

Rethinking Quaker Principles

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR Rufus Matthew Jones, philosopher, mystical scholar, Quaker historian and social reformer, graduated from Haverford College in 1885, received an M.A. from his alma mater in 1886 and from Harvard in 1901.

Jones taught at Oakwood Seminary (1886-7), and at Friends School, Providence, was principal of Oak Grove Seminary (1889), recognized as a minister (1890), editor of the American Friend from 1893 to 1912, sat on the Board of Trustees of Bryn Mawr College from 1898 to 1936, and became an instructor in philosophy at Haverford College (1893), achieving the T. Wistar Brown chair in philosophy before he retired in 1934.

The author of over 50 monographs, one of the principal missions of Rufus Jones was healing the 19th century split in American Quakerism; his life's work bore fruit in the 1950s with the reunification of American Quaker Meetings. Rufus Jones was instrumental in establishing at the college the Haverford Emergency Unit (a precursor to the American Friends Service Committee) that prepared members for relief and reconstruction work in Europe after World War I.

A world traveler (it is said he traversed the ocean 200 times), Jones met with Mahatma Gandhi at his ashram in India, and spoke with religious leaders in China and Japan during a trip in 1926, and in 1938, he traveled to South Africa, meeting with General Jan Smuts and returning via China and Japan. In that same year, he participated in a mission with George Walton and D. Robert Yarnall to Germany to see if a peaceful means of dealing with Nazis could be reached.

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I. A New Religious Type

It is not often that something wholly new comes to our world. We can probably say that something absolutely new never happens. The newest new form always bears some marks of the old out of which it sprung. The new, like the new moon, is born in the arms of the old. We have a new word for the breaking in of the new out of the existent old. We call it a *mutation*. A mutation is a unique and unpredictable variation in the process of life. It is the unexpected appearance of a new type in an old order. It is a leap and not a mere dull recurrence of the past. Something emerges that was not here before, something that is not just the sum of preceding events. The universe is on the march and the march springs surprises. The procession of life looks more like a steeplechase than like a predictable and repeatable habit track.

The birth of the Society of Friends is one of these mutations. It was not, of course, an absolutely new religious movement. It had a definite setting and a well-marked background in history, but nothing just exactly like it ever existed before in the world. I want to make you see, if I can, why it emerged when it did and what was the distinct type that broke in on the stream of the Reformation movement which was in full flood in England in the seventeenth century when Quakerism was born. It is obvious, or should be, to everybody that there would have been no Society of Friends if there had not been a Puritan movement, and yet it is just as certain that the Quakers were not, properly speaking, Puritans.

Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603) is the historical father of Puritanism and throughout the entire reign of Queen Elizabeth he prayed and preached and worked for a radical reform of the Anglican Church, which seemed to him to be the Roman Catholic Church slightly fixed over and “simonized,” but on the whole the old original model.

Cartwright and the other Puritan creative leaders had two major concerns. They were first of all fervid exponents of Calvin's theological system. They took over his conception of God as the absolute sovereign of the universe, whose inscrutable will determines irresistibly everything that happens in the visible and invisible worlds. The Puritans took over, too, Calvin's conception of man in his fallen state as wholly depraved and corrupt and involved by the "Fall" in utter moral ruin, a being wholly devoid of merit. They took over also the view that man's possible deliverance is due entirely to the grace and mercy of God revealed and made effective through Christ's propitiatory offering on the Cross, by which those who are elect and who accept the proffered means are saved, all others are eternally lost and doomed to Hell. The Bible, which reveals God's plan, they believed, is His one and only communication to the human race, and contains all that man can ever know or needs to know of God's will and purpose.

The other urgent Puritan concern was the reorganization of the Church. They believed that the plan for it was plainly set forth in "the Word of God." This plan was for the early Puritans the Presbyterian system in place of the Episcopal system, inherited from the hated Roman Church. Unfortunately both the Episcopal and Presbyterian systems confronted the reader of the infallible New Testament. Acts and St. John's Epistles describe the apostolic churches as led and guided by "elders," that is, presbyters, while St. Paul's epistles speak of bishops and deacons as the guides of the primitive churches. Here was a plain difficulty with the infallible Plan. And some of the Puritans, notably those that founded New England, discovered that the New Testament set forth a third plan, a Congregational plan.

The trouble with this infallible Bible was that there were so many ways of interpreting it, none of which ways seemed infallible to those who had a different way. In 1611

brokenhearted, to be a cup of strength in times of agony, to set men on their feet when the foundations seem to be caving in, and to feed and comfort the little children amidst the wreckage of war and devastation. Those who are to do such service need to know:

That God at their fountains
Far off hath been raining.

but also more completely organized and vitalized and equipped with new energies of the spirit.

This hush and silence, therefore, of which I have been speaking, must be thought of as preparation and fortification for the main business of life. John Woolman, one of the humblest men that ever lived, became a veritable dynamo against the evil of slavery. He describes how he learned to wait in patience and to dwell deep in the life and love of God, and then when the time came for speech or action, he was prepared to “stand as a trumpet through which the Lord speaks.”

If the Quakers in this generation have in some measure taken up and borne and possibly relieved the burdens of the world’s suffering, it has been made possible through a deeper preparation for life than the casual beholder was aware of. Friends come back from their worship with a new sense of ordination, but not the ordination of human hands. Something has happened in the stillness that makes the heart more tender, more sensitive, more shocked by evil, more dedicated to ideals of life, and more eager to push back the skirts of darkness and to widen the area of light and love.

The sensitiveness of the compass needle to the magnetic currents in which it moves reveals the fact that it has not only been carefully balanced on its pivot, but that it has also itself been magnetized and transformed through all its molecules. Somewhat so the dynamic worker at the tasks of the world must be organized within, must be brought into parallelism with celestial currents and be penetrated with energies beyond himself.

My beloved teacher, Josiah Royce, used to tell of an experience and a conviction which enables a man “to stand anything that can happen to him in the universe.” But we must do more than stand the waterspouts which break over us and rage around us. Our task is to bind up the

this Book was put into marvelous English and everybody read it with growing love and wonder. The more they read it the more difficult it became to make readers agree upon any one final and infallible interpretation of it. Honest minds strangely differed about what it meant, and no one Plan stood out as clearly revealed to everybody.

By 1643, when George Fox started out in his leather breeches as a “seeker,” there was a vast confusion of plans. Archbishop Laud had been executed and Episcopacy had suffered a great defeat. The Puritans were in control of Parliament. Presbyterianism was dominant and England was fighting a civil war. The longer they fought the more the confusion spread. There was almost from the first a strong popular reaction against Presbyterianism as a state church, and a vast variety of religious views and new church systems swarmed over England. In the midst of the confusion there broke out a powerful wave of mystical life and thought and religion, nowhere more in evidence than in the army of the Commonwealth, and especially in the mind of Cromwell himself. Little groups formed in many parts of England, opposed to infallible systems and intolerant authority, inspired by the writings of mystics on the continent, kindled by the freedom of the Gospel and resolved to create a new and freer type of spiritual religion for the future. “That was a unique situation, and it only needed a creative leader to turn this unorganized and chaotic spiritual yearning into a high tide movement. George Fox was the prophet leader who did just that in this hour of crisis.

Fox had almost certainly become unsettled in his religious views during his apprenticeship in Nottinghamshire, where he kept sheep, and when he came home and heard the extreme Calvinism of the “priest” of the Drayton Church, Nathaniel Stephens, he plainly revolted from what he called the “notions,” and what we should call the “ideology,” of the Calvinistic preaching which he was constantly hearing. At

the age of nineteen he reached a stage of complete revolt, cut loose forever from the organized Church of his time, and went out on his feet as a desperate seeker for reality, for something that would “speak to his condition.” Everywhere on his travels he found the preachers whom he met “hollow and empty.” You must remember that the persons he calls “priests” were Presbyterian ministers. As he wandered about, however, he gathered up from “tender” people a great many fresh ideas and transforming insights. He saturated himself with the New Testament and the prophets, and little by little, during the four years of his wanderings, he began to have great mystical experiences of Christ’s direct work on his soul, of God’s enveloping love, and of the authentic reality of the Pentecostal power of the Spirit. These experiences, which he called “openings,” gave him an unparalleled degree of certainty and a convincing power. In fact, his religious experiences give him a place in the list of the foremost Christian mystics of history.

By 1647 he knew that he had found what he sought, and from that time on he began to gather kindred spirits around him, remarkable persons like Elizabeth Hooton, James Nayler, Richard Farnsworth and William Dewsbury. They were his first disciples. Five years later, in 1652, he found in the neighborhood of Pendle Hill, “a great people to be gathered,” and an immense conviction followed, which marks the birth of Quakerism as a successful movement. Out of the conviction of the northern “seekers” he secured Swarthmoor Hall as the center of his mission, and sixty highly qualified “Publishers of Truth” to assist him in proclaiming the Quaker message. The visit to Pendle Hill is the epoch-making event in Quaker history.

At this stage, organization of the movement was hardly thought of. The thrilling thing was the certainty of God’s light and love in the individual’s soul. The day dawn and the daystar had risen in their hearts; that was enough. They

of life. Just that is what seems to happen to some of us in the hush and mystery of intimate contact with divine currents, in the living silence of corporate worship.

It is like a ship in a lock. Here the ship is, shut in by great gates before and behind. Its driving engines have slowed down; its speed has diminished to naught. It is no longer going anywhere. And yet all the time the water is rising underneath the ship, and when the gate in front swings open, and the ship emerges from its period of full stop, it will go out for its journey on a higher level and carry its burden of freight henceforth on a new plane.

I have read of a nurse who, during the influenza epidemic of 1918, became utterly worn out and incapable any longer of coherent effort. One day when at the limit of herself she resolved to slip away and sit in the quiet with a group of worshippers. She did so. The result was that the whole current of her life was altered in the hour of genuine worship. She felt herself restored, calmed and rebuilt. She returned to her work with a freshness of spirit, a renewed will, and she found herself raised to a new level of life and action, like the ship emerging from the lock.

There are moments when the walls between the seen and unseen appear to grow thin and almost vanish away, and one feels himself to be in contact with more than himself. The threshold of consciousness, which in our attentive and focused states of mind bars the entrance of everything that does not fit the business in hand, drops to a different level and allows a vastly widened range of experience, and we suddenly discover that we can draw upon more of ourselves than at other times. And in these best moments of widened range when we share the cooperative influence of many expectant worshippers around us, it seems often as though streams of life and light and love and truth flow in from beyond our margins, and we come back to work and business and thought again, not only calmed, rested and made serene,

practical task with a period of hush. It may, I think, be taken as a demonstrated fact that hush and silence minister to a consciousness of mutual and reciprocal communion with God. The soul in these deep moments of quiet seems to be both giving and receiving, to be breathing in a diviner life, and to be pouring out in response its own highest and noblest aspirations and expectations. Different exponents of religious faith differ widely in their emphasis on what is essential in belief and form and practice, but the representatives of all faiths, of all communions, of all systems, or of none, might find themselves moved, quickened, vitalized, refreshed, and girded for the duties and tasks of life by periods of expectant, palpitating hush with others who are fused together into one group of worshipping men and women.

Since the last world war, we have had many experiences of silence, in which a whole city, or even an entire nation, seemed somehow to find itself unified through an awe-inspiring hush, and more than that, to be lifted into communion with a vast invisible fellowship and with the Father of us all. It has well been called “the way of wonder,” and I would add that it is the way of expectancy. Sometimes it may be as important to get away from the problems of thinking as it is to get away from the yoke of business, or the press of the crowd. There is as much need of a holiday from the problems of the mind as there is for relief from hurry and worry and grind of work.

There are deeps in us all far below our ideas. There is in fact a substratum which is the mother-soil out of which all our ideas and purposes are born, as capes of cloud are born out of the viewless air. To feed or to fertilize that subsoil of our conscious life is far more important than to capture and to organize a few stray thoughts. To discover how to vitalize and to flood with power this fundamental stratum of our being is, after all, to uncover one of the master secrets

knew that the light of Christ had broken in on their souls and they called themselves “Children of the Light.” They no more felt the need of an organization than two young lovers do, or than the members of a happy family do. They sat down in intimate worship together, tremulous with emotion, and they let Christ take care of the result. There is no doubt that they trembled and the name *Quaker* was given to them, and stuck to them, because they actually quaked. There was, too, a striking return to Pentecostal experience of new spiritual life and power. Early Quakerism was an intense mass movement of the Pentecostal type. These people had discovered a new energy.

“I saw the Light of Christ,” Fox says, “that it shines through all.” “The ocean of Life and Light and Love flow over all oceans of darkness.” “One person in the power of God can shake the world for ten miles around.” Yes, for ten thousand miles. The movement was spontaneous and dynamic and grew by spiritual contagion, like the early Franciscan movement, and it remained for a long period very much like the Third Order of St. Francis. It grew amazingly in the eight years between 1652 and 1660 and the number of members leaped to about forty thousand in England alone in that period.

There are no marks of church structure in this early movement. Those who composed it had revolted from the heavy hand of organization and from the rigidity of what they called theological “notions.” What seemed to them the most certain fact of their own experience was the surge of the Spirit within and the revealing light of Christ operating in the soul. This was not a speculative theory. It was a thrilling, palpitating experience. They did not at this stage think of themselves as a new sect, a new denomination. George Fox himself said we belong to “what was before all sects.” They thought in all sincerity that they were the “seed,” “the first fruits” of Christ’s restored and renewed universal

Church of the Spirit. This movement which they were launching was to be essential Christianity, the thing itself. Of that no Quaker in George Fox's lifetime doubted. Strangely enough it was not by any means an impossible dream.

If the movement was to grow and spread and multiply as a "seed" should do, it must be kept in the vital process of life and unfolding development; not arrested and hardened into system and formality. There was for a long period no rigid list of members. "All the faithful men and women (i.e. all who attended meetings with regularity) whose faith stands in the power of God have a right of membership," according to a minute of London Yearly Meeting of 1676. The movement was managed and directed by persons possessing "gifts" rather than by chosen officers. There was no clear differentiation of officials before the year 1725, which marks the second stage of Quakerism.

It is an interesting fact that even the degree of organization implied by the name "Society of Friends" does not appear before the Restoration, i.e. 1660. In fact, the first existing reference to the term "Society of Friends" is 1667. Before this date the members are loosely called "Children of the Light," or "the Seed," or "Friends," and by the world "Quakers." The word "Society" was chosen to express the ideal of Quaker simplicity in organization. It meant then what we mean now by "Fellowship" — a vital spiritual group. It avoided the memory and the suggestion of danger which the word "Church" connoted to their minds. They wanted to be removed as far as possible from the danger of corporate compulsion in all matters which concerned the individual's relation with God, and in the deep-lying and sacred issues of faith and practice. They were feeling after a genuine basis of spiritual liberty, equality, and fraternity. They were endeavoring to provide free and ample scope for the life and growth of the soul of man both upward and outward.

That does not mean that Friends substitute love for force. They do believe that love is infinitely greater than force, but they know clearly enough that wrong social and economic conditions cannot be radically changed merely by loving those who are most responsible for the wrong, or by relieving the sufferings of those who are wronged. But the solution of the issues behind the ills of life can be better found, Friends believe, by those who work from the inside, who share sacrificially in the sufferings and who feel the burden of the tragic situations, than by those who stand off outside and merely apply a "magic" ideology.

Finally, here at the end, I shall put what might well have come first, the constant return of Friends to the springs and sources of life in worship. We may hold it as settled that we cannot change the world from ways of war to ways of peace, nor can we rebuild the social order on right lines for future generations, without the influence and guidance and inspiration of vital religion. A world built on purely secular lines would be a world that would fester and spoil and corrupt as has always happened. We must above everything else find our way back to the springs of life and refreshment for the hearts and souls of men. Religious faith when it takes us back to the true source of power removes from the mind the peril of bewildering unsettlement. It turns water to wine. It brings prodigals home. It sets men on their feet. It raises life out of death. It turns sunsets to sunrises. It makes the impossible become possible. The master secret of life is the attainment of the power of serenity in the midst of stress and action and adventure.

One of the most significant contributions which the Quakers have made has been their discovery of the value of silent communion and their practice of it as a source of strength and equipment. They begin all their meals in silence. They open all their meetings with a time of quiet, even their meetings for business, and they approach every

all carnal Weapons and have beaten them to pieces, stand in that which takes away the occasion of Wars, in the Power which saves men's lives, and destroys none, nor would have others (destroy)." He quotes no texts. He gives no reasons. He simply says Friends cannot do the things which war involves.

Quakerism, then, let us say, is a bold experiment, not merely in pacifism, in the midst of warring peoples, but an experiment with patience and endurance to exhibit a way of life which implements this high estimate of man's divine possibilities, and which even in the fell circumstances of war and hate goes on with a service of love and a mission of good will, the condition of peace. Mahatma Gandhi has described his life work as "My Experiments with Truth." I should like to have that term applied to our Quaker service: "The Quaker Experiments with Truth."

Friends who have seen the significance of this experiment, this way of life, can be counted on to be purveyors of peace, both in peace-time and in war-time. They will not fight nor be entangled in the mechanisms of war. They will be calm and heroic in other ways. They will make heavy sacrifices to transmit their faith in services of love. They will die if it will demonstrate their faith and their truth. But they will not endorse war methods or voluntarily take part in a system that is engaged in carrying on war. There ought to be a world like this diviner one of which the Quakers dream; and they propose to go on living for it, suffering for it, and if necessary, dying for it. The testimony I am talking about is not negative. It does not begin with "Thou shalt not". It is first and last a positive and creative way of life and of enlarging the area of light and truth and love.

This spirit and way of life which explain the Quaker attitude to war lie also behind the humanitarian endeavors of Friends from the days of George Fox to the present time.

At this early stage, and throughout the period of George Fox's life, nobody either outside or inside the Quaker movement thought of it in terms of an organized Protestant denomination. It had no ordained officials. It had no formulated and recognized creed. It had no sacramental ordinances. The existing churches of the period, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist and Congregational all considered no body of Christians a church without those three essential aspects: ordination, creed, sacraments.

In one other respect Friends of the early period deviated from all existing Protestant churches. They did not regard the scriptures as the infallible "Word of God." They loved these scriptures with their whole heart. One of George Fox's hostile critics admitted that if the Bible were lost it could have been reproduced from the memory of George Fox. They were all saturated in it and quoted it most aptly and effectively. But the ultimate authority for them was always Christ, the living Word of God, interpreted for them in the New Testament, but still abiding, and revealing Himself in their own souls as Guide, Light and Leader. That was essentially their new message.

How George Fox himself felt about a creed comes to light very clearly in what he said and did and wrote when the Congregationalists adopted their "Declaration of Faith and Order" at the Savoy Conference in 1658. Fox says, in his Journal "Before this time the church-faith (so-called) was given forth, which was said to have been made at the Savoy in eleven days' time. I got a copy before it was published, and wrote an answer to it; and when the church-faith was sold in the streets, my answer was sold also. This angered some of the Parliament men so that one of them told me, 'they must have me to Smithfield' (i.e. to be burnt). I told him, 'I was above their fires and feared them not.' Reasoning with him, I wished him to consider 'had all people been without a faith these sixteen hundred years that now

the priests (i.e. Congregational ministers) must make them one?' Did not (and this is the Quaker point of view), Did not the apostle say that Jesus was the author and finisher of their faith? And since Christ Jesus was the author of the apostles' faith, of the church's faith in primitive times, and of the martyr's faith, should not all people look unto Him to be the author and finisher of their faith, and not to the priests? Much work we had about the priest-made faith."

In no uncertain note he indicates here that "priest-made faiths" or "council-made faiths," or "convention-made faiths" are mental constructions, ideologies, (his word is "notions") which tend to be congealed substitutes for the soul's personal discovery of Christ, and for a vital correspondence with the divine mind and will and guiding leadership.

It is true — only too true — that many times in a history of nearly three hundred years Friends have attempted to produce these man-made faiths. Once in Barbados, in a moment of weakness, George Fox himself signed a credal letter, and in other times of crisis sporadic attempts have been made to hold the line at some fixed point of doctrine. But these "declarations" have always been temporary expedients. They have always failed to express the central and abiding core of life and faith of the onward moving Quaker movement.

It is also true that the Society of Friends has occasionally gravitated in the direction of becoming itself a rigid and congealed sect. The pressure from above, that is from the leaders of the Society, to turn the Friends into a solidified "peculiar people," with a fixed garb and form of speech, hedged about and isolated from "the world" by carefully devised regulations and testimonies, is still remembered by some of us. This happened in the second period, not in the first. It came from outside influences, especially from the powerful contemporary wave of quietism,

formed a deep-lying philosophy of life, which it is much more important to capture than it is to quote his pithy sayings at critical moments. It seems to me that the main secret is found in his discovery that God and man are never sundered, are never separate entities. There is always a tiny isthmus which links man's soul to the divine eternal mainland to which it belongs. The approach to God is not primarily up through nature and the natural order; it is rather through the soul of man which is essentially spirit and therefore may commune with Spirit.

To be "saved" for these early Quakers did not mean escaping the fires of Hell and gaining an entrance through the pearly gates into a peaceful Heaven. It meant an inward transformation of spirit and way of life. It was the birth of a new love, a new passion for holy living, a hate of sin both within and without. Salvation was an actual spiritual conquest and a new dynamic of life.

This Quaker philosophy of life was not a speculation and it was more than a faith. It was a vivid experience. The Light from beyond actually broke in on them and flowed over all their darkness. They knew God experimentally. They felt the healing drop into their souls from under God's wings. And with it came the assurance that this inward event was possible for everyone possessed of a soul made in God's image. If this be so then it follows as a corollary that every man is highborn, with immense possibilities, and is infinitely precious. He may muckrake in the dirt, but there is a crown of righteousness hovering above his head, if he would only look up and see it!

This estimate of human life is an essential feature of Quakerism, when one goes back to its headwaters. It was implicit rather than articulate, but it colored the whole Quaker attitude toward life and formed the spring and motive of the costly peace testimony. In an Epistle of the year 1659, George Fox wrote: "All Friends everywhere, who are dead to

love and patience, innocence and justice, self-restraint and willingness to suffer and endure are the infallible credentials of a Christian. His powerful influence as a scholar and as an interpreter of the New Testament gave these brave ideas of his a new standing in the world. The early Anabaptists and the Spiritual Reformers, both of whom were contemporaries of Luther, show in a marked way the influence of the great mystics before them and of Erasmus who had awakened and inspired them. They went back, as Erasmus had done, not so much to texts of Scripture as to the whole spirit of the New Testament and to what seemed to them to be the way of Christ. This stream of thought had quietly flowed into England in diverse currents and was an essential aspect of many of the mystical groups of the Commonwealth era, when George Fox and William Dewsbury and James Nayler and Isaac Pennington were finding their way into a new manner of life.

However this new warm stream of life and thought may have reached George Fox across the bogs and swamps of the time, he gave it a peculiar color and a curve of direction from his own unique insight and character. William Penn was right when he said that George Fox was “an original and no man’s copy.” He was saturated with the New Testament. He had found his way deeply into the heart of the Gospel, and the light of Christ had broken into his soul with fresh illumination. “I saw the light of Christ,” he says, “shine through all.” As one in the order of the prophets he made a novel contribution of his own to the way of life which the mystics and humanists and spiritual reformers before him had heralded.

In mapping out his path in the early creative days he felt his way along by inward vision. He did not explicitly think it out with his head. He certainly did not rest his case on texts which served as legal commands, though he knew the texts well enough. From somewhere he had caught and

rather than from the genius and spirit of early Quakerism. What happened was that nearly every aspect of life, including the direction of love and affection in marriage and the height of one’s gravestone after death, was regulated. The Discipline was a hard and fast system, which expected conformity. The elders in those days actually “eluded,” and stood like adamant for a well defined status quo. A rhythmic and cadenced tone of voice was expected if the preaching was to possess unction. The message must show no sign or indication of previous preparation. “Thou shouldst not have been thinking,” was the comment of an elder to me in the early days of my ministry, and he represented a long and weighty tradition of control. The hardening of the arteries of the Society was much in evidence in my youth, and one saw that a “society” could become, in fact had become, as rigid and inelastic as a stiffly organized church might be.

Well, that epoch has ended. We are deciding now, it is a matter of our destiny to decide which ideal is to be the ideal of Quakerism for the future.

Is our Quakerism to be an open or a closed type of religion? Open religion means a type that is uncongealed, fresh, free, formative and in vital contact with the creative stream of divine life. Open religion has faith in the spiritual capacity of the soul and confidence that God and man are akin and essentially belong together. Open religion, therefore, is expectant, forward looking. It prizes the past, but believing profoundly that God is a living God, it sees more yet of love and truth and goodness before us. Its ultimate assurances are not in books or creeds or formulations or arguments, but in the soul’s experience of the reality and Christlikeness of God. It dares to leave religion free to grow with the growing world and growing mind, and to sail the uncharted seas with God. The Society of Friends in its early formative period was a striking illustration of open religion. The day dawn and the daystar had arisen in the hearts of these “Children

of the Light,” and they moved forward.

Closed religion, on the other hand, stands for the finality of the formulations of the past. The returns are assumed to be all in. Truth has been fully revealed “by them of old time.” The function of religion of this type is to interpret the sacred deposit from the past, the truth once and for all time delivered. There is, I suppose, no existent church or denomination all of whose members are now committed to that backward-looking program. There are Christians of the open type in even the most conservative groups.

It seems to me to be a major issue for the Society of Friends today whether on the whole its emphasis is to be, once more, as in the beginning, for this type of open, expectant religion, or whether it is to seek for comfortable formulations that seem to ensure its safety, and that will be hostages against new and dangerous enterprises in the realm of truth.

Timidity, security and conformity marked our middle period. Though it often produced beautiful, saintly characters, it was an era of waning energy, of shrinking numbers. The handwriting was on the wall pointing to an unmistakable terminus. A new awakening has come to us. We have experienced a recovery. There have been among us new stirrings of life. The world at large, and the churches in particular, have turned to us with a renewed expectation. They are grateful for our work of relief and reconstruction, but they are even more concerned to see whether we have something fresh and new to say about life and immortality. Are we charged with hope and faith and vision or are we busy endeavoring to coin repetitive phrases and to become secure resting places for the mind?

Our very life is at stake on these issues. There are obviously many Friends who want us to be a safe and rigid sect. They have lost faith in the leadership of a living Christ in communion with the soul of man. The recovery of this

nourished the inner life of the child, and carried forward the nurture which the home had begun. The Quaker schools and colleges form one of our major contributions to the world. But we need to ask once more very seriously in the silent confessional of our Queries: Do you still in these modern times in your homes and schools and colleges bring up your children and those under your care in the nurture of Truth?

What comes first to mind when the Quaker way of life is mentioned is, almost certainly, the Quaker faith in the sacredness of human life and the refusal to use violent methods of force to change situations that are manifestly evil. The Quaker has unmistakably committed his trust for moral and social victories to the armor of light and the sword of the spirit, to methods that may be called gentle. He has been pretty consistently the bearer of a testimony for peace and in a good degree he has been a peacemaker. He has suffered much for his unyielding opposition to war. But his attitude toward peace and war is not an isolated attitude. It springs out of a deeper inward soil. It is an essential aspect of a larger whole of life.

Here especially we need to remind ourselves of the background movements which prepared the spiritual climate for the Quaker way of life. The Waldenses from the twelfth century on had stoutly refused to fight or to take human life. They based their scruple on definite texts of Scripture. They took the Sermon on the Mount as a new law to be strictly obeyed. The Third Order of St. Francis inaugurated a truce of God, since in its original intention no member of it might bear arms. The fourteenth century mystics were distinctly on the side of the angels in their desire to be instruments of the Spirit in the reformation of the Church and in the remaking of the world in gentle ways.

Erasmus inaugurated a new era in the testimony for peace. He is one of the profoundest advocates of the peace method that has ever interpreted it. He maintained that

of life — have asked questions like these: Do parents and those having care of youth early instruct them in the principles of Truth? Do you bring up your children in the nurture of the Truth? Every home was to be a vital center, a hotbed as it were, for the formation, the culture, the growth of the essential principles of the spiritual life. There is no substitute for the home as a nursery of the spirit.

Propagation of Quaker ideals of life was implicit rather than explicit, like the mathematics of the honeybee and the spider. It was done by contagion, by unconscious imitation. The important features were not so much explained as exhibited in life and action. You learned to live by being in the currents of life. The element of hush and silence is of course of vast importance in all these matters of nurture. Birthright is no doubt a poor word, but there was a certain richness of provision which went with it at its best. “Things provided came without the sweet sense of providing.” You simply drew upon an inheritance which became yours as naturally as the mother’s milk nourishes the child.

The unbroken stream of visiting Friends who came into every Quaker home was a unique method of carrying on and of heightening this enrichment of life in the home. Sooner or later the most eminent persons in the Society, both at home and abroad, came with their benediction of sweetness and light, and in the religious “opportunity” with the family, which was an essential feature of the visit, a season of refreshment from on high often attended it and left a rich deposit in the soul.

The extraordinary interest in education, which has always characterized Friends in every period, is the flowering out of this deep concern for spiritual nurture. Wherever the meeting house went, the Quaker school, if in any way possible, sprang up beside it. These schools in their first intention were invariably nurseries of spiritual culture. They informed the mind, but above everything else they fed and

faith in the living Christ as an eternal presence is essential to our very existence as a vital religious body. We need once more to be able to say with a Christian in the second century: “Christ is forever being reborn in the hearts of His followers.”

There is no doubt that some Friends do not kindle over a Light within the soul which no darkness puts out. They want stability and a plain basis of authority and security. But I believe that in the main the awakened Friends in the world today feel their kinship with the founders of our Quaker faith and want to move forward once more and break new ground and win a new following from present day “seekers,” and above everything else to become a fresh and responsive organ for the life of the Spirit in the world of today and tomorrow.

II. The Quaker Way Of Life

I have insisted often enough that no significant movement can ever be understood until it is studied in the light of its historical background and its temporal setting. This is peculiarly true of the Quaker movement. George Fox was not the originator of a new stock of ideas and ideals. He was the convinced and dynamic interpreter, the articulate prophet, in fact, of a group of truths and principles that had long been in circulation. He became the effective organizer of a Society, a beloved community, which incarnated and propagated those truths and principles.

If I were to pick out one aspect of this Quaker way of life which is most basic to it, I should choose the rugged feature of sincerity. That trait characterized George Fox throughout his entire life. There was a saying in circulation while Fox was still an apprentice in Nottinghamshire, “If George says Verily, there is no altering him.” His father was known throughout the region of Fenny Drayton as “righteous Christopher,” and the son exhibited throughout his life “the

brave old wisdom of sincerity.” He found in his beloved Gospel of John that doing the truth is the way into the light and he inaugurated a Society that was first of all committed not to saying but to doing the truth.

His hate of sham underlies a great many of his so-called peculiarities. His refusal to take off his hat or to tip it as a mark of honor to a human person was no doubt carried to an extreme point of emphasis and proved to be the cause of many severe prison sentences, but in all these things he was uttering his powerful protest against the shams of hollow fashionable manners. The same thing applies to his stark simplicity of address and language. He would not pluralize a single person. He would not use any form of compliment unless he could use it with absolute honesty. It should be said that these peculiarities of speech and of refusal to remove the hat, and the further refusal to take any form of judicial oath, which cost an immense amount of suffering, were not novelties introduced by George Fox. They already were existing traits among “tender” people belonging to small mystical groups in the Commonwealth era. At a later date these costly efforts to purify manners of daily life and to scale them down to a basis of utter sincerity were turned into the badges of a “peculiar people,” and in the process they lost their original meaning.

Oliver Wendell Holmes has somewhere described minute forms of life so transparent that one can look through their bodies and see their hearts beat and their lungs breathe. Such transparency of purpose, such purity of intention and motive, was a feature of this effort of Fox to penetrate all etiquette and intercourse between persons with sincerity, and with the elimination of sham.

This sincerity and honesty, of course, applied to all business relations and dealings, but the principle went much deeper. It was a principle of life. You were to be through and through what you professed to be. There is a fine text in the

Psalms: “Thou hast visited me in the night and searched me in the dark and thou hast found nothing wrong.” I need hardly say, we are all only too conscious of it, that is a goal Quakers strive toward, not a terminus that has been reached.

It was on this same basis of sincerity that George Fox revolted from the use of theological “notions” and creedal statements, and brought religion down to a secure basis of experience of life, of tested reality, and of discovered truth translated into action. To say or hear exalted phrases from a pulpit, or to sing hymns of lofty import, and then to go home and act precisely as though these exalted things had never been said, struck at his life, and threw him into a state of agony. It is impossible ever to estimate rightly the essential significance of the Quaker movement without a clear appraisal of the importance of this call to stark sincerity. And this call to sincerity lies at the root of the Quaker attempt to live the simple life. There is no fixed standard of simplicity. What is very simple for one person often seems very complex and extravagant for another person. There is no known calculus of simplicity. Simplicity at its best and truest is this utter honesty of heart and life, this complete sincerity of soul before God and in relation with our fellowmen so that we truly struggle to be what we tell God we want to be and what we profess in our social relations to be. A Quaker must get out and keep out of the ruts of duplicity and sham. That is a basic Quaker way of life which gets back to its original spirit.

The next basic trait which I shall select is the emphasis on spiritual nurture. If one may judge by the writers of Quaker journals, and I have read almost every one of them, it becomes evident that these pillar Friends rated spiritual nurture very near the top of the scale of Quaker virtues. It is indubitably the trait that has secured our survival. It is the reason why we are here. Throughout our history in most of the Disciplines, the Queries — those silent confessionals