

THETA ALPHA JOURNAL



APRIL 2013

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THETA ALPHA JOURNAL

Theta Alpha—Daughters of the Academy

From the Greek Θυγατερες Ακαδημιας (Thugateres Akadémias)

An organization of women members of the General Church

Founded 1904

Purpose: Furtherance of New Church Education

Non Nobis Solum (not for ourselves alone)

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A MESSAGE FROM THETA ALPHA INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your loyal support of dues and donations this past year. You enable us to continue with our many uses such as scholarships, awards, and the *Journal*. We are particularly excited about the translation of children's religion lessons into French to meet the growing needs in West Africa, and the baptismal gift packages sent out worldwide to families. It is our hope to look for more ways to help parents of young children in their efforts to bring New Church education into their homes. We are so grateful to you for your financial help in this continuing and important work. You will find the annual dues notice on p.55.

We are sad to announce the resignation of our editor of the *Journal*, Angela Rose, who is moving full time into New Church Education. Angela has brought the *Journal* back to life after a few years with no issues, and we have all loved it. Thank you so much Angela, for the enormous amount of dedication and hard work you have put into it. Now we are looking for a new volunteer to be our editor. Please know that you do not have to live in Bryn Athyn to do this job and that you

would have the support of the executive committee with the printing and mailing, etc., wherever you live. So come forward if this job appeals to you and we will talk. You can contact any member of the committee; we are all listed in the back of this issue, and we are eager to hear from you.

In the meantime, you should be aware that we have accepted an offer from Wendy Soneson to try an on-line website for women who are committed to New Church education where they can exchange views and share ideas. She has put out a first issue to see if there is any interest in this. Please go online and sign up (it's free!) at <http://thetaalphaonline.com>.

Again, thank you for your support and commitment to the uses of Theta Alpha International.

Barbara Doering (Secretary)

Carol Buss (Membership Secretary)

Farewell From the Editor

This April issue includes an article from ThetaAlphaOnline by Bronwen Henry. It is one of many gems in these pages, and I'm more than pleased for my farewell edition to have such a variety of fine articles, as well as a lovely poetic contribution, "Wind," from Barbara Posey. As our poetry editor, Janna King, noted, Babbie was a pilot and "must have often paid intimate attention to the wind." Many thanks to all the writers. Thanks also to the assistant editors, Linda Simonetti Odhner, Janna King, and Taryn Rose Frazier, and a special thank you to the proof readers, who prefer to remain anonymous, but without whose help this issue would not have been possible. Thank you one and all.

Angela Rose

Theta Alpha Online (thetaalphaonline.com)

Theta Alpha Online is up and running as of March 1, 2013. In this experiment, we will see if an interactive website of articles, pictures, and reports is a viable use for the women of the Theta Alpha community. In the first issue, we have three departments, called "I Remember", "I Believe", and "I Hope." Some well written articles, such as a memoir by writer Naomi Gladish Smith, and a wonderful talk by Julia Williams Robinson, are included. Also, there is an opportunity to respond right away to the pieces.

If you would like notification of when these online issues come out, please subscribe by writing to Wendy Soneson, editor, at wendysoneson@gmail.com.

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CHARTER DAY BANQUET ADDRESS

OCTOBER 13, 2012

B. ERIK ODHNER

Vice Chancellor Carswell, Friends of the Academy,

Since this is the political season, I'd say it's time for a State of the Academy Address. We can dispense with multiple rounds of disingenuous applause, unless you feel moved to it at the end. To begin, like any good State of the Union address, let's reassure ourselves that the state of the Academy is, in fact, good, without bothering to list a bunch of silly statistics to back it up. We're being politicians here.

And, like the State of the Union, let us now proceed to itemize all the scary things that threaten this great institution:

- the financial cliff;
- drifting from the mission of our founding founders;
- demographic challenges and the admission of undocumented New Churchmen into our schools;
- and, depending on your politics, either cultural decline, or the failure to keep up with the times - take your pick.

Now, we could just blame the previous administration and make it a really short night of it. Tempting! But it would be self-incriminating to a degree, so skip it. A brief, but full analysis is required.

Where do we stand? In order to answer that question, some perspective is needed.

When Eric asked me to do this, and I asked him if he had any thoughts about what I should say, he mumbled something about me being one of the older faculty. So, I will confess that I did - in fact - address a Charter Day Banquet some time ago. Without getting too specific about the number of years let's call it a generation, more or less. It doesn't seem like a very long time has passed, but a few things have changed.

Let's take Technology

Teacher orientation for me involved figuring out the spirit duplicator..... so I could make purple handouts. Email was a triple carbon form, to be typed on my Hermes typewriter - there was no delete button on my Hermes typewriter.

If the message needed to go out to more than a few people, retype the message three or four times on a carbon sheet and reproduce it on the spirit duplicator, then,

use the paper cutter to make the number you need, BUT, you need to know how many sheets at a time you could cut or we could have a problem in the faculty workroom. I did eventually get an overhead projector, with acetate transparencies; that is, I had to fight with the other second floor teachers to use it, when the bulb wasn't burnt out. But chalk dust was still a major part of every teacher's diet.

We also had short filmstrips we could get from the library. They had an accompanying 78 record - a record is a round, flat, plastic thing kind of like a very large DVD - remember DVD's? And the record would ding when it was time to manually advance the frame. Then we moved on to the 200 pound TV with a 200 pound Betamax tape player.

Some of you remember these Ancient Devices as high tech; things are a little different now. We're in the cloud; we connect our ipads to the smart board with a dongle when lightshow won't connect wirelessly. We report our grades online in ARIES and Engrade; our course scope and sequence in a database called ATLAS; course websites in eLiNC -- heady stuff for a guy who had trouble orienting the transparency on the overhead.

Now, let's take Demographics

Thirty years ago, it was unusual to have somebody in the school who wasn't related to somebody else here, and if they were related to somebody else, they were related to pretty much everybody. I'm an Odhner-Cole-Pendleton derivative, but I felt like an outsider because I didn't have Starkey blood like everybody else. And we were growing every year, because a family of four or five was considered average. Now, we try to hold our own by finding families who are new to the Church, and we struggle to accommodate a growing number of Asians in our number. Things have changed.

Finances?

Thirty years ago we had an enormous endowment, but if your stapler broke, just try to get a new one! We had to plan the conversion of our two Televisions, from Betamax to VHS, over four budget years. Question: what account paid for the replacement bulb for the overhead? Answer: there was no such account, but no worries: somehow the secretary managed to hoard a little stash of chalk.

What about Learning Styles thirty years ago?

When I started teaching, we didn't have learning styles. Everyone learned in exactly the same way. It was much easier. If a student was struggling, there was always Al's Gas Station or the Navy.

Then, suddenly there was a series of learning disorders: dyslexia, ADD, ADHD and now the whole spectrum of Asperger's syndrome. I don't know how or

why it happened, but sometime during my career in education, everybody's brains suddenly got different. Right brain/left brain; okay, I could handle that. Then front to back, and now with this gender stuff - brains really have gotten very complex.

And the Curriculum?

Back in the day, we had this thing called a 'curriculum.' It's a Latin word. Everybody starts here, at the same time, and you start running, and you end up over there. Simple. Now, everyone wants something different, which we knew would unravel the very fabric of our society. Where would we end up if everyone doesn't study the same thing? We end up with a bunch of people who are, like, different. Besides, it's impossible. To individualize the curriculum you would need a massive new technology that makes all the world's knowledge available at your fingertips.

So things have changed, and darn it, they continue to change, and that's what I want to address tonight. What if the trends we've seen continue? They might not.

-We might suddenly hit a Luddite phase where we all throw our Droids in the Pennypack and swear off Google and Facebook. Apple could go back to being a fruit. Families would go back to talking to each other when they are at home and not communicating when they are away from home, instead of ignoring each other at home and constantly texting, tweeting, facebooking and skypeing when we're away from home.

Don't count on it. I fearlessly predict that the advance in technology will be at least as mind blowing in the next thirty years as it has been in the past thirty. Are we ready for that? Do we take advantage of it, or just let it happen to us?

-We might suddenly see a stunning increase in the fertility rate within the church, so we can go back to ignoring families outside the church. Now that I've had my family, I'd be very happy to see my kids produce thirty - forty grandkids. But they'd better hurry.

Somehow I wouldn't count on it. I bravely predict that fertility rates within the church will struggle to equal the replacement rate, which means either shrinking schools or schools with a significant population of New Church immigrants, to coin a phrase.

-We might win the Lottery. The big one. Come to think of it, after taxes, we'd better win several power balls in a row. Then we could go back to jealously guarding an endowment by hoarding chalk.

I wouldn't count on the lottery. I boldly foresee a continuation of the struggle to balance expenditure with revenue on into the future and struggling to find ways for all of us to figure out how to pay for education.

We might see a rapid reduction in the number of students with learning differences. I can just see it: more and more parents saying, "Please, don't take my child's unique interests and mental characteristics into account when you design and teach your classes. I want you to treat her as though she is indistinguishable from every other child."

No, I can't see that. The truth is, everyone is different and we should not expect a return to the Prussian, factory approach to education any time soon.

And the curriculum? Let's face it. We are not going back to a standardized curriculum of standardized classes for everyone. There are simply too many options available to families, and the variety and combinations are going to be increasingly attractive. Content, and for that matter, even much in the way of skill learning, has become commoditized. There's an app for that. We're under pressure to recognize what's left and focus hard on it.

And the distinct possibility that changes in college expectations will be perhaps even greater than at the secondary level will further feed into the individualization of education. For good or for ill, the old system of education is dying and could easily collapse within the next generation.

Pretty scary, right? So where will ANC be in thirty years? I don't know the answer to that any more than I could have predicted thirty years ago that that weaselly fifteen year old in my Latin class would someday be my boss. But I will hazard a little trend analysis. First, the rate of change is likely to continue to increase, so get ready for a wild ride. What will the school look like in thirty years?

In thirty years we will have as our primary goal the preparation of our students for a good and useful life in this world and on to eternity.

The Heavenly Doctrines will guide the school and be the foundation of our programs.

We will prepare our students to grow in ways spiritual, moral, academic, physical, social, and artistic.

ANC teachers will honor and nurture the unique and complementary nature of the sexes.

ANC teachers will be passionate about promoting what is best for each student and will engage our students in lives of social responsibility.

By the way, the description I have been reading here was not penned by a Benade or a Pendleton or an Acton a hundred and fifty years ago, although I believe they would recognize the dream and heartily endorse the objectives. It was written by teachers currently serving on the faculty - some of them alarmingly young. Just as this vision reflects the values and virtues of thirty years ago, it projects those values as a foundation for the future.

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The technology, our demographics, the way we finance our institution, the very curriculum and teaching methods, all will change in incredible ways, so as to be perhaps unrecognizable.

But this audacious goal stated in the current mission and philosophy statement, can certainly be achieved:

ANC will be recognized in the secondary educational world as the model for the integration of spiritual and natural knowledge in the curriculum, and in the complementary education of the sexes.

Now, as to the dire threats we face:

In fairly short order, our school has gone from a technological dark age to positioning itself toward the forefront, leveraging the rapid development of new technology. As painful as it is to get yet another email from Kyle Genzlinger with three new free Google apps to master by Friday, the future, the *near* future, will see an incredible level of efficient services to be offered to prospective families. This pulling ourselves up by the bootstraps, technology-wise, could never have happened, I believe, if we were not facing a deep financial crisis. Nothing else would force that change.

Although we are on a learning curve in terms of welcoming new faces and new families who are a good fit with the Academy, there is a science to it, and we are learning that science. Having new families involved with the Academy, who are enthusiastic about the school, the community and the Church, is a tremendous boost to morale. I do not believe it could have happened if we were not faced with a steep demographic decline. Nothing else would force the change.

As part of our ten year re-accreditation, the Curriculum Committee met recently to consider how well we use data to analyze and remediate within our program. Traditionally, although we are a caring and engaged faculty, we have not done a great job of using data to identify and correct problems. We tried - in committee - to score ourselves low in the ratings, but as the meeting progressed it became apparent that we are approaching a very effective and comprehensive system of support for students of various learning types and different rates of learning. I do not think this would have ever happened if we had not been overwhelmed by a tide of challenges in this area. Nothing else would have forced the change.

Without belaboring the point, because of the willingness to revisit and renew founding principles, and a courageous energy to confront and solve an unholy

swarm of crises of all sorts, I foresee, quoting again from our mission and philosophy statement, the following:

In thirty years,

-The Academy of the New Church will not be identifiable to most people as a geographical entity, but as a revolutionary approach to secondary education. It will consist of a core curriculum of courses and programs for those raised in the church, and an outer core that is adaptable and marketable to those not raised in the church, and which is widely imitated.

- The curriculum will have further developed and articulated its doctrinal orientation, and will be particularly desirable for its successful integration of natural and spiritual or moral learning, as well as for its resolution of gender issues in education. It will embrace variety in learning approaches (academic, arts, life-skills, vocational) to reflect the variety of learners, taking full advantage of new technologies to grow and extend its reach.

- The ANC system will be a magnet for idealistic and enthusiastic young people, who recognize in it the cutting edge in education, and the attractive quality of its physical and moral environment. ANC educators will be known for their own learning and professional development, and the teaching field itself will be the liveliest form of New Church evangelization.

We have already, just in the last generation, seen enough change to destroy our institution ten times over. And despite all the challenges -- of finances, of demographics, of cultural decline -- these teachers, with all our support, are daily working these principles into their classes, into athletics, into the arts and social life of the Academy. There are exciting things happening, and strangely enough, a great part of what makes them exciting is that they are being facilitated by the very challenges we fear.

There is a revolution in education brewing in the world at large. The men and women of the Academy, that's all of us, must position ourselves to do more than weather the storm, but to harness it toward those ends that were a dream a generation ago and are still a living dream.

The State of the Academy is as precarious as ever. Perhaps the headwinds we face are more severe than ever. If we can look back in thirty years and see at the core of our curriculum, these principles or ones like them, then we can say that we were able to tack and jibe and turn those headwinds into motivation for healthy growth and change.

Erik Odhner (BS 1974) is Curriculum Coordinator at the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools, where he has taught for more than 30 years.

TWO GENDERS, TWO WORLDS
TAI CHARTER DAY LUNCHEON ADDRESS

SUSAN OLSON ODHNER

Introduction

Good afternoon and thank you so much for inviting us to speak about gender specific education. This is a subject near and dear to both of our hearts and we are pleased we can share it with you. We are thrilled to talk about our involvement with the Gurian Institute, but I would like to start at the beginning and how we got to where we are now.

Before my job as Principal of the Girls School, I had the honor of working in the classroom as a teacher. I was fortunate for I taught a very distinctively New Church class called The Formative Years. This course was originally created and taught by Donnette Alfelt, and I was lucky enough to be assigned to teach this after she left ANC.

The course resonated with me on many levels. I worked with girls and taught them about babies, (a favorite subject with teenage girls), childrearing, birth, adoption, female health issues, marriage, relationships and many other subjects. The class was popular and somewhat of a hybrid between religion and health; I looked forward to being there with them every day.

Some of our best discussions came about when the subject of relationships came up. We have the Writings and Word to guide us, and I used material from these resources on a regular basis. The girls learned early on that men and women are different and that their complementary nature is what can make a marriage last and grow. They knew it. This wasn't a message, however, that they heard with consistency outside of our school. In the outside world the message was that men and women for the most part are exactly the same and that environmental factors determine their differences.

We knew better. Luckily, while I was teaching the course, I stumbled upon a secular resource that supported the idea of intrinsic gender differences. The girls could see there were people outside of the New Church who believed in this concept that men and women are very different in every way and that this was a positive thing.

Fast forward. I took on the job as Principal in 2007, and the Formative Years was discontinued for the time being. As the principal of a girls' school my job is that of instructional leader; I am one of many who looks at curriculum and how it can be best suited to our girls. It is something that is dynamic and always changing, so while The Formative Years was no longer taught in the Girls School, I was still

interested in gender differences and how we could leverage this concept to educate our girls in a more efficient and effective way.

Long before we discovered and worked with Gurian, members of the Girls School faculty decided to dig deeper in how we could accommodate our girls on many levels. They wanted to know what constituted the feminine mind and how can we make what we teach our girls more meaningful. We looked specifically at the Senior Religion course and the book, *Conjugal Love*. We felt we needed to do something to help make this important book of the Writings more relevant and applicable for these girls. We wanted to find a way to make its challenging passages more accessible to them; we felt it important that it resonate with them, leaving them with a sense of hope for the ideals of relationships, marriage and life.

We rolled up our sleeves beginning in 2010 and met two times a month, when possible. As we read *Conjugal Love*, we tried to drill down and make sense of the content from a teenager's point of view. We continued our study through the 2011-12 school year.

We stayed true to our vision during these two years, looking at how the feminine mind works and examining the content of *Conjugal Love* to see how it could be more engaging for the girls without losing the integrity and intrinsic beauty of the book itself.

We are continuing our work this school year. We will take our notes from the first two years and study the main concepts. Our goal, ultimately, is to come up with and define at least 20 points that are pivotal to the teaching of *Conjugal Love*. After this, we will read two papers written by New Church women on gender differences, sexuality and conjugal love and a book written by a Girls School graduate. Eventually, we hope to compile a booklet that can be used in any religion class that focuses on men and women and their complementary nature, on religion and most importantly, on conjugal love.

So, how did we get from a study of *Conjugal Love* to the Gurian?

I am in graduate school working toward a Masters in Educational Leadership. I love what I am doing with this very much; my courses have enriched my experience as a principal and have helped me in many ways. Along with these courses comes homework, portfolio projects and many, many papers. It was during one of these courses that I became acquainted with the Gurian Institute and what they had to offer. I was working on a paper on gender-based education and needed current and relevant material to support my thesis. I knew that Kay Alden had done much work with gender studies, and I asked her for some help. She put me onto the Gurian. I went to their website, ordered books and called them, looking for information.

I was blown away by what they offered. Here was a group of people, outside of our own New Church system, who deeply believed that boys and girls learn

differently because they are so different, down to their every cell. This group works with the latest and most current brain-based research and formulates techniques and strategies based on this research to teach students in a way where they can be successful. Hmm, they were on to something that dovetailed so beautifully with our own theological teachings, how could we get involved with this?

As most of you know, we have been doing this gender-specific education for a very long time. We have been a Girls School and Boys school, and we take what we do in each school very seriously. Our freshmen are taught in totally single-sex classes; our sophomores have language and some math with boys; our juniors have a few more classes with the boys when they enroll in physics and chemistry classes; and our seniors, while still experiencing some single-sex classes, have even more co-ed classes. This may look random, but it isn't. We introduce the co-ed experience slowly and carefully and when we feel the students are ready. It is based on what we learn from The Lord and His teachings and it is very, very effective.

But, we can always do better and through the Gurian we felt our gender-based education could be even more effective. Our first step was getting out to Colorado for their annual workshop. During the three days spent there one learns about the physical brain and how it differs between boys and girls, how to manage a classroom more effectively with gender in mind, and how to create strategies and techniques to teach each sex more effectively.

Gail Cooper, Kira Schadegg and I made the trek in July of 2011. Aside from a little altitude sickness, the trip was fabulous; we learned so many things through a group of passionate and wonderful people whose only interest is how to teach with the student very much in mind. Part of the training involved trying to identify where the students are currently being successful (data), identifying the students that are falling through the cracks (data), and analyzing possible underlying issues (research). With this critical information we could discover new ways to redesign the best educational practices for all students.

While at the Institute we realized we could take this Gurian initiative even further through certifying our teachers to be trained and by becoming a Gurian Model School. This appealed to us in many ways for at the heart of any educational program is the goal to help the student learn effectively and with this, experience success in the confines of that learning. So what was next for us?

We have started our work to become the Gurian Model school we would like to be. The criterion for this type of designation is rigid, but so far we are on task. Our first job was to bring the Gurian to ANC and that is what we did in June. The founder and CEO of the Institute, Michael Gurian came to Bryn Athyn and presented the community with an inspiring keynote address on the ways boys and girls learn

differently. This was followed by two full days of Professional Development. Both the Boys School and Girls school were involved in this development and came away with techniques and tools to use in their classrooms.

We sent Gail and Kira again back to Colorado this summer, and at this point they are certified to train teachers in any of our General Church Schools. There are many other things we need to do, but we are in the game. We will share annual assessment data, provide presentations through our trainers to parents and community members, and continue to send faculty out to Colorado for training on an annual basis. If all goes well, we will acquire our designation by the end of this school year.

So, you may have a few questions at this point, and I am going to guess at what some of them might be.

What about the Boys School? While the Girls School has taken up the initiative here, the Boys School is interested and involved. They have been a team player every step of the way and will be sending faculty members to Colorado next summer. This initiative needs to be done jointly in order to last, and we all know that if this helps our students do a better job, it is worth it.

Why is this so important? We already do gender-based education pretty well, so why the big push? While we have done gender-based education for years, we didn't really know what it meant and didn't have a defined way of teaching. Working with the Gurian will help give us the road map we need to do it right. This is also very important for it combines the secular and theological approach that will help us provide our students with a better, more rounded education. Brain research is hard to dispute; combine that with what we know from the Word and the Writings and we can't help but do a better job.

Finally, how will this specifically benefit girls? School is set up for girls. They are more inclined to try to please, to sit still and to listen. So in many ways the benefits of gender-based education appear to be geared to boys.

But the benefits for girls are there too. We are better equipped to help girls gain confidence in all that they do, specifically in subjects like math and science. We can help girls build a healthy and well balanced self-esteem through what has been called the three c's: confidence, connectedness and competence. Confidence in the classroom can also help develop leadership skills. Through providing constructive, specific and positive feedback to our girls they can grow into the young women we know they can be.

Thank you for your time. I would now like to turn this over to Gail Cooper, who will tell you about the specifics of gender education, brain research, discovery and how this all fits into the Gurian model.

TWO GENDERS, TWO WORLDS:
ANC'S ROAD TO GENDERED LEARNING

GAIL REUTER COOPER

Nothing in the two sexes is the same, although there is nevertheless a capacity for conjunction in every detail. (Conjugal Love 33)

The Academy Secondary Schools are entering an era in which our long-held belief in the fundamental difference between the male and female and how they learn is finally coming into its own. For more than a hundred years, we have had separate schools for our boys and girls based on this very belief, but if hard-pressed, it would have been difficult for teachers to explain the differences in male and female learning styles except in a general way. The good news is that now there is a growing body of secular scientific research that can spell out those differences in ways that affect our teaching style, our classrooms, our pedagogy, even the way our classrooms can be set up. The purpose of this presentation is to discuss this new research in very general terms. We will look at the education of both genders, but will end with a focus on what we can do for our girls. Before embarking on the innovations going on at the Academy Secondary Schools, let us take a moment to look (too briefly) at the history of female education. Please bear in mind that the history of education is a gargantuan topic, and I will not be able to do it any justice at all in just a few paragraphs.

A Brief History of Gender Education

From time immemorial, the prevailing wisdom has been that females aren't equipped for cognitive education. They weren't considered capable of learning to the same degree as men. Indeed, for most of history, women were given only the very basic education—and sometimes none at all, especially in the lower classes. Even for upper class girls, the focus of their education was that they become “accomplished” in the realm of the home. Finishing schools provided that their graduates be able to read and write, possibly speak some French, but also to draw, paint, embroider, and play the piano.

In the nineteenth century the education of girls expanded, and by the end of the century it was becoming more commonplace for girls to go to high school. A few pioneering women went to college, and as the generations passed, this too became more acceptable, even expected. Even so, during the middle of the twentieth century, there were those who didn't feel that higher education was a serious pursuit for girls.

Then came the sixties, and the feminist movement, and the eventual and well-deserved end to the attitude that their college experience was primarily for getting an M.R.S. degree in husband-finding. During the following decades, more women

went to college, entered previously male-only professions, and showed that the female was as fully capable of learning as her male counterpart. Then with the nineties came the Reviving Ophelia Era, with a focus on the fragility of girls and their low achievement in math and science. The magnifying glass was on how to maximize their achievement in these areas. All these efforts at educating females have borne fruit; there are currently more women graduating from college than there are males.

This development has not gone unnoticed in the educational world, and the pendulum has swung once again to male education. What is behind this downward slope for boys' academic performance? Why are our boys underachieving, not only in college but in high school as well? Enter the Age of the Brain.

The Rise of Brain Research

While educators and parents were reviving Ophelia, the scientific world was making incredible strides in the area of brain research. With newly developed technology, scientists were able to actually watch the brain at work, learn what parts of the brain were used for specific tasks, and begin to get a concrete idea of how the brain handles tasks such as memorizing. And beyond learning how the brain works, they could also begin to identify the differences in the way male and female brains work. What have they discovered?

Most brain functions are the same for both genders. We are, after all, human beings and the operations of maintaining life, functioning in the natural world, and regenerating are the same for both sexes. This said, there are about one hundred discernible differences between them, and these differences are important and observable in their behaviors. These differences are supported by social and psychological research.

I must add here that a belief in intrinsic gendered differences is very controversial. While the differences are observable, the debate about nature vs. nurture is thriving. There are those who believe that differences are a result of upbringing. There are also those for whom "equal" means "the same," and these people find the "nature" approach politically incorrect and threatening. But there is also a strong group who support the idea of intrinsic differences, and these people are discovering what the New Church has always known.

Enter the Gurian Institute, which collects international research on brain-based gender differences, and uses this research to train educators and corporations in how to apply that research to better reach both sexes. The people of the Gurian Institute are pioneers in bringing neuro-biology and brain research into homes, workplaces, and schools. These are the people who last June spent two days training the faculty of both the Boys School and Girls School, bringing together brain research and best practices in teaching. The training they provide and the research that backs it up has implications in school, the workplace, and in private relationships. I am concentrating here on the educational applications.

What Have We Learned?

What I am presenting here is a distillation of a lot of information into just a few paragraphs; I cannot possibly do justice to it all, nor go into academic detail. Space does not allow for a presentation of the specific brain research. We will find in the summary that follows that in spite of our concerns for Ophelia, it is our boys who are at risk in education.

Verbal Ability: There are more verbal areas in the brain available to women. They have easier access to those areas, and that access begins earlier in their development. A female baby at birth is already several weeks ahead in this area than a boy. The female brain can also articulate concurrent thought processes; women can think out loud. Male brains need to process before articulating. And while emotions can affect access to verbal areas in both genders, the effect is more pronounced in the male brain. An upset boy has a very difficult time verbalizing; give an upset boy or man time to cool off before discussing the situation.

Current schooling methods rely heavily on verbal skills: reading, writing, verbal response. Girls are wired to do all these things with facility. But all of these are a challenge for a male brain, and under pressure in a classroom, that challenge is magnified. Our boys are behind the gun from the day they enter a formal educational system in preschool. Indeed, they are behind that gun from the day they are born.

Brain Activity: Activity in the male brain is localized, which gives men the ability to concentrate on one task or thought in depth and without internal distraction. The female brain uses several areas at once and has the ability to pass information from one part of the brain to another with more facility. This is why females are better at multi-tasking. The female brain at rest has more activity than the male brain engaged in problem solving. This does *not* mean that women are smarter than men. It is just that they are using more parts of their brain at one time than a man is. The male brain, on the other hand, is more suited to focus and specialization than the overactive female brain.

Women's brains are very active. They are constantly moving from one thought to another, never at rest. They literally cannot stop thinking. Men, on the other hand, can think of nothing at all. Really. Nothing at all. The "nothing box" is the default place for the male brain to go when under stress or bored. This is a concept a woman has a hard time picturing because she just can't do this. But every teacher can recognize that blank look gradually coming over a male student's face. What an educator must be aware of is that it is possible for that male to seemingly be paying attention, but not actually taking in anything at all. It's also a good thing for a wife to know about a husband.

Emotional Brain Life: The male brain is geared to acting on emotional reaction before it reaches the impulse-control area and tends to rest in the area of the brain devoted to "fight or flight." This means that males have a stronger and more

physical reaction when angered. An upset male is hard-wired to react physically. For males, especially when they are angry or upset, face-to-face confrontation exacerbates the natural tendency to aggression. The side-by-side approach is more conducive to communication (after they have been given down time to access their verbal access): sit beside the boy without making eye contact while talking together. This is far less threatening than a face-to-face discussion and allows far more effective communication. Even in the best of times, the male brain has a hard time reading emotions on other people's faces, or in identifying their own emotional responses. The male brain is geared for action and has little impulse-control. Most males will confirm that they rarely think before they act. They just act. They are risk takers. This is one reason men can make quick decisions. They do well on multiple-choice tests.

Females, on the other hand, are hard-wired for dealing with emotions and building relationships. Their emotions are tied into what they experience, which helps them to remember details. They are well able to identify the emotions on the face of another person. And they think—they plan--before they act. Women who take their time making a decision (on multiple choice tests, for example) do so, not because they aren't capable of making a decision, but because they see *so many factors* that bring to bear on that decision and must sort through them all before coming to a conclusion.

Hormones and Neuro-transmitters: This is a large and complex area, so we can only summarize here. Both genders produce the same hormones, but the way males process hormones and neuro-transmitters, and the amount of certain hormones (primarily testosterone) found in the male mean that they are wired for fight or flight. They will respond aggressively, or retreat to their Nothing Box. Flight by a male can mean that he is concerned about his own potential for aggression and will leave rather than indulge it.

Females also produce testosterone, but its effect is overshadowed by oxytocin, the "tend and befriend" hormone. Women are chemically driven to build relationships. They can't help but be concerned about interpersonal relationships. Anyone who has observed women heading to the Ladies' Room in groups has observed this.

Bridge Brains: We all know people who don't fit into the descriptions given above. That is why we need to briefly look at people who have "bridge brains," that is, people who have brains that operate more like the opposite sex. Men who are verbal. Women who are risk takers. Approximately 20% of people fall into this category, and they often feel as if they don't quite fit in. Often, though not always, in school they are the girls who are tomboys and the boys who are "sensitive." These children can be the victims of bullying during their school years.

Bear in mind, however, that a woman with a bridge brain, or one that operates more like a "male" brain, is still a woman. She has all the spiritual aspects of

femininity, but processes things more analytically. Her counterpart among men will be spiritually masculine, but his mind is more geared to empathy than that of most men.

Use It or Lose It

Let's take a look at how the Gurian training can help ANC teachers marry research with best practices in the classroom. An awareness of gendered differences- observable psychological and sociological differences- allow a teacher to teach to and work with each gender's strengths and needs. We can support their strengths and give them tools to deal with their challenges. We can teach them about gendered differences and how to respect and deal with them.

For *boys*, success in the classroom means easing up on approaches that rely primarily on the verbal. Let's allow boys to draw pictures of what they have read or what they intend to write. Drawing a picture first helps prepare a second grade boy for writing a composition. This isn't mollicoddling our boys, this is allowing them to access information more easily. This doesn't mean we don't develop their verbal skills; they can hardly get through schooling today without learning to do this. What it does mean is that we can employ other approaches as well that will allow our boys to more readily access their verbal centers as well as finding non-verbal ways of expressing what they have learned.

Boys' relationships tend to be hierarchical in nature, and the competition this engenders (supported by testosterone) is a great hook to use in the classroom. Women tend to underestimate how much of a male world is focused on competition, but it can be a very useful tool in a teacher's arsenal.

Boys also need to move, move, move. They have more parts of their brain dedicated to spatial and kinesthetic activity. Let's let them move by building in activities that involve movement, by allowing them to stand and use their limbs—especially when they start heading toward that Nothing Box.

The way our schools operate will challenge our boys to develop what does not come naturally. They will learn to be quiet, sit still, and use their verbal skills, and it is important that they know how to do these things. But we need to keep in mind that these behaviors do not come naturally to them, and that many boys find the current school environment undermines them from early in their school career to its end. For some it is entirely disheartening, and for others the stress is overwhelming. And how do they behave under stress? Fight or flight. Aggression or drop out or head for the Nothing Box. Boys are a disproportionate amount of discipline problems in school. When we can accommodate our classrooms to their need for movement and competition and downplay a reliance on verbal skills, our discipline problems with boys ease up.

Girls are already verbal, and our schools can help them hone these skills, and to rein in those overactive minds to focus. Their world of relationships centers on making sure that everyone is comfortable and is having their needs met. This

predilection for building relationships means that they are people pleasers: they will tend to want to do what their teachers ask of them. They do their homework!

They also have a need for movement, but as a means of stimulating them and giving their overactive minds a break. It will also help to develop their spatial and kinesthetic skills. Although girls may not have an intrinsic need for competition, they respond well when it is used appropriately in the classroom--the competition can be with others, or with themselves. Competition is a part of the world they share with their masculine counterparts and is therefore unavoidable. We serve them well if we can teach them to deal with it well.

The broad focus for teachers here can be summed up in two words: movement and competition. Each of these approaches benefits both genders and can be a basis for reaching all students. Let us not, in our haste to support strengths, lose sight of the fact that we are all human beings and have the capacity to use all skills, whether they are traditionally associated with masculine or feminine brains. Both genders are born with the ability to do the entire spectrum of tasks; what differs in each gender is the brain space dedicated to those tasks.

Mental ability is like exercise: use it and it strengthens. We enjoy what is easier for us, so we like to exercise the skills that come naturally to us and avoid skills or subjects we are not good at. Males tend to avoid the verbal, females the spatial and mathematical. The reason that girls in the past tended to perform poorly at math was because culturally and personally they tended to not do tasks that utilize this part of their brain. In the past decades we have focused on greater exposure on math skills for our girls from an earlier age, and the result? Girls are performing at the same level in mathematics as boys. The ability is there.

It is a fact that each of us is capable of developing *all* our innate skills, both the ones that are easy and the ones that present us with challenges. What we do not work on will weaken and our potential in that area will diminish, while the areas we focus on will grow and strengthen. This is why many trained educators find disturbing the recent trend in “unschooling” where students focus on the areas and skills that interest and excite them, with less or little emphasis on what doesn’t draw them in. The brain will literally prune away the areas that are not used and so much potential can be lost when we do not ask our students to stretch and utilize the areas where they do not have natural talent with as much emphasis as the ones they love. They may not enjoy it, but some day the skills related to those areas may be needed, and the student who has not developed them will have been ill-served.

New Church Perspective Meets Gurian

Neurological, sociological, and psychological research is now showing us how the truths in the Heavenly Doctrines about gendered differences can play out in the natural world. The genders share so much in common in their brain structure, but the few distinctive differences make all the difference. The analytic male brain is an accurate representation of the masculine focus on wisdom and its

truth; the empathetic female brain is hard-wired to build the relationships that love seeks. Bridge brains show us that the Lord has provided that the spiritual gendered differences manifest themselves in a variety of ways, and there is infinite variety in that manifestation. We can also see here how the brains are complementary to each other. The empathetic brain needs the analytic and vice versa. New Church educators can see more clearly than before how to teach to the masculine and feminine, mindful of the potential for conjunction on all levels of the mind.

As we align ourselves to address the challenges our boys face in education, let us not lose sight of what we can do for our girls. Let us help them understand the spectrum of gendered differences and know how to work with them. Our classrooms can be a model for this, as well as for learning to deal with competition. We can help them learn to deal constructively with their emotions and minimize the destructive effects of negative experiences.

In strength there can be weakness, and the verbal and relational tools girls have can be used to harm as well as to benefit. Let us help our girls avoid using relationships as cliques that effectively bully those they deliberately and knowingly exclude. Let us help them develop compassion and respect for those who are different and for minds that work differently from theirs. We can do this with positive mentoring, in the classroom and in life. Let us encourage them to be willing to face challenges on their own--but still go to the ladies' room with company—and be defined by their own strengths and weaknesses and not those of their friends.

The Boys School in recent years has focused on developing the moral virtues of its boys, a mission that is well suited to the characteristics of the male brain: focus, specialization, and the emphasis of truth in action. In the Girls School our hope is that our graduates will walk the fine line between being responsible, self-reliant individuals while supporting and gaining strength from those around them. The tools that the Gurian Institute has given us will help us hone our skills in addressing the strengths and challenges of each gender.

It is our sincere hope that the ultimate guide for our students and ourselves will be the Word of the Lord.

Susan Olson Odhner (GS 1973) received a degree in English and History from The Academy of the New Church College in 1995. She began her teaching career at ANC in 1998 and became principal in 2007. Her goal for the girls is to give them the tools to live a life with a solid moral and spiritual foundation.

Gail Reuter Cooper (GS 1968) is a product of New Church schools, K -12 in Glenview and the Academy. She earned a MARS degree last year from Bryn Athyn College and has taught at ANCSS for 25 years. Two of her four children are also New Church educators. This past year she became a certified district trainer for Gurian Institute as part of ANC's process of becoming a Gurian model school.

YOUNG PEOPLE AREN'T INTERESTED IN GOD
(AND OTHER MYTHS ABOUT A MISSING GENERATION)

BRONWEN MAYER HENRY

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I often hear people bemoaning the absence of young people in church. This sometimes leads to the hasty conclusion that young people are not interested in God, spiritual growth, the Bible, or the afterlife. This is a mistaken idea. And this misunderstanding sometimes leads to the misguided conclusion that one should change services to better appeal to young people, maybe pepping up their music, serving coffee in the sanctuary, or dressing their pastor like a hipster. This is missing the point. Don't get me wrong, great music and great coffee is awesome, they just don't remedy the absence of young people in church.

Where are Young People? Are They Actually Disinterested?

It's understandable to conclude that young people are straying away from church. But I challenge this conclusion as a sign of disinterest. But how do you assess young people's levels of interest? Is it attendance at Friday supper classes? Sunday morning services? If these are the only types of ways you qualify "involvement" then yes, it would seem the younger audience is moving further from church. So then how do we assess the amount of interest young people have in religion? It has to be beyond attendance and participation in existing programming. When we look at young people's involvement, it may be more effective to ask ourselves how are they showing up in conversations about church. Do they want engagement? Are they asking important questions or asking for help? Are they sharing their experiences of pain, grief, and loneliness? Are there active discussions of these topics in places other than we might expect, such as social media? The reality is young people are very much hungry for community and seeking clarity and comfort. There is reason to believe that young people are interested and passionate about living out the teachings of the church, but find it difficult to be involved in organized religions.

Is Decreased Alignment with Religious Organization Just Affecting Young People?

In the Outreach department of the General Church organization, we are coordinating an event focused on ministering to this missing generation. And one of the first responses I get from people is to add an 's' to make it missing generations, to which I wholeheartedly agree. In fact, my own perspective is one of

almost ambivalence about naming the generations specifically. I'm more interested in people and their experiences – no matter their age.

This is reflected in recent research on church attendance. There is a growing population of people who when asked to report their religion affiliation choose “none”, sometimes referred to as the “nones”. Though the majority of these individuals are in younger generations, this group is growing in all age ranges.

Deep Listening

In an effort to listen to the experience of young adults connected to the New Church, we at Outreach recently launched a survey asking those between 18 and 35 years of age their view of church, theology, etc. I was humbled that in less than two hours we had nearly one hundred responses. And the responses continue to come in (and if you are in this demographic and want to share your perspective please fill out the survey linked on www.newchurch.org). The fact that so many people, so quickly, wanted to share their views is uplifting to me. It shows they care. Many responses have been heartfelt and positive. Many responses are passionate and challenging to the status quo. And all responses are filled with care.

Membership vs. How You Live

The comments from the survey have reminded me of an idea Swedenborg describes in Divine Providence 101: “In the spiritual world, into which every one comes after death, the question that is asked is not, What was your faith, or what was your doctrine? But, What was the nature of your life?” Young adults seem to know and manifest this “nature of life” at their core. They don't feel a need to align with the membership of an organization. In fact, they are highly critical of organizations that are hypocritical: teaching one thing and the membership living another way.

Innovating Effectively

I am confident that young people care. They care about God. They care about other people and yes, even the church. They care about important questions. They care about living well and making a difference. Or as Carol Howard Merritt describes in her book *Tribal Church*, addressing the needs of younger generations, we do not need to:

“Roll out the PowerPoint presentations, latest pop cultural references, or mediocre rock music. Instead we do what churches are really good at doing: we care and we preach. When we understand the context of young adults and listen to them, without smugly dismissing or denying their realities, we begin to connect with those under forty in our midst, where they live and how they live.” (p. 127)

To respond to the needs of the missing generation(s) our goal must not be in engaging them in the way we've always done church, or even innovating on a

superficial level. It must be in responding to their passions and interesting and bringing them into true leadership, empowerment, involvement in the work of the church. Work that is effecting positive change in the world.

New Beginnings

One could look at the current levels of “involvement” of young people in church and feel quite discouraged. However, I think it is in many ways an opportunity, an opening, a possibility. I hear young people rejecting unhealthy patterns and policies. My hope is in how we respond. How do we use creativity and innovation to serve this evolving population? How do we reciprocate with compassion and insight? How do we do our own work to let go and grow? How do we get in touch with the challenges and needs facing young people today?

An Invitation

These are just some of my reflections on young adults and the New Church. We will be exploring this conversation further at the Outreach event Impact 365 in Glenview, IL on April 18 and 19, 2013. All are welcome to attend and participate fully.

What is your experience? How do you think the future of the church will manifest? Which ways scare you? Which ways excite you? I’d love to hear your thoughts. Ask young people in your life about their experiences with church. You might be surprised at what new insights they’ll inspire in you.

Bronwen Henry works as an editor of New Church Connection magazine (www.newchurchconnection.org) and a program manager for the General Church’s Journey program (www.newchurchjourney.org). She lives in the suburbs of Philadelphia with her husband and two young children. She loves studying theology and its practical application.

SIN BRAVELY

KIMBERLY BLAIR HANNA

Think for a minute about “antiquated” religious words. What sort of words have you heard in a worship service, radio program, or seen on a billboard that made you wince or perhaps even gave you a twinge of pride at the thought that we were above using these words in the New Church? It might be fun to brainstorm a list. A few might be words like Damnation, Perversion, Repent (!), Satan, or how about the 7 Deadly Sins of wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy or gluttony? These are heavy, threatening terms that, to me, conjure images straight out of Dante’s *Inferno*, complete with fire, dragons, the grim reaper or simply Dana Carvey’s “church lady” from Saturday Night Live circa 1980s. These words evoke emotions laden with fear. Specifically, fear of God imposed by the church—not exactly the brightest part of Christian history. How about the word “Sin”? Does that word belong in the outdated word pile, or is it still a relevant term? Is it too old and punitive or does it provoke the kind of reflection that we need more of?

First of all, I must say, that I did not grow up with that term being used in my family. My parents and grandparents, being earnest New Churchmen, communicated morality without such words. Their approach, and that of the surrounding church culture, involved more of an intellectual, politely stated “examination of conscience.” The closest we ever got to using the word “sin” was perhaps in some responsive readings from the Psalms. In recent years however, driven in part by my exposure to Eastern Orthodoxy through my husband and the books I’ve been reading by Catholic writers, I really think that our spiritual growth could be enhanced by returning the word “sin” to the vocabulary, especially applied on the personal level.

I recently finished the book, *Forgotten Among the Lilies* by Father Ron Rolheiser. In it he recounts concluding a confession with a woman who admitted to what he described as “some rather serious things.” After Confession she asked, “What would you call those things? My neuroses? My woundedness? My struggle areas? My immaturities?” Father Rolheiser’s response was, “Call them sin! Afford to them and to yourself the dignity of a rich and timeless symbol.” Wow, now that’s a new way to look at it. He goes on to say that we have entered an age of moral relativism which “excuses too much and challenges too little.” The book offers a very graphic but insightful quote by Daniel Berrigan: “When the obituary for our age is written it will tell future generations that our age died of nothing more serious than moral acne, or hemorrhoids of the spirit.” The point being that when we fail to admit to our sins it actually keeps us from seeing our true worthiness as well. It’s like saying that all I can aspire to is mediocrity in both the good and the bad. When we lose our sense of sin we lose touch with the very sacramentality

of our own lives. We go on rationalizing and avoiding our true selves instead of admitting our brokenness and having a real encounter with Christ.

This idea really struck a chord with me, not because I see myself surrounded by such a “sinful” world but because I realize that my own capacity for whitewashing and rationalizing seems boundless. I really do want to be called to task sometimes, and in my modern day free-form existence there are simply not many opportunities. The Sacrament of Confession was thrown out in the Protestant Reformation because of the buying and selling of indulgences, but perhaps 500 years later we’ve swung too far the other way. Maybe we actually could all use a little dose of speaking our sins aloud.

Over the Christmas holiday at my daughter’s Catholic school I heard the priest describing a Mass at which the parishioners would each be able to do a brief confession and then receive Reconciliation as a group. Because of the large number of people the priest requested that they limit their confessions to seven words or less. I wasn’t going to participate but I found myself thinking of what would be the truest thing that I could speak in such a short sentence. Perhaps not loving God enough would cover it, but how about all the subtle and not so subtle ways I act that out every day. Just writing down the Seven Deadly Sins makes me realize that I’ve done all of them in the last week, or for that matter in the last 24 hours.

I have at times heard grumbles over sermons deemed too dark or confrontational. I can sympathize with those who like to leave church happy, but I also don’t wish to be willfully oblivious to the darker part of my nature just so I can remain comfortable. Richard Rohr wrote that the word of God should Confront, Convert and then Console us—in that order. Seems like most of the time we prefer the reverse order, wanting only our version of a personal “Prosperity Gospel.” Rohlheiser writes that failure in self-honesty leads to the only sin that can never be forgiven which is “sin against the Holy Spirit.” Sin against the Holy Spirit can not be forgiven, not because God does not wish to forgive, but rather that the person no longer sees the need for forgiveness. It is the sin of lying to yourself until you become so warped that you believe your own lie.

As I sit now in the middle of my life I do feel a call to answer the presence that is “humming at my core.” I am also beginning to see that, unless I am careful, my interest in spirituality will become little more than an interesting hobby. I envision the potential moment of truth at the end of my life where I realize that “I had not loved God enough,” bringing me to my knees with shame. I just wish there was an easier way to answer the call that didn’t involve looking at my sins. The word sin does still catch in my throat in polite company. I believe it is a word best applied to oneself, never used as a weapon to deride others—a word that should be reintroduced into our collective vocabulary.

My favorite disciple in recent years has been Peter, perhaps because I can identify with how often he screwed up. What I also love about him is his reckless passion. He put it all out on the line whether he was throwing himself into the water

to come to Jesus, or vehemently denying Jesus and then weeping in shame. There was nothing lukewarm about this guy. That's what I aspire to. Maybe this is what God is talking about in the Book of Revelation when he wishes that our works be either hot or cold, anything but lukewarm. Martin Luther spoke well when he called on us to "Sin Bravely." Perhaps this is the best place to start answering that spiritual hum that is calling our name.

Kim Blair Hanna (GS 1982) lives in upstate NY with her husband and two daughters. Kim is interested in hearing people's thoughts on this topic. Her article will appear in the next issue of thetaalphaonline.org where readers can post their comments.

MIDWIFE TO THE STORY
REFLECTIONS ON TWENTY YEARS IN COLLEGE THEATER

AMANDA ROGERS-PETRO

Yesterday we put the show to bed. We unscrewed the screws that held together the make-believe world we've been living and breathing for weeks, untied the drapery, packed up the props, and said a few last goodbyes before going our separate ways. The student cast and crew headed off to the dorms, while the production team members returned to our homes and all the work we'd been putting off until "after the show." That night looking back over the process, I shed some tears, though not because I was sad that the show was over. I wasn't. And it isn't.

Directing students in a theatrical production is for me sheer happiness—yet theater by its nature is a most ephemeral art—it shimmers and gives joy for a moment and then it vanishes into pure spirit, where it lives forever in the human souls that have been touched by it. I feel satisfaction when a show is over—the way a midwife must feel satisfaction when a baby is successfully delivered. The precious human being has entered the world, and the midwife rejoices and does not feel sad that the baby will go on to a life without her, and indeed may have no knowledge of the role she played in his destiny, may not even ever hear her name. When a play is birthed into the spirit world, the energy of its performances, the depth of its meanings, and the joy it gives performers and audience members live on in secret, subtle ways that I can only dimly perceive. Yet I have utter faith in this eternal quality of artistic work, because in my own life I feel the resonance of beautiful works of art I have encountered. Stories, plays, music, poetry – there are artistic works alive inside of me, and through them God has touched me, and taught me, and is still teaching me what it is to be human, what it is to love.

Over the last 18 years, I've been involved in the production of 11 theatrical performances, six as director, and the rest as assistant director or musical director, and these experiences have been intense, varied, and profoundly spiritual, but it was only this morning that I woke up and thought to put my ideas about directing college theater down on paper. While not everybody will try their hand at directing a show, everybody is called at times to some kind of leadership, some kind of midwifery, and perhaps I can offer something from my experiences that may be of use to someone else. While there are many, many aspects of theater that a director has to attend to, there are a handful of principles which inform every part of my work as a director practical, theoretical, artistic, and spiritual, and which shine a light on my life outside the theater as well. It is these principles I'd like to share.

PRINCIPLE ONE – TELL THE RIGHT STORY

Storytelling is such a deeply human activity that I almost want to say it is the essential human activity. While our senses are constantly bombarded with bits of information, our wonderful hearts and minds instantly set to work making meaning out of it all, finding threads of cause and effect, insisting on agency, on the importance of human choices and actions. Stories affirm that what happens to us matters, that what we do matters. Life is not just random molecules bumping together in confusing ways. There is a pattern, a reason, a meaning. Whether or not one believes intellectually that the stories our minds construct and build our lives around are based in anything true, anything eternal, is almost beside the point. Whether we believe or not, we can't help making the stories. We keep doing it. It is the way the human mind works.

Putting on a play is a chance to tell a story, and the first decision a director makes is what story to tell. I've picked many different kinds of plays over the years, from the devastatingly naked portrayal of death and dying in Margaret Edson's *Wit* to the supreme silliness of Bill Irwin's Moliere update *Scapin*, to the show we just put to bed—the warm, big-hearted Caribbean musical *Once on This Island*, among others. Though the shows I've chosen are very different from each other, I chose each one because I fell in love with the story it told.

I have to love the shows I choose. If I am not touched by the story the play is telling, I will not be able to give what needs to be given, to guide the students to the humanity at the core of the play. I look for shows that say something about what it means to be a human being in a world that is beautiful and painful and confusing and ridiculous because those are the stories I love. If I look for a unifying theme in the work I've done, I notice that even the darkest stories have some element of redemption in them. The best thing about being human is that we can change; we can become better than we are. How does this ordinary miracle happen? There are so many ways that we are touched, moved to remorse, inspired to mercy. But

such change always (almost always?—I hesitate to make grand pronouncements) happens through other people. Other people love us, and we are able to be more loving. Other people show courage, and we discover our own courage. Other people speak wisdom, and our hearts assent and we change. A most profound way humans help each other to change, to become the angels Swedenborg insists we are all to become, is through artistic expression. I don't know why certain words put together in a particular order make me love my life more fiercely. I don't know why notes arranged in a certain way and played in a particular fashion can reveal something about the nature of mercy that a sermon can't express. But I know that such is the case.

Choosing a show is an opportunity to be a pathway for the mysterious operation of grace, and believing this, I take the responsibility very seriously. Am I claiming too much for something so modest—4 or 5 performances at a very small school for relatively small audiences? I don't think so. The invisible changes that happen in human hearts through encounters with meaningful stories ripple outward forever, like everything that comes from the spirit.

And how much more true this is of our own real life stories. Sometimes, in some situations, before I act mechanically from ego or animal need, I remember to ask myself what story I am creating by my words and deeds. Is it a worthy story? Is it a story that is spacious, loving, courageous, whole-hearted? The story that my natural self, my primitive ego, wants to create is never any of those things. If I want to live a noble story, a redemptive story, I have to prepare my heart through prayer and invite that kind of story in. In our life stories, so much of the action is happening back stage, and the ending keeps receding. If you believe, as I do, that the soul is eternal, then the ending never actually comes, so the meaning can never be fully declared. The plot is messy, the significance of events hard to assess. But each moment can be an opportunity to shape the story, to bend it toward generosity, toward radiance.

PRINCIPLE TWO – SEE FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Bryn Athyn College is a very small school, with fewer than 300 students and a performing arts program so small that it doesn't have its own department but instead is combined with fine arts. There is no theater major, no theater minor—only a handful of acting classes, a very small chorale, a popular series of dance classes and performances, and one stage show a year. The students who show up to audition for plays are not generally polished actors who imagine futures in the footlights or in Hollywood, though many of them acted in high school shows. In my experience, the students who audition are for the most part smart, creative, and extraordinarily nice, and most of them have everything to learn about theater.

This means that many of them come to auditions nervous, underprepared, and lacking the basic knowledge of how to use their bodies and voices to

create compelling characters. They fidget, they read lines too quickly. There are exceptions of course. It is always exciting when an audition reveals a student's full performance capacities. But for most students, I have to exercise a kind of inner vision during the casting process. I have to look not to what they are actually doing on stage, but to what they will be able to do after several months of rehearsal. I have to perceive capabilities they are not yet aware of. I have to see inside. Who here can be soft? Who here can be hard? Who here can be shamelessly silly? Who here can burn with fiery intensity?

Working with such a small pool of student actors used to make me feel nervous about auditions and casting. How would I get enough people, let alone the right people, to make the show possible? But over the years a magic kept happening. The right people revealed themselves. The cast lists almost wrote themselves—and often in ways that completely surprised me. In casting *The Man of La Mancha*, I was fixated on needing a very tall, very thin actor to play Don Quixote. This physique is described over and over again in the novel. Yet no such person arrived to audition, and as the end of the audition period neared, I was filled with anxiety—the show depended on having the right person in that crucial part. But then, at the very end of the second evening of auditions, a young man, perhaps 5'8", walked in, and sang the signature "To Dream The Impossible Dream" with such innocent enthusiasm, such heroic gusto, not to mention such a lovely, rich baritone, that it was instantly clear he was meant to play the role. His stature didn't matter at all. His inner being was calling him to the part.

I didn't expect the fierce literature professor/dying cancer patient in *Wit* to be a petite South African Zulu woman with a strong accent. She didn't match my picture of the character at all. And yet when she auditioned, I saw what she was capable of—the ability to embody both vibrant inner power and shattering vulnerability, and the charisma to carry what is almost a one-woman show. It was a profound experience to work intensively with her, helping her unpack the complicated literary analyses that her character shares, helping her access the depths of physical desolation the part requires. She gave a stirring, heart-breaking performance that touched many people. But her performance would not have come to be if I had not been willing to see from the inside out—to see not only her talent, but her ability to work, willingness to go deeply into feelings and language that were very challenging for her.

It is easy to see how the lessons of casting apply to off-stage life. Few of us live our earthly lives at full power. We fidget, we talk too quickly. We don't know what we are doing. Yet inside each of us is the angel we are destined to become. When I was in college I had a strange experience over several months. When I was looking at someone I would suddenly see a kind of shining radiance around the person—and feel a power and a heat emanating from them. It would last only a few seconds—but it seemed to me that I was being allowed to see the true person,

beneath all their fears, wounds, worldly concerns and personality—the true person, powered by the Holy Spirit and capable of wonders. Few of us are able to act from that place very often, but we can strive to recognize that true inner self in each other, to put our faith in it, to help each other grow into the role.

PRINCIPLE THREE – STEP BACK

As a director, I more and more have come to feel that my main job is to create an atmosphere of calm, loving spaciousness where actors (and set designers and costumers and choreographers) can feel safe and free to explore, to play, to be silly, to make mistakes, to be powerful, to be vulnerable. If I hold that space for them, the creativity that is already living in them can emerge and find its most authentic expression. I give fewer directions than I used to, and ask more questions. Why do you think your character says this? How is it different if you make eye contact on that line? I usually play many games at the beginning of the rehearsal process, games designed to free the voice and body from the restrictions of normal, appropriate behavior, group acting games that gently yet insistently require silliness, assertiveness, truthfulness, and human connection. This kind of play opens the imagination and honors the life of feeling. I have found that students are incredibly hungry for the opportunity to delve into these areas of their psyche. So much of their time and energy is devoted to a highly controlled, analytical approach to understanding the world. Receiving permission to engage with life in another way—with passion, with foolishness, with their hearts and bodies as well as their minds—is deeply healing for many.

A director holds the vision of the show, making interpretive choices about the story, the lines and the characters, deciding on color, mood, approach to set and costume, and many other aspects of the show. Yet I have found that stepping back and allowing people to discover their own way into the work does not diminish or change the vision I hold, but fills it out, fulfills it, improves it. Theater is the most collaborative of all arts, and one of the most important things a director does is allow creative people the freedom to do what they do. I've found that in a safe and loving space where everyone's creativity is respected and honored, student actors are able to access deeply authentic and powerful performances and give them with confidence and generosity to the audience.

Outside of the theater, stepping back so that another can step forward requires purposeful effort. It's easy to have a lot of opinions about how others should be living—my husband, my children, my friends and colleagues. The trust and gentleness required to make space for them to be their true selves is sometimes hard to find. Yet how wonderfully satisfying and joyful it is when I am able to quiet my demands, my sensible ideas, my wonderful insights, and let another person show me who she or he really is.

PRINCIPLE FOUR – STEP FORWARD

Stepping back to create space does not mean my role is passive. In fact, stepping back is a conscious action that I take deliberately with particular goals in mind. But of course sometimes I have to step forward and take hold of a scene or situation in a more direct, even confrontational way. Sometimes an actor needs a lot of step by step instruction in creating a performance. Sometimes an on-stage interaction needs to be reworked with clear, specific directions to convey the story more effectively. I enjoy hands-on, intensive work with students, most of whom are really learning about acting for the first time. If I have to spend a half hour a day with a student teaching him to enunciate his lines clearly, that is a job I'm completely happy to take on. I'm happy to tell students how to stand, how to walk, how to project, how to access the layers of feeling and meaning in their dialogue. This active teaching of skills is a pleasure and in no way contradicts the general principle of stepping back.

Less enjoyable but equally necessary are the times I must step forward to confront problematic behavior or attitudes among the cast. Some college students have not yet stepped fully into a sense of responsibility for themselves or others. Students who skip rehearsals or are chronically late show disrespect to me and their cast members, and need to be confronted. My practice is to deal with these issues privately as far as possible, and I ask the cast to trust my handling of such problems.

Sometimes, situations requiring intervention are caused not by students too little invested in the process, but by students who care too much. They have a commendable passion and vision, yet that creative fervor manifests itself in negative ways as they criticize other performers, undermine the authority of the production team, or insist on doing something their own way regardless of instructions from me. In such cases, I've had to reprimand somebody, to place a firm limit for the sake of the other performers and for the sake of the show. Such a confrontation is inevitably painful even when necessary. Happily, such situations have been rare.

Knowing when and how to step forward, to assert one's intelligence and vision in a situation or process can be tricky. I'm still learning to discern when my impulse to speak, to lead, is a true one and when it is the roaring of an inflamed ego. It's easier to know this when working on a play than in everyday life, because my mind and heart are so completely given over to serving the needs of the play as a whole, to giving something beautiful to the audience, that my personal ego desires seem absurdly small and unimportant most of the time. I am always asking "What does the play want to become, and what do I need to do to allow it to become that?" In life, however, too often I am asking, "What do I need, and how can I get it?" instead of "What does life want from me, and how can I give it?" If I remember to ask the latter question, it becomes clearer when to take action, and what actions to take.

PRINCIPLE FIVE – GIVE AND RECEIVE

All the work, all the silliness, all the nervousness and camaraderie and love culminates in performance. When the audience comes in and sees and laughs and is moved by the story we tell, there is a kind of blissful satisfaction that is a bit like falling in love. The people involved in the production, especially the actors, make themselves exquisitely vulnerable, offering up their bodies, their voices and their spirits to a theater full of friends and strangers in the hopes that they will be accepted, understood, and appreciated. How scary! Yet that is the point of everything. I always tell my casts the same thing—“Give all your love. Give them all your love.” And audiences are eager to receive what the actors are eager to give. The more open, truthful, and vulnerable the performers are, the more the hearts of the audience go out to them. The audience comes to the relationship with relatively few expectations compared to the intense work and thought and preparation the actors bring. The people who receive artistic expression in some ways seem to have a passive role in the exchange—yet the audience is the reason the show exists. When the show is over and the audience is clapping, when they congratulate the actors and me after the show, I am always thinking—“it is for you, all for you! All the labor and love and time are for you, because you are beautiful, precious human souls and we want to bless you! Thank you for accepting what we have to give.” And to have someone receive what you have to give is to receive a most powerful blessing in return. I love when praise and attention are lavished on my actors, not because they need their egos stroked, but because they are experiencing the proper fulfillment of an endeavor of love. They are seeing that their gifts are received, and feeling the joy of giving joy to others.

THE END

So the Caribbean fairy tale *Once On This Island*, the musical that I, my colleagues, and my wonderful students have been pouring our time and hearts into for months, is over, but not really. It’s vanished from the material world to live in the world of spirit and memory. Its life is real there, and the lessons and meanings and feelings it stirred in us and in our audiences are just beginning to ripple out, and we won’t ever know all the secret ways it goes on, in our souls, in our imaginations, subtly infusing our thoughts and actions. After we struck the set I cried, but I didn’t cry because the show was over. I cried at the blessing of being present at the birth of something lovely into the world.

Amanda Rogers-Petro (GS 1985) lives in Abington, PA with her husband Joseph and her three sons, Sam, Ben and Daniel in a house where art of one sort or another is always happening. She received her MFA from the University of Michigan and teaches at Bryn Athyn College and the Waldorf School of Philadelphia.

THE NEW CHURCH MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP FUND

CHARA COOPER DAUM

Hello, Journal readers. I'd like to draw your attention to a relatively new use in the church that would benefit from your awareness and support. In 2006, the **New Church Music Scholarship Fund (NCMSF)** was created to "promote the growth of music and music education in our church schools and societies." It aims to provide financial support to college students who have shown musical involvement in our New Church communities and are pursuing a Bachelor of Music degree, and to help them be ready and able to contribute to music programs around the church in their futures.

Our family was fortunate enough to receive the blessings of this fund. When our son Simon was contemplating his next step after high school, he could not ignore the spiritual power he found in *music* to enliven him and connect him to other people, so he decided to pursue that passion in the form of a degree in Music Education. It was four intense years, and he now has degree in hand, in no small part due to the generosity of the NCMSF.

Besides the financial support, I was grateful for the personal affirmation and validation provided by the NCMSF committee. What a gift it is for these students to have the attention and encouragement of like-minded, like-hearted people in their church communities who share their passion for the power of music. In the words of Chris Simons, administrator of the fund, this scholarship is "about funding personal dreams that not only benefit the individual, but also the church."

The recipients of the fund to date have all contributed and are currently contributing to musical uses all around the church. They are teaching or leading or performing music in all arenas of Bryn Athyn, in Boynton Beach, Kempton, and Seattle, and they all have visions of how they might continue to share their gifts in schools and programs in the church and beyond. The future of vital and vibrant music in these areas depends on talented and trained leaders.

If you are among those who value the presence of music in our communities, I invite you to join with others who are investing in the future leaders of music in the New Church, so that we can all continue to "Sing unto the Lord a new song."

(Contributions are tax deductible and should be made out to "The New Church Music Scholarship Fund," Academy of the New Church, P.O. Box 708, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009)

And send your questions to Chris Simons at Christopher.simons@brynathyn.edu if you, or someone you know are looking toward a career in music and are interested in finding out more about how to apply to the New Church Music Scholarship Fund.

WIND

What is this wind howling outside my window?
Where from? If it hits my window it has come from the East.
Has it come from the Gulf in the fury of a storm?
Did it cross the seashore and turn in over New Jersey,
Sweeping the Pine Barrens, crossing the Delaware River,
Across the trees and towns and roads to this place,
To squeak through the crack in my window and die here in front of me?

What is wind, anyway? Has it been the same air,
Moving over the continents and oceans since time began? Created?
Where does its energy come from?
What sparks it to pull itself into a storm?
The breezes and zephyrs of the calm times,
Are they related to this wild wind that hurls the rain against my window?

This wind is a cold wind.
Did it meet up with another wind coming down from Canada,
Blowing across the Great Lakes,
To make a whirling northeaster and bring three days of rain?

This wind sings to me!
It howls and whistles and whines to get in.
It thrills me, like the ocean.
I could shut my window, that tiny crack, to keep the cold out,
But I would not miss this concert for anything.
It is the music of the atmospheres, playing its own unique instruments,
It sings the song of its life.

Barbara L. Posey
(GS 1939)

FOREST GARDENS
AN INTERVIEW WITH LINCOLN SMITH

What is a forest garden?

A forest garden is a planting modeled on a wild forest, but designed to produce things for people. In an era when people have strained the world's ecosystems to meet their needs, a forest garden provides a critical combination of benefits for people and planet—cleaning water, building soil, and providing a bounty of food and supplies.

What is the difference between a forest garden and organic agriculture?

Organic farming is an excellent way of reducing agriculture's harm to the environment by, for example, reducing the use of toxic chemicals. Forest-based agriculture tries to go further, in designing agricultural lands that function as ecosystems.

Is food the only product that comes from a forest garden?

Food is a major focus of most forest gardens, but they can also be designed to produce materials, fodder, fuel, medicine, fertilizer and others.

What are some of the foods that can be grown in a forest garden?

There are numerous foods. Right now I'm especially focused on acorns, which have been a staple bread food for numerous cultures in history ranging from N. America to Europe to Asia. Acorns have a nutritional profile comparable to the world's biggest staple crops: wheat, corn and rice; and acorns are produced in a quantity per acre competitive with these big industrialized cereals. The acorn breads and cookies I've been experimenting with this winter are hearty and delicious!

I'm also excited about fruits and perennial vegetables that can grow in the partially shaded areas between widely spaced tall trees. Examples include Pawpaw, Currant, Kiwi, Persimmon, Ostrich Fern, Giant Solomon's Seal, Nettle, Ramps, and mushrooms like Shiitake.

How do you make a forest garden that works like a forest?

There is a lot we don't know about how forest ecosystems work—they are marvelously complex. But we can bring principles we do observe into our forest gardens. For example, plants that fix nitrogen play an important soil-building role in forest succession. So forest gardens include nitrogen-fixing “fertilizer plants” to help sustain the other plants in the garden.

What are the biggest challenges in forest gardening?

It is a balancing act to create a planting that has plant diversity resembling a wild ecosystem, but also yields efficient harvests for people. It can also be challenging to get people to try, grow or buy foods with which they are unfamiliar.

Has your life as a Swedenborgian Christian influenced your work as a forest gardener?

Quite a lot. A recent idea from science that resonates with my Swedenborgian belief in an all-loving God is the observation that there is at least as much mutualism in ecosystems as there is predation and parasitism. For example, here's a quote I share with my students about the interaction between forest plants:

“Extensive underground subway-like networks [of root fungi] may link a wide variety of plants growing in the same area. A large oak tree may be feeding not only its fungal partner but also other plants nearby. In forests, light levels may be too low for short seedlings to photosynthesize. Organic compounds in the mycorrhizal pipeline can power seedling growth to a size large enough to intercept sunlight for photosynthesis.” *Plant Biology* (Graham, Graham, Wilcox), page 366.

But these kinds of mutualistic interaction are severely limited in conventional industrial monocultures—corn plants cannot feed other corn plants, or divide up the resources available in a piece of ground, because they are all seeking exactly the same resources at exactly the same time. They all occupy the same niche.

Forest gardening allows the processes natural to the way the Lord created the world to re-emerge within the agricultural lands that sustain people.

Where can people find out more about forest gardens?

A couple of my favorite books are *Edible Forest Gardens* by Dave Jacke, and *Creating a Forest Garden* by Martin Crawford. My website www.forested.us also has good information, and a list of some of my other favorites.

Lincoln Smith grew up in New Church congregations in Maryland and Durban, South Africa, and graduated from Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. After working at a landscape architecture firm for five years, he founded Forested, a forest garden company in Bowie, MD. He helps landowners throughout the eastern US create successful forest gardens through consults and training at the Forested demonstration garden.

Lincoln is offering several workshops on Forest Gardening at his demonstration garden in Bowie, Maryland (May 11, July 6, and August 3).

For more information visit: <http://forested.us/courses.html>

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Donnette and Angela,

Thank you both for your contributions to the Journal. Mom would be happy it is still in print. I wouldn't mind an online TAJ, but I like the handy print size to bring along to the gym or a waiting room.

About Donnette's article. I really like that you speak from a long experience of helping people grieve and observing your own process, as well as much reading. I like that you took the stance that it is a long project without a real end. I heard the quote "we all die unhealed" and by that I understood that our issues are part of us, and that we learn and grow from them, but are never completely free of them. For a reason, I think. Our core issues give a focal point to our growth and development as wise humans and spirits that can help others from our growth.

It helped me to hear your ideas in print since so many of the people around me are in some stage of grieving over lost jobs, children moving away, death, and other forms of loss. I notice that society sometimes gives people a window of time to grieve, then want them to stop. I have a friend who was pushed out of a beloved institution that meant everything to her. On top of this she was grieving her husband's death. I listen to her recount the experience over and over, even though part of me wants her to move on. I know others don't want to hear her stories anymore and think she should get over it. I relate to her grieving since I am probably never going to be really over the death of my marriage, and it will always be something I am trying to deal with. Maybe we can be more patient with people who are still grieving years or decades after a loss. Trying to force their grief underground is not going to make it go away. Patience, listening, affirmations, and kindness can help others heal to the extent they can.

If you had a website I would contribute often!

Wendy Soneson
Brookline, MA

Dear Editor,

Knowing that this may be the last paper issue of TAJ, I just want to take a moment to say "Thank You!" to all the many women who have worked as editors, assistant editors, proof readers, circulation managers etc. over the years.

This magazine has connected me to others who share similar goals within a variety of opinions. It has also provided a safe vehicle for my voice. I am extremely grateful that about 30 years ago the editor at that time had the guts to publish my article (anonymously at that time), "Premarital Sex, my Experience." Thus began

a journey for me. TAJ (and my friend Helen Kennedy) not only encouraged me to find and use my written voice, but validated that it is “OK to be me” in this church community.

Since that time, I have submitted poems and short articles and have never experienced anything but rational and kind support from the editors. Thank you Angela, and many others, for your faithful work!

Peggy Mergen
Huntingdon Valley, PA

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to the Washington, DC news notes on page 47 in the October, 2012 issue of the *Theta Alpha Journal*. With regards to our church it was deeply distressing to me to read: “But those among our sisters and brothers with multiple gorgeous options for worship and gathering may not understand *how destructive* it can be to the spirit of a congregation to worship in a disintegrating, decaying building while saving and saving, fundraising for that someday when you can start.”

Before this building, we worshiped in many places, both good and bad, and even had our own building at one time—a very dark old building that probably was “disintegrating and decaying,” but I don’t ever think anyone felt it was “destructive” to worship; this congregation always had high spirits. Except for normal wear and tear (and there’s little of that in the church proper) I have never seen signs of disintegration or decay in our building, not even in the aging pews or kneelers.

Our church was dedicated in 1965. We had little funds and our members did everything possible that they could themselves to complete the building and make it a thing of beauty to us. In fact, after the dedication, there were people that just sat in awe in the church and marveled at what had been accomplished. I still sit during the interlude, looking at the chancel, and can’t believe how beautiful (to me) it is—especially the way the light is focused on the open Word.

It has been decided to get rid of what we have and turn the church sideways before long. It is very upsetting to me that this description of our church has gone out in a publication that all might read. I hope if you’ve never been to church in Washington that you might come and see for yourself how nice it is.

Nancy Allen Alford
Bowie, MD

THE AWKWARD NOTION OF SELF-ESTEEM

LINDA SIMONETTI ODHNER

I was the class dunce in gym class, particularly in the matter of hitting a baseball with a bat, and I was humiliated for it. I was (still am) visually disabled. Being told to “try harder” or “keep my eye on the ball” was not helpful.

I sometimes wonder what would have happened if instead of having to play baseball with my class and let my team down every time I came to bat, I was pulled out for remedial batting practice with a plastic bat and foam-rubber ball. I’ll bet you that my classmates would have been willing to take turns pitching for me. Even then, and despite their school-based conditioning, they were nice people. I might have had some success with that and even made some progress, and it could actually have been fun. Maybe I wouldn’t have felt sick with fear every time gym period came around.

I’m going to comment on this scenario with two different narratives.

Oh, she thinks she deserved some kind of special treatment to protect her from feelings of failure, does she? And she probably thinks she should have gotten a decent grade for it too. The problem with this sort of coddling is that she would have thought she was actually accomplishing something worthwhile with this dumbed-down exercise, even though the rest of the class had far more advanced skills. It would have given her a falsely inflated sense of her ability, and she would have been in for a rude shock when she got back to the real world. She might have started feeling good about herself for no good reason. Kids need to be challenged in order to learn, and there’s no way to challenge them while protecting their self-esteem. They need to earn the right to feel good about themselves by actually mastering knowledge and skills. Fun? School is not about having fun; education is serious business. Feeling bad is a good incentive to work harder. She could have stayed after school to work on her skills. Even though she never learned to play baseball, at least she knew she was terrible at it. It’s important to be realistic about these things. Standards need to be upheld.

What she needed was plenty of praise and encouragement for doing what she could. She needed someone to tell her she was doing a good job. Her teachers should have repeatedly reminded all the students that they were important and valuable, and told them to go home, look in the mirror and tell themselves they were special. Instead of punishing kids for doing badly, we should reward them for doing well, and make sure they have plenty of opportunities to feel successful. A steady diet of approval, encouragement, good grades, stickers, smiley faces, and

gold stars will ensure healthy self-esteem. We need to avoid the use of competition since it invites negative comparisons and threatens self-esteem.

The first commentary is the narrative of what might be called the “Self-Esteem Backlash.” The second incorporates principles of “Self-Esteem Pedagogy.” Each of these commentaries has assumptions embedded in it which are useful to question. Some of these assumptions from opposing philosophies actually have more in common than one might expect. I begin from the standpoint of the self-esteem backlash because in many ways it lines up with a return to traditional, pre-progressive educational values.

The “Self-Esteem Backlash” says:

The “Self-Esteem Movement” is responsible for dumbing down education.

The “Self-Esteem Movement” is depicted as a sinister cultural force. Modern psychology (including the ideas of Freud and his followers) and theories of human development come in for their share of bashing. Abraham Maslow, Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, Carl Rogers, and Maria Montessori all get discredited. As some people tell it, the entire history of progressive education reform in the 20th century is responsible for the sorry pass we’ve come to in current teaching practice: acknowledging the importance of feelings, individuality, and freedom in the lives of children is regarded with suspicion if not outright contempt. (See Stout 2001, pp. 33-44, 80-83.)

Current pedagogy could indeed stand some major improvement, but it may be more useful to see where sound principles have been misapplied than to condemn principles and entire schools of thought out of hand. Carl Rogers’ book *Freedom to Learn* (1969) shows some of the revolutionary concepts at the root of progressive education reform in their original purity and strength, freshly hammered from the forge of experience. It’s about breathing life back into learning. I have seen Rogers’ book dismissed as a plug for replacing traditional education with encounter groups (Ravitch 2000, 392) and his proposals labeled as being “all about feelings and nothing else” (Stout 2001, 87). Rogers worked toward a balance between intellect and emotion in education, not an exclusive focus on feelings at the expense of knowledge and understanding.

This is why I prefer to use the term “Self-Esteem Pedagogy” to indicate a much narrower focus than the term “Self-Esteem Movement,” and to pinpoint where the application of a philosophy of self-esteem to education may have taken a wrong turn or two, although on the whole it is a justifiable response to excesses in past educational practices.

Traditional methods have often worked to control behavior and to motivate naturally adept students. But as school became more demanding and time-consuming, the rationing of approval based on academic performance more often

backfired. Some students grew so anxious and wracked with guilt that they stopped being able to function academically and became paralyzed. John Holt's book *How Children Fail*, published a half-century ago yet still relevant today, describes fears children experience in school and the self-protective behaviors they use to cope with them. Friends still tell me stories of, for example, teachers hitting them on the head with pieces of chalk. A cultural climate that no longer regards this as acceptable teacher behavior is likely to be an improvement.

The Self-Esteem Backlash says:

People can't agree on a working definition of self-esteem.

Confusion may arise because of the need to distinguish between different kinds of self-esteem that function in different ways. Gloria Steinem, in her lovely book *Transformation from Within: A Book of Self-Esteem* (1992) makes a clear and concise statement about the difference between *core self-esteem* and *situational self-esteem*. Core self-esteem is the intuitive knowledge that one is welcome in the world and worthy of existing, taking up space, and getting basic needs met. Situational self-esteem is self-confidence gained from acquiring skills and knowledge and showing competence. No amount of situational self-esteem works as a substitute for core self-esteem. We know of celebrities and career-driven workaholics for whom no amount of money, fame, praise, and achievement fills the emptiness inside, the feeling of not being good enough. (See Terrence Real's book *I Don't Want to Talk About It: Overcoming the Secret Legacy of Male Depression* (1997) for more about the pitfalls of performance-based esteem.)

Healthy, functional self-esteem is not the same as narcissism and grandiosity, which tend to compensate for defects of core self-esteem. The language of devaluing self-esteem as an educational principle tends to blur these useful distinctions (See Stout, p. 58-59). Stout tells us in *The Feel-Good Curriculum* that children need "a society that welcomes and values them" (p. 44); this seems to support the promotion of core self-esteem.

It's not right for kids to feel good about themselves for no good reason. Children need to earn the right to feel good about themselves by learning and achieving.

Alfie Kohn, author of many impeccably researched books and articles about education, points out:

Traditionalists who ridicule efforts to boost self-esteem like to say that people feel good about themselves on the basis of what they have achieved; they don't achieve because they feel good about themselves. There may well be some truth to this. ... But lurking beneath the assault on such programs is a more visceral objection that might be identified as

a fear that somebody is going to get a “psychological free lunch” and be pleased with himself without earning that right (Punished By Rewards, p. 115).

Does “feeling good about themselves” mean “feeling superior to others”? Core self-esteem, a sense of basic value and belonging in the world, cannot be earned, and it is not about one’s worth relative to others. Unlike situational self-esteem, it can’t be measured or doled out in medicinal doses. If doing well in school confers the right to feel good about oneself, does that imply feeling superior to others who don’t?

I am a lot more concerned about kids feeling terrible about themselves for no good reason. People of all ages are capable of digging themselves deep pits of self-loathing and getting trapped in them, and telling them they’re not good enough, or that they have no right to feel good enough, doesn’t help. It just makes them more likely to lash out in retaliation, so they can feel better about themselves in comparison to someone even more worthless.

Curtis Childs has made a series of videos, available on his YouTube channel, Offtheflefteye, and in this connection I highly recommend “Head Bullies” and “Hierarchy is a Drug,” dealing with the negative talk inside our heads and the pitfalls of depending on outside approval. In these videos Curtis reminds us of the New Church principle that we go astray when we attribute good or evil to ourselves.

“Self-Esteem Pedagogy” says:

If shaming and insults break down healthy self-esteem, praise can build it back up.

This assumption resembles the idea that refined-grain products can be made just as nutritious as whole-grain foods by “enriching” and “fortifying” them with vitamins, minerals, and maybe a little sawdust for fiber. Children’s psyches can’t simply be pieced back together as good as new when they’ve fallen apart. Particularly, generic praise and approval addressed to the entire class is not enough to reach certain children who are convinced that if teachers knew what they were really like, they would be horrified.

“Self-Esteem Pedagogy” says:

Kids need plenty of positive reinforcement in the form of grades, prizes, stickers, awards, praise and encouragement for optimum self-esteem and learning.

They do, if we have trained them to depend on those things by making them the currency of our love, respect, and approval, which sounds a lot like what the “Self-Esteem Backlash” is endorsing.

This conditioned dependency is just what produces **students who feel entitled to good grades without working for them**, which the “Self-Esteem Backlash” can’t stand. Actually, these students are not displaying healthy self-esteem, but the lack of it; and certainly not feeling good for no good reason, but waiting to feel good until we give them a reason. If that reason is an inflated sense of their own abilities, it’s only a matter of time until they get cut down to size, and are shocked when they have to take so many remedial courses in college (Stout p. 43). Thus they are truly “punished by rewards,” as described in the title of Alfie Kohn’s book.

The “Self-Esteem Backlash” says:

It’s not right for kids to feel proud of achieving things that most of their peers find easy.

According to the above assumption, it doesn’t matter how hard they work, because effort doesn’t count. It doesn’t matter how much progress they make, because it’s how they do compared to their classmates that’s important.

The fact that kids have learning challenges doesn’t mean they’re stupid. Most of them are probably aware that many of their classmates are doing more advanced work. Children realize from an early age that some people are a lot better than others at doing certain things. I didn’t have a problem with not being good at baseball, until it became an issue in school. I doubt very much that working on batting skills at a lower level would have deluded me into thinking that I was good at it compared to my classmates.

I wish we educators could stop thinking that it’s up to us to decide on what grounds children are allowed to feel good about themselves. I’d rather see kids who are not puffed up by good grades or deflated by bad ones, even if it means they “feel good for no good reason,” which, when you think about it, is a pretty presumptuous phrase. They might have plenty of reasons that we don’t know about—or don’t agree with. Children who have been raised to value themselves and their aspirations without a constant stream of positive reinforcement are less likely to be manipulated by it and less apt to conform to expectations. They are more likely to go their own way, and the standardized-test chips will fall where they may.

Self-Esteem Pedagogy says (as John Holt (1982, p. 69) observes):

“...the way to make children feel good about themselves is to give them things to do that are so easy that they can’t help but do them.”

Kids often know when they’re being condescended to in this way and naturally feel insulted, especially when they receive extravagant praise for doing ridiculously simple things. Holt continues:

The point I now want to make is that “success” as much as “failure” are adult ideas which we impose on children. The two ideas go together, are

opposite sides of the same coin. It is nonsense to think that we can give children a love of “succeeding” without at the same time giving them an equal dread of “failing.”

Babies learning to walk, and falling down as they try, or healthy six- and seven-year-olds learning to ride a bike, and falling off, do not think, each time they fall, “I failed again.” Nor do they think, when finally they begin to walk or ride, “Oh, boy, I’m succeeding!” They think, “Now I’m walking! Now I’m riding!” The joy is in the act itself, the walking or the riding, not in some idea of success.

Holt adds that although gaining a skill may involve setting individual tasks and succeeding at them,

it is meaningless to talk of “succeeding” in playing the cello There is no line with *Success* written on one side and *Failure* on the other. These words seriously distort our understanding of how we, as well as children, do things and do them better. ... It is only when pleasing adults becomes important that the sharp line between success and failure appears” (pp. 69-70).

The “Self-Esteem Backlash” says:

Kids should not be graded for effort, only for the result of their work.

If education is primarily a competition to find out who is the best or who wins the game, and grades are the way we measure academic (and therefore personal) worth, then of course it’s unfair to give certain kids extra help and full credit for what they achieved with that help. To be fair, academic competition needs a level playing field. Nobody gets more help than anybody else.

This is the way it’s supposed to work in individual and team sports and games. Players pit their physical, mental, emotional, and tactical skills and strengths against each other, and may the best player win. A great deal of money, fame, and honor rests on the results of sporting contests, even amateur ones. The use of prosthetic limbs to enable disabled sprinters to compete with able-bodied athletes became an issue at the most recent Olympic Games.

When help with disabilities puts students in a position to compete with non-disabled students for scarce prizes that look good on transcripts and résumés, the issue of fairness comes up. A few years ago I read about a high school graduate who was named class valedictorian on the basis of her high grades, and then was later disqualified because she had received special academic help. Is school primarily a competition, or is it supposed to be something else?

The Paradox of Self-Improvement

Children are encouraged from an early age to divide their awareness into segments in a way that sets up potential internal conflicts. Simply the fact that they are placed in a classroom with large numbers of same-aged classmates invites them to stand outside themselves, as it were, and compare themselves with and measure themselves against others. The academically competitive setting only underlines the tendency to social competition. As John Holt says in *How Children Fail*, “Perhaps they are thrown too early, and too much, into the society of other children, where they have to think, not about the world, but about their position in it” (p. 77).

When doing the tasks which are set them, do young students get an opportunity to become fully absorbed in the experience? Or are they encouraged simultaneously to keep one eye on the clock, work efficiently, “manage their time,” and also to evaluate whether what they are doing is right enough and good enough?

This splitting-up of consciousness is not in itself a bad thing. It is a necessary capacity that comes with maturity. But when it is forced to flower before its time, a precious opportunity may be cut short—an opportunity to experience and love the things life offers in an open and unguarded way, innocent of self-protection and self-interest. Why are we so eager to hurry children into all the pitfalls, anxieties, and preoccupations of adolescent and adult self-consciousness? It’s a one-way street. The conditioning can’t simply be reversed as if it had never happened, or suspended when it gets in the way. The journey out of the innocence of ignorance is short; the journey into the innocence of wisdom is long.

I wish I could tell you that I never engage in academic pursuits for the sake of feeling good about myself. But I was socialized to feel superior for being smart at school, and it feels impossible to reverse that conditioning. Believe me, that is not what I value about my school experience.

I might put some Bach on the stereo at Easter time, looking for a mood of devotional humility, and I may actually get it, because Bach’s Passion music is powerful stuff. But at the same time I’m also patting myself on the back for my impeccable musical taste and carefully cultivated sensitivity. Mind you, I would be dealing with this issue anyway, because it goes with being human, but I think my schooling has made it, if anything, more difficult for me to leave my ego behind and lose myself in the contemplation of beauty and order.

I wish we could tread more carefully in the area of children’s self-esteem, and make it a matter of principle not to draw their attention forcibly to the matter of their adequacy and relative worth. That consciousness will come soon enough on its own.

Linda Simonetti Odhner (GS 1977) lives in Horsham with her husband, Dewey, and one of their three grown daughters. She would like to start a blog on education called “Writing Sideways on Graph Paper.”

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SPIRITUAL SCIENCE

KARIN ALFELT CHILDS

I recently read *Proof of Heaven* by Dr. Eben Alexander, and I loved it. The author recognized his story to be a marvelous demonstration of Divine Providence (though he used different words). He saw how perfect his situation was for bringing a new kind of evidence to the discussion about the existence of an afterlife. He had been a good-naturedly skeptical neurosurgeon who believed that near-death experiences were nothing more than the brain creating hallucinations, and then he had a disease that not only put him near death for a whole week, but also completely shut down the cortex of his brain, which is the part of the brain that can conjure up hallucinations. And still, with a completely non-functioning brain cortex, Dr. Alexander travelled into the spiritual realm and experienced amazing things.

One thing I love about this book is that the author sees no problem with looking upon his beautiful, spiritual experience in a scientific way. Unlike many in his field, and many others besides, he no longer sees any conflict between “spiritual” and “scientific.” Sounds rather Swedenborgian, don't you think? I've learned, too, that there are beliefs in the harmony of spirituality and science that run through Hinduism and Kaballah and Quantum Physics, to name a few. Part of the result of the Second Coming, I'm sure, is that minds are now more open to reconciling these two life approaches.

Looking at the history of Christianity, I see a religion that has long connected spirituality with morality rather than science. This has been necessary, I have no doubt. Through centuries in which scientific knowledge was so hidden in the shadows of misinterpretation and misunderstanding, moral codes with a promise of rewards for good behavior were probably the only way to keep many human lives in some sort of order. With laws like the Ten Commandments, further clarified by Jesus, basic moral codes could be constructed. Swedenborg clarified those codes even further by revealing truth that people were previously not ready for.

The thing that has recently become interesting and exciting to me is that the time seems to be ripe for moving away from approaching religion and spirituality in terms of moral codes (“be good, and you’ll be rewarded”) and instead toward a kind of holy science (“learn how reality works, in order to be able to connect with God and become a part of heaven”). The difference can seem subtle, but I think there are seeds in the noticing of this difference that could do away with judgmental arguing and shame, and replace them with the wonder of discovery and working together to see things more clearly. Also, this could lead us eventually back to the methods of the Most Ancients, who learned about God and heaven by looking within and by looking at the world around them.

Don’t get me wrong. I see plenty of good that has come out of moral codes, particularly when they follow the loving instructions of Jesus. These moral codes have helped countless people hold themselves in a state that heaven can affect and feed. To do something simply because “the Lord says so” can bring beautiful results. And yet, I think it’s hard to shake all those centuries of wagging fingers and shame that come from the impression of a God who is sternly watching to see if you will “behave,” or even a softer God who is saddened and disappointed when you “mess up.” Also, it seems to me we humans are far more prone to rebel against seeking approval from some authority figure, be it church leader or God, than we are to rebel against a presentation of the scientific facts about becoming a heavenly and happy person. The latter can still inspire awe of our Creator and our Savior without the seemingly arbitrary concepts of approval, favor or rewards mixed in. In the end it’s all the same thing, I believe, but the concepts of approval, favor and rewards have gathered many negative associations.

Though scientists, too, can do their share of stubborn arguing, there is something different about a group of scientists studying and experimenting in order to discover how things are. If lower egos are held in check, a group of scientists can manifest a vibrant desire to discover truth through a combination of the study of literature and experimenting with life.

The scientific method involves the following steps:

1. Ask a question.
2. Do background research (presumably of past literature and the findings of other people).
3. Construct a hypothesis.
4. Test with an experiment.
5. Analyze the results and draw a conclusion as to whether the hypothesis seems true or not.
6. If the hypothesis seems true, report the results.
7. If the hypothesis seems false or only partially true, do some more thinking and try again!

Imagine the wonderful power of applying the scientific method to exploring religious questions. It would have to involve the willingness to test hypotheses that assume a spiritual reality as well as a physical reality. This is what Dr. Alexander calls for in his book: to see things that are not tangible to the senses as nevertheless real and scientific. Applying the scientific method would have to involve the effort of approaching the testing with an open mind. (I don't believe any of us can be without biases, but at least we can admit that we have them!) It seems to me, if both the study and the life experiments are seen as equally important for informing each other, the progress in finding purer and purer forms of truth is increased. It doesn't matter how divinely inspired a text is. When that text is being processed through finite human minds it can become tainted and misunderstood, and only experimenting with and taking note of life experiences and results can help remove the mental blocks and let the truth of the text shine through more brightly. And the more "scientists" there are sharing those results to add to the general data, the better!

Take, for example, the helpful information about marriage relationships that came through *For Men Only* and *For Women Only* by Shauti and Jeff Feldhahn. They are a Christian couple, but instead of relying only on already-existing Christian interpretations of Scripture, they made a great effort to collect data through a scientific survey in order to see what more they could learn about how each gender feels and operates in a marriage. The results have been extremely helpful to many marriages, including mine, and I greatly appreciate the work they did. The "testing," or the studying, of what actually goes on day-to-day in the hearts and minds of husbands and wives shed more light on things written in Scripture. Some of their findings helped me have new understanding regarding things Swedenborg wrote about in *Conjugal Love*. And trying out tools based on the information in *For Men Only* and *For Women Only* further developed my and my husband's understanding of the science of our own marriage.

To take a look at what is actually going on in life helps break through what can be transitory cultural influence on Scripture, and helps get us closer to the actual truth that the Scripture is trying to convey. The problem with relying only on written texts is that words are so limited—particularly since the use of language is constantly changing—that Truth can never be fully conveyed through words. We need also to look to life, to nature, to human experience. These latter things, combined with study of Scripture, could help us get more quickly and effectively to more and more wonderful discoveries about what reality is really like. And fortunately, such studies have already begun, in many ways and from many places. Dr. Eben Alexander wants now to join the ranks of those pursuing the study of spiritual science.

What are some examples of "spiritual science" that Dr. Eben Alexander became intrigued with as a result of his near-death experience?

When he slipped into a coma and lost the use of his cortex, he first experienced a thick, murky level that made it hard to think. Gradually, in little bits, he became aware of a higher level. The more glimpses he had of that higher level, the more he became aware there was a higher level, and the more he wanted to go there. Believing in the higher level and then wanting the higher level are what then caused him to move toward that place. “Thought itself...brings about presence,” writes Swedenborg in *Heavenly Secrets* 6893. The more times Dr. Alexander visited the higher realm, the easier it was to get back there. So he learned, scientifically, that believing in something or knowing about it and also wanting it actually moves you—the real you—toward that place. Also, because Dr. Alexander’s cortex had shut down, he entered his spiritual experience without his earthly memories. This, he believes, allowed him to go deeply into a spiritual experience, and he concluded that the less earthly attachments we have, the deeper we can go.

Dr. Alexander experienced existence in the higher levels as more real than existence in the physical plane, just as Swedenborg has described. Dr. Alexander said that in the higher realm sound was palpable and almost material, “like a rain that you can feel on your skin but that doesn’t get you wet (*Proof of Heaven* p. 45). He also experienced seeing and hearing as things that really were not separate. He could hear the visual beauty of higher beings that he saw, and he could see joyous sounds that came from them.

In a place he called “the core,” Dr. Alexander saw an inky darkness that was also brimming with light. He wonders about the connection of this spiritual phenomenon with the “black matter” in the physical universe that earthly science has become aware of.

The acquiring of knowledge works differently in the spiritual realm, according to what Dr. Alexander experienced. First of all, answers came to him instantly and in tremendous detail as soon as the questions were asked. And knowledge was not “taught” to him in the earthly way, but rather was given as direct insights and stored instantly in his mind. This echoes Swedenborg’s description of learning by means of perception rather than intellect, which was the way things were in the earliest church. “The people of the earliest church...received from the Lord an uninterrupted state of perception, which enabled them to tell immediately whether or not a thought based on memorized information was true and good” (*Heavenly Secrets* 125). Dr. Alexander felt that the knowledge given him in the higher realms was still with him when he woke up from his coma, but he knew this knowledge would have trouble coming into earthly consciousness through a physical brain. To access the knowledge would take efforts to re-train his brain, to get around its filtering system that makes higher knowledge difficult for us here on earth. Part of the science Dr. Alexander indicates he wants to study are methods of re-training the brain. He mentions, for instance, a method that uses specific patterns of stereo sound waves to affect brain wave activity (*Proof of Heaven* p. 158).

But the scientific “discovery” that struck me the most in Dr. Alexander’s story was the fact he had awakened into a world characterized by love, consciousness and reality. During this spiritual experience, Dr. Alexander observed that love—in particular, unconditional love—was an actual and scientific substance. This unconditional love is what everything is ultimately made out of, even here in the physical world. But to move upward into higher realms is to encounter the substance of unconditional love in its purer forms. Dr. Alexander concludes that in order to be able to reach and live in the higher realms we must make ourselves more like them. We must open the connection to a higher part of ourselves that already exists, and yet we are often not awake to or not in touch with. Dr. Alexander asks:

How do we get closer to this genuine spiritual self? By manifesting love and compassion. Why? Because love and compassion are far more than the abstractions many of us believe them to be. They are real. They are concrete. And they make up the very fabric of the spiritual realm. In order to return to that realm, we must once again become like that realm, even while we are stuck in, and plodding through, this one. (Ibid, p. 85).

“Love is our life,” writes Swedenborg in *Divine Love and Wisdom* 1. “For most people, the existence of love is a given, but the nature of love is a mystery... We are wholly unaware that it is our very life—not just the general life of our whole body and of all our thoughts, but the life of their every least detail.” The things that Dr. Alexander discovered are not necessarily new information to a Swedenborgian. And yet, his experiences definitely broaden my understanding of these concepts, and add new dimension to them. Through learning from his experiences, I have new tools for understanding the nature of reality. I am intrigued at the thought that our physical brains are actually blocking awareness of higher reality that God would like us to have. I’m intrigued by the concept of re-training brains to stop blocking all that out. Combining such brain work with the work of shunning evils and regeneration could maybe speed up the process of the human race regaining connection with realms that God never wanted us to be separate from. I encourage everyone to read *Proof of Heaven*. Let it inspire you to pursue your own personal studies of spiritual science!

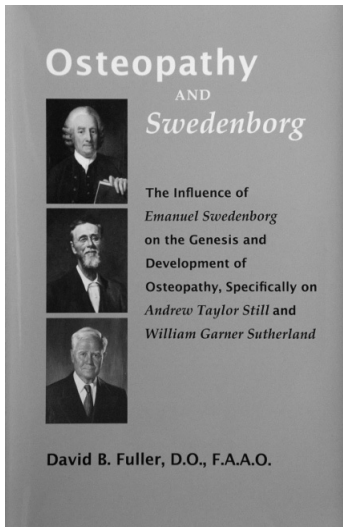
Karin Alfelt Childs (GS 1980) lives in Rochester, MI with her husband, Jon. They have five children—one in heaven, one still at home, and three grown and moved away—plus a small home business called Fountain Publishing.

BOOK REVIEW

*Osteopathy and Swedenborg:
The Influence of Emanuel Swedenborg on the Genesis and
development of Osteopathy, Specifically on Andrew Taylor Still
and William Garner Sutherland.*

By David B. Fuller, D.O., F.A.A.O.

Reviewed by Penny Rhodes



When Angela Rose called me and asked me to review David Fuller’s Book on Swedenborg and Osteopathy, my initial reaction was “YES!” Then, “Oh my, how could I possibly write a review of such a scholarly and academic tome?” The “YES!” came from my heart, and so, dear reader, will this review. If you would like to read precise and academic reviews, please go onto the internet. You will find many reviews, all favorable, from physicians and scientists and scholars.

I loved this book. I couldn’t put it down. It spoke to my soul, as I have experienced the human body as a bodyworker and CranialSacral therapist for well over thirty years.

This book, in precise detail, traces the influence of the scientific works concerning the Brain and Anatomy written by Emanuel Swedenborg, on Andrew Still, the father of Osteopathy, and William Sutherland, the developer of Cranial Osteopathy. Dig a little further, and you will find that Ida Rolf was influenced by Swedenborg and Sutherland. Dr. John Upledger, who further developed CranialSacral therapy, and was my teacher, was a student of the work of both Still and Sutherland.

Where do I start? As a body worker, I sense an inexplicable connection and magic when working with another human being. Some people call it “intuition.” Others may use actual techniques such as “muscle testing.” As a Craniosacral therapist, I use what we call the “Inner Physician,” using the very real and physically felt cranial rhythm. The mystery, the miracle is this: the patient’s body can communicate intelligently with us, the therapist/doctor. There is a deep “knowing,” beyond words, but powerful and true. How can this be?

I found the answer to that question in David Fuller’s book, specifically answered by Swedenborg, and picked up on by Osteopathy and its offspring. Can

I tell you how excited I was to find this in writing?

Both Still and Sutherland believed that the human body contained the inherent wisdom of self-regulation and self-healing, and the practice of osteopathic medicine tapped into that wisdom. Swedenborg's descriptions of the body-mind-spirit connection, written a hundred years before, resonated with Still and Sutherland's beliefs. The connection of science (anatomy and physiology) and spirit or soul is evident in osteopathy.

I loved the book because it affirmed and explained, with Swedenborg's studies, what I had been experiencing. The experience truly is miraculous and magical. The book is rife with quotes from all three scholars.

Swedenborg describes a fluid so fine that it is beyond detection by our senses, which he calls "spirituous fluid," which is produced in the brain, and travels by way of the body's detectable fluids—cerebrospinal fluid, lymphatic fluid—throughout the entire body. He attributes "intelligent potency" to it. This spirituous fluid is the first manifestation of soul in the body. Being soul, or spirit, it is intelligent. It can communicate!

Swedenborg described the individual cerebellula as producing a most refined fluidic substance he termed the "spirituous fluid"... (and) he mentioned the spirituous fluid as having a potency, something more than could be derived from nature alone. He recognized the source of this potency as the soul made manifest in the animation of the brain and in the spirituous fluid (p. 311-312).

Sutherland described the Breath of Life as something invisible that dwells within the cerebral spinal fluid ... [page number?]," an idea parallel to Swedenborg's concept of spirituous fluid.


Sutherland often made reference to the Breath of Life as something invisible within the cerebral spinal fluid, as a 'liquid-within-a-liquid' and a 'fluid within this fluid.' The Breath of Life within the cerebral spinal fluid manifests as intelligent potency, intelligence with a capital "I." This "fluid within a fluid" seems to share similar characteristics with Swedenborg's descriptions of the spirituous fluid as something beyond the knowledge of the senses, animating the cerebral spinal fluid yet maintaining its own character. Swedenborg stated clearly that this is part of the soul's manifestation in the body. He saw it as following the wisdom contained within it from the Creator (p. 334).

I end this review with a quote from p. 387:

It is interesting that across the organized New Church, both Convention and General Churches, there is a growing interest in alternative and complementary medicine, including hands-on therapies.

There is now a growing interest in Swedenborg with many American osteopathic physicians and international osteopaths.

Perhaps in the future there will be a surge of interest in osteopathy by Swedenborgians and a similar surge of interest in Swedenborg by the osteopathic profession that will culminate in a genuine dialogue between organized Swedenborgians and the osteopathic profession in America and around the world. The hope is that this book will contribute to a dialogue that will enrich both groups.

I believe that laymen and professionals alike would get **great value** from the information given in this book. It is readable, full of scientific data, and fascinating. I thank David Fuller for taking the time to research, connect these three great men, and write this book. 

Calling all Sophomore Girls (Tenth Graders)

You are invited to participate in an essay contest

“THE LAWS OF LIFE”

“**The Laws of Life**” are a set of rules, ideals, or principles by which one should live. What do you value most in life? What is important to you? What ideals do you hold deep in your heart? Think about the people and experiences that have helped you form these laws. This essay is an opportunity to write about what **YOU** think is important in life. This is your chance to be heard – to write from the heart about one, or more, of your personal laws of life.

THREE CASH PRIZES:

First Prize: \$75.00 USD
Second Prize: \$50.00 USD
Third Prize: \$25.00 USD

SCHEDULE: Your essay must be mailed to arrive by **April 30, 2013**. Mail to: Theta Alpha International, PO Box 511, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009, USA. Include your name and your postal address.

THETA ALPHA JOURNAL

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Cookbook Sales

The Bryn Athyn Community Cookbook needs your help.

We have sold more than 2,500 books, but the sales have slowed down. The publisher suggests that we need affirmative comments on our Amazon website. If you have a favorite recipe, or something favorable to say about the book, please go to Amazon, search for the cookbook, click on it and enter a comment. This can be done anonymously.

Thanks very much.

“IS ANYBODY THERE? DOES ANYBODY CARE?”

MELODIE GREER, TAI TREASURER

These are the words sung by the character of John Adams near the end of the musical *1776*, as the debate over the Declaration of Independence continued. He had a vision of what could be, but he was unsure of support for it.

What does this have to do with Theta Alpha International? We, on the Executive Committee, have been asking a similar question lately. We've been operating without a president or a vice president for quite a while. We have not been able to find anyone willing to take on either position. Dues support has declined over the years. Individual chapters appear to be struggling as well. It's time to ask, "Is anybody there? Does anybody care?"

One can speculate as to the causes of our current condition. More and more women are working and have less time to volunteer for any uses. What used to be a "lifeline" of communication among women, the *Journal*, is no longer the only medium for sharing our thoughts. With the explosion of the Internet and social media, communication can be more immediate and interactive. Women of the next generation don't seem to be "joiners" in the same way as women in the past.

Another question is whether we are being spread too thin with competing uses in the church? I believe that when Theta Alpha was formed, it was THE organization whose purpose was to support New Church education. Now we have the college alumni association as well as the General Church Office of Education, not to mention the work done by the ANC/GC Development Office. Is this a redundancy that weakens us, or do we serve New Church education in a way that is different from these other organizations?

We need to take a look at some of these issues. The challenge is how to best go about this self-examination. We have had a generous offer to help us in this endeavor, and we are currently pursuing our options. In the meantime, we would love to hear from as many women as possible regarding this question: "What does Theta Alpha mean to you?" What do we need to do to make our organization useful, relevant and alive today? How do we interest the young women who are our future? If there is no longer enough interest in the organization, is it best to shut down?

We have a Facebook page where we can get this conversation started. Please go to <http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Theta-Alpha-International/174228519307237> or just go to www.facebook.com and enter Theta Alpha International in the search box. Please post your thoughts there. If you are not comfortable with Facebook, feel free to e-mail us at anccaughters@gmail.com or send in a written response to P. O. Box 154, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009.

We need to know, "Is anybody there? Does anybody care?"



TAI Dues Notice for July 2013-June 2014

(Please pay dues by June 30, 2013)

WAYS TO PAY YOUR \$15.00 DUES AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE GENERAL FUND

Both U.S. and International Members

- Pay online using a credit card or PayPal
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 - Select “an article or publication.”
 - Select “Theta Alpha Journal.”
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OR

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- Please fill out the form below and mail check to:

Melodie Greer, Treasurer
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Box 154
Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Dues (2013-14) \$ 15.00

Contribution to the
General Fund \$ _____ (scholarship fund and other TAI uses)

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*Please make checks payable to **Theta Alpha International***

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- Send payment to a chapter leader or treasurer from the list below. Please do so within three weeks of receiving this dues notice.
- Chapter Treasurers please note: Please include the names and addresses of all paid members.

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phone: 02 9545 3823
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Judith Stewart, 64 Evenstone Ave, Kitchener, ON, N2R 1N9
Checks payable to Theta Alpha Guild

Amy Jutras, 279 Burnhamthorpe Rd, Etobicoke, ON, M9B 1Z6
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The New Church Buccleuch, PO Box 412956, Craighall, 2124
Checks payable to The New Church Buccleuch

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Account holder: The New Church Bucceluch
Bank: Standard Bank
Branch: Lyttelton
Branch number: 010945
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