



# The Threshing Floor

July 2015

Newsletter of the Guild for Psychological Studies

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**Guild Vision:** The Guild envisions a world in which the significance of each person's truth, authority, and inspired purpose finds fulfillment in life and community.

**Guild Mission:** Guild seminars offer a way of psychological and spiritual transformation that inspires individuals to live their purpose, expand consciousness, and discover and create meaning in their lives and community.

## “Software is eating the world.” -- Reply to Jack Russell Stone

By Hal Childs

Jack's query in last month's Threshing Floor about Mark Andreessen "meeting" with the Guild must be the result of an honest misreading of the flier for the Report from Berlin held on February 28. The paragraph in question is:

“The day will include presentations with time for conversation and dialogue. We will include an experiential group process to engage an ancient text from the *Gospel of Thomas* and a modern “text” from Marc Andreessen, co-founder of Netscape and the Silicon Valley venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz, from the point of view of soul.”

Marc Andreessen was not present at this event and there was no presentation by him. I worked with the group in a Guild discussion format using, first, the “Empty Jar” parable in the *Gospel of Thomas* (logia 97) and then, secondly, what I consider to be a modern “text” of soul that is a statement made by Marc Andreessen: “Software is eating the world.” We explored this simple statement made by him (some years ago, in 2011), in terms of what it might mean *psychologically*, that is, what soul might be saying about itself with such a statement.

My own speculative thought sees that, historically, Christianity evolved into both science and humanism, and so dissolved itself into a new form. Now, perhaps “software” (whatever that is really?) is replacing the human, and the essence of what we think of as humanity is dissolving itself into a new form (human decision-making is being replaced by software).

## What are the Records? Part I

By Hal Childs

Within the context of the Guild for Psychological Studies, the term “Records” refers to two distinct things: 1) A seminar, often called Basic Records, and 2) The book, *Records of the Life of Jesus*, a parallel presentation of the three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, that also includes the gospel of John. Of course, the seminar and the book are intimately intertwined, and the reading of the Records book is informed by the seminar. The Records seminar is a complex totality that engages the whole person, while at the same time structuring a very particular and limited reading of the *Records* book. And, so, what are the Records? Is it a book, or is it an experience? At least at one important level, the Records refers to a particular reading of a book.

What is the book that is read as the Records? That book is the Christian gospel narratives of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, the divine incarnate Son of God. However, in a Records seminar the reading that is undertaken of the Christian gospels is not the Christian story of Jesus Christ. Although the texts used in a Records study are the Christian gospels, the actual texts studied are a limited selection from all three gospels that are, in effect, taken out of their gospel context and woven into a new historical narrative about Jesus the man: the result is a form of creative (historical) fiction.

The modern literary and historical approach to the Christian gospels has only been possible in the 20th century because the *Christian* meaning of the texts had already been dying for a few hundred years. The death of God and the death of the Christian myth are what

made it possible to, in a sense, rip the gospels apart and shred them into the bits and pieces we moderns call history, memory, myth, legend, and theology. Prior to the emergence of Enlightenment, scientific critical consciousness, the gospels were an indivisible, sacred whole; they were the unquestioned truth. The gospels, as the received word of God, were the truth during a particular historical period of western civilization. This does not mean that they were taken as true on a literal, empirical level the way modern fundamentalists make them literally true. They were truth at a time when they were living soul documents, when soul inhabited them as the source of truth, publically shared and assumed truth by society at large. That was the age of mythological consciousness, when the reality of soul was taken for granted, and texts like the gospels were inherently and simply true because they expressed soul's truth (not the empirical world's truth).

With the emergence of scientific and historical consciousness as the dominant form of truth of modern society, soul abandoned (one way of saying it) its former context of myth and religion, and became the thought-world of materialism. Materialism became the reigning paradigm of publically shared truth and the real. Religion receded from the public sphere and became a private, subjective issue of personal belief and feeling (and thus supposedly immune from the prying methods of science). Religion (and spirituality) as private and personal is a modern phenomenon.

I would venture to say that everyone who came to Records' seminars took for granted that the gospels were historical documents written by human persons in specific social circumstances for varied reasons. It is not a God that is the source of truth and the real at a modern Records' seminar, but historical and psychological consciousness that is real and that determines how we approach these texts. The texts can only "come alive," as we like to say, within the private psychological experience of the individual, because their previous corporate and social mythological/theological context had disappeared, died. As psychological symbols, they can only evoke personal feelings and thoughts, because they are no longer public soul-truths. Of course I am using the word "soul" here in a way very different from the popular, romantic, cozy, and personal associations of new age spirituality and Jungian jargon. "Soul" in my usage has more to do with Jung's notion of the *objective* psyche, that transpersonal dimension of the unconscious that is not human. Soul is the unconscious thought-forms of the prevailing broad culture; in this understanding of soul, soul is historical and contingent, not timeless and eternal.

To come back to my question, What are the Records?, the answer has everything to do with the fundamental assumptions that constitute the context within which one approaches the Christian gospels. What is the

fundamental form of consciousness that informs our approach, our questions, and our answers? Originally, when the gospels emerged two thousand years ago, it was a mythological form of consciousness in general that permeated and informed all societies and cultures of that time. And so the Christian gospels were about a new God incarnate as a human person, engaged in a cosmic battle with evil/Satan. The Christ (for Christians) was the culmination and fulfillment of the Jewish myth, the desires of the Jewish God. God and Christ were one of the unquestioned forms that mythological soul-truth took at that time.

But the Records, as a modern method of studying the Christian gospels, are the result of the death of both God and the Christian myth. The rise of higher criticism and historical consciousness stripped away the theological and mythological elements and believed that, in so doing, what was left was the record of an historical Jesus. This was Henry Sharman's assumption and the assumption of most scholarly and historical approaches to the gospels, to this day. This profound change in how the gospels are thought about is the result of the transformation of the mythological form of consciousness into the modern scientific (broadly speaking) and historical form of consciousness. But the story of the transformation of general cultural forms of consciousness does not end here.

Something has happened to the unquestioned assumptions of scientific and historical consciousness. The assumptions that have grounded scientific and historical consciousness as a modern soul-truth (meaning public and shared and taken for granted) have come under question, and these questions can be gathered together under the umbrella of psychological consciousness. Why psychology? Because psychology is the result of mind's becoming aware of itself, with the result, the "post-modern" result, that all thought is self-conscious of itself, and recognizes itself as a self-construction. That is, the fundamental assumptions, the great ideas, of historical periods construct themselves and change themselves in an evolutionary way.

Today, psychological consciousness means that we can no longer take anything at face value, not even so-called scientific facts. What we realize is that there are no facts, but rather stories, narratives, matrixes of meaning and interpretation. Soul has, in effect, become self-conscious. Soul has, so to speak, thought itself out of its former forms of myth and religion, and science and history. The iconic symbol of this broad cultural development of psychological self-reflection is the view of the planet earth from outer space, which, in effect, is consciousness looking at itself.

This new consciousness of consciousness is a direct result of scientific curiosity being applied to the mind, and the emergence of the idea of the unconscious, or an

autonomous soul. This double psychological awareness has emerged in science itself within the new physics and quantum mechanics where it is understood that the observing mind has an effect on the outcome of experiments. We know now that what was once naively divided into mass and energy is really, by way of Einstein's famous equation,  $E=mc^2$ , one unified reality. Mass and energy are not truly separate, but actually comprise a unified reality. We can also think of this unification in terms of the mind's having become conscious of itself.

Because of these psychological developments, we can no longer approach the Records naively as either Christian myth or literal history. The Guild is called the Guild for *Psychological Studies*. Why *psychological*? If anything, the Guild over its history has been far more religious and spiritual in its general orientation than psychological. If the term *psychological* is going to be taken seriously, we need to see how *psychological* consciousness changes the meaning of and approach to the Records. The Records have not been abandoned, but the approach to the Records and the meaning of the Records is going through a transformation that is aligned with what is already happening, culturally and historically. The tradition of Records study is one hundred years old (original publication of the Records was 1917). As noted above, soul is historical; its forms of consciousness change. We can cling to old forms, and many do. But one of the sayings attributed to Jesus is that the son of the man has nowhere to lay his head (§81 A; Luke [9:58]). There is no final resting place, only change and transformation. The Records, even as they hold profound, beautiful, precious, and sacred individual memories for many of us, must obey the law of change (sublation), and become something that is unrecognizable to the prior form of consciousness. Only in this way can the "Records" remain true to their essence, "crucifixion and resurrection."

**Nominations for the Board of Directors -  
Due by July 20<sup>th</sup>**

*By: Elizabeth Bremer, Secretary of the Board  
(Lbremer4@[aol.com](mailto:Lbremer4@aol.com))*

Help ensure that the work that has been such an important part of your life continues to grow and flourish. We invite you to bring your experience, talents, and passion for the Guild's work to our leadership team. In addition to considering joining us on the Board yourself, if you know someone else who might be a good addition to the Board, please let them know!

The Board provides policy, program, and operations oversight. We seek to bring forth the Guild's work by supporting the energy of leaders to grow and create programs while maintaining a healthy financial basis through which to fuel future development. Board work gives members opportunities to expand their own consciousness while we seek to address the Guild's organizational needs and opportunities. Please contact the Guild office or any current board member for more information about board work.

By July 20<sup>th</sup>, potential candidates must confirm their willingness to run and have the official nomination of a voting member in good standing (voting members may nominate themselves). Nominations are due by 5:00pm Pacific Daylight Time, Monday, July 20, 2015.

Along with their confirmation, candidates are asked to provide a brief statement of interest and qualifications to be included with ballots (approx. 150 words). Ballots will be mailed to Guild voting members on August 1<sup>st</sup>.

The August election will provide for up to five directors to be elected: three for 2-year terms and two for 1-year terms. There are two vacant board positions, and three current directors are completing their terms: Elizabeth Bremer, Jennifer Larson, and Rita McGowan. Elizabeth and Jennifer will run again. Other directors are Hal Childs and Harry Henderson, who are at mid-term. We look forward to hearing from you.

**July Birthdays**

Sonya Milton	Jul 5
Regine Wilson	Jul 7
Dennis Serdahl	Jul 8
Fay Kilgore	Jul 9
Louise Frank	Jul 13
Dudley Pace	Jul 13
Donna Sachs	Jul 14
April Barrett	Jul 20
Ruth O'Day	Jul 26
Lisa Yount	Jul 28
Terry Dowdy	Jul 29



## Observing from Within

By Jack Arlen Russell Stone

I am writing again in response to recent articles in the *TF* about the Guild and its future. All the articles were well written and heartfelt, I'm sure, as those qualities of members are what holds the community of the Guild together for me. I have written to the Board (no response, yet) to suggest that there is a regular study of the Records held in the South SF Bay to which folks could be referred if they really feel a need for the traditional "Records" study; but I also recognized that for many (or most?) people the 'traditional' study may be passe'.

In this respect, it seems to me that not enough description has been produced for the membership about the new ("moving on") direction of the Guild and its focus, and for prospective new members that might benefit from the wisdom of the Guild's leadership and its members. So many writers refer to the teachings of Jesus or his wisdom. My personal take-away from "Records" was the wisdom of C.G. Jung, not Jesus. What I gained from Jesus was confirmation of the thoughts about the world and relationship that I already carried, *a priori*, and was amazed. And that to me was the value.

That this great teacher who had fostered a world religion had the same feelings as I, was an earth-shaking event for me. It didn't have to be Jesus. Ghandi or MLK Jr. could have accomplished the same, but they did not enter my training as a young person when I was vulnerable and didn't know how to question. That is also what I learned at the Guild: Questioning was encouraged. At 50 years old, I learned more than I had in the previous 50! Maybe people don't see that, but only want to learn from Jesus. That's not it! Learn from within, and from what you observe around you. Our 'world' has changed.

*"The "inner personality" is the way in which one behaves in regard to one's inner psychic processes; it is the inner attitude, the character, that one displays toward the unconscious..."*

Jolande Jacobi  
*The Psychology of CG Jung*

## Memories of "Records"

By Bob Barram

I am Bob Barram, a psychologist up here in Paradise, CA. Years ago we were in Oakland. I attended a "Records" seminar and as a guy growing up with a father who was a serious fundamentalist pastor, my experience was huge. I was beautifully pulled into the new. I asked questions, I listened, I felt like I was facing up to my shadow in ways I could hardly imagine. I got into the new by drawing pictures, walking around feeling in a state of love with my hands up, just savoring the new I was feeling. Even my little Altar out in the woods was very memorable.

It was very deep and life-changing for me and it has shaped my work with clients to this day and I am only 79 and seeing 20+ a week. When I drove in to the driveway at home, my wife was tending to flowers out in front. I pulled into the driveway and I just had to sit in the car and cry. I had been deeply changed and I was "Full of IT."

The best to you and keep up the good work!!



Guild for Psychological Studies  
July 11-19, 2015



## *The Inevitable Gravity of Beautiful Trouble*

Is it dangerous and foolhardy to offer a seminar on trouble? Should we beware of what will be stirred up? Who wakes up in the morning assuming trouble is something to look forward to?

We buy insurance; we make plans for disasters; we anticipate worst case scenarios; we learn to put on character armor as children to cope with troubling parents; we become vigilant for psychological trouble. The natural attitude is to keep trouble away.

Still, we must ask, What is the unknown presence that troubles us? What does trouble want? What does trouble need from us?

For Jesus the kingdom of God is trouble. For Jung the individuation impulse is trouble. Yet both these paths are a way to authenticity, to consciousness, to deep beauty.

Let him who seeks, not cease seeking until he finds, and when he finds, he will be troubled, and when he has been troubled, he will marvel and he will reign over the All.

*Gospel of Thomas, logia 2*

The shadow troubles our self-image, and the trickster troubles our best-laid plans. It is said the truth will set you free, but first it will trouble you profoundly. We sleep and our sleep is troubled by dreams. We have a choice: either to be victims of trouble, or to face the challenge of trouble. How might trouble lead us to Beauty and open us to truth?

In this seminar we will seek to face the inevitable gravity of *trouble*, to learn its inner necessity and to know its hidden secrets for making what is beautiful of soul manifest. The wisdom of Jesus, the Greek myth of Odysseus, the soul-centered psychology of Wolfgang Giegerich, and most especially our personal experience will guide our exploration.

The seminar process uses a modified Socratic method to guide group discussion. We honor the dignity of each individual to express their truth and move at their own pace. We utilize meditation, expressive arts, music, body movement and awareness, and silence to deepen our work.

Please include a letter stating why you wish to attend and any pertinent information about prior study and experience around spiritual issues.

**Location:** Four Springs, Middletown CA  
**Leaders:** Hal Childs, PhD, MFT and Patricia Calcagno Stenger, MA, MFT  
**Fee:** \$1,485. Include a non-refundable fee of \$50 with registration.  
Limited scholarships and payment plans are available.  
Contact for more information:  
Hal Childs, 415-573-2469; [halchilds@earthlink.net](mailto:halchilds@earthlink.net)  
Register at [www.guildsf.org/seminar-registration](http://www.guildsf.org/seminar-registration)

This seminar meets the qualifications for 30 hours of continuing education credit for MFT's, LPCCs, LEPS, and / or LCSWs as required by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences. Approved provider #PCE 1829. Please include an additional \$15 for the CEU certificate.

Participants will:

- Learn aspects of Jungian work on the psychological implications of life's troubles.
- Explore the importance of accessing the unconscious in order to process the buried, complex feelings related to the inevitable suffering of daily life.
- Explore and practice psychological thinking.
- Use art expression, body awareness and imagination as ways to dialogue with energies present in the self and in the world.

## Stay Connected

Bob Ridder, Administrative Coordinator, is available for all inquiries by phone at (415) 561-2385, or by email at [office@guildsf.org](mailto:office@guildsf.org).

Send your email address to [office@guildsf.org](mailto:office@guildsf.org) so that we can keep you connected and up-to-date on Guild events. Also be sure that we have your current mailing address so that we are able to send you this yearly edition of the newsletter. Please keep us updated with your address changes.

## Mailing Address

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## Guild Website

Visit [www.guildsf.org](http://www.guildsf.org) for information about seminars and events, and to register for seminars. The website also has general information about the Guild, past issues of the Threshing Floor, relevant news, and links to resources. If you would like to post information of interest to the Guild community, please email [harryhenderson51@gmail.com](mailto:harryhenderson51@gmail.com), our web administrator.

## Guild Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/guildsf>, launched in January! If you haven't yet, please "friend" and "like" us!

## Newsletter

To receive 12 issues of *The Threshing Floor* a year, please contact the Guild office. There is no charge for an e-mail subscription. For a print subscription, please send a check for \$25 to the Guild office.

Items for inclusion in the Threshing Floor should be mailed to the Guild Office, Attn. Threshing Floor Editor, or emailed to [office@guildsf.org](mailto:office@guildsf.org). The deadline for each issue is the 20th of the month. Items received after that date will be published the following month.

Production & Layout Editor: Wilene Chang  
Content Editors: Janet Boeth Jones, Sue Renfrew  
Distribution: Bob Ridder

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter (by contributors other than staff and directors) are the writers' and not necessarily an official position of the Guild.

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Order publications on the Guild website, or contact Carina Ravelly at [guildpublishing@yahoo.com](mailto:guildpublishing@yahoo.com).

## Donations

Many thanks to our donors! Your financial support in any amount helps the Guild with seminars and other events, with the training of leaders, with outreach, and with other new and ongoing efforts. Because the Guild is a registered nonprofit organization, with 501(c)(3) status, your contribution may be tax deductible. Donations should be directed to the Guild office address, or you may donate online using the PayPal link you'll find by selecting the Make a Donation link on the main page of our website.

## Volunteers

There are several people who fill necessary volunteer roles in the Guild. If you would like to be a Guild volunteer, please contact the Guild office at [office@guildsf.org](mailto:office@guildsf.org) and let us know particular volunteer roles that appeal to you. Currently volunteers are members of the editorial staff for the Threshing Floor; members of the Board of Directors; serve as continuing education coordinator; train to serve as seminar coordinator, committee person or cook; provide transportation to/from seminars for attendees; help to catalog or research Guild archive materials; write reviews for Guild books and other publications; etc.

## Friends and Members

Friends of the Guild are donors and others interested in receiving Guild information who are not Voting Members. Voting membership requires active participation in some form of leadership or committee role, or other volunteer effort, and the payment of annual dues. Voting members may receive a print subscription to the Threshing Floor upon request.

## Board of Directors

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Hal Childs, President  
Harry Henderson, Treasurer  
Jennifer Larson, President  
Rita McGowan

