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# THE CONSERVATIVE FRIEND

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Number 25

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Eighth Month 2006

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## General Gathering of Conservative Friends, 6th Month 16-18, 2006

A Friend from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and I traveled together to Barnesville, Ohio, for the gathering. Friends from all over the United States and abroad joined together for worship, Bible reading in the manner of Conservative Friends, meals and fellowship. Jack Smith gave a presentation in the evening of 7<sup>th</sup> Day entitled "The Lamb's War," preceded by waiting worship and followed by a lively discussion and sharing.

The weather and the setting for the gathering were beautiful, and we had ample time for fellowship and getting to know one another. I had the opportunity to meet Friends with whom I have corresponded, and with Friends whose books and pamphlets I have read. Those who, like me, are in the beginning stages of establishing worship groups benefited from the insights and experiences shared by those

who have done so already, as well as from the encouragement and enthusiasm of other participants in the gathering. Our hosts and organizers for the gathering worked hard to make all of this possible.

We all parted company on 1<sup>st</sup> Day, following worship with Stillwater Monthly Meeting and lunch, reluctantly and with some heaviness of heart. The Lord has seen fit to plant some of us across a wide area, but our bond in Christ Jesus is not weakened by this geographic distance. We rejoice in the work that He has given us, and we are grateful for opportunities such as this gathering to bring us together in one place to worship and fellowship face-to-face. We are joined in Christ Jesus, and called to the work the Lord has given us.

Robert L. Hopper

Robert lives in Evanston, IL. He is starting a worship group.

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Participants came to the General Gathering from various Friends' backgrounds, from other faith backgrounds, and in many cases, from near spiritual isolation. Some of us worship in very small groups in attenders' homes. We draw comfort from Matthew 18:20: *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* We know that our worship – even solitary worship – is real and meaningful. But many of us long for the spiritual nurture of a larger, gathered meeting for worship in the name of Jesus Christ, and the depth of ministry which more often occurs in a larger meeting with more seasoned Friends.

Again and again, Friends arriving for the Gathering reported variations on this reaction: "I feel I have come home, though I have never been in this place before." The opportunity to be a part of the Gathering is for us like cool, clear water after a sojourn in the wasteland. We are refreshed, heartened, and energized to carry on in our small groups or solitary worship, comforted by the knowledge and experience of the Gathering, and the presence – even at a distance – of other Conservative, Christian Friends.

The 2006 Gathering continued this tradition of faith and nurture. The gathered Friends represented a diverse group - ethnically, nationally, educationally, and economically. We were drawn together as Friends, as sisters and brothers in Christ, and the things which make us different one from another ceased to matter, even ceased to exist in the Light of His love and the nurture of our fellowship.

We were glad of the vocal ministry of Ohio Yearly Meeting recorded ministers and others who were led to rise during worship, and we were very glad of the evening presentation on "The Lamb's War" by Jack Smith [see page 4 of this issue] and the spirited and spirit-led discussion which followed. Friends who are isolated or widely scattered have few opportunities during the year for such ministry and teaching, and we treasure the Gathering.

Many thanks to the Wider Fellowship of Conservative Friends Committee of OYM for continuing the tradition of the Gathering, and extending this support and nurture to Friends.

Phil Helms

Phil and his wife Sharon live in central Michigan and worship with Crossroads Worship Group.

## Scheduled Meetings for Worship

(For worship at OYM monthly meetings see [www.ohioyearlymeeting.org](http://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	First Days, 5 PM
Caln	SE Pennsylvania	Mike Kinch	717-284-4999; mikekinch@ mymailstation.com	Weekly/ Seventh or First Day
Crossroads	Michigan: Flint, White Lake, Lansing	Phil Helms	248-360-2074; admin@ michiganquakers.org	Weekly/First Days
Goshen	Scone, Scotland	Paul Thompson	UK # 01738 553582; Book- seeker@scone18.fsnet.co.	1st & 3rd First Days
Gwinnett	Atlanta, Georgia	Scott King	770-315-9478; a_lang@bellsouth.net	Weekly/ First Days
Richland/Ashland Friends	Loudonville, Ohio	Scott Savage	419-368-9419 (leave message)	2nd First Day
Stirling	Stirling, Scotland	Henry Logan	UK # 01259 753508; log1957an@yahoo.co.uk	Every other First Day of the week
	Little Falls, New York	Geoff Gilmore	315-823-0616 geoff@gsgilmore.com	3rd Fifth Day

### Administrative Notes

**This issue** contains a very condensed version of Jack Smith's presentation to the General Gathering entitled "The Lamb's War Today." For a complete version go to <http://www.michiganquakers.org/lamb.htm> or write the editor of *TCF* (see below).

**Financial contributions appreciated.** *The Conservative Friend's* oversight committee agreed last summer to try financing this paper through contri-

butions. Small donations for *TCF*, as well as larger ones, are gratefully accepted. Please make checks to "The Conservative Friend, OYM" and send them to Elvina Krekler. The value of a subscription is \$10/year. Any excess over \$10 that thee contributes in a given year is probably tax deductible, because *TCF* is a publication of Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends.

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WFCC Committee Convener - Nancy Hawkins

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.

## Christian Peacemaking

Unfortunately many Quakers oppose war based on the armament potential of the secular contestants rather than on the testimony of Christ Jesus, who removes the occasion of war within us if we hear and obey His commandments. For example, during the “Cold War” peace groups, including some Friends, noted that the US had greater nuclear power than the Soviet Union. These groups urged our government to reduce, but not eliminate, our weapons of mass destruction, hoping that our adversaries would follow our example. The secular need for arms reduction was emphasized rather than inviting heads of state to wait on the Lord together to discern His tenderness and guidance.

Of course there were individual Christian pacifists who, in their love for and obedience to the Lord Jesus, would neither produce nor use weapons. They proclaimed the sinfulness of physical as well as psychological violence, but their voices did not permeate the peace movement.

Today this secular opposition to war continues, as people compare the evils of our government with the crimes of the former Iraqi leader. Is that what the Christian Quaker peace testimony elucidates? Are we so bereft of spiritual insight that we cannot be motivated by the Lord to refrain from violence because He commands us to love our enemies and forgive our trespassers?

George Fox declared that Friends must live “in the virtue and power that took away the occasion of war,” and his fellow preachers likewise urged peace. The early Friends witnessed to gospel order by living in the peaceable kingdom, even when they were challenged by Satan and the governing powers to renounce their commitment to Christ’s peace. They knew “that the Spirit in Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads unto all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the Kingdom of Christ nor for the Kingdoms of the world.”

Those Friends were peacemakers, ready to turn the other cheek in conflict situations. They followed Christ’s admonition that we love our enemy, even those who crucified Him. Because Fox and other first generation Friends were cognizant of God’s teaching in the scriptures of truth, they realized that the Lord required them to “turn their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.”

Early Friends provided schools for deprived youngsters, teaching them trades that offered opportunities for working on farms and in factories producing goods that were peace oriented rather than armaments of war. This enabled young people to receive Christ’s peace. Can we not learn from this?

Those Friends, in their quest for peace, reminded potential Christians receiving the gospel that Paul in his letter to the Ephesians urged Christ’s followers to “put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Eph 6: 11-12)

Fox often spoke of the need for the power of God to overcome evil within and without. We peacemakers should wait on that same power ourselves. God, not we, has the spiritual love needed for reconciliation.

This does not preclude the possibility of our suffering in our quest for true peace. But Fox and other Quakers knew that eventually Jesus would relieve our pain if we follow Him. Remember that Fox suffered cruel imprisonments but everything became clear in his understanding of the gospel of Christ.

As long as we follow politically inspired leadership in our desire for God’s peace, we will fail. Once we recognize what Fox knew clearly – that we desperately need God’s love in our peace work – then we will engage in prayerful waiting to discern what the Lord requires from us and, when we are obedient, we will be true peacemakers in the Lord.

Arthur Berk

Arthur, an affiliate member of Rockingham MM, lives in NYC.

## The Lamb's War Today

In the Old Testament, the lamb is a symbol for the people of God (Exodus 12:1-13) and a figure prophesying the sacrifice of Jesus. (Gen 22:12-18; Isaiah 53:7) The lamb as a figure for Jesus Christ continues in the New Testament. (John 1:36; Acts 8:32-33; 1 Peter 1:18-19) Revelation refers to the Lamb as Christ in a number of verses and to the struggle of the forces of Satan with the Lamb (6:15-17; 12:10-11).

In referring to "the Lamb's War," Early Friends meant the struggle of Satan against Christ. This war was not an abstract theological concept but a reality that Friends experienced in all areas of their life, as through conviction they abstained from oaths, military service, the payment of tithes, current fashion, and dishonest dealings. The Lamb's War allowed no room for lukewarm commitment. Early Friends understood that Jesus Christ was leading them, providing them spiritual weapons, and sustaining them as they submitted to "the cross of Christ, which is the power of God..." (G. Fox, Epistle 222, 1662)

Conditions changed dramatically after 1689 when, with the passage of the Acts of Toleration. Friends found permanent relief from the great suffering that they had endured. With the softening of the government's effort to stamp out religious dissent came a softening of the first Friends' stridency and radicalism, ushering in an era now called Quietism. The 1689 London YM advised: "Walk wisely and circumspectly toward all men, in the peaceable Spirit of Jesus Christ, giving no offense nor occasions to those in outward government, nor way to any controversies, heats, or distractions of this world, about kingdoms thereof. But pray for the good of all; and submit all to that Divine power and wisdom which rules over the kingdoms of men." (in Walter Williams, *The Rich Heritage of Quakerism*, p.119) The leadership three years later wrote, "Let all study to be quiet and mind their own business, in God's holy fear..." (Williams, p.120) In his *Let Your Words Be Few*, Richard Bauman observes that the new approach was "not war but diplomacy." (p.145) With the onset of Quietism, Friends abandoned the Lamb's War and no longer expected to be instruments for the conversion of the

entire world to Christ's way.

Ohio Yearly Meeting is the last yearly meeting retaining significant aspects of its Quietist heritage. I believe that conservative Friends are now called to be instruments for God's work under dramatically changing conditions. Is the era of toleration slipping away, to be replaced by challenges that Friends have not known for more than three centuries?

Friends have experienced a slow but steady accommodation to the world. However, important components of Christian unprogrammed faith remain in OYM and are attracting people's attention worldwide. We understand that Jesus Christ is the Word of God, sought and found here with us. We know that the Scriptures were inspired by the Word and have been preserved by God for our use for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction. We retain our ways of recognizing and nurturing God's gifts among us. We affirm that all of life is under the care of our Lord. Are we, even now, being called to a new work in God's Kingdom? The impact on us individually and as a people could be enormous.

Our attitudes, like those of much of today's world, are influenced by the 18<sup>th</sup> C Enlightenment's conviction that human reason is the road to all truth. This mindset teaches us to question everything and to disdain faith. It fosters a materialistic secularism that functions in many ways like a religion. It views the scientific process as the means to come to knowledge about all reality. As Wilmer Cooper adds, "Basic distinctions between the holy and the profane, the sacred and the secular - even between good and evil - are ignored, if not erased." (*A Living Faith*, p. 29)

Liberal Quakerism asserts that there is "that of God in everyone." Again quoting Wilmer Cooper, "Insofar as 'that of God in everyone' has theological meaning today, its association with Christ has been largely abandoned, whereas for George Fox this identification was essential. It has also come to mean that God as they understand the deity, has been parceled out among all persons so that everyone has a 'piece of God' within, and that it is

this that gives worth and dignity to human beings...Thus, the net effect is a denigration of God and an exaltation of humanity. Somehow, this belies Fox's overwhelming sense that 'the power of the Lord is over all.' (*A Living Faith*, p. 30)

Secular humanism, with its attendant globalization, dominates western Europe, is gaining in the United States, and expects to permeate the world. Opposed in the US by Evangelical Christians and Roman Catholics, it is being challenged worldwide by an increasingly militant Islam. The gap in this country between rich and poor widens. The media and the entertainment industry - which encourage a materialistic, consuming society - increasingly influence our culture, and even some Christian services become a type of superficial entertainment. The physical environment is being plundered and irretrievably changed, with extinctions of many species and loss of essential ecological services. We expect a variety of food year round, sometimes transporting it 6,000 miles. Our federal debt has grown to unimaginable size and depends for financing on people in other parts of the world.

The sustainability of all this must be questioned. What will happen when we reach the breaking point? How far off is that? Will we be prepared if something more cataclysmic than 9/11 occurs?

We need to prepare for a future that may quickly become the present. *[You] know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But ye brethren are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all children of light and the children of the day; we are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others but let us watch and be sober.* (1Thess 5:1-6) What do we need to do to prepare ourselves? Jesus spoke about preparation in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matt 25: 1-13). Our best preparation is learning faithful trust, attention, and obedience to God through Christ.

We Westerners enjoy and now expect many blessings: lights that turn on with the flick of a

switch, safe water that pours from our faucets, dependable transportation, abundant consumer goods, and personal safety as we walk, travel, work, and worship. There are many more. Do we assume that these blessings will continue? Can they continue? Do we require these blessings in order to feel blessed? Could we feel blessed under adversity?

Early Friends lived under adversity. They were beaten, imprisoned, and even killed. They were hauled before judges and had their goods taken. They were social outcasts, yet they thrived and the Friends' movement grew and flourished. They saw themselves in the midst of the Lamb's War, that epic struggle between the Lamb Jesus Christ and Satan with his forces of evil.

In this struggle there is no place for lukewarmness. In the Lamb's War, Christians are called to follow Christ into battle as citizens of His kingdom, prepared and equipped by Him. Paul described that equipment: *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* (Ephesians 6:13-17)

The Lamb's War seems foolish to the world, for following Christ into that battle requires following the way of the cross. Jesus yielded Himself to His Father's will and suffered, allowing the forces of evil to destroy His life. In His resurrection, which we experience through His continuing presence among us, we find God's ultimate victory over evil. As Christians we must follow Christ - in truth, righteousness, peace, and faith - through whatever outward circumstances He leads us. We must be prepared both to suffer and to know Christ's joy.

Jack Smith

Jack is a member and recorded minister in Rockingham MM. Of Ohio YM. He lives on a farm near Harrisonburg, Virginia.

[This is a condensed version. See **This issue** on page 2.]

## Joseph Hoag's Vision

Some of the Friends who attended Sixth Month's General Gathering inquired about Joseph Hoag's vision. Joseph Hoag was one in a long line of Christians upon whom God saw and still sees fit to bestow deep spiritual gifts. Born in 1762, he died in 1846 aged 85, a recorded minister since the age of 18.

Starksboro Monthly Meeting, who knew him well, mentions the following:

“. . . Perhaps of all the qualifications with which a wise Providence had endowed him, he appeared most conspicuous in the gift of the ministry and the spirit of prophecy. Often was he qualified to enter with great clearness into the state of individuals and meetings. We are able to call to memory certain occasions, when in obedience to his Heavenly Leader, he came amongst us and in the authority of the Gospel disclosed things known to but very few; and diverse are the occurrences, when in the vision of light, he was led to announce the near approach of death in some instances that it would be sudden – no time given on a bed of languishing.”

I have read Hoag's *Journal*, first as a newly-convinced Friend some 30 years ago, and again several times over the last few years. It is one of the finest Friends' books I have read and is just as instructive as John Woolman's journal and others, Joseph being of the next generation of public/traveling ministers of what was, at that time, a united Society of Friends.

Patrick Burns

A Friend for many years, Patrick lives near Mercersburg, PA.

### Joseph Hoag's Vision

In the year 1803, probably in the eighth or ninth month, I was one day alone in the fields, and observed that the sun shone clear, but that a mist eclipsed the brightness of its shining.

As I reflected upon the singularity of the event, my mind was struck into a silence, the most solemn I ever remember to have witnessed, for it seemed as if all my faculties were laid low, and unusually brought into deep silence. I said to myself, “What

can all this mean? I do not recollect ever before to have been sensible of such feelings.”

And I heard a voice from heaven say, “This that thou seest, which dims the brightness of the sun, is a sign of the present and coming times. I took the forefathers of this country from a land of oppression; I planted them here among the people of the forest. I sustained them, and, while they were humble, I blessed them and fed them, and they became a numerous people; but they have now become proud and lifted up, and have forgotten Me, who nourished and protected them in the wilderness, and are running into every abomination and evil practice of which the old countries are guilty, and I have taken quietude from the land, and suffered a dividing spirit to come among them. Lift up thine eyes and behold.”

And I saw them dividing in great heat. This division began in the Church upon points of doctrine. It commenced in the Presbyterian Society, and went through the various religious denominations, and in its progress and close the effect was nearly the same; those who dissented went off with high heads and taunting language, and those who kept to their organised sentiments appeared exercised and sorrowful. And when this dividing spirit entered the Society of Friends, it raged in as high a degree as any I had before discovered, and, as before, those who separated went with lofty looks and taunting, censoring language; those who kept to their ancient principles retired by themselves.

It next appeared in the Lodges of the Freemasons, and it broke out in appearance like a volcano, inasmuch as it set the country in an uproar for a length of time. Then it entered politics throughout the United States, and did not stop until it produced a civil war, and an abundance of human blood was shed in the course of the combat. The Southern States lost their power, and slavery was annihilated from their borders. Then a monarchical power arose, took the government of the States, established a national religion, and made all Societies

(Continued at bottom of next page)

## The Lord at Work

For quite some time, I have struggled with the silent waiting form of worship, and in recent months, I found myself doubting my initial leading a few years back to seek out Friends. I was struggling with this question and experiencing a feeling of disconnection from the Lord. I was worried that I had made a mistake that had distracted me from the Lord's path.

Recently, I attended a large gathering of conservative Friends from various parts of the United States and the world. Going into this gathering, I must confess that I doubted I would find anything nourishing to my spirit and found myself dreading that I would only come away with the burden of somehow announcing to my local worship group that I no longer wished to attend our meeting and that I needed to find some other place to worship, perhaps with Mennonites as I am drawn to the Anabaptist tradition. To complicate things, upon my arrival I was very tired and experiencing some pain, which both proved very damaging to my efforts to center for worship that evening.

But then at some point the next day, the Lord delivered me with an amazing refreshment of the Spirit, and it came as a true shock to me. It was a breath of fresh air, and I found at once a growing sense of confirmation of my initial leading to join Friends and also the sense that I was still where the Lord would have me. It was such a blessing to be surrounded by and in fellowship with so many Friends who know and worship the Lord Jesus! Each suc-

cessive worship meeting that we experienced saw the Lord drawing me in deeper so that come the last gathering together for worship, I had a wonderfully centered experience.

I remember that it began with my mind somewhat more quiet than usual. Distracting thoughts would still invade my quiet, but something different happened this time. As the first such thought came to me, I noticed that it was a sinful self-righteous thought about a person I knew and suddenly, quite clearly I discerned that this attitude was not of the Lord. I asked myself why He would bring this thought to my mind, and immediately, I had the answer that I was to repent of this thought and give it over to Him. At once, I found myself rid of the thought and drawing deeper towards the center of worship. Other thoughts approached, and I sometimes examined them in the Light and gave them over to the Lord as well. At the end of worship, I rejoiced as I felt that I had truly centered myself on the Lord and that He had met with me there with the rest of the Friends and had poured a spirit of joy onto me. This was a true gift from the Lord!

I came away with a sense that I was to return to my meeting and share this gift of renewal as freely as the Lord had given it to me. I am now actually looking forward to meeting for the first time since I can remember.

John Weathers

John is a member of Gwinnett Friends Worship Group in Atlanta, Georgia, and an affiliate member of Rockingham MM.

*(Continued from previous page)*

tributary to support its expenses. I saw them take property from Friends to a large amount. I was amazed at beholding all this, and heard a voice proclaim, "This Power shall not always stand, but with this Power I will chastise my Church until they return to the faithfulness of their forefathers. Thou seest what is coming on thy native land for their iniquity, and the blood of Africa; the remembrance of

which has come up before Me. This Vision is yet for many days."

I had no idea of writing it down for many years, until it became such a burden, that for my own relief I have written it.

From *The Journal of the Life of Joseph Hoag*, Philadelphia: 1909. p. 347-349.

Christ is not divided; the Christ who dwells within, the hope of glory, is the Christ of history. Only as we follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and by faith embrace the Lord Jesus as the Redeemer of the world, and as our personal Saviour, can we hope to perform an adequate part in the social and other service that lies before us; for, after all, the world's misery is the result of the world's sin. War, intemperance, avarice, lust, the chief sources of suffering and poverty, are the outcome of selfishness; and all selfishness is sin. Civilization makes but small progress against its ravages. We need a fresh vision of the cross of Christ. Coming as penitents to the foot of the cross, we find pardon, peace and power...Christ's life is the key to our life, and His service the key to our service. Underlying all differences of view, is the reality of the power of the living Christ, whose love goes deeper than all our experience. By grace may it be given to us humbly and gratefully to confess: 'The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for Me' (Gal 2.20)."

London Yearly Meeting , 1906