

Translator's Corner

J. Durban Odhner, Editor

A little over a year ago, Bishop King received a letter from Mr. Christen A. Blom-Dahl, an honorary Consul attached to the Norwegian Consulate in Valencia, Spain. It was finally referred to us for a full reply; and as some excerpts of the correspondence will no doubt be of interest to readers of "Translator's Corner," we include them in the present issue.

Following this correspondence, a question of translation is discussed by the Rev. Dr. Horand K. Gutfeldt, regarding the text of Rev. 3:19.

From Spain

In his letter of Nov. 29, 1982, Mr. Blom-Dahl wrote:

I have read with the greatest interest the annual report of your Translation Committee in the July issue of your *New Church Life* journal.

I myself have been reading, investigating and translating (into Spanish) Swedenborg's theological and scientific works, having arrived at some results which I hope to publish in the nearest future, although much work remains to be done.

In my collection of Swedenborg's works is included the Latin edition of *Diarium Spirituale* published by J. F. Immanuel Tafel in London and Tubingen, 1843-6.

Comparing the English version of some notes (the version published by the Swedenborg Society, London) with Tafel's Latin edition, I have found some differences. In addition to this, I now understand that if your Translation Committee has undertaken a new Latin edition with the new (and I think more appropriate) title *Experientiae Spirituales*, this means that Tafel's edition is not quite as perfect as one could wish.

If this is so, this fact is of the greatest interest to me, as my project includes critical notes on the papers investigated. For this reason, it would be a great help if you could give me some account of the problems, not only in relation to *Experientiae Spirituales*, but also as to the English versions of *Arcana Coelestia*, etc., in general.

May I also inform you that I am the grandson of the late Norwegian Consul J. H. (Jörgen Hartvig) Andersen, a prominent Swedenborgian because of the great task he undertook to spread in Spain and in Spanish-speaking countries Swedenborg's Teachings.

From our reply dated Feb. 12, 1983, we quote the following:

Your letter of Nov. 29, 1982, responded to by Bishop Louis B. King and referred to the Chairman of the General Church Translation Committee, has been passed on to me as editor of the forthcoming second Latin edition of Swedenborg's diary, *Experientiae Spirituales*. I am very happy to learn of your efforts to make the Writings of the New Church available to the Spanish people. I and my wife have made a number of lengthy visits to Costa del Sol (La Rabita) and Costa Brava, as well as to Madrid and Aranjuez....

It is gratifying to receive your approval of the new title we have adopted for his work. A detailed rationale for this choice is presented in the (English) preface in the first volume of *Experientiae Spirituales*, now at press. Within a matter of months, this volume will be available, *Deo volente*, and because its text is furnished with a quite thorough critical apparatus, I believe you will find there a resolution of many of the textual problems, including contradictory interpretations appearing in the first Latin edition and the first English translation. The English version (Swedenborg Society 1962?) you refer to (only the first volume) was translated by A. W. Acton in the light of many corrections observed by his father, Dr. Alfred Acton. This would explain divergencies of his translation from the Tafel text.

Your questions, frankly, are too general to answer in any specific way. There are problems relating to reading and interpretation of the manuscript; there are problems resulting from variant interpretation of the Latin text, some arising from Swedenborg's sometimes unusual Latinity; there are problems in relation to translation itself revolving around questions of philosophy of translation, style, etc. At the present time, English translators are becoming more aware of the need for a more simple, idiomatic presentation (modern? popular?). I would be delighted to respond to you on any specific problems you encounter.

Mr. Blom-Dahl replied on July 20, 1983, and we quote most of his letter below:

I am most indebted for your kind letter of the 12th February 1983, and have to apologize for the extreme delay in my reply. I used to be quick in despatching correspondence, but have been overburdened with work lately. Perhaps it would be appropriate to explain why this is so, as it will enable you to have a better picture of how my work with and for Swedenborg has been developing.

Some eight years ago I had an extraordinary experience of enlightenment (with a feeling of extreme joy, light and beauty) while reading *Arcana Coelestia* 5391 (this happened again a couple of times, while I was reading some other parts of the same work). I suddenly realized that there was a most precise correspondence with true physical (biological) facts. From that moment onwards, I undertook a systematic investigation of the *Maximus Homo* descriptions. To give you some idea of the results, I am enclosing one copy of a "Preliminary Report" on this subject (2nd issue—Valencia, May/June 1980). Nevertheless, please note that presently I look upon this paper as being most imperfect. Time has shown me that I have to be much more cautious and thorough. I dropped the project of a manuscript for a book that was ready, so that a postponement could enable me to progress to a level proportionate to the task I have been facing.

Indeed, I feel that quite a number of matters and my own attitude towards them have undergone a positive change since I decided to be very patient and careful. And still much effort remains to be made. There are, also, important physical barriers imposing a slower pace than would be desirable.

I am just an honorary Norwegian consul at Valencia, with no income from this activity. My earnings are provided by my work as a translator (Norwegian-Spanish). But this is a very time-consuming task, particularly taking into account that I have a fairly big family to support, although with the very positive contribution of my wife. We have five children, and this means that we both have quite a job to do, although we do it very lovingly. But I will with all my heart and strength continue my work with Swedenborg until a book can be published. What would be the intention with that book?

Swedenborg predicted (was led to predict) that with the second coming of the Lord, mankind would realize that no love nor any knowledge—true knowledge—comes from ourselves. And although what I am going to state now might not be the most important thing which is to happen, it might contribute to some change in the minds of present day people: I feel I am able to prove very solidly that to Swedenborg were revealed things far ahead of his time, such as scientists deal with and are able and willing to understand; and that if they are to accept this—and I foresee that they will have to—the gap between their general mental attitude and the acceptance of the existence of a higher True Source of Knowledge will be diminished.

And now, returning to your kind letter with very useful information, I think that the preface of the first volume of *Experientiae Spirituales* might very well suffice to clarify some of the questions I had formulated (and which, indeed, were too general and unspecific to be answered otherwise, as you remark in your letter). Therefore, please let me know in due time price and postage.

You ask for permission to publish some comments on my activities in the "Translator's Corner" that might be of interest to other translators, and you are indeed most welcome to use *any* information I have given you, as you might find appropriate. But please note in respect to the translations—the ones I have made of Swedenborg's works into Spanish—that I have not yet *published* any. I made them in preparation for my book (which, by the way, I foresee divided into three volumes). I have sometimes thought I could publish some of the translations independently, but upon further thought I have arrived at the conclusion that they might be more appreciated *after* the publication of my first book.

As for *The New Philosophy*, I only knew about this periodical from references and notices. Indeed, I am interested in being a subscriber. Could you please make arrangements for an order-form to be sent to me?

Finally, should you and your wife be travelling to Spain again, please do not fail to give me some notice about this, as it would be very nice if we could meet.

We look forward to receiving our correspondent's first translation of the Writings into Spanish, *before or after* his book is published. The