



November 2018
Number 100 (1)

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*

Insights from Our Ancestors

Healing and Reconciliation

Joan Dyer Liversidge

*“Love is patient; love is kind;
love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.”*

This is a story that began 100 years ago and has shaped my life. In February 1918, my paternal grandmother passed away about six weeks after giving birth to my father.

As an only child growing up in the 1950s, I had very close relationships with my mother’s family. However, my father’s family was distant and uninvolved in my life. I didn’t understand this as a child but as I grew into a young adult, I started to see more clearly how the death of my grandmother began a chain of events that reverberates to this day.

“Injuries and limited beliefs are passed down from generation to generation.” In Marcelle Martin’s book, *Our Life Is Love*, she talks about the openings for spiritual growth that come to us throughout our lives. The “inter-generational family pattern” that was handed down to me was the belief that once someone hurt you, or there was emotional pain, there was no other option but to distance yourself or cut yourself off completely from the source, whether a person or an event, thereby preventing more hurt. I have come to discover that in some cases in which someone continues to be hurt and abused (emotionally or physically) by someone, this may be the best option. I know there is also the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation.

In my 20s and 30s, I learned some of the story about what happened after my grandmother’s death. To this day I have not discovered the circumstances around her death and I remain curious about what caused her death and why no one seemed to know. I do know that this event shaped my life in profound ways.

My father was raised by his two maiden aunts for the first two years of his life. Then he was reunited with his father and a stepmother at about age two. A few years later another child was born, his half-sister. The few times he talked about this time, he described being treated unfairly and cruelly by his stepmother, with resentment towards his father for his lack of support. He felt abandoned and alone. His parents did not allow him to have a relationship with his biological mother’s family nor did they talk about her to him.

At age 18, he learned that one of his friends from high school was his first cousin, the daughter of his mother’s sister. It was then he learned about his mother’s family

From the Editor:

My interest in this topic sprang from working on my memoirs in a Friends House Quaker Women/ Sandy Spring Meeting writing group. Three of the entries in this and the web versions of WCTS come from members of this group. One member has recently lost her mother. It is helpful in grieving to find meaning in the lives of our parents and other relatives, and to review what they have taught us. What do we need to resolve before it is passed on to other generations? What gifts have we gleaned from our families who have passed on? How can we show gratitude for these gifts? This topic has generated many poignant submissions, so several are continued in the web version <whatcanstthousay.org>. Since the web version allows full color, we have included art from Jennifer Elam and Carol Cober.

—Betty Brody, Guest Editor

What Canst Thou Say? (WCTS)

is an independent publication co-operatively produced by Friends with an interest in mystical experience and contemplative practice. It is published in February, May, August, and November. The editorial and production team is Muriel Dimock, Lissa Field, Mariellen Gilpin, Judy Lumb, Grayce Mesner, Mike Resman, Earl Smith, Eleanor Warnock, and Rhonda Ashurst.

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and his anger and bitterness reached a new level. Shortly afterwards, he enlisted in the Air Force. When he returned from basic training on leave, he experienced another injury when he found his bedroom had been moved to the attic. It was at that time he began to spend his leave from the service at my mother's home with her family. The schism deepened.

My father attended a Quaker elementary school and his parents attended Quaker meeting. He lived in a Quaker retirement community for 19 years at the end of his life, although he did not seek affiliation with or comfort from religious practices from any faith groups, including Quakers.

It is with these injuries and limited beliefs that I was raised. My maternal grandparents were a loving presence in my life and I have only a few memories of my paternal grandparents. The estrangement with them was wide and deep. I spent my childhood and young adulthood in the Presbyterian Church with little knowledge or familiarity with Quakers. I later learned that my paternal grandmother's family were Presbyterian!

When I attended my aunt's Quaker wedding (my first experience with Friends' worship) and my step-grandmother's memorial service, many Friends in attendance didn't know who I was. I experienced that sense of being "unknown" and "invisible", probably much like what my father had experienced.

My father continued to have very little contact with his family and it was clear he didn't want to engage in conversation about them. Another belief held by my father was if something troubles you, don't talk about it. Many from this generation have

handled hurt and pain in the same way. I challenged that belief when I entered a profession that encourages talking and seeking assistance for those areas of your life.

At age 24 and after the birth of my first child, I embarked on an undergraduate degree in psychology. After a second child and a divorce, I experienced a crisis of faith and left the Presbyterian Church. I kept working on ways to address and learn from these hurtful and painful relationships and unexpected/unwanted events in my life outside of a faith community. I wanted to help others with this work as well.

In graduate school I continued my studies as a Marriage and Family Therapist. In one of my early courses we were assigned a research project, to explore our own family history, identifying patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and secrets.

My step-grandmother passed during this time and my grandfather befriended and then courted another Quaker woman, Marian. When she learned of our family history she made a concerted effort to bring healing through increased and extensive visits. She even insisted that my grandfather ask my father's permission for them to marry. I remember my parents being astounded at this turn of events. And I was taking this all in, learning about myself, my family, and about healing.

My grandfather's third marriage was very different for us. Marian had a large extended family of brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews, but no biological children. We were included graciously and I hope we added something to her life by our presence. When my grandfather passed, our relationship with Marian remained strong. She was included in

all our family activities and rituals as a grandmother and great-grandmother.

In 1981, after several years of being “unchurched” and seeking without a community of faith, I began exploring faith communities. I was drawn to Friends for many reasons. I was able to explore Christian faith and practice among Friends without having to commit to a particular set of beliefs (creed). The unprogrammed worship taught me access to the Inward Teacher, the Christ within. And, as I reflect over the years, Quakerism was also a way of connecting with this lost side of my family.

Early in my exploration of Friends I considered taking my paternal grandmother’s maiden name when re-marrying. Marian introduced me to Mary Dyer and asked me not to give up the Dyer name. I was intrigued and sought to learn about this Quaker woman whose statue sits on Boston Common and two other places. This helped me to understand the spirit and faith of early Friends. More importantly, Marian was a living example of an individual who was faithful to the Spirit of Christ.

In all that I do, I seek to be a minister of presence to individuals and families who are suffering from painful and hurtful relationships and events. I was blessed to have Marian in my family to enrich my spiritual learning with the love and care she demonstrated. This was truly an experience of “love as the first motion.” She “let her life speak” to all of us over many years. At her memorial service, I was honored to offer *1st Corinthians 13:1-8* as a testimony to the love she showed to all of us. I will be eternally grateful.

In my remarriage I became a stepmother to three children. The example of Marian, along with other

education I received about step-families, helped me to engage successfully and build relationships with these children, who are now grown with children of their own. My children also had a stepfather. Although we have had our struggles, we sought and received assistance from professionals and our Quaker community, stayed engaged with love, not cutting off or distancing. Now my husband and I have been married over 36 years and this vast, complicated family continues to challenge and bless us as we strive to make love our first motion.

Unfortunately, I believe my father did not recover from his pain and resentment toward his first stepmother. Sadly, I think he took this to his grave. I now believe, and have experienced, that relationships and injuries can be healed with loving guidance, honesty with compassion and empathy, the willingness to risk vulnerability, and a commitment to seeking and following Divine Guidance. I am hopeful these injuries and limited beliefs will have less power as our family continues to evolve and grow through the generations.

How can we know when to pursue healing and reconciliation? We discern guidance from the Inward Teacher, the Christ within, in faith and community. We follow that guidance to the best of our ability, with the gifts we are given.

May we all have someone in our lives who touches us with love as the first motion.

Joan Dyer Liversidge has been a Friend since 1984 and currently attends Sandy Spring Friends Meeting in Baltimore Yearly Meeting. She is grateful for the guidance of many Friends and other spiritual mentors over many decades.

Family Secrets

Betty Brody

On a sunny fall Sunday, as my family of seven, including my parents and siblings, sat around our dining room table enjoying our Sunday dinner, the doorbell rang. My father got up to answer the door and my mother told the rest of us to look out the window. She said the woman on our doorstep was our grandmother and our father would not invite her in.

This was the first and last time we saw our father’s mother. The only time my older brother and younger sister saw her was in her coffin and they were spooked by how much our father resembled her. I was living in Botswana at the time of her death and was advised of her funeral only after it was over.

Dad didn’t talk often about his childhood. We only knew that he was taken to an orphanage when he was 11 years old and had a little sister who was born just before he went to the orphanage. Our family was as connected to the orphanage as most families are connected to grandparents. We faithfully attended their “Homecoming” event every year and often visited the Superintendent’s home afterwards.

I remember the homemade Brunswick stew, trips to the barn to see the cattle and annual visits to the pigpen, where my dad would call the pigs “sui, sui, sui” and they would come running to him. Then there was the ocean wave, a merry-go-round that went up and down while it was going around. My mother would paint the nails of the teenage orphan girls. We often took an orphan child with us on our family trips to the beach. We almost adopted a preteen

to provide male company for my brother who had only four sisters, but his mother changed her mind at the last minute. This orphanage was sponsored by the Congregational Christian Church (Church of Christ). One of the highlights of Homecoming for me was a church service in the chapel, with plenty of stirring hymns.

Dad did tell us that his mother spent most of her life in a mental hospital and that his dad died at an early age. He would usually change the subject if we asked for more information about his childhood.

It wasn't until I was an adult, living and working in Botswana, that Dad began to share more about his parents and the circumstances under which he was sent to the orphanage. He, my mother and my youngest sister were in Botswana to visit my husband, son and me, and enjoy a safari into the northern game preserves. We spent many hours being driven around by our guide in a Land Rover, looking for signs of elephants, lions, giraffe, zebras and many other wild animals. With time on our hands and no TV to distract us, Dad began to answer some of the long-unanswered questions about his life before he went to the orphanage.

His mother had frequent "angry spells" during which she would chase him with a butcher knife. He learned to hide in the well when this happened. His father and mother were living apart when his father died. Dad was living alone with his father. His mother thought her husband had been unfaithful so she had taken their infant daughter to live with her sisters.

Dad's uncle was in the army and was home on leave. His mother told him she believed her husband was being unfaithful and she talked

her brother into shooting him. Dad remembers seeing his uncle, holding a gun (army issue rifle) at the bedroom window. Dad's uncle shot his sister's husband in the chest. He did not die immediately, but lingered for about two weeks. Eventually, he died of pneumonia.

Following my grandfather's death, his wife was sent to the mental asylum; his uncle to life in prison and he was taken to the orphanage. His little sister remained in the care of her aunts.

Just before my dad died in 2007, his younger sister applied for a passport to travel with her daughter. Since she no longer had a copy of her birth certificate, she applied for a copy. When it arrived in the mail, something was wrong. It had the correct names of her parents, the doctor who delivered her, the date and time of her birth, but there was a male name on the certificate, not hers!

She called the office that had issued the birth certificate, certain that they had made a mistake and learned for the first time that she had a twin brother, who was raised by a distant part of the family. Unfortunately, she never had the opportunity to meet him. She read an obituary in the *Burlington News* that said he had died, leaving a wife, but no children. She called some of the relatives listed in the obituary and even managed to meet some of them, but was unable to learn why she and her twin brother were separated at birth and raised apart.

She shared this information with my father before he died, but it was too much for him to believe. She always said she felt as if she was missing something important in this life and feels very sad that she didn't get to know her twin brother.

My father's mother was in her 70s when she rang our doorbell that sunny Sunday. She had been out of the mental asylum for several years. She lived with my aunt and even went back to work at the mill. She was said to be a very fast worker. My father visited his mother several times, but always without my mother and his children.

I remember my father's uncle calling our home on several occasions, asking to speak to my father. He had been released from prison and was seeking my father's forgiveness for killing his father. I don't remember Dad ever talking with him, but he said he had forgiven him in his heart.

(cont'd in the web version)

Betty Brody is a member of Alexandria Friends Meeting in Virginia, but for eight years has been sojourning at Sandy Spring Friends Meeting in Sandy Spring, Maryland. She is an alumna of The School of the Spirit, a spiritual director, and she and her husband are residents in the Friends House Retirement Community in Sandy Spring.

So Many Inspirations: Some Ancestors

Joy Belle Conrad-Rice

Because my mother, Enid Rice Conrad, became a skilled and thorough genealogist in the days when requests for information were handwritten or typed and sent through the U.S. Postal Service and historical records were perused by librarians or volunteers sitting in front of a microfiche device, my family has a lot of information about our ancestors.

(cont'd in the web version)

Family Saga

Barbara J. Bucknall

*If I choose to go back further,
I come to my great-grandmother.
She was named Barbara Morrison.
I am called Barbara after her.
And she was born on a croft.*

*When she grew up, she was pretty
And she fell in love with a sailor.
Most of the boys were sailors.
But her family said "No."
They found her a rich, middle-aged husband.*

*My great-grandfather, whom she married,
Was a very remarkable man.
At the age of fifty he was the very richest man
With the widest whiskers on the whole of Bernera.
He was also an elder of the Kirk,
But he had been poor.*

*Here is the tale of my great-grandfather:
For thirty years he sat and thought.
Not all the time—he worked a turn,
But when his work was over, he
Would think and let the cabbage burn.*

*The thought that occupied his mind
Was how to find the proper way,
And to finance the plan when found,
To make his lobster fishing pay.*

*He sat and thought for thirty years,
For thirty years and then some more,
And finally the plan was born
When he was nearing thirty-four.*

*He shipped upon a cargo boat
Destined for Canada.
He flexed his muscles every night
And said a little prayer.*

*He prayed like Samson he might be
Great, tall and stout and strong,
And likewise rich as Solomon
Without doing anyone wrong.*

*Upon arriving at the coast
He leaped upon the shore
And started chopping trees like mad.
No other could chop more.*

*They were well paid, Great-grandfather
And all the other men.
But while they squandered, he would save
And earn some more again.*

*Before he had been many years
Upon that fortunate shore,
He'd saved five hundred pounds in gold
And sailed for home once more.*

*Once home, he hired two men to dig
And with their help he made
A most enormous lobster pond - -
Like Aberdeen harbour, it is said.*

*He filled the pond with lobsters blue
From all the seas around.
When other fishermen sailed out
No lobsters could be found.*

*They all were with Great-grandfather
Who sold them—at a price.
He was the richest man for miles
And got Barbara, which was nice.*

*Now this great man is dead and gone,
But still the things he did remain.
He built that pond like Pyramids
To win an everlasting name.*

*Not long ago an engineer,
Officially sent from London,
Came many miles to see this pond
And could not think how it was done.*

*Great-grandpa used his natural brain
To do what others could not do,
And even now the government
Is baffled by the things he knew.*

*Barbara survived him. She bore two sons
And adopted two children as well.
She was made with a leaning to hope
And a heart like the widow's cruse,
Furthermore, she had natural curls.*

*For a matron these were improper,
But she tried to repress them in vain.
Since her marriage had failed to depress her,
Nothing could ever achieve it.
She died in her sleep, smiling.*

Barbara J. Bucknall first attended Friends Meeting in the late 1960s. For many years she has been a member of Pelham Executive Meeting, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada

Ancestral Challenges and Gifts: Two Parts of the Whole

Jennifer Elam

My parents died in January of 2018. That has sent me on a quest to understand and appreciate better the gifts of my heritage. Sometimes gifts come in unexpected packages.

My great-grandparents had a farm in Morgan County, Kentucky, in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains. My father loved the mountains; the only time I ever saw him really cry was when I tried to talk to him about mountaintop removal. I just inherited a piece of those mountains.

I visited that land many times with my father. He loved the ice cream store in West Liberty so there was always a predictable treat. I was blessed to have visited my great-grandfather's farm for the last time with my father in September of 2017. I started to see through his eyes.

We visited his friend Sharon who promised him a butterscotch pie and kept her promise. She proudly showed us her canned goods and spoke of the many memories of her husband and my father; their love of the land and each other shone through.

When I was growing up, we were extremely poor; my dad said we were not poor but we just did not have money. I understand that now in a way I did not understand then. But, back when I was about age four till 10, I spent many days gathering pop

bottles or walnuts with my mother to get money for dinner. Not able to make a living farming in Kentucky, my family moved to a working-class town called Carpentersville, northwest of Chicago, when I was 11.

My dad always told the story of me and the tobacco fields. When I was 8, I was heard screaming my prayers to God. "God, I don't know what college is, but I wanna go." My prayers were answered. AND I worked very very hard to help them get answered.

There was a war going on in Morgan County related to whether they would allow public schools. A powerful group said "NO." My grandfather said "YES," and declared himself the teacher.

I grew up in a culture that is violent by nature. The story that has come down through my family that has set more norms for behavior than any other went like this:

When my grandfather (we called him Fifi) came home from WWI, there was a war going on in Morgan County related to whether they would allow public schools. A powerful group said "NO." My grandfather said "YES," and declared himself the teacher. One day a group ambushed him and tried to beat him up, but just having served in combat, he was in good shape and beat them up. The school stayed.

The norms set by that story include the idea that physical violence not only is ok, but it is the way. Ironically, getting educated set me in direct opposition to that basic family norm.

I did not like violence, EVER. I did not like physical altercations, EVER. I did not like emotional violence, EVER. And I did not like the violence of extreme poverty. I became a psychologist and a Quaker. Talk about going against the family norms. I did it big time and it came back to haunt me.

I have been a Quaker for 27 years and have been sheltered from that violence until recently. When I got cancer, I became vulnerable. Then when my parents got ill and I felt called to care for them, I got targeted with major aggression for my northern city ways, religion, education, and politics. My 27 years as a Quaker did not prepare me for that. And Quakers have not known how to support me in that violence.

And the hillbilly part of me does not get supported—anywhere. I renounced my own heritage at a young age, so in a way, I should not complain that others have. That served me in surviving Chicago, getting through school, even working as a psychologist for many years. I did not pay attention when I was considered less smart than I was, or made fun of for my accent, or when I experienced more subtle expressions of bias toward hillbillies.

Was it in my best interests not to pay attention to those things? I don't know yet. In recent years, I look back at things that happened to me as a school psychologist in PA. Whew! What I see in my rearview mirror makes me shudder at having not addressed those incidents for what they were—pure raw bias and discrimination.

I look in my rearview mirror at a lot of my experiences as a

Quaker—subtle and not so subtle expressions of the same. There was the time sitting in a circle of well-thought-of Quakers and a woman told the story of her son rejecting her obviously upper-middle-class values and described him “as like one of those hillbillies in Appalachia with a washing machine on their front porch.” I just said, “Gosh, I wish my family could have afforded a washing machine on our front porch. We had a tub and a clothesline. That is how I thought people did laundry.” That was the first time I found myself unable to stay quiet in the face of obvious discriminatory speech.

A few times since then when Quaker friends have made negative comments about hillbillies, I find myself pointing a finger at them and saying, “Thin ice.” I have become aware of a huge problem of bias related to Appalachia among Quakers, and it is not fun to see.

Do I like confronting this issue of Appalachian bias? NO. Do I feel comfortable with Quakers about this issue? NO. Do I feel like I belong nowhere at times? YES. Do I feel more whole when I address this part of my heritage? YES.

One day a professor I had recently met said to me, “Boy, you are getting it in both directions, catching it at both ends.” I meekly said, “Yes.” The “yes” came quietly both because I did not want to admit that he was right and because I knew he was right. It becomes overwhelming at times to deal with the bias from my faith and work communities and from my family.

I think the bias among Quakers is hardest because Quakers profess to be accepting of differences. There are many groups for whom bias and discrimination are politically

incorrect. But some Quakers have not yet discovered that hillbillies are also covered by the equality testimony. I don’t say these things to be critical of Quakers. I just wonder if Quakers are even aware of these biases; raising awareness is important.

J.D. Vance made a best seller of the book *Hillbilly Elegy* in 2016. I resisted reading that book for a year. Then I read it and reacted as I feared I would. I had no problem with his relating experiences of his family. But the conclusion of the book reinforced the stereotype of Appalachian people as dumb and drug-addicted, and that has been used for many political purposes.

I think the bias among Quakers is hardest because Quakers profess to be accepting of differences. There are many groups for whom bias and discrimination are politically incorrect. But some Quakers have not yet discovered that hillbillies are also covered by the equality testimony.

I began passionately writing my response. I had no idea that my feelings could be so strong about someone reinforcing the stereotypes but I have had to fight bias most of my life in order to just do basic things like get an education and work competently. Some Appalachian people I have known are the most hard-working, some of the smartest intellectually, best cooks, friendliest, and would do almost anything for me if they knew of a need. They are family-centered, faithful to God, and more.

At the same time, there are norms within my own family that came directly from the Appalachian mountain culture that have caused

me enormous heartache and grief—violence in relating, suspicion/intolerance/betrayal if you are different, extreme differences in social expectations, and more.

The effect of the extremes of my heritage from my ancestors has left me finding myself in many situations in which the rules of engagement seem invisible. When I was young, I was a selective mute. I overcame that and for decades was able to take deep risks in social engagement. More recently, following major trauma in family relating—I have been “catching it from both ends”—in the South for my northern ways and in the North for my “hillbilly/southern ways.” I have found the risk-taking more difficult.

Despite the extremes, I am grateful for the many gifts, disguised and otherwise. I can now listen to many people’s stories with a level of empathy and understanding that I never would have if I had not worked through enormous challenges (poverty, norms of violence and incest in family-relating, lack of social skills, and more) provided by my ancestors. And I have survived difficult situations because of the gifts from my ancestors (hard work, persistence, keen intellect, foundation of principles from the best of Christianity, and more). The challenges and gifts are not separate; they are two sides of the same coin, two parts of the whole.

Jennifer Elam is a member of Berea Friends Meeting (Kentucky), and attends Middletown Preparative Meeting (Pennsylvania). She is the author of Dancing With God Through the Storm: Mysticism and Mental Illness and more recently Art as Soul’s Sanctuary, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #452.

My Ancestor, Grandma Dziondziak

Hazel Jonjak

I'm not certain how old I was when I read these words by P. L. Travers, wherein newborn Annabel tells the starling at the window:

I am earth and air and fire and water. I come from the Dark where all things have their beginning. I come from the sea and its tides. I come from the sky and its stars....And I come from the forests of earth... And when I had dreamed my dream I awoke and came swiftly...came through the dark, deep waters. — P. L. Travers, Mary Poppins Comes Back

The mystery of birth—and before birth—intrigued me as a child, and now as crone. The words of C.G. Jung describing the chthonic Black Madonna connect me to my Polish immigrant grandmother, Pavelina Veronika Dziondziak:

(cont'd in the web version)

Musing on Ancestors

Cheri Dupuis

Rivers are made of tributaries and innumerable careful quiet springs. ... The river always finds the right way.

This William Stafford quote flashes on its polished rock as I walk along the Willamette River. It always makes me pause. I study the back of my hands and see my own river of DNA in the form of blood vessels. Is this river finding the right way?

As an adult I learned about my father's tributary. He was raised African-American and passed as white. Not even my mother knew his history. His family were proud blacks with light skin on both sides of the family. Their grandparents were slaves but the light skin tells me there were white slave owner ancestors also. When I asked to visit my father's childhood home, he agreed but stopped two times on the way there to vomit. ...

(cont'd in the web version)

I See Sicily Island

Maurine Pyle

As children growing up in the 1950s on Morning Glory Avenue, there was one message we loved to hear from our parents—"We are going to The Place." That meant not just any place, but a very special place with a capital P. Our Daddy Sam, my mother's father, lived on a small farm by that name in North Louisiana. Our mother, Lorelle Seal Hebert, was often homesick for her childhood home, a small town called Sicily Island, so we visited there often. When I look back on this simple adventure, I think it is amazing that we all loved to go there. As we approached the town around a curve and over a small bridge, we raced with each other to be the first one who could say, "I see Sicily Island!"

Daddy Sam lived in a bungalow-style house outside of town with his oldest daughter Lily Mae, affectionately called "Mae" ...

(cont'd in the web version)

When Love is Lost

Eric Sabelman

Spending some time reading old family records, I am intrigued by the essential sadness of my grandfather's generation. My grandfather, Harry Sabelman, was one of eight children, seven of whom lived into their late 60s and 70s. ... Only one had a long-lasting marriage. They left a trail of papers when they died describing discouraged, unhappy lives. Their diaries are full of people and events that annoyed them, and little that pleased them. ... What happened, that caused this family to live so bereft of happiness?

(cont'd in the web version)

My Grandmother, My Mother

Mariellen Gilpin

I was taught to be my mother's mother, by the real expert—my mother's mother, who we called Mamaw. She was the anchor of my young life, the one who loved me, fed me, cuddled me, told me stories, and washed my socks and shirts. I know she loved me by the lovelight in her eyes when I came near. My mother's eyes also lit up when I came near, but very early, I learned the difference between Mamaw's lovelight and the light of mischief sometimes in Mommy's eyes. ...

(cont'd in the web version)

BOOK REVIEW: *Primitive Christianity Revived*

Primitive Christianity Revived by William Penn, translated into modern English by Paul Buckley, 2018, Inner Light Books, San Francisco, CA. Reviewed by Michael Resman.

Paul Buckley has long studied Penn's writings. In the introduction to *Primitive Christianity Revived*, Buckley talks of the original text being full of long sentences, filled with words that needed translation. Penn wrote in English, but meanings have changed enough during the last 350 years to cause misunderstandings.

Penn wrote prolifically. This book was intended to speak to Quakers

and non-Quakers. It provided a view of how God relates to humanity and how Quakers should relate to the world. Its importance lies in the great influence it had on Quakerism for the next 150 years.

Reading an old explanation of Quakerism yields valuable insights. Penn had studied theology, lending weight to his observations. The preface begins with the sentences, "By this short treatise, you will come to understand that the Light of Christ in each person is the manifestation of God's love for our happiness. This is the unique testimony and characteristic of the people called Quakers."

Contemporary Quakers could benefit from contemplating the idea that what nowadays we refer to as "that of God within" is God's love for our happiness. While subtle, the differences between God's presence

and God's love is worth wrestling with. Additionally, the idea that God is in us for our happiness is a concept that could bring joy.

Penn is of course a product of his time and prejudices. Everyone always is. He asserts that the Light is universally in everyone, a belief not only before its time, but before our current time. He also says that only those who do not sin will be saved. Also he uses the term "born again."

Buckley has done a masterful job of making an obscure text comprehensible. Justification was the only term whose meaning was unclear. Modern Quakers would do well to ponder the differences and similarities between Quaker beliefs then and now. I was left wishing I could talk with Penn about past Quaker practices, such as disowning those who married non-Quakers.

Symbols from the Garden

Carol Cober

*The healing gifts of the garden are many—
a treasure affirmed by my great-grandfather Andrew who grew his vegetables into his 90s
and my grandmother who adored her plentiful, rainbow-hued rose garden.*



(cont'd in the web version with this rose in color)

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February 2019

Being with the Dying

**Editor: Susan Greenler
with Judy Lumb**

How then shall we live? Have you supported loved ones with their final journey on earth? How have you and they faced this holy time: creating space for a hope that is ever changing and sharing what needs to be shared in words, touch, or through hearts? How may we and our loved ones feel complete with this life, softening into a future that will be forever changed, living into this time, moment by moment?

Deadline: November 15, 2018

May 2019

Eldership

**Guest Editor: Alison Levie with
Earl Smith**

And dear people of God, be tender over the least breathings of God's Spirit in one another and all wait to be clothed with a healing Spirit.—William Dewsbury

What is your experience with spiritual eldership? Has someone acted as a “midwife to your soul”? Have you witnessed Friends speaking both kindly and clearly in response to Friends’ choices? Have you seen the skills needed for this important role nurtured? Does Spirit-led eldering deepen the faithful vitality of Friends’ meetings?

Deadline: February 15, 2019

August 2019

Discernment

Guest Editor: Marcia Nelson

Growth in the spiritual life comes precisely in faithful exercise of whatever capacity for discernment we are given. ... As far as we are able, we practice an ongoing intentional openness and prayerful attentiveness to intimations of divine presence and guidance, both inwardly and in outward life and relationships. —Patricia Loring

How have you experienced discernment? What tests of discernment have you used? How have you distinguished discernment from ordinary thinking? In what way(s) has discernment made a difference for you?

Deadline: May 15, 2019

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