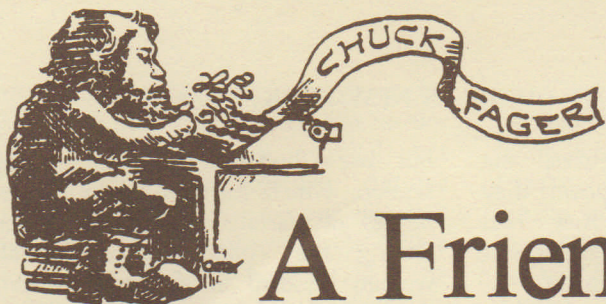




POPEYE POOPED OUT??? With autumn weather here, we are again in the "hot cereal season," when oatmeal makers go all out to sell their grey glop to America's youth. But according to a statement by a Quaker Oats Company spokesman last month, Popeye the "Quaker Man" will **NOT** be returning. The two-fisted sailor is going back to spinach; he was out-slugged by Quaker Power.

A Friendly Letter

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TENTH & ELEVENTH MONTHS, 1990

Dear Friend,

If you find the article in this issue valuable, I have a request to make of you. But first, there is some explaining to do.

A Friendly Letter is usually four pages long. The article in this issue, however, is three times normal size. It wasn't planned that way; the subject--Witchcraft and Quakerism--simply would not fit into the standard format. It was too complex, too emotionally freighted, and, I came to feel, too important. If you are among those who prefer the shorter length, I hope you will take a deep breath and press on through the extra pages anyway.

This is also the first double issue ever. This too was not intentional; the research and writing just took that long. In preparation I read six books, totalling 2500 pages; spent ten-plus hours in long distance telephone interviews (the MCI bill will be horrendous); and traveled seven hundred miles to upstate New York and back. There was much more that could have been done, had there been more time and budget. The article itself has been through almost a dozen drafts.

I did all this because the involvement of some unprogrammed Friends in witchcraft seemed to highlight in a special way many key issues facing Friends today. Moreover, as it developed, the story seemed to become a kind of parable of the condition of society at large: increasing fragmentation into mutually ignorant subcultures; the growth of media images as a substitute for real contact and communication among them; their vulnerability to the manufacture and exploitation of fear for commercial, political and religious purposes.

It is my sense that many of the hottest disputes that inflame our political landscape--abortion, obscenity, school textbook censorship and more--are as much cultural conflicts as much as anything else. Americans understand this, just barely anyway, when it comes to race. But it is equally true of religion, though there the cultural partitions are often harder to see. And Quakers are as subject to these trends as any other group; it is wishful thinking to imagine otherwise.

If this reading of the signs of the times is at all accurate, one implication is that the need for bridging

institutions, agencies and media able to look and speak across these yawning cultural gaps is increasingly important. The case could even be made that the longterm health of our society may depend on how well such institutions are maintained and how effectively they function.

This is where my request comes in. In our small Quaker corner of the world, *A Friendly Letter* has tried to fill such a cross-cultural function. If you are a regular reader, chances are it has worked that way for you, at least to some extent.

And if it has, then my request is that you take the gift subscription flyer inserted in this issue, and seriously consider sharing *A Friendly Letter* with at least two F/friends this holiday season.

I ask this in part for a reason of mutual self-interest: a desire to avoid a subscription rate increase. Production costs continue to rise; postal rates will soon jump substantially; and as that looming phone bill underscores, reporting is expensive. In the face of these facts, the only sure defense is a broader circulation base.

But to my mind these are, if inescapable, still secondary considerations. I seek your help primarily to be better able to work at seeing, understanding, and speaking across the gaps within the Society of Friends, and through it to the world outside.

In pursuit of this mission, you are the ultimate judge of my performance. And if the extraordinary effort that has gone into this issue seems worth it to you, sending gift subscriptions to Friends and Friends is one of the most effective ways to express that confidence.

I hope you will come through for me, and for Friends.

Yours in the Light,

Chuck Fager

Chuck Fager

WITCHCRAFT AND QUAKERISM: THE GREAT DIVIDE IN NEW YORK?

New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM) is a kind of field laboratory for an ongoing experiment in institutional Quaker ecumenism. Unfortunately, in recent years, many of the results of this test have not been promising, and never more so than at its 1990 session.

New York is one of the reunited YMs, knit together in 1955 from Hicksite and Orthodox groups which had separated in 1828. The Orthodox YM brought into the union several pastoral meetings, and some members who are strongly evangelical, even fundamentalist in their views. The Hicksites' religious outlooks range from liberal to humanist, atheist and beyond. (For a survey of liberal Quaker theologies, see AFL #28.)

The 1980s were not easy for NYYM. While many other unprogrammed yearly meetings were growing, New York's membership declined by about ten per cent; the body struggled to meet its budget; and worst of all, its annual sessions were wracked by chronic wrangling over doctrine and morals. An effort to rewrite its *Faith and Practice* has been a major focus of NYYM's recent divisions. By last year, this process had become so acrimonious that the Yearly Meeting put it temporarily on hold. Initially this was to be for a year, but it could well continue indefinitely.

DON'T GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

In this impasse, the moral sticking points are what one Friend calls the "pelvic issues"--abortion, homosexuality, and sexual/family issues in general. At the other pole are perennial doctrinal questions: How Christian is or should Quakerism be? What, and *who* defines "Christian"? What are the limits of Quaker faith and fellowship? And underlying them all, though few will ask it openly: has NYYM's experiment failed--was reunification a mistake?

An Ad Hoc Committee on Love, Discernment and Community, representing most of the conflicting viewpoints, had worked this past year to find a peaceful way forward.

Despite continuing differences, the committee members were upbeat; they planned to report that they had maintained a Friendly spirit, and this at least seemed reason for optimism.

But on 7/24, the Tuesday night of the 1990 Yearly Meeting, all hopes for a peaceful session suddenly went aglimmering, when a minute was read from Clintondale Meeting, a small pastoral church in the Hudson Valley. The minute was short and stern:

"Clintondale Friends Meeting rejects the teachings of Goddess worship and their correlates of paganism and witchcraft, and calls on New York Yearly Meeting to do the same. Paganism and witchcraft have no place in the life and teachings of the Religious Society of Friends."

WHERE BOMBSHELLS ARE BORN

Paganism? Witchcraft? The minute, although it came as a surprise to many Friends, had considerable history behind it. It began with an announcement the previous fall of a women's weekend workshop at Powell House, NYYM's conference center. The topic was the Quaker experience of the Goddess, and in the announcement for it the workshop leader, Carolyn Mallison, described herself as, among other things, "a student of Wicca," the name for certain forms of modern witchcraft.

This was not the first such workshop Mallison had led at Powell House; she had also led interest groups on Goddess spirituality at NYYM for several years. But a few Clintondale Friends, seeing the reference to Wicca, felt such a session should not be held on NYYM property. After much labor, and not without dissent, the meeting agreed, and protests were sent, first to Powell House, then to the YM Ministry and Counsel Committee, and finally to the YM representative Meeting, all unsuccessfully.

The workshop was held as scheduled, but Mallison invited Clintondale women to attend. Two did,

but were horrified by the opening session, which included chanting the names of various ancient goddesses. During the chant the Clintondale women huddled in a corner, reciting the Lords Prayer, then packed hurriedly and went home. Clintondale Meeting soon resolved to take its protest of this paganism to the full Yearly Meeting.

Once it was read on the YM floor, there was division about what to do with this minute. A move was made to send it to Ministry and Counsel Committee for consideration and guidance. Many approved of this; but the Clintondale Friends present emphatically did not. They wanted to be heard, and they wanted to be heard *now*. This was not a time for procedural finagling; to them it was a matter of life and death.

MAKING SOMETHING CLEAR

Walter Eichler was one of the Clintondale Friends. He had not been to Yearly Meeting before, and had driven for several hours specifically to attend this session and voice this concern. He repeatedly tried to speak, but the Clerk did not recognize him. Finally his pastor, Dan Whitley, intervened and he was given the floor.

As he recalls it, Eichler told the group, in sum, that it didn't really matter what they thought about this minute, because God had already decided the issue: *You can't be a Christian and believe in things like witchcraft and Goddess worship, as evidently many here do. Some things in the Bible are complicated, he insisted, but some things in it are clear, and this is one of them: the Bible condemns sorcery, witchcraft, and the worship of goddesses. It's not mysterious; it's a matter of the First Commandment.*

Eichler is a big man with a gruff voice, and he spoke brusquely about these things. Both his words and his tone were offensive and frightening to many of his listeners; as he spoke, one after another began to stand, in silent angry, fearful protest. Carolyn Mallison was one of them.

This confrontation crystallized

more than a theological disagreement; it also showed that Friends like Eichler and Mallison inhabit parallel but strikingly different cultures, cultures without a common language on such matters. These cultures lack visible landmarks at their borders, like the French signs in Quebec to the north; so they are easy to miss, and stumble over. But they exist nonetheless, both inside and outside our Society.

And that night, these two cultures clashed like half-submerged icebergs colliding in a murky sea. The depth of the differences between these two Friends can be seen in the wildly different and yet eerily parallel accounts of their perceptions at that moment:

FEAR COMES CENTER STAGE

Walter Eichler sensed the presence and work of demons, minions of Satan, all around him, a presence that cried out to be named, rebuked and banished in the name of Jesus Christ. Carolyn Mallison, on the other hand, heard frightening echoes of the Inquisition; she could almost smell the smoke of fires that consumed tens of thousands (or was it millions, as some say?) of suspected witches, most of them women, women like herself.

The atmosphere of the business session abruptly thickened with hostility. To one shocked Friend, what followed was a total disintegration of Quaker process. Another saw "fear, anger, pain enter center stage uproariously...we were brought to our knees." A third said it seemed the Yearly Meeting was suddenly, astonishingly facing schism. Joshua Brown, the respected pastor of Adirondack Meeting, was so upset that he walked out of the session and began packing his bags.

After that night, Friends struggled to salvage the week. Ministry and Counsel did end up with the Clinton-dale minute, and made plans to meet with partisans on both sides in the coming months; or as one Friend put it, the Committee said, "We can't fix it for you. We can't do it in a week."

Then at Thursday's business session, another blow fell: A letter from Joshua Brown. Brown is no fanatic; he has lived and worked among both programmed and unprogrammed Friends. His letter noted that he had tried to play a bridging role among New York Friends. But Tuesday's events, Goddess worship and witchcraft were things he could not stretch to cover. Thus he was resigning his Yearly Meeting appointments forthwith, and had already left for home. There were gasps when this letter was read, and business was brought to a halt; several Friends were in tears.

PEERING INTO THE DARKNESS

What produced such a sharp clash? To approach an answer, let's look at the cultures involved. Walter Eichler is a citizen of America's evangelical subculture. He says he listens only to Christian radio stations, and besides worship at Clintondale, he attends a midweek charismatic service as well. He also reads evangelical Christian books, in particular a novel called *This Present Darkness*, (Crossway Books, 1986) by Frank Peretti.

This book demands our attention here, because it has shaped much of the current concerns of people like Eichler, Dan Whitley, and millions of others. If you have never heard of it, that shows your isolation from the subculture it speaks for, because *Darkness* has sold almost 1.5 million copies in the U.S. since 1986, has been very widely discussed, and translated into 11 foreign languages. A major movie will be made of it soon, says the publisher; and a sequel has sold nearly a million copies already.

In the novel, which unfolds like a thriller, a small town in the American heartland--not unlike Clintondale, New York--is targeted by a vast horde of demons. They want it to be the nerve center of a plot to take over the United States and make it the keystone of a New World Order. In this Order, every human will be part of a Universal Consciousness, all controlled by a super-demon, who once ruled ancient Babylon. Is this ex-Babylonian demon-prince the Antichrist? Satan himself?

The novel is tantalizingly coy about this, but his human vehicle, a man named Kaseph, is portrayed as "*a perfect cross between the ultimate guru and Adolf Hitler [who] makes Al Capone look like a Boy Scout. Even the Mafia is afraid of him.*"

To gain their ends, the demons are not above murder and mayhem. But usually they use subtler devices, above all New Age seduction. A character explains that this term covers, besides Jungian psychology and its archetypes, "*Eastern meditation, witchcraft, divination, Science of Mind, psychic healing, holistic education--oh, the list goes on and on--it's all the same thing, nothing but a ruse to take over people's minds and spirits, even their bodies.*" The book is full of people who have been seduced by New Age techniques, taught by a beautiful woman psychology professor at a nearby college. They are then possessed by hideous, vividly-described demons, who sink long claws invisibly into them, like giant predatory insects with their prey.

A NEW DOORWAY FOR DEMONS

But the hapless victims of this vast supernatural conspiracy are not, fortunately, alone. In the town is a little evangelical church--not unlike Clintondale Friends Meeting--whose pastor is a young but brave and true Christian. And above him and his beleaguered congregation are a platoon of watching angels, who see the plot taking shape and rally their own forces for a decisive battle on behalf of the believers and their heavenly Master.

Despite the fact that a reader soon figures the good guys will win in the end, the tale is quite suspensefully told. More important, for many readers, it is only half fictional. The characters and the town are made up; but their predicament is real, and is common to all believers. The New Age, witchcraft, etc., are really out there. Through them, many evangelicals are convinced, satanic beings are in fact possessing more and more people every day.

Most ominous of all, the demons' most prized conquests are true Christians and their churches. That's because these are the only real

bulwarks against the demonic forces; they are the source of the "prayer cover" the angels must have to throw the demons back. It is these believers who must, and can, drive demons from their victims in Christ's name, as they do repeatedly in *Darkness*' pages.

This Present Darkness provides the key to the fervor of the Clintondale delegation. They were not being mindlessly judgmental and intolerant; they were fighting Satan for the very soul of New York Yearly Meeting--fighting and, they greatly fear, losing.

If you doubt this interpretation, then move on from *Darkness* to another widely-read book from the same publisher, and based on the same theology, *Dark Secrets of the New Age*, by Texe Marrs. This book is presented as a nonfiction expose; yet its depictions of the perils facing believers, and the infernal schemes of the New Age conspirators, are more lurid than any of Peretti's inventions.

THE SEEDBEDS OF FEAR

"Documented" with hundreds of footnotes, Marrs warns that "*a multi-headed, invincible, conspiratorial network is the goal of the New Age.*" This plot centers on what he calls "**The Plan.**" And "*Once New Agers ascend to world power, they will undoubtedly consent to the plans of the Antichrist to rid the world of the inferior 'rabble' that prevents universal Cosmic Consciousness ... The New Age war on Jesus and the Bible is vile and vicious.*" He makes frequent references to Hitler and the holocaust as New Age prototypes.

Is it any wonder that Walter Eichler and Dan Whitley pressed their case with urgency? The paranoia level about everything dubbed "New Age", among evangelicals influenced by this literature--and most are to some degree--is difficult to overestimate. And the angry reaction to Eichler's testimony seemed like proof, solid evidence they were in enemy-occupied territory.

But what of Carolyn Mallison, who was among those who stood, and whose leadership of the disputed workshop thrust her into the eye of the storm over Clintondale's minute, as the

most visible spokeswoman for witchcraft in NYYM? What shaped her equally fearful reaction?

Ignorance, for one thing. Mallison has not been to Clintondale; she avoids pastoral meetings. A retired librarian, she came to Friends at Westtown in Pennsylvania, a mainline unprogrammed meeting. Later, moving to Richmond, Indiana, she was appalled by pastoral Quakerism. After settling in New York, she was slow to transfer her membership from Philadelphia YM, because of the presence of programmed meetings in New York. She has stayed within the liberal, feminist subculture, and had only vaguely heard about *This Present Darkness*. "*I guess I've been hiding out from all that,*" she acknowledged.

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

But she has images of such people; and there is another novel which helped shape them: it is *The Handmaid's Tale* (Fawcett paperback, 1985) by Margaret Atwood. This *Tale* likewise was an international bestseller (the paperback alone has been through twenty-one printings), and was made into a major motion picture. It too is regarded by many readers as only half-fictional. In it, a fundamentalist conspiracy overthrows the American government and establishes the Republic of Gilead, a regime which combines South African apartheid and Nazi anti-semitism with a high-tech, puritanical, misogynist theocracy.

Women in Gilead have no real status outside patriarchal families, and many, like the novel's protagonist, are forced into slavlike concubinage for breeding purposes. This practice is based on a passage in Genesis 16, where Abraham's childless wife Sarah offers him her "handmaid," Hagar, in order that he might have a male heir.

Abortion and feminism have, of course, been made capital crimes in Gilead, and executions for these and other offenses are frequent, the mangled results left hanging in public. Yet there is, it turns out, a dangerous "Underground Femaleroad" helping women escape to Canada. Naturally,

many of these quiet resisters are Quakers, even though the sect is subjected to frequent police roundups as heretics and subversives.

The Handmaid's Tale and *This Present Darkness* are in many ways mirror images of each other. When Walter Eichler and Carolyn Mallison stood in confrontation at that NYYM business session, it was almost a case of duelling potboilers. But how accurate are the portraits each has drawn of the "other side"?

It is easy to take aim at Peretti and Texe Marrs, especially when comparing their work to a book like Margot Adler's first-rate survey of modern Neo-Paganism, *Drawing Down the Moon* (Beacon Press, 1986). Adler, who some readers may recognize as a veteran correspondent for National Public Radio, has visited literally hundreds of Wicca and neo-pagan groups in the U.S. and Britain over a 15-year period, and is thoroughly familiar with the best scholarship on its history and sociology. Her book is an exemplary piece of serious reporting; it is also one, unfortunately, which Walter Eichler and Dan Whitley have *not* read.

A NOSE FOR NONSENSE

Marrs, on the other hand, deals almost entirely in second- and thirdhand sources. His whole New Age super-conspiracy notion is repeatedly contradicted by his own data, which points instead, as does Adler's, to "New Age-ism" and Wicca being riotously shapeless thickets of thousands of disparate groups, including numerous competing would-be messiahs.

"*The Plan most definitely includes ominous provisions for Christians,*" Marrs declares, and the very lack of evidence for this is itself evidence: "*even if they exist, it would be difficult--perhaps impossible--for us to gain access to the actual documents that reveal outright a hideous, hidden intent to persecute, purge, or kill all the Bible-believing Christians....*" Got that?

Journalists have words for what Marrs passes off as reporting; among the printable ones are: hogwash, malarkey, poppycock, balderdash, and

crap.

The real source of Marrs' thesis is an 1853 tract, *The Two Babylons*, by Alexander Hislop, which argued that a purported "mystery religion" of ancient Babylon was the original of all satanic, anti-christian cults, and that its marks were the true indicators of satan's rule. But Hislop "proved" that the **Catholic Church** was the new Babylon, and the Pope was the Antichrist. Marrs discards Hislop's now unfashionable anti-Catholic bigotry and substitutes "New Ageism". Anyone relying on such drivel is not only seriously, dangerously misinformed about the facts; their theology also needs revamping.

ALAS, BABYLON--AGAIN

The same outlook shapes *This Present Darkness*: "Universal Consciousness," says an angel in awe, when the apocalyptic nature of the plot at last becomes clear. "The world religion, the doctrine of demons spreading among all the nations. Babylon revived right before the end of the age." This works better as fiction, where Babylon's resurgent Prince can be decked out in the latest apocalyptic fashions. In sum, "New Age-ism" might be an unqualified evil, but it is not the monster Marrs and Peretti think they see.

Evangelical journalists of greater integrity have said this, more than once. *Christianity Today* ran a major article on witchcraft in its 10/21/1983 issue. It was judicious, well-informed, and definitely non-hysterical. And a recent book, *Another Gospel: Alternative Religions and the New Age Movement*, by Ruth A. Tucker (Zondervan, 1989) also refutes the grand conspiracy nonsense. But *Darkness* seems to have drowned out these evangelical voices of reason, at least for now. (For that matter, its presence among Friends was mentioned in AFLs #27 and #31, that same year, without causing a ripple.)

But let's get back to our stereotypes. On the other side, what about *The Handmaid's Tale* and Clintondale Meeting as the spearhead of Gileadite fascism?

The best antidote to such paranoid feminist canards would be a visit to the

century-old clapboard church in its setting of autumnal apple groves, now heavy with their harvest. Behind it is the little original 1811 meetinghouse, and behind that a hillside leveled and ready for construction of a baseball field. (If you build it, I couldn't help thinking, will they come?)

The morning I attended worship, on 10/7, the sanctuary was well-filled, the service programmed but a little haphazard too, the children numerous and occasionally noisy, the singing heartfelt. The group was also mindful of its silent heritage, devoting a full fifteen minutes to "open worship".

After meeting, talk with Clintondalers made plain that their primary concerns centered, not on some statewide witchhunt, but on their own spiritual and personal struggles and achievements. For instance, the most prominent literature in the fellowship room was not some anti-New Age screed, but brochures for Alcoholics Anonymous. Their next big program will be, not a purge of Hicksites, but a fellowship dinner for Jamaican apple pickers. Here, it was abundantly clear, is a real church, made up of real people, and that meant it had plenty of home-grown problems to worry about.

A TIME TO MOVE ON

No wonder then that pastor Dan Whitley's sermon that morning focussed on their famous minute, but not to call them into more Gileadite combat. Rather, he exhorted the handful of activists who had pushed it (including himself) to lighten up, to leave it in God's hands, and turn their attention back to their own community and its many physical and spiritual needs.

Overall, despite my confirmed preference for silent worship, I found Clintondale Meeting very appealing, and wished other Friends, especially some of New York's liberal zealots, would visit there; if they are to have pastoral groups in NYYM, they won't do much better than this. Sure, you can find fear and prejudice there, but no more than in some liberal unprogrammed meetings I've seen.

Clintondale and its viewpoints are

not well represented in NYYM at large. For instance, the Ninth Month issue of NYYM's newsletter, *Spark*, included brief comments on the YM sessions by nine Friends, and two long Letters to the Editor. The issue was evidently intended to dampen the polarization, but the attempt backfired: none of the nine Friends was from Clintondale or the strongly Christian group; and one of the letters spoke snidely about "evangelical types" while the other muttered darkly about "power seekers" using "fear and ignorance" in a manner similar to Hitler, as if Gilead already had a beachhead in the Hudson Valley.

To say that Clintondale Friends felt this issue of *Spark* was grossly biased against them is an understatement. For Walter Eichler in particular, it was the last straw: After reading it, he resigned from the meeting, and his wife followed his example. "I'm going to look for a church where I can be a Christian," he told me bluntly.

OLD RELIGION, NEW MYTH

Spark's bias is too bad, especially given the basically non-threatening character of Clintondale as a church community. On the other side, I doubt if some Clintondalers would be pleased to hear it, but my exposure to Wiccans among Friends, once I pushed past the fears the term evoked, aroused many similar sympathetic responses. Most come to it the way described by a woman in a recent letter, via concerns "about sexism: in society as a whole, in the church, and among Friends." She speaks of "alternative religious activities that Quaker women are using to express our experience....when god is male, male is god--and this is what I see."

As Carolyn Mallison says, "the organized church has much to answer for," which is true enough. Some find more adequate symbols outside it, in Wicca. The most interesting and detailed accounts of these symbols and their appeal came in Margot Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon*, and *Dreaming the Dark* (Beacon, 1988), by Starhawk, a leading contemporary witch.

Most Wiccans believe they are exploring something older than Judaism or Christianity. They often refer to

their "Craft" as the "Old Religion", which preceded Christianity in Europe and particularly England. Yet Adler shows that this "Old Religion" idea is almost entirely a myth, a modern invention which makes use of ancient symbols. But few Wiccans are literalists: "*Traditionally, religions with indefensible histories and dogmas cling to them tenaciously,*" she writes. "*The Craft avoided this through the realization, often unconscious, that its real sources lie in the mind, in art, in creative work.*" For many adherents, "belief" in these symbols as actual gods or their rituals as invoking objective forces is not necessary; old or new, Wicca is meaningful, Adler says, because it works for them.

THEY COULD BE COUSINS

(And by the way, both Starhawk and Adler firmly reject, both in practice and in principle, Satanism and all the terrifying violence and child molesting /sacrifice stuff that Marrs and others accuse such movements of. In all her years of travel and research, Adler never ran into a Wiccan group involved in either of these. She argues that Wiccans and other neo-Pagans are no more likely to be child molesters and killers than are Christians or Jews, and those who do such things are as aberrant in the one tradition as in the others. But to be safe, she includes a Cult Checklist which can alert spiritual explorers to dangerous tendencies in a group or leader--Pagan, or Christian.)

It would be easy, reading accounts of Wiccan rituals, to dwell entirely on (and be dismayed by) their pagan features, such as the use of various ancient god and goddess figures, oracular tools like Tarot cards, and the habit some have of doing some rituals in the nude. Despite all this, as I worked my way through their books, familiar phrases and ideas kept leaping out at me. The relevant quotes could fill several pages; among them are an emphasis on seeking the divine within; continuing revelation and aversion to creeds; improvisation in ritual which often amounts to an "unprogrammed" worship; women in equal or leading roles; decisionmaking by consensus, with minimal organization and no

hierarchy; and for Starhawk at least, commitments to peace and nonviolence.

How much closer to liberal Quakerism can you get? In Starhawk's case, pretty darn close. She recommends Quaker dialogue techniques she learned from Friends in jail during an antinuclear protest that Quakers helped organize; most of her activist colleagues, she says, are not witches: "they are as likely to be Quakers, Buddhists, radical Catholics, or atheists." (Note who gets first billing.) She even comments that the Quaker "*doctrine of the 'Inner Light' reflects a Christian conception of immanence,*" and this is the highest compliment she pays to any Christian group.

Given these many Quaker/Wicca affinities, it is no wonder that some evangelical Friends consider liberal Quakerism little more than paganism in a bonnet. They have also been noticed in Friends General Conference: When FGC's plenary planning committee met to pick speakers for the 1991 FGC Gathering, Starhawk was their first, unanimous choice. (She was unable to accept, but it's the thought that counts.)

NEW MYTHS, OLD COMPLAINTS

Even the criticisms of the new "Old Religion" that come to mind also apply rather well to liberal Quakers generally: Their complaints about the Judeo-Christian tradition, while containing much truth, typically reflect a narrow and stereotyped view of it; in fact, there is more of immanence in Christianity, and more of a divine feminine, than they think (See AFL #111).

And there is often a tendency to attack Christianity, as more than a few Christian Friends, including this one, can attest. The phenomenon of anti-Christian prejudice among liberal Friends was considered at length in AFL #37; this is a real problem, because Christianity, with all its faults, remains Quakerism's heritage and context, and it isn't going away.

Also, they do not take evil seriously enough, in my view. Where liberal Friends tend to ignore it, Wiccans prefer to see it as an illusion or a manipulative tool of patriarchal

religions; neither is adequate, in my experience and observation.

Carolyn Mallison surprised me by agreeing with this. "*Many of these 'New Age' witches are just blissing out and don't know the dangers involved,*" she said. "*But there are people in occult circles who want to use power for selfish purposes.*" She compared magic to prayer, and believes both can be used for God's work or against it.

Mention of God brings up another point. Despite their affirmation of Wicca's pagan roots, Adler and Starhawk mention numerous instances where this identity has been diluted. Adler tells of witches who joined synagogues or became Catholics. Even Starhawk, in the revised edition of her book, tells of reaffirming her own Jewish identity: "*I am comfortable being both a Jew and a Pagan....*"

THAT EMBARRASSING FOX

For her part, Carolyn Mallison insists that, notwithstanding her Wiccan studies, she is still a Christian, albeit an unorthodox one. She does not like to read the writings of anti-Christian, anti-male radical feminists. "*Everybody's involved in the problems we have,*" she maintains. And she sees in Wiccan symbols a partnership of Goddess and God. Such mixing of traditions is an ancient phenomenon, condemned by many theologians as syncretism and heresy, but persistent for all that. It also shows that the Judeo-Christian traditions may not be as easily shed as some neo-Pagans would wish.

Mallison even thinks George Fox must have been something of a magician, for instance, by the way he shook many people up just by looking at them. She may be right, too; Fox published a *Book of Miracles* detailing many amazing and terrible things that happened during his career. (It was suppressed by embarrassed elders.)

Such talk hardly reassures more evangelical Quakers, however; in fact, it makes them nervous. And I don't blame them: Fundamentalists aren't the only ones who carry psychological baggage where witchcraft is concerned.

As Adler herself says, "The mere words *witch* and *witchcraft* unlock a set of explosive associations that inspire unease if not fear." While attempting to learn enough about witchcraft among Friends to write about it intelligently, I found I had to deal not only with others' fears, but my own as well: it gave me nightmares and other physical symptoms. It made me ill.

This response was both cultural and personal. I may scoff at Texe Marrs' paranoia; but I have my own, the unconscious deposit of centuries of conditioning about the dark evils of witchcraft. It echoes from as far back as the book of Exodus, which coldly commands that "*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.*"(22:18) Just the word for the resulting terror campaigns, which now has a generic meaning, still strikes a chill into me: *witchhunt*.

REMEMBERING OLD FEARS

And then there is the personal side of it. It was well into this study that my wife reminded me of something I had "forgotten": my own encounter with a kind of witchcraft in 1968. The details are for another time; suffice it to say that it did not involve anyone connected with this present article, that much of what happened is still mysterious, but that in the end I was left with a family member nearly killed, and myself shaken to the roots.

I mention these autobiographical items because reporters have their personal and cultural histories, their fears, which cannot be wholly disconnected from their work. And in many ways this essay comes down to a story about fear: Fear of witchcraft, fear of witchhunts, fear of the unknown, fear of each other, fear of ourselves.

And as New York YM's experience shows, our Society, and our society, are increasingly vulnerable to being driven by fear, especially fear of each other, or of what we imagine each other to be. New York's travail may be but the beginning: Present at the fateful Tuesday night session were observers from Friends United Meeting in Indiana. NYYM is a member of FUM,

and is supposed to host its 1993 international Triennial session. Stories of witchcraft in eastern Quakerism were soon circulating on FUM's pastoral grapevine. Add to this that FGC invited a witch as a major speaker at its next Gathering, and you have plenty of fuel for the fires of fear and divisiveness among Friends at large.

Can New York Friends recover their balance and handle the issues entangled with Wicca in a Friendly spirit? Can they work through the many levels of fear involved? Can they learn enough of the realities that lie behind their images of each other to make judgments based on reality and not on fearful fictional stereotypes?

SPIRITS IN METAPHOR

I wonder. It won't be easy. Despite my scorn for fundamentalist pop demonology, I am not a skeptic about spiritual combat: There are forces out there which won't fit in a test tube but which can wreak broad havoc. To speak of them as "spirits", entities with a kind of autonomy is at least a useful metaphor, one George Fox often used. Here evangelicals and Wiccans are in substantial agreement, more than they realize, though they argue about which spirits are which and how to deal with them.

The spirit of fear is surely one of them, as we have seen here only too vividly. The spirit of division is another. This force, loosed so abruptly by the minute on the YM, is always a double-edged sword: after worship at Clintondale, the first people to speak to me were those anxious to say they were against sending the minute and unhappy about its impact. And even Dan Whitley noted that the dissension it generated had produced a dropoff in attendance. This is a shame, but it could have been predicted; it was Paul, not a witch, who observed that we reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7).

(And looming over these lesser demons is another one, previously unmentioned here: the spirit of war. I visualize it as growling beast, crouched in a cage. A few men in Washington and Baghdad have their hands on the

latch, ready to open it and loose the monster upon us. War will make every other problem, including intramural Quaker quarrels, harder to solve.)

Personally, I have seen little in Quakeish Wiccan spirituality that threatens Christian Friends, once we get over our fright. Following Gamaliel's counsel (Acts 5:38-39) is probably the wisest response: "*Leave these men[sic] alone!...For if their purpose...is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men[sic].*" One scholar told Adler that "*The Craft is really the Yoga of the West*"; and some liberal Friends have practiced yoga for years without causing any great calamity.

Yet it would not be unthinkable if many in New York YM, after informed, empathetic consideration of all the implications of this new "Old Religion" among Friends, decided they were indeed called to be separate from it. In that case, the groups could part amicably and in right ordering, still able to cooperate where appropriate.

RELEARNING AN OLD LESSON

But New York Friends are far from any such informed and peaceable discernment process, not to mention the mutual regard it implies. And if they ever achieve it, they may well discover that the kind of fellowship and community created in the process outweighs their theological and cultural differences. If this seems fanciful, consider that it was just such a conviction that led the old Orthodox and Hicksite YMs to reunite in the first place.

Maybe these old Friends were deluded; maybe cultural/doctrinal conflict leading to separation is the permanent fate of our Society, and society at large as well. But then again, maybe they knew something we have forgotten, something William Penn put this way: "*Love is the hardest lesson in Christianity, but for that reason it should be most our care to learn it.*"

And if the Christian Friends can learn it, perhaps the Wiccan Friends can too. And New York's Quaker ecumenical experiment could continue.

SPECIAL: OUR FIRST DOUBLE ISSUE---
QUAKERS AND WITCHCRAFT

Address Correction Requested

From: Chuck Fager, A Friendly Letter
P.O. Box 1361
Baileys Crossroads, VA 22041

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THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

Two obscure books, published in 1960, stand as the monument to the Quaker godfather of peace research. They are *Arms and Insecurity* and *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels*. Their almost equally obscure author was Lewis Fry Richardson, born 10/11/1881 in Newcastle, England.

Trained as a meteorologist and chemist, Richardson served in the Friends Ambulance Unit in World War One. He came away from that experience confirmed in his Quaker distaste for war; so much so that he left a job with the Royal Meteorological office in 1920 when it became part of the military air ministry. Thereafter, Richardson worked quietly as a teacher and chemist, until his retirement in 1940.

But in these same years he pursued a growing concern, which after retirement became a solitary passion: To discover whether the causes of war could be modeled mathematically. As he explained, "I have a prejudice that the moral evil in war outweighs the moral good, although the latter is conspicuous. This prejudice is derived from the Quakers, who brought me up. I am not ashamed of it; indeed, it has been one of the two principal motives for (this work). The other principal motive is my prejudice that scientific method is more trustworthy than rhetoric. I am not ashamed of that either."

This seemed to him far preferable to the noisy and often simplistic rhetoric of pacifist activist groups. "There are many antiwar societies," he lamented much later, "but they are concerned with propaganda, not research."

Most of his research consisted of tracking down and quantifying statistical data associated with arms races and hostilities, to provide the basis for a mathematical theory of warmaking. This was lonely work, but he didn't seem to mind: "I hardly know what loneliness feels like," he admitted. "When solitary I am usually serene; when in a crowd I am often embarrassed...." He acknowledged that this temperament "does prevent its possessor from collecting disciples and founding a 'school.'" His essays are full of complicated charts and formulae, unsuitable for use on a picket sign or protest leaflet.

His books were not published until seven years after his death. But they left their mark: peace studies is now an established field, and Kenneth Boulding has written that "Richardson's equations will be changed by future investigators, some of his conclusions will be abandoned, but his work will remain forever as the first step made in the right direction....Whatever the shortcomings of (his work), it will have to be studied by every investigator who delves into the causes and origins of war."

QUAKER CHUCKLE

Anne Thomas, the distinguished General Secretary of Canadian Yearly Meeting, recently asked for a button to be made bearing the motto, "Question Authority....But not your mother," to wear at Yearly meeting sessions and committee meetings.

Her daughter Helen then asked for a companion button, to read "Question Authority....But not my mother."

While a travelling minister was visiting a farm in Ohio, there was a flood. She joined her hosts on the roof of the house as the waters rose. Looking down, she was amazed to see a large hat moving back and forth in the water across the front lawn. When she pointed this out to the farmer, he said, "Good Lord, it's George, the hired man. He said he would cut our grass today come hell or high water, and I guess he meant it."