

With respect to this third item, I had to be aware of continuing relationships among Taiwan Friends, Thomas Taylor and Yoon-Gu Lee, and to be sensitive to Thomas' and Yoon-Gu's observations about the readiness of Taiwan Friends, and of the American missionaries there, to commit themselves to hosting an FWCC gathering of fairly ambitious dimensions.

In the report which follows, I will err on the side of being too detailed rather than too sketchy. I hope this will not be a burden on those who will see the material. But the reason for the detail is that I found the experience to be a very intense one and full of surprises. It was a very good experience, and I came away with a very profound respect for the variety of Quaker experience which was opened up to me there. But I also find that I have not as yet emerged, upon reflection about this experience, with any clear grasp of exactly what the further involvement of Evangelical Friends in FWCC would entail, and indeed what we might offer to them which would make participation seem worthwhile from their point of view, without at once putting off Friends who practice other expressions of the Quaker faith. I know very deeply in my heart that only good things could come from liberal Friends and Evangelical Friends overcoming their relative ignorance of each other, and that FWCC is uniquely situated to bring about these good things, but seeing the way forward will require the insights of a wider circle of FWCCers than those of us who were actually present in Guatemala City. Hence the detail.

Overall View of the Conference

Approximately 250 Friends convened from the countries of Bolivia, Burundi, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Ireland, Jamaica, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, the Navaho Nation, Peru, the Philippines, Taiwan, Tanzania, Uganda, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Approximately half of this group were from the United States. Major delegations of Americans came from the Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region, Mid-America Yearly Meeting, Northwest Yearly Meeting, Rocky Mountain Yearly Meeting, and Southwest Yearly Meeting. Also represented were Alaska Yearly Meeting, Indiana Yearly Meeting, Iowa Yearly Meeting, Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, Ohio Yearly Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Wilmington Yearly Meeting, and New York Yearly Meeting. The official attendance list is attached to this report.

Except for Sunday, November 8th, when a special excursion was organized to the Mission Center at Chiquimula, Guatemala, the Conference activities all took place in the Hotel Fiesta in Guatemala City, and the schedule followed the same pattern each day.

Each conferee was assigned to a small prayer group of about fifteen people, and these met at the beginning of the day for about an hour. A morning workshop period of about an hour and a half followed, and the morning concluded with a ninety minute worship service. The afternoon began after a midday break at 2:30 p.m. with another ninety minute workshop period, and after an early supper there was an evening worship service.

Thus, with the prayer groups, the ninety minute morning worship service, and the evening worship service which often lasted somewhat over two hours, the time devoted

to worship was considerably greater than is common at FWCC gatherings. As best as I could observe, participants very devotedly participated in the prayer groups and the worship services. I was aware of some people—not very many—organizing alternative activities for themselves (shopping, sight-seeing) during workshop times.

Six workshops were offered each day, and each was repeated in both the morning and the afternoon workshop periods. Thus, each attender could personally sample about one-third of the workshop offerings. This seemed to be a perfectly fine way to organize things, although I was frequently frustrated in wanting to be at more of the workshops than it was possible to attend.

As was mentioned, the overall theme of the Conference was "Jesus Christ is Lord." Each day had a sub-theme, which provided both a focus for the varied workshops and for the evening worship. The theme on the first day was "The Message of Christ," on the second day "The Messenger of Christ," next "Methods of Sharing the Faith," then "Quaker Distinctives" (this was the day on which the FWCC workshop was scheduled), and on the last day the theme was "The Mission of Christ." A copy of the daily schedule is attached to this report.

The Fiesta Hotel was an eminently comfortable, even luxurious, international class hotel in a part of Guatemala City called the Zona Viva, which seems to be the center of newer, high prestige development. It is about a ten minute drive from the International Airport. Conference rooms were located on the third floor, and the plenary session meeting room was on the top floor, the 18th floor. The plenary session room had glass walls around which was a terrace full of tropical plants, and beyond which one was afforded magnificent views of the chain of volcanos which surrounded the high valley in which the sprawling capital city is situated. The room I shared with Jonathan Vogel of New England Yearly Meeting was spacious and comfortably furnished, with a television set and a private marbleized bathroom. All the meals were served buffet-style in an elegant dining room, and each day the buffet resembled what one would expect to see at a wedding or bar mitzvah.

These accommodations would undoubtedly have produced complaints from people regarding them as too lavish had they been used for a Section of the Americas Annual Meeting. I did not sense any unease about them among the people at this Conference. There were some complaints on the first or second day because the restaurant service was not fast enough. But on the whole, there was satisfaction with the arrangements, and one of the organizers of the Conference commented to me that they were glad to have found a facility "where everyone could feel comfortable," implying that it was not too fancy for people from economically developing contexts nor too primitive for people from the "First World."

Prayer Group

As mentioned above, each day began with a prayer group. Like most of the Conference attenders, I had arrived fairly late in the evening on Wednesday, November 4th, and so the 8:00 a.m. gathering of Prayer Group #14 was my first encounter with the

Evangelical mode of doing things.

I found myself in a group of about fifteen Friends. Our group's leader was Larry Mendenhall, a member of Southwest Yearly Meeting who is the pastor of East Whittier Friends Church in California. The group itself represented a good cross-section of the Conference. There were Friends from Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, Taiwan, Kenya, and the United States.

Interestingly, one member of this group was Richard Hall of Ohio Yearly Meeting Conservative. I did not expect to meet a Wilburite Friend in this particular setting. I knew Richard Hall from the time I was asked to be a speaker at the 1986 annual session of North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative, at which he and his wife were visiting Friends from Ohio Yearly Meeting Conservative. The Conservative Yearly Meetings represent an ingathering of those Friends who clung to the old ways while their Quaker neighbors were starting to program their worship and hire ministers. These Conservative Friends have maintained certain traditions more steadfastly than did other unprogrammed Friends from the more liberal Yearly Meetings. Richard Hall and his wife wear a modified form of plain dress, and when Richard offers vocal ministry in silent worship he chants his message rather than speaking it, which is Conservative Friends' way of exercising anything that is merely personal and creaturely from what is offered. In any event, seeing Richard in my prayer group on the first morning of the Conference on Quaker evangelism at least made me feel that I was not necessarily the most "wayout" person present.

After very brief introductions, our prayer group leader promised us that we would have plenty of time to pray, but first called our attention to the passage from Matthew where it is promised that if we seek we shall find and if we knock the door shall be opened to us. (Matthew 7:7-11). He offered some reflections on the implications of this passage for our life in prayer and then invited others to do the same.

I have always had some difficulty with the concept of intercessory prayer—with the idea that one seeks to change God's mind so that she does what the pray-er wants, as if to turn the deity into a kind of cosmic bellhop. True silence is the practice of a state which is without personal desire, which is satisfied with whatever God provides and allows to happen. To "be still and know that I am God" is to find a stillness which is total surrender, which is devoid of any stubborn grasping or mental agitation. It is to let go and let be, surrendering the will entirely to God.

When it came my turn to speak I thought it best simply to observe that one of the purposes of prayer is not to change God but to change ourselves so that we want what God wants. Although this remark was slightly aslant of the general tenor of the conversation, it seemed to be received as an acceptable contribution to the dialogue.

After further comments it then became time to pray. I bowed my head. I assumed that our very able facilitator would offer a well-phrased prayer to which we would all listen and at the end of which we would all conclude in unison with "Amen". But as my head was bowed I became aware of many different voices, and as I peeked out from

under the hand on which I had rested my forehead I saw that indeed everyone was praying aloud at once. One member of the group had gotten off his chair, had knelt on the floor, and had buried his face in his palms on the chair seat. Another member of the group was kneading and unkneading his fists while his upturned head reflected dramatic facial expressions, as if he were in the midst of a most earnest conversation. Still another member of the group had tears streaming down his face! Richard Hall from Ohio Yearly Meeting Conservative was chanting. All this was occurring simultaneously in perhaps four or five different languages and dialects!

Ordinarily, when I am in a room with someone who weeps I weep also, quite automatically. But somehow, on this occasion, the cacophany of simultaneous praying with such intense emotions which had no clear antecedents in earlier conversation or in the situation itself just seemed befuddling to me. This being the first hour of a six day Conference, I found myself wondering what the rest would be like.

Our praying thus continued for fifteen or twenty minutes. At one time or another different people's voices would seem to wax or wane and the group's attention seemed to focus on one more dominant expression of prayer, but without losing the quality of many voices praying. I continued to contribute my silent listening.

When the time was up, we stopped the praying by shaking hands and drying our eyes where necessary. It seemed generally agreed that our group had gotten off to an excellent start and all looked forward to our reconvening the first thing the following morning.

As we gathered the following morning it became clear that our leader, Larry Mendenhall, had been detained somewhere. We waited for five or ten minutes past the appointed hour in silence. Presently someone observed that we probably should not delay any longer and said "Dan, why don't you get us started?" There was immediate general assent to this idea. I was caught off-balance at this suggestion, to say the least, especially since I seemed to have contributed so little the previous day, but it definitely seemed not the right occasion for buck-passing. The only scriptural passage I could think of on the spur of the moment which had to do with prayer was the story of Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane, so I quickly rummaged through the Gospels until I found it, and we read it together.

In offering a commentary I focussed on the fact that the disciples kept falling asleep and Jesus kept awakening them and exhorting them to watchfulness until at last, when they slept for the third time, Jesus observes that the Son of Man has been betrayed unto sinners. I suggested that the meaning of this passage was not merely that the disciples were so insensitive to what was going on around them that they actually fell physically asleep during a moment of high drama and great danger, but rather that the passage meant to indicate to us that Jesus is summoning us to a higher level of awareness and consciousness, to a new way of seeing life. This higher awareness is one from which we are always in danger of slipping, even if we identify ourselves as followers of Him. Others in the group tended to see the passage as the scriptural basis for the exhortation that we "pray unceasingly," certainly a reasonable enough interpretation. I did have

great unease about my ability to facilitate the transition from discussion to prayer and was much relieved when Larry, the appointed facilitator, arrived. I promptly turned the floor over to him and we proceeded in a fashion similar to that of the previous day.

From day to day as this group met, the amount of praying as opposed to discussion tended to vary. At Larry's suggestion we began a process, in addition to reflecting on Scripture, of each taking a turn to describe our own ministry and to ask for prayer intentions related to our ministry. This had the dual purpose of providing a specific focus for our prayers while allowing us to get to know each other.

Everyone in the group did indeed have a "ministry," for even if they were not pastors or workers in Quaker agencies they nevertheless were religious activists. It was a most useful exercise to hear about people's work and to get a flavor of the social and physical environment in which they carried it out.

All who spoke concluded their account of their ministry with a report, as well, on their family life. Usually these self-introductions concluded with some comment such as "I have been married for twenty-two years and have two daughters and a son, each of whom, praise God, loves and serves the Lord." Often the ministry of the spouse and the children would be described. As this process continued, as a childless divorced person, I began to feel quite awkward and apprehensive, but by the time the fourth or fifth day rolled around and it was my turn for self-introduction, I felt close enough to the group to feel it was right simply to be frank about this. Besides, when one person who gave his introduction earlier than I did neglected to mention his family, he was quickly asked about it, and gave the familiar-sounding account. I probably could not have avoided the issue in any case.

At any rate, when my time came, I spoke of my work in the American Friends Service Committee as my ministry, mentioning our efforts with Haitian refugees, unemployed youth, and prisoners in the New York Metropolitan area; our concern for public education on issues of world hunger; and our struggle to promote nuclear disarmament and the disarmament of conventional forces as well. I asked for three prayer intentions: I said the scale of our work was very meager compared to the need, and I asked members of the group to pray for its growth; I asked them to pray that I and my colleagues would never be overcome with bitterness or despair because of the increases in poverty, violence and weaponry which we confront every day; and finally, I asked the group to pray that my colleagues and I retain a lively sense that in our work we are seeking to give expression to the larger harmonies of the Creation, and that we be saved from the delusion that everything depended upon us, that we were going to create peace and justice through our own merely human effort. To conclude my self-introduction, I said that I noticed that everyone had given some account of his or her family life. I told the group that my wife and I had separated about eight years ago after sixteen years of marriage. I told them that Betty-Jean Seeger was active in the same Yearly Meeting that I am, and that readers of Friends Journal would frequently see her very insightful articles there. I said that even though our marriage had ended, my former wife and I had fortunately never lost the respect and sense of caring we felt for each other. I concluded by commenting that all this did not mean that it was a good thing for a husband and wife to

leave each other, but I was sharing it only to indicate that the Lord is capable of bringing healing even in the most difficult of circumstances.

I was asked if either Betty Jean or I had been remarried. When I said no there was a great sigh of relief and there was triggered an outpouring of prayer that we be reunited in marriage once again. Haitian refugees, world hunger, nuclear disarmament and unemployed youth were completely forgotten, as were my three prayer intentions.

I found myself feeling unoffended at this; I did not think there was anything particularly insensitive in this response on the part of the prayer group. It was simply their genuine and unpremeditated reaction to what impacted upon them most vividly. They were clearly very family-oriented in their general outlook and this was something they could sincerely relate to. Nor did I feel that any members of the group became alienated from me because of this disclosure. I was warmly embraced by several at the rise of the prayer session.

Nevertheless, I did find myself wondering if I had done the right thing. On the one hand, it was better for me to have offered this information forthrightly rather than in response to a question. On the other hand, it was peculiar to find that a facet of one's experience which one regards as somewhat peripheral is suddenly, in the minds of a group of people, taken as one's whole identity. I felt as if I were being slotted in as a walking personal tragedy. The experience did seem to emphasize for me the importance, when communicating, of adjusting for your audience's capacity to hear; it also exhibited some of the difficulties of having the complexity of one's personal identity subsumed under a convenient and simple label.

At one of the last sessions of the prayer group, near the end of the Conference, it came to be Richard Hall's turn to discuss his ministry and to ask for a prayer intention. He spoke of how his Yearly Meeting, Ohio Yearly Meeting Conservative, was becoming weaker and weaker; of how his Monthly Meeting now had only about five members left. He spoke of a vision he had had of finding himself in a forest, the trees of which were completely denuded of all their leaves, and of hearing a voice from somewhere saying "It is too late." He asked the group's prayers for the renewal and revival of his Yearly Meeting, and as he made this request, he was overcome with uncontrollable sobbing, and he covered his face with the palms of his hands and bent over in his chair so that his forehead was near his knees, his shoulders shaking convulsively.

It was a deeply poignant moment. The week had been filled with many stories of optimism and triumph, of the planting of churches, of the growth of the Religious Society of Friends, of decisions made for Christ and church memberships gained as a result of door-knocking campaigns and home bible study crusades, and here was a Friend who had clung faithfully and lovingly to a way of life in spite of the more successful alternative which programmed and evangelical Quakerism represented. And I knew that to the extent that the Conservative Yearly Meetings were indeed being revived and renewed, it was most often with urban or university-oriented unprogrammed Friends or seekers who probably had little leading to nourish the particular charism of the Wilburite tradition.

Richard Hall's being overcome with these emotions unleashed a fervor of praying such as I have rarely seen. I found myself very deeply touched by the oddity of all these Bolivian, Peruvian and Guatemalan Friends, the progeny of the Evangelical Quaker movement, fervently praying in Spanish, Aymara and Chinese for the restoration of a Wilburite Yearly Meeting without, perhaps, knowing exactly what it was they were praying for. Nevertheless, I knew in my heart without a doubt that if all these Friends had indeed understood the whole story, their prayers would not have been one bit less heartfelt and intense. So sweetly paradoxical did all this seem to me at that moment that I too felt the tears streaming down my face and, forgetting for the moment my reservations about intercessory prayer, added my petitions to those of the group for the restoration of Ohio Yearly Meeting Conservative.

Overall Impressions

Generalizations about people are obviously always very crude. Moreover, one can scarcely pose as an expert about people after one week's exposure to them if they had previously been utter strangers. Nevertheless, in seeking to understand how we might better relate to people with whom we are newly acquainted, it is necessary to at least try to identify some salient characteristics which can guide our responses. I will try to share a few of these overall impressions here since this is a confidential memorandum, the limited readership of which can understand the need, the difficulty, and the limitations of this sort of summary assessment.

1. I was impressed by what I came to regard as a high level of seriousness and competence in the group. Outlines had been developed for all the workshops and were circulated in advance. When one went to a workshop, one invariably found the presentation to be well-organized, with a beginning, a middle and an end. Presenters were always articulate, and they knew how to make their points in effective, down-to-earth ways. Abstract thought was always quickly made vivid with telling concrete examples. Humor was readily and easily employed. I realize that I was probably experiencing the "cream of the crop" of the Evangelical Quaker movement, but there seemed to me to be much less fumbling and vagueness than I am used to experiencing in Friends circles.

The Conference itself was well-planned and well-organized, and the schedule successfully adhered to. In part this may have been more possible than it is in Friends gatherings to which I am accustomed because this assembly was not in any way considered to be a deliberative body which needed to make decisions. As such, the unexpected was minimized and there were no delays due to the need to labor through disagreements.

2. I was impressed, even amazed, at people's knowledge of Scripture. Everyone seemed to know exactly where to look for the passages they wanted. They seemed to stay very close to Scripture, in the sense that almost every activity they undertook, or every strategy or decision that was defined, was supported by a Biblical passage.

From what I heard at the Conference in Guatemala City, I did not emerge with any particularly striking impression about how the Bible was interpreted. Issues of literalness or inerrancy did not come up in the conversation. My own impression always was that the way passages were applied was reasonable. I was simply somewhat surprised at their ability to find relevant passages for seemingly every conceivable situation, and at the thoroughness of their approach to Scripture.

3. The Friends gathered seemed to have a cheerful and positive attitude. There was an acknowledgement of the existence of sin and evil, and there were some very sharp words about various political and social conditions, but on the whole there was an absence of what I would loosely term "Calvinist gloom" or "liberal despair" over human nature and the state of the world.

4. I felt the presence of a genuine Christian spirit. People seemed really to care about each other and to be sensitive to each other's needs. There was an absence of the sort of ego trips and self-indulgence which can sometimes overtake certain unprogrammed Friends. Everyone was very normal, unidiosyncratic, and cheerful. This did not seem false or forced. Perhaps this would be bland and uninteresting to a liberal Friend as a perpetual diet; for one week it was refreshing.

5. There seemed to be a spirit of success, as one might expect from people sincerely convinced that they were doing the Lord's work. I never did get a very clear grasp of what this success consisted in concrete terms, for they only occasionally sought to reduce this to numbers, and certainly avoided the sort of scorekeeping which might tempt one to boast. Nevertheless, to the extent that numbers filtered into the conversation, I was left with the impression of a scale quite unlike anything unprogrammed Friends are used to thinking about. Individual church congregations would have thousands of members. Yearly Meetings would have scores upon scores of meetings or churches within them. I remember hearing that in Guatemala (population: 8.5 million) there are 131 churches and about 150 as yet unincorporated worship groups associated with the Religious Society of Friends. But more impressive to me than numbers was the positive, expectant attitude I sensed among these Friends.

6. Evangelical Friends are not monolithic. They seemed not to dwell upon or quarrel about their differences, but there certainly were some of these. The decision of some Quaker pastors to become chaplains in the Air Force produced a deep spirit of concern among other Friends. The relative degree of emphasis on Quaker "distinctives," and the strategies and timing for introducing these distinctives to different constituencies, varied. The amount of emphasis on what might be called the social Gospel varied. A certain familiar Quaker organizational orneriness seemed to be present. Yearly Meetings seemed to tend to go their own way, even to the extent of unknowingly

evangelizing in each other's backyard, in spite of efforts to bring them under umbrella groups like the Evangelical Friends Mission.

As mentioned, attitudes toward "Quaker Distinctives" are an example of the some of this lack of uniformity. For example, one young pastor said that he never spends a lot of time talking about Quakerism. He gives much more energy to speaking about Jesus. He believes in a Jesus-centered Church. "In our Church, our single focal point is Jesus and his power to change life. Looking backward at our distinctives is not the chief way to meet the challenges of the future." He wants to give his flock a very long time to adjust before he starts talking about Quakerism. According to him, spending much energy making sure that the movement is pure and the tradition is clear is a way of living in the past. Nevertheless, this approach was quickly challenged by others who felt that Quaker distinctives were very important and ought to be kept upfront. The peace testimony in a time of war and of the danger of war, and the testimony of simplicity in a time of increasing materialism, were cited specifically in rebuttal.

At the Conference, I had lunch with one Friend who had left conventional pastoral work and was now a chaplain in the Air Force. He was stationed at NORAD, which I gather is some sort of underground facility in the Rocky Mountains from which World War Three will be masterminded. This seemed an astonishing ministry for a Friend, but the person in question had a fairly well-developed rationale for what he was doing, and claimed that he himself was a pacifist "in most respects." His ministry in the Air Force has caused concern and alarm among other Friends in his yearly meeting. Interestingly, this same Friend, as a result of his reflections on the experience he has had providing pastoral care to members of the armed forces, has written the manuscript for a book tentatively entitled "Have We Misunderstood the Homosexual," in which he argues that the classical Scriptural condemnations are really not intended for those people whom today we know as consenting adults with a gay orientation. He is circulating this manuscript among Christian publishing houses, but has not yet found one which would include it in its list. I asked him if he would mind sending me a copy of the manuscript and he agreed to do this, but I have not yet received it. But it does seem to me that if the book does find its way into print, and if it does say what I have the impression it says after my conversation with him, it would greatly ease the burdens the AFSC faces to be able to cite Evangelical as well as liberal theological sources in defense of its Affirmative Action Plan.

At any rate, there does seem to me to be some diversity of approaches among Evangelical Friends to issues of faith and practice.

7. I will discuss worship at more length below, but in this list of summary observations, it is appropriate to mention that the plenary worship sessions and the small prayer groups were both characterized by a degree of emotion which startled this rather typical unprogrammed Friend. This sur-

prise does not imply a negative judgement. It was just a surprise. I will have to think some more about the relationship of emotion and emotional catharsis to spiritual practice.

8. I was also surprised by the music. Of course, I expected there to be good singing, and there was. The style of the music was not what I anticipated. I presumed we would be singing old line Protestant hymns, some of which might be quite familiar to me. But as it turned out I actually knew almost none of the music used. This did not pose any problems, since the tunes were very easy to catch, and the words were always flashed on a screen at the front. The music had a twentieth century pop flavor, rather than a nineteenth century revivalist flavor. To me the tunes seemed reminiscent of '40's and '50's ballads. One favorite hymn which was sung very often to a slow tune resembling a love song had words as follows:

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.
There's something about that name.
Master, Saviour, Jesus,
Like the fragrance after the rain.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,
Let all Heaven and Earth proclaim.
Kings and kingdoms will all pass away
But there's something about that name.

Worship

As has been previously mentioned, worship was a very significant part of each day's agenda. This particular group of Friends clearly were able to withstand much more spiritual nourishment than most Quakers I know.

Leadership of the morning worship rotated, and was organized around an always very substantial message which the particular presiding person for the day would give. Of the six morning worship services only one was led by an American; the other five were led by Friends from Taiwan, Burundi, India, Guatemala, and Bolivia. One of these five, the person from Guatemala, was a woman.

The American homilist was Robert Hess, the Superintendent of Evangelical Friends Church, Eastern Region. His message was characterized by scholarliness and eloquence. I hesitate to characterize the others collectively or to seem to pass a judgement on anyone's worship, although I realize that rating sermons is a fairly common practice. Perhaps it is reasonable to say that from the perspective of an unprogrammed Friend, the homilies tended to escalate in emotional stridency very rapidly and to plateau at a fairly high level of volume and intensity. The substance of these messages revolved around familiar faith themes, although there were some surprises to which I will allude later.

Periods of silent worship were called for at various points throughout the week. I would not say this happened frequently, but it happened a lot more often than I would have imagined. Such periods of silent worship or silent prayer were much more than the perfunctory thirty second pauses which are often inserted into Protestant worship services. I experienced them as deep and centered silences.

Beatriz Zapata, who is not a Friend but is a staff member of an ecumenical evangelical organization in Guatemala, and who is herself Guatemalan, gave a stirring homily about the role of women in the Church. She began by speaking of her recollections of Ruth Esther Smith, who apparently was the first, or one of the first, Quaker missionaries in Guatemala. She then broadened her observations to include the role of women in agriculture worldwide. She asserted that the whole secular world is aware of the intelligence and talents that women have to offer. Women are heads of state, engineers, economists. "Is your Church allowing women to achieve their full potential?" she asked. She spoke about a letter she had received from a Venezuelan woman who is the chief executive officer of a large economic organization in her country. She signs contracts with Arab petroleum cartels. This woman wrote of the great need in her heart for a spiritual home. She was invited to an evangelical church and found herself not welcome. She was too well-educated, too well-dressed, too much of an executive to fit into the mold of the Church. The world accepted this woman, the Church could not. Why? Beatriz Zapata continued in this vein throughout her very substantial homily. She said the Church was afflicted by bad theology, bad cultural patterns, and insecure men. She said that if we read the Gospels, we find that Jesus always had women near him. She said we usually think of them as simply serving Jesus, but if we read closely we will find that he was always building up women's self image. She concluded by saying the church must shape itself up or lose the support and devotion of its women.

Beatriz Zapata delivered this homily in the same forceful, even strident, style that characterized all the other morning worship services. I was not able to detect that her message had any particularly negative effect on the men present, but it clearly elated very, very many of the women. I overheard more than one conversation among women who were laying plans to invite her to be a speaker at their yearly meetings.

Beatriz Zapata said two things which caused disenchantment with her among one or two of the men present who thought themselves to be feminists. She said that no Scripture-reading woman would ever usurp the role of a man. She also employed a simile which reminded me of the old saw that behind every great man there is the loyal support of a wonderful woman. Beatriz Zapata claimed that wherever one saw a woman achieving her full potential, one would notice that her husband and her sons were building up her self image. These suggestions that women do not usurp men's roles, and that successful women are somehow being "propped up" by the men in their lives, was found passe by one or two of the men I spoke to from unprogrammed meetings who were present. It was my own feeling that these were relatively mild concessions to male insecurity made almost in passing, and that the general thrust of her remarks was quite constructive and suitable to the particular situation.

All the evening worship services were under the leadership of Sam Kamaleson, a

Methodist originally from Madras, India who is now serving as a Vice President of World Vision. His conduct of these worship services was, as I experienced it, nothing short of remarkable. But I was interested that so central a role was given over to one who was not a Friend.

Sam Kamaleson is a tall, striking-looking person with a deep and pleasing baritone voice. He always began his sermon by singing a sacred song. Most of these were in English and in the western scale, but once or twice he sang in Hindi or Tamil. The messages with which he followed his singing were always quite lengthy by any standards with which I am familiar, but never tiresome. The messages were imaginative, subtle, dramatic and very eloquent. Again, the level of intensity and emotion got very high very fast, but there were more frequent changes of pace, the skillful introduction of anecdotes and humor, and other techniques which helped avoid the harangue-like quality which one sometimes felt in the morning presentations.

The Evangelical Perspective

Obviously, there is no way I can give a full report on all that I heard during a six day Conference. But I hope it will be useful if I give a brief synopsis of some of the key themes which were sounded. Most of what follows tries to encapsulate things that were said on the platform in plenary session, rather than in workshops, unless otherwise noted, which reflects my judgement that things spoken from the platform in plenary session meetings were more "authoritative" and more widely accepted as views.

There were frequent references to George Fox as a great evangelist. It was said that, as is the case in our own day, George Fox found the churches full of many baptized people who did not really know Jesus. He had a passion for winning souls to Christ. In only six years, the valiant sixty brought ten thousand souls to knowledge of Jesus, and Friends had visited twenty countries.

As one workshop leader put it: "The content of our testimony is Jesus. When working in mission fields our presence is good. Our service, too, is good and valuable. But eventually we must say who motivates us. Our testimony is Jesus, his death and resurrection. Where the name is not named, evangelism has not taken place. Transformation will never take place when this content is not there. John was a reformer. Jesus is a regenerator."

A sound mission, we were frequently told, must be rooted in a theology of mission as given in Scripture. We must avoid the danger that our missions become reduced to promotion schemes. Mission is not a department of the Church. It is the total reason for its existence, its central thrust.

A timeless model for evangelism is given in the Book of Acts. As described in the Book of Acts the essential purpose and mission of the Church is evangelism, is bringing ever more souls to knowledge of Jesus. The Church must be constantly reaching out. Our greatest longing must not be to build bridges to each other, but to unbelievers. The Church is not meant to be a series of enclaves in which people get smug and satisfied.

Jesus did not stay where it was comfortable. He moved on. Karl Marx said that religion is an opiate. But our religion does not bring peace but a sword—a sword with which to undertake a prophetic piercing of pride. This does not sell well on Madison Avenue; it does not sell well in middle American churches. We come to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable.

(While from the pulpit some disparaging remarks were made about the uselessness of large California congregations which flourish because they do not rock anyone's boat, nevertheless, in the workshops, one could hear discussions about, for example, the need for parking lots, and about how you need one parking space for every two and a half church members, even if you wind up spending more money on parking lots than on faith promises).

Evangelists are seen as "ambassadors." We were reminded that ambassadors have four characteristics:

- (1) Ambassadors have only the right to convey the message they are given. Ethnocentrism is the great pitfall of evangelists. Under the guise of preaching the Gospel people wind up preaching their own culture. But there is really no room for provincialism in the New Testament witness. Jesus' message is a cosmic message.
- (2) Ambassadors know the person they are representing. Personal intimacy with Jesus is much more important for the evangelist than is good organization. In many ways which will not be repeated here the Conference sought to enhance attendees' knowledge of Jesus and their sense of intimacy with him.
- (3) Ambassadors are steadfast. They stick through difficulties. The "hit and run" strategy (crusades) should not be the primary approach.
- (4) Ambassadors know and empathize with the people to whom they are sent. It was stressed that this is another place where evangelism frequently fails, and a great deal of effort at the Conference was devoted to getting the evangelists present really to know and empathize with the people who need to hear the Word.

In this connection, it was repeatedly asserted that the world of the future will be a world of cities, and that as Friends we tend to reflect and to express a deeply embedded rural mentality. There was much emphasis on the need to overcome this country bias, and to look to the city not with anxiety but with competence.

We were told that a new world culture is emerging. One quality of this new world culture is that it has a single neighborhood characterized by technical commonality. Technical man can go from place to place with ease. Ability and skill make people transferable from one location to another.

This new world culture is international. Great Britain has within its borders Indians, Africans, and West Indians. There are more non-Saudis than Saudis in Saudi Arabia.

The new international community is non-racial. People borrow skills from one another but will not be subjugated to anyone. Old racial attitudes are no longer tolerated.

As has already been mentioned, this new world culture is seen as urban in nature. The city is inescapable in the future. The city breeds a new kind of human being. The answer to the secular city is that we must build a better city, a City of God.

We see all about us the resurgence of tribalism and nationalism. This does not contradict the fact that this new world culture is emerging. There is a natural fear within the human soul that the person will lose his or her identity, and so nationality becomes exaggerated.

All the evidence is that, as modern societies become more competent technically, they become more bankrupt spiritually. The future, therefore, will provide an urgent need for the exercise of evangelism.

We were warned that indifference to political questions will be sinful in the future. We must deal with the powers and principalities which grip the souls of women and men. We cannot so spiritualize the Gospels that we think of individual souls only. People must see the Kingdom come in the way we live and in our struggle for justice. The reason why young people wind up Marxists is because we do not have a program. The Kingdom of God cannot be relegated to the future; we must visibly struggle to make it a present reality. We cannot remain aloof from a suffering world.

The Kingdom judges all cultures and finds them wanting. The enactment of democracy is everywhere poisoned by self-interest and egotism. The Kingdom does not endorse capitalism over communism.

God chooses no-name people like us to tell all the hierarchies they are wrong. We must live in total community with humanity's suffering. There can be no separation between the spiritual and the political.

The Conference seemed not to be preoccupied with detailing the mechanisms and structures of oppression and tyranny, nor was an attempt made to sketch out the missing plan. There were frequent references in passing to the problems of the international political economy, and to the need for Christians to attend to the crises of tin and coffee prices and to the impact these have on the well-being of people in producing countries. Regarding the international debt, a year of jubilee was called for. It was seen as intolerable that children should starve so that bankers could collect their interest. It was asserted that unless we forgive debts we will destroy cultures.

On the last day, in addition to delivering the evening homily, Sam Kamalson led a workshop on dialogues with other faiths. As a Quaker Universalist I was, of course, particularly interested in his approach to this matter.

Sam Kamaleson began his presentation with a fairly long and detailed reflection on the nature of dialogue. Sociologically and historically, humankind has depended upon dialogue and, at the same time, people often put up resistance to dialogue because of its power to induce a change process. The Bible and church history abound in the use of dialogue. Jesus used dialogue, and in using dialogue, he was willing to open himself up to people. Human sensitivity promotes dialogical persons. If we are going to be dialogical persons, we have to be that way at home before we can do so in the counseling or evangelical situation. All of us must ask our spouses and our teenage children if we are dialogical persons or not. Jesus was a dialogical person. Even when his enemies attacked him, he stops to answer. It takes enormous depths of ego strength to be able to dialogue.

There is no room for arrogance, for impatience, or for closedness in dialogue. Our body language is extremely important. If it is deep things we are dialoging about, we need a great deal of time. You cannot conduct a dialogue on your own schedule. It is an insult to the dialoging partner. As soon as you look at your wrist watch, you've lost it. At all moments we must recognize the person to whom we are speaking as extremely important.

Sam Kamaleson cited three books which he regards as authoritative on dialogue. One is called The Christ of the Round Table by Stanley Jones. The second is The Call of the Minaret, and the third is Sandals at the Mosque, both by Kenneth Craig.

We must recognize the value of the culture of the person with whom we are dialoging. For example, if we are dialoging with a Moslem, we must readily recognize the value of their belief in prayer, in fasting, and in alms-giving.

Shouting and hostility are the quickest ways to expose that your point is weak.

Often, dialogue does not involve conversation. Calcutta is a hotbed of Marxism. Mother Theresa, who works there, contributes to the Christian-Marxist dialogue something that no one else can. She lives among the people as a servant. Service most naturally leads to evangelical dialogue. Marxists find in Mother Theresa someone who has done more than they have ever done. They cannot ignore her Jesus. Her dialogue takes place without words.

In dialogue about deep spiritual things, as each shares openly and undefensively, there gradually will develop an awareness that some have gone further along the spiritual path than others. The Holy Spirit witnesses along with you and, somehow, without the other person feeling ridiculous, they become drawn to Jesus. You bring the person to the Lord and leave him there. You do not leave your own imprint on the person.

Thus, Sam Kamaleson concluded, after all this recommendation of openness, with the supposition that, in the end, all those engaged in the dialogue would wind up "in Jesus' lap," so to speak.

At one point, in one of his plenary session addresses, Sam Kamaleson referred to non-Christian faiths. He imagined a mother at her son's bier. He asserted that Krishna

would say to that mother, "The unseen is more real than the seen." Sam Kamaleson said that Buddha would say to that mother, "Get detached!" He said that Mohammed would say to the mother, "Understand the will of Allah." But Jesus raises us from the dead. I must say that I felt this was a cheap shot and somehow not in character with the rest of the content of his messages. The ideas he attributes to Krishna, Buddha, and Mohammed are all important themes in Christian thought as well, although the language used might be somewhat different. And Lazarus aside, the eternal life which Christianity promises us is not that different from the transcendence of temporality of which other spiritual traditions also speak.

Altar Calls

This synopsis gives only a pallid flavor of the teachings which were advanced in worship, of the sweep of their content, and of the fervor and subtlety with which the homilies which formed the core of the worship experience were delivered. Indeed, I found Sam Kamaleson's capacity to be on deck night after night for a major address without growing tiresome or repetitious to be quite amazing. Equally astonishing to me was what he put into these addresses in terms of emotion and energy. It was, perhaps, roughly comparable to what Placido Domingo would "give" during the performance of one of the more ambitious works in the operatic repertoire. At least, that is the nearest analogy I could think of.

As the period of worship drew to a close these homilies were gradually transmuted from an oration into a kind of chant or incantation: "Jesus we love you . . . Come to us sweet Lord Jesus . . . Lift us up and make us whole . . . Make us your servants . . . Mold us and bend us to your will . . . Let us, if we have been touched by your word or your spirit, fall to our knees . . . Help us to acknowledge your Lordship in our lives . . . etc., etc., etc." In response to the exhortations that they kneel people would, one after another, drop to their knees next to their chairs. I found these moments exceedingly uncomfortable. On the one hand, it did not seem natural or right to me to drop to my knees; on the other hand, I hunched over in my chair feeling more and more conspicuous as the only one sticking up out of the crowd. It seemed somehow manipulative and very awkward.

On the evening of the next to the last day, the Altar Call process seemed to reach a climax. In an extremely emotional period of 15 or 20 minutes we were encouraged, if we loved Jesus, and if our souls had been touched by anything that had transpired that week, to come and kneel at the front of the room by the podium. People who went, one by one, seemed to overcome some internal resistance when going forward. Some knelt. Some seemed to throw themselves on the floor sobbing. By the time Sam Kamaleson's incantation ended the room, to my mind, seemed in utter disarray. People were on the floor in different postures. Some were weeping. Some who were weeping were being hugged and comforted by someone else. Some seemed to be engaged in a two-person simultaneous prayer process such as I had experienced in the morning prayer group. After he concluded, Sam Kamaleson prayed silently for awhile with the other officials who were on the podium, and then he and his wife quietly left the room, picking their way out over various bodies. I waited around for a while, wondering how closure would be brought about. Here and there, people began quietly leaving. I left, too. As I wended my way

out the idea occurred to me that the room looked something like a left-over Roman orgy. I never did find out whether there was a formal adjournment or whether people just faded away one by one.

As a Quaker Universalist, I usually try to get my money's worth no matter what religious ceremony I am participating in. I cross my legs and count my breath if I am in a Buddhist Zendo. I participate in the Eucharist at Roman Catholic Mass. I clap my hands at piles of vegetables with the Shintos. Usually when I do these things I can feel in my bones what is going on, or at least what should be going on. I have a sense of the meaning of what is occurring, even if I do not have a full intellectual grasp of it. But I have to acknowledge that I found these Quaker Evangelical Alter Calls somewhat foreign. The idea of going to the front of the room and throwing myself to the floor sobbing simply seemed very bizarre. While I was sitting uncomfortably in my chair while people were falling to their knees around me, I did try to consider the importance of humility and surrender in the spiritual life, and I recognized that my own characteristic emotional vibration, which is insecurity, is not the same as humility and surrender, but rather is their opposite.

I will have to give more thought to the relationship between emotion and spirituality. It is my own experience that nearness to the Divine comes more readily in stillness than in agitation. At times it was tempting for me to dismiss the nightly cathartic procedure as an all-too-human sort of hype, rather than seeing it as the activity of God. Yet I also remembered that liberal Friends might go to a Shakespearean play and consider themselves to have a genuinely spiritual and emotional experience, and not assume that it is artificial simply because it is being induced night after night by paid performers. Some people even claim to have life-changing experiences in the theatre. This analogy might be considered offensive by Evangelical Friends, but it is the closest thing I could come to out of my own experience in trying to understand what was occurring around me.

FWCC Workshop

Alex Morrissey, Andres Carranza, and I led the FWCC workshop, which was scheduled on the morning and afternoon of the day devoted to "Quaker Distinctives." As mentioned earlier, I frequently found it frustrating not to be able to attend more than two of the six workshops scheduled on a given day. On the day our workshop was scheduled, obviously our own was the only one we could attend. In a way this was doubly frustrating because I would have felt it extremely important to gain more insight regarding these Friends' perspectives on traditional Quaker testimonies.

In the morning and the afternoon we began our FWCC workshop with a spoken prayer and ended with a short period of silence. As with all the other workshops, we began with a prepared presentation, which I had developed and which I delivered in English. Alex simultaneously translated it into Spanish with great adeptness. Then Andres gave a presentation which Alex translated. I find myself unable to remember whether Andres spoke in English or in Spanish. In any event, he focused upon those activities of the FWCC's Section of the Americas which would be of particular interest to Latin

American Friends.

In accordance with Conference practice, both the English text and a Spanish translation of our workshop were available for circulation in printed form. My English text had been translated into Spanish by Jorge Hernandez. However, since both Gordon and Alex were out of the country when I sent my material to Jorge, and since my repeated attempts to reach him by phone were of no avail, I became anxious that he, too, may have been traveling and might be unable to do the translation, and so I had a second translation made at the last minute by a teacher at Friends Seminary. Thus we had two different Spanish translations available. A copy of the English and Spanish texts are appended to this report.

Our workshop was well enough attended, but it was not the most popular item on the menu. There were, perhaps, between 20 and 30 people at each session. A scattering of the people present I recognized as having at least some previous familiarity with FWCC, but most of the people seemed new to me.

The discussion following our presentations was mild but interested. I would not say that we generated a constituency of enthusiastic new supporters breathlessly anxious to become involved in FWCC.

I can recall only two exchanges in the discussion which raised serious issues. Bob Hess, Superintendent of Evangelical Friends Church, Eastern Region, and one of the primary organizers of the Guatemala Conference, attended the afternoon offering of our workshop. During the discussion period, after expressing appreciation for our presentations, he observed that he had once gone to an FWCC gathering and was approached by a young Friend who asked him if he had been saved. When he replied that he had, the young Friend said, "I think you are arrogant!" Bob explained that he had not intended to seem arrogant, but only to express confidence that this was an experience available to anyone.

He went on to say that one unpleasant incident like this is really not a good reason to stay away from FWCC gatherings. He said his more serious concern was that, given the limited time and energy available to all of us, Evangelical Friends may feel it is not a good use of their God-given personal resources to spend a lot of time at meetings where the name of Jesus Christ is rarely or never mentioned.

I responded by observing that, when people who have been out of communication and are perhaps feeling somewhat estranged, first meet again their encounter usually entails some risks in terms of someone indulging in inept communication. I said it was not the idea of FWCC gatherings that Friends from different Quaker traditions would belittle each other's faith, but rather the idea is that we should share the good things about our own experiences in an affirmative way, while listening creatively to what other people had to say. I said that the FWCC Interim Committee would be taking care to establish a constructive atmosphere in which Friends can encounter each other in a genuine and charitable way.

Regarding the content of the dialogue which occurs and the scant references to Jesus, I said that the coloration of communication at FWCC gatherings tends to reflect the concerns of those who show up at them. I said that as more and more Evangelical Friends are led to participate, the way religious experience is articulated would tend to diversify and become more inclusive of the concerns of all.

At this point, Salome de Bartalama of Bolivia, a co-opted member of FWCC, spoke. She told of having attended the last FWCC Triennial in Mexico, and of how she had been kept awake night after night discussing the Gospel with interested Friends, and of what a wonderful experience it had been for her to find so many people interested in her faith and in what she had to share about it.

There was a very noticeable pause in the room as Salome finished speaking, and it was clear that her account of being kept busy explaining the Gospels to interested people had a telling effect on this small assemblage of evangelical persons. I was uneasy at this moment, because I felt something slightly misleading might be occurring. I am certain that Salome was being very faithful to the truth in recounting her experience, nor would I want to cast any aspersions on the motives of those Friends who kept her awake until the wee hours of the morning explaining the Gospels. But if any of the various middle-aged, middle-American Evangelical Friends present in the room that afternoon showed up at an FWCC gathering I knew it to be hardly likely that they would be kept awake all night by liberal Friends hungering for the word of God. However, I really did not know how to handle this and so I let the moment slip by without comment.

The other interesting interaction involved a passing comment made by Andres who, in describing the services that COAL can offer to Latin American Yearly Meetings, used as a "for instance" how it might help Bolivian Friends better to realize the leadership potential of their women members. This was only a minor comment made in passing, by way of an example of the possibilities, but, nevertheless, when the time for discussion came, a spokesperson for four or five male Bolivian Friends sitting somewhat across the room from Salome rose to his feet and gave a rather lengthy speech about all the ways the women Friends of Bolivia are involved in the the life of the Yearly Meeting. He concluded by observing that it is confusing to Bolivian Friends when the FWCC appoints (I suppose he meant "co-opts") a woman who is not well-known to the leadership of the Yearly Meeting as "FWCC liaison."

In the workshop we assured the Bolivian Friend who spoke that the main representation of any Yearly Meeting in FWCC is based on delegates named by the Yearly Meeting itself, and that FWCC-named people were only a minor portion of the whole picture when things are functioning as intended.

Alex followed up on this situation after the workshop in some detail. I will say no more about this here, since it is for Alex to report. I think the situation does give us something to think about when we employ co-option as a method of getting new life into the FWCC from inactive Yearly Meetings, especially if, quite unrelated to the co-option, the person we select presents life-style issues in the cultural context from which they are drawn.

Literature Table

A literature table was set up in the plenary session room of the Fiesta Hotel. It was not lavishly stocked with titles, probably a reflection of the difficulties of transporting any sizable number of books long distances. There were many thin pamphlets about Quakerism in the Spanish language. In terms of full-scaled English books, there was a good supply of the classic titles: Barclay's Apology, The Journal of John Woolman, and The Journal of George Fox. There was also a biography of Levi Pennington. There was another title with which I was unfamiliar called The Rich Heritage of Quakerism.

Interestingly, prominent display was given to a book entitled The Controversy: Roots of the Creation/Evolution Conflict by Donald E. Chittick. I heard no discussion at the Conference of this matter, the focus of so much contention in the education field here in the United States. Yet the prominent display of such a book on the literature table aroused my curiosity, and I bought a copy to read around the fringes of the Conference.

Donald Chittick offers an absorbing and far-ranging rebuttal of conventional scientific theory about evolution. The ambition, subtlety and scope of this challenge was quite astonishing to me, although I am not in a position to judge its merits. At any rate, the author does not merely juxtapose Biblical accounts against scientific theory, asserting the Biblical accounts to be true simply because they are the word of God, but he uses scientific theory against itself, so to speak.

Regarding the age of the earth, he challenges the system of radioactive dating using isotope ratios, claiming, for example, that lack of knowledge of the initial conditions under which the earth existed makes all theorizing about the ages of rocks from presently existing isotope ratios merely speculative. He cites discrepancies given for the age of the moon using different isotope systems. He seizes upon the fact that, apparently, some scientists seek to explain away the discrepancies by postulating that decay rates can vary with geological conditions as evidence that the entire theory is bankrupt, since there was no one around to observe the conditions being speculated about, so anything might have happened with respect to isotope ratios having nothing to do with elapsed time, but only with geological conditions. He says that the whole process is like trying to judge how long a candle has been burning by measuring the rate at which its length has decreased under observation, but without knowing how long the candle was when it was first lit.

He further claims that there is not a shred of evidence that species evolve from each other, that the fossil record is completely devoid of examples of intermediate species. The evolutionary trees which adorn textbooks have data at their tips and nodes only; all the rest is inference, not the evidence of fossils. He points out that large numbers of mutations have been produced in the laboratory using radioactivity. Fruit flies have been artificially mutated again and again for countless generations, yet they have stubbornly refused to become anything but fruit flies.

The author's basic thesis is that a scientific theory consists of three elements: primary assumptions, data, and conclusions. If you start with different primary assumptions, the same data will yield different conclusions. He gives some humorous examples, such as might be involved in determining whether the wiggling of leaves on the trees causes wind or vice versa. He claims that all the data upon which evolutionary theory depends are susceptible to different, equally plausible explanations. Evolutionism and creationism represent a clash of two different faiths, or belief systems, not a clash of faith with facts or with science. Creation implies responsibilities to a Creator, a responsibility modern man wishes to avoid; hence, he interprets data in a way which makes the universe self-actualizing through mechanical and chemical processes. Once one interprets Genesis as a myth, what is to prevent the entire Scripture from being interpreted as myth? This has serious doctrinal consequences. If the Creation and Fall are not actual events, why would one need a Saviour? If evolution means that things have been continually improving, then perhaps humankind will work out its problems on its own. Why must we be saved? One's views of origins thus have important implications. They explain who man (sic) is, his place in the universe, and his relationship to it. It affects the very meaning of life itself.

I found this to be an absorbing book, and not at all characteristic of the monkey-trial fundamentalism of popular legend.

Taiwanese Friends

Eight persons attended the International Conference on Friends and Evangelism from Taiwan. Alex Morisey and I were mindful that we were seeking an opening with them regarding the possibility of holding one of the 1991 Conferences in Taiwan.

Very few of these eight persons spoke English, and so they tended to stick together. The American to whom they seemed most closely connected was, if I understood this situation correctly, a missionary still on active duty there. His name was Howard Moore. He led the singing at the plenary sessions. He seemed like a most personable Friend, but the little bit of flavor of his theological views I got from attending his workshop seemed very "conservative" indeed, if I might be permitted to use an inadequate label as a kind of shorthand. Moreover, the sermon given by the Taiwanese speaker during one of the morning worships also seemed to me to be very "hard line." ("Mysticism and silence leave space and emptiness into which Satan can enter.") I did not find any way to overcome these difficulties and do any serious getting acquainted with them, to say nothing of exploring the question of a venue for an FWCC activity. Alex, however, was much more successful at this than I, and he will be reporting about his findings separately.

The Trip to Chiquimula; Guatemala in General

Since some time around 1954 the domestic political situation in Guatemala has been highly polarized. Up until the period around 1980, the military was firmly in control, and its tyrannical administration exacerbated the political polarization and gener-

ated a deepening state of civil war. Then there was a brief interregnum by a military President known as General Rios Montt, a born-again Christian, who was ultimately succeeded by a "Christian Democratic" civilian government led by the present head of state, President Cerezo Arevalo.

The civil war has abated but not ended. Kidnapping and disappearances reported by Amnesty International and America's Watch averaged about thirty a month so far in 1987. The actual rate of disappearances is presumed to be much higher, since many are not known about or reported. The police and the military are suspected by human rights groups of being implicated in this lawlessness. Oddly, Mayor of Atlanta Andrew Young, who was a vigorous human rights advocate when he served as the United States Ambassador to the United Nations in the Carter Administration, is seeking contracts to have the Atlanta Police Department train the Guatemalan police. He claims to want to help them with their detective work in solving disappearances. Obviously, others fear that if there is no will to solve the disappearances, the training will not help and might only serve to provide establishment-connected terrorists with a patina of respectability.

After a lengthy search, the Cerezo Government recently appointed a "Human Rights Procurator." The person selected is an 82 year old lawyer whose background is good but whose age does not promise much in the way of activism.

On Sunday, November 8th, the 250-odd delegates were scheduled to make an excursion to Chiquimula, Guatemala, a village three-hours drive away from the capital, which is the center of Quaker missionary activity in Guatemala. We all boarded buses chartered for this excursion.

Chiquimula itself proved to be a very quiet town--at least on Sundays. The streets were straight and laid-out in a grid-iron pattern. Practically all of the buildings seemed to be one-story high. They were built right up to the edges of the narrow streets, with very few windows on the exterior walls, giving the streets a certain walled-in look. I have not traveled extensively in Hispanic countries, but I presume this is somewhat typical of buildings organized around an interior private courtyard which turn their "backs" to the street.

The streets were narrow enough that the buses had some difficulty negotiating them, and we could only get within two or three blocks of the place where the Sunday morning worship was to take place. After a brief walk, we arrived at the "Tabernacle Evangelica Amigos." As we entered the door, young women pinned small flowers or trinkets on our lapels. We found ourselves in a large church, very simple but very spacious. The structure itself was all roof and no walls. There was open-air seating in the gardens around the outside of the structure itself. Beyond that were the walls separating the Quaker precincts from the street.

The place was swarming with an animated throng of people from Quaker churches in other villages who had gathered to greet the foreign visitors and participate in worship with them. Music was playing and there was a very touching mood of enthusiasm and expectancy as the visitors were murmured over and stared at as they were conducted to the

large area reserved to them at the front.

The worship service which followed was typical of what I had come to expect. There were greetings by Guatemalan Quaker leaders, music provided by the local Quaker Bible College choir and by some of the visitors, and a major homily by Sam Kamaleson which, mercifully, did not conclude with an Altar Call.

After worship we were led through a few streets to a different Quaker facility where a splendid lunch was waiting for us. After lunch we were given a tour of the Quaker Evangelical radio station, and of various educational institutions run by Friends which form the heart of the mission headquarters. I believe I was given to understand that there are about eighteen expatriate staff conducting mission work throughout Central America, the headquarters of which is located in Chiquimula. Mission work began around 1902, if I remember correctly. There were many inspiring stories to be heard about the love and dedication of the early missionaries.

It was my very good fortune to wind up, quite by accident, sitting next to Raymond Canfield for the three hour bus trip from Guatemala City to Chiquimula. Raymond Canfield is the head of the mission staff headquartered in Chiquimula. He and his wife have worked in Guatemala for twenty years. His wife is a nurse and has established several clinics. Raymond himself, although now apparently mainly engaged in administrative work, was originally an agricultural specialist who helped Indians practice appropriate farming methods in the rather fragile soils of newly cleared rain forests. He described to me some of the procedures they had invented for preserving the productivity of this land newly under cultivation.

I asked Raymond about the current political situation in Guatemala. He admitted that there were continuing problems of corruption, self-dealing and repression, but he felt that things were improving. He sees the growth of a middle class in Guatemala, and he feels that there is getting to be more and more possibility for upward mobility for the peasantry. There is a bitter-sweet dimension to this because with the rise of this middle class has come a falling away from religion, an emphasis on materialism, and a breakdown of family life.

Regarding former president Rios Montt, Raymond acknowledged that he was given to making off-the-wall statements about religion to the press. Raymond also acknowledged his dictatorial qualities, but claimed, too, that he was honest and firm, and that he accomplished a lot in terms of regaining control of the army by the government. He regarded Rios Montt as a truly "disinterested" person, not at all in government for personal gain, and he depicted him as now being quite happy back in his village teaching Sunday School. Raymond felt that Rios Montt was thrown out of office too soon.

Raymond further allowed that before 1980 things were very bad in Guatemala. However, now that things are getting better he is inclined to regard the rebel bands still causing trouble in the hills as diehards.

I asked Raymond how the mission postured itself with respect to the oppressive

pre-1980 conditions. Raymond said that they regarded themselves as guests in the country, that they tried to remain neutral in all things, seeking not rock the boat, and to preach the Gospel of Salvation. I reminded Raymond of the sermons we had heard back in Guatemala City about the need for the Church to engage in issues of justice, and about the irrelevance of congregations which are so passive and comfortable that they do not cause any stir or attract the establishment's anger toward themselves. Raymond admitted the paradox and the difficulty of the Mission's position during the years of oppressive governments. He recognizes the criticisms that can be leveled, and acknowledged that theirs was a flawed response, but he said that he and his colleagues felt it was better to do what they did rather than simply get thrown out, leaving their flock to their fate.

Raymond tended to feel that the present Cerezo Government is honestly trying to straighten things out. Raymond said that he himself tends to be Republican back in the United States, but that he believes that a Christian Democratic center-left government, such as the present one in Guatemala, is right for a developing country.

Thus, while human rights activists back in the States are apt to regard the Cerezo Government as "window dressing" applied to an underlying militarist and repressive reality, Raymond was inclined to regard it as a fragile but honest attempt to put civilians back in control and establish justice and human rights. He thought that the fragility of this enterprise in itself makes every claim upon us to give it whatever support we can.

Raymond was clearly distressed at American policy toward Nicaragua. He acknowledged that Somoza had to go. He felt that the United States has foolishly missed the chance to have Socialist allies in the Sandinistas, that for some peculiar reason the U.S. Government had kicked them while they were down. He felt that our aid to the Contras should end. He observed that we are allies with Socialists in France, and we are allies with Italy, where the Communist Party is very strong. Why, he asked, do we seem to be unable to visualize ourselves having Socialist allies in Central America?

I asked Raymond about his relationships with AFSC activity in Central America. Raymond says he wishes the AFSC and the Mission could develop more mutual respect. He said he tries to explain to his colleagues that the AFSC has a different ministry than they do, that AFSC can function usefully in a sphere where the Mission cannot. He seemed anxious to recognize AFSC as a valid Quaker organization, but he acknowledged that communication with the AFSC was almost non-existent.

As so casual a visitor to a country like Guatemala, I was obviously in no position to make any judgement about whether Raymond's views are a more or less accurate reading of the significance of the current situation than are the views of others. He certainly came across to me as a very sensitive and concerned Friend, and not one to shun confronting difficult political and social issues. Perhaps there is no way that AFSC's approaches to Central American issues can harmonize with those of the Mission. But it would certainly seem regrettable, indeed, if the AFSC did not give itself the benefit of at least keeping in dialogue with a person with the qualities of Raymond Canfield as it proceeds to define its own role in a region like Central America.

I had two or three days to explore Guatemala itself after the Conference was over. The business center of Guatemala City has a few modernistic buildings which employ surface decorations derived from Mayan carvings. There is a neo-Renaissance cathedral, presumably somewhat old, on the large main square, and a 1930's "National Palace" which is the seat of government administration. There is a national theatre on the top of a small hill executed in a somewhat striking Corbusier-like style. Outside of the Zona Viva, where the Hotel Fiesta is located, and the somewhat small central precinct of business and government, the capital was largely a sprawling array of residential "working-class" neighborhoods. Although the buildings were often in very poor repair they were, as far as I could tell, real buildings. I may not have gotten around enough to see everything, but I did not discover the kinds of squatter neighborhoods teeming with people living in dwellings made of found objects and plastic sheets, such as one readily sees in places like Nairobi or Manila. However, I may simply not have been in the places where this could be seen. The capital has a population of about two and a half million people, which is 25% of the population of the country.

The country's main assets as a tourist attraction is its scenic chain of volcanic mountains, among which lies Lake Atitlan, known for its visual splendor. There are also some interesting Indian market towns, and the extensive remnant of a Mayan city located at a remote site called Tikal.

Guatemala has both an Atlantic and a Pacific Coast. The range of mountains, many volcanic in origin, lies parallel to the Pacific Coast. Most of the people live in these mountains, where the altitude keeps things somewhat cooler. A large, flat, underpopulated, forested and largely unexplored expanse of the country stretches away from the coasts and to the north, lying between the countries of Mexico and Belize. This area, largely a tropical cloud forest, is called the Peten. At a remote site in the Peten there was discovered earlier in this century the remains of an extensive Mayan city. Overland travel to this site is not recommended, both because adequate roads have not been constructed, and because the government apparently has not secured the vast forest from the insurgents. Those interested in seeing the ruins at Tikal catch an antiquated prop plane at Guatemala City International Airport, and after flying for a hour or so through pea soup fog and very rough air, one lands at a very small airport which is still an hour's drive from the archeological site. A large military base has been established nearby, and this presumably helps keep the area secure for tourists. The Tikal museum, nevertheless, has replaced most of its artifacts with photographs because it was constantly losing things to guerrilla raiders.

Only about 18% of the Mayan city has been excavated. It is, nevertheless, an awesome sight, with incredibly steep staircases ascending monumental pyramids, extensive palaces and apartments presumably once occupied by the Mayan ruling classes, and vast irrigation systems. Everywhere the dense jungle is trying to bury again the cleaned-up portion of the site. It is possible to walk through the unreclaimed part of the city and see the outlines of pyramids and buildings beneath the tangle of vines and roots. The Mayan civilization flourished at this site from about 300 B.C. to about A.D. 700, at which time it rather suddenly disappeared for reasons which are not yet well understood. To wander among these silent remnants of what was once clearly a tumultuous city, now

buried beneath the aggressive jungle with its shifting mists, was definitely a haunting, surrealistic experience.

After flying back to the capital from Tikal, I sought to reach two of the most famous Indian villages overland by means of a self-drive. I thought I would visit Santiago on the shores of Lake Atitlan and Chichicastanango, a short distance to the north of that. On the outskirts of Guatemala City one sees frequent evidences of the army, but as one proceeds deeper into the rural areas, one encounters small groups of peasants in civilian clothes carrying rifles or machine guns, with no particular indication of what their chain of command might be. I do not speak Spanish and felt somewhat isolated as I drove along. I did manage to pick up the news that Santiago Atitlan had been raided by the guerrillas the day before I expected to arrive there. It had been a hit and run raid, rather than an occupation, but I decided not to proceed to that particular place. I stopped instead at Panjachel on the shores of the same lake. Chichicastanango did indeed prove to be a picturesque market village with some old churches in which local people were performing rituals of both Christian and nativist derivation.

I also had time to make a short visit to Antigua Guatemala, about an hour's drive outside of Guatemala City. Antigua Guatemala was the capital during the Spanish colonial administration, and it is full of ancient buildings in the Spanish style. There are several beautiful old churches. The cathedral, alas, was destroyed by an earthquake, but for a contribution of a few quetzal one can wander among the tumbled-over columns and crashed vaulting.

Conclusions

I was deeply touched by much that transpired at the International Conference on Friends and Evangelism, and often stimulated and surprised. I went not knowing exactly what to expect, but with a philosophical inclination to believe that Evangelical Friends ought to be drawn into FWCC if FWCC is to fully realize the mission to which it aspires. I emerged from the Conference with a much more visceral sense of conviction that the relative isolation of the main body of FWCC Friends from the center of gravity of Quaker Evangelism ought to be ended, and that Friends of all persuasions have a great deal to give to each other. I was sorry that there were not at least fifty other FGC, FUM, and London Yearly Meeting Friends at the Conference, besides the ten or twelve of us who were there.

At the same time, while emerging with my conviction about the relevance of FWCC's mission, I also emerged with a much sharper sense of the difficulties of carrying it out. It was hard for me to imagine what would happen if our usual FWCC constituency showed up at a Triennial, say, and found that 35% of those present were Evangelical Friends. I remember the reports of difficulties at the World Gathering of Young Friends, and wondered if older constituencies would emerge from such an encounter with so much of their loving kindness intact. At the same time, to have a mere handful of Evangelical Friends floating around a typical FWCC gathering, with no additional reinforcement, might leave them feeling very undernourished, and possibly alienated, by their sense of our failure to know Jesus.

I find it interesting food for thought that we non-Evangelical Friends, when thinking of venues for the 1991 conferences, as first choice for exploration picked sites such that two out of three were concentrations of Evangelical Friends, while Friends at the third site, although not Evangelical, practice the programmed form of Quakerism. Thus, Friends who tend to disdain evangelism nevertheless seem to enjoy the results it produces in terms of making our Religious Society relevant to Third World and developing contexts.

One of my favorite Quaker sentiments appears in William Penn's Reflections and Maxims:

The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious and devoted souls are everywhere of one religion, and when death has taken off the mask they will know one another, although the diverse liveries they wear here make them strangers.

As a universalist Friend I enjoy applying this maxim, but until my visit to Guatemala City, my application of it tended to veer in the direction of Buddhists or Hindus, or toward Franciscans or Dominicans interested in New Age spirituality. Will Friends be capable of applying this sentiment to each other across the diverse forms in which their own spirituality manifests? During my visit to Guatemala I was relieved to discover that Evangelical Friends are not strangers, and that we are indeed of one religion. But how we will enact this truth before death strips us of our liveries is a question which deserves our careful reflection.

**Que Todos Puedan ser Uno:
FWCC y la Familia Mundial de Amigos(Friends)**

En la ciudad de New York, donde yo vivo, hay una estación de televisión que transmite programas culturales y educacionales que no son comerciales. Transmite muchos valiosos programas para niños. La programación también incluye frecuentemente conciertos, como asimismo programas sobre Arte, Ciencia y la Naturaleza. También ofrece presentaciones de obras de William Shakespeare, uno de los grandes dramaturgos de la lengua Inglesa.

Esta estación también ofrece frecuentemente programas sobre temas espirituales y religiosos. Fue por este motivo que los directores de la estación de televisión me invitaron a mí y a algunos representantes de otras agrupaciones Cristianas a reunirnos con ellos.

Cuando asistí a esta reunión en nombre de la Sociedad Religiosa de Amigos, me encontré en un grupo de aproximadamente veinte personas. Había algunos sacerdotes y monjas, algunos hombres y mujeres laicos, uno o dos ministros, y uno o dos obispos y patriarcas de diferentes ramas de la Iglesia Cristiana.

Dos cosas me sorprendieron en la conversación que siguió. Los productores del programa explicaron que los programas que ellos han estado transmitiendo acerca de temas religiosos y espirituales estaban generando una audiencia muy grande, y habían producido muchas cartas y comentarios positivos de parte de la audiencia. Los programadores de televisión estaban muy sorprendidos por la necesidad que aparentemente existía en la audiencia por el tratamiento sensitivo de temas espirituales, y parecían genuinamente preocupados por su responsabilidad de continuar respondiendo a esta necesidad en una forma constructiva y auténtica. Ordinariamente yo no pienso en la audiencia televisiva de New York como intensamente interesada en asuntos espirituales, de manera que este fue el primer elemento de sorpresa en la conversación.

Los productores luego explicaron que ellos estaban considerando hacer una ambiciosa serie de programas sobre el tema del Cristianismo. Ellos nos invitaron a la reunión para que hablemos de este proyecto y para que leamos y reaccionemos al plan preliminar que ellos desarrollaron para las series. También querían mostrarnos los escritos que habían preparado para varios de los programas que estaban considerando incluir en las series.

Entonces sucedió en la conversación la segunda cosa que me sorprendió. Los productores nos informaron de los grandes sentimientos de duda con que ellos abordaron el proyecto de desarrollar una serie sobre el Cristianismo, duda basada no en la profundidad del tema, lo cual sería una reacción comprensible, sino más bien una duda surgida de su temor de que, al tratar el tema del Cristianismo, ellos terminarían envueltos en la polémica conflictiva de la gente interesada. Fue muy sorprendente para mí que programadores profesionales de la televisión, cuyo trabajo habitual consiste en tratar controversias, desde vecindarios locales a grandes debates nacionales, incluyendo conflictos internacionales y guerras, se sintieran aparentemente intimidados por los desacuerdos entre diferentes grupos Cristianos. ¿Cuán feroces somos nosotros, realmente?

Frente a esta preocupación de los productores de la televisión de que, tratando el tema del Cristianismo, ellos estaban enfrentando un tema lleno de intolerancia y controversia, es interesante reflexionar en el mensaje de Jesús en el Evangelio. ¿No dijo él que sus seguidores serían reconocidos, no por sus doctrinas particulares o sus métodos de organización de la Iglesia, sino más bien por el amor que ellos sentían por el prójimo? ¿No hemos sido nosotros enseñados que si estamos ofreciendo un presente al altar, y recordamos que un hermano o hermana tiene algo contra nosotros, debemos posponer el presente e ir primero a reconciliarnos, y luego volver para ofrecer el presente? ¿No es cierto que debemos amar no solamente a los otros Cristianos o a nuestros vecinos sino también a nuestros enemigos, y hacer el bien a aquellos que nos odian? ¿No nos han dicho que todo lo que le hagamos a cualquier persona se lo estamos haciendo a Jesús mismo?

En la oración con la cual él termina su discurso final en el Evangelio de San Juan, Jesús dice que él fue enviado por el Padre para que "todos puedan ser uno... aunque ya seamos todos uno".

Como Cristianos, entonces, nosotros estamos comprometidos al ejercicio de la caridad mutua y constante, y a la práctica de la unidad, porque, ¿cómo podríamos predicar el Evangelio de la reconciliación sin estar reconciliados?

Hoy, más de doscientas denominaciones separadas existen en el paisaje del Cristianismo contemporáneo. La gente está de acuerdo sobre muy pocos temas. Ciertamente los Cristianos no piensan de la misma manera sobre su Fe. Hay discrepancias acerca de la doctrina, moralidad, celebración y la organización. Algunas personas ven esto como un pecado y un escándalo, otros reconocen la existencia de una pluralidad de denominaciones con características diferentes como legítima, como la manera en que Dios llega a su gente.

Pero casi todos reconocen la responsabilidad de trabajar por la unidad entre los creyentes.

Algunas personas han trabajado para la unidad tratando de definir lo que los Cristianos creen acerca de ciertos aspectos fundamentales de la vida Cristiana. Se ha dado especial atención al bautismo, la Eucaristía, y el ministerio. Otros buscan la unidad no en la doctrina, no en la forma de organización de la Iglesia, no en un proceso de federación, pero en la experiencia de haber sido tocado por el Espíritu y dando testimonio de su fe Cristiana. Los Cristianos Evangelistas, y los Amigos de todas las ramas de nuestra propia Sociedad Religiosa, tienen en común cierta cautela acerca de una unidad Cristiana concebida como uniformidad doctrinaria o como el desarrollo de estructuras organizadas o concilios. Sin embargo la necesidad de alguna forma de unidad es siempre reconocida.

En 1974 el Congreso Internacional Evangelización Mundial, reunido en Lausanne, Suiza, fue la ocasión para la reunión de un grupo internacional de 142 líderes evangelistas bajo la dirección honoraria de Billy Graham. La gran mayoría de éstos líderes firmaron el Convenio de Lausanne el cual afirma "que la unidad visible de de la Iglesia en la verdad es el propósito de Dios".

¿Cómo encaja nuestra Sociedad Religiosa de Amigos en este panorama?

La Sociedad Religiosa de Amigos existe en unos 56 países alrededor

del mundo. El número total de miembros adultos probablemente excede 240.000 almas. Por una parte, esto es mucha gente. Por otra parte, por supuesto, nosotros representamos una muy, muy pequeña porción de la Comunidad Cristiana total.

Pero lo que es interesante es que en muchos aspectos nuestra muy pequeña Sociedad Religiosa de Amigos es un microcosmo de la Comunidad Cristiana total, con su amplia diversidad de doctrinas y creencias, de modos de celebración, de prácticas espirituales, y de testigos sociales. Por lo tanto, visto en el contexto de las necesidades de nuestra familia humana total, la diversidad dentro de la Sociedad Religiosa de Amigos puede ser una señal de la única vocación a la cual nosotros hemos sido llamados en esta coyuntura en el desarrollo del drama de la Creación. Jesús de Nazareth vino, como nos dijo, para que todos podamos ser Uno. Pero Jesús respecto a los Samaritanos, a los Centurianos, a los cobradores de impuestos, y a los descastados de todo tipo. Seguramente el no habría querido el mundo unificado y pacificado forzando sus diferentes razas y culturas en una uniformidad. Tal vez la misión de la Sociedad Religiosa de Amigos es mostrar como una gran cantidad de gente puede estar junta en una unificada y amante comunidad y al mismo tiempo respetar e incluso celebrar las diferencias de sus distintas partes. Porque si cada entidad constituyente de esta diversidad encuentra su propia Verdadera Manera, cada una de ellas también va a expresar la manera universal. Este es el milagro que hace posible la unidad.

El Comité de Consulta Mundial de Amigos (Friends) es el organismo mundial a través del cual Amigos busca la Unidad compartiendo entre todos los dones del Espíritu, y tratando de afirmar la vida de cada uno de nosotros por medio de celebración, servicio y testimonio, al mismo tiempo que amando y respetando nuestros distintos carismas. La FWCC es el instrumento que tenemos para practicar el amor mutuo y la constante caridad de la cual Jesús habló. Es donde encontramos que el Reino aludido en las Escrituras no está ubicado en algún tiempo futuro cuando Dios vuelva al mundo después de una larga ausencia, sino más bien en su superabundante entrega de Sí Mismo a su gente en cualquier momento en que ellos despierten ante su presencia a través de la práctica del amor, de la justicia y de la misericordia. Es donde encontramos el Reino de Dios vuelto visible en nuestro medio a través de nuestros actos.

Como ya lo he mencionado, nosotros llamamos este instrumento mundial de la unidad de Amigos "Comité de Consulta". "Comité" y "consulta" son términos interesantes. Yo no estoy seguro de que estas palabras suenen como si tuvieran algo que ver con las Escrituras. En realidad parecen peculiarmente modernas y anémicas en sus connotaciones. Yo no recuerdo que estas palabras aparezcan en los grandes pasajes del Evangelio de San Juan, o en las Epístolas de los Paulinos, donde la gente de fe son reunidos en comunidades. Y cuando George Fox tuvo una visión de una gran cantidad de gente reunida, fué esta una gran reunión para formar comités con el propósito de consulta?

Sin embargo, hay algo genial en estas palabras que es peculiarmente adecuado para un organismo mundial en el contexto de este planeta. Porque el término "consulta" implica una amplitud que ofrece lugar para todos. No implica que los elementos constituyentes estén forzados en un conformismo doctrinario; pero tampoco implica el tipo de diversidad amable en la cual ninguno piensa que asuntos de fe cuenten mucho. Implica oír creativamente. Implica que la unidad que la verdadera fe religiosa trae no es una unidad de doctrina, de manera de celebración, de forma de organización

de la Iglesia. El punto esencial de convergencia es la calidad de espíritu que sólo la sincera y desinteresada devoción por las cosas de Dios puede producir. Porque el Cristianismo no es algo que nosotros sabemos con nuestras mentes, sino que es algo que nosotros somos. Es una calidad de ser. Nuestras mentes no pueden contener o comprender el conocimiento de Dios, porque nosotros no podemos contener lo que nos contiene a nosotros ni comprender lo que nos comprende a nosotros. Nosotros podemos sentir la verdad, pero no podemos adecuadamente expresarla. Aquellos que entienden esto nunca entran en discusiones sobre doctrina. Ellos saben que la Verdad debe ser vivida, no meramente pronunciada por la boca, y ellos saben que viviendo esa verdad, lo que es imposible de definir se hará visible.

Esta verdad puede ser experimentada directamente en reuniones como ésta en la ciudad de Guatemala mucho mejor que a través de lecturas. ¿No es por eso que todos hemos hecho un gran esfuerzo para venir aquí? ¿No es por eso que tenemos fé de que, cuando cada uno de nosotros vuelva a nuestras propias comunidades, Iglesias y reuniones, a pesar de nuestras limitaciones personales vamos a traer un mensaje de gracia y verdad a nuestra gente? Uno de los trabajos más esenciales del Comité Mundial de Consultas de Amigos es estimular estos encuentros espirituales entre los miembros de Amigos. Estimular visitas y viajes sobre temas espirituales. Arreglar Conferencias y reuniones como ésta; facilitar el entendimiento mutuo y la cooperación entre misiones y organismos de servicio de Amigos alrededor del mundo. Mobilizar equipos de Amigos alrededor del mundo para servir en las Naciones Unidas de manera que un testigo de Amigos pueda ser colocado entre los diplomáticos y sirvientes civiles internacionales trabajando en New York y Ginebra. FWCC tiene muchas formas de presentar la preocupación de Amigos por la paz y el desarme, por el movimiento Feminista, por la igualdad racial, y por la correcta distribución de los recursos mundiales. Finalmente, la FWCC es un instrumento a través del cual Amigos puede relacionarse con el espíritu ecuménico del mundo Cristiano, y así nos permite conducir diálogos con gentes de religiones no-Cristianas, diálogos que están creciendo en importancia en este mundo que se ha convertido en una villa global.

Miembros de Friends de las Reuniones Anuales representados aquí en Ciudad de Guatemala han jugado importantes papeles en la vida de la FWCC, por lo cual estamos muy agradecidos. Pero la FWCC necesita una muchísima amplia participación de los Amigos representados en esta Conferencia, para llevar a cabo su misión más perfectamente.

Una de las principales actividades de la FWCC son las reuniones trienales. Estas son reuniones que ocurren una vez cada tres años, en las cuales Amigos de todas las ramas de la familia Quákera se reúnen para celebrar, compartir, y aprender unos de otros. La próxima Trienal es en Agosto de 1988. Se realizará en Tokyo, Japón. Esperamos que muchos Amigos de las reuniones e Iglesias representadas aquí en Ciudad de Guatemala también atenderán esta Trienal. En el período de preguntas y discusión que seguirán estas palabras de introducción, tal vez podremos hablar más acerca de planes para la Trienal, y acerca de aumentar su participación en la misma. Yo estoy aquí representando la Oficina Mundial de la FWCC, basada en Londres. Mi colega, Alex Morisey, trabaja en la Sección de Américas de la FWCC, y él puede decirles a ustedes más en sus programas específicos. Alex y yo juntos también podemos darles alguna información

de las actividades de la FWCC en Europa y el Cercano Este, Asia y el Pacífico Oeste, y en África. Yo también espero que ustedes puedan ayudarnos a pensar acerca de cómo la FWCC puede funcionar mejor en el futuro. Nosotros queremos que ésta sirva más y más efectivamente como un instrumento que permita a todas las ramas de la familia de Amigos continuar más perfectamente juntos en el amor de Jesús.

Se nos ha dicho que al comienzo sólo había una Palabra, una Palabra que es el origen de todas las cosas, una Palabra de gracia y verdad. Esta Palabra habita dentro de cada uno de nosotros, y dentro de cada ser humano que haya existido. Amigos en todas partes del mundo están envueltos en una jornada común, una peregrinación, para descubrir dentro de ellos mismos esta Palabra y su revelación de las cosas eternas y universales en las que toda vida correcta y verdadera paz están basadas. Si hoy en día observamos a los miembros de nuestra Sociedad Religiosa de Amigos alrededor del mundo, nosotros reconocemos que hay muchos caminos posibles en esta jornada de búsqueda, y que uno de ellos siempre se abre para aquéllos que desinteresadamente lo buscan. Porque es una de las características de la Verdad que aquéllos que tienen sed de ella eventualmente reciben la gracia de encontrarla y expresarla, como si el precio al cual se compra la Verdad es el mismo sincero y puro anhelo por ella. ¿No es por ésto que se nos ha prometido que aquéllos que buscan, con seguridad van a encontrar? Compartamos, entonces, como Amigos, la confianza de que, habiendo ya encontrado en nuestra fé Quákera algo que es supremamente bueno, hay algo más, de inagotable medida, lo cual, juntos en la unidad de Su Amor, nosotros aún tenemos que lograr.

Daniel A. Seeger
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