

Dear Illinois Yearly Meeting Friends: Here is the text of my talk from June 15, 2011. I have resisted the impulse to make changes in it, although it is not polished, and I can (now) think of a number of ways to make it better.

I have added some information about the sources I drew upon so that you can read more from each of these people if you wish. I did not try to remember the off-the-cuff comments I made during my talk, and the ending is likewise not here because I did not write it down in advance.

I thank you for inviting me to speak at your Yearly Meeting. David and I had a wonderful time.
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P.S. The phrase “AFW,” used below, means “A Few Words,” and it stands for the introductory comments I make to calm myself down before I start reading from my talk. I think I said something like what is listed below, but I can’t remember. Phrases that are **in bold face** are usually comments to myself, and I don’t always speak them.

" 'If it bring you into trouble, it will bring you out again': The paradoxes of being a Quietly Rambunctious Quaker. " Illinois Yearly Meeting, June 2011

1. Hello and AFW
 - a. Grew up near here; attended Evanston Meeting for 4 years in the 80s.
 - b. Vocal stylings of 2-Ton Baker and the Happy Pirates
 - c. Humor of Garfield Goose
 - d. Wisdom of Kukla, Fran and Ollie
2. The saying that provides the title for my talk tonight comes from a tract written in 1658 by an early Friend named Sarah Blackborrow. Her title was, “A Visit to the Spirit in Prison,” and in it she invited all people to “come to Christ the light of the World.” I’m here to introduce you to her story, but I’ll tell you more details a bit later. My plan is to lift her (and others) up as examples of what I’m calling “Quietly rambunctious Quakers.” I think they offer us – even though they lived long ago or far away – some clues about how to live our Quaker faith now, here, with one another. **This is my main goal.**
3. That, I think, is what we are always trying to do – and especially when we come to Yearly Meeting. Yearly Meeting is like – well, it’s like a little Quaker village, isn’t it? We gather for a few days to live and pray and think and worship as Friends. We step outside of our usual lives, and outside of time, in a way, to re-create for a while an enclave that is Quaker saturated. It feeds us and strengthens us for the challenge of being Quakers now. As I often say: we can’t wait for some better, wiser, more faithful group of people to come along and be the Society of Friends. Look around, Friends, and rejoice and tremble: It’s us: for good or ill.
4. A bit about Rambunctiousness

- a. This is one of my favorite words, and I don't really care if it is sort of a made-up word, based on the ideas behind the word "robust" and forcefulness of being a "ram."
 - b. What I like of the word, and why I think it is a useful one for us, is the connotation of being "unruly." If you are rambunctious, then you are willing to hold a mirror up to the rules, question them, and maybe even defy them – for the core values and principles that matter to us.
 - c. If you are rambunctious, you are forthright moving toward forceful, you are sometimes loud and outrageous, maybe even obnoxious, you may even be strident and definitely out of control. We will look for these qualities in the stories I'm telling tonight, and I'll invite you to look for them elsewhere in Quakerdom.
5. A bit about the "Quietly" part:
- a. I chose this word carefully, although I'm not fully happy with it. What I wanted was a word that suggested intentional calm, or chosen stillness. Here are some words I rejected, so you can understand my choice better, and can offer an alternative word.
 - b. "Silence" is a much-used and much beloved word among us, and could work here. My troubles with it are two:
 - i. first, it implies that not-speaking is our goal, and that not-speaking is somehow better than speaking. When we say "silent worship," is that what we really mean? Don't we mean, "worship based on silent waiting"? The word "silence" tends to rule out the possibility of speech. This leads to my second objection:
 - ii. "Silence" can be used as a verb, and there is a long history here. Those in power have been known to silence those who object, or rebel [get rambunctious.] History is full of stories of oppressed people being told they have no right to speak, that others will speak for them, that they have nothing important to say. The revolutions going on right now in the world offer a stunning example here: when those in authority try to limit or shut down completely access to the phone lines or the internet, the goal is to silence objections, accounting, and expressions of the truth. That may not be the intention behind the word "silence," but the implications attached to the word make it suspect, or at least difficult.
 - c. "Stillness" works better for me because it solves some of the problems with "silence." Stillness can be a goal, because it suggests that we are actually doing something as we enter into worship – we are stilling ourselves, and that is a stage on our journey to something else. It isn't the end-point. Here's the problem:
 - i. When I was faculty clerk at Earlham, I regularly wrote on our agenda that we would begin our meeting with "Opening Stillness." One day I was rushing about just before our Meeting and my eye transposed a few

letters, so I read “Opening Silliness.” I shared this with the recording clerk, we got the giggles, and so had to share our joke more widely, and – thereby ruined the word for serious use for at least some of our colleagues. [Maybe for you, too.]

- ii. “Stillness” still sounds more passive than I would like. I wanted a word that expresses more dynamism, but can still contrast with rambunctiousness.
- d. So “Quietly” it is – not perfect, but better than two other candidates: “stealthy,” which suggests sneakiness, or “inaudibly,” which suggests that people are just not speaking up.
- e. So: “Rambunctiousness” allows me to look for outrageous Quaker companions who are unruly, willing to break the rules and challenge authority. “Quietly” opens up the idea of working behind the scenes, and not seeking to promote oneself. Together they form a rich partnership that lets us make some new friends among Friends, to see how they accomplished Quaker lives.

I want, at this point, to say a few words about words. From the earliest days of the Quaker movement, Friends looked for ways to manage this paradox: They believed that the central Quaker experience, the direct encounter with God – was beyond the human capacity to describe. And yet: they wrote, and published, and talked and talked – trying to express their experience. They developed a symbolic vocabulary that approximated the experience, and they knew that their words were not fully adequate for the task. For them, words were important but not ultimate: words were “demoted” in importance relative to the experiences themselves [although sometimes you’d never guess that, give how much they wrote!] Early Friends – and Friends since – have held that words can point to the Truth, to meanings, and so on, but they are at best only the vehicles for carrying ideas – behind- beneath - words lies the Truth – ineffable, unspeakable, uncontrollable. This idea about language will emerge gradually as we meet out quietly rambunctious Quakers.

6. First two Rambunctious Quakers: Sarah Blackborrow and Elizabeth Bathurst. Two early Quakers who will demonstrate ways to combine quiet and rambunctious in authentic Quaker lives.

INSERT: I used excerpts from two texts for this part of my talk: "A Visit to the Spirit in Prison," by Sarah Blackborrow, and "Truth's Vindication" (sometimes called Truth Vindicated) by Elizabeth Bathurst. Both of them can be found in Hidden in Plain Sight: Quaker Women's Writings, 1650-1700. This book, edited by the team of Judith Applegate, Margaret Benefiel, Dortha Meredith and me, was published by Pendle Hill Press in 1996. Page numbers here refer to that volume. The account of the dinner party at the Bathurst home is found in John Whiting's book, Persecution Exposed in some memoirs..... on p. 327. The story of George Fox and Sarah Blackborrow and the establishment of the Women's Meeting can be found in the second volume of the 1911(Cambridge) version of George Fox's Journal, on pp. 342-3.

- a. They both lived in England during that era of economic, spiritual, and political unrest. war, increased poverty and dislocation, political unrest, and spiritual betrayals shaped her world. Does this sound familiar? There is in our world, right now, right here, a similar spiritual/political crisis, created in part by the tumult around us. This is part of my urgency to explore Quaker lives: can they help us in our lives to speak to the spiritual famine in our own time?
- b. These earliest Friends set out to discover a vocabulary of religious experience that would tell the truth about what God was up to. [Remember: they had no "early Friends" to rely on!] We need to ask: What was it that attracted people to this way of being? Why were they willing to step out of their ordinary lives and take the risks that being a Quaker seemed to require? And another set of questions: what made these Quakers so dangerous, so obnoxious, so threatening to the authorities of their world?
 - i. Quakers were claiming that it was possible for a believer to have a direct, powerful and unmediated experience with God. No social or political or ecclesiastical structures were required for this experience, and it was available to all.
 - ii. Crucial to their preaching was their view of God and God's nature. It was shaped by two core beliefs: God was Powerful and God was Loving.
 - iii. Quakers were further claiming that coming to know God, experiencing the "Power of God" – this God who loved all of humanity - resulted in what they called "overturning." All "worldly" understandings had been pre-empted – the world – and society – could now to operate according to God's plan: all false and contingent circumstances, like war, social inequality, hatred based on ethnic identity – all that was OVER. "We live" they said, "in the power of that Spirit that removes the occasion of war."

This means that they lived in a new realm, and by living there they would extend this realm. Tremendous appeal of this message.

- c. What was so obnoxious about this?
 - i. In general, Quakers were accused of “making up” a version of Christianity that was not faithful to the accepted Christian beliefs of the day. Their critics went on to argue that wrong beliefs were the cause of subversive acts: not paying the tithe, not using deferential speech and actions, not worshipping in the state church, and refusing to swear loyalty oaths (or any oaths) to the King. Taken together, these actions suggested that Quakers were blasphemous, heretical, socially disruptive and dangerous.
 - ii. In some ways, it made perfect sense for the authorities to throw Quakers in jail for their beliefs and the actions that were motivated by those beliefs. They **were** dangerous to the status quo!

One story to illustrate how this worked:

Sarah Blackborrow

- a. Return to Sarah Blackborrow, whom I introduced earlier. She lived in London during the earliest days of the Quaker movement, and was an acknowledged minister among Friends. She came to George Fox in 1656 – when Friends were being persecuted and sent to jail, where the suffering was huge - and complained that nothing practical was being done for the suffering Friends, especially their families. Fox told her to gather some women Friends together – and the next day, sixty women met and decided to meet once a week to meet the needs of Friends who were sick, prison, needed encouragement, or the necessities of daily life. So right away we know that she meets our “rambunctiousness” test: she is forthright and maybe even strident, and she puts her faith into practice. [
- b. To know more about Sarah Blackborrow, I’m going to focus on a tract entitled “A visit to the spirit in prison.”[1658] SB believed that God has placed in every human heart a “witness” that is “faithful and true.” [HIPS, 48] [This may be what later Friends have called: That of God. Remember: she’s working out that vocabulary.] This witness is given to all people, but our responses to that witness within varies a lot. The witness within is particular to each one of us: it teaches, strengthens, and empowers us in our particular situations to speak up, to act up, and to grow up into a transformed life. We might even say: this is a rambunctious witness! SB uses her own story as an example: she tells us that she became aware of this witness at a young age – 8 or 9 – but that she didn’t quite understand or know what to do about this witness until she met Quakers. They didn’t really persuade her; rather, she says that their testimony matched

what she already knew. [HIPS 49] But note: she writes that this witness works mainly in our hearts – we are inwardly transformed as we make the outward moves: it is a quiet witness as well.

- c. The tone in this tract is urgent and also loving: SB wants her readers to come to know the Living God. She calls them “dear hearts” and she invites them to know God as “a Love...which does not cease...” [HIPS, 49] She invites them to “Wisdom’s house...” [HIPS, 50] where a feast has been prepared for them. She refers to herself as “a lover of your souls, but a Witness against your deceits.” [HIPS, 49] In other words, SB is a rock-bottom realist about the life of faith. She is not naïve about what it takes to join up with these Quaker people. This Witness invites us to come to it, to abide with it, to know its power and leadings. She urges Friend to be unafraid: and reminds them: “if it bring you into trouble, it will bring you out again.” [53]
- d. Now I just love this, because I think it describes perfectly the life of faith as I have known it, studied it, and admired it in other people, and tried to live it out myself. The life of faith – being taught and emboldened by the Witness Within – is NOT a magical state that keeps you safe from all harm. It will NOT (SB suggests to Quakers in 1658) keep you out of prison, or safe from persecutions, or – we say this – protect you from scorn, ridicule, or dismissiveness. No – it will probably lead you into trouble. BUT: here’s the best part – if the Witness does that, it will lead you out again.

TRANSITION: Let’s see how this works – a few other people.

Second person: Elizabeth Bathurst: born in 1655.

1. A second early Friend, names Elizabeth Bathurst. She and her family were religious seekers, looking for a more authentic relationship with God. One night some Quaker visitors dined at their home, and “the word of life was opened.....,” “for them, and they were astonished to realize that this “new” word was also “the ancient path of the just.” [Whiting, 327] EB and her family all joined the Society of Friends.
 - iii. Once EB became a Friend she spoke out passionately against her former church, which was Presbyterian. She disrupted a worship service with her alternate vision of God’s love and power, and was ejected and thrown in jail. Once released she traveled in ministry, speaking in various cities and visiting among Friends.
 - iv. EB combined this rambunctiousness with some quieter activities. She was a writer, and challenged her persecutors on the page as well as in person. *Truth’s Vindication* has three main sections, and lots of sub-sections, and it deals with the major theological questions of the day. I’ll just summarize one part of her argument, hoping that you will find it so lovely that you will read more of it.

SLOW DOWN HERE

1. EB began by addressing the charge that Quakers deny the authority of the Bible. She calls this a “Slander.” [HIPS, 349] For her, one sign of God’s love for all humanity are the holy scriptures, which are a repository of God’s interactions with humans. She expressed deep gratitude and joy for the stories and the teachings found in the Bible.
2. Next point: this loving God, who desires the redemption of all Creation, including all of Humanity, would never locate the source of redemption in only one place: the written scriptures. Because the Bible is written in words, it is “subject to Concealing, Mis-translation, Mis-interpretation, False Application....” [HIPS 352]
3. Third point she makes: there are crucial questions of human existence about which the Bible is silent. Would God, who loves us, abandon us? OR are there other sources of wisdom besides the Bible?
4. Notice here EB’s boldness: she invited her readers to think about the Bible in two ways at once: as a universal and timeless source for Christian inspiration and guidance, and as a time-and-place-bound human document. The value of this document, she argued, is not in the words-on-the-page, but in the powerful and loving truth to which those words point. She invited her readers into a new relationship with the Living God. To move into that relationship she urged them to listen to what the Bible says – about itself and about how to live in the world. She wants her readers to look beyond the words on the page to the Life that

exists beyond those words: she quotes from the gospel of John [and MANY other places]: “When the spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.” [Jn 16:13] [HIPS, 351]

- d. This is only one part of her treatise, and only one part of her life. But there are signposts here for us as we seek to live our own Quaker lives:
 - i. First: How does she combine quiet and rambunctiousness?
 1. *Truth Vindicated* is theological treatise, and she wrote it after a season of rabble-rousing. Writing theology must be done in quiet; it is not a public act. She confessed that she wrote as a matter of conscience: she believed that she had stayed silent too often while other Friends were being mocked, falsely accused, scorned, and lied about. She had to “go public” with her thoughts, despite the cost to her. [HIPS, 346]
 - ii. This helps us to see that writing theology became a form of activism for her: to refute the arguments of those in power meant revealing herself and her thinking to the world.
 - iii. Second: what can we glean from her story for our own journeys into quiet rambunctiousness?
 1. Let’s go back to the story of the Bathurst family, eating together and listening to some Quaker guests: they recognized in the word of life both a new thing, and also “the ancient path of the just.” Maybe we, too, can in our Quaker speaking and living, help others to see and hear the merging of the past and present: and a new way forward into the future. They discover:
 - a. Quakerism can’t be neatly classified as either liberal or conservative – it is both things at once.
 - b. Quism is also both an historical movement and a present day answer to the spiritual hungers of our world. It is both new and old.
 - c. We have to keep in mind how unusual it was for a woman to do intellectual work in public in the 17th century. In fact, when her theology was published, some people raised doubts that she, a young woman, could have produced so sophisticated a work. A Big Name in Quakerism [George Whitehead] wrote a preface for her book, testifying that he has seen drafts of *Truth Vindicated* in her own handwriting, proving that she had written it herself.
 - d. Let’s reflect on the radical nature of her ideas: it was offensive to theologians in the 17th century to suggest that the Bible could be read in two ways - but by the 19th and 20th centuries people had a name for that: The Historical Critical Method. EB shows us how to have the courage to keep wrestling with ideas! Saying clearly what we think about God and the world – this can be a potent form of action!

INSERT: Cyrus Pringle's Diary was published as a Pendle Hill pamphlet [#122] in 1962. That is the version I am using in my talk, although it is also available on-line in various forms. The introduction to the PH version is written by Henry Cadbury, and provides some background on his life, and on the story of the diary's publication. I recommend a book by Kevin Dann, called Lewis Creek Lost and Found, [Middlebury College Press, 2001] which includes accounts of Pringle's work as a botanist, and the later part of his story. I didn't draw on that information for my talk, but enjoyed reading about his life and his contributions, as well as the lives of other naturalists included in this volume.

e. Cyrus Pringle –

- i. The next story I'll tell is about Cyrus Pringle, who lived between 1838 and 1911 in the United States. He was not a leader among Friends, and not a theologian either. [whew.] His main preoccupation in life was plants. He was mostly self-taught as a botanist, but we know that he achieved success and acclaim as a collector and curator of botanical specimens later in life. He considered his life as a naturalist to be evidence of God's loving presence in the world.
- ii. CP was a life-long diarist, but we'll focus today on the diary he kept for 5 months in the summer and fall of 1863 when he was 24 years old. He had been drafted to serve in the Union army during the Civil War.
- iii. On the surface, the story that unfolds in this diary is not terribly complicated. Cyrus Pringle and his Quaker friends, also drafted, made their first big decision: they refused to pay a substitute to serve in their place. Instead they were inducted into the army, where they faced more choices: would they carry guns? Would they clean the guns of others? Would they clean up the camp instead of drilling? Would they work in a hospital, caring for wounded soldiers? At each stage, these young Quakers refused, and the military authorities grew increasingly impatient with them. They were sent to a prison, they were threatened, deprived of food and drink, and eventually they were tortured. Eventually they were transferred to Washington DC, where their cause was presented to President Lincoln. When their pardon came, they returned home to Vermont.
- iv. I want to say a few words about how CP survived this ordeal, with an eye toward what we can learn. I'll focus on him as a diary-writer, and on what that sort of writing did for him.
 1. Writing in his diary helped him as well, and we can see in his words how his faith developed.
 - a. First, his diary-writing helped him to articulate his dilemma. He was caught between two Quaker teachings:

that slavery is evil and needed to be ended, but Friends should not go to war, because Friends are called to live in that spirit that takes away all war.

- b. Second: As he described the conditions under which soldiers lived – we see him making connections: to turn a young man into a soldier who can kill requires that destroying his humanity. [DCP, 10] CP discovered as he wrote that he had compassion for the other soldiers – he saw the Divine Spark within them. [DCP, 16] This surprised him.
 - c. CP was further confused when he and his friends encountered other war resisters in the prison camp. To his dismay he learned that these men were draft rioters from New York - men known for their hatred and scorn for blacks. His confusion deepened: he enjoyed of the company of the soldiers who intended to fight – despite their differing views of war; he was repelled by the other war-resisters, and could not find any common cause with them because of their racist words and actions. [DCP, 16]
2. He wrote about his friendships – and as he described them he realized what it meant that he not alone in this adventure.
 - a. His two companions gave him “deep comfort” [DCP, 9] While in prison they stuck together, often sharing their one blanket and meager supplies. His diary entries reveal that each of these young men went through periods of doubt about their decision not to participate as soldiers. When the doubts hit, they supported each other, had courage for each other, and so they came through together.
 - b. Also with him [in Spirit] were the members of his Religious Society, who prayed for him and worked behind the scenes for his release.
 3. He wrote about God, and what he learned about God through Prayer – CP’s diary includes numerous prayers and references to prayer. He and his friends prayed together, and he also spent time alone in prayer. At each stage of his journey, CP’s relationship with God grew deeper as he learned more about God’s nature.
 - a. Early in the diary CP wrote of his gratitude for God’s love; later he prayed for courage to face the trials ahead. He began to ask himself questions as part of his prayer [DCP, 13]: Why are you afraid? Remember that God is more powerful than “the arms of all men.” In the midst of the atmosphere of war that pervaded everything around him, he found relief in prayer: he was able to look beyond “this error” to the Truth and Holiness –and caught glimpses of “sweet consolation”[DCP, 14] of God’s love. He praised God

for the beauty of the earth, and also asked God to forgive those who were choosing war and heartlessness. [DCP, 15]

- b. As the situation of CP and his companions became dire, it became increasingly clear that they would suffer and perhaps die. Here's where we see his prayer life changing.
 - i. In his diary CP confessed that he had been harboring a secret wish – that he might be spared, sent home. His prayers deepened at this point: instead of asking for release, he desired only to turn himself over to God's will and to trust God's love.
 - ii. [DCP, 27] – After enduring a forced march, deprivations and threats - CP went through a period of despair. He wondered: am I deluded? Is this all in vain? The next morning his heart was full of peace – he discovered that “holy life that is above fear” – and even though doubt continued, he also felt the love of his supporters at home, and the presence of God with him.
4. But the elephant in the room here is: the tension between the testimony against slavery and the testimony against war. How can the diary of CP help us to live an honest and faithful Quaker life in when we feel caught between our loyalties to different Quaker commitments? I find an answer by returning to the diary one more time, to see what is there. We are watching someone grow up in his faith.
- a. When Cyrus Pringle refused to pay the “commutation fee” and then refused to do “alternative service” for the army, he did this against the wishes of his family members and weighty Friends in his faith community. They loved him and wanted him to be safe, and they believed that his religious commitment exempted him from service.
 - b. But he rejected their views, and in the process he discovered new dimensions to his faith. He realized that hiring a substitute would not keep him from the evil of war. In fact, it would bring him closer to the war, since he would be condemning someone else to participate in this great evil. CP came to realize that war was “unlawful” for everyone, not just for himself.
 - c. In his prayer life, CP discovered that he could no longer hide from an unpleasant truth: he had assumed that his prayers would somehow protect him from harm. When that didn't work out, he was tempted toward despair, but instead: discovered a deeper lever of God's love and care.

- d. In the end he refused to “purchase life at cost of peace of soul.” [DCP, 21] He would not compromise one testimony for the other, just to find a resolution for his dilemma. Instead, he was determined to keep faith with both testimonies: he was ready to go into battle with the other soldiers, knowing that he would not fire a gun. That meant that he was prepared to die during the war to end slavery, but not to kill. This didn’t end up happening, but that was the decision he made.
- e. Finally: CP wrote about God’s beautiful earth all around him. [DCP, 15] Slowly his descriptions became more profound.
 - i. On an early journey – a voyage up the Potomac – he described in detail the bright sunshine, green vegetation, calm waters. For him the beauty was “the results and means of wrong.” [DCP,23] The land itself – although beautifully tended, was no longer lovely to him because it reflected the horror of slavery.
 - ii. Later he wrote that the land, “once adorned with groves and green pastures and meadows and fields of waving grain, and happy with a thousand homes” was ruined by the “two-fold blight” – war and slavery. [DCP, 26] He realized that war and slavery were “twin relics of barbarism” [DCP, 26]. Their continued presence was so toxic that they had the power to “change even the face of the country.” [DCP, 26]
 - iii. What happened to him? His emerging vocation – to be a botanist, a naturalist – became infused with his religious commitments. He grew up in his faith.

INSERT: For the story of David Niyonzima I have relied on his account of his life, which can be found in an essay, “How I Came to be a Traveling Minister and was Transformed in the Process,” found in Walk Worthy of Your Calling, edited by Margery Post Abbott and Peggy Senger Parsons [Friends United Press, 2004], and also in his book, Unlocking Horns: Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Burundi, [Barclay Press, 2001.] Another essay, “Healing, Forgiveness and Reconciliation,” found in Seeking Peace in Africa [edited by Donald E. Miller, Scott Holland, Lon Fendall, and Dean Johnson, and published by Herald Press in 2007] provided information about the historical and political context as well as his theological insights. Since David Niyonzima is still alive, I encourage you to watch for his further work. The website for his current work is: <http://www.thars.org>

David Niyonzima **SLOW DOWN HERE TO END**

- i. The final person whose story we'll explore, seeking this combination of quiet and rambunctiousness, is a Burundian Quaker named David Niyonzima. He is the only living person in our group, which makes telling his story a slightly different task – there may be people here who know him, and I hope you will speak with me after, especially if you think I miss big important aspects of his life or personality. Second, he is young (about 50) and so has more to do in his life – so everything I say and we think about him may change - deepen, alter, expand – depending on what he does next week, next month, next year, and so on. Living people are so – ALIVE! – which is part of the fun and part of the challenge in including them in our exploration of Quaker lives.
- ii. David Niyonzima was born in Burundi [Niyonzima, p. 63] , and has lived, worked, and studied in Burundi, Kenya, and the United States. He graduated from Kenya Highlands Bible College, has a Master's degree in counseling from George Fox University, and is currently a Friends Pastor in Burundi. He also coordinates the work of an organization called Trauma, Healing, and Reconciliation Services.
- iii. Three kinds of context will help us to grasp the importance of his life: Quaker, family, national.
 5. Quakers in Africa: A group of three Quaker men arrived East Africa in the early 20th century, where they established a school, a hospital, and an industrial training project.
 - a. The Quaker style of overseas mission work was distinctive: based on a model of empowerment rather than self-perpetuation. This means that by the middle of the 20th century local Quakers in Kenya were assuming leadership roles in all areas. They created a Quakerism that is distinctly African.
 - b. Two important names to know here: Arthur and Edna Chilson from Iowa. They served among the Quakers of Africa for many years, and came to Burundi from Kenya in 1934, funded by Kansas Yearly Meeting. That's one part of his context. Another part is his family:
 6. Family context: David Niyonzima's childhood was partly shaped by the story of his father's miraculous healing in childhood, from a devastating disease. All the other children in the family died from this disease, but David's lived, although his face was scarred for life. For this reason he was nicknamed: the marked one. [Abbott, 76-7; Niyonzima, 62].
 - a. Soon after David's father met Arthur and Edna Chilson. When this young, scarred boy, this miracle child, heard Arthur Chilson preach about Jesus' scars, and his resurrection, he became a convinced Friend. "The marked

one” became “Mark,” later a Friends minister and leader.
[Niyonzima, 63.]

7. The third part of the context is Africa in the late 20th century: David was born in 1959, which was a particularly tumultuous time. All around him, in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, was political chaos. The three main tribal groups in Burundi are Hutu, Tutsi and (much smaller than the other two), Twa.
 8. I want to focus on David’s account of the events of 1993 in Burundi. This focus will allow us to pay close attention to a moment of his life, and how his Quaker identity helped him to live through it.
 9. In 1990 David Niyonzima established the Pastoral Training Center, attracting Hutu and Tutsi students from both Rwanda and Burundi. Their mission was to prepare leaders for the rapidly growing Quaker community in these two neighboring countries. So many leaders had been killed or harmed during the violence of the previous decades that the need was great. [Niyonzima, 1] Their goal was to prepare their students to be servant-leaders: equipped spiritually and intellectually, but also in practical ways.
 10. The third year of operation was just beginning at the school in 1993 on a beautiful morning when 20 armed soldiers and civilians walked into their school area, and began shooting. Eight students were killed, both Hutu and Tutsi. For David Niyonzima, who survived this assault, the next days, weeks, months and years have been a journey through fear and horror.
 11. Immediately after the massacre of his students David says he descended into a deep and angry depression. He blamed himself, and he accused some “so-called friends” for alerting the soldiers and guiding them to the school. Most of all he was angry at God. He wondered why God did not warn him, empower him to keep his students safe. [Abbot, 74] After he emerged from hiding, he felt ashamed, guilty about his survival, and abandoned by God. He wanted to give up.
- iv. In what I am sure is a compressed account, the next part of David’s story moves by stages. As I tell it [and it moves me very much] I will make some links to the other three stories.
12. First, DN remembers the prayer of Jesus prior to his death: “Father, forgive them....” [Luke 23;34] This prayer, familiar to him, takes on new meaning as he realizes that he must forgive if he is to keep on with his ministry.
 13. Staying with that prayer, he begins to change how he sees the world [Abbott, 74] He begins to feel compassion for the killers as he senses their need to be forgiven for what they have done. He offers his hand to one of the men who brought the killers to his school – and – he experiences not hatred but freedom. He realizes that up until then his notion of faith had been shaped by the

concept of control. Giving up that control brought him new freedom with God. Like CP, DN moved into a deeper relationship with God through prayer, which moved him to compassion, which moved him toward reconciliation. This didn't happen magically, but gradually, through community and care.

14. In his essay, David goes on to speculate about what can be learned on a journey from resentment to forgiveness. Here's what we should NOT do: we should not pretend that we are not angry or hurt. [Abbott, 75], we should not express our anger and hurt in explosive ways, and we should not run away or avoid the reasons for our anger. Instead we need to look at the root causes of our anger and hurt, face those who have angered and hurt us, truthfully identifying the justice of our cause, and "overcome evil with good." He is not naïve about how hard this can be, but believes that such a path leads to a closer relationship with God. When we leave to God those matters which are God's, then we see more clearly the work that is ours to do. [Abbott, 75-6] Like Elizabeth Bathurst, DN discovers that theological work can bring about action. Applying what we know academically about the human condition, about the nature of God → this quiet and thoughtful work can bring us back into human community and engagement.
15. This journey to the work of reconciliation was neither easy nor smooth for David Niyonzima. He and his family were forced to leave Burundi in the late 1990s for Kenya. What felt like a defeat became the entry point into wider ministry among Friends. HE traveled to the USA, he translated a book on reconciliation so that his Friends in Burundi could make use of it, he studied at George Fox College, he wrote his account of the trauma and the healing process in Burundi, and he discovered the next stage of his vocation. Part of his ministry now is to do "life-changing work" in the healing of trauma. He also calls others to find their vocation, their life-changing work. Like CP – DN discovers his vocation through his suffering, and he makes the sacrifices that are needed to follow his vocation.
16. Most important for us: his call to understand the power of culture, and the necessity to honor the ways cultures can shape our identities. At the same time, he calls us to step outside that shaping power: to adapt when we can to the needs of others, and to let go of our need to control the world, to shape it to fit our particular cultural expectations. The trauma of his life in Burundi has taught him not to assume that one way of life is automatically superior to another – in other words, to stop dismissing or hating others for their particular expressions of life. "I believe," he says, "That God has hidden part of His truth in each culture and that we need to listen to each other and learn from each other." [Abbott,

81] Here are the echoes of Elizabeth Bathurst, translated into the idiom of the 21st century. We must look for the ways God's loving and powerful presence is available – in cultures, attitudes, practices that differ from our own.

- v. David's life story [so far] gives evidence of the twin themes of rambunctiousness and quiet. David was dedicated to Christian ministry as a Friend, to honor his family's legacy, and to heal the wounds of his beloved land.
- vi. ENDING – not written down.