

THE QUAKERS

A Brief Introduction

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THE QUAKER CHURCH, FAITH, LIFE: A Brief Introduction

Quakers have no ministers.

Neither do they have an established line on faith.

I can present my own view: other Quakers will have different views.

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1 Summary

a) Quakers

“Members of a religious body, so nicknamed soon after its foundation by George Fox (1624 – 1691): its official title is the Society of Friends. Dispensing with many of the outward forms of religion such as creeds, professional clergy, and traditional words in worship, the Quakers have commended themselves by their philanthropy, their pacifism, and their basis in Christian mysticism. Their nickname was suggested by their trembling or excitement when gripped by religious ecstasy, but nowadays in their worship calm, although spontaneous, words arise from a corporate silence.”

(David Edwards, Canon of Westminster; in the Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought.)

b) What Friends Believe

- “The basis of Quaker life and practice is a conviction that there is something of God’s spirit in us all: that ‘every soul can have immediate communion with him.
- When Friends meet together, they do not rely on priests, clergy or leaders. The meeting begins in living silence: one in which the clamour of daily life is stilled, and we can hear God’s voice. Then there may be brief passages of vocal prayer or ministry from any of those present.
- When we thus seek God consistently, we can, at all times and in any place, sense the eternal which is behind the succession of ordinary events. This for us is the sacramental life which need not be marked by outward rites

- This attitude is founded on the life and teaching of Jesus. It involves an attempt to accept literally the command to love God and one another. It rules out war. It recognizes evil, but meets it with that goodwill which outlasts it or transforms it. Such beliefs have involved sacrifice and much suffering.
- Our numbers are not large. In Great Britain there are about 20 000 Friends in about 400 meetings. Membership is open to those who share our outlook, and who, in worshipping with us, find themselves 'at home'. That simple expression is not out of place, for the Quaker way of life leads us to think of men and women all the world over as parts of the family of God."
(Pamphlet Issued by Quaker Home Service, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ)

2 History

a) Founder

Quakerism was founded by George Fox who was born in 1624 in Leicestershire. He had a religious father and mother: and followed this way. However he became very dissatisfied with the priests and 'professors of religion' he met. After seeking help from various of them, he fell into the grip of an utter despair that comes from finding no meaning in life, no purpose in living. Then in 1647 (when he was 23) he found the spiritual peace he was looking for: "And when all my hopes in them (the priests) and in all men was gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do; the, oh! Then I heard a voice which said 'there is one, even Jesus Christ, that can speak to thy condition' and when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy" (CFP # 5). Two years later he wrote, "I was commanded to turn people to that inward light, spirit and grace by which all might know their salvation and their way to God." This was his gospel: though Christ was dead, his risen presence was with them.

In 1652 he saw a vision of a "great people to be gathered" – and preached his Gospel, so that two years later there were 80 centres of Quaker life in England. He trained 60 Ministers who spread Quakerism to Britain and overseas. He became an unwearied traveler "in the service of truth"; travelling to Wales, Scotland, Ireland, America, Holland, Germany.

He was imprisoned twice for refusing to take the oath of allegiance; twice for supposed blasphemy; and once each as an enemy of the king, as a disturber of the peace, for interrupting a preacher during a service, and for attending a Meeting for worship after the holding of them had been made illegal.

He had a great presence; was said to have powers of healing; was faithful to his convictions and obedient to what he believed to be right, irrespective of the cost; was a formidable disputant; and had great organizing ability. He also was stark, rugged and forthright, too sweeping and ungenerous in his denunciation of others, and inclined to be egotistical and lacking in objectivity. According to Trevelyan, he had "and overwhelming, perhaps hypnotic power and presence like of the ancient prophets." And

according to William Penn, founder of the Quaker State of Pennsylvania, “above all he excelled in prayer ... the most awful, living, reverent frame I ever felt or beheld, I must say, was his in prayer” (CFP # 13).

b) Fox’s Message

He phrased his message, “I was sent to turn the people from darkness to Light” (CFP # 10).

When he used the term “light”, he had five characteristics in mind:

1. It is the living God known in human experience.

At the centre of Fox’s message is his rediscovery of the ‘contemporary inspiration of the Holy Spirit’; according to Rufus Jones the early Quakers “succeeded in passing from a knowledge about God to a personal acquaintance with him.” His people were to “walk with” the light, rather than “talk about” it; that is, there is implied not only the presence of the light but submission and obedience to it.

2. It is that which shows man evil.

Fox saw the self-centered pride and complacency that may accompany one’s short-comings: “I saw professors and priests and people were whole and at ease in that condition which was my misery ... The light is that which will let you see your transgressions and your running aside ... and this light is Christ which sheweth these things.”

3. It is the light of Christ.

It not only shows a man evil but can save him from it. Men may here and now be saved, in the sense of triumphing over sin, if they follow the promptings of the light of Christ in their heart (rather than having an intellectual faith in the atoning power of Christ that will save men in the world to come.) Fox stressed freedom from the power of sin in this world. This centrality of Christ meant that the Light and the Bible were closely related (especially the new Testament.) The “inward teacher” was informed and guided by the Scriptures. He knew the Bible extremely well and often referred to it, but refused to identify the Scriptures as the Word of God: rather he called the scriptures the “words of God”, but wrote “the Word of God was before the writings were.” The Word was at work in the world and in the hearts of men before in the fullness of time it was made flesh. Thus Fox can say “everyone of you hath a light from Christ” and assert that “everyman was enlightened by the divine light of Christ” (and so as to the Bible he could comment: “Do you not rob Christ of his title and his honour and give it to the letter?”)

4. It is Universal.

The Light of Christ shines in the hearts of all men of all ages. Does this do away with the need for the historic Christ and the Gospel he brought and embodied? No: the inward and eternal cannot be adequately (and never fully be understood by men without the outward and historic. On the other hand, the universality of the light meant an intense missionary zeal: there is something in all men to which an appeal can be made. His own life was unsparingly spent in turning people “to the light of Jesus Christ that through it they might come unto him and be saved.” This is not all: “answering that of God in every one: meant not only concern for men’s spiritual needs but their material ones too, along with a general recognition of the dignity and equality of all men. Fox’s religion was severely

practical and ethical as well as evangelical. He was a champion of justice in many spheres. "And it was upon me from the Lord to go and speak to the Justices that they should not oppress the servants in their wages." "Moreover I laid before the judges what a sore thing it was that prisoners should lie so long in jail." "I wrote to the judge and jury ... showing how contrary it was to the law of God in old times to put people to death for stealing." "There were several poor people, travelers asking relief, who I saw were in necessity; and they gave them nothing, but said they were cheats. It grieved me to see such hardness amongst professors; so when they were gone in to their breakfast, I ran after the poor people about a quarter of a mile and gave them some money." His attitude is summarized in this exhortation "feel every one's condition as you r own." He believed that Christian qualities matter much more than Christian dogmas.

5. It leads to Unity.

"The Society of Friends , according to Fox, is not composed of all who claim to be led of God, nor yet of all who are so led, but of those who recognize certain definite leadings of the inner light and are prepared to be faithful to such leadings" (H.G. Wood). Fox said that he was "to bring people off from all their own ways to Christ, the new and living way, and from their churches, which men had made and gathered, to the Church of God, the general assembly written in heaven which Christ is the head of ..." This meant breaking completely with the established Church and forming a body of what Fox called "living members, a spiritual household which Christ was the head of"; it meant silent waiting for God in the meeting for worship, a free ministry, an absence of outward forms and ceremonies, and a democratic or "Christocratic" government in Church affairs. Meetings for worship were central to the life and power of early Quakerism and were openly held in spite of laws forbidding them, and open hostility.

c) Practice and social milieu

Initially conflict with established authorities resulted from refusing to take oaths, the question of removing hats before social superiors; and simplicity of living. ("You Popes with your triple crowns, you Lord Bishops with your pampered horses and gorgeous apparel, with your black coats and white coats and silk girdles, are you like to entertain Him who was called a carpenter's son or to cast Him and His mother into the manger in your stables?") He urged friends to "keep in the truth that brings to plainheartedness". Conflict also arose from the peace testimony. Fox firmly believed that all war was contrary to the teaching of Christ and that therefore it was unlawful for Christians to fight. He was imprisoned for refusing to be a captain in the army: "I told them I knew from whence all wars arose, even from the lust, according to James' doctrine; and that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars" (CFP # 613).

Fox exhorted the early Friends to maintain and deepen their corporate fellowship and sense of belonging to a family of which Christ was the head. "Beware of that spirit which cannot bear with one another or forgive one another ... stir up that which is pure in one another ... serve one another in love, wash one another's feet ... be as one family building up one another and helping one another ... keep in the oneness ... the children of the Light are one in the Light."

As Rendel Harris put it, Fox “recalled men from the circumference of religion to the centre.” Rufus Jones said, “Quakerism at its birth was a fresh attempt to recover the way of life revealed in the New Testament and to reinterpret it and relive it in this present world.”

(Sections 1 and 2 above are taken from GEORGE FOX by J. Phillip Wragge, Friends Home Service Committee.)

d) Spreading the faith

From 1652 onwards the Quakers spread in England and America; they were persecuted in both countries. Massachusetts passed a law against them: they were to be banished and hanged if they returned. A group of them did return repeatedly, and four were hanged. In England, Acts of 1662 and 1664 made all meetings for worship of more than four people (other than Anglicans) illegal. Until the Toleration Act in 1689, 21 000 friends suffered fines or imprisonment, and at least 450 died in prison or as a result of their suffering in prison. The reasons for imprisonment were basically two-fold; on the one hand the wide social range in the movement alarmed the authorities; on the other hand it was a real threat to the religious establishment because of the fundamental threat from the doctrine of direct inner experience of the divine – the theme of God in every man; and because of the more practical threat of a belief which found no place for the university-trained priest. As well as conflicts with the outside authorities there were some internal divisions, usually related to the conflict between freedom and authority. For example, the Preston Patrick Friends took to meeting in ‘woods, ghylls and unaccustomed places’ because the Acts offered inducements to informers, and Preston Patrick Friends saw no virtue in putting money into such hands by meeting openly. Yet Friends generally put great store by open steadfastness at whatever cost and criticized the Preston Patrick Friends accordingly.

In 1682 William Penn took a grant of land in the New World and set up the state of Pennsylvania, an experiment in the application of Quaker principles in Government. It was a Quaker State for 80 years; it treated the Indians more fairly than other states, and here in 1688 German settlers first urged the inconsistency of Quakerism and slavery. Penn emerged particularly as a champion of civil liberties. In England persecution continued until the Toleration Act in 1689; Fox died in 1691. The spirit of the confrontation with the authorities is captured in a petition to the House of Commons in 1659:

‘We, in love of our brethren that lie in prisons and houses of correction and dungeons, and many in fetters and irons, and many have been cruelly beat by the cruel goalers, and many have been persecuted to death, and have died in prison, and many lie sick and weak in prison and on straw, so we, in love to our brethren, do offer up our bodies and selves to you, for to put us as lambs into the same dungeons and houses of correction ... and do stand ready a sacrifice for to go into their places ... that they may go forth and may not die in prison as many of the brethren are dead already’.

They were one for one for every Quaker in prison at that time, and many had already suffered on their own account.

e) Preserving the Faith

After this period direct persecution ceased. The second generation started to look for forms and rules

that would preserve the faith, leading (to a certain degree) towards institutionalization. Some degree of conflict with the authorities remained: particularly they refused to pay tithes (which was a form of compulsory support for parsons.)

f) Role in Society

Another feature was that through following the idea “Let your yea be yea and your nay be nay” they adopted fixed price dealing, and so contributed to the decline of haggling over prices. This was gratefully recognized by those who dealt with them, who also came to realize the advantages of dealing with traders whose integrity could be relied on. (Mr Ashton: Iron and Steel in the Industrial Revolution. “The 18th Century Friend no less than the mediaeval Catholic held firmly to some doctrine of Just Price.”) Hence Quaker traders were successful: “Early in the reign of George II they were already famous for their knack of prospering in honestly conducted business ... they took to banking and had much to do with the establishment of the best English tradition therein; honest, quiet, liberal, and peace-loving, they had a steadying influence on the excitable violences and jingoisms of the financial world” (GM Trevelyan: Illustrated Social History of England, Vol. 3). Barclays and Lloyds were Quaker banks. Quakers became increasingly involved in trade: some of the best-known Quaker names (Cadbury, Rowntree) are associated with the cocoa and chocolate trade, built on the interest of Joseph Fry (an apothecary) in the use of chocolate in diets. They became millers, brewers, ironmasters, smelters of silver, lead and zinc, middlemen in the textile trade – together they form a considerable part of the history of the industrial revolution. They particularly played a considerable part in the early development of railroads: “Many of the railroad promoters and investors who led the way in the (18) 30’s were Dissenters, and more particularly Quakers of the Midlands and the north. The original Bradshaws Railway Timetable was issued in 1839 by a Friend who wished to be helpful to mankind.” The first commercial railway line (the Stockton to Darlington line) was financed by Quakers. Again, Friends developed the puddling process for iron, and the safety match.

At the beginning of the century (1700) John Bellers was following Penn’s lead in exploring the application of Quaker principles to political and social organization. He advanced schemes for the employment of the poor; for the treatment of criminals; and for bringing together nation states into an international society for the avoidance of war.

Another mainspring of Friends activity for nearly 150 years was the question of slavery. In 1761 London yearly meeting decided to disown Quakers involved in the slave trade. “In Britain and America the Quakers, who began their criticism in 1671, were the first significant opponents of slavery ... English Quakers began actively to campaign for prohibition of the importation of African slaves into the British colonies and United States in 1783. In 1787 the Abolitionist Society, consisting mostly of Quakers, was formed. Under William Wilberforce, who led the movement in parliament, and Thomas Clarkson, who devoted many years to the tireless collection of facts concerning the evils of trade, the antislavery forces waged and unremitting contest against powerful opposition. The trade to the British colonies was finally abolished in 1807 ...” (Encyclopaedia Britannica.)

Not only were the victories attained important, but the methods used: “Wilberforce and the anti-slavery men had introduced into English life and politics new methods of agitating and educating public opinion. The dissemination of facts and arguments; the answers to the misstatements of the adversary ... the public meetings – all these methods of propaganda were systematized by methods familiar enough today but strange and new in that age. The methods used were afterwards imitated by myriads leagues and societies – political, religious, cultural, philanthropic - which have ever since been the arteries of English life. Public discussion and public agitation became the habit of the English people, very largely in imitation of Wilberforce’s successful campaign” (GM Trevelyan, Illustrated Social History of England, Vol. 4.)

Other activities included such features as founding (in 1779) the Ackworth school in Yorkshire to offer a boarding education for children whose parents ‘were not in affluence’; and the Retreat (in 1796), the first hospital to treat the mentally ill with kindness and love rather than whip and chains.

In the 19th century they continued with their social concerns, and were also involved in theological controversy leading to some separation and division. Essentially, some groups split off, moving towards more conventional Christian forms – meetings became churches, revivalist hymns were introduced, and so on. Thus the American Quakers split into three groups: the ‘orthodox’ meeting, the ‘conservative yearly meetings, and the Hicksite yearly meetings.

On the other hand, they developed particularly an interest in prison reform work through Elisabeth Fry, who (in 1817) began her work of transforming the treatment of criminals. Other issues taken up were the abolition of capital punishment, the spread of peace; the succor of the oppressed and hungry, the education and care of the ignorant and deprived. In America, when General Grant became President in 1869, he put the administration of Indian Affairs largely in Quaker hands. For ten years Friends conducted the management of major Indian reserves, and are still involved. In England they started an Adult School movement. Quakers founded colleges like Earlham, Haverford and Swarthmore; and individual Friends founded Bryn Mawr College, Cornell University, and Johns Hopkins University. Involvement in pacifism included opposing the Crimean war in 1854 and the Boer War in 1899; and helping with the aftermath of war. (“From the time of the American revolution, Quakers have been active in ministering to refugees and the victims of famine,” Encyclopaedia Britannica.) In addition they were still at the forefront in important social developments: Quaker employers were amongst a small group who began enlightened development of employee living conditions. Thus Cadbury at Bournville was one of a handful of industrialists who “made a sound contribution to urban life. They accepted the vital principles of romanticism, the delight in nature, the concern for children and the interest in healthy rural sports as a basis for a new type of community development. But they did not forget the factory: they united the domestic and industrial scheme in the same general frame. In this handful of exemplary developments, the foundations for a new attack upon the problems of housing and city development were finally laid: they paved the way for the new biotechnic concept of a balanced urban environment – what was first called the Garden City ... In terms of open suburban living the last two initiatives (Cadbury at Bournville and Lever at Port Sunlight) had an important effect upon the design of middle

class suburbs with generous allotments of open spaces” (Lewis Mumford, The Culture of Cities.) The third industrialist who played a major role was Krupp of Essen.

g) Present social concerns

In the 20th Century these concerns have continued, perhaps with new emphases. Quakerism extended to Africa (particularly to Kenya) and to continental Europe. Concern for the poverty of the working classes led to Rowntree’s classic study “How the labourer lives.” A particular feature has been the concern for peace; when the First World War broke out, many Quakers were imprisoned for refusing military service. The Friends Ambulance Unit was formed by Philip Noel Baker, and was also active on many fronts in the Second World War. Philip Noel Baker went on to become one of the three major figures concerned with initiating the League of Nations; he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work. A Swiss Quaker ran work camps for French and German young people in 1920, which developed into the International Voluntary Service. Family Service Units were started by Friends in the Second World War as a form of alternative service for conscientious objectors. Quakers opposed the mass bombings of cities in the Second World War. They have been involved in various official and unofficial peace initiatives in many parts of the world. The Quakers have also acted through groups such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation, which acted as a bridge between East and West.

While the traditional Quaker concerns for Poverty, Prisons and Peace have continued, they have modernized these concerns. For example, Lewis Fry Richardson was the initiator of much serious peace research, particularly through his books Mathematical Psychology of War, Statistics of Deadly Conflict, and Arms and Insecurity. Kenneth Boulding has made major contributions to exploring the relations between economics and peace. Quakers have been instrumental in founding the only Chair of Peace Studies in Britain. They were heavily involved in the Vietnam peace movement, and in the Nuclear Power debate, for example by opposing the British development of nuclear weapons. They have recently been involved in the concept of ‘Right Sharing of World Resources’, a recent conference on which included the following papers: The Spiritual Basis for the Right Sharing of World Resources, Stewardship of the Earth, and Towards a New Social Order.

In terms of more personal concerns, recent Quaker concerns expressed in pamphlets and books include “A Quaker Interpretation of Experience”, “The Creative Imagination”, “On having a sense of all Conditions”, “The Philosophy of the Inner Light”, and “Facing Death”. Thus while modern Quakers express their concern in more modern themes, the basic issues they deal with are still the same as those that were the concern of early Quakers.

(The unattributed information in this section mainly comes from Quaker by Convincement by Geoffrey Hubbard.)

3 Beliefs and attitudes

Quaker beliefs are in essence the same as those of George Fox.

The starting point is the concept that God is directly accessible to all men. This is the concept of the inner light. Essentially, an idea which recurs continually in the history of Christianity, in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit is something to be experienced, and is not subject, therefore to the criteria of formal thinking ... in the Pauline literature the place of the Holy Spirit is central ... it is the Spirit which comes to man and delivers him from sin, death, and the law and opens the way to freedom and all the fruits of the spirit – faith, righteousness, joy, peace. The work of Christ makes possible the renewal of the spirit within us. The Spirit becomes the mode whereby the Christ becomes the indwelling and dynamic principle of productive power within us." SJ Hopper, A Handbook of Christian Theology (Fontana)

1 In Quakerism this leads to:

- The Priesthood of all believers: no hierarchical authority. Quakers recognize no priestly caste, no individual or group set apart as the preferred channel of communication between God and man.
- Rejection of the concept of a defined creed or statement of belief to which all members must subscribe – no dogma.

In relating to the World Council of Churches, the Quakers were unable to accept full membership because it involved acceptance of a statement of belief. The objection was not to the particular statement of belief put forward by the WCC, but an objection on principle to any formal intellectual acceptance of a definition of faith.

- Rejection of all formalized sacraments, such as baptism, confirmation, or communion, in favour of acceptance of the whole of life as sacramental – no sacraments.
- No formalized service: rather unprogrammed, silent worship, interrupted only by the ministry of anyone present who may find himself or herself moved to speak – no service.

Quakers meet for worship in their meeting houses, usually on Sunday mornings. Meeting for Worship is open to all; there is no form of service. Those present sit in silence, unless some one of their number is moved to speak. Most meetings for worship consist more of silence than talk; perhaps three or four people may speak, for a few minutes each, in the course of an hour's meeting.

In this list of negatives, each negative rejects a limitation:

- No one priest, for all are open to the word of God
- No defined creed, for each must find his own way of expressing his own experience

- No sacramental rites, for all life is sacramental
- No pre-arranged service, so that the Meeting is open to God's message however it is expressed.

Similarly Quaker Meeting Houses are not sanctified and set apart like churches; to the Quaker no day, no place is more sacred than any other. All places, all days, all actions are equally opportunities to find and follow the will of God. Again, although George Fox and the other early Quakers are held in high regard by the Friends, they are not revered as saints; patently they were very human. George Fox is colloquially referred to as "the man in baggy britches."

2 Without a creed, it is not as simple as in other religions to set down what constitutes the essence of Quaker beliefs and attitudes. In fact it will immediately be clear that it is attitudes, and approaches to living, that are typically Quaker, rather than beliefs. Nevertheless one can delineate limits on what one must believe in order to be a Quaker.

- The Society is the Religious Society of Friends. Its members live as they do, and do what they do, because of a conviction – derived from personal experience – about the non-material element in life.
- Quakers believe that there is that of God in every man.
- Quakerism is a Christian religion: Quakers recognize Jesus as a man through whom the divine light shone undimmed.
- These beliefs are held in the framework just mentioned: there is no creed, no set form of words to be read over and accepted or rejected; no priests to state what the correct interpretations are; only the living experience of other Friends to be compared with one's own experience.

The attitude to religious knowledge here is that religion is about matters which are not susceptible to proof; and that a creed, a definite statement of beliefs, is in some ways incompatible with religion. In fact for Friends theology is a secondary concern, more a gloss on their beliefs than the substance of them. When they express their experience, they know that they are finding words for the transcendental; that the experience on which belief is based is fundamentally non-transferable. Any attempt to define reality in terms of words will always be misleading in important aspects and will beg a great many questions in a handful of words. We can regard beliefs as the moderating mechanism through which experience is brought within the capacity of our fallible and essentially human understanding, so that we may live with it and through it; and so we can understand how not merely different forms of words, but even different beliefs may be appropriate for different people. As you go towards God, you will be led to the beliefs which answer your personal need, which in the light of your experience and understanding most correctly represent the reality we wish to comprehend. We realize and accept our inability to comprehend the totality of God, the transcendental Deity. The totality of God embraces many forms and symbols and appearances; for any individual there is only one aspect of this totality which carries profound meaning, which strikes to his heart, and so God is manifest to him in

that form. The beliefs that enable me to dwell with God are true for me, and those which are true for you will enable you to do likewise.

It is this attitude towards belief, explicit or implied, that enables the Society to be so tolerant. It is within the very broad range which this attitude allows, that the Society can claim to be Christian.

While there is not unity of belief in the Society, there is unity of a different sort – the unity of worship and action, transcending diversity of beliefs and understanding.

3 As to worship, this is based on listening and silence: on suspending the continuous argument in our head and becoming still; thereby attaining new awareness. After the process of ‘centring’, we become aware of a sense of unity with the whole creation, aware of the very sense of being which cannot be reached by intellectual argument or other striving. We can discover, in plain terms, the spirit which is in us. George Fox described it thus:

“Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts, and then thou wilt feel the principle of God to turn thy mind to the Lord God, whereby thou wilt receive his strength and power from whence life comes, to allay all tempests, against blustering and storms. That is it which moulds up into patience, into innocency, into soberness, into stillness, into stayedness, into quietness, up to God with his power.” (CFP # 303)

What one has to do is to stop the relentless operation of mind; and be still, be quiet, be nothing. This is the meditative theme at the centre of Quaker worship. It is expressed by Isaac Pennington: “But some may desire to know what I have a t last met with. I Answer ‘I have met with the Seed.’ Understand that word, and thou wilt be satisfied and enquire no further. I have met with my God, I have met with my Saviour, and he hath not been present with me without his salvation, but I have felt the healings drop upon my soul from under his wings. I have met the Seed’s father, and in the Seed I have felt him my Father; there I have read his nature, his love, his compassions, his tenderness; which have melted and overcome and changed my heart before him ... I have met with the true peace, the true righteousness, the true holiness, the true rest of the soul, the everlasting habitation which the redeemed dwell in. And I know all these to be true in him that is true, and am capable of no doubt, dispute or reasoning in my mind about them, it abiding there where it hath received the full assurance and satisfaction” (CFP # 28).

In this search, the Bible is a primary source, but is clearly regarded as a record written by men from their spiritual experience, rather than as an absolute authority. Isaac Pennington again: “And the end of words is to bring men to the knowledge of things beyond what words can utter. So learn of the Lord to make a right use of the Scripture: which is by esteeming them in their right place, and prizing that above them which is above them” (CFP # 204). With this interpretation, ‘the Society has never required its members to conform to a particular view about Jesus, holding that the only valid test of a Christian is whether he lives in the spirit of Christlike love, and not what he says he believes’ (Introducing Quakers, G.H. Gorman, Friends Home Service Committee 1969). This is part of the broader theme of rejecting any binding credal statements; the London Yearly Meeting in 1917 summarised the reasons as: “all such

attempts are provisional and can never be assumed to possess the finality of ultimate truth ... among the dangers of formulated statements of belief are these:

- a) They tend to crystallize thought on matters that will always be beyond any final embodiment in human language
- b) They fetter the search for truth and for its more adequate expression; and
- c) They set up a fence which tends to keep out of the Christian fold many sincere and seeking souls who would gladly enter it.” (CFP # 205)

The pragmatic nature of Quakerism is essential to this approach. “‘Hold Fast,’ said Fox, ‘to that which is eternal.’ We do that; we cling to our direct experience of the eternal, we find this absolute worked out in living terms in the teaching of Jesus, and then we turn our whole being to trying to follow that teaching. But as to the explanation of the nature of Jesus, the rationalization of the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection, the uniqueness of the divine revelation – these are all fin Latin based words, strictly for schoolmen. Individually we need the belief structure, in order to live with our experience. Individually we will find that belief which is true and meaningful for us. But collectively we can agree on the simple but profound experience of God and the example of Jesus Christ; this must be lived by us in answer to our own individual inner guidance ... the more one turns one’s life towards God, the less time or inclination there is to indulge in theory: one is too busy trying, and failing, to live up to the standard set by the founder of Christianity, extended as it is into every corner of life by the living presence, the still small voice within.” (G. Hubbard, Quaker by Convincement).

4 Action is not regarded as totally separate from worship, but rather it is recognized that there is a way of understanding through action. From service to others (undertaken for whatever reason) can come a realization of a deeper community, of a one-ness that is something more than ‘common humanity.’ This too can be a road to that knowledge of the indwelling Divine Presence, which is what Quakers ultimately share. Much more than this, action is regarded as a necessary part of worship by Quakers. This is because “The Kingdom of Christ, not being a kingdom of this world, is not limited by the restrictions which fetter other societies, political or religious. It is in the fullest sense free, comprehensive, universal ... It has no sacred days or seasons, no special sanctuaries, because every time and place alike are holy: (L.B. Lightfoot); and an awareness of and concern with the universality of the spiritual element means that the Light is not to be found only in certain times at certain places, nor recognized only in certain people, but at all times and all places and in all people. This implies a clear obligation to improve the condition of the world and make it a more loving, caring community; to follow fox’s recurring exhortation, “Walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone” (CFP # 376).

5 In order to make this kind of approach viable, certain attitudes are necessary. They are, more than any strictly religious beliefs, the characteristics which mark out a Quaker, and which we usually find in applicants for membership. They are,

- a) Sincerity. If the essence of Quakerism is the concept of that of God in every man, then the essence of the Quaker way of life is the sincere following of the consequences of that concept as we individually see them, in the circumstances in which we live.

Religious beliefs are not something for Sundays, but must dominate our whole lives and influence our every action. This is not a matter of formal observances, but of continually seeking understanding of the divine will and of striving to live in accord with it. This is of course an aim, rather than an attained fact. Nevertheless it is the aim one would expect. The approach aimed at is one of integrity.

- b) Respect for the integrity of others; regard for their individuality, for their needs and their strengths. This is a direct outcome of the concept of 'God in every man'; if you are seeking 'God in every man', you cannot treat them in domestic or professional relationships as people to be manipulated or exploited, nor can you dismiss their opinions, feelings or beliefs as of no importance. This expressed also in Fox's conviction that "I should have a sense of all conditions, how else should I speak to all conditions" (CFP # 7).

Again this is just an aim, not an accomplished fact; but again it remains true that this is the Quaker aim.

- c) 'No infallibilities, except the infallibility of the guiding spirit' (Rufus Jones). The only inescapable requirement is that imposed on me by my own awareness of God. Otherwise there are no certainties in belief or moral requirements.

Where then does the discipline in the Society come from? First, there is the self-discipline which comes from the sincere attempt to follow out in practice what we have discovered for ourselves. To become a Friend is to make a commitment to God and to living in the light He shows us. In so doing the Society gives a frame of reference in which we can live, in that we are 'a society of friends' in the simple meaning of those words, supporting and sustaining each other in our endeavours. This leads to the sense of corporate testimony, a unity of action stemming from a deeper unity. This is worked out in practice by the taking of decisions by consensus. If one Friend disagrees with all the rest, then he is not expected to say he agrees with them; rather he is bound to follow the light that illuminates his understanding. He is not expected to disregard his personal convictions and fall into line, nor are the majority expected to compromise to achieve a spurious unity. But the obligation rests on all to reconsider their positions, to ask themselves whether they are indeed following the light. From such an examination it is then possible to move on towards a true unity of testimony. Thus if an individual finds himself at variance with other of the Friends he is forced, as are the majority, to a more careful examination of his own attitude. From time to time such re-examinations result in a modification of the testimony of the Society, through a growth of a common attitude in the Society that is rooted in common worship and takes into account the concerns of all the members. This testimony to the world is what we act and believe. It is required that it should show the nature of God and of the life lived in his spirit; and that it should do this in such a way as to strike home to others and to 'speak to their condition'. Attempting seriously to a unity of testimony in the spirit outlined provides the discipline, and 'faithful following of the light leads us into unity with those who would also follow it'. This re-

examination will be based on available precedents, particularly that of the Historical Jesus as recorded in the Bible. However in accord with Rufus Jones' dictum, the Bible is not regarded as the infallible word of God. (During the process of persuading Meetings that women should be eligible to represent them at Meeting for Sufferings – the first such women were appointed in 1898 – the apostle Paul was quoted often by some Friends; so Margaret Pim remarked, "Paul might be of that opinion, but thou knows he was not a Friend!")

d) Awareness of the underlying spiritual element in every man and every situation results in a developed social concern.

The kinds of concerns developed have already been mentioned; because of the basis of this concern, it results in a Ghandi-like concern for reconciliation and constructive attempts at creating peace. Here the Quaker stand-point was defined in 1661, in the Declaration from the Harmless and Innocent people of God called Quakers:

"All bloody principles and practices we (as to our own particular) do utterly deny, with all outwards wars and strife and fightings with outward Weapons, for any end, or under any pretext whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world ... that the Spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as to once command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it: And we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward Weapons, neither for the Kingdom of Christ, nor for the Kingdoms of this world" (CFP # 614).

In more modern times this has been interpreted particularly as a call to strive for peace, to remove the occasions for war. As with other questions, not all Quakers agree with the statement above in all circumstances. A fairly modern interpretation is as follows:

"The Quaker testimony concerning war does not set up as its standard of value the attainment of individual or national safety, neither is it based primarily on the iniquity of taking human life, profoundly important as that aspect of the question is. It is based ultimately on the concept of 'that of God in every man' to which the Christian in the presence of evil is called on to make appeal, following out a line of thought and conduct which, involving suffering as it may do, is in the long run the most likely to reach the inward witness and so change the evil mind into the right mind. This result is not achieved by war". (CFP # 606).

6 Overall, then, Quaker beliefs and attitudes are a practical and modern approach to the question of knowledge and belief, and also to the question of freedom and authority in a religious society. In this approach, practice and attitudes take precedence over formalized beliefs; in many ways the problem of belief and knowledge is tackled at a more fundamental level than in the majority of alternative religious systems. Nevertheless it is clearly within the broad mainstream of Protestant churches, in general approach and aims. (Quakers have many attitudes in common with, for example, the Congregationalists; but probably the closest in their concerns are the Mennonites.) The particular emphasis rests on the attitude to personal knowledge of the Light, on the one hand, and consequent

attitude to authoritarian belief systems, on the other. It is a very democratic belief system, that takes seriously both human fallibility and the concept of the inner light. (The Holy Spirit in more conventional Christian terms.) It permits a more fundamental approach to personal responsibility and morality than any dogmatic religion.

The Quaker view is in accord with modern views of the nature of transcendence as evidenced in everyday phenomena (see for example [A Rumour of Angels](#), Peter Berger, Doubleday-Anchor); it agrees that “in openness to the signals of transcendence the true proportions of our experience are rediscovered ... It permits a confrontation with the age in which one lives in a perspective that transcends the age; and thus puts it in proportion.” (Berger, p. 96)

(The major part of this section has been taken from [Quaker by Convincement](#) by Geoffrey Hubbard.)

Practice and characteristics

I The Society is organized in Monthly Meetings; that is, gatherings that meet for worship about once a week and for business once a month. These in turn are part of larger meetings, the Yearly meetings. There are only about 200 000 Quakers in the world, about half in the USA, a quarter in Africa, and the rest mainly in Europe (predominantly in Britain, the historical home of Quakerism.) There are subsidiary bodies like the Friends Service Council, Home Service Committee, Friends Education Council, and so on.

The meetings for worship are based on silence, and the meetings for business on consensus. The practical expression of the Meeting's concerns in the world are exercised partly directly by the meetings, and partly through the various Quaker Service organizations. There are no formal requirements for membership; rather an enquirer who wishes to join is visited by delegated members of the meeting, who discuss with them why they wish to join; make sure they are aware of the nature of the Society (and its faults); and then report back to the meeting on the suitability of the applicant as a member. The monthly meeting decides to admit them, or to advise that the time is not yet ready for the applicant to join, on the basis of this report. The Meeting has various officers to look after its affairs, the central one of whom is the Clerk who conducts the business meeting; but he or she is not regarded as a priest but simply as one of the Friends who has undertaken to fill this office for a time, and their main duty in this office is to find the will of the meeting and to express that will.

The members try to live up to the ideals set out in the last section, and they make a certain amount of progress in this respect. They do, by and large, have a well-founded reputation for honesty; they are not strict puritans, but are serious in their beliefs. This is reflected in much that they do, particularly in the practical expression of their social concerns. This concern is exercised particularly through the service committees such as the AFSC:

[“American Friends Service Committee](#); organization to promote peace and reconciliation through programs of public service and information, founded by US and Canadian Friends in 1917. In World

War I it helped conscientious objectors to find work in relief projects and ambulance service as an alternative to military service. In World War II it broadened the scope of alternative service to include duty in mental hospitals and other humanitarian work. In peace time it continued to administer such national and international programs as community development, racial reconciliation in the USA, aid to migrant workers, and relief to civilians in war-torn areas. Its program of Voluntary International Service Assignments served as a model for the U Peace Corps. In 1847 the AFSC was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with the Friends Service Council, its British counterpart.” (Encyclopaedia Britannica.)

The Friends tend to be a rather mixed bunch of people – “improbable” is a good adjective – who are also perhaps rather individual and tiresome at times, as they can be very stubborn about what seem to be trivial things. Because they take their actions seriously, it can take a long while to convince them that something is the right thing to do; and they certainly do not like being pressurized into acting in specific ways. It is a rather individualist, non-conformist religion. They are sometimes rather dogmatic, smug, and self-satisfied; in many ways they do not, in practice, live up to their ideals. However they are sensitive to this danger, and can be expected to take it seriously if problems of this kind are pointed out to them.

The individualistic nature of the Society is a creative force, which has resulted in it having a far wider influence than its numbers warrant. It has led not only to a significant Quaker contribution to social affairs, but also to scientific matters. Thus the chemist John Dalton; the geneticist Francis Galton; the anthropologist EB Tyler; the astronomer and relativist Arthur Eddington; and Joseph Lister, the discoverer of antiseptis, were all Friends. The creative nature of this kind of non-conformism is exemplified, for example, by Lewis Fry Richardson who was not only the founder of major branches of peace studies, but also was the first person to apply mathematical techniques to predicting the weather accurately; he was a major figure in the foundation of modern meteorology.

2 What formalization of the institutions there is, is recorded in Church Government, which lays out the customary way of organizing committees, meetings, and particular ceremonies (e.g. marriage.) Religious advice gathered by various meetings for the use of other meetings is contained in a small volume entitled Advice and Queries, and a substantial compendium of writings and resolutions of meetings entitled Christian Faith and Practice in the Experience of the Society of Friends. (The intention of this volume is expressed in its message to the reader: “Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all, with the measure of light which is pure and holy, may be guided: and so in the light walking and abiding, these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth light.”) In this document, extracts from Christian Faith and Practice are referred to by (CFP) and the reference number in that volume.) In addition there are various regular journals expressing Quaker thought and concerns, and many booklets and pamphlets produced from time to time.

The flavour of the Advices is given by its opening section: ‘Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts, which are the leadings of God. Resist not his striving within you. It is his light that shows us our darkness and leads to true repentance. The love of God draws us to him, a

redemptive love shown forth by Jesus Christ in his life and on the cross. As his disciples, we are called to live in the life and power of the Holy Spirit.

5 Quakers in South Africa

a In the 18th century, Nantucket whalers introduced Quakerism into South Africa, and seem to have had a Quaker meeting room in Cape Town. During the 19th century, long visits were paid by two concerned Friends. James Backhouse, who was a noted botanist and travelled widely, established a school for Coloured children in Cape Town under the care of Friends.

One of the earliest Quaker residents was Richard Gush, an 1820 British Settler. He introduced Quaker ideas, particularly Fox's injunction to 'live in that life and spirit which taketh away wars.' Roughly half a century later, Isaac Sharp spent many months travelling around to encourage missionaries and Christian workers of all denominations.

b After the visit by Sharp and other Quakers, British Friends opposed the imperialistic role of Britain in South Africa from 1899 on. Individual Quakers such as Guy Enoch, an engineer in Johannesburg, attempted to avoid the war by discussions with Kruger, Smuts and Reitz; and Francis Fox, a leading British Quaker, visited the Dutch Prime Minister in an attempt to get him to mediate between the British and the Boers, and thereby played a significant role in the chain of events that led to peace negotiations.

The Quakers as an organization also threw in their weight, taking a leading role in organizations such as the South African Conciliation Committee and the Friends South Africa Relief Fund. These organizations campaigned against the war, promoted the case of the Boers and provided practical assistance to the oppressed.

George Cadbury gave financial help to anti-war candidates in the election in 1900 and bought the London newspaper The Daily News to ensure that the campaign against the war would receive press publicity (and thereby suffered severe financial loss.) Joshua Rowntree threw in his weight against the farm burnings and conditions in the concentration camps. When Samuel Crownwright-Schreiner visited England in 1900 to protest against the war (he was a Karroo farmer and husband of Olive Schreiner), Joshua Rowntree offered him a platform for his views in a café in Scarborough (other channels were closed to him.) Furious crowds attacked them, and the police and army had to be called in to protect them. Rowntree travelled to South Africa with Emily Hobhouse to obtain first-hand information about the concentration camps. Subsequently several Quaker nurses and other workers came to the camps, as volunteers. The Relief fund sent clothes and other goods to Emily Hobhouse for the women and children in the camps (in its first six months of action, a Quaker womens' committee formed 100 sewing groups and collected 20 000 garments.)

After the war two leading Quakers, Lawrence Richardson and William Alexander, visited South Africa under the auspices of the Friends South Africa Relief Fund. They promoted local relief in partnership with a local Quaker, James Butler (editor of the Midland News at Cradock) and with Emily Hobhouse and ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church. They promoted home industries among the Afrikaner women,

assisted farmers (particularly with seed), and provided scholarships to needy children. They also helped DRC ministers restore their libraries, and ran a campaign to return many Bibles which had been removed by British soldiers.

(the sections above are largely based on articles by HW van der Merwe. Details of the activities of the Quakers during the Boer War are given in The British Pro-Boers: 1877 – 1902, A Dave (Tafelberg, 1978), and of the Relief Fund's work after the war in Lawrence Richardson: Selected Correspondence, Ed. A Davey (Van Riebeeck Society, 1977).)

c) The South African General Meeting (a Quarterly Meeting of London Yearly Meeting) was established in 1918, and for the next 30 years, Union wide meetings were held at irregular intervals and in different centres. The arrival of a number of Friends from overseas after the Second World War led to the formation of new groups in Southern Rhodesia. In 1948 Southern African Yearly Meeting was formed as an independent body. South Africa, Malawi, Zimbabwe and small groups in adjacent territories are included in its province. SAYM in 1976 had 146 members and 60 attenders; of these 95 members and 34 attenders belonged to SAGM (mostly in Cape Town and Johannesburg), and 51 members and 26 attenders to Central African General Meeting, including Bulawayo, Salisbury and Malawi Monthly Meetings. About 20 of the Quakers in South Africa are in Cape Town (belonging to the West Cape Monthly Meeting).

SAYM is informally related to other Yearly Meetings through the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC). SAYM publishes a newsletter in South Africa, SA Quaker News.

d) Present day Quaker activities in South Africa are firstly, the Meetings for Worship and various associated business meetings and study groups; and secondly, social action based mainly in the activities of Quaker Service (in addition, individual Quakers are active in a very wide range of other organizations concerned with welfare and justice, e.g. the SA Institute of Race Relations, Compassion, the Centre for Intergroup Studies, the Urban Problems Research Unit, and the Black Sash; and are working as doctors, social workers, and so on.)

Through Quaker Service, they have recently been mainly involved in relief work among the destitute. In Johannesburg, they support full-time social workers in Soweto (through the Johannesburg Project.) In Zimbabwe, the Hlekweni scheme trains farmers in appropriate farming methods. In Addo, social work is carried on in a local location.

The Cape Western Monthly Meeting (CWMM) holds meetings for worship every Sunday at 10:00 at Quaker House, Rye Road, Mowbray. Further information on its activities can be obtained from the Clerk of the Meeting (currently at 021)

The Cape Western group has been involved in development and relief work in the Ciskei and Transkei, particularly in the Dimbaza- Keiskammahoek- King Williamstown area; and in the squatter areas round Cape Town, particularly Modderdam Road, Cross Roads, Lourdes Farm and Vrygrond. In addition they

have helped substantially with such features as prisoners' families (through the Dependants Conference) and education (through bursaries for school children and university students.)

Their concern for mediation and peace was particularly exercised during the disturbances in Cape Town in 1976, when members attempted various conciliation moves, and attempted to moderate police action; and after, when evidence was presented to the Cillie Commission. More recently, against considerable opposition, attempts have been made to help provide an alternative form of service for conscientious objectors. The old idea of a Quaker Ambulance Unit has been revived, and there are Quaker ambulances in operation Cape Town townships today.

The small number of Friends limits the degree of involvement they can attain. One of their aims in the near future is to consider, from a Quaker view, the problem of how one might realistically attempt to construct the foundations of a non-violent society in South Africa: to analyse how it might be based, and how it would handle such questions as security, police conditions of work and service, economic foundations of peace, and so on. This kind of theoretical analysis is, we believe, important in the long-term future of the country, as well as the more immediate help being given through various practical projects. Friends will also be continually interested in promoting the foundations of peace in Southern Africa, particularly through attempting to promote the ideas of reconciliation and of consensus in decision taking. They will attempt to resist the fanning of war psychosis and military fervor, which does not contribute to the solution of the real problems facing this country.

As well as looking at questions such as this, their study group focuses from time to time on more conventionally spiritual matters; for example, they are currently studying methods of prayer and meditation through the book The choice is always ours (ed. DB Phillips, EB Howes and LM Nixon), and recently looked at sections of William Temple's book Readings in St. John's Gospel.

6 Conclusion

a) "Friends ... felt that their 'experimental' discovery of God would lead to the purification of all Christendom. It did not; but Friends founded one American colony and were dominant of a time in several others, and though their numbers were relatively small, they continue to make disproportionate contributions to science, industry, and especially to the Christian effort for Social reform.

Trust in the 'inward light; is the distinctive theme of Quakerism. The Light should not be confused with conscience or reason; rather it is "that of God in every man", which allows men an immediate sense of God's presence and his will for them. It thus informs conscience and directs reason. The experience of hearkening to this inner Guide is mystical but corporate and practical. ... It is in the pregnant silence of the meeting of true waiters and worshippers that the Spirit speaks. Sometimes the meetings is too dull or worldly for any message to be heard, and sometimes there are altogether silent meetings, which are spiritually beneficial to the participants; but ideally someone has reached a new understanding that demands to be proclaimed. He or she speaks or prays and thus ministers to the meeting which weighs

this testimony by its own experience of God. Friends historically have rejected a formal or salaried clergy as a 'hireling ministry'. If God can provide his own living testimony, the Bible ... can take a subordinate place, and creeds and outwards sacraments can be dispensed with altogether ... often the 'opening' of the inner light is a concern for the suffering of others and a mandate laid upon the conscience to take action to alleviate that suffering. Such concerns are laid before a meeting and thoroughly considered; any corporate action taken must be unanimous. But slow and unorganized as such action is, Friends have been led to oppose slavery, brutality in prisons and insane asylums, oppression of women, militarism, and war. Their history is thus the story of their experiences with the Inward Light and what they have had to do to be faithful to it." ([Encyclopaedia Britannica](#).)

Their attitude to theology agrees with Søren Kierkegaard: "The highest of all is not to understand the highest, but to act upon it."

b) Their spirit is expressed in James Nayler's last words: "there is a spirit which I feel that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself. .. As it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thoughts to any other. ... In God alone it can rejoice, though none else regard it, or can own its life ..." (CFP # 25; James Nayler was sentenced to barbarous punishment by the House of Parliament for blasphemy.)

The silent approach of the Meeting for Worship is expressed in a hymn by the Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier:

Dear Lord and Father of Mankind
Forgive our foolish ways
Reclothe us in our rightful mind
In purer lives thy service find
In deeper reverence praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
besides the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord
Let us like them without a word
Rise up and follow thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee
O calm of hills above
Where Jesus knelt to share with thee
The silence of eternity
Interpreted by love.

With that deep hush subduing all
Our words and works that drown

The tender whisper of thy call
As noiseless let thy blessing fall
As fell thy manna down.

Drop thy still dews of quietness
Till all our strivings cease
Take from our souls the strain and stress
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace.

c) One should note again that this compilation of ideas and history on Quakerism reflects only my own view* (and at that, is largely derivative); as there is no official line or dogma, one can easily find other Quakers who will disagree with much of what I have said.

(* A recently joined Quaker; originally Anglican, but decided after experiencing parish life in England that the institutional Church is a splendid institution, but has little to do with religion. Attracted to the Quakers because of their social concerns, firstly; found out more about their beliefs much later.)

While a good modern presentation of the Quaker view is contained in, for example, Quaker by Convincement, Geoffrey Hubbard (Penguin), on which this summary is largely based. It is perhaps in some ways easier to see the spirit of the movement by reading either some Quaker history, such as The Story of Quakerism or Quakerism: A Faith to live by, both by Elfrida Vipont (Bannisdale Press, London); or by reading some of the novels about early Quaker life, such as The Peaceable Kingdom, Jan de Hartog (Hamish Hamilton), and parts of Chesapeake, James A. Mitchener (Corgi.) The last part of this book focuses on the unfortunate Quaker connection with Richard Nixon. His story, as well as that of James Nayler, serves as a salutary reminder of the need for at all times correcting one's beliefs and actions by reference to the consensus of the Meeting, which can act as a check on false leadings of the mind. (Nixon was censured by many Quaker meetings during his presidency.)

However one will find the major sources on the Quaker view, in the end, in books such as Christian Faith and Practice. It is perhaps appropriate to end this summary with George Fox's dying words (CFP # 11):

I am glad I was here. Now I am clear, I am fully clear ... All is well; the Seed of God reigns over all and over death itself. And though I am weak in body, yet the power of God is over all, and the Seed reigns over all disorderly spirits.

George Ellis, (CWMM)
Cape Town
Easter, 1980

APPENDIX I - Some Theological Themes

Themes from the mainstream of Christianity that the Quaker view particularly adopts and takes seriously. (Quotations are taken from A Handbook of Christian Theology, Fontana.)

Authority: Ultimately, man is responsible only to God. Therefore he must rebel against anything that compromises this ultimate authority. ... every claim to Christian truth, whether in the Church or outside the Church, must be held under judgment ... others must help the individual to locate the ultimate truth. But the Christian must hear it for himself.

Ethics: Existentialism, especially under the influence of Kierkegaard, stress the threat to Christian faith and to the unique individual that ensues when ethical principles or philosophical systems presumptuously usurp the place of the Living God. It also emphasizes the uniqueness of each situation, and therefore insists that the Gospel may have its sovereign sway and yield its redemptive power only when it can speak directly and anew to the believer who renounces the false securities of “rational principles” and who is ready to make unique and critical decisions ... every decision in order to be relevant must be unique, but in the societal situation it cannot merely be the unique decision of an isolated individual; it must be a decision growing out of social consensus regarding the definition of the situation and its possibilities.

Mysticism is a term that describes the condition of being overwhelmingly aware of the presence of the ultimately real. All the world’s great religions acknowledge this direct encounter with the real: Sankara in Buddhism; Laotze and Taoism; the Cabalists and Hasidism within Judaism; Al Ghazali or Rumi and the Sufis within Islam; Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Eckhart, Boehme, and the Quakers within the Christian company.

Priesthood of believers: ... the popular temptation was to think of a first-class layman as still a second-class Christian ... The Reformers assailed vigorously this particular distortion. Puncturing what they regarded as the pretensions of the professional clergy came as close as anything to be what the whole reformation was about ... Today in a continuing effort to reclaim the priesthood of all believers, Protestants ... are putting most emphasis on the common service to which the doctrine bids all Christians. “Every shoemaker can be a priest of God and stick to his own last while he does it” said Luther. Whoever, wherever we are, whatever we do, we are ministers of God.

APPENDIX II - Some Brief Quaker Biographies

These biographies are mainly based on articles in the Encyclopaedia Britannica; (*) denotes a main article about them in that encyclopaedia (1977 edition.)

Allen, William: Chemist (FRS) and philanthropist. Treasurer and trustee of the British and Foreign School Society. Friend of Czar Alexander I of Russia. (Made a trip to Russia in 1818.

Anthony, Susan Bronwell: 1820 – 1906. Pioneer crusader for the Woman’s Suffragette movement in the USA. Her work helped pave the way for the 19th Amendment to the constitution (1920) giving women the right to vote. After 1854 devoted herself with vigour and determination to the anti-slavery movement and women’s rights.

Barclay, Robert: 1648 – 1690. Published Theses Theologicae, then Apology for the True Christian Divinity. Friendship with James II helped obtain the patent to settle the province of East Jersey. “This early and enduring exposition of Quaker beliefs defined Quakerism as a religion of the ‘inner light.’” Arguing against both Roman Catholicism and traditional Protestantism, Barclay asserted that neither the church nor the Scriptures could claim completeness or ultimate authority and that both were secondary to the work of the Holy Spirit – the inner light – in the believer.” Repeatedly persecuted and imprisoned at home ... settled in East Jersey ... then returned to Scotland. “The masterpiece of Quaker theology is the Apology.”

Bertram, John: 1699 – 1777. Naturalist and explorer considered ‘the father of American botany.’ Largely self-taught, Bertram was a friend of Benjamin Franklin and original member of the American Philosophical Society ... commemorated in the name Bertramia for a genus of mosses ... first North American experimenter to hybridise flowering plants.

Bellers, John: about 1690. Cloth merchant; ‘a veritable phenomenon in the history of political economy’ (Karl Marx.) Published Proposals for a College of Industry in 1695, a scheme for working and educational communities. One of the first people to advocate the abolition of the death penalty.

Braithwaite, R.B.: British moral philosopher.

Bright, John: (*) 1811 – 1899. Reform politician and orator in Great Britain. Active in the early Victorian campaign of Free Trade and internationalism, in the anti-Corn Law League (which fought for lower grain prices), in the British movement against participation in the Crimean war, and in activities favouring parliamentary reform.

Boulding, Kenneth Ewart: Economist: see 'The economics of Peace and Love' in The Economists by Leonard Silk (Penguin.)

Cadbury, George: 1839 – 1922. Businessman and social reformer. Introduced a private social security program and improved working conditions (in Bournville) much in advance of their time ... it has been a model for other "garden cities" and "garden suburbs" ... from 1901 he acquired the London Daily News and other newspapers (to express the Liberal Party view.) Member of the South African Conciliation Committee.

Coddington, William: 1601 – 1678. Founded Portsmouth and Newport on Rhode Island.

Coffin, Levi, called 'President of the Underground Railroad' by slave hunters who "could not find fugitives after they got into my hands."

Cookworthy, William: 1705 – 1780. China manufacturer who first produced an English true hard-paste porcelain. Discovered only English source of China clay. Apothecary, interpreter. Helped build Eddystone lighthouse. Friend of Captain Cook, and translator of Swedenborg.

Dalton, John: (*) 1766 – 1844. Self-tutored English chemist and physicist, developed the atomic theory of matter and hence is known as one of the fathers of modern physical science. Developed Dalton's Law of Partial Pressures, determined the relative weights of atoms. Developed concept of atomic weight. Had a gift for recognizing many unsolved scientific problems about him.

Darby, Abrahams: 1678 – 1717. Ironmaster who first successfully smelted iron ore with coke. Made high-quality, cheap iron this way ... made more than 100 cylinders for Newcomen steam engines. Built the world's first iron bridge at Coalbrookdale, and the first railway locomotive with a high pressure boiler for Richard Trevethick.

Dyer, Mary: New England Quaker martyr. (d. 1660)

Eddington, Arthur Stanley: (*) 1882 – 1944. Astronomer, physicist, mathematician, pioneer in the fields of relativity, cosmology, and internal constitution of the stars. First expositor of the theory of relativity in the English language.

Forster, William Edward: 1818 – 1886. Statesman noted for his Education Act of 1870 which established in Great Britain an elementary school system approaching the idea of universal public education. (Also chief secretary for Ireland; disowned by Quakers for 'marrying out'.)

Fothergill, John: 1712 – 1789. Physician; first to describe coronary arteriosclerosis, and diphtheria. Popularised the use of coffee in England and promoted its cultivation in the West

Indies. Friend of Benjamin Franklin; collaborated with him on a plan for British Reconciliation with the American colonies (1774).

Fox, George: (*) 1624 – 1691. Preacher and missionary and founder of the Society of Friends. Imprisoned eight times.

Fry, Elizabeth: 1780 – 1845. Quaker philanthropist and one of the chief promoters of prison reform in Europe. Also did much to bring about improvements in the British hospital system and the treatment of the insane. Her recommendations for Newgate Prison, for instance, included separation of the sexes; classification of criminals; female supervision for women; adequate provision for religious and secular instruction; and useful employment.

Gurne, Joseph John: 1788 – 1847. Quaker evangelist and theologian.

Galton, Francis: (*) 1822 – 1911. Explorer, anthropologist, eugenicist; known for his pioneering studies of human intelligence. Among the first to recognize the implications for mankind of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Later on, while he acknowledged that he owed much to his Quaker father and mother, had little use for the classical religious teaching he received – traditional religious arguments made him feel "wretched". Wrote on many subjects, including the use of fingerprints for personal identification, correlation calculus, twins, blood transfusions, criminality, meteorology.

Hicks, Elias: 1748 – 1830. Early advocate of the abolition of slavery in US and a liberal Quaker preacher whose followers became known as Hicksites, one of two factions created by the schism of 1827-8 in US Quakerism. The poet Walt Whitman wrote of the "pleading, tender, nearly agonizing conviction" expressed in Hick's speech. He urged a boycott of the products of slave labour, advocated the establishment of an area in the South West as a home for freed slaves, and helped secure legislation that brought an end to slavery in New York state. One of the first to preach progressive revelation, which allowed for continued revision and renewal of doctrinal beliefs.

Hobhouse, Emily: (Not Quaker, but supported by them.) 1860 – 1926. Reformer and social worker whose humanitarian undertakings in South Africa caused her to be dubbed the "Angel of Love" by grateful Boer women. Went to South Africa to determine the true facts about conditions in the British concentration camps; her investigations led to a storm of indignation in Britain; an amelioration of conditions soon followed.

Hodgkin, Thomas: 1798 -1866. British physician who early (1832) described the malignant disease of lymph tissue that bears his name.

Hoover, Herbert: 1874 – 1964. Born of Quaker parents, orphaned when 9. 31st President of the USA, whose humanitarian image earned as chief Allied relief administrator during World War I was tarnished when his Republican administration failed to relieve the severe economic hardships of the Great Depression (which began in 1929.)

Hopkins, Stephen: Nine times Governor of Rhode Island. Disowned by Friends because he would not free one slave.

Howard, Luke: 1772 – 1864. English meteorologist (FRS).

Lancaster, Joseph: 1778 – 1838. Educator. Developed a system of education known as the Lancasterian school, in which the brighter or more proficient children were used to teach other children under the supervision of an adult. His teaching career began when he brought home poor children to teach them how to read. He had large numbers of students before the age of 20. At one time he had 30 000 pupils in 95 schools in England, but went bankrupt. Founded 60 such schools in the USA.

Lilburne, John: 1614 – 1657. Leader of the Levellers, a radical democratic party, prominent during the English Civil War. Master propagandist demanding religious liberty and extension of suffrage to craftsmen and small property owners. Whipped, pilloried and imprisoned. Converted to Quaker faith in prison.

Lister, Joseph: (*) 1827 – 1912. Surgeon and medical scientist who pioneered the use of chemicals for the prevention of surgical infection. In October 1877 was able to demonstrate conclusively that his method of antiseptics reduced the danger of death from surgery, and by the time of his retirement (1893) had the happiness of seeing almost universal acceptance of his principle.

Lonsdale, Kathleen: 1903 -1971. Crystallographer. First woman to be elected to the Royal Society of London. Established the hexagonal arrangement of Benzene compounds. Applied crystallography to medical problems.

Lundy, Benjamin: 1789 – 1839. Philanthropist and leading participant in the Abolition Movement in the 1820's and 1830's. Organised the Humane Union Society and published emancipation newspapers.

Mott, Lucretia (nee Coffin) 1793 – 1880. Pioneer reformer who with Elizabeth Stanton founded the organized women's rights movement in the United States. Active in the campaign against slavery; their home became a sanctuary for runaway slaves after the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Called convention in Seneca Falls, NY in 1848 to discuss the social,

civil and religious rights of women. Until her death at 87, she was considered one of the most consistently effective reformers in the country.

Nayler, James: 1618 – 1660. Prominent early Quaker. Twenty week imprisonment for blasphemy. Came under unfortunate influence of over-enthusiastic Quaker women who persuaded him he was a reincarnation of Christ. Imprisoned at Exeter. Disagreed with Fox who wanted to free Quakers from lawlessness of the ranters. Sentenced to severe punishment and imprisonment; reconciled with Fox in 1660 and preached in London until his death.

Noel-Baker, Philip John: 1889 - Statesman and advocate of international disarmament, campaigned for peace for 40 years; received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1959. Ran in three Olympic games (captain of the British team in 1924.) WWI: served with ambulance units. League of Nations secretariat. Assisted Nansen and Lord Cecil (both Nobel Prize winners.) Sat in House of Commons and held three Labour secretaryships. Helped draft UN charter.

Opie, Amelia: 1769 – 1853. Long known for Father and Daughter, a novel that influenced the development of the 19th century popular novel.

Pease, Edward: Known as 'The father of railways'. Made possible the historic journey of George Stephenson's 'Locomotive No 1' in 1825.

Penn, William: 1644 – 1718. Quaker leader and advocate of religious freedom who founded the state of Pennsylvania. Imprisoned four times for his beliefs. The rights of jurors in England were established as a result of the Penn-Meade trial (1670.) Devoted himself to efforts on behalf of religious toleration. Secured a tract of land in America and spent the remainder of his life there developing a colony organized according to his religious and political principles. Penn's treaty with the Indians was the only treaty 'never sworn to and never broken.' (Voltaire.)

Richardson, Lewis Fry: 1818 – 1953. Physicist and psychologist who was the first to apply mathematical techniques to predict the weather accurately. The Richardson number is named after him. Attempted to use mathematics in the study of the causes of war. Contributed to theory of calculus and study of diffusion.

Rowntree, Benjamin Seebohm: 1871 – 1954. Sociologist and philanthropist known for his studies of poverty and welfare and for his record as a progressive employer. Instrumental in getting company to establish a pension plan in 1906, a five-day week in 1919 and an employee profit-sharing plan in 1923. Published Poverty: a Study in Town Life (1901) and Poverty and Progress (1941). Member of SACC.

Savery, William: 1721 – 1787. Philadelphia cabinet maker, craftsman working in Chippendale style (Quaker??)

Sturge, Joseph: 1793 – 1859. Philanthropist, Quaker pacifist, and political reformer; who was most important as a leader of the anti-slavery movement. Also worked on extension of suffrage and repeal of the Corn Laws. Went to Russia in 1854 in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the Crimean War. Organised relief fund for Finnish villages devastated by British Navy. Started the Severn Street adult school in Birmingham in 1845.

Taylor, Edward Burnett: (*) 1832 – 1917. Anthropologist often regarded as the founder of cultural anthropology. Visited Mexico; reputation established in 1865 by Researches into the early history of mankind and the development of civilization, followed by his most important work Primitive culture (1871) which developed the relation of the life of the primitive to that of modern populations. The first anthropologist to study man's cultural growth rather than merely his physical evolution.

Whittier, John Greenleaf: 1807 – 1892. Author and abolitionist. Many of his poems are sung as hymns. Became a 'household poet'. Best known poem was Snowbound. Editor and lobbyist.

Wilbur, John: 1774 – 1856. Orthodox quietist Quaker (disowned by the Gurneyite New England meeting.)

Woolman, John: 1720 – 1772. Quaker leader and abolitionist whose Journal is recognized as one of the classic records of the spiritual, inner life. Made many preaching journeys, carried message against slaveholding. Sought to curtail the sale of rum to Indians and worked for a more just Indian land policy. Abstained from use of any garment connected with the slave trade.