

The Conservative Friend

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Of Writing, Encouragement, and Vocal Ministry



The art of writing has interesting parallels with vocal ministry. The gifts are closely related, but true ministry comes from a different source. Another difference is in how they are encouraged. Admiring comments for a secular writer can be an encouragement. However, the same directed at a minister* can be counterproductive. When a compliment is directed at a writer, it is to acknowledge that the writer has a gift for selecting and assembling words.

Encouragement directed at a minister should not be a compliment for well-chosen words. It should be an acknowledgment that the minister was well used. A minister should only take encouragement in that light. To do otherwise can build up the ego which can interfere with being a vessel for The Word.

Although the gift of writing and the gift of ministry can appear similar, they are not the same thing. A message that comes out of the depths of worship should be from The Spirit and not the individual. The effectiveness of a message comes from the source of the message, not from the skill in assembling it. There are times when a minister has the gift of word assembly, but it must not be trusted or consciously relied upon. Such a gift may be

tapped by the divine, but it can only be used with God's direct control.

And, just because someone appears to lack the ability to choose words, it does not mean that they will not be called by God to deliver a message. If such an ability is hidden, divine promptings can bring it out. If such an ability is absent, God can provide it.

For these reasons, those who feel inadequate to convey God's Word, must be open to the possibility that, they too, may be asked to serve. Those who are confident in their speaking ability (justified or not), should be careful that what they hear inside them is truly a divine message and not from their own thoughts or desires.

When God gives you a message to share in Meeting for Worship, you may find yourself selecting words to convey that message. But the choice of these words must not be directed by any sense of good prose. They should be selected by recognizing which words are yours and which are truly authored by Him. He is the vine; we are the branches. Nutrition only flows through us. It comes from Him. He is the musician. We are the instrument. We cannot produce music on our own. We can rejoice in the small part we play, but we must remember that the composition, rendition, and artistry are His alone.

So, when you hear a message offered in the sacred silence, do not judge it by human standards, but let it settle on your soul. If it runs off like water on oil, let it pass and return to the silence. If it sinks in and deepens the silence, it is a sign that the message is authentic. We can and should encourage those who deliver authentic words. But as we must not blame a messenger for bad news, neither should we give credit to one that delivers good. Thanks should be given to anyone for faithful service, but praise should be reserved for our Father in Heaven.

Charles "Chip" Thomas, Jr.,
(Marlborough Monthly Meeting, OYM-C) 3/2026

*When we say minister, we are not referring to someone in a paid position of a church or even someone recorded by Friends. We are referring to anyone who has been called by God to speak His Word to His assembled people.

Inspired Ministry



“Without me,” said our Lord to his disciples, “ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5). But when He had endued them with the Spirit, they ministered the Spirit (Gal 3:5), as well as the doctrines of Christianity. For true gospel ministry is not that of words only, but of words with power. Therefore the true minister of the gospel always baptizeth, more or less, in his ministry, according to the measure of divine influence upon him; who without it would be only as salt without savor. However he might be furnished with scholastic argument and human eloquence. These may entertain the head, and move the passions, which is not the business of an inspired minister; but to subject them, and to instruct, and quicken the soul into an inward sense of the effective power and virtue of divine life. “My speech, and my preaching,” said Paul, though a learned person, “was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit, and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor 2:4-5).

Joseph Phipps, *True Christian Baptism and Communion*, (1870), p.14

Rejects Beautiful Openings



I sat long in silence; many presentations attended my mind, but as I waited for the Word of life, I saw there were many subjects on which a man might either muse or speak, divers fields of doctrine, a large scope for choice; but alas! we cannot choose aright for ourselves, anymore than we know what to pray for, without assistance. So I was made willing to reject all these false openings, however beautiful; and sinking down into the silence of all flesh, this pertinent lesson was opened to my mind: “Ever remember, when thou approachest before thy God, in order to worship Him, that of thyself thou canst do nothing: that thy business is, to wait in true silence, avoiding all imaginary workings of thought, and all self-active motions, cogitations, and conceivings; feeling thy relationship, thy sonship, therein crying, “Abba, Father,” and in a sensible communion with Him that made thee, experiencing that He has graven thee upon the palms of His hands; therein breathing to Him for help and instruction; not presuming to stir him up, nor awake him, before he pleases; nor to form unto thyself a graven image; nor to presume to warm thyself by the sparks of thy own kindling, lest thou lie down in sorrow.

Job Scott (1751-1793), *Pearls from the Deep*

About *The Conservative Friend*

The Conservative Friend (theconservativefriend.org) is published under the care of the Wider Fellowship of Conservative Friends Committee of Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends in Barnesville, Ohio (ohioyearlymeeting.org).

Wil Brant (Crossroads, OYM-C) serves as editor.

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The Conservative Friend, Ohio Yearly Meeting, Barnesville, Ohio



Are the Scripture Essential to Salvation?



Salvation begins when we realize that we are poor, helpless people and seek God's help to obey Him, both in setting aside what we should not do and in doing what we should. George Fox's coming out of his spiritual wilderness and into God's kingdom meant giving himself up to the Lord in a whole series of acts—leaving evil company, taking leave of his relations, and setting aside outward supports to rely wholly on the Lord. Fox's moment of hope flashes forth when he faces his own helplessness: "When all my hopes...in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, Oh then, I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,' and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy" (*Journal*, p. 11). For Fox, Scripture could not do what our present Lord did, for living in the presence of, and at the direction of, our Lord is the work of salvation. Fox observes:

Though I read the Scriptures that spoke of Christ and of God, yet I knew Him not but [except] by revelation, as he who hath the key did open¹, and as the Father of life drew me to his Son by his spirit. And then the Lord did gently lead me along, and did let me see his love, which was endless and eternal, and surpasseth the knowledge that men have in the natural [human] state, or can get by history or books; and that love let me see myself as I was without him (*Journal*, p. 11-12).

In addition to testifying that an individual's personal salvation experience happens through

¹ A Biblical allusion to Revelation 3:7

Christ, early Friends understanding that Christ enlightens all people, and thereby leads into salvation even people who do not have access to the Christian Scriptures. Of course, early Friends did have the Christian Scriptures, but although they used them extensively, early Friends did not claim the Scriptures to be "essential" to spiritual salvation. God's power and love are the essentials of salvation; where there is no Bible, God's power can still reach and save men and women. The Old and New Testaments are living witnesses to the fact: God's power was already working to direct men and women to save them, before the Testaments existed. Today, too many people dismiss the Scriptures by drawing the unexamined conclusion that "inessential" means "useless," "of little value," and "can be readily skipped and ignored." They take what they think is the shortcut, which is actually the very long, circuitous, difficult, and dangerous route.

Terry Wallace explores several dangers of too casually asserting the "inessential" nature of the Scriptures for being saved from the World.²

First, we can too easily become centered on our individual experiences with Scripture and our own experiences of being drawn to Christ Jesus. While our witness to our own rescue from the World can be useful to a point, it can also lead us inadvertently to equate our experience as the common or even universal experience of men and women today. Yes, some do find that early on in their lives they're turned off by Scripture or have no significant acquaintance with it and yet Christ Jesus leads them along until they are finally open to Him, engaged with Him, and have passages of the Bible opened to them by His Spirit. Yet many others have grown up with an appreciation and love of the Scriptures. The use of a word like "inessential" to describe the Scriptures will simply move many of those people to reject what we have to say, because

² From Terry H.S. Wallace, "Scripture and Salvation: To those who say that the Scriptures are inessential to our salvation" {Accessible at crossroadsquakers.org/reflections}

they are aware of how significant (this is not to say “sufficient”) the Scriptures have been in their own salvation and sanctification.

Second, we must be sensitive to how others than ourselves may read and respond to the words we are using. We live in a time in which the World denigrates Scripture, ridicules it, and seeks to dismiss it. After all, its words from God stand too often as a judgment against the World’s evil actions, destructive politics, lack of responsibility and self-control. If we say that the Scriptures are “inessential” to salvation, the ready response of fallen human nature is “Good! I don’t have to deal with them....”

[Third, we] must be most careful in the words we use, because we should not imply that the gospels and the words of our Lord are “inessential”; that our Lord’s life, crucifixion, sacrifice, and resurrection are “not required”; that, if such knowledge is “not required” and “insufficient” for our salvation, we may ignore them completely and consign them to the ash heap of history. Certainly these are the easy spins the World can put on our words, spins that point out where our words might lead others.

Fourth,... [in] our haste to point to what is essential to salvation, we risk inadvertently throwing into the negative much of what the Lord has given us to assist us in finding and walking on the straight and narrow Way....

Rather than an inessential impediment, the Scriptures are a God-given gift to help us seek and find Him, but they are not absolutely essential to salvation.

From *Traditional Quaker Christianity*,
Assembled and Edited
by Terry H. Wallace,
Susan S. Smith, John C.
Smith, and Arthur Berk,
(Ohio Yearly Meeting,
Barnsville OH: 2014)
Section 2.B, pp. 31-34.



My Father, William Cope’s Musings (1919-2002 OYM minister)



- To be converted, conversion-meaning: change of direction, a turning point, about face.

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Rev. 3:20

- Is our decision to open the door the same as conversion? Is conversion something or a decision we must make ourselves?

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.” Psalms 19:7

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” Acts 3:19

“For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted and I should heal them.” Acts 28:27

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” James 5:19, 20

“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach

transgressors the way; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.” Psalms 51:12, 13

Mary Alice Pino,
(Middleton Monthly Meeting, OYM-C) 12/8/2026

Peace



“From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” (James 4:1). “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness” (Mark 7:21-22). Primordial to all these is the inherent human drive to dominate others and the equally strong drive not to be dominated.

If there is ever to be true peace, it will only happen when there is One to whom ALL humans abandon their drive to dominate and to whose domination they ALL abandon themselves. And who is this One? It is He who, possessing the power to command even the wind and the waves, washed the feet of those subject to His command. It is He who could call down twelve legions of angels to defend Himself, but who instead forgave those who tortured and crucified Him.

There is only One to whom we can surrender so completely, trusting to be treated fairly, mercifully, lovingly. This is Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God. He has the authority and the power to reign as KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS, yet submits His will entirely to God. This Jesus, as a seed, as a spark, lives deep

within every person. When we submit to the weeding of our own desires that makes way for Him to grow; when we nurture that growth with the compost of our own dead wills, we will become as He is and we will live in that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars.

If we want peace in the world, we must not only experience and live this truth ourselves. We must acknowledge that we as human beings cannot make peace, bring peace, keep peace. What we can and must do is to proclaim the truth of Christ to the world.

Conrad Lindes, (Salem Upper Springfield Monthly Meeting, OYM-C), 4/2026

How to Become Happy



When we do anything which we feel to be wrong, a feeling of reproof arises in our minds which destroys our peace and comfort. It makes us uneasy and unhappy. This feeling comes not only to men and women, but to children also. When we are tempted to be angry with our companions, to say what is not true, to take what belongs to another, or to do anything that is wicked, we feel that these things are wrong, and that we ought not to act in such a manner. If we obey this feeling, which would restrain us from evil, we are rewarded by a feeling of peace; but if we yield to the temptation to do evil, a sense of condemnation follows, which destroys for a time our happiness. That which comforts us when we do right, and reproves us when we do wrong, is the Spirit of the Lord who created us. He is very merciful and kind to us, and He

designs that we should be happy in this life, and that after death our spirits should forever be happy with Him. But He is a pure and holy being, and we cannot be happy in His presence unless we also be made pure and holy.

Therefore He warns us against everything which is wrong and sinful, and encourages us in those things which are right and good, so that He may prepare us to enjoy eternal happiness.

If we refuse to obey His warnings, and go on committing sin after sin, we become more and more wicked; and if we continue in this state until the end of life, we must be forever separated from His presence and be eternally wretched. But great is the love of God toward us, that He sent His Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, into the world to save us from so dreadful a state. He came, as the Holy Scriptures declare, that we might have life, that is, spiritual and eternal life. Jesus Christ, when on earth, taught men how to live so as to receive the Divine blessing; and for Christ's sake, God is willing to forgive us our sins, and continue to love us freely if we will obey His commandments. He also promised His disciples that He would send the Comforter, which is the Spirit of Truth, to teach them what they should do, and should guide them through life, so they might receive eternal happiness hereafter.

Reader, this is the Spirit of the Living God, through Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, which teaches thee that thou must not lie, or steal, or envy the blessings of thy neighbor, or indulge to excess in eating or drinking, or use bad language, or injure another, or do anything which is evil. It leads thee to speak the truth, to be temperate, honest, just, kind, merciful, to avoid evil thoughts, to love all men and seek to do them good.

It works in the hearts of all, even of those who never heard of the coming of Christ on earth. It is spoken of in the Holy Scriptures as the Grace of God, which it is declared hath appeared unto all men, and which teaches them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world. It not only shows us what is wrong, but it

gives us power to turn from and resist it. When thou art tempted to do evil, this Divine Grace will warn thee against it; and if thou yield thy mind to its influence and turn from the evil, it will give thee strength to do the Lord's will, and thus preserve thee from evil. By acting in this way thou wilt find favour with the Lord, and He will often reward thee with a sweet feeling of peace and tenderness of heart. Thus thou wilt learn to love the Lord more and more, and to obey His commands; and He will forgive thy sins, and enable thee to trust in His goodness and mercy.

As thou livest in His love and holy fear, doing His will, He will give thee a hope and faith that when thou leavest this state of being thou shalt be prepared through His help and mercy to enjoy pure happiness hereafter with Him, and with the good of all ages and nations. This will make thee very watchful and careful not to offend so gracious a master, and thou wilt be afraid to indulge a wicked thought, knowing it pollutes thy soul and is displeasing to the Lord. But if thou refuse to submit thy will to the Lord's will, and disregard His Divine Grace or Spirit by doing what thou feelest to be wrong, thou wilt grow worse and worse. The devil who tempts us to sin will have more and more power over thee, and thou wilt become more and more like him. Thou wilt have no pleasure in the society of good people, nor in thinking of the Lord thy Creator. Thou wilt seek the company of sinners like thyself, and if death should overtake thee in that condition, thou must dwell hereafter with the wicked.

Dear reader, choose that which is good and refuse the evil, and may the Lord bless thee and help thee to love Him, and keep His holy law in thy heart, as He shows it unto thee.

Author and date unknown (c. late 1800s), printed as Tract Association of Friends, Tract 130; reprint permission extended by Tract Association of Friends, Philadelphia.

Walk and Answer



Unfortunately, it can be quite common for a phrase to be lifted from its context and take on a life of its own, somewhat removed from the intent of the text that the phrase first appeared in. The phrase “walk cheerfully over the world,

answering that of God in every one” is one such phrase, taken up as a thing we should do, often being stripped from the Christian context in which it was written as well as missing the command to “be valiant for the truth upon earth; tread and trample upon all that is contrary.” In the full text, “walking cheerfully...” is presented as what follows or is the result of serving God and have unity with God and with the scriptures. And that from this, through one’s patterns and conduct in living out this Christ-devoted life, one preaches to all sorts of people. George Fox’s full letter follows to provide the full context of the phrase. Thanks to David Male (Stillwater Monthly Meeting, OYM-C) for raising this concern and the need for people to read the full text. Quote section italicized.

Friends,

In the power of life and wisdom, and dread of the Lord God of life, and heaven and earth, dwell; that in the wisdom of God over all ye may be preserved, and be a terror to all the adversaries of God, and a dread, answering that of God in them all, spreading the truth abroad, awakening the witness, confounding the deceit, gathering up out of transgression into the life, the covenant of light and peace with God.

Let all nations hear the sound by word or writing. Spare no place, spare no tongue, nor pen; but be obedient to the Lord God: go through the work; be valiant for the truth upon earth; tread and trample upon all that is contrary. Ye have the power, do not abuse it; and strength and presence of the Lord; eye it, and the wisdom; that with it you may all be ordered to the glory of the Lord God. Keep in the dominion; keep in the power over all deceit; tread over them in that which lets you see to the world’s end, and the utmost parts of the earth.

Reign and rule with Christ, whose sceptre and throne are now set up, whose dominion is over all to the ends of the earth; whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, his throne an everlasting throne, his kingdom an everlasting kingdom, his power above all powers. Therefore this is the word of the Lord to you all,

Keep in the wisdom of God, that spreads over all the earth; the wisdom of the creation, that is pure from above, not destructive. For now shall salvation go out of Zion, to judge the mount of Esau; now shall the law go forth from Jerusalem, to answer the principle of God in all; to hew down all inventors and inventions. For all the princes of the earth are but as air to the power of the Lord God, which you are in, and have tasted of; therefore live in it, that is the word of the Lord God to you all; do not abuse it; keep down and low; and take heed of false joys, that will change.

Bring all into the worship of God. Plough up the fallow ground. Thresh and get out the corn; that the seed, the wheat, may be gathered into the barn: that to the beginning all people may come; to Christ, who was before the world was made. For the chaff is come upon the wheat by transgression. He that treads it out is out of transgression, fathoms transgression, puts a difference between the precious and the vile, can pick out the wheat from the tares, and gather into the garner; so brings to the lively hope the immortal soul, into God out of which it came. None worship God but who come to the principle of God, which they have transgressed. None are ploughed up but he who comes to the principle of God in him, that he hath transgressed. Then he doth service to God; then is the planting, watering, and increase from God.

So the ministers of the spirit must minister to the spirit that is in prison, which hath been in captivity in every one; *that with the spirit of Christ people may be led out of captivity up to God, the Father of spirits, to serve him, and have unity with him, with the scriptures, and one with another. This is the word of the Lord God to you all, a charge to you all in the presence of the living God; be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your life and conduct may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every*

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one; whereby in them ye may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you: then to the Lord God you shall be a sweet savour, and a blessing.

Spare no deceit. Lay the sword upon it; go over it. Keep yourselves clear of the blood of all men, either by word or writing, and keep yourselves clean, that you may stand in your throne, and every one have his lot and stand in the lot in the ancient of days. The blessing of the Lord be with you, and keep you over all the idolatrous worships and worshippers.

Let them know the living God; for teachings, churches, worships must be thrown down with the power of the Lord God, set up by man's earthly understanding, knowledge, and will. All this must be thrown down with that which gave forth the scripture; and who are in that, reign over it all. That is the word of the Lord God to you all. In that is God worshipped, that brings to declare his will, and brings to the church in God, the ground and pillar of truth: for now is the mighty day of the Lord appeared, and the arrows of the Almighty gone forth; which shall stick in the hearts of the wicked.

Now will I arise, saith the Lord God Almighty, to trample and thunder down deceit, which hath long reigned and stained the earth. Now will I have my glory out of every one. The Lord God Almighty over all in his strength and power keep you to his glory,

that you may come to answer that of God in every one in the world.

Proclaim the mighty day of the Lord of fire and sword, who will be worshipped in spirit and in truth; and keep in the life and power of the Lord God, that the inhabitants of the earth may tremble before you: that God's power and majesty may be admired among hypocrites and heathen, and ye in the wisdom, dread, life, terror, and dominion preserved to his glory; that nothing may rule or reign but power and life itself, and in the wisdom of God ye may be preserved in it.

This is the word of the Lord God to you all. The call is now out of transgression, the spirit bids, come. The call is now from all false worships and gods, from all inventions and dead works, to serve the living God. The call is to repentance, to amendment of life, whereby righteousness may be brought forth, which shall go throughout the earth. Therefore ye that be chosen and faithful, who are with the Lamb, go through your work faithfully in the strength and power of the Lord, and be obedient to the power; for that will save you out of the hands of unreasonable men, and preserve you over the world to himself. Hereby you may live in the kingdom that stands in power, which hath no end; where glory and life is.

George Fox, "Exhortation to ministers" (1656)