

~~to conduct their business on the supposedly holy days as they ordinarily would, and some Friends schools continued to hold classes on Christmas into the twentieth century. Gradually, however, recognition of major Christian holidays has become accepted by most Friends.~~

~~Many other activities commonly engaged in by the rest of humanity have been considered to be contrary to the testimonies of Friends. One example is gambling and speculation, because the gains therefrom are not earned through one's own labor and can cause serious loss to others; another is membership in secret societies because they are not open in their activities, are exclusive, and may tend to encourage the formation of conspiracies or may reduce sympathy for some portion of society.~~

~~Another corollary of the fundamental Quaker belief that there is the seed of God in every person is the testimony against paid ministry. George Fox in his early searching found the established clergy to be both corrupt and incompetent in spiritual matters. The Society recognized from its early times that some members possessed gifts of ministry, but abhorred any monetary reward for the practice of ministry as a trade rather than a calling. Friends might be released to travel in the ministry by provision for expenses and support of their families, but any sort of salary for such service was unheard of until the late nineteenth century.~~

~~For further discussion of current Quaker testimonies, see below under "The Life of the Spirit" on page 9.~~

~~7 ENFORCEMENT OF TESTIMONIES~~

~~During the earliest period little need was felt for formal enforcement of the observance of the testimonies, although many controversies about them did arise among Quakers in the 17th century. But in the 18th and 19th centuries, conformity was enforced by threat of disownment, a measure often carried out. At the same time, rather than creedal statements to which members were required to assent, "Queries" a set of penetrating questions were used to remind Friends of the tenets of their faith. In the 20th century there has been considerable variation in the use of queries.~~

~~For further information about the history of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, see *A History of Baltimore Yearly Meeting of Friends*, the tercentenary volume by Bliss Forbush. (Published by Baltimore Yearly Meeting of Friends, 17100 Quaker Lane, Sandy Spring, MD 20860, 1972, 155 pages.)~~

B THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

1 CULTIVATION OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness.

(John 10:10)

The Society of Friends arose out of personal experience of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. The conviction that God can and does speak to all human conditions—enabling, directing and working through us—is at the center of Quaker faith and practice.

The Divine Spirit, which Friends variously call the Inner Light, the Light of Truth, the Christ Within, That of God in Everyone, has power to reveal, to overcome evil, and to enable us to carry out God's will. Quaker testimonies arise from listening to and obeying this Spirit.

Quaker faith welds the beliefs of its Christian foundation with the conviction that the Holy Spirit speaks to men and women and children of all races at all times. It draws individuals into a community of worship and of work for the redemption and improvement of human life. A Friends Meeting should be such a community. It should involve frequent, regular coming together in a common spiritual search, with members sharing experiences and insights, and finding the channels of service to which we are called individually and collectively.

2 MEETING FOR WORSHIP

Our way of worship is not just an historical accident; it is a corollary from our conviction concerning the universal Light of Christ. Believing that in every worshiper, regardless of age, learning, sex, or any other human label, the promptings of God's spirit are at work, Friends meet together in entirely unprogrammed meetings, worship in silent prayer, opening themselves [to the Spirit]. In such corporate worship... we are led into a depth of communion with God and with one another that is deeply meaningful and spiritually refreshing.

(L. Hugh Doncaster)

The meeting for worship is the heart of every Friends Meeting. Baltimore Yearly Meeting generally has unprogrammed worship based on waiting in silence, and founded on faith that human beings can commune directly with God. In expectant silence we strive to center inwardly. Each is aided by the seeking of others, so that worship becomes a corporate experience.

Friends approach the meeting for worship confidently, believing that God speaks directly to us, revealing Divine Will and guiding those who listen. Each worshiper becomes a listener ready to receive God's message, which may come in the silence or in spoken words. The divine manifests itself to individuals in many ways.

While Friends in the several branches have varying forms of worship, even unprogrammed Meetings have elements of accepted practice. All Friends seek to avoid the stultification which can arise from dependence on ritual and outward sacraments. The simplicity of Friends' worship results from an emphasis on the reality of the inward experience. Direct communion with God—the experience of the Holy Spirit—makes the observance of outward rites unnecessary.

Worship requires discipline of mind and heart, and heeding the Holy Spirit over and above our worldly concerns. Daily meditation and prayer, study of the Bible and other writings of spiritual inspiration, and striving to live each day in harmony with the Divine Will help to prepare minds and hearts for the consciousness of the presence of God in worship.

With diligence meet together, and with diligence wait to feel the Lord God to arise, to scatter and expel all that which is the cause of leanness and barrenness upon any soul; for it is the Lord must do it, and he will be waited upon in sincerity and fervency of Spirit; ... and let none be hasty to utter words, though manifest in the light in which ye wait upon the Lord; but still wait in silence, to know the power working in you to bring forth the words, in the ministration of the eternal word of life to answer the life in all.

(Stephen Crisp, 1663)

3 VOCAL MINISTRY

Waiting upon the Holy Spirit in silent expectation and prayer is the basis of our meeting for worship. Vocal ministry should arise out of a sense of being inwardly moved to share a message aloud. Sometimes a message is not ripe yet, or comes clearly but is meant only for the person receiving it, not for the group. Some Friends are led to speak frequently, and others only rarely; yet the timid or brief message of one who seldom speaks may be as moving and helpful as that of a more practiced speaker. The experienced speaker should be watchful not to speak too often or at undue length. No Friend should come to meeting for worship with an intention to speak or not to speak.

The most satisfactory vocal ministry arises out of a leading that is felt in the silence so strongly that it cannot be ignored. It should be delivered with as few words as possible, yet as many as necessary. Vocal prayer offered on behalf of the gathered meeting can also bring us into closer harmony with God.

~~4 USE AND NURTURE OF GIFTS~~

~~*You are my friends if you do what I command you.*~~

~~(John 15:14)~~

~~Every Friend is called to be a servant of God. Each of us has God-given gifts or talents, which we are obliged to develop and use to the glory of God. Each of us is encouraged to seek the ways in which we are called to minister to others. "Speak, for thy servant hears," is our prayer (1 Samuel 3:10).~~

~~We are obliged also to recognize and nurture the gifts of other Friends. The spiritual quality of our meetings for worship deepens when those who are led to speak out of the silence receive encouragement and help. The fabric of the Meeting community and the larger community is strengthened when Friends who serve the community receive loving support from other Friends.~~

~~Monthly Meetings may wish to recognize in some way the special gifts of certain Friends, in the ministry of the word, in Bible interpretation, First Day School teaching, peace witness, prison visiting, counseling or the like. One way is to acknowledge the gift in the minutes of the Meeting. Such formal recognition expresses approval of the Friend's contribution and may affirm his or her suitability to interpret the Society of Friends to the larger community.~~