

## Book Review

### THE SPIRITUALITY OF AGE: A SEEKER'S GUIDE TO GROWING OLDER

Robert L. Weber & Carol Orsborn;  
Toronto: Park Street Press, 2015.  
Paperback (234pp) – CAD\$17.95.

The collaborating authors introduce their new vision of aging as the path to spiritual maturity. They then respond in turn to each of 25 questions which they devised along five intriguing themes: What is spiritual maturity? What is spiritual awakening? What is freedom? How can we become more fully ourselves? What is the value of aging to society?

Throughout the book, the two American authors – one from a Catholic and one from a Jewish background – each weave their individual expertise and spiritual views with personal experiences as they tackle these profound and timely questions. Bob Weber, a university-affiliated clinical psychologist and a former Jesuit, hosts the website:

***ContemplAgeing.com***. With a doctoral degree in psychology of adult development and studies in spirituality and religion, Carol Orsborn has published numerous books for aging boomers including ***Fierce with Age*** and ***The Art of Resilience***; and she hosts the website: ***Fierce with Age***.

The Socratic method forms the base for the book – and implicitly invites the formation of discussion groups. The resources range from classic religious and spiritual sources to contemporary aging & spirituality works, adult development and health psychology, gerontology, memoir, and poetry. To further support individual and group engagement with the material, the Appendix provides twelve extended exercises to explore spiritual aging and the annotated recommended reading list offers a rich menu of further options.

Carol has been learning how and when to let go of the publication race, moving to the country where she can sit by the river – her teacher:

*I am beginning to understand that there really is nothing to fear, for when all is stripped away, what remains is God. Today the river tells me that no matter how many days I come out to sit, pen in hand or not, and even on those days when I won't or can't come anymore, the answer will always be the same. Let. Wait. See.* (p. 162)

Bob has also been struggling with how to contribute even while taking time to confront the changes of aging consciously:

*Now, you and I, as we face marginalization due to aging and ageism, face the crisis of getting older and have a choice to become and be more who we are, living from the inside out rather than the outside in. We do not need to fight or accept marginalization. We do need to re-envision ourselves in terms that transcend the limits of sociocultural values in which we are embedded and about which we are unconscious. Aging is a wake-up call, a chance to wake up.* (p. 157).

As conscious-aging expert Rick Moody says in his foreword, the authors teach by example that we become wise only if we love the questions – treating life and aging as a mystery, not a problem to be solved – and wait for the answers as they unfold. Gerontologist Andrew Achenbaum congratulates the authors in the afterword, recognizing them as true spiritual mentors, personally involved guides along the aging way toward spiritual maturity.

In frank and articulate responses to their own questions, Weber and Orsborn model the process of struggling with important questions, moving forward and backward along an upward spiral toward life's ultimate destination (God, death). We try to learn to allow ourselves to be marginalized, even while renewing connections with our society and communities. We learn over and over again to give up the illusion of control over our life. We cannot figure out once and for all how to balance our later life between letting go and making a contribution -- rather we choose a direction and make decisions day by day trusting in God.

Reviewed by Ellen B. Ryan, Professor Emeritus, McMaster University, Hamilton, CANADA. See her **Writing, Aging & Spirit** website: [www.writingdownouryears.ca](http://www.writingdownouryears.ca).