

Translator's Corner

J. Durban Odhner, Editor

Our first contribution in this issue discusses the phenomenon called *prolepsis* in Swedenborg's first-draft manuscripts, with examples, and ventures in general terms to explain this orthographic lapse as well as other "errors."

Then we have received an additional reaction to Rev. Dr. Horand K. Gutfedlt's article in the Oct.-Dec. '83 issue of *The New Philosophy* under this rubric, entitled "Revelation 3:19—In Need of Revision?" The first response to that article, by Mr. Richard L. Goerwitz III, was published in "Translator's Corner" in the Jan.-Mar. '84 issue, p. 270. This one comes from Mr. Brian M. Talbot in Beecroft, N.S.W., Australia, and we are happy to insert it now and thus close the discussion.

ON ORTHOGRAPHIC PROLEPSIS (AND OTHER "ERRORS") IN SWEDENBORG'S MANUSCRIPTS

J. Durban Odhner

In editing Swedenborg's first-draft manuscripts for the text of *Experientiae Spirituales* (*Spiritual Experiences*)—the second Latin edition of the work originally edited and published by Dr. J.F.I. Tafel under the title *Diarium Spirituale* (*Spiritual Diary*)—we have noted the frequent occurrence of a phenomenon that might be classified under the linguistic term *prolepsis*; which is defined as follows:

"Anticipative use of a word in the sentence construction"
(*Dictionary of Linguistics* by Pei and Gaynor, Philosophical Library, NY: 1954).

This phenomenon usually occurs in a process of writing in which the thought is proceeding "faster than the hand," and thus signals an impelling inspiration—something that would seem to be applicable in the case of Swedenborg. In most of the instances to be discussed here, the anticipation of a word to come affects the shape of a preceding word in some manner; although it sometimes works in reverse.

EXAMPLES

a) **preceding word shaped by following word** (recessive)

et quia propemunt saliant (propemodo) 559

post vitam corporis, seu portem (post)

mortem corporis

2017 ½

possunt videre quod infelicere, (infelices)		
[et] dicere		4537
putant quam nusquam detrudi (quod)		
[possint]		4580
se habuerit secundi animi (secundum)		
affectionem		4820
illorum artes in altera vitae (vita)		
sunt plurimae		5642
agri eorum, qui planei nivei erant (plane)		4832
[quod] tales dentur...et quod		
interii religiosi	(interius)	4949
quod eL.functores et honores	(functiones)	4418
dederit		4418
in clare luce	(clara)	2314
influunt e coelo, [a] Dominos per (Domino)		
angelos		5136
de doctrinam, quam didicerunt	(doctrina)	5228
terram sub ille se aperuisse vidi, (illis)		
et [illos] deglutitos		5260 ½
fama eruditionibus in spiritualibus (eruditionis)		
et coelestibus		5574
dicebatur quam quamdiu tales sunt	(quod)	5634
cum tamen exindere constare possit	(exinde)	3471
ut ibi remanerent ad docerentur	(ac)	5411 ½
malitioso ~ reliquis	(malitiosior)	4265
To which we may add a case encountered by the Rev. N. Bruce Rogers in his labors on the <i>De Verbo</i> ms.:		
voluntas...illud quod ex memoria [est] in		
intellectat, spectat ut extraneum	(intellectu)	13
b) following word shaped by preceding word (progressive)		
cum sonitu satis altu	(alto)	4317
quod omne quod cogitant influant (influat)		
(twice)		4434
providetur a Domino ne bonis malis (mala)		
inferant		4471

totam noctam (noctem) 5543

Ut scirem prorsus quomodo somnia
influant in eos qui dormiunt,

dormivi [primum] quae non mem ini, (somniavi) 3380
tandem quod navis veniret

c) **combined forward and backward shaping** (reciprocal)

a Providentia Domina, continua (Domini) 4290

In this connection it is interesting that such *lapsus* are related to stammering, which is in many instances the result of a thought-process getting ahead of the speech mechanism; and also, that Swedenborg (like Moses) was reported to have "stammered" (*Documents*, vol. II, p. 399; Exod. 4:10).

But a deeper cause related to this "defect" in the human instrument of revelation is the profundity and even ineffability of the things which are being inspired into the mind and thus laid down into natural ideas that are *essentially inadequate* for their expression.

Another thing that these examples illustrate and emphasize—like all other "errors" that occur in the Writings of Swedenborg, such as misspellings, maternal-language interferences, grammatical deviations, scientific errors, and the like—is that law regarding Divine revelation, that it descends and clothes itself in the vernacular, the knowledges and the form of the natural mind of the revelator as instrument. The Lord acts in accordance with His own laws, one of which is that mankind shall not be compelled to believe the Word. The Divine Truth shines through the gross letter for those who are in the affection of truth for the sake of life; and that this is true also of the Writings, would appear from *Spiritual Experiences* 2185, where we read (emphasis ours):

[Spirits] said—because they are now speaking with me—that those things which I have written are so crude and gross, that they judge that nothing interior can be understood from those words or the mere sense of the words. I also perceived by a spiritual idea that it was so, that they were *most crude*; wherefore it was given me to reply that they are *only vessels into which purer, better and deeper things can be infused*, just as a literal sense; and that such vessels, as it were, are the many senses of the letter in the prophets, and that they are not only crude, but even of filth and dung, and of mire, and indeed into these can be infused clean and holy interior things—such as that the Lord becomes angry, rages, kills, which are so disordered that it can

scarcely be believed that anything interior could be infused: when yet they spoke *to the grasp of the common people*, and if they had done otherwise, nothing of good could have been infused because it would not have been understood. So it was given me to add, that if they wished to remain in the senses of the letter, then they could *form their knowledge from similar filthy vessels*; and that those who so form *doctrine* can be greatly mistaken.

What "the grasp of the common people" means in reference to these Writings is further elucidated in number 3240:

Those spirits [from Mercury] around me, together with spirits of our earth, when they came to me into a grosser sphere, were all surprised that the things I was writing were so gross, because there was as it were no idea in them; but it was given to reply that the people of this earth are such that they do not understand even the tenth part, and a much smaller part, of the sense of those things which have been written; so that *they can hardly be written so grossly that people such as they might perceive anything*—adding that they do not even know there is an internal sense, but believe it is the body that sensates; therefore they do not believe, either, in a life after death, nor that the spirit exists. They asked then whether such can become angels, and it was said that the ones who had spoken with them could have been like this in the life of the body and that yet now they are intelligent—while in the life of the body they had known nothing whatever about the things they have said: at which [those spirits] marveled.

The Word is not a revelation of natural truth—neither of history, nor of natural science (knowledge)—but of Divine Truth clothed in a natural form adapted to man in his state, by "borrowing" the natural mind of the revelator. Such as that mind is in its historical *niveau* or environment, such will be the literal form in which Divine Truth clothes itself. The Lord used the totality of Swedenborg's natural qualities as ultimate vessels for the New Word, as He used Moses' and the prophets' and the evangelists' for earlier forms of revelation.■