



**Rosalind Smith**

**Articles**

## Forward

Rosalind Smith is a mystic, a medium and a Quaker healer and counsellor. She was a Warden of Claridge House, adviser with Citizens Advice Bureau, Editor of Towards Wholeness and tutor at QSH courses.

She is the author of two booklets: Simple Healing, and Quakers and the Spiritual/Psychic Dimension, and a book of Meditations, Visualisations and Exercises for personal or FFH group use. These are perennially useful for those guiding meditations, bearing the signs of her Spiritual and Psychic knowledge.

“Have We Met Before?” is a very moving and complete account of her courting and marriage, and the gradual, inexorable and total loss of her husband to Alzheimer’s, and her recognition of his indwelling Divinity through all the losses.

All four publications are available from FFH. Simple Healing, and Quakers and the Spiritual/Psychic Dimension are included here.

The present collection of articles reveals Rosalind’s compassion, knowledge, spirituality, intelligence and goodness in the many fields of her experience, love and service.

The circle in the cover design symbolises the perfection of the indwelling Divinity that Rosalind refers to again and again.

Gervais Frykman  
2025

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|---------|---|
| NV      | New Vision  |
| TW      | Towards Wholeness                                     |
| QR      | Quarterly Review                                      |
| CFPSS   | Church’s Fellowship for Psychic and Spiritual Studies |
| I and D | Ipswich and Diss Monthly Meeting                      |

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## All Will Be Well ... Will It?

*'All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well'* said Dame Julian of Norwich many centuries ago. And *'All is well, all is perfect'* wrote Henry Thomas Hamblin about a century ago. But *'Everything is so awful I have tried to commit suicide'* said my client who has progressive multiple sclerosis – and who, although he fixed up a hang noose for himself recently, didn't have the strength to climb on the steps to it. Completely different views of life and its beneficence, or lack of it, according to the individual expressing these views.

We know that Dame Julian, HT Hamblin and many others, have arrived at a completely different understanding than my client, who cannot see past his physical condition. (And who can blame him – for he experiences pain and weakness, a certain humiliation, and a definite lack of what most of us might call 'quality of life'.) Of course, we cannot know what physical problems Dame Julian might have had to endure – very few of the pharmaceutical and palliative remedies that we have now would have been available to her. And HT Hamblin probably had his share of the usual aches and pains that we mortals are heir to. But, somehow, they were able to see beyond this physical plane, to know that whatever transpired in this earthly life, and on this material level, they were still, in the Mind that created them, perfect.

Everything is created in the mind

Everything that comes into existence is created in Mind – in Thought – first. This is one of the great laws of the universe, that Cause creates Effect. And all that is conceived in Mind is perfect (even things some of us don't like too much, like slugs!). Each creation comes into material form following its own pattern of being – its own blueprint. And each blueprint is perfect in its conception. Sometimes, in fact often, the perfect form *doesn't* manifest because something has happened to it along the way – perhaps an accident of birth, or adverse environmental circumstances, or ill-treatment at the hands of others (who themselves have become warped mentally) and so that being which has been created in Mind has succumbed to the ravages of physicality and *appears* to us as abnormal, deformed, diseased in some way.

*'Trailing Clouds of Glory do we come....'*

So, for those of us who find ourselves working with people who cannot even begin to think of themselves as perfect beings, where do we start? Can we, who need to continually remind ourselves of the wonderful fact of our own perfection (especially when we don't actually feel very perfect!) help those others who not only inhabit the same world as us, but are actually a part of us. We are all expressions of the one Consciousness – and therefore our sharing in that Consciousness makes us one. Turning our backs and pretending that we aren't just won't do! We must recognise the basic perfection and yes glory, of each person no matter how incapacitated they seem. Although we may not appear to influence the thoughts of others and cannot 'make a horse to drink' of the inner life, so to speak, because we share in the one Consciousness, our thoughts and actions can profoundly affect others. The power of Right Thinking and Prayer bear witness to this fact.

When we remember to view the whole of creation as perfect, whole and worthy of our respect no matter how much it may appear otherwise, we are seeing the reality of it in the Mind of God where there is no imperfection. What then of the criminal, the debtor, the

prisoner? Hard though it may be for us to accept, they too are perfect in the Mind of the Divine. Although their actions are clearly wrong, these do not expunge their essential nature which remains perfect.

We cannot influence their thoughts or make changes in their material lives that will lead to the inner search that everyone finally needs to make in order to experience the Life Within (what Quakers often call the Inner Light). But we can teach ourselves to view *them* as perfect, whole, and worthy of our respect no matter how unwholesome they seem. And I use that word intentionally, because it may be how most of us tend to regard those whose characters appear to be just that – unwholesome: what many think of as the ‘dregs of society’, the criminals, the prisoners, the debtors, those whose life has gone awry for some reason. Remember they too started out as perfect creations in the Mind of God.

And so, for my friend with the progressive disease which now has not only struck his body down, but is also working away destructively at his mind and causing him deep depression, I can only hold him in my own thoughts and see him as perfect in conception, even though I cannot teach him to do the same. Of course there are others whose attitude to their path in life, when they too have succumbed to such a physical condition, has been much more positive and they are determined to gain what they can from life; and these, I feel, have been given a certain Grace. Perhaps, because of this, they are able to see beyond their limitations and pain to a fuller vision.

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!*

From 'Intimations of Immortality' - William Wordsworth

New Vision – Oct/Nov 09

## A Grace-full Acceptance

*Ros is a Quaker and tries to take life as it comes, from day-to-day, with gratitude. We admire her compassion and acceptance in looking after a husband who is seriously ill and approaching the future with acceptance and patience.*

How sad it can seem when we see someone who is obviously in the autumn, or even the winter, of their earthly life trying to look as though they're still a 'spring chicken'. However, when we see someone who is approaching old age 'gracefully', with total acceptance and a face that radiates serenity, peace and contentment despite the wrinkles and lines, and probably aches and pains too, then they can often seem very beautiful.

With the knowledge and acceptance of our own altering physiognomy there comes the realisation that our days are now numbered - that time is passing. With this realisation we can begin to really appreciate all the good things Life has brought to us and recognise that some of the seemingly unwanted events and occurrences have resulted in valuable lessons being learned. Although these events are in the past, they are part of the rich pattern of our lives and make us who we are now.

So, in gratitude for all that our personal journey has so far accomplished, and an acceptance of its lessons, we can let go of the past in a positive way and welcome the future, both here and hereafter. This leads to a profound feeling of deep peace.

We can also do this for others, for our nearest and dearest who may be moving beyond these shores. Instead of trying desperately to hold on to them, we can perhaps come to accept, and help them to accept, that their life is drawing to a close. We can stop sending up beseeching prayers for them to stay here hanging on to the thread of life which still animates their ailing body, and perhaps their disordered minds too, because, selfishly perhaps, we don't want to face life without them.

Some years ago when my mother had only a few days left to live she told me she felt 'very calm and peaceful', which I was very grateful to hear. And now, during the current time of what is probably my husband's last illness, I asked him how he was feeling. He said, 'Becalmed', which was an unusual word for him to use, but seemed to describe aptly the state he finds himself in. Probably we all know of folk who, in the words of Dylan Thomas, '*Do not go gentle into that good night*' and who '*Rage, rage against the dying of the light*'. This cannot ever contribute to a calm and peaceful passing. Helping others to calmly face the inevitable helps us too.

What we *can* do for our loved ones is to ask for a gentle, peaceful passing for them. We can ask that whatever is right for them might happen, unhindered by when and as we want it to be, but according to the Divine Will. That way they will be able to leave in a state of peace, and we who are still here will know that we have co-operated as fully as possible with Divine Providence. And then during our ensuing time of loss we will be cradled and sustained in that Peace 'which passeth understanding'.

## Another Out-of-Body Experience

I read, with interest, the account by Fee Berry in *Reaching Out* (Spring/Summer 2015) in which she describes an out-of-body experience, and it brought to mind a similar event that happened to me many years ago now.

It was in the early days when I was just realising that there is more to life than the temporal earthly state which we seem to inhabit: that we actually live in a spiritual universe and that, with the right frame of mind we can actually become aware of this dimension. Probably at that time I would not have put it quite like that. I was just becoming more open to the ideas which seemed to be flooding my way, from books, from the people I met, and, because of my increasing involvement in meditation, from the intuitions and insights that began to enrich my life. It was exciting and new, compulsive and irresistible, and hinted of a vastness which I could hardly begin to comprehend.

One day I was driving over to visit my parents. Although it was a much frequented trunk road, it wasn't a busy time of day and I was – as they say – bombing along in the fast lane, overtaking. Suddenly I found myself looking down at the top of my head, through the car roof. I continued driving without any sense of fear or even unease. It just seemed very natural. I *knew* I would be safe and that I would get to my parents' place without any problem. And, what has always remained in my mind, was the feeling of inconsequence about what I was doing, and where I was going. It didn't matter, it wasn't important. I was in a place or state which rendered everything we do here as unreal. The reality was/is within the raised level of consciousness in which, briefly, I found myself.

This was well before I became a Quaker, but after I had drifted away from the Church of England and at a time when I was spiritually searching, and coming to understand that God, or whatever we choose to call It, is not contained within any one religion or creed. That, in fact, It contains all of them, and none. All disciplines contain some of the truth, and serve to point the way, but Truth itself is beyond any of them.

There have been other, similar moments but none as striking and memorable as that one. And even after all these years, I can still recall the feeling of utter peace and safety that enveloped me, and the sheer *knowing*.

## Chosen People?

Recently I read something which really made me stop and consider my place in the scheme of things. It was this: out of all the many eggs that my mother had produced in the time of her fertile life, and, from all the myriad multitudes of sperm that my father must have produced – out of all the possible lives that might have been formed, it was me that actually received Life, me that entered into existence, me that was given the supreme gift, of Life. What a thought! What a responsibility! What a privilege!

If each of us considered the choice which Nature (or God) had made at our conception, thereby setting in motion the genes which would ultimately show forth as individual characteristics, looks, sex, and so on, we might look with wonder at this – we might appreciate our own beingness, our isness, our own pattern that was thought into existence. We might then think “Why me?” We may well start to wonder what other combinations might have been produced, if it hadn’t happened to be us. Would any of them have had the same thoughts, ideas, likes and dislikes? Would any of them have looked better, worse, been more intelligent, or less so? Would any of them have achieved the great things we never did ourselves?

And, another point to consider, have we fulfilled that which we were asked to fulfil? Have we completed, or even tried to complete, that sacred contract that we agreed to before birth? Would it have been better if we had never been born, never had the opportunity to experience life and the living of it?

There are those who would argue that we come into the world with only a set of inherited genes, and that we are haphazardly flung into a certain environment and time in history, and that we must make of it what we will, or can. So, perhaps there is no plan, no individual pattern, no life road-map to follow. This doesn’t seem to add up, however, when we realise that people do show certain tendencies, sometimes from a very early age, such as artistic talent, be it in music, literature or painting, and others show an innate flair for relationships with other people; some prove themselves skilled at various sports, at having ‘green fingers’, at caring for others and so on. So, we do all have patterns to follow, to realise, to implement, if we are to fulfil ourselves to the highest potential, and if we are to show forth the promise of our ‘chosenness’.

And this is our responsibility! We must each find out in which way, or ways, we can best be the person we were meant to be. We must search and find what there is at the very roots of our existence that is trying to find expression: what, in fact, is the reason it was us that was allowed to form into an embryo in the first place, rather than any of the multitudes that might have been.

This privilege that we have each been granted – to live, perhaps for only a short time, perhaps for many years, perhaps with disabilities, perhaps enjoying near-perfect health, – this is not to be taken for granted. It needs acknowledgment, it needs acceptance, it needs appreciation, and above all, it needs our co-operation and willingness to bring to fruition our highest potential.

The Friend – May 09

## Citizens Advice Bureau

When I first became involved with the Citizens Advice Bureau, back in 2000, it was with no altruistic thoughts at all. I have to admit to pure selfishness on my part! After retiring a few months previously I had reached the stage where I needed a new direction, another interest, something to ‘get my teeth into’ – and when I saw the advertisement asking for volunteers, well, I just felt it sounded like interesting and challenging work. The worthwhile bit came later!

It was when one of my early clients walked out of the room in tears, and said “I’m so glad I talked to you about it. I feel as if a load has been lifted off my mind,” that I realised that this work was an aspect of *healing* – something I had already been involved in for about 15/16 years.

Healing can take very many forms, as we know. From giving a smile to someone who is looking rather down; to listening, often at length, to someone’s problems over the phone; from practical help, such as preparing a nourishing meal, to physically holding someone when they need it – perhaps at times of bereavement or other trauma. And there is the healing that is often requested from those of us who regard *spiritual healing* as something we are required to do, something we have felt ourselves drawn towards. Within the Quaker Spiritual Healers (a group attached to the Friends Fellowship of Healing) we tend to call it ‘holding in the Light’ – and where a group sit together for this purpose, the results can often be quite amazing.

When I am on my way to the CAB, (to spend one day a week there working much harder than most solicitors!) I send out a little prayer that I may be able to help whoever I see or speak to that day to the utmost of my ability, and to be able to see the underlying cause of their problems. Although these can be many and various they do tend to fall into certain categories, such as employment, relationship breakdown, consumer, housing, debt and so on. In the current economic circumstances debt and the despair which accompanies it form a great deal of CAB work. Often, when a person comes in with a severe debt problem, they will be carrying a plastic shopping bag full of unopened bailiffs’ letters and demands, summonses and court orders – and one needs first to help the client to actually open the envelopes and face what they contain. While working out the best stratagem for dealing with the debts, the conversation may soon reveal that their partner/spouse has left them, that they have been denied access to their own children, they have been made redundant, and, not surprisingly, because of all this they are suffering from depression, and, as a result, they simply cannot cope.

There is always ‘light at the end of the tunnel’ and helping people to see this soon became what I regarded as part of my healing work. Even when, through no fault of her own, a client with three children suddenly found herself served with an eviction notice, finding a way to enable her to stay in her own home, and cope with the debts, proved to be a way of bringing fresh hope to her. Her husband had neglected to tell her that they were already on a suspended possession order, and he had simply gone, leaving her to face the consequences.

But there are many ‘advices and queries’ which are presented in a normal day’s work, and there is always help of some sort – even if it’s just a listening ear. Sometimes it’s a question

of pointing a client in the right direction, or explaining their statutory rights, or their employment rights.

I soon found that the precepts that the CAB work with were in great accord with my Quaker beliefs. Being non-judgemental and trying to see a way forward for them was a part of seeing 'that of God' in clients. Treating them with respect and integrity, helping them to understand that their stories and crises were treated impartially and confidentially, equates with the Quaker testimonies of truth and equality.

What I really like is when a person has come in looking very dejected and then goes out at the end of the interview and we are both having a good laugh – not because of any lack of consideration for their problems but because, underneath it all, they still possess the human attribute of humour – and are starting to look at things in perspective.

And this I regard as healing.

I and D Newsletter December 09

### **Clearing Away the Clutter**

During some personal correspondence in which we discussed the effect of clutter, a friend expressed the following thought: *Clutter is...that which we have neither energy nor inclination to care for*, and her words immediately resonated with me because of the book I had been reading, *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle. He stresses the importance of not only recognising the present moment, but also being ready and willing to dwell in it. We cannot do this if our minds are too cluttered.

This awareness of the present moment, the Now, is a state which *can* be reached, but only after much practice and perseverance. Most of the time we are thinking ahead to what might, or might not be coming in the future, worrying about it, fearing it, creating a sort of mental dialogue; or we are going over and over in our minds things that have already happened either recently or further back in the past, expending a great deal of mental energy in the process.

It's true that in the context in which my friend was talking she was actually referring to the physical clutter that can accumulate in a person's home. I remember calling on someone once and in order to get closer to her I had to climb over multitudinous, full plastic carrier bags - they were everywhere! It appeared that she kept all her belongings in them and they served as cupboards, shelves, and even – awful thought – her fridge! This was her permanent state of living and, of course, it was her choice, but I think that most of us could not live happily in such permanent clutter.

However, even with plenty of clear floor space around them many people still live in homes which are cluttered. Looking at this on a daily basis would, I imagine, be quite depressing. Also, it could stop us from being able to visualise how beautiful, bright and clear our homes and offices could be if we allowed ourselves light and space and freedom.

What does clutter tell us?

If we accept the ancient law that the outer reflects the inner, then it might be helpful to consider what clutter is telling us about our inner lives. Possibly we need to simplify and ordinate our lives so we focus on the important things and bring them into right relationship with each other.

While we are constantly either looking back with regret, resentment, even nostalgia, or looking forward with anxiety, apprehension or fear, trying to imagine situations which might not even arise, we are actually filling our minds with clutter. Not only is it tiring and unnecessary, it also prevents us from being able to access the peace of the present moment.

It is not easy to let go of past hurts or slights, but by holding on to them we not only increase their strength, but we give them the power to keep on wounding us when really they should be allowed to die a natural death. It is only by letting go of this baggage that we can truly enter into the Now.

Ways of bringing our consciousness into the moment

Meditation and contemplation are ways of bringing our consciousness into the present moment. This can be done really anywhere – indoors or out, but some places are more conducive to a meditative state. I find nature a never-ending source of inspiration. Listening to the sounds around one, being aware of the current of the air, noticing the scents and smells of one's garden – all these are ways of training our consciousness into becoming aware of the Now, of Presence, and accessing the peace that it brings.

At least, for a time, there is respite from the constant dialogue with ourselves about the past or future - we can value the present and be more aware of its simplicity. Clearly, illumined souls spend most of their time in this state of heightened awareness. Most of us will remember Dame Julian of Norwich's words, '*all manner of things shall be well.*' What trust and complete lack of concern for the future they reveal. The fact that these words have been quoted so often through the centuries, surely points to their veracity and the innate trust of the human soul in the all-wise workings of Providence.

Meditation, contemplation, worship and ritual – all of these clear our mental clutter and allow us to breathe our native air, so that there is space for intuition, guidance, clarity, harmony and peace.

I and D Newsletter 08 – New Vision – Quaker Monthly Feb 09

## **Experiment with Light – a deeply healing process.**

Quakers are quite experienced at meetings; meetings for worship; meetings for worship for business; meetings for ‘the solemnisation of a marriage’, etc., and, as we often joke among ourselves, meetings about meetings! For well over seventy years the Friends Fellowship of Healing groups have been holding meetings for distant healing –sometimes just called meetings for healing – all around the country. The intention is to hold those who we know are unwell, either physically, mentally or spiritually, in the Light. In fact, the concept of the Light, and the deep healing that it offers to anyone who allows themselves to ‘go into’ it, is an integral part of our healing ministry.

So the Experiment with Light is something which fits naturally with what the Friends Fellowship of Healing has been doing quietly and regularly for a very long time now. However, it goes somewhat deeper in that as well as holding others in the Light, there is opportunity to use the method for oneself. And this is where we need to make sure that we differentiate between Meeting for Worship, which is the basis of Quakerism, and the Experiment with Light which is a valuable healing method.

It can, of course, be done privately while in MFW, although it does seem to be more efficacious when it is ‘led’ by someone else. Not only does the process flow along at the right tempo, so to speak, but it is less likely that one’s mind will wander. And, any troubles, be they bodily ills, problems of the mind, concerns about others, fears, doubts, guilt, anger, resentment etc. can all be brought, very gently and gradually, at the pace which a person can accept and cope with, into the Light.

So, often, these problems are then viewed in their right perspective, and rather than feeling overwhelmed and defeated by them, they assume their rightful places as just facets of our lives. We are brought into a space where we can look at them dispassionately. We come to a knowledge of what is in our soul rather than what is churning around in our conscious mind. From that place of healing discernment we can then try to do something about changing things for the better, bringing our own lives into balance, seeing the good in ourselves as well as the faults. So this rather objective view of ourselves which the Light offers us can be used as a ‘tool’ for healing, something which we then return to again and again until we see our lives transformed, put into ‘right ordering’ and, indeed, ‘open to new Light’.

While we may go into an EwL experience with our conscious minds, perhaps with various ideas about it at first, perhaps hesitantly, perhaps even sceptically but usually expectantly, it will have been some sort of obedience to a request from our sub-conscious mind, or inner self: some deep awareness that ‘something’ is there, something with which we can make contact. My own feeling is that it is not instigated by our own ego alone: it follows on from some sort of drive or incentive – dare I call it a ‘call’? “You did not choose me, but I chose you...” (*John 15: 16 – The Bible, English Standard Version.*)

Anyone who has been fortunate enough to take part in an EwL session will, usually, have come to realise its value, even though the depth to which individuals will go will differ enormously, depending on their personality, *and* their willingness to ‘let go’.

We should acknowledge that we all have the inner Voice, or inner Light. How often do we suddenly receive an intimation – a flash of insight – which gives us guidance or answers to a dilemma? We even receive sudden answers when we have mislaid something, and it’s

usually when our minds are clear and uncluttered, so the voice ‘which knows’ has a space in which to operate. There is that flash of ‘Oh yes, I know...’ So, from where does that come? There is a whole inner part of ourselves which functions independently from our normal waking self – and it is that part that we attempt to access, or tune in to, when we take part in the Experiment with Light process. Then, sometimes, answers for which we have searched will surface, either during the session, or perhaps a little while afterwards.

Some might say that this is just a part of our own ego or psyche. Perhaps it is. But the deeper our experience becomes, the more we can acknowledge that there is something greater at work, something utterly trustworthy and all-knowing. So, perhaps we might then think of it as ‘that of God within’, or any one of the well-known Quaker epithets for that within which ‘we live and move and have our being’.

We approach the Light with openness and expectation. We go into the Light, and yet we seem to hear the ‘still small voice’. And, that still small voice actually *is* the Light that we seek.

The Friend – October 2011

### **‘Got The Sun in the Morning’**

*‘Got no mansion, got no yacht,  
Still I’m happy with what I’ve got,  
Got the sun in the morning and the moon at night.’*

Irving Berlin’s memorable song brings us all up short when we consider the meaning behind it. Who wants a yacht? Who wants a mansion? Well, some do, I know, but often the accumulation of riches and expensive material goods just leads to unhappiness. Witness the figures quoted for the break-up of marriages and even suicides after people have won large sums on the Lottery!

There is a saying ‘The best things in life are free’. And I really do think that is true. All the things we, most of us, take for granted are the free things. Our sight, our hearing, our other senses with which we enjoy life. And the ‘sun in the morning, and the moon at night’. And the stars; the sea; the countryside with its ever changing seasons, which happen with heavenly reliability. And the air we breathe! All free, all abundantly provided.

With careful co-operation, the harvest happens annually, sometimes a good one, sometimes not so good depending on conditions, but it happens. What we see growing in our fields and gardens is the physical expression of the abundant supply which exists in Consciousness. Even when all is gathered in, processed, consumed and the ground lies fallow for the winter, the concept, the *idea*, of every fruit, vegetable, grain, flower still exists within Mind, still exists within Infinity, outside of time and space. It is there, abundantly ready – it doesn’t have to be re-created, or re-designed – and, as it is said, to everything there is a time and season, so, when the right earthly conditions pertain then the particular idea will come forth into material form. Even now, writing this in the summer, I know that there will be masses of daffodils next spring. And this is not only because there are bulbs already dormant in the earth, but because the idea of ‘daffodil’ exists eternally, infinitely ready to come forth.

Helped along with Man's cooperation we are supplied abundantly with all that we really need, and with all the beauty that we could desire.

A reason for everything that exists

Weeds are abundant too! But what are they except wild flowers and plants that we choose not to cultivate? In another age and time they could be much sought after. Certainly, as scientific research continues, and more and more species are found to contain healing properties for various illnesses we may find the common weeds that we pull out of the soil more valuable than we currently realise. I believe that the common periwinkle has provided a cure for leukaemia, and there are many other cures awaiting discovery. Just another example of Abundance.

Another way of thinking about Abundance is to consider it as life – or Life. That which is continually pouring itself into existence, creating, maintaining and sustaining all that exists. This is a continuous flow, unstoppable, unquenchable, and unchangeable, no matter what man does, or how he tries to control it. It is Consciousness holding everything in Its idea of perfection, constantly bringing forth that idea into material form, and providing for our individual consciousness. It *is* Abundance. Recognising that Abundance, that Divine Mind at work, and being aware of Its existence within our own souls, we should be able to relax, stop worrying, fretting, complaining and so on, and *trust* It. I know this is not easy, not with all the problems there are in the world, and in our own lives. But we can, at least, aspire and aim towards the teaching of Dame Julian of Norwich, 'All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well'. This is a supreme example of trust.

And, perhaps, when we get up and look at the 'sun in the morning' (it's always there even if it's behind clouds!), providing us with the light of day, and again, the 'moon at night' (still there just the same), controlling the movement of the tides, we might regard them as continual expressions of the love of God for all creation, holding us in a wonderful pattern of existence.

New Vision – 2010

## Listening to the Inner Voice

How frequently do we hear people say that they sense a lack of satisfaction and fulfilment in their own lives? Perhaps they admit to a feeling of ‘dispiritedness’, a need for something they can’t put into words, and yet which hovers at the back of their minds. This feeling can manifest itself in various ways: a general feeling of boredom with life in general; an unwillingness to face the day’s responsibilities and demands; a lack of care about things that matter; even, a difficulty in getting up in the morning. And, what can this last thing signify? It can mean that a person is suffering at least some level of depression, and certainly a dissatisfaction with their life.

I am not here talking about a clinical depression which needs some kind of medical intervention, but rather the state of mind that we might be experiencing if we are not fulfilling our own intrinsic life pattern. Caroline Myss, in her book *Sacred Contracts*, writes about the supreme importance of finding just what our own life pattern is. And I have found myself in total agreement with her. If we are spending our lives doing things that are inimical to what our soul has been incarnated to do, then we will never feel fulfilled, and we will never be complete.

Many people feel that, before birth, we are ‘programmed’ to be a certain type of person. And, if we do not find out what that personal programme is then we will never be satisfied. For example, if we have found ourselves working in an office, day after day, and we dread getting up in the morning and going there, then we are definitely not fulfilling our function. Alternatively, if we enjoy going to work in this same office, and the work we do is interesting, and gives us a good sense of job satisfaction, then it would seem that we *have* found our path in life. Or, at least, our path for this chapter of our life.

Often, and usually sometime around the middle years of life, we find ourselves beginning to feel that we are in the wrong place, doing the wrong job, associating with the wrong people; not that there is anything wrong with them as such, but simply that the pattern of their lives does not now interweave with the pattern of ours. Somehow we find ourselves being taken in a different direction, possibly one which we never dreamed of. We find ourselves presented with a choice – whether to carry on as we are, or to take a plunge, a risk, and branch out in another direction. And that which offers itself to us now brings a new feeling of excitement into our lives.

We might find that, after all, the thing at which we excel is teaching, or is writing or painting. Or perhaps we’ve had a high-flying and well paid job, but what we really want to do is work in a care home, loving and looking after those with physical and mental health needs, for National Minimum wage. We might find that after many years of making money in business, which has never felt quite right for us, we now feel a strong urge to become a gardener, or to care for the land in some way.

If we are sensitive to the inner voice and brave enough to obey it we may find our lives transformed. The new occupation, or place we find ourselves in, will bring with it a sort of ‘buzz’. In fact, one sure way of knowing that what we are doing is right for us, and is following our own inner pattern, or design, is that we can feel this ‘buzz’ of satisfaction, this sense of completeness.

If we can learn what this design is, it will affect our whole state of being, our mind, body and spirit.

Some people are fortunate enough to *know* from an early age just what is the right path for them. But very many of us are placed into positions from which it is not easy to extricate ourselves, or from which we simply cannot do so for economic or family reasons. Those who spend their lives caring for chronically sick relatives will know the frustrations and limitations that this can bring. And, although love can dictate that this is actually the right path for that person, nevertheless it does seem hard to accept and bear. It may be that later on, when situations which seem to constrict one change, when perhaps the person cared for dies, then the vacuum left becomes the opportunity for the inner pattern to emerge and for that person to begin to ‘live their own life’, to blossom. It is never too late for this change to happen, even if we are well advanced in years. I knew a lady who found herself to be a very good healer, and she took our QSH short course, and then became a great help to many people.

She was in her late seventies when she took the course. It had taken her all those years to recognise and accept her inner pattern. I do know that it gave her great joy to know that she was helping others in this way.

Another point to bear in mind is that we may each have several designs or patterns within our souls, and that these different paths may need to surface at different times in our lives. So, although a great sense of fulfilment may have been experienced during one phase of our life, it may be that there comes a sense of 'moving on' with another equally satisfying opportunity presenting itself. If it is a genuine manifestation of our personal design, then one should embrace it without any feeling of guilt at having left the other behind.

We may become aware that what actually gives us that 'buzz', that innate feeling of satisfaction, is not what most would think of as 'doing good'. Once, talking this over with someone who found she couldn't see her path ahead, I asked her – Supposing you woke up one morning, you had no commitments and had the whole day free, what would you most like to do with it? She almost immediately said – I would go to the National Gallery and study fine art. So by opening the way to let this realisation come to the fore she recognised the thing which most appealed to her. (I hope she did go and study it!) Life itself is made up of many different colours – and so, I believe, are our lives.

There are those who might find it difficult to accept that we are all programmed before birth, that we are all born with certain functions to fulfil. Why should this be so? We have only to watch very small children playing to see that some will dominate others (the bossy ones!) and that they are actually showing leadership skills, while others will be quieter, and perhaps more interested in seeing how things work – the menders, fixers, and repairers of this world. Others show a definitely creative streak, and, if this is encouraged and not stamped upon in some way, then they may go on to fulfil their potential and become creative artists. Small children exhibit their natural characteristics before their upbringing and environment make changes upon their personalities, not always for the best.

If we have found our own inner ability, what we might call our own blue-print, we will find we will make the best use of our energy, which, in itself, will be enhanced. It is the surest form of listening to the inner voice, or the Inner Voice.

Let us each become what we were meant to be – a vessel in which Life can live itself.

TW – Spring 2011

## Your Sacred Contract

“Why am I here?” “What is my real purpose?” “What should I be doing with my life?” How often we hear questions like these expressed, or perhaps we find ourselves thinking around them. And, also, “What is my full potential as a person?” “What is my real character?” “Who am I really? Not only in my dealings with others but with myself?”

It's fairly well-known and accepted that a lack of understanding of one's own real purpose in existence leads to emotional stress, withdrawal from others, timidity, depression, anxiety, fatigue, and even physical illness. It's not only your mind that needs to understand and know, but your body and spirit as well. But, actually, the spirit *does* know – we don't always hear!

A Jungian psychologist (James Hillman) once said: “You have to give up the life you have to get to the life that's waiting for you”. And another, more well-known person, stated: “He who would lose his life, will find it”. These are very powerful statements, and deserve much contemplation – probably much more than we are usually willing to give. Although, we should not blindly assume that it means that we should sacrifice everything and throw it all to the winds: rather we should just be willing to change our attitude to certain things, and be willing to accept that ‘we may have been mistaken’ in our views. (*Advices and Queries No.17*)

We seem to be living in a time which has an absence of spiritual and emotional orientation; with material riches outweighing spiritual values. We may sense a lack, a need, an emotional vacuum, a lack of satisfaction and fulfilment, even wondering whether our own life is worth living. So, for our own good, we all need to learn what our mission is, our true state of being, our potential, because how we actually live our lives affects our state of mind, body and spirit. But, *even more so*, we each need to be fulfilling our basic pattern, which is the blue-print – if you like, the Divine Plan – which existed before our birth and which is actually our personal plan, our own unique and personal design. And the more we stray from this, which is to say that the more we do not recognise our own intrinsic potential, the more frustrated we will become.

“By coming to know your mission, you can live your life in a way that makes best use of your energy. When you are working well with your energy, you are also making the best expression of your personal power.” Caroline Myss calls this living in accord with your Sacred Contract. (*Sacred Contracts*. Bantam Books. 2002.)

So in her words we could well ask ourselves: “What does the divine will request of me?”

We can stop to explore and analyse the various symptoms and ailments that inflict themselves on us – no, wait - rather that we take upon ourselves, may be a more apt way of putting it! It can help if we look at these symbols of discontent and illness as they can often point the way to helping us to see things more clearly. The body produces symptoms of our dis-ease, warnings: perhaps the Monday headache; the Saturday migraine; high blood pressure; ulcers due to stress; allergic reactions; nervous indigestion; depression; no inner spark; no joy. It's as though our illness is saying to us ‘Do you want to live or die?’

We cannot always change things in the twinkling of an eye, but the realisation that we need to do something about it might come in a flash, a sudden given insight. We might suddenly realise we are in the wrong job, the wrong situation or the wrong place to live – are we really a country person or a townie? And, unfortunately there's very often not much we can do about it, at least not immediately.

But we easily make excuses: we can't change our lifestyle now; we have a mortgage; there's the children's education to consider; I need to work hard now for early retirement; there are the expectations of others; it's too late to retrain; even, it's selfish to change.

And we can find that our language often reflects our emotional feelings e.g. ‘I can't stomach it any more...I am sick of it’, ‘My heart is heavy,’ ‘My head aches,’ ‘It's doing my head in’, ‘It's a pain in

the neck', 'I feel as though I'm carrying the world on my back'. So our personal language is a warning: if we endure too much the body can react.

However, sometimes a breakdown, either physical or mental, can lead to a breakthrough, a kind of personal realisation or enlightenment. A recovery from the treatment for cancer can influence one to do the thing one has always wanted to do, leading to a more positive attitude, and which, in fact, helps to fight the cancer. An enforced absence from a difficult situation can lead to more clear thinking about it, with the option of a better way forward, a more positive way of coping.

In her book, *Sacred Contracts*, Caroline Myss says: "As vital parts of a larger, universal Spirit, we each have been put here on earth to fulfil a Sacred Contract, that enhances our spiritual growth while contributing to the evolution of the whole global soul." So, your personal pattern, your purpose here, is not only your career, or relationship with others, or hobby or interest – though all these are part of it – but it is your overall relationship to your personal and spiritual power – your real self.

We are like holograms – with multitudinous facets. It is how we work with this – who we give it to – and how much we are willing to surrender to divine guidance; how much we are able to listen to that Inner Voice; and how much recognition we give to the wisdom of 'To thine own self be true'. (Shakespeare: *Hamlet* – Polonius.)

C.G. Jung recognised and wrote a great deal about archetypes: the ancient patterns of human behaviour that appear in myths, fairy-tales and legends: they populate our minds and lives in ways that affect us deeply. He said they were living forms of energy that are shared in many people's thoughts and emotions, across all cultures and countries. For example, if within you, you have the archetype, or pattern, of a teacher, you will probably behave like a teacher even when not in the classroom! Because you are patterned to be like that. He outlined many other patterns that predominate within human relationships, and one such was that of the servant and master. Some folk will always take the subservient role and others will usually find themselves wanting to organise things and 'rule' the lives of others, rightly or wrongly. These two archetypal characters will often find themselves together in life, and depending on the degree of each of these patterns will make a success, or otherwise, of this situation.

Although it seems that we each have many different archetypal patterns within our consciousness - and these can become evident at different times of our lives, and may lead us to take on different roles at various times - Caroline Myss highlights the four most meaningful ones that can dominate our journey, for good or ill. Everyone has the child archetype, which is one of the most powerful because we are born into it: it is our first state of consciousness, and, as we know, the quality of an individual's childhood can often reflect into adult life. A healthy relationship to this is learning when to take responsibility and when to have a healthy dependency; when to stand up to the 'group' and when to embrace communal life; to develop emotionally.

The second 'pattern' which has a strong influence over our personal behaviour is that of the victim archetype. Possibly, during our childhood, we were taught not to fight back (as Quakers too!) to turn the other cheek. And from this attitude we can often develop the feeling that 'Everyone's against me...I always get the worst of things...It would have to happen to me...I deserve this...I'm not worthy.' Oh, poor me, poor me! When we find ourselves in a situation which elicits this sort of response we need to put the question to ourselves, 'What other choices have I got here that will help me to overcome this threat or problem?' We could then well accept that everything and everyone in our lives is there to assist in our spiritual growth.

A strange sounding archetype, but nevertheless one which is quite recognisable, is that of the prostitute. Obviously not the general association of the word, but rather how much of ourselves we 'sell': our integrity, our morals, our intellect, our word, our body or soul, for the sake of physical security, or to be liked! Perhaps there is the fear of losing social status, or the fear of having to support oneself, or of being alone. Folk who exhibit this are 'people-pleasers' and agree all the time

with the opinions of others, rather than voice their own, because they fear not being in the others' 'good books'. It's a denial of one's own integrity! We need to learn to be 'true to ourselves', to recognise our own inner truth, in order to overcome this weakness.

The fourth archetype described is that of the saboteur: this is the one which is evident when there is a fear of inviting change into one's life, especially when good opportunities come along. Expressions may include things like: 'I couldn't possibly do this...I'm not as clever as other people...I'm not as good as other people...I'd only fail if I tried this...' It's the reflection of the fear of taking responsibility for oneself and for what one does and creates. It's easier just to not try! It can also make other people feel awkward because one can often deflect kind words or praise from others by saying things such as: 'It's nothing really...It's just an old thing I had...Oh, don't be silly! (which can make them feel rejected or put down). The saboteur belittles oneself and makes one discount one's own talents. A recognition of this weakness can usually be the way towards changing one's attitude.

Each of the archetypes described so far sounds rather negative, but recognition and acknowledgment of them, and then working with them, can result in a person coming to terms and then moving forward in a positive direction: becoming who they really are, who they are meant to be.

Of course, there are multitudes of archetypes/patterns/blue-prints extant in the human psyche. There are those of us who love to work on the land, in the garden, and these have the sort of inner compulsion to care for the land and environment. Others find their meaning in life in being carers of others – the carer archetype. Writers, artists, musicians, scholars, explorers, inventors, cooks – one could go on and on. What is important, and the thing which informs us that we are doing that which we were programmed to do is the buzz, the thrill, perhaps the excitement, or the joy, which comes with fulfilling our own potential. We do these things with enthusiasm and welcome each day or opportunity to do so.

There is much much more to this interesting concept of archetypes and how we allow them to affect our personal lives, but the main thing is to be able to recognise their presence within us, and, where appropriate, use them as tools to develop our own understanding and integrity, to be able to move forward as the people we are meant to be, and really are. And although we may not be able to easily change our outward physical situation we may well be able to change our attitude to it.

If we can recognise our own personal blue-print – we can live out our own Sacred Contract.

TW141 Spring 2015

## Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

*Above thought is the intellect, which still seeks: it goes about looking, spies out here and there, picks up and drops. But above the intellect that seeks is another Intellect which does not seek but stays in its pure, simple being, which is embraced in that light.*

Meister Eckhart

On the very day that I was asked to write an article on the subject of the Changelessness behind Change the first news of the double, or rather triple, catastrophe that hit Japan was broadcast. How, one might ask, can the concept of an ever-loving and changeless God be acceptable in the face of such destruction?

One could well sympathise with those who deny the existence of God! But, of course, if they do that they actually deny the existence of themselves and everything that is: for God – infinite and eternal Consciousness – also exists in Its creation, manifest as you and I, and in everyone and everything. There is not God and us, there is just God manifesting as and through us. “In Him we live and move and have our being.” (*Acts 17; v28*). And yet God is beyond everything that we can possibly comprehend, and contains all within It.

### Creator and Destroyer

God is not *just* Love. If we accept that the Divine is Almighty, then It must be Creator, Preserver and Destroyer – in Hindu, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. It must be all that is meant by the Horsemen of the Apocalypse: earthquake, famine, fire and flood. God is Almighty because It manifests as these things, as well as what we like to acknowledge as Godness (Goodness). We are taught to believe and have faith that ‘God is working His purpose out’, although it might not seem very obvious when cataclysmic events occur.

If we allow ourselves to look back over the disasters, natural and man-made, that have occurred over the last millennium, and even before, we can easily calculate that millions (perhaps billions) of people will have died one way or another, seemingly ‘before their time’. Taking that further, if those events and disasters had not happened, and those people had gone on to reproduce themselves down through the centuries, we might get some indication of the desperate plight that the planet would be in now, with even more mouths to feed. and perhaps only able to exist closely packed like ‘sardines’!

### The harmonious whole

George Trevelyan, the founder of The Wrekin Trust, ([www.wrekintrust.org](http://www.wrekintrust.org)) taught that the universe is an immense system which exists in perfect harmony; and that the organism which is our world is a harmonious whole; that humanity is part of that organism and that the well-being of both, indeed of all things, is intertwined. Mystics have always known that there is a creative Intelligence in the living universe to which we can attune, and because this is accessible only in

what we term 'altered states of consciousness' this is why it is so difficult, well-nigh impossible, to describe.

So I have come to feel, with George Trevelyan, that the Earth is a living, self-regulating organism, and the force behind it is Consciousness. This Consciousness always creates divine perfection in all its patterns and always works towards healing and restoration of those patterns when man interferes. In these aspects It is unchanging and unchanged. But, in order for the Earth to continue there must be self-regulation, a kind of pruning if you like, for in the long-term this is the only way that humanity and all that goes with it can survive. There is That which knows this, even if we find it hard to accept.

And, because we think of ourselves as 'only human' and cannot easily acknowledge our own divinity, we rail against the events – which, in *our* terms, we rightly call disasters – and blame God, and allow ourselves to wonder why He lets it happen. Don't we?

### **The Work of Jane Sherwood**

We live in a time when there are many people who claim to have received channelled wisdom, very often through automatic writing. It may be that the whole process, now recognised as a credible phenomenon, has become easier over the last century, both in its implementation and its acceptability. There is, however, still a great deal which one might regard, not necessarily as fraudulent, but as a result of the interference of the medium's own mind.

Always with this reservation firmly in mind, I have been greatly interested in the channelled communications that came to Jane Sherwood soon after she started, in great loneliness and desperation, to try to make contact with her husband, Andrew, who had died in the 1914-18 war.

She was warned by "those who had experience that there were certain dangers which might have to be faced if one opened one's mind to influences from the spirit world." Nevertheless, nothing daunted, she felt herself stretching out into "the great universe of real being searching for Andrew and...convinced that he was there." She felt that there is a "beyond-body", something that is incorporated in each of us and therefore more than the system of chemical energies, and that "to make contact with this beyond body of another, one must learn to use the corresponding body in oneself."

Like many before her, and since, she pondered on the keen intellects and trained minds that had made the transition into the unknown. Was all their genius and wisdom lost? Surely not. She began to recognise an inner compulsion to try and align herself to the level of perception that she knew might be a bridge between her material and scientifically oriented world and that "other world".

Although she makes no actual mention of belonging to any specific religious denomination, here and there are definite Quaker phrases e.g. 'that of God' and from this I must assume that her own spiritual leanings lay in this direction. (Later information has come that she was indeed a Quaker.) Apart from a very few references to the words of Jesus, there is hardly a

mention of Christian or any other of the world's faiths' teachings, and, interestingly, the initial indication that Andrew was trying to make contact came through to her via a friend's message from a Spiritualist medium.

At first this led her to search for help amongst Spiritualist literature, initially finding it rather a "hotch-potch of mystery and imagination" and it was only when she came upon the ideas of Rudolf Steiner that she began to be able to suspend her faint hostility and suspicion. In several communications from a medium she had been "urged to attempt to take automatic writing" and eventually she began to experiment.

For the whole of the first two years nothing happened. Despite some despondency on her part about this, she persevered, and one day the initials G.F.S appeared on the paper and, as Jane relaxed her hand, "they made a name, a signature – G.F. Scott."

Even as she experienced the shock of success she felt too "the impact of an emotion, a surprise and joy that matched my own."

This tentative, exploratory communication developed her sensitivity, and she soon became aware of the presence not only of Scott but, to her joy, her husband, Andrew. There was also a third communicator who was only ever referred to as E.K, and who seemed, of the three, to be the most spiritually advanced.

Scott, who actually communicated enough evidence for Jane to later write *Post Mortem-Journal*, never wanted his true earthly identity to be published, but in the Introduction to this book she makes it clear that from the first communication with her, in 1938, he used his own real name, Colonel T.E. Lawrence (of Arabia). As is well-known, Lawrence took the name of Scott for the last years of his life in order to gain anonymity and distance himself from the notorious events in which he had been involved. It is also well-known that he died in a motor-bike accident – and a graphic account of this is given at the commencement of the book, followed by the circumstances in which he then found himself. He continued to recount his experiences for about twenty years.

Andrew's communications were more personal to her, understandably, and he was able to describe not only his present existence and conditions, but also the circumstances in which he found himself when he first "woke-up".

It is now over 40 years since the first publication of *Testimony of Light*, the beautiful account by Helen Greaves of her communication with her friend, Frances Banks. This is a very well-known 'best seller', a classic of its kind, and a wonderful book for anyone who has been bereaved or is facing their own death. However, the various planes and conditions that are described in that "other world" had been written about many years earlier, and published originally in 1944 by Jane Sherwood. Much of the wisdom communicated by Frances Banks verified that already received by Jane from E.K., from Scott, and from Andrew.

These communicators were sometimes present as a group, and it seems to have been a combination of the communications from all three, though with the main 'received wisdom' emanating from E.K., that led to the content of both *The Four-fold Vision* and *The Country Beyond* (this second book also containing material from an earlier book, *The Psychic Bridge*).

The title of *The Four-fold Vision* refers to the four principles of being: that we are more complex than just body and soul – “a more accurate analysis would prove that we have a purely physical body actuated by a body of sensation, working in co-operation with an emotional form, and these all interpenetrated by a spiritual mode of being.”

These divisions can be more clearly understood as the physical body, easily visible as solid matter; the etheric body, which contains the blue-print (or the facsimile) of the physical; the astral body in which all emotion and feeling is present, the essence of the personality that has built up during the earth life; and, that which contains everything else, the spiritual body.

When a person dies, leaving behind permanently their physical body, there is an interlude in which they find themselves in their etheric body. And, for a while this experiences various states of consciousness, including sleep, until it too is shed leaving the astral body to wake fully on the astral plane. Interestingly the communicator says that it normally takes three days for the etheric body to disengage from the physical, bringing to mind the biblical mention of “on the third day he rose again.” Once on the astral plane “one’s thoughts begin to be much concerned with the life of earth which has been left behind.” The scenes and events now come back vividly in terms of their *feeling* content, and impressions of people, events and acts are now more real and comprehensive than when they were actually experienced. The difference now is that the feelings and reactions of other people are now included – “the effects of deeds on the lives of others must be experienced as intimately as though to do and to suffer the deed were one...where sorrow and wrong have been inflicted they must be felt.” Not only is it justice, it is “redemptive suffering...a purely natural process, set going by the astral body itself which thus works to rid itself of impurity and disease.” This brings to mind the biblical phrase “As through a glass, darkly, but now face to face.”

The astral body is that with which we experience feelings and emotions – often a very unruly part of ourselves when still on the earth plane, and which requires a great deal of work and development. When we are no longer in the etheric body the astral body is the only visible part of us – and that only to others on that plane. Here we exist in a world of thought – we can ‘think’ ourselves from one place to another. We can think of another being with whom we would like to make contact, and, providing that they are on the same plane as ourselves, we can find them. However, if there is not an affinity between us then we cannot make this contact, or at least, not until one or the other of us ‘catches up’. The great spiritual law of ‘Like attracts Like’ pertains here, and, as we develop and grow spiritually we will find ourselves progressing onto higher planes, with more highly evolved beings. And, although time is not measured in the same way as here on earth, it will still seem like ages for this process to be worked through.

The fourth aspect of our being is that of pure spirit, referred to throughout the communications as the ego-body (not to be confused with the Freudian concept of ego), and which, though totally invisible, can stand off from the other bodies and observe their doings objectively. It is the part which differentiates human beings from animals and which can say “I feel happy” or “I feel tired” – in other words it can be aware of itself. It is this ability which causes its feeling of separation from the environment and from other beings, its isolation.

“The other work of the ego-principle is to infuse the whole of experience with the special value we call *meaning*...No clear thought or perception could emerge unless the ego was present to translate all this into terms of meaning.” The meaning, or essence of a thing, is

generated by the ego – otherwise it is just a meaningless object. Communication on the astral planes is by thought, not in actual words, but as *meaning*. Thus there is no language barrier, as meaning is the same to all; its other name is intuition.

Jane found she always knew who of the three communicators was working with her at any one time, as her writing changed completely. She recognised immediately the handwriting of her husband, being able to compare it with the letters she had kept – and the writing changed noticeably when Scott came through, and again with E.K., who had a very sloping style. There are examples in *The Country Beyond* of these greatly varying scripts.

In the last few years of her life, Jane wrote a short though wonderful book, *Peter's Gate: a Book for the Elderly*, in which she calls upon her own wisdom and understanding to offer guidance to those who, being elderly, are either dreading the thought of their own death and possible annihilation, or looking forward towards the final adventure. Instead of closing down one's senses and interest in life she advocates embracing whatever new experience is on offer, even though bodily aches and pains may make life difficult. She even gives a very good healing exercise designed to help a person cope, and rise above, physical and mental pain.

The freedom of being alone, not lonely, at the end of one's life is a gift, although it might take some time to be realised as such. This freedom can begin to take the form of a rediscovering of the self, a recognition of the person one really is – not the person who has “been taking (our) ideas at second-hand”...and “unconsciously adopted someone else's attitudes to politics, religion, books and music.” How often have we noticed that bereaved people, once over the first trauma of their grief, begin to gain a strength and individuality that they did not have before, perhaps because, unwittingly, they allowed their personality to be dominated by another?

Jane Sherwood refers again and again to the concept of the four-fold states of being, and in her advice for the elderly exhorts them to look forward to the expanding of their spirit when they eventually leave the physical body behind. This greatly reflects the writing of Rudolf Steiner who felt that the soul expands vastly once out of the physical body, and then contracts again as it re-incarnates.

It is very likely that all of these books are out of print now, but they can be borrowed from the CFPSS Library. It is also possible that they can be obtained from one of the internet booksellers who specialise in finding out-of-print books e.g. [www.abebooks.co.uk](http://www.abebooks.co.uk)

1. *Peter's Gate: a Book for the Elderly*. CFPSS 1973
2. *The Four-Fold Vision*. Neville Spearman Ltd. 1965
3. *The Country Beyond*. Neville Spearman Ltd. First published 1944.  
(New edition combining *The Psychic Bridge* and *The Country Beyond* 1969)
4. *Post-Mortem Journal*. Neville Spearman Ltd. 1964

## Life between Lives

The idea of an existence between earthly lives is only acceptable to those who can already accept the tenet of re-incarnation. In many religions and cultures this actually appears to constitute a proven fact, and, as we know, it was certainly accepted within Christianity in early times. So, a follow-on from that is the idea of the soul's existence *between*, often, many re-incarnated former lives, and is, perhaps, the next step in understanding the continued existence of the human soul.

Rudolf Steiner, the Austrian philosopher, social reformer, architect, and occultist, felt that a human soul, or spirit, which has inhabited an earthly body and imbued it with a residue of spiritual forces will return to the spiritual atmosphere and enliven it. He talked about human experiences becoming nourishment for the cosmos. He also felt that while we are on earth we prepare for the spiritual world – and then, again, in the spiritual world we prepare again for another life on earth. Life is a continuum.

In one of his lectures he said: 'After death we see, in looking back, what we have done wrong, and say to ourselves: "I have deteriorated as a soul". Then the intention is formed to make good in the next earth life what has been done wrong, in order to regain the standard of spiritual perfection a man should have.'

He taught that on passing into and through the experience we call death, our consciousness is gradually and *vastly expanded*, so that we feel a sense of oneness of consciousness with all things. And then, as we approach the new earth life, that consciousness begins to contract as we enter the new body.

Nowadays - some psychiatrists – in particular Dr. J. Whitton of Toronto – have found that under hypnosis, or past-life regression, clients explore more than just their previous earth lives. They seem to explore the state of *life between lives*. And some, like Michael Newton, have developed a therapy which concentrates on using this spiritual dimension of life between lives. So, if we can accept the concept of re-incarnation, then there must be a time when our soul actually finds itself between lives.

Michael Newton postulates four states of consciousness:

- a. The Beta state is a fully awake conscious state.
- b. Alpha states involve -
  - 1) a light stage which we typically use for meditation;
  - 2) a medium state which is associated for recovering childhood memories and past trauma; and
  - 3) a deeper Alpha state which is used for past life recovery.
- c. The Theta state is the deepest we can go into before losing consciousness, and it is this state that uncovers the area of the superconscious mind that reveals spiritual life between lives activity.
- d. The Delta state is our final deep sleep state.'

During this life between lives therapy it is usual to regress the client back to their mother's womb and then straight back into their most recent previous life. This is so that they can experience their death scene naturally before they enter the spiritual world.

They are helped to do this by the therapist asking them relevant questions, e.g. 'where are you now in relation to your body?' 'What is happening?' 'What are you feeling?' etc.

'When taken through the death experience of one of their previous lives, clients seem to experience the same things which we see reported in the literature on near-death experiences – separation from the body, witnessing activities around the body and in neighbouring vicinities, the tunnel, the encounter with the white light, life review,' etc.

But where those who almost die are instructed to return to complete their current life, his clients continue on to explore what comes next in the *bardo*, as this dimension is called in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (written approx 12 centuries ago).

Michael Newton calls this state of consciousness between lives metaconsciousness.

This is the state that Rudolf Steiner seemed to mean when he spoke of the oneness of consciousness with all things – the expanded consciousness.

It seems to be a heightened state of awareness.

It seems to be beyond time – as we know it.

It seems that everything is happening all at once – a sort of holographic panorama.

It seems to carry a feeling of being more 'real' than earthly existence.

Repeatedly, it has been recognised as our true home.

And, like peak experiences...it can be a glimpse into eternity.

Quotes from people who have experienced it include- "*You've woken me up in an unreal world...Now I know where the true reality lies.*"... "*It's so bright, so beautiful, so serene. It's like going into the sun and being absorbed without any sensation of heat. You go back to the wholeness of everything. I didn't want to come back.*"

Even these expressions do not convey the richness, intensity and beauty of the *bardo* – those who express them always say they cannot do justice to the reality experienced.

*The Tibetan Book of the Dead* states: 'one's environment in the disembodied state is largely a reflection of each person's thought-forms and expectations.' It would seem, therefore, that it is important that we approach our own death with acceptance and, where possible, die in a state of peace: Catholics have the sacrament of Extreme Unction, also designed to bring peace to a dying person.

While it is accepted that this state, of being in life between lives, is a state of being in the now – timeless - it seems that the length of earth time one spends there varies widely. The shortest Whitton encountered was 10 months (in earth time) the longest about 800 years. He says 'the average is about 40 years, though this appears to have been getting shorter over the past three centuries.' (This research has been borne out by other researchers, in particular Dr Helen Wambach, a clinical psychologist.) People spend this time doing different things. At one extreme are those who are unambitious or indifferent to their spiritual development. They spend most of it resting, perhaps because they have had an arduous, difficult or traumatic life and they need a period of solitude and healing before they move on to a sort of orientation process. At the other extreme are those souls who are deeply committed to their evolutionary progress, who spend their time in study of various kinds, preparing for their next life. Mainly, it has been found that this period does include much help, particularly from one's own guide.

Also, it seems as though one meets with one's nearest and dearest. People may well ask 'what about contact with a relative after death – if they have re-incarnated?' Michael Newton has found that, on average, we need about 80% of our own spiritual energy to re-incarnate, but may therefore leave about 20% of our essence, so to speak, behind in the spiritual world, which may be still contactable by mediums etc. This sounds like a very strange concept at first, and may be difficult to 'digest', but there is a more comprehensive account of this theory in Michael Newton's book (details below), and also a lot about energy and light in the spiritual world.

'It has been said that we are able to tap into our entire spiritual energy during times of stress through prayer or meditation.'

It appears that here, in this state of consciousness between lives, one is brought before a sort of panel of judgement, where the soul confronts the truth of the life just lived. Many people who have reported back on this – when under hypnosis or similar therapy – have found themselves before a '*group of wise, elderly, archetypal beings whose job was to assist them in learning lessons from their current life and planning their next incarnation. These beings sometimes take the form of figures from the individual's religious heritage, (such as Christ or Buddha, or Mohammed,) but others see them as wise and loving beings.*' Michael Newton calls them 'elders'. Other people are just aware of a loving but judging presence.

We see *everything* that has happened in our lives.

And while we may not like the new life that is recommended to us, from the heightened perspective we may well recognise its value as a learning device. We may see that we have to return to a life surrounded by old enemies, or suffer great trials – but it is all selected to create the conditions for growth. And (*according to Whitton*) each of us sees what we are getting into before we are reborn.

We, just possibly, might understand a little more about situations in the world where people are starving/persecuted/ ill-treated/ if, before incarnation, it is something they have recognised as a growth area? Or rich/happy/fulfilled etc.? For example, one client said: '*There are people I didn't treat too well in my last life, and I have to go back to the Earth plane again and work off the debt. This time, if they hurt me in return, I'm going to forgive them because all I really want to do is to go back home.*'

Suffering, hardship or trauma does not mean punishment. It can be that as a soul nears the completion of its journeying it elects to experience more difficulties in order to speed up the completion of its course of study. And it is said that these *karmic scripts* are developed in consultation with other souls who will take part in them. (*Another idea to contemplate!*) The choice of one's parents is critical in establishing the themes of one's life – and the timing and place of each birth is vitally important.

All knowledge exists beyond this plane – and outcomes that seem unclear now, are seen as present knowledge in the *bardo*, or metaconsciousness or state between lives.

We may recall St. Paul's often-quoted statement: '*Now I see as in a glass darkly, but then I shall see face-to-face*'

There are many incidences quoted in *Lifecycles* by Christopher Bache – which show how people have come to understand just why certain patterns repeat in their lives – or why they appeared to choose to experience certain events – some very traumatic. 'For those who are

deeply committed to their own evolutionary progress, it is possible to accomplish many lifetimes of work in a single life-cycle...Those who have experienced the planning of their lives in the *bardo* all return with the same insistent message for us... We are solely responsible for who we are and for the circumstances in which we find ourselves at every point in our lives...No matter how difficult or seemingly inexplicable our lives may be, everything in them is there for our own benefit.'

The identity one assumes in the *bardo* appears to be that of the Oversoul with the most recent life emphasized. (The Oversoul is the larger consciousness that incorporates and integrates all the experiences gathered in our many incarnations: that which can see over the whole pattern of our lives, and which guides us to make the choices that we do.)

Michael Newton says: 'Life between Lives therapy is actually a spiritual quest for better self-understanding.' And people sometimes 'have deep experiences of the meaningfulness of the flow of existence, a meaningfulness that fills them with wonder and lifts their vision beyond the horizon of their individual sagas.'

One person said: *'I have been allowed the barest glimpse of levels of creation that are far above anything I can even begin to put into words. I was made to feel that everything we do has meaning at the highest level. Our sufferings are not random: they are merely part of an eternal plan more complex and awe-inspiring than we are capable of imagining.'*

Interestingly, there is a Quaker slant on this: the Quaker, Richard Hubberthorne, was reported as saying, on his death bed in Newgate prison, "...out of this straitness I must go, for I am wound into largeness..." Was he already experiencing the expansion of consciousness?

*References:*

Christopher Bache: *Lifecycles*

Rudolf Steiner: *Aspects of His Spiritual Worldview*

Michael Newton: *Life Between Lives*

Lucy Screechfield McIver: *A Song of Death, Our Spiritual Birth: A Quaker way of Dying* (Pendle Hill pamphlet No. 340)

*(Based on a talk previously given at a QFAS day conference- 10/05/2008)*

## Mediumship: What is it?

Communication with a level of the afterlife, telepathy, or fraud?

This title sounds rather like those examination questions that are termed, *multiple choice*, and usually it is the case that there can only be one correct answer. But in the question under consideration here, it would seem that we can actually tick off, as being correct, each answer 'box' so that mediumship *is* a) communication with a level of the afterlife, b) telepathy, and c) fraud (or it can be). It is certainly true to say that mediumship has, at various times, come under each of these headings and, to some degree, each holds together.

In dealing with the last one first, it is because I want to cover some of the ground over which mediumship has, in the past, and even sometimes today, been considered to be fraudulent, and there have been many cases where it has been proved to be so.

Over the last century or so, there has arisen a rather comic idea of people sitting in a group, or circle, usually in a darkened room, presided over by a heavily bejewelled female medium who purports to be in contact with the loved ones of her sitters. "Are you there, Ethel?", or some such phrase, can be guaranteed to bring snorts of laughter, and probably rightly so, for that sort of question thrown out by the medium usually indicates that some careful and skilful questioning of the sitter has taken place before. At some public meetings, to demonstrate clairvoyance, a medium can be heard to say something along the lines of, "I have a Jim here – can anyone take a Jim?", and, of course, quite a large proportion of any audience can lay claim to a dear departed Jim!

So as far as fraud goes, it seems that there are some who do practise it, even though at some level they *are* capable of true mediumship. This field of work necessitates time spent in meditation, a real integrity, and a certain degree of humility. If someone starts out along those lines, it can often happen that public demand overtakes them, - perhaps fame beckons, fortune even, and the integrity with which one started out can be lost along the way.

I have painted the worst picture first! And, unfortunately, I think it is the one with which most people are familiar. Plays and films which parody mediumship only serve to feed the fear of the unknown which is the greatest enemy of true mediumship.

The records of the Society for Psychical Research contain a great deal of evidence of telepathy, a faculty which it is hard to refute because of the frequency of its occurrence, and "it was soon discovered that telepathy appears to be independent of the law of the inverse square; by this law it should diminish in strength in ratio to the square of the distance between agent and percipient. Evidence suggests that it can work just as clearly from Australia as it can from the next room".<sup>1</sup> This would support the idea that distant, or absent, healing can work, no matter what the physical distance may be, and that this type of mental activity is actually a telepathic one. That distant healing *does*, in many instances, work, is a proven fact, especially "where two or three are gathered" for this purpose. It would seem that the combined telepathic powers of the senders are more efficacious than that of a single sender, or absent healer.

Not only are there many documented instances of telepathy by the SPR, there are also many other written sources which offer compelling evidence of its existence, and also, I believe, there

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Beard. *Survival of Death*. Pilgrim Books. 1966

are often evidences of it in our own personal experience. Instances of telepathy between close relatives especially, are often recounted in personal anecdotes, where it has been noted that someone has experienced the indication that another, often a loved one, has, or is, or even is about to, undergo some sort of traumatic event in their life. These indications, as with most intuitions, rarely come in the form of words, but rather as a kind of *knowing*, and they carry absolute conviction of their integrity, so that the recipient has no doubts about their authenticity. “Thought would come to us purely in its own original mode of meaning and would have no need to pass through the clumsy medium of words”.<sup>2</sup>

Telepathy would therefore seem to be akin to intuitive understanding and is probably developed, to a degree, by those who engage in meditation. This self-discipline may be for the purpose of opening their own mental channels, perhaps with the intention of being able to develop mediumship. However, the more spiritually minded meditator will be doing it for the purpose of obtaining a closer relationship with God – the Universal Life Force, Cosmic Energy, the Holy Spirit, Allah, the Buddha-mind, or whatever is the individual’s concept of the creative Source. But this sort of discipline does carry with it the distinct possibility of opening and developing the intuitive faculties, those, in terms of the chakras or energy centres, of the brow chakra: the energy centre which is activated by most good mediums, consciously or unconsciously. And this may come as a complete surprise to the meditator.

This is a point at which many people seem to stop on their spiritual journey. They find that having got this far in their ability to ‘see’, and become aware of extra-sensory perceptions, they are now side-tracked, so to speak, into an area of clairvoyance, clairaudience, and openness to intuitions of a telepathic nature which can be really exciting and attractive. But the true meditator knows that this is just a part of the journey, and although it may be that they want to develop their clairvoyant faculties, as part of their service to others, both incarnate and discarnate, it would be sad for them if they were to lose sight of their original intention for learning to meditate – that of union with the Highest.

One deeply committed researcher in the field of psychic phenomena talks about *extended telepathy*, which seems to be “the power of acquiring knowledge which has been in the sitter’s mind, but of which he is not at that moment conscious”. He goes on to say “that one cannot exclude the possibility that anything whatever which a person has ever thought or known is still lying submerged in his or her unconscious or subliminal mind, and can pass thence to a medium without the owner of this knowledge being aware of it. Theoretically this must include the most casual scraps of information, gleaned only perhaps from an odd glance at a stranger’s newspaper many years before.”<sup>3</sup> A real sceptic could say that if this is the case then extended telepathy constitutes an unconscious type of fraud on the part of the medium; but it could also be argued that any medium with this amount of extended intuitive ability will probably only be using it at this level in conjunction with a true exercise of mediumship.

It would seem therefore that telepathy is an important part of a medium’s skills, one which s/he integrates, without really thinking about it, with direct communication from discarnate sources, or spirits.

This aspect, of direct connection to a level of the afterlife, aided either consciously or unconsciously by the use of telepathy, is something which those who have experienced it know,

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<sup>2</sup> Jane Sherwood. *The Fourfold Vision*. Neville Spearman Ltd. 1965

<sup>3</sup> Paul Beard. *ibid*.

without any equivocation, to be genuine. Fraudulent mediums and mediumship there have been, it is true, but genuine mediumship, genuine psychic communication which is usually by telepathy from a discarnate source, carries with it a complete and utter conviction, and knowledge of its truth and integrity. It seems to 'come in' at a different angle, or into another area of our brain; and when we consider that science has told us that we only use about 20% of our brain's potential at present, it seems likely that communication of any sort with different levels, or dimensions, will therefore find an inlet somewhere in the other 80%!

Most people, even theologically minded people (and perhaps especially those, in some orthodox quarters), would not find it easy to equate the soul with psychic occurrences, so it is worth having a look at the definition of the word 'psychic'. It comes from 'psyche' the Greek word for 'soul', so it follows that psychic is an adjective which means 'of the soul', or 'soul-like'. A dictionary definition states: "psyche, the human mind or soul" and from the same source: "psychic, a) outside the possibilities defined by natural laws, as mental telepathy, b) (of a person) sensitive to forces not recognised by natural laws etc."<sup>4</sup> Freud stated, "Psychical treatment (hence) means 'treatment of the soul...by measures which influence above all and immediately the soul of man'.<sup>5</sup> So "psychoanalysis thus literally means 'analysis of the soul'".<sup>6</sup>

Where there is a division between the usual everyday functioning of the mind, with its often material pre-occupations, and the still small voice of the soul, or psyche, there is an alienation and a lack of harmony and healing in the personality. Those whose mental faculties have been awakened to the extra-sensory perceptions and openings that can be developed through meditation and contemplative prayer are often more integrated, balanced, and *happier* people because of it. A true medium who *knows* that there is an afterlife will not fear death, even though s/he may well be naturally apprehensive about the manner of its coming.

One of the criticisms one often hears about the level of some communications is their apparent triviality. To the researcher it can often seem to be the case that communications and messages appear to be rather inconsequential and even silly. But it must be borne in mind that what might appear to be total silliness to one person, perhaps a message of seemingly absolute banality, does, in fact, constitute clear and definite proof of the identity and validity of the communicator. A demonstration of this occurred while I was on a short course to develop my own mediumistic ability. I was aware of a young man who I tried hard to describe to a sitter. It was difficult. I gave as much as I could of a physical description, and also the young man's hobby, which appeared to be drawing, because he was showing me a sketch-book and pencils. But he was not recognised by the sitter. Just as I was about to leave it at that, a picture, and the words "tomato soup" flashed into my mind, and so I spoke them. The sitter almost bounced out of his seat. He said, "Ah, I now know who this is; he practically *lived* on tomato soup!"

So the acceptance and verification on the part of the recipient of the most unprepossessing evidence could be considered to be the most *convincing* proof of the genuineness of afterlife communication. It is often something known only to the communicator and the sitter, or recipient – possibly a very private nickname, or a happy shared memory - that really clinches the evidence, not only of the fact of the existence of the departed one, but also the reliability of the medium and the proof of direct connection to a level of the afterlife.

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<sup>4</sup> Collins English Dictionary

<sup>5</sup> B.Bettelheim. Freud and Man's Soul. Penguin Books. 1989

<sup>6</sup> Michael Jacobs. Still Small Voice. SPCK. 1982

And it is when we have experienced just such a communication ourselves that we find that we are not just believing and hoping, but really and irrefutably *knowing*.

While it is wonderful and spiritually stimulating to receive teachings from a higher level, which are often channelled through those suitable to be used for this purpose, it can be argued, at least by the sceptically minded, that this type of teaching might just be the deeper workings of the mind of the vehicle or person supposedly receiving the impartations, rather than from a discarnate source; and although spiritually uplifting, and/or illuminating, it may not be a guarantee of mediumship in its usual context.

It can be very difficult for a discarnate to mentally put across, *by telepathy*, an indication of who s/he is, for, by not being in a physical body any more, they have to visualise themselves how they were, and will often show themselves either as they were at death, for purposes of recognition, or as if they were in the prime of life. And they will also try to 'send across' something about themselves which will help the sitter to recognise them, even if it seems mundane. As it has been generally accepted that our minds remain at the same level when we pass the barrier between physical life and spiritual life, (no mention here of death!), we can only remain at the same intellectual level that pertained in that physical life: we don't suddenly become all-knowing and wise, though it is believed that we know ourselves more clearly. For many people, this is considered to be the 'judgement': we judge ourselves, "...that we shall become aware of what we have made ourselves, because we shall be in a situation where the external physical constraints are lifted, the lid is off, and we will know ourselves as we really are."<sup>7</sup> Perhaps this is the flash-back over their lives that people who have nearly died are said to experience.

We cannot really know for certain what awaits us, although there are many accounts and channelled scripts from the afterlife. One such beautifully written book puts the arrival there in these words: "There is no compulsion, of course, to review one's past life on earth as soon as one arrives and the new life here begins. Some take a long while to tackle the problem. They dread to see the *effects* of mistakes and failures...."<sup>8</sup>

However it is, there is often the desire on the part of the departed soul, to communicate with those still on earth for one reason or another: perhaps to apologise for poor or violent behaviour towards them while on earth, or to thank them, but often to say that they are still around, they still exist albeit in a different dimension, and that they still love them. Messages such as these form the greater part of a medium's work, and while seemingly unsatisfactory to researchers and students of the afterlife, and those who think that deeper and more spiritual wisdom should be available, nevertheless they are totally acceptable to the bereaved person who may have come to seek some evidence of the survival of their dearly departed.

When someone dies it seems to be an awful prospect that all their knowledge, wisdom, insights, character, memories, hopes and dreams could all be extinguished in a moment. What a waste! And yet there are many who believe this to be what happens. One of the reasons for discarnates

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Perry. *Psychic Studies*. Aquarian Press. 1984

<sup>8</sup> Helen Greaves. *Testimony of Light*. Neville Spearman Ltd. 1977 (first published 1969)

working so hard to ‘get through’ is to put right this idea: to help those still here to accept that life does go on albeit in a different dimension, in an altered state. And it is because of this altered state that communication is so difficult for most of us. On earth, and in our physical bodies, we exist in a very heavy material kind of vibration; the vibrations of those who have moved on are much lighter and faster. And beyond that the vibrations get higher and higher, faster and faster. So, to communicate with us, the discarnates have to slow down their rate of vibrations to blend in, while a medium is able, in an altered state of consciousness usually, to raise his/her own vibrations to meet them.

Presumably, if a spirit has made a great deal of progress, yet still wishes to make contact, this is why some are only visible as light, as a patch, or ball, of sheer vibrating light. It is just not possible for them to bring down their vibrations enough so that they can be viewed in any recognisable form. This is where the *essence* of them is experienced as the only evidence of their presence. And we all have our own essence, or soul: that part of us which is more real and recognisable than our physical bodies. When Jesus appeared to his disciples at different times after his crucifixion and resurrection he seems to have taken different forms, yet all were recognisable as the same soul essence of him.

The original ‘multiple choice’ question posed at the start of this article, therefore, does seem to have three correct answers. Mediumship *is* direct communication to a level of the afterlife, and, in fact, to various different levels depending on the spiritual development and integrity of the medium, and the ability that s/he may have in interpreting and differentiating what is being given or apprehended. No amount of coercing on his/her part will ensure that profound and spiritually meaningful information will come through, unless this has been developed with the guidance and love of a highly evolved spirit. Most messages will be fairly mundane, even though often charged with love, but the recipients will be able to recognise and greet joyfully the communicators.

Telepathy is involved to a great extent in the operation of mediumship because this method of communication does not necessarily involve the use of language. Although human beings may try to influence each other telepathically using words, that which is communicated from a discarnate to a medium is usually a thought-transference of *meaning*. Thus a discarnate who, in earthly life, spoke only French or some other language, would be able to influence a medium, whose only language was English, with the essence of the meaning, and with no language problems between them. But it is only telepathy at this level that is acceptable in mediumship. If information is received, by the medium or clairvoyant, from the mind of the sitter, intentionally or unintentionally, then that can never be classed as true mediumship.

And as for fraud? Well, it still goes on, and probably always will. But this should not preclude serious researchers into mediumship from continuing to follow the golden thread which is a veritable life-line between ‘this world and the next’.

## Unconditioned Mind

Recently I was invigilating for a disabled youngster taking a GCSE exam. His brain was totally functional – as much as any other sixteen-year old's brain is totally functional! His body, in a wheel-chair, was very frail, in the grip of some degenerative disease, so he needed help with his writing. As he sat and thought about his answers before dictating them to me, I was very conscious of how he would appear in the Mind of God, which has created everything. He would be totally perfect. But something had happened in the physical process between, leaving his body in the grip of disease.

### The Perfect Pattern

His blue-print still exists in the Divine Mind, in Thought, but is not evident to our earthly senses. Any blue-print, any pattern which has been thought, and perhaps is constantly being thought into existence in the Mind of God, will be perfect – the design is always perfect. That Mind which pushes forward into Life everything that exists, that ever has existed, and ever will exist, constitutes the substance which in its unconditioned state knows no good or evil. Joel Goldsmith often refers to God as Unconditioned Mind – that which creates always according to the Divine pattern – and then, even when that pattern becomes distorted in some way it is still part of the Unconditioned Mind. Even when what was originally created in a certain form in Mind has become diseased, destroyed, disintegrated, deformed in some way it is still part of Itself, only in another guise. That Fountain of Life contains All – both good and bad, light and dark. Unconditioned Mind contains all being and beingness – It contains the storm, whirlwind and flood, the earthquake, volcano and fire; It contains poverty and riches, illness and good health; It contains all the changing seasons, all the aeons of time, all the stars, planets and universes. It is the Fountain of all Life – and is the consciousness of all things, mineral, vegetable and animal, as well as spiritual.

### Ever-Changing Yet Static

We could say that Mind is continuous, ever-changing – and there are some schools of thought that feel that God is still evolving, still in a process of evolution. This is worthy of consideration, even though at first it may appear abhorrent. If the world as we know it, as matter, is still evolving then it may be quite acceptable that spirit, or Spirit is also evolving?

And yet, Mind, Spirit, Consciousness is also static and somewhat predictable. It doesn't behave erratically, or haphazardly: it doesn't make human beings or animals give birth to anything other than their own kind – when one plants a rose cutting it doesn't grow into a beetroot!

I recently came across a lovely name for God – (which is a term which causes hang-ups for some people, as they have mental images of some enormous white-bearded giant in the sky)- it was Great Other Dimension (G.O.D.) and was used by Maurice Fullard-Smith in his excellent little book, *This is It: the art of happily going nowhere*. Thinking of God in this way – Great Other Dimension - seems to give It a vastness which is more appropriate at least to our limited imaginings than anything we might have used before. And I find a similarity in this approach to the way in which orthodox Judaism does not mention the Supreme Being, but only refers to It as G-d.

We all have our own ways of naming the Power that lives and moves and has Its being in us and as us. But it may be helpful for some to come to an understanding by thinking of It as Unconditioned Mind, even although the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* reminds us that ‘by love can He be gotten and holden, but by thinking, never.’

*This Is It; the art of happily going nowhere* by Maurice Fullard Smith. Darton Longman and Todd; 95pp. £5.95 ISBN 0-232-52693-1

*The Thunder of Silence* by Joel Goldsmith. Harper San Francisco, 192 pp.  
ISBN 0-06-250342-1

*The Cloud of Unknowing* by unknown author. Penguin Classics.

### **Single-Mindedness.**

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” *Matt 6:22*

Single-mindedness can often be a rather controversial value, if indeed it is a value at all. Is it a quality, something which a person might aspire to in the hopes that worldly success, fame or fortune might be the outcome of such a personal discipline? Can it sometimes become an obsession? Or is it a drawback, perhaps a personality fault – something which hampers one’s way in life, a sort of one-track, blinkered approach which prevents one being able to have a more balanced open view? Certainly we can think of people who, without this aspect to their character, and their life-long dedication, would never have produced the great music, art, literature, and scientific and medical discoveries of past and present centuries. So being single-minded can be a great and marvellous asset.

Another term for this single-mindedness can be ‘purity of intention’. If one allows opportunity of expression for the over-riding compulsion which brings forth the creative spirit and gives it full rein, then surely the intention is pure, is single, is concentrated for good. At least in most cases. One can think of many instances in which single-mindedness can actually reflect an intention which is not pure, not for the good of mankind, and which, in fact, is positively evil!

If, as I believe, everyone is born with their own personal pattern - a sacred contract (to use the expressive term used as the title of the book by Caroline Myss on the same idea\*) - then the sooner we can realise that individual pattern, that reason for our own existence, then the sooner we can bring into fulfilment the life work we are meant to do: the meaning for our own especial existence.

Fortunate are those who, being aware of their own life’s pattern at an early age, can then hold fast to it, and with purity of intention, can follow that path without being side-tracked into ways that are not relevant for themselves. Most of us do not find that reason for our existence until later on, perhaps in mid-life (when a sort of mid-life crisis occurs, and we find our true path); and some only find it in older age. And even then, how very easy it is to let

other unnecessary concerns, other possibly trivial pursuits side-line us into using our energies wastefully. Or we might find ourselves labouring under some sort of guilt complex which dictates that we should not spend our life doing what *feels* right, what gives us a feeling of satisfaction and fulfilment, or what gives us a ‘buzz’, because we should be doing what we, often mistakenly, feel that others *think* we should be doing.

When we look forward to doing our work, when we go out in the morning with a feeling of anticipation that the day will be rewarding and fulfilling, then we may well be doing what we are patterned or programmed to do. But when we face each day with dread, boredom or fear then we need to start asking what we should be about! Obviously there are many things we can be involved in which are very worthy in themselves, but they may well not be what we are really ‘called upon’ to fulfil.

Keeping that essential purity of intention is only possible if one resolutely keeps it in the forefront of one’s mind and learns to listen to the essential leadings of the Inward Voice, the still small voice which guides us to the life which is meant for each one of us. Only then can we really fulfil our glorious potential, and do that which we were meant to do, and *be* that which we were meant to *be* – the expression of God.

In the words of St Teresa of Avila –  
God has no body on earth but yours,  
No hands but yours, no feet but yours...

\* *Sacred Contracts* by Caroline Myss. Bantam Books 2002. ISBN: 0-553-81494-X

### **The Placebo Effect, and the Power of Intention**

Is popping pills the answer to all our ills? There has been a lot of press coverage in recent months about the high dependency on medication, especially for conditions such as depression. Many anti-depressants today are selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), which appear to boost the amount of serotonin, the brain chemical associated with mood. There is evidence to support the idea that, in cases of severe depression, these drugs do work, and are beneficial.

However, there is also good evidence that placebos work too. There seems to be a connection between the *idea* that something will do us good, and the actual fact of it’s doing so. It would seem that it’s not that anti-depressants don’t work but that placebos can work just as well. Interesting! It points to the old saying ‘It’s all in the mind’. We *expect* the pill to work, and so, it does. Perhaps this is not always the case, and there will be many people whose lives have been, and are, blighted, because they have been unable to find the right medication for their condition. But with a mind-set such as ‘This pill *will* work, I know it will. I have faith in it’ then we must surely be more than half-way there. Conversely, with an underlying feeling that ‘This pill probably won’t do much good, I don’t really have faith in anything helping me’, then it’s unlikely that there will be any improvement at all.

So how linked is our expectation of what a pill can do for us to a positive affirmation such as ‘I am expecting this to make me whole again?’

A current best-seller in the non-fiction lists is *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne (see Book Reviews), in which the whole message of the book is that whatever we ask for and *expect* to have or receive, will be given us. Jesus said: “Ask and ye shall receive” sometimes quoted as “Ask and *believe* you have it and you shall receive.” This puts the onus squarely onto our own shoulders, so to speak. We become responsible, almost, for the results not only of the pills we might be taking, but also for fulfilling our own requests.

The results of drug trials for anti-depressants have proved ambiguous, apparently. A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* concluded that there is a bias toward the publication of positive results, while negative results tend to be left unpublished. Be that as it may, I have no grouse about anti-depressants because I know several people whose lives have been completely turned around for the better once they started taking them. And, of course, there’s no way of knowing whether results would have been different if they had, unbeknown to them, been given placebos.

Any pill, or potion, represents hope to one who is in the depths of despair, or suffering pain of any sort. Studies with other conditions have also proved that placebos can work e.g. with irritable bowel syndrome, headaches caused by stress, and pain. They can’t cure diabetes, or arthritis, or cancer, but perhaps they can alleviate the side effects of these conditions. They can’t mend broken limbs, but perhaps can alleviate the associated pain. The main requirement is that the patient puts their trust in them, much as a person who puts their trust in their physician or surgeon is likely to make better progress than one who doubts their skills.

The positive statement, that life is going to improve, that illness is going to depart, that financial problems are going to resolve themselves, that relationships are going to mend, is wonderful - if we can hold to it through thick and thin. And, in so many cases, with this sort of willpower, many, if not all, situations *do* improve, do look better when viewed from this angle. But, many would agree, it’s sheer hard work to keep this going all the time – we’re not all Pollyannas. We have to *teach* ourselves the facility of expectation, and keep on learning it over and over again, until, as negative and untoward events happen in our lives, we can step aside and think along the lines of ‘Ah, but I won’t allow this in my life/body/relationship/job – and I expect and *know* that everything will turn out right’.

The keys are expectation and intention. And whether we want to change things by using these alone, or by taking pills as well, whether they are chemical based, homeopathic, or placebos, it seems that the greatest power we have over ourselves resides within our own minds.

TW – Summer 08

## **‘The Unforgiving Minute’**

*‘...If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run –  
Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it,  
And – which is more – you’ll be a Man my son!’*

What a lot of wisdom flowed from the pen of Rudyard Kipling when he wrote this lovely poem! The well-known verses of ‘If’ engender a feeling of encouragement, strength, integrity and - well, uprightness! But the last few lines also seem to urge us to make sure we fill every available moment of our time with *doing* things – being useful, being creative, being busy. We mustn’t waste any of the precious life and time we each have and risk leaving any minute unoccupied. Otherwise that minute will not come again, hence its supposed unforgivingness.

While I do agree with his stance that *‘If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you... Or, being lied about don’t deal in lies’* etc., perhaps his ideas about dreams and thoughts, and not making them our ‘master’ or our ‘aim’ need more consideration. While we would be very unwise to let dreams and thoughts rule us, we should certainly be able to give them space in our lives. For from them flows the richness of each individual character– that facet of ourselves that indeed makes us Man (or Woman!). Without giving time to thought, to contemplation, to day-dreaming, we may rapidly become automatons, only capable of rushing from day to day in the most unthinking way.

Some people feel that sitting in meditation or contemplation is a waste of time – they feel they should be up and doing something. And it doesn’t help when thoughts about what they *could* be doing seem to crowd in and jeopardise the peace and calm that just sitting quietly can produce. Most of us are very good at making sure we have things to fill all our minutes, throughout the day. Even sitting down and relaxing we might want the radio on, or the TV, or take the chance to read a book. All that’s OK, of course, but we’re still filling each minute – each unforgiving minute. We may be throwing away the chance to open up our awareness, to let our minds become receptacles for inspiration, or intuition. This won’t happen if we’re concerned about keeping our minds occupied all the time, as though without anything happening we’re some sort of lesser being for a while. Quite the contrary! Let us be still, be quiet in our minds – ‘be cool in thy mind’ in George Fox’s words – be ready to receive and *know*. Let’s have a few minutes in our lives which are not filled ‘with sixty seconds’ worth of distance run’. Let’s acknowledge that every minute that we *don’t* fill is as valuable, or more so, than those we do. And ours will still be ‘the Earth and everything that’s in it’ – and we’ll be no less a Man – or Woman – anyway!

## Abiding in the Shadow

Probably the idea of being in shadow isn't one that appeals to most of us who, in one way or another, and through one spiritual discipline or another strive to be in the Light. As a Quaker, I believe that the Light of God exists, and shines through everyone and everything. Therefore this concept of abiding in the shadow - even of the Almighty - may seem to be a contradiction, a paradox.

If we can let go of any concept of 'Light' as being anything to do with daylight, or sunlight or any sort of artificial light, and sit and meditate or pray in the middle of the night in pitch darkness – we are still in the Light. Our total existence is in the Light: we might think of it as the Light of Consciousness, the Light of Awareness, or, as I think of it, the Light of Beingness. Without Beingness – without the I AM – there is nothing, no existence whatever. For want of a better word we use 'light' to describe this Beingness.

Often in sending distant or absent healing to someone we 'hold them in the Light', but, in fact, they have never been out of it. Beingness and Consciousness, surrounds and permeates them – and *is* them.

“My God in Whom I Trust”

So, how can we equate this understanding with the lovely lines in Psalm 91: v1-2 “He who abides in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, ‘my refuge and my fortress; my God in whom I trust’”?

It's a very human property to feel the need for protection, to feel the need of another on whom to rely, to trust. When we turn to someone for help, for support, for strength, we are, in fact, turning to the part of that person that is divine, that is the Light of Beingness. We are turning to them for the “shelter of the Most High...the shadow of the Almighty”.

C.G. Jung recognised and taught about the shadow side of all of us: that part of each one of us that, conscious or unconscious (and this is what it usually is), is part of the totality of our human nature. The persona, or mask, that we present to the world, is how we each want to be seen, and, in most cases, it is not a falseness but something which, through our own development, through environmental factors, and sometimes through our expectations, both by ourselves and what we feel others expect of us, has built up around and in us. And often, we can feel quite comfortable with that 'persona', and can feel the trust and respect of other people with whom we come into contact. But, underneath it all and, more often than not, in an area of our psyche of which we are not consciously aware, there are aspects of ourselves that we would never want anyone else to know about.

Not for nothing did the early Church make such a lot out of the seven deadlies! What are they? Anger, avarice, envy, gluttony, lust, pride and sloth. It takes only a moment of consideration to realise that each of these aberrations from the *expected norm of goodness* originates in our minds and at a deeper level than that of the everyday. Each of these has the potential to become a dark force within us, and, if not consciously recognised and dealt with appropriately, will be suppressed, and lurk destructively in our unconscious mind. This is what Jung meant by the shadow side of us. In biblical terms we could say that we are all a

mixture of good and evil; in psychological terms we have expression and suppression. In childish terms we can be nice or nasty! But we don't always know about our nastiness.

### Integrating the darkness into Light

If we are unable to integrate and deal with these darker forces then they often find ways of making themselves known. There are schools of thought which hold that unrecognised negative attitudes will manifest in physical symptoms. There may well be some truth in this sometimes, but it can be very injurious for someone who has an incurable disease to have to contemplate that they brought it on themselves. I do not think this is the case. One way in which this unconscious layer of our mind, this shadow, can express itself and be brought into conscious recognition is through dreams, even nightmares.

The study of dreams highlights the fact that, in *most* cases, people who appear in our dreams are aspects of ourselves. They can represent parts of ourselves that need to be looked at, recognised, accepted and dealt with in some way.

It would seem, therefore, that our unconscious mind has an intelligence of its own, existing alongside, yet separately, from our own thinking, reasoning logical mind. It acts as a sort of safety valve, warning us, alerting us to ourselves – to our faults, to our weaknesses, to our fears. It also sends us messages, through dreams, of guidance, solutions to problems, warnings. There are many instances, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, of people receiving messages through dreams. Often we are told, "...and God spoke to...in a dream." It seems that in earlier times it was accepted that dreams could indeed be direct messages from God – or, as some might prefer to think of it nowadays, the Higher Consciousness. John Sanford, in his excellent book, *Dreams*, says, 'Dreams are the Voice of God.'

If we take note of what we are given in our dreams – the ones that remain in our memory long after we have dreamed them, not the passing images and flashes that relate to our daily lives and which are forgotten even before we awake or very shortly after – reflection on them might yield deeper understanding of what this shadow side of our psyche is trying to tell us. We would find that, after all, we are receiving strength, guidance, support, shelter and, perhaps an old-fashioned word now, succour. We could indeed, find ourselves 'abiding in the shadow of the Almighty'.

NV – Jan 2005

## **A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose**

Eckhart Tolle, published by Michael Joseph/Penguin Group. ISBN 0-718-14810-X £14.99 hardback.

This book teaches us what we all, at a very deep level, already know: that we are all part of the One, that we are all part of each other in Being. Being is Eckhart Tolle's word for what most people call God.

Many other books attempt to teach the same, but Tolle's simple, direct and very readable way of getting across this perennial wisdom touches the parts that 'others don't reach'. How simple and fulfilling our lives would be without the demanding presence of our own ego, which, even at its most unassuming and philanthropic level, can still keep us in a state of separation from Presence. And yet, that Presence is our very self, our innermost essence, which given space and welcome will fill us, use us, and function through us.

Our only real purpose here is to awaken - to realise the Presence. As Tolle says: 'When you recognise the unconscious in you, that which makes the recognition possible is the arising consciousness, is awakening'. The only way in which we can become fully conscious of our own unconsciousness, our own Beingness, is to dwell in the present moment, the Now; to become fully aware of whatever we are doing, or not doing, in the present moment – because that moment is actually Eternity.

A shift in one's own awareness– an ability to step back and observe one's own thoughts, emotions and reactions is the beginning of the journey into Being. And once started it cannot be retraced – only the time it takes is up to the traveller – and time itself does not exist except as an outer perception.

This book will either 'change your state of consciousness or it will be meaningless'. If you are already on a journey into Self-Realisation then it will certainly be the book for you.

NV – Autumn 06

## **All Good Gifts Around Us...**

*“Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday Saturday too.  
One two three four five six seven days,  
Every day diff'rent and every day new!”*

I love this little song which my five year old granddaughter sings, accompanied by a vigorous nod of the head for every stressed syllable. Apart from watching her little red head bobbing vigorously, I love the sentiment which the song expresses – the newness and delight of every day – the positivity and joy of being, of life.

When a person is suffering from depression it's often very difficult to give them something to focus their thoughts on, some positive way of seeing the world. But, I have found that, occasionally, just suggesting that each day they try to find one thing which is beautiful, awe-inspiring, or just interesting – and then to write it down in a note-book can bring some relief. Once they get into the way of doing this they often find more than just one thing. At the end of the week they can look back and recall all the things that they have noticed. Perhaps it was just the light glowing through the petal of a flower, perhaps it was a piece of music that lifted their thoughts just for a few moments, or a sunset, or perhaps it was someone's friendly smile. Each thing that is noticed can be regarded as a gift. I do believe that even amid the greyness a sufferer can find some colour in life.

For those of us who are not depressed, but who, perhaps, experience the highs and lows of everyday life, there are gifts abundant all day long! From the moment we open our eyes in the morning and see the sun, or the rain, snow or hail, – and see the garden outside, or the road, or even the annoying brick wall that faces us – we are experiencing the gift of life, and of sight, and hearing, and of the seasons with all their changes. I have a blind friend, and she talks of seeing things – she sees people and places – she has the gift of imagination, which we all have too.

Lesson 315 of *A Course in Miracles* says: *'Each day a thousand treasures come to me with every passing moment. I am blessed with gifts throughout the day, in value far beyond all things of which I can conceive. A brother smiles upon another and my heart is gladdened. Someone speaks a word of gratitude or mercy, and my mind receives this gift and takes it as its own'*. Even more, lesson 343 states: *'The mercy and the peace of God are free.'* Free gifts!

Other, perhaps more concrete, gifts are the Arts – music, poetry, great literature. We can easily appreciate these as gifts and inspirations and evidences of abundance. However, it is just a step further to recognise that the real gift here is the ability to appreciate these finer things.

Abundance is Life. It is the constant creation of all living things, all life as we know it, of food and sustenance, of water and air. And the concept of all of creation exists in the Divine Mind, outside time and space, continually there in the form of Idea. In the middle of Winter we may not see any roses growing – but the idea of 'rose' is always there, and when environmental conditions are right for it the rose will grow and bloom again. Everything exists in Divine Abundance – and in its perfect state, forever, in Eternity. The blue-print, or pattern, of everything is held constantly in the Divine Mind, in infinite Awareness, in Consciousness, ready to burst forth when conditions for its expression are right.

But it is within our own concept of earthly time that we appreciate the daily newness of abundance – the gift of “Every day diffrent, and every day new”.

NV May/June 2007

## Facing the Dragon

Henry Thomas Hamblin writes, “To deny the power of an evil thought is to destroy it” and “...by denials it is possible to eradicate age-long beliefs and thus remove their evil results from life”.\*

The collective unconscious is strong and full of the stuff of myths and legends which contain many fears, repressions and thought-patterns that are inherited from time immemorial, If we do not discern those that are positive and progressive tools for the soul from those that are soul-destroying we will not make spiritual progress.

*‘How should we be able to forget those ancient myths that are at the beginning of all peoples: the myths about dragons that at the last moment turn into princesses; perhaps all the dragons of our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us once beautiful and brave. Perhaps everything terrible is in its deepest being something helpless that wants help from us.*

*Rainer Maria Rilke*

*Letters to a Young Poet*

We need to know and recognise our own particular dragon, and apprehend it when it leaves its den and begins to make itself visible in our minds. It can manifest as thoughts of hatred, fear, resentment, jealousy and many other negative attitudes. While it has a strong power over our emotional life we may be quite unable to see what it is doing – what is happening to us. But it is usually very obvious to other people, and often affects their lives too in unpleasant ways. This is something we do not like to recognise – it is unacceptable that our inmost negative thoughts should have such intimations for others.

### Transmutation

So, recognising that dragon within – that part of us that takes the first line of defence and sees itself as the ‘goodie’ and others as ‘baddies’ – is to take the first step towards a transmutation of thought. It is to remove the judgemental side of our character to one side, and to allow acceptance to come to the forefront.

Acceptance, of course, is not the same as denial. To deny that certain things exist is almost too simplistic. We are all human and, having been given free-will, can express ourselves in many ways, both so-called good and so-called evil. Free-will is a divine gift of the Creator and carries with it a responsibility to choose wisely and with compassion for our fellows. So, we do need to work at overcoming evil, or negativity, in our thoughts.

One way of coping with our inner dragon is to make friends of it! This immediately removes the main stumbling block, which is fear. We see it, and ourself, for what it is: a mentality based on a self-imposed concept of being a victim of life’s circumstances, which consequently uses a sort of striking out with the only defence the sub-conscious knows – self-destroying thoughts.

Yes, we can face and make friends with our dragon, acknowledging that as soon as we tolerate and then allow our negative, harmful thoughts to disintegrate, their subtle power will be lost. Rather than fearing our sub-conscious dragon, we can, in effect, humour it, acknowledge its existence and then find ways of using it to our spiritual advantage.

## Becoming a ‘watcher’

We can only do this when we become ‘watchers’. The sub-conscious, which is holding onto dark thoughts, possessively, is afraid of the light of the conscious mind – afraid to divulge its secrets because it knows they will be washed away in that light. While these thoughts are allowed to rankle and fester they can take charge of the emotional aspect, (or emotional body), of us and blind us to the daylight of consciousness. They take over and appear to become our whole self. But, once we can step aside mentally and watch what is happening in our own minds we are well on the way to being able to control the sub-conscious dragon, to first accepting its presence with a degree of tolerance, and then, in the words of HTH, “By the persevering use of denials and affirmations the mind can be renewed...the sub-conscious mind cleansed and trained to direct life’s forces towards a manifestation of God’s Perfect Idea.”

However, I do not think we can just deny evil, unpleasant thoughts; though we can perhaps affirm their opposite and gradually “thought by thought” we can make progress. But a way in which we can effectively process our inner unacceptable thoughts is to realise that we may be holding onto past issues, past situations and hurts that can rear their ugly, painful heads at the slightest opportunity, and to accept that they did actually happen – no denials on our part will make them disappear – but that we can learn to view them as a part of our life’s pattern, staging posts on the map of our life; that they are memories now and only have the power that we give them in the present. Again, as HTH writes, “Within you is the Power...”

As you think, so you are.

\* *The Way of the Practical Mystic – Lesson X* by Henry Thomas Hamblin

NV – July 2005

## The Wee Small Hours of the Morning...

‘In the wee small hours of the morning/that’s the time I miss you most of all...’ ends the well-known song, memorably sung by Frank Sinatra. It could as easily conclude with ‘that’s the time I worry most of all’, because it’s probably true that most of us have experienced emotions of fear, dread, or despair that can seem overwhelming in those wee small hours – feelings that during the rest of the day we seem to be able to manage and keep under control. But at that time when we are at our most vulnerable, perhaps with no-one to discuss things, our problems loom large, and can seem even larger than Life itself. We literally cannot see the wood for the trees.

But could this stark presentation be considered, in some way, as a gift? It is here in the depths of our anguish, fear and desolation that we are actually given the opportunity to face our problems, whatever they may be. And, facing up to our most difficult circumstances, literally turning our whole attention towards them, is the first and most vital step towards solving or coping with them.

Often, however, our instinct for mental self-preservation will conjure up ways in which we can push aside, rationalise, or, as many of us like to think, ‘rise above it’. We all know that often we worry about things which in a few days or weeks, or even months’ time, will have become history. By that time there will be other things to concern us. So, seeing things in perspective certainly helps in some situations.

But what about the really big things? How can we face up to and put in perspective things like bereavement, terminal illness, chronic pain, crippling debts, difficult relationships from which there seems no escape? Well, we can face them, own them, accept them and then, mentally stepping aside, we may be able to look at ourselves as though we were looking at another person. How could we help that person? How could we present the problem in a different light? What strategy or coping mechanism might we be able to suggest that would bring that other person (ourselves!) into a position where their life could be experienced on a happier level?

Seeing our own lives in perspective gives a wider view of the whole – gives, perhaps, a God’s eye view. If we can bring ourselves to see the problem, circumstance, or situation as only a *part* of our total life, rather than as dominating the whole of it, then we do indeed, start to get it into perspective. We may then begin to be able to see the ‘building blocks’ that are creating the person we are. Might it be that going through certain experiences is necessary for our inner growth, enabling us to become more like the person we are meant to be? Who knows? But attempting to cultivate an overview of our own lives may help us to see a pattern emerge. It may also help us to see that we often cause our recurring problems by our own repetitive behaviour.

Once we can recognise, and admit, that we need help with our difficulty we may have to work to overcome our hesitation (or pride?) about asking for it. In the so-called western world we are fortunate that we live now in a society and time when there is help for practically all situations. There are people who are skilled in dealing with the very problems that we find so daunting, so hopeless, so private and personal. Help *is* out there, for the asking.

So, there’s the key. Ask! ‘Ask and it shall be given you’ doesn’t necessarily mean that we will actually get what we ask for. More than likely we will receive what is right for us at the time. But, taking the decision to ask for help is almost like off-loading the problem onto sturdier shoulders than our own. There is great truth in the old saying ‘A problem shared is a problem halved’. It doesn’t matter whether you ask for help from a Higher Power, that which you think of as God, or from a friend or wise counsellor, or from one of the many self-help groups that are available. I truly believe that no-one has to struggle alone. And when this help is to hand, we should accept it, use it, be grateful for it and let our lives move on accordingly.

If, at the end of the day, the only help is to become aware that all that can be achieved is acceptance, then that, in itself, has great healing power.

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.*

NV – Sept 07

## More Precious than Gold...

How much value do we place on our own minds?

Most of us tend to regard our material possessions as having a certain intrinsic value; some of us see a value in our bodies and the wisdom of keeping them healthy and in good working order. But how many of us ever consider the content, health and intelligence of our minds as being of any particular value? We tend to take for granted this wonderful aspect of Creation.

The *Course in Miracles* talks about the extension of the Mind of God into each one of us. This means that our own minds are revelations of the one Divine Mind, just as the branch is part of the trunk (or vine, for Christian readers familiar with the parables of Jesus). However, although this is true our minds are not, like the Divine Mind, fully enlightened! Just as a flower unfolds when it receives the right amount of heat and light, so do our minds unfold as the beautiful ideas within them are educed and we move towards enlightenment. This is the true meaning of 'education'.

We have all been given free will, which makes it possible for us to choose between pairs of opposites like right and wrong, good and bad etc. We can also choose not only what we think, but what we expose our minds to, eg what we watch on TV, and the cinema and what books we read. Often, we can choose what company we keep, although it's not always easy to cut ourselves off from those, perhaps with whom we live, whose lifestyle, attitudes and desires are not commensurate with our own. In order to cope with difficult situations, sometimes all we can do is to change our own mental attitude. Perhaps taking the stance that we have been given this or that situation to live through and learn from can often provide us with the grace to accept, work through and see things from a different angle.

Seeing things in a different light

Seeing things in a different light *is* the golden key to transformation of thought – and this needs to be preceded by the *desire*, the sincere wish, to do so. This is a transformation which not only changes our own lives but which can also have a profound and liberating effect on other people, and their attitudes and actions. It is the Light of Consciousness working within us.

Consciousness and the exercise of freewill are very much linked to conscience which prompts us to act or refrain from action or to think or not to think certain thoughts. What is deemed to be 'right' or 'wrong' for one person may not be for another. This is because conscience literally means 'with knowledge' and therefore it is built up by Right Knowledge and understanding. As we grow in understanding, we do in fact move towards the Absolute Truth above and beyond all pairs of opposites upon which all our actions are ideally based.

Behind and within the operations of the mind is the silent Witness or Watcher. If we are still and alert we can become aware of this Watcher. This is the real 'I', the pure Light of Spirit which eternally observes.

Because of this wonderful facility, which we should welcome and develop, we can become much more proficient in regulating our individual minds. We are often exhorted to use positive thinking, to refuse to allow ourselves to harbour negative thoughts, not to dwell on

our ailments or problems, and to try and see the brighter side of life. And, it actually does work. By taking charge of our own thoughts in this way we can change the state of our mind and our complete way of life. It takes determination and courage, but it can be done. George Bernard Shaw said, “*Life is no ‘brief candle’ to me: it is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.*” He was a real positive thinker!

Being extensions of the Divine Mind, our individual minds are more precious than gold. We can allow them to become undervalued, dull and tarnished, or make them glow with creativity and light. If we learn to listen, it is the Watcher within us that can bring about that transformation.

Letting go of past grievances, ceasing to fret about future possibilities and accepting that Now is all there is, can bring a great relaxation and transformation of our thinking. Eckhart Tolle, in his book *The Power of Now*, reminds us that we live in the ‘Now’, and the *Course in Miracles* constantly refers to the ‘holy instant’. If we can realise this instant calmly and expectantly we can receive a gift beyond all measure – a glimpse of Eternity.

NV 2006

### **Dreams: Their Potential For Healing.**

Taking our dreams seriously can lead to a very definite and rewarding outcome of our own conscious efforts at self-healing. Dreams don’t come by chance – except perhaps those fleeting images that flit through our brains during sleep and are completely forgotten by morning. And even these are considered relevant by some people. But those dreams that seem almost more real than our waking existence and remain strongly in our memory the following day, and even longer, are the ones that we should take note of.

Dream workshops abound in which symbolic imagery can be studied. Various animals that feature can be viewed as aspects of our own character, perhaps representing warnings, indications of parts of ourselves that we don’t want to look at or admit to, but also hidden strengths that we may not be aware of. So also, it is often said, the other people who appear in our dreams are aspects or facets of ourselves that we find it difficult to acknowledge. It is easier to look at discrepancies of conduct, unpleasant traits, and personal fears in someone else than be forced to recognise them in ourselves.

The language of dreams is symbolic and mythical, and expresses itself by way of an inner dramatic presentation that demands the attention and consideration of the dreamer. If our attitude to a powerful and memorable dream is one of flippancy then we miss an opportunity for growth, and we ignore, to our detriment, a message from our unconscious mind. We should never dismiss it.

The very fact of the reality of dreams indicates that there is more to us than our conscious mind. It points to the fact that there is an unconscious mind which has an intelligence of its own, that it can assess our potential, our aspirations, our fears, our hidden agenda, in ways which our conscious mind is loath to do. So, during our waking hours our conscious mind may be registering one set of circumstances while our unconscious mind is absorbing

another, deeper, set. When this deeper knowledge has gone through a stage of being processed then the unconscious presents it to us in the form of a dream – sometimes a clear one, sometimes a mystifying one, sometimes a fearful one, or nightmare.

Recently I had a very powerful dream in which I was running a weekend workshop. There were many people taking part, and although it was the middle of the Saturday afternoon, when we should have been half-way through the workshop, we had not yet started the course, for two reasons. One was that the photocopied programmes had not yet arrived for me to give out, and the other was that there was a seemingly endless table running along one side of the wall of the hall which was covered with tea-cups and saucers, and teapots etc. and I knew I had to serve everyone with a cup of tea before we could start. I registered a distinct feeling of frustration. Then I was aware that a large box had arrived in the mail and was under a small table by the door. I opened it hoping that my pile of photocopied programmes for the course participants were in it. They weren't! The box just contained a stack of empty sheets of paper, with a few on top that appeared to have rotas or lists of names on them. As I turned back to my self-allotted task of pouring tea for innumerable people, I suddenly said to them all, "Oh, you can pour your own tea from now on."

A little later on, during a short Meeting for Worship, I allowed myself to meditate on this dream. I consciously 'held it in the Light' for its meaning to become clear. It did. It seemed to be telling me that I needed to develop more awareness and recognition about which habitual patterns I now needed to relinquish in order to devote myself to new patterns in my life that were waiting to emerge. This self-explanation would not have become so clear if I had not thought to bring my dream to Meeting for Worship.

Dreams and stories of dreams abound in both the Old and New Testaments. It seems that it was quite usual to regard these as messages from God. They came offering instruction, warning, guidance and enlightenment. They were noted, and revered, and acted upon.

Our own dreams can express not only messages and impartations, but also show us our repressed darkness in the form of fearful images. These too can be brought to the light – and to the Light. They can be brought consciously, in meditation, for clarification, for understanding, for healing.

We all contain an inner blue-print, or pattern, of what we should become. It is there even before we reach our mother's womb. And it is important for our own growth that we learn to recognise the pointers that are offered to us to realise this potential, this perfect blue-print, this wholeness. These pointers come in many forms – sometimes easily through our environment, our nurture, our conscious aspirations and abilities, our inter-action with other people. If we're metaphorically still in the dark, our unconscious will work to enlighten us to our potential in the form of dreams.

We can talk about our dreams with other people, or, perhaps, we can go for analysis, but it is in our own unconscious mind that the answers lie: it will give us the guidance we seek if we allow it to do so. The Inner Light, which some call the Holy Spirit, and some the Higher Self, and which has other names too, is always there in the most subtle area of our psyche, waiting to high-light and guide us through the difficulties of our emotional and spiritual life. We must learn not to reject these dreams because, often, they are gifts from God.

(Towards wholeness – Summer 2005)

## **When The Soul Enters The Human Body**

Dear Editor,

The article by Keith Denerley in the Spring 2006 issue of the QR, on *Birth, Death and In Between* raised the unresolved question of when the soul enters the human body. He says, 'Astrologers might take the moment of birth view, as that is the point at which horoscopes begin'. True, but the moment of birth can often be traumatic for both mother and child and, if the soul is precipitated into the child at that instant, one might wonder what sort of disturbed behaviour could result before a complete bonding of the spiritual with the physical is achieved.

Keith says he tends to favour the 'gradualist approach', presumably with the soul gently evolving within the little body in a peaceful and ordered pace. And this might well be true.

-However, as a person who has had five children, I have no doubt in my own mind that the moment the soul enters the body is around 14/16 weeks into the pregnancy, when what used to be called 'quickening' occurs. It is the moment when life – or Life – stirs the formed baby: there is a subtle but definite flutter, rather like a butterfly's wings, and many mothers can feel this happen. And, for some of us, it is accompanied by a new realisation of what we are carrying: an acknowledgement of a new life, a new person, someone that is still a part of us and yet is not us.

I wonder if other mothers felt the same?

Yours sincerely,

Rosalind Smith  
(CFPSS Member)

## **On Respecting Angels...**

Recently I switched on the computer and along with the usual messages, both wanted and unwanted, e.g. spam, I found a 'round robin' sent, obviously thoughtfully, from a friend. Its title was 'Angel in your Pocket'. I left it there while checking out the other emails. But it still awaited my attention.

This was not the first of these snappy, cheery, bouncy, jokey type of emails: I have received many such, as I'm sure that people with email access will understand. Some just need to be deleted forthwith, others may be worth looking at. Often they carry a caption which goes something like this, 'send this to all your friends – it will cheer them up'. And perhaps, if one follows this request, this does happen – after all it's only like repeating a good joke, to make someone laugh. So I have nothing against email jokes – apart from the fact that they are time-consuming and sometimes downright silly.

But this particular one – 'Angel in your Pocket' had the effect of pulling me up short. I had a distinct feeling that something was seriously amiss. As I sat there I became aware of a feeling of irritation. It was not in myself: it came from the area slightly behind me and to the right, the area in which I often am aware of an accompanying presence.

There are many people who can accept the idea of a guardian angel (some would say ‘guide’) who walks through life with them, not always recognised but nevertheless *there*. There are others who find themselves able to either make contact with this guardian angel or, at least, to be able to register a presence. I am one of these. At first sceptical (always a healthy attitude to start with) and then gradually, with the build up of personal indications and awarenesses, accepting of this presence, I am now able to work with the idea that we *all* have this help at hand, that it will not interfere with our day-to-day life, but that it will be a guiding force in our own spiritual development and well-being. And, importantly, that this guiding presence, or essence, or angelic being can be called upon for help, for it is another aspect of the Godhead, as, indeed, each one of us is too.

So, with the deep respect that I do have for angels I registered this feeling of irritation that came – from my angel. And I know, too, that the irritation stemmed from the lack of respect, the belittlement – I feel I need to say, the reduction of *awe* that was inherent in this message. Angels aren’t toys; neither are they little fluffy feathered things with cheery chubby faces. I can’t really put into expression what they are, but they are certainly mighty forces – creative guiding intelligences that oversee everything that exists. Some would say that everything has its own angelic essence.

There are many reports of angel sightings, and these usually seem to have occurred at times when the person receiving them has been most at need, perhaps depressed, needing help emotionally, or in danger of some sort. These beings often seem to be very tall, well over six feet; what seems strange is that although they can be seen in white garments, even with feathered wings, very often they are seen as ordinarily dressed, even in jeans and T-shirts – although, as I was told by someone who had had this experience, there was a definite glowing whiteness about the T-shirt (Persil white?). There are too many of these reports to dismiss them out of hand, and although some may like to think that they are ‘conjured’ up by a person’s imagination, they are nevertheless a personification of power, and the experience of seeing them is often life-changing.

We tend to think of angels as being nearest to man and archangels as being more remote and more powerful. Archangels have been described for centuries in world scriptures, and given names too. These names usually end in ‘el’ because that means God in Hebrew. So we have Gabriel who seems to fulfil the angelic description of being a messenger; Raphael, often considered to be the archangel of healing, possibly because he first appears in the Apocrypha where he cures Tobias of blindness; Michael who, according to H.C. Moolenburgh in his book *A Handbook of Angels* ‘is well-known as the commander of the heavenly legions...tireless champion of a good cause’, often depicted holding a flaming sword; and Uriel, considered by many to be the Hebrew archangel. And, there are schools of thought that hold that there are in fact multitudes of archangels – and names such as Metatron, Raziel, and Samiel to name but a few are to be found in many writings.

Archangels are often depicted as overshadowing towns, cities and countries: there are stories of people seeing their presence in times of war e.g. the Angels of Mons; and the vision of an angel that appeared over Finland whereby that tiny country was saved from attack by Russian forces in 1939.

Dionysius the Areopagite, in his works *On Mystical Theology* and *The Celestial Hierarchies* explains the heavenly hierarchy as being composed of three triads – nine different denominations each rising higher and closer to the Godhead of which they are constant expressions.

*Angels, archangels and principalities (or princedoms)* constitute the first and lowest triad. According to Martin Israel's book *Angels: Messengers of Grace*, the angels 'minister to all things of nature, including humans, by purifying and uplifting them.' While these guardians who work with humans protect us from birth, they are also available to guide and help us in many ways, *if only we will ask*. They can smooth our path, heal through us, inspire us, fill us with higher energies and work with us to create a harmonious life. The archangels 'imprint the divine seal on all things, whereby the universe is the written word of God.' They seem to have a bridging role linking the higher levels of the celestial hierarchy with the lowest choir, the angels. They impart spiritual light to the soul, so that it can realise itself and use its own faculties correctly. The principalities 'exhibit divine lordship and true service; through them the soul may turn from attachment to earthly activities to the service of God...' They are the guardian angels of all large groups, from cities and nations to recent human creations such as multi-national corporations; they could be said to be integrating angels.

The intermediate, or second triad, is composed of *powers (or authorities), virtues, and dominions (or dominations)*. The lowest sphere, the powers, 'beneficently lead those below...to the supreme power which is the Source of Power...they re-direct the forces that fetter the human mind to earthly things'. They are said to be the angels of birth and death, who enfold us at the moment of birth, and who help with the transition from our human body into the light body at death. The second order of this triad, the virtues, '...that have a powerful and unshakeable virility welling forth into all their God-like energies', beam out massive levels of divine energy in a form which is accessible to us humans. And the third and highest order of the second triad, the dominions 'are free from all earthly passions...and all that is low...Through this second triad, the soul is liberated from all that is below, and assimilated to that which is above.' They are considered to be 'celestial prefects', who oversee those in the angelic realms who are at a lower level.

The highest triad consists of the *thrones, cherubim and seraphim*. The lowest order of this triad, the thrones, are 'divine seats through which the soul is lifted up to God and becomes established in the constancy of the divine service'; it is said that they look after and guard the planets – often depicted as having many eyes, or even wheels. The second order, the cherubim, through which 'the energy of God streams forth as a transcendental light that perfectly illuminates the soul and unites it with the divine wisdom...;' while being regarded as guardians of light and the stars their light still touches our lives and brings enlightenment. The seraphim is the highest order of all, the fiery ones, 'from whom the stream of superessential grace flows (God transcends all essence). Like fire, the seraphim consume all that separates the human from God'. Their essence is pure Love.

As we let our thoughts range higher and higher into this understanding (except that we can't really understand) of the sheer glory and splendour of the heavenly hosts, or mighty powers, we can at least begin to comprehend the awe and respect that is due, and which we need to cultivate in ourselves in consideration of the angelic hierarchy. Beyond our own imaginings, beyond anything the human mind can comprehensively contemplate, lie worlds beyond worlds, inhabited by essences finer and finer, more and more powerful, and more and more glorious. We do only see 'through the glass darkly' at present, although there have been some, visionaries like William Blake and Emmanuel Swedenborg, for whom the darkness was somewhat lightened. At about the age of nine, Blake saw 'a tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars' and, later in his life he saw angels descending on a ladder to his cottage. Swedenborg had his sight 'opened to the view of the spiritual world...' And Rudolf Steiner found his own spiritual faculties developing extensively in his middle years so that he dedicated his life to writing and lecturing about the 'supersensible' world of which he was acutely aware.

So, no wonder my own angel communicated irritation (or was it anger?) at the belittlement of the angelic world – and has pushed me into writing about it!

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A Handbook of Angels by H.C.Moolenburgh. C.W.Daniel. 1988. ISBN 0-85207-169-8. £6.95

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## **Out Of Tune**

Not so long ago, a member of our Meeting stood up and said that she had been feeling really “out of tune” recently. She said that, although quite well physically, she had been feeling irritable with everyone and even more irritable with herself; she felt frustrated, unsure of where she was going; she felt “jangled”.

In *Chambers Dictionary* the verb ‘to jangle’ is described as ‘to sound with an unpleasant irritating tone, such as a harsh dissonant metallic or ringing noise...’ No wonder she felt herself to be out of tune!

Surely all except the calmest of people do experience this feeling sometimes. We live in a world which is far from stress-free, and this is why so many therapies have been developed, including stress-management courses, to help combat this tendency.

People who meditate are in a minority and, as we know, the quiet calm of Quaker meetings is only experienced by a few. And yet, all that is needed to bring us back into alignment with the Source is this intention to return to our own inner stillness. This is where we place ourselves back into alignment, where we find ourselves re-attuned, or, we could say, ‘in tune’ again.

We are failing to make use of our own inner healing power if we do not recognise that we each hold our own key to unlocking the inner wisdom and guidance that can bring harmony back into our life.

Sometimes it is because too many material things obsess us in one way or another; or we take on too many responsibilities which become burdensome and which, in fact, could be delegated to others. Sometimes we allow ourselves to be ‘hassled’ by events of our own making. At other times we take on board other people’s problems, which it might be more pertinent to allow them to resolve. For whatever reason, the feeling of being overwhelmed, frustrated, stressed or having just too much to do, can lead directly to not letting ‘our ordered lives confess the beauty of Thy peace’.

Peace is there all the time (despite personal as well as world concerns), and it is we, ourselves, that become disconnected and therefore out-of-tune. When we learn to de-clutter our lives, both materially and mentally, we find that there is ample space for an inflow of peace and calm, and a feeling that we do have the ability to cope with whatever comes along. We find ourselves in tune again. And this brings the knowledge that a Power mightier than

we can comprehend lives and moves and has its being in and as us; that it is the Life that lives through us.

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## Reservoirs

As healers we often liken ourselves to being channels – channels for the divine energy that is always there, immediately available when we let go just enough to allow its free-flowing.

This letting-go is not easy because most of the time we are ‘bogged-down’, so to speak, with all that our busy lives entail. Most of us tend to be involved not only in what we are doing at the present moment but also, and often more so, in the future, whether that future is just a few hours later, or a few days/weeks/months further on. We often carry thoughts and concerns along with us from our past, be that an immediate same-day past, or something further back in our own life. Consequently, our attention span in the present moment is often clouded over by things we really have no control over. What we do have some sort of control over is the present moment – the Now.

We do seriously need to develop our own potential to be able to enter that state of Nowness. This can be very beneficial for our own state of health, both physical and mental – and it can open us up to experience the more spiritual dimensions of our life, bringing awarenesses and intimations that we had never previously been cognisant of. If we are really steadfast in our seeking we will become aware of the Now moment as a dimension of Eternity – that which is beyond time and place. And we will find ourselves filled with a peace such as we may not have allowed ourselves to experience before in our hectic, cluttered schedules - or in the boredom of a long drawn-out day. The ‘Peace that passeth understanding’ perhaps?

But though we may aspire to reach this Nowness, this time that is beyond time, paradoxically we do need to give time to achieve it. We need to consciously allot periods to meditation, to day-dreaming, to contemplation, to prayer in its deepest sense of listening to God. We need to strengthen our inner life, to develop a richness of spirit which will enable us to face whatever our personal circumstances present to us. In this way we will gently rejoice and be grateful when things go well, and feel ourselves guarded, guided and supported when things crash around us.

This is all part of our continuing spiritual development which, as healers, we should recognise as an important part of what and who we are. We are always on the journey – we never reach the destination because that is beyond our comprehension and yet, like a magnet, it continues to draw and pull us in its direction.

So when we are being used as healers we are indeed channels for that healing to flow, but, in addition, that healing needs to flow through the depths of our own spirituality to be effective. As Bernard of Clairvaux says, *“If you are wise you will become a reservoir rather than a canal. A canal distributes its water as fast as it receives it, but a reservoir is content to wait until it is filled before overflowing and this without loss to itself...it communicates its super-abundant water to others...”*

## **Social And Spiritual Life**

I became a member of the Society of Friends mainly because I found it gave me the freedom, and the personal permission, to enter into a far deeper space for worship than I had hitherto been able to find in any other denomination. No creed was forced upon me, no dogma placed into my mind, no expectation of adherence to ritual and repetitive prayers, no ‘jumping up and down’ to sing hymns, and, certainly, no hierarchy to pay lip service to. In short, I found, and still find, that in the simple Meeting for Worship, I can enter into a deeper place than I have ever been able to elsewhere. So, the most important facet of my Quakerism *is* the spiritual life.

Of far lesser importance to me, and something which I thought I had left behind when I moved away from the Anglican Church, are the social events that crop up from, time to time. These involve planning, shopping, food preparing, washing-up, fetching and carrying, and cheerful social intercourse at the actual time of the event. I have felt that many Churches’ appeal was, in fact, the social life that they offered – and, of course, for many people this is a life-line, and I am not trying to deride it in any way.

But it would seem that if we, as Quakers, only value the time which we spend in Meeting, and feel that that is all that is worthwhile, we could find ourselves spiritually poor. I have found a deeper fellowship and connection with those with whom I sit at Meeting since I have become involved with them in a social context.

The material, social side of a Quaker Meeting is the other side of the spiritual coin; the necessary balance.

## **Some of the Differences and Similarities Between the Words Psychic and Spiritual**

The word ‘psychic’ derives from ‘psyche’, which is another word for the soul. So, we are all psychic because we all possess a soul. And, while many people imagine that their body contains a soul, my own view is that our soul contains our body. In other words the energy field of which our soul is a part surrounds and holds the dense material part of us, our body.

This may sound strange at first, but when we consider the many accounts of out-of-body experiences, where the ‘I’ of the person looks down, or over, at their body, then it can be seen that that intrinsic ‘I’ is the real essence of the person.

People with a materialistic frame of mind tend to be very much ‘in the body’ and are not so likely to become aware of their soul or psyche as a separate part, as those who are able to stand apart and view themselves, their own behaviour – and perhaps take stock of themselves objectively.

This ability to step outside of oneself is the start of the spiritual journey because, while in this state, one can become very aware of one’s own faults, and so-called hang-ups, and also can begin to see a pattern – a life-pattern which is unique to each of us.

Being able to become aware of our own psyche, or psychic energy, usually means that we can sense that of other people. So we find we start to pick up things about them: we can sense when they’re unwell, distressed, unhappy or happy, and in fact become aware of quite a lot

about them. We may even be able to get a sense of what is happening in their life. This is psychic energy inter-acting. Very useful sometimes – quite annoying at others! And it is something we can guard against by learning to put up a sort of psychic barrier around ourselves, a protection which can take many forms. One such way of doing this might be to imagine a white, or gold, light around oneself – especially useful in situations where the energy feels unpleasant, or draining.

So, being psychic mean that one is open to other psychic influences, and it is necessary to learn to get these under control.

It is often found that people who become interested in learning more about other dimensions around them do become aware that they have a guiding force, or intelligence working with them – variously known as a guardian angel, guiding spirit, guide, or, perhaps, Higher Self. And this is the area that we would call ‘spiritual’. Not only are we in contact with a spiritual source, we are also in contact with that part of ourselves which is spiritual. So the guardian/guide, or whatever it is felt to be, appears to blend in with our own spiritual essence.

And, it will guide you truly. I believe that the test of a true guardian/guide is that one is only led along the path of understanding of spiritual matters at a pace that is appropriate. There will never be shocks or unpleasant surprises while this benign essence is in control. All goes at a gentle and acceptable rate, and, importantly, with your permission.

When one makes oneself available for growth, and work, in the spiritual field, there may be significant life-changes. As one’s belief system changes, so there may come a distinct feeling that one is in the ‘wrong’ place, and even perhaps doing the wrong thing in life.

This is spiritual guidance – and being aware of it is a great part of the meaning of the word ‘spiritual’.

In the context of spirit communication, being psychic means that one can ‘pick up’ or sense certain things about another person, or situation – or can have a premonition that a certain thing is going to happen e.g. the phone will ring very shortly. But being ‘spiritual’ means that one is in contact with a deeper layer of existence; one is open to actual communication with discarnates, and one is aware of a strong guiding force in one’s life. It is acceptable that there are many names for this force, and the most favoured one is God, from where everything, spiritual, psychic and material flows.

## Simple Healing

Simple Healing – this title is unequivocal, for all spiritual healing is in reality simple. No amount of doctrine or training or reading about it can make it come about. There is only one requirement and, although it can be expressed in various ways, the most simple and yet the most profound of these is contained in the injunction by the most well-known healer of all, Jesus Christ: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength.’

From this attitude of soul stems all healing – spiritual, mental and physical – both for others and for oneself. And if anyone reading this has already experienced this truth, then they need read no further. The ‘secret’ is theirs – and their very life should be one of channelling healing, in all its diverse ways and forms.

But can this really be termed a ‘secret’? I think not. It appears in both the Old and New Testaments. It appears in other great scriptures of the world. It is implied in the sayings of all those throughout the ages who have been teachers of God.

Great teachers have appeared throughout history, in all parts of the globe, and have been suitable for their age and place. But for many of us in the western hemisphere, the teachings of Jesus have had the greatest appeal. They have become truths which we have been exhorted to live by, to emulate, to imitate. And the greatest of these teachings has been the commandment to love God, with heart, soul, mind and strength.

This teaching is followed and equalled only by: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ However, for many people, this has come to mean: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour even to the extent of running thyself into the ground, of denying thyself the self-respect to which all beings have a right!’

In other words, for some people, particularly carers of the old and the mentally or physically disabled, the ability to have any love or respect for themselves is abysmally small. They still need to see that the commandment is to regard self and neighbour as equal sons and daughters of God.

When Jesus realised that he had given out enough for the time being, he retired to the mountains or into a boat, we are told, so that he could have some time to himself.

Nowadays we tend to think of this withdrawal as having one’s own space. And here the word ‘space’ actually means a time and place to be, usually alone. This should be regarded as a precious space in which to recharge one’s batteries, so to speak, so that one can indeed go back out into the fray and offer again that healing which seems so badly needed.

What can one do with that space? Well, anything that brings relaxation and peace – but primarily it needs to be something that brings one back into the awareness of the presence of God. And dwelling in that awareness is the most sure way of coming into the state of loving God with heart, soul, mind and strength.

Now this love can be, and often is – especially in the early stages – an emotional love. And I think it has to be, because only a strong emotional feeling will be able to cut across and sweep away the material concerns, detritus and debris of much of our lives. In time, this

becomes tempered and fined down into a steady awareness of the Presence, the Force, that which pervades and maintains everything that exists in the form in which it does so. Without that sublime subtle energy of Life, nothing would be at all. It is a power beyond our limited understanding, and because of its incomprehensibility there are many who do not believe in it.

For those, however, who are open enough to admit that something must be responsible for the beingness of everything, even though it is incomprehensible, there will come an Awareness which, if invited, will enter and become stronger and stronger: 'Behold I stand at the door and knock.'

This I believe to be the very essence and power of that energy we call God. It is the same energy that creates and lives in its creations. It is the same energy that expresses itself in multifarious forms, forever following its own blueprints and designs of perfection – even though, by the time it manifests in material ways, some of the perfection can be lost. For example, a rose is conceived perfect in the creative Mind, but if grown in poor soil it will develop as a poor specimen. Its potential is still for the same perfection.

So it is too with every human being. Conceived as perfect in the creative Mind, through adverse conditions (before, during or after birth) he or she may appear to be less than perfect. But the potential is still there – the potential to be a perfect specimen of a human being, physically, mentally and spiritually. The original blueprint is still perfect.

We use the term 'Christ-like' to describe a perfect human being. Jesus was called the 'Christ' because he had realised his own God-like perfection. In Quaker terms, he recognised that of God within him. And he taught that we could all do the same, although often that teaching can be overlooked. We are all, without exception, perfect sons and daughters of God. We are all perfect expressions of the Divine Mind, but in our material form we have lost much of the essence of this.

In striving to get back to God, in striving to become 'Christ-like', indeed in striving to follow the commandment to 'love God with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength', we are on the way to realising our full potential.

So, healing is little more than the awareness of God, the awareness of that energy that cannot be defined by any of the processes known to science. It seems that many healers view the existence of this energy, variously described as mighty, or as gentle, as something way beyond any definable doctrine or creed. And although doctrines, creeds, denominations and so on may prove an admirable basis for the religious life of many, there comes a time for some people when these are left behind. There often comes, then, what many have referred to as a 'leap of faith'. This is difficult to describe because it is really a conscious releasing of all the props and religious guidelines one had always relied on before, and a kind of flinging of oneself into the unknown – unknown because there is no creed or set of beliefs to sustain one, only a knowledge that this is where one has to be.

But, in acknowledging that Something has called one to be in this state, one does have the basis of that Something to hold on to. In jettisoning all previous concepts and props, in emptying oneself and asking, one then begins to receive, in full measure, something that is completely indescribable. It is something which changes a person's complete outlook, so that some of the attitudes of mind, such as criticism of others, jealousy, resentment and so on, are often swept away, leaving a clear field for the love and respect due to others to be manifested.

This change is both subtle and overpowering at one and the same time. It takes over. Gradually, life seems to change around one. Old friends and acquaintances make way for new ones with whom one has more in common, and who in fact are on the same pathway or are, in the words of Thomas Kelly, ‘the Blessed Community’. New openings and opportunities arise, so that whatever has been given can then be given back and utilised. For nothing spiritual is really given to us for ourselves alone. It is something given in trust, to be passed on and multiplied.

This is the sheer beauty of gifts of the Spirit – they multiply, they do not diminish. If love, the greatest of the spiritual gifts, is given to another, in most cases it will be reciprocated, thus doubling itself. A good teacher can offer his/her knowledge to receptive minds, and that knowledge will thus be spread and multiplied, and even strengthened in the mind of the teacher.

Although the term ‘healing’ can actually be expressed in various different ways – for example, contact healing, absent or distant healing, counselling, listening, sympathising and so on, even down to practical help like providing a much needed meal – we are in this instance considering the healing energy that is available for contact healing, often called the ‘laying on of hands’.

There seems to have been a tremendous upsurge of interest in contact healing over the last two or three decades. Although it was practised in the early days of the Christian Church, following the teaching of Jesus, it appears to have ‘fizzled out’ after a couple of centuries, and even been frowned upon by the Church at that time. Since then, throughout the centuries until now, there have been people who have sensed this healing energy and have often been able to channel healing. And many and various have been the persecutions that have followed them. Most of them were regarded as witches, and most met a very unpleasant death because of it.

We do seem to live in more enlightened times, and although there are still many people who will have nothing to do with the concept of healing, there is nevertheless a growing number who recognise the fact that it can and often does work – even where medical expertise has been ineffective. Consequently, many organisations have arisen specifically to train people to become healers; and provided the right-mindedness that should accompany the training is there, it should lead to more competence in healers.

However, the Spirit in each one of us works independently of our individual minds. And what we might learn through a course of training with our minds can be useless in the field of healing if we do not have contact with Spirit, or God, or Consciousness, or the Universal Life Force, or the Cosmic Energy, or whatever name you choose to give to that which gives you existence.

This contact is termed ‘attunement’ by the healing organisations, and it is a good and apt word. Would-be healers are taught to ‘tune in’ to this energy at the time of offering healing. Very often there is a grounding process encouraged. And this is fine. I often think that healers should have their feet on the ground and their heads in heaven! The grounding or ‘tuning-in’ process can consist in imagining that one’s feet are solidly on the ground, with roots going down into the earth; that there is a firm central trunk going up through one’s body; and then that one’s head is putting forth branches into heaven. This is quite a good analogy. If you can imagine this, it can give you quite a tall feeling – you could say a ‘walk tall’ sort of feeling!

In healing training this is encouraged at the time of contact with the patient or client, and is only to be closed down or switched off at the close of the session. But I would like to offer another analogy.

Imagine an electric plug fitted permanently into a socket, which has an on/off switch. The plug is actually in permanent contact with the source of electricity, but there is no power available for use until the switch is pressed on. So it should be with a healer. He or she should be permanently 'plugged in' to God, living in an awareness of the Presence, so that at the moment of healing the switch is, so to speak, turned to 'on'. The power, or energy, is there, available at all times, and the intention to heal is the switch!

The act of attunement becomes thus very simple. There is no mental struggle or effort to imagine light or anything else round the patient/client. There is just a simple 'letting go' into God for both healer and patient, and a knowledge that healing energy is abundant around and through us – and that if we can open ourselves to it, it will flood through to where it is needed.

Of course, there is nothing at all wrong with imagining light around a patient/client. In fact, our minds have to do something; they cannot just become blank, so imagining light is an excellent way of conceiving of energy. But it has often been noticed that good healing can occur even when the healer is in conversation with the patient, and also – and this is important to consider – when the healer's mind has strayed, in a relaxed manner, away from the business in hand (not meant to be a pun!). From my own experience, a very satisfactory healing occurred while I held my hand on someone's leg and continued to watch television!

Because healing comes from a Source beyond the healer's mind, it doesn't really matter what is passing through that mind (within reason) at the time of offering healing. The important factor is that the healer's own life-style and aspirations are so bound up in God for the majority of the time that the healing moment is the natural outcome of that soul-attitude. And here I must return to the opening statement, that unless the person is open to the awareness of the Presence of God (or the Life Force), then no amount of training will make him/her a healer. God first – training second. It has to be!

Also – and this is another thing to be considered very deeply by a would-be healer – one cannot aspire to love God 'with all one's heart, with all one's soul, with all one's mind and with all one's strength' because one wants to heal! God has to be loved for no other reason than that of loving God. Any healing power that becomes obvious has to be the outcome of this. It is one of the 'signs following'.

The simplicity of this approach to healing is well in accord with the simplicity of the Quaker way of worship. When we 'centre down' in a Meeting for Worship we are, in effect, intentionally opening ourselves to the awareness of the presence of God. Quaker worship is a waiting attitude, a listening attitude, and, it could perhaps be said, an attitude of expectancy. As opposed to the ritual and set services of worship in some denominations where those who minister seem to be in control of proceedings, a Meeting for Worship of the Society of Friends is a time where everyone consciously allows God to take control. At least it can be! And letting go of control of events, for the space of time of the Meeting, can lead to a great depth of silence and worship, and a concentration on that which lives and moves and has Its being in and as us.

Yes, we can attempt to learn to attune – but we cannot be taught by any human agency to love. This is something that comes from within the individual soul. And even that is not really self-motivated, but is the result of an initial call or urge from the Source Itself. But, as far as we are concerned, once we find ourselves set upon that pathway we can ask to love even if we think we don't know how to. After that, God Itself will take over.

I would like to state here that I mean no offence to anyone else's concept of God when I choose to use the word 'It'. For me, God contains all, both male and female, and is beyond any of our earthly patriarchal or matriarchal ideas. It is the Power that contains all that is – and all that might be meant by that statement. All opposites – light and dark, life and death, good and evil – are all contained within that Beingness. And all these opposites are for our use, and for our growth and healing; for without one side of the coin there cannot be the other.

And having placed good and evil together as part of that Beingness (much to the dismay of some, I'm sure), I would offer a reminder of the earlier statement that all things pertain to perfection, to the perfect idea in the Mind or Thought which is the Source of all. So, therefore, the ideas of good and evil are only staging posts away from, or journeying to, that state of perfection. Bearing in mind that what constitutes both good and evil varies from age to age and culture to culture, and even individual to individual, that which is perfect in Thought cannot be altered.

Holding to that understanding of the perfection of all things conceived by the Mind of God will raise our comprehension of the transcendence of God beyond what we call good and evil. In Hindu and Buddhist terms it means detachment; in Christian terms it means faith. It brings with it an ability to see beyond the apparent rights and wrongs of a situation to an overall view, and an acceptance that 'all manner of things shall be well'.

Often in the process of receiving someone for healing, it is important to see that the dark side of their particular coin of life is something that can be a growth experience – even a growing, healing experience into so-called death. To help a person face the approaching death of his or her physical body with a tranquil acceptance and an expectation of a spiritual life ahead of them is probably the highest aspect of healing. And if that expectation carries with it a deepened trust and faith in God, then nothing more is needed for that person (although relatives and friends may need help).

An attribute that is very useful, if not essential, to a healer is the ability to take in the whole family situation of a patient/client. It is often the non-acceptance of their condition by their nearest and dearest that can cause acute anxiety and pain to a person. Once the possibility of their impending death, or disablement, is accepted by those around them, the personal burden is lightened, and the ensuing freedom to talk together and be open with each other carries a great sense of healing to all concerned. I recall a lady who was dying from stomach cancer, and one of her main concerns was that her husband just would not accept the situation. He refused to talk about it, and continually insisted that she would recover. It was about two weeks before Christmas and her prognosis was that she only had a very short time left. In fact, she asked me privately whether I thought she would actually see Christmas. I told her she would, not really having any idea at all! However, I was able to encourage them both to talk more freely about things. I saw her again three days before Christmas, and because of their new-found freedom she seemed much more at ease. She died peacefully, on the evening of Boxing Day, with her family and friends around her.

A few final thoughts on the actual process of channelling healing to someone. Once one has tuned in to the patient, usually by talking together and making him/her feel at ease and probably more relaxed than when he/she entered the room, and following into a situation where both healer and patient/client are feeling comfortable with each other, then it is important that the healer 'lets go'. By this I mean that once the proprietaries have been observed, e.g. explanations to the patient/client about what to expect (or perhaps not expect), how the session will be brought to an end, and so on, then the healer must mentally offer the session over to whatever he/she feels is appropriate.

And just a simple asking is all that is required. God's healing energy is abundant in full measure – if we only know how to leave an open channel for it.

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## Quakers and the Spiritual/Psychic Dimension

### I

The Quaker Meeting for Worship, by its very act of centering down and opening up in the Silence, carries the potential, for some people, to become the gateway to the spiritual/psychic dimension. Because of the relaxed and meditative state that we find ourselves in, we are in a unique position to open our intuitive faculties and become aware of the dimension which exists, not only immediately around us, but also further and deeper than we are aware of.

It may be, and perhaps often is, an intrusive extra that most Quakers do not wish to receive. But the fact remains that, by and large, the deliberate intention to alter one's demeanour, for the hour of worship, the passive relaxed state of alertness that, as Quakers, we try to achieve is, in itself, bordering on the same state of altered consciousness that any good medium will employ at the time of communication with those in the spirit world.

Now, an awareness of the spiritual/psychic dimension that exists, shall we say, only a thought away, is, in itself, not a bad thing; despite the horror and deliberate antipathy of many orthodox Christians, and others, and even the reservations of many Quakers. This reluctance to accept a fact of life (or a fact of after-life) really stems from fear; and also from certain passages in the Old Testament, especially Deuteronomy Ch.18 vv.10-12:

“There shall not be found with thee any one that... useth divination, one that practiseth augury, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer. Or a charmer, or a consulter with a familiar spirit...”

But, if one is going to quote from the Bible it can only be just to recall other passages, and in particular that well-known statement delivered by St. Paul in his first Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12, vv. 8 - 11:

“For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; To another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings in the one Spirit; and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discernings of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will.”

Many are the references about Jesus himself which pertain to his awareness of, and participation in, the spiritual world as, for example, at the Transfiguration where he was seen by his followers to be in the company of Elijah and Moses; Luke Ch.9 vv 29-31:

“And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling. And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elijah; Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

It would seem that at no time did Jesus refute the existence of the spiritual world. And, by his resurrection, he proved conclusively the continuation of the soul and the possibility of recognisable return.

So, perhaps, for Quakers (and others) it is not a question of whether there is an after-life, but rather should we allow ourselves to contact those in that after-life? Or, should we encourage them when they obviously want to contact us? Surely the answer here has to be in the affirmative.

If someone wants to pay us a visit and arrives on the doorstep and rings the bell, we answer it. We acknowledge their arrival. There is very little difference in this idea from that of a discarnate person (a spirit) wanting to call on us in our earthly sphere, though the effort involved is considerably more. The difference lies in which sight we are using: physical sight or spiritual sight.

Many people pass to the next life suddenly, often in a state of fear, confusion, frustration and even aggression. For these souls the opportunity to return to make their peace with those they have left behind; perhaps to apologise, to forgive and be forgiven, must be too much to withstand. So, usually through a mediumistic person, they do return and try to make their needs known. The ties of love between those who grieve, on both sides, are often very strong, and there may be unfinished business between them which needs to be resolved before the final goodbye and the progression of the soul in the next life.



No-one purports to know what the soul will find on its spiritual journey; but there is strong evidence to suppose that one finds oneself in the same state of mind and consciousness as that which pertained just before the physical death. So, there are no sudden sproutings of wings and acquisition of harps (who wants all that anyway!); no sudden conversion to goodness, no sudden change of character; but only an ability to see oneself clearly and objectively, with a stripping away of all self-illusions. Could this be the judgement? There are many schools of thought that think it is. It has often been expressed by people who have experienced near-drowning, that all one's life flashed before them. This could well be an opportunity for self-judgement. Other near death experiencers have said similar things, and have then come back and changed their life style, and their attitude to others, considerably for the better. Many have then gone on to report their loss of their fear of death, exhibiting only a desire to improve themselves while still here.

For those interested in reading about near-death experiences there are many books on the subject. Here, we are concerning ourselves with actual life experiences: intimations of the nearness, the actual presence, of those we have said goodbye to in the flesh. Also, we can become aware, and often even more easily if we are willing, of the gentle presence of those who would act as our guardians. Other words for these might be angels, spirit guides, or helpers. Those who have come from a Roman Catholic background should have no difficulty at all with this concept. Part of the catechism taught to small children is that they have a guardian angel, and they are taught to pray to it, and rely on it to help and protect them through life. I realise that this is not perhaps a very 'quakerly' idea, but having been brought up in the Roman Catholic tradition myself I found no difficulty in accepting the fact of the slight pressure in the energy field just behind the right side of my head, whenever I entered into a meditative state, or even just began to think about something that might be considered spiritual. Eventually I acknowledged this presence of energy as my guardian – however it did help to have it confirmed by a good medium.

Without going into too much detail this was the start of my journey along the path of spiritual and psychic discovery. Exciting, awe-inspiring sometimes, even mundane at others, nevertheless life opened up and took me along with it. Although with scepticism, many

reservations and heart searching at first, I finally agreed to accept what I had been offered and try to use it beneficially.

We always have the choice. We are always in charge and need to remember this at all times. But, having once agreed to work for the understanding of the spiritual life, the personal choice becomes such that one feels the importance of continuing.

It is a privilege to be offered such knowledge and, as time goes on, I feel that more and more will it be accepted that we live surrounded and interpenetrated by the spiritual dimensions. It is now scientifically accepted that all form, all material things, are, in reality, energy in expression: energy solidified, slowed down, condensed into matter. This discovery has had far reaching implications not only for the scientific world but also for those interested in exploring the spiritual one. And now these two seemingly diverse areas are no longer as divided as before. Increasingly, as understanding dawns about the nature of energy, the scientific and spiritual are linked. Material form is vibrational energy condensed.

Behind all this energy there is Thought – or Mind. This is That which creates all things in Itself. One of the many words used to describe God is Mind, or Universal Mind (although with the seeming new discovery of other, further and further distant multi-universes, we cannot now, perhaps, accept that the Universal Mind has created only our own universe). But if Universal Mind creates and holds all things within Itself, eternally, then the only word we can use to even remotely come to understand it is ENERGY. And, for our purpose here, which is to try and see what is actually happening when we sit, as Quakers or anyone else, in silent meditation and prayer, opening ourselves to the energy around us, we need go no further.

At this point I need to say that it is unlikely that many people are going to be concerned about the possibility of becoming aware of the spiritual dimension that exists around them and that can be apprehended during, say, a Meeting for Worship. For most, this is a time of silent waiting, of allowing a space in one's life for the Holy Spirit of God to be experienced, both singly and as a corporate body. For some it is a time to give over their personal concerns and worries and ask for help; for others, a very few, a time to catch up on their sleep! But it is usually a whole hour when, for some, a state of altered consciousness is not hard to slip into; they become aware of subtle energies around them – sometimes a feeling that someone is sitting, or standing, extremely close to them. It is as though their own energy field, or aura, has been entered by another energy field. (This is easy to understand if a simple experiment is tried. Ask someone to approach you and stand very close, and at the same time close your own eyes. Then try to become aware of what you can sense.)

## II

It is because the very act of a Quaker Meeting for Worship serves to develop a stronger sensitivity that some people, who would normally not consider themselves to be psychic in any way, find themselves becoming psychically aware.

Sometimes, instead of this realisation of a specific energy nearby, or even in addition to it, there comes a picture in the mind's eye, perhaps of a place, a garden, a street or house. But more often than not it is a face, or whole form that is presented. This face can be that of someone known to the recipient, or it could be a completely unknown being. Another experience is the hearing of a voice – possibly just a word, a name, or even a sentence. This is quite different from listening in to one's own thoughts, and comes with a immediate recognition of what it is. All these experiences, sensory, visual and auditory, are those intuitively received by any reputable and reliable medium, i.e. a sensitive person who has developed the ability to receive communication and knowledge from discarnate sources

using his/her intuitive faculty. This faculty is something that every human being, and all animals, possess to a greater or lesser degree. Indeed, it is well-known that in earlier times our ancestors relied far more upon it than we appear to do today. Nowadays, we seem to rely more upon our logical, left-brain thinking than upon our intuitive right-brain awareness. We have even created mind-machines, that we call computers, so that we can off-load this responsibility even more!

It has been discovered that most human beings use only about one fifth of the brain's potential. Sensitives and mediums are really only using a little more than the average person.



Although it might appear, at first, that these experiences are coming in 'willy-nilly' so to speak, it will never be the case that there is no control at work behind them. Most of these unexpected happenings herald the burgeoning of a psychic awareness (or gift, as some would say) over which we have the choice as to whether to develop it or not. It is very much like being offered something on a plate: we have the opportunity and right to accept or refuse. We can either say, mentally: "Well, thank you for this privilege, this opportunity to be of service. I accept and, in faith and trust, I ask for help and guidance with it" – or, importantly, we can just as well say: "Thank you for showing me this, but I have no wish, at least at present, to be involved". We always have the choice.

However, as I said, none of this comes to us in a haphazard sort of way. We will find that once we have made the conscious decision to accept and develop the work we have been asked to do, then we will soon become aware that there is a guiding force, on a very close vibrational level, that is taking control. The guardian angel concept is not so very difficult to accept after all. Those who work in the Spiritualist Church would call these energies, guides. Often the term door-keeper is employed because these energies, or spirits, act in that capacity to admit into consciousness only those others who would be acceptable to the recipient at that time. There are, after all, many clamouring to make contact for one reason or another – often for healing on either side – and psychically and spiritually, it would be too much if all those waiting spirits were allowed to communicate at once. Imagine how it would be if there was only one phone line between Australia and Great Britain. What a clamorous queue there would be!

Another term which one might hear used is the word, control. It is just another term for the guiding spirit, or guardian, because they actually do control what is happening, and they care very deeply both for the mental and spiritual welfare of their sensitive or medium. The gentle care which is bestowed on a mediumistic, or any other, person from their guardian is one of the ways in which their integrity can be measured. Nothing will be asked which is not acceptable, and true collaboration will only be requested when the time is right in the person's earthly life; in other words, when responsibilities such as family commitments etc. can be safely relinquished. Often, we can communicate with the guardian, or guide. Frequently we join together in deep prayer because we know we are working to promote a deeper understanding of the universal forces of life beyond life, and the fact that, as Jesus demonstrated, there is no death.

When the physical body dies the incarnate spirit simply becomes discarnate, carrying with it all the positive and negative luggage it has accumulated during life, including loves, hates, memories, aspirations, hopes, fears and so on; and, of course, leaving behind all the material goods it might also have accumulated; Matthew Ch.6 vv. 19-21

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where

thieves do not break through nor steal: For where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.”

This is the time when one sees oneself as one really is; as was said before, the time of judgement. And it seems that this is where the possibility of re-incarnation comes in. At this point we can take stock, see where things might be improved, rectified, developed; and then elect to return to earth, or the physical dimension, in order to progress further along the spiritual path. It appears to be a choice open to us. It certainly makes sense of a lot of seemingly unfair situations, and has always been believed in by more people in the world than not. There is no real way in which we can be sure of all this except by the many well-documented accounts that exist, and also, again, by one’s own intuitive faculty.

On a personal level, at one time I found myself extremely interested in reading about the different monastical orders that have developed since the Middle Ages. At the same time, for a pleasurable day out I would go and browse through the illuminated manuscripts that are housed in the British Museum, particularly the various beautifully decorated copies of the Gospels, including the Lindisfarne Gospel. A few years later I attended a short series of lectures given by a very well-known and respected medium, Ivy Northage, at the College of Psychic Studies (an august body which was founded late in the nineteenth century). This venerable lady was working in close connection with her own guide, and we were invited to ask questions. I can’t now remember what I said, but I posed a question and as she turned towards me she said immediately: “I’m told you have been here many times before and frequently in a monastery or convent setting, which partly explains your occasional need for solitude”. She said a lot more, much of which I was too dumb-founded to absorb. But she had explained, right off the cuff, so to speak, much of what I had felt. This was something which I kept to myself for many years; but I now feel that it might be instrumental in helping one or two others.

Another true story, before we move on from the concept of re-incarnation, goes as follows. A little friend of one of our granddaughters, aged about three at the time, was sitting on a settee with his father who was reading to both of them. The little boy was looking at the pictures when he suddenly became quite agitated and said: “Daddy, why can’t I read those words like I used to when I was a big man?”

### III

As at the moment of so-called death we find ourselves in the same state of mind as when we last drew breath, we can safely assume, and know, that there are those whose characters need to change radically if they are to make further progress along their own spiritual path. There are those who still harbour some sort of ill-will towards those they have left behind; and they are to be prayed for.

Years ago, a friend’s child was experiencing difficulties with what could only be classed as psychic disturbances. She would not go to her bedroom and said that a nasty man was there. After sitting watching the little girl play for a while I became aware of a slightly built, older man with an odd sort of smile on his face. Also I experienced a feeling of malice from this spirit. So, mentally, I asked him to leave the child alone, told him he was doing himself no good by troubling her, and asked him to move on and into the Light. When I told the girl’s mother what I had seen she said: “Yes, that’s her grandad, and he thought nothing of doing other people a bad turn when he could”. So, I had been able to sense the maliciousness in his character, and, hopefully, point it out to him. He did not return.

Because we operate in our own physical environment our own power of thought tends to be stronger than that of any spirit, who has to make enormous efforts to communicate in the sphere which is not now natural to it.

Another incident such as the one above involved the discarnate aunt of a little girl. The child was agitated about seeing a “lady” in her bedroom, and I was asked to see if I could help. The child’s mother had been cut off by her parents for marrying beneath her (still!) and the feeling I received from the spirit that I became aware of, was that of someone who was now missing out on being able to see the child. Again, I had to ask this spirit, who actually felt very loving and motherly, to leave the child alone because it was disturbing her too much.

Apart from some of my own experiences offered here, I have been told, during counselling sessions, of many wonderful incidents that have happened to people including some which have not at first been regarded as so wonderful, but on discussion and consideration have been accepted for the timely help they have since proved to be.



So, what can we do when, as Quakers, we find ourselves the recipients of communications from the next dimension?

One thing to bear in mind is that it’s quite alright! You are not going ‘barmy’, odd or senile; and you have no need to be afraid. Neither do you need to put yourself into the nearest psychiatric hospital!

Although it is a privilege to be able to receive these ‘intimations of immortality,’ it must always be born in mind that it is a by-product of the state of spiritual awareness in which we seek the Presence of God. There are many who become side-lined into thinking that they have ‘arrived’ when they become so able at discerning spirits. But, as St. Paul says, this ability is only one of the spiritual gifts, something that can be acquired along the way and not the be all and end all. It is a gift, or ability, that must be used with discretion and care, with love and understanding, and, above all, with the knowledge that it is only a stepping stone for some along the way to true spiritual development in our search for God.

Occasionally a face, or figure, will appear obviously in a state of distress; possibly showing forth the particular condition that prevailed when they died. But it is not to be supposed that they are still in that state. After more than twenty-five years study and reflection on the subject I have come to understand that a spirit, or the essence of a person, will present itself to the person it wants to communicate with in the way in which recognition can take place. So, if a person passed over with severe pain in, for example, the abdomen, then the spirit of that person will project a picture of themselves suffering in this way. Some mediums actually experience for a moment or so this feeling of pain, but on asking for it to be taken away it is removed immediately. But it is often enough to serve to enlighten the recipient – or sitter – as to who is trying to communicate. A mental picture of someone holding their head and intimating that before they passed they had suffered with severe head pain, accompanied by a description of what the person looked like and, possibly, how they had felt, will suffice to identify that person. These ‘visions’ of suffering are only tools projected by the mind of the essence of the person who is now in a non-physical form.

As we, if we have a powerful imagination and can visualise well, can imagine a picture of ourselves going somewhere or doing something, so those in the next dimension can also, using thought, project that image into our receptive minds. A person can show themselves how they were at death or, more often, how they were in the prime of their lives – a pleasanter image usually. We can only project how we have known ourselves to look; it is

unlikely that an old lady would project an image of how she looked as a little girl because, except with the help of photographs, she probably would not be able to imagine just how she had looked at that time. Sometimes all a spirit can do is to project a photograph, one which will be recognised.

It must be remembered that it is extremely difficult and a great effort for a discarnate spirit to impress the mind of a sensitive person. Those of us who have tried telepathy will recognise this difficulty. Although the spiritual and physical layers interpenetrate at all levels there is still an immense barrier (some have called it a veil) which, rightly, separates the two, or more, worlds.

#### IV

Here, I have attempted to explain how spirit communication works. Several conditions are needed. Firstly, a willingness and quiet receptivity on the part of the one I shall call the sitter. Secondly, the intention and will of the discarnate source to make some sort of communication. And thirdly, and most importantly, the intermediate action of the controlling spirit, or guardian, who will only allow a certain and suitable amount of interaction between the two previous minds. In a case where, say, a bereaved person has gone to a medium or sensitive in the hope of being able to make contact with a loved one, then there is a fourth factor, the mind of the medium – though he/she, if strictly honest, will only relate to the sitter what is received.

For the purpose to be served here, we are more interested in studying what happens when our faithful Quaker has found himself/herself in receipt of unexpected mental images. They are not just the result of an active imagination; they feel as though they come in at a different angle to the thoughts that habitually churn around in the mind. They tend to be clear, sharply focussed, often very close to the mind's eye vision, and usually of brief duration. They carry a strong feeling of extra awareness, veracity, and simply feel different from our usual thoughts. They cannot be 'conjured up' or commanded to appear (a popular mis-conception by sceptics); but when they do appear it is usually with suddenness. It is on a different vibrational level that this information is projected and received. It's a little like suddenly tuning in to a particular radio station that has been difficult to locate, and when one finally makes the contact there is still a great deal of fine tuning to achieve.

However, we must not make the mistake of assuming that the spiritual world is just another radio wave-band! The Mind that contains all also contains radio, and other, wave-bands as well as the dimension of spirituality in which we are now interested. Everything exists in God – and God exists in everything; otherwise the world, the universe, could not exist at all.

Acts. Ch.17 v.28:

“In Him do we live and move and have our being”.



We need not feel that by allowing ourselves to have communication with those in spirit that in some way we are cutting ourselves off from God. We are still operating within the great Whole, and interacting with those who now exist in a non-physical form.

Earlier on I mentioned the concept of there being more than two worlds. Some eastern schools of thought propagate the idea that there are seven spiritual layers. And Jesus said:

“In my Father's house there are many mansions...” John Ch.14 v.2.; and this saying has been translated in many different ways, one being the idea of different heavens to be achieved by the soul. St. Paul was transported into “the third heaven”, Corinthians II, Ch.12 v.2. So the idea of there being worlds upon worlds is not new.

Those who we might have known on earth and who now wish to make contact are probably existing within what we might think of as an immediate non-physical state, still able to remember how they looked, thought and perhaps still aware of their earthly name. But as the soul progresses onwards towards the Ultimate Truth of existence some of these memories are forgotten, discarded, leaving only the spiritual essence of the person, which will now find it harder and harder to return – and which now has no reason to want to return. I became aware of my own much loved and loving grandmother by my side when I happened to be in a florist's shop, looking for a plant to buy for a friend in hospital. I happened to look down at some violets, in a box on the floor, and I knew immediately that she was there: I could sense her presence next to me. I just had to buy a bunch of these little flowers, not knowing if I was buying them for her or she for me. Later, on the same day, a mediumistic friend said that he felt there was a “grandmotherly” presence with me, and went on to pass a message which I was too amazed to remember accurately except for the final two words: “have faith” – words which were almost the last she had said to her daughter, my mother. My friend had not been able to give me a physical description, but had been aware of the feeling he received – similar to the feeling he got when he thought about his own grandmother. At that time she had been ‘dead’ for over twenty years, and it was probably too difficult for her to project an image of herself: after that long time she might not have been able to recall what she looked like. But her desire to reach me seemed to have overcome that, and, at the time, it helped me a great deal.



True mediumship is a very subtle thing, and although many people have the potential to become mediums it actually involves a great deal of training, or development. Anyone wishing to embark on this path should do so with great care and self-discipline, in a prayerful way and with skilled help and support. There are some pitfalls along the way, but there are many joys, one of the greatest of which is the knowledge that, by overcoming superstition and fear, we are, in the words of the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies, adding knowledge to faith.

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