

TOWARDS WHOLENESS

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Talking Friends holds recordings of Towards Wholeness.

Anne Brewer records them and sends to Talking Friends for distribution to Friends with visual impairment. The subscription for one year is £3 for TW publications.

www.talkingfriends.org.uk

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Distant Healing From Home

Please see our website www.quaker-healing.org.uk for current intentions.

We welcome the Oxford Healing and Upholding Group

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Please check the information shown for your group. Will you please advise Anne Le Marinel, lemarinel@hotmail.co.uk of any amendments and updates.

FFH Thursday Group

This meets on zoom on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month at 2:30 pm. It is an experience of giving distant healing in the context of a healing meditation and silence. Please contact Gervais for the link.

QSH Training Course

Claridge House 31 July – 4 August.

Please book with Claridge House.

Please contact Cherry Simpkin for bursaries.

Healers' Support Weekend

Claridge House 4 August – 6 August.

Please apply to Cherry Simpkin. Some bursaries are available.

Notice of AGM

The AGM will be held on Saturday 18 November 2023 on Zoom.

The link is as for the Thursday Prayer Group and will be circulated nearer the time.

I have attended several healing sessions in the past, but never before been present when an immediate tangible change in the person's condition took place.

Recently Allan Holmes, at my request, visited an elderly lady not known well to me but with whom I felt a point of contact. I knew C was suffering from a cough, constant pain over one side of her head and increasing quite sudden deafness in her only good ear. She had been completely deaf in one ear for the past 20 years, following a fractured skull. All the requisite medical tests had been done revealing nothing, and it was suggested that it was something she would just have to live with. It was certainly preventing her living a normal life, although she never complained or talked about her difficulties unless asked. Acting on a hunch, I asked my friend whether she knew anything about or had considered spiritual healing. She replied that she had not really thought about it, but when I told her I had a friend who was a healer and might be able to help, she was quite open to the idea.

A few days later, on a bright sunny morning, the three of us met in C's little flat. Introductions made, Allan in calm, matter of fact and friendly way said "Right, how can I help you?" and C simply and sensibly explained her symptoms and the opinion of the medical profession. Allan explained to her that instant healing was rare and that generally it took several sessions before improvement, and sometimes spiritual healing had no apparent effect. He said that it was not in his hands, that any power that resulted in improvement came from God and he was only the channel. Allan went on to explain that many years ago during a spiritual experience he had been given the gift of tongues, a language he did not understand but with which he could communicate in prayer and which he might use during the healing. C was quite accepting of this.

Allan began the healing with a brief prayer. I was fascinated to watch C's breathing becoming gently rhythmical as Allan's shaking right hand

passed over and around her head, later moving over her heart and solar plexus areas. I was standing to the other side of C, and Allan and I chatted quietly to each other, and to C, who couldn't hear she said because of the deafness. C asked at one point if she could quietly pray. After about twenty minutes or so, Allan and I took our leave, declining C's offer of refreshment.

After we left, C went to her kitchen to make herself a cup of tea and found she could hear her kettle boiling and her extractor fan whirring. Instead of feeling she was breathing through cotton wool she was breathing freely and the pain in her head had gone. Then she went out for a walk and found she could hear the traffic – a mixed blessing perhaps! One month later C continues to be well.

It was a privilege for me to be present at this healing.

Two interesting footnotes:-

Having had no hearing whatsoever for twenty years or so in one ear following the skull fracture, C is amazed to find that a little hearing is returning to that ear also.

C told me afterwards that her own prayer during the healing had been for an old lady upstairs who was seriously depressed. Visiting her later in the day C found that the depression had lifted, so perhaps the holy spirit had drifted to the next floor.

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The following is in response to the request that I record what I felt when D brought the healer Allan Holmes to see me at my flat on the morning of Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005.

The three of us sat down and he asked me about myself. From the first I felt completely at ease with Allan. He explained that sometimes he could help people a little and sometimes more; sometimes the effect would be immediate, but at others, not for perhaps some weeks or longer. He emphasised that it was God working through him; he could

achieve nothing on his own. Asked what I most wanted help with, I said the pain and pressure now covering my right ear and all that side of the head to the back; also my breathing as it was like trying to breathe through cotton wool and if I tried to take a deep breath it would start a bout of coughing.

Allan asked me to sit in a deep-backed chair which he placed in the middle of the room so that he stood behind me. He suggested D stand at one side. I concentrated on inviting God in as I always do at Meeting with my hands lying open on my lap. A year earlier, Chris Smith, Canon Brian Smith's wife had mentioned that an early Christian English King prayed with open hands – both offering himself to God and inviting Him in. That has always seemed symbolic and right somehow and I've done so ever since.

My eyes were closed and there was a great sense of peace even through the pressure of my head pain. His presence was with us and I asked silently within myself that He would help Allan to help me. I knew in that moment not only that He could, but He would. Although throughout the healing time my eyes were closed, there seemed to be a light, a warmth and a gentle reassurance. Gently layer by layer, the pressure in my head was peeled away. Layer by layer until finally there was just the pain, a hard spot beneath. Then, as if switching off a light, the pain went out. I was vaguely aware of Allan (not really of D) and saying to him something like "It's marvellous – the pain and pressure are gone." I don't think at any time his hands touched me, though I was aware of them.

At this point I silently asked God to help my old friend who lives in another flat here and is 95 years old. She had become very depressed lately and please could He help her? It was as if He smiled perhaps suggesting "Anything else while I'm here?" His presence was so loving and kindly – "Please help her too, she is old and tired," I asked.

Allan's hands were above my chest and the cotton wool sensation was dissolving. I was for the first time in many months, breathing normally

– deep, easy, comfortable breaths. It was wonderful after so long to feel whole and well again.

Allan and D left and I sat quietly for awhile. Gradually as I moved about my flat I was aware that my hearing (in my right ear where the pressure had been) had returned. In the following weeks this has improved and last week 20<sup>th</sup> April to my amazement, I found that some hearing has returned in my left ear also. I haven't heard in that ear since the 1980s when a blow to the skull above the ear left me profoundly deaf there.

Thank you Allan that through God you have given me my life back, where before I was merely existing. I cannot thank you enough for coming to see me.

Later that day I went upstairs to my friend. She was bright and cheery and I said that I had prayed for her and it seemed that He had smiled. "Well," she said, "I don't know whether He smiled or not, but He certainly heard you, for suddenly this morning I felt so different and happy." And we hugged one another.

C

Written 27<sup>th</sup> April 2005.

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Wednesday 7th September

Dear Allan

I feel I must write and let you know what has happened. After you left on Monday, I potted around doing various things, then sat down to listen to the radio. I turned it lower for it seemed too loud. Later that afternoon/evening I discovered my CD player and TV were too loud. (I listen to both with earphones in case I disturb my neighbours).

It then – belatedly! – occurred to me what had happened and I played the CD of Vivaldi concerti which includes his piccolo concerto. You will guess the rest. I heard it complete with piccolo for the first time ever.

In fact, I played it over and over – it’s only about 8 minutes long and a dream.

Yesterday morning I went gardening in St John’s churchyard. The tower has a clock which chimes the quarters. For the first time ever, I noticed it has a “resonance” for want of a better word and I mentioned this to RC who was varnishing the west doors. He was surprised I had never noticed this before “Considering how much of your time you spend up here,” so I explained.

Thank you AND GOD very, very much.

C

Glad that I live am I;
That the sky is blue;
Glad for the country lanes
And the fall of dew.
After the sun the rain,
After the rain the sun;
This is the way of life,
Till the work be done.
All that we need to do,
Be we low or high,
Is to see that we grow,
Nearer the sky.

Lizette W. Reese

THE BODY AND SPIRITUALITY

Michael Lewin

“If anything is sacred the human body is sacred.” *Walt Whitman*

Recently, after a good meal with some dear friends, I decided to walk home. I was only minutes into my journey when I was confronted by a gang of Afro-Caribbean ‘hoodies.’ I tried to break the ice by saying: “Hi, you OK?” when one of them came up from behind and hit me over the head with an iron bar. I collapsed to the ground, but like a boxer in the ring on auto-pilot, I very quickly stood up and they disbanded. It all came as something of a shock. I have sustained hearing loss on one side but I’m hoping this will recover. I now live with the realization that I could have been killed. I have always walked the streets of my neighbourhood with impunity but now I know the risks involved. Life is a precious gift and I just feel so grateful that I’m still alive. After this incident I had repeated headaches, jaw aches and difficulties with sleeping. I felt very vulnerable. My mind kept going over the event and I became increasingly outraged and resentful for what had happened. The emotional need to stay attached to this anger however seemed to block my body’s healing process. My mind was racing away thinking of retribution and punishment for the culprit and my body was sadly left behind, neglected. Soon I reached a point when I could go no further, I had to let go of my emotional preoccupations and allow healing into my life... Laying down on my bed, as a regular practice, I started to undertake body scans (creative visualizations) paying particular attention to the painful regions. Dwelling there, saying a soft hello and waiting patiently for a response, I soon felt somehow connected again. Soft breathing – calming, relaxed – slowly ensued and my awareness gently touched and reassured the pain. Fairly soon, and quite magically the pain seemed to transform into a sensation that whispered to me: “I’m OK,” then I knew I was really on the road to recovery. An outburst of weeping, brought on by a deep feeling of gratitude, let me know how much I had taken my physical wellbeing for granted.

“Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding.” *K Gibran*

Sacred Vessels

Our bodies are sacred vessels that contain all our potential, all our futures, so we must be mindful to nurture and nourish them. This is our spiritual practice that will help us to lead a full and active life. Sometimes, because we become so preoccupied with the tangled mess of everyday living we forget to engage in relaxation time to smooth the body. Then, if we allow this neglect to go on too long we start suffering. One of the central lessons I have learnt in life, that has cost me dearly, is that of ignoring body signals that told me I was too deeply entwined in anxiety and busy-ness. I overlooked these signals of course, far too busy to pay attention, then I collapsed with exhaustion. I eventually recovered but in my later studying I became really surprised by the amount of medical research evidence that linked abnormal stress levels, often fuelled by anxiety and busy-ness, with physical and mental illnesses. Life can be difficult at times, there often seems so much that we need to do in order to survive but by 'tripping over' to the hyper mode of operating we seriously challenge our bodies. A primary precept that we should honour is that related to body care. We must constantly listen to our own bodies, monitor their wellbeing simply because they are us. They are not independent entities that we visit occasionally as we do sick relatives, they are you, they are me...

Meditative Walking

When I'm anxious, having troubling thoughts and worries that feed into my body to induce aches and pain, I deliberately slow my walking down to meditative pace. Every movement of the walking then comes under mindful observation and fairly soon I feel a relaxed presence appear, as if from nowhere, to slowly heal me. This reduced pace is not always easy to sustain for long, especially in a fast track modern world, but the more I engage with it the more benefit I seem to derive. Often this mindful walking practice filters through to other activities as well, such as writing where I can engage with it more deeply and meaningfully, creating in me a sense of peace and serenity. Other

exercises that induce this feeling in me are: yoga, gardening, rambling and cycling – all mindfully practised. When our bodies are in gentle mode, calm and relaxed, we find that our minds will soon follow. This often feels like a homecoming where we have come back to our bodies, our natural state of being that our minds have allowed us to wander away from.

Non-dualism

In this article I have drawn a distinction between the mind and body when in reality they are one and the same. The mind is in the body and the body is in the mind – one fully functional, integrated system of wholeness where every minute cell has intelligence and communicates that intelligence (along with our emotions) to billions of other cells. A body-wide network of ‘talkers’ and ‘listeners’ that is quite astounding in its complexity and richness. This view of the mind / body as an interactive, homogenous operation is no longer considered idle speculation from the fringes of pseudo science but a scientifically verified reality that is altering our perception of how we function as homo sapiens. Another startling reality of this wondrous ‘machine’ – that constitutes you and me that we walk around in – is its ability to repair itself. Similar to the gaia principle of self regulation, the body has a remarkable homeostasis quality that engenders self healing on a level that is quite miraculous.

“Your body is precious. It is your vehicle for awakening. Treat it with care.” *The Buddha*

Looking at ourselves

In our world of hyper activity, often induced by market place dynamics, we can easily become over-preoccupied with busyness. Never ending pursuits and actions, movements and motions that keep us distracted from our real selves, our deeper being. Human activity, globally, has now reached neurotic proportions and is the major contributor to climate warming. Perhaps we have reached a stage in our development when we should be slowing down more, taking time out

to appreciate the quieter moments of our existence. In nature, winter is a time of hibernation, a period of rest for all living things except, it seems, the human species. Industrial plants, factories, shopping malls and financial markets know nothing of rest. They just perpetually go on without any regard for the sanctity of stillness. Our 24/7 culture of neurosis is slowly killing our sensibilities, harming our bodies and destroying the planet that sustains us but all we do is just put our heads down and carry on regardless. If we really want longevity and a quality of life, that only leaves a soft carbon footprint – we must stop doing so many things. In conclusion I often have to remind myself that I should attend as much to my under-worked body as I do to my over-worked mind. The latter already receives enough exercise, too much perhaps. But unfortunately the former does get neglected at times, or, even worse, pushed into stressful situations that can cause so much unwarranted damage, with possible long-term effects. When we are at peace with ourselves, serene and tranquil, united in body and mind, we find ourselves in a sacred space where we are nourished and protected. Some experience this feeling as a profound meditation or prayer, others as a healing, yet others as a mandala of awakening, but however we try to define it, one thing seems certain: our bodies have their own intelligence, their own wisdom that requires us to stop, listen and take note of what they are trying to tell us.

“Here in this body are sacred rivers, here are the sun and moon, as well as the pilgrimage places. I have not encountered another temple as blissful as my own body.” *Saraha*

JOURNEY WELL AND BE BODY WISE

Reprinted from TW 124 Summer 2009 [Ed]

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. So how can we equate this understanding with the lovely lines in Psalm 91: v 1-2 “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 in 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*¹ 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 wake 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.”

First published in New Vision and reproduced with permission.

¹ “Dreams: God’s Forgotten Language” by John A Sanford, published by Harper Collins, ISBN 0-06-067055-X

I was on night duty at the Hammersmith Hospital at the time. On my way to the hospital I was knocked down by a Post Office van. As a result I had severe bruising of my hip and suffered back pain. I rested for a few days and then returned to night duty. My back pain increased. I could not stand, walk or sit for long periods without pain. My friend with whom I shared a flat was concerned for me. She was on day duty at that time so we saw little of each other.

I reported for duty on this particular night, and within an hour or so I was in such pain I knew I could not continue working. I dreaded telling the night superintendent! I left the ward and shut myself in the staff cloakroom. I was in turmoil. I knew that if I reported off sick I would be off duty for several weeks (or even have to give up nursing) which would delay my finals and take me from the group I had started my training with, and which had supported me throughout. We drew strength from each other in difficult times. I felt quite desperate. I do not recall whether I uttered a word or silently prayed, but suddenly my pain disappeared. I looked around me in amazement as if looking for the pain – it was so surreal. I returned to the ward, walking on air. I told no-one. I could not speak of it.

The next morning, I met my friend briefly as she was coming on duty and I was signing off. She asked how I was. I said, "It's funny you should ask," and told her of my incredible experience. My friend showed no surprise, and asked me what time it had happened. I told her. She smiled and said that she had joined a prayer group, and it was at that time they had prayed for healing for me. I left her and went into the hospital chapel. I needed to be alone and quiet. I knew something wonderful had happened and was still tingling from the experience. I thanked God for my healing, and for my friend and the group of strangers who had prayed for me. Following that experience I joined a healing group.

Reprinted from TW 104, Autumn 2002.

I am 62 years old and have never really experienced grief. Both my parents are still alive and there has been no illness or tragedy to take away those nearest to me. I have been most blessed. Until now, that is.

I became a grandfather this year, for the first time. One of my twin daughters, Victoria, gave birth to Henry in June. My joy and delight was more than doubled when her twin sister Charlotte, announced that she too would deliver me a grandchild this year, and all timings, etc. being correct, he would be born on Christmas Eve.

Charlotte did not have a pregnancy that some women enjoy, such as one of abundant good health and blooming radiance. She experienced minor illness throughout her pregnancy and towards her seventh month was quite discomforted. The result was that she had a forceps assisted birth three weeks early and on 5th December presented me with a beautiful, bonny, bouncy, baby boy of eight pounds fourteen and a half ounces. (A very good weight for a baby three weeks early!) He was named Seth Stephen.

There was great joy and jubilation throughout all of the family for there was much to celebrate and many were the day-dreams of boy cousins romping and playing together in our gardens as they grew up; but it was not to be.

After five days baby Seth showed signs of distress and was taken to hospital with fits and convulsions. After two more days he was taken to another hospital with a specialist paediatric unit and was there put on life support machines whilst surgeons and top notch consultants performed brain surgery and applied drugs to stem the bleeding and to remove the blood clots deep within his brain. Sadly it was all in vain.

After eight days in the paediatric unit the awful decision had to be taken to switch off his life support systems. He was expected to fade away quickly, but this too was not to be.

Eventually he and his parents were moved to a specialist children's hospice where they would spend their last hours or days together in the most appropriate environment.

Seth lived for another eight days. He was tenderly and lovingly cared for by expert professionals who administered the anti-convulsing drugs and morphine that were to ease his last days with us. Their expert care and compassion will never be forgotten. In his last few days Seth was bathed and cuddled by mum and dad, he had a visit from Santa Claus, with photos, and he finally passed away in his mother's arms on 29th December; that day was also his other aunt's birthday.

Much more can and will be said, but for the moment, that is the story of Seth's life and the background to The Healing Touch.

It is a sad and tragic story to tell when its events have already been run, but to live the story as it unfolds brings emotions and wretched feelings that no one of any persuasion could fail to feel. Overwhelming compassion and sorrow were freely expressed by many folk. And thereby lies the clue to The Healing Touch – 'overwhelming.'

The tragic circumstances involving Seth and Charlotte and Peter also affect other family members like aunts and grandparents and close friends. In a short space of time the natural social 'grapevine' swings into action and one receives many calls of support and concern. One's local Meeting held Seth, parents and us in the Light. I was much comforted by this knowledge and in fact, had requested their prayers and blessings in accordance with Divine will, for I had learnt that though prayers are always answered, God does not necessarily do requests.

The sadness and misfortunes of other folk serve to remind us of our own position and we take the opportunity to be grateful for what we have, and to put our own lives into perspective. Oftentimes one is called to reflect that 'all things considered' one's lot is not that bad. Our gratitude and compassion however, is seldom contained and this, to me, has given rise to the notion of the 'burden of compassion.' It is

bad enough to be experiencing the horrendous peaks and troughs of a young life wavering in the balance. But to then have to respond to loving enquiries from those affected by the news is frequently a burden too much to bear.

Why do folk, who when they open a dialogue by saying “There aren’t really any words one can say...” then proceed to use words which they know are inadequate? Why do folk feel impelled to hold out hope and to talk of miracles and ‘holding on? And why do folk feel that relating stories of their own past tragedies and traumas will, in any way, help me. Oftentimes, in my tortured state, I was called to counsel and comfort those who had yet to come to terms with their sadness, sometimes experienced several decades ago. Such is life I suppose, and such is the human condition that, in flawed attempts to comfort those in distress, we often dump on them the issues that we have yet to come to terms with that lie deep within ourselves.

For me, in my journey from 5th to 29th December when I went from joy to mild concern, to worry to deep concern, to distress to wild hope and total despair and final resignation to God’s will, I was at all times much comforted by the knowledge that my grandchild was being held in the Light by our Meeting. I was warmed and felt cherished by the knowledge that I too was being thought of and prayed for. I had never felt like that before. I have often been the centre of attention during my lifetime but that was for professional activities or for some other public task or duty. But to be the focus of so much love and warmth and feeling was truly unique for me, and I cherish the memory of it.

It is the Quaker way to worship in silence. A recent leaflet of quotes prepared for an outreach week by our Meeting had the sentence ‘Quaker silence makes up for the inadequacy of words.’ I just love that expression. It means so much to me. Is it not true that worship, true worship, is not that which we conduct on a Sunday morning but that which we do the rest of the week? Is it not true that worship is not downgraded to just one or two hours a week but is elevated to encompass all one hundred and sixty eight hours in the week? Worship

is in everything we think and say and do. If this is so, then in those worshipful activities outside of the meeting room does not the Quaker silence still make up for the inadequacy of words? For me this surely is the case.

We need to care, we need to be cared for, and we need to know that care is offered, is given and is received. Should it not suffice, that in the Quaker manner of things, a smile, a nod, a touch of the elbow or a gentle touch of the shoulder is all that is necessary to convey humankind's and God's love, without the burden of words?

Our social taboos are such that touching one another is frowned upon and is the domain of very close family and friends only. Wariness is the norm for we are conditioned to be suspicious; such is the turpitude of our age. Within the Society of Friends, and especially the Friends Fellowship of Healing, I hope that we can find the space and the courage when the sad times arise, to refrain from the burden of compassion by avoiding excessive words. I hope that we may all reflect on the healing that a light touch can bring.

“Death is not an extinguishing of the light: it is a putting out of the light because the dawn has come.” *Rabindranath Tagore*

Reprinted from TW 123, Spring 2009

I had met death only through nursing my previous wife dying of cancer. I did not know how I felt about my own death. Death is hidden in the closet in our society. Most of us are in denial about it, but in reality only by facing our mortality can we live life fully.

I had spent four months earlier in the year with increasingly debilitating back pain and then sickness. After admission to hospital, a round of blood tests showed advanced prostate cancer, which had spread to my spine, pelvis and rib cage. After leaving hospital things continued to deteriorate to the point when I thought I might die. Was I going to die? Then to my surprise and relief I realised dying would be fine, it really would be O.K., just another transition. It would be letting go of the pain, the sickness and exhaustion. I could opt out.

As a child I had never wanted to be here, the world was a frightening and dangerous place. I could not face the hard things of life. I would opt out – literally! Under stress and when ill I would sometimes go out of my body and watch. I also had fainting fits and *petit mal*.

The idea of death was very attractive to that little boy who was still a part of me, who did not want to face the pain, the sickness and exhaustion. Lesley and I always talk about our feelings. Talking with her about the possibility of my dying and sharing her pain and feelings of anticipated loss, pulled me into asking Spirit for help. The answer came very clearly “Tony, you can choose to die or you can choose to live, the choice is yours.” The shock of this projected me into looking more deeply at who I was. Yes, that “little boy” in me would like to opt out and die, but there was more to me than that. I had grown up and faced the nasty things in life, albeit unconscious of who I really was. More importantly, over the last twenty years I had found out who I am and had become a very different person. The me that I was now did not want to opt out. I wanted to live, to have more life with Lesley my lovely wife. But how was I going to live with the pain and sickness?

Maybe for now it was about asking Spirit to help me to help myself and trust that answers would come.

The answers came as an incredible blessing. First, the prayers, the healing, the upholding and support of so many people gave us the feeling of being held in the light. We felt a tangible energy which almost overwhelmed us at times. The joy we felt in this helped Lesley to find strength to cope and to keep trusting. It gave me the knowledge that I was totally connected and at one with all that is, allowing me to be in touch with my soul, much of the time responding from the soul level rather than that damaged and suffering ego self. Yes I *could* trust the process. It showed me with the guidance of Spirit how to live this new life I was being given. The other gift I received was the first of a series of injections, which reduced the pain in my ribs and gave a slight improvement in my back.

There were still choices. I could exist with the pain and the physical limitations: exist with resentment and anger that I didn't have the health of a year ago. This seemed pointless because I didn't feel resentful or angry, better to die than that. My soul gave me a plan for how to get the most out of my new life.

Let the pain be the pain, do not fight and resist it, give it permission. I found at one level that I only suffered from it when I was fighting it or wished it wasn't there.

Do not wish for things that I could not have or be.

Live in the present moment. Live the present as intensely as a child, in awe.

Live adventurously, adventure in the little things like being pushed in the wheelchair along the sea front.

Live in and with love.

When I remember to practise living these advices I am given such release and joy, that I hope to live them more of the time. And yes there will still be the dark times.

I have written this to remind myself of the blessing I have been given, a new life to be lived fully and hopefully not to fall back into the norms of the past. One of these blessings is my wife Lesley, whose love and caring has made this possible.

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There are some people who make God feel near, and it's the greatest gift that one human being can give to another.

*Michael Ramsey*

*Reprinted from TW 114 Spring 2006.*

Some time ago I received from Ros Smith a gloriously rich resource comprising nearly all the issues of Towards Wholeness from number 1 to 142, many of them accompanied by electronic files, and the newsletters that preceded TW1. I have nursed the idea of a feature in new issues: "From the Archives" but have not implemented it hitherto because of the wonderful supply of new articles. Now the situation is reversed. There are too few new articles to hand, so most of this issue is "from the archives." The quality of the reprinted articles speaks for itself. Nevertheless if Towards Wholeness is to maintain its edge, to respond to new currents of thought and to recount new experiences of healing, I need a copious supply of new articles. This may refer to you!  
[Ed]

## THE ROLE OF THE FFH IN THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS:

where are we going?

*Hilary Painter*

I just want to tell you about the FFH committee weekend from which I recently returned. I'll try and do it sequentially because I'm going to get a bit lost in my own cleverness. One of our main agenda items was membership (of the FFH); it's falling fast, significantly faster than in the Society of Friends generally: mainly through deaths, from which one may easily deduce that we are not appealing to younger people. There is of course the question does it matter? – perhaps we have had our day. And then there is the question – what do we do about it? While practical action will be necessary (and we do have some ideas), at the moment it's more about what is our *raison d'être*, what do we have to contribute, what is important about healing. We do think healing is important, it is following in the footsteps of George Fox, and of course Jesus himself. They were prophets, and left a trail of healing which was one of the things which made their Truth known to the people around them. (Healing by the way is not about praying for a cure, but means entering into the Wholeness and drawing others there, so that it is easier for them to experience the Light). Recently what has been coming to my attention, to use the title of a book I was lent quite unexpectedly, is *The Return of the Feminine and the World Soul*.\* I cannot yet articulate clearly what this means but I am getting a little closer. While lying awake in the night during our committee weekend I was reading *Prayers of the Cosmos*,\*\* a re-translation of the Lord's Prayer with textual notes which go into the multiple meanings and resonance of each word in the original Aramaic. I was looking at the first line, where it is pointed out that the word translated simply as Father carried within it deeper meanings: – human father; divine father; human and divine mother; creator; source; wellspring; primal

energy. This is not entirely news, but it inspired me to actually try saying the words “Our Mother...” I cannot put into words my reaction, but I was profoundly affected, and felt it in my body, a very gentle sense of discomfort. Now there are two aspects to this, one is that even using the words “our Mother” is strange to us; and secondly that my sense of it appeared in my body; it is not currently conscious. Is this the feminine consciousness which needs to be illuminated by masculine consciousness to integrate this vague felt sense into conscious daily life? Because that feminine consciousness is not an articulate verbal one it is easy to overlook it or dismiss it. And in any case words cannot encompass all of our experience, as any Friend knows. So, this led to ministry in Meeting for Worship and to further cogitation, and to the realisation that I would probably not have ministered along those lines in my own Meeting. I felt free to do so on this occasion because there was not one person present who would have wondered what on earth I was talking about. Whereas in the Society of Friends at large there are many people who are very outwardly directed (thank heavens) who would have either not have heard a word or thought this was hippy-dippy nonsense. Then this led to discussion on the nature of this awareness of the hidden dimensions of life. I’m not really talking about the illumination of the spirit, the direct experience of God or the Light; I assume that all Friends have at least an inkling of that. Rather I want to look at the conscious awareness of the transformation of human consciousness which is taking place now. There was a tremendous shift at the beginning of the Enlightenment and now another shift is taking place so that we may, collectively, as a species, learn more harmonious ways of living, but more consciously now. This is New Agey talk, but believe me it is important inward work, and it seemed to us in that committee meeting that mediating this, holding these subtleties very carefully in

mind, might be part of our service to the Society of Friends at the moment. We see the Society participating in the zeitgeist, in our own inimitable Quaker way of course, but still with a strong emphasis on the importance of doing Things; love in Action; when we let our lives speak we tend to think they speak loudest where there are concrete visible results, achievements. This is good! It is wonderful! It is necessary! I for one am immensely grateful that others are willing to go and man the barricades, to bring about material change. But there is also inner work to be done. These things are not in opposition, they support and inform each other, and within the Society we all endeavour to live our lives from the spirit. But what I observe in my own Meeting is that this inner work is not everyone's cup of tea and that people are very grateful for others doing it. I feel that though most of the Meeting is not personally interested in either the FFH or Experiment with Light they are glad these groups are there, and they are appreciated as deepening the spiritual life of the meeting as a whole, without necessarily involving all that many people. And it seemed to the committee that the FFH might fulfil this function on a wider scale. The work of transformation on all levels, personal, practical, in society, collectively is massive, and we cannot all do everything. But perhaps we can do some of the inner holding for the Society of Friends and perhaps we can lead the way in bringing the transformation of our ways of thinking, working, living and being into consciousness.

\* The Return of the Feminine and the World Soul by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee ISBN: 978-1-890350-14-7

\*\* Prayers of the Cosmos by Neil Douglas-Klotz ISBN: 978-0-06-061995-4

*Reprinted from TW132 Spring 2012. Hilary speaks to my condition.[Ed]*

This story starts with “in the beginning” but it is a myth already, for there was no beginning, because all times are present now.

So in the beginning there was the Unity. There was nothing else. The word “else” did not exist. All things were latent in the Unity, but nothing existed by itself, because there was no such thing as self, nor existence for that matter. The Unity was deeply unconscious, for there was nothing for it to be conscious of. It couldn’t be conscious of itself because it had no self.

In mythical time, then the Unity conceived a desire to know itself. It couldn’t step outside to look in, because there was no outside. So it split itself into fragments while still retaining its Unity. To do this it had to extrude from itself (for now it was a self) a system of layers of ever lesser concentration, or greater dilution. The totality of the fragments resided in the first of the extruded layers, and is called the Pleroma, or fullness. Now you had duality, for there was the Unity and the Pleroma, and with duality came the possibility of all the ills in the world. It is useless to blame the devil for this. There was no devil. The Unity did it. There was no other.

What a playing there was with the Pleroma. But the Unity was not satisfied. The Pleroma was not separate enough from the Unity for the Unity to see itself reflected in it. So it further diluted the Pleroma to make the Creation. Not only did it fill it with every kind of grace, but it also gave it the power to make itself. The stars and planets were made according to natural laws. Species evolved according to natural selection. The best lion is the one that catches the antelope. The best antelope is the one that escapes the lion.

Now the Creation could stand over against the Unity, mythologically. There is still nothing but the Unity. And the Unity could be surprised at the Creation and see aspects of itself mirrored in it. It could see a stone and could say that the stone exists, therefore I, from whom the stone came, must exist too. Nice to know! It could see a plant and in its life could see reflected its life. The animals reflected back still more. Then the Unity said, mythologically (for there is no “then”) “There must be more to it than this!” So it invested soul and spirit into some of the animals, not being averse to seeding the Creation with new species at its discretion. In accordance with the power of the Creation to make itself, the new animals had the power of free will. Some of them used their free will to dominate their fellows and make life very unpleasant for them. The Unity gave them this power.

The Unity learned a lot more about itself by observing the merry-go-round, but it also dealt fairly with the souled and spirited animals, for no matter how vile their lives were, they returned to conditions of freedom and peace, where bullies could not touch them. Moreover because of their experiences they became experienced, that is, they grew in stature. In addition the Unity was able to share their experience, which it never could have done without them. And so it was able to feel the opposite experience too. Either because they were pushed, or because they felt the urge that was implanted in them to grow in soul power, the souled and spirited animals returned to incarnate life over and over again, in conditions best suited for their development as chosen by themselves and their mentors using indications supplied by the law of Karma.

The combined experiences of all the millions of human animals over millions of years, and of any animals in other worlds, eventually grew into a formidable database and is growing still.

Eventually some of the human animals said in their turn “There must be more to it than this!” and suffered agonies of longing. Then it was that they discovered the spirit which had been in them all along. Some of them realized that the spirit in them was nothing less than the Unity. When they did not just realize this but experience it as well, the circle was complete. For they saw the fullness of the Unity, and the Unity saw itself in them, and was ecstatic with delight. Well could it be said “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee”. For now the database of experience included the knowledge that contains all other knowledge, the Unity itself.

So in the beginning was the Unity. There was nothing else. And the Unity was fully conscious, of itself and of everything within it. Brahman breathed out, and breathed in again.

It is not much use saying that the Son died for us, for we, by our seemingly separate existence, gained the experience that generated the Son, so we are the loved and admired heroes of the story, good and bad alike, not the villains.

Aeons from now we can imagine that all possible experiences will have been experienced, and that the Son is complete. That time is now, along with the incomplete Son and the unconscious Unity.

*Note: This is the furthest reach of my exploration to date.*

Breathe fairly deeply, in and out, but at your own pace.

Don't let the breathing become stressful in any way.

If you need to breathe shallowly for a while, then do.

*Just let the directions, as given, mingle with the relaxed in and out rhythm of your breathing. Sit comfortably, and relax in your own way.*

So, breathe in gently and deeply, and imagine a lovely white light, the light of PEACE, above your head - or perhaps a golden light if you prefer – and feel that light surround and enfold you – and think the word PEACE to yourself.

Now, breathe in that PEACE. *(Remember to let your breath gently come and go, don't hold it.)*

Feel that PEACE flowing down from the top of your head, a lovely white or golden light flowing down through your arms, and down through your body, down to your feet. Feel it filling you with PEACE.

And, as you breathe out, feel yourself breathing out all tension. Feel the tension flow away and out from your toes, away out into the ground.

And again, breathe in PEACE – see it flow through your whole body again – lighting every area – and breathe out all negativity, all stressful thoughts.

*(Remember to breathe gently and in a relaxed manner.)*

And again, breathe in PEACE, and breathe out - all fear.

And now, see the light that is above you, and which surrounds you, change to a wonderful deeper golden colour – and see the word JOY contained within this light.

Breathe in JOY – feel it flow throughout your body, down to your feet.

Breathe in JOY, and breathe out all cares and concerns, all worries  
See them flowing away from your toes, out safely into the ground.

Again breathe in JOY, feel it flow, and breathe out all negative thoughts.

*(Keep your breathing regular and gentle)*

Breathe in JOY – and breathe out - all fear.

And now, see the light change to a lovely rose-pink above you.

See it as it surrounds you and enfolds you. And see the word LOVE glowing within this light. And know yourself beloved.

And, gently, breathe in LOVE – feel it filling the whole of your being.

Breathe in LOVE – and breathe out all negative feelings about yourself.  
See them flow away from you, safely into the ground.

And, breathe in LOVE – breathe out all negative feelings towards others, all feelings of jealousy, anger, envy, malice - see these feelings flow away gently and safely into the ground.

And again, breathe in LOVE – and breathe out all your – fear.

And now, again breathe in PEACE – see the lovely light of PEACE above you, and enfolding you. And know that it is always there – ready for you to breathe into, whenever you need to.

Open your eyes etc.