

## SWEDENBORG'S HEBREW BIBLE

STEPHEN COLE

What approach should the translator of Swedenborg's Theological Works take towards the Biblical quotations found in those works? Should they be looked upon as a "Swedenborg translation" of the Bible?<sup>1</sup> or should they not be seen as translations at all?<sup>2</sup> What view should New Church translators of the Bible have with regard to the suggestions Swedenborg's quotations might offer? Of importance in answering these questions is the study of Swedenborg's use of the Hebrew and Greek originals of the Bible. There has been discussion of this subject on the basis of the evidence found in Swedenborg's works themselves and statements made by those who had known Swedenborg or were shortly after his time.<sup>3</sup> Beyond these early statements, however, there has been no discussion of Swedenborg's own copies of such texts and their annotations. Indeed, in the case of most of these copies it is not even known if they are extant. One notable exception is Swedenborg's copy of the Hebrew text of Everard van der Hooght published in 1740 in parallel columns with the Schmidius Latin translation.

The 1696 edition of Schmidius's Latin translation of the Bible has long been known to students of Swedenborg's manuscripts. Swedenborg's copy of this Bible with his marginal comments is to be found among his manuscripts in the Library of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences as codices 89 and 90.<sup>4</sup> Swedenborg's notes have been available to scholars in facsimile in a photolithograph edition of his copy of the Bible<sup>5</sup> and also in English translation.<sup>6</sup> Little notice has been taken, though, of the other Swedenborg Bible preserved at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

<sup>1</sup> *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), vol. II, p. 455.

<sup>2</sup> James Hyde, "Swedenborg's Bibles," *The New-Church Magazine* 1901: p. 495.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 348-357.

<sup>4</sup> *Documents Concerning Swedenborg*, ed. R. L. Tafel (London: Swedenborg Society, 1875-77) vol. 2: 2, p. 800.

<sup>5</sup> *Biblia Sacra cum Annotationibus Svedenborgii*, ed. R. L. Tafel (Holmiae: Ex Officina Societatis Photo-Lithographicae, 1872).

<sup>6</sup> *The Schmidius Marginalia*, trans. E. E. Iungerich (Bryn Athyn: Academy of the New Church, 1917).

It was while looking through a list of Swedenborg's manuscripts that I first became aware that Swedenborg's own copy of the 1740 Bible might be preserved among these manuscripts. Listed among the printed works in this collection are "64. Van der Hooght's Bible, Vol. II." and "73. See no. 64, (Vol. I)."<sup>7</sup> That this Bible was listed among Swedenborg's manuscripts suggested that it was his own copy, but the fact that none of the previous investigators of Swedenborg's manuscripts had made any remarks about this Bible threw some doubt on this conclusion, or at least implied that there was nothing in it worthy of comment. Mr. Lennart O. Alfelt, curator of Swedenborgiana at the Academy of the New Church, offered to write a letter to the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences inquiring about this Bible and obtained first, photocopies of several pages with marginal notations and later, a microfilm of the whole Bible. In June 1976 I was in Stockholm and was able to examine the Bible myself. Sufficient evidence now exists to demonstrate that this was indeed Swedenborg's own copy of the 1740 Van der Hooght Bible. As such it is the only known copy of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament with Swedenborg's notations.

### THE EVIDENCE

Beyond being found among Swedenborg's manuscripts, there is the fact that this copy of Bible resembles extant descriptions of Swedenborg's copy. Rev. Arvid Ferelius says of a visit with Swedenborg in London: ". . . he was sitting at a round table in the middle of the room, with the Hebrew Bible before him, which constituted his whole library."<sup>8</sup> That this Bible, which Swedenborg must have very often referred to, was in fact the Van der Hooght Bible is suggested by the testimony of Carl Johan Knös concerning Ferelius, who was Dean of the Swedish congregation in London:

The last official act which the Dean performed in England, was the Assessor's burial. As a burial fee he received the copy of the Hebrew Bible, in two volumes, quarto, which constituted the Assessor's travelling library, and which he had most frequently made use of, and underscored everywhere.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Documents*, vol. 2: 2, p. 796.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2: 1, p. 558.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2: 1, p. 563.

This took place in 1772; a further description of the Bible comes in 1790 from Augustus Nordensköld, who wrote of one of the Hebrew texts possessed by Swedenborg:

IV. *Bibl. Hebr. secundum Edit. Belgii Edvardi Vander Hoogt, cum versione Latina Sebastian Schmidii; Lipsiae, 1740, 4to.* This book was given to the Rev. Mr. Ferelius of Schofde, for interring him at London, where he was then minister to the Swedish chapel. There is no remark in the margin, but a great number of lines and asterisks, at the most remarkable places of the Latin version, the original text not being in any manner touched; because, according to the expression of Swedenborg 'The word is perfect, such as we have it.'<sup>10</sup>

This last observation is rather curious in view of the fact that the Hebrew text described in Nordensköld's list just before this one is said by him to be "filled with remarks."<sup>11</sup> As will be seen below, Nordensköld's account is not entirely to be relied upon. Where Nordensköld saw this Bible he does not say, but as early as 1787 the Van der Hooght Bible was included in the list of manuscripts at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. The presumption is, then, that by this time the Bible had found its way there from Ferelius's possession. Since Nordensköld there has been no account of Swedenborg's copy of this Bible.

The Bible in the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences is, as the earlier descriptions indicate, underscored everywhere. This includes the Hebrew text, contrary to Nordensköld's statement. That Nordensköld was capable of making faulty generalizations based only on cursory examination of the evidence is clear from some of his other assertions about Swedenborg's Bible. He says, for instance that Swedenborg "never followed the version of *Arius Montanus*" and that he translated Genesis, Exodus, and the Apocalypse directly from the originals.<sup>12</sup> These claims can be overturned simply by comparing the version of the Apocalypse used by Swedenborg in *Apocalypse Explained* and *Apocalypse Revealed* with that of Arius Montanus. They agree almost word for word. Nordensköld may have encountered some of the places in the Van der Hooght Bible where Swedenborg does only underline the Latin (e.g., pp. 98, 101) and generalized on the basis of these.

<sup>10</sup> Augustus Nordensköld, "On the Different Editions of the Bible Made Use of by Emanuel Swedenborg," *New-Jerusalem Magazine* 1790: 87.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

He also could have fairly easily missed the few places where there are marginal remarks.

These marginal remarks are the clearest proof that this Bible was Swedenborg's. They are in a hand fairly recognizable as Swedenborg's and are the same sort of notes as those found in the 1696 Bible. Indeed, two of the notes in the 1740 Bible (cross-references "Jer: 48: 45.46" at Numbers 21: 27-30; and "Ezek: 47: 14 to 20" at Numbers 34) are identical to notes in corresponding places in the 1696 Bible. Also worthy of remark are similarities between the cross-references noted in the Bible and those observed in the published theological works.<sup>13</sup> One of the most interesting connections between the published works and the notes in the Bible is the statement, in *Arcana Coelestia* 7264, of eleven, not ten, plagues in Egypt and the actual numerals in the margin of Swedenborg's Bible counting out eleven plagues.<sup>14</sup> One other note suggests the spiritual sense given in the published works by associating temptations with the Sea Suph.<sup>15</sup>

The underlinings in the Bible are not so conclusive a proof that the Bible was Swedenborg's as the marginal remarks are, although they do support that conclusion. Once the conclusion has been accepted, however, the underlinings become a mass of evidence as to how Swedenborg dealt with the Hebrew text.

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UNDERLININGS IN SWEDENBORG'S VAN DER HOOGHT BIBLE

The general rule for these underlinings is that when a word in the Latin text is underlined the corresponding word in the Hebrew text is also underlined. One would expect, then, that the underlinings indicate some attention to a point hinging on the original, the Hebrew. Such points fall into several different categories. These will be discussed in turn with examples.

1) In Swedenborg's Bible at Exodus 9:8 the Latin word *favilla* and the Hebrew word *piach* are underlined. In explanation of this verse the *Arcana Coelestia* states: "That 'ashes (*favilla*)' denote falsity, may be confirmed from the passages where another word for 'ashes (*cinis*)' is used. . . ." <sup>16</sup> The passage goes

<sup>13</sup> See esp. "Jer: 48: 45.46" at Numbers 21: 27-30 and the comments in *The Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* 103.

<sup>14</sup> pp. 98-106 in Swedenborg's 1740 Bible.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>16</sup> AC 7520.

on to cite a number of places in scripture where the Hebrew word used is *epher*. The distinction noted here is one not observed in the Latin of Schmidius, so the underlining is used to indicate the distinction in the original Hebrew.

2) One of the most common reasons for recourse to the original is that one wants to change or correct a translation. Two examples of this follow: *A.* At Exodus 9: 19 the Latin word *collige* and the Hebrew word *ha'ez* are underlined. Later in the verse *colligetur* occurs this time representing the Hebrew *ye'aseph*. In the Latin of this verse found in the *Arcana Coelestia* one of the few differences from the Schmidius version is the use of *congrega* instead of *collige*. The *colligetur* remains the same. In the previous example a distinction was noted but no change was made in the translation. Here there is a change in the translation to preserve a distinction that exists in the Hebrew. *B.* At Exodus 11: 5 the Latin *pistrinum* and Hebrew *harachaim* are underlined. The *Arcana Coelestia* rendering of this verse makes use of the Latin *molas* (millstones) where Schmidius used *pistrinum* (flour mill). The *Arcana* version is a more literal rendering of the Hebrew.

3) There are a number of places where the *Arcana Coelestia* explicitly refers to the Hebrew. Two examples in which the Hebrew words cited are underlined in Swedenborg's Bible now follow: *A.* The words *villis* and *castellis* in the Latin and *bechatsreyhem* and *uvtirotham* in the Hebrew of Genesis 25: 16 are underlined. In *Arcana Coelestia* we read: "In the original language the words that signify villages (*villas*) and castles (*castella*) also signify courts and palaces."<sup>17</sup> *B.* There are several words underlined in Exodus 32: 18. Among them are the Latin *clamoris* (first occurrence) and *cantus* and the Hebrew *'anoth* and *'annoth*. The Hebrew *'anoth*, the *qal* infinitive of *'anah* occurs twice in the verse and is twice translated *clamoris* by Schmidius. *'annoth* the *pi'el* participle of *'anah*, although quite close to *'anoth*, is translated as *cantus* by Schmidius. The Latin of the *Arcana Coelestia* has *clamoris* for *'anoth* as Schmidius does. For *'annoth* however, it has *clamoris miserabilis*, which gives more indication than Schmidius's translation does of the similarity of the two words. The *Arcana Coelestia* in treating of the words "But the voice of a miserable cry (*clamoris miserabilis*) do I hear" explains: "That this signifies the lamentable state of their interiors,

is evident from the signification of 'the voice of a miserable cry,' as being what is lamentable; for in the original language this is expressed by a term which means 'a cry,' and 'affection,' and also 'misery,' thus which means 'a miserable cry.'<sup>18</sup>

The fact that Swedenborg used a bilingual Bible, the Van der Hooght—Schmidius Bible while working on the *Arcana Coelestia*, is indicative of his approach to the Hebrew. He did not work from the Hebrew text alone. A comparison of the Latin of the *Arcana Coelestia* with the Schmidius version in the 1740 Bible leaves little doubt as to what the *Arcana* translation was based on. But neither did Swedenborg work from the Latin version alone. That he chose to work from the bilingual Bible when he had the same Latin translation available by itself is some indication. The examples given above demonstrate some of the ways in which Swedenborg revised the translation from his own knowledge of Hebrew.

Swedenborg's own copy of the Van der Hooght—Schmidius Bible is, then, of valuable assistance in discovering what lies behind the Latin renderings found in the theological works. From it we learn that Genesis and Exodus were not "translated directly from the originals" while on the other hand there are interpretations of the Hebrew inserted by Swedenborg himself.

## DREAMS

### ALFRED ACTON II

From ancient times men have sought explanations for their dreams. Both Pharaoh of Egypt and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon clearly accepted the premise that future events were predicted in their dreams, events which a skilled interpreter could readily predict. Nor was belief in revelation by means of dreams confined to pagan kings. Hebrew tradition also accepted God's ability to speak to His chosen people in dreams. As the book of Numbers attests: "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream" (Num. 12: 6). Also in New Testament times dreams play an instructive role. The wise men were warned in a dream not to return unto Herod. Joseph was thrice warned in dreams:

<sup>17</sup> AC 3271.

<sup>18</sup> AC 10457.