

HOWARD H. BRINTON
Ethical Mysticism In The Society Of Friends
PENDLE HILL PAMPHLET 156

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR Each publication of Howard Brinton's always carries with it the happy assurance that something of permanent value has been written. The present pamphlet adds the further assurance that, even in his eighties, Howard Brinton is still writing it. *Ethical Mysticism* is, to quote the author's description, "an effort to classify and characterize the religious experience of Quakers throughout their history." Surely no one is better qualified to do this than the Director Emeritus of Pendle Hill, who, to his embarrassment, once found himself introduced to a gathering of Zen Buddhist monks as "the abbot of a Quaker monastery." Transcending sectarian limits, he brings to these pages the fruit of many lifetimes — his own and that of numerous Quaker Journalists — presented with that fusion of depth and perspective which has always been a hall-mark of his work.

Quotations from the Bible refer to the Revised Standard Version.

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Introduction

Though largely historical, this pamphlet has an intimate bearing on the present. The debate between Quakers and Puritans in the 17th century bears some resemblance to the “death of God” debate and other theological controversies today. Also, recent writing on Quaker experience and Quaker thought has, in this writer’s opinion, contained three misconceptions: (1) that the Quakers were not mystics, (2) that they were radical Protestants, and (3) that 18th century Quietism was different from the activism of the preceding or subsequent centuries. We are here, of course, dealing with definitions about which there can properly be disagreement.

The following pages deal primarily with essential Quaker beliefs. By this I do not mean the fruit of the Quaker tree, such as its social doctrines, but its roots. To say that the Quakers have no fixed creed, accepted as final and as a basis for membership, is not to assert that they have no primary beliefs. It would be just as absurd for a scientist to say that he had no beliefs because no scientific statement is accepted as fixed and final. Similarly the Quakers may have many beliefs, but the Spirit of Truth in the heart may reveal further truth. This Spirit of Truth works through historical research into the origins of our religion as well as through inward experience. As Jesus said to his disciples: “When the Spirit of Truth comes he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13).

Research has changed our interpretation of the historical basis of Christianity and who knows when the turn of an archaeologist’s spade may result in further changes. But there is one area in which neither the scientist nor the Quaker should expect a change. The scientist does not intend to abandon his scientific method nor should the Quaker abandon his basic method, which is to wait in silence

for the leadings of the Spirit and to treat other persons as if they had, or could have, the same awareness of divine Truth. It is not correct to say that both the scientist and the Quaker depend wholly on their own individual experience. The scientist depends on the findings of his scientific predecessors and contemporaries; and Quakers, as well as others, depend or should depend, largely but not wholly, on past and present religious leaders. Early Quakers, with whom this essay is principally concerned, depended constantly on the New Testament. George Fox, the leading founder, declared that he eventually found there truths which had earlier been made known to him by direct revelation. Quakerism is derived largely from the ethical teachings of Jesus, the Christ-mysticism of Paul, and the logos-mysticism and God-mysticism of John. It is not possible or is it desirable for us today to revive in its entirety either primitive Christianity or primitive Quakerism, but we should cherish the mystical element that existed in both, which is independent of cultural environment and historical events.

July, 1967

Notes

1. I have dealt with group worship at length in *Creative Worship and Other Essays* and in *Friends for 300 Years* and shall allude to it only briefly here. In Bradford Smith's *Meditation: the Inward Art* there is an excellent chapter on "Group Mysticism" written from the Quaker point of view.
2. In using the word "Protestant" I am aware of the fact that modern Protestantism represents such a wide variety of sects and individual opinions as to be incapable of classification. I am speaking here principally of the 17th century non-conformist sects such as Presbyterians, Independents, or Congregationalists, and Calvinistic Baptists. The official faith and most of the practice of these groups has changed little.

“We have to build the spiritual world out of symbols taken from our own personality as the scientist builds his world out of the metrical symbols of the mathematician” (*The Nature of the Physical World*, The Gifford Lectures, 1927, p. 338).

Eddington applies the same ideas to religious mysticism. Here, unlike the poet, we are no longer in a world of sensations. “Certain states of awareness,” he says, “have at least equal significance with those which are called sensations” (p. 334).

Today science has its great prestige because it enables us to acquire extraordinary control of the world around us, both human and non-human. Our lives are becoming more and more dominated by machines and machine minded men. The “hidden persuaders” aim to be as scientific as computers. As a result many people are wandering about aimlessly in a mechanistic world devoid of meaning. Science is indifferent to value. It deals with means not ends. In the mechanistic world, whether of machines or men, there is no beauty, no goodness, just a stream of abstractions. If we feel our world to be only molecules and atoms in ceaseless motion, what is there to live for? No wonder that so many young people want simply to withdraw.

But the world we actually live in is not the objective world of science but the world of mystical experience which is both objective and subjective, the *within* which is also the *beyond*. We experience freedom, although science has no place for freedom. We experience that which is beautiful and good, not as means but as ends. And what is most important of all, we experience that which transcends this finite world, the Divine Life coming from beyond our personal self-consciousness out of the depths of being.

Types of Mysticism

By Ethical Mysticism, I mean that type of mysticism which first withdraws from the world revealed by the senses to the inward Divine Source of Light, Truth, and Power, and then returns to the world with strength renewed, insight cleared, and desire quickened to bind all life together in the bonds of love. These bonds are discovered by this process of withdrawal and return because the one inward Divine Source is itself the creative unity which seeks to bind all life together. But there is no necessary chronological order in the world of spirit. It may be that the desire to penetrate to the creative unity in the depths of the soul was first aroused by finding it in the outward affairs of daily life.

Albert Schweitzer, in his book entitled *Out of My Life and Thought* (1949 ed., p. 235) uses the term *ethical mysticism* to describe his philosophy. “Any profound view of the world,” he says, “is mysticism, in that it brings men into a spiritual relation with the Infinite. The view of Reverence for Life is ethical mysticism.”

The ancient philosophy of mysticism, discovered again and again in all religions, though with different forms and names, will be elaborated upon later in the Christian form in which it appears in Quakerism. Because this mysticism is a philosophy or perhaps a theology, it follows that if Quakerism is mystical it is based on thought as well as feeling. We should add that it has also a non-mystical aspect in being based on historical events and ethical concepts, particularly those recorded in the Christian scriptures.

The word “mysticism” is to some minds misleading, connoting that which is mysterious, occult, and abnormal. But writers on the practices and beliefs of various religions find it a useful term to designate a distinct type of religion found in all world religions. We can say, in the words of Dean Inge in his book, *On Christian Mysticism* (1899, p. 5),

that mysticism is “the raw material of all religion.” Rufus Jones says, “I shall use the word mysticism to express the type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence” (*Studies in Mystical Religion*, 1909, p. xv). In this pamphlet I shall use the word in this sense.

It can truthfully be said that the non-mystic rather than the mystic is unusual. He is the over-intellectualized person who sees the world only in sharp outlines grinding on like a soulless machine. Carl Jung speaks of this type as most in need of a psychiatrist. When such a man retires and is forced to withdraw his attention from his business or profession, he finds his world reduced to a flat desert with no mountains reaching above the clouds, no valleys with unseen depths. At that time, reports the psychiatrist, he may dream of a withered tree stripped of its leaves. Most of Dr. Jung’s patients were of this type.

There are various types of mysticism and it is the purpose of this paper to describe the type represented by the Society of Friends. A few recent writers who have declared that the early Quakers were not mystics are probably confining the term to the negative neo-Platonic type of mysticism as some other writers on religion have done. Neo-Platonism, originating from Plotinus in the third century A.D. is, with theological variations, the religion of some of the most striking figures in the history of Christian mysticism, among them Meister Eckhart, Saint Teresa of Avila, and Saint John of the Cross. Here the goal is contemplation of, and unity with, the Absolute, the One above and beyond the many, Pure Being as contrasted with the shadow world of our senses, Reality beyond all illusions, Unity transcending all contradictions or comparisons.

Here we have a philosophy, or more properly, an experience which unifies the True, the Beautiful, and the

Hindus and the Buddhists. But there were often preliminary acts of purging, struggle, sometimes long periods of seeking and waiting before the Light dawned.

Science And Mysticism

Many words useful to our forefathers are fading from our vocabulary. We no longer draw a sharp line between natural and supernatural, flesh and spirit, worldly and unworldly. Another dualism or dichotomy has emerged which is as important as the older ones: this is the dualism between science and mysticism and here we mean the nature mysticism of the poet and artist who experience a living nature as well as the mysticism of the more religiously inclined who experience a living God.

I turn to a writer who was an eminent scientist as well as a devout Quaker — Arthur S. Eddington. In his Gifford Lectures of 1927 he includes a chapter on Science and Mysticism. The same subject is dealt with in his Swarthmore Lecture in 1929, *Science and the Unseen World*. Here we have a prelude to a struggle which is now going on among philosophers and theologians. Since philosophers today offer no answers to ultimate problems, the theologians are being listened to more than they have been for some time.

After devoting most of his Gifford Lectures to the latest advances of science, Eddington begins his discussion of mysticism by comparing a long mathematical formula on wave motion in water with a poem describing the “gladness of the waves dancing in the sunshine.”

The scientist and the poet use different roads to truth but these roads are both valid. The scientist deals only with quantities that can be measured, His is an abstract world of generalities. But the poet deals with a concrete unique experience, in other words with the world in which we live. The main difference is in the symbols used.

everlasting life, the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth, and the life. John often uses the word “know” in the Platonic sense of participating in that which is “known.” “Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free.”

If Paul’s union with Christ seems to be a psychological union of will, John seems to include a union of substance, a kind of *divinization* resulting from rebirth according to the later Hellenic religion. Thus Robert Barclay writes “this Jesus brought forth in the heart that we are made one with him as the branches with the vine ... his obedience becomes ours, his righteousness becomes ours, his death and sufferings ours” (*Apology*, Prop. VII:II). Those who have criticized Barclay for his duality of flesh and spirit do not take account of its transcendence by a living union.

In the same way the separation of man from man can be transcended. Fox writes, “So feel the seed of God in every particular ... and then ye come to be bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh” (Epistle 99).

This is ethical mysticism because it retreats, quietistically, to the creative Source of Unity and returns to create that unity in the world. The creation of unity in this world always assumes some form. It is a mistake to suppose that the Quakers have rejected all forms. They have rejected forms which are not the outward expression of an inward state, that is, uninspired forms as contrasted with inspired forms. Fox’s Epistle 271 says that the earth is a form that God has made. Words, he says, are forms. Only those forms inspired by “godliness” are acceptable. Good actions are forms and that extraordinary book on Quaker ethics, Jonathan Dymond’s *Essays on the Principles of Morality* (1829), in which his only moral standard is the will of God revealed in worship, depicts the form of Quaker morality.

The Quakers did not speak of stages on a Jacob’s ladder reaching up to heaven as did the Catholic mystics, the

Good of Plato with the One of Plotinus. This beatific vision is also closely related to the *samadhi* of Hinduism and the *satori* or *nirvana* of Buddhism. Here “all is none, none is one, one is all.” This experience which is also beyond experience gives rise to such paradoxes as we find in Francis Thompson’s poem, “The Kingdom of God”:

O world invisible we view thee,
O world untouchable we touch thee,
O world unknowable we know thee,
Inapprehensible we clutch thee!

Such experiences, or shall we say philosophies, of mysticism exist in Quakerism, but when a Quaker writer endeavors to describe an experience which he knows is indescribable, he does not resort to paradoxes which would seem to him artificial. When John Woolman says, “my mind was covered by a feeling of awfulness,” he realizes that if his readers have not also experienced this feeling of awfulness they will not understand.

Examples of mystical experiences are profuse in the Quaker Journals. I have space here to quote only a few. The commonest kind of experience is a sense of God’s presence felt in the meeting for worship, or in so-called “opportunities” — that is, when traveling Friends meet for worship with families — in periods of private devotion, even in the routine affairs of daily life. For example, in 1661, two women traveling in the ministry, Katharine Evans and Sarah Chevers, were imprisoned in Malta by the Inquisition. Asked how they knew God was speaking to them, one replied that “He bid her go, and his living Presence should go with her, and he was faithful that had promised, for she did feel his living Presence” (Joseph Besse’s *Sufferings* 1753, II, 400). “The Lord’s Power was over all,” a phrase often found in Fox’s *Journal*, expresses the feeling of the writer when that power was felt in a meeting.

The Call To Service

But Friends were not so likely to mention the sense of God's presence as to mention the times when they did not have it. Nearly all the Journals refer to periods of darkness and aridity sometimes lasting a year or more. (See H. H. Brinton, *Children of Light*, 1938, p.401.)

Meetings also could be dark and barren. This sometimes occurred when people came in from the neighborhood with "itching ears" just to hear words.

The call to service can generally be described as a mystical experience in the sense in which this term is used here. John Churchman (1705-1775) thus describes his call to travel in Great Britain:

... one day walking alone, I felt myself so inwardly weak and feeble, that I stood still, and by the reverence that covered my mind, I knew that the hand of the Lord was on me and his presence round about, the earth was silent and all flesh brought into stillness, and light went forth with brightness, and shone on Great Britain, Ireland, and Holland, and my mind felt the gentle, yet strongly drawing cords of that love which is stronger than death, which made me say, Lord! *go before, and strengthen me, and I will follow whithersoever thou leads.*

Job Scott (1751-1793) describes a similar call of a more general nature as follows:

... Riding on the road, my mind was livingly opened, and I beheld, in the visions of God, large fields of labour allotted me in his service. A language ran livingly through my soul, and the whole man seemed almost swallowed up in the flowings of life which accompanied the glorious

Thomas Story argued, "Let not this people be thought useless or inconsistent with governments for introducing that harmless, glorious way to this distracted world for somebody must begin it" (*Journal*, p. 367).

And likewise Isaac Penington in *A Weighty Question Concerning the Magistrate's Protection of the Innocent* written in 1661 speaks of the peaceable kingdom foretold by prophecy:

Whensoever such a thing shall be brought forth in the world it must have a beginning before it can grow and be perfected. And where should it begin but in some particulars (individuals) in a nation, and so spread by degrees. Therefore whoever desires to see this lovely state brought forth in the general, must cherish it in the particular.

William James in his *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1904, p. 358) writes, "If things are ever to move upward, someone must take the first step, and assume the risk of it." The early Christians, like the Quakers, had a mystical sense of the immanence of the Kingdom for, as the writer of Hebrews says, "They tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Hebrews 6:8).

But the Quakers were influenced by John as well as Paul. Since in John's Gospel "the Word became flesh," the writer did not separate the flesh and spirit as fully as did Paul. Man is related to Christ as the branch to the vine. For John the Word of God is God and union with the Word is union with God. "God is love," said John in his epistle, "and he that abides in love, abides in God and God abides in him" (I John 4:16). Following John the Quakers used many different words to designate "the Light which lighteth every man." He is the bread which comes down from heaven, the door of the sheep fold, the well of water springing up into

Quaker theology is an illogical combination of what Albert Schweitzer calls the Christ mysticism of Paul and the logos mysticism and God mysticism of John. The first he says is Hebraic and the second Hellenic. These distinctions he sets forth in his book *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (1931). Paul speaks of the mature Christian as being “in Christ,” or “Christ in you.” “I live,” he says, “but not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Christ came to bring in the Kingdom of God and this union with the resurrected Christ brings his disciple into the kingdom, not physically but spiritually, so that when the Kingdom finally comes, he is prepared to enter. He is first, like Christ, crucified in the flesh, or self-will, to be resurrected in the spirit. Paul’s doctrine was eschatological, that is, he expected that the end of the world and the second coming of Christ would soon occur. The Quakers seldom said anything about “the last days.” To the Fifth Monarchy men who took over London in 1660/61 to prepare for the second coming, Fox said that Christ had already come and “dashed in pieces the four monarchies.” If we subtract the eschatology, there is much in Quaker writings which is close to Paul. Quaker journal writers sometimes speak of attempts to crucify the flesh. But more important, their mysticism becomes ethical when it leads them to enter the Kingdom and live according to the teachings of Christ. When told that their pacifism was impracticable, they replied that someone must take the first step, though it might be dangerous.

When Joseph Hoag in 1812 was pleading his peace principles a man in his audience said, “Well stranger, if all the world was of your mind, I would turn and follow after.” Joseph replied, “So then thou hast a mind to be the last man in the world to be good. I have a mind to be one of the first and set the rest an example” (Hoag’s *Journal*, 1861, p. 201).

prospect! The language was on this wise: Thou are called and appointed, and through many and deep tribulations I have separated thee a prophet to the nations. Thou hast very little more ever to do in the business and affairs of this life. Gather thy mind from all cumbering things, and stand singly and wholly devoted to my work, service, and appointment (*Journal*, 1831 ed., p. 400).

Such experiences were not only a call to service but were felt to be good for what they were in themselves. John Whiting writes in his *Journal* called *Persecution Exposed* (1715) because of its many accounts of persecution:

... And when I have been walking in the fields, and in my shop and business, yea, on the highway and on my bed, as I have retired to the Lord, Oh! how hath my heart been broken and tendered before him in a sense of his love, many a time, and cannot but recommend silence and retirement (whether in meeting or out of meetings) to wait upon the Lord and enjoy his Presence, as the greatest good and highest attainment we are capable of in this life ... (p. 187).

Christopher Healy (1773-1851) writes:

... Returning from my school at evening, my mind as I walked was fixed on heavenly things, and I felt a stream of Divine love to flow into my soul, whereby my inner man was greatly refreshed. And my spirit breathed forth songs of praise to the Lord, beseeching Him to preserve my soul alive, and keep me obedient to His commands. This heavenly flow of Divine love continued with me until late in the night, and my cup did overflow with joy at the

goodness of the Lord to me (*Memoir of Christopher Healy*, 1866, p. 48).

and of another occasion,

... when I went to bed, it pleased my Heavenly Father to visit my poor soul with the Day-spring from on high, wherein my heart was so overcome with his loving-kindness that I spake of it to my friend who lodged with me; for sleep, in this joyful state of mind, departed from my eyes (p. 54).

It is important to realize that Quaker mysticism contains elements both negative and positive. This, of course, is not true of Quakerism alone. It is probably psychologically impossible for any mysticism to be entirely negative. Whether or not the classifying, analyzing function of the intellect is totally excluded, we know at least that the negative retreat to the Absolute is generally followed by a realization that the One is also the Many. The mystic returns from his withdrawal to find himself united with all Life more closely than before; the Zen Buddhist comes back from his enlightenment to find every inhabitant of his village a potential Buddha. In Saint Teresa's "Spiritual Ladder," the final rung is Spiritual Marriage. By this she means marriage of the world of pure spirit with the world of life around us.

But in Quakerism the positive return to the "world" after withdrawal from it is emphasized to an unusual extent. The history of the Society of Friends, with its multitudes of social concerns, shows this. Robert Barclay (1648-1690) in his *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1676), the most systematic and widely accepted account of Quaker doctrine, compares the Quakers to such "misticks" as Saint Bernard and Father Augustine Baker, author of *Sancta Sophia*. He makes the only important distinction the Quaker practice of not retreating to a monkish cell, but of returning to the world to engage in the routine affairs of daily life such as

and acknowledging himself in all subsequent history" ("Existence and the Christ," Vol. II of *Systematic Theology*, 1957).

A Theology of Experience

This is different from 17th century Puritan orthodoxy. Quaker theology is unsystematic. It is based largely on experience, and on a variety of thought which appears in the New Testament (eight varieties, according to E. F. Scott's *The Varieties of New Testament Religion*, 1943). Even Paul does not always make clear distinctions, as when he says: "But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, If the Spirit of God really dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Rom. 8:9). Fox, in one paragraph, speaks of the Light "which comes from Christ," and the "Life which comes from the Father of Life" (Epistle 149). In similar fashion John distinguishes between God and his Word and also identifies them. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). This Word is the eternal creative principle in the world, and according to what was once called "the Quaker text," "the true Light, which lighteth every man" (John 1:9). If we wish to be more analytical than George Fox ever intended to be we can find in his epistles at least six different theologies: The Light (1) is God (2) is from God (3) leads up to God (4) is Christ (5) is from Christ, (6) leads up to Christ. Such paradoxes can be found in all religions which hold that God is both transcendent and immanent. Thus we can say that the Light is both within man and also beyond him. In all this there is no evidence of a trinitarian formula, since the second and third persons of the Trinity are the same. Each is the Spirit of God which goes out from him to create the world as the light goes out from the sun to create life on earth.

There is a mystical unity with historical events if they are repeated and verified in a similar form in the life of an individual.

Salvation by the life of Christ, the life and light of men (John 1:4), meant salvation through the Inward Light — the cosmic Christ, the Word of God who became manifest in the historic Christ, and who is present in the depths of the human soul. Fox sometimes refers to the Light as Savior. They that deny the truth, he says (Epistle 30), “who go from the Light within, ... go from the Savior within, Christ Jesus ...” In Isaac Penington we find “Letting in the Light which convinceth of and warneth against sin, the Life stirs and is felt — so that I can sensibly and with clear understanding call it my Savior ...” (*Works*, 1863 ed., I, 172). And Martha Routh (1743-1817) who traveled in the ministry throughout the length of the colonial frontier in America, writes of her labor as “tending to advance the pure principle of Truth above every shadowy performance, name or profession of religion, as the only means of salvation to man” (*Journal*, 1822, p. 234).

But salvation is a word not often used by the Quakers. They more often used such expressions as being *reached* or *tendered*. This is not to be thought of as only acceptance by faith of an historical event however important, but as a spiritual growth (usually gradual) from an inner divine seed of the Kingdom which may be called by many names. Christ is, as Whittier says (in *Our Master*),

No dead fact stranded on the shore
Of the oblivious years,

but a living presence felt by mystical intuition. Paul Tillich expresses the same thought in this way: “The Christ is not an isolated event which happened once upon a time; he is the power of the New Being, preparing his decisive manifestation in Jesus as the Christ in all preceding history

making a livelihood and the maintenance of a family, or sometimes a period of travel in the ministry.

Today individuals inspired by religious concerns have been to a large extent replaced by committees, each entrusted with a special responsibility. This increase in planning is in accord with the times but with it comes the serious danger of too much organized structure.

Group Mysticism

Another characteristic of mysticism in the Society of Friends which differentiates it from the solitary inward searchings of the famous mystics of history is the Quaker habit of meeting together in silence to realize the Divine Presence. Unity with other persons, when felt in a meeting for worship, can be called group mysticism. As practiced by Quakers it is a unique contribution to public religious practice. The group meeting together may feel a greater sense of the Divine Presence through unity with one another than individuals usually feel alone. This is sometimes called a “gathered meeting.” In Quaker writings the expression “unity with God” is often followed by the phrase “and with one another.” For example Barclay says of the Inward Life, “This is the cement by which we are joined to the Lord and so to one another.” This belief brings us close to that form of idealistic philosophy which holds that we know one another directly and intuitively, and not through our senses only, because we can share in the One Life, the Life of God. We can go from one radius of a circle to another only by passing through the center. Or to use another geometrical figure, we must have both vertical and horizontal axes if we are to plot a curve.¹

The retreat to communion with the Divine (whether conceived as God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit) in the meeting for worship, in family devotion, or in solitary contemplation, was non-ethical in its aims. It is an experience considered

valuable less for its results than in itself. However, it often has unplanned-for consequences in practical action and provides strength to carry out that action. "They that wait upon the Lord," said Isaiah, "shall renew their strength." This sense of renewed strength, of security and of being lifted up is frequently expressed in the Quaker Journals.

"Waiting upon the Lord," (not for Him) were the words most frequently used to describe a Quaker meeting, as we today use the word "worship," which can mislead by suggesting a distant deity too majestic to be intimately approached. Friends did not go to meeting primarily to hear sermons, although sermons could be useful as way-marks to travelers uncertain of their direction and goal. Quaker sermons have seldom been as well expressed as those delivered by a trained professional ministry. Sometimes they have been very inadequate. But this weakness has generally been patiently endured in order to give the wind of the Spirit an opportunity to "blow where it listeth."

This is the price which all democracies must pay for the privilege of freedom. A leader in control may produce an expected result. But an unprogrammed Quaker meeting, though seemingly inept, may also surpass any prearranged result. Waiting upon the Presence in the Midst is mysticism, in the sense in which I am using this term. Richard Davies (1635-1708) says of the first silent meeting he attended, "God alone was master of that assembly." This was an experience recorded times without number in all Quaker writings. That meetings were sometimes described as flat and barren does not subtract from the high value of other meetings.

Nature Mysticism

Though nature mysticism is not ethical mysticism in the full sense in which we are using that term, it has its

historic Christ, and, following John's gospel, the cosmic Christ, at once God and from God, through whom the world, according to John, was created (John 1:1).

This identification with Christ gave to Quaker mysticism a definite and specific content without which it might have been vague and formless. The Quakers believed that the sayings of Jesus in the New Testament were conditions for bringing about the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The Puritans, however, left man in his sins with certain elected persons to be saved by the incomprehensible miracle of the Atonement. For the Quakers the Atonement was important as introducing the new covenant, the new dispensation, the new outburst of the Spirit which, as Paul said in Galatians, ended the Law of Moses and initiated the new era.

This new epoch was more dependent than the old on the rule of the Spirit. The Spirit of God had always been working in man especially in the Hebrew prophets, of whom Fox speaks as "the prophets which saw Christ, the Light" (*Doctrinals*, 1706, p. 7). Paul said that the water gushing out from the rock which was smitten by Moses was Christ (I Cor. 10:4), but the historic Jesus was to introduce a new epoch in which a new code of ethics was provided by which the Kingdom of Heaven could be entered here and now through spiritual union with Christ. This new epoch was an age of reconciliation in which Christians were friends of God, according to the words of Jesus in John's Gospel (John 15:15), not slaves to be regulated by law. Barclay, in dealing with the Atonement, makes much of Paul's saying in Romans (Romans 5:10), "If we being enemies are reconciled by his death much more are we saved by his life." His death is only effective existentially if it is repeated in the experience of the Christian with the death of what Barclay calls "the old man" and the resurrection of the new. Quaker theology is existential in the sense that it must be lived. It is not wholly dependent on abstract formulations or on historical events.

And mind that which is pure in one another which joins you together, for nothing will join but what is pure; nor unite, nor build, but what is pure" (Epistle 13). Fox often speaks of the Light as the Unity which exists before the Many and which will exist after it. In his *Journal* (ed. John L. Nickalls, 1952, p. 27) Fox writes, "Now was I come up in spirit through the flaming sword into the Paradise of God." He then records a mystical insight into nature " ... beyond what words can utter," and ends by speaking of "the Word of Wisdom" by which we can "know the hidden unity in the Eternal Being." This unity, as its Power works in the world is sometimes referred to by Fox as the Fellowship. "If we walk in the Light as He is in the Light we have fellowship with one another." (I John 1:7.) This primordial Unity, sometimes referred to as coming from God and sometimes from Christ ("In him all things hold together." Col. 1:17) is the One Life which seeks to unite all life into one fellowship, one *koinonia*. This is the basis in philosophical thought, as well as in mystical feeling, of the Quaker peace testimony, according to which the Light in one person answers the Light in another even though he be an enemy, the Unity which if permitted to operate holds the meeting for worship together without human leadership and the meeting for business without a vote.

The Puritans thought that Quakerism, without the stabilizing and unifying power of an accepted creed and trained leadership, would result in anarchy. Such anarchy did result in the Ranter movement based entirely on individual access to Truth. But the Quakers avoided anarchy in at least two ways. Quaker mysticism was a group mysticism in which what the individual felt to be divine guidance was not completely thwarted even though the group disagreed with him, if he felt his guidance strongly enough. He was counseled to wait and sometimes his critics came to his point of view. Also, the Light was identified with the

results in behavior. It is the oldest mysticism there is. Nature mysticism is the concept of nature as a spiritual reality rather than as a purely physical one. This feeling, described by W. T. Stace in his *Mysticism and Philosophy* (1960) as extraverted in contrast to introverted mysticism, is expressed in the works of poets and artists and is as old as the human race.

Some modern philosophers, among them Whitehead, believe that in modern physics the conception of an organic nature, including the belief that even an atom is an organism, has replaced older mechanistic conceptions. That so many Quakers have had scientific hobbies is an indirect result of their belief that nature is one of the outward forms of Divine Reality. Thus Thomas Lawson (1630-1691) who wrote an early scientific textbook in Latin writes, "His works within and his works without, even the least of plants, preaches forth the power and wisdom of the Creator and eyed in the spaces of eternity humbles man."

Thomas Shillitoe (1754-1836), after fulfilling one of his difficult concerns, speaks of nature as appearing to him with a new freshness and meaning. George Fox (1624-1690/91), during what was clearly a mystical experience, found that all creation had a new smell. At least three Friends — Fox, Job Scott, Catherine Phillips (1726-1794) — had such an insight into the nature of medicinal herbs that they were tempted to "practice physick."

Catherine Phillips writes in her *Journal*, "I have admired [wondered] how by one gleam of heavenly light the understanding is opened into natural things so as in a degree to behold as at one view the general economy of the Divine Form of all things as it is displayed in the outward creation" (p. 11).

Since Light is the symbol of the Divine Presence within, this same light sometimes seems without. Joshua Evans (1731- 1798) records in his *Journal* (p. 5) when "bringing

up my father's flock I saw the glory of the Lord shine round me which seemed to exceed the sun at noon day." He adds that it was not an external light. Of Edward Stabler (1796-1881) it is written "that he could hardly persuade himself that an outward light above that of the sun did not shine around him as he followed his daily vocations" (*Life of Edward Stabler*, by his son William Stabler, p. 38). Similar experiences are recorded in the lives of Thomas Holme, Mary Alexander, John Woolman and others. That such illumination is more subjective than objective is recognized by the authors themselves.

Sometimes Friends on emerging from a meeting for worship found that nature perhaps only for a few moments had a new aspect. In some indefinable way the veil of infinity, discovered in worship, seems drawn over the finite. A description of this phenomenon appears in Bayard Taylor's novel, *The Story of Kennett* (1866), in the chapter entitled "Old Kennett Meeting." At the close of the meeting "All arose and moved into the open air where all things at first appeared to wear the same aspect of solemnity, the poplar trees, the stone wall, the bushes in the corners of the fence looked grave and respectful for a few minutes. Neighbors said How does thee do? to each other in subdued voices and there was a conscientious shaking of hands before they dared to indulge in much conversation. Gradually however all returned to the outdoor world and its interests. The fences became so many posts and rails, the bushes once more so many elders and blackberries to be cut away and the half green fields so much sod for corn ground" (pp. 79-80).

Quakerism And Protestantism

In my opinion some confusion has been created by the assertion that Quakerism is a form of Protestantism.² This assumption has sometimes led to the abandonment of

and of too many mechanical inventions, they are increasing in number and size in various parts of the world. On the North American continent about 200 new meetings have come into being in the 20th century. Many of these are now grouped into four new Yearly Meetings.

There is also an increase of intellectualism in modern Quakerism but reason and spiritual intuition function better together than separately. Reason, like conscience, can be inspired or uninspired, as Robert Barclay points out.

The Theological Basis Of Unity

The Quaker withdrawal and return had a basis in thought as well as in mystical feeling. Here it comes close to some of the more philosophical forms of mysticism. The Hindu, for example, withdraws to the Absolute One beyond all multiplicity and returns to find that all life is one life. To injure another is therefore to injure oneself. In similar fashion, but with a different philosophy, the Quaker believes that the Inward Light is One and not many, that the same Light illumines all men and therefore the closer all men come to the Light, the closer they are to one another. Accordingly, Jesus, the Word of God, the Light that enlightens every man, can pray (John 18:21) "That they may all be one, even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us." "The Light itself," said Thomas Story (1666-1742), "is not divided, but one and the same entire, undivided Being continually" (*Discourses Delivered in the Publick Assemblies of the People Called Quakers*, 1738, p. 61).

George Fox frequently speaks of the Light as leading from the many to the one: "Mind the light of God in your consciousness which will show you all deceit; dwelling in it goes out of the many things into the one spirit" (*Epistles*, No. 4) and "Every one in your measure wait upon God ...

Oh, the want of weight and depth which is both strikingly evident in our meetings, both for worship and discipline. When met to transact the affairs of the Church, what a cringing and crouching to those noted for much worldly wisdom, and abundance of the riches of this world; so that, indeed, the pure influence of the Spirit is seldom sought after or expected; it being considered only *mysticism*, or, at best, but undefined imaginary sensations, not safe to follow ..." (*Ibid.*, p. 228).

Since the Gurneyites were more authoritarian than mystical in their position, it is not surprising that beginning about 1870 they developed Protestant forms of worship, including professional pastors and programmed meetings. The "Richmond Declaration of Faith," which had earlier appeared in some disciplines of the Five Years Meeting, was adopted by that body in 1922. London refused to adopt it although it had been largely written by Joseph Bevan Braithwaite, one of London's most weighty members.

In the middle of the preceding century Philadelphia, with a strong Wilburite majority, had recognized the Wilburite body in Ohio. The Gurneyite minority, composed mostly of city Friends, so strongly objected to this recognition that a separation was prevented only by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting giving up all correspondence with other Yearly Meetings. It is noteworthy that no part of Philadelphia adopted the "pastoral system." The recognition of Ohio was never rescinded and Philadelphia continued intimate relations with what are now called the "Conservative bodies."

Those who in the 20th century carry on the practice of worship in silence are probably not as conscious as were their predecessors of the immediate guidance of the Spirit but there is still evidence that the Divine Spirit is at work among them. Meetings which wait in silence for right guidance represent the "wave of the future" for the Society of Friends. In a time of too much talking by word of mouth

characteristic Quaker beliefs and practices and the adoption of Protestant beliefs and practices. It is no doubt true that all non-Catholic Christians can in some sense be called Protestants but neither the early Quakers nor their Puritan opponents considered Quakerism to be a form of Protestantism. Rather the rise of Quakerism was to be a second reformation which was a protest against Protestantism itself, a new dawning of the Day of the Lord, a new attempt to return to early Christianity. Barclay speaks of Catholicism, Protestantism, and Quakerism as three forms of Christianity; the first depends on the authority of the Church, the second on the authority of the Bible and the third on the authority of the Spirit. The Quaker conception of the Kingdom of God is also different. Catholics considered the Church as potentially the Kingdom of God, Protestants thought that in this evil and fallen world the perfection of the Kingdom was impossible except beyond the grave. Whereas Quakers believed that any person by being perfect as far as his insight and ability permitted, or, to employ the usual Quaker term, if he acted according to the "measure" given him, would belong to the Kingdom of God here and now by living according to the Sermon on the Mount, including its apparently impracticable standard of pacifism. The words of Jesus presented no ideal impossible of fulfillment to the Catholic saint, nor to the Quaker immersed in the world but not of it. At this point the Quakers were closer to the Catholics than to orthodox Protestants. This was sometimes held against them.

We have the instance of a great lady seeking amusement in the course of an illness by arranging for a debate at her bedside between an Anglican clergyman and John Roberts, a Quaker. Each accused the other of being at heart a Catholic. In this humorous encounter as described in a biography by his son, Daniel Roberts (*Life of John Roberts*, 1725), John Roberts won by forcing the Anglican to accept

his Quaker doctrine of perfectionism, or more accurately, the possibility of acquiring a sense of freedom from guilt through repentance.

In practice the Quakers were like the Catholics in not having a sermon-centered worship. Quaker worship was sacramental in intention as was the Catholic ritual. The Deity was actually felt to be present in both. Rudolph Otto, in his book *The Idea of the Holy* (1923, p. 218), points this out:

... there is the plainest inward kinship between the two forms of worship which, viewed externally, seem to stand at the opposite poles of religious development, viz. the Quaker meeting and the Roman Catholic Mass. Both are solemn religious observances of a numinous and sacramental character, both are communion, *both* exhibit alike an inner straining not only 'to realize the presence' of God, but to attain to a degree of oneness with Him.

A religion is understood better by what it does than by what it thinks and this is especially true of its form of worship. In *Friends for 300 Years* and elsewhere I have dealt with the theological differences between Catholic, Protestant and Quaker on such issues as the atonement, justification by faith, predestination, faith and works. I shall however point out a difference which has passed unnoticed. Protestantism until quite recently was a thoroughly masculine religion, while Catholicism and Quakerism are both masculine and feminine. The hard, cold, merciless logic of the Calvinistic creeds which condemned a person to eternal torture for no greater crime than being a descendant of Adam reduced the Puritans to a continual state of anxiety quite different from Quaker serenity. The Catholics included in their worship the womanly Virgin Mary, hoping that her

mystery," to use Fox's words. Their emphasis was on what Christ did for us in Jerusalem rather than what he is now doing for us inwardly, though neither group wholly left out either the inward or the outward Christ.

Gurney, a highly cultured and able member of a wealthy and distinguished English Quaker family, spent three years in America, 1837-1840, where he was very popular. Some of the weightiest English Friends had opposed granting him a minute for travel in America, but a Gurney could scarcely be refused. It was quite proper that the Gurneyites should accuse the Wilburites of mysticism, a word the Wilburites did not like but which was nevertheless a true designation in the sense in which we are using it.

The Wilburites put the main emphasis on the leading of the Spirit. Everything else was "creaturely activity." The Gurneyites emphasized as all important the Bible and Bible teaching and written statements of doctrine.

In 1837 John Barclay wrote a letter to John Wilbur supporting his cause. Barclay, like Gurney, was a prominent member of a wealthy, distinguished Quaker family in England. He was one of the most prominent Quakers of his time. His book, *Letters, etc. of the Early Friends* (1841), is still a valuable source of information. In 1837 Barclay wrote at length to Wilbur regarding a tract that had just been published: "I understand," says Barclay at one point, "that J. J. G. objected, in the Morning Meeting, to the whole scope and tendency of the tract, as partaking of *mysticism, &c.*" (*Journal of John Wilbur*, 1859, p. 226).

In the same year Jonathan Evans, the leading Orthodox Friend of Philadelphia, wrote a long letter to John Wilbur, in which he said:

"... I received thy letter, and am glad to find that there are some yet left, who are not carried away by the stream of popularity and fashionable opinions, which now seems threatening to overwhelm our poor, tried, religious Society.

God, and those who devoted themselves wholly to it, the priests, monks, and nuns, lived at least theoretically according to the ethics of that Kingdom. For this reason they had the strength to pass on to the succeeding culture much that was important in the old.

Mysticism In The 19th Century

We have considered the so-called Quietism of the 18th century and have endeavored to show that this Quietism was as in the 17th century, a negative road which was followed by a positive road back to the world. The following period, i.e., the 19th century, represents a different situation. This was the darkest era in Quaker history in America as it was marked by three separations: the Orthodox-Hicksite in 1828; the Wilburite-Gurneyite about the middle of the century; and the pastoral-non-pastoral during the last quarter of the century, which was in many respects a continuation of the second, since the non-pastoral branch of the Gurneyites joined the Wilburites. The Orthodox-Hicksite break is now healed and can be forgotten, but the second with its consequences in the third is still with us. A brief account of the second half of the century will throw light on our subject since the Wilburites were mystics and the Gurneyites were less so, though each branch held some doctrines characteristic of the other.

John Wilbur (1774-1856) of Rhode Island and Joseph John Gurney (1788-1847) of Norwich, England, were not responsible for the separations although they began the dialogue between the two groups. Up to about 1800, the Society of Friends remained fairly constant in its beliefs and practices. But about that time influences began to filter in from the Methodist revival, which were more evangelical than earlier Quakerism in the sense that they stressed the outward more than the inward, "history rather than

feminine tenderness would help them both now and hereafter. They also revered feminine saints. Nuns were an important part of the Church. In the Society of Friends men and women are equal in the ministry and in managing the affairs of the Society.

Some recent writers have called attention to those whom they call "radical Protestants," who accepted the Quaker belief that new revelations had not ceased with the writing of the Scriptures but who did not accept the Quaker doctrine of the "Universal and Saving Light," that is, the belief that every human being before and after Christ has received a measure of the Spirit sufficient for his salvation. However, all Protestants did accept the Holy Spirit as the means of understanding and interpreting the Scriptures.

Joseph Smith in his *Bibliotheca Anti-Quakeriana*, a catalogue of anti-Quaker books (1873), says in his preface, "The greatest adversaries the Society had to contend with in early days were the Nonconformist divines." If one reads the elaborate titles of these controversial works and the elaborate titles of the Quaker replies which are quoted by Smith, the gulf between Puritan and Quaker becomes evident. The clergyman for example who wrote *Hell Broke Loose: or An History of the Quakers* would be astonished to be told that Quakerism was a form of his own religion or even of Christianity. The Arminian or Free-Will Baptists, as distinguished from the Calvinistic Baptists, were closest to the Quakers because of the large measure of spontaneity in their worship. Many of these, whom George Fox called "shattered Baptists," became Friends, yet they and the Quakers railed at each other. For example the Quakers put out a pamphlet entitled *The Boastful Baptist Dismounted and the Beast Disarmed* while the Baptists replied with *The Quaker Quasht and His Quarrel Quelled*.

In a similar vein we find Barclay saying, "Non-conformists are more embittered and prejudiced against us

than any other men" (*Works: Truth Triumphant*, 1692, p. 882). This shows that the attacks on the Quakers came more from the Puritans than from Anglicans whose persecution of the Quakers was caused mainly by their refusal to pay tithes.

On this subject Fox wrote, "I am not one of them that calls themselves papists, common prayer men, Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, puritans nor heathens which be out of the life of God, but that which God called me to, that I am" (*Journal*, ed. Norman Penney, Cambridge, England, 1911, I, 333. Spelling modernized by the present author).

The controversy between 17th century Protestantism and 17th century Quakerism is a conflict as new as it is old — the ancient conflict between an authoritarian and a prophetic type of religion. It appears throughout the Bible and throughout the history of the Christian religion. Recent books on what is mis-called "the new theology" have revived it in its current form. The so-called "death of God" controversy is a new attempt to denounce a religion based on the external and renew a religion based on the internal, in other words, a mystical religion. *Dynamics of Faith* of Paul Tillich contains an element of mysticism which reaches out toward the infinite; otherwise faith is idolatry of the finite. But, however much modern theologians exalt Christ, most are unwilling to accept the Sermon on the Mount as a practicable and attainable code of behavior for moral men immersed in an immoral society.

Quakers And Quietism

Modern histories of Quakerism, almost without exception, speak of a century of "Quietism" different in character from the Quakerism of the earliest period. This they assign mainly to the 18th century. But it is not difficult

which reached their climax about 1800. Some Friends probably thought of these as "creaturely," in other words "not pure," but at least they were not "quiet" in the usual sense of that word.

To take a single example, Thomas Shillitoe was a complete Quietist in considering himself to be as much guided by the Spirit as a cork floating on the ocean is moved by wind and current, yet his extraordinary achievements in visiting kings, czars, presidents, crowds of dangerous prisoners, slave holders with ferocious dogs, and holding Quaker meetings in about 1000 drinking places in Ireland show him to be a thorough "activist" as well as a "Quietist." Being a timid man he could not sleep before some of his adventures, but he never hesitated to carry out what he felt to be a Divine command. Quietism took away fear because it removed the self-centered spirit which is the source of fear.

In Arnold Toynbee's philosophy of history, an "inner proletariat" is the term applied to a group within a civilization which being in it, but not of it, withdraws and returns to make a creative response to a definite challenge. The Quakers, Toynbee says, had a real opportunity to become such an "inner proletariat" but missed it by becoming a wealthy and prosperous part of Western culture. There is some truth in this, though many Friends were not wealthy and prosperous, but their withdrawal was actually followed by a return in the many social reforms they instituted. Because of their pacifist opinions, the Quakers were unable or perhaps unwilling to take positions of power which might have halted what Spengler calls "the decline of the West." In this respect they differed from that earlier "inner proletariat" within the Graeco-Roman civilization, the primitive Christian Church, whose leaders retained their pacifism for only the first three centuries. But the Church continued to think of itself as potentially the Kingdom of

The Road Back To The World

This brings us to an essential element in Quaker mysticism. The negative road of Quietism which leads away from the world is followed, sooner or later, by the positive road back to the world where, either through ministry for the help of others or by means of some form of service, some requirement discovered in the period of withdrawal is carried out. This was as true in the 18th century, which has been called the period of Quietism, as it was earlier, though in the time of the founders the exhilaration and enthusiasm which accompanies a new discovery and the enormous vitality required to resist cruel persecution led to a more fervent effort to convert the world.

In the 18th century Friends were as active as they could be in the face of limitations put upon them. In England, they could not enter political life, as an oath of allegiance was required of all office-holders; but this was not true in most parts of America. Friends had political control at one time or another of five of the American colonies, though only for a short time in the Carolinas where the imposition of the oath by the British government promptly eliminated all Quakers from public office. In Pennsylvania it was the threat of the oath which forced the Quakers to agree in 1756 to give up their majority in the Assembly in war time, though many Quakers continued to hold office.

The powerful influence of Quakerism on colonial America has never been fully assessed by historians. It accounts for certain ideas now thought to be peculiarly American—such as the belief in the infinite worth of every individual. There were many unquiet activities carried on by Friends in this period, such as the maintenance of peace with the Indians, both before and after the French and Indian War, opposition to slavery, reform in prisons and institutions for the insane, and a multitude of educational undertakings

to show that the first generation of Quakers were Quietists in the technical sense of the word as truly if not more so than later generations. Quietism does not mean being quiet. It means that the human mind, or as the early Friends expressed it, “the natural man,” must be repressed or quieted in order to permit the Divine Light to enter the soul uncontaminated by any human element.

Rufus Jones rightly points to the use of the word “pure” as a sign of Quietism for “pure” means purely divine unmixed with the human. For example, John Woolman, the best known of the so-called Quietists of the 18th century, never uses the term “Inward Light” but always “that which is pure” or “pure wisdom” as in the Epistle of James (3:17). For example in what is perhaps his most famous passage, John Woolman writes:

There is a Principle which is pure, placed in the human Mind which in different Places and Ages hath had different Names: it is, however, pure, and proceeds from God. It is deep, and inward, confined to no Forms of Religion, nor excluded from any, where the Heart stands in perfect Sincerity. In whomsoever this takes Root and grows, of what Nation soever, they become Brethren (*The Journal of John Woolman*, ed. Amelia Mott Gummere, 1922, p. 380).

In the next paragraph, he explains what he means by the word “pure.” He believes that the children of slaveholders accept slavery because the teachings of their parents “leave less room for that which is good to work upon them.” Their minds are being shut up against the “gentle Movings of untreated Purity.” In other words, that which is pure is free from the conventionalities and prejudices of society. Quietism of this kind enabled the Quakers to become pioneers in many social directions because it freed them from conventional opinions.

A similar quietistic use of the word “pure” is found in George Fox, particularly in his *Epistles*. In the folio collection (1698) containing 420 letters dated and chronologically arranged, Fox writes to his friends just as he feels without straining to adapt his radical views to Puritan or any other orthodoxy. Epistle 4 (1651) begins “Mind that which is pure in you to guide you to God.” In Epistle 10 we read “Stand still in that which is pure.” This word “pure” designating the Inward Light occurs many times throughout these epistles. Here Fox’s Quietism has much in common with that of Robert Barclay, who comments at length regarding the ruinous state of what he calls the “natural man” who, if unaided, finds himself incapable of knowing divine truth.

Rufus Jones attributes Quaker Quietism to Barclay’s sharp distinction between the Divine and the human (*Later Periods of Quakerism*, 1921, I, 59). This dualism was common to all contemporary Christians. This helplessness of man seems like Calvinistic predestination, but Barclay gives man a free choice between “the natural” and “the spiritual.” Some good is in him if he is able to make the right choice. The gulf between flesh and spirit can be bridged. Man is estranged from God, but he need not remain so. According to Barclay a rebirth is possible by which in the words of Peter (II Pet. 1:4) “we come to be partakers of the divine nature.” Barclay has been accused of leaning too much on his Calvinistic upbringing but this is far from the Calvinistic doctrine as held by the Puritans who assert that even the saints continue to sin “in word, thought and deed.” Union with God is not for the Quakers an achievement of identity, as for example in the Hindu Vedanta, but an organic union like that of the branch with the vine as Barclay points out. We are saved by Christ, but this Christ, Barclay says, is “brought forth in the heart.”

In almost every Quaker Journal we find a description of the conflict between what was sometimes called the “two

seeds.” The seed of evil is thought of as characteristic of the flesh and the seed of good, the spirit. The two are most at variance in the years following adolescence. These terms “flesh” — which includes egocentric as well as physical desires — and “spirit” are taken directly from Paul who describes his own conflict in Rom. 7:19: “The evil I do not want is what I do.” The Journal writer feels himself to be a divided self, but eventually the inward Savior appears, the Light is accepted as guide and peace is obtained, until some new and unfulfilled concern causes the tension to be renewed. Again fulfillment brings the struggle to an end. The transition from darkness to light is always a mystical experience. Job Scott, who devotes thirty pages to his inner conflict, writes:

Thus I continued still in vanity and folly, with intervals of deep distress and mournings, a short space longer, that is, till the winter of the year 1770, when, being about nineteen years old, I became more fully and clearly convinced, and that very much by the immediate operations, illuminations, and openings of divine light in my own mind, that this inward something, which had been thus long and powerfully striving with me, disturbing my every false rest, confuting every false and sin-flattering imagination of flesh and blood, or of the grand adversary, and enjoining it upon me to give up all, and walk in the ways of virtue and true self-denial, was the true and living spirit and power of the eternal God ... (*Journal*, 1831, p. 44).

Job Scott uses the term “union” to describe what occurs. This word, not often used, but generally implied, in the Quaker Journals meant in the Hebrew sense union of wills, rather than in the Greek sense, union of substance.