

Trust

My Experience of Quakerism's Greatest Gift

Sally Rickerman



Quaker Universalist Fellowship



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definition on the criteria for membership. Since I started listing Quaker-stimulated organizations, I have regularly read the periodicals from both Friends United Meeting and those that are evangelical. However, I have gleaned only four from pastoral and two from evangelical Friends. From this I have concluded that these two branches, and to some extent the branch known as Conservative Friends, lack the basic trust characteristic of the more universalist-leaning Friends General Conference. This universal trust holds that each of us is enabled to seek and live the beliefs that are right for us. In contrast, the masthead of FUM's *Quaker Life* states: "Friends United Meeting commits itself to energize and equip Friends through the power of the Holy Spirit to gather people into fellowship where Jesus Christ is known, loved and obeyed as Teacher and Lord." Evangelical Friends are equally definitive regarding belief criteria for membership. It is not that these branches of Quakerism have not accomplished much good work in the world — they have! But their humanitarian focus has always included actively sharing their religious perspective rather than merely *doing* and *being* as they reached out to rectify societal wrongs.

- {9} A personal letter written to my father following my mother's death.
- {10} When he approached Ohio's Senator Robert Taft on behalf of the bill, he warned Taft to get up his lobbying guard. The senator replied, "When you lobby, David, I lobbies easy!"
- {11} Only four years out of Haverford and the intimacy of Quaker circles, my father had not yet learned that one did not ask a former president for a personal reference. Roosevelt generously replied to the reference seeker, who later gave the note to my father.
- {13} Underhill, in *Quaker Monthly*, p. 67

NOTES

- {1} January 29, 2006. This poem was composed in just two days. It came out of my deep distress following actions at my yearly meeting which seemed to me not to be in accord with the Quaker custom of discerning divine guidance as a community.
- {2} Henry Underhill in *Quaker Monthly*, vol. 3, p. 68 (UK, March, 2008).
- {3} George M. Trevelyan, *English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries*, p. 247 (Longmans Green, UK, 1944)
- {4} Hugh McGregor Ross, *Jesus Untouched by the Church*, p. 3-13 (Ebor Press, UK, 1998). Until the mid-20th century there was no knowledge of the *Gospel of Thomas* other than references to its existence and a few fragments found in 1897. In 1945 it and a trove of other gnostic writings were found in a six foot high clay jar sealed with tar at Nag Hammadi in the Egyptian desert. As scholars examined and translated these important early Christian documents, they identified groups of sayings on a single theme numerically. These groups were named *logia* (singular, *logion*), Greek for “sayings,” especially today referring to sayings attributed to Jesus. In most translations of Thomas the logia are presented in their original numerical order. Ross, on the other hand, first writes several chapters on his interpretation of Thomas. As he begins his translation, he regroups the logia by similar themes, not by numerical order but by subject content, and he writes an additional introductory essay on each specific theme.
- {5} Ross, *Jesus Untouched by the Church*, p. 72-73
- {6} Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*, p. 142 (Vantage Books, 2004)
- {7} Sally Shaywitz, M.D., *Overcoming Dyslexia*, p. 82-84 (Alfred A. Knopf, 2003)
- {8} The basic difference between the element of trust to be found in the different branches of Quakerism is that only “liberal” Quakers enforce no standard of *an empowering spirit* or its

Editor’s Introduction

In February, 2008, Sally (Hinshaw) Rickerman observed her 87th birthday. The occasion was marked by a celebration at Arch Street Meetinghouse in Philadelphia, where she was described as a model, an energizer, and a prophet for younger Friends. In May of the same year she will complete a quarter century of active service to the Quaker Universalist Fellowship. It is fitting that the latter anniversary should be marked by her sharing of the reflections in this pamphlet.

Like many other members of the QUF, Sally believes that the very essence of Quakerism rests in accepting the possibility that every human being may have a direct and personal relationship to God, the Tao, or the spiritual universe — whatever name one chooses -- independent of belief, creed, clergy, or organization. Paradoxically, this extreme of individual seeking finds expression in a community of support, love, and mutual discernment. The resulting tensions between individualism and universalism, freedom and community, are mediated, Sally finds, by trust. When corporate trust fails, the Society of Friends falls apart; when it is present, we are each and all empowered. The various steps by which she has arrived at this insight are set forth in the pages that follow.

Rhoda R. Gilman

Trust: My Experience of Quakerism's Greatest Gift

By Sally Rickerman

Love Needs No Partner:
But Doth Increase With One

Love needs no partner
For it can dance alone,
Or even worship from afar or near
Until the seas run dry.

The mother's full flush adoration
Of her newly birthed defenseless babe,
Not able, yet, to respond in kind,
Or the admired, emulated teacher
Who does not singly return
The love, devotion, adoring of the young
To each and every child.
All these lovings are, indeed, a wonder.
But still they lack the breadth and depth
Of a healthy and exquisite life.
For these loves tread only upon a single path
Where what's divine within the *other*
Is not at first enriched, and then enhanced,
By travelling this journey with another.

We, a total of merely 59,000 unprogramed Friends on this planet, have been able through this exceptional understanding of the message of Jesus, to have a long-lasting effect on the course of world events. Think then, what could it be if there were more of us? In the years that I have been doing outreach, I have met and heard stories from many who spent years searching for a meaningful religion for themselves, finally discovered its name was Quakerism, and then spent many more years learning as well both where it was to be found and what it is.

It is not that we are perfect. We are not. It is not that we have one foot in heaven. We do not. It is not that we are uniquely able to inspire. The world can number many saints from other religious backgrounds. It is that we are the only religious organization which implements in its faith and practice a universal policy of trust. For once again, I proclaim that when a person is trusted, that person is liberated from self-centeredness. And when people are liberated from the doubts, anxieties, and needs centering on the self, they are enabled to act, freed to go out and *do!*

We cannot, must not, and I hope shall not, *not* share our precious gold of *trust!*

Our secret gold mine of our ability to trust and become worthy of being trusted would disappear in a flash if it did not rest on this solid rock of spiritual understanding and active, continuing discernment.

When one is trusted one is able to be present in the moment. It follows, then, that the soul of the other can be heard breathing, the heart beating in oneness with us. When our awareness of others is so heightened, we are one. We are one with them in their angst, desires, pleasures, hopes and fears, and when we are one, we have broken down the artificial barriers of separateness and have become universal. Thus it matters not how the others express their understanding of eternal truths as long as these essential attributes are lived joyfully, caringly and thoroughly.

This soul-enriching trust is, to me, the great gift of Quakerism. It is a gift that accepts and respects where each person is or needs to be without reservations based on differing religious, ethnic, and cultural factors. It permits each of us to accept Christocentric or atheist or Catholic Quakers, gay or straight Quakers, Wiccans or even fundamentalists as we struggle to hear and respect the divine in each. This frees us to discover our *true self*, which Jesus propounds in the *Gospel of Thomas*. This trust, with a little gentle guidance, helps its recipient to respond in kind to the life-giving gift of love and trust. Yet it remains *hidden*. I have not heard any other Friend comment on this miraculous and enriching aspect of Quakerism which to me is the fundamental strength of our tradition.

This understanding of the solid rock on which we build our “house of God” and the world-changing implications from its practice is why I spend 99 per cent of my time on outreach. I want to inform others about our unique religious perspective. I want to reach the many who are Quakers but do not know our name, what we believe, or where to find us. Through outreach I am enabled to throw a pebble of knowledge into the waters of the earth and see resulting ripples reach faraway shores.

While, on the other hand,
Trust needs a partner,
Needs to travel the two-way road,
Where spiritually the best in each can thrive
As both dance, then whirl those multiplying steps,
Each step of which, at first reflects,
So suddenly, re-dancing those gorgeous gaudy whirls,
Sometimes performed in unison, sometimes apart,
But in the end rejoining one another,
Becoming then, a single lovely movement
Of real partnership and love. {1}

As I have entered into my eighth and ninth decades, I have had thrilling, encouraging and helpful insights about the gift of potentially world-changing understandings and empowerment of “liberal” Quakerism. They have given me new hope not only for Quakerism, but also for humanity as a whole. These same thoughts have, apparently, been new to many F/friends with whom I have talked. Therefore I feel impelled to share them with an even wider audience.

My understanding of how I discovered this “hidden” secret of Quakerism has been gradual and began without my being aware of it or aware that I was searching for its source. In part it came from the evidence I saw of Quakerism’s positive effect on the 20th-century world through the large number of organizations for human betterment that Friends have played a role in establishing. Another source has been my increasing awareness of Quaker influence in upholding free government and its methods. I learned this through my work with an exhibit on “Quakers in the Political Process.” Spurred by these perceptions, I began to search more consciously for the source of Friends’ extraordinary empowerment. This essay describes my journey.

Part of the way has led me through reading more widely in books by scholars who trace the human spiritual journey in many

religions. Three of these formative authors have been Karen Armstrong, Elaine Pagels and Hugh McGregor Ross in his translation of the *Gospel of Thomas* and commentary accompanying it. The other factor in my recent insights has been my gaining new pleasure, understanding and acceptance of the peculiarities of my distinctively different-from-the-norm mind and the gifts it has given me. Thus I have been enabled to use them not only for my own benefit but also for others. The result of this new understanding is that I am no longer as bothered by being “out of step” with the world as I had been while I was maturing. I have also come to realize that one of my most important supports has been in being trusted by a far higher percentage of folk in Quaker circles than in the wider world. Perhaps the most succinct expression of the kernel of truth that Friends have found and act upon from the teachings of Jesus is by Henry Underhill, writing in the latest issue of the British publication, *Quaker Monthly*:

Each step [on the spiritual path] requires the letting go of the boundaries of the smaller identity as it transcends into something bigger. This transcendence of the ego to the greater Whole is at the heart of all spiritual disciplines. . . . As Jesus said: “When two or three are gathered together in my name, There am I.” There are no restrictions or rules in Togetherness, only the prompting of unhindered love. {2}

These words summarize my discoveries. The Quaker world would fall apart without the continued practical application of this insight, for we have no forms as “crutches” to further the seeking of the greater Whole.

For the last 350 and more years we who have been permitted to share in Quakerism have been given the opportunity to be a part of a religion which has both discerned a precious gift and endeavored to share that gift with others in the world. At our very best we base our religious beliefs and actions on the trust of one another — friend and foe alike — for trust begets:

necessary to produce healthy souls as is a well shaped note to produce beautiful music. Recently a gentle, caring and efficient physical therapist told me that the “Servant Leadership” propounded by Robert Greenleaf, a Friend and the distinguished chief executive of American Telephone and Telegraph Company, had been a disaster in his clinic. This seemed difficult to understand until I realized his conclusion was based on the fact that he had followed its formula without its spirit. He began the process, he told me, by listening to his staff and gave them the opportunity to express their views, *but* he did not include their input nor change his already formed conclusion — which he *knew* was the correct one! *Ergo*: no trust of others, no sought-for result which was acceptable to any of the staff who had been asked to participate in this ersatz process of Servant Leadership.

I return again to Harry Underhill, who identifies Quaker empowerment’s arising as we seek the Other together. His words seem to breathe active life into my thesis of our ability to trust. He says:

So the question arises: “Is my identity to be an independent individual or am I a part of something greater?” And the answer is both, at the same time. We know this as Quakers when we come to Meeting for Worship as individuals who “center down” and then discover the experience of a “gathered meeting.” Each step in awareness of being part of a larger whole involves a change in “identity,” in our sense of who we are. It follows that identity is always expanding as we grow more mature, as the boundaries of the smaller unit of being or *holon* expand into each larger being. Each step requires the letting go of the boundaries of the smaller identity as it transcends into something bigger. This transcendence of the ego to the greater Whole is at the heart of all spiritual disciplines. [*Holon* is a whole in itself, made up of smaller wholes and yet a part of a larger whole.] {12}

instituting, but treating them the way I had been treated — with trust. I did not set out to teach them a “lesson,” but simply passed on the gift of trust that I had been given over and over again.

Out of this approach, which respected both their capacity and integrity, I received an unlooked-for and unexpected reward. This blessing came to me shortly before Christmas in the darkest days of the winter. Horror upon horror! I overslept! When I awoke, I immediately called the school to warn of my late arrival. This school had a teaching principal (7th and 8th grade), no office, no secretary and an eight-party phone line. The principal, a crippled soul, had been removed from one school by its parents and would be removed from this school after I left. Her *modus operandi* seemed to be doubting all and maintaining control by screaming at everybody — teachers and students alike. Her room and mine were directly across the hall from each other, with their doors at opposite ends of the facing rooms. She was called to the phone by a student and came down the long hall to answer it. I could tell from her confusion as she spoke that she was not aware that I was not in my classroom at that very moment!

My “normal” twelve-year-old students, when they realized that I was not in the building and they were on their own, had proceeded as if I were there. They went through the morning exercises of ordering lunch, collecting the money, saying the Lord’s Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance and reading the Bible. When I walked in breathlessly, they were working from notes in my plan book on the first lesson of the day. Had I planned, had I expected, had I wished for any of this, I could not have wished for anything better.

The Firming Up of My Thesis

I *am* convinced that I am correct in this understanding that *trust* is the basis for the growth and sustaining of healthy minds and souls. Trust enables all to grow into whole adults who have a psyche well rounded — not misshapen. This component is as

- acceptance of both others and self (warts and all);
- love of others;
- love of self;
- full forgiveness of all — self and others;
- being open to continuing revelation;
- using the form of queries to foster creative action, rather than replying with a “yes” or “no”;
- understanding that Quaker testimonies are for the guidance of living one’s beliefs rather than using fixed formulas and static beliefs.

The result of this trust is that the trusted one is able to relax, be off guard, go for the free fall and let the solution to the challenge or its consequent action come as it will.

When considering how and where trust has appeared in human history, two examples of individual trust from Judeo-Christian scripture quickly come to mind. One is in the story of Job when he had lost all — children, land and wealth — and his neighbors taunted him about his trust in *his* God. Whereupon Job said to them, “No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you” (Job 12:2). His answer exuded his trust in his God and in himself through that relationship. The other obvious one is from Luke 2: 48-49, when Jesus, the boy, was lost to his parents when they were in Jerusalem for the Passover. The verses say:

And when they saw him they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, “Son why hast thou dealt with us thus? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.” And he said unto them, “How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”

Here, too, Jesus had total trust in himself, a sense of appreciation of himself and his mission. In the 20th century alone, the world has seen three amazing examples of widespread use of trust as a relationship with others and one in which its use accomplished results far greater than the usual wars. Those

actions were: Gandhi's nonviolent revolution which freed India from British control; Martin Luther King Jr.'s civil rights movement; and Nelson Mandela's influence on South Africa and its subsequent Truth and Reconciliation program.

Quakers and Trust

Obviously trust is not a new concept in either personal relationships or those with the divine, but its collective practice seems to have been discovered, perhaps for the first time, by the Quakers in the 17th century. This trust of another person has been promoted by those who preach, teach, and practice religion since the very first shaman began to wield power. Friends, did, however, go further and weave it into the very heart and soul of their movement from its outset. The earliest teachings of George Fox and other early Quakers emphasized that each adherent could possess both continuing revelation and a direct, vibrant relationship with the divine. Since there were no pre-fixed "right" answers, this group trust by and of its participants could be tested by the considered response given to the thoughtful *queries* posed either to the new gatherings or to individuals in such groups.

This method of utilizing queries, not creedal statements delivered through preordained answers, showed unheard-of trust in human experience. For those in authority to allow "uneducated," "unknowledgeable" and "inexperienced" individuals to be their own authority was, at the very least, heretical! Therefore it would appear to me that trust was not only important to early Quakers but was also the very foundation on which Quakerism rested and — after many bumps in its early road — still rests.

As this experiment in trust, not consciously sought, began among Quakers, it was on shaky legs. It was a new method of examining one's faith. There were, indeed, times when queries were used in an authoritarian manner. But the concept and purpose of these queries for each individual or meeting was to

Unfortunately I have often observed the cutting-down-to-size approach to child-rearing. It seems to be done for two reasons: first, that the parents were reared that way, and second, that despite the damage done to their own psyches the parents think that they are "instructing" the child, not helping to "grow" a whole and productive being.

In all of my relationships with the young in my care, temporary, semi-permanent or more-or-less permanent, my aim has been to give them the opportunity to become dissatisfied with their own nonproductive behavior — not by lecturing them, but by giving them the chance to find out that their method is not working to their advantage. One year I was teaching a 6th-grade class in a semi-rural school set in a tiny community. Most of the pupils came from individual homes self-built by blue-collar workers. These kids were normal or average, full of themselves, with lots of interests and lovely bubbling personalities which, of course, made it difficult for them to sit, pay attention and do imposed-upon-them schoolwork.

At the beginning of the year, when it was time for the lessons of the day I would stand ready to begin, with all my material open on my desk and waiting to start. At first, I might have to wait as long as ten minutes for the attention of all. The first time this happened, that particular lesson was to start at 10:00, but it was 10:10 before they all appeared to be attentive and had settled themselves down. Thus there were only fifty minutes left for class work before recess was scheduled to begin at 11:00. Suddenly, at that time, they became more fully engaged and many hands were raised. The kids informed me it was time for recess! Whereupon, I looked wide-eyed and innocent and said, "Oh, I thought we had recess from 10:00 to 10:10! Didn't we?"

Gradually, over time, those kids, who were used to being ordered about without their own input or choice by the adults in their lives, began to understand that they now were trusted and being given the opportunity to "police" themselves. On my part, it was not a deliberate premeditated policy that I was

influence with the press secured the free publicity that enabled the organization to raise desperately needed funds. On one occasion Theodore Roosevelt wrote as a reference:

I know David Hinshaw well; I have trusted him in confidential and important work, and he has always met every expectation of mine; I testify most heartily to his experience, character and integrity, and to his loyalty.
{11}

An Example out of My Own Experience

Humans have learned that, in the case of vegetation, if a productive crop is desired there are certain steps that the grower needs to take to receive the optimum results for the time, money and labor expended. These are:

- carefully spade the needed area;
- remove the sod, rocks and branches;
- break up the solid clods of earth;
- rake the area so that it becomes smooth and pliable;
- carefully make a trough for the to-be-planted seeds;
- carefully and gently cover those seeds;
- carefully, gently water the newly planted seeds so they don't wash out of their furrow;
- carefully and by hand remove weeds from among the newly sprouting seedlings;
- carefully and gently hoe the burgeoning plants, and in awaiting the harvest, do not take the hoe or a corn knife and brutally slash and injure the stalk.

All of the above actions involve the loving and constant care needed to produce the best plant and crop. My question then is, why does not our society see that the raising of our young demands as much care as the raising of crops if we wish to have good results? I feel that, for the most part, I have been blessed with that loving, trusting care and have thus been enabled to contribute to my religious society and to society at large.

self-examine through thoughtful questions which evoked thoughtful responses to the ways and the commonly held beliefs that were being honored. This system of collective trust aided Friends in bringing their beliefs and actions together. It established, in the petri dish of Quaker agar, the nurture of trusting relationships which when cultivated began to permeate the lives and spirits of those early seekers.

This collective trust among the 17th-century Friends was a new concept in the ways of the world. One of the results was that it was the Friends who introduced single-pricing into Western Europe in place of haggling. Before the rise of Quakerism, it had been customary for sellers to set an unacceptably high price on their goods and services to ensure that the income they received after bargaining would end up being fair. There were many Quaker shopkeepers in the general population, for Friends at that time, being nonconformists, were excluded from universities, parliament, and a number of trades and professions. Quaker merchants would set a fair price and post it so that all buyers could know it before they bought. Also Quakers did not try to short-change or short-supply any buyer. A busy mother, cooking her dinner and suddenly needing sugar, could with confidence send her six-year-old to the village grocery store and be certain that she would get that full pound for her tuppence, even though the mother was not there to watch the grocer weigh it up.

We, as Friends, also have a collective and organizational heritage of functioning through trust in which we are able to take pride. George Trevelyan, the British religious historian of the 19th century, said of us:

The finer essence of George Fox's queer teaching, common to the excited revivalists who were his first disciples, and to the "quiet" Friends of latter times, was surely this — that Christian qualities matter much more than Christian dogmas. No church or sect has ever made this their living rule before. To maintain this Christian quality in the world of business and domestic life, and to

maintain it without pretension and hypocrisy, was a great achievement of an extraordinary people. England may well be proud to have produced and perpetuated them. {3}

These are very flattering words to have said about us, and words which only describe us in our very, very best moments. But — and an extremely large *but* at that — the basis of our being able to live up to these accolades, even rarely, is that we identify and “officially” emphasize trusting one another to live spirit-led lives and take spirit-led actions. We do not and have not fulfilled our hopes much of the time, but we have held the goal in front of us, as the motto of Kansas says: “Ad astra per aspera” — “To the stars through difficulties.” But most important of all is that when a Friend has a *leading*, we use *clearness* committees to test it and that a Friend’s clearness is based on *the holding* of the concern for taking the action — not on the action itself.

There is a tale from the life of John Woolman which is probably apocryphal but is often told among Friends. It illustrates my concept of this unusual Quaker understanding of *trust*. According to the story, Woolman was meeting with a clearness committee concerning whether he should travel in the ministry for the purpose of speaking to Friends against both the institution of slavery and their own practice of keeping slaves. One slaveholding Friend said: “John, I feel that my relationship with our black brothers and sisters is suitable for their welfare. Still, I will help to pay for thy travel. I will see that thy wife and daughter are looked after in thy absence and that thy business continues to prosper.” Woolman replied that he could not be easy in accepting money from anyone who was not in unity with him regarding slavery, but that he respected the trust that the Friend showed in being willing to support his (Woolman’s) *leading*.

In talking about this perspective with Friends over time, I have not yet found another who looked at this kind of collective trust as being our unique contribution to the world. In my opinion,

Finally, the list of Quakers who have exhibited the trust that has been so important to my growth as a human being must include my own parents. They trusted me to grow, to use my talents and to become that which I could be. I was a difficult and challenging child, and my maturation was a long time coming, but I (almost) always felt supported, loved, accepted, and trusted to live up to my potential.

Both of my parents were brilliant, but they never made me feel less capable than they were. Frances Perkins, the first woman to serve in a U.S. cabinet position, wrote of my mother:

She was one of the finest women I ever knew. Her stimulating mind, her absolutely reliable and loyal friendship, her great insight into other people’s minds and personalities, her unfailing emphasis on the best rather than the worst in them — all of them made her a truly humane person. {9}

My father, a poor Kansas farm boy, left school at eighth grade to help on the family farm. Later he earned his way through high school at Westtown and through college at Haverford. Returning to Kansas, he took a job with the *Emporia Gazette* and became a lifelong friend of its famous editor, William Allen White. Recommended by White, he served as Kansas manager for Theodore Roosevelt’s Bull Moose campaign in 1912. This opportunity opened the door to continuing involvement with the country’s national leaders, but although he had easy access to the White House and the floors of Congress, and national media outlets were open to him throughout his professional life, he never abused these privileges. His colleagues recognized his integrity and the fact that he never used his access for self-promotion but only for the well-being of others.

One example of his success at this was a bill to forgive interest on the World War I debt owed by Finland, so that the Finns could use the money to create scholarships and fellowships for study in the United States. Almost single-handedly he achieved the writing and passage of the measure. {10} Another instance was saving a neighborhood house on New York’s East Side. His

the timing of the night watchman's rounds, then had one of their attractive young women appear to rush out of the editor's office at the "perfect" moment, screaming, with her blouse torn off. Naturally, the editor was accused of improper behavior and expelled from the college. After that incident, Bayard left off having any association with the members of that cell or any other communists. As he said to me, "No cause is worth the destruction of a human being."

Another Friend who lived a life consistent with his beliefs was Wilmer Young, whom I knew both as a teacher and family friend. He and his wife Mildred were part of the original wave of relief workers that the newly formed AFSC sent to Europe after World War I. When service there was over, they moved to Westtown School, but during the depression years the family left that comfortable spot to live and work beside African-American subsistence farmers in the Mississippi Delta in another program sponsored by the AFSC.

I knew "Uncle Caesar" — our family nickname for Wilmer — literally from my birth. He visited my mother while she was in the hospital at the time I was born in Kansas City, Missouri. He and my father had a lifelong friendship that started at Westtown and continued with their rooming together all four years at Haverford College. Wilmer was a gifted teacher who recognized the potential of his students and cultivated it while, simultaneously, not discouraging them when their performance was not what it might have been. I benefited from that trust. He graded me on my understanding of mathematical relationships, while assessing me realistically on my inaccurate calculations, which unfortunately relied on the memorization that dyslexics find difficult. On one grade card, he put down an "A" for recitation and a "D" for calculations with the remark, "tsk, tsk." I can still visualize that report card with a warm feeling of appreciation that I was trusted to do that which I could do well, and was mildly and lovingly reminded of my deficiency when I didn't come up to snuff in an era when dyslexia was not known by even the best educators.

it is our empowerment. It is the reason that I am so strongly led to proclaim to Friends that we have no right to hide our light under a bushel. We do not have leave *not* to share this concept with others who are seeking a religious home such as ours. Thus, I have longed to present it on more than a one-to-one basis, for I feel that Friends need to reach an understanding that this is our hidden secret — hidden from ourselves as well as others. It is time to let this out of the closet!

In my mind, there are direct consequences of this method of discernment. An important product is the discernment's willingness to "let go" and be empty of self — to become a blank slate. This action eliminates preconceived solutions and enables one to tune into the songs of the universe freely and without obstruction. Our clearness committees can come to unity, in love, concerning the validity or, even, invalidity of our leading with that "given." Thus, we are liberated and empowered to like ourselves and feel trusted. We are released from the constriction of self-centeredness and can go out and *do*, or even, if need be, re-examine our concern. On a personal note, I am frequently asked by F/friends what results I expect to attain by working on a specific project. My reply always is, "I don't know. I only know that I am given to do this task and that I must go forward."

Trust and the Real Self

To trust and be trusted is to have no goals — no end results that *must* be achieved. One simply knows that one is the architect and builder of an action and has the patience to see what direction that impetus will take without having or demanding specific expectations and definitions for its end result. As Friends, we have discovered that the very foundation of religion is the manner in which we practice our faith through trust.

Thus, when our clearness committees and meetings have discerned that our leading is valid, our only responsibility is to *do* that which we are led to do by the *Light*, with the aid of our

Real Self. The concept of the *Real Self* that I call upon here is drawn from its use in the *Gospel of Thomas* as translated by Hugh McGregor Ross. {4} This early Christian document, consists of sayings attributed to Jesus. In his chapter entitled “Quenching Amhak_ra,” Ross begins with quoting one of these sayings:

Jesus said:

Become your real self as amhak_ra passes away

As Ross explains,

Amhak_ra is the name given here to a concept which is very strange to us The inner meaning of this group of sayings, which is probably the most difficult in this Teaching, can only be grasped by an awareness of a concept that is virtually absent from western thought, even though it is central to several eastern spiritual teachings.

No European languages have a word for the concept, so it will be best to borrow the eastern word — amhak_ra. Its meaning is the dominance of the body, of its mind and its emotions, and the individual soul. In consequence an ordinary person mistakenly identifies the self as composing the body, mind and spirit. This dominance veils the Real Self that lies at a higher level, even though only latent or hidden within each person. The main spiritual work is to quench amhak_ra, to quench this dominance. Then the Real Self becomes spontaneously and automatically known.

Surprisingly, however, ordinary speech touches on this, but without its significance being noted. We say “my body,” “my mind and thoughts,” “my feelings and emotions.” These phrases come entirely naturally to us; we know them to be valid without anyone having to convince us. The point is: who is it can say “my”? It is the hidden real self.

Ross goes on to quote a verse by the medieval Sufi poet, Jelaluddin Rumi:

an expensive, one-time use of this most formal of male formal wear, Cadbury went to the material aids department of AFSC, found the appropriate style and size, had it cleaned, wore it, and returned it to its previous home at AFSC when he came back from Oslo.

Clarence Pickett also had an inner being that was liberated. He felt free at my wedding to say as part of his vocal ministry that with regard to the two families being united he knew nothing about the “Rickermen,” but he did know that the Hinshaws had a great deal to contribute, if you could stand them! He trusted me to understand and appreciate his loving remarks with the inferred message that although I might have many gifts, “Watch out and be cautious not to steamroll others!”

Clarence was even willing to take on the federal government and gently, but unwaveringly, insist that Bayard Rustin be permitted to get a passport, although Rustin had been associated with a communist cell at City College of New York in the 1930s. Rustin, another outstanding example of a person of integrity, was brought up by his Quaker grandmother, who nurtured him with acceptance, love and trust. He showed the depth of his center, when he, who was mainly responsible for the success of the famous Civil Rights March of 1963, deliberately stayed in the background because he did not wish public reaction to his homosexuality to cloud or destroy the demonstration’s effectiveness.

As I remember the story Bayard told me of his relationship with the cell at CCNY, he said that he had been attracted by the communist approach to the equality of the races, but despite much urging he never joined the party. At that time the cell had taken over every office in all student organizations on the campus with the exception of the student newspaper. The editor, a solitary, friendless soul, could not be “persuaded” to resign, so the group hatched a scheme for compromising his reputation. He was known to work alone, late at night, on the upper floor of one of the college’s tall buildings. The members of the cell determined

We were out, but our help reported to us when we came home that this crazy man had come galloping up our drive, shouting. Rufus, I am sure, was not concerned about how he appeared to others. His concern would have been giving pleasure to his young friends.

Jones's brother-in-law, Henry Joel Cadbury, was another of those "greats" that I was privileged to grow up knowing. He was fired from Haverford College during World War I for writing a letter to a Philadelphia paper about pacifism. Later in his life he became Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard and one of the nine translators of the 1930s edition of the American Revised Standard Bible. He was always a direct-speaking and a no-nonsense person.

At the time he was translating the Bible, the *New York Herald Tribune* did a feature story on his comments regarding how Jonah arrived in the whale. Henry Cadbury told the writer that scribes who wished to make sure their readers understood the story of Jonah's being in the "belly of a fish" wrote marginal notes explaining that this expression was Babylonian slang for being depressed. After the Jews were released from their Babylonian captivity, Cadbury said, subsequent generations forgot the "foreign" slang. Many scribes, however, continued to feel that it was incumbent upon them to "explain" the story as they copied the account. One scribe would explain and the next would incorporate that marginal note into the text, until, behold — Jonah arrived in the whale's belly! The point of this tale is that Cadbury was willing to "buck" conventional wisdom when he knew his field. He was assured enough, through his trust in his scholarship, to weather the ensuing flack from the fundamentalist public.

His grounded center led to a practicality and lack of self-consciousness that was demonstrated when he went to Oslo to accept the Nobel Peace Prize for all Quakers as the chair of the American Friends Service Committee. Knowing that he would need a tail coat to appear in, and unwilling to spend money on

Awhile, as wont may be,
self did I claim;
true Self I did not see,
but heard its name,
I, being self-confined,
Self did not merit,
till leaving self behind
did Self inherit. {5}

One of the many gifts given to me at birth was being able to almost "wallow" in the moment where I found myself being, with little regard for either the experiences of the past or awareness as to the consequences for the future. One of the important benefits of "being in the moment" is that most of the time I feel myself to be fully engaged with the people and mutual activities that occupy me in the "now." A willingness on my part to stand, unclad, with the situation or my companions has in the past led to some unfortuitous situations. As both age and experience, joys and disappointments, have fallen on my shoulders, I have learned a modicum of discretion. But I have been blessed with the gift of keeping the innocence of the uninitiated, of dropping my protective armor and ego before others and, almost, reveling in being "present in the moment." This is an exhilarating experience, for one is enabled to be freed to discover one's true self! Thus when I read Ross's explanation and Rumi's poem, I fully resonate with the message, for they succinctly describe the *universal* path to the divine within all.

As I understand this concept, I can see how it ties in with my larger thesis of trust, for when we are liberated to find our Real Self, we trust and are trustworthy. We are then enabled to *do* what the Real Self suggests, *do* that which may be moral and difficult, *do* that which is needed — not the mainstream or the popular. We are freed to march to a different drummer, to march out-of-step with the majority. It is not that other religionists do not take these actions; many do. It is not that other religions do

not preach these values; most of the world's religions do. But it does seem as if many of the people who live on this planet have some emotional scars, crippling and insecurity that blocks their ability to become whole and to trust either themselves or others. So it follows that to fulfill their sense of security, they need to have the crutches and props of ritual, creed, priesthood or hierarchy.

An example of this kind of insecurity which had an enormous effect upon the world can be seen in the action of Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, in 173 CE. Unable to trust others to find their way to God through the words of Jesus, he imposed on Christians his own interpretation of that message, declaring all other versions and interpretations illegitimate and moving to have a whole body of writings and recollections destroyed. Thus, in the words of Elaine Pagels, "His instructions to congregations about which revelations to destroy and which ones to keep . . . would become the basis for the formation of the New Testament and what he calls its 'canon of truth.'" {6}

Consequently, most of the documents and practices of the Gnostics were lost to the world because Irenaeus deemed them to be "heretical" (from a Greek root implying questioning — not accepting absolute answers) and could not trust others to weigh them. His own insecurity and that of so many others eventually forced on the Roman Catholic Church the adoption of orthodoxy, the one "straight true path" which in the judgment of Irenaeus was right thinking.

Trusting Different Ways of Processing Thought

True security in a person produces centeredness, relaxation, and the ability to roll with unexpected happenings. A vivid example of this is the experienced fireman sliding down the brass pole with only the little finger of one hand holding onto the pole as he puts a boot on with the other hand. The novice fireman, on the contrary, grips the pole with both hands, sure that he will crash if he doesn't hang on with all his might.

through the medium of that adequately watered and nurtured trust, as beautiful plants do in optimal growing conditions.

Examples of Friends Empowered by Wholeness

Among the Friends who had a decisive role in my formative years were Rufus and Elizabeth Jones, Henry Joel and Elizabeth Cadbury, Clarence and Lilly Pickett, and Wilmer and Mildred Young. All of them were firm friends of my parents and all were souls who were enabled to be true to their ideals and did not permit themselves to be beholden to the whims of society (and that includes Quaker society as well as that of the world). They themselves had been liberated, because they, too, were trusted in their circles to nurture others and then go out and *do!* They were freed to go out into their world and improve the fate of those "others," whoever they were and wherever they were found.

Rufus Jones was a professor of the small Quaker Haverford College located on this side of the big pond. But when he died, he was so well known in his field that *The Observer*, a top paper in London, ran an obituary of two and one half columns in length devoted to his life, scholarship, and accomplishments. He was a giant in the field of religious understanding while still being a truly humble man, one who had no concern about his image.

In the summer when I was ten years old, my parents rented one of the cabins Rufus owned on China Lake in Maine. The various children in the community gathered almost nightly to be entertained by his marvelous story-telling ability. One night his story ended with the punch line of, "Jubilee, Jubilah." I have long forgotten the tale, but the memory of its follow-up is still with me. That fall, when Rufus had come over to Westtown School to lead Sunday evening vespers, he arrived a little early. So he walked — this long, lanky former farmer lad with the gait of one who had followed the plow across the rocky fields of Maine — to our house and strode into our driveway shouting "Jubilee; Jubilah!" I am sure it was for the benefit of my brother and me.

of the other seven co-founders. One of them was Polly Cuthbertson, whom I knew, and knew to be a Quaker.

In addition to the organizations which have Quaker connections — names that start alphabetically with the Aids Quilt Project, founded by California Friend Cleve Jones, and end with Youth Hostels, founded by British Friend, Jack Catchpool — Friends include 19 Nobel Laureates and one alternate Nobelist selected by the Templeton Foundation. The source from which most of these exceptionally empowered individuals arise is unprogrammed Quakerism, which numbers only 59,000 members in the entire world today! {8} A list that I have not yet systematically explored is that of Pulitzer Prize winners. Two names come to mind immediately — Signe Wilkinson, the first woman political cartoonist to be so honored, and Henry Taylor, who received a Pulitzer for his poetry — and I am sure that there are many, many more.

As this disproportionate amount of Quaker involvement and achievement became apparent to me, the question arose, “What has enabled all of these quiet and mostly unassuming individuals to have such an enormous effect on society?” In pondering the conundrum, I have looked at the particular and familiar first — namely the truly great souls that I have had the good fortune to know in person. Those Friends, who offered me trust either directly or as role models, have helped me see how important trust is to the well-being of growing souls and spirits. The gift of trust made all the difference to my peers and myself in freeing us to become productive people. Without it we could not have lived up to our potential and might instead have become shrunken, wizened beings, looking for vengeance or justice from others in our immediate circles.

Thus, I wish to share a few of my experiences with those Friends who trusted and liked themselves so that they were able, in turn, to trust others who then grew. These Friends did not need to demand, threaten or require “good behavior” from others but were able to “hang loose” and enable others, too, to grow

Humans, as well as most of the animal kingdom, process experience in many different ways. Our minds range from those that proceed by way of systematic, step-by-step reasoning to those that move forward by sudden insight and flashes of understanding such as Archimedes expressed with his “aha!” in the bathtub. Some of the difference may relate to right or left brain dominance, for it has been fairly well established by modern studies of the brain’s functions that the right side utilizes images and analogy and feels the emotional overtones of incidents, while the left side draws upon logic and linear thinking.

We who call ourselves Quakers have the example of George Fox and many other early Friends who were open to extraordinary flashes of spiritual insight. Not content with a formalized, ritualistic interpretation of the individual’s relationship with the divine, they realized that *trust* instigates and nurtures the human potential for divine involvement, increasing it exponentially. They essentially said, “Let’s get to the real experimental relationship with the divine and, once there, reach out and greet our empowerment.”

This concept took away the need for the props of ritual, priesthood, and creed that many individuals rely on as they live their lives. Persons rich or poor, bright or dull, male or female, young or old, or any of the rainbows of skin, hair or eyes, when so liberated, become empowered with a sense of security and trust in their own insights. They are then freed to accept inspiration and go out into the world to do that which they see is needed. Their vision of the world and others in it ceases to be limited by a few factors — foremost of which are their own self-doubt and need for reassurance.

I have seen the effect of this trust in my own life, for I was born with dyslexia, a condition which prevents the potential reader from being able to interpret the squiggles on a page meaningfully. Sally Shaywitz, M.D., co-Director of the Yale Center for the Study of Learning and Attention, has discovered through MRI images that there is a sound reception area in the

brain which does not light up and, thus, the spoken word, since it is not heard, is not connected to the written one. In compensating for this, the dyslexic mind tends to see things in terms of a big picture and/or patterns. {7}

Using patterns and seeing wide horizons with sudden insight is both a symptom and a gift for dyslexics. Fortunately I was born into a family with excellent minds and one which loved me unconditionally. Because I have been trusted by both my family and the religious community of which I am a part, I am able to consider this condition a gift — not a disability. Although it produces a few inconveniences, such as not being able to memorize, the flip side of the coin is that I am enabled to understand my world in the context of patterns. It has been given to me to see big sweeping pictures of those situations I meet in life and it follows that I possess insights that occasionally startle others. My mind seems to work from the particular experience to a general hypothesis which can be seen then as a pattern for the new situation being examined. This has created the basis for my thesis that *trust* is Quakerism's great gift to ourselves and to the world.

Exceptional Empowerment

In 1988, when I asked a New Zealand Friend how many Quakers there were in his country, he replied, "only 700." My next question was, "What is the population of your country?" And I was told 3,000,000. Then I remarked that the Quaker proportion was .02 per cent of the total population — the same percentage that was to be found in the United States if all branches of Quakerism were lumped together.

Since that incident in New Zealand, I have reflected often on the remarkable influence that this relatively small group wields. In 1930 my father wrote an article for the *Century Quarterly* recounting the surprising number of Quakers who were involved actively in the state and federal government at that

time or in its immediate past. More recently I have been gleaning information from Quaker institutions' alumni magazines and Quaker periodicals to discover outstanding creators of organizations for the betterment of humankind. I do not go back the full 350 years of our history to find the Quaker influence on society throughout our first 250 years but only include groups started after the 20th century began.

In my original listing I include neither "official" groups, such as the American Friends Service Committee or Friends Committee on National Legislation, nor those of only local interest. Two such local interest examples of concern might be a food co-op I helped start in Newark, Delaware almost 40 years ago, which still thrives, and the White Clay Watershed Association, which helped prevent the powerful DuPont Company from building a dam that had the potential of producing some 300 acres of mud flats. If I included such local groups my list would be many, many times longer, but in this case the WCWA is now included, since it has been named both as the first, and so far the only, entire watershed in the nation to be *Wild and Scenic!*

As of now I have collected some 302 organizations of greater general impact such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace and OXFAM and have listed, with each organization's name the names of the Quakers involved in its founding. Most of these groups were organizations in which Quakers were pivotally involved, not always as the sole founder, but as a co-founder. An example is the case of the American Civil Liberties Union, where the name most known to the public is that of non-Friend Roger Baldwin, although Quaker Peter Olmsted played a key role. Another such case is that of the Friends in Canada Yearly Meeting, who although never recognized by the public press, co-founded Doctors without Borders. I have even gleaned information from newspaper obituaries. At the death of Maggie Kuhn, who has always been identified as *the* founder of Grey Panthers, I saw listed the names