

THETA ALPHA JOURNAL



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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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What Does “The Word Made Flesh” Mean?

Erika Brown

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us
(John 1:14).

“The Word made Flesh” is a phrase we may have heard many times. It has represented a dry, tangled doctrinal concept to me. The phrase had more the tone of a ritualized saying and less that of part of my living faith—a phrase that I have avoided partly from discomfort and partly from laziness. How do I take this mystical piece of text and use it as the Lord intended? What follows was the fruit of my first conscious engagement with this concept.

Divine Love always loves. The Divine doesn’t love some more than others, or only provide most of what someone needs, and all of what others need. This Love, that is the Lord’s essence, meets all people where they can be met, and provides that Love might be received in the most complete way. The Word made Flesh is a tremendous example of this, both historically, and personally for each human being.

A very literal reading of the Word made Flesh could be taken to mean that the Lord became an earthly body made of the cells and organ systems that are called flesh. This very earthly word, flesh, makes me think of unconnected body pieces, or functioning earthly processes. Are there many words more earthly, and

temporal than this word? This word, “flesh,” is the most suited one, as it brings the mind to the process of the Incarnation, being the process of God coming to earth as a Man in a human body. This was the miracle it sounds; the Divine Love actually being channeled into a human body. The Word made Flesh is Incarnation. In this regard the Word made Flesh is a temporal event. All states develop and slough away over time, and the state of the Jewish Church is no exception. Before the Incarnation, the state of the Jewish Church was providing a place for the externals of worship to be held on the earth. This church, being heavily ritualized and focused on maintenance of law, was the place that the Divine could be represented. Its dedication to obedience and strictness in enforcement allowed it to actively hold this space for the Word to be on earth. However, as its focus remained tightly on obedience, blind adherence, it was a church of the head. It might be said that faith lived in the head of the Jews, as law and obedience. As the state of this church did not have an internal connection to Love through a real experience of the Divine, it was not a church that could combat what the hells were doing at that time. The activity and power of the hells to infest and rule, while not omniscient in any way, was not a place that the Jewish Church could engage, as it was based so heavily in external expression.

To remedy this situation, and provide for continued salvation, the Word was made Flesh. The Lord coming to earth and being glorified was the way that the hells could be subdued by the Lord. In a temporal place, with a temporal body, this Intercession from the Divine was provided, so that the channels to heaven could remain open for humans and order maintained. This becomes so when Jesus as the Word is on the earth. Jesus as the Incarnation is the key to the historical Word made Flesh. The revolutionary teachings of Jesus forever altered the spiritual

experience of mankind. The Word, as Jesus, asked mankind to go beyond the message of the head, and turn toward a message of the heart. Jesus taught about the kingdom within, and told this new Christian church to face inward, toward the internal world of intention and motivation.

This new focus, shifting from rules to intentions, is revolutionary, and provides the materials needed for mankind to once again maintain a connection and move toward heaven. And it wasn't just some great ideas that sparked this salvation: when the Lord came to the world as a man, mankind was forever able to connect with the Divine in a way they were able to understand. Jesus was not an angry god in a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night; He was a way to grasp the Divine and an understandable path out of the mire of hell. He was a Man, yes a Divine one, but to the minds of mankind, He now could be associated with relatable actions and thoughts, which is so necessary for earthly minds. This Divine in the finite serves to connect us with the Infinite. Finally, with Jesus as the Word made Flesh, the hells could be met in their own arena, on a plane where they could be properly reordered. The Lord even managed the hells in a merciful way, not destroying them, but coming to them where they could be managed, and so subduing them. All of the activity was in the effort toward preservation of all beings, heavenly and hellish.

The worldly nature of this word "flesh" is entirely suited to the nature of the development of personal spiritual awakening. Looking into the Greek, it seems to indicate part of the root word of "flesh" means, "to sweep with a broom." The concept here for me starts as one focussed on parts, bits of muscle, the pieces of us that move the bones of the body. This implies work of a very worldly origin with sweeping being perhaps one of the lowest household chores. It is a very earthly word in another sense, in that dust swept with a broom would speak to me of

a very physical place of interaction with the Word. Dust is the detritus of living; it is what is left over from dirt. It does not have life in itself. But this is where a person is spiritually, we live in the sweepings of the floor of heaven. Much of what is in us is fit for being swept up by the broom. So this word, "flesh," is the perfect word to bring our thoughts to what the Incarnation does for our spiritual awakening, our process to salvation. We simultaneously both labor and live in dust, and we are the dust.

All humans must go through times of external focus. This is where the work of being human lies. An external focus to spiritual life is not a shameful state, but one of necessity, as a person needs this detritus, this dust, to be where they awaken to the Lord. We want it to be esoteric and glamorous! The confusion that we can fall prey to is that external religious expression, whether of piety or morality, for example, is the end goal of spiritual work. When it doesn't make us feel happy anymore, we are disappointed. Why aren't we happy, we may wonder? We are living in an ordered, obedient state, but feeling dissatisfaction, unrest, and an experience of being lost and in captivity. This could be our minds in the state of the Prophets, disturbed by the lack of internal worship, but not really knowing what we need. Captives to our own external focus, we suffer in far-away lands and live in confusion. During this time, the Word prophecies to these states in us, lending us hope, promising that a living state can come.

To move into the next state in spiritual awakening, the Word must be made Flesh in our minds. This is a movement from an external focus of spiritual work to an internal focus of spiritual work. This happens when we apply the Word to the dust in our lives, and begin to acknowledge that life is the Lord's alone. This change of focus can be a lifelong work. So the new Word is born and takes us where we can more accurately observe and

categorize what must be cast aside, and what of the Lord can remain in us. The work of this new church in us lies inward. The Lord in us, in this new state, provides the means to work as if of ourselves, but to continually observe and acknowledge that it is a mere appearance that we have life, and that external religious practice is not a complete religious practice. Jesus, in our minds, asks us to question our old ideas of what worship is. He asks us to reevaluate if what we are saying with our mouths is what we think with our hearts. The birth of the Word will happen infinitely in a person working to spiritually awaken. Every time it holds the depth and breadth of an incarnation. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory." We have never arrived or completed this process of awakening from the dust. In this sense, the temporal definition of the Word made Flesh becomes a template for a recurring process in spiritual life. A question that remains for me is this: How do I more fully experience and act on the opportunity of the Word made Flesh? The Word has come down to the sweepings of the floor in me, and is asking to have a reciprocal relationship and aid in my salvation. How do I participate?

Erika Synnestvedt Brown is currently studying with the Australian New Church College, as well as training to become a hospital chaplain. Both of these bring her great joy, but are outshone by her five dynamic and precious children and her husband. She lives in Kempton, PA. She can be contacted at gardennerd34@gmail.com

Temptation

Coleman Glenn

For forty days and forty nights
the waters crash above the land
and storm clouds hide the two great lights.
An uncreation is at hand.

For forty days and forty nights
on Sinai, Moses sits in cloud
and eats no bread, nor drinks, but writes
the words that will convict the crowd.

For forty years of weary days
the manna falls, the daily bread
enduring though the people's praise
decays, and grievance grows instead.

For forty days and forty nights
the Lord endures the tempter's scorn.
Alone on desert land He fights
to see our undone souls reborn.

New Church Day Villanelle*

Coleman Glenn

Let earth with heaven ever sing
The good news the apostles brought:
The Lord God Jesus Christ is King!

With heaven's armies following,
He conquered, and the Word of God
Let earth with heaven ever sing.

Still hear their anthem echoing:
“Forever over realms He's wrought
The Lord God Jesus Christ is King!”

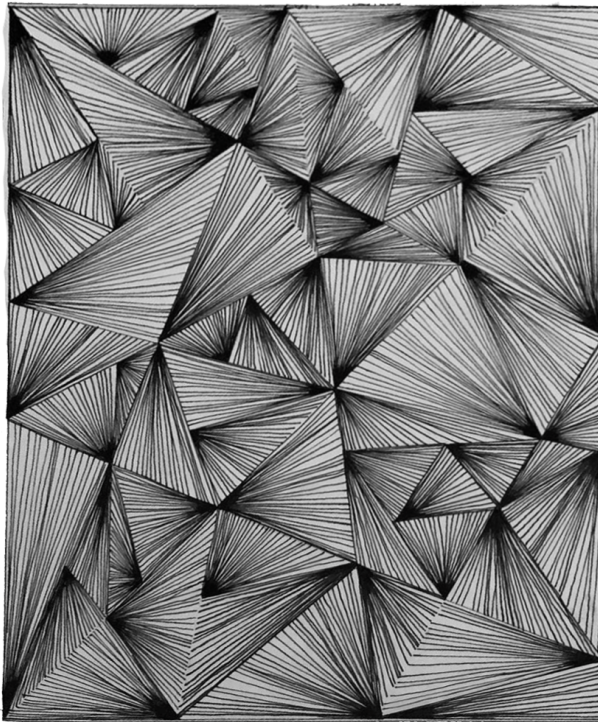
And yet when night is darkening
I see with shame where I have not
Let earth with heaven ever sing—

Where I abandoned suffering
For comfort, as if I forgot
The Lord God Jesus Christ my King.

But hold, my soul, from anguishing;
Awake, for battles must be fought!
Let earth with heaven ever sing:
The Lord God Jesus Christ is king!

*Villanelle: a French verse form consisting of five 3-line stanzas and a sixth 4-line stanza. Lines 1 & 3 of the first stanza are alternated as the last lines in stanzas two, three, four and five. Also, these same two lines become the final two lines in the sixth, or last, stanza of the poem (Poetry Foundation).

Coleman Glenn is assistant chaplain and assistant professor of religion at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. He lives in Huntingdon Valley with his wife Anne Grace and their three children. He can be contacted at coleman.glenn@gmail.com



Book Review: *The Peabody Sisters* by Megan Marshall

Meg Eynon

There is a trend in publishing now to tell the stories of women in history who have been forgotten or marginalized. The *Peabody Sisters* is a book about three women whom the author is crediting with igniting the period of American Romanticism.

Elizabeth, Mary and Sophia Peabody were women who were actively involved in reform movements. They were collectively the founders of the kindergarten movement in the United States, champions of modern educational theory and supporters of the arts.

During the 1800s these women lived extraordinary lives outside of the domestic realms which were considered not only the norm for women at the time but were also considered one's religious and societal duty. These sisters were opening bookstores, teaching as a lifetime vocation, publishing intellectual journals, founding the first United States kindergarten system, and writing books, to name a few of the outstanding and unusual activities for an American woman during this period.

Elizabeth is credited with being a foundational support to the transcendental movement and she followed a vision of human goodness through practical application in the world. This resonated with me as I was reading the book. My rough translation

of this intention was that it was important to be “of use” in this world. Although this is an idea that is credited to Unitarianism, this struck me as a very specific New Church ideal.

The women frequently were in touch with transcendental thinkers like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Branson Alcott, Sampson Reed and David Henry Thoreau. They were actively involved in publishing works of the bold new literary figures of their time. Sophia married Nathaniel Hawthorne, and encouraged him during financial struggles to keep writing until he was published. The list of famous intellectual and literary men that these women not only had contact with but were supporting or influencing in their belief systems was nothing short of remarkable.

All the while as I read *The Peabody Sisters*, I kept thinking about all of the ideas that the women were exploring, from having a relationship with the Lord directly, to being of use in the world as a force of personal development and good, and the importance of individual education for seeking enlightenment. They felt, for want of a better phrase, “so New Church.”

And then, which should not have really surprised me, there it was. *Swedenborg*. The name typed into a paragraph. The light bulb went off in my head, and “of course.” I am not an historian, nor much of a scholar, so I won’t even begin to try to give a primer on Swedenborg and the American Transcendental movement. I did, however, find a book by Anders Hallegren called *Gallery of Mirrors, Reflections of Swedenborgian Thought* published by The Swedenborg Foundation. This book specifically covers the influence of The Writings during the Transcendental period and mentions the Peabody sisters. The correlation between American Romanticism, transcendentalism and the New Church is definitely there and is exciting.

Both books are worth the read. It is always truly exciting for me as I read to see the influence of New Church thinking at

critical times in history. I hope you may enjoy and find the same excitement of the unexpected reference to Swedenborg that crops up so casually, as if we should take it for granted, in the thinking of this and so many other crucial time periods.

An avid reader, Meg graduated from The Academy of The New Church in 1988. Meg and her husband live in Paoli, Pennsylvania and enjoy gardening together. Meg can be contacted at megeynon@gmail.com



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! Contact information is in the beginning of this *Journal*.

A Talk by Shannon Good

Shannon Good was asked by the ANC Girls School to be one of their two "Distinguished Alumnae" for Charter Day 2020 (they ask 2 alumnae each Charter Day). Like other "Distinguished Alumnae," she was asked to talk with the seniors girls at ANC about anything that she felt was important. This talk/article was her offering. To fully appreciate the article, you need to know that Shannon currently has not one but two dream jobs: she is a part-time librarian at the Bryn Athyn Church Elementary School as well as being the owner and operator of Bryn Ellis Guest House, a bed and breakfast in Bryn Athyn.

I would like to share some things I wish I had known when I was your age. I'd like to start with a story:

Once upon a time a baby girl was born. Her parents tried to guess what their little girl would grow up to be. She grew up in a Western culture where comparison was the focus, that said you had to be the best of the best and you had to be successful, "successful" being defined by how much stuff you had. Mistakes, she was told, proved that you were not the best of the best and would haunt you forever. The parents loved their little girl and wanted her to be happy. But the parents, because of the culture, were afraid that she might make a mistake; that she might not have or be enough. What if she said the wrong thing? What if she did the wrong thing? What if she wasn't smart enough or pretty enough or talented enough? They loved her and encouraged her, but she had seen as she was growing up that her parents were afraid that, like themselves, she would not have or be enough. Eventually, the little girl grew up. She worked hard and got a college education, like she was supposed to . . . and tried not to make any mistakes; she got a job she liked, like

she was supposed to, . . . and tried harder to not make any mistakes; she married and had a perfect family, like she was supposed to, . . . but lived in fear of making life-long mistakes with her husband and children. Having a family was one of the happiest times in her life. But then she made mistakes and her family fell apart—she believed she was a failure.

That little girl could be me, my mom, you. Who am I? My name is Shannon Smith Good. I grew up in Bryn Athyn, went to the elementary school here, attended ANC, and got my Associates degree at Bryn Athyn College. I then got my bachelors in Secondary Education and Social Studies from James Madison University in Virginia, followed by my Masters in Library Science from Catholic University in Washington, DC.

I then married and lived away from Bryn Athyn for over 25 years. I worked in the Washington, DC metro area, followed by 20 years in central PA. While in DC and the first 5 years in central PA, I worked first as a high school librarian for 4 years, then at an elementary school for learning disabled and emotionally disturbed children for 4 years. I home-schooled my children until my oldest was college age, then my children and I moved back to Bryn Athyn so that my daughter could attend Bryn Athyn College and my son could attend ANC.

I am now 59 years old and I am one of the librarians at the Bryn Athyn Church School AND I own a bed and breakfast in Bryn Athyn, called Bryn Ellis Guest House.

A lot of living has happened since I was at ANC. There have been a lot of ups and a lot of downs, but what has increased my joy during the good times and sustained me through the bad times has been community. I don't know about you, but to me, community is the connections we make with other people around common interests, attitudes and goals, even just location, such as here at ANC. Providence has guided me to the communities I needed when I needed them. When I interviewed for the position at the elementary

school for learning disabled and emotionally disturbed children, I was excited about the prospect of working with those children. The principal told me that I was the first interviewee who had not been scared by working with those children. Why? Because my dad and my brother both had dyslexia, and I had a first cousin who was mentally challenged, so knowing and working with that group of children felt familiar. Providence had helped prepare me for working there! Providence also provided the community I needed there to thrive—a community of experienced teachers who were willing to mentor me as I learned my job.

A community can be global or just 2 people. We have our family communities, our local communities, our national communities, our professional communities, our school community, our friend community, our online community, our church community, and more.

Creating community is a passion of mine, but until I was 50 I could not name my passion. When I turned 50, I had a crisis in my family, and I discovered that community helped carry me through that crisis. I would not be here today without my communities: my family, my friends, my school, my town, my online, and my church communities.

What was my crisis? My husband found someone else and divorced me. I was devastated. Family had always been my number-one focus, and now my “perfect” family was tearing apart. Then both of my children moved onto campus at the college. Suddenly, I was living alone. I realized that I needed a community even in my home. So I started by having a renter in my house—a beginning to a new community in my house.

My identity and self-worth had also been shattered. What could I do to repair that? I had to find a way. There is the saying that, “When God closes a door, He opens a window.” His Providence opened a crack in that window for me: He showed me that I needed to be with children so that I could re-discover who I was (was I worthy of love?) and so that I could learn to live in the present as they

do. The most honest and present people I know are young children. So I volunteered as an aide in the 1st grade three days a week. I discovered that the structure provided by showing up at school and the love I received from the children started to heal me. After 5 years of volunteering, I was given a position and have been one of the two librarians at the Bryn Athyn Church School for 3 years so far. The school community makes me feel alive and vibrant!

My extended family was also supportive. However, I am also a great believer in “family by choice,” whether it be a whole family by choice, a grandparent by choice, a parent by choice, or a sibling by choice. You can always choose to add new “family” members to your biological family.

Then Providence not only opened my window all the way, the Lord turned it into a huge sliding glass door and opened it wide! If you had asked me anytime during the first 53 years of my life, if I would ever own a bed & breakfast, I would have looked at you like you were crazy. Happily, even if my family thought I was crazy, they kept that to themselves and fully supported me when I decided to buy a bigger house so that I could have a larger community in my home. I now have 8 people who call my property home, which is a delight to me.

Even with 8 people, I still had extra bedrooms. I thought about renting them out for people to live in, but I wanted flexibility in terms of having those same bedrooms available when family or friends came to visit Bryn Athyn. So I decided to make my house a bed and breakfast, and Bryn Ellis Guest House was born.

Running a bed and breakfast is another dream job for me. *How many people get to have 2 dream jobs at one time?* What a difference in my life it has made owning and operating a bed and breakfast! During non-covid times, I have up to 9 additional people (yes, 9 guests plus my 8 regular residents) in my home community—I’ve even had as many as 17 guests at a time for weddings. I try to make staying at my bed and breakfast affordable, especially

for families with small children because children bring another level of joy to my home community. Many guests have stayed at my bed and breakfast numerous times, and every time they walk through the door on a return visit, it feels to me like family has come back to visit. I have also met numerous people I never would have met if they had not stayed at my bed and breakfast. Examples are a researcher from the Louvre in Paris, the band *Darlingside*, a family who does Star Wars re-enactments as a family hobby, also, people from Canada, England, Australia, Sweden, Germany, Korea, Japan, South Africa.

Communities are made up of people, and every person is unique. Each person has their own lens of experience, interest, knowledge and passion that they bring. These unique lenses can lead to division among the people in a community. On the small scale of my B&B, the long-term residents of my home community have sometimes been divided over issues. For example, the issue of privacy. Where do B & B guests' right to enjoy my house and grounds conflict with my long-term residents' right to some privacy? When do guests' desire for staying up late talking on our porches conflict with my long-term residents' desire for an early bedtime? My home community has had to work to find answers that keep us connected rather than dividing us.

Conflicts can be barriers to connection and community. However, there are several things that I have found to be very helpful when trying to create and maintain community connection. These are also things I truly wish I had known at your age!

I hope to plant four seeds in your minds that I believe can support your efforts to build your own communities. The first is: The Lord loves variety. *I have a couple of different flowers here. Look at each one closely: its color, shape, size, formation. Is one your favorite? What do they look like when I put them together in a bunch?* I do have a favorite, but each is beautiful in its own way. Each flower is made up of several different parts, which all work together to

become a beautiful whole. Heaven is a kingdom of variety and the Lord created it and delights in it. Variety CAN imply differences and if those differences are the FOCUS, then those differences can divide. So how do we counter-act that possible division? By acknowledging that, while every member in our community may have the same or similar goal, each of us has a different perspective on it; just like all flowers are different and need different things to grow.

Sometimes issues come up because we do not take the time to truly listen to what other people are saying. By “listening,” I mean listening to HEAR what someone is saying, not just listening to RESPOND. When you are excited about something, it can be hard to slow down and listen and actually hear what another person is saying, but listening is a very important skill that we ALL need to work on. I have even taken a class on how to listen to hear. If we truly listen to hear, we will be better able to learn that there is beauty in variety as we work with other members, looking for the good intentions in their ideas and actions.

The second is from a quote by Martin Luther King, Jr.: “Everybody can be great because everyone can serve.” *EVERYONE CAN SERVE!* That means everyone can connect. The introverted person who would rather spend all day on her computer rather than interacting with physical people can still serve by doing things for people online. That extroverted person who does not appear to get much done because she is so busy listening to friends’ problems is serving. I personally believe that personal connection is essential to human mental health, but each person has a different level of personal connection that they need. Does serving someone else have to be a huge act? I do not believe so. One of my favorite things to do when I am going through a check-out line is to look the teller in the eye and say, “*Thank you for your help*” and *smile*. Imagine yourself as a checkout person watching dozens of people an hour go through your line. Many have told me that they start to feel like invisible automatons, and it makes their day go very slowly. Howev-

er, these same checkout people have told me that when customers take even 15 seconds just to see them as a person and connect, it brightens their day and makes it go faster. Maya Angelou writes, “If you find it in your heart to care for somebody else, you will have succeeded.” I believe she is right!

And that is where acceptance and faith come in. Don’t waste your energy complaining or struggling against how hard life can be, accept that it is hard and put all of your energy into learning from it. And if the mistake was made by someone against you, forgive them, and allow them the dignity of making amends and growing into a more loving human being.

The third is from Dr. Dan Gottlieb, a nationally recognized mental health expert, talk show host, columnist, lecturer, author. . . and quadriplegic. He is paralyzed from the neck down. Dr. Gottlieb says that it is perfectly fine to live under the bell curve. “I have learned that we humans tend to be happier when we are where we belong rather than trying to get somewhere that is not really who we are,” he said in his book, *Learning From the Heart*. Here is a picture of a bell curve. Way over here to the right is the top 1% of people. Look at how tiny that is! And that is only the people that are the top 1% in whatever this particular curve is measuring. The rest of us are all somewhere below that 1%. 157,000,000 million women live in the US. 157 MILLION! The culture in our country tells us that we can only be successful if we are in the top 1% of our 157 million women. That is only 1.5 million. In clearer numbers, if we take 1,000 women, only 10 of those 1000 women can be in the top 1%—just 10! Does that mean the other 990 women are failures? Absolutely not!

I know that I am not in the top 1% of healthiest women, more like the middle %. As you can see from my hands I have had rheumatoid arthritis since I was 16 years-old, which has required several joint replacements and meant I could no longer play sports. I also have asthma, and, at times, I struggle with depression. However, because of my supportive communities, I do not define myself by

my physical limitations. *I am not in the top 1% of intelligent women.* I love science and I can easily grasp scientific concepts, but ask me to translate those concepts mathematically, and I just cannot do it. *I am not in the top 25% of emotionally intelligent women,* let alone the top 1%. However, I can still listen, I can still support, I can still serve, I still matter. And, because I am not in the top 1% of any group, I think it helps me understand and connect better with the 99% of people who are not in the top 1%. You can serve, so you can be great, too.

Another positive thing about being under the bell curve is that if you make a mistake, no one is shocked. If you are in the top 1%, people expect you to be perfect.

Author Robin Sharma says, “There are no mistakes in life, only lessons. There is no such thing as a negative experience, only opportunities to grow. From struggle comes strength. Even pain can be a wonderful teacher.”

I love that there are no mistakes in life, only lessons. “*But,*” you may say, as I still do, “*But those lessons can be so terribly hard and painful!*” Yes, they can and are. However, if you look at my life path as an example, I had no idea at the beginning that Providence would lead me to where I am today: I have an extended family by choice, two dream jobs, one of which I did not even know was one of my dream jobs, and I belong to wonderful communities I never dreamed I’d be a part of!

The fourth has been life-changing for me. Author Brené Brown in *Daring Greatly* asks the question. “What is the opposite of scarcity?” So now I will ask you, “What is the opposite of scarcity?”

Did you answer “abundance,” “plenty,” “bounty,” “lots”? Brené Brown says that the opposite of scarcity is enough. Think about that—ENOUGH. If you do not have enough food, shelter, love, can you survive? No. However, if you DO have enough food, shelter, love, can you survive and even thrive? Yes. You do not need more than enough. You are enough. You, right now, are enough. I wish I had known that at your age! You are enough to be part of a

community, or two communities, or even more—family, friendship group, school, team, church, and online communities.

Can you become more? Absolutely! It is important to have goals and ideals that you are working towards. They give you direction and help keep you focused on a better world. They keep you in connection with people—communities of people. You are never finished evolving or becoming. Even in heaven you continue to evolve and become more and more the best possible you. AND, you are enough right now. It is not about being enough OR not enough, becoming OR not becoming, it is about being enough AND still becoming . . . forever.

Now, you might be wondering what happened to that woman in the story I told at the beginning. Well, the woman continues to grow through mistakes, support from her communities, and her trust in Providence. Her life had big ups and big downs. Her life has not been a straight line and has had many detours from her birth to now. She is TRULY LEARNING that, despite what the culture around her is telling her,

The Lord loves variety.

Everybody can be great because anyone can serve.

Life is good under the bell curve.

Communities support you along your path of life.

And, YOU ARE ENOUGH!

Shannon (Smith) Good was raised in Bryn Athyn, then worked and lived in Central Pennsylvania raising and homeschooling her 2 children for 20 years, before moving back to Bryn Athyn so that her daughter could attend Bryn Athyn College and her son could be at ANC for his junior and senior years of high school. You may contact her at shannon.good1@gmail.com

Take to the Sea

Rev. Thomas H. Rose

Let us take to the sea today
As we have done before
Tossing all our cares away
Scattered on the shore

Come with me, my child, my wife
My long and trusted friend
We'll sail the seas and test this life
Before the day must end

And by and by the sun will set
And we will come ashore
And having lived with no regret
I'll sail the sea once more

*This poem was written for Peter G. Bostock's memorial service,
July 11, 2020.*

At My Father's Side

(To Dad in honor of his 80th Birthday)
Bonnie Cowley

The little girl cradled the seedling in her small hands, the black soil, loose on her pink fingers, crumbled down to the ground where a crude hole was dug. Gently she placed the little package into the hole raking the dirt around the plant with her hands, all the while glancing up at me with her dark brown eyes as if to ask, "Is this all right, Granny?" It's perfect, I say to myself. . . . awed at the pleasure this small task seems to give her.

My mind drifts back nearly 60 years. This time I'm the little girl sitting next to a long furrow, a handful of precious seeds in my hand. A gentle voice strokes my ears with the soft sound of encouragement and instruction. I'm content to sit and plant these few seeds, but mostly I watch as my father cultivates the soil. I'm intrigued by the machine in his strong grasp. It makes no noise except the *scritch scritch* as its five curved tongs dig into the stony ground and the occasional squeak of its large steel wheel.

At Dad's side I learned to love the earth and the world of nature.

My daughter and I are driving in the car to work. The CD player is blasting out one of her favorite tunes. . . . It's one of mine too. The two of us unashamedly sing out loud with the song, both jockeying to sing a different harmony. My mind drifts back to my early teens, to the Beatles, Peter, Paul and Mary, and the Beach Boys. My dad was cool then, he liked my music; he would play my music on the record player; he would sing to my music. But that really

was not so surprising. He loved all music. He would fill the house on Sundays with Dvořak's *New World Symphony*. On Saturday afternoons he would often play Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass as he worked around the house. If he could talk three or four of his daughters into doing the dishes he would teach us how to sing the close harmony of "On a Chinese Honeymoon" until Mom would plug her ears or leave the room fearing the dishes would never get done. Or he would pull out his guitar and sing the pop songs of his day. But I think my favorite times were some late evenings when he would put on Mantovani and dance with me.

At Dad's side I learned to love all music.

My fifteen-year-old son puts the finishing coat of wax on the church tile floors. He stands for a minute and admires the beauty of a job well done. We talk about the week's work — what it took to come to this pleasurable moment — the scraping, scrubbing, and mopping, the heat and the sweat. My mind drifts back to the Pittsburgh church, the lovely green flagstone that was once blackened from soot and time. The hours upon hours of scraping, scrubbing, and mopping that I did with my dad to make them green again. I remember the wooden flooring under the pews and think about the many nights spent on hands and knees with sanders and varnish turning that old rough dark wood new again. I can still feel the softness of the wood under my hand, see the now visible flowing patterns of the wood grain outlining animals and faces like those you see in clouds. I can still smell the sawdust and feel its grit in my eyes. And I can still feel the heaviness in my shoulders, arms, and legs as we drove home late at night. . .yet that heaviness somehow felt good. At Dad's side I learned to love hard work.

I lie in bed. Tears run down my cheeks and into my ears. My throat is tight as I choke back the sobs. I am angry with my husband. We've argued. Somehow, he just can't see things my way. "If he loved me," I say to myself. . . .

My mind drifts back. I am once again lying in bed, but this time

I lie motionless, listening to the distant angry voices of my parents. Money is tight or one of my siblings is in trouble I cannot really make out the conversation. I just know that they are unhappy and angry. Then I remember the love on their faces when they sing the anniversary song. I think of the lectures Dad would give us on respecting our mother and knew how much he respected her. I can smell the wonderful bread Mom would make for him, the time she would take to look her best each day when he came home from work. I remember the procession of anniversaries.

At my parents' side I learned about commitment.

I sit on the side of my grandchildren's beds. I have read them several stories and have instructed them to fold their little hands. As I begin to recite "Now I lay me . . . ," I must stifle back a yawn. The same yawn I would have to stifle night after night when I would say the prayer when my own children were little.

My mind drifts back to when I was tucked into bed. Dad had played us guitar songs (riled us all up, as mom would say) then he would tuck us into bed and say the prayer. "Now I lay me (yawn) down to sleep (yawn). . . ." It worked nearly every time. I do not believe I yawned as much because I was tired, but because I was at peace, safe and content.

At Dad's side I learned about trust and about the Lord's love.

Thank you Dad!

Love,
Bonnie

Yvonne (Bonnie) Alden Cowley: My father, John, is the youngest son of Rev. Karl Alden. I am 4th of 12 children of John & Joan Alden. I grew up in Pittsburgh and attended the Pittsburgh New Church School from 1st - 9th grade. I attended ANC as well as 2½ years of BA College. I have been married to David Cowley for the last 47 years and we have 6 children and 15 grandchildren. After moving around a lot in our earlier years, my husband and I settled in the Washington D.C. area and have lived there for the last 33 years. I have worked as the Church and School secretary for 27 years. I can be contacted at Bonniecowley@washnewchurch.org

The Gardener's Work

Eugene O. Muth, Jr.

I am wondering what becomes of a gardener's work after he is gone, or simply moves on to another garden. All the planning and work that goes into the making of a garden, what becomes of all that? Ideally we could hope that a gardener would come along and have the desire to continue to improve what has already been started. It would take a lot of work to take it out and return the space to grass. However, grass would be easier to care for in the long run. It would be easier to mow grass or to find someone to do it than it might be to find knowledgeable help to care for the established garden as it moved through all its stages through the year.

Early Flower Recollections

I must have been about 5 years old and in kindergarten, at Ogontz School in Rydal, PA, about two blocks away from our house on Woodland Road in Abington. One of my classmate's names was Edwina Porter. Her father was a doctor at Abington hospital and their house was just across from the school. They had a large garden in their back yard and one day on the way home I stopped and picked an armload of daffodils and took them home. Mother was furious and marched me right back to Mrs. Porter to show her what I had done, and to apologize! I don't think I ever did that again. The stems must have been very

short because daffodils are not easy to “pick.”

I learned about German Bearded Iris from another neighbor about the same time. She had lots of them in her garden. I don't think I picked any of hers. She and Mother went down the whole row showing them to me. They must have been wonderful and made a big impression on me. Iris have always been one of my favorite flowers. I have enjoyed painting several, even a dramatic one in black. I have one iris that blooms indoors and is just in bud now.

When we moved into our house on Inverness Lane, a few miles away, I remember Grandpa bringing a white azalea and an abelia bush, and watching him plant them in the yard. We also had a hedge of yew bushes with bright red berries that I was told never to eat.

Another memory is that of mowed grass and “ground ivy,” an invasive, low-growing vine that was brought in during Victorian times as ground cover, and it soon went berserk! Most older lawns now have some of it somewhere.

We moved again in 1946. This house had rose bushes in the yard with tiny orange flowers. Again I was impressed. I was really beginning to notice and enjoy flowers. Grandpa showed up again with his dark blue Ford, the white azalea and the abelia in the trunk. Again he planted them for Mother.

When we moved to Morningside on Huntingdon Pike (near the Cathedral in Bryn Athyn) in 1947, a great big world of flowers, plants and trees of all kinds opened for me to learn about. Mother knew the names of most of them. The gardens there always had something in bloom and we always had flowers in the house. In the winter it would be evergreens, then forced spring blossoms. I guess from those beginnings I became a florist and gardener. I made my very first flower arrangements when I was in the 5th grade at Lower Moreland school and entered them in

the fall flower show. I won one first prize, with a blue ribbon and an honorable mention! This was 1949.

Over the past years, I watched a friend's garden become just too much to handle, as age and health prevented her from continuing the work herself. The garden became so overgrown that the only real solution would be to plow it in and start over. A sort of plant genocide! There was a large collection of daylilies and other choice perennials that had grown in their same locations for decades; some re-seeded themselves many times and were no longer true to the original colors, but were quite different. I know the roses had reverted to the color of the root-stock and bloomed in that odd sort of blood red color. An ancient raspberry bed was still struggling as it wandered in and out of the various other plantings, producing an occasional fruit here and there. There was another large area of overgrown hostas that thickly bloomed in summer, eventually going to seed. Of course, these seed-pods ripened and in time burst open to produce new baby hosta plants. The effect of all these hostas in bloom was spectacular in late summer, a sea of tall lavender flower spikes.

My friend's garden must have been well over 65 years old when I last knew it. Many years of dedicated work and enjoyment had kept it going. Now some years later it is basically gone. There are some traces remaining but hardly enough to reveal that a large and lovely garden had even been there.

My own garden is now less than half the age of that friend's garden and probably about in its prime. Again I wonder, "What does become of all that planning and work?" And I feel it has to be kept going as long as there are those, like myself, who enjoy it. There are times when I think I have created some sort of monster that is demanding my attention.

If I rethink its demands, it is easier to justify, as it is mostly a maintenance issue now. Pruning is the important work, the effort

to keep it all within bounds. Shrubby plants need to be kept in their allotted spots or a major problem will develop. Perennials only need attention every 3 or 4 years and can slide by a bit longer if they have to. The divisions of those plants can then be used to fill in other parts of the garden, given to other gardener friends or thrown away. Yes, they may be thrown away!! For years I believed that every small division had to be kept in my garden. It needed to have a new home and never be thrown away. While this may be of economic value while developing a young garden and trying to fill up space, it can create greater labor later on. This is especially true when dealing with small spaces. I no longer think it is wasteful.

Another garden theory of mine is that if I try a new plant, some variety not tried before, and it is not a happy camper, then I am willing to let go of it and say it is not for this garden. There is so much wonderful material out there to try, why struggle with a plant that is never going to be happy here?

I have a gardening friend who I am sure thinks I am some sort of a murderer, a kind of serial killer! She continues to think that I should try to find a new home for all the baby plants I want to get rid of.

It is now the last full week of April and the garden is showing lots of color and letting us know that it made it through another winter. I am soon to enter my 75th year and wonder if I am approaching the age when I will no longer be able to do the necessary work myself. Something to think about but I won't spend too much time thinking!

So maybe the best thing to do about the garden question is to just hope for the best, and perhaps the right person will come along and love the garden as much as we have!

Most of us know that this love of gardening can only come from the Lord, himself.

Update: February 2021! We have had a great deal of snow here in Berks County, Pennsylvania, and it is still on the ground. Maybe 25/30 inches! With all that snow we also have the deer invasion and they have eaten all the greenery they could reach! Holly, rhodys, and they love yews. There will be a major clean up this spring. After that we will know what damage was really done.

Gene writes: I was raised a Quaker in Huntingdon Valley and joined the New Church in 1956. My wife, Andri (Simons) Muth, and I had a flower shop on Huntingdon Pike (across the Pike from the house I was born in). We moved to Maine for two years and then to Kempton. I am now retired and live in Lenhartsville. I enjoy my garden and oil painting. I can be contacted at eugenemuth@outlook.com



Proud and Priestley: Two Josephs and Two Movements Intersect in History

Chelsea Rose Odhner

Introduction: England was an epicenter of New Church growth from the beginning. Swedenborg had several of his theological works published in England and it was the sole location of his booksellers.¹ By the end of Swedenborg's life there were a number of avid receivers of the New Church doctrines in England and their numbers would grow exponentially in the decades immediately following Swedenborg's death.² Two main centers of growth were in London and Manchester. Between these two cities, a circle of New Church receivers developed in Birmingham as well.

Joseph Proud (1745-1826) was one of the early New Church ministers in England. He was exposed to New Church teachings by the traveling ministers Ralph Mather and Joseph Salmon when

1 See the Swedenborg Bibliography in the Essay Volume for the New Century Edition and episodes 19-21 of the Inside Off The Left Eye podcast. <https://inside-offthellefteye.simplecast.com/>

2 See Jane Williams-Hogan's doctoral thesis "A New Church in a Disenchanted World: A Study of the Formation and Development of the General Conference of the New Church in Great Britain" (1985) and *Annals of the New Church*, Vol 1, 1688-1850 by Carl Theophilus Odhner (1904).

they came to where he lived in Norwich.³ Already a Baptist minister and a popular preacher, Proud joined the New Church and was invited by the Rev. Samuel Hands to become the pastor of the New Church group in Birmingham where Hands was building the first dedicated New Church temple. Proud visited the site in 1790, and moved to the finished temple and manse in 1791.³

At that time, Birmingham was also home to the well-known chemist and philosopher Joseph Priestley (1733-1804). Priestley was known as a separatist theologian who opposed the Anglican church, and a political theorist who supported the French Revolution.⁴ Since the storming of the Bastille in France in 1789, England was feeling the impact of the French revolution whose aftershocks threatened the stability of England's own evolving government.

Proud and Priestley had in common that they were both religious dissenters from the Church of England. Priestley supported the founding of Unitarianism in England and Proud supported the development of the New Church there.³

What follows is a fictional account of real history. This moment in history captures my imagination because it is an intersection of the New Church and the larger foment of change going on in the world. The two narratives overlap in the persons and paths of Joseph Priestley and Joseph Proud. And they are each individual reflections of larger waves happening in the groups they represent. Each Joseph is taking care of his wife and children and caring for the movements each defended and represented. The

3 *Memoirs of the Rev. Joseph Proud (1745-1826)*. Typed from a photocopy of memoirs handwritten in 1822 by the Rev. Joseph Proud by the Rev. Daniel Goodenough in 1988. Unpublished. Accessed from the personal collection of Sarah Odhner.

4 Wikimedia Foundation. (2021, January 6). *Joseph Priestley*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Priestley. Accessed January 10th, 2021.

scene takes place on July 14th, 1791, the day Joseph Priestley had organized to have a dinner celebrating the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille at The Hotel in the center of Birmingham, within walking distance of Proud's home and the newly built New Church temple.

July 14th, 1791. Birmingham, England

Midday: Dr. Joseph Priestley held the ticket to the *French Revolution Dinner* in his hand. His thumb traced the embossed pattern encircling the freshly printed words. He had organized the dinner, celebrating the second anniversary of the storming of the Bastille, but now there were rumblings that the event would not be left in peace.

"And so you say there's going to be violence?" He held the ticket out to his friend Mr. Bayer who had come to warn him. They stood together in his study off from the front hall.

"That's the word I hear, I'm afraid," Bayer replied, "our adversaries expect you to be there, sir. It is for your own safety that I strongly implore you not to attend."

"I understand. And you expect me to cower before the threat of violence tonight as if it weren't already around every turn I take?" His reputation over the last several years had kindled as many enemies as it did supporters. Dr. Priestley, proud supporter of Unitarianism and author of seditious material against the government, placed the ticket inside his jacket pocket, tapped it lightly, and proceeded to do up the buttons of his coat.

"Now if you'll be so kind, Mr. Bayer, I have an errand to make before the dinner at three."

He clicked his heels together, extended his arm gracefully toward the door, and bowed punctiliously toward his friend, swiftly dismissing the man's concern. Bayer opened his mouth as if to say something, his eyes wide with consternation, then shut it,

pressing his wide caterpillar lips together and knitting his brow. “Doctor, with all due respect,” his words came out sputtering like tight shots of steam, “your attending this dinner will be a horrible mistake. I will leave you now, but think of your wife, of your young son!” Bayer stretched his squat form to stand as tall as he could, glaring up at Dr. Priestley’s seemingly cool defiance, then exhaling sharply, he turned toward the entryway and marched out.

The corner of the Doctor’s lips curled with coy amusement as he heard the shutting of the door. He didn’t wish to offend his friend, but it was part of his careful calculation. It would be useful to convince Bayer that he would be attending the dinner. Then no word otherwise would seep out in the meantime. Best to incur as much confusion on his whereabouts as possible. He wouldn’t be attending the dinner. The rumors of a simmering riot were too strong. His wife would be nearly finished packing their cases, and in all likelihood, they would arrive at the home of their friends, the Findleys, safe and removed in the country—beyond the reach of marching feet—in time for tea.

Half-past six in the evening: The Rev. Joseph Proud could see the new Temple of the New Church from his dining room window. Its warm fresh brick was a bright, strong red, shining in the late afternoon sun. He admired the strong angles of its frame, its symmetrical, arched windows, and its wide inviting stone patio at the front, facing the long stretch of Newhall Street that lay before it. He placed his tea cup in its saucer delicately. His every move was careful and deliberate when his wife, Susannah, and their newborn twins were napping. Moving slowly, silently, he picked up the freshly printed second edition of his New Church hymnbook which lay beside his plate on the table. He opened it at random and smiled as his eyes fell on the hymn of praise, a

favorite of his compositions, that they had sung at the opening of the temple. It had been a warm, sun-filled day just like this one, not even a month before. The memory was still so fresh in his mind that he returned to it often. The first New Church Temple in England—in the world! And he, the pastor! The construction was finished in time for them to have their opening services on June 19th, an auspicious day, echoing the momentous day when the honorable Swedenborg witnessed the Lord's disciples being sent to share the good news of the second coming throughout the spiritual world. At their own temple, there had been a sea of people spilling out of the temple doors and onto the patio, hearers of the disciples' call, like the waters flowing from the temple in Ezekiel's vision. Susannah hadn't been able to attend, convalescing from the birth of their sons, but she had told him once he had arrived home that day that it was a happy sound that had carried over to their new home beside the temple and had comforted her.

The doors to the temple had stood open for the whole day as the Rev. James Hindmarsh and himself conducted services. Hindmarsh's son Robert, the leader of the New Jerusalem church, had been able to attend the historical occasion as well, a boon to their congregation! And to think of all the people in this great city hearing of the new dispensation, not least of which the infamous Dr. Priestley! And several of them had had a private reception with the Doctor the following day at the home of Rev. Hands; young Robert had impressed them all, shining in the passionate theological debate that filled that afternoon.

Joseph Proud chuckled aloud at the providential fortuity of it all, then caught himself, stifling the noise. He paused and looked up toward the ceiling—silence. He exhaled in relief and broke a piece off the scone on his plate, spread it with cream. The perfect crumb of it, which their housekeeper Mrs. Darmott consistently

achieved, melted blissfully in his mouth.

He wondered whether Priestley would believe the great work of the Lord set before him that day and during their subsequent conversation. Priestley was a man of science and was thoroughly embroiled in the politics of the day and the Unitarian movement. As a separatist and fellow dissenter he might taste the divinity in the New Church teachings, but Proud knew from his own first exposure that the doctrine of the Divine Human appears before man's eyes like a phoenix—one assumes it must be fantasy since no such bird is known to exist. But would Priestley, like him, have that first exposure pierce his heart and cause a stir which grows and spreads throughout his whole being, heralding confirmation? He anticipated with delight the scheduled meeting they had for the morrow when Priestley was set to read his *Letters to the Members of the New Jerusalem Church*, his response to the New Church teachings, in a private reception with Rev. Hands and himself.

Proud sipped his tea and reclined against the tall carved back of his chair, closing his eyes in the peace and quiet. The light reflecting off the temple's southwest corner redirected the warmth of the late afternoon sun as a broad swath of comfort slowly climbing up his torso in its descent in the sky.

The great room of the temple had been so full on its dedication day, and the crowd so animated by the teachings, that between services the congregation had stayed in an enormous cluster, making it difficult for anyone to leave, voices lifting and carrying through the spacious ceiling. The layers of the linen of his robe had amplified the heat of his oratory. He had felt cloaked with divine blessing. He had descended from the pulpit, the heavy folds of his silk and linen sacerdotal garment catching and flowing against his careful gait. Within minutes his face had been painfully sore from the smiling, greeting and welcoming all

those present to the new dawn of Christianity now with a solid foundation beneath it on the earth. A place for the Holy City to land.

Proud had dedicated himself wholly to the cause of the New Church when he and Susannah moved to Birmingham at the beginning of the year. They had been grieved with the loss of their first son, but it filled Joseph with immense pride and hope in the Lord's providence when upon deciding to move to Birmingham, she had told him she was expecting again—and with twins! Two healthy sons, born to his bride only a week before the temple's dedication. They seemed a message from God, his own woman clothed with the sun giving birth to twins, at the same time as the opening of the New Jerusalem Temple. The yellow light which streamed through the open doors on that June day shined like the golden streets of the New Jerusalem. And the sound of the crowd outside as they dedicated the temple clapped like the waves of the river of the water of life flowing from God's throne through the city. The clapping and the cheering. Had there been cheering?

Joseph Proud's eyelids fluttered open, momentarily blinded by the sunlight that had reached the full height of his face. In his sleepy fog it took a moment for him to register that he was indeed hearing cheering from outside this very moment, but it did not sound like the joyful cries of praise. He thought he heard clapping too. He rubbed his eyes and shook himself alert. What in the world was that noise? Not clapping. Stomping? And not cheering. Jeering? He braced his hands on the table. He looked briefly up at the ceiling, a mounting sense of fear climbed his spine as the sounds from outside grew nearer.

He cringed as the chair skid loudly against the wooden floor as he pushed it back abruptly and ran to his front room. Pulling back the curtain, he peered out into the street.

“Oh my dear Lord!” He whispered, eyes widening. Coming up the street was a roiling storm of people with lit torches, black tails of smoke trailing above them. Some were holding clubs, others knives, and still more had firewood under their arms. They weren’t turning to the side or harassing the houses along the way. Their collective face was directed sharply at the single structure at the end of the road: the wide, gleaming front of the New Church Temple, illuminated by the setting sun.

Something flew forward from the crowd in a long arc, a fire ball in the sky. Proud flinched as the sound of shattered glass cut the air. It was one of the upper windows, and if the torch hadn’t been extinguished upon impact, then—! He couldn’t leave through his front door and run to the church - they would surely attack him on the spot, but he had to do something.

Just then a chorus of shrill cries erupted from upstairs. He rushed the curtain closed, the large rings scrapping against the iron rod, and ran to the foot of the stairs.

“Susannah!”

He could barely hear her voice above the babies’ cries, “Yes, what is the matter?”

“Stay where you are!” He called up to her, his mind madly racing on how to keep both his wife, his children, and the temple safe. “Don’t go anywhere!”

He didn’t have time to know whether she’d heard him. The boys’ screams rivaled the muffled sounds of the advancing mob. And if he didn’t get to it fast, a deafening fire would overwhelm them both!

He dashed back through the dining room, into the kitchen and out the back door. He sped to the water pump, grabbed the wide-mouthed hanging bucket and pumped as rapidly as he could. Gripping the bucket handle with both hands, he ran across the low meadow to the side of the church, his trousers catching

and dragging in the clusters of burdock, the water sloshing over the bucket's sides.

He coughed as a cool sharp smell wafted through the air to him and struck the back of his throat. Gin, mixed with the acrid sting of torch smoke. "Oh dear Lord," he repeated. The sound of more shattering glass clattered through the air. They were near enough now he could make out individual voices, and he managed to pick out a few of the calls. "No popery!" "Long live the king of England!" "Gauls to hell!"

His mind raced. *Why were they attacking the New Church Temple? And on a Thursday? Had he unwittingly incited a riot?* If the masses of Birmingham had hated his presence, why hadn't they attacked the church weeks ago, after the dedication on the 19th? *The 19th.* Now it was July.

July 14th: He reached the side door to the vestry and looking south, caught sight of a black cloud of smoke sitting thick on the horizon, curling toward the sky and spreading out in a reddened gray haze illuminated by the sun's descent. And it struck him, "The Revolution Dinner!"

Proud had seen the announcement in the *Gazette* for the French Revolution Dinner. Suddenly another memory flashed in his mind—the handbill Priestley had passed in town the day before. What did it say? Something about calling "*all enemies of Civil and Religious Despotism*" to attend the dinner. The air in Birmingham had felt charged with opposing sentiments ever since the start of the French revolution. Perhaps the heat of this July day had tipped the balance to light the lurid fumes into flame. Whatever was happening now in the center of Birmingham—the looming black cloud suggested great ill—there was clearly a mob charging down Newhall Street this instant to bring his precious Temple to justice for some imagined wrongs. Was he associated

with Priestley in the minds of the rioters? His memory fell like sand through fingers as he strove to trace any remarks he'd made in the shameful pride of his elation for the Doctor's attendance at their opening services.

He shook himself from his stunned reverie and with hands shaking, got the door unlatched. The church inside was nearly pitch black with darkness. He hurried, sweeping his feet as he walked, trying to keep the bucket steady with his steps. Finally the nose of his shoe hit the door at the opposite side of the room. He groped toward the handle, and the great door creaked, echoing into the great hall as he pushed it open.

It was eerily quiet inside the church, but immediately his ears picked out an isolated crackling coming from the gallery. Only a murmur of the mob carried in through the few shattered panes. In a fevered rush he dashed to the winding staircase up to the gallery and heaved what water was left in the large bucket at the sinister fire. He stamped wildly at what the water didn't extinguish and he kept stamping, sweating and breathless, until it was fully abated. But it was only a moment's reprieve. The advancing mob would do much worse if he didn't find some way to stop them.

He looked out through the broken window. The crowd looked like one large beast snarling and plodding its way down the street toward its cornered prey. Like the seven-headed dragon, here to maul and destroy the man-child, the infant New Church!

He stumbled down the stairs, tripping and catching himself on the railing, praying a jumble of scattered adjurations mixed with fragments of scripture. "*You brought us into the net...O dear God!...You laid affliction on our backs...Help me!...You have caused men to ride over our heads, We went through fire—please, God, no!*"

He stood before one of the great mahogany doors of the church, his harried mind empty of what he could possibly do next.

He could hear them chanting now, all in unison, a short rhythm of enraged voices, all their passion united in a shared, throbbing heartbeat. He swung around, facing the chancel, himself a small helpless body standing at the foot of the great presence of God. He willed himself to hear any echo of the faint heavenly music of his songs they had sung for the New Jerusalem ringing between the walls instead of the mob's threatening voice. He wiped his hand across his wet brow. A pebble of sweat trickled down his temple. He released his breath in a sob, one desperate sob, and inhaled a stuttering breath. His lips were wet; he could taste the salt of his perspiration. Out of nowhere a quavering melody trembled forth, his voice not sounding like his own. "*But You brought us out to rich fulfillment,*" he centered his mind on the intonation. "*I will go into Your house with burnt offerings; I will pay You my vows,*" he sang, growing louder, "*Which my lips have uttered and my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble.*"

Then he fell to his knees, hard against the wooden floor. His vision dappled and he felt suddenly like he might faint. *Would he die here? Dear God, he would give his life if he knew his wife and the twins, Paul and Thomas would be safe!* He reached his hand up to the offertory table which stood between the entrances to steady himself. The cherry wood was cool. His arm and head felt flooded with heat, like he was already on fire. *Burnt offerings. Pay You my vows.*

His head snapped up, his vision swirling for a moment with the residue of the swoon. He gripped the edge of the table and pulled himself upright. There was the basket, shallow and wide mouthed, hand-woven, and nearly full still with the coins and bills of the past Sunday's offerings.

He swept it up into his arm, like a sower set to seeding.

Turning round with a flood of reckless determination, he took one long step towards the door and heaved the wooden bar up

and out of the latch. He barreled his shoulder against the door which moaned with a deep resonance as it opened and creaked like the hull of a large boat casting off into a turbulent sea.

Having assumed the church was empty, they may have thought they were seeing an act of God, the enshrouded Lazarus coming forth in resurrection. The mob froze, stopped by the row of leaders at the front who stood stunned momentarily at the edge of the short step to the patio.

Upon seeing the slight figure of the Rev. Proud, strands of his hair wet with sweat matted across his face, they picked up their jeers with renewed ferocity, waving their clubs in fury. "Get him!" "Peace for the King!" "Revolutionary!" "Roast the dissenter!"

"No!" Proud mustered his strength to shout as loud as he could, his voice a garbled croak. He heaved with labored breath. "I'm not! Here!"

Reaching into the basket, he gripped a fistful of coins and threw them at the crowd. The men at the front of the pack jolted as they were hit with the smattering rain of silver. Proud grabbed another fistful and followed the first. "We are not the Unitarians! This is the New Church! We support the king!" Another fistful, coins flying and bills fluttering through the air. His face hot with a zealous passion. His voice now a shrill, breaking scream. "We have no hostility toward the government!"

As it dawned on the front row of the mob that it was money that was clinking against them and landing at their feet, they fell to their hands and knees, clawing at the strewn currency laying among shards of broken glass. Those behind, beginning to recognize the prospect of free money, pushed forward, barreling into each other to grab at the coins and falling bills.

"This is the New Jerusalem church!" Proud took the basket in both hands and hurled it and its remaining contents at the mob. "The New Jerusalem Church!" He dropped his arms to his

sides. His shoulders lifted and fell with each desperate breath, sucking air deep into his lungs. One of the leaders stood up, stuffing coins in his pocket. His face was as round as a plate, the lower half completely concealed by a large, dark beard. He caught Proud's eyes and winked, then lifting his club he swung it around his head and shouted a command to the crowd. Proud felt the dizziness of his earlier swoon come on again. He bent down and braced his hands on his knees. Any last resistance on his part yielded in that instant as the vibrations of shock riddled his body. He quaked and sobbed. Through his haggard state he realized slowly that the attack truly had abated. The sea of voices shifted from the tumult of scrambling for the money to another rhythmic chant as the mob turned away and began its march back down Newhall. He had successfully distracted the beast and now it would be off to find its satiation elsewhere. A wave of fear swayed through his mind briefly at the thought of what carnage lay still ahead in the path of the mob now receding from the temple. But he was unharmed. He was alive. His temple, his wife, and his children were safe. An evening breeze came up the street, carrying with it the caustic air from the wreckage already accomplished on the horizon, and his ears picked out the muffled words of the mob's fading chant, ominous and discordant: "The New Jerusalem forever! The New Jerusalem forever!"

Proud lifted himself and, stepping toward the edge of the stone patio, reached a shaking hand toward the offertory basket. Glass cracked against the stone's grain beneath his footstep. He stood upright facing the town. Everything around him glowed an amber red as the last of the sun's light cut through the burning haze of Birmingham. He was standing and so was his temple.

Postscript: The New Church temple survived, but the Priestleys' house was destroyed along with twenty-six others and four

churches which were either severely damaged or burned down over the course of the four days of the riots in Birmingham that July that lasted from the 14th to the 17th. It was found out later, and has since been confirmed by historians, that the mobs were instigated by Birmingham magistrates.⁵ The Priestleys eventually fled to London and three years later moved to Pennsylvania, staying in Philadelphia for a time before settling in Northumberland County.⁴ The riots and the Priestleys' sudden departure prevented the intended meeting between Priestley, Proud, and others to discuss his Letters. The fair copy of the Letters was destroyed in the riot but Priestley was able to rewrite and publish them later from an earlier draft. Proud, Robert Hindmarsh, and others in the New Church published replies.

Sadly, Joseph Proud's twin sons both died within the following two years, bringing the total number of his children to have died in childhood to eleven. He had three, older living children from a previous marriage.³ At the end of 1792 the New Church Temple in Birmingham met its own sad fate when, due to financial mismanagement, the Rev. Samuel Hands went bankrupt and the property of the temple eventually was seized by Hands' creditors as a result.⁶ Rev. Proud continued his ministry in London.³

Echoes of the ferment going on in the wider world about forms of government were felt within the organized New Church itself. In 1792 the annual meeting of the New Jerusalem Church was full of heated debate over how the church should be governed, the majority in favor of a democratic government and the

5 Wikimedia Foundation. (2020, September 19). *Priestley Riots*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priestley_Riots. Accessed January 10th, 2021.

6 Gyllenhaal, E. *Early History of the New Church in Birmingham*. NewChurchHistory.org. <http://www.newchurchhistory.org/articles/ejs2007/ejs2007.php>.

minority advocating for an episcopal form of government.⁷ The two groups held separate, parallel annual meetings in the name of the New Jerusalem church in 1793—one in London led by James and Robert Hindmarsh⁷ and the other in Birmingham, the latter of which was attended by Joseph Proud.⁸ The split essentially stalled the functioning of the organized body of the church in England for several years. Another annual meeting wouldn't be held until 1807.⁷

Chelsea Rose Odhner's mission is to bring Swedenborg's revelation—the teachings of the New Church—into the global conversation about the nature of life. She creates pathways for individuals to access and grasp these ideas through her work as the Director of Content Strategy for Off The Left Eye at the Swedenborg Foundation. There she is also the creator and host of the podcast Inside Off The Left Eye which shares insights from the scholarship of the New Century Edition translation project and studies the history of Swedenborg's life and experiences. In her own time she takes this historical study further, analyzing the spread of New Church ideas in the world and the rise of New Church religious organizations after Swedenborg's lifetime. This piece is a study for a larger work of historical fiction she is writing. She lives in Glenside, PA, with her husband and three children. She can be contacted at crodhner@gmail.com.

7 Odhner, Carl Theophilus. *Annals of the New Church 1688-1850*. Academy of the New Church: Bryn Athyn, PA (1904).

8 *Minutes of the General Conference of the Members of the New Church*. April 1-2, 1793. J. Belcher: Birmingham, England.

Theta Alpha Video

Janet Krettek

Charter day 2020 came and went without a Theta Alpha luncheon. However, a video was put on our Facebook page and sent to our members by email to give an update on the year's activities as well as a greetings from each of the Executive Committee members. https://youtu.be/xF7T9Yu_3e0 Cyndi Glenn gave a nice presentation on the Pittsburgh New Church School's program for children with dyslexia. Though the pandemic has put a damper on social activities, we continue to perform our other uses via zoom meetings. As you may recall, we have 5 Undergraduate scholarships for BAC and 2 graduate scholarships, plus 2 scholarships for ANC. We have high hopes of returning to normalcy soon.



Join the Conversation!

We would love to publish selected responses to articles, poems and stories in the *Journal*.

Tell us what you think! Contact information is in the beginning of this *Journal*.

Websites and Blogs of Readers

*If you'd like your blog or website included here,
send the information to the editor.*

Jenn Beiswenger – artist, wordsmith, carer: www.beiswenger.net/renjenn

Karla Buick – directory of artists who create specifically New Church-themed art: www.silverbrancharts.com

Chandra Hoffman – writer: www.chandrahoffman.com

Helen Kennedy – writer: <http://hmk98.blogspot.com>

Lara Muth – writer: <https://twitter.com/lyramariner>

Abbey Nash – writer: www.abbeynash.com

Tiffany Perry – poet: naturepoetrysite.wordpress.com

Hilda Rogers – artist: www.dailypaintworks.com/Artists/hilda-rogers-8286, <https://hilda5462.wordpress.com>

Kerstin Sandstrom – artist: <https://kerstinsandstrom.wordpress.com>

Wystan Simmons – blogger: <https://embracingchaos.net>



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 this *Journal*.

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Treasurer's Report

	<u>19-20 Budget</u>	<u>19-20 Actual</u>	<u>20-21 Budget</u>
Income			
43400 Direct Public Support		0.00	
43470 General Fund Contribution	\$8,000.00	2,468.22	\$7,000.00
Total 43400 Direct Public Support	\$8,000.00	\$ 2,468.22	\$7,000.00
45000 Investments		0.00	
45040 Bank Interest - Money Market	\$10.00	6.91	\$6.00
Total 45000 Investments	\$10.00	\$ 6.91	\$6.00
46400 Other Types of Income		0.00	
46430 Miscellaneous Revenue		705.00	
Total 46400 Other Types of Income	\$0.00	\$ 705.00	\$0.00
47200 Program Income		0.00	
47230 Membership Dues	\$2,200.00	640.00	\$2,200.00
47250 Journal Contribution		324.00	
Total 47200 Program Income	\$2,200.00	\$ 964.00	\$2,200.00
49000 Special Events Income		0.00	
49010 Fundraising		1,116.00	
49030 Luncheon ticket sales	\$1,600.00	1,380.00	\$1,300.00
Total 49000 Special Events Income	\$1,600.00	\$ 2,496.00	\$1,600.00
Total Income	\$11,810.00	\$ 6,640.13	\$ 10,806.00
Expenses			
60300 Awards and Grants		0.00	
60320 Cash Awards and Grants	\$1,200.00	2,591.00	\$1,500.00
60330 Noncash Awards and Grants	\$800.00	619.33	\$700.00
60300 Awards and Grants - Other	\$200.00		
Total 60300 Awards and Grants	\$2,200.00	\$3,210.33	\$2,200.00
65000 Operations		275.53	
65010 Books, Subscriptions, Reference		63.60	
65020 Postage, Mailing Service	\$100.00	95.90	\$100.00
65030 Printing and Copying	\$100.00	0	\$50.00
65040 Supplies	\$50.00	0	\$300.00
65060 PayPal Fees	\$50.00	0	\$30.00
Total 65000 Operations	\$300.00	\$435.03	\$480.00
65100 Other Types of expenses		700.00	

	<u>19-20 Budget</u>	<u>19-20 Actual</u>	<u>20-21 Budget</u>
65090 Journal Expense	\$9,500.00	9,294.77	\$9,500.00
65120 Luncheon Expense	\$1,600.00	1,139.13	\$1,300.00
65130 Baptism Project	\$400.00	175.36	\$300.00
Total 65100 Other Types of expenses	\$11,500.00	\$11,309.26	\$11,100.00
Total Expenses	\$14,000.00	\$14,954.62	\$13,780.00
Net Income	-\$2,190.00	-\$8,314.49	-\$2,974.00
ANC Fund Ending Net Assets	\$266,097.20	Down from last year	
ANC Fund Scholarships	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
ANCSS 1	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$2,500.00
ANCSS 2			\$2,500.00
BAC General 1	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
BAC General 2	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
BAC General 3	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
BAC Graduate 1			\$2,000.00
TAI Fund Ending Net Assets	\$186,052.45	Down from last year	
TAI Fund Scholarships	\$4,200.00	\$4,200.00	\$8,200.00
BAC Education New	\$2,100.00	\$2,100.00	\$2,100.00
BAC Education Continuing	\$2,100.00	\$100.00	\$2,100.00
		\$2,000.00	
BAC Graduate 2			\$2,000.00

Theta Alpha International Board October 2020

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Portrait of Lisa Hyatt Cooper

Gill Simons Mayer

After trying to read the Arcana Coelestia for many years, I joined a group led by Rev. Erik Buss who had a plan for reading the Arcana in two years! Now I'm very proud to say I'm on the 7th volume. Sometimes I think of the New Church people who, in the past, read this for the first time and learned so many truths that are now just becoming part of my life.

An announcement came in the Spring of 2020 that Lisa Hyatt Cooper had finished translating the *Arcana*, which now is being called *Secrets of Heaven*. It came to me that I wanted to celebrate this event and gathered a committee together which included Chara Daum, Alix Smith, Gail Cooper and Helen Kennedy. I talked about my desire to have a portrait of Lisa done and hung in the Girls School in hopes that it would inspire the study of Latin and translating the Writings into readable updated English. The first thing I did was talk with Wendy Soneson, an artist who has painted many portraits. I asked what is involved in having a portrait commissioned. Wendy was very helpful, and the first thing she recommended was getting in touch with Lisa to see if she was willing to sit for a portrait. Helen talked with Lisa and we all waited for the answer. Helen came back and said that Lisa would do it if it would further the study of Latin.

So we started the process. . . meeting 6 feet away on my front porch during the time of Covid. . . finding portrait artists. . . assessing cost and availability. . . choosing an artist. . . contacting her. . . getting back to Lisa to have pictures taken. . . choosing

the picture we would use. . . and then waiting while Sasha Silverman did her magic and created a beautiful portrait of Lisa. The portrait was unveiled at the Informal Service in Bryn Athyn on January 24, 2021, and also at the Swedenborg Banquet the following Friday.

Among the things I talked about at the unveiling of the portrait was Lisa's background for being a translator. Lisa graduated from Bryn Athyn College with a Religion and Philosophy Major and a Sacred Language Minor. Since 1977 she has worked on Latin editions and translations, including being a consultant for Durban Odhner and John Elliott. Lisa was active with the Swedenborg Foundation when they were deciding to do a modern translation of the Writings, and so was involved with the birth of the New Century Edition. She was thunderstruck when asked if she wanted to take on the translation of *Secrets of Heaven*. Her goal was readable English, readable secrets. It took Lisa twenty years to do this! And she is very touched that we were honoring her with a portrait.

Editor's Note: We don't put people's pictures on the front cover of the Journal but want our readers to have an opportunity to see Lisa's portrait.



Portrait of Lisa Hyatt Cooper by Sasha Silverman



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