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## **SOME THOUGHTS ON THE TRANSLATING OF THE WRITINGS**

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I am very happy to have been invited to attend this conference. This is the first time I have returned to my native country since I went with my Swedish parents to Sweden. It happened one year after the first world war. We didn't speak English at home—and failing practice throughout the years, I don't really speak English fluently—so excuse my broken English.

Translating can often be as striking as fiction, nay, still more so. A translator must always be ready to meet with many problems, regarding a right comprehension of the contents as well as to find apt wordings. This is a recurrent challenge.

I am going to mention here some of the problems I have met with as a translator of *Arcana Coelestia*. However, let me first say something about the Swedish translations during past years. The first translation dates back as early as the last decade of the 18th century and was in the first half of the next century followed by several more. I pass them over here, because they are long ago out of print. The oldest translations of the Writings into Swedish available to readers today—the first parts of *Arcana Coelestia*—date back to the 1860s and were done by Dr. J. A. Sevén. He was a very competent translator, a prison governor by profession in Kristianstad, a city in the southern part of Sweden. The translation of *Arcana Coelestia* was taken up by C. J. N. Manby, for several years the minister of the Swedish New Church Society in Stockholm. The translation of this work was finished in 1911. By that time Manby had also managed to finish the translations of *Apocalypse Revealed*, *Conjugal Love*, the *Four Doctrines* and the *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*. So he was a very prolific translator and—without any doubt a very good Latinist. His translations are stamped by great accuracy and faithfulness to the original text. He was born in a century—in Sweden often called "the

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century of Scandinavianism"—being a romantic period, especially in literature; and Manby was, so far, a child of his age. The idea of forming a specific Swedish New Church language crossed his mind, an idea, however, doomed to failure. His endeavour to express the content of the Writings as closely as possible to the original text often resulted in a sort of Latin-Swedish, very hard to get hold of by common readers. I have dwelt on these facts, because Manby's translation principles were to exercise a not unimportant influence on the succeeding Swedish translators of the Writings.

I must here not forget to mention the translation of *True Christian Religion*. This was done by A. Th. Boyesen, the grandfather of Björn Boyesen. He was for some years the minister of the New Church Society in Stockholm. This version, which was published exactly one hundred years ago is—in my opinion—one of the best translations of the Writings into Swedish, and in spite of its age still very readable. He was very skilled in languages. I am told he read the day's lessons in Swedish straight off from the original languages, Hebrew, Greek and Latin as well.

The most important translations in the first part of this century are the following: *Divine Love and Wisdom*, translated by F. Lind, a lawyer by profession. This translation is good, but is now out of print. *Divine Love* and the *Divine Providence*, translated by T. Holm, a postmaster by profession and the author of the history of the Swedish Post Office, are pretty good translations. The latter is out of print and six years ago was replaced by a new one done by Björn Boyesen. Again there is the *Grand Man*, an excerpt from *Arcana Coelestia*, translated by Erik Sandström, Senior, among other things at one time the minister of the Jönköping Group and of the New Church Society in Stockholm. Further, there is *Heaven and Hell*, translated by Gustaf Bäckström, for many years the minister of the New Church Society in Stockholm. This version, too, is replaced by a new one done by Björn Boyesen. Finally, there are no translations into Swedish of *Apocalypse Explained* and the "Spiritual Diary"—*Spiritual Experiences*.

On the whole it must be said that there is a great need for new Swedish translations of the Writings, especially of *Arcana Coelestia* and *Conjugal Love*.

This account is but a summary and by no means complete. Olle Hjerm, as an expert in this field, will give you a detailed account, if required.

More than 30 years were to pass before new translations of the

Writings into Swedish—translations of *Divine Providence* and *Heaven and Hell*, done by Björn Boyesen—were published. It was in 1982 and 1986. This work was going on for nearly seven years. During this time Björn was the minister of the New Church Group in Jönköping and for some years in practice also the minister of the New Church societies in Stockholm and Copenhagen, besides which he many times a year visited New Church members in Scandinavia. So it is not too much to say that this work by him was an achievement.

I had the privilege to support Björn by, so to speak, scrutinizing his translations to the best of my ability, and we had many, many discussions during these years. So I learned very much, and all this was a necessary preparation for me, without which I wouldn't have dared to grapple with the translation of *Arcana Coelestia*. This work has now gone on for a couple of years. I hope at the beginning of next year to have reached up to the 23rd chapter of Genesis, that is to say, two parts of the Latin edition or three volumes of the English ones. Even though I have again and again revised my translation, I very well know that it is still only a rough draft, which still needs more revisions with the help of my good friends and consultants, Björn Boyesen, Olle Hjern and Erik Sandström Senior.

Translating *Arcana Coelestia* has—to my surprise—in spite of all, not been so overwhelmingly difficult as I at first feared. The most difficult part has been to translate the frequent quotations and certain concept-words. The first-mentioned problem has, however, been possible to solve by the inestimable help of Elliotts version. Regarding the concept-words—by the way, pretty often treated of in the abundant New Church literature—the challenge has not so much to do with the connotation of these terms as to find adequate and apt expressions. Among these terms belong, for instance: *scientifica* (*scientificum*), *sensualia* (*sensuale*), *rationalia* (*rationale*), *intellectualia* (*intellectuale*) and *proprium*. To limit myself, I am here going only to say something about the first-mentioned and last-mentioned terms.

As employed in the Writings the term *scientifica* refers to a full set of all knowledge, whatever its source—to know facts stored up in the memory (as noted in *Arcana Coelestia* 121), in other words, memory knowledges, quite outside of man. In the old Swedish version the word *vetskapligt*—something scientific, impossible to translate into English—has been employed. This word is quite abstruse. Using only the word "facts" is here often insufficient in Swedish. We need a qualifier. So I have used the expression: *kunskapsfakta*, literally translated, "facts of knowledge." Depending on the

context I have sometimes alternatively used the expression "memory knowledge" or "knowledge stored up in the memory."

For the term *proprium* I have used the word *ego*. In the Writings it is stated that there are two kinds of *proprium*, *egos* (as noted in 128). There is a human *ego*, and there is an *ego* given to us by the Lord. The former is evil and hellish, has no life, is nothing—nothing but a negativism. It is represented by Pharaoh, king of Egypt, self-love and love of the world personified. The latter *ego* seems to stand for a vessel for influx of goods and truths from the Lord. People who have been given such an *ego* have a real identity, may feel as if they lived from themselves. This *ego* is, however, obviously an appearance, but the most important appearance of all. The Lord alone has a real *Ego*, nay, He is the *Ego*, that is the *I AM*, Jehovah.

Let me in conclusion touch on a matter which always seems of great importance to me in all translation work. I believe an honest and conscientious work of any kind has its roots in a man's knowledge, experience, aptitude, insight and feeling for the job. To translate the Writings is no doubt a work involving a tremendous responsibility, because the Writings are the Lord's Word. To violate their genuine meaning, would be, I believe, to do violence to the Lord's name. The legitimate demands on a translator of the Writings—more than on any other translator—is surely on the one hand for accuracy and faithfulness to the original and on the other hand for a readily understandable and tasteful language. It may sometimes lead the translator to a feeling that he sits on two different chairs. But I shall not discuss this problem further, since I have understood that it will be taken up later in another context. Let me only say—as an amateur with a limited vision—that it appears to me as if the difficulties often are exaggerated and polarized in the debate around this question, and that sometimes the question is even incorrectly stated. The two needs for accuracy and readability are perhaps not so irreconcilable as they at times seem to be. ■