

Theta Alpha Journal



April 2019

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Theta Alpha
"Daughters of the Academy"



Named From the Greek:
Θυγατερες Ακαδημιας
Thugateres Akadémias

Founded in 1904 by graduates of the Academy of the New Church, Theta Alpha exists to provide a forum for women for the advancement and support of New Church education in its many forms, and to support each other in our personal spiritual growth. Membership is open to interested women aged eighteen and older.

Non Nobis Solum ~ Not for Ourselves Alone

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Peace

Emily Jane A. Lemole

*If you can start the day without caffeine,
If you can always be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains,
If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles,
If you can eat the same food every day and be grateful for it,
If you can understand when loved ones are too busy to give you time,
If you can take criticism and blame without resentment,
If you can conquer tension without medical help,
If you can relax without liquor,
If you can sleep without the aid of drugs,
Then you are the family DOG!*

What disturbs our peace? Why can't we be like the family dog? What does peace mean? Is it absence of conflict, an absence of war, a truce? Or status quo in a relationship without discord? Is peace something, or an absence of something? Just like health — is health an absence of disease or an entirely different state altogether?

There is an external peace, and there is an inner peace. One is dependent upon outward circumstances; the other not. In the book of Jeremiah, the story of the captive Israelites illustrates both.

Israel was a nation that had three kings — King Saul, King David and King Solomon. The Kingdoms divided into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, and in 722 BC the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom. In 597 BC the

Babylonians conquered the Southern Kingdom. This marked the end of Israel as a nation with their own country. They were captives and their leaders, the priests and prophets, were sent into exile — all except the Prophet Jeremiah, who stayed with his people.

All looked hopeless. This was the most awful time imaginable in their lives. And what was the message through Jeremiah, from God?

For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and dwell in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters – that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it, for in its peace you will have peace. (Jeremiah 29: 4-7)

God is saying, bloom where you are planted and LIVE. Don't give up hope. Again, from Jeremiah,

For I know the thoughts I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil; to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me and I will listen to you, and you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity. (Jeremiah 29: 10-11)

The children of Israel had external peace — the war was over, but they were captive. This peace was not 'peaceful' for them. But God was telling them, even with everything going horribly wrong for them, how to survive, how to live

well, how to flourish even in their difficulties, and that God would give them peace — true peace.

When our own world goes to pieces and we are captive to our own losses, negative thoughts, hopeless view, and dim future, the Lord's voice can reassure us. We all see from a little point of view — God sees the View! God reminds us when we have lost our reference point, and can see no future — that there is a future and it starts now. We are to bloom where we are planted, to metaphorically build houses and live in them, have children, plant gardens — and LIVE! And He will give us peace. Not outside peace; dependent upon what is happening externally in our lives: but inside peace.

This peace forgives, erases resentment, soothes anxiety, and transforms anger. It brings heaven to earth.

The Israelites initially must have felt that God had deserted them, until they heard His voice through Jeremiah. We can feel the same when our external peace and inner peace are jostled, shaken, or shattered. Of course, external circumstances can drastically affect our lives. Losing loved ones, loss of relationships, loss of employment, loss of health, and with all of this, loss of trust, loss of certainty, loss of a sense of purpose — loss of meaning. These can tailspin us so that we can feel as bereft as the Israelites in Babylon. At the time of the loss it is almost impossible to gain perspective. But with time, perhaps there can be seen a hidden blessing in our troubles.

It often takes a loss (in varying degrees) to wake us up from our spiritual slumber and addiction to the constant busyness, noise, distractions and “entertainment” of every stripe — wake us from our own focus on ourselves.

“I want peace” we say! Remove the I (*self*) and the want (*desire*) and what are we left with? *Peace!*

It helps to remember that it is not only external events that can and do upset our lives – depression, unresolved guilt, lingering unhappiness from the past, and instability about the future, all can throw us off kilter.

Our attitude is the game changer.

There is an adage – *Nothing will change until you do!*

We have the choice to choose our attitude — except perhaps in the case of severe depression, where it appears we are caught in the dark deceptive net of hopelessness and cannot escape, without help. But mostly, we decide whether to sit down on our little handful of thorns and complain — or to choose life — to get up and build houses and live in them, literally or metaphorically! To *Choose LIFE!* I am sure God never expects us to do this soon after a great loss. It takes time to regain balance and perspective. Sometimes a very long time before we can *Choose Peace!* This is the peace that is described in the Swedenborg’s Secrets of Heaven,

Hardly anyone today knows what peace means where the Word mentions it, as in the benediction. . . . Almost everyone believes that peace is safety from one’s enemies and tranquillity at home and among one’s companions—but that is not the peace meant. What is meant is a peace that vastly transcends it. What is meant is the heavenly peace described just above. No one can receive the gift of this peace without being led by the Lord and living in the Lord, that is, in heaven, where the Lord is the all-in-all. Heavenly peace flows in when cravings born of self-love and materialism have been removed, because these cravings are what banish peace. They infest our inner depths and eventually cause us to find rest in disquiet, and peace in plague, because they cause us to find pleasure in evil. As long as we involve ourselves in these banes, we cannot

possibly know what peace is. . . . Since peace is like this—since it is central to all happiness and blessing and therefore reigns supreme everywhere in everything—the ancients used the words “Peace to you” as a stock phrase meaning “Be well.” They would also ask, “Do you have peace?” when they meant, “Are you well?” (Secrets of Heaven 5662)

Remembering that Heaven is a state of mind as well as a place — the way to Heaven is Heaven — our choices take us there and create it here.

Another part of Jeremiah’s prophesy was that the Israelites were to pray for their captors. “Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for in its peace you will have peace.”

Our peace includes the peace of others. We cannot divorce ourselves from others’ wellbeing. To love the neighbor is to wish well and to be able to say “Peace be to you” — like the Ancients. If they asked whether another had peace, it meant is all well with you? We are to pray for our neighbor. We must let go of resentment and an unforgiving attitude. LIVE! Says the Lord — our future is in the hands of the Lord and He has only good thoughts and good plans for us!

What nourishes this peace? What encourages us when we are anxious, and overwhelmed?

We can be like the halcyons! These are mythological kingfishers and are said to build nests in the open, turbulent sea, having the power to calm wind and wave. They are said to bring peace by “not the taking of arms against, but the building of nests amidst a sea of troubles.” Nests of words bring us comfort and peace, especially the words of God; they feed our souls. From the New Testament,

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you not as

the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

Do not be anxious about anything but in every situation, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

The robbers of peace? Loss of every kind, change we didn't ask for and don't want, distraction, immersion in worldly pursuits — the race for power, prestige, and possessions. These are thieves of peace. Then we add the everyday garden variety, like nonstop news with fear injected even into the weather reports. Constant comparison of how we measure up and compare to others haunts us — exacerbated by unrelenting social media. "Comparison it has been said, is the 'thief of joy.'"

Jacob Needleman wrote,

In fact, it could be said that the West suffers primarily from a malady that it doesn't even recognize. From day to day, we may think that our worst disease is violence, racism and prejudice, environmental degradation, warfare between nations or cultures, or even physical illnesses such as cancer. But most of these ills could be ameliorated, and some perhaps even eradicated, by the reclamation and exploration of our inner life.

It is in this inner life that real peace dwells.

What feeds peace? Prayer, meditation, music, contemplation, reflection, quiet, nature, and silence. Being present in the present — forgiveness — prayer for others...

Wendell Berry in his poem "The Peace of Wild Things"

describes the deep peace he finds in nature:

*When despair grows in me
and I wake in the middle of the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting for their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

St. Francis de Sales has an inspiring and steadying message in his prayer *Be at Peace*.

*Do not look forward in fear to the changes in life;
rather, look to them with full hope that as they arise
God, whose very own you are,
will lead you safely through all things;
and when you cannot stand it,
God will carry you in His arms.*

*Do not fear what may happen tomorrow;
the same understanding Father who cares for
you today will take care of you then and every day.*

*He will either shield you from suffering
or will give you unfailing strength to bear it.*

*Be at peace,
and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations.*

So here we are, often like the captives of Babylon, our peace in pieces. The message is the same: Build a new soul home, homes for our inner life that can contain a new outlook,

can provide and protect that new life; plant gardens — that will flourish in our soul. Look to the future, and trust that God has a plan. Our job is to figure out how this applies to us. What will feed us as we halcyons build our nests — our regenerating lives amidst a sea of troubles? We all must decide what best nourishes us.

Philippians 4:1 says it for me,

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.

This is a prescription for real peace. And it applies to each one of us individually. These are benchmarks on which to measure our thoughts:

Is my thought — true?
Is it noble?
Is it right?
Is it pure?
Is it lovely?
Is it admirable?
Is it virtuous or praiseworthy?

This is a practice for examining and transforming our thoughts — the thoughts we think, and then the words we speak.

Proverbs 23 reads, “As a person thinks in their heart, so is he or she.”

This catchy phrase puts it well: “Remember! You are not what you think you are, but what you think, YOU ARE!”

These words from the Vedas hang on our kitchen wall:

Watch your thoughts,
They become words.
Watch your words,
They become actions.
Watch your actions,
They become habits.
Watch your habits,
They become character.
Watch your character,
It becomes your destiny.

(And of course, I remind myself that they must move off the wall into our hearts and lives to mean anything.)

To meditate on higher things, to forgive others, to be grateful for all our blessings — this creates the setting that helps us to quiet the mad rush and noise of our lives — to hear God’s voice. This is the setting that helps to comfort our confused, sad, or breaking hearts, when we experience deep loss. This is the setting that invites the gift of God’s peace. “I have told you these things,” said the Lord, “so that you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16: 33)

Amen

Emily Jane Lemole is a minister in the General Convention of the Swedengian Church. She is married to Gerald Lemole, MD. They have six children, twenty grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. In addition to family and spiritual studies, Janie’s interests are in the areas of nutritional counseling, integrative medicine, travel, horseback riding, reading and writing.

The Coming of the Lord

Marcia Furry

Oh, where is Your dwelling place, Lord, in me,
When You knock and I have but a manger for Thee?
Is it habitable, or forbidding and dim,
As You strive there to open my eyes from within?

The fox has his hole and the bird, her nest,
Should there not be a place for my Savior to rest?
Who with gentle persistence a dawning has brought,
And the miracle of a new will in me wrought.

How then shall I house Thee, redeeming Lord,
When Your light outshines all brilliant suns in Your Word?
Still, here's a heart's chamber in need of Your care,
And a promise that you'll not be crucified there.

*Note from Marcia: The fox and bird reference is from Luke 9:58.
She can be contacted at marcia.furry@gmail.com*

The following talk was given in St. Paul, Minnesota, at the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church.

What Does it Mean to Love or Acknowledge the Lord?

*Julia Robinson
Lay Service Leader*

When I was listening to Gordon Meyer's (pastor of the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church) sermon two weeks ago, I was very moved by the evidence he presented that the Lord is constantly influencing us to make good choices, and to love Him and the neighbor. In this way we will have happy useful lives, and be prepared for heaven. Jesus says in Matthew 22:37,

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

In this text we are encouraged to love the Lord and to serve the neighbor.

But a lot of people I know don't acknowledge God. They call themselves agnostics or even atheists. And if we listen to Jesus' words, acknowledging the Lord seems to be a first requirement for the happiness we all seek. Thinking about these wonderful people who call themselves agnostic, or atheistic, and the fact that the Lord is constantly working for everyone to turn towards him, raises questions about what it means to "love the Lord with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind."

A great many of the people I am thinking of who are non-believers are very idealistic people who are trying to make this world a more just place. While some simply are sincerely doing their jobs, others are making important contributions to society in a larger way, by actively fighting racism, addressing poverty and injustice, or working to reduce child abuse. The truth is, there is a combination of religious and non-religious people doing this work, and many of these non-believers serve other people every day with joy. This seems to create a contradiction. They do not acknowledge the Lord, but if the appearance reflects the reality, they love their neighbor. If the Lord seeks for all people to go to heaven, it doesn't make sense for him to abandon people like this because they don't acknowledge his existence.

We also know that loving the Lord is a two-way street. We read in this excerpt from *True Christian Religion* 787,

This new church is the crown of all the churches that have ever existed on this planet because it will worship the one God, who can be seen, within whom is the God that cannot be seen, like a soul in a body. This is the only way we can form a partnership with God, because we are earthly and we think in earthly ways; and such a partnership must be formed in our thinking, then in the desires that belong to our love. This occurs when we think of God as a human being.

Establishing contact with a God we cannot see is like trying to make eye contact with the limitless vastness of outer space, or like being on the lookout in mid-ocean but not being able to see anything but endless sky and sea.

Establishing contact with a God we can see is like making eye contact with a person in the air or on the sea, whose arms then reach out, inviting us into an embrace.

If someone doesn't believe in God as a person, does it mean that the non-believer cannot have a reciprocal relation with the Lord? Or does this passage suggest that we may be too limited in our idea of who God is, and what it means to love God?

I went to Pott's Concordance and looked up God and related terms like "worship," "serve" and "Lord." Today's talk is my reconsideration of what it means to love the Lord, and what it means for him to love us.

One key to answering the question is to be reminded that a person doesn't have to be a Christian or a New Church believer to go to Heaven.

Divine Providence 253,

Because these people turn to the Lord during their lives and do no harm to their neighbors, they are led by the Lord; and people who are so led are also taught about God and their neighbor according to their religions.

The reason for this is that there is great power in the Church Universal, that is, in the people who live good lives outside Christianity or the New Church.

Heavenly Secrets 9256,

Further in regard to people outside the church, called gentiles: Admittedly their theology is full of falsity, but only because they do not have the Word and accordingly lack knowledge. Once they have been taught, they have a clearer and therefore deeper perception than Christians of the heavenly life a person possesses. This is because they have not hardened themselves against the true tenets of faith, as many Christians have. As a consequence their inner self is not

shut off but rather is open and receptive to truth, as it is in little children.

Such is the lot of all who lived a good life in accord with their religion. This means that the Lord's church is scattered throughout the globe.

But this doesn't seem to describe those who don't acknowledge God. So the question remains "If you don't believe in God, can you have a reciprocal relation with him?"

I suggest that the explanation comes from learning what is the essence of worship.

Secrets of Heaven 7038,

For true worship consists in the performance of uses, thus in the exercises of charity. ...The frequenting of a place of worship, the hearing of preaching and prayers, are also necessary; but without the useful deeds, they are of no avail; for they are not of the life, but teach what its quality must be.

The passage explains that people who serve others through uses are worshiping the Lord, especially if they do so in service to a larger principle, such as justice for all people or making the world a better place.

Apocalypse Explained 825:3,

Good works are everything we do, write, preach, and even speak, not from ourselves but from the Lord; and we act, write, preach and speak from the Lord when we are living according to the laws of our religion. ... So far as we live according to our religion we are led by the Lord; and so far as we are led by the Lord our works are good; for we are then led to do what is good

and to speak what is true for the sake of goodness and for the sake of truth, not for the sake of ourselves and the world; usefulness is our pleasure, and truth is our delight. ...When we act from this, it appears as if we are acting from ourselves; yet we know at heart that it is from the Lord.

In *Apocalypse Explained* 973:2,

For to love the Lord is not to love the person, but to love the things that proceed from the Lord, for these are the Lord with the individual. ... And as these are the Lord, so far as a person loves these, and thus acts from them, so far the person acts from the Lord.

The way I see it, people who act from principles higher than themselves and who keep the Lord's commandments are worshipping the principles, and thus worshipping the Lord, although they may not be aware that the principles come from the Lord. This includes people who go to their daily jobs and contribute to the greater good, whether simply to earn money to support their family, or, even better, to do their job well in order to contribute to society. The character of their love, and the quality of their service may be more natural (doing what is right), more spiritual (serving the neighbor), or even celestial (consciously serving the Lord). The degree to which they are in truth and good will vary, but it is all in service to God.

Therefore, people who believe in the Lord do not need to make judgments about those who profess not to. The nonbelievers may be better motivated and more humble than they are. As with all human beings, we cannot know who is really in love to the Lord, but neither can we assume to know who is not.

The important thing seems to not be whether the person outwardly acknowledges the Lord, but whether the person

serves the neighbor with humility and love, and also the quality of that love and its alignment with truth. In such humble service the Lord can enter, and the person can have a reciprocal relationship with God. This can happen even if the person is not consciously aware of the Lord or of the relationship that is developing.

And finally from the *Doctrine of Life* 102,

The Lord said, "Abide in me and I in you . . . (John 15:4)

Those who abide in me and in whom I abide bear much fruit. (John 15:5) . . .

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you . . . If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love. (John 15: 7, 10)

The people who love me are those who have my commandments and do them; and I will love them and dwell with them. (John 14: 21, 23)

So the Lord dwells with us in what is his own, and we dwell in what the Lord is giving us, and are therefore in the Lord.

Julia Williams Robinson graduated from the Academy of the New Church in the class of 1964, and is now Professor of Architecture at the University of Minnesota, parent to four wonderful children, and grandparent to one. A resident of Minneapolis, she is a member of both the General Church and the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St Paul, Minnesota, part of the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

Pine Run Park

Joel Brown

Two circles
Form an eight
Or the sign of infinity
Some kind of eternity
Where childhood
Never ends.

I am amazed
As I grow older
Passing through
The middle passage
Of my life
How often
In my mind
I return
To Pine Run Park
And the house
On Woodward Drive

It was something
Like heaven
Houses with flower gardens
Children with bicycles
Green lawns cut in the summer
The syncopated sound
Of sprinklers lazily watering
The lazier view of adults
Lounging in folding chairs.

The flag we were proud of then
Fluttering in the warm breeze
Tall trees, pine trees, oak trees,
Smaller dogwoods in the yards
With white flowers.

Dr. Doering,
The neighbor with the wide smile
The smell of baking drifting
Out of kitchens,
Apple pies, brownies
Oatmeal and chocolate chip cookies
The barbecues
Grilling hamburgers

Birds chirping birdsong
Squirrels at play
Children at play
The basketball hoop
At the dead end.

Flashlight freeze tag
Flag, kick the can
Pools and pool hopping

Mailboxes the quiet reminder
Of order
A neighborhood so quiet
Police cars seldom drove by.

At night in the summer
Armadas of fireflies
The creek with cool stones
Crayfish, and the occasional real fish.

The wide open spaces
Of the golf course
Behind the tree line
Room to breathe

But it is mostly the children
The kingdom of the child
That opens once
And closes
And whose garden
We long for
As we grow up.

“A Black Dot Appeared. When Opened It Stretched Out Like a Universe, Leading To the Lord.”

Sarah Walker Ralls

About six months ago a friend approached me and asked me if I was interested in a project she had in mind. I was intrigued when she explained it would be working with representatives. So I said yes. Little did I know what perspectives and state shifts this journey would provide. It just so happened that at the time I had started studying with the Australian New Church College, and also my dreams had started becoming more prolific. But there are no coincidences, right? A friend of a friend calls them God-incidences. Providence was leading me to explore this area further.

So once a week Helen Kennedy would email me four representatives. I would sit down and write whatever thoughts, images and affections came to mind and send them back to her. Afterwards I would look to see what Swedenborg had said about them. I discovered that sometimes it seemed as he and I were living in the same community because our thoughts and reflections were so similar, and other times perhaps in neighbouring communities. There were times again when it was a long distance to travel between us, and even more so when it seemed as if we were in the exact opposite states.

Here are two such examples of being close and not so close:

Fragrance from gardens; or from a perfume

Swedenborg: The pleasures of love, especially marriages in the Christian heaven.

Sarah: The smell of heaven— particularly conjugal love.'

A tenuous white ray resembling a flash of lightning then

a small band of bright little stars

Swedenborg: lightning – a sign of disagreement among spirits of Jupiter; the bright little stars – the disagreement is speedily adjusted.

Sarah: A truth is stunning and it opens up more possibilities and ideas.

At first I found working with the representatives difficult. I didn't trust what I was receiving. I wanted to turn around and look to have someone else affirm what I was seeing and feeling as being "correct." I was tempted to swoogle — Swedenborg Google them – you know – look them up in New Christian Bible Study or Eswedenborg.com online to see what the Heavenly Doctrines told me I should be seeing.

But, funnily enough, I then entered into a course on correspondences with the Australian New Church College. I found myself having to define the difference between a correspondence, a representative and a significative.

Here's how I currently think of them:

A correspondence is the relationship between something that has a spiritual cause on a higher level, and it's direct relationship to something that is on a lower level. It's like the celestial level of love — it can't be seen, just felt. A representative is when this relationship is demonstrated so that it can be seen within the awareness of the person's mind. The relationship is presented in such a way as to convey the nature of the correspondence. It's the manifestation of the relationship. It's like the spiritual truth or wisdom. We can only see love within wisdom, or good within its truth.

A significative is the actual object, person or place in

the sensual, physical plane or lower plane that is used in the representative. It's like the natural level of life. It's our external surroundings that have ultimates that we can touch. It's the actual book of the Word in my hands and the letter of the text. It contains all of His wisdom and love within it. It's the vessel that holds all but we must see beyond its appearance if we are to understand what spiritual life is.

I found that the weekly ritual of working with the representatives started to shift my awareness on the spiritual ideas around correspondences. It began to enable anything that was occurring in the field of my perception to be read in a reflective way. Knowing that the spiritual and natural worlds are related through correspondences meant that if I remembered this, then the situations and circumstances of my life could, and can be, read spiritually. And so I found that I started to be offered insights into my own internal mental states and what was presenting there. I began to unintentionally translate everything I saw. It wasn't just limited to objects and animals but it extended to people and their movements too. A person would walk into a room and place something on the table or offer me something and walk out again, and my mind would see the whole scene as a memorable relation that provided insight into my internal spiritual state.

I also found, when read in this way, connections were made back to the stories in the Word itself. My outer life kind of became an illustration of the principles the Lord offers us through His Word.

So for example...

I had a vision of the Lord peeling my skin off one day and then seeing His body moving all over me. It felt holy and full of His grace. His skin was making contact with my peeled form, as if giving life to my inner being. It was offered in

connection with the feeling that I am constantly being asked to expose myself to others and to share personal experiences of the Lord in my life and how it affects me. And of how difficult it feels sometimes to make myself vulnerable like this. The image of Elisha lying on a dead child and bringing him back to life came to my mind. Twenty minutes later, my son is playing Minecraft, a computer game for children akin to virtual Lego building. He yells out – “Mummy I’ve got a new skin – it’s Australian birds!” I didn’t actually know what that meant in the game itself, but it was what he said that caught my attention. It seemed so closely related to my recent vision.

And here’s what unfolded in my thoughts from that:

“The young innocence of truth (my son) announces that the new externals(skin) I have been given relate to affections for ideas and truths (birds) in the southern land(Australia) – the church where truth is bright.”

And while there may be a multitude of ways in which I could have also read this, the interesting thing for me is which of those ways of reading the situation actually did present to me. It was, of course, coloured by my state at the time, the state of my affections or love. And it felt as if someone had reached out, described and connected with the spiritual struggles I had been experiencing during that time. I had been seeking clarity about how to apply a certain truth that the Word had shown me. It didn’t seem to make sense at the time and I couldn’t see how it applied in my life. And then I had been offered something else from the Word that connected things for me, and it was as if through now seeing how it applied, I had been given a new skin. A new way of living with the truth in my life and seeing it in application in the externals rather than just in my mind, in the internals.

Recognising this principle creates an opportunity for reflection so that when I am awake to it, ANY event can be

read in a way that opens a window — not just into the state of my thoughts and affections, but to the presence of the spiritual world — and through that, to the Lord Himself.

So what I notice is the gift. I obviously don't notice everything going on around me. What I take note of and am given to see is a direct reflection of the unique vessel of reception that I am of His love.

This translates to dreams too. We remember some and not others; we remember certain details and not others. And this reminds me that in the spiritual world, just as in dreams, whole landscapes are able to transform in a moment to be in keeping with the changes of state which a spirit or angel is passing through.

As I described in the previous paragraph, the Word itself can offer a similar experience of a landscape being transformed. If I see the text of the Word as the landscape, then as it enters my mind it transforms to reflect the state of my love. At least that's how I experience it. I can read a passage one day and receive something, and then again on another day and receive something entirely different.

I'm also aware that it's not the Word itself that actually changes, but this is an appearance that reflects the changes of state in my affections and thoughts. His love always takes a form that is accommodated to my state because it's my state that determines the inflowing of His love. I understand this as a spiritual law; the love of the Lord as the Word is constant.

And this is what the Word tells me too. That for every correspondence there is an infinite variety of representatives possible because our state changes:

They went on to say that the same discussion could have been transformed into other representations,

and indeed with endless variation into either similar or dissimilar ones. The reason they had been transformed into the representations seen in my dream lay in the state of the spirits surrounding me and therefore lay in my own state at the time. In short, very many different dreams may come down and present themselves from the same discussion and so from a single source: The reason for this, as has been stated, is that the things in a person's memory and affection are recipient vessels, in which ideas are varied and are received as representatives according to the variations in form which those ideas take and according to the changes of state which they undergo. AC 1980

After a few months of my awareness expanding, and in coming to view the world around me as a memorable relation, I started to want to share this beautiful example of the diversity of His love that I had been gifted with. I ran two workshops, one in Perth, Western Australia, and one at the New Church in Australia's annual retreat in New South Wales. People worked in groups of four with the same representatives. Each wrote down the thoughts and concepts they received and then shared it. And sure enough what I had suspected unfolded. Each unique offering complimented and added to create more of the whole to be seen — even when the things one person offered the group were directly opposite to what another offered. We saw through this that each representative could be read from a good or evil perspective, and that having the two opposites helped to demonstrate the nature of the Lord's love even more so. In summary, we saw the rainbow of the heavenly proprium, the Divine Human being made visible. Heaven became known through the exchange with the neighbour.

It was a privilege to share in these large group exchanges with others. From these and from my own personal work with representatives over the six-month project, I have learnt that we also need to hold what we see lightly sometimes because we are always in appearances. Some will be real

appearances. My level of openness to having the Lord show me what He wants me to see will be greeted with immediate recognition in these states. At other times the appearances that I see will be misread and obscured by me because my state is relatively unreceptive, due to resistant proprial love that may be active. Perhaps then what I've been shown has the purpose of leading me to consider the questions that arise from it, or to look at my reactions to what I'm seeing. For example "Why does what I've been shown here make me want to recoil, yet this other concept over here fill me with His love?" But regardless of what I see and whether the appearance is real or false — the wonder is that the Lord uses it all to draw me ever closer to Himself.

That's the eternal gift He gives us. We are always coming into His love but never fully completed in perfection because only. He is perfect. What a promise!

A black dot appeared. When opened it stretched out like a universe, leading to the Lord. (SE 1188)

Swedenborg: In every single mental image that is induced by the Lord, there is an image of the entire heaven, because it is from He who is Heaven.

Sarah: The forming of the new proprium at first is black, with endless possibilities.

Sarah is currently studying the Diploma of Spiritual Christianity at the Australian New Church College. Her passion for ministry is centered in the Logopraxis approach, which is based on the core principle that the Lord is the Word. She finds it very exciting and full of promise. Sarah loves being part of the spiritual community that has built up around Logopraxis. For her it is a way of truly sharing life together in the Word. Any comments or questions? Sarah would love hearing from you. She can be contacted at musictogetherwithsarah@gmail.com. To find out more about Logopraxis: spiritandlife.net/church/

Age

N. Bruce Rogers, 78

Age is but a number, so they say,
A number that increases day by day.
Youth is but a mem'ry of the past,
A time and state that simply cannot last.
Wiser now while often foolish then,
We'll not regain youth's passion e'er again.
Lost is vigor, gone with young ideals,
No more what adolescent spirit feels.
Gone forever youthful pranks and schemes,
Forgotten too are former hopes and dreams.
Scattered now and gone are friends once dear,
Old friends in mind and heart no longer here.
Age brings wisdom, people oft contend,
A gift of life, its final dividend.
For what we've lost it helps to compensate,
Even when it seems a little late.

2018



The Role of the Arts in Preparing New Church Teachers: A Bryn Athyn College Faculty Development Study

Angela Rose

The influence an elementary school teacher has on her students can be profound. She is working with highly impressionable, young human beings at a formative time in their lives. A teacher who appreciates the individuality of her students, who acknowledges their gifts, their struggles and the spiritual path unfolding before them, is a teacher who can be open to prayerfully cooperating with the Divine Plan for each child. If New Church education is meant to be transformative education, then a program designed to prepare teachers to work in New Church schools should place special emphasis on the capacity to perceive and respond to children. The arts can help develop this capacity.

Honing Skills of Observation

Perceiving the inner qualities of another human being is more than can be accomplished by detached observation, but perception does begin with observation of the outer appearance and characteristic tendencies of a child. If the skills of observation are important for a teacher to possess, one might suggest that work in the sciences would be just as good a preparation, if not better than, artistic work. Certainly, careful observation is a hallmark of scientific work. But observations in the realm of science are restricted to physical characteristics that can be quantified and measured. Working with children means working with changing states and qualities of being that cannot be quantified or measured. Similarly, artistic work calls for observing and perceiving unmeasurable qualities and states, whatever the medium may be.

A drawing class, for example, gives practice in careful observation. If you stop and really look at how the light falls on

a face and notice where the soft shadows lie and then produce those same gradations of gray and white on paper, a portrait will begin to form on the page. One may argue that the intensity of light *is* measurable, and therefore the observation called for is not any different than scientific observation. However, it is not the measurable aspect of light and shadow on which the artist focuses. Rather, the artist tunes into the relationship between the shadows and the light: one area is darker in relation to an adjacent area which in turn is darker compared to another area, and so on. This constant readjusting to how light and darkness are working together creates a state of mind that is especially tuned in to what is immediately present.

In his book, *Working with anxious, nervous, and depressed children*, curative educator Henning Kohler (2001) described how developing the habit of careful observation can help when working with children who pose a particular challenge. He makes a bold suggestion that when we don't know how to help a particular child, we should ask for guidance from the child's guardian angel. This may not surprise a New Church teacher. She may be accustomed to praying for guidance when she doesn't know how to help a child prone to tantrums or a child who has been caught lying several times. This is the realm of transformative education. The answers to our questions about how to best serve the children in our care can come more readily when we are truly aware of the child's present state of being. Have we carefully observed the child? Have we felt the quality of his handshake, noticed his posture and the way he walks? Have we observed so well that we virtually have a kinesthetic experience of what it might feel like to live in the child's physical body? If we can observe his characteristic gestures without any feeling of liking or disliking what we see, we have a chance to witness his being and experience empathy for him. True empathy is the goal. And in the warmth of such devoted attention, the child is free to emerge into new states of being.

Kohler (2001) emphasized that observation is the first step in attaining empathy and insight into how to best work with a child. The goal is not to mold the child into some preconceived model of our own devising. We are instead seeking to cooperate with the Lord's intentions for the child. Who has the Lord created this child to be and become? It is an unanswerable question. But carrying the question is immensely important. By opening ourselves to inspiration from a source higher than our own intelligence, we help create the possibility for transformative education. And careful, objective, loving observation is the first step.

Perceiving the Child

Both Benade and de Charms spoke of the importance of witnessing the children in our care. In *Conversations on Education*, Benade (1976) wrote:

It is...necessary to recognize the individual child, and not treat all children alike, or in mass. To do this it is well to observe carefully what use the child makes of what he learns; from this the affections of the will may be known. Hence are these two things essential in teaching: a clear idea of the subject to be taught, and as thorough a knowledge of the child as possible. (p.23)

According to de Charms and Synnestvedt,

When we come to study our own children that are right in front of us, and seek to understand their change in states, the affections that actually stir them, the interests that can be appealed to—that is when we come to discover a child's purpose (Rose and Glenn, 1993, p. 12).

A mode of attention informed by artistic work is the right way to “study” our children. We are not analyzing them.

We are opening ourselves to perceive their qualities. Stanford professor Elliot Eisner (2002), who published many books and articles on the importance of art education, had this to say about what the arts teach:

A fundamental concern of anyone working in the arts, whether painting, composing music, writing poetry, or engaging in dance, is to create satisfying and expressive relationships among the “parts” that constitute a whole. Composing, the putting together of elements, can be resolved in the arts only by paying attention not to literal matters, not to matters of reference or to logic, but to qualitative matters....

*The creation of such relationships, relationships that display rightness of fit, require careful attention to highly nuanced qualities; very subtle differences in the temperature of a color or in the strength of a line can make all the difference between achieving a satisfying array of relationships or an array that doesn't work.
(p.75)*

Getting to know the qualities of a medium and its limitations can only be learned through direct experience with that medium. The painter learns just how much water to add to achieve the desired quality of translucence in a painting of watercolor veils. The potter learns just the right pressure to apply to the clay turning on the wheel. The sculptor feels the contour of the wood and knows just how much to carve away to create the most pleasing curve where two planes come together.

What is to be gained from taking a class on painting, ceramics, sculpture, woodcarving, or any other fine arts course that requires careful attention to the canvas, clay or other material? The question itself contains the answer. This practice of careful attention and response in the present

moment is at the heart of artistic work, and it is at the heart of working with young children. Artistic work gives a prospective teacher practice in perceiving the characteristics peculiar to the individual child. Some children respond best to direct interaction and clear boundaries strictly enforced; they feel security in a strong, externally imposed structure. Other children require a more round-about approach; they prefer a peripheral orbit around the teacher rather than being the center of attention. In responding to the needs of an individual child, the teacher must have a feel for what will work best for him or her—each child will respond differently to the teacher.

A gardening analogy works well in regard to responding to the needs of different children. Different plants thrive in different kinds of soil and varying amounts of sun exposure. Lavender needs full sun, and thrives in dry, sandy soil. Hostas prefer the shade and moist conditions. A good case could be made for using a gardening apprenticeship as preparation for teaching. But the time it takes to learn from experience which plants suffer from over-watering or which companion plants bring beneficial insects, takes months, if not years, of observation. The arts can give practice in attuning our attention to the present state of children in a much more convenient time frame!

Studying great works of art can also develop the kind of perception that is so important if we are truly going to nurture the children in our care and create the possibility for transformative relationships with our students. Rosenquist (1974) gave an example of comparing the work of two master painters, skillfully capturing their characteristic qualities:

Vermeer's world and Van Gogh's world, although both Dutch, are two altogether different worlds; one serenely ordered, cool, precise, and jewel-like, confined; the other turbulent, emotional, alive with energy and motion and high-keyed intensity, open and

expanding.... Each picture has its own presence, its own vital force. Approach a picture with an open mind. Let it look at you first and introduce you to its own world. Then evaluate. (p. 8)

Notice that Rosenquist's words could apply equally well to the children in our classrooms: "Each *child* has its own presence, its own vital force. Approach a *child* with an open mind. Let it look at you first and introduce you to its own world." This is the kind of attitude that can engender transformative education. While I suggest that beholding a work of art is comparable to contemplating the being of a child. Philosopher Maxine Greene (1987) posed the comparison the other way around:

In a way, encountering a work [of art]...is like encountering another person: engaging in a kind of interested reciprocity, exchanging, replying, giving back uniquely one to the other. But there must be an interest; there must be a raptness of attention. There must be a presentness, a being there. (p. 70)

The parallels between encountering a work of art and encountering a person suggest that the practice of giving attention to a work of art can develop the quality of presentness required in our work with children. Note the parallels in the following quotes, one from Greene on attending to a work of art, and one from Kohler on witnessing the being of a child. In the first passage, Greene (1982) captured the mood and attitude necessary for transformative education: "I am talking about being present, allowing personal energy to go out to works of art. I am talking about awareness of process and a realization that it is ongoing, that there is always something more" (p. 56).

And Kohler (2011) said of observing a child:

One aspect of loving is the ongoing practice of overcoming one's own habitual judgments, desires, expectations, and concepts, pushing them out of the way and giving oneself to listening and observing in what might be called an ever-marveling attentiveness to the phenomenon of the child's image in the here and now, every least detail of which deserves your whole-hearted and nonjudgmental interest. (p.8)

Of course, New Church educators do not have the corner on transformative education. Dr. Robert Brooks, a prominent lecturer in the fields of special education and positive psychology, has done much to publicize the research on promoting resilience in children. He frequently refers to the role of a "charismatic adult," a term coined by psychologist Julius Segal. In his monthly electronic newsletter of October 2012, Brooks wrote,

When adults who had overcome challenging childhoods were asked to reflect upon what factors contributed to their perseverance and hope, an almost universal response was that there was at least one adult in their lives who steadfastly believed in and supported them. Their resilience was rooted in great part in their interaction with this charismatic adult.

Brooks (2012) continues to collect testimonials about charismatic adults and to share his conviction that "the development and maintenance of emotional and physical well-being at any age are best accomplished when we have charismatic adults by our side, individuals who provide encouragement and support within a safe and secure relationship." He has noticed that following his many presentations and lectures, this idea of how an adult can have a transformative effect on the trajectory of a child's life, tends to elicit the most reflection and discussion. I would suggest that the adult who can make a difference in a child's life is

more than a cheerleader for the child, he or she is a person by whom the child feels seen. And it is this capacity to perceive other human beings—not just their physical characteristics, but their inner qualities and character—that the arts can help foster.

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The following are short interviews with two students participating in Bryn Athyn College's Arts Program, and one in the just launched Building Arts major, the first of its kind in the United States.

College Interviews

Rosemary Fuller (Human Society major, 2019): I am happy to be getting back into stained glass at the college through an independent study. I started in high school with Eyvind Boyesen. In the class he had us try various stained glass techniques. For example, we started with a special type of clear glass, then cut out shapes of colored glass, and arranged them on the clear glass. When it's fired in the kiln, it all fuses into one piece. The result is that you have all the colors next to each other, without metal bars between them, which allows more of the light to come through, rather than being blocked by pieces of lead. It's really pretty.

I originally chose stained glass as an art because you don't need any artistic talent to do this, all you need to know is how to put things together – like in a puzzle. I later gained interest in the artistic side of the craft. I love that stained glass combines a man-made piece of work with a natural element, which is sunlight. Glass has a fascinating history, and it's very interesting to me that you can use light to tell stories, evoke emotions, or express yourself. Light and warmth are connected, and they make us feel alive and comforted and hopeful.

After growing up in Alabama, Rosemary attended the Academy of the New Church, then continued at Bryn Athyn College. She is the daughter of David Fuller and Janet Krettek. Rosemary is the first of three children.

Shannah Conroy (Religion & Mathematics majors, 2019): I am in a ceramics class at the college. The instructor is Christine Orthwein and she teaches you the basics, then lets you loose. It's more inspiring to work on things that are your own ideas. I really like to make mugs and bowls on the wheel. I liked it so

much in school that I decided to get my own supplies and do it on my own, to the point that I have my own kiln.

Ceramics is always a challenge. In painting you have a lot of control, and the paint will do whatever you want (hopefully). Because of the clay and the glaze, I'm never sure how it will turn out. This insecurity in ceramics is my least favorite part.

I like that I get to turn dirt into something useful and beautiful. Even more, I just like the process of shaping things on the wheel. I never liked sculpture or any of the other forms until I started using the wheel. Then I was hooked. It's more about being familiar with the way clay and glazes behave rather than time commitment. It takes a lot of practice to know how clay is willing to move, or how the glazes will react.

Coffee and tea are a part of life. I like the sense of home and ritual that comes with a mug that someone made. It's peaceful and restful to be home with a hot meal or a drink, and to add art to that experience is meaningful to me. Beyond all that, I just can't not.

Shannah Conroy is a recent graduate of Bryn Athyn college, where she took ceramics classes with Christina Orthwein. She is now focusing on ceramics as a career.

Tess Brown (Building Arts major, 2021): In my classes, I am specializing in stained glass, and am learning leading, cutting and painting, which are the basic three stages of creating stained glass. I will graduate with a degree in it, and the possibilities of use for this degree would be in restoring stained glass, i.e., in a Cathedral or church. In general I'm learning how to design and draw, and am learning about building materials so I can design interiors, exteriors or buildings in general. Learning how the materials work will help me understand how buildings are constructed.

What draws me to this program is my love for color theory and also art history. The skills are ancient and have been passed down through the centuries: metalworking, which includes forging, stained glass, masonry or stone carving. I love the underlying tone of how religion has been depicted in art over the centuries. A few classes I've already taken: forging, introduction to craft practice, and medieval art history. To describe a bit of it—for three weeks on Tuesday and Thursdays I've been forging with hot metals for six hours at a time. Never in my expectation did I think I'd be doing that in college. Some days I'd go from cutting stone for three hours to forging for the next three.

Growing up I would draw and print a lot. My dad, Dan Brown, is actually a construction worker, helping build the new high school building in Kempton. But I never thought of being involved in anything that had to do with buildings. People said at times when I was growing up that you might be doing what your parents did, but I never thought it would be me. I really appreciate creation and the beauty in my environment. It has such positive effects on the people psychologically, making them happier.

About the mural of the Tree of Life that is on the cover of this Journal. There were a lot of correspondences of why I choose it for a school. It is actually a mustard tree, growing from the smallest of all seeds. I see it as a good metaphor for students learning because it grows into the largest of trees. The birds that rest in the tree represent the Lord's spiritual kingdom and the variety of the types of birds represents the diversity of the angels in heaven.

Tess grew up in Kempton, attending the Kempton New Church School from kindergarten to graduating high school. Daughter of Dan Brown and Erika Synnestvedt, Tess is the oldest of five children.

The Fool and the Wise Man

Jill Jorgenson

Stop, said the wise man. The fool on the rock was weeping, head in his hands. Stop running headlong into brick. The fool rubbed a sore spot on the top of his tender skull, sobbing It hurts. He took off his spectacles and looked, forlorn, at their cracked lenses. The wise man said You run into walls, repeatedly, and no wonder, for you are no longer able to see. The fool whimpered, held the broken glasses in front of his face, and the wise man appeared as an austere fragmented figure. Nothing, the fool found, as he peered around, spectacles upheld as viewfinder, looked right. His house split in sliding pieces, his table shifted, slivers of books, even his feet, his free hand, were strange splintered messes. The wise man urged him: See? Your things are fine, it's only your vision distorted. The fool laid a solid hand on solid books in reassurance. What else? he said, lifting a trusting myopic stare to the blur he knew was the wise one. What about that wall, you were saying? Stop, said the wise man; step back. And glasses still in hand, dropped at his side, the fool could momentarily see afresh: there, along the long wall, as far as his unreliable eye would take him, wood doors at unpredictable intervals. Then once again all was a fuzzy muddle, doors indistinguishable from brick. Do what you need to do, said the wise man (and the fool knew the gentle but stern wise eyes would match the imposing paternal voice): Fix your glasses. The fool blinked, already thinking of what

to make of this. Thank you, said the fool,
but the wise man said One more thing.
You, fool, are no fool but a vessel. The fool
opened his mouth to ask more, but the wise man
was gone. The vessel on the rock sat,
looked at his glasses in his lap,
considered a repair kit, or an optician.
He turned his gaze up again to the wall,
its game of doors.

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My Shoulder*, by Jill Jorgenson, © 2014. Used with the
permission of the publisher.



The following poem shows ways that allergy sufferers can experience the seasons in a different way than most other people. For many of them spring, summer, fall, and winter are all the same because you can't open your windows.

Springtime

Margit Irwin

Mud

Four-thirty a.m.

Cacophony of bird calls

Desperate for mates,

Territories, or food sources.

Cloying perfumes permeating the yard

Like the ladies room

During an opera intermission.

Lesser flowers competing

With the hyacinth's claim to strongest odor.

Oily steam

Rising from black topped roads

Meeting and mixing

With car exhaust

Unable to push past the pressing smog

Hovering over the city.

Yellow green tree pollen

Coating driveways,
Window ledges, cars, porch furniture,
And nostrils.
Plastic scooters, motorized toys
Growl and rumble up and down the street
Into the prime time hours
When adolescents then
Take over
Shouting, swearing,
Forcing high pitched laughter as they
Brazenly toss beer cans.
Surrounded in tobacco smoke
And hormones
They saunter through the community
Into the wee hours of the morning.
Just a prelude
To the birds' turn.

Born and raised in Pittsburgh, Margit has spent most of her adult life in Bryn Athyn raising a family. She also taught music full time in the elementary school and part time in the college. Now retired she enjoys volunteer work in the community.

(This essay won 2nd prize in the Laws of Life Essay contest 2018)

The Life of the Party

Madison Zagorski

I strive to balance my double-sided nature of a hard-working, focused, diligent student, and avid partier. However, at my bashes, there are no streamers or helium balloons. I offer not a lick of food or a chord of popular music. In fact, I only throw parties when I fall off my seemingly pristine pedestal and crash into rock bottom. This is the type of festivity I used to imagine after my mother would cheerfully state, “When you fail, then we will celebrate.”

Garrett arrived on this earth four years after my reign as an only child. During his grand debut into the universe, he was delivered, and quickly the doctor and nurses rushed him off to the NICU for lack of air. This beginning event foreshadowed the path of his existence; he would always move faster than anyone could keep up with. Garrett’s need for speed is formally diagnosed as ADHD. My mother, a special education teacher, knew from his first breaths he would struggle in school. His impulsive nature and rowdy mannerisms cause his attention to stray from staying on task. In Garrett’s sapphire eyes, classrooms purposefully torture his learning differences. I often try placing myself into his worn out sneakers with the hopes of understanding why he bursts in anger and frustration before searching for an antidote. Garrett’s ADHD confounds him as if he spends his life looking at broken clocks, while the rest of the world uses faultless wristwatches. It seems as though he races too far ahead of the clock, or lags a step behind each moment, all while guessing what time everyone around him is seeing. The hardest truth to fathom of all is that Garrett never chose the broken clock in the first place, and his own sister is the faultless wristwatch he looks towards for guidance.

Garrett and I tick to different rhythms. I overwork myself until I have planned out each hour for the next academic term. Without order, I shut down and feel like my internal hard drive has gone awry. My mother, someone who strongly believes grades never define a child, never pushes me to do better; I already set the bar higher than I can reach on my toes. Weekly, I arrive home with another nearly perfect score on a test, forgetting about the sleep debt I accumulated as I stayed up over-studying. While my mother acknowledges my efforts and remains a proud parent of a scholar, she limits my accolades and instead uses her favorite quote, "When you fail, then we will celebrate." Her parties, at one time, seemed such negative occasions, for I believed I always completed tasks to their fullest.

Contrary to my way of handling important situations, Garrett makes decisions rashly as they arrive and hopes they are not concerned with his least favorite word: school. His backpack transports failed tests and crumpled teacher notes which question the amount of support he receives at home. The school staff does not see how my mothers spends her every waking minute on him, trying to make his life easier. She is delighted when Garrett secures a high mark on a test he tediously studied for, but also knows how to calmly formulate the next move when he has to retake a particularly difficult quiz. Her positive outlook on his good days, as well as his bad, helped me uncover what it means to care for someone unconditionally.

Because of Garrett, I understand my mother's quote about growth from failure. When I struggle to come out on top, I finally see how my brother lives his everyday life. His classroom is a jail, but sports provides freedom. Homework confuses him, but handiwork fascinates him. Overachievers scare him, yet he still adores how own sister and longs to walk in my same footsteps. Garrett cherishes me so passionately he assumes I hold the answers of creation, but I am the one

who truly looks up to him for guidance. Having a sibling with recognizable differences opened up the world of unique angles and careful choices for me. Garrett became a teacher, especially to those who thought they were instructing him, by demonstrating daily how success is obtained — take a step back and build achievement, one block at a time.

From one avid partier to another, I admit I only ever knew how to reach my goals, and the praise that came with my distorted view of fruition, using a mediocre plan of attack. Without giving a thought to bettering myself, I could climb up a problem alone and call the journey good enough. Now, I spend more time at the bottom of an obstacle, because Garrett and I can climb together if we both start at failure. He transforms both of our downfalls into real celebrations.

I love you, Little Man.

Call for Art Submissions!



As you can see from the beautiful cover art and line drawings, we are hoping that the *Journal* can present some of the visual art that Swedenborgians around the world are creating.

Please send us images you would like to share with *Journal* readers and feel free to write a few sentences about what you send in!

Book Review: *My Own Four Walls*, by Don Rose

Kristin King

My Own Four Walls—originally published in 1941 and now available in a new edition from McFarland, edited by Neil Genzlinger, a journalist for the *New York Times* and grandson of the author—tells the story of a transplanted Englishman, Don Rose, who purchased a house and small plot of land in the American countryside, just outside of Philadelphia, at the end of World War One. Over the next 25 years, the author furnishes, repairs, and improves his century-old house, or at least keeps it from collapsing around his growing family of 12 children.

Rose came to America to pursue a theology degree, later worked as a high school teacher, and eventually gained a following as a successful newspaper columnist. But it is the house itself, and the owner's tireless labor and reflection upon that work, that most reveal the man.

With a writing style that is something of a mashup of Henry Thoreau, E. B. White, and Oscar Wilde, Rose turns the most mundane household tasks and garden projects into reflective surfaces for personal philosophy, trenchant social criticism, wry humor, and staunch self-reliance. He champions the self-taught who work with their hands and fix things, and he rides fearlessly into the jaws of any job, unperturbed by the trail of projects that, having listed too far to one side or the other, eventually go the way of kindling.

Surrounded by a modern world hurrying “hotfoot to nowhere,” the author relishes staying in place and talking with friends about things that matter, long into the night, until dawn comes up “like thunder over the blackberry patch” (75). He is suspicious of labor-saving devices, preferring “older ways of living and doing things until newer ones have

proved their worth beyond question" (151). Revising the worn adage about pathways to hell, he proclaims: "Inventions, not intentions, pave the road to personal damnation and disaster for civilization" (136).

Rose frequently wields the art of overstatement, often with a sobering sense that he is not entirely joking. His crankiness about cars, lawn mowers, razors, and the "rising tide of amperage that will eventually electrify the least of our habits and occupations" provides lighthearted amusement; more haunting are the critiques of a post-depression financial system that bails out the wealthy while calling in the debts of the working class, or the "ostensibly peaceful" invention of the air plane that drops bombs on the patient workmanship of centuries and the beloved gardens of common folk.

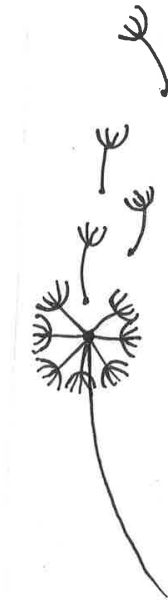
Appreciation for workmanship, gardens, and common folk surface throughout *My Own Four Walls*. With dauntless confidence and no experience, the impoverished author labors tirelessly on household projects in his twice-mortgaged home. The crumbling structure and ghosts of the past constantly whisper to him "do it yourself," build it by "rule of thumb and the looks of it," because there's nothing that a man of "common sense" can't learn (61). Along with common sense, it helps to have patience, talent, humor, and a convenient preference for good-enough over perfection. And when good-enough can't be achieved, as evidenced in endlessly smoking chimneys, reupholstered furniture with fabric hanging like jowls, constructions too big to fit through doorways, and plaster that "goes on easily and falls off immediately," the author applies the perfect amount and consistency of humor. It sticks nicely.

In addition to humor, social criticism, and an array of well-placed classical, biblical, and literary allusions, this transplanted Englishman offers a characteristically American refrain about the dignity of work. Owning a house and land

and working them with one's own hands and passion builds true value. As the author weeds his row of carrots, he thinks how some people make money by selling things for more than they paid. "But money is not wealth." Real wealth comes from human labor on the land, "the essential foundation of human society and all its prosperity" (142). And though a row of carrots will not support an individual, let alone a family, it brings a symbolic harvest in the confidence that "a certain spiritual support and stability still come of land ownership if only the owner will do something else with the land but walk on it" (142).

My Own Four Walls tells a humble story of the hands-on labor of an amateur handyman in a small defined space for good-enough outcomes. It's a good story, made all the more powerful by the well-wrought prose of an artist at work.

Kristin King
November 2018



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I just finished reading the November '18 Journal cover to cover and was impressed with the quality of offerings. Nadine Roger's thoughts on the Elisha story were powerful. I enjoy her writing tremendously, and find it easy to connect with. Many of us have times where we just want to hide away, and we feel too weary or unable to face the hard things (within and without), even when we know the Lord is holding us in the palm of His hand. I wonder if this is why adventure novels have been so popular? Ones where good must face evil, even when all appears hopeless: Homer, Tolkien's Trilogy, Harry Potter and many more have struck that chord. And in the Word there is David and Goliath, The Fiery Furnace, Daniel and the Lion's Den, The Elijah and Elisha stories. . . and of course the story of the Lord Himself facing the evil man had chosen. I appreciated the way Nadine wove her thoughts around core ideas and stories from the Word.

What a treat to read Helen Kennedy's meditative fictions. I was familiar with *Lisa*, because she had already shared it with me. And I enjoyed reading it again, like visiting a friend. The other three were eye opening, helping me see the Lord's mercy in a deeper way. It gives me hope for the lost souls of today's world, and for times when we are nurturing evil, run by addictions, have lost our humility or are enticed by excitements that lead away from a heavenly path.

My gratitude for Angela Rose's work in offering de Charm's Philosophy of New Church Education in this newly edited version is great. I read through de Charms' notes long ago, as a parent, and my appreciation for his thoughts on what will truly nourish children has only grown. His principles guided much of my work as a teacher and I encourage teachers and others interested in developing New Church Education to read, discuss, and build on this wonderful resource.

Sarah Walker Rall's article also spoke to me. I know her eager feeling of wanting to share something the Lord has given you. In October I went to Kenya with my husband, Roger, Kay Alden, Rev. David Lindrooth and another HCIC (Helping Children In Crisis) board member, John Willie, to visit the General Church Sacred Care Orphanage there. One week before I woke early in the morning with the thought that I must sew a pocket story apron so there will be something to nourish the orphans (most of our agenda involved talking to adults, gathering info, verifying receipts etc. There was little for the children this time.) I had some African fabric in the attic that I pulled out and started cutting. No pattern, no plan, but the ideas flowed. Not from me, but they were flowing. Twelve pockets, twelve different symbols from the Word to needle felt or appliqué onto the pockets. Stories and activities to fill them. My dear husband looked at me like I was crazy, when there were so many other things to do before we left. But this project just spilled out. I finished the last stitches on the way to the airport. The children loved it. It was the perfect vehicle to connect, teach, and talk about New Church ideas with the children. Now I am using it with my grandchildren. Love does want to give.

Yours,
Kathy Schrock

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the November issue of Theta Alpha Journal. I was deeply struck by Nadine Rogers' essay, *Elijah*. Her clear, personal descriptions of wanting to hide from the world, yet needing to be useful in it, resonated with me. At the same time she added very readable insights to the Biblical story of Elijah.

I also want to share my reflections about *Meditations on Heavenly Communities*. On first reading, I wasn't sure how

to relate to them. On rereading, with a more open, playful, less fixated mind-set, I became curious, wondering if, perhaps, the stories could strengthen a part of my spiritual psyche.

One is the story on *Lisa* which reads, “Lisa and those in her heavenly community find their greatest joy in guiding others though their shallow thinking.” It has left me wondering, “Can the sphere of Lisa’s community support me as I learn to move away from hellish societies, those wanting to convince me the “warm, bath-like” sensation of loving my own thinking is actually heaven? If I remember what *Lisa* represents, and think about her influence, maybe I can move more quickly away from the temptation of this conceit.

Sincerely,
Peg Mergen

Call for Articles!



We need and want to hear from everyone throughout the world in the pages of our long-lived and well-loved *Journal*. Everyone has something absorbing, interesting, thoughtful or humorous to share. Contact information is in the beginning of the *Journal*.

Theta Alpha International Charter Day Luncheon and Annual Meeting

Oct. 12, 2018

Janet Krettek welcomed members and invited them to get their lunches.

1. Blessing and luncheon.
2. Performance by the ANC dance ensemble.
3. Reading and President's Report from Janet Krettek:
 - a. A reminder of the mission of TAI: New Church education and women's spiritual development.
 - b. Janet discussed TAI activities, its history, and possible future.
4. Acceptance of Treasurer's Report and Budget:
 - a. Melodie offered to accept dues today or at anytime.
 - b. She mentioned a general fund contribution of \$8,000 last year, noting that it skews the budget.
 - c. She encouraged everyone to contribute as they are able, as it is needed for a balanced budget.
 - d. There are reminders in the Journal.
 - e. Wendy Closterman accepted scholarship checks on behalf of Bryn Athyn College students.
5. The 2017 annual meeting minutes were accepted.
6. Andrea Cranch read Marriage Love 418:
 - a. This describes how the transition from human life to angelic life is similar to the transition from a caterpillar to a butterfly.
 - b. As a memorial, she then read aloud the names of Theta Alpha members who have passed into the spiritual world.

7. Angela Rose was the keynote speaker:
 - a. She gave an address on her work with George de Charms's presentations on the philosophy of New Church education.
 - b. Her goals are to pass on principles to students and new faculty.
 - c. Revised lectures are on the college website for all to read.
 - d. Key principles:
 - i. Children develop in stages.
 - ii. A philosophy of natural learning.
 - iii. The essence of NCEd is a combination of these two things.
 - e. Workshop offered: The Art of Awareness in the Classroom, June 2018.
8. The meeting was adjourned.



Treasurer's Report

Ordinary Income/Expense	Jul '16 – Jun '17	'17- '18 Budget	Jul '17 - Jun '18	'18-'19 Budget
Income				
43400 · Direct Public Support				
43470 · General Fund Contribution	6,881.22	8,000.00	8,345.00	8,000.00
43400 · Direct Public Support - Other		0.00	0.00	0.00
Total 43400 · Direct Public Support	6,881.22	8,000.00	8,345.00	8,000.00
45000 · Investments				
45040 · Bank Interest - Money Market	5.86	6.00	8.53	10.00
45050 · Interest/Dividends - NCIF	5,151.28	7,000.00	6930.53	7,000.00
45000 · Investments - Other		0.00	0.00	0.00
Total 45000 · Investments	5,157.14	7,006.00	6939.06	7,010.00
46400 · Other Types of Income				
46420 · Scholarship - TAI		0.00		0.00
46425 · Scholarship - ANC Fund	8,000.00	11,000.00	9,000.00	10,000.00
46430 · Miscellaneous Revenue		0.00	625.00	0.00
Total 46400 · Other Types of Income	8,000.00	11,000.00	9,625.00	10,000.00
47200 · Program Income				
47230 · Membership Dues	1,725.00	2,000.00	1,680.00	2,200.00
47250 · Journal Contribution		0.00	0.00	0.00

	Jul '16 – Jun '17	'17- '18 Budget	Jul '17 - Jun '18	'18-'19 Budget
47260 · Translation Project		0.00	0.00	0.00
47200 · Program Income - Other		0.00	0.00	0.00
Total 47200 · Program Income	1,725.00	2,000.00	1,680.00	2,200.00
49000 · Special Events Income				
49010 · Fundraising		0.00	0.00	0.00
49030 · Luncheon ticket sales	1,125.00	1,200.00	1,580.00	1,200.00
49000 · Special Events Income - Other		0.00	0.00	0.00
Total 49000 · Special Events Income	1,125.00	1,200.00	1,580.00	1,200.00
Total Income	22,888.36	29,206.00	28,169.06	28,410.00
Expense				
60300 · Awards and Grants				
60310 · Scholarship - TAI	4,200.00	4,200.00	4,200.00	4,200.00
60315 · Scholarship - ANC Fund	8,000.00	11,000.00	9,000.00	10,000.00
60320 · Cash Awards and Grants	825.00	800.00	1,025.00	1,500.00
60330 · Noncash Awards and Grants	1,447.75	1,500.00	655.08	1,000.00
60340 · Specific Assist to Individuals		0.00	70.00	0.00
60300 · Awards and Grants - Other		0.00	200.00	200.00
Total 60300 · Awards and Grants	14,472.75	17,500.00	15,150.08	16,900.00

	Jul '16 – Jun '17	'17- '18 Budget	Jul '17 - Jun '18	'18-'19 Budget
62100 · Contract Services				
62110 · Accounting Fees		0.00	0.00	0.00
62140 · Legal Fees		0.00	0.00	0.00
62100 · Contract Services - Other		0.00	0.00	0.00
Total 62100 · Contract Services		0.00	0.00	0.00
65000 · Operations				
65010 · Books, Subscriptions, Reference		0.00	0.00	0.00
65020 · Postage, Mailing Service	96.00	100.00	136.11	50.00
65030 · Printing and Copying	300.11	300.00	20.00	100.00
65040 · Supplies		0.00	0.00	50.00
65050 · Telephone, Telecommunications		0.00	0.00	0.00
65060 · PayPal Fee	62.92	100.00	13.72	50.00
65000 · Operations - Other		0.00	0.00	0.00
Total 65000 · Operations	459.03	500.00	169.83	250.00
65100 · Other Types of expenses				
65090 · Journal Expense	13,345.01	9,000.00	8,861.20	9,000.00
65120 · Luncheon Expense	1,186.38	1,200.00	682.57	1,200.00

	Jul '16 – Jun '17	'17- '18 Budget	Jul '17 - Jun '18	'18-'19 Budget
65125 · Fund Raising		0.00	0.00	0.00
65130 · Baptism Project	515.33	500.00	335.59	500.00
65165 · Translation		0.00	0.00	0.00
65170 · Miscellaneous	226.19	500.00	912.00	500.00
Total 65100 · Other Types of expenses	15,272.91	11,200.00	11,078.36	11,200.00
66900 · Reconciliation Discrepancies		0.00	0.00	0.00
68300 · Travel and Meetings				
68310 · Conference, Convention, Meeting		0.00	0.00	0.00
68320 · Travel		0.00	0.00	0.00
68300 · Travel and Meetings - Other		0.00	0.00	0.00
Total 68300 · Travel and Meetings	30,204.69	29,200.00	26,719.26	28,350.00
Total Expense	-7,316.33	6.00	1,449.80	60.00

Notes: Miscellaneous Other Types of Expenses = \$287 for Sr. Girls' Luncheon; \$625 change for TAI Luncheon cash box
Miscellaneous Revenue = \$625 change for TAI Luncheon cash box returned

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**The Art of Awareness in the Classroom:
Cultivating the Capacity for Observing and
Perceiving the Children in Our Care**

**Bryn Athyn College
Saturday, June 22, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

Presentations by Ray Silverman, Angela Rose, and Kathy Schrock

In this era of standards and accountability, education has become increasingly focused on testing and scores. But working with children means working with changing states and qualities of being that cannot be quantified or measured. In this workshop we will explore ways of honing our skills of observation so that we are better able to perceive and respond to the children in our care. The classroom is also a place where our egos can get hooked and we can find ourselves reacting in ways we may later regret. How can we prepare ourselves internally for leading a class of children and creating a safe environment where children feel seen?

Afternoon sessions include artistic workshops to practice qualitative perceiving (watercolor painting or clay modeling), and the opportunity to sign up for a one-on-one coaching session with Ray Silverman on personal growth challenges within the context of the classroom.

Registration opens on April 22

Early bird registration: \$60

Registration after May 22: \$75

To register, contact Angela Rose: angela.rose@brynathyn.edu or 267-502-2566

SAVE THE DATE!

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE

The Art of Awareness in the Classroom:

**Cultivating the Capacity for Observing
and Perceiving the Children in Our Care**

A workshop with Ray Silverman, Kathy Schrock, & Angela Rose

Saturday, June 22, 2019 | 9 am - 4 pm

To register, email: angela.rose@brynnathyn.edu or call 267-502-2566. Registration opens 4/22/19.



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