

# Authors' Preface

By introducing the human body and its unique way of knowing into Christian spirituality, this workbook offers all Christians an inviting path beyond their often divisive debates and poisoned histories. Many Christians today want more than religious information. They seek *a transformational, new reformation*. Longing for a spirituality no longer disconnected from what their body knows, they cry out for help in changing the relationship to their own body's feelings. They search this fresh, holy ground to rediscover their own body within the Body of the Whole Christ. By slowly journeying at your own pace through the body-learnings and exercises in this workbook—whether alone, with a companion or in a small group—your steps in personal wholeness and the body-feel of grace open as one, unifying, organic experience. The implications for building peace-filled communities and a dedication to the global common good are enormous.

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During more than 45 years of our team research, we have discovered that the way in which people treat their own bodies and feelings becomes a reliable predictor of how they will then treat and interact with those around them. It offers a window on how they will fashion the social and political structures in their societies, their business communities, systems of economics and education, even how they will design and live out their religious aspirations. In our view, the missing link in our all too human educational efforts for world peace lies in our lack of fully comprehending the structure and functioning of *a biospiritual pedagogy* which can lead individuals and societies into their shared body-knowing as an opening doorway along the path of achieving an enduring, global peace. But how can we actually teach this? How do we pass such experience on to the next generation? The overlooked key, of course, is that you cannot do this as an idea or information in the mind alone. It must somehow be passed on *within the body's consciousness of being a living cell within a Larger Body*. But how?

The above observation has boundless global implications for our future understanding of the body's key role in Christian spiritual development. Over the last 30 years, a recurring experience which stands out for us has been the number of people in so many

different cultures and countries, who have attended our programs and thanked us for *the inner biospiritual process* they learned. For many, it became the principal support for how they carried the stress of life and aging, how they functioned constructively in trauma, as well as becoming their most effective approach, routinely used in spiritual companioning, ministry and pastoral work.

What they continued to ask, however, was for the inner body-process they were learning to be integrated *experientially* into a unified, Christian spirituality. We could not attend to this full-time until we began developing a three month transformational living program which then gradually evolved into this workbook—*Rediscovering the Lost Body-Connection Within Christian Spirituality*—an easily learnable body-process as *itself* an experience of their Christian faith. The workbook now serves as the primary resource, both psychological and theological, as well as the experiential format through body-learnings and exercises, for a program in Christian transformational living. The program can be adapted for 3-5 year olds in the home or preschool as well as for retirement communities and special needs groups—grief and chronic pain groups, marriage preparation, adolescent support groups and pastoral care in high schools and universities—as well as in the training of seminarians and novices within religious communities.

If Christians cannot help one another to *experience* their bodies as *living membranes* within the Body of the Whole Christ, giving witness by their organic presence in the world as the Continuing Incarnation of God “in Christ,” then Christianity will be experienced as increasingly irrelevant within the lives of those suffering the pain of aging, physical trauma or those carrying the insecurity and emotional-physical impact of violence, as well as the inevitable dying we all go through.

Our important feelings try to express so many levels of felt-meaning that are vital for a religion built around the Incarnation of God in Christ. It is crucial that Christianity be experienced *within the human organism itself*, living in Christ’s Body through our own bodies as a profoundly meaning-filled, Christ-revealing resource and healing way of carrying our fears, anger, low self-esteem, chronic pain, grief, helplessness, loneliness, hopelessness and loss of loved ones. Otherwise, Christianity will inevitably be sensed as missing the mark and feel more and more disconnected from everyday life.

The research and experience of our long lives has taught us that now is the time for Christian communities to rediscover who Christ really is today by changing the relationship most of us have to our own body. We need travel no further than inside ourselves. May this workbook be a loving companion for you and those with whom you might share this journey.

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