

William Stoddart as Translator

By Alberto V. Queiroz

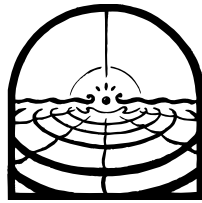
In the preface to the classic *Filotea (Introduction to Devout Life)*, Saint Francis of Sales, in order to justify in Christian humility the fact that he is writing *to teach*, quotes “a great and learned man” as follows:

A good way to learn is to study;
a better way is to listen;
but the best is to teach.

There is profound truth in these words. In fact, when we teach, we have to organize logically and didactically what we know, in a way that tests and consolidates our knowledge. And conversely, when we wish to truly learn something, it is easier and more effective to try to teach someone what we have just learned.

The words quoted by Saint Francis of Sales are applicable also to the art of translation. When one translates a text one must first understand it integrally, at least in its literal meaning, and this requires mostly a passive attitude. But to translate it into a different language requires an active attitude—more or less active depending on how close the two languages involved are. If they are so closely related as to have cognates with the same meaning, similar idiomatic expressions, and similar sentence structures, the translation will not be so difficult, but, at the same time, it is easier to fall in the trap of the so called *faux-amis*, “false friends”,

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