

TpH?

THE MEANING OF "a" and "ex".

The Church in Holland has been brought to a crisis over the translation of "a" and "ex" into the Dutch language. At first sight it may appear strange that the translation of these two little words could lead to such a serious crisis; it is therefore important to consider the matter as fully as we can.

The question of the proper mode of translation has always been a matter of argument in the Church from its beginning. There were always those who translated the Writings, as they were called, as exactly as possible and those who attempted to translate them freely into as literary a form as possible.

The first translation into English was a translation of the second volume of the Arcana Coelestia, made by a translator whom Swedenborg chose and commissioned to do the translation. It is evident from this translation that the translator had been strictly ordered to translate the Latin very exactly, for the English contains a carrying over of the Latin idiom, that is a departure from ordinary English, and this at times to an extent not found in later translations. For example in this translation we find "intellectuals", "rationals", in place of the common translation "intellectual things", and "rational things".

In the early translations of the Latin Word into English, French and German, particularly into French there was an effort to translate the exact meaning even when this necessitated a departure from the usual idiom of the language.

But, as the Church began to decline, and the center of effort was placed on attempting to bring as many into the Church as possible at the expense of internal development, new translations were made to appeal as far as possible to the newcomer at the expense of accuracy.

With the forming of the Academy and the acknowledgement of the Writings as the Word of the Lord, the importance of a faithful and accurate translation again came to the fore. And the Academy took a strong stand for exact and faithful translations even when this required departure from the common English idiom.

When Mr. Hyatt came to see that the Writings of Swedenborg were also the Word even as to its letter, he realized for the first time fully the great importance of an exact translation, in a light that was new in the Church. And the same applied to the Church in Holland.

In the early nineteen thirties we read in "De Hemelsche Leer" much thought was given to the question of an exact translation. As a result of much study and reflexion the conclusion was arrived at by Mr. Zelling, Mr. Groeneveld, and Mr. Pfeiffer that "a" should be

translated by the Dutch "uit", and "ex" by "vanuit". Mr. Pfeiffer spoke enthusiastically of this new translation, and that it was undoubtedly correct and of great importance. Later Mr. Pfeiffer wrote a paper in which he reversed himself, and took the stand that "a" should be translated "van", and "ex" "uit". After a meeting in which this paper was considered some years ago he withdrew the paper and confessed that his paper was based on thinking from an external and not an internal ground.

This year Mr. Pfeiffer has again written a paper, opposed to the translation of "a" and "ex" adopted in the early nineteen thirties; he has refused to continue his work in reviewing the translations being made, and has attempted to block the publication of Heaven and Hell which was ready for the press.

We have said that as over against the Convention the Academy and the General Church stood for more exact translations. But in the General Church there was also a difference of attitude. Bishop W.F. Pendleton stood for a strictly accurate translation while Bishop N.D. Pendleton preferred a more literary and free translation, for example Bishop N.D. Pendleton said he would translate "the man is in good", "the man is good".

Bishop Acton said that when he talked with Mr. Hyatt about the nature of the Writings he always found himself in agreement, but when they came to the subject of translation they found themselves in disagreement. Bishop Acton did not realize that the internal disagreement in their attitude towards "The Writings", which was not so obvious when they spoke abstractly came out in the practical matter of translation.

Everyone speaks of the Holiness of the Word and everyone in the Church accepts the Holiness of the Word theoretically. But there is no greater sign as to whether one actually accepts the Holiness of the Word than in the matter of translation or in ones attitude ~~concerning translation~~ towards translation.

This matter is of the greatest importance possible, for if one does not accept the Holiness of the Word actually, one in the Church is closed off from all influx and relation to the Lord in His Divine Human.

If one reads most translations of the Latin Word one immediately sees more or less of an attitude of humility before the Word, thus a more or less feeling of the Holiness of the Sacred Text which one has the grave responsibility of translating. Most translations, to a greater or less degree, testify to the vanity of the translator, who, lacking a feeling of holy fear, tries to improve on the Divine Text of the Word of God.

Those who argue for a free translation always speak of the importance of accomodating the Word to the simple, the newcomer, and to children or the young, or to people who have a feeling for languages. Thus they place what they call charity above the love to the Lord and the Holiness of His Word. This calls to mind the following statement from the Gospels: "Then took Mary a pound of

ointment of spikenard, very costly, and annointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then said one of His disciples, Judas Ischariot, Simon's son which should betray Him, 'why was not this ointment sold for threehundred pence, and given to the poor?'. This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare that which was put therein. Then said Jesus 'Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor ye have always with you: but me ye have not always.' John 12: 3-7.

If one believes that the Writings of Swedenborg are fully the Word of God one believes also the teaching of the Word that every word in the Word opens up to Infinity. Thus the little words "a" and "ex" open up to infinity.

For the most part the words "a" and "ex" in the English translations of the Latin Word are both translated "from" without any distinction. When "a" and "ex" are both found in a sentence a distinction is sometimes made; as for example it is said: "The New Jerusalem descending from God out of Heaven." But such distinction is rare, ordinarily one cannot know from the translation whether the Latin is "a" or "ex", for both are translated "from". We are taught in the Word that when two words, having a similar meaning, are used the one belongs to the celestial class of words and the other to the spiritual. We can therefore see that with "a" and "ex" one belongs to the celestial class, the other to the spiritual, but which is which?

We read: "In the celestial Heaven...each letter possesses a complete meaning; that vowels there indicate a sound that corresponds to the affection, and that in that Heaven they cannot utter the vowels "i" and "e", but instead of them "y" and "en", but that they do use the vowels a, o and u, because they are full of sound. Further they do not pronounce any consonant hard, but soft." S.S. 90.

"In the Word, in Hebrew, it can in some measure be seen from the words used whether they belong to the celestial class or the spiritual class, that is whether they involve the good or the true. Those involving good partake largely of the sounds of u and o, and also somewhat of a, while those involving the true partake of the sounds of e and i. Because it is especially in tones that the affections express themselves, so in human speech, when great subjects are discussed such as Caelum (Heaven) and Deus (God) those words are preferred that contain the vowels u and o." H.H. 241.

The signification of letters as used in the Word is a tremendous one, which we can only touch here. You are all familiar with the signification of the letter H as taken from Jehovah and added to Abraham's and Sarai's names to signify the Divine. Next to the consonant H the consonant J (pronounced in Hebrew, Greek and Latin like the English Y) is the most holy letter, observe its use in the words Jehovah, Job, Jesus, Jerusalem, Judah, Joseph, John or Johannes. The Lord Himself spoke of this little letter Yoth, when He said "a jot (Yoth) or a tittle, (the little horn on the Hebrew letters) shall not pass from the law".

Letters have their signification not only from their sound but as to whether they are produced by the lips, palate or teeth. The letters H and J particularly signify the Divine.

The consonants which particularly belong to the celestial class are b, p, others, also belonging to the celestial class are c, pronounced like the English k, and m and r.

Those specially characteristic of the spiritual class are s, x, v, t. We are told that the first and last of a series are of particular significance, thus the first and last letter of a word indicate its class.

We are told that the letters indicate the class in the Hebrew Word, but when we regard the Latin we are astonished at how this applies also to the Latin Word. In the light of this view the series below:

Celestial class

Coelestia (celestial)
Bona (good)
Charitas (charity)
Amor (love)
Cognitiones (cognitions)
Panis (bread)

Spiritual class

spiritualis (spiritual)
vera (true)
fides (faith)
sapientia (wisdom)
scientifica (scientific)
vinum (wine)

The list could be extended indefinitely; observe also the following names:

Celestial

Job, Jehovah
Jesus
Abraham
Judah

Spiritual

El, Elohim
Christos
Isaac (Ytschak)
Israel

From the above it can be seen that "a" or "ab" belongs to the celestial class and "e" or "ex" to the spiritual class, that is "a" bears special reference to the good and "ex" to the true. It can therefore be understood why "a" and "ex" so frequently in the Latin Word appear to be used interchangeably in the same sentence. Frequently we have the same sentence used, sometimes with "a", and sometimes with "ex". This can be compared to the chapters or parts of chapters in which there is an apparent repetition, but in one case with the word Jehovah, and the other with the word God. Often by observing whether "a" or "ex" is used one can tell as to whether the subject has primary reference to the good or the true.

But this relation of the good and the true is an ever varying relation. To illustrate we may say that red and ~~green~~ are cool colors,

yellow

white

and blue and green are cool colors, but if we have a room decorated in red and yellow the red is the warm color and the yellow relatively cool, while if we have a room decorated in green and blue, we can say the green is warm and the blue is cool. The Word is full of such relative relations, always moving with endless variety.

The word a immediately reminds us of the Alpha in the Alpha and Omega. In fact when the words "I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last" are read, in the light of the Third Testament there could be added the words: I am the a and the ex.

Note that the word a and ab are the beginning of the word Abraham, and the word ab in the Hebrew means Father, while from a merely linguistic point of view the philologist would accept no ethomological relation between the Hebrew word "ab", father and the Latin word "ab"; seen spiritually they are closely related. Observe also in the Greek form that "apo" or "ap" when reversed are the first letters of the Greek and Latin pater (father).

What then is the difference between a and ex? As to the interior meaning a or ab is the immediate influx from the Lord, while e or ex is the mediate influx.

It is therefore clear why it is said that "Nova Hierosolyma descends a God ex Heaven", why "the Doctrine is ex the Word a God", or why the understanding of the Word is ex, the word a the Lord", or why "the Holy Spirit proceeds ex the Son a the Father".

The word a can also have an unfavorable signification, for to look for an influx a God which is not at the same time ex God is to approach the Father immediately, a thing forbidden.

As the word a belongs to the celestial class it has to do with esse, with substance and with love, while ex has to do with existere, with form, or with wisdom, thus also with creation and created forms.

The Divine substance of Nova Hierosolyma is out or from the Lord, this substance takes on an existere or form in the New Heaven, and the Nova Hierosolyma on earth is out of the Divine form of Nova Hierosolyma in the New Heaven whose substance is out of or from the Lord.

As I have said, in the Hemelsche Leer in the English translation a is translated from and ex is translated out of. The preposition from in English has two meanings; if I say "I have come from the tree to the house" this implies only a spacial relationship, I, in this case, has nothing to do with the tree or the house ^{that} I was near the one and now I am near the other, but if I say "I speak from the heart" then my words are out of my heart, and contain the substance of my heart. "From" in this sense is not primarily a spacial relationship.

According to common usage it is never possible to translate with absolute exactitude, because the usage in different languages varies. Thus in translating from Dutch into English sometimes "uit" would be translated from, and sometimes out, while "van" would be translated sometimes of and sometimes from, and "vanuit" would be translated out of, or could be translated fromout.

In translating the Word new problems arise, for the Latin of the Word often differs in its meaning from the classical and medieval Latin. For example, the difference between the words *Coelestia* and *Spiritualis*, the spiritual and the celestial as used in the Word can not be found in any Latin or English dictionaries, nor the meaning of continuous and discrete degrees.

The meaning of such words and many others can only be found in the Word Itself, and the same applies to the words a and ex. In the Divine Providence suitable words were provided in the languages in which the Word was to be written. But the words often had to be used with new meanings.

In Dutch there is no distinction between of and from, van is used for both. In old Dutch no distinction is made between in and out, and into and out of both being expressed by in and uit. In recent years the word vanuit (literal ofout, or fromout) came into use and in nineteen fifty was officially recognized as a good Dutch word by the dictionaries. It was this word that has been used in the Dutch translations since nineteen thirty one to translate ex in many cases.

The reason for not translating a by the Dutch van, as is done frequently in the Dutch Bible, is that van in Dutch has two meanings: It may mean of or it may have the purely spacial relation of from; while the Latin word a, as used in the Word, is frequently not a spacial relation as in the following examples: The Holy Spirit proceeds ex the Son a Father, this is not essentially a spacial relation nor does it have the meaning of "of"; for "of" implies appropriation. The Lord, when on earth, appropriated the Divine to Himself. But we cannot speak of appropriation in relation to the Divine in Itself. In relation to the Divine Itself we can only speak of out, or from if the word from is not thought of spacially, and if viewed as being of the Divine substance. The ~~next~~ of in the word out of in English often has little meaning; if we say: "I take something out of the drawer" that which has been taken out has nothing of the drawer in it. If I say: "I speak out of my heart", my words have the whole of my heart in them.

To translate the word a into the Dutch has no linguistic difficulty such as translating a into out would have in English. Even in English there might appear reasons for translating under circumstances a into out instead of from, for the reason that usually

from does not imply the containing of the substance from which it is, but merely a spacial relation, ~~of xxxxxxxx~~ even only nearness.

Vanuit can in Dutch readily be understood as a proceeding from an appropriated thing, an appropriated form which is of it or belongs to it. Vanuit if so understood can be seen as an accurate translation of ex, as used in the Word.

In Mr. Pfeiffer's paper in opposition to the accepted translation of a and ex, the points made are that it is opposed to the traditional translation, it is not beautiful, it hinders newcomers, and makes the Word difficult for children and the simple, and it does not agree with the dictionaries.

With the exception of a consideration of the definitions of dictionary we need add no more to what we have said in regard to these points.

The dictionaries make the following distinction between a and ex:

a they say is in opposition to ad, ex to in. In Dutch a...ad is van...tot, English from...to, while in Dutch ex...in is uit...in, English out of...into. But in the Latin Word we find that this is not the destination used between a and ex, for we find not only a...ad, but a...in, a...per, as well as ex...in, and ex...ad, and a and ex with other prepositions as opposites. In a word the distinction between a and ex, as used in the Latin Word, is no more the distinction made in dictionaries than the distinction between celestial and spiritual, as used in the Word, is the distinction made in dictionaries, and to try to insist on the distinction made in the dictionaries is a proof that one is thinking from the dictionaries and linguistics and not from the Word.

The doctrinal point that Mr. Pfeiffer makes in his paper is that if creation is thought to be uit, that is from or out God, this leads to pantheism. Creation is indeed finite in form, but it is out or from the one only Divine substance. To deny that creation is from or out God as the Divine substance leads to the old church idea of creation out of nothing, merely by command, let there be; in which case it might be said that nature is of God, but that it is not from or out God.

If Nova Hierosolyma is only van or of God, and is not from or out His Divine substance, then it is only a form, an appearance, lacking all substance.

