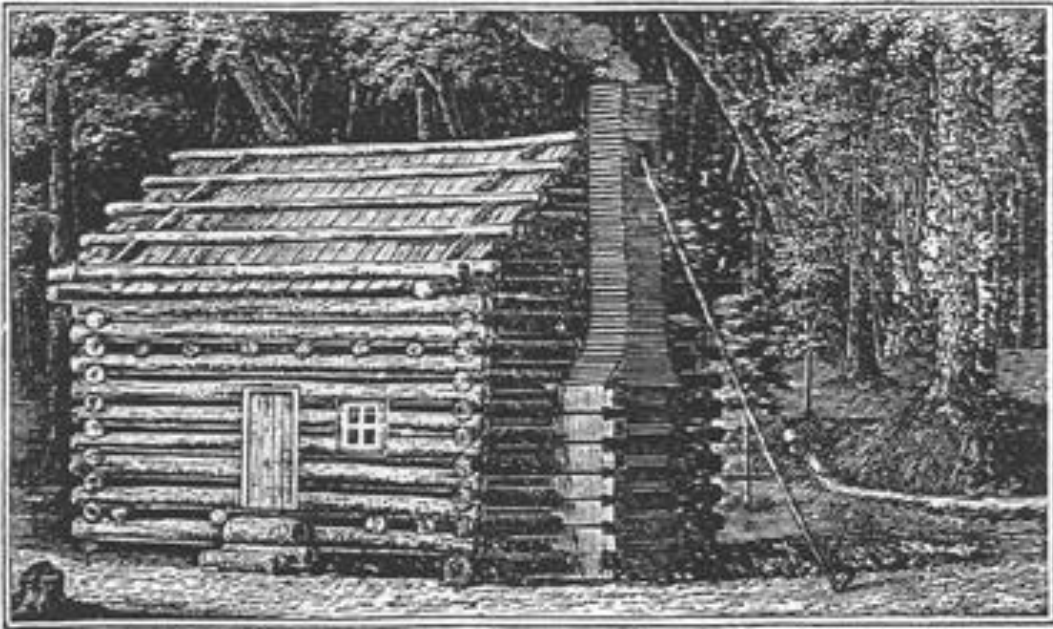

QUAKERISM 101

UNDERSTANDING OUR ROOTS



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I. Seekers and Finders: The Experience of Early Friends

How Quakerism Developed Historically

Outline of Quaker History

Quakerism grew out of the Protestant Reformation in England and also has its roots in European Anabaptism. The Quaker historian Elbert Russell, in *The History of Quakerism*, describes three key periods in Quaker History:

The Rise of the Society (1647-1691)

From George Fox's discovery of the Light Within in 1647 through his death in 1691, this period includes the spreading of the Quaker message throughout England, to the European continent, to North America. It includes the period of heavy persecution of Quakers in the 1660s, during which two-thirds of the male leadership died, many in prison. This period includes William Penn's founding of Pennsylvania and Robert Barclay's articulation of Quaker theology in his *Apology*. It also includes the protest of Germantown Friends (Philadelphia area) against slavery in 1688.

The Age of Quietism (1691-1827)

From George Fox's death through the 1827-1828 Hicksite-Orthodox separation in America and is more a period of consolidation than creativity for Friends, although there were exceptions: Quakers as a "peculiar" people with distinct testimonies regarding dress, music, etc. and a strong corporate discipline. This period includes Friends' active participation in the government of Pennsylvania, Carolina, and Rhode Island; John Woolman's long and fruitful witness against slavery; and Elizabeth Fry's prison reform work.

Revival and Reorganization of Quakerism (1827-Present)

This period begins with the Hicksite-Orthodox separation and is characterized by many Quaker separations and the development of both liberal and evangelical trends: Quakers become more similar to Protestants; the establishment of the American Friends Service Committee in the 20th Century with their famine relief programs in Germany and Russia; and the spread of Friends' peace and justice witness in many parts of the world.

William Cooper, in *A Living Faith*, divides this period into three: (1) Separations and Evangelical Awakening, (2) the Development of Pastoral Quakerism, and (3) 20th Century Liberalism and Evangelical Reactions.

Roots in the Protestant Reformation

Quakerism arose in a time of major religious ferment. Spiritual questions were discussed then with the intensity of conviction given to matters such as abortion today. Theological debates occurred not only among theologically trained people, but among the general population, who would come out to hear a debate or listen to a traveling preacher the way people today come out to watch a major athletic event. Spiritual life was taken very seriously, and for many people religion was perhaps the most important area of interest and concern.

Quakerism emerged in the middle of the 17th Century and can be viewed historically both as part of the Protestant Reformation as it developed in England, and as an offshoot of the European Anabaptism which in part preceded the Protestant Reformation.

The Protestant Reformation as we are most familiar with it has been defined as starting with Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses on the door of Wittenberg Cathedral in Germany in 1517. These theses called for a wide range of reforms in the Catholic Church. When Luther, his supporters, and others protesting abuses in the Catholic Church were unable to achieve the reforms they sought, and were rejected by the Roman Catholic Church, they set up new churches outside the Catholic fold. This was a radical step. To this time, there had been only one Christian Church in Western Europe and the Reformers (or Protest-ants) split it, perhaps forever.

Luther and the other Reformers emphasized that a person is saved by God's grace and is justified by faith, not by human deeds. They set up more simple forms of worship, reduced the number of Sacraments from seven to two, simplified clerical clothing and ceremony, and allowed the clergy to marry. They also translated the Bible out of Latin (Vulgate) and into the common language of the people, who for the first time were able to read it for themselves.

In England, the course of the Protestant Reformation was complex. Henry VIII declared the Church of England (Anglican Church) independent of the Papacy in 1534. Henry wanted very little change in the Church, except for his rejection of Papal authority. He kept the sacramental ceremonies of baptism, penance, and communion; he continued confession, absolution and works of charity; and he also differed from some Protestants in believing that Christ was physically present in the Eucharist (communion elements).

When Henry died in 1547, his nine year-old son Edward became king. During his brief 6-year reign, the Church of England became fully Protestant. Much of the ceremonial patterns were set aside, prayers for the dead were omitted, and other changes were made in the liturgy.

At Edward's death in 1553, however, his half-sister Mary, who was a Catholic, took over the throne, and the Church of England became Catholic again. About 500 Protestants were killed during this time under command of the person the Protestants of the time referred to as "Bloody Mary."

Mary didn't live long, however, and in 1558, Henry VIII's daughter by Ann Bolyn became Queen Elizabeth I. Tired of religious turmoil, Elizabeth decided to have a Church of England in which practically everyone would belong—a church whose theology was shallow and inclusive. English Puritans, however, were dissatisfied with this. They wanted a national church purified of what they saw as superstitious ceremonies, false theology, corrupt priests, and religious lukewarm-ness. The name "Puritan" comes from their desire to purify the church. They saw in John Calvin's city of Geneva and in the English-language Bible, a divine ordering of church and state. They saw the Bible, not the church, as the basic authority for religion, and they believed in the priesthood of all believers.

The Puritans continued to be dissatisfied when King James I began his reign in 1603. During James' reign, a significant event took place: the publication of the King James Bible in 1611. This was the Bible generally used by Friends. It wasn't the first Bible printed in English, but it was the most important one to that time.

During the final year of James' reign, in 1624, George Fox was born at Fenny Drayton, in Leicestershire (les-ti-shur), England. His parents were Puritans and righteous people, as Fox describes them in his *Journal*. Most of the other first generation leaders of Friends were also born during James' rule and grew up during the reign of his successor, Charles I.

Charles I started his rule in 1625, and continued the policy of his father in supporting strong central authority over the church and a highly ceremonial form of worship. Some Puritans decided to give up their hope of setting up a purified national church in England. They were able to get a charter for Massachusetts in

1629, and at least 20,000 Puritans crossed the Atlantic to live in a colony where Puritanism was the sole state religion. The Boston Puritans were intolerant of any religious dissent, and around 1660, hanged four Quakers, including Mary Dyer, whose martyrdom is familiar to many Quakers today.

Charles I made himself extremely unpopular through his taxation measures, his arbitrary rule without Parliament, and his church policy. Around 1640, English merchants, Parliament, the Scots, and the Irish united in opposition; most supporters of the opposition were Puritans. This resulted in the English Civil War, which was won about 1645 by the Puritans under Oliver Cromwell.

After about 1640, there was increasing freedom in England for sects and congregations which did not accept the Anglican (Church of England) pattern of worship. Baptists, Independents (also called Congregationalists) and others flourished; so did groups of Seekers, who had rejected all outward sacraments and clergy, and waited for God at their meetings in silent worship. In addition, there were Ranters and Familists, who placed inner freedom above ethics.

It was in this rich environment of many varieties of religious seeking and finding that Quakers got their start. The vast majority of early Quaker leaders had English Puritan backgrounds. None were Catholics, and none came directly from the Church of England. Many had tried out different Protestant congregations before joining the Friends.

Some of the future Quaker leaders, including James Nayler, Edward Burrough, and William Dewsbury, served in Cromwell's Puritan army. Cromwell's army was a hotbed of religious ferment, and Nayler became a popular preacher there.

Roots in Anabaptism

The Puritan roots of Quakerism are easier to trace than Quakerism's other major historical roots—those in Anabaptism. Just as "Puritan" is a general term that includes a diversity of theologies and practices, so is "Anabaptist." The word "Anabaptist" refers to that group of Reformation Christians who believed that the church was a fellowship created by the Holy Spirit of people who had come into membership as adults by their own choice. They believed in adult baptism of believers, and thus required that people who had been baptized as children be baptized over again as adults. Because of their belief that baptism must be voluntary, they strongly opposed coercion by the state in religious matters.

Anabaptists saw themselves as a church gathered by the Spirit and made up of people fully committed to obedience to the teachings of Jesus, especially the Sermon on the Mount. The main Anabaptist tradition believed in nonviolence and freedom of conscience. There was a strong corporate discipline maintained to help people remain faithful in a world that was viewed as sinful. Jesus had been faithful, loving, and nonviolent, and had suffered and died a martyr's death, and the Anabaptists were called to follow.

Some Anabaptists, such as Hans Denck (born about 1500), while valuing the Bible, held the then quite radical view that salvation is not bound to it; what is essential is the inner grace of regeneration, the living Word of God that transforms a person to the good. This comes close to Friends' beliefs a century and a half later.

Some Anabaptists came to feel uncomfortable with ceremonies, and sat in quiet contemplation. This pattern of worship is similar to that of the Seekers in England, who were among the first attracted by George Fox's message.

While it is more difficult to trace direct links between early Friends and Anabaptists than it is between Friends and Puritans, connections exist nonetheless. Queen Elizabeth tried to root out Anabaptism in England during her reign, but it seems clear that Anabaptist beliefs were not destroyed but rather expressed more quietly. George Fox moved among the English Baptists while a young seeker, and there were visits between

these Baptists and Anabaptists on the European continent. In addition, some Puritans appear to have been influenced by Anabaptism, and a merging of perspectives occurred.

A chart may be useful here—remember that it is oversimplified. This chart shows a spectrum of belief and practice ranging from Roman Catholicism to Quakerism; recognize that it expresses an interpretation of 17th Century religion, and beliefs and practices have changed since then. Friends can be seen here as part of the radical left wing of the Puritan Reformation in England. They shared many of the goals of the Puritans, but carried these goals further—the shared the aims of cutting down on ceremony and outward sacraments and reducing the power of the clergy, but went beyond the Puritans in getting rid of all outward sacraments and rejecting the paid clergy completely.

	CATHOLIC	LUTHERAN	CALVINIST	BAPTIST	QUAKER
THEOLOGY	Clear, rational; truth expressed in creed	More personal; creed still fundamental	Logical; but more personal; power of God in history	Conversion and commitment	Most personal; experience over doctrine
SACRAMENTS	Crucial; seven sacraments	Once/week; two sacraments	Once /three months	Some do without	No outward sacraments
MINISTRY	Sacraments & salvation depend on priest	Minister not essential for salvation	Same as Lutheran	Conversion itself if what's important	No permanent pastor
ECONOMIC & SOCIAL	Social hierarchy approved	Princes; less hierarchy; mixture	Similar to Lutherans, but middle class; success orientation	Mixture	Mixture; many leaders from lower classes
	Pure Doctrine ← → Pure Experience				

George Fox

So it was that George Fox, as a young man, wandered among many different groups, including Puritans, Baptists, and Seekers, looking for spiritual fulfillment and relief from inner turmoil. As he wrote in his *Journal*, he spent long periods of time alone. He read the Bible so much that he knew many passages by heart; the Bible became, so to speak, the religious environment in which he lived.

Fox suffered deep spiritual depression and went through many periods of temptation and inner darkness. He was unable to find help for his spiritual anguish from any of the clergymen—whom he called ‘priests’—whom he visited. His *Journal* recounts how one clergyman recommended that he smoke tobacco and sing psalms to feel better, which was no help at all, especially as he didn’t like tobacco and couldn’t sing. Experiences like this convinced him that pastors couldn’t provide true spiritual aid.

In 1647, he met Elizabeth Hooten, who belonged to a group of Seekers who later joined with Fox. Her group may well have been influenced by the Anabaptists.

Shortly after this, he had the spiritual experience that we recognize as the turning point in his life; it is related on p.11 of his *Journal*:

But as I had forsaken all the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those called the most experienced people; for I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell me 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. Then the Lord did let me see why there was none upon that earth that could speak to my condition, namely, that I might give him all the glory; for all are concluded under sin, and shut up in unbelief as I had been, that Jesus Christ might have the pre-eminence, who enlightens, and gives grace, and faith, and power. Thus, when God doth work who shall let [prevent] it? And this I knew experimentally.¹

Thus, Fox came to depend on the Inward Christ directly as his teacher, and found that the Bible was opened up to him by the Spirit. His depression and temptations continued intermittently, but now he found that he was held up by the Spirit.

Fox realized that it does no good to read the Bible or preach religion if you aren't living in the Spirit. He sought to bring people to the Teacher within themselves—to the Light of Christ within—and began to share his discovery widely with others.

Fox's message was a strong one; he urged people to recognize the evil within themselves and come to obey the Teacher within themselves, who could lead them out of all sin. Fox's own dark periods of temptation enabled him to understand what was going on with other people, so he could speak to their condition. Despite the power of evil—which he called the ocean of darkness and death—he saw an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. He saw that good could overcome evil if a person was willing to follow the promptings of Christ within.

As Fox traveled and shared his discovery, hundreds, and ultimately thousands, of people joined with him to form the Society of Friends. There were many early Quaker leaders, women and men, who felt led directly by the Spirit to travel in the ministry, join with others for worship, and accept the risks of persecution. One of the most important people convinced by Fox's message was Margaret Fell, whose home became the center for Quaker communication and who herself nurtured many Friends.

Historically, Friends can be understood as part of a prophetic tradition; they saw themselves as carriers of a God-given message to be conveyed to others. They were also mystics who practiced a contemplative spirituality that seeks to connect to the Divine Spirit within the human soul that Fox referred to as the Inner Light.

¹ The Journal of George Fox, 1986, London Yearly Meeting, p. 11

II. The Light Within

Trying to put spiritual experience into words might be inadequately compared to trying to stuff fifty energetic kittens into a small cardboard box—the experience is too vibrant, great, and powerful to rest comfortably within the limitation that words inevitably impose, and we risk stunting our spiritual lives if we insist on tidy definitions. What we experience as infinite and unconditionally loving, as wisdom, strength and life, is ultimately indescribable. All metaphors miss something.

Yet words are key to our communication with others. We're stuck using them, even if they aren't adequate.

Early Friends went a long way toward solving this problem—insofar as it is possible to solve it at all—by using a multitude of terms and phrases when speaking or writing of their spiritual experience. Many of these have Biblical roots. Everyday words were called into service in new ways so that Friends' experience could be known and shared with others. This vocabulary includes words and phrases like the Word of Life, the Seed, Truth in the heart, the eternal Spirit of God, the inward light, spirit and grace, the Light of Jesus, that of God in everyone, and many more.

One of the most basic and important of these terms is the Light. Its Biblical sources lie in the beginning of the first chapter of the Gospel according to John and in Paul's letters to the Ephesians (Eph 5:8) and the Thessalonians (1 Thess 5:5).

John's rich theology notes that all things came into being through the Word, which was God. In other words, what has come into being in the Word was life, and this life was the light of all people. Verse 5 reads: "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it."² The true light is then described as the one witnessed by John, one in the world but not known by the world, not accepted by his own people, but giving power to become children of God to all who received him, as Jesus Christ; this light enlightens everyone (1:9).

Ephesians 5 is full of Paul's advice to Christians in Ephesus about how to live. Verses 8-9 read, "For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true." Early Friends took "children of light" as one of their names. The phrase is also found in 1 Thessalonians 5:5, "for you are all children of light and children of day..."

Although a metaphor as full of meaning as the Light resists definition, it is possible to talk about how Friends have used the term over time. Here is a list of characteristics which begins with those developed by Sam Caldwell and expands on them.

THE LIGHT IS:

Divine – refers to God and God's work in our lives; it is not reason, conscience, or emotion, although it works through these – not *natural* but *supernatural*

Single – one and indivisible; not *my* Light versus *your* Light, but each of us has **The Light** "in measure" (i.e., some of the Light, which we need to heed and to live up to); not "spark" because this implies separate lights; this oneness of the Light is the basis for the "gathered" Meeting for Worship.

Unifying – the Light brings us into unity within ourselves, and draws Friends together into a single body

Universal – the Light works in the life of every person, and has from the beginning, whether a person knows it or not.

² Revised Standard Version

External – existing from before time and will exist forever; in John’s Gospel, the Light is the Word, which was in the beginning, and through whom all things were made.

Pure – perfectly good, unerring and infallible, although we may misinterpret its guidance.;

Unchanging – our awareness of the Light changes, but the Light itself does not.

Personal – not an abstract force, not some “clockmaker God” who set the universe in motion and then left it to run by itself, but the God of Abraham and Sarah, of Job and Mary, with whom we can have an “I-Thou” relationship (Martin Buber).

Inward – implies action, dynamic; the Light shines *within* each of us; sometimes it is a searchlight, focusing on aspects of our lives which need changing but which we might prefer to ignore.

Saving – if we follow the leadings of the Light within, we will be brought into fullness of life and right relationship with God, ourselves, and each other.

Guiding – if we let it, the Light will guide, nudge, and lead us into a more meaningful, richer life—step by step.

Resistible – we are perfectly free to ignore the guidance of the Light, which can’t force us to do anything.

Persistent – God starts with us, again and again where we are. If we continually disobey the leadings we receive, our perception of the Light may dim, but we can’t completely extinguish it.

Empowering – if we seek to follow where the Light leads us, we will be empowered to do what is required, even if we start out feeling inadequate.

Ineffable – the Light can’t be fully understood and described; words are insufficient.

The Light, as noted before, isn’t the only term Friends have used for God and God’s work in our lives, and this is important, since like all other terms, it has limitations. Like early Friends, we do well to use many different words and phrases to describe what gives us life, joy, and strength.

III. Quaker Universalism

It is no secret that Friends are diverse in their beliefs. While unprogrammed Friends today are generally homogenous in ethnic background and socio-economic class (many are white middle to upper class professionals, often in the “service” field), religious beliefs vary considerably. How did this diversity come about?

The roots lie in early Friends’ emphasis on direct spiritual experience as more fundamental than either Biblical teaching or tradition. While 17th Century Friends were steeped in the Bible (many early writings are made up largely of Bible passages woven together to express a message), and both traditions and corporate discernment came to be key elements in community solidarity, individual spiritual experience has been understood from the start as foundational. George Fox’s question, recorded by Margaret Fell, “Christ saith this, and the apostles say this, but what canst thou say?” remains compelling. Friends do not want to claim to believe what they themselves do not know in their own experience.

Second generation Quakers Robert Barclay and William Penn have been cited both for their universalism and for their Christianity. So has 18th Century Friend John Woolman, whose *Journal* expresses a life of extraordinary faithfulness to the promptings of the Spirit. The writings of many early Friends reveal both a living Christian faith, including relationship with Christ as Inward Guide and Teacher, and affirmation, as their spiritual brothers and sisters, of non-Christians who live according to the leadings of the Spirit.

Given the primacy of personal spiritual experience for Friends, controversy over matters of belief has occurred since the beginning, with the resulting splinter groups and schisms. The first major division, called the Hicksite-Orthodox Split, occurred in 1827-1828, with tragic consequences for Friends’ unity and witness in the world.

The 18th Century has been called the Quietist Period; Friends emphasized obedience to the immediate leadings of the Spirit and distrusted what they called “creaturely activity,” or actions which derived from their emotions, thoughts, or wills. John Woolman’s long witness against slavery grew from a Quietist faith and trust in the Inward Guide. Many Friends who ended up on different sides of the Hicksite-Orthodox split were Quietists.

During the late 18th Century and into the 19th, several movements were afoot which helped to cause the Hicksite-Orthodox Split:

(1) A new spirit of democracy and individual freedom of conscience which exploded into the American and French Revolutions spurred some Friends ultimately to oppose what they saw as the “oppressive authority” of the elders; elders had the responsibility of maintaining the discipline of the traditional Quaker way of life;

(2) The Evangelical movement, which began with John Wesley in the 1730s, emphasized direct religious experience, the necessity of correct faith for salvation, and social reforms in a way that attracted many Friends;

(3) Some Friends, especially those living in the city, became wealthy, cultured, politically powerful, and fairly well-educated while their country counterparts did not, leading to discomfort and distrust between them;

(4) The influence of rationalism led some Friends to believe that religion must be rational; there was an opposition to arbitrary dogma and religious intolerance.

Democracy and Freedom of Conscience

The spirit of democracy and belief in individual freedom of conscience gradually came to clash with the belief—generally held in the Quietist period—that a Meeting had authority over the faith and practice of its

members. Friends became used to phrases like “liberty and equality” and “the consent of the governed.” Even country Friends came in touch with the ideas that had sparked revolution, and many were influenced by them.

The Meeting elders came to see younger Friends as “raw and undisciplined,” while some younger Friends disliked what they saw as repressive authority on the part of the elders. The elders interpreted the stirrings toward democracy and freedom of conscience as lack of discipline, waywardness, disrespect, and unsoundness of belief, and reacted with more discipline.

The statement of John Comly, which announced the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting split in 1827, read, in part, “...God alone is sovereign Lord of conscience, and with this inalienable right no power, civil or ecclesiastical, should ever interfere.”

Evangelical Movement

Many Friends were influenced by the Evangelical movement, first in England and then in the United States, largely through the influence of the messages of traveling ministers.

There were several similarities between Evangelicalism and traditional Quaker belief:

- (1) Emphasis on direct personal religious experience
- (2) Belief that salvation is attainable for all, including the poor and oppressed
- (3) Concern with social and moral issues, including opposition to slavery, prison abuse, and alcoholism

However, there were also important differences between Evangelical belief and Quietism. Evangelicals stressed:

- (1) Acceptance of Jesus Christ as personal Savior, often in a dramatic experience, while many Friends’ experiences were less dramatic
- (2) Belief that the Bible is direct revelation and has final authority, while Friends stressed the guidance of Christ Within
- (3) Acceptance of the full deity of Christ
- (4) Emphasis on Bible study and religious education, which some Friends feared would lead to neglect of inward spiritual experience

City Friends were more influenced by the culture of influential people around them and were the first to be moved by the evangelical spirit. In 1806, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting discipline was revised and a new article was included, stating it was cause for disownment to “deny the divinity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the immediate revelation of the Holy Spirit, or the authenticity of the Scriptures.” Among Friends influenced by the Evangelical movement, the priestly type of personality tended to take precedence over the prophetic, meaning a focus on discipline, tradition, and creedal statements.

City/Country Differences

The wealthy and politically influential city Friends basically controlled Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. At Yearly Meeting sessions, their words were heeded, while country Friends’ words were often considered of less worth. Samuel Bettle, the Yearly Meeting Clerk, tended to discount what country Friends said.

Country Friends deplored the “worldliness” and, in some cases, luxury of city Friends and felt uncomfortable in their homes at Yearly Meeting time. Also, country Friends opposed the way decisions were sometimes made at Yearly Meeting, feeling that they had little chance to influence a decision.

Rationalism

The ideas of rationalism originally expressed by Paine, Voltaire, and Hume influenced some Friends directly and others indirectly. Rationalism supported the tendency toward mysticism and away from Evangelicalism.

It opposed what was perceived as irrational dogma and lack of inner tolerance. Elias Hicks, whose name is linked to the split, rationalized the idea of the Inner Light.

Hicksite-Orthodox Split

The immediate cause of the tensions that led to Friends' division was the attempt by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting elders to forbid Elias Hicks to preach in 1822. Elias Hicks was born in 1748 and by this time was an old man. He was a popular traveling minister and a Long Island farmer, a Quietist with a rational mind. The Inner Light was to him the sole authority; he believed that the Bible and the life of Jesus should be studied as an aid to inner spiritual life, but not accepted as authoritative on their own.

Some of Hicks' beliefs shocked Evangelicals. He did not believe in "imputed righteousness" through the sacrifice of Christ, but held that a person actually had to live righteously. He believed that Christ was different because he possessed a limitless measure of the Spirit. Further, he felt that the Bible was useful but not necessary for personal spiritual life.

Some Friends who didn't agree with Hicks' theology supported him in the name of freedom of conscience. These included John Comly, a Pennsylvania school teacher who disliked the Evangelical's aggressiveness and lack of religious tolerance. Comly was a mystic and Quietist who wanted peace to return again to the Society of Friends. His answer to the tensions of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1827 was "a quiet retreat from the scene of confusion."

Another key player in the Hicksite-Orthodox split, Samuel Bettle, was a Philadelphia merchant who had been clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for fourteen years. He was an elder concerned with maintaining discipline.

At the start of the 1827 Yearly Meeting, difficulty arose over who should serve as clerk, and Bettle continued to serve. The Hicksites felt powerless and decided to draw apart after the closing session of that Yearly Meeting. Later, they formed their own Yearly Meeting. The results were splits in the Yearly Meeting, and Quarterly and Monthly Meetings; legal suits over property; and divided families. In Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, at least two-thirds of some twenty-four thousand members became Hicksite; country Friends were mostly Hicksite and city Friends were mostly Orthodox.

The split did not stop with Philadelphia. New York Yearly Meeting divided in 1828, as did Baltimore; both becoming mostly Hicksite. In the newly created Indiana Yearly Meeting, the vast majority was Orthodox; there was a small Hicksite group. In Ohio Yearly Meeting, there was a fiasco—a scuffle to seize the clerk's table; there Friends were about evenly divided. In the United States overall, about half of the Friends were Hicksite and the other half Orthodox; London and Dublin Yearly Meetings both recognized Orthodox Meetings, if they were included, the majority of Friends in the world were Orthodox.

The split lowered the Society of Friends in the eyes of the public, as Quakers proved unable to practice internally the love and sensitivity toward others that they had long professed.

Wilburite-Gurneyite Split

While the Hicksites did not have any more major splits, the Wilburite-Gurneyite split occurred only among Orthodox Friends. This split occurred in 1845 in New England Yearly Meeting and in 1854 in Ohio Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) and a Monthly Meeting in Iowa.

Joseph John Gurney, a British Friend and evangelist, came as a traveling minister to the United States in 1837. His family of wealthy and influential Friends included his sister Elizabeth Gurney Fry, known for her work in prison reform. Gurney was well-educated and a Bible scholar. He strongly encouraged Bible study and Sunday School programs, although he did not believe the Bible to be more primary than the Spirit. He emphasized Christ's atonement as necessary for the satisfaction for human sins (God's "legal requirement"),

believing that the blood of Christ is necessary for salvation. Gurney died before the time of the paid pastorate, and did not favor physical sacraments; in these ways his beliefs were traditional.

John Wilbur was a conservative, Quietist Friend who spoke out directly against Gurney's preaching. He opposed religious education and Bible study as detracting from attention to the Spirit within. His Quarterly Meeting succeeded in having him disowned over the firm objections of his Monthly Meeting. In New England Yearly Meeting a split occurred, which resulted in about five hundred Wilburites and sixty-five hundred Gurneyites. There was also a split in Ohio Yearly Meeting (Orthodox).

Organization of Quaker Meetings Today

Over time, these and later divisions resulted in the pattern of organization that exists among Friends today.

In the mid 1870s, many Gurneyite Meetings took on pastors as a means of securing vocal ministry and in providing for the nurture of an influx of new people. Today, there are two organizations of Friends made up largely of pastoral Meetings: Friends United Meeting (FUM), formed as Five Year's Meeting in 1902 but also includes Meetings without pastors; and Evangelical Friends International, formed in 1965.

The other two major groupings of Friends in the United States are Friends General Conference (FGC), which began in 1900 and is non-pastoral with the exception of some Meetings which are also a part of Friends United Meeting; and Conservative Friends, a small group of Meetings that has sought to maintain a Quietist approach.

Within many unprogrammed Meetings, Friends tend to feel spiritual unity with each other more through the experience of Meeting for Worship and small group sharing than through common beliefs. Friends are often joined together through experiences which can be called mystical—spiritual communion with God and with each other. Unlike some other mystics, Friends' ultimate goal is not so much union with God alone, but more communion with the Spirit that leads to concern for others and action in the world.

IV. Worship and Ministry

What is Worship?

When Barclay defines *worship*, he quotes the following passage from William Temple, the renowned archbishop of Canterbury.

“For worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose -- and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin.”³

Three good questions to ask concerning Meeting for worship are:

- (1) How do you “center down?”
- (2) How do you know when to speak?
- (3) What can you do to promote a “gathered Meeting?”

There’s no single answer to any of these questions.

Howard Brinton, in *Friends for 300 Years*, talks about the Meeting for Worship as a “laboratory,” a “laboratory of the Spirit.” The Meeting for Worship is a corporate *experiment* of communion with God. In this it differs from almost every other activity that we undertake. It differs significantly from other corporate activities such as forums, discussions, classes, therapy groups, self-help groups, and many committee meetings. It differs from these primarily because the purpose of a Meeting for Worship is to experience the presence of God, and discover what God is calling us to do.

The Meeting for Worship is an experiment because there is no single way for it to proceed. Each person’s experience in worship is different; we have different personalities and somewhat different needs. There is no “user’s guide” that guarantees a rewarding experience. Each of us, in each Meeting for Worship, has to find our own way. John Punshon wrote that we are all at the same stage—the beginning—every time we come into God’s presence.

At the same time, Quakers today have a wealth of past experience to draw on, and can gain insights from reading the journals and other writing of Friends over many generations who have described their experiences of Meeting for Worship. Among many good books that include material on Friends’ worship are:

- Douglas Steere’s *Gleanings*
- Thomas Kelly’s *A Testament of Devotion*, and
- Samuel Bownas’ *A Description of the Qualifications Necessary to a Gospel Minister*, an 18th Century journal which describes the inner transformation undergone by Friends of his era as they sought to be faithful to leadings of the Spirit, especially regarding vocal ministry.

Another helpful way to grow in the Meeting for Worship is through spiritual friendship, a relationship between two persons involving regular times for worship, sharing experiences, and testing leadings.

How Do You Center Down?

³ William Temple, Readings in St. John's Gospel, 1942.

Centering Down means getting in touch with the Spirit. What helps Friends do this?

1. Douglas Steer, in *Gleanings*, wrote “get Brother Ass, the body, properly tethered and out of the way, “For some Friends, this is best done by shutting the eyes and stilling the body.
2. Still the mind and open it up to God. Some friends find physical postures helpful: to empty the self of ‘busyness,’ cup the hands downward, and cup the hands upward when ready to receive from God.
3. Pray silently. How do you pray? There’s no one right way!
 - a. For “actives,” those who feel more comfortable doing than reflecting, the Meeting for Worship is an opportunity for reaching out to the Spirit, for dialogue with a God who is “personal” and available to us:
 - Prayer of *thanksgiving* (for life, family, friends, work, home, beauty, etc.)
 - Prayer of *intercession* (for others, some of whom may be suffering—holding them up in the Light; this includes prayer for situations in the world)
 - Prayer for *forgiveness* (for things done wrong, or not done; sins of “commission” or “omission” – means letting the Light reveal personal actions and their consequences, and what might be done differently in the future
 - Prayer for *guidance* (what direction should I take?)
 - Prayer for *strength* (empowerment in weakness and difficulty)

It is important to be sincere before God. If we can’t be honest about ourselves in the quiet, with the Source and Center of our lives, where can we be? The Hebrew Scriptures give many powerful examples of honest expression of feelings toward God; including intense anger (see the Psalms or the book of Job).

- a. For “contemplatives,” those comfortable with inner quiet, an attitude of still receptivity may be possible from the start.
 - *Meditation* (on a thought or image, such as “love,” or the image of a candle flame or a rock)
 - *Contemplation* Brinton refers to mental prayer, affective prayer, acquired contemplation, and infused contemplation/mystical union, categories according to the degree of human will involve.
 - b. For both “actives” and “contemplatives,” the following are often useful.
 - Willingness to be vulnerable and open (letting down everyday defenses against the world)
 - Listening to God and to each other
 - Openness to the Spirit. “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength...” Isaiah 40:31
 - Robert Barclay said, “Neither words nor silence is most important, but *holy dependence* of the mind upon God.”
 - Letting oneself become a vessel for the Spirit and be *prayed through*, i.e., experience prayer that is not of one’s own volition.
 - c. These are *means*, well worth trying to see if they are helpful, but what matters is experiencing a deep connection with others and with God, knowing ourselves to be loved and valued, and gaining guidance and strength for our lives.
4. Dealing with *distractions* in Meeting for Worship can be difficult; sometimes even the most experienced Friends find their attention wandering throughout a Meeting for Worship. Ways of dealing with distractions include the following:
 - a. Incorporate them into your worship
 - b. Let them flow by
 - c. Recognize that it generally doesn’t work to fight them or willfully try to ignore them
5. *Blockage* happens when our own pain, anxiety, or restlessness gets in the way of whatever we want to experience in worship.

- a. Let it in; accept it and feel it. Again, we need to be honest in worship, and this means accepting what we are actually feeling.
- b. Ask for, and wait for, healing. This means actually *wanting* healing, which isn't always the case. Remember the story in John 5 where Jesus healed the invalid at the Pool of Bethesda? The man had been waiting for 38 years for healing and Jesus' first question to him was, "Do you want to get well?"⁴ There was cause to doubt the man's desire to get well.

How Do You Know When to Speak?

All Friends should be open to the possibility of being lead to speak in Meeting. Friends accepted the Protestant concept of the "priesthood of all believers" and carried it further—they abolished the laity, which means that we're all "clergy."

There is no single or sure test for when to speak—discernment is learned through experience. Friends speak of "feeling called," "feeling led," of a "still small voice," or of divine "prompting." For many, there is a sense of burden, a feeling of having a responsibility laid on oneself. Sometimes this seems like the heart "falling through the floor."

Vocal ministry and speaking in Meeting are two terms for the same thing. "Vocal ministry" is the traditional term for spoken messages.

Today, in many Meetings, spoken ministry is a mixed bag. Some messages appear to come directly from reading and thinking. Some friends have been accused of preaching the "gospel according to the *New York Times*." Other messages appear to grow primarily from emotion. Thinking and feeling play important roles, but if they serve as the basis or impetus for ministry in Meeting for Worship, then the Meeting is less than it could be.

Friends traditionally have understood ministry to be the *Spirit* speaking through whoever is ministering. Vocal ministry therefore has been seen as what God has given a particular person to share with the Meeting. Ministry therefore is a pretty awesome thing, but it is also simpler than we might think. It is not dependent on intellect or IQ, nor on reading (although some reading can be helpful), nor on emotional intensity (although it is helpful to come to worship knowing oneself and one's feelings pretty well). Ministry is dependent most fundamentally on faithfulness on the leading of the Spirit, as best we can discern it.

The Meeting for Worship is an opportunity for corporate as well as individual discernment of what God is calling us to do, here and now. Friends therefore have believed that speaking in a Meeting for Worship should be limited to what, as best we can discover it, is God's message for the Meeting.

All of us have opportunities at other times in the week to share our own impressions, ideas, and insights with others, but how often in this very secular culture do we have the opportunity to come together with others to try to discover what the Spirit is leading us to do?

How do we know if a message is from God or not, or even more basically, why is it that Friends believe that God would have something to say to us in the first place? One partial response is that it has been the experience for many generations of Friends that God *does* speak to us, and it is possible to distinguish what God is trying to tell us from our own desires and thoughts, although we may err in this. Friends over many years developed a way of life and a manner of worship that helped them distinguish a leading of the Spirit from other impulses. Spoken ministry doesn't happen in a vacuum, but develops over time as a Friend worships in a particular Meeting and learns to listen for leadings of the Spirit that are sometimes subtle.

It helps to set aside time each day for prayer, meditation, and reading of the sorts of books likely to inspire you and help you to stay centered despite the distractions caused by everyday existence. It also helps

⁴ John 5:5 (NIV)

to bring to Meeting for Worship an attitude of expectancy and a readiness to listen. Friends have traditionally believed that one should come to Meeting neither with the intension to speak, nor with the intension to not speak, but with an openness to speak if led.

What happens inside of a person before he or she speaks in Meeting for Worship can vary considerably; some Friends go through different stages as they sit in worship. One person's experience is recounted below.

Usually as a result of a previous message, I find myself focusing on a phrase, idea, image or concern. Gradually, a message begins to evolve and I start to feel that I may be led to speak. I begin to feel an inner clarity about the message and also a sort of excited tenseness. I then wonder if I am really being led to speak, and ask myself the following questions:

- Is this message meant for me alone, or it meant to be shared?
- Are there people here to whom this message is likely to speak?
- Is this message meant to be shared now?
- Am I the right person to give this message?
- Will the Meeting be a better place for this message?
- Most importantly, is this message from God, as far as I can discern, or it is coming from something else, such as my ego or self-will, discomfort that the Meeting is too quiet, the desire to have a "platform" for something that I think "ought" to be said, etc.?

If the answers to any of the questions are discouraging, she does not speak. If, after asking herself these questions, she feels greater clarity that she is being led to speak, she usually has some physical symptoms, like sweaty palms, shaky hands, a knotted chest, and the sensation that her stomach is about to fall through the floor. Ideally, she waits to stand up until she feels she has to speak, when there is a sure inner-clarity; generally, the message is still incomplete. The message tends to come out with little human effort to articulate or develop it. Afterwards, there is a gradual sense of release and relief.

Most Friends would not be comfortable claiming they were *certain* that what they said was a message from God, but there are several beliefs and "tests" that can help keep us on course if we pay attention to them.

1. First, Friends believe that "there is that of God in everyone," that God works in the life of every human being.
2. Friends also believe that God can call anyone to minister, irrespective of age, sense of worthiness, level or education, or gifts of public speaking.
3. There is also the combined experience of all the members of the Meeting, who can help us discern whether or not we are really led to speak; new Friends (as well as long-timers) can benefit from listening to the response of experienced Friends to their ministry.
4. Beyond that, there are centuries of Quaker journals and other writings to draw on, and even earlier, the many experiences of divine leadings described in the Bible.

Our own experiences of being led to speak should not be carbon copies of anyone else's; we do believe in the continuing revelation of God. At the same time past experience gives us a context and the wisdom of many women and men who can be spiritual friends and mentors to us.

Perhaps the most powerful evidence of the presence of something greater than ourselves in the Meeting for Worship is the experience of the gathered Meeting. A gathered Meeting is one in which Friends feel a deep connectedness with each other and with God; it is also called a "covered" Meeting. In such a Meeting there is a sense of unity in the Spirit and inner spiritual communion among those present.

In a gathered Meeting someone might have a message that seemed right to share in that gathering but no clarity about being the person to give it—and then hear someone across the room stand up and give the message! Another example involves a man who stood up and spoke, then sat down abruptly, apparently in the middle of the message. Immediately, another man stood up and finished the message, as if to say to the first man, “your message was fine as far as you went, but you didn’t finish it.” Sometimes it will be obvious to an experienced Friend that another Friend has a message to give: an example is the younger Friend who reported that an older Friend said to her, “if you don’t give your message soon, I’ll have to say it for you.”

These things may seem strange or unreal because we’re so used to seeing ourselves as separate, rational individuals. However, if we believe that there is one God who works in each of our lives, it is not so surprising that several people in a Meeting, and indeed the entire Meeting, might be led in the same way.

What Can I/We Do to Promote a Gathered Meeting?

Friends can encourage the development of a gathered Meeting (though not control it).

1. Come to Meeting already deep in the spirit of Worship
2. Hold the group, or individuals in it, in the Light; in intercessory prayer
3. Spiritually embrace those persons
4. Be willing to let go of oneself and one’s own private concerns and become part of the whole
5. Live into a life of worship, every day, in all situations

V. Living in the Light: Quaker Witness

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice* defines a "concern" as a sense of obligation to do something, or to demonstrate a sympathetic interest in some individual or group, as a result of what is felt to be a direct intimation of God's will.

How does a Concern Arise?

A person *feels something is wrong* regarding a situation in the world; for example, an individual or group is suffering to no good end, or there is a discrepancy between values and reality, and something needs to be done to change the situation. The Quaker use of "concern" is not unrelated to its use in everyday English; a concern often involves an anxious interest in the welfare of others. Underlying the development of a concern as an impetus to action is Friends' belief that the Kingdom of God can be realized here and now, not just in another place or time.

How do Friends move from a Concern to Action?

A concern, when it initially arises, may not be linked to a particular course of action, but may simply be a troubled sense that something is awry. Action is often the result of a *leading*, or a sense of being drawn or called by God in a particular direction or toward a particular course of action.

Friends speak of "feeling led" or "being called." A leading may be short-term and specific, or it may involve transformation of one's life. Both concerns and leadings may arise and develop in Meeting for Worship, and may be the spur to vocal ministry.

A concern may also be shared with a Meeting committee or with the Meeting as a whole: "a burden shared is a burden halved." Clearness Committees, modeled on those for marriage, or less formal, may help the individual to gain clarity on responding to a concern or to a leading to action. In a clearness committee, a group of Friends helps a person discern if he or she really is being led to take action, and can explore different options for proceeding.

If the Meeting is presented with a concern and unites in approving it, the Meeting may pass it on to a committee, or to the Quarterly or Yearly Meeting. In cases where new concerns develop at the Yearly Meeting level, a working group of a new committee may be established.

Taking Action: Quaker Witness

The term "witness" is often used by Friends to describe outward action taken in response to spiritual leadings. Friends speak of "war tax witness" or the historic "witness against slavery" to refer to a large set of actions. "Witness" is also used to refer to a single, sometimes seemingly minor action that seeks to be a faithful response to a leading, such as the "witness" of participating in a vigil against the death penalty.

Testimonies

The term "testimonies" can be understood in their relationships to concerns, leadings, and witnesses. To put it simply, first you have a concern; then you feel led to take a particular action; that action is a witness. Often,

you'll find that your concern, leading, and witness fit in with the traditional Quaker concerns, leadings, and witness.

For more than 300 years, Friends have acted upon shared concerns through practices which historically have been distinctive and definitive. While the specifics of Friends' practice have varied as times have changed, Friends today continue to have concerns and underlying beliefs similar to those of past generations. The word "testimonies" is used to refer to this common set of deeply held, historically rooted attitudes and modes of living in the world.

Howard Brinton notes four testimonies: Community, Harmony, Equality, and Simplicity.

Wilmer Cooper, in *A Living Faith*, also notes four, but two are different: Integrity, Simplicity, Peace, and Equality.

To some extent, the testimonies can be seen as the Quaker counterpart to a creed, but with an ethical focus, defining a way of life rather than a formal theology. Another view is that the testimonies are the Quaker alternative to the concept of outward Sacraments—Friends' outward expression of the inward experience of divine leading.

Hugh Barbour recognizes three key testimonies for the first generation of friends: Honesty, Equality, and Simplicity. Barbour notes several factors for each testimony.

- *Religious Background*: This included roots in the Bible, and/or in the Christian church, especially among Puritans.
- *Regional Background*: Many early Friends came from the north of England, and some of their customs became characteristic of Friends as a whole.
- *Truth Claim*: The testimonies were based on Friends' assessment of what was honest and right.
- *Assault on Pride*: Acting on the testimonies involved consequences which were sometimes severe, including imprisonment and offending relatives and friends through refusal to engage in customary courtesies.
- *Loyalty Badge*: Some of the early testimonies continue to be practiced by Friends today and are recognized as distinctive.

Early Quaker Testimonies

Equality					
	RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND	REGIONAL BACKGROUND	TRUTH CLAIM	ASSAULT ON PRIDE	LOYALTY BADGE
NO TITLES	All equal before God	Use of first names more common in north of England	Status doesn't make a person deserve honor	Strong element	First and last name, no Mr. or Ms.
NO HAT HONOR	All Equal before God	Because of cold, hats probably kept on more in north	Status doesn't make a person deserve honor	Legal problem only when hat kept on in court, anger of parents, etc.	
LEADERSHIP, MINISTRY BY ALL	More democratic than Anglicans or Puritans; Acts 2: Spirit poured out on women and servants	In Mass. Especially high proportion of Quaker ministers were women	Women, servants, youth showed gifts of ministry and leadership	Nobody formally and permanently designated as minister; Fox had no formal status	

Honesty					
	RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND	REGIONAL BACKGROUND	TRUTH CLAIM	ASSAULT ON PRIDE	LOYALTY BADGE
OATHS REFUSED	Matt 5: Let your yea be yea; Anabaptists	Northern England had greater stock in loyalty oaths	Implication that one tells truth only under oath rejected	Quakers could be jailed for refusal to take oath	Affirmation, not oaths
SINGLE PRICE IS A JUST PRICE	Church-idea there was one right price				Made some Friends rich
NAMES OF WEEK DAYS / MONTHS	Bothered Puritans first; came from Norse and Roman gods			Necessary on order to be a Friend	
THEE / THOU TO INDIVIDUALS		In North & West England, “thee” was custom; in London, “you”	Distinction between singular, plural should be maintained	Shock-usually “thee” only to servants/children	

Simplicity					
	RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND	REGIONAL BACKGROUND	TRUTH CLAIM	ASSAULT ON PRIDE	LOYALTY BADGE
COSTUME	From Puritans	Quaker farming background; working class	Shouldn't waste money on selves	Friends looked different	Still often simpler than average
LUXURY, GAMES	Puritan self-denial		Shouldn't waste money on selves	Had to exclude selves from some activities	
ART, MUSIC, DRAMA	Extension of Protestant Reformation				No

The Religious Basis of the Friends' Peace Testimony

Perhaps the most famous statement of the Friends' Peace Testimony is contained in the Declaration to Charles II of England in 1660. It begins, “We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever; this is our testimony to the whole world...” The roots of the peace testimony and Friends' commitment to nonviolent action include the experience of Christ Within, the Bible, and an optimistic view of what people can do when acting under a leading of the Spirit.

1. Friends believe that the Spirit is active among us, and will lead us in the way of peace if we allow it. The Spirit is consistent, and therefore, since Friends as a body have felt led to condemn war as evil, they can expect that this will continue to be God's leading.

“We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever; this is our testimony to the whole world... The Spirit of Christ, by which we are all guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil, and again to move unto it; and we certainly know, and testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads

us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the Kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world...Therefore, we cannot learn war anymore.”⁵

2. Early Friends proclaimed a “Lamb’s War” against evil, so named after Christ in the book of Revelation. This was a **spiritual, nonviolent war** which each participant had to undertake within him or herself before being ready to speak to “that of God” in others. War is caused by sin, which needs to be rooted out spiritually.

“But I told them [the Commonwealth Commissioners] that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars, and I knew from whence all wars did rise, from the lust according to James’ doctrine...”⁶

“What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so, you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so, you fight and wage war.”⁷

“And the word of the Lord came unto me and said, ‘Put up thy sword into thy scabbard; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my children fight,’ which word enlightened my heart and I discovered the mystery of iniquity, and that the Kingdom of Christ was within, and the enemies were within, and was spiritual, and my weapons against them must be spiritual, the power of God.”⁸

3. The Bible was seen as a living book, and its prophecies in the process of being fulfilled in the present. In theological terms, early Friends had a “realized eschatology”⁹—they were not waiting for “pie in the sky by and by,” but saw the Kingdom of God, the ideal world, coming into being in and through them.

God’s promise of a new covenant: “I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”¹⁰

The earth as a peaceable kingdom, where “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,” and “they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”¹¹

“...they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”¹²

4. Friends have sought to take seriously the difficult teachings of Jesus on peacemaking. In this century, many have seen Jesus as a great moral teacher whose teachings, if followed, would produce a peaceful world.

⁵ Friends’ Declaration to Charles II of England, 1661.

⁶ George Fox, 1651.

⁷ James 4:1-2.

⁸ William Dewsbury, 1655. See John 18:11, 36; Ephesians 6:10-12; 2 Corinthians 10:3-4.

⁹ Eschatology is a branch of theology that deals with the final events in the history of the world or of humankind. It includes beliefs about death, judgment, the afterlife, the resurrection of the dead, the Second Coming, the Last Judgment, the messianic era, and the problem of theodicy. Eschatology is a term that originated in the West and refers to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim doctrines about the end of history and the ultimate destiny of the soul and of humankind. (Webster)

¹⁰ Jeremiah 31:33.

¹¹ Isaiah 11:6, 9.

¹² Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3.

The Great Commandment, as it is worded in Luke: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”¹³ This is followed by the story of the Good Samaritan, which clarifies that “neighbors” includes foreigners and hated people.

“But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To whom who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him that takes your cloak do not withhold your coat as well. “Give to everyone who begs from you, and of him who takes away your goods do not ask for them again. And as you wish that people would do to you, do so to them.”¹⁴

“If anyone would be first, that one must be the last of all and servant of all.”¹⁵

5. Radical Quaker activism of all periods has often been found offensive and upsetting, or been called impossibly idealistic, by those not taking part; this is integral also to Jesus’ experience as described in the gospels.

Jesus denounced the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees for neglecting justice and mercy while carefully tithing mint, dill, and cumin.¹⁶

He threw the money changers out of the Temple, denouncing their making the house of worship into a den of robbers.¹⁷

He broke the Jewish law, and healed on the Sabbath.¹⁸

“For truly I say to you, if you have faith as small as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move hence to yonder place,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.”¹⁹

6. Especially in the first generation, but also through to the present, Friends have sometimes suffered as a consequence of faithfulness to what they understood to be divine leadings—some 500 early Friends died in England in prison or as a result of having been imprisoned. One of these Friends was James Naylor, a powerful preacher, writer, and traveling minister who was imprisoned by Parliament for blasphemy after an unwise action which led to others to believe he had equated himself with Christ; the words cited were written in prison and are sometimes called his “dying words.”

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”²⁰

“There is a spirit which I feel, that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end: Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself. It sees to the end of all temptations; as it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thoughts to any other: If it be betrayed it bears it; for its ground and spring is the mercies and forgiveness of God. Its crown is meekness, its life is everlasting love unfeigned, and takes its kingdom with entreaty, and not with contention, and keeps it by lowliness of mind. In God alone it can rejoice, though none else

¹³ Luke 6:27-31.

¹⁴ Luke 6:27-31.

¹⁵ Mark 9:35.

¹⁶ Matthew 23:23.

¹⁷ Mark 11:15-17, par.

¹⁸ Mark 3:1-5.

¹⁹ Matthew 17:20.

²⁰ Mark 8:34.

regard it, or can own its life. It's conceived in sorrow, and brought forth without any to pity it; nor doth it murmur at grief and oppression. It never rejoiceth, but through sufferings; for with the world's joy it is murdered. I found it alone, being forsaken; I have fellowship therein, with them who lived in dens, and desolate places in the earth, who through death obtained this resurrection and eternal holy life."²¹

Historically, while Friends have a reputation for pioneering social change, few Friends have actually been in the vanguard, as shown by Margaret Hope Bacon's chapter, "Quaker Women as Abolitionists."

Current expressions of the peace testimony include the work of Quaker Organizations. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) was established in 1917 by Rufus Jones and others. Much good will was created through child feeding programs in Russia and Germany after World War I. As Friends have often sought to do historically, the AFSC provided relief to both sides during the Vietnam War.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) was established in 1943 as the lobbying arm for Friends.

Cutting edge issues for Friends often involve differing with the law or current interpretations of it, as in war tax resistance, providing sanctuary to illegal aliens, and civil disobedience at nuclear weapon sites.

²¹ James Naylor, 1660.

VI. Quaker Business Procedure and Organization

Friends established Monthly Meeting, Quarterly Meeting, and Yearly Meeting, named according to how often the *business* meeting of each is held.

Meeting for Business

The Quaker Meeting for Business begins with worship, and ideally, remains in a spirit of worship throughout. It has been called a Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, since Friends gather to discern what God is calling them to do as a Meeting.

Meetings have officers. Key among them are the clerk and recording clerk. Brinton and Sheeran both emphasize the role of the clerk; in practice in many Meetings the recording clerk has great responsibility in shaping the minutes that record decisions made during business sessions. In Britain, there is no recording clerk, and the clerk drafts the minutes.

The clerk follows an agenda. Ideally, this agenda is distributed to Friends in advance, so they can come prepared. The agenda often includes consideration by the Meeting of concerns brought by Friends: a concern that the Meeting support a member who feels led to work to start a Meeting in Moscow, or that the sign out front be enlarged so passersby can read it from the road, or that homeless people be able to sleep in the Meetinghouse, or that a Quakerism 101 class be held.

Decision-making is based on reaching a “sense of the Meeting,” or “achieving unity.” This differs from consensus, which is a valuable secular process, because of conscious inclusion of the “divine factor.” Friends seek to discern God’s will, or act according to the leadings of the Spirit.

Unity differs from unanimity. Both Brinton and Sheeran make the point that unity does not depend on the enthusiastic assent of all present. Friends may “stand aside” to allow the Meeting to act even when they are not in full agreement.

A Meeting for Business closes as it began—with worship.

Committees

In small Meetings, all business may be done in the Meeting for Business. Large Meetings may have many standing committees. The Nominating Committee has the role of discerning the gifts of members, looking not only at skills, but seeking to recognize what Friends might be led to do to contribute to the life of the Meeting.

Quarterly Meeting

The Quarterly Meeting, sometimes called a regional meeting, brings together members of several Meetings in a given area, once a quarter by definition, though OVYM’s Quarterly Meetings consider the Annual Sessions a replacement for one of the four Quarterly Meeting sessions.

Some Quaker Quarterly Meetings are strong with committees and much activity. A strong Quarterly Meeting can facilitate strengthened activity for Friends. OVYM contains two Quarterly Meetings: Miami, made up of the Monthly Meetings in Ohio and Kentucky; and Whitewater, made up of the Monthly Meetings in Indiana.

Yearly Meeting

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting contains 20 Monthly Meetings, organized under two Quarterly Meetings. A “Yearly Meeting” is a term that has three different meanings: the total membership of the Monthly Meetings in the Yearly Meeting, the Annual (Business) Sessions held each year, and the committee structure and staff that supports the individual Monthly Meetings.

All members and attenders are encouraged to come to the Annual Business Sessions, which include seeking unity on several important issues, reports, speakers, socializing, and full programs for children and youth.

Between Annual Sessions, the Executive Committee meets. Monthly Meetings appoint at least one “representative” to attend these Executive Committee meetings.

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting also has a number of committees and staff members, the names and positions of which are available on the Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting website.

Broader Quaker Groups

Outside of the Monthly/Quarterly/Yearly Meeting organization, Friends’ corporate bodies tend not to fit into neat structures. Rather than being hierarchically organized, groups tend to arise from the grassroots, as the result of Friends feeling the need for a new body to act on a particular set of concerns.

Broader Quaker groups, which include participation by Friends of more than one Yearly Meeting, include the following:

Friends General Conference (FGC) was established in 1900. This is not a decision-making body, but an association of largely unprogrammed Yearly Meetings, and some Monthly Meetings. FGC holds a week-long gathering each summer that is attended by a large number of Friends. It includes speakers, workshops, interest groups, and opportunity for connections with many Friends and liberal Quaker Groups.

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) was created in 1937. It has sponsored both world-wide and regional gatherings for Friends from all Yearly Meetings across the theological spectrum. It is not a decision-making body, but as its name suggests, serves a consultative function.

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) includes representatives on its Board from some (but not all) of the Yearly Meetings in the United States.

Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) has its agenda set by a Board of representatives from many (but not all) Meetings in the United States.

There are many additional Friends groups reflecting a wide variety of concerns, and new ones emerge frequently.