

THE PRESERVATION AND REPRODUCTION OF THE  
MANUSCRIPTS OF EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

LENNART O. ALFELT \*

One day in the late autumn of 1772 a wagon rumbled through the cobbled streets of Stockholm and stopped in front of the library of the Royal Academy of Sciences. The carters unloaded a chest and carried it into the building. For the carters it probably was routine business and in the Royal Academy's records it is only stated that a certain amount of money had been paid for the transportation cost of "a delivered chest, containing blessed Assessor Swedenborg's manuscripts."<sup>1</sup> We do not know what the reaction of the Academy's Secretary Wargentin was upon receiving this chest of manuscripts and books now put in his custody. One thing we can be certain of is that neither he nor scarcely anyone else at the time realized that several of those manuscripts and books were a part of the clouds in which the Lord was making His second coming as foretold in the book of Revelation. But as the realization grew that the Lord had provided mankind with a new and deeper revelation through the Writings of His servant Emanuel Swedenborg, the interest in the contents of the chest increased. And through the almost two centuries that have passed, the Lord, in His Providence, has raised up many men who have taken a special interest in the preservation and publication of the manuscripts of Swedenborg.

The purpose of this address is to relate something about these men and their work, with the emphasis on those of them who have been connected with the Academy of the New Church. In order to get a proper background it is first necessary to briefly sketch something of the history of the Swedenborg manuscripts from 1772 to the beginnings of the Academy movement.

Swedenborg did not leave a will. When asked to make one he answered that he did not care to do so, and that those who would be his heirs according to Swedish Law might take whatever he left.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sten Lindroth: *Kungl. Svenska Vetenskapsakademiens Historia 1739-1818*, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> R. L. Tafel: *Documents*, Vol. I, p. 394.

The heirs probably did not mind receiving Swedenborg's property on Hornsgatan in southern Stockholm. But what their immediate reaction was upon discovering that they also had inherited about 25,000 pages of manuscripts, we can only surmise. Whatever the reaction was, in the Divine Providence they were led to regard the manuscripts as of sufficient importance to be preserved, although apparently no individual heir wished to keep them at that time. The Royal Academy of Sciences in Stockholm seemed the logical place for the manuscripts to be deposited, for many of them had a scientific content and Swedenborg had been a member of the Academy almost from its start. After a careful list of the documents had been made, they were delivered to the Academy "to be preserved in its library with the care which the content of these documents, the respect due to the departed, and the honor of his family may expect now and forever."<sup>3</sup>

It seems that for a few years the manuscripts were left undisturbed in the chest. In 1780 August Nordenskjöld, who had become acquainted with the Writings a few years earlier, came across the manuscript of *Coronis* while in London and immediately took steps to have it copied and printed. This incident made him eager to investigate the rest of the manuscripts and if possible to have them published. In June the same year he requested permission to borrow some of the manuscripts for publication, a request which the Royal Academy apparently granted. While Nordenskjöld was thus examining the manuscripts, he decided to arrange them more systematically and have them bound at his own expense. This was an important step in the preservation of the manuscripts, most of which were in the form of loose sheets tied up in bundles and therefore could easily be scattered and lost.

Now, the binding was of course in itself no certain guarantee that none of the manuscripts would disappear. And curiously enough, August Nordenskjöld and his fellow New Churchmen were the ones responsible for the fact that some of the manuscripts borrowed by them and taken out of the country were lost sight of and later regarded as lost by the Royal Academy of Sciences. Fortunately, after some of them had passed through many hands, all except two indices were recovered and restored to the rightful owners. Copies had been made of the two missing indices so their content was saved for posterity.

<sup>3</sup> *Documents*, Vol. II :2, p. 779.

To trace the oftentimes perilous and always interesting ways in which the once lost manuscripts travelled before being restored to the Royal Academy's library would give material for a whole address. I will here mention only one of the more dramatic events.

In 1783 August Nordenskjöld borrowed several manuscripts, among them the bulky volumes containing Swedenborg's clean copy of *Apocalypse Explained*. The intention was to have the manuscripts published in London. August's younger brother, Charles Frederic, left the same year for England carrying with him the precious manuscripts. After a stormy voyage over the North Sea he arrived in Hull and took the stage coach from there to London. He left his trunk with his books and manuscripts behind to be transported separately, a decision he regretted bitterly since he had to suffer more than one month in suspenseful waiting before it arrived.<sup>4</sup> While the first volume of the manuscript of *Apocalypse Explained* was being printed, the second volume was entrusted to Henry Peckitt, who was the President of the Theosophic Society, probably the first New Church society in the world. One night about midnight a fire broke out completely destroying Mr. Peckitt's house. Mr. Peckitt himself narrowly escaped with his life. It was not until morning that he remembered having the precious manuscript in his custody. The desk in which the manuscript was kept he found destroyed. While despairingly walking in the ruins of his home looking for any trace of the manuscript, a neighbor came over and told him that he had picked up some books from the street during the fire. On examination Mr. Peckitt found the very volume of manuscript he had feared lost. A fireman had thrown the contents of the desk out into the street. The volume had been only slightly singed in one corner and was otherwise in perfect condition. A few evenings after the fire Mr. Peckitt came to the meeting of the Theosophic Society with the volume under his arm. Putting it on the table he burst into tears, exclaiming: "There, the greatest treasure which I had in my house is preserved in safety; and for the sake of that, I willingly submit to my great loss."<sup>5</sup>

But it was not only a permissive lending policy on the part of the Academy of Sciences, careless borrowers, sea and fire, that threatened to scatter and destroy these priceless manuscripts. In

<sup>4</sup> Letter of C. F. Nordenskjöld to C. B. Wadström, dated 31 Jan. 1784.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Hindmarsh: *Rise and Progress . . .*, pp. 32-33.

the first decades several attempts were made to dispossess the Royal Academy of the documents.

The first of these attempts came in 1788 when Swedenborg's heirs received an offer from England of a considerable sum of money for the manuscripts. A distant relative of Swedenborg's by the name of Silfverhjelm, a pseudo-New Churchman whose main interest was in mysticism, mesmerism and other assorted "-isms" of the same kind, acted as the representative of the heirs, and requested that the manuscripts be returned to them. He argued that the documents had not been *given* to the Royal Academy but left there for safekeeping only. The Academy refused to part with the documents and the matter seems to have been dropped.<sup>6</sup>

The last attempt, which settled the question of ownership for all time, was made in the late 1820's. A distiller in Stockholm, Abraham Berg, had procured himself a document, signed by all Swedenborg's then living heirs, by which they resigned to him their right to the manuscripts. With this document in hand Berg claimed them of the Royal Academy. When the Academy refused to deliver the manuscripts, he sued. In all instances the courts upheld the Academy's contention that it was the rightful custodian of the manuscripts, and that it belonged to the Academy to decide, "how far the documents thus entrusted to the Academy ought to be delivered up."<sup>7</sup> And as many of you know, after visiting Stockholm and experiencing the indescribable feeling of holding one of these precious manuscript volumes in your own hands, the Academy fortunately decided not to part with any of the documents.

In the two decades following Swedenborg's death there was great activity in both Stockholm and London. August Nordenskjöld continued to borrow manuscripts and have them copied. Both originals and copies were brought to London and published there. But with the death of Nordenskjöld and the disbandment of the Theosophic Society the activity subsided considerably and only a few works were published thereafter.

In 1840 however a number of manuscripts were rediscovered in London. This gave new impetus to the publishing activity and several manuscripts were printed and new, critical editions of the Latin originals were issued. Dr. Garth Wilkinson in London and

<sup>6</sup> *Documents*, Vol. II :2, pp. 820-1.

<sup>7</sup> Swedenborg Society *Report* No. XXXIII, 1842, pp. 15 ff.

Dr. Immanuel Tafel in Tübingen in Germany were the leading men in this movement.

Dr. Immanuel Tafel's death in 1863 can be said to have closed the first chapter of the history of the publication and preservation of Swedenborg manuscripts.<sup>8</sup> The initiative and main drive of the movement was now transferred to the New World, and more specifically to those persons in the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, who constituted a group that came to be known as the Academy. This is not to say that other groups and bodies of the Church completely lost interest in the work of publishing the manuscripts. On the contrary, they contributed considerably, especially in the financing of the projects, but the enthusiasm, leadership and execution of the actual work came on the whole from Academy-oriented people and would remain with them.

In an address like this it is difficult to give the proper attention to all the people who enthusiastically and through personal sacrifices contributed to the success of the different projects and helped to overcome the many difficult obstacles. In the Academy movement almost everyone of the leading men was vitally interested in the preservation and publication of the unpublished manuscripts. This interest was a logical extension of their firm belief that the theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg are a part of the Word and "the most excellent of all revelations hitherto given." As the Lord had preserved the Jewish nation for the purpose of preserving intact the exact form of the Old Testament so the men of the Academy felt it their duty to preserve intact the exact form of the revelation for the New Church.<sup>9</sup> The movement for the preservation of the manuscripts thus found a natural home where the basic beliefs and philosophy gave strength and renewed purpose to it.

Within the early Academy movement Bishop William H. Benade emerged as the leader and enthusiastic speaker for the group of people who regarded the preservation of the manuscripts as an important part of the Church's activity. The idea of collecting and publishing everything that Swedenborg wrote had not earlier fallen in such a fruitful ground as existed in the minds of this dedicated group of men in the Convention in the 1860's. They studied the Writings diligently and from that study they received a unanimity in at-

<sup>8</sup> C. Th. Odhner in *New Church Messenger*, Sept. 9, 1896, p. 214.

<sup>9</sup> *New Church Life*, April 1890, p. 49.

titude and thinking so they jokingly called themselves the "pre-established harmony" and later more seriously the "Academy." This group of men had many dreams and plans, all beginning and ending with the Writings as the foundation for all personal and social life, the New Jerusalem realized on earth.

Yet they seem up to the middle of the 1860's not to have found a workable plan of action, something that would set the stone rolling. This something came from the "wild and barbarous regions of the Far West" as Bishop Benade put it, and it was in the form of a manuscript written by Dr. Rudolph L. Tafel, at that time professor of Philology at the Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Benade, after reading the manuscript, was enthusiastic and immediately recognized that here was something that could concretize the Academy movement and bring about action, which, if properly handled, could lead to the establishment of those institutions the Academicians dreamed of and we are privileged to see realized around us.

No one can tell about the excitement, the dreams and the plans better than Bishop Benade himself, so I leave the floor to him and quote somewhat extensively from a letter of November 10th, 1865, from Benade to his close friend the Rev. J. P. Stuart.

And now about the Academy. I have something to say. The Academy lives—it is—it exists—life is in act. And now—there is something for us to do . . . an Academician—of the first grade, and chief of the Class—Philolog. has perfected a work, which may be considered as beginning *the* work of the Academy. . . . He has prepared a volume—entitled—"Swedenborg—the Philosopher and Man of Science—vindicated by Philosophers and Men of Science." . . . and beyond all controversy—Rudolph has produced a great work.

And now—what will we do with it—and with him?—Is it not emphatically a work of the Academy? The Academy must labor to distribute it. Is not he an Academician? The Academy must sustain him. How? Thus—Abroad—in Switzerland (Sweden?)—in Stockholm—mayhap in London—lie stored up and away—sundry M.S.—volumes—of E.S. and Dr. Im. Tafel. These must be rescued—& copied—& prepared for the Press—and put through the Press—and forth to the World.—They *must* be. No sane man can say ought else. . . . We, the Academy must gather round him—and take him up in our midst,—must arrange a plan—and form an Association to send him forth on his mission and see that he is sustained in it—by constituting a body for that special purpose with a treasurer to hold and disburse the moneys. And these moneys must be obtained by a call upon the Church to give for this so great and important use.

This is work for the Academy—preparatory and formative work—and will lead most certainly to the College of Priests. An Annual contribution once established—it will not be difficult to turn it into a new channel, when the first use is well accomplished—& to have it increased. Let the Church see and feel the need—and see also the way of satisfying it—and the money will come. Besides, look at it—we shall get *all*—that E. S. has written—and if then we can have this all printed and published in a new—and elegant edition—we shall be able to place before the World—a complete Swedenborg Library—and shall be able to go down into Egypt—all the sons of Israel—with Jacob—to buy bread—to live—and learn to live—and work and learn to work.—So that we may enter the desert—and move on our way to the conquest of Canaan—the establishment of the kingdom—the building of the Temple—and the being a Church in very deed. . . .

Write me as soon as you can—and as fully as you can. I want this thing to go on. It is something to work for—it covers the Universe—and is for all time and Eternity.<sup>10</sup>

Much of what Benade dreamed of has become a fact. Today we have the complete Swedenborg Library. We have placed it before the world but the positive reaction has not been as great and instant as Benade probably envisioned. And we are going down to Egypt to buy corn. But in our Exodus to conquer Canaan are we borrowing the vessels of gold and silver, as we are commanded to do?

In a letter of December 25th 1865, to Stuart, Benade speaks of the two great and important uses, the establishment of a college and the gathering and publishing of the literary remains of Emanuel Swedenborg. He proposes very simple plans for presenting the matter to the Church. I quote:

We say to the Church—here are two great and all-important uses. To perform them, we need money. You have it—therefore—fork over. And this is the way—we will use your money—provided you will make your subscription Annual.

He then speaks of the establishment of a college, and continues:

Again—if you give money enough—for a year—or two—or three—here is a man who will gather all that remains of E.S.—publish it in Latin,—translate it—for your use—revise your old translations, and put your symbolic books—into a shape to be received by Scholars and everybody—and we will help this man, all we can.

And he commits himself to the cause, saying:

<sup>10</sup> Quoted from copy in the Academy of the New Church Archives.

I am ready to take such part in this matter as the Church may assign me and as I am able to do. If the Church wants me to teach—I'll try—if to collect funds—I'll try. Anything at all so the *work goes on*.<sup>11</sup>

In June of 1866 the Rev. Samuel M. Warren presented the matter of publishing the manuscripts and the republishing of the printed works to the Convention. Apparently it was deemed wiser to let a less controversial man than Bishop Benade do it. The resolutions which were adopted by the Convention proposed that the Convention unite with the Swedenborg Society in providing for and supporting the execution of the work, and that Dr. Rudolph Tafel be recommended for the work. A committee was formed consisting of Benade, Warren, and L. S. Burnham. They apparently went to work immediately in contacting the Swedenborg Society but were unexpectedly rebuffed by the Society which declined cooperation on the grounds that they believed, with the exception of the *Index Biblicus*, "none (of the manuscripts) worthy of preservation."<sup>12</sup> To this opinion they had come mainly on the authority of Dr. Bayley, an otherwise excellent New Churchman, who during a journey through Sweden and other countries had spent only two days in examining the Swedenborg manuscripts.

However the letter from the Swedenborg Society was not entirely negative for it suggested: "that measures be taken, if possible, to obtain photographic copies of the manuscripts, with a view to their being deposited in a fire-proof place."<sup>13</sup> This is probably the first time that facsimile reproduction has been mentioned as a means of preserving the Swedenborg manuscripts. And it could not have been suggested much earlier for the technique of photography had only recently been brought to such perfection that reasonably good negatives could be obtained.

In a report to the Convention the next year, the Committee strongly emphasized its disagreement with the evaluation of the manuscripts as expressed in the Swedenborg Society's letter. The Committee suggested that the Convention now proceed independently in the work. This the Convention resolved and the Committee, which now was increased by two new members, was given the power

to secure the early completion of the republication of Swedenborg's Works in Latin, carefully collated and revised, after the plan of Dr. Tafel; and

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

<sup>12</sup> *Convention Journal*, June, 1867, p. 48.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

the thorough examination of all that are accessible of Swedenborg's unpublished manuscripts; and the publication, or duplication, in their discretion, of such as are found worthy of preservation.<sup>14</sup>

However, when the Committee issued an appeal to the Church for financial support the response was discouragingly small. Only \$640 was secured. When the matter was brought before the Convention in 1868 by Benade, the Convention decided to contribute \$1,000.

With this money at their disposal the Committee immediately engaged Dr. Tafel to go to Stockholm for the purpose of examining the manuscripts and investigating the feasibility of having them copied by photographic or other process. After having spent several months at hard work in Stockholm, Tafel left for London, where it now looked as if the Swedenborg Society would support the work. But, possibly after seeing that the estimated cost of photolithographing all the manuscripts would run as high as \$17,000, the Society decided not to support the undertaking, with the explanation that "as the real gist and value of the unpublished manuscripts exist in better form in others that are published, the photographing of them would be not only a matter of great expense, but of questionable utility."<sup>15</sup> However, after having secured an additional \$2,500 from the Rotch Legacy Fund, the American committee decided to engage Dr. Tafel to go ahead with the photolithographing of as many selected codices as the money at hand would permit.

The work that Benade and his co-workers had fought so hard for was finally under way. But the road ahead was still full of obstacles to be overcome. Mostly they were of economic nature. The expenditures were perennially ahead of the contributions. It seems that Tafel was partly responsible for this. He also gave Benade troubles in other respects. In a letter to Stuart, Benade complains:

As to Tafel—he works bravely and well—so long as he *pursues his own line*; but like a gosling when he undertakes to do other people's business. He has given me a world of botherment. However, that's no matter; we are getting something more of Emanuel Swedenborg.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

<sup>15</sup> *Convention Journal*, June 1869, p. 43.

<sup>16</sup> This and the following quotes are excerpted from copies of letters preserved in the Academy of the New Church Archives.

Benade also writes to Warren, who at this time was in England, asking him to exert his influence on Tafel. But in his reply to Benade, Warren is somewhat pessimistic :

I will do what I can towards *managing* the heady colt you have found too difficult to control. But I should not dare to promise much.

In many letters to Tafel, Warren comes back to the economic problems and warns that Benade "is exceedingly anxious that everything should be very economically managed." And he advises Tafel that "In practical affairs 'the wisdom of the serpent' can never be safely disposed with." And in a letter to a member of the English Conference Warren touches upon what he thinks is the root of the trouble with the "heady colt." He writes :

It is not to be denied that Tafel is wanting in worldly prudence . . . as very learned men are wont to be. . . . He is in some matters too impulsive and too outspoken.

At the end of 1869 Benade was very pessimistic about the continuation of the project. He writes to Stuart :

As to funds—I can only hope and beg. . . . A few dollars more and then we shall have to give up—unless our friends come to the rescue.

But a little later he writes triumphantly :

The English *have* come to the rescue. The new Conference Committee have set aside the old fogies of the Swedenborg Society and put their heads on Dr. Bayley's mean and petty jealousy. They are vigorously at work and have already sent considerable monies to Tafel.

But in spite of this great boost of about \$5,000 from England the economic problems continued to linger on till the very end. In 1870 Benade writes to Stuart :

For the money sent I am thankful—especially in view of the fact that our Professor abroad, not being well versed in financial matters, left his tail behind him in Stockholm in shape of certain debts for work done and the Photolithographic Company—being wise in their day, attached this tail to the copy of Swedenborg's Bible which was not quite completed when Tafel departed.

Dr. Tafel may thus not have been a good businessman, but as a scholar and researcher and devoted worker, he is one of the most outstanding we have had in the Church.

Meanwhile the finished volumes were shipped from Stockholm but apparently were on the way for an unusually long time. War

had broken out between France and Germany and stormy weather raged on the Atlantic. Benade and the subscribers were anxiously waiting for news on the shipment. In a letter to Stuart, Benade expresses his worry :

No news yet of the arrival of the manuscripts. What, if they should have gone down in the late storms! I can't believe it. The vessel that carried them bore more than Caesar and his fortunes.

Well, the volumes finally arrived safely and Benade could with satisfaction report this fact to the Convention. The Convention showed its gratefulness by adopting a resolution :

that the thanks of the Convention be rendered to the Rev. W. H. Benade, the chief promoter in America of the measures taken to secure copies of the unpublished manuscripts of Swedenborg, for the indefatigable zeal and fidelity he has exhibited in the discharge of his duties as Chairman of the Committee on the manuscripts of Swedenborg.<sup>17</sup>

Later Benade was presented with a set of the photolithographic volumes.

I have dwelt at some length on Bishop Benade and his work in connection with the reproduction of the manuscripts because it was the first major project directed by the Academy movement. But also because in all its aspects it is rather typical in that it contains all the elements of vision, enthusiasm, persistence, hard work, frustration and despair, and at the end triumph and great joy, so characteristic of the work connected with the preservation of the manuscripts both at that time and in later years.

The Convention Committee now turned its attention to the publication of a new Latin edition of the Writings. In this work the photolithographic copies proved to be of great value; in fact much of the work could not have been done without them.

Nothing further was done to complete the work of reproducing the remaining manuscripts until 1886, when again Bishop Benade called attention to this use. In London, Dr. Wilkinson directed an appeal to the Swedenborg Society to take measures for the reproduction of the manuscript of the *Spiritual Diary*. In America the General Church of Pennsylvania answered this call by forming a committee to solicit contributions. In 1887 Bishop Benade again brought the matter before the Convention, which body decided to take up the work where it was left by Dr. Tafel. But it

<sup>17</sup> Convention *Journal*, July, 1871, p. xlvii.

proved very difficult to get the actual reproduction going. The different church bodies could not cooperate effectively and in spite of the careful planning and the thorough analysis of the manuscripts made by Bishop Benade and the Rev. E. S. Price on a visit to Stockholm, the start of the project was delayed time after time. Discouraged with the state of affairs Bishop Benade resigned from the Committee on the Manuscripts of which he had been the Chairman and only really active worker from the start.

The separation in 1890 of the General Church of Pennsylvania from the Convention and the difficulty of Convention and Swedenborg Society coming together for a common action further delayed the work on reproduction. Meanwhile the Academy of the New Church decided to do something about it. In 1895 the Rev. Carl Th. Odhner was sent over to Stockholm to promote the work. The result was the reproduction by a new method, phototyping, of the small manuscript *Summaries of the Internal Sense of the Prophets and Psalms*. At about the same time the Swedenborg Society decided to leave the matter wholly in the hands of the American Convention Committee. The Rev. Warren was sent to Stockholm and he obtained additional estimates for the reproduction of the manuscripts, notably the *Spiritual Diary*. These estimates were communicated to The Academy of the New Church and Mr. Odhner and Mr. Carl Hjalmar Asplundh did not waste any time. They prepared themselves with all the arguments and went to the Convention meeting held in Washington in 1896. At that time Mr. Asplundh presented the Convention with a phototype copy of the *Prophets and Psalms*, and Mr. Odhner made a plea for cooperation in the further prosecution of the work of reproducing the manuscripts of Swedenborg. They worked out an agreement with the Convention to start the phototyping of the *Spiritual Diary*. Mr. Asplundh was appointed manager of the project and from then on he emerged as the driving force in this work. Energetic as he was and anxious to get things done, he immediately entered into negotiations with the proper authorities in Stockholm and with a copying company. The negotiations proved tedious and slow-going but at the beginning of 1898 the work was finally under way.

It was generally thought that the project would proceed rapidly since the process of phototyping required much less work than the photolithographic method. But as weeks and months passed and

only a few sheets arrived occasionally, Mr. Asplundh grew increasingly impatient. Many are the letters he wrote to the Rev. Joseph Boyesen in Stockholm, who supervised the work there, urging him to do what he could to get the company moving. He also wrote directly to the company threatening to take away the work if not carried out more rapidly. But the company apparently felt fairly safe since there was not any time clause in the contract. Finally on May 3rd, 1901, the first volume of the *Diary* arrived and Asplundh writes happily to Boyesen: "The bound volume of *Spiritual Diary* has arrived and it looks very well. Glad it is here so promptly."<sup>18</sup>

But it was something more that made Mr. Asplundh particularly happy this day for on a corner of the letter he tells Mr. Boyesen that "Our fourth son and eighth child was born today." I looked it up in *New Church Life* and sure enough the boy was named Lester. So from his very first day Lester was tied into the work of the Academy, a tie that has grown stronger as the years passed by.

At about this time Mr. Asplundh initiated another work in connection with the manuscripts, namely the transcription by hand of Swedenborg's scientific manuscripts. It was keenly felt that in order to further develop the science of Swedenborg it was necessary to have available the unpublished manuscripts. The reproduction by phototyping would be desirable but the great cost involved made it out of the question for the time being. A carefully executed transcription would answer the present purpose and be economically feasible. Mr. Asplundh made his suggestion to the young and flourishing Swedenborg Scientific Association, and received the association's approval. He soon had secured the cooperation of the Academy and the Convention while the Swedenborg Society found itself unable to participate. The Rev. Mr. Boyesen was again called upon to arrange the details in Stockholm and the work was under way in a very short time.

While in the middle of these important undertakings Mr. Asplundh suddenly died in February of 1903. His energy and zeal were largely responsible for the fact that a great new era in the history of the preservation of the Swedenborg manuscripts was well under way. His own attitude to this work is well ex-

<sup>18</sup> Copy book, p. 61, preserved in the Archives of the Academy of the New Church.

pressed in a passage of a letter to Mr. Boyesen where he approves of Boyesen's rejection of some faulty pages, and then adds:

Constantly bear in mind the great importance of the work and that not too much pain can be taken to have it as perfect as human skill and care can make it.<sup>19</sup>

Again the Academy of the New Church had a man ready to carry the work forward. In fact he was already at work in Sweden at the time of Mr. Asplundh's death. His name was Alfred H. Stroh. During his years in the Theological School of the Academy he showed a lively interest in Tafel's *Documents* and developed a great skill in reading Swedenborg's handwriting. He was therefore eminently prepared for a work that would occupy the greater part of his life. It had become increasingly evident that the direction and supervision of the work with the phototyping and the transcription of the manuscripts could not be effectively done by mail. Mr. Stroh was therefore engaged to be Mr. Asplundh's personal representative and to supervise all the activity connected with the manuscripts in Stockholm. The day after his graduation from the Theological School, Mr. Stroh sailed for Sweden.

He arrived in Sweden just at the time when the members of the Royal Academy of Sciences had been alerted to the fact that Swedenborg's manuscripts contained treatises on the subject of the brain, the publication of which would be of great value to the learned world. He soon came into close contact with a committee formed by the Academy of Sciences to inquire into the content of the Swedenborg manuscripts with a view to their publication. The committee decided to publish Swedenborg's scientific manuscripts in a series of several volumes and Stroh was appointed editor. Meanwhile he had of course attended to the business of phototyping and transcription which now proceeded at a more rapid pace. Before he left Sweden in August of 1903 the second and third volumes of the *Spiritual Diary* were nearly completed and work on other smaller treatises begun.

After spending a year teaching at the Academy of the New Church during which time he had continued his supervision of the work in Sweden, Mr. Stroh returned to Sweden in the summer of 1904. During this summer he began his diligent search for documents connected with Swedenborg and the New Church,

<sup>19</sup> Copy book, p. 17, in the Archives of the Academy of the New Church.

a search which he continued throughout his life and which took him to several European countries.

After a short interval of studies in America for his Master's degree, which he received in 1906, Mr. Stroh decided to devote the rest of his life to research into the life and writings of Swedenborg. Though he at times spread out into many areas, the phototyping of the manuscripts remained with Stroh as one of the most important tasks confronting the Church. His great talent as an editor and bibliographer produced results that made the Church in general more willing to support the continuation of the phototyping till all the manuscripts were reproduced. Thus the Swedenborg Society decided to sponsor the phototyping of the *Index Biblicus* and at the great Swedenborg Congress in London in 1910 the various church bodies and related organizations at a special meeting, arranged by the Swedenborg Society, decided on a plan for the phototyping of all remaining theological manuscripts. The continuation of the work was now assured and was carried on in spite of the great difficulties encountered during the first World War. The 18 volume set of the phototyped manuscripts will for ages to come be a memorial to Stroh's devoted work.

In 1922, the year Mr. Stroh died, the last volumes of the phototypes were ready to be distributed to the subscribers. While this was in process, Dr. Alfred Acton suggested that it now was

time to give some preliminary thoughts to the continuation of the work of phototyping by the reproduction of all Swedenborg's scientific and philosophical writings.<sup>20</sup>

Dr. Acton had of course been active and greatly interested in the undertakings of phototyping and copying the manuscripts long before this. His participation began in the first years of this century. But now the whole responsibility of the work fell on his shoulders. And I need not tell you that those shoulders were well prepared to carry the burden.

In contrast to the case with earlier enterprises in the reproduction of the manuscripts, the completion under the direction of Dr. Acton went very smoothly and with less cost than estimated. He had contacted the Librarian of the Academy of Sciences for the purpose of having some pages of a codex transcribed. The Librarian could not find a competent copyist and besides, copying by hand would be rather expensive. At the same time he men-

<sup>20</sup> NEW PHILOSOPHY, 1922, p. 137.

tioned that the manuscripts now could be reproduced facsimile with a new method called photostating for the same amount of money that copying by hand would take. This so delighted Dr. Acton that he immediately ordered some work to be done at his own expense, for which he later was reimbursed, however.

With this new method available Dr. Acton proceeded to make a thorough investigation of what was still to be reproduced of Swedenborg's manuscripts and proposed that the Swedenborg Scientific Association take it upon itself to finish up the work. The cost was estimated to \$2,000.<sup>21</sup> After the Association had received an offer from the Academy of the New Church to make several copies from the negatives received from Sweden and also some economic support, the work was begun and progressed so rapidly that it was completed in less than three years. Later some of the manuscripts that Tafel had photolithographed, and in doing so edited and rearranged, were reproduced exactly as Swedenborg had written them.

During these years Dr. Acton himself went to Sweden to examine the manuscripts and also had invaluable assistance from Mrs. Thorsten Sigstedt, who during her visits to Sweden conducted research in connection with Swedenborg's manuscripts and Swedenborgiana in general.

In 1930 Dr. Acton laconically stated that

the report concerning the work of photostating will take but a few words, in short, the whole program which was undertaken by the Scientific Association in May 1924, is now completed.<sup>22</sup>

In looking back at the movement in the Academy of the New Church for the preservation and reproduction of the manuscripts, one can trace a remarkable continuity and persistence in keeping the idea alive and carrying the actual work forward. Much of this was due to the great interest and support of Mr. John Pitcairn, stretching over half a century from the pioneering times of Benade<sup>23</sup> and culminating in a personal participation during the Stroh period.<sup>24</sup> Being one of the founders of the Academy, Mr. Pitcairn was one of those who carried with them the vision of the early Academicians. He was eminently able to transform this vision into practical action which at critical junctures decisively

<sup>21</sup> NEW PHILOSOPHY, 1924, pp. 270-5.

<sup>22</sup> NEW PHILOSOPHY, 1930, p. 241.

<sup>23</sup> *New Church Life*, 1910, p. 201, 1917, p. 90.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 1910, p. 689, 1917, pp. 496, 499.

brought the work of the reproduction of the manuscripts forward toward its successful completion a generation later.

It remains only to be added that although the 58 large volumes that constitute the physical results of the work of reproducing the Swedenborg manuscripts are in themselves a sufficient testimony to the dedication and persistence of all men and women involved in that use, nevertheless, the real memorial and lasting influence of their love and work will be realized only when we in our scholarship and publishing return to the originals they have made available to us.

### EDITORIAL NOTES

This issue is dedicated to books and consists of three parts. The first part is a republication of the *Catalogus* of books from Swedenborg's personal library which were auctioned following his death. This was the original list reprinted in facsimile in 1907 but has long since been out of print. Included also is a comment by A. H. Stroh on his discovery of this list. This is extracted from a report originally printed in *New Church Life*.

Second is an article by Mr. Lennart O. Alfelt growing out of his work as Curator of the library devoted to Swedenborgiana at the Academy of the New Church.

The third part consists of two extracts concerning Swedenborg taken from a recent issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association*. Both Professor Otho Heilman and Dr. P. R. Cronlund called the editor's attention to these.

Copies of two letters are added. Senior readers of our journal will perhaps be interested in the letter from Herbert Hoover to Dr. Alfred Acton. Hoover was Secretary of Commerce at the time he wrote the letter. In an article entitled "Room 17" I recalled a conversation I had with Dr. Acton who was then editor of the NEW PHILOSOPHY.

In 1912 Herbert Hoover and his wife had translated Agricola's *De Re Metallica* from the Latin.

Dr. Acton told me that when the Academy obtained a copy of Hoover's translated Agricola in 1926, he had written Mr. Hoover trying to interest him in translating Swedenborg's work on Copper. Mr. Hoover answered, stating that he doubted if he would have time. Dr. Acton added whimsically, "I note he had time to become President of the United States among other things afterwards." (*The Academy Journal*—Literary Number 1961-62, p. 21.)