

sister who's perspective

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Overview

In terms of dominance, the spectrum of societal archetypes obviously occasionally shifts. Considering the stresses, outbursts, frustration, and power struggles of times of transition, it is logical that the archetype of the soldier would surge. Unfortunately the corollary to this is the refugee. My prayer for both is that they be healed and reintegrated.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

Societal Refugees

I've lost count of the number of times I've been told "if you don't do it my way, you are doomed to fail!" The violence within such a statement may not be physical, but may be just as devastating—which I suppose is why even I myself wonder how I've been able to survive that particular attack so many times. Yet when the dust settles and the moment of shock and astonishment at being hit that way yet again passes, I'm still standing—ready to move on.

As much as I wonder how much longer I will be able to endure, I know there are so very many others who have already passed their breaking points and now avoid any chance for such to happen to them ever again. A major problem within this, is that when a genuinely good opportunity does come along, it may be superficially indistinguishable from preceding broken promises and thus declined.

"If you follow my directions without question, everything will be perfect" the potential victim is told, but when the steps of the process fail to deliver the result which has been promised, the perpetrator of the lie is nowhere to be found. When communication is finally reestablished, blame for the failure is typically assigned to the victim, while the perpetrator refuses to "stand behind the work."

What the perpetrator also often fails to realize is that s/he is attempting to recreate his

or her experience of blessing within someone else—but this is not possible. One can never have another's experience, nor can one exactly reproduce one's own experience within another. Each person participates in the creation of a unique experience, which is to varying degrees dependent upon the ways that are components are willing to manifest.

On the flip side of all of that, are those regrettable experiences, when I might have risked losing more than I could afford and thereby provided opportunity for a miracle—but I was unable to find sufficient strength within myself. My trip to Belgium in 2013 is an example of that. I was completely enveloped within a crosscultural situation within which I was additionally confronted by the greatest hostility I have ever faced in nearly twentyfive years of doing this unconventional ministry. I sought spiritual guidance in the ways available at the time and consequently chose to return home rather than persist, but if given another chance—considering the dangers I faced and survived throughout 2015—I know I would now stay and participate as planned. At that time, however, I knew I was going "way out on a limb" to be there at all and doing even more seemed to be more than I could manage.

I was very much a refugee, subjected to perhaps the most intense bombardment of threats I'd ever experienced up that point and, in retrospect, what was most needed was to "call their bluff"—but I was unable to find the strength to do so, which is why I am now ashamed of my weakness within that time.

As a societal refugee, struggles are not merely with circumstances, but also with shame and a yearning for greater courage, wisdom, and faith. What remains unknown, however, is whether any of effort will be enough. Either way, however, one can be certain that other contrasting circumstances will follow. No struggle lasts forever.

May one and all everything, blessed and loved ever be.

Religious Refugees

I remain baffled by people who want Godde to be small enough to fit within their doctrinal and ideological constructions. My conclusion within graduate school which still rings true for me to this day, is that if Godde is no bigger than human theology, then Godde is not big enough to be Godde. What is most peculiar, however, is that those who embrace larger conceptions of the Divine are often attacked by those with smaller conceptions.

A refugee is a person struggling with conflicting desires—one part reaching for a better place where every need will be met while the other part longs to return to a home that perhaps no longer exists. Within the histories of virtually every religious system humanity has created, an initial enthusiasm for spiritual connection fades to a dry and lifeless practice and needs to be revived by successive movements toward renewal. Until that renewal takes hold, however, wave after wave of refugees flee from religious tyranny that their souls can no longer tolerate or endure.

What must be rediscovered is the collective ability within the refugees of creating the very renewal they seek. What must be understood is that this renewal is only possible if they all work together with mutual respect. In a very real sense, one could say that Godde provides the need which is ideally met by the creativity of human ingenuity, and thereafter gives birth to a new and vibrant form—perhaps analogous to a phoenix rising from its ashes.

The more that religious and societal entities push for conformity, the more important it is to rediscover the uniqueness and potential of each other. Fewer discoveries made means more refugees without inhabitable homelands created. The possibilities to alter our collective reality may be closer at hand than most realize, but they remain inaccessible until or unless loving collaboration unfolds.

An additional complication of struggle is its tendency to be blinding. When one is nose to nose with a difficulty, it may be very difficult if not impossible to step back enough to see the bigger picture—and to remember how small an individual moment of struggle is. The more loudly the struggle's pressures scream, the

more difficult it may be to hear any contrasting perspective—until without any ability to choose, one has been rendered virtually deaf.

Perhaps this is why historical records of humanity's religious practices often refer to people seeking for a sign. If humanity had become deaf, sign language would have been the next logical way for Godde to attempt any sort of meaningful communication.

No refugee ever desired to become a refugee. This label is simply an honest label for those who have been impersonally victimized. They were not specifically selected for attack, but rather they were objectified as a target for hostility and brokenness (e.g. in the wrong place at the wrong time).

In the case of religious institutions, what sometimes needs to be understood is the existence of perhaps subconscious resentment that Godde appears to have left the room. It would be more accurate, however, to say that the practices have evolved into a blindfold that prevents the majority of persons present from recognizing that Godde is not only still there, but also eager for ongoing interaction. It is not that Godde is gone, but rather that human religion sometimes makes it difficult to distinguish between what is and is not actually divine. The more that humanity masquerades as actually being the Divine, however, the more painful disappointments will follow.

Whether envisioned as supernatural person or transcendent scientific principle, the Divine embodies highest truth, is discovered little by little, and has never been subject to human control. At the heart of all spirituality is the challenge of interfacing with someone or something much greater than ourselves, but humility and respect are required for any and all genuine accomplishment. It is especially when such humility and respect are absent, that abuse begins to characterize whatever interaction follows.

As stated within a past newsletter, I have no specific objection to institutionalized religion, but humanity needs to use religion to nurture relationships with Godde rather than using relationships with Godde to nurture religion—and thereby creating refugees.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

Vocational Refugees

I was once asked why I put so much more effort and work into my ongoing television series, "Sister Who Presents," than most other public access television producers. I suspect there is not any especially adequate answer to this question. It is perhaps at heart the same as asking an artist why he or she continues to create, even when there is no fair market value associated with his or her work. Doing less than my best at whatever I do is somehow unacceptable and even unthinkable to me.

Going one step further, resigning myself to any particular context, situation, or level of expertise has also never made any sense. If I can in any way embrace development which could improve and empower the work further, what possible legitimate reason would there be for not doing so? I am alive and by its very nature, life is expansive and striving always to grow. To censor, restrict, or strangle one's creative and living inner impulses, is an act of violence against one's spirit and consequently an action to be absolutely avoided unless one has very good cause for doing otherwise.

Ideally, creative impulses are what guide the selection and development of one's professional vocation. When what we love to do and what our tribe or family asks us to do unfold in synchronicity, a vast constellation of other blessings follow. There is a sense within which humanity inescapably remains one very extensive family or tribe. Vocation is just another word for the role and corresponding relationships that we each serve within that

*"Inspiring ingenuity,
frugality, or adaptability
within the poor
will never legitimize
the injustice inherent
within the vices of
apathy, selfishness,
complacency, or greed."*

Sister Who

larger context. It is vital that such definitions remain fluid, however, because the world around us is always changing—creating a need for vocations to evolve and change also.

To the extent that the world around us refuses to concern itself with our inner and/or personal realities, we are rendered vocational refugees—knowing where home is, but being driven from there by hostile forces. A few of those whom I've met have described the creative activity they most loved as having been taken from them. As I have watched them flounder through various alternatives, I find myself more and more convinced that they will never be truly happy until they return to that first individually unique creative passion.

The reason for this is not that I have objectified and negatively judged them, but rather that I perceive how essential their neglected creative contribution is both to the surrounding world and to themselves. We are each created and designed to make a unique contribution to the life of humanity on Earth and the subconscious mind within each of us knows this and thus cannot truly rest until that goal is accomplished.

This is why retirement has never made any sense to me, except as a reward from a dysfunctional human society for having sacrificed one's true vocation for one assigned by the surrounding world, throughout what are probably the most productive years of one's life. The chance to invest in one's true vocation is at best reduced to an afterthought and at worst irretrievably gone. At the heart of being a refugee is fleeing from a loss too great to bear—which might explain the extreme efforts some employ to distract and entertain themselves throughout their latter years.

Living life within the reality of one's true vocation, however, even when circumstances are adversarial and societal cooperation is minimal, produces no such regret. A photo poster of a jogger on a country road that I saw many years ago had the caption, "Only those who will risk going too far, will ever find out how far they can go." Sometimes being a refugee is just another way of getting somewhere new.

I intend to find out just how far I can go.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

Relational Refugees

Every unique human society I've encountered has certain expectations of its members. While compliance is generally rewarded, originality is too often seen as a threat. The most wounded ones within such peculiar contexts, are generally those aware of better possibilities.

Seeing a better possibility and knowing also its improbability because of extenuating circumstances, can be agonizing for a loving and sensitive soul. At the heart of resolving the relational fact of being a refugee, is finding people willing to listen, to love, and to form new and different relational patterns. In some ways this is perhaps analogous to figuring out where the refugee camp is, which will offer a certain concentration of people who understand the problem, the experience, and the solution that is needed—which for a variety of reasons may nonetheless be currently unavailable.

In finding the refugee camp, however, it is essential to distinguish being a refugee from being a victim. Although a refugee has in fact experienced victimizing circumstances, every individual's problemsolving skills, abilities, and knowledge remain available. The current circumstances thus cannot encompass or completely define all of the invisible resources that remain quite available. The first task of refugees within a camp, therefore, is to create communal collaboration which may ultimately resolve the problem that made them refugees in the first place.

This is the difference between helpful and unhelpful support groups. The former are engaged in building solutions. The latter have defined themselves as victims incapable of moving toward better experiences of life.

Ultimately, whatever kind of refugee one may find one's self to be, this status is related to particular events within time that are already in fact a component of past rather than present reality. The spirit within each person goes on and has no need of defining itself as being no more than a product of past experiences and events. Living spirits, by their very nature, create new possibilities each and every day.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

On a Personal Note

I am trying to trust that my writing, expressed through my monthly newsletters and my next book manuscript, which offers a much more extensive presentation of the history and development of this unconventional ministry, is sufficient justification for the struggles of life that I currently endure. As much as I know exactly what I would create, given the ability to immediately manifest anything I imagine, the circumstances and limitations of my present life experience are obviously more objectionable than I'd prefer. I do try to nonetheless remain open to the possibility that a higher purpose for current struggles will eventually be revealed.

For now, although slow and tedious my progress may be and accompanied by whatever cursing extremes of frustration may inspire, I persist in putting one foot in front of the other and doing whatever good I can each day. Opportunities for direct ministry for a person such as myself are very difficult to find here. Every invitation thus far received has been inseparable from conditions adversarial to my integrity, so it seems advisable to persist in creating a space free of such conditions.

As the poster of a basset hound with a puppy pulling on its ear lamented, "How long, oh Lord?" The only honest answer of course is simply, "That depends."

To the best of my ability, however, it will never be a question of whether I was willing to do all of the work necessary. I want to be a reason for divine success rather than failure.

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