

THETA ALPHA JOURNAL



NOVEMBER 2024

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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

Theta Alpha Journal

Volume 18

Number 20

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Google “Facebook Theta Alpha International” or visit
<http://bit.ly/fbthetaalpha>

Archived copies of the *Journal* are available at:
newchurch.org/connect/subscriptions/theta-alpha-journal

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Please remember that your membership dues support all of Theta Alpha International's programs, including this *Journal*! Membership is open to interested women aged eighteen and older.

Dues are \$15 (US)

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For new and renewing members, please remit payment to:

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Name: _____

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☐ I am also including an additional donation of \$ _____
to support Theta Alpha International

(\$15 donations are equivalent to paying the \$15 annual dues)

President's Message

Janet Krettek

The exuberance that is part of the human spirit is palpable when you are around youth. It can wear me out when I am caring for little children. Teaching medical students and residents, though they are in the adult category, can buoy my heart when I am around them, even if it's through their emails and texts. The enthusiasm to grow and build themselves and make the world a better place gives me great hope for the future. Those seeking to learn, to perform, to take on new tasks brighten my day.

Age gives some perspective on life. I can't believe I will ever have the wisdom of my parents or Grandma, but every once in a while, I see things closer to the counsel they gave. Life brings us cycles, including in organizations. Having reviewed some previous Minutes of Theta Alpha from the 1940's into the 90's, I see that this organization came close to shuttering a few times. Yet the need for connection, the support for New Church education, and the support of women in their spiritual growth has continued and kept this organization going.

There are so many talented people in this community that have contributed to this Journal and Theta Alpha International. At our latest gathering during the Assembly, women of all ages shared their ideas for the future. I've enjoyed the wise counsel of those who have come before me and now I relish the thoughts and ideas of those who will come after me. Please share your ideas! What are your hopes and aspirations for our sisterhood organization? What do you want from this association? How do you want to grow and learn? What do you want to accomplish? I look forward to hearing from you.

Janet can be contacted at jmkrettekdo@gmail.com

Editorial

Helen Kennedy

In Spring of 2015 I became editor of the *Theta Alpha Journal*, and this current issue is my 20th. There had been a hiatus for several years, and my motive for becoming editor was to keep it in print and not let it fade away. The Journal is a unique magazine, drawing its readers into thoughtful and affectionate connection with one another. It keeps readers of the Writings and people associated with the General Church in contact. We've seen some beautiful writing in its many articles and poems as the authors shared their thoughts and insights on a wide range of topics.

The time has come, though, for me to step down as editor, the lesser energy of growing older requiring it. I want to thank you, dear readers, for your interest and support for me as editor, and thank all those who contributed articles and poems. Without you there would only be blank pages in the Journal. My fond hope is for the Journal to find a new editor, and its mission to continue well into the future.



Opening for an Editor or Member of an Editorial Board

Theta Alpha International is looking for a woman willing to take on the post of editor of the *Theta Alpha Journal*, or women to be part of an Editorial Board that will gather articles for the *Journal* and publish them. The positions are interesting and present opportunities for meaningful connection with others associated with the Writings and the church. Anyone wanting to learn more, contact Janet Krettek at jmkrettekdo@gmail.com or Helen Kennedy at hmkenedy98@gmail.com.

The following was written as a response to the request to reflect on the differences between spiritual and celestial angels.

Thoughts About Spiritual and Celestial Angels

Nadine Rogers

My thoughts on this subject may seem somewhat radical, especially in regards to what Swedenborg says about how celestial good and spiritual good cannot be mixed or harm would result to both (see AC 9673, for example). However, if you take into account all the passages about how there must be a flow from celestial to spiritual to natural levels, and you take into consideration the progression of an individual as the person is regenerated, I don't think these ideas are so far-fetched.

A human being starts out doing what is good on a natural level. Think of a child learning to obey his or her parents. They do what is right because they want to please their parents, avoid consequences of disobedience, and perhaps reap a reward for doing something good. It is mostly learning obedience of rules that leads to a peaceful family life and a peaceful society.

As we grow, we start to think more about the things we are taught that are good. We consider from our own rationality what is right and wrong. We evaluate things and deliberately choose to do what we have reasoned to be good. This is a spiritual stage. It is a state of reformation, where we use our minds to determine what is right and compel ourselves to do the right thing from the love of what we believe to be true. Swedenborg indicates that the bulk of our spiritual work on earth is spent in this state.

The third stage of development is when we start to love what is good for its own sake. We are no longer making ourselves do what is right—we are eager to do what is right. Doing good springs from our heart's desire, because our own will has been replaced by God's will. This is the result of regeneration, and it is a celestial state.

It is God's hope that we will all move through these stages and arrive in a celestial state where love springs from our regenerated will. However, I think it is quite clear from observation in our own lives and the lives of those we are close to that we do not move from one state to another in discrete steps. In one area, we are going through the motions of doing the right thing because that's just what we learned to do. We are still in a natural good state. In another area, we have really considered what is right and wrong and have made a deliberate choice to try to do the right thing, even though it is a challenge. Perhaps we are working on curbing our tongue, but we find it an effort to hold back the sarcasm or the cutting comment. We are doing the right thing because we believe it is right, but our heart has not completely embraced the love behind the right thing. Yet in another area, we may be doing good straight out of the joy of doing good. I think we have all experienced a time when it was a joy to help another, to alleviate another's suffering, or to bring another hope. We have, perhaps, elders in our lives who have had times they needed to sacrifice and sincerely were able to say, "It was my pleasure to do it." These are golden states of celestial love. Yet we know that even people who have had the blessing of acting in a state of celestial good can still be struggling in other areas. We don't pop from a natural state to a spiritual state to a celestial state completely, once and for all, in a single instant.

Swedenborg talks about the inner loves of angels separating

them into the general kingdoms of spiritual or celestial, based on their main love being the love of truth or the love of good. He writes of three heavens within those two kingdoms based on what is motivating the good that we do, whether on a natural, spiritual, or celestial level. There are many references to spiritual-celestial states and celestial-spiritual states which he admits will be hard for the human on earth to really grasp. He writes that the celestial and spiritual good need to be separate for the safety and preservation of each kind of love. But he also writes of intermediate societies that act as emissaries between the different levels (SH 9826 for example). We also know that some spiritual angels go to the celestial heaven to preach there.

Swedenborg often compares the spiritual kingdom to the lungs and the celestial kingdom to the heart. But if we look at the anatomy of the heart and lungs, we know that the exchange of oxygen that keeps us alive is actually at the interface between the alveoli of the lungs and the capillaries of the circulatory system. They are so close that single molecules of oxygen can slip between the two organs. Wouldn't these most important capillaries be like an intermediary angel? And again, capillaries infuse almost every organ and substance in our bodies, bringing vital oxygen and nutrients to every single part of the body, even though those parts might seem extremely different than the circulatory system. You cannot separate out the capillaries from the other tissues; they are deeply embedded in a complex web within those tissues. Though the circulatory system may represent the celestial kingdom, it is so intricately intertwined throughout the rest of the body that it really cannot be separated out. In similar ways, there are connective tissues that bind varying tissues together to form full organs or bind one organ to another so that the whole human being is a functioning, whole unit. The right side of the brain and the left side of

the brain have many unique functions, but they have absolutely vital connections such as the corpus callosum where the two hemispheres are joined and interact with each other. My instinct is that this is probably true within an individual soul and heaven as a whole as well.

Could it be that in order to explain the differences between the minds and hearts of the different types of angels, Swedenborg focused on the separation between them more than on the interconnection between them? Could there actually be a lot more intermediate angels than we hear about in the Writings? Since connection and unity are so vital for heaven, wouldn't it be likely that there are many, many connections between angels who are of an intermediate nature, who are somewhat half-half when it comes to what drives their actions, and from where their goodness is derived? Since heaven can be viewed as a single being, the Grand Human, it would seem highly likely to me that communication, joining together, the appreciation of multiple ways of being, and cohesiveness would be both highly valuable and necessary in the ever increasing perfection of heaven. Swedenborg was laying out a scheme which was entirely new since the knowledge of the Most Ancient and Ancient churches was lost, and it therefore probably needed to be simple and perhaps simplified in order to get so many ideas onto paper in one short human life. I am sure that to the angels these words are the bare minimum to contain the wisdom of the heavens. Not everything could be included. My hunch is that the interconnectedness of the heavens is far more complex than what can be easily gleaned even with the vast knowledge of the Writings.

As far as an individual angel is concerned, I wonder if it is as set in stone as it appears. Any one individual is at various stages of reformation and regeneration as they go through life

on earth. Once we have crossed over to the spiritual world, would the Lord diminish those aspects of us that are further on the path towards celestial love just because there are more parts of us that are still in a more spiritual or even natural state? It seems highly unlikely. Would unregenerate areas be immediately erased just because parts of us have accepted God's will? This is a more appealing idea, because we all like to imagine that we will be perfected once we are admitted to heaven, but the idea probably doesn't fit in very well with the natural order of progression that God has built into all of nature. God continues to perfect the angels to eternity. God's endeavor for all of us is to feel the joy that comes from the celestial love of goodness when His will becomes our own. Swedenborg seems to indicate that we are mostly spiritual or celestial once we cross over from this world and that determines where we feel comfortable and happy in heaven. It determines our home there. However, I can't help but wonder if we are not getting the full story here. It seems to me that God would continue to help us develop more and more so that we come closer and closer to enjoying His love in our hearts in ever deepening ways. Perhaps the permanence of the spiritual and celestial kingdoms is more due to the fact that there are always angels coming into heaven at various states, and less about the permanence of any one angel in their eternal journey towards unity with God and His creations.

These are all speculations, of course, and I recognize the somewhat audacious nature of thinking perhaps there is more we can know beyond the gift of the Word and the Writings. However, I think God loves the curiosity He has put into His children, and wants us to try to imagine Him and His kingdom in ways that make sense to us, and inspire us towards more love. In my psychiatry work, I often see patients whose ideas

of God, heaven, and spiritual life leave them confused, worried, and unhappy. I gently challenge them to try to think outside the confines of what they were taught and to reach for an idea of a God, heaven, and spirituality that leads them towards love, a greater sense of peace, and better functioning. Could they choose an idea of God that they could actually love and not fear or resent? Could they imagine a spiritual schemata that feels freeing and like a blessing rather than confining or a burden? I believe this is what God wants for us, and if we have a few mistaken ideas along the way, He is happy to let us have them if it is bringing us in the direction of freedom, light, and love. There will be plenty of opportunity to sort out details once we are no longer bound by time. For me, the idea of a more communicative and interconnected nature of the two heavenly realms appeals to me and fits in with what I know about God and nature. The idea that we can continue to grow as individuals forever is a freeing one that gives hope. If I am incorrect in these speculations, I am sure God has a grander, more perfect plan than my mortal brain has been able to grasp, and I trust I will embrace it with joy once I am enlightened!

Nadine Rogers is a psychiatrist who has just moved back to the United States after 18 years of living in Nepal taking care of orphans and at-risk children with her husband, Rajendra Budhathoki.

My Story and Journey to the Writings and to the Lord

Bradley Sheahan

My story begins on a beautiful sunny day in early November 2018. I was playing golf with several of my neighbors when I received a phone call from my wife. She had arranged for a doctor's appointment that morning so I assumed her call was nothing important and would be the usual "Hi honey, on my way home, see you after golf," so I just let that call go to voice-mail. When I received a second call within a matter of minutes, this meant something was up and she needed to talk with me right then and there. As I answered the phone, and she began the conversation, my heart began to drop. The doctor wanted her to proceed immediately to the emergency room and she was in route as we spoke.

Kim, my wife, had been suffering from a bloated feeling in her abdomen and arranged this appointment because her discomfort was on the rise. Her doctor's assumption was that she was having some sort of blockage and wanted the emergency room to examine her and do some X-rays. When I arrived at the hospital she had been checked in and was waiting comfortably for what was to come next. The initial set of X-rays revealed that her abdomen was covered in tumors with the initial diagnosis as ovarian cancer, stage four. Needless to say, we were both in shock as I began the arduous process of calling our three grown kids and her mom and dad. That night the surgeon on duty wanted to do a small procedure to get a sample of the tumors for analysis; this would confirm the initial diagnosis and give some data for an oncologist to review.

This procedure was scheduled for as soon as they could arrange the needed operating room.

The next day our kids arrived in town and met us at the hospital for a meeting with the doctor on call. The meeting was scheduled with our kids, Kim's mom and dad, and me. We wanted the doctor to be able to speak freely, not guarding any of his responses or details. This is one of those types of meetings that one would never want to have when discussing the prognosis of a stage four cancer regarding a loved one, the person at the very center of our family. The doctor was still under the assumption that we were dealing with ovarian cancer and his words seemed like a dream, a very bad dream. The procedure that the surgeon had mentioned the day before was scheduled for the next day, with this adding more clarity to the situation.

That night the kids and I returned home to allow them to unpack, settle in, and give us some time to work out a plan for whatever was coming next. Again, this was all like a dream, Kim couldn't be sick, she was too full of life, we had too many plans as we were just settling into our new life in North Carolina. How could this be?

I decided that night that I would take a leave of absence from work and devote my time and energy to Kim. Ironically, over the preceding several years, we had worked out a succession plan at my company, one that I thought would only come into play when I retired. Thankfully, though, we incorporated contingencies for situations just like this. My number two's, those who had been prepared to assume control of the company, stepped up and rose to the occasion allowing me not to worry about business situations. My energy was needed for Kim and our kids.

The following day we returned to the hospital to settle into our plan. One of us would always be with Kim, not leaving her alone and being as positive as we could be. The surgical procedure was going to be done that afternoon, so we had a nice positive visit with Kim as we waited for things to fall into place. That afternoon

she was taken down to the surgical center and we were told this would be a fairly quick operation. They would take the sample via a laparoscopic procedure, not wanting to inflame her situation, something that might be more detrimental to her and her condition.

After having the procedure done and when Kim had returned to her room, we again had more great family time, reminiscing about all the great times we shared as a family. Late that afternoon as we were winding down and planning out what to do for dinner, the surgeon burst into the room hands in the air and full of gusto, “Good news, good news!” Kim says, “I don’t have cancer?” “No, you still have cancer, but what you have is a better form of cancer, one that we can kill if we act fast.”

Kim was diagnosed with Burkitt’s Lymphoma, a non-Hodgkin’s form of Lymphoma, a blood cancer. She was transferred to Duke University Hospital the next day and admitted into the ICU for treatment of the residual effects of her cancer. The cell lysis was clogging up her kidneys, shutting them down, not allowing them to perform their job of cleaning out her blood. With this effect they had to delay the plan for chemotherapy, a regimen that would last seven days with a following twenty-one-day rest period then another seven-day chemotherapy treatment.

With Kim settled into the ICU, our kids all there supporting each other and Kim and me, we were ready for the battle to begin. Kim’s odds at this point were 50/50. Did the cancer damage her kidneys, had it spread into her brain, or worse, did it begin to destroy her bone marrow? These were the questions that would be answered in the coming days.

Duke University Hospital had arranged for a hotel just off campus for me and my family to stay in. After spending the day and evening with Kim, I would go back to the hotel to try and get some sleep, be rested for the next day’s task of keeping Kim in a positive frame of mind. It was in the evenings when I was back at the hotel that I would open my iPad and begin reading about the day’s news.

I would also begin to entertain myself with YouTube shorts when one interesting short popped up on my screen, “What Happens After You Die?” This grabbed my attention and within a matter of minutes, Curtis had led me through the proverbial door into Heaven. I don’t remember how long that presentation was but the feeling of peace that I had encountered calmed my soul and filled me with a sense of ease regarding the situation we were facing. Each night I returned to my room and began to search out these videos that some weird-sounding organization was producing, Off the Left Eye? I mean, who or what is that?

I developed a new regimen to replace my normal working day regimen. Get up and ready for the day, pick up breakfast at Starbucks for Kim and me (she needed a break from hospital food), and settle into my chair in Kim’s room. I started a simple blog on Apple messenger to keep friends and family attuned to Kim’s situation as the parade of doctors made their way around the floor checking on each of the patients in the cancer ward. I would listen in to how things were going and add any useful information to my ongoing blog. The dose of ‘chemo’ they were giving Kim was strong with many side effects to monitor. By the end of each week Kim would be very weak. The ride home from Duke was hard on her, but she was always looking forward to her bed and her home, her place of comfort. When we would get home, I began reading these books by some strange guy named Emanuel Swedenborg. I probably got through three or four, I had to read them twice to absorb the things I was learning, before deciding that I needed to start at the beginning.

Kim started her regimen of chemotherapy just before Thanksgiving of 2018. Again, every twenty-one days we returned to Duke for another seven-day regimen of the ‘cocktail’ they were giving her. In March of 2019 Kim was released from Duke and rang the bell signifying that she had conquered this evil enemy that had invaded her body. The Lord had gotten our attention and was ready to change our lives forever.

Upon returning home and after Kim had regained some strength, I tried to return to my prior life as a financial planner and business owner. Within a matter of several months, I knew my life was not the same. I did not want to leave Kim's side and I had other work to do; I was going to study the *Arcana Coelestia* starting at Genesis one and explaining this work in my language. Verse by verse I went about the task of deciphering what the Lord wanted us to know about him and his Kingdom. Verse by verse I began to understand these stories that, before, never made sense. Verse by verse the Lord led me to understand the basis of His glorious creation.

On January 1st of 2020 I retired from my previous profession. I sold my company and settled into my new life of learning all that I can about our Lord and Savior and his Kingdom. Volume by volume I wrote explanations that made sense of what the Word was saying but in a language that was more suitable to me and my limited theological knowledge. As I continued to learn and utilize different tools to help me on my journey, I soon began to be exposed to the New Christian Bible Study website. This became my number one resource for comparing translations and getting deeper knowledge on harder-to-understand concepts. With this resource in hand and understanding that other people were doing the same thing that I was doing, I reached out to Steve David, the owner or force behind the New Christian site, to see if he wanted any of the explanations I had prepared. This opened the door to a new friendship and a wonderful mentor. Steve introduced me to Bryn Athyn, the New Church, and many, many wonderful and influential people.

Now in my fifth year of Swedenborgism, I am a completely changed man and I understand how the Lord has done that. I grew up in a Catholic family, attended Catholic schools as a child and was influenced early in life by parents who had a strong belief and faith. As a young man I began to drift away, felt that the stories I learned about in Catholic school or church did not make much sense. When I tried to read the Bible, I was turned off by the stories

I read, it sounded so . . . un-god-like. I drifted into fanciful ideas of ancient astronauts, ancient aliens from other planets seeding this world, even into reincarnation. I would try something on for a while but would soon lose interest. I was drifting but found myself always coming back and talking to God in times of despair and in times of great joy. The Lord blessed me in so many ways even though I was a reluctant servant.

I lost my father when I was twelve, and can remember so many situations where I would be talking to my dad, scared that the family was going to fall apart and the five kids my parents had would be scattered amongst relatives. Over time the conversations that started out almost as prayers to my earthly father soon were actual prayers to my Heavenly Father. Somehow, somehow, God would reveal to me what his true nature was and what his Kingdom was really like. One day God would let me know what the truth really is.

Yes, the Lord changed me the way he changes everyone, by creating us anew, by regenerating us. Just as I learned from Genesis one, there are steps and stages to the process that brings us home to his Kingdom. His work and mine will continue forever, with each and every day the Lord teaching me something new and meaningful. I am so thankful that the Lord brought me to Off the Left Eye, the Swedenborg Foundation, the New Christian Bible study website and the New Church. I feel like just a small cog in the wheel that's helping to spread the good news of the Lord's Kingdom.

Those Gone To Winter

Janna King

If you left because the winter was absolute
And rudely blew you far across many wrong streets,
And you grew so weary from bracing and opposing!
Or gone off where no one whatsoever can come —

Even if they wished to dig you free
Even if they wished with all their impotent hearts.

Did the grizzled, thickened sky
Turn your very suns to odd and paled domes,
Unwilling or unable to glow even lightly.

How long has low been, young soul?
Is there silent howling in the trees there.

Is there no crying.

Surely you left with an end in view,
As if there were hope to take hold of —
A far exposure. Somewhere else, entire.

I ask you now, How far are all, and will

You hear the truth of it?

The spring is come. Be home.

Janna King has been a teacher, writer, editor, mother and grandmother. She has published poetry, short stories, editorials and academic essays. Her greatest blessing is her family, and the source of all her hope is The New Church. She can be contacted at jannaking50@gmail.com.

A New Church Librarian & the Special Collections

Carroll Odhner

Carroll Odhner was born the 2nd of four children in rural Michigan. Her father was a Marine pilot who moved the family often to various states. They lived in Hawaii while Carroll was in high school, where she attended Punahou, the same private school that President Obama attended.

After initial plans of becoming a high school history teacher, Carroll's love of books and research eventually propelled her toward a career in library science. She graduated from the University of Michigan with an M.A. in Library Science in 1967, and then began her work career in The Hague, Netherlands as Head Librarian for the American International School.

This first job at the American International School came shortly after the tragic death of Carroll's father in a car accident. Seeking a minister to talk about dreams she had after her father's death, Carroll was introduced to her future husband, J. Durban Odhner—the minister she was seeking—and the New Church. Durban said, "You are a librarian so read these books [The Writings]."

Carroll returned to the United States three years later to Newark, NJ as Acquisitions Librarian at the Law School of Rutgers University. While there, Carroll also did graduate coursework in the French language which served her well in subsequent years—particularly so in 1971, when she and Durban relocated to Africa. They spent four years there, during which Carroll held several positions doing library work and library science instruction at the

National University of Zaire, and research work at the University of Zambia.



Upon their return to the U.S. in 1976, and with a growing family, Carroll joined the Academy of the New Church Library as Technical Services Supervisor, Reference and Cataloging Librarian. Ten years later, in 1986, she advanced to the directorship when Mary Alice Carswell retired. Carroll also had the opportunity to use her teaching skills during this time by providing instruction in French at the Academy of the New Church Boys School, and at Bryn Athyn College.

Carroll served as Director of the Swedenborg Library for over 30 years. Much was accomplished in the Swedenborg Library under Carroll's leadership. The fundraising for, planning and construction of the award-winning library building that we have today is probably her most outstanding achievement, since nothing else would have been possible without that important beginning.

Among the many projects to improve and expand the library collections and services that Carroll has spearheaded include implementing an automated library system; integrating information literacy into the college core curriculum; increasing vault space for special collections; and adding a branch library in Stockholm, Sweden. In addition, she has been central to the growth of the Swedenborgiana collection by obtaining several original Swedenborg letters and documents. Her efforts on behalf of the library have resulted in numerous grants for digitization and other essential library needs,

and the founding of the Friends of the Swedenborg Library (FOSL).

Also, as director, Carroll was active in professional librarianship organizations, making presentations and conducting workshops for professional and academic audiences. To that end, she served for ten years as President and in other offices of the Tri-State College Library Cooperative (TCLC).

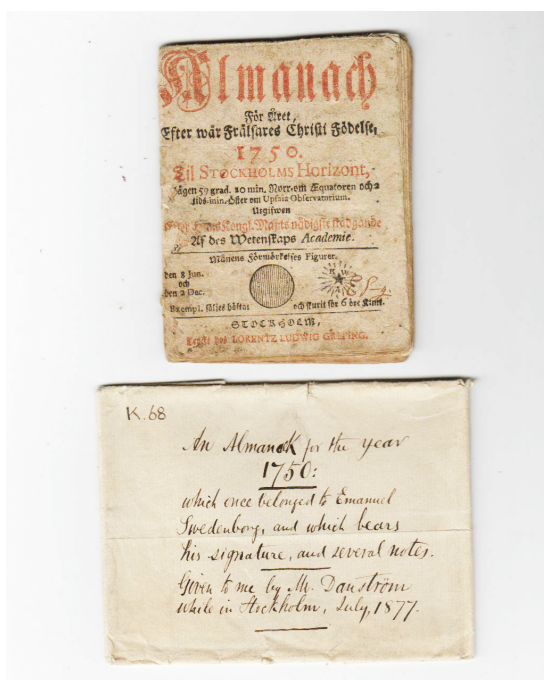
The most exciting aspect of Carroll's tenure as Library Director came in April of 1988 when, through much work, diplomacy, and planning, Carroll hosted Queen Silvia of Sweden who made a visit to Bryn Athyn to dedicate the new library.



Since her retirement in 2016, Carroll has been Director of Swedenborgiana and New Church Research. Her duties include overseeing the collections of Swedenborgiana and New Church collateral collections. The Swedenborgiana collection contains copies of Emanuel Swedenborg's original manuscripts, first and all subsequent editions of Swedenborg's theological writings in every translated language, photo-reproductions of all Swedenborg's extant manuscripts, the Academy collection of Swedenborg documents and more. This includes many materials collected under the heading "His Day," which includes books, letters and papers relating to 18th century thought, philosophy and publishing, some which Swedenborg mentioned or quoted.

The library has the world's only rendition of Swedenborg's personal library—a collection of rare volumes that were owned by Swedenborg. This is based on an auction list produced by his heirs at the time of his passing in 1772. Also included are books that were signed by Swedenborg and either sold or given away before his death. A recent example is the purchase of Swedenborg's own Almanac for 1750 which includes his signature and several notes. 1750 was the year Swedenborg paid for and approved the English translation of the *Arcana Coelestia* volume two. It was published simultaneously with the Latin edition and is the first translation into a living tongue.

These books and others that he quoted show how his mind



was being prepared by the Lord for his work as a revelator. Swedenborgiana contains many other documents and letters signed by Swedenborg as well. The New Church Literature collection doc-

uments the church that grew based on these theological writings with New Church books, journals, newsletters, pamphlets, liturgies, and hymnals. Finally, the archives offer a personal perspective, with photographs, letters, and documents related to the history of the New Church, the General Church, Bryn Athyn College, the Academy of the New Church, and the Bryn Athyn Church and community. These collections are the world's primary repository for New Church thought and history and serve as a critical resource for New Church education. They fulfill a purpose explicitly stated in the Academy of the New Church Charter for "establishing a library." They also serve a critical use in the academic research of scholars in Bryn Athyn and around the world. With grants from the Wyncote Foundation and the Carpenter Fellowship Fund, we have been digitizing portions of these collections making them available and searchable online in our New Church Digital Collections. In October, the Swedenborg Institute's conference will feature Swedenborg's personal library, and we will host an exhibit and tours of the collections.

A significant part of Carroll's efforts has involved fundraising for the Swedenborgiana and New Church collections. To date, she has raised over \$1 million from a combination of foundations and private donors, which has supported the work to date.

However, to ensure the future of these unique New Church collections, to cover digitization costs, and to provide staffing to maintain, preserve, and support research in these collections, we need your donations. An endowment will provide permanent support for these collections which chronicle the history of New Church thought and are a critical resource for disseminating the New Church. If you'd like to donate, please go here: <https://tinyurl.com/swedenborgiana>.

Portions of the above article are taken from the library's newsletter, Bi-Lines, News and Notes from the Swedenborg Library.

Big Waves, Small Boat, No Kids: Entering the Empty Nest

Katya Goodenough Gordon

My husband, Mark, and I went on a trip last fall that was so magical I hardly dare to write about it for fear of breaking the spell.

Why did we do this? In August 2023, we dropped our younger daughter Lamar off at Northern Michigan University in Marquette, officially entering the “empty nester” status. Mark had a full slate of captained charter sailing trips scheduled in the next month, and I kept myself busy at home with the usual—radio, newspaper, church, community—so it wasn’t until we ended our charter season and took off on our own on September 25 that we felt the full blast of the empty home—and for us, it was the empty boat that stared us in the face. Not since our first year of marriage (our honeymoon) had we gone on a trip like this together by ourselves. First it was with babies, then children, then young adults with Sea Change Expeditions, then trip participants of all ages, often with our growing daughters and other teenagers. How would we like each other, after all these years of taking other people sailing?

Our trip was delayed almost five days due to the wind. “We wait for weather windows longer than most people’s vacations,” Mark used to say—but we had not had to live that reality for

many years. Would our trip be over before it began? We emptied our calendars for another week in October to release Mark from the pressure, felt constantly on charter trips, of having to get back on a certain date. We took off from Grand Marais, Minnesota, in the dark (fall sailing—much shorter days) into a big northeast swell and a decent southeast breeze. I was woozy for the first and last time of the entire trip. By mid-morning the winds were mitigating the motion, the clouds were lifting, and we were in the cockpit eating a second breakfast and listening to music. On cue, I started to feel the emotions rising.

“I’m going to need a hankie,” I said. Mark immediately understood—“we’re consecrating the girls’ departure,” he said as he put his arm around me. It felt great to cry and I felt like it would never end. But, after that morning, it did. We had felt the weight of the situation in its fullness and were ready to embrace the present and look to the future.

And not a bad future it was! Though I am still ridiculously excited about every interaction we have with Cedar and Lamar (and lucky for us, they live eventful lives), we realized that being a couple together with no one else to care for (my sister was staying with my elderly parents in Two Harbors, so even those concerns were covered) was a heck of a lot of fun.

We luxuriated in an enormous amount of space for two people. Our books, shoes, and raincoats strayed from their designated compartments and were tossed flippantly in the living area. We worked our way through several books and magazines, and discussed the contents. Sailing was brisk and if the winds were adverse, we waited it out. We were alone on Isle Royale during the height of the fall colors and also during an unusually warm fall week. Hiking and swimming, kayaking and reading, and oh yeah the food! How many couples get to embark on a wilderness tour with very little planning (Mark did

get all possible permits ahead of time) and all the comforts of home? Physical activity, but no sore backs or blisters; at our age, that's a bonus! We'd brought along "treat foods" (pesto, potato chips, bacon) and had a huge pile of fresh vegetables and eggs from local farmers. We ate healthy but delicious. We watched downloaded movies or played cribbage in the evenings. We left Isle Royale and the US while the weather was still mild and the wind was still south, pushing us north.

At Loon Harbor (along the northern Canadian part of Lake Superior) we reminisced about the times we'd been there—with Sea Change, with little girls—during fall and spring gales. We kayaked to ancient "Pukaskwa pits" and raced back in an impending thunderstorm. Every day, whether cloudy, stormy, or crisp and clear, was spectacularly beautiful and I felt my sailing mojo come to life. Ah yes, sailing as recreation! With no one to care for or worry about, and Mark always happy to take over the sailing, it felt truly luxurious.

At Loon Harbor, fall arrived via a 24-hour northerly gale, ushering in a 40-degree temperature drop. The wind howled through the night. We set our alarm for 6:00 am, hoping to pull up anchor as soon as it was light enough to see and head south to Thunder Bay. But when the alarm beeped it was spitting rain, pitch dark, and winds still rocked the boat. I snuggled a little deeper under the comforters (we had two on us by now) and thought, "maybe not." But Mark was confident in the forecast, and from long habit we've learned that Action really does Conquer Terror (ACT). So we got up and dressed as if heading out into a cold windy sea was the natural thing to do, and had the anchor up just as it was light enough to see.

What followed was one of the most blisteringly fast 52 miles of our entire sailing life. The winds were north which meant they were comfortably behind us but still coming off the

land. So the swells didn't grow and our pace didn't drop. Down below, I watched the GPS hit 7.5, then 8.3 knots. It topped out at 9.4 knots. I poked my head out. "We're going over 9 knots," I said helpfully, with a telltale shaking in my voice, to Mark. He remained confident. "It's all under control," he said, and I returned below, certain that I will never sail with any less of a sailor than my amazing husband. It was a wild ride outside, but pretty calm below.

I did become accustomed to the speed within a few hours. Headlands that normally take hours to pass, flew by. We passed the magnificent Sleeping Giant peninsula, resplendent with fall colors and the morning sun shining on it, and came into Thunder Bay. In Thunder Bay we burst our honeymoon-like bubble and invited our niece Amber, who was staying with friends in the city, for dinner, which was a treat all in itself.

The next morning, with northerly winds predicted into the indefinite future (akin to suddenly having an unlimited number of perfect peaches land in our lap—an endless boon), we headed home for real. Water temperatures above 50°F and sometimes 60°F kept the air relatively warm compared to what we were used to with May sailing, though it frosted at night away from shore.

(Translation: if we wear our long underwear, several layers, stocking cap, neck gator, and our foulies (nautical lingo for "thick heavy raingear") and drink plenty of hot liquid, we were plenty warm.)

We sailed straight down to Grand Portage's Wauswaugoning Bay on the US/Canada border. Though entering Canada was effortless with our Remote Border Crossing, re-entering the US took Mark an hour with his phone, wifi, and a Border Patrol website.

Cold and dark is really different than warm and dark. All

that night, anchored ¼ mile from shore, furious (“williwaw”) gusts blew down on us from the cliffs surrounding us, rocking the boat. Again the next morning I had to put mind over matter. As we headed out of the bay Mark later confessed to having a few butterflies in his stomach, and I was close to suggesting that we raise no sail at all since we seemed ready to blow over with bare poles. But good sense prevailed (for Mark, who is able to rationally calculate the difference between a 25 knot wind and a 30 knot wind, and who could also look at the shoreline and guess that what we were experiencing was local). Once we turned into the open lake, the winds moderated and the double-reefed mainsail and staysail he had raised kept us rollicking forward but maintained stability during gusts.

We sailed all day and then through the night. Mark was eager to end his season with a true passage. Once he promised to take the 6:00 pm-6:00 am watch (i.e. do all the sailing in the dark) I agreed, with some trepidation because of the 30-knot gusts still predicted overnight. As it turns out, the winds were much calmer. I cozied up in Cedar’s bunk and had deeper-than-dozing dreams, with one snack break at 1:00 am (another long-learned lesson—eat during overnights), and Mark had a blast doing what he loves the best.

By 6:00 am he was ready to sleep, however, and so I took over as dark merged into a gray dawn, feeling safety and civilization close in on us after two weeks of high adventure.

We got back to Knife River by late morning, having not stepped off the boat for three days. Perhaps deeply satiated for once, Mark was ready to move into the next season, painful as it always is to haul out. With a northeast gale pending, he had Amicus II out of the water within 48 hours.

I recommend marking big transitions with a symbolic trip. In this one, we ended a 22-year family chapter and celebrated 13

years of our charter business as well. With a vacuum of responsibility and worldly distraction, we also contemplated, without pressure, the next chapter of our professional and personal life.

Vacations, I've decided, should be just that—vacations. Vacating the norm for a time. We would not have enjoyed the space had we not previously been packed into the boat in groups of 6-8 people, over and over, since May. We would not have relished that bacon if it was part of our normal diet. I would not have thrilled in the swimming if I could do it year-round. And yes, the world can live without Mark and Katya for two weeks. What a relief!

In the end, what really made this trip so special was the fact that we each went into it intending to make it the best trip ever for the other. When I texted Mark beforehand, "What are you going to do if you are not worrying about weather?" he texted back, "Dote on you!" If one of us had a strong opinion about something, we got our way. Should it be any surprise that that would lead to such bliss?

Now, with a year to look back on it, I can safely say that the seeds of our next spiritual offspring were sewn then. As Rev. Robert S. Junge once wrote, "The seasons of natural fertility are relatively few in perspective; the states of spiritual fertility stretch to eternity." At a time when child-rearing suddenly seemed far too short and sweet, we began a much longer journey together. We adjusted to spending more time together. We re-learned what the other really enjoys, and is passionate about, besides our children. Over the next year we committed ourselves to new projects in our community, spent more time with our parents, and realized that "there will always be someone to love." Our purpose in life did not desert us—it simply headed off in a new direction.

Katya Goodenough Gordon lives in Two Harbors, Minnesota, just a block from the north shore of Lake Superior. She has lived in this picturesque setting since 2008 when she and her family completed their first yearlong voyage living aboard a sailboat. Aside from home, marriage, and family, she is an author and reporter, a radio show host, a climate activist, a Restorative Justice facilitator, a Rotarian, and an active member of the United Church of Two Harbors. Born and bred in Bryn Athyn, PA, she is increasingly aware of and grateful for the ideas instilled in her childhood from Swedenborg's Writings, and is always looking for ways to spread these life-giving truths in her community and beyond.



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*.

Excerpted from a presentation at the General Assembly, June, 2024.

A Seamless Garment: The Four Gospels as a Divinely Arranged Narrative

Star Silverman

A Seamless Garment

As the title of this article indicates, Ray and I have completed a four-part commentary on *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* titled, *A Seamless Garment: the Four Gospels as a Divinely Arranged Narrative*. Our central premise is that the Four Gospels are perfectly ordered, from the first word of *Matthew* to the last word of *John*.

The title of our commentary comes from a passage in the *Gospel According to John*. When Jesus was crucified, the soldiers took His outer garment and tore it into four parts so that each soldier might receive a part. But the inner garment could not be torn. As it is written, “Now the inner garment was seamless, woven from top to bottom in one piece” (*John* 19:23).

The Writings tell us that the seamless inner garment is the spiritual sense of the Word. Although the literal sense can be interpreted in various ways, the internal sense is a continuous stream of divine truth, “truth that the Lord does not allow to be torn apart” (AC 4677: 7).

In brief, our commentary is an attempt to demonstrate that, episode by episode, the Word is divine, containing the fullness of the Lord’s message to each of us. It is, truly, a divinely arranged narrative. As it is written in the Heavenly Doctrines:

In the Word many things appear to be unconnected. However, in the internal sense there is a continuous coherence in a beautiful series. Moreover, in its original language not a single word, nor even a single jot, can be taken away from the sense of the letter of the Word without an interruption to the internal sense. On that account, by the Lord's Divine Providence, the Word has been preserved so very complete as to every tittle. Therefore, it is written that "Not one jot or one tittle shall pass away." –White Horse 11

Although Ray began this study forty years ago, for the past four years Ray and I have been working together to rewrite, revise, and bring it to completion. Our commentary is now available on the New Christian Bible Study website (www.newchristianbible-study.org). The four-volume set, amounting to over 2,000 pages, will also be published in hard copy, hopefully within the next year.

Our Method

When we are writing, we are totally focused on what the text is telling us right then, especially its inner meaning. We remain focused on a single verse, as it takes place within a single episode, within a sequence of episodes, within that chapter, within that gospel, within the series of the Four Gospels. And all of this is in the light of the Heavenly Doctrines with an abundance of footnotes.

Through this study, we have seen the perfect ordering and sequence of the Word. Nothing is out of place. It is truly divine. Nevertheless, over the years, the divinity of the Word has been under attack. Scholars have raised serious questions about the authenticity and reliability of the Word, causing some people to lose faith in its divinity. Our effort has been to restore faith in the divinity of the Word through a study of the continuous internal sense of the Four Gospels.

To be honest, when the gospels are read without an understanding of the internal sense, they can be quite confusing and contradictory. Here are some of the questions that can come up:

- Why is there a descending genealogy of Jesus in Matthew (from Abraham to Joseph), and an ascending genealogy of Jesus in Luke (from Joseph to Adam)?
- Why does Jesus give His most famous sermon, called “The Sermon on the Mount,” on a mountain in Matthew, and on the plain in Luke?
- Why does Jesus cleanse the temple towards the end of his ministry in Matthew, Mark, and Luke (after the triumphal entry), but cleanses the temple at the beginning of His ministry in John after turning water to wine (long before the triumphal entry)?
- If Jesus is God, who is He praying to?

There are answers to all these and other questions, but only when the gospels are seen as a seamless garment, perfectly ordered from the first words of Matthew to the last words of John, and read in the light of the heavenly doctrines.

Themes

Along the way, we have come to discover that each gospel has its own theme, and that the stories that occur in that gospel, even the words used in that gospel, relate to that theme. In every case, the specific theme of a gospel is embedded in the opening words of that gospel. For example, Matthew begins with the words,

The book of the birth of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1)

In the spiritual sense, the word “book” corresponds to a person’s inner nature. Our “book of life” reveals who we are. So, *Matthew* is the “book” of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. It tells us who Jesus Christ is, that is, His essential nature.

By the middle of this gospel, Jesus is not just the son of David, the son of Abraham. He is much more. As Peter says, “You are the Christ. The Son of the living God” (*Matthew* 16:16). Then, at the end of *Matthew*, Jesus says:

All power has been given to Me in heaven and on earth ... go and baptize all nations. (Matthew 28:18-19)

So, a primary theme in the Gospel According to *Matthew* is **the gradual revelation of Jesus’ divinity**. Turning the page to the next gospel, Mark begins with these words:

The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (Mark 1:1)

This is a significant step beyond the first words of *Matthew*. There it is said that Jesus is “the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Here, in *Mark*, it says that Jesus is “the Son of God.” Immediately after this, *Mark* begins with John the Baptist carrying out the mission given by Jesus at the end of *Matthew*. We read:

John came baptizing in the wilderness, and preaching a baptism for the remission of sins. (Mark 1:4)

And the first words that Jesus speaks in *Mark* are “Repent and believe the gospel” (*Mark* 1:14). Throughout the Gospel According to *Mark*, the theme of **repentance** will occur frequently, and will be emphasized through the casting out of demons—more so per chapter than in any other gospel.

In the very last episode of *Mark*, it is written that “these signs will follow those who believe. In My name they will cast out demons” (*Mark* 16:17). Spiritually seen, this is about our repentance—the demons that are being cast out of us. To repent is to recognize and “cast out” those attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors that prevent us from developing into the people God intends us to be.

There are, of course, other themes running through *Mark*, but

a careful reading reveals that repentance is the major theme of this gospel. After first acknowledging the divinity of Jesus Christ, repentance is the next step in our regeneration.

Turning the page to Luke, these are the opening words:

Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been most surely believed among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed. (Luke 1:1-4; emphasis added)

Words like “believed,” “eyewitnesses,” “understanding,” “know,” and “instruct” suggest that the theme of this gospel will relate to the **reformation of the understanding**. This is underscored by the fact that *Luke* begins in the temple with the story of Zacharias and ends in the temple where the disciples are “continually praising and blessing God” (*Luke* 24:53). Both the city of Jerusalem and the temple correspond to doctrinal things, especially the learning of things that relate to the understanding.

Therefore, in Luke’s gospel, Jesus’ last words to His disciples are, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you receive power from on high” (*Luke* 24:49). There are, of course, other themes running through *Luke*. But a careful reading reveals that the reformation of the understanding (tarry in the city of Jerusalem) is the major theme of this gospel. After repentance, this is the next step in our regeneration.

Turning the page to the *Gospel According to John*, we read about a new beginning. It is the beginning of a new birth in which we are given the power (*power from on high*) to become

children of God. As it is written:

As many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become children of God ... who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13).

This is exactly what Jesus promised at the end of *Luke*. He said, “Tarry in Jerusalem until you receive power from on high.” This “power from on high” is our new birth. It’s the Lord’s love flowing into us. It follows naturally after repentance and the reformation of the understanding. After living according to the truth we have learned, we see the goodness within that truth. Now we begin to act from love, indeed guided by truth, but understood with new eyes, and practiced with a new heart.

This is when our old will becomes relatively quiescent so that God’s will can become active in us. This is **regeneration**—the reception of a new will. It is the next step after repentance and the reformation of our understanding.

Throughout our commentary, our intention has been to demonstrate that from the first word of *Matthew*, which is “book,” to the last word of *John*, which in the original Greek is “books,” there is a perfect progression, revealing the path of our regeneration, the holiness of the Word, and the divinity of the Lord.

And yet, the divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ can never be fathomed in its entirety. His divine qualities are more numerous than all the stars of the heavens, and all the sands of the sea. This is why John concludes with the words, “the world cannot contain all the books that could be written” (*John* 21:25).

A Personal Note

We began this study of the four gospels wanting to show the seamless connections from episode to episode, not only within

each gospel, but also from gospel to gospel. When seen from the internal sense, it is a continuous, divinely arranged narrative revealing not only the path of our regeneration, but also the story of the Lord's glorification.

Through this in-depth study, my appreciation of the Word, and my sense of its beauty, holiness, and power has immensely expanded. While going through this study, verse by verse, episode by episode, and chapter by chapter, I have felt how the Lord is present, speaking to me directly, guiding me along, and challenging me to grow.

It has culminated with the experience of reverential awe that the disciples may have experienced when the Lord appeared to them for the third time after His resurrection, saying, "Come and eat breakfast" (*John* 21:12). This awe is what I feel each day as the Lord says to me, "Come and eat breakfast." Through these words, I hear Him inviting me to live sustained by the nourishment He gives me fresh each day—that is, the heavenly thoughts and feelings that flow in from Him. This is my "daily bread."

In Jesus' concluding words to Peter, He says, "Do you love Me?" When Peter says, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love You," Jesus says, "Feed My lambs," "Tend My sheep," and "Feed My sheep" (*John* 21:15-17).

This work has been our humble attempt to help the Lord feed His flock. It is our prayer that the effort we have made will help people to see that the Word is truly holy, and that the Lord is present in His Word, comforting and guiding us with love and care. May this be our small contribution, along with the contributions of so many others, to the spreading of the Lord's New Church throughout the world. "May Thy kingdom come. May Thy will be done."

These almost-one-hundred-year-old poems come from a book compiled by Wynne's daughter, Nanette.

Four Poems

Wynne Simons Jefferies

Arbor Day

Knowing, oh cruel world, the doubtful prize
of fame and fortune, and of great renown
that beckons us, we yet would strive to rise
to higher goals. We would not seek a crown
of laurel or of gold, nor bear a name
that finds a voice in many tongues. Not these
we seek, the empty spoils that hold no spark
of life, no vital things. We would be trees
that bear a richer fruit — that from the ark —
sweet freshness of the earth springs up in green
and vernal growth to face the sky — forever!

Holding the honor high we give our youth
to live in rich simplicity and truth.

Untitled

All that you are to me, my dear,
is measureless. No thought have I,
no mood that does not somewhere
hold your touch – awake, asleep,
I only live because I know
you hold my heart within your eyes
somewhere. To be thus part of you
is truly life, nor could I live
should ever you renounce my love,
for then this self would be
a creature without warmth or gentleness,
an empty semblance. Oh, my dear,
relinquish not your claim,
thus let me love you to eternity.

1934

Wreckage

'Twas only a little while ago
My castle seemed firmly to stand
— the storm, my castle gone
nothing but shattered wreckage left —
a pinch of dust in my hand.

My castle was full of the happiest dreams
And built on the sands so warm
Oh, how did I think that only my love
Could shelter my dreams from the storm?

February 1931

Friendship

Friendship, that lovely bond
That links your life to mine
And makes me wish to share
Each thought and joy with thine
That brings an understanding
That words cannot define.

Your word of cheer, your loyalty
Have made my life anew for me

Friendship, that wielded chain
Of common thoughts and ties
That brings more perfect two-fold joy
In sharing things we prize
In giving help to those we love
Life's greatest pleasure lies.

You showed me what a friend can be
And made my life anew for me!

April 1930

Published with permission of Wynne's daughter, Nanette de Maine.

Winifred Simons (1910-2003) grew up on South Avenue in Bryn Athyn and graduated from the Girls' Seminary in 1928. She studied Music Education at West Chester Teachers College and then taught in a private school. In addition to writing poetry she was a brilliant pianist and composed classical music in her early years. In 1936 she married Henry de Maine, and they had a daughter, Nanette. Over the years she taught many piano pupils,

and accompanied musical productions and Christmas Sings. After she and Henry divorced in 1948, Wynne worked for the Department of Defense. In 1961 she married Harold Jefferies. After retirement, encouraged by her sister, Carolyn, Wynne began to practice the piano seriously again. In her 80s she gave a well-received concert at Cairnwood Village.



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*.

The following is a fictional story about a woman in the spiritual world as she is being prepared for heaven.

Verna

Helen Kennedy

Verna's mind and heart have been opened to wisdom. It was a slow process, like the unfolding of a flower. She knows that wisdom graces her now, and the gentle aroma of it leads her through her day. Her relationships with others no longer are filled with fear, or the foreboding sense that disaster is going to happen at any time soon. She feared before because she did not know that the menacing impulses welling up in her meant that evil spirits were close to her. She thought those terribly hurtful impulses and thoughts originated in her. From fear of hurting others, she hid them in the folds of her mind, and developed an ultra-nice personality.

But now, exposure to the sun's rays in the spiritual world have melted that fakeness, and more importantly, brightened up her mental outlook; its truthful rays have slowly chased away those ugly spirits, and with them any need or desire to hurt others. Now she knows that all cruelty is from hell, and she knows this deep in her being because of the pleasure of socializing with people when the unkindnesses left. The impulses no longer keep her crippled because of fear of them and how they affect her with awful urges to hurt. Now she walks where flowers are blooming. She thought she'd pick a bouquet and present it to her sister-in-law, Judy, perhaps the person she hurt most in her life while on earth. But Judy was still on earth,

working on her eternal home.

Verna went to visit the heavenly home her sister-in-law was building in a society not far away. It was in a suburb where new construction was going on. It was good for Verna to be there because, by seeing Judy's unfinished house, she saw how very different her sister-in-law was from her. Instead of seeing things wrong with it in comparison with her own, which would have immediately happened while on earth, Verna wondered what qualities of Judy's mind the silvery-blue brick of the house related to. She tried to go closer but a construction worker stopped her. There could be no disturbance to Judy's mind. But from where she was Verna could see the bits of truth Judy ascribed to every day recorded in the silver lines in the bricks. And the windows—so crystal clear—on each floor there were six big windows, and three skylights on the roof above the second floor. Plenty of light was going to get in.

Eight years later Verna did bring a bouquet of flowers for her sister-in-law, for she was permitted to leave it at the door to be the finishing touch of the just-completed house. Verna thought, "She is with the angels now who are waking her up to this wonderful world." Verna thought back to when some of her last over-idealized ideas of what heaven was like were shed during conversations when the welcoming angels met her. Verna was happy for Judy, very happy, and bringing the flowers was a real honor for her, a sign of how far she'd come and of the trust put in her—very different from the person she was on earth. So "Yes," she could say to friends, "the person I was no longer is." She didn't last time they gathered in the rose garden when all the others were saying something like that. Their lives had been improving so rapidly they barely remembered who they used to be, and Verna had felt a little embarrassed at the

time. But now Verna thought about the improvements made to her house recently, the enlarged kitchen, the sun deck, the better landscaping. She imagines now saying, “And the inner person I knew nothing about on earth is here and very happily talking to you, but only, that is, through the good graces of Our Lord.”

Verna originally was part the heavenly society of a young man named Francis. He was a student she had taught while on earth, but when obtaining better clarity about her own mind and self, she migrated to a closely-related but different one. Where Francis’ society loves the impulses bringing to life our thoughts and feelings, in the heavenly society where Verna lives, their greatest expression of love is shown by using their hands. To her, all of her sorrow and asking for forgiveness from Judy was expressed by the bouquet of flowers she was leaving at her house. Verna deeply regretted the ways she slighted her sister-in-law by ignoring Judy’s honor when she was made Teacher of the Year, intentionally forgetting to tell Judy about a family party, falsely using Judy’s information to take out a loan when her own credit was bad, then neglecting making payments so Judy’s credit was ruined. There were many other things, too, that came out when Verna was having her life review. But now, because Judy had been doing the hard work on her own path, Verna trusted she would understand all the meaning behind her bouquet: all the years of Verna’s guilt and sadness, her work of repentance in asking the Lord for forgiveness, her acknowledgement of the things she had done, the arrogance with which she spoke to her sister-in-law, and the fakeness and pretense that nothing was wrong between them. What was it, a vying for dominance between two strong women, or her envy because Judy had children and Verna never was able to

have any? The two women had very similar traits, too, Verna had to admit. That Verna left it all behind her a long while ago was evident in the attention with which she selected lavender azalea, Judy's favorite flower, from a bush in her garden and placed them so caringly in among white roses that were just opening, small pink lilies, pale yellow snapdragons, and other significant flowers. Verna trusted that Judy would be smart enough, detailed enough—the word was perceptive enough—to draw out all the meaning she had put into the bouquet. People who come to the societies in Verna's region were like that, their hearts were willing to open and feel the delicate love of another through flowers and music and artwork.

The people in the hell opposite Verna's heavenly society spend their day in continual activity. They rush up the stairs, back down, into a room to open a drawer, take something out and put it in a closet, then return an hour later to take it out again. In clearer moments they make a list of things to do, but the purpose of doing the activities on it is soon forgotten. When in their busyness they come across another person, they don't stop to greet the person because their need for activity keeps them constantly wrapped up in themselves. Their high ideals for each day are impossible to achieve because the reason or purpose for them is flimsy or non-existent. The 'good' they fantasize they are accomplishing often harms others, and when confronted with the hurt, their rigidly stone faces register lack of empathy or compassion. It is then that the underlying deceit in all they do is fully perceived.

Verna's heavenly society, the one she settled in forever, is different from that of her former student, Francis. But they do work well together. Francis' society comes alive in the recognition of human faces. Verna's society is essential for hand-eye

coordination. Of its many uses, all of them work towards the visual recognition of an object that a person is holding. This society is essential for the activities of human life. The people in it have an instinctual need to locate and communicate with compatible fellow workers in other societies, and to be working along with others. Their regeneration required the expunging of any desire to be in control. The instantaneous responses they have been graced with allows the Lord to use them in ways that are not understandable to them until a long time after the activity is completed, if at all. The very first awakenings of this society to use in a new human being can be detected when a very young infant gazes at its fist. In the Grand Human, Verna's heavenly society corresponds to the deep fissure in the brain that lies between the perceptive and motor systems. It is recruited during tasks requiring attention, maintenance and use of information in the working memory.

On earth Verna lived in Vancouver, British Columbia, and even though she had no children, her love of them came through in her work as a Special Education teacher. Over the years she gravitated toward helping children who were excessively impulsive. Her husband looked forward to reuniting with Verna when he entered the spiritual world.

The above is from a collection of short stories called "In My Meditation." Several other of the short stories have appeared in previous Journals. If anyone is interested in reading more, contact Helen at hmkennedy98@gmail.com.

Grace Hotson Shields

Cornelia Shields

Grace Augusta Hotson Shields was born on October 6, 1926, in Boston, Massachusetts, to Clarence Paul Hotson and Cornelia Robb Hinkley Hotson. She was the second of five children. Her older sister, Eleanor, tragically died of diphtheria at the age of four, so at age one and a half, Grace became the oldest child in the family, and was much cherished by her parents.

The family came from generations devoted to the writings of Swedenborg and the New Church. They were particularly proud of being directly descended from John Hargrove, the first New Church minister in America. Grace was his great-great-great granddaughter. Since then, various family members have been active in all branches of the New Church. Four generations of the family have at times attended New Church camp in Fryeburg, Maine, and lived for a time in Bryn Athyn and Bethayres, Pennsylvania.

Grace graduated from the Academy of the New Church, Class of 1945, and went on to complete college in Bryn Athyn with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1957. She taught kindergarten and first grade at a New Church School in Glenview, Illinois. She went on to marry Robert Shields in 1960 and had three children, Cornelia Margaret Ada and identical twins Heidi Elizabeth and Klara Katherine. Grace loved reading and music and was often surrounded by books. She read to her children and encouraged

them to play dress-up and stage performances such as “Hansel and Gretel.” She was particularly fond of dolls and supplied her children with many.

When Grace married Robert in 1960, he had accepted a job teaching high school English in Kennewick, Washington. They moved to Kennewick, which is where their children were born. In 1969 they moved to Dayton, Washington. Living in Washington state, there was little opportunity for New Church fellowship so she relished the semi-annual visits of traveling ministers. She or a friend would host them at home. She also attended some New Church retreats. Grace read the Bible and the writings of Swedenborg and applied them to her life. She passed away peacefully at home in Dayton, Washington, at the age of 97 on April 17, 2024. Grace is much missed here but must be happy in her spiritual home. A Celebration of Life was held on Monday, May 27, 2024, with a reception for family and friends elsewhere afterwards.



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*.

Washington Society

Sharon Kunkle

Theta Alpha Guild

Annual Report 2023-2024

Lauralyn Cooper and Sharon Kunkle are Co-Presidents for the 2024-25 term; Kathy Johns remains Treasurer; we currently have no one in the Vice-President or Secretary positions for this term.

Four meetings this year were led by President Carina Heinrichs using a mix of in-person and online options. In addition to the uses supported over the course of the year, Carina led our meetings to include some fun, including a Bingo night (using Smarties as markers – yum!) and a book/movie recommendation share. We also supported a fire-circle Christmas hymn sing that was well attended. Greg Henderson was the speaker for our Spring Banquet, with a well-timed presentation on New Church Education through history. Many thanks to everyone who continues to show up to meetings and/or volunteers to support the uses!

Scholarships Available!!

Bryn Athyn College Scholarships

Two education scholarships will be offered for the 2025-2026 school year. This annual award is for the purpose of supporting women attending Bryn Athyn College of the New Church who desire to become New Church teachers and declare education as a major or minor (or in an interdisciplinary degree).

The annual scholarship award amount is \$2,100 USD (\$700 paid directly to the college at the beginning of each trimester), for up to 2 recipients. One award is for an incoming first year student, and one award is for a current Bryn Athyn College education student. May be used toward tuition, fees and/or books. Applications are due March 1, 2025.

Three scholarships are available to women students of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church who have a GPA of 3.0 or above and are studying **Religion** (major, minor or ID) or are **international** students. There are two (2) \$2,000 and one (1) \$1,000 scholarships awarded to eligible recipients who exemplify the teachings of the New Church. These are annual merit-based scholarships that can be used for tuition, college fees, books or supplies. Applications are due March 1, 2025.

Two scholarships are available to women attending Bryn Athyn College of the New Church earning a Master's Degree and have a GPA of 3.0 or above. Each annual award is \$2,000, paid directly to the college at the beginning of each trimester. These are annual merit-based scholarships that can be used for

tuition, college fees, books or supplies. Applications are due April 1, 2025.

To apply: email scholarships@thetaalphainternational.org or see BAC website.

ANC Scholarships

Two annual scholarships are now offered for the 2025-2026 school year in the amount of \$2,500 for up to 2 young women who exemplify the teachings of the New Church. The Scholarship may be used toward tuition, books or fees. These are annual merit- and need-based scholarships and may be applied for yearly. Applications are due April 1, 2025.

To apply: email scholarships@thetaalphainternational.org.

Scholarship Winners

2024-2025 BAC Scholarships

Jennica Nobre – TAI Graduate Scholarship (MARS) (\$2000)

Anne G. Glenn – TAI College Scholarship (MARS) (\$2000)

Leilah Glenn – TAI Education Scholarship (\$2100)

2024-2025 ANC Scholarships (for \$2,500 each)

Mary Vandegrift

Isabella Furness

Websites and Blogs of Readers

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

Jenn Beiswenger – birth doula: *induetime.au*

Eva Björkström – her lovely gardens can be seen on YouTube
by searching her name

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

Jim deMaine – a doctor's thoughts and stories from his 32
years of practice: *endoflifeblog.com*

Diana Hasen – author children's books *stevieandharley.com*

Chandra Hoffman – writer: *chandrahoffman.com*

Helen Kennedy – writer: *hmk98.blogspot.com*

Kelly Lucero – Children's book author and storyteller:
KellyLucero.com

Page Morahan – photographer: *psmorahan@gmail.com*

Lara Muth – writer: *twitter.com/lyramariner*

Abbey Nash – writer: *abbeynash.com*

Tiffany Perry – poet: *naturepoetrysite.wordpress.com*

Hilda Rogers – artist: *dailypaintworks.com/Artists/
hilda-rogers-8286, hilda5462.wordpress.com*

Kerstin Sandstrom – artist: *kerstinsandstrom.wordpress.com*

This issue of the Theta Alpha Journal was formatted by Michelle Chapin
using Adobe InDesign CC. The text is set in Cabin and Timeless.
Printed by Paradigm Digital Color Graphics, Southampton, PA.



THETA ALPHA JOURNAL

Published by Theta Alpha International

P.O. Box 154

Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

NONPROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE

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LANGHORNE, PA

PERMIT NO. 81