

Translator's Corner

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Several items of interest to translators of the works of Swedenborg offer themselves for this issue of *The New Philosophy*. First we present Professor Tatsuya Nagashima's paper on the Japanese language and its problematique. Next comes Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose's 1996 report to the Board of the Academy of the New Church on the new edition of *Experientiae Spirituales* (Spiritual experiences), followed by an account of the presentation of the 6th and final volume to the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences in Stockholm on June 5th, 1997—who have substantially supported this project.

NEW CHURCH CULTURATION IN ETHNIC MINDS[†]

Tatsuya Nagashima*

PROLOGUE

When Bishop Buss announced that the 32nd General Assembly theme would be "Toward a New Church Culture," an idea came to mind that we need a definition of "culture" according to New Church principles. The term "culture" [L: *cultura*] has no entry in Potts Concordance, but we have to clarify it from the relevant sources of New Church doctrines. Generally, "culture" is so broadly interpreted that we can hardly distinguish it from life-style, custom, habit, and taste, disregarding its morality. So in the first section, we will see what is meant by "culture" in its essential significance.

[†]The following is a modified but considerably expanded version of Professor Nagashima's speech at the publishers mini-session at the June, 1996 General Assembly of the General Church of the New Jerusalem, held in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania.

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We are already ethnically cultured people. Our language, education and traditions engraved in us a type of culture. Human minds are all differently characterized by this type. When talking about the above topic "Toward a New Church Culture," we must ask ourselves how the ethnically cultured peoples can be cultured anew in accordance with New Church principles? The New Church culture has no intent to mold us into a uniform life-style. It rather makes us free from ethnic mentality and still remodels it for a new regenerate humanity. All good comes from the Lord, so we have to make ourselves prepared to accept the good from Him. If the present study can be such a preparation, our ethnic humanity will some day be a garden in which truths and goods will flourish.

I

NEW CHURCH INCULTURATION

Going back to etymological origin of "culture," the Latin *cultura* signifies "what is going to cultivate," or "what was cultivated."¹ When we cultivate, we cultivate the land (L: *humus*),² as we read "the human mind is like soil, whose quality depends on its cultivation" (HH 356). The more we cultivate, the better human soil we have.

We cultivate the human mind; we cultivate the human to be rational. "Human" is "human" because of its rationality. As the classic definition says "man is a rational animal." The heavenly doctrine also testifies "in the inmost of the rational, the human begins" (AC 2106, 2194). Where the rational is, there is the human, and where the human is, there is the rational.

Etymologically therefore, "culture" is defined as "humanity to be rationally cultivated." If so defined, "culture" excludes whatever is against human reason. As the old English proverb says, "custom without reason is

¹ *Cultura*: a feminine gender, singular (or a neutral gender, plural) of the active participle, future tense of *colere* (to cultivate): "what is going to cultivate." Or it might stem from *cultus*, -a, -um, passive participle, past tense: "what was cultivated," W.W. Sleat, *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*. Oxford, p. 123.

² The English "human" (Latin *homo*) also comes from *humus*, the equivalent to English "land, soil, ground," C.T. Lewis, *A Latin Dictionary*. Oxford, 1980. pp. 859-860.

only an old error." A senseless custom is not a part of culture but a continued bad habit. In Modern societies, we see a number of customs and habits, as watching TV, smoking and drinking, etc. But we exclude them from culture, unless they are done from a right cause.

We can distinguish "culture" from "civilization." Civilized people are not always cultured people. Apes can imitate a civilized life but not a cultured life. Civilization looks for the modernized convenience in human life, but culture looks for the cultivation of the human mind. Recently we see more and more highly civilized people, but less cultured human beings, because most people neglect to cultivate their humanity to be rational. Where can we find a real humanlike human dialogue deeply rooted in wisdom?

Theologically, such a topic as "Toward a New Church Culture" has a deeper meaning than it appears to have. As we recognize now that culture is based on the cultivation of the rational mind, so we can clarify the term "rational" according to Divine truth: "The genuine rational is from good, but comes forth from truth. Good flows in by an internal way; but truth by an external way. *Good thus conjoins itself with truth in the rational , and they cause the rational to be.* Unless the good therein is conjoined to truth, there is no rational although there appears to be...This is the common way in which the rational is formed with man" (AC 3030:2, emphasis added). So the New Church "culture" is "the cultivated humanity by the rational which comes from good conjoined with truth from the Lord."

The word "inculturation" shown in the title was originally found in a noted Catholic missionary's address.³ He mentioned that, just as Christ was "incarnated" in the world, the Gospel should be "inculturated" into all nations of the world. The verb "inculturate" as well as "incarnate" is only to be predicated of the Lord, not only because the "human" begins in the inmost of the "rational" (AC 2106), but also because such "ratio-humanization" can only be done by Jehovah Who is the Only Man (AC 1894). What's more, as the internal sense of Ishmael's birth (representing the first rational) teaches us, the Lord miraculously preceded us in His own "rationalization" of His life on earth (AC 1890).

³ Fr. Pedro Arrupe (1907-1991), a missionary in Japan (28 years), gave the address on "inculturations" in 1978.

The Western culture is based on Hellenism, Judaism and Christianity. They all derive their seed of rationalization from the Word. Hellenism preserved the unwritten ancient Word, Judaism and Christianity protected the literal sense of the Word. So the Western culture in general is founded upon the Word. On the other hand, the Oriental cultures were so ramified that the remnants of the ancient Word, being commingled with various falsities, can hardly be traced back. Rationally cultivated humanity never flourishes where the Word is hardly noticeable. Our ethnic cultures in Japan therefore have never awakened by ratio-humanization through the ages. We are the descendants of those who gradually extinguished the ancient Word.

However, the New Church Inculturation has already started in the modern world. We have the printed and published Word on earth. Before the General Assembly was held, Bishop Buss commented as follows: "A New Church culture...is an attempt to express the truths of the Writings in our attitude and in our customs...In the Writings the Lord has given us wonderful dreams and hopes and loves. This final, great revelation will create a set of values and a set of customs which reflect our inner convictions."⁴

II THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE AS A TOOL OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

As a matter of fact, the difference of cultures is most clearly seen in the difference of languages, because a language is a reflection of the ethnically cultivated humanity. If the most essential means for cultivating one's humanity is a language, ratio-humanization can only be executed with an adequate language tool.

In the present world we see two language blocks: the phono-language and the ideo-language blocks. Chinese, Korean and Japanese are all of the ideo-language block. Our ideographs derived from pictographs are called "Chinese characters (KANJI in Japanese)." In Japan the Chinese characters

⁴ P. 1, Spring 1966, *Bishop's Newsletter*.

are the predominant linguistic tool, and we employ them as phonetic tools as well as ideographs. It is said that the first pictographic forms were found in oracle bones used in divination rites. We are told that the original KANJI appeared almost 5,000 years ago. Chinese pictographs are the rough sketches of the things they represent. One tree (木 KI: Japanese phonetic) is written with 4 strokes, and the double KI with 8 strokes becomes woods (林 HAYASI), and triple KI with 12 strokes becomes a forest (森 MORI). Dictionaries index 5,000-20,000 KANJI, but the number for general use is limited to 2,000. As an example of some of these, look at the fifty KANJI below which are learned by junior high school students (11-13 years).

FIFTY SAMPLE KANJI

(Sounds, other meanings, combination with other KANJI, stroke order, etc. are omitted)

癖	礎	穩	禪	笑
bad habit	foundation	gentleness	Zen meditation	laugh
箱	糧	紫	縛	縫
box	food	violet	bound	sew
縮	罰	聽	耐	翻
shrink	punish	listen	endure	flutter
胸	豚	舞	臟	艦
chest	hog	dance	viscera	warship

葬	夢	慕	膚	覽
bury	dream	yearn for	skin	see
覆	譽	訴	誓	誕
cover	honor	sue	oath	birth
躍	透	違	避	鄉
jump	penetrate	different	avoid	village
醜	鋼	鍛	隣	霜
ugly	steel	training	neighbor	frost
靈	響	飾	髮	魂
spirit	resound	decorate	hair	soul
鯨	麗	墨	鷲	襲
whale	beautiful	soot	eagle	attack

The above exhibits may stimulate your imagination. Can you figuratively liken the last one “襲”, for example, with the notion of “attacking”? Maybe not. The upper 龍 is a “dragon” and the bottom 衣 is “clothes,” and this so-called compound ideograph stems from the imagination that a dragon “attacks” a man and robs him of his clothes. Otherwise, they simply look like mystical square-dash-dot-stroke conglomerations. However, even for Japanese, each KANJI is like an ancient castle in which

dwells the enigmatic despot who commands the learners to observe the adamant how-to-write-and-read rules. Brush-writing calligraphy demands artistic beauty. There are also simplified forms to be learned for additional use. Furthermore, each character is multi-vocal with two or three different possible sounds according to its combination with other characters.

During their nine years of compulsory education, the children learn how to spell correctly, pronounce and employ them. In the Western countries, the children do not spend more than a month to master the alphabet. Our children spend 9 years just learning the writing tools. Still they soon find 2,000 are not enough to know many of the proper names nor to read classic literature. Whatever KANJI they learn, impeccable correctness is required. Only a single dot changes the meaning. In such a rote learning process, their minds are moulded not for truth-seeking, but for correctness seeking. They aim not at truth, but correctness, forgetting to ask why. An old cliché says, “Naze to tou nake (Don’t ask why!).”

Let us take an English noun “peninsula” for instance. And let us compare it with the Japanese equivalent “半島”. How is each word learned in each language? English-speaking children learn the spelling of “PENINSULA” with its meaning: A piece of land almost surrounded by water. Probably it takes some 10 minutes to learn the word. They do not have to learn the etymological origin of “peninsula” which is a composite of the Latin “Paene (almost)” and “insula (island).” Latin could be learned later, but is now an irrelevant knowledge for them. Although they did not actually learn two additional Latin words “paene” and “insula,” it would not take much time. They are both visually and phonetically very close to English.

The Japanese children learn HAN-TOO 半島 (peninsula) with its ideographs. The first HAN 半 is learned in the second grade (6 years old) as one of the 105 KANJI to be memorized that year. The “半”, a five-stroke-script, with two different sounds: HAN in Chinese and NAKA in Japanese, which means “semi-, demi- or hemi-,” and many different combinations with other characters such as HAN-NICHI 半日 (a half day), HAN-SUU 半数 (a half number), NAKA-BA 半ば (a half time or distance), etc. They spend quite a while learning the single “半”.

The second TOO 島 is learned in the third grade (7 year old), one of the 187 to be learned that year. The KANJI “島”, ten-stroke-script has two

different sounds: TOO in Chinese and SHIMA in Japanese, both meaning "island." There are some combinations too with other letters such as TOO-MIN 島民 (islanders), SHIMA-GUNI 島国 (island country), etc., among which you finally find HAN-TOO 半島 (peninsula).

There is a long way to go, just as if learning two languages, Japanese and Chinese. The KANJI have two distinct etymological backgrounds. So it takes more hours than learning English and Latin at the same time. Where the language is not rationally systematized, the people might spend all their lives just learning the tools. The ideographic language, owing to its audiovisual complexities, can deprive the users of much time and energy and prevent them from cultivating their rational minds. The visual forms and the audial signs are merely the tools, and their living contents, ideas and thoughts, should be cherished and conveyed. Therefore such complexities often leave in the mind obscurity as to what the contents really mean, and if anything unknown is left, some distortions such as enigmatism, occultism and superstitions could be fermented.

We hear that Japanese are polite but do not know justice. Now the reason is clear, because politeness comes from correctness-seeking, and justice comes from truth-seeking. Let me show why justice is easily replaced by politeness. The Japanese equivalent of the English "justice" is "正義 SEIGI." "正 SEI" is a five-stroke KANJI and it signifies "right, original, positive, genuine, punctual, truthful, correct, lawful, moral, healthy, perfect, etc."; and "義 GI," the 13-stroke KANJI, has many meanings such as "righteousness, faith, favor, self-sacrifice, significance, moral principle, artificial thing, friendship, etc." And the combined form "正義 SEIGI" is equivalent to "justice." But how can we escape from ambiguity, since each KANJI has so many meanings? After a repeated exercise, students can finally spell "正義 SEIGI," but few know what "SEIGI (justice)" really means, much less why "SEIGI (justice)" should be in human life. Correctness is concerned with the appearance only, while truth is concerned with its essence. The essence is ignored, while the appearance is adored. And politeness mainly comes from one's caution to keep harmony and appearance.

KANJI were imported into Japan with the inscribed books of Mahayana Buddhism and Confucianism. No wonder the scripts have their own connotations from such religions. Just as English is the language of the

King James version, the Chinese characters are of the language of Buddhist sutra. When our people hear “真理 SHINI (truth),” they call in mind what is meant by “Prajna” of Buddhism. “神 KAMI (God)” is none but a spirit of either good or evil. “善 ZEN (goodness)” is far from “bonum (good)” understood in the Writings, but “fortune” or “benefit.” The Japanese “愛 AI (love)” accompanies the original notion of “lust of sexual love” or “romantic love.”

III

THE KANJI CULTURE AND ETHNIC MINDS.

In my country Japan, indifference to religion has persisted for a long time. It may be due to the yearlong Christian persecutions in the Topkugawa Period (17th to 19th centuries), the collapse of the Emperor-worship Shintoism, the hereditary animistic occultism, and traditional undoctinal Buddhism and so on. Young people, without any guilt in mind, wed at a Christian church, have their baby purified at the Shinto shrine, and hold a funeral at a Buddhist temple. In spite of repeated evangelism, Christianity has never been accepted by 99% of the total population. The acceptance of the New Church doctrines is thought to be almost “next to nothing.” How can those who believe in the eight million gods (YAOYOROZU NO KANIGAMI) believe in only one God, much less “enter understandingly into the mysteries of faith” (TCR 508)? The ethnic minds have already been so paralysed that New Church inculturation looks like a daydream.

The Arcana Press however, has translated and published the main books of the Writings.⁵ For the sake of the “Nunc Licet” principle, I employ easy and understandable language. The common readers, however, find my translations lack a mystic flavor which they expect in occult or esoteric books. When they understand, they don’t respect. Before New Church inculturation is discussed, we have to know how our language affects ethnic minds. I wonder how their minds could be rationally (de)-cultured, insofar as they employ an irrational linguistic instrument.

⁵ The following are translated from the Latin texts into modern Japanese: *Heaven and Hell* (1985); *True Christian Religion* I (1988), II (1989); *Divine Love and Wisdom* (1991); *Divine Providence* (1991); *Conjugal Love* (1992); *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* (1993); *Earths in the Universe* (1994); *Intercourse Between the Soul and Body* (1994); *The Four Doctrines* (1996); etc.

1) Obscure verbalizations:

Japanese syntax prescribes that the predicate to be put to the end of a sentence, so many attributes and clauses can be placed between the subject and the predicate. In addition, the subject can arbitrarily be omitted. As a result, the listener (or the reader) tracing the jigsaw narration is often at a loss. He cannot find out what the speaker (or writer) intends to say. Obscurity however is thought of appreciatively, because it stimulates arbitrary conjecture. So we are told our language is not for “report” but for “rapport.”

2) Poetic but not logical:

Now the “Haiku” has global popularity. At home it always attracts senior people as a traditional elegant poetry. A few words are capable of exquisite nuances, insinuations, hidden connotations. That is why Japanese are not efficient in composing succinct logical expressions. Our minds are weak in analytic and synthetic theorization.

3) Meticulous descriptions of sensual phenomena:

The novelists often devote themselves to autobiographical tales, depicting sensual phenomena and delicate feelings in a meticulous way. Juxtapositional arrangement of KANJI stimulates the writer to compose mosaic arts.⁶ The sensual descriptions are helped by various onomatopoeic words. With such a language, is it scarcely possible to create a great panoramic drama based on lofty vision.

4) Correctness as substituted for truth:

Where correctness is emphasized, truth is ignored. Where correctness is blamed, falsity is overlooked. As the old saying “USO MO HOOBEN”

⁶ An image of Japanese literature can be formed by reading some books of Kabuki, Bunraku, Noh, Kyogen, etc. One of the most well-known classical stories is “Genji” by a female novelist Murasaki Shikibu in the 11th century. For modern ones, the Nobel-winner Kawabata’s English translation are commendable. Mishima’s short stories are also well read.

(lies are permissible as the means) puts it; and so lies and falsities are hardly checked but rather are condoned. Thus the Western proverb “to err is human” is quite unknown. People are not aware that correctness has little to do with moral value, wherein lies and deceits are evils.

5) Practicality preferred to abstractness:

For most Japanese, abstraction is a sign of unknowableness, and practicality or concreteness is applauded. The latter are supported by the collected data which may lead the people to visible gains. Here is found another reason why this nation is strong in applied technology.

6) Opportunistic academicism:

Whereas numerical data and statistics are objectively valuable, creative ideas in Humanities are not. Such tendency in academicism leads to skepticism or nihilism. In the West, modern agnosticism is a result of failing authority of religion, but our academicism is opportunistic. It fluctuates between two extremes, being affected by fashions or trends.

7) Discriminative verbalization:

Chinese characters were invented by men in the feudal age of China. In Japan also the KANJI were under men’s control. So discriminative scripts against women are found in glossaries. Some KANJI with a classifier ONNA 女 (woman) humiliate the female gender. They are “奴 YATSU (slave),” “奸 KAN (wickedness),” “妬 NETAMI (jealous)” “姦 KAN (rape),” “姪 IN (adulterous),” “嫌 IYA (dislike),” etc.

8) Habit of mechanical rote learning:

The Japanese habit of hard-working is formed by the KANJI discipline during their childhood. Children are coerced to learn a definite number of KANJI each year. 2,000 are learned in 9 years’ compulsory education. No illiteracy is allowed; not any “why-question” is accepted. Patience

(GAMEN) and persistence (GANBARU) are encouraged in social behaviors and in group actions.⁷

9) Ranking system established:

In each KANJI are embedded different sounds, meanings and combinations. No wonder that many unknown KANJI are left out of one's memory. The unknown becomes awesome, and it humiliates those who have no knowledge of it. This leads to producing a ranking hierarchy, according to one's education and knowledge.

10) Make-believe, superstitions and enigmatism:

If man is unwillingly oppressed by abundant memory-knowledge, he easily loses natural affection for them, and cannot be made rational. The more affection of truth one has, the more rational he is. The Writings testify, "in proportion to the affection, and accordance with the quality of the affection, in the same proportion, and in the same quality, *does a man become rational*" ((AC 1895-2; emphasis added). Irrationality, obscurity and vagueness leave in the mind a fermentation in which irrational ideas grow.

* * *

Language represents humanity, because what is spoken comes from what is thought and desired. Language represents culture also, because speech shows the level of mental cultivation. By means of such Japanese language, how can we pursue human rationality? How can the New Church inculturate our ethnic minds? Will our minds be free from ethnicity and reformed by a new culture? What does New Church inculturation mean to us?

⁷ GAMAN, the Japanese equivalent to "patience," is slightly different from the latter. GAMAN is a persistence in working without questionings or complaints until the end comes. GAMBARU, the equivalent to English "to persist, hold out," is also different from the latter, because GAMBARU is always accompanied by GAMAN. Both GAMAN and GAMBARU are not caused so much by reasonable incentive as by the instructive adherence expected by society.

IV

RATIO-HUMANIZATION AND THE NEW CHURCH

As we have seen, our language is not only complicated for foreign learners, but quite cumbersome for indigenous users. Multivocality and vagueness lead people into semantic labyrinths. But still it can be a vessel of the Word, and it is especially so when it is translated into understandable language. The Divine truths are transmitted to the readers according to their ability to understand.

Amazingly, the first Japanese translation of *Heaven and Hell* appeared in 1910. We have almost all the Writings translated into our language by Rev. Yoshii Yasane, now an octogenarian. Japanese was probably the first ideographic language which had put all volumes of the Writings into human history. In the occult corner of bookstores, even a carton of *Heaven and Hell* is sold. In most cases Swedenborg is known as the greatest seer the world has ever known. The Japanese Bible of various translations is found among the best-sellers each Christmas. There is no difficulty therefore in discovering the Word of God. If the Word is read from genuine doctrine, why may the New Church not exist?

Human languages are more or less contaminated by man's evils and falsities. We hope however, that our language tool will be purified by delivering Divine truths therein. Only the Lord can transform language to be a more adaptable vehicle for conveying the Word. If the nations are healed by the leaves of the tree, their language must also be healed by the leaves of the tree of life, which represents the Lord's Divine Love (Rev. 22:2, AR 933). Let me introduce some New Church concepts in KANJI. Even for indigenous eyes, such theological terms look strange and exotic. When each of these concepts is purified from enigmatic ambiguity, occultism will be dissipated from the reader's mind. Only then will the New Church concepts be rationally acceptable.

遺伝悪	永遠	栄化	英知	親子愛
hereditary evil	eternity	glorification	wisdom	storge
教義	共通善	巨大人	啓示	結婚愛
doctrine	common good	Grand Man	revelation	conjugal love
荒廃	再生	残果	新教会	神人
devastation	regeneration	remains	New Church	Divine Human
真理	自己愛	世間愛	自己改革	地獄
truth	love of self	love of world	reformation	hell
十戒	受肉	純潔	自由	情愛
ten commandments	incarnation	chastity	freedom	affection
仁愛	推進力	正義	摂理	洗礼
charity	conatus	justice	providence	baptism
善	相応	創造	存在	実在
good	correspondence	creation	esse	existere

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段階	天界	天使	内的意味	内部人間
grade	heaven	angel	internal sense	internal man
外部人間	表象	無限	文字上の意味	役立ち
external man	representative	infinite	literal sense	use
理性	流入	良心	隣人愛	靈界
intellect	influx	conscience	love for the neighbors	world of spirit

Nobody can understand the Word without doctrine (SS 51), and no doctrines can be understood without an enlightened mind (SS 57). And no mind is enlightened without being rational, and no rational is opened without affection for truth. So everything starts from the affection of truth.

Optimism therefore is of no avail, since the correctness-seeking habit may suffocate one's affection for truth. Without the affection for truth nobody can be rational (AC 1895:2). Without being rational, nobody can be human in its real sense (AC 3175:2). The more affection for truth one has, the more rational he can be, and the more human he is. The "ratio-humanization" is the first necessary step for regeneration, because none can be reformed without being rationally human.

In Japan we have quite a few readers of Swedenborgian books, but the majority cannot yet extricate themselves from occultism. Occultism and enigmatism are fermented by sensuous minds. A few show their concern for the Christine doctrines, and many fewer for the New Church doctrines. Such questions as those with "when, where, who, how" interrogatives are often asked, but the "why" question hardly ever. Information about miraculous incidents and experiences is avidly sought, but truth-seeking stemming from one's affection for truth is rarely seen. A concern is shown for data and correctness, but little concern for genuine doctrine.

My sincere hope for the nation is that correctness-seeking affection will gradually be changed to the truth-seeking affection. Correctness,

which aims at order and harmony in the scientific and sensual dimensions, might be transformed to an understanding dimension of rationality. Probably and hopefully, truth-seeking desire will be kindled some day, when people are not satisfied with the superficial correctness-seeking after it has been active for many years. Correctness is achieved by an imitative mind, but truth is reached by a free rational mind. There should be a kind of awakening of ethnic minds open to rationality.

If culture is humanity cultivated by the rational, the ethnic cultures which are not yet cultivated are not cultures in its strict sense. They are nothing but customs, habits and life-styles. Ethnic minds, if not rationally cultivated, are not yet cultures in its most essential meaning.

In the light of the above, New Church inculturation is not so much a change of the old culture to the new, but the rational transformation of ethnic minds into the ratio-humanization based on the Word. In its truest sense, therefore, New Church inculturation can only be done by the Word. Outside the New Church we have no full-fledged Word of God, and without the Word of God nobody can be fully cultivated rationally as well as spiritually. We are still in the darkness, but it will be dissipated, when the light shines from the Word. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not comprehended it" (John 1:5). □

