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The Fashioning of Angels: Partnership as Spiritual Practice

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Stephen Larsen
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"Angels are baffled when they hear that there actually are people who ascribe everything to nature and nothing to the Divine…Yet if only they could raise their minds a bit, they would see that things like this are from the divine….Angles compare people like this to Owls, who see in the dark, but not in the light." This excerpt from Emanuel Swedenborg's Heaven and Hell begins a jaunt to truth through myth, symbol, art and psychology. Can truth be reached through myth? Is this contradiction too great a leap of faith, or of something else?

The Fashioning of Angels reveals less about the book than does its subtitle, Partnership as Spiritual Practice. Partners in life and in work, Stephen and Robin Larsen originally and effectively offer the heart of partnership and what keeps it going. They explore its supernal dimensions through a variety of spiritual teachings as well as the dynamics of their own relationship.

This process begins with the Creation story of Adam and Eve where the "trouble" begins. Equal time is given to the viewpoints of such spiritual practices and teachings as shamanism, mythology and witchcraft. Throughout each of these accounts the authors attempt to promulgate feminism in order to prove the powerful role of women in the world. This inevitably jeers tradition, and more often than not, Biblical teachings come out smelling like something of a rat. Each chapter is concluded with daring dialogue between Stephen and Robin regarding events in their own lives both as partners and individually. This method conclusively brings the subject matter of the particular chapter closer to the reader. The dialogue is easy to relate to and often times entertaining, vulnerable and endearing.

Can truth be found in myth or in shamanism, witchcraft or the Bible? This is the same as asking if truth is subjective. Each of these spiritualities is represented fairly thoroughly, not in order to persuade (occasional endorsements are evident) but to provide cross-cultural examples of the human fascination with the male-female relationship. Truth about men and women and in all matters can only be found in one place and need not be so complicated. Truth is the simplest of all things in this universe because it transcends the universe. Who are the "owls" who can only see in the dark? May it be suggested that truth is light, even if it happens to be steeped in tradition.
MARY BETH ZELEZNIK (May / June 2000)

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