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What Canst Thou Say?

Friends • Mystical Experience • Contemplative Practice

*You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this: but what canst thou say?
Art thou a child of Light and hast thou walked in the Light, and what thou speakest,
is it inwardly from God? —George Fox*

Addiction and Grace

Desperately Hungry

I am very distracted right now. I feel as if I cannot be here, cannot do this work of preparing this issue and certainly not the work of writing the letter from the Editor. I feel a fool for even attempting such a thing. Who am I, to write anything that will be topped with the word “Editor” when I have had not even a tenth of the time and prayer to put into organizing this issue that I told myself I would give it and that I know it deserves?

But I am not distracted. I am actually quite, quite present in this moment, surrounded by splices—slips of paper, tape, scissors, and my computer. I’d like to call this state distracted, but it is not.

I was led to suggest an issue of WCTS on the spiritual state of addiction from a place within me that longed to hear the stories of others on the path of Spirit who live with or had lived with addiction. I have been addicted to food since I was twelve years old. Now 36, I was looking back at 24 years of struggle and felt myself on my spiritual knees once again, begging to know why, despite all my efforts and prayers, I was still as unhealed of my affliction as I ever was. Here again on my knees, I looked up for a moment and saw all around me God’s children going about their days, their hearts also suffering. I saw the pierced heart

of Mary, immaculate and unbroken though bleeding. I heard my belly. I heard all of our bellies, rumbling and hungry for God.

Here I am tonight, attempting to finish what I pledged to do as an act of connecting to the Divine in myself and in my fellow seekers of the Light, and I am feeling unworthy. I am feeling small and wanting. And I am hungry, desperately hungry. My mind is crying out for me to eat something, anything, to cope with the pain of facing and pushing through this sense of inadequacy tonight, but I am not fulfilling its request. Instead I am being here with the words of other seekers and sufferers who have lived with addiction, honoring their stories with all I have to give—my unflinching presence.

I know there is something holy, something of Grace, in the experience

Jacqueline Hannah, Guest Editor

of addiction. Sometimes I can almost put words to what that something is. Tonight I cannot put it to words, but I know I can hear that Grace in these stories of lives lived with addiction courageously offered up by other seekers. I am agitated, unsure of myself as I attempt to introduce these writings to you, but not distracted, not at all. This sense of unworthiness is the heart of my addiction, is the place where I need and hunger for God. Perhaps you know this place too and will visit it with new eyes in these writings. Perhaps you have never been here before. Regardless, welcome.

Jacqueline Hannah directs Common Ground Food Co-op (Urbana, Illinois). She has a leading to bring local natural foods to shoppers. She and Michael Hannah are members of Urbana-Champaign Meeting, Illinois.

From the Editors:

The addiction theme reverberated in a number of readers’ lives. We were blessed to receive many more offerings than would fit in the paper version. In order to make these messages available, we have placed them on our web site <whatcanstthousay.org/extras.html>. Our thanks to our authors for sharing so generously of themselves, and to Maurine Pyle, who advised us about addiction issues.

Jacqueline Hannah with Mariellen Gilpin and Mike Resman

Addiction and Grace: Encounters with the One True God

Gene Hillman

I first started drinking while working in Korea in my mid-20s. At first I was the only American in town, and after work there was very little else to do. I drank makkoli (a crude rice wine) because it was cheap and not too strong, and that's what my co-workers drank with dried squid and kimchee when we went to a wine house after work. When I got back home and started graduate school I continued drinking, now usually beer, but wine, whisky, brandy at other times.

I'm what is called a functional alcoholic. I always held a job, even while in chemotherapy for esophageal cancer. I worked through the day, sometimes attended or taught a class in the evening, but as soon as my responsibilities were completed I would head for a bar or liquor store. This continued pretty much for almost 30 years.

The only significant break to this pattern came after joining Friends, when I attended Yearly Meeting sessions or FUM Triennial Sessions and Board meetings. The urge to drink wasn't there. I now see that for these brief periods when I put God first, and

in the company of others who also put God first, I was graced with freedom from my addiction. Yet on return to the secular world, the cravings returned. Gerald May speaks of addiction as idolatry (in *Addiction and Grace*, see review, p. 8). The addictive substance takes the place of God, becoming like an idol.

I sometimes felt God's presence in Meeting for worship, and sometimes felt called to stop and be attentive at other times. After I completed chemotherapy, I lived for a while in the basement of the home of Friends in Annapolis while I finished a program in Pastoral Counseling at a small Franciscan school in Pennsylvania. I drove back to Annapolis after an evening class every Tuesday night, drinking as I drove. I was blessed that in all the years of drinking I never hurt anyone, or was hurt myself; the police drove me home on occasion, but I never had a DUI.

One night in that basement in Annapolis while depressed and drunk, all of a sudden, I felt a sense of peace. I became sober, and the words "*faith, hope and love*" were given to me. It

wasn't an auditory experience; the words were just given to me. I've had a couple other experiences like this, words that would not have occurred to me, which is a primary test of the Spirit, to my mind. Everything became clear and God's love was almost palpable. I think this was an invitation to change—repent, come around, metanoia—but I didn't. The next night I was drinking again: I returned to the false god.

Another instance occurred after finding regular full time work. I had a stressful confrontation with a supervisor. I was very upset. Leaving work I could feel God calling me to a church, any church, to come and be comforted. Instead, I turned my back on the one true God and sought solace at a bar. I knew what I was doing when I did it, but couldn't help myself; I wasn't ready yet to turn to the true God. Again I returned to that false god, alcohol.

One evening a few years later the woman who is now my wife visited me and saw a trash bag full of empty beer cans in the kitchen (at least I recycled). Soon after, she addressed the issue of my drinking in a twelve-page letter, and a Quaker psychologist we were seeing for couples work started seeing me on the side on addiction issues. The psychologist was helpful, but he seemed to compartmentalize his spirituality and his counseling. The counseling was pretty much what I later recognized as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. I continued drinking. Even when I went to Alcoholics Anonymous (which is a spiritual program) I would stop at a bar on the way home.

The first three steps of AA are: "1) We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable; 2) came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity; 3) made a decision

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Freedom

Janis Ansell

to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.” Addiction robs us of the free will God gave us when God gave us life; it robs us of that life and makes us robots. It sucks the life out of us. Recognizing the truth of these three steps, I took a day off from work for a one-day retreat at a Benedictine convent in Delaware (since closed). I took my Bible, some AA literature, the before-mentioned *Addiction and Grace*, and “Friends and Alcohol” (Robert Levering, *Pendle Hill Pamphlet #313*). I spent some time in the chapel in prayer, but much of the day I sat in the sun by a stream reading and praying. I asked God to relieve me of this affliction (step 3). When I drove home I drove right past two bars that I never seemed to get past before—unless I knew I had something to drink at home. There had been no dramatic opening of the heavens, but God had taken away the cravings. The urge wasn’t there. That was over twelve years ago. With the help of friends of Bill W. (AA), and God’s grace, I haven’t had a drink since.

Gene Hillman is a member of Middletown Monthly Meeting (Concord Quarter, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting). He is a friend of Bill W., and now works for Gaudenzia, a residential drug treatment facility in Wilmington, Delaware.



When the theme “Addiction” was first announced I was sure I had nothing to contribute, but my inner nudges soon told me otherwise. I’m aware that certain substances are known to be potentially addictive. What else might be? Could behaviors be considered addictive? As I sat with this topic, I soon heard inner whisperings telling me that I am recovering from an addiction to “holding on.” Specifically, I’ve been known to hold onto bad habits, self-defeating behaviors, sentimental attachments, guilt, anger, stuff, and my own opinions—just to name a few things I’ve clung to over the years. These behavioral characteristics existed before I joined the Religious Society of Friends over 25 years ago, so it’s no surprise that when I became a Friend I fell right into using language such as, “holding onto the Light” and “holding onto a space for the Spirit.” Now, for me, I understand such language to be an effort to control a mystery and a power that is beyond my grasp, though not out of reach of my experience.

How has the Inner Teacher so tenderly allowed me to learn this lesson?

God gives me freedom and I intend to return the favor. ... I'm going to let God be God.

Patiently, very patiently, my Guide has worked. I’ve missed a lot of learning opportunities by seeing obstacles rather than gifts in my path. There have been times when letting go was not my choice and I had to turn to and trust God rather than my own insights. Slowly, I’ve discovered that any space which I might be capable of “holding” for Light is much too small

to contain the Love that I now know the Light of Christ to be. I’m learning to let go. The experience of watching a little child stumble showed me how to reach out for help—simply open your hands, stretch out your arms, look to the source of love in your life and trust that someone will pick you up and comfort you. As a preschool teacher and parent I had witnessed such a stumble and seen only my failure to hold on tightly to the little hand that depended on me. Finally, I understood the lesson. Falling is not a sign of failing but of an opportunity to rise again. By opening my hands and turning to the source of Love, I can receive the help and comfort necessary to overcome a stumble and stand again. Jesus, the Comforter, is with me always, waiting to take my open hand.

Not long after the “aha” moment that came through observing a child’s fall, I began to notice open hands appearing in various forms in everyday experiences. Gently God was reminding me, reinforcing the lesson to let go. Only as my hands are open am I able to receive all that God has to offer. Only an open hand can reach out and grasp the hand of a friend; an open hand can gently caress a lover; an open hand can cradle a newborn, stroke a pet or wipe away a child’s tears. A closed fist

Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given to me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.—2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (Contributed by Michael Hannah)

cannot make a loving gesture nor can a closed heart be touched by love.

I'm unclenching my fingers and allowing my hands to open fully. No more "holding on" for me. God gives me freedom and I intend to return the favor. No longer do I agree to "hold" others in the Light though I do offer to pray that the Spirit of the Living Christ—Love—is free to move in the person and/or situation. No longer do I clutch God in clenched hands, afraid the Divine Mystery will vanish if I let go. Without holding onto me, God has waited for me to open my hands and my heart. Now that I have, I'm going to give up the useless metaphorical box in which I tried to hold the Spirit, and let God be God, in whatever space or shape God chooses in any given moment.

It has not been easy shifting patterns of thought and language to this "freedom" way of being. I've learned a lot of trust is required for me to allow God the freedom to work in and through me. I've discovered that fear blocks the Spirit's free movement, so I endeavor to let go of fear and settle into expectant waiting. In trusting openness and joyful anticipation, I am sometimes blessed with a deep inner awareness of freely expressed love. Letting go of entrenched addictive behavior patterns and language requires a lot of practice. Fortunately, I'm free to practice as often as I'm willing to surrender, open my hands and heart, and allow Spirit, Joy and Love to flow freely.

Janis Ansell is a member of Rich Square Meeting (North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative). She completed the School of the Spirit program, "On Being a Spiritual Nurturer," in 2008 and now serves on its Board.



Answering the Knock

Anya Hamrick-Nevinglovskaya

drinking. Back home, my mom and her friends do a lot of that.

And there's usually nothing to do at the hospital but stay in bed. Most people consider it quite boring, in fact. But, boy, did I want boring. Best part? I have hours and hours of being left alone to travel into the enchanting world of books. Wow, I explore the mysteries of young America and hunt with its native tribes, thanks to Karl Mai. I travel to Africa, Patagonia—all around the world in fact—with Jules Verne. Forget the world, how about traveling through time? Thank you, H.G. Wells.

I learn how to be a lady in Victorian England. I almost learn what it's like

to have a parent and a childhood.

I have fun and feel through the characters with whom I live, from cover to cover. I learn that strength and perseverance are

real; that a better life in fact exists and is a matter of time and waiting.

The lessons come in handy. Let us fast-forward four more years—I am eleven, and my two brothers and I live at an orphanage. Oh boy—all those shaved heads and cots, and scary, sad stories that for some odd reason don't feel sad or scary when you hear them. Gone are the days of frequent, lengthy hospital stays. I am quite healthy now, but the tradition of "literary travel" continues. During nap hour, we get a chance either to sleep or to read. The places I go during that hour, the things I feel, the roles I assume—it seems like lifetimes. Wonderful, merciful lifetimes. Stories are food now; they are medicine. The adventures from the written world in fact color reality. The energy I explore and retrieve there

Sometimes I feel like I need to stand up and announce, "Hi, my name is Anya, and I am addicted to reading."

May sound funny, but it's true. I suppose, ordinarily, we tend to think of addiction as something that negatively impacts our lives in a more or less obvious way—alcohol, drugs, sex, food. But what about something that is viewed as positive, even admirable by our society? Something that for you at one point may have served an educational, even life-saving function, but eventually began to outlive its usefulness?

Allow me to back up, please, and travel with me if you will. I'm about four, and I am talk-

ing with a girl at my kindergarten in Kaliningrad, USSR. She asserts that we are looking at a letter "o," and I am feeling uncomfortable because I

have no idea what she's talking about. That evening, I ask my Babushka (Grandmother) to teach me the alphabet. I memorize it in one night, and it proves to be one of the greatest gifts she gives me.

Let us fast-forward three years—I am seven. I am at a Soviet hospital, yet again. In fact that year alone I find myself in one about eight times—pneumonia, asthma, bronchitis. I just can't seem to stay out. I feel quite glad when the ambulances come to pick me up for yet another stay. In fact, there are times when I consider faking symptoms just so the doctors don't send me home when I'm getting well. Sure, there are nightly shots, IV sessions, and the staff's not always nice. But the place is clean; it has a schedule and regular meals. Most importantly, there is no

Through books I could experience these feelings vicariously, a process that was much more than entertainment. It was spiritual solace, therapy, home.

nourishes my waking world—and that of my companions.

Zap: three more years—I am almost fourteen, living at my second orphanage. Not a nice place, rougher than the first—but it has a tiny library with American books in translation, among others. Nancy Drew, the Hardy boys—I investigate crime, solve mysteries, order my threatening, seemingly chaotic reality into something familiar, something that makes sense and has a happy ending. All while marveling at the Magic Land of Plenty.

One day, however, the excitement of reality trumps that of books. I find out that I am to travel to America for a summer vacation with a host family.

Oh boy, this is a dream come true—just like it happens in books! The orphan child suffers losses, goes through trials. But if she’s good and kind enough, if she studies hard enough, if she believes strongly enough, she will be rescued. And happiness will begin. “This is the family I’ve always wanted,” I think. “I just know it.”

Let us fast-forward through the next ten years, for they are still too fresh and near. I was adopted. My brothers were not. My mother and Babushka passed away within the next three years. Suffice it to say that the reality of my family life turned out quite different from the plot of rescued-orphan stories. The dream world of books remained a refuge from the waking life.

I needed to feel, but I couldn’t. I needed to grieve, but I wasn’t able to. Through books, however, I could experience those things vicariously, a process that was much more than entertainment. It was spiritual solace, therapy, home.

And thus I continued existing—split between the visible world and the one I would get spirited into through my imagination.

Until I began to wake up. And it was very painful.

We now become transported to a small West Indian island where I live when I’m 24 and 25. As part of my Peace Corps service, I work at an orphanage. One of the things I’m asked to do involves educating staff on psychological trauma and its effects on children. Before I can do that, however,

I must learn about it myself. I partner up with an American psychologist, get my hands on the literature, and begin to learn, only to discover

that I already know this, intimately, all too well.

And so, this is the time I begin to meet myself—formally. It’s like answering a knock, opening the door one day and seeing an unknown child standing on your threshold. Scared, tear-stained, silent. “Who are you?” No response.

Every time we got a new child at the orphanage, he or she was inconsolable for anywhere from two days to a couple of months. Most of them had living parents, like me when I went into my first one. Things had to get

very bad for the government to step in and remove them. Regardless of what their mommies did or didn’t do, the kids cried for them. And there was nothing you could do for them at first but hold them. Sometimes listening to the tears, sometimes holding them without touching—in silence.

Every time I was there with one of our kids, there was a knock on my own psychic door. “Who are you?” Silence.

I began to wake up, and that entailed feeling previously un-experienced pain. It was at this time that I first began to realize that reading no longer involved only pleasure and psychic refuge. It had become a cocoon of safety, an avoidance tactic that I all too easily was tempted to employ every time the knocking at the door got a little too loud to ignore. I began to realize that there is a real-time reality out there: one that isn’t necessarily fair and that doesn’t guarantee happy endings, one of great un-witnessed suffering, both on mass and individual scales. In order to try to see a little more of it each time, I must first begin seeing the seer.

What it really comes down to is this: answering the knock, opening the door, and holding unknown parts of myself without touching—in silence.

Anya Hamrick-Nevinglovskaya attends Urbana-Champaign Meeting, Illinois, and is a student of Zen Buddhism and Iyengar yoga. As a graduate student at the University of Illinois, she studies the relationship between literature and psychological trauma.

I continued existing—split between the visible world and the one I would get spirited into through my imagination.

WCTS Editor Mariellen Gilpin was interviewed on “Keepin’ the Faith” November 25, 2007. <will.uiuc.edu/am/ktf>

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Undoing the Ego

Jay Mittenthal

With a controlling mother and a distant father, I learned to be a control freak and an approval junkie. To keep a semblance of control and to get a modicum of approval, I tried to become self-reliant. I focused on what I could do well—on school-work, where critical and judgmental evaluation is applauded. However, choosing to *do*, over choosing to *be*, draws a veil over Spirit, *I am*. Trying to control breeds fear and guilt. Since control is impossible, the inevitable failure breeds frustration and anger. In judgment and avoidance of my parents, I became alienated from them. Eventually my angry outbursts ended my first marriage when I was 50.

Alone and afraid, not wanting to live a solitary, isolated old age as my parents did, I sought help. I met with a faculty colleague who was unmarried, reputed to be an outstanding teacher, and known to be a recovering alcoholic. At our lunch it was clear that we responded with addiction to similar histories. He chose alcohol; I chose control and approval. He explained that his path to recovery, the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, worked for people with hundreds of kinds of addiction. He agreed to become my sponsor. In many afternoon meetings we worked through the steps.

I came to believe in God again, after being agnostic for decades. I became a Quaker and a student of *A Course in Miracles*. I came to understand that my parents and I had developed illusory images of ourselves and the world. In our childhoods we developed an ego—a set of beliefs and expectations—that enabled us to survive but that cloaked Spirit. (EGO = Edging God Out.) Gradually I felt release from the ego. Bicycling home

from these meetings, I often wept with gratitude and relief.

A dialogue in “Monty Python and the Holy Grail” summarizes my recovery:

Peasant: Well, she turned me into a newt!

Knight: A newt?

Peasant: [meekly after a long pause] ... I got better.

To go beyond this and ask the role of Spirit is the realm of conjecture. Surely the thoughts and feelings that directed me to my sponsor and sustained me as we worked the steps were grace. Grace also led me to meet Terri, with whom I’m happily married. Am I still addicted to control and approval? Yes, though less so (with large fluctuations) over time. I don’t have to keep them under control if I relinquish control to God every day. I lose peace and become angry when I feel unheard or judged. But, I recognize that those feelings almost always arise from a misunderstanding. Reflection and reading the *Course* help to restore my perspective, allowing me the release of forgiveness. On the whole, I can say that I live in grace.

Jay Mittenthal is a member and former clerk of Urbana-Champaign Meeting, Illinois. He and Terri Mittenthal open their home to spiritual pilgrims every Thursday night.

From Addiction to Happiness

Lee Rada

I met a wonderful man. He was warm, funny, smart and ever so talented. He wasn’t a knight in shining armor, but I was sure he held my ticket to happiness. We shared common interests and, even more important, he seemed to want to spend time with me.

After a few months I found out there was one little problem—he admitted he sometimes took a day or two off to smoke cocaine. That explained the longer-than-expected absences when I thought I had gotten some of his travel dates wrong.

Still, love conquers all, right? All I had to do was fix him and then we could live happily ever after. I came up with all sorts of diversions to keep him busy and in my company. I spent many evenings and weekends with him. When we couldn’t be together, he promised he would call me if he felt like using. If he called me late at night, I would keep him on the phone until he fell asleep. One month I insisted that I should be in charge of his money; I bought his groceries, paid his bills and gave him a small allowance.

Still, despite my best efforts, he would go out and use anyway. Each

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This life, therefore, is not godliness but the process of becoming godly, not health but getting well, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way. The process is not yet finished, but it is actively going on. This is not the goal but it is the right road. At present, everything does not gleam and sparkle, but everything is being cleansed.
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

time this happened, I was devastated. How had I failed as a friend? Or more to the point, how could he pick crack over me? My life began to revolve around his binges. I would count his days clean. I figured out a way to monitor his drug use by checking his bank balance by phone. Sometimes I would call the automated teller system every fifteen minutes. A withdrawal meant he was still alive, but still using. When there was no activity for a while, I convinced myself he had overdosed and was probably dead. I was happiest when there was no more money in the account, because that meant he would be home soon.

Every binge would be his last. Except when it wasn't. There were more and more difficult situations. Stranded in a city miles away? Of course I would send bus fare. Going to rehab this month? I could pay the rent. How did that verse go? *I was hungry and you fed me, I was in prison and you visited me.* I did that, too. I followed the rules, but my prayers were pretty much being ignored. Maybe there was another way. I decided to look online.

I found the Co-Anon E meeting. At first I didn't like what these program people had to tell me. They had no cures for addiction; they didn't even have any helpful hints. They said I should focus on my recovery, yet I was the person who didn't have a drug problem. My only problem was getting my loved one to stop doing drugs. Or was it?

"Let go and let God," they told me. I wasn't so sure. Then again, my

way hadn't gone too well. Picking up his expenses had put me in debt. Emotionally I was a wreck. I was increasingly resentful, fearful, depressed and confused, as I allowed my life to become more consumed by the darkness of drug use—yet I didn't even get high. The longtime members had a sense of peace and serenity that I wanted. Finally I decided to try it their way. I had little to lose.

One of my new online friends encouraged me to do a Fourth Step workshop with her, including the dreaded Fearless Moral Inventory. I was afraid I would finally be exposed as the defective, horrible person I tried so carefully to hide from the world—and summarily rejected by my sponsor and my new friend. Still, I followed the process. I looked at my anger, my fears, my shortcomings. I faced myself. And I faced God. To my great surprise it was a very self-affirming and liberating experience.

I decided what I wanted to keep—and what I wanted to give up. Doing things my way hadn't always worked out so well, so surrendering to the creator of the universe didn't seem like such a bad proposition. If there really was such a thing as sin, trying to control people and outcomes might be on the list—especially when the manipulation was masked behind seemingly kind and selfless actions. On a more practical level, trying to be responsible for another person's actions and happiness was exhausting.

Almost immediately I came to believe that I was really no better—and

no worse—than anyone else. I began to release many of my issues about not being good enough, as I surrendered my defects to the universe. I realized the creator of the universe wasn't judging me, so why was I living in fear of what another person's opinions might be? When I finally accepted that my friend's life was between him and God, just as mine was, I found a great deal of peace. I was able to release him and actually become grateful for the experience, because it brought me so much closer to the Truth.

I found myself returning to activities and friends I had given up in the years when I had allowed my focus to become skewed. Some years before, I had done meditation work, which involved creating sacred space within and without and moving energy through my chakras. I came back to those practices with new zeal and far deeper understanding.

Some of the change came with time, and many things remain to be changed. Sometimes I can be self-righteous or take a "poor me" victim attitude. Sometimes I worry about what other people think, or try to run things my way. Sometimes I am just self-righteous and intolerant.

Through the internet I also found a nearby Quaker meeting. Attending Meeting for Worship helps me center down and attend to the still small voice of the Universe. And when I am in tune with the Universe, which is my term for the Higher Power referenced in the 12 Steps, I have found things have a way of working out perfectly well. I have found that deep sense of inner peace...and, most curiously, happiness.

Lee Rada attends Morningside Meeting, New York City. She is relatively new to Quakerism, but she was a Quaker a long time before she knew it. Through a West African dance instructor she has discovered spiritual renewal through movement. She is working on a book about her life.

Resources

Magnificent Addiction: Discovering Addiction as Gateway to Healing by Philip Kavanaugh, MD. Fairfield CT: Aslan Publishing, 1992. Reviewed by Mariellen Gilpin, suggested by Jay Mittenenthal.

Unhealthy addictions are misguided attempts at solutions; they prod us to reconnect with our inner wellspring of creativity and spiritual fulfillment. At the deepest level we are all addicted. It is not addiction that destroys our lives, but what we are addicted to. Kavanaugh argues that we need to upgrade our addictions, and provides a roadmap to healing: feeling our feelings but not acting on them; reparenting ourselves; reprogramming our beliefs; practicing a form of meditation he describes as giving our

feelings permission to exist; taking responsibility for ourselves; surrendering to a power greater than ourselves. He argues that spirituality is the addiction that heals: "We will always be addicts yet it is the addictive commitment to God and our spirituality that ultimately heals us." He is a proponent of 12 Step programs, which "help people who cannot afford expensive psychotherapy and offer a belief in spirituality rare among psychotherapists." He defines and argues for spiritual reprogramming by surrendering our lives to a Higher Power. "Feeling resistance to surrendering . . . is part of a general resistance to giving up control. If we are willing to turn our lives over to a stockbroker, or share our deepest secrets with a hairdresser, why do we recoil when God is mentioned? This is our ego's fear of relinquishing control." He regards *A*

Course in Miracles as "postgraduate" work. "Combined with the 12 Steps it is transformative and powerful."

Addiction and Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing of Addictions by Gerald May. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Reviewed by Gene Hillman.

Gerald May (1940-2005) was a psychiatrist as well as a Senior Fellow in Contemplative Theology and Psychology at the Shalem Institute in Bethesda, Maryland, and the author of several books on the life of the spirit.

He describes his own journey, and his own addictions. This leads him into two of his main themes: freedom and idolatry. Addiction robs us of our free will, which God gave us when we were given life; it makes us robots. He uses the story of Adam and Eve in the garden to address human rebelliousness, freedom and free will. "Eden, as a garden, becomes symbolic of humanity's rightful relationship with God's grace" (p. 119). The second theme, idolatry, appears whenever a substance or behavior is put in God's place.

His theology is Christian but he points out the Upanishads of Hinduism and the four noble truths of Buddhism reach the same understanding.

He discusses the psychological and neurological nature of addiction. As a psychiatrist he is well qualified to speak to the psychological and the neurological basis of addiction. This is all information which can be found many other places, but he presents it very well for the non-specialist.

In chapter five, "Spirit," he returns to the spiritual nature of addiction, and continues with this theme for the second half of the book. He juxtaposes God-given freedom and love with attachment and addiction (and even brings in evil). He tells us that "we respond to God's homeward call [love] with a mixture of hope and fear" since responding to God means to "withdraw

Pain

*Pain, ever present companion,
awakens me from deep sleep
to enter the constant here and now.*

*Mindful waiting, walking, eating
cannot let go, just be.
Ebb and flow of pain is how to gauge*

*life and love and consciousness
throughout the universe
of my life.*

Shadows

*Shadows in my mind
are hopes and dreams and fears.
No substance to them now,
and yet, when someone nears
enough to breach the inner space,*

*They spring to life, full-blown,
and live, and die, and once again
become, just shadows in my mind.*

Angeline Reeks is a member of Upper Fox Valley Meeting, Illinois, and a member of Ministry and Advancement Committee, Illinois Yearly Meeting.

from addictive behaviors that have become normal for us.” (p. 95). We can’t become addicted to the true God because God is not a thing, but we may become attached to a religious system, and that brings slavery. “The structures of religion are meant to mediate God’s self-revelation through community. They are not meant to be substitute gods.” (p. 97).

Ever since I first read this book some thirteen years ago, I have kept coming back to it. There is so much in this short book that I can only mention that which particularly caught my attention, and which I have found most useful in my own thinking and work. It is an excellent resource for any who deal with addiction, their own or others’.

The Divine Feminine Fire: Creativity and Your Yearning to Express Your Self by Teri Degler. Dreamriver Press, 2009. \$17.95 Reviewed by Kathy Maia Tapp.

In this inspiring and thought-provoking book, Teri Degler explores the relationship among creativity, spirituality, and the feminine face of God.

She explains in her introduction, “I wanted to write a book that compared Sophia from Christianity, Shakti from Hinduism and yoga, and Shekinah from Judaism—and show how they were all related—not just to our yearning to be creative, but to the personal transformation so many are undergoing...and the world itself is experiencing.”

Degler suggests that this yearning to live more deeply, to know our true selves and to express ourselves creatively, comes from the divine feminine within. “Shakti, Sophia and Shekinah can all be seen to represent the divine within us, the divine in our bodies... The way to embody the divine feminine is to realize you have embodied her all along!”

She weaves information from stories and myths of Shakti, Shekinah, and Sophia (Wisdom) with stories of the spiritual journeys of such women as Hildegard of Bingen, Mechthild of Magdeburg and, and Mahadevi Akka of twelfth-century India—as well as modern women in corporate landscapes. In all cases, regardless

of time period, cultural expectations, education, or age, the enlivening of this “divine fire” within led to deep spiritual searching and inspired creativity.

The author considers the provocative question, “Is Sophia the same thing as the Holy Spirit?” She finds support for this idea from several early church theologians and in the early Christian church in Syria. In *The Divine Mother: a Trinitarian theology of the Holy Spirit*, Jesuit theologian Donald Gelpi builds a strong case for the idea of Holy Spirit and Sophia being one and the same, calling the Holy Spirit “Holy Breath”.

Having explored such vast spiritual, geographical and historical terrain, the author turns to the reader and offers beautiful, yet practical, ways to continue the exploration. The exercises at the end of each chapter use visualization and sometimes art—designed to help one open to and express this divine creative fire within.

The Divine Feminine Fire represents a reverent and knowledgeable synthesis of many strands from many spiritual traditions. It perhaps offers a new window on the Quaker belief of “that of God in every one.”

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Correction

Janis Ansell included a website for contacting Quaker Circle in the February issue. She sends this follow-up: “We chose not to renew the registration of Quaker Circle. Although the vision is alive, we have been unable to purchase land in the area of North Carolina in which we’ve been seeking it for over a year. Not continuing with the website seemed a necessary part of the integrity of living into the vision and of being truthful in our communication. We continue to listen and would welcome inquiries to my email <anselljg@gmail.com>. God is at work, and we await direction.”

Please write for *What Canst Thou Say?*

(See instructions for authors on page 6)



August 2010

Questioning

Guest Editor: Judith Favor with Mike Resman

In the beginning, God asks Adam and Eve, “*Where are you?*” (Genesis 3:9). The First Question seeks relationship, inviting us into communion. What questions has God asked you? What has been your journey to answer the questions? Have you asked God a question, and what was the divine response? How did God’s response come about? How has your relationship to God changed as the result of a question? Tell us about your conversations with God, and what you have learned from them.

Deadline: May 15, 2010

November 2010

Silence and Music

Guest Editor: shulamith eagle with Judy Lumb

For many people, music is an integral part of worship. Whether it’s shape note singing, shouts of gospel joy, choral-orchestral works involving hundreds of musicians, or simple children’s rounds, many people can’t imagine corporate prayer without song. Quaker traditions for many of us include an important period of silence in our worship, or may even be “waiting worship,” which can be completely silent if no one is moved to speak. How does worship change for you, depending on if you are embraced in silence or carried on wings of song?

Deadline: August 15, 2010

February 2011

Prayer

Editor: Mike Resman

Pray always. (1 Thessalonians 5:17) Prayer can be so many things—conversation, petition, source of growth and fount of healing, to name a few. What happens when you pray? How has your prayer changed over time, and how has it changed your life? Share gifts you’ve received and miracles you witnessed. Have you ever prayed in ways that you regretted later? Tell us about the interior process that can form the center of life.

Deadline: November 15, 2010

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