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Moving Toward the Light

The Toll-Booth Angel

*Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to
entertain strangers: for thereby some have
entertained angels unawares.*

Hebrews 13: 1 & 2

There was a time several years ago when I was grieving, and I allowed that grief to spill over while driving a 30-mile stretch of Indiana toll road from work to home, with George Winston's "December" playing on the tape deck. As I approached the toll plaza that marked my exit, I would mop my face and attempt to pull myself together before rolling up to the booth with my ticket and money. There were days when I didn't quite achieve the transformation. But Anna would lean out of the booth, look into my face as she took the ticket, and smile the kindest, most luminous smile. I smiled back, grateful, encouraged on my journey. Winston's piano music floated out over the highway, and I knew things would be ok, I was being helped.

I didn't know her name then. She was just there most afternoons, and when she was the one in the booth it didn't seem to matter if my face was puffy and streaked, her smile went past all that and sent love. It was a benediction. She wasn't there for several weeks, then she reappeared on the morning shift. I asked her name, and when she said it was Anna, it seemed I already knew that. It fit. "Your friendly smile has really helped me through a difficult period," I said. "It's very healing." "Why, so is yours," she said.

Soon after that I changed jobs and no longer traveled that stretch of the toll road. I didn't see Anna again until a few weeks ago at a spiritual growth meeting. As we introduced ourselves, I suddenly realized who she was. "For years I've thought of you as

the toll-booth angel," I said. I recounted my gratitude for her healing presence. She replied that it was good to hear that, because she had seriously questioned whether she should seek another, more fulfilling job. Like so many of us, she'd wanted to know her real mission in life. Was she doing what she was meant to do? And how could she grow in that job? "I began to consciously focus a loving energy on every person who came through the plaza. Blessing them, every time I gave them a ticket or took their money. It has made the job so much more," she said. "It's made such a difference in my life. You wouldn't believe the wonderful things that happen—one night a man's car broke down right at the plaza as he was taking his wife to the airport. They were going to miss the plane, and I said, 'here, take my car, I'm not going anywhere tonight.' I gave him the keys and he drove off. Somebody said, 'you may never see your car again.' But of course, I knew I would. That man was back in two hours."

Of course he was. Such is the power of angels.

This Thanksgiving *Messenger* seems to be celebrating the life-affirming people in our world, whether they be family members, friends, "strangers", authors of books that have changed our lives, or mythical creatures. And a celebration of the bountiful, all-giving earth itself. Angels. They surround us on every plane, and as we become more truly aware that our very essence is love, the choice to see or be one becomes easier in any given moment or hour.

A Meditation on Mortality, Myth, and Meaning

Stephen Larsen

This year has been momentous for me—as was the year before it, and the one before that. So many changes, transitions, new beginnings. My father, Harold H. Larsen, died last year. Born at the turn of the century, he always seemed to me immortal—surely he would see the turn of the millennium. So many “immortals” now are gone to the other side of a veil from which we humans mostly avert our gaze because it seems to hide every human intimation of immortality—and there is so much sorrow and regret woven into its fabric.

The first to cross, in October 1987, was my old friend Ken Wakely, a wiry, feisty farmer—former accountant, aircraft mechanic, jack-of-all-trades, who even in his seventies could back down a bull by staring him in the eye. His strength ran out—he had lost most of his lungs working in the Grumman Aircraft Plant during the second World War—and now he just couldn't catch a decent breath.

It was the end of that same month, on Halloween, when the apertures between the worlds are wide open, that Joseph Campbell made his *paranirvana*. A warrior to the last, he died on his way to the only battlefield that really mattered for him—his writing desk. Joseph knew that his end might be near. “I'm not afraid to die,” he had said to me in May 1987 as we sped along in a cab after seeing the premiere of the Swedenborg Foundation's newest film, *The Other Side of Life*. “I just don't want to be there

when it happens.” The first part, like so much else Campbell was wont to say, had me wide-eyed and attentive for a great metaphysical revelation—then he handed me Woody Allen. That was Joseph. And he and I and Robin laughed as we sped over the Brooklyn Bridge to see a theater performance put on by Jean's Open Eye Theater. Joseph had liked the Foundation's film because it was subtle, metaphorical, and did not proselytize for a particular creed or point of view.

My brother Mark died twenty years after we had bought our farm together—to the day, June 1, 1988; I wondered as I grieved, if somehow he had intended it that way. He and I had grown so far apart, our very worlds seemed different, and yet every now and then I caught a glimpse of an old love between us . . .

Dad made his crossing a year after that, in the same month, just four days after he had reached his sixty-fifth wedding anniversary. What gem or precious metal do they award for that one?—I wondered; after silver, gold, and diamond have been exhausted. It ought to be the *cintamani*, the wish-fulfilling gem of Hindu mythology, for what this world longs for is love—long and true, and he had found it. Even at the end, when his Parkinson's Disease had taken much of his coordination and his ability to speak, he could look at Mother with real love and say, “She does everything—everything for me, she's wonderful.” He could joke too, and at the end there were

moments when I knew how close to his core his gentle wry sense of humor really was; that was there when so much else had gone.

At the very last, when he had fallen and broken his hip and was in much pain, it seemed all his relatives were crowding there on the other side. “Throw me a rope, Arthur,” came the call loud and clear to his older brother, “I want to get up—I want to get in.” Then there was my aunt Edna, with whom he had kept up a debate on religion and all sorts of subjects, for many years, long gone to the other side. “Don't you lie to me, Edna,” he said, responding to the other side of a conversation we couldn't hear, “I'm dying.” Their arguments used often to center around what indeed would happen after death: Would it be a Lutheran heaven (in her view he was an apostate of that faith, in which they had both been brought up by Norwegian immigrant families) or a Swedenborgian one, to which we all would go, when all was said and done? I guess they were still arguing, but there was no malice, there was a friendliness in his voice as he rebuked her.

As I gather my thoughts for this writing, it seems that my meditation is really about mortality—and heroes. Each of my friends and relatives partook of that quality, a bright and shining spirit that was willing to meet life head-on—with all its trials and tricky places. “Say yes to life,” Joseph would

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A Meditation on Myth . . .

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say, "even though you know it will devour you." Dad's faith was equally life-affirming, but perhaps more traditional. "Put your trust in the Lord in everything you do—and you won't be disappointed." This seems to me true test of the hero's mettle in today's spirit-ennervated world; to live against the odds, and the vast omnipresent specter of materialism, in a universe that at times seems to make no sense—simply to live in an unmistakably life-affirmative way.

"One of the psychological problems in growing old is the fear of death," said Joseph Campbell in his interview with Bill Moyers,

... People resist the door of death. But this body is a vehicle of consciousness, and if you can identify with the consciousness, you can watch this body go like an old car. There goes the fender, there goes the tire, one thing after another—but it's predictable. And then gradually, the whole thing drops off, and consciousness rejoins consciousness . . . This is something that I learned from myths. What am I? Am I the bulb that carries the light, or am I the light of which the bulb is a vehicle?"

Swedenborg said something remarkably similar: "The life that is in us is merely that of receptacles." It is not only that the spiritual attitude gives us consolation in the face of inevitable mortality—there are no atheists in foxholes, as the old saw puts it—it is rather that if we are already aligned with the spirit "deep down in things" we identify not with our fearful surface, but with our depths. The surface contents of the belief seem to matter relatively little if there is this alignment, and this openness to trusting that the life which moves in oneself is identical with the interior life of the universe. We need constantly to renew our kinship with

the Source of the great pageant of being unfolding ceaselessly around us.

It is easy to be heroic when we are young and full of the sap of life. Both Joseph Campbell and Harold Larsen were extraordinary athletes in their youth. Both were New York City Champions in the half-mile run. Harold in about 1921, Joe in 1926; and I have often wondered, but never verified, if the record Joe broke those four years later might have been Harold's. The running times are much faster now, but Harold and Joe were performing better than all but a handful of the men in their world at their time. The half-mile is a great test of heart, and both men had it, in the metaphoric as well as the physiological sense.

charitable to the last. We often used to joke that he was at "Joe's friendly service," again, because he seemed so often willing to interrupt his own demanding schedule of scholarship to help someone else with a problem: a creative filmmaker with a writer's block—Maya Deron; a Tibetan struggling to write about his life to an English audience—Kyungla Rato; Robin and me at our dissertations and books; and many others.

Both men were later to stick by their opinions—even when they knew it was unpopular to do so—Joseph to his more conservative political stance at liberal Sarah Lawrence, and Harold against what he felt was the too liberal theology of the General Convention. Both men were staunchly anti-



Harold B. Larsen, age 22
(The Young Hero)

The flavor of track competition in their time can be seen in a wonderful movie, *Chariots of Fire*, which Dad saw in his last years and much enjoyed. I kept trying to drag Joe off to see the movie, but never managed to get him there. There is a beautiful resonance of human courage, dignity, and an ethical sense that moves between the two men in the movie and the lives of these two men I knew so well. "Harold is solid all the way through," was how his in-law-to-be, the father of my wife, put it on first meeting him. So was Joe, courteous,

Communist, an attitude I always attributed to their generation. But for Joseph, I think the problem was that he felt Communism as an ideology tried to subsume the free intellect of the thinking man within its rhetoric and its values. For Harold the problem was the anti-spiritual stance of Communism. Both deplored the taking-over—of Eastern Europe by the Soviet Union, and Tibet by the Chinese Communists—as acts of cultural genocide.

When I was a young man our home was often filled with Chinese refugees

from the People's Revolution. Many of them were university professors, scientists, philosophers—all with an interest in Swedenborg and things metaphysical—and opposed, needless to say, to dialectical materialism and Mao. I remember my first lesson in Taoism from Timothy Shao. He would tell tales of mystery and magic, and how the old Taoist beat the draft by sitting on the bottom of a nearby pond when the conscriptors came to town, or how another small Chinese man used his *chi* power to fight a huge Russian bully, or turn away weapons.

Joseph Campbell's home saw the likes of D.T. Suzuki, Ananda Commaraswamy, Swami Nikhilanda, Heinrich Zimmer, and Alan Watts, all

then, and there were accusations of malingering from the school authorities. Painfully teaching his gym classes on crutches for months, he was about to admit he was crippled and destined to spend life in a wheelchair, when he decided to try a new, radical kind of medical diagnosis: the x-ray. It revealed a fractured fifth lumbar vertebrae. He was put into a body-cast and in bed for almost a year. It was there that he discovered Swedenborg's writings: He saw *Heaven and Hell* advertised in the newspaper. Soon he had embarked on a program to read everything Swedenborg ever wrote. Like Helen Keller (whom he later knew quite well and toured the country with, introducing her to audi-

quotation was from the Gnostic Gospel of St. Thomas. "The disciples asked Jesus, 'When will the Kingdom of Heaven come?' Jesus said, 'The Kingdom of Heaven will not come by expectation, men will not say—see here—see there. The Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it.'"²

What comes to me as a conclusion for this little meditation on mortality and myth is this: We human beings who are alive now, and living in a free society, are among the most privileged in all the long history of the race, as we know it. We are indeed standing on the shoulders of a thousand generations, and perhaps our first act of gratitude should be to admit that fact. Whatever is good in our lives is the gift, first of the Transcendent Source of all life but also of millions of men and women who have lived and died with integrity. What we call *culture* is that legacy, and the commitment that comes with the gift is that we are required both to appreciate what we have and carry it forward, in beauty and in meaning, as best we can.

The third grateful acknowledgement must be to our participation in the vast economy of nature, a study to which Swedenborg devoted much time and energy. All that lives is a metaphor, a symbol for inconceivable spiritual realities, and invites our respectful attention. To live symbolically is an awesome task and an exciting privilege. Even the most physical-seeming of events can be rendered more transparent if we practice this spiritual discipline—seeing through—skillfully. Birds are divine messengers, water is truth, and fire shows us what it means to be consumed with spiritual longing. We do well to remember the faith of our most ancient ancestors, who held, as did Blake, that "all that lives is holy." (The immediate task of this generation and the next is to cope with the aftermath of the last few generations which forgot that fact.)

When my brother and I were little, Dad would play roly-poly with us on my parents' big carved Chinese bed.

(Continued on page 153)

*"Say yes to
life,"
Joseph
would say,
"even
though you
know it will
devour
you."*

Joseph Campbell, age 80
(*The Wise Old Man*)



spokesmen for the wisdom of Oriental religion, and the need for Westerners to integrate it. Their commitment was to the metaphysical realm, not to that of social and economic realities.

Dad's great life crisis came in his thirties: first tuberculosis that sapped his magnificent vitality, and made a weak man out of a trained athlete; he had to retreat to a sanatorium. The second occurred when he broke his back rescuing a young gymnast who had flown off the parallel bars. The doctors were unable to diagnose the wasting sickness that came to him

ences), now he would say, "Whereas before I was blind, now I see." The luminous vision that had opened in him was eye of the soul. "The Open Eye," as Joseph and Jean called their little center for plays, dance concerts, and lectures.

Joseph Campbell in his journals of the mid-thirties wrote, "Goethe, Schiller, Swedenborg, Blake, my crowd exactly." He spoke of "the fluorescent eye, the eye of the Mythos," as a kind of vision that he was cultivating that would open doors to a new way of seeing the world. His favorite Christian

Dragons and Personal Mythology: My Celtic Project

Ethelwyn Worden

I have had the good fortune to be a part of a family of storytellers, and to have grown up in a variety of places in the world using books for entertainment, unaware of TV until I was in my teens.

The stories I heard growing up were mostly wonderful tales about members of my parents' families two or three generations back, history of the local area, and history in general. My dad recounted stories of Ghengis Khan, Saladin, the Cherokees, in such a way that I have never forgotten landscapes, details of clothing, sounds of language. I loved to listen to him, for whom history was so real and current. My mother's family was large and closely-knit and they loved to gather to visit, sing, laugh, and tell stories on each other and on members of previous generations. Mother brought the gift of the artist's eye and musician's ear to her stories that were full of colorful details and tunes. My aunts and uncles brought with them a world of guitar and folk music of England, Scotland, the U.S., Africa and other countries. It was a lovely way to grow up and a lovely family as well.

My "Celtic Project" was born out of an urgent question that appeared in my mind one day—is there anything remaining in my genes, after thousands of years of generations, of the original Celtic genetic material, that would give me the affinities with which I have grown up, and which appear to be common to people of Celtic derivation?

As a practicing homeopath, I am aware of the increased power in dilutions and of the homeopathic theory that after a certain number of dilutions (homeopaths will quote "Avogadro's number—ten to the twenty-third power"), there is no longer anything of the original substance in the mix,



*The druid runemistress,
aka Ethelwyn Worden*

only a shadow of its molecular structure, and this structure, mixed with a tiny amount of lactase, is what seems to do an amazingly thorough job of helping the body to heal. So I wondered if my genetic inheritance could also work in that homeopathic style. Rupert Sheldrake, also taken with the idea of "cell memory," deals extensively with the idea of "morphic resonance" in *The Presence of the Past*, and seems to substantiate my thought that the genetic inspiration continues.

The Celtic project consists of a lot of reading, listening, learning music, and researching history, legend, myth and genealogy with the end result of producing a one-woman show with several possible scripts, a lot of Celtic folk music, a book based on the research and scripts that will include photos, music and maps, and an animated film based on the show, scripts and legends. I began my quest by tracking family in the usual genealogical way, hoping to make enough connections with the distant past to allow me to use real, historical family members who could be fleshed out in the con-

text of their time and location as narrators to take up a part of the story. I have run into a snag or two, tracing one family to 1145 A.D., another to the 1500s, but no information farther back than the youth of my great-grandfather in a third family. It will take time in Scotland, Lancashire and North Wales to really tie these ends together, and to allow me time to locate older music than I now have to work into the show.

I have solid tracks of the clan, from quite early in Scottish history, but am lacking the backward chain that would link me to a specific part of those families, to a specific area, and to real dates.

Meanwhile, I read a lot of books, theories, dissertations, have taken a course in Celtic mythology and religion, and am branching out in order to better understand the Celts as a tribal, migrating culture from a couple thousand years B.C. to the present. I am also learning music not only of Scottish, Irish and Welsh derivation, but of countries through which the tribes migrated—Yugoslavia, Spain, Turkey, Italy, France.

Even in this age of concrete underfoot and ears hardened by the thunder and crackle of loud rock music, the soul of nature is still visible and audible to those who look and listen. The sea and its creatures still tell their tales to those who sit on the rocks and tune in. Some of these tales have to do with my own search, and I am learning to hear them as if I were allowing my eyes to be opened to a storyteller in my own clan, beside a glowing hearth on an autumn evening.

In my presentation I am trying to recreate the storyteller tradition. It is natural to me because I am a Celt, one of that tribe whose history and deeds were transmitted only orally by

its spiritual leaders, the druids and bards, the equivalents of the shamans.

We Swedenborgians are aware that we don't have the only source of truth, so we can accept that the Celts and their sense of history and religion were not to them what we would term "pagan." The Celts were tuned in to nature and its moods, to animals and what they could learn from them.

It was not unusual for their hierarchy of gods and goddesses to adopt human, animal, bird or sea creature forms, much like the guardian spirits of Native North Americans, Siberians or South Americans. And it was surely not unusual for the average person, at that time, to understand the animals, trees and rocks and their symbols.

Symbols are a universal language, and we Swedenborgians can comprehend them as correspondences. True, many of us are not well enough versed in correspondences to readily apply

◆

*The sea and its
creatures still
tell their tales
to those who sit
on the rocks
and tune in.*

◆

them to our daily world, but folks did do that "back then," and it was a normal part of life. There was certainly animism—a belief that nature and natural things have spirits just as man does, and a certain amount of anthropomorphism—the idea (held by humans) that animals possess emotions and thoughts, as well as souls. Add to this a well-developed symbology, and you have background information used by the tribal Celts in their daily lives.

The Celtic histories and sagas were

first written down around the 1500s, usually by people outside the tribe, because like the Native Americans and others, the Celts felt that to put something in writing was to kill it, to stop its development, and to make it useless. This is why the bards were so favored as the singers and storytellers of the histories of their people, and why they spent years in apprenticeships not to memorize sagas and formulas—because that would also have killed the development of the history—but to learn the poetic forms and rhyme schemes and meters so well they could improvise in them without a problem. This is how they were expected to create the imposing paeans and sagas, on the spot, for the tribal festivities. The medieval wandering minstrels, the *trouweres* and *minnesingers* derived from this, and served—among other things—as carriers of news from town to town.

Storytelling is in the blood, and should not become a lost art! It warms my heart to see more and more storytellers nowadays, and not only in children's sections of the library.

The wonderful images, stories and songs my parents, their siblings and my cousins passed to me are parts of a long history. I respect them as such, and love the expanded universe they have given me since childhood. Because of these stories and songs, I feel connected to a larger whole, and can understand why I feel so strongly about staying within reach of the sea, have no fear of wild creatures, and feel a kinship with wolves, seals, otters, thunderstorms and wind. I have learned a little about how to listen to nature, and am still working hard at it. But mostly, I want to redevelop in myself the storytelling habits and to pass along some of what the world knows to those who would listen.

I impersonate a druid runemistress in my show, because such a character can transcend and move through time, deal with symbols that seem magical to a layperson, and can move easily in the human and natural worlds. The runemistress also represents the ancient Celtic heritage. Midshow the druid cloak comes off to reveal a member of the MacGregor clan dressed in a costume of the 12th century, and she carries the show from recorded history

to the present. As the genealogy progresses, I hope to give this later character several names of real family members, and to have her speak and sing about the places and times of those people.

◆

*Because of
these stories
and songs,
I feel connected
to a larger
whole.*

◆

That's the mythology. And the dragons? They are the material of dreams and magic, and their presence is more often felt than actual in my show. They are symbolic and big, usually fire-breathing and somewhat ferocious, in Celtic legend—though docile, good-natured and bringing good luck in Chinese and Far Eastern legend. They are a good image to use because everyone has some feeling about dragons, and questions whether or not they were real or imaginary. Don't you?

Ethelwyn (Muff) Worden is former executive director of the Swedenborgian Church's Central Office. She is currently teaching in New Hampshire and working on her Celtic project, and says she would like to hear from anyone interested in sharing facts, history, stories or music, and is reachable through The Messenger.

For a report on Muff's first research visit to the ancient home of her forebears, read "Rannoch Moor" in the current Chrysalis.

Chief Seattle Speaks

In 1854 President Franklin Pierce made an offer for a large area of Indian land and promised a reservation for the Indian people. Chief Seattle, an Indian of Salishan stock and chief of the Dwamish tribe of the Pacific northwest in the Puget Sound region, made the following reply that has been described as the most beautiful and profound statement on the environment ever made.

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. We are part of the earth and it is a part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man—all belong to the same family.

So, when the Great Chief sends word that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us. The Great Chief sends word he will reserve us a place so that we can live comfortably to ourselves. He will be our father and we will be his children. So we will consider your offer to buy our land. But it will not be easy. For this land is sacred to us.

The shining water that moves in the streams and the rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you the land, you must remember that it is sacred, and you must teach your children that it is sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.

The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes, and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must remember and teach your children, that the rivers are our brothers, and yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness you would give any brother.

We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on. He leaves his fathers' graves, and his children's birthright is forgotten. He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads. His appetite will devour the earth and leave only a desert.

I do not know. Our ways are different from your ways. The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the

red man. But perhaps it is because the red man is a savage and does not understand.

There is no quiet place in the white man's cities. No place to hear the unfurling of leaves in spring, or the rustle of an insect's wings. But perhaps it is because I am a savage and do not understand. The clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night? I am a red man and do not understand. The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of a pond, and the smell of the wind itself, cleansed by rain or scented with pine cone.

A Thanksgiving for Our Planet from the Native North American Perspective

... At the first American Thanksgiving, the Native North Americans looked on the hairy strangers with weird pale skin color and strange clothes as their brothers who were in need... they believed all creatures—unless they prove different—are filled with spirit put there by the Great Spirit that loves all... The red man worshipped by meditating in sweat lodges and by dancing, to tap into his inner soul and spirit, where he believed the Great Loving Force lived... His image of "God" could appear in many metaphors, especially during dreams, as raven, deer, and they could talk to him in this form.

... only the white man saw nature as a wilderness...¹

Lord's Prayer

GREAT SPIRIT, Whose teepee is the sky and whose hunting ground is the earth, Mighty are You called.

Ruler over storms, over men, birds and beast, let us find this day our corn and meat, that we may be strong and brave.

And put aside from us our wicked ways as we put aside the bad works of them who have done us wrong.

And let us not have such troubles as lead us into crooked pathways, but keep us away from evil.

For yours is all that is—
earth and sky,
streams and hills,
valleys and stars,
the moon and sun
and all that lives and breathes,
O You Mighty, Wonderful, Shining Spirit.

◆
*Whatever happens to the beasts,
 soon happens to man.*
 ◆



Indian Prayer

O, Thou bright Morning Star,
 to whom we raise our eyes in prayer,
 help us ever to look up and not down.
 If we have fallen today
 may we rise again tomorrow,
 knowing that the Great Spirit
 will lend us a helping hand,
 so that we may become at last
 what we were intended to be.

1. Luther Standing Bear

Excerpts from "A Thanksgiving Service from the Native American Perspective". Guenther Wehrhan, President, LaPorte New Church, LaPorte, Indiana, 1990.

Medicine Woman
 Artist: Jean Jublin

The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath: the beast, the tree, the man, they all share the same breath. The white men, they all share the same breath. The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench. But if we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also received his last sigh. And if we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred, as a place where even the white man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow's flowers.

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we decide to accept I will make one condition. The white man must treat the beasts of this land as his brothers.

I am savage, and I do not understand any other way. I have seen a thousand rotting buffalos on the prairie, left by the white man who shot them from a passing train. I am a savage, and I do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be more important than the buffalo that we kill only to stay alive.

What is man without the beast? If all the beasts were gone, man would die from a great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected.

You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth.

Even the white man, whose God walks and talks with him as friend to friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all.

We shall see. One thing we know, which the white man may one day discover—our God is the same God. You may think now that you own him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. He is the God of man and his compassion is equal for the red man and the white. This earth is precious to him, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt upon its Creator. The Whites, too, shall pass; perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Contaminate your

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The National Council of Churches Goes through Its Own "Ad Hoc Phase" and Reorganizes

Robert McCluskey

The 1980s was a period of struggle for the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., as the nation's largest ecumenical body attempted to respond to significant changes in society, the churches, and the Council itself. But good efforts over the past several years, abiding faith, and commitment to the Lord, have resulted in a new vision, identity, and a new organization for the NCC, which was unveiled last May. It appears that the 1990s will be a period of renewal and greater effectiveness.

In the January 1985 issue of *The*

Messenger, I reported on the shift in the Council's identity from a "cooperative agency" to a "community of Communion." Let me bring you up to date on what has happened since then. The NCC found its administrative structure unable to accommodate the more unified and integrated vision and identity that was emerging. As one report noted: "Without a structure . . . correlated to the new vision, conflict inevitably arose among leaders of various parts of the Council. The relationships and leadership styles of those key leaders in the Council . . .

have not enabled the Council to work together fruitfully . . ."

But there were other reasons for these difficulties. National people-related issues—social justice, racism, poverty and homelessness—environmental concerns, corporate and governmental corruption, for example, had all grown more complex and problematic. As the political climate grew more conservative, funding for programs addressing such issues was greatly reduced; the private sector, including the churches, was asked to

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The President Reports

October Highlights

Continuing my sharing of issues facing our churches, let me first report that the annual meeting of the San Francisco Society (see my report, October *Messenger*), at which the vote on reallocation of assets was to be taken, was rescheduled to November 4.

This month we are looking at the Elmwood (Mass.) church. The Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (PMSU) is working with the Elmwood church as it faces three major issues: Enormous building maintenance costs, hiring a new minister, and the likelihood of dwindling congregational morale, enthusiasm and membership.

Deferred maintenance problems, the plague of many nonprofit organizations, has reared its ugly head in Elmwood. The building needs major repair and painting and the congregation has faced this issue head on, approving a plan for renovations. The

Elmwood church has \$15,000 in hand. The cost is \$30,000. Painting has already begun. This is indeed a step in faith.

With the sudden resignation of its minister, the Elmwood church is faced with securing pastoral leadership. I am happy to report that there are two candidates actively seeking the position. I am also pleased that our denomination's prescribed process for a church's securing a minister has been followed: notification of the Ministerial Placement Committee by candidate(s), and the local church seeking and getting input from PMSU and the president of the Swedenborgian Church. The final decision on whom to hire may be made at an October 22 meeting.

The third issue was openly addressed: With two big blows hitting at the same time it could have been

expected that congregational morale and membership attendance would be severely affected. But with firm resolve, the Elmwood people pulled together and faced the various crises with unanimity of purpose. PMSU encouraged the Elmwood group and offered its help.

The end result of all this is the probable hiring of a Swedenborgian minister within several months and a closer tie between the Elmwood church and our denomination as we support the members in facing their short and long-range financial needs. We appreciate and validate the Elmwood group's struggle through the dark times into the light, and celebrate and rejoice with them.

The cup is still half full!



Richard H. Tafel, Jr., President

NCC Goes Through "Ad Hoc Phase" and Reorganizes

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fill the gaps in the social support services, at the very time that congregations and budgets were growing smaller.

In the same decade there were also distinct shifts to the right and left in religious circles. Fundamentalism and politically-right religious values grew stronger in reaction to society's increasing diversity and problems. At the same time, liberal thinking drew people away from traditional and Western forms of religion, especially mainline Christian churches. Within the NCC, these factors contributed to a decrease in funding and staff, an increase in the demand made on churches, and differences among member communions over the NCC's future mission and priorities.

Committee of Fifteen

At its November 1988 meetings, NCC's governing board appointed a special "Committee of Fifteen" (C15) to review the Council's work and structure. (Their work was to be somewhat similar to the work of the Swedenborgian Church's ad hoc committee.) The committee collected information from all levels of the NCC, member communions, and related ecumenical bodies. In April 1989 the Rev. William Lawson, Episcopal Church and C15 member, met in Newton with the Rev. Randall Laakko and other members of our own General Council to receive Swedenborgian input on the future design and mission of the NCC.

In May 1989, the governing board approved the committee's recommendations for a new NCC structure. At that meeting, General Secretary Arie Brouwer spoke to the many problems that had come to affect the Council's work of the past two years. Much of the conflict had centered in the efforts

of his office to integrate the Council into a more cohesive unit, with some individuals and groups citing problems with the leadership style of the secretary.

It was the consensus of the Swedenborgian delegation that the crisis resulted not only from personal, or even professional differences of leadership style. It seemed rather that conflicts were a natural result of the Council's efforts to move forward and to respond to the many national social changes. Nevertheless, near the end of June 1989, after much consideration and in the interest of the Council, Arie Brouwer resigned as NCC General Secretary. The next day, he arrived in Urbana, Ohio, to be the keynote speaker at our convention, which he regarded as his last official act. (See July-August 1989 *Messenger*; also, the June 27-July 4 *Christian Century* [107:2] "The Real Crises at the NCC" by Arie Brouwer, with responses from four Governing Board members.)

Change in Basic Structure

Perhaps the most important change recommended by the C15 report was the change in the Council's basic structure. Replacing the eleven different divisions and Commissions would be four basic support units, responsible for carrying out the work of the Council. They are: a *Unity and Relationship Unit*, to nurture and embody Christian unity and interfaith relations; a *Discipleship and Communication Unit*, to witness to and celebrate God's gift of grace and foster careful stewardship of God's creation; a *Prophetic Justice Unit*, to proclaim, advocate and seek to participate faithfully in God's mission of justice in the cultural, social, political and economic context of the U.S. and to help the churches understand and respond to the relationship between national and international witness; and an *International Witness and Service Unit*, to serve God's vision of love, justice and peace with partners

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Meditation on Myth . . .

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There were the images of people coming and going in a magical landscape indeed: mountains, forests, rivers, small bridges and pagodas; and he would tell us stories, just making them up as they came to him. One was of *Bunna-munna-honna-gunna*, the little horse that we could see in teakwood on the head of the bed. It didn't take much, our child minds were so susceptible, to set us off with that little horse into an enchanted landscape of the mind. That perhaps was my first experience of "The Power of Myth," that is now my almost constant meditation.

Our minds receive some images, some symbols, much more readily than others. Living symbolically we come to recognize ourselves in every experience that befalls us, how we respond, how we understand the "forest of symbols," as Baudelaire named it in his poem "Correspondences," that surrounds our lives. Even more than my later teachers, I am grateful to my first, Harold Larsen, for his great love, for his personal integrity, and his wisdom in opening the gates to a world ensouled, and full of symbol and meaning.

Stephen Larsen is a psychology professor and psychotherapist living in New Paltz, N.Y. Author of The Shaman's Doorway (Harper & Row's Station Hill Press), his The Mythic Imagination has just been released by Bantam Books. Steve and his wife Robin are the authorized biographers of the late Joseph Campbell (Doubleday, 1991). Dr. Larsen served on the board of directors of the Swedenborg Foundation for 14 years and co-edited with Robin Emanuel Swedenborg: a Continuing Vision. He also served as an editor on Chrysalis for several years.

References

¹Transcripts of these interviews were published by Doubleday in 1988 as *The Power of Myth*, with Bill Moyers. Quote from p. 70.

²Quoted from lecture notes, Joseph Campbell.

The Family Connection

Sunday School Association's Status Report

Just recently the Cleveland Society's Sunday school began a new program with a new group of children. The Royal Oak (Mich.) program, which had its beginnings within the last three years, continues to grow. New children's programs were recently started in the Seattle area and in Boston. In addition, many established programs have made new beginnings or are at least "holding their own." While some programs seem to be in decline, some perhaps barely surviving, there is also growth in many places.

The American New Church Sunday School Association is continuing its support of the *Bible Study Notes*, *Sunday School Activity Books*, and *Five Smooth Stones*. The need to revive *Five Smooth Stones* was recognized, and Joyce Fekete and Betty Hill have come forward as editors. Volume 1 of the *Sunday School Activity Books* is now ready for reprinting, and adequate funds need to be set aside for that. Promotion of the *Bible Study Notes* continues to be discussed, and some modest efforts at promotion were made in Swedenborgian publications.

The American New Church Sunday School Association is undergoing some important changes. One change that will be considered and discussed is replacing many of the standing committees with provision that *ad hoc* committees can be formed as needed. Especially important is the need to revitalize the Association. As part of a beginning in revitalization Sunday schools are being asked to consider what they can do for the Association and what the Association can do for them.

Officers of the American New Church Sunday School Association for the present (1990-1991) year are:

President, Rev.Dr.J. Theodore Klein
Vice President, Rev. Stephen J. Pults
Secretary, Sharon Slough
Treasurer, Adrienne Frank

Outreach is critically important for the Swedenborgian Church, and Sunday school and children's programs can have a very important role in outreach. The American New Church Sunday School Association can aid in outreach and in seeking a greater emphasis on Sunday schools and children's programs in the Swedenborgian Church. The Association can also play a larger role in building communication and sharing among Sunday schools and children's programs.

Ted Klein, President
American New Church
Sunday School Association

Convention '91

Start thinking about it!
Convention '91 coming up
June 26-30,
in beautiful Kitchener-Waterloo,
Ontario, Canada.

NCC . . . Reorganizes

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in the U.S. and around the world, as responsible servants to people in need, and responsive to the relationship between international and national witness.

After the C15 was dismissed, a Council transition team was appointed to implement the recommendations. This team met in September 1989 to begin the real work of getting the new Council up and running, and to bring a report to the next governing board meetings in November 1989. Attending those meetings with me were the Revs. Dorothea Harvey and Richard Tafel, Jr. and Ms. Nancy Hawley. While the restructuring process continued to require time and effort from the delegates, it by no means dominated our agenda. There was a distinctly positive mood among the 273 members of the board; there was a shared feeling of moving forward and getting to the work that was before us.

New Life Emerges from Struggle

As I was preparing this report, I saw another article on the NCC from the autumn 1990 newsletter of a conservative think-tank in Washington that focuses on religious issues in society. The article describes the work and state of the Council in images of "declining confidence," institutional crisis," and "oldline (as opposed to mainline) churches." Council members are described as "social activists" who have turned their faith into a "political agenda masked with a veneer of spirituality." I have seen similar reports in other politically conservative publications. No one denies that the NCC has been experiencing difficulties and internal conflicts. What is so fascinating is the tendency to interpret struggle in purely negative terms; to refuse to see the larger, systemic context in which these struggles develop, and the inability to envision the new life and direction that can never be born without the travail of labor. I am confident that *Messenger* readers realize that religion should relate to life, and that political and social change are very much a part of life.

The Rev. Robert McCluskey is one of our denomination's delegates to the NCC. He is pastor of the New York Swedenborgian Church.

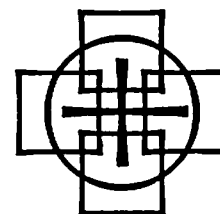
Opinion

Dear Editor:

I was excited by your article in the August 1990 issue ("For God's Sake, Enjoy Yourself"). Unlike so many Christian churches that teach GUILT, we Swedenborgians believe that we are born into the natural world to learn and to grow: to enjoy ourselves! I share your experience of not having "integrated" that fact into my own belief system. I forget, sometimes, that I do deserve to enjoy life!

Feminism is an interesting word. For me, feminism encompasses the belief that both sexes have worth and potential equal to each other. I believe that only by owning our "male" and "female" components, no matter what our sex is, can we become whole. In *Arcana Coelestia* (475), Swedenborg says, "Male and female means the marriage of faith and love." Are we not continually instructed in the Writings that when that marriage has taken place in each of us we are truly in a heavenly state? Perhaps the disagreement that exists over the worth of feminism is based more on semantics than anything else. Yes, let us dialogue on this issue!

*Karen Nielsen Conger
Canoga Park, California*



Chief Seattle Speaks

(Continued from page 151)



bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.

But in your perishing, you will shine brightly, fired by the strength of the God who brought you to this land and for some special purpose gave you dominion over this land and over the red man. That destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses are tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted out by talking wires. Where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone.

But I am just a savage, and I do not understand.



Moving On
Artist: Jean Jublin

What Is Truth?

Snow, with sun melted crust,
the ground spread smooth with glazed icing.
Leaves, like little sleds, sailing across the surface.
(Do I hear voices shrieking with tiny glee?)
I hear the wind,
an intermittent roar with strips of silence,
separated by long, slow minutes of scattered . . . but steady . . . rustling.

No deer in its right mind would walk where I look,
coming at me with the wind at its back,
the setting sun in its eyes;
And yet I am unable to move.
I can't bear to break the illusion I'm not here
with flashing face and crashing sole.
And so I sit with the rocks,
and look out.

O you pale wind,
licking my face, biting my cheeks, my neck,
like an unholy lover caressing with cold,
sucking at the very life within me.
My ears burn and my eyes run with tears.

When cold wins, as with an unhealthy lover,
after the pain, there is nothing . . .
But I ride the cold like a surfer on an ice wave,
like a leaf sluicing over sun-glazed snow,
my spirit lifted by the wind.
Without moving, I come to a place inside
where the body is only a distant disturbance,
no longer the ground for reality
My mind's eye searches
among the miscellaneous sound
for any sign of life.
To see something moving beyond time,
in spite of human nature,
is affirmation of the presence of God.

I walk home knowing that we are allowed to live here
with the gift of a lifetime on our hands.
"What good do we do that is not God's?"
"What problem do we have that is not of our own making?"
A voice cries out: "What is truth?"
Go ask the deer.

Kenneth O. Turley, Portland, Maine

Teachers Needed for Convention Children's Program 1991

Teachers are needed for next year's Convention Children's Program in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. Applications are encouraged from both Swedenborgians and non-Swedenborgians who meet the qualifications. Applications from the Kitchener-Waterloo area are especially encouraged.

Qualifications for Convention Children's Program Teacher:

- Willingness to devote oneself full time to the children's program during pre-convention and convention sessions.
- A caring and nurturing attitude which encourages children to grow.
- Training, skill, and experience in working with children.
- Ability to engage children in a variety of activities.
- Attentiveness to the spiritual well-being and growth of children.

If you might be interested or have anyone to recommend, please contact me by January 15, 1991. Rev. Dr. Ted Klein, Children's and Family Ministry, 48 Sargent Street, Newton, MA 02158. (617) 244-0504.

Commencements

Baptism

Clarkson—Cody Anne Clarkson was baptized into the Christian faith September 29, 1990, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Pawnee Rock, Kansas, the Rev. John Bennett officiating.

Turley—Ethan Oak Turley was baptized into closer care of angels and the committed care of his parents, Rev. Ken and Laurie Turley, and their church community September 7, 1990, at the Portland, Maine, Church Retreat, Fryeburg Assembly. The Rev. Eric Allison officiated.

Marriage

Brown and Clarkson—Margaret Brown and Gil M.J. Clarkson were united in marriage September 29, 1990, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Pawnee Rock, Kansas, the Rev. John Bennett officiating. (Margaret and Gil are both in the U.S. Navy; Gil has already been serving in the Persian Gulf.)

Kiesman and Henschel—Kara Lynn Kiesman and Mark Gerald Henschel were united in marriage September 15, 1990, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry officiating.

Death

Clarkson—Roy Edward Clarkson of Larned, Kansas, member of the Pawnee Rock Church of the New Jerusalem, entered the spiritual world September 9, 1990. The Rev. John Bennett conducted resurrection services.

Mrozinski—Ronald H. Mrozinski, long-time member and former president of LaPorte New Church, LaPorte, Indiana, entered the spiritual world October 11, 1990, at age 77. Ronald is survived by his wife Nezera, three children and several grandchildren. Resurrection services were conducted October 19, 1990, the Rev. Kathleen Easton officiating.

Change of Address

Rev. Dr. Ivan D. Franklin
4482 Meadowlark Lane
Santa Barbara, CA 93105
Phone (805) 964-8042

Nominating Committee Seeks Candidates

The Nominating Committee of the Swedenborgian Church is seeking qualified and interested people to fill the following within our various offices and Support Units.

Vice-President
Recording Secretary
Treasurer
General Council (1 minister, 2 lay persons)
Communications Support Unit
Education Support Unit
Financial Planning and Resource Supporting Unit
Growth and Outreach Support Unit
Information Management Support Unit
Pastoral Ministries Support Unit
Nominating Committee
Committee on Admission to the Ministry
(1 minister, 1 lay person)
Convention nominees for SSR board of trustees (2)

If you are interested in having your name considered for nomination or wish to suggest a potential candidate, please notify the chairman of the nominating committee by December 22, 1990 at the following address:

The Nominating Committee
c/o Ron Brugler, *Chairman*
229 Scioto St.
Urbana, Ohio 43078

The Swedenborgian Church
The Messenger
48 Sargent Street
Newton, MA 02158

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