

Inward Light

The Journal of The Friends Conference on Religion and Psychology

Number 1

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Autumn 1937

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Inward Light

Seeks to be a organ of expression and inter-communication among those concerned with cultivating the inner life and relating it to the problems of our times.

*Sponsored by the
Friends Conference on Religion and Psychology*

Published 1937 by Pendle Hill
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<http://fcrp.quaker.org/>
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The Mystic Friendship

Burritt M. Hiatt

A mystic experiences an element in meeting a fellow mystic that is beyond other friendships. It is the union of two people looking in the same direction, but not at each other. Their connection surrounds them instead of being a tie between them. The recognition between them is one of response to the same object.

This unpossessive basis of friendship widens the range of a mystic's friends. He may feel close to a man widely separated from him in race or condition or class. He lives "not merely by desire, but by admiration."

Not only is the mystic's range of friendships widened but the possibility of intensity is also increased. Having felt this added element in his own being, he knows its unexplored possibilities in his fellow mystic. He knows that his discoveries in his fellows are limited only by the depth of his own appreciations. Only when he sees God as his own self, can he see God as the self of another.

and the other independent of speech? Is one more to be desired than the other? Can we really experience group worship or group meditation with only the first? Again, what does an individual do, or how does he react when the light which reaches to speech in the meeting is from that part of the spectrum not even complementary to the colour band across his own consciousness?

Theoretically, the light would not break through – God’s voice would not be heard – speech would not come, until the centering down process of each member of the group had taken place and all were actively listening. But suppose all were “centred down”, in what way can the inner light of the group expressed in speech by one, break through to those who do not hear the spoken words? And is the foregoing, if shared by all, often or seldom, a description of what happens in practice? How do we know when it does happen? Would be destroy it by trying to find it?

MEDITATIONS

Howard H. Brinton

During the World Conference of Friends in September 1937, a small group met under a tree on the Swarthmore campus to learn something from each other regarding silent meditation and worship. As we did not have time to exchange fully our thoughts, we decided to try to do so by letter. This letter was to assume the form of mimeographed sheets. I was asked to reproduce and forward to the several participants such communications as I might receive. The communications arrived during October, but I have been late in doing my part. Apologies are hereby offered for this delay which is partly accounted for by the multitude of duties at Pendle Hill and the pressure from non-mystical (and hence more insistent) publishers of another publication in which I am collaborating.

Dorothy Johnson inquires as to what extent a sense of communion of worshipers with each other depends on the spoken word. Our group, which communes through this letter, depends on the spoken (or in this case, written) word alone. Might it not be possible, even though apparently using only words, for persons widely scattered in space and time to hold a real meeting for worship in which they write rather than speak their messages. Let our communications continue to be of a nature appropriate for utterance in a solemn meeting. To this meeting, let us welcome kindred spirits with the advice that all messages be brief, confined to a single thought, and such as arise out of real first-hand experience.

Elined Kotschnig says that perhaps we have been thinking of “meditation” when we mean “prayer”. I think that is true, for “meditation” implies the lonely thinker and “prayer” implies an out-reaching process in which we seek to overcome our isolation through communion with a greater Life than our own. Yet “prayer”, “meditation”, “worship” – in fact all words – fail us when we seek to describe in terms of thought an experience which takes us beyond self-conscious thinking. Here indeed is the inevitable limitation of our undertaking in this letter.

Perhaps there is not one silence but three silences, each with its own unique value. There is the silence in which there is no speech. This is the easiest to achieve. Here many things may happen, – meditation in which we seek to view events from some large, more inclusive viewpoint than that of our own limited self-interest; prayer, in which we reach upward toward God beseeching that He reach downwards toward us; the struggle for obedience of our will to the divine Will; adoration of the Holy in awe, reverence, and humility; communion with our fellow worshipers in which love dissolves the “fleshly screen” and we become intimately aware of the problems, aspirations, and accomplishments of our fellows.

There is the silence of the flesh in which our body attains complete relaxation. This is not easy to achieve and requires much practice. Even when we think we have released all physical tensions we may later discover somewhere a strain. To many persons complete physical relaxation is an important prerequisite to successful meditation and worship. Let us not in seeking this, confuse the physical and the spiritual, a confusion which opens the door to an unhealthy occultism.

Group Meditation

Dorothy E. Johnson

One aspect of group meditation is our attempt to express the eternal in terms of the temporal, or rather, perhaps, to help the eternal break through into the temporal. When we are together how far, if at all, is this dependent on the communication of the spoken thought?

In any group there may be some in whose personal life private meditation has been increasingly an integral part, so that, especially in the environment that group worship gives, the spirit is in its familiar home, and they can leave behind the outside world including, even, their fellow-worshipers. When someone speaks they may, or may not, hear the spoken words. Is then their group meditation any different from their private meditation except that the group has kindly provided them with an easy approach? If any were able to hear what was said, would there be any difference in the content and quality of their experience of group worship from what it is now? Can we analyze our experiences sufficiently to find out what we give and get in group meditation?

What difference does that spiritual experience which crystallizes out in words in that particular time, place, and circumstances, make to the ‘group’ experience? This, I take it, may be considered the breaking through of the eternal into the temporal within the limitations of the time, of the place, of the personality giving and on the personalities receiving. Is it important? Is it an objective we constantly reach? Is it an ideal even, to be achieved? What is the relationship of these two aspects, the one dependent,

A Meditation at Early Morning Mass on the Georgic

Fred J. Tritten

This is my blood poured out for you; this is my body broken for you. This is how I give myself; this is how God gives Himself, eternally for his creation.

The crass materialization of allegory – don't get entangled in metaphors; don't hold on to the dead form; seek to know and feel the life that it embodies. The perpetual celebration of the Supper, Communion, Mass, is in itself, nothing; but it helps to concentrate on a tremendous spiritual reality, and by concentration, focusing of all feeling, thought, desire, aspiration, imagination, body, soul, spirit, we are able to penetrate to the heart of mystery, feel ourselves into it, become identified with it. The blood shed is God's life flowing through us, washing away our stain, washing us clean from sin, invigorating and strengthening us to do all things that are God's will. We also must pour out our life in like fashion because it is one life – and look for the operation of that life in others.

The body broken is the form ever being shattered so that the life may be liberated. Ideas, notions, concepts, ideals also, must be continually broken up and their essence absorbed for our spiritual nourishment. Even Christ himself (the idea, word, concept of God incarnate) must be taken and broken in order to know him in his essential reality. He is a gateway rather than a cul de sac. He who sees him sees beyond him. He who knows that he can never be imprisoned in a concept, that he will always be knowing more but never know him finally.

Finally there is the silence of thought, in which thought widens out to become something which is qualitatively different from thought. Here we find ourselves possessing a type of consciousness different from that in which we usually meet the routine problems of life. Here is peace, serenity, obedience, and the harmonious unity of mental forces.

Thought as silent has not ceased to exist, any more than in bodily relaxation physical processes have ceased; but it is truly "silent" because transmuted into spirit which is in the world but not of it. Spirit does not enter the world as one force among many, but seeks, from above, to unite all things into the organic unity of the One Divine Life.

Future Issues

No definite plans were made at the first and only meeting of our group regarding future issues of this letter, though it seemed to be assumed that there would be future issues. Will those who receive this, express to me their desires in this matter. I suggest that when, and if, some helpful communication comes to any of us in our own meditations that it be briefly put on paper and sent to me, and when a sufficient number of such offerings accumulate a new issue will occur. If I find no time to do the work I shall forward the material to another. Though the mystic consciousness is timeless, its verbal incarnations may be subject to a certain degree of periodicity. Contributions to the experience of this undertaking will be welcomed.

H.H.B.

The Need of the Spirit of the Age

Elined Kotschnig-Prys

Some of us have been surprised to discover this summer how intensely others are feeling the need of training in the inner life. At Pendle Hill a nucleus of us tentatively found each other – at the All Friends' Conference we expanded – by no plan of ours, but by those “chance” conversations which are the leading of the Spirit. We represented America and Britain, Europe and the Antipodes – an illustration of the fact that our concern is no localized one, but a need of the Zeitgeist, the spirit of the age.

We are impressed by the many signs in the world today of this sense of need to reach the “central depth” of the soul, and there touch the Universal – be united with God. The white race, one sometimes feels, has almost forgotten how. Some of its efforts to do so today remind one of the man of business pathetically trying in middle age to recapture a feeling for nature or for music which he has neglected for half a lifetime. They are primitive and naive and mistake the first crude success for mastery, often with painful results to others and later needless disillusionment to themselves.

We have heard of others, necessarily far fewer in numbers, with a profound understanding of the sickness of modern civilization, who are taking heroic measures, spending two hours a day in private meditation and two hours a day in group meditation. How do they do it? most people will ask aghast. We who meet in these pages may echo, How? but at least we shall not ask, Why? The necessity that goads them we too feel, however fainthearted and unfaithful in the quest some of us know ourselves to be.

As Friends we have maintained an unbroken tradition of group worship and meditation, and its

now take account of their fellow worshipers, not merely as aids to private meditations, but as individuals whom they have to learn to know in the Eternal, whom they need to see as children of God, realizing for them their divine Sonship.

Out of that changed attitude will come – after much struggle to adjust themselves – a new a richer and vitalizing experience in which they will know themselves as linked up with, and part of those others, suffering and rejoicing with them, but able, because of this knowledge of the Eternal, to speak to their condition and to help them too to know the infinite life that is flowing through them and uniting them all into one with God.

you to forsake the assembling of yourself with others. For to this individual experience of God, group worship is the necessary complement. You may experience disappointment in your meetings for worship unless you realize that a different method of approach is needed, that your attitude of mind needs adjustment to the new conditions. For whereas in your solitary communion it is yourself alone with God, in the meeting you have those other silent forms to go out to and draw into your experience. And the process of integration with them takes time and often great struggle, but the reward is great.

In your private devotions you draw inwards and upwards, in the meeting there is also this reaching out to others on the inner plane of experience. If you kept only to one form of devotion you would become like a tree that was all height and no breadth, or vice versa. By practicing both, your growth is healthy and all around. For the time being you leave your soaring in order to feel down into your spiritual roots and out into the lives and experiences of your fellows. You meet together with them in order to “know one another in that which is eternal.” And for those who have only been used to their private devotions this is not easy. They may practice private meditation in the meeting, and for a time it seems that the atmosphere of quiet alongside of other worshipers is helpful. Some may even go on for years without knowing anything different. But sooner or later there comes a time when they are disappointed. They enter upon a dry period, and are unable to obtain refreshment in the meeting, though they may still do so alone.

Then, they begin to perceive that they have unknowingly been selfish in their devotions. They must

practice has provided its own training. But the private meditation on which it depends for its richness has been left too much to chance and the individual. We lack the experienced help given to their adherents by the Catholic “spiritual director” or the Indian Guru. That some, even among Friends, have had to seek what they need from psychology or from Eastern practice is a sign that as a body we are not sufficiently awake to our responsibilities and our possibilities. In as far as that is so, our group worship must needs languish too. The Inward Light must shine in the ground of the soul when alone with God, if it is to shine in purity in the soul of the group.

Our fathers had, without perhaps talking much about it, a mode of private devotion common to all Protestantism – prayer and Bible-reading and meditation upon it. For better and for worse the regular habit of these things has greatly diminished among us. Our interests and sympathies have widened to include much more than the Bible in our religious reading, but they have tended to become shallower and more diffuse perhaps.

Modern educational methods have omitted “learning by heart” on the ground that it was mere “learning by rote”. Maybe we have to rediscover that “heart” was no accidental term, and that our worship and meditation is often poor and unrewarding because we have no sufficient store of the accumulated divine wisdom of the ages to well up in our minds in tranquility and gain there new lustre and meaning. And prayer – what is it? Perhaps we need to come into the experience of a different mode of prayer, and that for a lack of having discovered it, our devotions seem sterile and dull and ineffectual. Perhaps the fact that we have been talking of “meditation” rather than of “prayer” is a clue to the change required.

The Check-up

Burritt M. Hiatt

For persons who strive religiously to improve the relationship of the forces within themselves, and who seek the development of latent powers, it is valuable to check up their progress with a close friend. This friend might better be one with whom they are not associated daily, but see only every month or two. The value in talking to such a one is that it tests our feeling of having grown. In the conversation we may see that our secret impression of progress was attained by a narrowing of the scope of our interests or responsibilities. We discover that what we thought was increased peace within us may be due to stolidity or to reduced enthusiasm for sharing in the struggles of a worth-while minority.

Also a check-up with a friend may remind us afresh of the unexplored and unattained possibilities of our quest. It enlarges our imagination, refines our capacity for appreciation and encourages us to venture further on into the mystery.

Personal and Group Worship

Fred J. Tritton

What is it that we seek in our devotions? – by prayer, by meditation, by contemplation? Truth, Reality, assurance of the Eternal, an experience of being grounded on a Rock, a sense of unity with the infinite life of God, a deep inward peace that the world – to which we owe so much – cannot give nor yet take away.

By quiet reflection on one of the great sayings, “Be still and know that I am God,” “Lo, I am with you always,” or by deliberate meditation on an incident in the life of the Lord (the Transfiguration, the healing of the blind men) we may be brought into that “serene and blessed mood” wherein we see into the life of things and are at rest. Sometimes we may like a pen in order to record what we have known, but often that is impossible and even the very fringe of it eludes expression. As for the core of the experience, we know and are transformed by it, but are unable to declare what it is. We may feel that the living Christ has arisen in our hearts but we are so Blended within Him that all we can do is to allow the Glory to shine through us. We cannot describe the ineffable. The experience is that of lover and beloved, the alone with the alone, my mystery for myself, in incommunicable secret, a transubstantiation by which our very inner self is transformed into God’s, and we are made partakers of the divine nature.

But beware lest the intensity itself of the experience betray you into seeking it for its own sake. There is nothing more dangerous, especially if it leads