



The Threshing Floor

October 2015

Newsletter of the Guild for Psychological Studies

Web site: www.guildsf.org

Phone: (415) 561-2385

P.O. Box 29385, San Francisco, California 94129-0385

e-mail: office@guildsf.org

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.

Remembering Norman McMullen

By Ruth McMullen

Editor's Note: Bob Ridder received the following message from Ruth McMullen regarding the death of her husband, Norman, on Friday, September 4.

I write very sadly now to say that Norman died yesterday, September 4th.

His transition was peaceful and he had his family around him.

We celebrate his being, his love of life, his deep explorations, his sense of wonder, and his consideration for others - even as he came to the end. He was deeply loved and will be deeply missed.

*...I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass,
How to kneel down in the grass, how to be idle and
blessed, how to stroll through the fields, which is
what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done ?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon ?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
With your one wild and precious life ?*

--Mary Oliver

Fire Spares Four Springs!

By Harry Henderson

During the days following the outbreak of the rapidly spreading Valley Fire, we waited anxiously to learn whether it had destroyed Four Springs. Fire maps showed the property as being right on the edge of the fire zone. A few days later we received confirmation from Tim Locke via Facebook that Four Springs still stands ... here is Tim's post:

"I was not able to get to Four Springs today after all, but our neighbor did get home (a little fib at the road block) and Four Springs is OK! I had a feeling, but nothing like an eye witness account. The highway is likely to be closed for a few more days, but temperatures are cooler with rain in the forecast for tomorrow, and it looks like Four Springs is going to be alright. The firefighters bulldozed a trench in the vineyard at the end of Sheveland Road and apparently used the vineyard irrigation to help prevent the fire from advancing further. Thank goodness for the firefighters and for all the prayers and visions of safety and protection for Four Springs. It seems miraculous, and also sobering in the midst of so much loss and destruction for so many. Power is out, outages are widespread, and access is restricted, and so it is likely to be some time before there is any semblance of normal, but I am feeling relieved and grateful."

To follow Four Springs on Facebook, go here:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Four-Springs-Retreat-Center/109638722409264?sk=wall>

What is the “absolute core of the gospel stories”?

By Jack Russell Stone

I am first called to respond to the poem from Selena Sweet (Sept. 2015) - every word touches me "to the core."*

I am therefore *not* touched to the core by the long tomes on *What are the Records? Parts II and III*, because I've thought that Guild questions are to be answered by us, for us, as individuals, not lectured *to* us, particularly in convoluted sentences and paragraphs that are not consistent among themselves, e.g., Part II, para. 2: "Jung's and Giegerich's soul-centered psychology . . ."; Part III, para. 5: "Jung's psychology is not soul-centered."

Records was for me neither a theological interest nor an historical interest, but an interest in the text and what others had come to believe about it. So, much of what was written in *What are the Records? Part III* causes me to want to ask, "So, what's the point?" and, "Didn't we know that already?" But that would be unfair, because the writer went to a lot of trouble to explain for people who perhaps did not come to *Records* from the cynical position that I held. My quest was met, however. I was seeking a community of intelligent souls who could ask and try to answer difficult questions about a world I had inherited that seemed to be dominated in every institution by a religion that I could not understand. Such an opportunity had not presented itself before my "middle age" at 50. What had guided me to that point? Certainly not the church or its scriptures, nor the man Jesus. In fact I had taken his name in vain many times without consequence. All I knew was his command-ment: to do unto others . . . , etc., but I didn't know he was the author. Only in *Records* did I learn it was also the basis of other faiths.

So much I learned! When I later was invited to the sort-of "helper" group known as Circle Two, I finally felt I had found the community I'd been seeking, and "seeking" was the affirmed bond among us, our purpose, outside of service to the Process. A deeper devotion was needed in order to be part of the inner group of "question-askers-in-training." Having no experience with devotion, I was not ready for that. I much admired the knowledge in the Three: Elizabeth's scholarship and her Jungian interpretations; Luella's take on social issues and stepping out into the cosmos; and Sheila's profound appreciation of nature and mythology (brand new to me). Others worked so hard and were inspiring, but none more than the McCaslins, due to their practicality. They were *real!*

With all that as background, I can feel the loss of the traditional *Records* seminars, and of those seminars that followed; the loss that so many have expressed in different ways in these pages. There was so much more in all those seminars than the quest for an historical person, but it was important to me to be able to understand how the man was made into the Christian god that has permeated our European culture to such an extent that we are still battling over concepts based on a Bible that "nobody" believes in anymore!

Thankfully, we don't also have to suffer the loss of our seminar home, so revered because of our experiences there; for me, a place of inclusion, where the lonely could feel at home. Now, the town to which it is attached is devastated, looking like a miniature Hiroshima (not an accident). (Descriptions of the fire's beginning in Cobb were of an "explosion.") And Hardister's, where we committee were sent to shop for our cooks, has survived, I believe.

The following from Nancy:

*My Brain is only a receiver, in the Universe there is a core from which we obtain knowledge, strength and inspiration. I have not penetrated into the secrets of this core, but I know that it exists. – *Nikola Tesla*

Board Election Result 2015

By Elizabeth Bremer

Congratulations to Denise Dinwiddie, who has been newly elected to the Guild Board of Directors, and to Elizabeth Bremer and Jennifer Larson who have been reelected. All will serve 2-year terms, which began in September. Continuing directors at midterm are Hal Childs and Harry Henderson. Rita McGowan retired from the board, and has our deep appreciation for her three years of service. The board reelected the current slate of officers to serve from September 2015--August 2016. The officers are Elizabeth Bremer, Secretary; Hal Childs, President; Harry Henderson, Treasurer; and Jennifer Larson, Vice President. Many thanks to all our directors! We continue to welcome interest from others in board service – please contact the office or a member of the board for more information.

What are the Records? Part IV

By Hal Childs

To approach the Records psychologically means they are no longer the “Christian gospels,” but rather soul documents. To use Jungian language we might say that the Christian gospels are no longer viewed as revelations of the Word of God, but rather that they are expressions of the transpersonal psyche, or the collective unconscious. Within the modern context of psychology, the “Word of God” is no longer a reality in its own right (as it once was), it is no longer a self-evident category that cannot be explained by anything else, cannot be reduced to anything else. God and the Word of God were once the final self-explanatory category that explained everything else. But now, through psychology, the “Word of God” is viewed as a symbol that is understood within the context of another more inclusive category of consciousness, and that category is psychology with soul. The “Word of God” was, once upon a time, the self-expression that soul took in the past. But now it is not a matter of redefining the Word of God, but rather of seeing that the very notion of “the Word of God” has simply dropped out of the equation, and has been incorporated into a new larger category that in fact soul has created for itself. This is a change of syntax, or logical form, and not merely a semantic redefinition, a reshuffling of contents.

The difference between semantics and syntax is analogous to the problem of rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. The Titanic symbolizes the syntax, or logical form, that contains the deck chairs; the deck chairs are contents that are contained by the larger reality of the ship. When the ship is going down, obviously the deck chairs are not the issue. If we equate God to the Titanic, then clearly if God is going down (in fact, has already gone down), and “God” symbolizes the whole form of cultural consciousness that was God-centered, then trying to redefine God is like rearranging the deck chairs. The content of the idea of God is irrelevant because the whole form of consciousness that was God-centered has disappeared into another form entirely. Even the idea of the “death of God” is still thinking in God-terms. In the modern syntax of science clearly God is not a factor. In the modern syntax of psychology God is not a factor either, but what was once the truth of God is now understood in a wholly new way (it is not simply dismissed). This again is the historical process of sublation by which one soul-form (God) is negated while its essence is preserved in a new form as another status of consciousness (science), which itself is undergoing a sublation into the form of psychology.

The very idea of the Records, that is, calling the Christian gospels the *Records* of the Life of Jesus, is itself a change of syntax, and expresses the historical

shift (sublation) of the logical form of consciousness (that had already happened) from theology to history. With the rise of historical consciousness and science, theology no longer explained the course of events. History became itself a new category that was self-explanatory with humankind, not God, as the chief agent of history. The idea of the Records as records (the record of an historical event) is already a shift of consciousness that leaves behind Christology and theology. As “Christian gospels” they were the good news of Christ; as records they are merely the report about a man.

Theology approaches Jesus as the Christ (of faith, of myth). Historical consciousness approaches Jesus as an empirical man. Psychology approaches “Jesus” as an *idea*. What does it mean to say that psychology views Jesus (Christ) as an *idea*? Psychology views the figure of Jesus as the symbol or personification of an idea or thought that soul thinks, but that is not at first obvious. In other words, psychology wants to see through the visible manifestation to something deeper; psychology does not take the symbol (Jesus) at face value, in fact, psychology, when it chooses, does not take anything at face value, but seeks the deeper meaning and purpose of phenomena.

This does not mean that there is some spiritual, metaphysical, or even archetypal something or other (another entity) behind visible phenomena. These are old categories that divide reality into two distinct realms, the spiritual and the material. Psychology dissolves the idea of *two* realms into a unified reality while preserving a sublated differentiation between soul and empirical reality. Soul does not exist in some mysterious way, directing traffic from behind the magic curtain. That is a kind of magical thinking about what is conventionally understood as transcendence. “Transcendence,” for psychology, is right here and now in a vertical dimension, a depth of meaning.

Consciousness, in becoming aware of itself, and in this sense “transcending” its own former literal self-understanding, now knows that language and idea are real in themselves, and are the way soul manifests itself, not *with* or *in*, but *as* word, idea, interpretation. As noted before, soul is always a live performance right now, and humankind is always (so far, anyway) a performer with soul. But soul (to use a dance metaphor) is not the sole choreographer: soul and human person choreograph *and* dance together as a unified unity and difference that produces itself instantaneously. Soul does not know where it is going ahead of time anymore than we do (thinking existentially and historically of course; the ego always knows where it is going, a task and goal being its definition).

So, if we are not approaching the Christian gospels to learn about Christ, and we are not approaching the Records to learn about an historical Jesus, then what is the goal in approaching these texts as soul documents?

As soul documents, the Records themselves are an *idea*; actually they are a thought (idea) that soul had about itself a long time ago (and let's remember again, this is a modern psychological interpretation). Today we are interested in what soul might be saying about itself through these texts. We cannot pretend that what we think the texts might mean today is what they meant two thousand years ago. No, today we seek to work through the unconscious Christian and historical meanings and to see if there is a new form that the old idea can take which will release the idea into a new psychological truth; not for the ego to have a better life, but for soul to realize itself.

One way to notice how the transformation of the *idea* has already occurred is to look at how the title of the Records seminar has changed over the years. For decades it was "The Records of the Life of Jesus" (after the title of Sharman's gospel parallels), or some variation on "the wisdom of the historical Jesus," referred to informally as "Basic Records." In the past ten years, titles for this seminar have undergone a transformation: "Paradox: Coming Home to Yourself...to be more at home in this world" (2005); "With Desire I am Desiring; Listening to Life's Longing" (2007); "Who I Am I Must Become" (2009). These titles make no mention of Jesus or God, and they are purely psychological.

The title "Who I Am I Must Become," takes the form of a first person declaration, an imperative. But the real question is who, or, better, *what* is making this declaration? Our default humanistic form of consciousness assumes it is the individual who makes this statement, and that it is about personal development, a process Jung called individuation. But if we look deeper and do not take this first immediate appearance of the personal at face value, in fact if we negate this first impression and allow another possibility to emerge, we can interpret it as soul itself saying it will become itself (quite independently actually of what the ego might prefer). Psychology as the discipline of interiority will see the statement "Who I Am I Must Become" as a personifying idea of the soul declaring its own ineluctable process. It is the interiority that is soul itself that must become (empirically) what it already is (implicitly). With another metaphor, we can say that soul is pregnant with itself and must give birth to itself. "Must" is not an external "should," but is the innate *telos* of soul itself.

The interpretation that "Who I Am I Must Become" is soul's "I Am" is dependent on an historically earlier "I Am" that emerges at the beginning of the Judeo-Christian tradition in the book of Exodus. In the story of the Jewish liberation from Egypt, God names himself to

Moses as "I Am Who I Am" or "I Will Be What I Will Be." (Ex. 3:14) The "I Am" in this story comes from, and belongs to, God and God alone. Moses, the stand-in for humanity in general, can only say, "*Who am I* to lead the Israelites out of bondage?" But this just raises another question: What is the "I Am" really? What is its phenomenology?

The simplest description, in view of what the god of this name is doing, is that the "I Am" personifies a *telos*, which does not mean a full blown teleology, no grand plan, only an urge, a direction, a seeking, without a known goal or end—only an endless urge always creating itself out of what it has already created—we can call it a blind urge—the "I Am" personifies a blind urge. That is, it is not a blind urge without context. The god of the Exodus is the same god(s) who in Genesis created humankind in their own image. This god does not exist without the reflected image of humankind. God and humankind are a unity. The *telos* of the "I Am" can only learn what it is through its interaction with itself ("itself" being both a god and a humankind).

God's desire (*telos*) to liberate the Jewish people from Egypt is really God's desire (*telos*) to liberate himself, but from what? It can only be from himself because it is God who has gotten himself into this pickle. God set it up (so to speak) so that he, as his people (his self-image), would be enslaved in Egypt. (Gen. 15:13-14; and the story of Joseph, Gen. 37:2-50) God is a self-contradiction unknown to itself. The *telos* of the I Am is for liberation. Therefore, "Who I Am I Must Become" is the liberation of the "I Am" from itself for the sake of its becoming. What is implicit and potential wants to become explicit and real.

This phenomenological interpretation of the "I Am" should help us see that the statement "Who I Am I Must Become" is the psychologically sublated version of the mythological statement that (paraphrase) "The way to enter the kingdom of God is to do the will of God" (Records 38 U; Mt. 7:21). The phrase "Who I Am I Must Become," is one way the essential idea of the Records expresses itself when understood as soul speaking about itself.

October Birthdays

Janet Petroni	Oct 1
Clare Morris	Oct 5
Steve Toby	Oct 15
Martha Maris	Oct 16
Emil Dockter	Oct 19
Patricia Trocmé	Oct 21
Andrew Getman	Oct 22
Peggy Hagen	Oct 25
Julie Gaebe	Oct 26
Jennifer Brodie	Oct 28
Nils Peterson	Oct 29
Dottie Wylie	Oct 29

Stay Connected

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

Send your email address to 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

Guild for Psychological Studies
P.O. Box 29385
San Francisco, CA 94129-0385

Guild Website

Visit 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, 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. 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.

Publishing House sales – books and CDs

Order publications on the Guild website, or contact Carina Ravelly at 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 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

Elizabeth Bremer, Secretary
Hal Childs, President
Harry Henderson, Treasurer
Denise Dinwiddie
Jennifer Larson, Vice President

