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## Before the Americans

While doing research for my books and the Basic Elements class, I came across the name of Emanuel Swedenborg. He was born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1688 and died in 1772. He was educated at the University of Uppsala and studied medicine, astronomy, mathematics, natural sciences, Latin, and Greek. He drew up plans for a submarine and a glider aircraft. He published books on natural science and in the early 1730's turned his attention to anatomy and physiology in an attempt to discover the seat of the soul. He was convinced the divine had an anatomical location. He also made discoveries about the brain and the nervous system. His writings on the animal kingdom, the cerebrum, the brain, the nervous system and esoteric interpretations of the Bible were published throughout the mid 1800's. I find his earliest paper on physiology, "On Tremulation," written in 1719, fascinating. In a letter to his brother-in-law he wrote, "I have also written a little anatomy of our vital forces, which, I maintain, consist of tremulations; for this purpose I have made myself thoroughly acquainted with the anatomy of the nerves and the membranes, and I have proved the harmony which exists between that and the interesting geometry of tremulations."

I believe he was talking about craniosacral rhythm and craniosacral therapy before the Americans. He makes further statements as if he is a craniosacral instructor—remember this is 1719:

“...tremulations begin in the fluid which is contained in the membranes.”

“Membranes require to be in a state of tension” (Two hundred years later William Sutherland was to define the Reciprocal Tension Mechanism.)

“...just like any other fluid, and they thus communicate a trembling motion to the membranes, and also their bones; so that almost the whole body is brought into a state of subtle co-tremulation which causes sensation.” (Bones, membranes, fluids... Sure sounds like osteopathy to me.)

“...because all things are so connected by threads and sinews, that what is touched in one place is felt in another, and especially in the membrane of the brain.” (Is this not an elder statesman’s description of the light touch therapy known as craniosacral therapy?)

“Tremulation is the most subtle form of motion.” (Subtle is the supreme adjective to describe the motion of craniosacral rhythm.)

He eloquently goes on to say, “The lungs are a fountain of a multitude of motions...the heart has its own motions...if new hypothesis be allowed to mingle with anatomical experience, we may easily suppose that these undulations propel a fluid into the nerves...and thus to the extremities and membranes, these membranes reciprocally returning the fluid through the nerves back to the meninges of the brain over which expands the tremulation flows in the first instance. The brain therefore is a fountain.”

“Our whole living and moving nature endeavors to express itself by means of tremulations.”

“It is known that the tremulation flows with rapidity of lightning over membranes and nerves, from one end to the

other, in an instant making the most subtle waves over the whole expanse, like the oscillation in water or in the atmosphere.”

He wrote, “The nervous serum (his term for CSF) possesses an even viscosity being neither too fluid nor too tenacious or viscid. Any obstruction of the fluids causes obstruction in the nerves.” He described the ventricles as “filled with viscosity and water and inundated by stagnant water and a disruption of tremulation, it results in paralysis, convulsions and apoplexy.”

“The tremulation requires a tension for its swift and proper communication to the cranium and the other bones.”

Speaking of CSF Swedenborg said “the fine blood-like fluid was to be found in the spirituous fluid of the brain that functioned as a vehicle for the divine inflow that has been streaming through man and his world ever since matter came into being.”

So here is a person defining a natural, subtle physiologic movement containing “spirit” (as in coming from the divine) that circulates in and out of the brain and up and down the spine in waves and movements called tremulations.

So then Andrew Taylor Stills arrives. He lived from 1828 to 1917. In the fabulous book by Jane Stark, *Still's Fascia*, she does an exhaustive study of the founder of osteopathy.

She even researched the books Still may have had available to him during his time. Books back then were treasured and rare, and civilization moved ahead based on the collective thought, theory, and philosophies put forward and carried forward by authors of a preceding age in literature. Although no volume of Swedenborg's was ever found in what remains of Still's library, Jane Stark made some amazing observa-

tions. Some of Still's statements have resonance in the way Swedenborg spoke of the brain, the watery nervous serum, and the life force, soul, and stagnant waters.

Still saw the fascia functioning as a "connected oneness" within the body. He believed that the soul and the "water" are somehow related. Swedenborg thought the same. Other of Still's statements have common ground with Swedenborg's:

"As motion is the first and only evidence of life."

"...the soul of man with all the streams of pure living waters seems to dwell in the fascia of his body."

Still frequently used the phrase "economy of" which echoes one of Swedenborg's most famous works, *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*.

Toward the end of his life Swedenborg devoted himself to the spiritual, mystical, and theosophical nature of life, studying and interpreting the Bible. Historians believe "Swedenborg thoughts" influenced many of the philosophical and religious developments of the 19th century, including the Shakers, the Christian Scientists, homeopathy and possibly osteopathy. The Swedenborg Society, honoring his life and work, still exists today.

Still's philosophy had a lot to do with water, life force, and the brain:

"Osteopathy believes that the brain and heart are fully supplied with all the living forces, and will send power to any place with which they have nerve-connections without any rubbing or manipulation further than to insure unobstructed flow of nerve forces."

He called the cerebro-spinal fluid "this great river of life," called the lymphatics the supplies of the water of life and said that the lymphatics

drink from the waters of the brain. He said, “He who is able to reason will see that the great river of life must be tapped and the withering fields irrigated at once or the harvest of health will be forever lost.”

Still always expressed respect for the body as a sacred gift:

“God is the father of osteopathy.”

“Osteopathy is a science that analyzes man and finds out that he partakes of divine intelligence.”

He said of osteopathy that it was a drugless science, based on the scientific knowledge of anatomy and physiology. The osteopath he said is “willing to be governed by the immutable laws of nature and feel that he is justified to pass fluid on from place to place and trust the results.”

Of fascia Still writes:

“The soul of man with all the streams of pure living water seems to dwell in the fascia of his body.”

“It is the dwelling place of his spiritual being.”

Still was a character of the old West, advertising himself as a lightning bone setter and magnetic healer in his early days, who reportedly treated Mark Twain. He had five children, his fifth child dying five days after birth. His wife also died around the same time, though he eventually remarried. In 1864 three of his children died of meningitis, pushing him to years of retrospection and spurring him to develop osteopathy years later. He was a farmer, a lumber mill operator, and an inventor before studying medicine, though he left school before ever graduating. He learned medicine from his father who was a physician and minister. He finally settled in Kirksville, Missouri and established the school of osteopathy in 1892 although he had already announced the name of his new field of study in 1874. He died peacefully in 1917.

One of his most famous students was William Garner Sutherland who completed a two year course of study in osteopathy from Kirksville in 1900. Sutherland was a newspaper reporter from Iowa, in his early days and intrigued about osteopathy after hearing a lecture on the topic. Sutherland was interested in anatomy and intrigued by the human skull with all of its bones and the intricate designs of the joints.

Within this lifetime the basic elements of craniosacral work were formulated. Sutherland spend years looking with wonder at the bones of the skull, ever aware of Still's teachings that the body was a unit; it was self regulating, structure following function, and that the body had all the pharmeucopia it needed for healthy life.

Sutherland was the one who told us the temporal bones look like the gills of a fish; that they must be designed to move. He recognized the central keystone bone of sphenoid as the center of the head and with light touch wondered about the strange movements he felt with his hands on the head. His long-time friend and wife, Adah Strand Sutherland, documented beautifully in her book, *With Thinking Fingers*, their lifelong attempt to promote the notion that the bones of the skull are not fixed or fused, but do have movement to them. He put primitive devices on his own head to illicit reactions, which his wife would document in order to prove that restricted and encumbered cranial bone movement had ill effects on the body. He once put a wooden bowl with its sides modified on his head to artificially restrict movement on one side.

He declared that cranial bones move rhythmically throughout life. He developed the nomenclature of flexion and extension, defining the forms of movement of the craniosacral system. Swedenborg said the fluids and membranes need to be in some tension to function and raised the physiological mechanical principles of reciprocal tension

of the membranes as being a principle of function for the meninges. Sutherland introduced the idea that a fulcrum is a point of rest, balance, and an opportunity for change within the system. He also discovered, as did Swedenborg and Still, the divinity of life force within the waters of the brain. He defined the movement and circulation of cerebral spinal fluid as having a self regulating “potency.” Potency meaning the inherent capacity for growth and development—potentiality. All his career he would admonish his students to know their anatomy and to “Be Still and Know.” In the beginning of his career he developed many hand placement techniques to gently but manually illicit joint and alignment change. But in the twilight of his career he promoted a spiritual reverence for the craniosacral system and admonished his students to listen to the rhythm of the movement of the watery fluids and just witness the automatic shift that can take place with only the slightest of touches. He too had biblical awareness in that he called the fluctuating rhythm movement of the fluids the “Breath of Life” and like the tidal motion of the ocean. He spoke of cerebrospinal fluid as the highest known element and he spoke of transmutation (not tremulation, but not altogether dissimilar) as a change into another nature, substance, form or condition. I think he was talking about the change in tissue we perceive as a “release” occurring!!

Sutherland defined the motions that originate from the union of the sphenoid and occiput. He introduced the notion of stillpoints, (a stoppage of the craniosacral rhythm.) Sutherland gave us words, theories, concepts, anatomic detail, and the manual techniques that Upledger would later use to form his ten step protocol. And as importantly, he maintained the reverence for the divine innate beauty of this wondrous system of water, energy, movement, and life force. He created cranial osteopathy and established the Cranial Academy and was its first president. He died peacefully in Pacific Grove, California in 1954.

The sacredness of CST continued with John Upledger who was a student of osteopathy and attended Kirksville in the late 1960's. He wanted to be a doctor who did surgery and used medications when appropriate. It was while assisting a spinal surgery in the early 1970's that he noticed the spinal cord moving in and out of the surgical site in a rhythmic fashion that he couldn't explain. He researched the phenomena and ran into Sutherland's work. By the mid 1970's he was a well respected cranial osteopath and led a team of over twenty researchers in a study at the Bioresearch Department at Michigan State University. His assignment was to prove or disprove Sutherland's theories. There he proved the normal rhythmic movement of the living cranial bones of monkeys and a predictable and recordable energy frequency variation caused by different hand positions on the skull of human subjects. He did research with autistic children and found positive behavioral changes with the use of craniosacral therapy. He also noted emotional release with some children and realized the contribution CST would make in releasing emotions held in the body.

He combined the hand positions of osteopathic craniosacral therapy developed by Sutherland into a full body protocol of treatment and introduced his brand as CranioSacral Therapy. He spread the work all around the world, offering to teach anyone with a good sense of touch and a willingness to learn basic anatomy to be of service in helping people heal. He was the one who said CST belonged to the world and not one profession or institution. He continued the tradition of Swedenborg, Still and Sutherland in the respect they all had for the sacred divine nature of the living craniosacral rhythm.

Upledger moved the work ahead in many ways. Not only did he popularize cranial work but he honored the wisdom of the body to heal itself and said that the practitioner is only a facilitator for the process. He said we need to "blend and trust," light forces are all that are



needed, “the weight of a nickel,” that the nature of the force used is “intention.” In the tradition of Rollin E. Becker of the 1950’s who said each patient had a “physician within,” Upledger said there was an Inner Wisdom, a Universal Consciousness, an “Inner Physician” that was the source of change, renewal and health of the biological human system. He importantly introduced Somato-Emotional Release (previously offered only in psychological disciplines) to craniosacral work. He taught that we could use the craniosacral rhythm as a way of communicating with the body and the Inner Wisdom. He introduced dialogue to craniosacral work borrowing from Fritz Perls and Gestalt Therapy. He gave us expanded treatment to encourage the faculty of speech and expression with the Avenue of Expression work. He also brought forth the notion we could dialogue with organs of the brain and even cells of the body, as every part of the body has a consciousness that is accessible by the use of CST, expressed by the involuntary stopping and starting of craniosacral rhythm.

The one aspect I notice coming universally from all these founders is their reverence for life and their respect for the universal (or divine) consciousness of the body. They all identify the source of this consciousness as being in the potency of the nervous serum, as Swedenborg says, which is the CSF, as Still, Sutherland, and Upledger affirm. I agree; but for me the divine is in the more basic fluid they all identified: the water.

Water truly represents consciousness for the world by its universal nature and source of life-sustaining properties to all life forms. To think of water as having consciousness doesn’t seem a stretch to me. If ever the divine was to be present on this planet, can you think of a more universal medium? To think that we are the practitioners who, by way of touch and intention, enter into contact with the sacred and the naturally divine on a daily basis is quite humbling.