
THE CONSERVATIVE FRIEND

Number 34

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Eleventh Month 2008

A Vision from God

I saw in my mind this image or vision during the opening worship of Ohio Yearly Meeting, Eighth Month eleventh, 2008, and spoke of it in the meeting of ministers and elders 8/14/2008

As I sat in worship, I was overcome with a sense of what a beautiful, peaceful place we were meeting in and I saw in my mind the beautiful old meeting house, the red-brown of its bricks glowing in the evening light, surrounded by the soft green grass of its lawn and in my mind I saw the hilltop surrounded by a dense screen of tall fir trees, adding their stately beauty to the peaceful scene.

And then I saw that outside that hedge of fir trees the world is on fire. It is burning with hatred, greed, lust, pride and vain-glory and filled with all the toxic fruits which these things bear: war and oppression, rebellion, adultery and homosexuality, arrogance, inhumanity, and spiritual emptiness. And I cried out, "Lord, how can a place of such peace and beauty exist in the midst of a world on fire?"

And the Lord showed me that this place of peace does not exist by accident, but it is the fruit of the labors of generation after generation who have lived and worshipped here, building a culture and a community of peace. I saw that just as there is a blessing to the peacemaker there is a blessing to those who create a place of peace. And I saw God's covering, like a clear transparent bell-jar resting over the scene and the only ones who were able to pass through from the outside were those who God specifically allowed or called, and I thanked God, for I am one of those who, fleeing the flames, found peace in this place.

As I sat in the meeting of Ministry and Oversight the Lord gave the following 2-part message: I saw that there was a line dividing two generations, (the older and the younger) but it was not given to see exactly where that line falls, only the words "You do not have to be very young to be 'young' in Ohio Yearly Meeting."

To the older generation I said:

Over the next few years most of you seated here will be going to be with the Lord and will receive the reward of your labors. No further work will be required of you. You have sown in peace and it is yours to reap the harvest of peace. The blessing of the peacemakers rests upon you.

Then I said to the younger generation, feeling to repeat again that it is not given to see just where the line falls between older and younger:

In the years of your lifetimes the fire which burns in the world has flamed up hotter and hotter, and I saw the fire leaping up against the outside of the fir trees, like a forest fire running up a slope and a few hot embers beginning to fly through the air and land within the circle of trees.

And I felt to say, "Prepare yourselves. Drink deeply of the peace of God which is in this place and soak it in through your bones, because sometime soon, when the last of the older generation is laid to rest out there on the hill, God is going to lift that covering of protection which covers this place and when it happens, that wall of fire is going to come crashing in upon you, and neither ancient bricks, nor ancient traditions will be able to hold it back any longer.

"When that day comes, it will be your work to give of the peace of Christ, from inside yourselves as one offers a cup of cool water to a person who is suffering. You must share God's peace, sweat it out of your very pores for the sake of the burned and desperate people who will be thrown in upon you. Your ability and willingness to do this will be the only thing standing between a last few precious souls and the fire which burns for all eternity.

Grant Kaufmann

Grant is an affiliate member of Rockingham Meeting (O YM). He, his wife Neva, and their family live in Christian witness on a cattle ranch in southeastern Bolivia.

Scheduled Meetings for Worship

(For worship at OYM monthly meetings see www.ohioyearlymeeting.org)

Meeting	Location	Contact Person	Contact Information	Meeting Schedule
Athens Christian Friends	Athens, Greece	Themistoklis Papaioannou	papathem@gmail.com; P.O. Box 21121, Athens 11410, Greece	Weekly First Days, 5:00 PM
Chatahoochee Friends Worship Group	Atlanta, Georgia	Scott King	770-315-9478; a_lang@bellsouth.net	Weekly First Days, 10:00 AM
Crossroads	Michigan: Flint, White Lake, Lansing	Phil Helms	248-360-2074; admin@ michiganquakers.org	Weekly / First Days
Friends Gathering in Jesus Christ	Evanston, IL (near Chicago)	Robert Hopper	847-733-7226 ; friendrobert61@sbcglobal.net	Twice a month / 2nd and 4th Seventh Days
Goshen	Scone, Scotland	Paul Thompson	UK # 01738 620688; Book- seeker@blueyonder.co.uk	Twice a month / 1st & 3rd First Days
Greenwich	London, England	Simon Watson	simonw@quaker.org.uk	Weekly / First Days
North Main Friends	Greenville, South Carolina	Don Shabkie	dshabkie@bellsouth.net	Weekly First Days, 2:00 PM
Richland/Ashland Friends	Loudonville, Ohio	Scott Savage	419-368-9419 (leave message)	Monthly / 2nd First Day
Ripley Christian Quakers	Ripley, Derbyshire,UK	Mike Wake- field	UK # 01773-541424 Rcquakers@lomaxes.me.uk	Weekly First Days, 10:30 AM
Salisbury	Salisbury, Maryland	Kye Parsons	410-749-8221 kyeparsons@hotmail.com	Weekly First Days, 1:30 PM
	Little Falls, New York	Geoff Gilmore	315-823-0616 geoff@gsgilmore.com	Monthly / 3rd Fifth Day

Financial Contributions Appreciated

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The editor welcomes articles for publication, those written recently as well as excerpts from earlier Friends’ writings. Subscriptions are funded through readers’ contributions and an appropriation from OYM.

A Dream

I dreamed this dream in Seventh Month 2008 and spoke of it in the Meeting of OYM Ministers and Elders Eighth Month, 12th of that same year.

I dreamed I saw a Friend, and this Friend felt a concern to visit the City of God. After duly obtaining a minute from his meeting he set out on his journey.

When he had traveled some distance he saw a turn-off to the right and felt this was the way he should go, so he turned into this side-road and continued on it for some distance. Soon however the road became narrow, woodsy and dark, and he heard strange noises from the forest. He no longer felt easy in his mind about his course, so he returned to the main road and continued forward.

After traveling most of the day, he came to a high hill where the road forked in two, with one road passing to the right of the hill and the other to the left. There was no clear indication of which was the main track, but he felt perhaps that the left fork would lead him to the City of God. However, as it was now late in the day and because he did not want to forge ahead without clear guidance, he decided to sleep along the roadside and, in the morning, to wait upon the Lord for clearness. Accordingly he lay down and slept.

In the morning he devoted himself to seek God's guidance, and now he felt that the right fork was in fact the way to the City of God. Since this so clearly contradicted what he had felt the evening before, he was troubled in his mind. He determined to spend the day there in prayer and waiting on the Lord, until he should receive a clear sense of how to proceed. By evening he still did not feel clearness, so he again lay down and slept by the roadside.

That night, in the early hours of the morning, the Friend died. The sun rose and his bones bleached there at that crossroads, but his spirit rose to be with God, for he was a man who loved the Lord.

As his spirit rose, my vantage point in the dream seemed to rise with it, until I was looking down on

the scene from above as God sees it. And then the reason for the Friend's dilemma became clear: the two roads passed one to the right and the other to the left, and then came together again behind the high hill, where they joined with the third road, which had emerged from the wood – and the three roads came together there just in front of the gate to the city of God.

And so I saw that our Friend, doing all the right things, for all the right reasons had made the only wrong choice which was possible within the scenario of the dream.

When I awoke, I sought the Lord for the meaning of this dream. He showed me that much too often we, like the Friend in the dream, are held back from doing what we should by our own reticence and fear of misstep. We are all flesh and blood, and as long as we are in this life, we will see “through a glass, darkly.” [1 Corinthians 13:12] There will always be doubts and uncertainty. But our God is a loving father who forgives his children their errors, so long as we diligently seek to do His will.

While it is indeed an error to forge ahead where we are not led, it is equally an error to hold back from doubt or fear when the times demand boldness. When God has given us His direction, we must press forward. None of us lives forever. This world will not continue forever. We must work while it is called today. *

Grant Kaufmann

(For biographical information, see article on pg. 1)

* At the same time I also mentioned the account from the life of (I think) Ann Branson [a 19th C recorded minister of Ohio YM)], when she felt called to stand on the main street of Barnesville and preach against war. For one reason and another she delayed to fulfill this mission, and then the Civil War broke out. The people were swept up in the “war-fever” and she knew they would no longer be open to her message. Ever after this she felt the weight of all the men of Barnesville who died in that terrible war weighing on her conscience.

Closing Minute - Ohio Yearly Meeting, 2008

We have now completed the business brought before the meeting. We have met in a place of peace, though surrounded by a world on fire. Our committees have reported on their work expressing our faith to others, whether through gatherings, visitation, planned activities, or discernment. In the face of outside obstacles, the Walton Home continues to be richly blessed by the Lord in its ministry to the elderly, sharing hope and joy with those in their golden years. We shared our experiences of miracles in our lives that cannot be explained away or taken from us. Our many visitors have exercised their gifts as well, admonishing us to experience the transforming power of simplicity, to be more attentive in peacemaking, and to have a greater appreciation for the Creation provided us for this life. In answering the Queries, we have shared our joys and our failures, identifying shortcomings that prevent us from fulfilling what God has for us to do. In all our deliberations, we have earnestly sought to avoid the pitfalls of the man who, for all the right reasons, made the wrong decision and missed a marvelous experience the Lord had prepared for him in this life.

The week was also graced with ministry. The importance of life-changing faith was brought to our attention on many occasions. Faith takes a lot of focus and desire on our part. Reach out in confidence with both hands for the faith that Christ Jesus longs to give thee to meet the needs in thy life. God is a Spirit, seen with the inward eyes. He is a mystery with many clues, including His pulsating power, the fruit of His presence, and His beautiful voice speaking and singing in the soul.

We were reminded of the scripture regarding Christ Jesus, "This is my beloved Son. Hear Ye Him." The One who made all things new also said "If thou knewest the gift of God, thou shouldst have asked

of Me, and I would have given thee living water." Friend, dip thy cup into this water and receive everlasting, spiritual life to cleanse thine inward soul and mind. The crystal clear, always overflowing spiritual water provided by our Creator witnesses that He loved us before we loved or even knew Him. Search and find the living God and experience the excitement from knowing that He works with thee and in thee right now. His grace is sufficient for thee to overcome any bondage of this life.

Christ Jesus wants thee to become His new creature – to live in His way of love and compassion with an open heart and mind. We know that we see through the glass darkly, but we long to be made whole. We have this treasure in earthen vessels, and we sometimes neglect the things of God. However, His inward presence creates a yearning to become a mirror of Christ Jesus. In terms of thy fulfillment, attentiveness to the inward work will always outweigh outward things, which attract thy attention away from Him.

As each of us takes up our role in the larger work, yielding our own ideas, let us not be held back by fear when the Lord has directed us to go forward. Let us be encouragers and not discouragers; let us support the leadings of other sisters and brethren in Christ. Let us discover what He requires of thee as an individual as well as what He requires of thy meeting and of Ohio Yearly Meeting. Let us bear fruit meet for repentance and hear the word the Lord has for us. Let us join with Samuel in saying, "Speak, Lord – thy servant heareth."

We now bring this yearly meeting to a close, purposing to meet again next year in Eighth Month, unless otherwise directed by the Lord.

Seth Hinshaw, clerk

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. {beloved...: or, beloved of God, your election} For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.

1 Thessalonians 5: 2 - 6

The Faith and Culture of Conservative Friends

Editor's note: Fran and Bill Taber developed these ideas together several years ago. Bill and Fran grew up in the 1930's and '40's in Conservative Friends' families, immersed in Conservative Quaker community culture. That culture had many similarities to British Quakerism around 1800, as described in Thomas Clarkson's *Portrait of Quakerism*. Thus an analysis of traditional Conservative Friends' life can be a proxy for analysis of classic Quakerism. That analysis of culture is printed here. The second part of Bill and Fran's paper, about the witness of Conservative Friends, will be printed in a later issue.

What is it we are trying to conserve, and why? How do Conservative Friends' characteristic patterns of life and practice flow, or fail to flow, from our understanding of our relationship to God?

One key element of classic Quakerism is **paradox**, in which Friends hold together opposing understandings of Truth. The various Quaker separations can be seen as the result of each party's emphasizing one side of a paradox and diminishing the other. Conservative Friends tried, and try, to keep both sides of one of these paradoxes: our deeply felt experience of the Inward Light in our lives held together with our equally deep understanding of the Inward Light incarnate in the historical life, teaching, death, and continuing presence of Jesus.

Friends today may describe themselves as believing Christians or as experiencing that every person has access to a Light within. For Friends through the early 19th Century, both points were essential, and Conservative Friends continued to hold onto both. Sometimes they held on so tightly that they became rigid, but we witness today that both sides must be held in a living, dynamic relationship if we are to be alive in our faith.

Conservative yearly meetings separated from a number of North American Orthodox yearly meetings between 1877 and 1904. Active communication and an increasingly unique Conservative Friends' culture were initially maintained by gifted ministers who traveled among them and by movement of teachers and high school students among the network of meeting-run small, rural elementary schools and larger boarding high schools.

However, by the middle of the 20th Century, there were only three Conservative yearly meetings left. The others had either been laid down or assimilated into other branches of Friends. Rural meetings and small elementary schools declined, and students at the two remaining yearly meeting boarding schools (in Iowa and Ohio) came from an increasing variety of backgrounds. Young adult Conservative Friends took jobs in cities and universities, and although they often kept membership in the meetings where they had grown up, they rarely attended them. Among Friends who stayed in those home meetings, the use of plain dress became less common. During WW II most Conservative Friends stayed faithful to the peace testimony, but afterward they gave up their traditional isolation from other groups and joined in the work of the AFSC, FCNL, FWCC, and other Quaker groups.

By mid-century some people from other Friends' groups were being drawn to visit Conservative Friends because they experienced among us a depth of authentic Quakerism that they missed elsewhere. A gathering of Friends from the three Conservative yearly meetings was held in Barnesville, Ohio, in 1965, and another in Middleton, Ohio, in 1969, in order to strengthen each other and our understanding of who we are. Since then gatherings of "Conservative Friends and those of like mind" have been held every two or three years, mostly in Ohio.

Demographic characteristics of the three Conservative yearly meetings have changed noticeably over the last 100 years. There are few farmers, small-town merchants, and craftspersons left, although many Conservative Friends still live in rural areas. In Iowa and North Carolina there are new urban meetings with a majority of members who did not grow up as Conservative Friends. Some new members have also joined Ohio YM, reviving or adding strength to existing meetings and starting two new meetings. As the 20th Century drew to a close and in response to requests from people living far from existing Conservative monthly meetings, Ohio YM added affiliate membership to make a way in which

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distant Conservative Friends could formally be part of an Ohio monthly meeting.

Today, although some Conservative Friends use distinctive plain dress and speech, most of us dress and talk very much like the world around us. Yet we continue to live with an attentiveness and obedience to the Inward Guide, maintaining some of the distinctive ways Conservative Friends have organized our time, our homes, and our interaction with the world. These ways define what can be identified as the traditional culture of Conservative Friends.

We often describe ourselves as Christian unprogrammed Friends. That is correct, but it is not complete. Our testimony on peace and our understanding of baptism and communion distinguish us from a number of other churches, but there are still other characteristics descriptive of who Conservative Friends have been, and in many places still are, as a people. Of some of these things we as a group are not fully aware.

The first defining attitude and practice, and the root out of which the others grow, developed among Friends in the 18th Century and has been called a **culture of listening**. It refers to a life that is deliberately designed to facilitate a continual inward listening to God. In the past Friends often engaged in occupations that made listening easier. Agriculture, homemaking, and crafts do not engage the mind so constantly as to preclude religious recollection and prayer. Even in other occupations today, many Conservative Friends follow daily practices that remind us to adjust to what God is telling us: silent thankfulness before meals, family worship and Bible reading, personal retirement for silence before God, prayer, spiritual reading and journal writing.

This habit of listening to God, cultivated as the atmosphere of one's life, becomes the ground for **discernment**, the second defining practice. Discernment is important not only for major decisions but also in the little choices of everyday life. However, that term was rarely used by earlier generations to describe their common practice of choosing between alternatives according to direction from God.

A third defining practice involves a cluster of personality characteristics. Willingness to be directed by God often expanded into willingness to be taught by people. "**Teachability**" is one personality characteristic common in the traditional culture of Conservative Friends; many Friends were flexible, responsive, and open to learning throughout life. Another typical personality characteristic was **feeling**, or gaining a sense of underlying Truth through such means as sympathy, empathy, and mercy. **Gentleness**, found equally among men and women, was another common personality characteristic.

Just as many personality characteristics were not firmly differentiated by gender, expectation of leadership was and is also held equally for men and women Conservative Friends. Although leadership **gender equality** had been characteristic of Friends since the 17th Century, an observation in 1970 showed more men than women in leadership positions in each of the other US branches of Friends.

Expectation of leadership often grew among Conservative Friends from **recognition of spiritual gifts**. In Ohio Yearly Meeting today we still record gifts in vocal ministry, and we name elders and overseers through awareness of those spiritual gifts in our members. We feel this recognition is an important way of nurturing spiritual growth, spiritual faithfulness, and spiritual leadership in the meeting. Both the individuals whose gifts are nurtured and the meeting where they are used benefit from that formal recognition. A person's spiritual gift belongs not to the individual but is given by God for the benefit of the corporate meeting.

Focus on corporate being, another defining characteristic of Conservative Friends, contrasts with western society's individualism. Friends often referred to a meeting as "the body," reflecting their experience of a well-functioning meeting being an organism that responds as a whole to God. Meeting minutes included such phrases as "the meeting desires" and "the meeting regrets." Members perceived themselves as particular parts of the whole, rather than a collection of individuals. Thus Friends worked together with different members of the meeting,

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rather than focusing on the differences or leaving the meeting because of them. In addition, the understanding that God guides us with the corporate wisdom of the group, as well as through personal experience of the Inward Light, made it clear to members that their personal guidance needed to be verified by the faith community.

Another important characteristic of Conservative Friends was **truthfulness in speech**, which went far beyond avoiding the double standard implicit in legal oaths. For example, while two teenage boys were visiting a Friend in his house, a third boy knocked at the front door. When the Friend went to the door, one of the two boys slipped out the back, as planned by all three boys. When the boy at the door asked if the other two boys were there, the Friend replied "I left both of them in the living room," thereby thwarting the three boys' hopes of catching the Friend in an "untruth." The Friend's carefully accurate words were typical of that community's daily speech.

Although Friends took care to be truthful in what

ever they said, they were aware that however carefully we speak, no words can contain the Truth or even our experience of it. It is this realization of the **ultimate inadequacy of words** that underlies Conservative Friends' avoidance of the repetition of creeds and our relative lack of involvement with formal theology. Conservative Friends do not have a fundamental disagreement with making a clear personal confession of faith.

People sometimes think that plain dress and plain speech are defining characteristics of Conservative Friends. Those practices were prevalent in Ohio Yearly Meeting less than 100 years ago, and a minority of our members use distinctively plain dress now. However, the other characteristics mentioned here are more central to the identity of Conservative Friends. Outward practices, including plain dress and speech, are spiritually significant when they grow out of listening for and discerning Truth, and when they are used to make more room for God in one's life.

Frances Taber

Fran, a member of Stillwater MM (Ohio YM), married Richard Simon, after Bill's death. They live in Barnesville, Ohio.

Edmund Goerke - Request for Information

"Gather up the fragments that remain" is a command which Friends have understood to apply in our day to preserving the memory of eminent servants of the Lord Jesus. Such a one was Edmund Goerke, of Navesink Hills Meeting of Friends, Highlands, New Jersey. For many years this meeting, of which Edmund was a recorded minister, served as a refuge for Friends in the New York City area who were not welcome in their home meetings, because of their testimony for Lord Jesus Christ, in this anti-Christian age.

I am not certain about the details of Edmund's early life, but he must have been born around 1923, and he graduated from Haverford College in 1944. His family owned a department store in Elizabeth, N.J. and were apparently Friends (at Shrewsbury perhaps?). At some point in his younger days, Edmund was fully convinced of the Truth which he had earlier been acknowledged only nominally. He sought

out Conservative Friends throughout the country and tried to strengthen the remnant which remained, being closely associated for a long time with William Bacon Evans, of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

Edmund has been gone for over a quarter-century now, and his memory is fading, especially among younger Friends. To keep alive his testimony for the Truth, I am collecting materials which I hope can help me in writing a memorial to him. I knew Edmund only in the later years of his life, and would be greatly interested in any information on his earlier years. Could Friends who have recollections of Edmund's service, and personal details of his life, write to me? Joseph D. Conwill, P.O. Box 829, Rangeley, Maine 04970. A photograph of him, also, is very much needed. Thank you.

Joseph Conwill

Joseph lives on a farm in western Maine. He worships alone and sometimes attends Vassalboro Meeting

The Conservative Friend #34
c/o Susan Smith
3876 Hopkins Gap Road
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Meeting for Worship

Swimmers,
We meet at the edge of the silence,
That pool of unfathomable depth,
Awaiting the baptizing Spirit
Who yearns for our total immersion.

Quaking upon the brink,
Watching for the Spirit to move,
Dare we take that plunge,
Trusting to be buoyed up?

Dare we encounter that nakedness,
That baring of the soul
Which is the lot of all
Who enter those clear waters?

Fearing lest we flounder,
Lest we cannot find the words,
We disobey the call to speak,
And find no rest nor ease.

Suddenly, the Instructor tips us in.
We find ourselves afloat.
He will not fail us, nor forsake,
If we but trust in Him.

Ralph Hill

Ralph is an affiliate member of Rockingham Meeting (Ohio YM). Ralph and his wife Daphne live in Bexhill, England, along the English Channel coast.

Ed. note: This is one part of a four-part poem presenting meeting for worship in different ways. The other parts use imagery of connoisseurs, students, and (radio) hams.