Chapter II
FAITH AND THOUGHT
Basic Principles

Father, Son, Holy Spirit

Friends, with other branches of the Christian Church, believe in God, the Father, the Creator, infinite in love, wisdom and power, and supremely manifest in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection have given to mankind a unique revelation of the nature and reality of God. They believe with Paul that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," (II Cor. 5:19) and with John that "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4). They accept the assurance of John's gospel that God "gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). Friends also hold as essentials of the Christian life and experience: the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, the atonement through Him by which men are brought to God, and the gift of the Holy Spirit as the ever-present Comforter and Guide. Friends hold that this is the age of the Spirit, and look to the Holy Spirit for guidance in their understanding of Truth.

Meaning of Salvation

Because of sin, there is need for repentance and salvation which bring deliverance from sin and the possession of spiritual life. This comes through a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, who through His love and sacrifice draws mankind to Him. Conviction of sin is awakened by the operation of the Holy Spirit causing the soul to feel its need for reconciliation with God. Persons thus come into newness of life and are saved from the power of sin to righteousness as they yield their lives to Him in loving and loyal obedience. Their relationship to God becomes an actual reality, a transformation that may be wrought without any human agency or ceremony since their entire spiritual life springs from the direct relation of their souls with a living and present God and cooperation with Him. Though adults may consciously and deliberately yield to evil impulses necessitating repentance, it does not follow that infants and young children are under the condemnation of guilt. Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God." (Mark 10:14 RSV). It should be noted, however, that the Christian nurture of children is the highest privilege and most sacred duty of both the Christian family and the church.

The Living Presence

Friends give special emphasis to the vital principle that one's salvation and higher life are personal matters between the individual soul and God. They recall that primitive Christianity was a spiritual society in which all members were priests and held direct communion with God. From the birth of the Quaker movement, Friends have regarded Christianity as essentially an experience and a way of life based on that experience. George Fox, in describing the great spiritual transformation of his early life, declares, "And this I knew experimentally." (Fox's Journal, 1694 ed. p. 8). Isaac Penington gives as his testimony, "My heart said, `This is He whom I waited for and sought after from my childhood. . .1 have met with my God, I have met with my Savior'." Robert Barclay says, "I felt a power that touched my heart and as I gave way to it, I felt the evil in me weakening and the good raised up." This intimate fellowship with God, the consciousness of Christ as a living presence, has run through the whole history of Quakerism as a warm, life-giving stream. Nothing is more certain than that God is still speaking to mankind as He did in ancient times. His Spirit guides and controls the surrendered life, makes sensitive the conscience, illuminates the mind, and strengthens the will. The Christian's constant and supreme business is obedience to Him.

The Light of Christ

From the earliest days of their history there are frequent references in the writings of Friends to the belief that there is in the human soul a Light (Ps. 36:9, John 1:9) which is of divine origin and which

makes mankind capable of response to moral and spiritual influences. It is this divine quality that enables one to develop that awareness of moral distinctions and obligations known as conscience, and inspires one to live, struggle, and suffer for the achievement of what ought to be. It gives persons pre-eminence over the natural world, raises them above their physical nature, gives them divine potentialities, and makes it possible for them to experience the joys. and satisfactions of the abundant life through acceptance of and obedience to Jesus Christ. It is this spiritual endowment that enables mankind to advance beyond the narrow bounds of self toward the Christian ideals of goodness and love, and to respond to the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. George Fox often called this principle the "Seed of God." "That of God in you," or "the Light within." William Penn called it "The great principle of God in man, the root and spring of divine substance." Robert Barclay described it as "a real, spiritual substance," or "a divine bestowal." It is "that something we cannot call less than divine and universal, for it links us with the eternal realities, and with our fellow men of whatever race or creed. It may be hidden or warped by ignorance or pride or self-will or prejudice, but it cannot be wholly lost, for it is part of that which makes us essentially men, made in the divine image, and having within us boundless possibilities of life in God." (London Yearly Meeting, 1920)

Divine- Human Relationship

The emphasis placed by Friends upon the foregoing principles is the source of their special testimonies and activities. Since all persons are potentially temples of God, all personality is sacred; persons everywhere are the object of His special concern and so are of immeasurable worth. This doctrine of the dignity of mankind permeates all human associations; it rests on the divine-human relationship and works through all the aspects of life. As one yields to divine guidance, one becomes an active partner with God in the extension of His Kingdom. It is the Light of God within that gives a burning sense of mission and inspires the ideal of universal brotherhood. Out of the realization of this spiritual fellowship come the rising tides of human sympathy that bear persons forth to do God's will. With faith in the wisdom of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and believing that it is His purpose to make His Church on earth a power of righteousness and truth, the Friends labor for the alleviation of human suffering; for the intellectual, moral, and spiritual elevation of mankind; and for purified and exalted citizenship. It is an essential part of the faith that a person should be in truth what he/she professes in word. The underlying principle of life and action for individuals, and also for society, is transformation through the power of God and implicit obedience to His revealed will.

For more explicit and extended statements of belief, reference is made to those officially recognized at various times, especially the "Epistle addressed by George Fox and others to the Governor of Barbadoes in 1671," the "Declaration of Faith issued by the Richmond Conference in 1887," and "Essential Truths" adopted in 1902 by the Five Years Meeting, which are printed in Part III of this Faith and Practice.

Ideals of Worship

Meaning of Worship

Friends' concept of worship is based upon the belief that the relationship between the Divine Spirit and the Christian worshiper is essentially that of Father and child, in which each may fully participate. Such was the experience of Jesus, for to Him God was always Father and He was Son. Worship is the supreme act of the human spirit. With a sense of God's worth and supremacy, the worshiper enters into a living and uplifting relationship meeting God in fellowship and communion. No intermediary, ritual, or ceremony is required. The worshiper, waiting in humility, prayer, and praise, experiences a renewal of spiritual strength and is the recipient of the divine outpouring of revealed truth to the extent that he/she is willing to listen and is able to comprehend.

Prayer and Worship

Prayer is listening as well as asking, as persons wait before God in openness and humility. Vocal prayer during worship should gather up the aspirations and praise as well as the needs of all, and voice the unworded adoration and longings of worshipers.

Music and Worship

Music, as a part of worship, may give expression to the common aspiration of all, and may well serve to develop a tenderness of soul in which the divine voice may find sympathetic hearing. To many, music may be a means of expressing the deepest things in their experience and of bringing them into closer touch with God.

Forms of Worship

Some Friends gather in silence and worship expectant waiting without prearranged singing, Bible reading, prayers, or message. Their worship proceeds with quiet meditation or prayer, with spoken ministry only as Friends may feel led to share their insights and messages.

Other Friends follow a programmed form of worship, which was adopted by many Friends meetings as the nineteenth century revival influenced Quakers. Such meetings for worship may include spoken prayers, responsive readings, hymn singing, choral-organ music, scripture and message. There may also be a significant open time of free worship based upon silent waiting, as among other and earlier Friends. Worship is not an end in itself, but should result in Christian service as a way of life. The object of both forms of worship is mystical communion with God.

Meditation and Message

If private meditation and communion with the Source of all truth have preceded the period of worship, any message rising out of the Meeting will tend to be clearer, stronger, and more helpful. One should never discount the ability of the Holy Spirit to work through the fellowship of the group and to find willing lips by which God's will may be revealed to those assembled in worship; but helpful communications of divine truth may generally be expected from those who not only have recognized a call to vocal ministry, but also have honored this call by cultivating their gifts and capacities by special training and study. Messages that are fresh, illuminating and uplifting will help satisfy the hunger of the human spirit, open the gates of life to struggling or discouraged souls and point out the path of Christian action.

Testimony on Ceremonial Rites

Baptism and Communion

Believing that a direct approach to communion with God, which brings true inward grace and spiritual satisfaction, is open to them in the experience of worship, Friends do not feel the need of outward symbols in achieving the realities symbolized. They claim strong scriptural support for the belief that it was Jesus' purpose to introduce an era of spiritual religion to replace the ritualism of the Old Testament. Therefore, Friends do not feel it necessary to practice the rites of water baptism or the Lord's Supper. The baptism which they consider essential is that of the Holy Spirit; the communion which they most earnestly desire is participation in the Spirit of Christ, the bread of life, and the spiritual comprehension of God as the source of life and power.

Ordinances, Historical Perspective

From the standpoint of historical perspective Friends note the Jewish ceremonial origin of' the ordinances and how they were carried over into the Christian era along with other Hebrew rites such as those pertaining to the use of meats, unleavened bread, and foot washing. They note how often the outward forms have been substituted for inward and personal experience. They have also been impressed

by the controversies and divisions over the observance of the sacraments and by historical variation in practice.

The Real Presence of Christ

"To the soul that feeds upon the bread of life, the outward conventions of religion are no longer needful." (Christian Faith and Practice #214, by John Wilhelm Rowntree, 1902).

"Our experience leads us to emphasize the fact that entrance into the community of Christ's people requires no outward rite, but is to be known only through trust, obedience, love, and commitment. As these are brought forth in us, we find ourselves drawn together into a unity with one another in which the presence of the Spirit of God is realized. Similarly we believe that our corporate experience at its best justifies us in claiming, in humility, that Christ's real presence is indeed known by us when even two or three are gathered together, in quiet expectancy, in his name. And some Friends would even say that they have come to know, in Quaker worship and fellowship, a communion with Christ and a baptism of the Spirit which go beyond anything they had previously experienced in the sacramental practice of other Christian groups.

"We desire to bear a corporate testimony to the fact that, while to be made a member of Christ's Body does not necessarily involve any outward rite, it does inescapably require an inner transformation of the whole self by the indwelling Spirit of God. And we would bear witness to the certain fact that, in a gathered company of worshipers, and apart from the use of the outward elements of bread and wine, the real presence of Christ is to be truly and effectually known, bringing us into unity with one another and with himself." (Christian Faith and Practice #210 - Maurice A. Creasey, 1956).

The Scriptures

Scriptures and Inspiration

"The Canon of Scripture may be closed, but the inspiration of the Holy Spirit has not ceased. We believe that there is no literature in the world where the revelation of God is given so fully as in our New Testament Scriptures; we go back to them for light and life and truth. But we feel that the life comes to us, not from the record itself, but from communion with Him of whom the record tells. ...We feel them to be inspired, because they inspire us; we go to them for guidance because as we read them we feel our eyes are being opened and our spirits kindled. We search them because `These are they that testify of me.' It is the living Christ we want to find, the eternal revealer of the will of God. It is the spirit behind the letter that we need." (London Yearly Meeting, Proceedings, 1919).

Barclay on the Scriptures

Of the Scriptures the Quaker apologist, Robert Barclay, writes: "God hath seen meet that herein we should see as in a looking-glass the conditions and experiences of the saints of old, that, finding our experiences to answer to theirs, we might hereby be the more confirmed and comforted, and our hope of obtaining the same end strengthened. This is the great work of the Scriptures, and their service to us, that we may witness them fulfilled in us, and so discern the stamp of God's spirit and ways upon them, by the inward acquaintance we have with the same spirit and work in our hearts."

"Because they are only a declaration of the fountain and not the fountain itself, therefore they are not to be esteemed the principal ground of all truth and knowledge, nor yet the adequate, primary rule of faith and manners. Yet, because they give a true and faithful testimony of the first foundation, they are and may be esteemed a secondary rule, subordinate to the Spirit, from which they have all their excellency and certainty: for, as by the inward testimony of the Spirit we do alone truly know them, so they testify that the Spirit is that Guide by which the saints are led into all truth: therefore, according to the Scriptures the Spirit is the first and principal Leader." (Apology, Prop. III).

Scriptures and Revelation The Holy Scriptures were given by the inspiration of God and are the divinely authorized record of the moral principles and doctrines of Christianity. In them, as interpreted and

unfolded by the Holy Spirit, is an ever fresh and unfailing source of spiritual truth for the proper guidance of life and practice. Their value lies in their witness of the nature and purpose of God, their account of the message and mission of Jesus Christ, and their teachings as to salvation, the way of life, and eternal destiny. In the Scriptures is found the record both of mankind's search for God and of God's revelation to mankind. Through numerous spiritual pioneers the illumination moves from the beginnings of history to "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (II Cor. 4:6). The Scriptures are an inheritance of all who through the centuries have found strength and guidance in the inspired wisdom of this storehouse of spiritual experience. Individual leadings should be tested by the teachings of the Scriptures and the leadings of the community of faith. We reverently believe that the leadings of the Holy Spirit will be in harmony with the Scriptures.

Search the Scriptures

The chief objective of the Bible student should be to grasp Scriptural truths and teachings as vital and life-giving realities rather than to regard them as matters only for intellectual or doctrinal discussion. One should accept with appreciation all fresh light thrown upon the Biblical records but should remain assured that the spiritual strength received from such study comes from a living communion with Him of whom the records tell. They are an inexhaustible treasury of spiritual truth, fitted to the needs and problems of each age as it re-interprets and appropriates the message for its own time. Their words are words of life because they testify of Him who is Life.

Spiritual Gifts

Gifts and the Kingdom

In fulfillment of the promise given to Joel, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh," (Joel 2:28) the Heavenly Father in His wisdom has bestowed a diversity of gifts upon His children for the building up of His kingdom. "And these were his gifts: some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip God's people for work in his service, to the building up of the body of Christ. So shall we all at last attain to the unity inherent in our faith and our knowledge of the Son of God - to mature manhood, measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-13 NEB). Recognizing the inherent spiritual capacity of all persons and the work of grace that is shared by all believers, Friends cherish these manifold gifts and desire to bring each to full development, that the whole body may be fitly framed together by that which each member supplies.

Gifts for Service

These spiritual gifts include: sensitiveness to human need and suffering; efficiency in ministering thereto; intuitive power of religious insight; the personality and language to communicate religious truth and enthusiasm; sympathy, intelligence, and optimism in personal counsel; comprehension of broad social problems; constructive guidance in public affairs; powers of dedicated self-expression in writing and teaching; and the skillful exercise of the creative arts of invention, painting, sculpture, and music. When gifts are used to the glory of God they constitute a vital exercise of the universal ministry of all Christians.

Gift of Ministry

Friends do not ordain ministers but they recognize that some are especially called to be prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The gift, the call, and the careful training and exercise of the gift lead Friends to record some as ministers of the gospel, to be especially devoted to equipping God's people for the work of his service. However, no sharp line of distinction can be drawn between different types of ministry or service. All Christians should cultivate and develop their gifts by prayerful study, close observation of human need, and obedience to the Holy Spirit.