

Universalist Friends

The Journal Of The Quaker Universalist Fellowship

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Quaker Universalist Fellowship

The Quaker Universalist Fellowship is an informal gathering of persons who cherish the spirit of universality that has always been intrinsic to the Quaker faith. We acknowledge and respect the diverse spiritual experience of those within our own meetings as well as of the human family worldwide; we are enriched by our conversation with all who search sincerely. Our mission includes publishing and providing speakers and opportunities for fellowship at regional and national Quaker gatherings.

Universalist Friends and a QUF pamphlet are published twice a year and are available free to on-line subscribers. These publications are available as web pages (HTML) for browsing, ebooks (PDF) for on-line reading, and pamphlets (booked PDF) for printing. Visit our website at <http://www.universalistfriends.org> to enter a free on-line subscription.

If you wish to receive printed copies of these publications by regular mail, send an annual subscription fee of \$25.00 to QUF at our mailing address below. Selected past QUF publications are available free to our on-line subscribers. We will send available printed copies of past publications upon request and on payment of a fee.

We trust that all of our subscribers will support our work by sending a tax-deductible contribution to QUF. You can also contribute by sharing your reflections on our publications and on your own experiences. To make a contribution, subscribe to printed versions of our publications, or ask questions, contact:

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News from QUF

George Amoss, Jr., and Lyn Cope have recently agreed to serve on the Steering Committee of the QUF.

George is a member of Homewood Friends Meeting in Baltimore and currently attends Little Falls Meeting in Fallston, Maryland. He has served in the past on the Steering Committee, and long-time readers will remember him as having been for several years editor of *Universalist Friends*.

Lyn lives in Melbourne Beach, Florida and works full-time for South East Yearly Meeting, where she is responsible for design and layout, website, finance and conference support. She writes: “Philosophically, I believe that all active adult Friends have chosen to be Friends of whatever persuasion and that there seemingly is a vibrancy in meetings blessed with convinced Friends. Born into Paullina Monthly Meeting, I have chosen to remain passionately involved in the wider world of Friends. . . . My life might best be summed up with a Horace quote, ‘Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which, in prosperous circumstances, would have lain dormant.’ . . . [I have] a self-directed, independent, liberal value system that now I am seeing reflected in my grandchildren, which brings me full circle to QUF — I want the next generation to have the option of knowing that Quaker roots are universalist.”



The year 2008 saw the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Quaker Universalist Fellowship. It was marked by an article in the August, 2008, issue of *Friends Journal*, in which Rhoda Gilman outlined the history of the organization. Readers of *Friends Journal* will have noticed several letters in later issues commenting on the nature of Quaker universalism.

Sally Rickerman's pamphlet, *Trust: My Experience of Quakerism's Greatest Gift*, which was published by QUF in spring, 2008, has been issued in paper format by Troll Press and is featured on the website of QuakerBooks.



Sally Rickerman writes: "I was fortunate to receive a notice from the Hawkinson Foundation in Minneapolis that our editor, Rhoda Gilman, and her daughter, Betsy Raasch-Gilman, received two of their 2008 three annual awards for Peace and Justice. Three cheers for Rhoda and may we, too, bask in her glory!"

A Message from the Clerk

A Summary of a Conversation

The Chair of Quaker Universalist Group (QUG) in Britain (Andrew Cowan) and the Clerk of Quaker Universalist Fellowship (QUF) in the United States (Larry Spears) met for four hours of conversation at Friends House, London on November 22, 2008.

It was stimulating. The conversation was wide-ranging and enthusiastic for the role of QUG and QUF in the future of the Quaker tradition and, through Quaker witness, to the world. We recognized mutual strengths and weaknesses in current efforts and identified potential joint and parallel initiatives for consideration.

At lunch, we were joined by Alec Davison, former QUG Chair, who updated us on the outreach activities of Quaker Quest and Kindlers programs in Britain.

As a result of these conversations, based partly on points for clarification raised by QUG and QUF colleagues, we made some of these observations and suggestions for consideration by QUF and QUG for discussion and discernment:

Demographics: Both organizations currently reflect aging constituencies. Neither has a significant youth constituency. This is not promising for the future or for the current communication mechanisms of the organizations. We discussed whether universalism, by its nature, is only meaningful to those in the last chapters of life, who have accumulated sufficient experience to recognize the importance of universalism.

Web Activity: Both organizations benefit from the growth of their websites, from the immediacy and personal opportunity of e-groups and from newsletters. QUF provides fuller content of its publications. Neither has entered fully into the blogosphere. Both are shifting toward greater expansion into

the Internet. QUF and QUG are moving to an online publishing presence at different speeds. Use of these web tools is helped by having like-minded partners and by skilled, dedicated administrators. Visual expression and music at QUG are developing to supplement the verbal messages.

Strategic Planning: QUG will consider framing issues for strategic planning for sharing with QUF.

Language: QUG and QUF recognize the problem of inadequate language and vocabulary in carrying on the discussion of universalism within the Quaker tradition. Language is a challenge and opportunity for QUG and QUF to make a joint contribution in clarification and augmentation of the larger discussion of universalist themes within the Quaker tradition.

Globalization Relationship: QUF and QUG see a relationship between Quaker universalism and the globalization of culture and commerce, but neither currently addresses this globalization as a spiritual or reasoning challenge or as an opportunity of major importance.

Diversity and Relativism: We discussed the need for clarification of the role and limits of theological diversity as an element of universalism within the Quaker community but did not arrive at a conclusion.

Inter-religious Dialogue: We discussed the role and limits of universalism in inter-religious consultation but did not arrive at a conclusion. How do we provide respect and appreciation for other religions without endorsing all asserted religions as of equal completeness or religious cultural practices as of equal soundness?

Environment: There is affinity within QUG and QUF for the spiritual links between universalism and planetary environmentalism, but we recognized that the conceptual basis of the relationship of universalism to environmentalism is insufficiently clarified.

Future of Universalism Within Quaker Tradition: There is an impression that universalism is part of the common denominator of unprogrammed Quakers and some programmed Quakers in Britain and the U.S. among the older cohort of Quakers. Universalism of salvation and respect for other religions is highly contested among most programmed Quakers. The views of the younger generation of Quakers are currently opaque.

Cooperation: Both QUG and QUF want to emphasize that we enjoy being collegial and hope to continue this mutually helpful relationship. Areas of potential future cooperation between the two organizations include:

1. Joint publication of selected articles and historic documents;
2. Mutual reviews of the publications of the other organization; and
3. Cross-over participation in meetings of steering committees of the two organizations.

Organizational Relations: Neither QUG nor QUF have formal correspondence relations with environmental, political or religious organizations or institutions outside of the Quaker community.

Testimonies: From the discussion of the implications of universalism for implementation of Quaker testimonies in the areas of social policy advocacy, we concluded that they need further development. We discussed the potential scope and elements of a human universalism underlying all religions and secular ideologies as a basis for global human rights policy development.

Expanded Visibility: We discussed the possibilities of expansion of the visible presence for QUF and QUG.

Quaker Quest: During the conversation, Alec Davison joined us and summarized his view of the distinctiveness of Quakers as present-day seekers, as identified from listening in

nearly 100 Quaker Quest events in Britain. These distinctives included:

1. **Truth:** Quakers accept the truth from several sources, including science, the arts and other religious traditions.

2. **Christianity:** Quakers recognize their roots in the Christian tradition and the disclosing and transmission of the way of Jesus for today as developed and augmented by others, including Elizabeth Fry and John Woolman.

3. **Experience:** Quakers identify truth in both their individual and their community experience, subject to threshing processes.

4. **Testimonies:** Quakers witness to testimonies for implementation in individual and community life, which testimonies are derived from their understanding of truth. These include equality and social justice.

5. **Peace:** Quakers focus particular attention on the testimony of peace.

6. **Sacramental Life:** Quakers witness to the reality that all of life is sacramental, beyond the affirmation of that of God in everyone.

In Britain, Quaker Quest, which is for persons who are interested in Quakers, is accompanied by a program called Kindlers, which is for deepening the spiritual roots and worship within the Quaker community.

Financial Condition: Both organizations have modest budgets. QUG currently functions with a balanced budget. QUF is working toward that goal. Neither budget reflects the much greater order of magnitude of the importance of the spiritual witness these organizations have to share.

Business Model: QUF and QUG have similar business models. Both rely on contributions, subscriptions and the purchase of published materials for their income. Both are shifting toward greater expansion into the Internet. QUF and QUG are moving to an online publishing presence at different

speeds. QUG runs an annual conference, designed to break even rather than to make money.

Fundraising: We discussed whether QUF and QUG should be more active fundraisers, as are so many other nonprofit organizations in order to carry out larger services.

Quaker Contributions: We discussed how the resources of the Quaker tradition could inform, clarify and assist us today in these discussions of universalism for the implementation of traditional Quaker testimonies.

We look forward to close communication as opportunities open in the future.

This was a warm and searching conversation. We both recognized the benefit of encouraging more discussion between QUG and QUF in the future to our mutual benefit.

Larry Spears

A Message from the Editor

After three years of editing *Universalist Friends* and in addition taking on the task of preparing two Quaker Universalist Readers for publication, Patricia Williams laid down her editorial pen last summer. We are all grateful for her dedicated and competent service. Two new books — *Universalism and Religions* and *Universalism and Spirituality* — stand as monuments to it. Both can be purchased from the QUF bookstore on our web site.

As editor of our pamphlets and a former editor of *Universalist Friends*, I have volunteered to assemble the journal on its semiannual schedule until a more permanent editor can be found. Therefore any contributions, comments, and correspondence can be sent to me by e-mail at <editors@universalistfriends.org> or by regular mail to: 513 Superior Street, St. Paul, MN 55102.

We welcome essays or personal journeys related to Quaker universalism (approximate length: 1,000—3,000 words), and we especially welcome reviews of books and pamphlets, or suggestions of publications that perhaps we ought to review. In keeping with past custom, we will also include letters from readers and news and notes about the ongoing activities of the Quaker Universalist Fellowship.

Rhoda Gilman

The Teachings of George Fox and *A Course In Miracles*

By Jean Weston

Editor's Note: Most readers of Universalist Friends will have heard of the work known as A Course in Miracles (ACIM), which was published in 1976 and has been widely studied and discussed among spiritual seekers. The contents was communicated over a period of seven years to Dr. Helen Schucman, a medical psychologist at Columbia University, by an inner voice claiming to be that of Jesus. It has never been distributed by a commercial publisher but is available from the Miracle Distribution Center with a workbook for students and a manual for teachers.

My Own Journey

I wanted to write this article when I saw the similarities of my Quaker understanding to ACIM and had a profound sense of 'fit,' like a hand in a glove. At times in Quaker meeting I felt certain things were being missed but did not have a clear vision of what was missing. I loved my Quaker understanding, but it seemed as if I were being tested and that if I should fail in some way I would be forever judged as not 'weighty.' I disliked this feeling and realized that it was the same old dynamic the world uses. Those that learn to 'play the game' can often come out ahead, but, unfortunately, it is usually at the expense of losing our loving and compassionate natures. This is what ACIM so eloquently explains as our investment in ego vs. spirit. When we choose from a position of ego we make that stronger within us. When we choose from a position of spirit, spirit becomes stronger.

This made great sense to me. I felt it was a simple idea but one that causes lots of stumbling, and in my excitement I wanted to bring it to my meeting, naively thinking Friends would appreciate and embrace these ideas that would really

help grow the meeting. But I was mistaken, of course, because it was something I had found an interest in, and that was not going to mean that other Quakers would do likewise. Still, I know my heart was in the right place. I had seen Quaker meetings suffer due to a bit too much emphasis on one ideology at the loss of another. A need for a deeper understanding of how we could work together within our meetings, as well as how we could connect with the outer world seemed to be very necessary. But where could we go to get this information?

Some Friends get insight from the Bible, while others do not feel an attraction to it. In the last decade or two there has seemed to be a growing interest in the gnostic gospels, which tend to be the mystical or less concrete side of spirituality. Many wonder why these gospels were removed from our Bible and feel we can't be whole in our spirituality when half of it has been removed due to the fears of early political leaders. ACIM helps us to understand the Bible in a new way that fits with newer human understanding. It shifts the terminology and ideas of the Bible slightly, so they open our minds to the gnostic ideas as well as new discoveries in science and psychology.

This reminds me of First Corinthians 13:12: "Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face." I feel that ACIM helps us to see more clearly, much like using a higher power on a microscope. It is a useful tool for us at this point in time when our world is becoming a global community. It reminds us that we are all one in Christ and need to align with the truth about our relationships to each other, which we can only really see when we align with spirit. When we get caught up in our ego side and try to solve problems through that way of seeing, it does not work. This is because only God's will can prevail and God's will is what we truly want whether we realize it or not because we are extensions of God. When we are not clear or in unity we are caught in our human/ego dynamics and need to let go so that God's vision can come shining through. The layers of human rules and ideas we have come to accept as

simply 'the way it is' must be unraveled, and this can only be done by letting go of our own understanding and giving it to spirit. We have been bombarded by the worldly view of things without realizing that it is quite fallible. It is fallible when it is based on an idea that is not from a perspective of oneness. In other words, it will be as fallible as it is unloving or judgmental. Judging separates us; it does not transcend.

As an example, many of us have become very invested in college education. This is not wrong, but we tend to forget in our desire to acknowledge and affirm education that spirit does not come from textbooks. And when we give more credence to those who have education over those who do not, we are being discriminatory. We can justify why we do it, but this is one way that our ego/human natures can take hold and we lose our spiritual connection to one another. There are many examples of where we have let ourselves be caught in this kind of bias. It could be on social action, or vegetarianism, or simple living. All of these are worthy ideals. However, if they take precedence over 'seeing the face of Christ in our brothers' (an ACIM idea), we have moved from a transforming ideology to a limiting one.

This is one reason I could not unite with my meeting. The members seemed happy with their social action and feeling that they were doing good things, but for me there was a deeper layer that needed to be addressed in order to do anything that would be truly transformative. I loved Quaker philosophy as I understood it, and I wanted to make a better world where people would not feel that they were living in different camps or at opposite poles. Limiting ourselves to one set of political or lifestyle beliefs did not seem to be helping to bring humanity together, and, in fact, it was doing the opposite.

I had a few crises in my life which led me to believing 'the sky was falling' and that there just *had* to be a better way. Luckily at this very low point, I found ACIM. I did not, however, feel lucky at first. I did not like the terminology or voice of it. It

seemed to be blaming me or telling me what I thought and how messed up I was. I persisted simply because I did find some beautiful ideas that spoke to me, and I did want to understand God on a deeper level. I later read somewhere that “ACIM has something to offend everyone.” I think that might be a test to see how willing we are to try to see a bit differently. Will we extend ourselves even if we read something we think we do not like? Do we really want to grow? {1}

George Fox and Religious Hierarchy

I have always considered Quakers as progressive. From the beginning, George Fox did away with rituals and intermediaries, saying that people did not need anything between themselves and God. He seemed to understand that the more complex our hierarchies become, the more illusions are placed between ourselves and our experience of God. This is just one of the similarities between Quaker philosophy and *A Course In Miracles*. I am grateful for having learned both of these loving disciplines. Quakers have taught me to see ‘That of God in everyone’ and that naturally segues into seeing ‘that of God’ in other faiths and in all things.

George Fox believed in continuing revelation, and for this reason we should celebrate any readings or ideology that will bring us to a higher way of seeing or experiencing our divine nature. Many have been raised with an idea that we should stick with our own. But does this not only reinforce our feelings of separation, feelings of superiority, defensiveness and polarity? Truth is truth, but certain aspects of truth are often expressed more clearly in one spiritual discipline than in another. As we grow in this global community we need to embrace truth from other disciplines in order to really appreciate people from other faiths and cultures. God is truly not only a God for Christians any more than He is a God only for Americans. It is important to have spiritual writings and new references to help us grow in

the light. It is limiting to only recognize God within our own camp and it serves to keep us separate. As *ACIM* puts it, we need to let go of the idea of scarcity and start living in abundance.

For this article I want to compare *ACIM* and Quaker Philosophy, because I feel they are coming from the same path or religious experience. Both *ACIM* and Quakers recognize Jesus as our guide, believe in direct communion with holy spirit (or our higher selves), and reject doctrines or creeds set up by the Christian church. As stated online: “George Fox began preaching that since there was ‘that of God in every man,’ a formal church structure and educated ministry were unnecessary.” {2}

ACIM teaches that hierarchy of any kind tends to take us from spirit and get us seeing from our ego or human/carnal way. So, although it is necessary to have structure, both of these paths caution about the difficulty of staying with the divine while trying to make structure. This is an important thing to keep at the forefront of our thoughts, because it is so easy to fool ourselves or to think we are doing something good that, when really examined, is leading away from spirit rather than toward it. The Quaker idea of group ‘discernment’ speaks to the need for this careful check to see that we are coming from a place of spirit over human understanding. Yet both Quakers and *ACIM* tell us to work in this world for the highest good of all, since we are united as one through God or spirit.

The Inner Journey

Fox was a searcher. He found God by going within. The following two passages show us something of his inner journey. {3}

One morning...a great cloud came over me, and a temptation beset me; and I sat still...And as I sat still under it and let it alone, a living hope and a true

voice arose in me, which said, “There is a living God who made all things.” Immediately the cloud and temptation vanished away, and life rose over it all; my heart was glad, and I praised the living God.

Great things did the Lord lead me into, and wonderful depths were opened unto me, beyond what can by words be declared; but as people come into subjection to the Spirit of God...they may receive the Word of wisdom that opens all things, and come to know the hidden unity in the Eternal Being. (Chapter II, “The First Years of Ministry, 1648-1649”)

The text of *ACIM* describes this inner journey, and a literal road map to this place within is supplied by the workbook lessons, which are 365 lessons, or a lesson a day for one year. The voice of *ACIM* speaks often of “clouds and veils” that hide the truth of God from us, just as George Fox mentions in the first paragraph quoted above. Fox’s last phrase, “the hidden unity in the Eternal Being,” speaks to the *ACIM* metaphysical aspects of oneness and time vs. eternity. *ACIM* teaches that there is no death and that we truly are eternal spirit and can experience this right here and now. In fact, what keeps us from remembering this at any time is simply the clouds of ego thoughts and conditioning.

In the following quotation, George Fox reacts to a pastor quoting scripture and shows that it is the connection with Holy Spirit that is sacred — not the scriptures. This ‘interruption’ landed Fox in prison!

He [the pastor] took for his text these words of Peter, “We have also a more sure Word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed...And he told the people that this was the Scriptures, by which they were to try all doctrines, religions, and opinions.

Now the Lord's power was so mighty upon me...that I...was made to cry out and say, "Oh, no; it is not the Scriptures!" and I told them what it was, namely, the Holy Spirit...whereby opinions, religions, and judgments were to be tried; for it led into all truth, and so gave the knowledge of all truth. The Jews had the Scriptures, and yet resisted the Holy Ghost, and rejected Christ, the bright morning star. They persecuted Christ and His apostles and took upon them to try their doctrines by the Scriptures; but they erred in judgment, and did not try them aright, because they tried without the Holy Ghost. (Ch. III – "The Challenge and the First Taste of Prison, 1648-1649," paragraphs 3 & 4)

Fox points out here that it is not the scriptures but what the scriptures point to — the Holy Spirit, which is available to us all. Then he points out that the Jews missed the message of Jesus because they relied on what they had made sacred – their scriptures — and so missed the gift they would have received if they had used their inner knowing and their connection with Holy Spirit. When we get too dogmatic about things, including our religion or spirituality, we lose our spirit, for we are then investing in concrete form and forgetting about the ephemeral spirit of love and forgiveness. This is not to say either should be denied, but when we give emphasis to one over the other, we get out of balance. *ACIM* points this out in various ways, reminding us that it is our choice in each moment whether we will invest in our human understanding (ego) or in spirit, which is of a higher authority (God and love).

George Fox describes his mission as follows:

I was sent to...preach freely, and to bring people off from these outward temples made with hands, which God dwelleth not in...directing them to the Spirit and grace of God in themselves, and to the Light of

Jesus in their own hearts; that they might come to know Christ, their free teacher, to bring them salvation, and to open the Scriptures to them. (Ch. V – “One Man May Shake the Country for Ten Miles – 1651-1652”)

This speaks of our inner journey. It is interesting that Fox directs them to “the Light of Jesus.... that they might come to know Christ” because it sounds as if he is saying that Jesus is different from Christ. This correlates well with *ACIM*, which explains that Christ is not only Jesus, but we are all part of Christ. Once we reach this understanding, Fox seems to be saying, the scriptures can be opened to us, because now they can help us awaken to our true, Christ-conscious selves.

Christ Consciousness or the Oneness of Us All

ACIM teaches that we are all one. This oneness is Christ. Jesus is as an elder brother to us because he *lived* this belief fully, thus showing us the way to live as he lived, in Christ. In Chapter VIII, “A Visit to Oliver Cromwell, 1653-1654,” George Fox states:

But I showed that the promises were to the Seed, not to many seeds, but to one Seed, Christ; who was one in male and female; for all were to be born again before they could enter into the kingdom of God.

Again, this confirms the understanding Fox had of us all being part of this oneness of Christ (seed, not seeds) and that we would have to be ‘born again’ (or re-perceive this understanding) in order to enter into the kingdom of God (heaven).

Sin

At Derby, George Fox was again taken away and questioned. After hours, they asked him the following:

At last they asked me whether I was sanctified. I answered, "Yes; for I am in the paradise of God." Then they asked me if I had no sin. I answered, "Christ my Saviour has taken away my sin; and in Him there is no sin." They asked how we knew that Christ did abide in us. I said, "By His Spirit, that He hath given us." They temptingly asked if any of us were Christ. I answered, "Nay; we are nothing; Christ is all." They said, "If a man steal, is it no sin?" I answered, "All unrighteousness is sin." (Ch. IV, "A Year In Derby Prison, 1650-1651," paragraph 10)

ACIM says there is no sin (as popularly defined) but only error, which is choosing to believe we are separate from God. Fox seems inconsistent in the above quotation, for he says "Christ....has taken away my sin; and in Him there is no sin," but later he states, "All unrighteousness is sin." ACIM helps clarify what this means by explaining that while we are in the world, which it calls "illusion," since it is not what we truly are (spirit), we can choose through our "wrong" mind which is aligned with ego over our "right" mind which is aligned with spirit. All unrighteousness would simply be choosing with our wrong mind. Thus, we would be choosing from a position of being separate from God, or from a position of sin or error.

Metaphysics and The Illusion

The following was written in a letter to Friends from Fox:

All along ye may see, by faith the mountains were subdued; and the rage of the wicked, with his fiery darts, was quenched. Though the waves and storms

be high, yet your faith will keep you, so as to swim above them; for they are but for a time, and the Truth is without time. Therefore keep on the mountain of holiness, ye who are led to it by the Light.

Do not think that anything will outlast the Truth. For the Truth standeth sure; and is over that which is out of the Truth. For the good will overcome the evil; the light, darkness; the life, death; virtue, vice; and righteousness, unrighteousness. The false prophet cannot overcome the true; but the true prophet, Christ, will overcome all the false. (Here and below, Ch. XVII, "At The Work of Organizing, 1667-1670," quoted from a letter from Fox to Friends)

Here Fox speaks of time vs. eternity. He exhorts us to "keep on the mountain of holiness" or to stay in our right mind connected with Holy Spirit, so that we stay true to our eternal selves and not be tempted by the temporal. The false prophet is what *ACIM* calls ego. Like *ACIM*, Fox focuses Friends on the truth of their eternal spirit, rather than investing in what they see in this world of time and ego illusion.

Regarding his vision of the New Jerusalem he wrote:

...I saw the beauty and glory of it, the length, the breadth, and the height thereof, all in complete proportion. I saw that all who are within the Light of Christ, and in His faith, of which He is the author; and in the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, which Christ and the holy prophets and apostles were in; and within the grace, and truth, and power of God, which are the walls of the city; — I saw that such are within the city, are members of it, and have right to eat of the Tree of Life...

Here he is stating that these members are not only within the city but are the spirit, the faith, and therefore the walls. Thus, they must be one with the city – they are part of this New Jerusalem or, as *ACIM* calls it, “heaven” or “the real world.” In *ACIM*, when we reach the real world it will be when we are living on earth as one. We will know that we are truly dependent on one another, not in a co-dependent way but because we are truly one. Our minds, thoughts and energy affect the consciousness of the planet, so we need to realize our interdependence and that we ‘go together or not at all’ since we are all part of the one son of God. According to *ACIM* until we all understand this, and are united, we cannot return to heaven.

In Closing

Before ending I want to share two other topics that are central to Quakers. Most Quakers are social activists. Some *ACIM* students surmise that since the world is an illusion, there is no sense trying to ‘fix’ it since *It* does not exist. Ken Wapnick, who is the foremost authority on *ACIM* today, who worked closely with Helen Schucman and has written numerous books on *ACIM*, states how difficult it is to be involved in political activism and remain spiritually based rather than falling into ego dynamics. This is due to the fact that politics is largely an ego-based sphere. Ken says, however, that if *ACIM* students really understood *ACIM* they would be able to do political activism in a most effective and uniting way. They would be truly transformative activists because they would understand how important it is to stay in spirit and be ever watchful for ego tricks that can make us stumble and set us and our ideals back years. Thus, it seems it would be expedient for Quakers and other sincere activists to do a deep study of *ACIM*. On the more superficial level *ACIM* may not sound applicable to

social action, since it sees the world as illusion. However, when it is truly understood, it helps us to 'be in the world but not of the world' so that we can remain in spirit while working in this ego-driven environment.

ACIM suggests that there must be change, but sees it, first and foremost, as a change in our minds. Yet, as our minds are transformed, so are our actions, and we affect the collective consciousness of all. Thus, the world can be transformed, one separated mind at a time and these transformed minds affect those around them. The above passages quoted from George Fox show that he also spoke of seeing the world through transformed eyes, after aligning ourselves with Holy Spirit.

Lastly, I want to compare the Quaker gathered meeting with the *ACIM* concept of a holy instant. Sometimes a Quaker meeting will be noticed to be 'gathered'. This means that those who are sitting in the meeting have a feeling of oneness. It is as if all tensions and thoughts have dissolved and there is a feeling of unity or joy in the air. Likewise, in *ACIM*, there is the concept of 'the holy instant.' This is a similar feeling between two or more individuals when, for whatever reason, differences fall away and they experience a common purpose, usually closely tied to love and forgiveness.

This comparison has helped me to bridge the perceived gap between Quaker philosophy and *ACIM*. I hope it will also help others understand the need to study inspired writings, such as *ACIM*, that will strengthen our understanding of the divine that dwells within and let this reign supreme over any church, doctrine or attitude. If sincere spiritual seekers will embrace the beauty, knowledge and helpfulness that *ACIM* offers us, we can move this world from a stalled, 'us vs. them' mentality into the real world of appreciating our oneness in God, Holy Spirit, Jesus, Buddha, Mohammad, *et al*, for truth is truth and unites us all.

Endnotes

{1} I have published a little book for the beginning *ACIM* student. It is available at www.lulu.com/content/3100918. There are also many other books that can help new students of *ACIM*.

{2} <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txc/quakers.htm> See first section.

{3} These and the following quotations are from the journal of George Fox, edited by Rufus Jones (1908). The text can be found online as “George Fox, An Autobiography” at www.strecorsoc.org/gfox/. Since page numbers are not provided, the quotations are cited only by chapter.

Reviews

Choosing Life: Embracing Spirituality in the 21st Century, by Jocelyn Dawes (44 p., QUG Pamphlet no. 32, 2008)
Reviewed by Sally Rickerman

When I offered to review this latest pamphlet from our British sister organization for our *Universalist Friends*, it seemed well for me to know the precise meaning of the word “spirituality” — a word that is being freely bandied about in today’s culture. It is frequently used in our present world, a world which appears to promote self-centeredness and greed to new heights and in which sensitive people seem to be rejecting the formal offerings of the orthodox and static religions of yesteryear.

Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary lists four definitions for spirituality: 1) something that in ecclesiastical law belongs to the church or to a cleric as such 2) clergy 3) sensitivity or attachment to religious values 4) the quality or state of being spiritual. Obviously the first two definitions are not germane to a discussion of Quaker universalism. The usefulness of the latter two becomes obvious in the pamphlet’s introductory pages where the author expresses the need for Quakers to bring their history, background and present understandings to enhance their own spirituality and that of Quakerism by presenting multiple road maps to help pilgrims travel that path.

Dawes approaches this subject much as researchers would report on their research propositions, conceptions, definitions, methodology and conclusions — in a somewhat detached and objective manner. In so doing she tries to explain the inexplicable, name the nameless, and reduce that which cannot be diagramed to lines and spatial figures. The essence of spirituality, to my mind, is to be fully present in the moment in which one finds oneself. This concept of spirituality is as old as

recorded religious history. In the Bible, the early Jewish prophets reported that when they asked God who he was, he said, “I am!” — that is, present in this moment — here and now — without qualities or boundaries.

Although her style does not suit mine, I am able to see that it could be helpful to those who have different methods of processing information. As she develops her thesis, the author gives readers adequate road signs to help them traverse what she considers to be unknown territory. She tells her readers in detail where the new branch road is, how that stretch of road looks and feels and how that stretch of road branches into new sections. In addition she informs the reader of the interesting specificities of that section as it easily glides into its next junction.

Her way of presenting the specifics of her theme can well be helpful to those readers who prefer a detailed road map presentation as they travel from “here to there.” On my first reading I swiftly absorbed the big picture (while perhaps missing some of the finer points) by the technique of “osmosis” that I developed early in life to cope with dyslexia. As I turned page after page, I, too, kept saying to myself, “Of course this is sound and helpful.” Now, as I carefully re-read it, I find myself impatient at the lengthy, carefully drawn diagrams and the detailed description that accompanies each one. But my personal reaction does not imply that her careful analysis and descriptions are not thorough, meaningful and helpful to those who receive more guidance from detailed road maps than from intuition.

Dawes’ diagrams of two overlapping circles are drawn to help readers visualize the separateness of one’s outward being and one’s inward being, with both displaying the “unity, wholeness and integrity underlying and interpenetrating physical matter (*Spirit, Presence, Light, God*).” The result of the overlapping is an oval space at its center which she names

“mandorla.” It demonstrates that “. . . a new synthesis can emerge from seemingly disparate elements.”

In the second diagram the drawing which she uses illustrates her perception of reality and her concepts of reality as she renames the two circles as “Christian Tradition” and “Contemporary Spirituality Milieu.” She then places a Quaker banana at their apex, naming these areas universalism — Quaker universalism in particular — and points out it is “a place where the new synthesis can be threshed.”

For the rest of her 39 pages and 128 footnotes, Dawes systematically and thoroughly fleshes out her thesis of *Choosing Life — Embracing Spirituality in the 21st Century* and concludes with the key aspects of choosing life which are:

- * We are in a time of transition and need to develop inner resilience, life sustaining practice and connection with all things to re-source our way through.

- * Spirituality is changing and levels of consciousness are evolving to embrace a universal practice, honoring the primacy of experience over dogma, but tested in community.

- * Practice and action, embodying life-affirming values and spiritual principles, are key elements that enable us to respond creatively.

- * As we do so we become imaginal cells in a transformational process that will facilitate constructive engagement with the challenges we face.

- * Thus, the foundations of change lie within each of us and are available to us individually and collaboratively.

- * This is both a cultural and spiritual revolution.

Her pamphlet holds importance for Friends for two reasons. The first is that it aids the Quaker reader to understand what universalism really is — not what it is suspected of being. The second is that if humans are going to achieve any *real* peace in the 21st century, we need to become even more aware of the truths that other religions, cultures and nations possess and not be fixated on our own.

A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion, by Catherine L. Albanese (628 p., Yale University Press. 2007)

Reviewed by Rhoda Gilman

Despite its academic style and more than 600 densely packed pages, I found this book fascinating. In opening it, I had several questions: What is metaphysical religion? How does it differ from mysticism? Is it a fringe movement populated by a few far-out sects and cults? Is Quakerism one of them? How does the metaphysical relate to universalism in today's world?

My own mental picture of a metaphysical religion dates from my childhood and is based on family memories. The place is any one of several small towns in Iowa or Minnesota at the turn of the 19th century. I can imagine four or five women seated on straight chairs and drawn for warmth around a coal-burning stove in the parlor of a sparsely furnished rented house. My grandmother is one of them.

She was a slight, quiet-spoken woman, mother of four children and married to a railroad engineer. His job required the family to move often from one place to another, and she never developed ties to a single community or to one of its mainstream churches. Her own grandmother had been a convert of Mary Baker Eddy, and although Christian Science had little or no organized presence in the rural Midwest, my grandmother usually found in each town a few venturesome women who would meet in a reading circle to discuss the latest publications of Eddy's movement or of the more mystical New Thought being taught by Emma Curtis Hopkins in Chicago.

My grandmother's own reading extended also to Thoreau and Emerson and included the Theosophical works of Helena Blavatsky. Her beliefs, as told to me, were summed up in the simple statement, "God is within you." This, I learned later, was metaphysical religion.

Catherine Albanese distinguishes three principal divisions in American religious history: organized Christian denominations, including both Protestant and Catholic; evangelical and revivalist movements; and metaphysical religions. In describing the latter, she says that “metaphysical forms of religion have privileged the mind in forms that include reason but move beyond it to intuition, clairvoyance, and its relatives such as ‘revelation’ and ‘higher guidance.’” (P. 6) The breadth of this definition reaches far beyond the quirky fringes. In the 17th and 18th centuries it was as much identified with the new science, which still had ties to the magical world of alchemy, as with mysticism. The latter leaned toward pure contemplation, psychic ecstasy, and union with God.

Albanese maintains that metaphysics embraces nature religions and the shamanism and magic of tribal peoples, including those brought on slave ships from Africa and those indigenous to North America. Among Native Americans, she chooses to focus on the tribes of New England and the Middle Atlantic coast, although she acknowledges the extent and complexity of the traditions she must omit. She has in fact examined some of them in a previous book, *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (1990).

Although Quakers, with their “leadings” and Inner Light, clearly qualify as metaphysical, they are not among the sects that Albanese discusses in detail. Perhaps this is because the majority of Friends since the 19th century have moved steadily away from their mystical roots and toward becoming a Protestant denomination. Nevertheless Quakers played a significant role in the story of American metaphysical religion. Their control of the Delaware Valley and their openness to other persecuted religious communities made them an important channel through which the esoteric traditions of late medieval Europe reached the American colonies. Examples cited by Albanese are the settlements of Johannes Kelpius near Philadelphia and the Ephrata colony near Lancaster, both deeply

influenced by the German visionary Jacob Boehme and other Christian mystics.

Never directly related to Quakers but often confused with them are the Shakers. Albanese devotes a number of pages to their belief in spirits and miracles. Other metaphysical influences on the early American republic to which she gives particular attention are Freemasonry, Mormonism, and two New England movements that challenged the Puritan Calvinist world — Universalism and Transcendentalism.

The 1830s saw the country engulfed in a tide of evangelical fervor known as “the Second Great Awakening.” Less well remembered is a corresponding enchantment with spiritualism and other-worldly contacts. Radical Quakers, calling themselves “congregational” or “progressive” Friends, helped to initiate the popular enthusiasm for spirit manifestations that swept the country, culminating in a wave of trance speakers and seances. Quaker participants were far outnumbered, of course, by Universalists, offshoot Mormons, and various flavors of transcendentalists. As Albanese points out, the phenomenon was closely linked with social causes, especially the underground railroad, abolition of slavery, demand for women’s rights, and healing through mesmerism and other forms of mind work.

Popular faith in the spirits waned after the appalling death and destruction of the Civil War years, but other forms of metaphysical religion were already springing from the seedbeds of Transcendentalism and spiritualism. Some were purely American in cultural context. Christian Science, under the firm hand of Mary Baker Eddy, became a tightly organized church, centered in Boston, while its parallel movement, New Thought, spread widely in the Midwestern and Western states but remained split among various independent groups. All emphasized health and healing through mental attunement, and most had female leadership. Like traditional Quakers, they operated without trained or designated clergy, although only one branch — Divine Science — had traceable Quaker ties.

Other spiritual practices of this period were stimulated by new perspectives from the East. Well-read Transcendentalists like Emerson, Thoreau, and Bronson Alcott had already been inspired by the first translations of Vedic writings from India, but the last quarter of the 19th century saw more widespread and personal contacts. The most powerful of these was the mysterious Russian woman, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. Medium, prophet, channeler, and world traveler, she teamed with Henry Steel Olcott, a New York attorney and agricultural scientist, to found the Theosophical Society in 1875. Three years later the Society and its two leaders moved to India, where the Theosophical amalgam of East and West achieved vastly greater importance than in the United States. Its political and social impact in Asia is not a part of Albanese's story, but its literary and ideological backwash was soon felt on American shores.

The flood of Eastern influences swelled in the 1890s, following the World's Parliament of Religions, which was held in Chicago in connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893. Versions of Buddhism and of the Vedanta school of Hinduism that had already been influenced by Western thought gained a popular foothold in the years that followed. The practice of Yoga, common to both religions, spread steadily and took various Westernized forms, with or without an overt spiritual component. Thus the diversity of the American religious scene and the influence of metaphysical traditions reached a new high in the years leading up to World War I.

Albanese sees a relationship between this growth and revolutionary developments in science resting on the work of Albert Einstein and Max Planck. Following them, light and matter appeared as variant forms of energy, which was the central constituent of the universe. Observer and object were shown to be interrelated. Metaphysical movements responded with new and more confident affirmations of the power of mind. Books like R. W. Trine's *In Tune With the Infinite* (1897)

became best sellers, and at the level of health care and medicine, new practices like osteopathy and chiropractic drew upon metaphysical elements. Albanese observes that “God, in twentieth-century and later metaphysical religion, was Motion.” (P. 397)

It seems no coincidence that these years also saw the influential work of philosopher William James and the publication of his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). Through the impact of James and his Harvard colleagues on Quaker scholar Rufus Jones, these currents also produced a generations-long re-examination of Quaker history and open recognition of its mystical origins and metaphysical nature.

At this point in the story, I begin to wonder if Albanese has undertaken a task that is nearly impossible by definition. In the years after World War I nations changed immensely. Not only did war become global; instant communication and popular entertainment by radio and later by television, travel by air, economic interdependence, multinational corporations, and new developments in science knit the world into a consolidated industrial-technological society. The process has been accelerating ever since. Meanwhile the distinctive cultures and spiritual orientation of modern nation-states have been fading and mingling, spurred by ever more powerful technology, damage to the planetary environment, and mass migration of peoples. To what degree is it possible in the 21st century to refer to any purely *American* metaphysical religion?

It is no criticism of Albanese’s work that she narrows her story in the later 20th century to include mainly the successors of the metaphysical movements she has already defined and traced — particularly New Thought and Theosophy. Even in this, however, she is forced to neglect important outgrowths that took root elsewhere in the world but circled back to shape American thought in new ways. An example is Anthroposophy, launched by Rudolph Steiner in Germany (later in Switzerland)

after years as a Theosophist. An American Anthroposophical Society, a biodynamic farming movement, and more than eighty Waldorf schools are testimony to Steiner's continuing influence in the United States. Another example is Jiddu Krishnamurti, who was adopted and educated by leaders of the Theosophical Society in India but ultimately rejected Theosophy and conducted his own worldwide teaching from a base in Ojai, California.

Of course gaps are inevitable given the scope of the subject, and it is clear that Albanese never intended the book to be an encyclopedia of metaphysical religions in America. Instead she seeks to identify main currents and trace their effects on American culture. I question, however, some of her omissions, especially in the follow-up on Eastern influence in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. She discusses Taoism and mentions acupuncture with its connection to the body's energy systems, but she stops there.

Other historical trends and cultural phenomena have had more long-range sway. There are the Beatniks and their fascination with Zen. There is the whole generation of young people who headed East in the 1960s and '70s with backpacks on their shoulders and disgust in their hearts for American consumerist-materialism. There is the worldwide impact of Tibetan Buddhism, forced out of its homeland and adapting its teachings to Europe and America. There are those new staples of the mainstream medical scene, "stress reduction" and "mindfulness meditation." There are the popular periodicals and publishing houses — *Tricycle*, *Turning Wheel*, *Inquiring Mind*, *Yoga Journal*, Shambhala, Parallax Press — that testify to the growing Asian flavor of American spirituality. And, finally, there is the universal yearning for peace, both individual and international, before the threat of worldwide nuclear destruction.

All of these add substance to Albanese's contention that metaphysical religion is far more of a defining element in

American culture than has been recognized. It has been overlooked because of its dispersal and diversity. Often brushed aside by the orthodox as secularism or superstition, it has lurked deep in the American psyche and has been an influence toward optimism and self-direction.

“Combinative” is a word that appears repeatedly throughout the book. It signifies the readiness with which metaphysical traditions in America have borrowed and traded ideas while mixing and matching practical applications. They have been characterized by openness to ongoing revelation and new intuitions, even those associated with unfamiliar cultures. Their watchwords have been change, flow, and energy, not the permanence of established doctrine and ritual. Beginning with the diversity of individual experience, they have repeatedly recognized parallel paths and moved toward unity. Their history is a demonstration of the truism that there is, after all, nothing more universal than the individual.

Publications Also Noted

Quakers and Buddhism: The Cutting Edge, by Anne Bancroft (31 p., QUG Pamphlet no. 33. 2008)

Seemingly intended as a quick read for beginners, although not for children, this short essay includes brief outlines of the lives of George Fox and Siddhartha Gautama, interspersed with simplified selections from their teachings. Closing sections on “Historical Developments” and “Quakers and Buddhists Today” bring the story to the present time. For those interested in going further, it is supplemented by a helpful bibliography.

Walking in the Light: John Woolman’s Witness for Living in Right Relationship with All of Creation, by Louis Cox and Ruah Swennerfelt (2007)

This booklet was developed as a study guide for the authors’ 2007-08 “Peace for Earth Walk” along the West Coast from Vancouver, British Columbia, to San Diego, California. Copies were left with Friends’ groups that Cox and Swennerfelt visited and talked with along the way during their six-month pilgrimage. It is now available for downloading on the website of Quaker Earthcare Witness (www.quakerearthcare.org). Four units present narratives and excerpts from the life and writings of John Woolman that emphasize his concern for the sacredness of the nonhuman world, and a final unit lists organizations, websites, and printed materials that support the same message today.