



# InterVisitation: Travel Under Religious Concern



Quaker Heritage  
and  
Present Need

by  
Van Ernst



INTERVISITATION:  
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QUAKER HERITAGE AND PRESENT NEED  
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In July of 1980, Visitation Committee sent a letter to the Clerk and Executive Secretary or General Superintendent of every Yearly Meeting in the Section of the Americas. The letter stated the theme of the 1979 August Triennial in Switzerland, "Friends in a Changing Society" and the two overall goals accepted as our challenge for the 1980's. They were: (Hamilton 1976)

1. *To facilitate loving understanding of diversities among Friends while we discover together, with God's help, our common spiritual ground, and*
2. *To facilitate or make possible our considering together our Quaker witness in response to today's issues of Peace and Social Justice.*

One of the proposals for implementing these goals was Travel in the Ministry, which we defined as travel under the weight of a concern rooted in the Spirit. From Visitation Committee's exploration of this proposal we agreed:

1. *To encourage Yearly Meetings to recognize and nurture the gifts of ministry within their meetings and to sponsor travel in the ministry for those so gifted, and*
2. *To select qualified Friends to travel in the ministry on behalf of our Visitation Committee, to plan their itineraries and to give financial assistance as needed.*

We suggested in that letter that there "are many Friends with gifts to share within their own Yearly Meetings, as well as with Yearly Meetings other than their own. Crossing Yearly Meetings was hoped for since Friends World Committee for Consultation embraces all.

When I left in November of 1981—after an eight year term representing Pacific Yearly Meeting, two Yearly Meetings of the twenty-nine had responded. One was Baltimore Yearly Meeting and the other Pacific Yearly Meeting which has a Visitation Program together with Intermountain Yearly Meeting and North Pacific Yearly Meeting.

This response could hardly be called enthusiastic, but since I

was advised when I joined the Society, that Friends are never in a hurry, we should be pleased when Helen Jean Nelson or her successors hear from twenty-seven meetings.

Prior to our trip to Gwatt, a questionnaire prepared by Ron Mattson and myself, was sent to all members of FWCC, Section of the Americas, regarding Travel in the Ministry. We defined Travel in the Ministry as travel under the weight of a concern rooted in the Holy Spirit. This ministry, we said, could take several forms, among them: teaching, exhortation, prophetic ministry, pastoral care, counselling, reconciliation, peacemaking, personal witness to our testimonies, the arts—fruit of the Spirit, good order of Friends—fruit of the Spirit.

Of the many responses I perused before coming here (Here is McNabb, Ill. where this talk was given), all said, "yes" to welcoming visitors—all varieties of us, and "yes" to Friends sharing religious thought and their social witness. Subjects highly endorsed were: "How to help new people know what Quakerism is all about," Quaker History, Personal Witness, Good Order, Old and New Testament, and Peacemaking and Peacekeeping.

Although responses from individuals have been positive both here in the Section of the Americas and abroad at Visitation sessions at Gwatt, why has there been so little response from Yearly Meetings?

*Can we conclude that Yearly Meetings have not shared this concern with their Monthly Meetings—even though their representatives affirmed the program at Triennial Business Sessions.?*

*Or, have Yearly Meetings shared the concern, but find no interest among their members?*

*Or, are those who were so positive in their response to our questionnaire here and at Gwatt but a small group of FWCC representatives and supporters who do not in fact reflect their Meetings' concerns?*

*Or, are our Representatives (FWCC) unable to share with enthusiasm, the merits inherent in a program of travel under religious concern?*

*Do we, after all, lack interest because we lack time, energy, money—a sense of need for Intervisitation on a national scale—at least for the goals set by FWCC?*

*Do Friends feel that FWCC as a consultative body should be*

*responding to needs initiated by Yearly Meetings rather than suggesting a program for them?*

*Should we not take a close look at conferences at which we affirm programs that do not materialize?*

For a Society, which throughout its history, was welded together by its travelling ministers, this seeming lack of interest bears scrutiny. If we compare briefly the climate and soil of the 16th and 17th centuries with our own 20th, the reasons may be obvious.

In England, the years between 1527 and 1625 were known as the Weathercock years—years in which churchmen changed religions like Weathercocks. In 1534, Henry VIII obtained the divorce he wanted by shouting, "I am the head of the Church", loud enough to drown out the voice of the Pope, and shortly after placed his officially approved version of the Bible in parish pews. Ordinary people like you and me began to read and read *into* their Bibles. The Bible became the Book-of-the-Month. During the short reign of Henry's son, Edward VI, the great English prayer book was drawn up. This added another wedge between the authority of priest and people.

After Edward's death, along came Mary Tudor (daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon) who, after disposing of 300 Protestants, brought England's fold back to a joyous Pope and was christened Bloody Mary by supporters of its victims. Elizabeth I, responded in kind by burning Catholics and persecuting Puritans "who were trying to purify the English Protestant Church of its Romish ways."<sup>1</sup> James I, a dour Scotch Presbyterian, and son of Mary Queen of Scots, took the throne in 1603. He forced religious unanimity and endorsed his, the King James Bible. And once again we see a thwarted Pope.

In 1625, when George Fox was a year old, Charles I and his French Catholic wife took the throne and once more there was rejoicing in Rome, but not for long. Charles lost his head in 1651 shortly after Fox began to preach and soon after that England became a Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell with Puritan sects like Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists now in favor.

Is it any wonder that thoughtful, spiritually alive men and women in England began to long for a religion which was not at the mercy of worldly authority and change?

We know that Fox sought in this climate and found, that free of the tyranny of schedules, he took all the time he needed to

wander alone, to dialogue with others, to ponder and probe the words of the Bible until he could perceive their meaning for him.

"My desire after the Word grew stronger and zeal in the pure knowledge of God and of Christ alone, without the help of any man, book or writing. For though I had read the scriptures that spoke of Christ and of God, yet, I knew him not by revelation . . . and then the Lord did gently lead me along, and did let me see his love, which was endless and eternal, and surpasseth all the knowledge that men have in the natural state or can get by history or books, and that love let me see myself as I was without Him . . . All things were new and all creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond that words can utter."<sup>2</sup>

We all know that through this direct personal experience of the love of God, Fox could say, "There is one even Christ Jesus who can speak to thy condition" and could with that relationship charter a course through all the events of his life, with the compassion and Power to be eyes, hands, feet and heart of his living God. Religion and everyday life were one and the same.

That Christ had come to teach his people Himself, Fox and the Friends who followed him, knew in their hearts. They met together to wait upon the Lord, they listened, they heard the teaching, they were empowered to do what the Holy Spirit willed for them.

"And your strength is to stand still that ye may receive refreshings, that ye may know how to wait and how to walk before God, by the Spirit of God within you."<sup>3</sup>

The will for Fox and early Friends was to travel in the ministry to proclaim the Good News. They felt called upon to travel great distances to support one another in their experience and witness to the Power of the Seed of God within them. Separated as they were by miles, surrounded by a hostile church, a repressive government that fostered a *Conventicle Act* forbidding more than four Friends to gather together at one time, suffering imprisonment in conditions that took the lives of many, these men and women came together to affirm their openings of the Lord—among them: an equal code of behavior for rich and poor, plain language to all, hats off for God alone, honesty in trade, temperance in food and drink, justice to hired help, justice in the courts, one standard of Truth, no swearing (taking of oaths), and

an insistence that God did not dwell only in temples made by hands.

From 1652 on, Friends were up and about the British Isles, the Continent and the new colonies. Richard Farnsworth, William and Ann Dewsbury, Francis Howgill, John Audland, the Valiant 60 (actually 54 men and 12 women) were among the earliest to spread the word. In the years 1655, 1656 and 1657 we find Thomas Loe and James Naylor preaching in England, William Edmondson in Ireland, E. Thomas Holmes and his wife Elizabeth Leavens in Wales, William Cator and John Stubbs in Holland, (the former communicating in Latin!) Williams Ames in Scotland and in Germany where he founded a meeting at Griesheim. This meeting continued until 1686 when its members emigrated to Pennsylvania to settle in what later became Germantown—the first organized community to protest slavery in the United States. We find Mary Fisher and Ann Austin imprisoned in the Barbadoes, their books confiscated and burned. We find them a year later in Boston, the first Friends to set foot in the colonies, and the first to be asked to leave. One year later, Mary Fisher set off to enlighten Mohammed IV, the Sultan of Turkey! And in 1657, John Perrot and John Luffe travelled to Rome where Perrot was imprisoned and Luffe hanged.

These early Friends travelling for the Word, saw, along with Fox, the infinite ocean of darkness and infinite ocean of light and love which they knew as the infinite love of God. Like the active mystics before them, they experienced God's love for them and returned it to God in service that transformed them and those who heard them. They became, like others before them in the 12th to 14th centuries, mystics-in-action.

Mysticism or mystical experiences as I use it here, is defined by Richard Wood in "Mysterion" as the "capacity of man, woman or child to be open to an immediate and direct experience of the Absolute, however it may be interpreted. It is as ancient as humanity's search for a personal contact with the ultimate Source of meaning and value in the world. It is found in the least likely as well as the most likely places at all times and among people of every race, creed, color, temperament, age, constitution and state of life"<sup>4</sup> and from William Ernest Hocking, a modern Protestant and contemporary of Rufus Jones, we hear that "all human beings are at bottom mystics." Mysticism is essentially a democratic phenomenon; a mystical experience is open to all.

Only those who felt the pulse of the Living Spirit within them

could have shown such compassion, caring, courage *and joy* , in the face of persecution, personal loss, torture, imprisonment and death.

In these early years, Friends were held together by their leader, a spiritual giant who pointed his followers to their loving, comforting Teacher, Christ, Jesus. In these early years, Friends were held together *and united* by a "kinship of Spirit, kept vital by continual travel from one meeting to another!" They evangelized at home through travel and printing. By 1708 more than 2600 books or pamphlets had been written by 440 different authors! They evangelized abroad, following Fox's advice "to walk cheerfully over the earth answering that of God in everyone." "The power of their vocal ministry sprang from personal religious experience. Their religion was a living union of the mystical and evangelical aspects of Christianity, exemplified both in doctrine and practice, in doctrine because no theological opinion was valid unless vitally related to religious experience; and in practice because outward activity was valid only in so far as it grew out of Inward Spiritual Guidance. Carl Jung points out that when the introvert and the extrovert elements in human character are integrated, the strongest type personality results. When either is developed at the expense of the other, some form of disproportion results possibly from formalism or fanaticism."<sup>5</sup>

Not only did their intervisitation born of and nurtured by the living waters of the Source itself, spread the good news and respond to the personal needs of Friends wherever they were, but it set straight misconceptions and misunderstandings resulting from such individualistic witnesses as those of the women supporters of James Naylor, who went so far as to break up Quaker Meetings convened by others than Naylor himself (1656) and the preaching of John Perrot, who, after being imprisoned in Rome by the Inquisition, returned to England in 1661 where he began to testify against any kind of organization or orderly behavior among Friends. Even pre-arranged times for Meetings and baring the head for prayer were unacceptable to him and his followers.

To scotch any further seeds of revolt and erratic behavior, Fox devised a Good Order of Business in which Friends agreed to subordinate individual guidance to the sense of the group as a whole—at least until 1676 when this good order inspired the travelling preaching of John Story and John Wilkenson, who not only objected to the organization set up by George Fox, but preached against women's meetings, fund raising for travellers

both at home and abroad, the authority of George Fox and the opening of business meetings to any Friends other than appointed representatives.

In the late 1600's, we find travelling and preaching under religious concern for reasons different from the Story-Wilkenson concern, and in another part of the world—Pennsylvania. Here, George Keith, a friend of Barclay, began to attack Friends for "slackness in discipline and unsoundness in theology."<sup>6</sup> He felt the stress on the Light within neglected the historic Christ and denied the possibility of salvation for any, however enlightened, to whom Jesus Christ had not been made known, and urged adoption of a creed.

In both the Wilkenson-Story and Keith controversies, the will of the group prevailed. The former two and their followers separated from the main body of the Society; and Keith was expelled from it in 1695. Both these controversies sparked a travel under religious concern that challenged practices affirmed by the larger group.

And so the period of 1650-1700 was one of joyful discovery—in spite of persecution and internal pain—when Friends preached the Good News of the Inward Light and outward witness to that Light with a missionary zeal that gathered converts at home and abroad. The Inward and the Outward, the Mystical and Evangelical were fused into words and deeds that spoke with power. As for early Quaker theology as such, "It is as difficult to be specific about Quaker theology in this period as it is to be specific about Christian theology in New Testament times."<sup>7</sup>

Next we come to the period 1700 to 1800, known as the period of greater mystical inwardness, a quietist period when God was to work in Friends without the aid of human intellect. Although there was no change in doctrine, there was an important change in behavior. The  *Toleration Act* of 1689 found the Quakers exhausted by the storms they had weathered. The theological battles of the 17th century were over. Most of the first leaders had died and a second generation was not moved with the zeal and fire of first discovery. Many of the most active Friends had migrated to America where they worked at setting up a new society, a new way of life in a new world, a colony in which Truth might reign. They brought into being a Utopia, a clearly defined way of life with a spiritual basis, one which centered around the family, home, meeting and community. A unique Quaker culture was born. Friends were in their Golden Age between 1700 and

1740 with Philadelphia becoming the center of culture in the New World. Quakers held important government positions in Rhode Island, North Carolina and Pennsylvania—until the French and Indian Wars and the American Revolutionary War brought their Peace Testimony to the test. Although many claimed support for these military actions and so remained in office, the majority maintained faithfulness to the Peace Testimony by withdrawing from public office.

As this earlier generation died out, it became clear that some kind of approved rule of discipline was needed for reference. Friends recognized that "every kind of excellence implies some self discipline and most self discipline is founded on wisely and moderately administered external discipline."<sup>8</sup> Advices and Queries were conceived in the Spirit of Love, written at the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, affirmed by the group, and, as they do today, evolved to meet the group's needs as revealed in worshipful meetings. In 1738 the first authoritative collection, "Advices to Friends", was issued by London Yearly Meeting. A year earlier, a need was felt for some definition of membership and in 1737 London Yearly Meeting recorded its members. Ministers, Elders and Overseers gradually came into being and as the ministers did not confine their ministry within their own meetings, but journeyed about the country, they were eventually recorded as ministers by minutes from their own Quarterly or Monthly Meetings. Elders chosen for their wisdom, discretion, and judgment were expected to advise the recorded ministers and to encourage and help younger Friends to enter upon that service.

Intervisitation during this period continued in many forms. We read in "The Story of Quakerism", by Elfrieda Vipont Foulds, that some Friends were so engaged in religious service that they were seldom home for any length of time. Several could say toward the end of their lives that they had visited every Meeting in the Society of Friends! Some journeyed for as many as four years at one time, crossing the Atlantic. Travelling Friends held advertised meetings for addressing the General Public and many non-Friends attended. Around 1738, Quaker Meetings were rapidly increasing in numbers due to the zeal of travelling ministers and the ease with which a Quaker Meeting could be set up.

Great distances were covered by canoe and horseback. In America, Martha Routh, an English school teacher, records 11,000

miles between 1794 and 1796! And Catherine Phillips, 8750 miles on horseback, meeting for worship with families sometimes as many as five to ten times a day! Some travelled under concern to keep the Discipline alive as did John and Samuel Fothergill; Stephen Grellet to preach the gospel according to Fox. Thomas Shillitoe and Thomas Scattergood, reflecting extremes of Quietism, were so open to the stirring of the Holy Spirit they found it impossible to plan a visit ahead of time, never knowing when, where, or if the Lord would fill their hearts with words! John Woolman, a Quaker Saint to many, sensitized Friends' hearts to the evils of slavery on his journeys.

Whether those travelling under religious concern to keep the roots and organization healthy, maintain plain dress, speech, simplicity, or to exclude the worldly—music, dancing, plays, marrying out of the faith, or to deepen awareness of a truly moral evil such as slavery, *travelling Friends were the links which bound the widely scattered society together* giving it coherence and insuring a certain degree of uniformity. But, whatever the reason for travel, Friends were for the most part addressing Friends—a peculiar people. The Quaker message was for Quakers rather than a Universal message for a Universal Church.

Still dealing with what was, we come to what Brinton called the Period of Conflict and Decline, 1800-1900—the conflict between Mysticism and Evangelicalism. Although Friends deemed it essential that the outward be a genuine and sincere expression of the inward, the elders and overseers—“guardians” of the traditions governing plainness in dress, speech and behavior gradually became dominant. Their assumption of a priestly function in effect doomed unity.

Resistance to a definite and strict code of behavior on the one hand and complaints of looseness of conduct and a diluted spiritual life on the other, burst into flame when the elders attempted to control theological opinions of those who spoke in Meeting for Worship. The tension increased from 1800 until it led to the Hicksite-Orthodox Split in 1827-1828. This was a split between those who emphasized the outward scriptures and outward historical events (the Orthodox) and those who emphasized the inward experience of God (the Hicksites). It erupted when the elders of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting forbade Elias Hicks to preach. *Even though he had a travelling minute from his home meeting in Long Island, he and all members of the Hicksite party were disowned! Lack of good order brought about the split.*

Both parties were to blame for the separation.

"The Orthodox Party for its belligerent attack on persons holding what they considered to be un-Christian positions, and for their disowning of all members of the Hicksite Party; the Hicksites for their impatience and unwillingness to wait in that time-honored Quaker manner, for greater unity . . . What had begun as a controversy of Church government—the authority of the Elders, now became a theological controversy between the followers of the historic Christ and the followers of the Inward Christ . . . What both overlooked was that *primitive Quakerism like primitive Christianity was a synthesis of Mystical and Evangelical elements in which each modified the other.*"<sup>9</sup>

Spiritual life was at too low an ebb to create the former synthesis of Inward and Outward. Impatience and intolerance took over. The Holy Spirit that unified was ignored.

Since the Hicksites or liberal Friends had assumed a position which allowed for a wide variety of theological opinions, no further separations occurred among them. "They reduced the authority of Elders and Overseers, so they did not continue to lay the same emphasis on time-honored Quaker traditions."<sup>8</sup> They emphasized democracy and tolerance—to a point. For a century their discipline advised Meetings to deal with persons who denied the Divinity of Christ, a position which they defined as blasphemous!

"If on the one hand, the Separation of 1827 was due to certain universal tendencies within the Society, it can also be attributed to the unusual environment in which it took place. The French Revolution and the Revolutionary War ushered in an era of the individual, a free individual. Processes of social, economic and intellectual change were so disruptive, that they placed a severe strain on all religious organizations, not just the Quakers. Methodist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian and Baptist churches also split during the first half of the 19th Century."<sup>10</sup>

Early 19th Century America was on the eve of an industrial revolution. Transportation was changed dramatically by the building of canals, railroads, and turnpikes. Friends in and around large cities had mutual economic interests which in turn gave them general acceptance among their non-Quaker peers. Their religion had become proper. Orthodox leaders were wealthy, urban-dwelling business men. The precious, guarded

Society of Friends was out in the world, a world which couldn't help but change it.

Since the Orthodox wing adopted a more outwardly structured position, controversy continued between those stressing Inward and those stressing Outward, those stressing Evangelical and those stressing Mystical, those stressing Group Control and those stressing Individual Freedom.

The Wilburite-Gurney separation began in New England in 1845 and spread South and West. Joseph Gurney, an able, attractive member of a distinguished English family, and brother of Elizabeth Fry, travelled in the ministry to American Meetings for three years, 1837-1840. A scholar, educated at Oxford, versed in theology, an advocate of Bible teaching, he preached righteousness through a profession of faith and the Bible as the only source of Truth.

His opponent, John Wilbur (who first spoke out against Gurney while travelling in the ministry in Great Britain in the years 1831-1833) was, according to Brinton, "of the prophetic type, his thought closely in line with the Quakers of the 17th Century. He relied upon the Inward Light as the primary source of Truth, and of the Bible as a secondary source revealing the same Truth."

When Wilbur expressed his disapproval of the doctrines preached by Gurney, New England Yearly Meeting overwhelmingly supported Gurney and *through lack of good order* brought about the disownment of Wilbur by *overriding the support of his own Monthly Meeting*. (Wilbur's adherents appealed to other Yearly Meetings, causing divisions among them also.) Two years later some 500 New England Friends rallied around him to form a new Yearly Meeting. There were now two New England Yearly Meetings, the old one with a membership of 6500 and the new one with a membership of 500.

And so, in the second half of the 19th Century, American Quakerism is divided into three-Hicksites, Gurneyites and Wilburites. Simply stated, the Hicksites were more mystical, liberal and non-creedal in persuasion; the Gurneyites more evangelical, theologically conservative and authoritarian; the Wilburites more a combination or synthesis of the mystical and evangelical. It is interesting to note that doctrinal differences were never clearly defined, since Friends had no formal written creeds. Sad to say, *divisions continued* among Gurneyite and Orthodox Meetings. What happened to the unifying Power of the Holy Spirit? Did Friends listen, hear and obey?

In the late 1870's, Conservative Meetings separated from Iowa, Western and Kansas Yearly Meetings where the pastoral system was accepted with revivalism and music, Wesleyan in nature—practices against stated Quaker principles. And in the space of a short generation, most of the midWest yearly meetings adopted the pastoral system. Not too long after that, the more evangelical group became divided into a modernist wing with a somewhat critical attitude toward the Bible and a fundamentalist wing of Biblical literalists.

And so to recap the period of 1800 to 1900 and early 20th Century, we can say that the pastoral or counseling function of travelling under religious concern was subordinated to (1) Evangelical preaching that emphasized the Bible as the word of God; (2) Repudiation of such Evangelical preaching; (3) Advocacy of Revivalism from Wesleyan roots which was striking the Orthodox Branch; (4) Repudiation of such Revivalism. From Hicks, Gurney, Wilbur, Joel and Hannah Bean, David Updegraff, controversy covered the United States from East to West.

Be that as it may, Quaker men and women still travelled in and out of the country, moved of the Spirit, not only to teach and preach, but to open up new territories in the West, work against slavery by way of writing, preaching and the Underground Railroad, to speak out against war, serve the wounded in hospitals, work for women's rights, prison and labor farms.

Among the many travellers we see Stephen Grellet preaching with fervor across two continents; Elizabeth Comstock (the Elizabeth Fry of America) working tirelessly for prison reform; William Hobson calling Friends to settle in the Willamette Valley which he called the "Garden of the Lord", and founding a school which would later become George Fox College; and Joel and Hannah Bean whose visit to the Sandwich Islands opened up a missionary concern in America—a concern with which Evangelical Missionary Friends later enlarged the Family to include Kenyans, Peruvians, Bolivians, Mexicans, Cubans, Jamaicans, and in most recent years, Taiwanese and Alaskans.

So where are we today? Happily, many of the divided Yearly Meetings are back together again with Pastoral and non-Pastoral Friends working side by side. These reunions owe much to the work of Rufus Jones, mystic and author of "Quaker Histories and Studies in Mystical Religion". As editor of the "Friends Review," he promoted in a prophetic way, the "advance of Christian Truth and the maintenance and honor or spiritual realities rather than

forms and traditions. He chided Friends on their excommunications of piano-owners, or those who married out of the faith. Along with others on the Review Board, he played a leading role in the creation of the Five Years Meeting in 1902."<sup>11</sup> This eventually brought 12 Yearly Meetings together, Meetings which now accept a uniform Discipline and common statement of faith known as The Richmond Declaration. (The Five Year Meeting is now the Friends United Meeting and meets triennially; Oregon and Kansas of the original twelve withdrew in 1926 and 1937 respectively.)

Another bridge that deepened the bonds of spiritual fellowship among all Friends was the formation of AFSC in 1917, with Rufus Jones as its first chairman. Here we see love in action, springing from The Source that said, Love your enemies as well as your friends. Forgive, affirm, give of yourselves. Your brother, your sister is anyone who needs you.

Other bridges to loving relationship are Friends General Conference, Evangelical Friends Alliance, and of course our own Friends World Committee for Consultation, which was set up as a consultative body in 1937 during a World Conference held in Swarthmore, Pa. FWCC is the one member of the family called Quaker who keeps a loving relationship with all its members and gathers them together every three years.

Where are we today on *Travel under Religious Concern*? What is the condition of our soil, today's soil that is to give birth to a concern that must be shared? I would suggest that the soil is choked with weeds and thorns that make it all but impossible for roots to reach to water, stem and leaf toward light. How much of our time, money and energy goes into preparation for Meetings, in travel to Meetings, and in participation at Meetings? How much time do we have to consider and digest the oral and written reports and minutes produced by these Meetings at Monthly Meeting, Quarterly Meeting, and Yearly Meeting levels; from Friends World Committee for Consultation, Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting, Friends Missionary Outreach, American Friends Service Committee; from Quaker United Nations, Right Sharing of World Resources, Pendle Hill, and Quaker Hill to name but a few; on concerns of ecology, disarmament, reconciliation, women's and minorities' rights, education, and all the trouble-spots in the headlines. How much time is left for the care and love of our children, husbands, wives?

Who amidst these pressures, can hear the still small voice? Who can listen long enough to allow its message to speak through

him, her? I suggest it will be one who, along with Tagore, can say, "I dipped the vessel of my heart into the Silence and brought up Love", a supportive love from God that urges me to return that love in service. It will be a love I found centered in the solitude of my heart where I come to know who I am, who I am not, *what is mine to do, what is mine to not do*. When I know what is mine to do, I will *prune the unnecessary*, thin the necessary and disc to bring prayer into the soil of my solitude. I will know what Rufus Jones means when he says "prayer releases Energy as certainly as the closing of an electric circuit does. It heightens all human capacities. It opens invisible doors into new storehouses of spiritual force for a person to live by. It is as effective and operative as surely as the forces of steam and gravitation."<sup>12</sup>

The one with a message that must be heard will have said "yes" to a quote in Douglas Steere's "Leisure and Contemplation": "All the nobler instincts of our race are born in solitude and suckled in silence." He or she will know what Richard Foster means when he says, "If we hope to move beyond the superficialities of our culture, including our religious culture, we must be willing to go down into the recreating silences, into the inner world of contemplation."<sup>13</sup>

Our Society today lacks prophets, evangelicals and mystics-in-action. We lack them, suggests John Yungblut, because we have neglected the mystical dimension of our faith. We have neglected prayer in solitude. In his pamphlet, "Quakerism of the Future", he goes so far as to say that the only Quakerism that can survive will have to be mystical, prophetic and evangelical, and that "the mystical is the most crucial because . . . it provides sustained motivation both for the prophetic involvement and evangelical spirit."<sup>14</sup>

The world around us has changed and will continue to change. The world within us shelters and will continue to shelter the Essence that abides eternal. Our teacher is present to us. We have but to take the time to receive. Only God knows what we may be able to give in return.

While we are waiting for the prophets and evangelicals to abound anew within our Society, I suggest we recognize those among us who can teach—Quaker History, the Psalms, Old Testament Prophets, The Sermon of the Mount, the Parables, the insights and lives of men and women who have talked with God in other traditions and very important, those who can share the root of their witness to the needs for social reform, peace, and com-

munity amidst the lonely, within and outside the family life. There are many Friends gifted in these areas who can speak to gatherings of both pastoral and non-pastoral Friends. If they can articulate their beliefs, for "It is only when we have formulated our faith for ourselves, that we can communicate it to others or know its incisive power in our day to day discipleship."<sup>15</sup>

Both the traveller and the ones visited would have to ask: Are we open to one another's experience of God? Tolerant of another's doctrine or creed or dogma, or some fresh new insight, perhaps like depth psychology that has changed a Friend's belief?

From Richard Ullman's "Tolerance and the Intolerable" we hear:

"It is difficult to reject a system as inherently intolerable unless both its doctrine and practice are studied in detail and with a will not to condemn, but to understand differences as differences . . . If we are to tolerate one another, truly tolerate, we cannot be indifferent to our religious beliefs . . . Tolerance far from being indifferent depends on the fact of difference. It is a way of meeting difference which has been clearly recognized as such as we cannot meet difference unless we are sufficiently interested in it to feel its challenges and to wrestle with it . . . To withhold one's beliefs simply because they might cause offense and call this tolerance is wrong. Like indifference, it is an early stage of intolerance."

Comments of others to be found in Ullman's pamphlet include:

"Indifference is born of the arrogance of one's own truth and is the mildest form of intolerance." Jaspers. "True tolerance is an other-regarding virtue, essentially unselfish in character." Goodhart.

Tolerance then is not indifferent. Tolerance is not vague.

"It is a mean between two extremes. The extremes are intolerance and indifference. On the one hand, you must think and act as I do and on the other, 'I couldn't care less.' It is difficult to say which of these extremes is worse." Aristotle.

To sum up: "It is not the doctrine but the pride of doctrine, not dogma but dogmatism, not substance but the self assertive spirit which separates from whatever quarter."<sup>16, 17</sup>

And so, *if we are to facilitate understanding of our diversities, we will have to share them with other than FWCC members. We will*

affirm the integrity of another's experience with God, the Source of Love, because we see the fruit it bears in the life of our Friends, and we may even discover for ourselves that "any truth we think we have and hold is no longer quite true, because it excludes one part of truth, namely *complete openness for any greater truth beyond our ken*".—§

*I would suggest at this point that it is at the grass roots level both in pastoral and non-pastoral Churches and Meetings that we need a better understanding of the Religious Society of Friends with all its variations.*

*But, I ask:*

- 1. Will pastors want to inform newcomers of our infinite variety? Are they convinced that dialogue across Yearly Meetings is indeed important and, if so, for what reasons? If not, why not? Friends in Churches I've attended comprise a busy, studious, community of men, women, children and young people. They are united in a faith that is specific. What more should they want?*
- 2. Will Clerks in non-pastoral Meetings explain our division to new-comers? The fact that so small a Society has had so many divisions could be cause for pause for an applicant to membership. While some in my branch of the Society suggest that joining Friends is like joining Jello, many others in this group have left Christian Churches because they are specific. From their vantage point, what would be the advantage of dialogue with Friends in pastoral meetings?*

Unless there are Friends who feel there are advantages to fellowship and dialogue among all members of the family with the name *Quaker*, and can articulate these advantages to those in their Meetings and Churches, it isn't likely that we shall ever come near the FWCC overall goals for the 1980's.

It is my hope that enthusiastic FWCC members and representatives particularly will feel prodded from within to inform Pastors and Clerks of activities involving the entire family of Friends and that Pastors and Clerks allow time, however brief, for these reports to be heard, at the Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly Meeting levels. Highlights of Annual Meetings, actions of Executive Committee Meetings, progress reports on who is traveling under concern, the evolution of our Mission and Service gatherings, the work of interns at the Quaker United Nations Organization, concerns of our International and Right Share of

World Resources Committees—these are but a few of the topics that can be shared to bring us closer together as Friends who are aware of the many ways in which we serve God.

Our FWCC reps and members could suggest that our libraries contain copies of "Friends in the Americas", the handbooks published by FWCC, reports from Mission and Service, Quaker United Nations Organization (QUNO), New Call to Peacemaking (NCP) activities, along with copies of a variety of Yearly Meeting Disciplines and Articles of Faith. This would enable those visiting other Yearly Meetings or attending Conferences that include many different Yearly Meetings to be better informed and more understanding of differing interpretations of the message called Quaker. (The Disciplines of Pacific, Northwest and California Yearly Meetings, for example, say little or nothing about the evolution of our variety.)

On the specifics of Travel under Religious Concern, might it not be possible for Visitation Committee to endorse two or three Friends from differing Yearly Meetings within the same geographic areas to present their differences and similarities to a grass roots gathering, such as this one? Might not such a gathering dare to explore Silence—in depth? Could it not bring into that Silence a mutual concern—possibly Pruning, The Guidance of Love, Courage to Be, Healing Relationships, or whatever the group agrees on? Could not that concern be offered to the Presence in the midst of a Silence for possibly two hours in the morning before a simple lunch and three hours in the afternoon before coming together to share with one another from the depths of our being? God only knows what might come of this kind of presence to the Presence. Seekers who never find might find; those who reject any discipline, even one they have affirmed, might experience it in a loving, understanding light; wounds suffered in another Church might heal and be left outside the Quaker door; the unique message of Friends might be affirmed with fervor; the life and teaching of Jesus might take on significant new meaning.

On the specifics of Travel under Religious Concern, might it not be possible for Visitation Committee to encourage a repeat of the Roberts-Seaver visitation. Recently, Arthur Roberts, Professor of Philosophy and Religion at George Fox College in Newberg, Oregon, and Ben Seaver, former Peace Education Secretary of the San Francisco Regional Office of AFSC for sixteen years, agreed to travel together under the sponsorship of FWCC to share with

both pastoral and unprogrammed Meetings; the title of their religious concern was "Peace Making, Peace Keeping—Source of this Testimony and Witness to It." These Friends—Arthur Roberts of Northwest Yearly Meeting and Ben Seaver of Pacific Yearly Meeting were selected to travel together because both are spiritually sensitive Friends who are able to affirm the integrity of another's experience of God and can share their insights and the Source of these insights with both pastoral and non-pastoral Friends.

I have no doubt that faith in this format can invite thought and dialogue among us, deepen understanding and love within the Quaker family and help us as a family to witness God's purposes for us in the community around us. I have no doubt that Friends young, and not-so-young can be found to travel together to share their witness in missionary work, AFSC and QUNO assignments, education and religious counseling, to name but a few.

In closing, dear Friends, may we in our solitude feel the warmth of God's love for us; may we be encouraged to nurture God's gifts to us, however long it may take. May we rejoice as we realize more fully what "Christ has come to teach his people (each one of us) Himself", (now, today, present tense). May we in our solitude, "examine every nook and cranny of our lives with Love as our only guide",<sup>19</sup> and *in* our solitude discover how the Holy Spirit unifies. Then, *from* our solitude, let us go forward to minister to one another in the way unique to us, ever guided by that Love.

## NOTES

1. Jane Yolen, *Friend*, Ch.I, p.14.
2. George Fox, *Journal*, Ed. John L. Nickalls. Ch.I, p.11, Ch.II, p.27.
3. George Fox, *Epistle #43*.
4. Richard Wood, *Mysterion*, Thomas More Newsletter #1, p.5.
5. Howard Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years*, Ch.9, p.181.
6. Elfrida Vipont, *The Story of Quakerism*, Ch.13, p.131.
7. Howard Brinton *Friends for 300 Years*, Ch.9, p.180, Ch.6, Ch.9, p.191.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Robert W. Doherty, *The Hicksite Separation*. Ch.II, p.23.
11. Mary Hoxie Jones, Introduction to *Quakerism, A Spiritual Movement*, p.14.
12. Rufus Jones, *The World Within* from Rufus Jones Speaks to Our Time, Fosdick, Ch.VIII, p.163.
13. Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, Ch.I.
14. John Yungblut, *Quakerism of the Future*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #194, p.3.
15. Hugh L. Doncaster, *God in Every Man*, Swarthmore Lecture, 1963, p.39.
16. John Ulman, *Tolerance and the Intolerable*, Swarthmore Lecture 1961, pp.12, 23, 32, 34; p.49.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Dorothy Hutchinson, "Unless One is Born Anew" Pendle Hill Pamphlet #143, p.8.





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