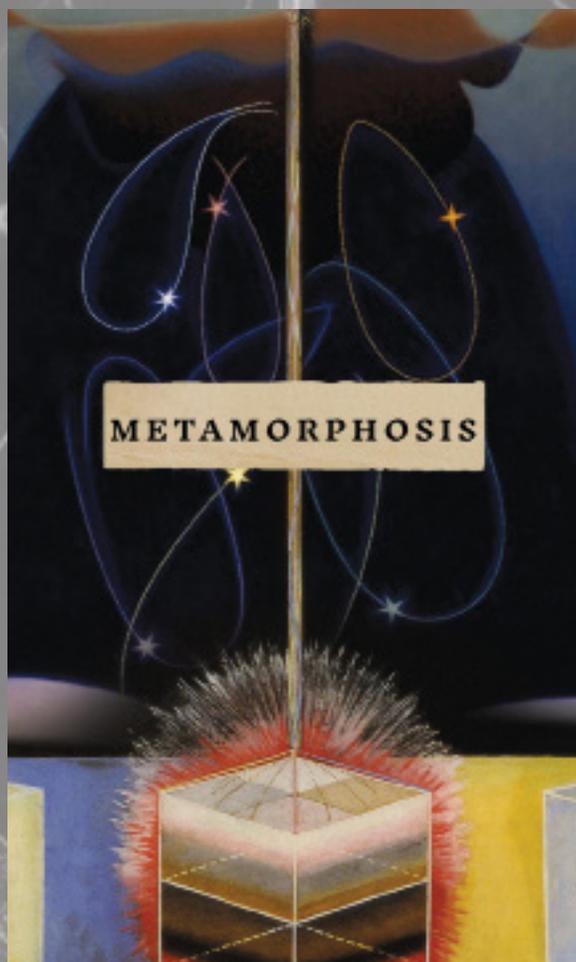


October 2020
Volume 32
Number 10



THE MARK

A Publication of The Church of Conscious Harmony ❖ A Contemplative Christian Community



OCTAVES OF CHANGE

BY PETER HAAS

Don't despair. Don't give up. New octaves are always occurring. If we wish, if we practice the Work of Inner Christianity, a new past and future is available *now*. It is easy to drift in life. Entropy is happening. Regret arises. It takes effort to grow and break free from the ingrained patterns of personality and memory acquired or inherited by life.

While miracles may occur and bring dramatic change seemingly without our effort, for most of us and for much of our lifetime, change must be chosen.

How?

We take new Aim, for a more fruitful, joyful, love-filled, healthy, abundant life in God. We make efforts, small at first. We seek new influences. These influences feed us and inspire different choices. This is our own work. No one else can change what is ours to change.

Change is acquired by conscious efforts.

Change happens as we release the past and learn our lessons so deeply that they are remembered in both our brain and bones.

Yet why do some remain stuck? Why is our change so long in the coming? What keeps us from this possible new octave and different future?

As I have observed my life and the choices that parts of myself have made over the decades of adulthood, I see that the wisdom of the Work is so clear and precise. The primary reason our octaves are incomplete and change does not occur is because of the power of identification with negative emotions. Maurice Nicoll, in his *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky* on page 1710, reminds us all that:

“Being identified is the source of negative emotions.

“If you are never identified, you would not mix what should not be mixed with what you do, and you would not be negative. If you always remembered yourself, you would never identify, and if you never identified you

would never be negative.

“To be negative is to sin against the Work. It is to miss the mark.”

And we often miss the opportunity of further metamorphoses and new beginnings because we haven't completed an octave. When we do, instantaneous change and shifts occur, as if the miraculous has invaded the mundane.

So, let's review a few terms in service to our ongoing present and future change.

Identification. I think of psychological identification using the image of red wine spilled on white carpet. Identification occurs when something presses into us so completely, we become one with it – stained as it were with its color, aroma, texture, taste, presence.

Negative. This term does not mean bad. A negative emotion can be a very useful emotion, such as anger, but what makes it negative is the impact and effect the emotion

has on you. Emotions by themselves aren't good or bad, negative or positive. However, how we let our emotions run on our system can become quite destructive. There is a difference between feeling an emotion like anger or hatred – and expressing that emotion. When we get identified with a negative emotion, it often means that the emotion has taken over us, and we can't control that emotion in that particular moment.

Miss the Mark. This is a unique term because it helps us see that change requires Aim. Missing the mark comes from archery. The Greek term was *harmatia*, which is badly translated into English as the word *sin*. A better translation would be *aimless*. Thus, if we live aimlessly, we will never hit the mark. The mark means centering into the unfolding purpose of our life. When we do hit the mark, it is a way of speaking about completing an octave. Change and the completion of our lifetime octaves requires countless moments of hitting the mark.

Recently, I observed that, in all my life, I've never been happier. This is a big change for me, since most of my life I have, so it seems, successfully and even deliberately sabotaged my happiness by way of identification with a few recurring negative emotions.

Looking back, I've seen how when left unchecked, negative emotions have the capacity to limit happiness completely. I've also seen how applying Work ideas on oneself, consenting to the Divine Therapy in the silence of Centering Prayer twice a day, journaling, getting good counsel, taking retreat in solitude and silence, to name just a few, all contribute to consciously chosen change.

I am in awe of the untold ways God's grace activates our Work in the process of change, evolution and transformation on our journeys. As we advance on the Way that Draws Us Deeper, I conclude with a soaring affirmation of prayer, which I utter now in the silence for you, me and all sentient beings:

Take my hand and feel the grip of nothing that holds everything with light and moves with grace and slight rhythms.

Take my hand and release your grip on everything else, grasping at nothing but surrender. And in your empty palms pressed together at the heart, feel the arrival of love's warmth as fear and other such soul-fevers slip through the lattice clasp of wanting desire.

I am the hand of God worn smooth with loving prayer, empty always yet filled with giving.

I am left and right; presence and absence; illumination and transformation. I am two hands, building a temple for your wishes. I use every tear for mortar, every laugh for stone. These hands are ceaseless, though never weary. They move out over all things as fire, seed, stream and song. And shape your life through every season, one change to another. 



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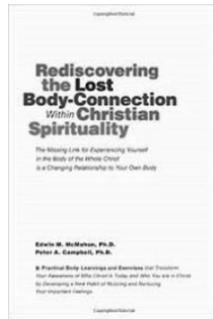
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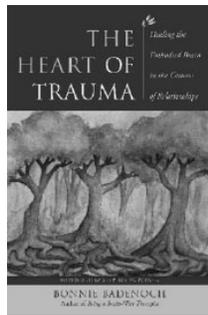
BOOK LOOK

THE ISSUES ARE IN OUR TISSUES

Two new books provide further inspiration for our integration of the body into our spiritual practices.



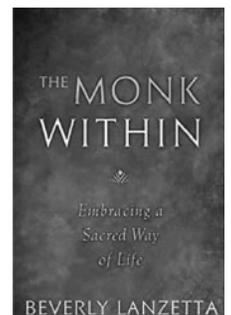
Rediscovering the Lost Body-Connection Within Christian Spirituality by Edwin McMahon and Peter Campbell is an accessible yet advanced handbook for discovering and working on one's emotional center.

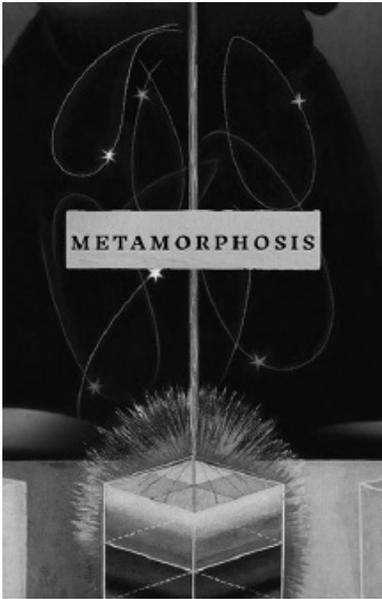


Similarly, Bonnie Badenoch's extraordinary professional resource *The Heart of Trauma: Healing the Embodied Brain in the Context of Relationships* is essential reading for all who wish to help others do their inner healing work. ☸

2020 ANNUAL COMMUNITY READING

As a community, we are still reading Beverly Lanzetta's *The Monk Within: Embracing a Sacred Way of Life*. Periodically, we are invited to share our experiences with this contemplative book during our Sunday service. It's not too late to join in reading this significant resource that supports our annual aim *The Way Draws Us Deeper* and our evolution of The Journey School and its Oblate's vow and rule of life. Lanzetta describes what it takes to become "A Universal Monk" while living in our world. ☸





I am the way, the truth and the life. John 14:6

ANNUAL AIM: THE WAY DRAWS US DEEPER

METAMORPHOSIS CHANGING WITHOUT CHANGING BY DEENA GRAHAM

In the Fourth Way
it is knowledge that must precede
change of being ...
Through knowledge of one's being
one can begin to separate
from certain elements in it,
so that eventually
one has changed being
so that it does not attract
the same things as formerly.

But this metamorphosis
only begins through metanoia
or change of mind, because,
if there is no change of mind
or new knowledge,
there can be no metamorphosis
or change of being.

Maurice Nicoll, "The Sphere of Being,"
Commentaries, Vol. 4

*They are reborn - not
with a physical birth
resulting from human
passion or plan,
but a birth that comes from God.*

John 1:13

"Our thinking is all we need to change.
It's all we *can* change. This is very good news."

Byron Katie, *Loving What Is*

Maurice Nicoll says above that metanoia (change of mind) must precede metamorphosis (change of being). This change of mind begins as a nagging sense that something is wrong. Hearing this message opens me to the wish for help and the possibility of receiving it. I open—even if just a crack—the closed loop that has been my ego-driven mind. In this opening, I learn to step back and notice the thoughts and beliefs that pass through my mind and reveal who I am believing myself to be. In noticing, I can learn to question,

to see through the illusions of this ego self, and I can wonder about what is True. That wondering space is all the invitation God needs to begin to teach me who I really am. Opening, I receive; Forgetting, I remember again through God's Grace and begin my work anew.

Growing up in the egocentric world, I absorbed the belief that I make my thoughts, and I am responsible for them. I learned that I was supposed to reject my bad thoughts and listen to my good thoughts, so I could "do the right thing." If I did something wrong,

it was my fault, and I would be punished. Yikes! That's a lot for a child to manage, but I tried. Over time, a vicious cycle developed: the more I tried to be good and gain recognition, the more I fell short and the more shame I accrued; the more shame I accrued, the harder I tried to prove myself, and on and on. After a while, I developed the strategy of avoiding this shame cycle in favor of pretending I was above it all, and I did not really care what others thought of me. I could never fully convince myself into believing my story. I still felt depressed and hopeless much of the time.

By the time I found The Church of Conscious Harmony seventeen years ago, I was weary of this cycle of shame and failed self-protection. Desperate for a way to authentically connect with myself and others, I embraced the teachings of Fr. Thomas Keating and the Work of Inner Christianity ("the Work"). I went on Centering Prayer retreats, became a Godly Play teacher in the youth program, and joined the Tenth Man School. I hoped I could excel in the practices and create some relief for myself, and I brought the same achieving energy to the Work that I had always brought to learning. Looking back, I can see that I was

engaging in what the Work calls a "self-improvement project." My ego was still firmly in charge, still trying to make something happen on its own. It was exhausting and demoralizing to work so hard and feel like I was still my same miserable self.

At the same time, I was having intermittent experiences of Grace. There were many moments, in prayer and in community at CCH, when I miraculously let go of my ego identification long enough to touch into the Peace and Presence of God, and I would experience the sweet relief I craved. In these blessed moments, I didn't have to do anything to be in the flow of God's Love. But those experiences didn't last, and I would find myself back under the spell of dissatisfaction. I wanted more of God and less of me, but I didn't know how to make that happen.

I thought if I worked hard enough, I could create a better ego, and then I would finally have a better life. I didn't understand that the Work was inviting me to something so much deeper. The Work encourages me to relinquish my ego identification completely and follow God into a wholly new sense of Being: to lose myself in order to find my Self. This Self is already perfect and whole and free.

There is nothing missing, nothing to strive for. Nicoll says "Man cannot do" and "Change nothing." He does not seek to discourage me or shame me but rather to shock me into seeing the futility of trying to fix something that is merely a figment of my imagination. When I see through the ego in this way, I no longer wish to change it. It is clear that distressing thoughts are here only to wake me up to my forgetting; each one is an alarm bell showing me the work of the moment in exquisite specificity.

The teachings of Byron Katie (which she also calls The Work) have allowed me to self-observe and non-identify more deeply than before by giving me a set of proscribed questions with which to meet stressful, emotional thoughts. Katie was given the four questions, which form the core of her Work, years ago after a sudden and profound enlightenment experience. Whenever a thought came to take her out of connection with Reality, these four questions would arise:

- 1) Is it true?
- 2) Can I absolutely know that it is true?
- 3) How do I react when I believe that thought? and
- 4) Who would I be without this thought?

Katie's questions are a practice, a meditation, a prayer, and an appeal for the revelation of God's Truth in a given moment. Through their use, I have learned that Peace is my natural state, and I have a way to investigate and clearly see what is moving me from my center. I had the great fortune of spending ten days with Katie last fall and have since spent many hours watching her teach and work with others online. She is a living example of what it is to be free of the grip of fear, and she speaks out of that glorious experience in simple language that invites trust and relaxation in the presence of Truth. When I practice Katie's Work, I can actually feel the hard outer shell of my ego let go bit-by-bit into the possibility of freedom from the responsibility of creating happiness, a task for which it knows deep down it was never equipped.

This practice has taught me how to self-observe and non-identify more cleanly and completely. I've learned to observe my thoughts and follow them into the body, holding myself in a space where Truth itself can correct my false beliefs. When I notice any distressing thought, I slow down, get still, and ask myself if it is true, if I can really know that it's true; then I sit and wait for the answer to come to meet the question. Whether the answer is yes

or no, I am in relationship with part of me that is suffering, I am non-identified with that part and yet I am deeply connected with it. Listening intently, I sit in the thought with deep compassion, being present to any emotional reactions in my body without judgment. I name the emotions present and take my time with each one, sometimes putting a caring hand on my heart or belly. I notice any images from the past that arise to support the thought and images of future fears arising. I do not deny or dismiss anything; all is welcome, to be known and cared for. When this seeing is complete, I move into a space of curiosity and imagination: in this moment of stress/confusion/fear, who would I be without this thought? I make space for the answer to manifest in my body. Sometimes, I immediately have a sense of freedom and peace; other times, I see that without that thought another one is there to take its place, and I have a new opportunity to work. At the end of the practice, Katie invites us to turn the thought around to its opposite and see if feels as true or truer. It is often a revelation of just how confused the original thought had been. If my original thought was "He is difficult," I will be shown how I have been difficult in that situation, outwardly and inwardly. I get to see

how I am projecting my suffering onto others in that situation and where my work actually resides—in me.

Through the methodical questioning of arising beliefs and meditating in the answers I receive, I can see the fear of vulnerability that resides at my ego's core and the protective strategies it has developed to try to hold the fear down and out of sight. It's an exhausting business; there is always something new to fear, something new to protect. The blessing of this Work is seeing that everything—everything!—the ego believes is completely upside down and backwards. I am not vulnerable—not at all. And there is absolutely nothing to fear. Nothing can really hurt me except my own belief that it can. In this Truth, I am utterly changed, and at the same time, I have come to understand that no change is actually necessary or possible. I experience the metanoia that will prepare me to be completely undone, to become what I've always been. As I continue to question my thoughts in moments of suffering, I invite this Truth to meet my ego where it lives, and, gradually, it begins to understand that there is nothing to protect, nothing to fear, nothing to do. Held in God's embrace, my ego can learn to let go and rest. 

My Father is still working, and I also am working. John 5:17

LIVING THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY IN DAILY LIFE

METANOIA BY NATHAN JONES

Work Idea:

The Work talks about the need to have a “change of mind” or “changing the way we think.” In the New Testament the word *metanoia* has been incorrectly translated as “repent.” A more accurate translation is “change of mind.” With *meta* meaning “after” or “beyond” and *nous* meaning “mind.” This makes it a softer and gentler teaching than has been passed down. We can leave the associations around a sweaty preacher screaming “Repent” in the past. In the Work, we are informed that to change who and what we are it is necessary to have a change of mind. By thinking in a new way, we are able to approach the world from a new perspective. The Work offers us a manner, a

teaching, a path, to change our mind and our perspective in order to achieve this. The Work tells us to observe ourselves, that all negative emotions are a lie, that we cannot *do*, that life is happening in the only way it can, that my being attracts my life, amongst other insights and truths. Through considering these teachings, by “putting on” these teachings we begin to have a change of mind. The way we think is changed. It is important to remember that so much of what we take as fact is given to us by our senses, our parents or our experience. We operate daily decision making based on these cold, unconscious half-truths. In reality, they are our distorted perceptions, identifications and associations. Through tools offered

by the Work, we can become more conscious of these. In one wanting example, there is a difference between viewing a thunderstorm from the stand point of getting wet and soggy socks to considering how all that water was hoisted up into those clouds in the first place. The former is negative in nature and the latter is not. This latter perspective leads to wondering. Some might say like a child. One aspect of the Work is attempting to facilitate this internal movement through a change of mind.

Work Source:

“The problem therefore is to change these associations in order to develop our own thought and our own understandings, and, as you know, the Work is about

GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE, GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

Fr. Thomas Keating, in his seminal work *Open Mind, Open Heart*, lists 42 principles underlying the Christian spiritual journey.

Fr. Keating asks that these principles be read according to the method of Lectio Divina.

One principle appears in these pages each month.

GUIDELINE 33

Chastity is distinct from celibacy, which is the commitment to abstain from the genital expression of our sexuality.

Chastity is the acceptance of our sexual energy, together with the masculine and feminine qualities that accompany it and the integration of this energy into our spirituality.

It is the practice of moderation and self-control in the use of our sexual energy.

metanoia, or change of mind, which means thinking from quite new associations. And I will add that so many people do not see that this is the case – in short that the meaning of the Work is to change the way you think, and to change the way you think is to change the usual associations whereby you have hitherto thought.”

Commentaries, p. 1414-15

Application:

What does it mean to think from new associations and new knowledge? In Africa, when a giraffe eats from an Acacia tree the tree will release a chemical that makes its leaves toxic and unappetizing. The tree then releases a pheromone to communicate to surrounding trees that a predator is near. These trees in turn release

the toxic chemical to their own leaves as well. Thereby assuring they are not tasteful to the giraffe. This is how they communicate and protect each other. In other forests where Douglas fir and paper birch grow together and compete with one another, they also cooperate. In the summertime when the Douglas fir is shaded, the birch tree will provide it carbon through its root system via below ground fungi. Whereas in the fall, when the birch loses its leaves the fir provides it with excess carbon. Though our senses don't inform us, forests communicate and help one another. They are more like one great organism than a collection of individuals. With this new information, this new knowledge, one can approach a forest from a changed mind. Gaining greater and deeper understanding leads to new associations. Take a walk amongst the forest with this changed mind and consider what it means to have a change of mind as it relates to the Work. Hold and practice one Work idea to experience metanoia. Perhaps, *all negative emotions are a lie.*

Further Resource:

Ponder these ideas in the light of what Jesus taught in Matthew 18:3, *Then he said: I promise you this. If you don't change and become like a child, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.* ☉

ABOUT SPIRITUAL SUPPORT

Spiritual companioning
is offered and encouraged
for the church community.

Appointment times
with our minister
are available

Wednesday-Sunday
by Zoom or telephone.

Pastoral visits
are also available
for our home bound.

Please contact the office
at 512-347-9673
to schedule.

OCTOBER SERMON SERIES

BEING HUMAN LOVING GOD

October 4
Soul

October 11
Strength

October 18
Mind

October 25
Your Neighbor as Yourself

ON CAMPUS OFFERINGS

NEW: FOR WORSHIP SERVICES

Wednesday and Sunday worship services are open for in-person attendance for those who sign-up on our website. To review the list of protocols for attending a worship service on campus at The Church of Conscious Harmony, please go to our website. Thank you for the understanding and consideration for each other with this new sign-up process. Worship services will continue to be streamed online.

FOR COURTYARD COMMUNION

This brief service is designed to provide a safe, socially distanced, outdoor Eucharistic experience on campus for you and/or your family. To schedule an appointment, please contact minister@consciousharmony.org.

DURING THE WEEK

The campus is open during normal business hours. Just let the office know where you go, so they may keep things clean and safe for all. Enjoy the library, book store, chapel, and many outdoor offerings: playground, labyrinth, hiking trails, paths of intention, fountains, benches, creek, and foliage. This is holy ground!

Please see consciousharmony.org for more details and the latest news.

TWO SPECIAL EVENTS WITH FR. CARL ARICO

AN OVERTURE “Celebrating Life”

Friday, October 9, 2020 7:00-8:30pm (CDT)

Before the one-day Centering Prayer Workshop,
an online evening with Fr. Carl is being offered for everyone.

You’ll want to join in this “overture” as he invites us
to Centering Prayer and introductory insights to focus
on those three questions, focus on what needs to be celebrated
and reflect on our own spiritual life.

In valuation and generosity, you are invited to make a donation
for this Church offering of Fr. Carl and his joyful presence among us.

Go to the Happenings page of the website for a link to join.

ONE-DAY ONLINE CENTERING PRAYER WORKSHOP “Celebration of God’s Work in Our Lives”

Saturday, October 10, 2020 9:00am-4:30pm (CDT)

Many have experienced Fr. Carl Arico’s three questions:

- 1) What needs to be healed?
- 2) What needs to be forgiven?
- 3) What needs to be celebrated?

This retreat day will focus on what needs to be celebrated.
Fr. Carl will invite you to focus on those three questions
and encourage you to look at your life through the lens
of your human condition, daily routine, prayer practices, graces
and the manifestation of God in your life.

Let us make a joyful sound of gratitude and appreciation
in the silence for a gift that keeps on giving.

(Registration has closed as the maximum number of participants has
been reached).

OCTOBER CALENDAR

For more details, visit
consciousharmony.org or call 512-347-9673

SPECIAL EVENTS

Fr. Carl Arico Event
Oct-9 (see details at left)

Half-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Oct 24 9am-12:00pm online
\$10 Please register online

Courtyard Communion
Schedule for you/your family:
minister@consciousharmony.org

MONTHLY

Caritas Donations
To continue our long standing partnership,
please consider making a donation of food or
money directly to caritasofaustin.org

*Godly Play Parade of Parables
Oct 10 1pm

WEEKLY

Sundays
*Centering Prayer & Lectio Divina 8-9am
*Intercessory Prayer 9am
†*Worship Service 10-11:30am
**Teen Program 10-11:30am
**Youth Program 1pm

Wednesdays
†*Contemplative Worship Service 6:30-7:15pm
*Minister’s Book Study 7:30-8:30pm

Thursdays
*The Journey School Class 7-8:30pm

Fridays
*Mystics of the Christian Tradition 12:30-1:15pm

Saturdays
*Scriptorium 11am
*Compline 9-9:15pm

DAILY

*Centering Prayer Service 7-7:35am

†Sign up online to attend in person

*Please join the services online. Contact the website
for instructions.

**All our youth are invited to participate. Contact
youthdir@consciousharmony.org for details.

Recordings of services are available online
at www.consciousharmony.org



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THE DIVINE LIFE: IN ORDINARY TIME

*The divine power has bestowed on us everything
that makes for life and devotion,
the knowledge of Him who called us
by His own glory and power.
Through these, He has bestowed on us
the precious and very great promises,
so that through them you may come to share
in the divine nature.*

2 Peter 1:3-4

It must be emphasized
over and over
that daily life
is the fundamental practice.
To bring both our activity
and our vision together
in vital dialogue
is to perceive the right way
of manifesting vision *today*.
Maybe it will be
a little different tomorrow.
Every day is a new unfolding
of our life in Christ.
Our practice has to be adjusted
as we keep climbing
the spiral ascent . . .
The eagle circles
as it rises toward the sun.

Thomas Keating,
The Mystery of Christ

