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NOTES ON THE PRINCIPLES AND
PRACTICES OF THE SOCIETY
OF FRIENDS

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Notes on the Principles and
Practices of the Society of Friends.

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By J. F. M.
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Tasmania :

PROPSTING & ROBEY, PRINTERS, HOBART.

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C. K. OGDEN



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NOTES ON THE PRINCIPLES AND
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In attempting to give some account of the main teachings of the Society of Friends, it is not intended to fully set forth their religious belief; but only those points in it where the difference of outlook from all other professing Christians marks them as a distinct religious community. To do this it is necessary to give earnest heed to the united testimony of those individuals who laid the foundations, and yet to be mindful of the danger of seeking our guidance from these fathers in the truth, lest our religion become one regulated chiefly by precedent; and thus we get into the same kind of error which it was their mission to lead out of. It is right to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, and to imitate their faith, considering the issue of their life; but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and as in times that are past, so in the time now present, His Holy Spirit leads into all truth, and will continue to do so, even unto the end of the world.

George Fox, of all others, was concerned continually to testify that Christ had come to teach His people Himself; and respecting this worthy elder, it should be remembered that though he was the first publicly to proclaim the doctrines which are professed by the Society of Friends, yet we must not suppose that only he had been burdened on account of the errors against which he testified, or that to him alone had

there been an uncovering of those Divine truths which had been hidden from mankind through centuries of error. Other men had a similar spiritual history to that of George Fox; and of these, many who afterwards united with him were not led to their conviction through his teaching, but finding their minds in unison with his, they associated themselves with him in a fellowship of labour and of suffering. Yet, inasmuch as the landmarks in their spiritual history are much the same, it is convenient to trace them in the leader more widely known, especially as he has been at greater pains than others to leave on record full details concerning his growth in the knowledge of Divine things.

In his autobiography it will be seen that before George Fox commenced his public ministry he had no thought of being opposed to the recognised teachers of the established religion; for when in a condition of inward unrest, he sought out the most noted men amongst them, in the hope of finding some man who "could speak a consoling word, but in this search he was singularly unsuccessful, and he came to the conclusion that no living *man* would be able to speak to his state. 'I felt,' he says, 'I had no where to go, none to speak words of comfort, none to understand my state,' and then adds, 'it was in these very depths I heard the voice:—There is one even Christ Jesus that can speak to thy condition; and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy, for I did see why—that I might give Him all the glory, that Christ Jesus might have the pre-eminence, who enlightens and gives grace, faith, and power' * * Thus his peace came by hearing the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and in submission to His power and teaching in his own heart, he went forth and preached a gospel free from customs, rites, and ritual."¹

1. Wm. Beck, "George Fox and his Times."

He did not, like Luther, commence his ministry by nailing in a public place a number of carefully worded theses; but his teaching and that of his fellow labourers may be briefly summarised under the following heads:—

1st. Opposing the teaching which inculcated a submission to established religious authority, they submitted themselves only to the Spirit of God speaking to the single soul. They proclaimed that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of a living Spirit, who holds converse with His people. Thus it was made clear to them that the present dispensation is a dispensation of the Spirit;² and therefore they taught that “the great work of the ministers of Christ is to keep the conscience open to Christ, restraining men from imitating their practices further than His Spirit guides and persuades them; for they saw how prone persons are to receive things as truths from those of whom they have a high opinion, and, by imitating their practices, hurt their own growths and endanger their own souls.”³

A modern writer⁴ pointing out the danger, in a liturgical worship, of a young Christian gradually exchanging his personal religion for that of the congregation, says, that the superior excellence of the provision made for him by another, instead of ministering to his growth, is often for him a system of deputy nutrition which tends to destroy development, and arrest the genuine culture of the soul.

2nd. Second in order comes a truth which is partly included in the first, viz.:—that this power of Divine converse belongs to *all* men by the will of their Creator and Redeemer. The early Friends appealed unweariedly to the words of the Apostle John in which

2. The larger portion in each of the heads 1, 2, and 4 is almost a quotation from a notice of George Fox in “Social Aspects of Christianity” by Dr. Westcott, which has been reviewed by Richard Westlake in “The Friends’ Quarterly Examiner,” from which review the writer of this paper has received much assistance.

3. Isaac Pennington.

4. Professor Drummond.

he testifies of the Light, the true Light, which lighteth every man—a Light, George Fox adds, “sufficient to lead unto the Day Star, because it is a light from God.” George Fox said further, “I was sent forth to declare the word of life and reconciliation freely, that *all* men might come to Christ, who gives freely, and be renewed into the image of God.” This message opened once again the prospect of that universal kingdom to which Isaiah looked. It gave back to this world the idea of a Divine fatherhood commensurate with the Divine love. It offered to the preacher of good tidings of the Kingdom an assurance sufficient to support his largest hope; for he knew that he could not approach any hearer without having God for his fellow-worker, and the secret voice of the soul for his witness.

3rd. Thirdly that inasmuch as Christ, the fulfilment of all types, the substance of all shadows, has Himself come (and in this day of His real presence, we have One essentially in our midst—Immanuel, God with us, who is sufficient for all our needs), the manifestation of His presence with His people is not to be looked for in symbol or representation, but in the real communication of His own Spirit; for the dispensation of types, which are but shadows of the true, is no longer needed and has passed away.

4th. Then, fourthly, it naturally follows that the facts of intercourse with God, of affinity to God, must, if they are received, find expression in life. The early Friends “could not conceive of religion and morality apart, and their labours were a commentary on the text, ‘If we live in the Spirit, in the Spirit let us walk.’ Justification was for them a making, and not an accounting just—not forensic, but real; and conduct was a sign of the fact.* * And being fully persuaded of the efficacy of a child-like trust in the reality of a Divine fellowship to cleanse the rudest and coarsest

life, they did not labour towards the accomplishment of any special work of mercy or justice—they were not busied in dealing with partial evils, nor aimed at building up the kingdom of God in fragments, they strove merely for the recognition of a living Christ within every soul; * * and thus they wrought for God in the conviction that new life is the consequence, and not the condition of quickened faith—that righteousness, peace and joy are the notes of the believer, and not the prerequisites for believing—in a word they struck at the disease of the sinful which is ignorance of God, and not at the symptoms of that disease.”

The teaching of the Early Friends, as summarized above, necessarily separated those individuals who accepted it from their fellow christians, who still adhered to that system which was upheld by the existing churches of the land; and in the practical endeavour to work out these teachings in the daily concerns of life, there have arisen those usages which distinguish the members of the religious Society of Friends from other professing Christians, and which have but little significance if not considered in relation to the principles which lie at the root.

§ 1. Thus, putting into practice their belief that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of a living Spirit, who holds converse with His people, and whose worship must be in spirit and in truth, it is their usage when met together for this solemn duty to sit down in silence, mindful of the declaration of Christ, “where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” And as they esteem the worship of God to be an individual work which cannot be performed one for the other, they are careful that no service or stated vocal utterance in the congregation be allowed to interfere with the silent but not unfelt ministrations of the Spirit of Christ,

dividing to every man severally, as He wills; and whilst they recognise, as a means of edification, the preaching of the Gospel and the offering of public prayer; yet, as they believe the call of the Spirit to be necessary to the office of the ministry, so also in respect to public or private worship they declare that, without a sense of the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit, the exercise of the ministry cannot be in the life and authority of the gospel. For a clear apprehension of scripture doctrine, and a heart enlarged in love to others, are not of themselves sufficient for the work—the able minister is not of the letter which killeth, but of the Spirit which giveth life; and speaks not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, interpreting spiritual things to spiritual men. And though the work of the ministry is manifold, it being a divinely authorised means for the conversion of sinners as well as for the perfecting of the saints (and therefore there are diversities of operations;) yet it is the same Lord who worketh all things in all.

§ 2. And seeing that the Spirit of Christ is given without distinction to all, the Society of Friends maintains that the work of the ministry is not limited to any particular class or order of men; not only so, but that women as well as men may be qualified to be ministers of the gospel, and that this ministry has been, and is at this day, exercised by women in the fear of the Lord and to the honour of His name. And whilst thus giving practical testimony that all living members of the Christian church have liberty to use the gifts bestowed upon them by its Holy Head; yet, as the gift is free, our religious society maintains that the exercise of it should be free also, according to the command of our Lord Himself:—
 “Freely ye have received, freely give.”

It was in connection with their view of the universality of Divine Grace that the early Friends strongly protested against the misapplication which professing Christians had given to three Scripture terms, viz.:—the word *Church* used to designate a building, instead of the gathered assembly; the *Word of God* as a familiar expression for the Holy Scriptures, instead of its use by inspired writers as a title of Jesus Christ or of the Holy Spirit; and the word *Reverend* applied to a religious teacher, whilst its biblical use has reference only to God. The popular language thus had testified that the ideas originally conveyed had become obliterated, inasmuch as it could only have been through the members losing their individuality and power, that the name of the congregation was transferred to the building, concerning which false ideas of sanctity had increased, in proportion as there had been in the congregation a decrease in vital godliness: then again the inward speaking of God's Spirit to the single soul, a Word which is described as "*living and active, * * quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart,*"⁵ was, after centuries of error, no longer apprehended as such, but the Word of God was for the people only that which had been previously revealed: moreover these sacred writings they had been taught to receive only through a fellow man, who stood for them almost in the place of God, and received homage accordingly. With the lapse of time an alteration has again taken place in respect to the words above mentioned; so that in the case of the word *Reverend* it is now used by most Christians simply to designate a minister of religion. But the use of such a biblical expression, even in this restricted sense, makes a distinction between man and man, which is at variance with the scope

5. Hebrews iv., 12, R.V.

and tendency of the New Testament writings. One is our Father even God, One is our Master even Christ, One only is Reverend; all we are brethren and fellow servants.

It may be fitting here to remark that the early Friends did in no wise undervalue the Holy Scriptures, nor detract from them. On the contrary "they read them with delight and joy," believing them to be a true declaration of that which "men spake from God being moved by the Holy Spirit;" and they were anxious that all their fellow members should exercise a daily diligence in the perusal of these sacred writings, regarding them as the only fit outward judge of controversies amongst Christians, any doctrines contrary to their testimony being justly rejected as false. Yet they would "not say as some have done that the Scriptures are the only rule, or the chief and principal rule of faith and life, because they could not give the office of the Holy Spirit unto the Scriptures; for the Scriptures themselves declare that it is the office of the Holy Spirit to guide believers into all truth. And indeed the true meaning and benefit of the Scriptures is not attained in the reading of them, unless the Spirit, that gave them forth, open them and unseal the mysteries contained in them."⁶ "They who are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God; so the Holy Spirit is the guide of the saints' faith and life; and the Spirit must necessarily lead them to walk in the fulfilling of the Scriptures, and according to them."⁷

§ 3. We come now to the public testimony of the early Friends that the dispensation of Christ's living presence is indeed come, or rather that particular testimony respecting it, in which they are opposed to the practice of all other professing

6. Thomas Ellwood.

7. Edward Burrough.

Christians; viz., their non-observance of these symbols and representations, which signify in effect that the way into the holiest of all is not yet made manifest. In thus giving evidence of their settled conviction that the Lord Jesus Christ did not design that there should be any rite or outward observance of permanent obligation in His Church, Friends have been greatly misunderstood by their fellow Christians. It has been said, even in the present day, and that by those persons who otherwise think well of them, that by not observing these so-called Christian ordinances, the members of the Society of Friends are not only acting contrary to the example of the Apostles, but are also disobeying the express command of our Saviour Himself. Yet this accusation is made somewhat inconsiderately; for Friends, "accept every command of Jesus Christ, in what they believe to be its true import, as absolutely conclusive; and it is in obedience to His commands, 'Swear not at all,' 'Love your enemies,' that many of our brethren on both sides of the Atlantic have endured grievous suffering, some even unto death. The question of outward ordinances is not as to the authority of Christ, but as to His real meaning."⁸

To understand the position, it should be remembered that not only were the Apostles Jews, but that our Lord Jesus Christ was, in His earthly guise (Jesus of Nazareth) a Jew also—"that he spoke *first* and *directly* to the Jews—that His words must have been intelligible to them, and His teaching have reached upwards from their intellectual and religious standpoint, even though it infinitely extended the horizon, so as, in its full application, to make it wide as the bounds of earth and time."⁹ No careful reader of the gospels can have failed to

8. London Yearly Meeting Epistle.

9. Dr. Edersheim, "Life and times of Jesus the Messiah,"

notice that, before their Lord was taken from them, the Apostles had no thought whatever of the passing away either of the Jewish customs or of the Jewish ritual; and their Divine Master, giving a new direction to their observances, explained the mysteries of the Kingdom only as they were able to bear it. Yea, and after He ascended to where He was before, He continued through the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth, yet only here a little and there a little. It is indeed marvellous how "the unlearned and ignorant men" of Galilee grew out of their Jewish prejudices and Jewish observances—not marvellous that they came out slowly, but that they at length attained to such clear vision respecting them. But the progress was slow and only by degrees. We read how Peter and John were, as a matter of course, attending the temple service after their Lord was taken from them, how later on Peter received a revelation that the Gospel was to be preached also to the Gentiles, and how they of the circumcision were astonished that the Holy Spirit was poured on the Gentiles as well as on the Jews. We read further that it was only after much disputing that the council at Jerusalem concluded that the Gentiles which believed should not undergo all the Jewish rites—the inference being that the Jewish Christians still continued them; for when Luke's history closes we find that the Church at Jerusalem persuaded the Apostle Paul, and that Paul acted on their advice, to give public evidence that he still walked orderly in regard to the Jewish customs and that he kept the law.¹⁰

Such being the state of the case, how can it be insisted that the practice of the first disciples, whilst under bondage to the law and its requirements, was to be of perpetual obligation to the Church. If the sacred writings had

10. Acts xxi., 24–26.

concluded with Luke's history, the followers of Christ would have been without a record of the continued guiding of the Holy Spirit, until the disciples were able to receive in its fulness the salvation, concerning which the prophets had sought and searched diligently what and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ that was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. But the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ being revealed to those disciples whose hearts were open to receive it, we have clearly set before us, in the late apostolic writings, that the old dispensation had passed away, with all its signs and symbols (which were but shadows of that which is true) and that the new covenant, with its exceeding great and precious promises, is the fulfilment of all that is typified in the observances of the old covenant. Therefore, when our Lord's commands to His disciples are couched in the language of their ritual observances, Friends appeal, for the real meaning of such commands, to the whole tendency and new direction of the New Testament writings.

Thus, they understand, in reference to the command which our Saviour gave respecting the converts which the Apostles should receive into fellowship, that He was not instituting a new ceremonial observance; but that inasmuch as there had now been made manifest a more perfect revelation than had been known by the Jews in their worship of Jehovah, He looked for the fruit thereof, in a living confession of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.¹¹ He said moreover that they who should receive the good news and should confess Him before men should be saved, but they that should not believe on the name of the only

11. Matthew xxvii. 19, R.V.

begotten Son of God should be condemned. It is worthy of remark that, whilst Jesus Christ in thus giving instructions to His disciples, was emphatic as to the ground of the faith which they were to teach, yet, in respect to the rite usually gone through upon admission into fellowship, it was the *only Jewish custom* which the sacred writers specially mention as not practised by Jesus Himself. Furthermore, John, who was designated as the Baptist, had foretold that his own baptism of water should be superseded by the baptism of One mightier, who should baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire. When therefore Jesus had prepared His disciples by a long course of instruction, and when all things written concerning Him had an end, He tells them, when ascending to His Father and their Father, that they should receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit not many days afterwards; and that they were to do nothing in respect to the mission, concerning which he had spoken to them, until they had received this token of fellowship with Him. As to the manner of making manifest an outward union with the Church, the disciples were left for the time to continue the usual custom; for their setting aside of their ancient rites was one of the matters which they were not then able to bear; but the Holy Spirit, who was sent to guide them into all truth, led them on step by step, till, as the Apostle of the Circumcision informs us, it was clear to their minds that it was not the outward rite which availed anything, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.¹²

And similarly in respect to the passover there was in our Saviour the same honouring of the Mosaic institutions, the same tenderness in regard to their slow perception that Christ's kingdom was not to

12. 1 Peter iii. 21.

be a kingdom for Israel only, the same leading upwards from their intellectual and religious standpoint, to a full vision of the better covenant, which was established upon better promises. Is there not in the narrative respecting the last common meal at least as much ground for this view, as for the supposition that a new ordinance was being established? Notice that it was the *disciples* who made the first reference to this meal: "Lord where wilt thou that we prepare and eat the passover?" and that in reply they were directed to one of the many rooms which were specially set apart for the use of visitors on such occasions. Then when they had sat down to meat their Lord and Master followed the usual custom of the head of the household; saying also, "With desire I desired to eat *this passover* before I suffer;" and explained how each particular observance bore relation to Himself, and to what he was about to pass through; and seeing that the disciples were not yet prepared for an immediate cessation of their Mosaic observances, is it not most likely that He would say, "do this in *remembrance* of me?" For not until the church had received fuller instruction in the mysteries of the Kingdom, did the disciples understand that all such religious observances—their meats, drinks, and divers washings—were carnal ordinances imposed until a time of reformation. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing—the true communion is thus described by our Saviour Himself:— "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him."

§ 4. In respect to all that pertains to the daily life and conduct, the early Friends insisted strongly that this should be such as becometh the Gospel or Christ, that in fact the fruit of righteousness

should in this way be made manifest. Thus they worked in harmony with the law of the natural world, "that the principle of life both fashions the organism and sustains it; and no scheme has ever shown a power of continuity which has not been based upon religious faith; 'If we live in the Spirit, by the Spirit let us walk'—that is the law of the kingdom." Walking by this rule the early Friends connected the loftiest thoughts, and the commonest obligations alike, with a personal sense of Divine communion; counselling their followers to live under the government of Christ, to be careful to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and to be examples of meekness, temperance, patience, and charity, to be kind and liberal to the poor, and endeavour to promote the temporal, moral, and religious well-being of their fellow men; to maintain strict integrity in trade and all outward concerns, to observe simplicity and moderation in deportment and attire, to avoid all flattery and insincerity in language: thus they enjoined that non-conformity to the world which becomes the disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Friends as far as possible have united with others in all secondary efforts for the moral or for the spiritual welfare of their fellow men; yet when there is an endeavour through such efforts to build up God's kingdom by working as it were outside of it, they cannot but testify that "truth never came in that way; * * for there is no real holiness to be found, nor righteousness either, but in trees of God's planting, in branches which are by Him engrafted into the true vine, whose strength of virtue and holiness lies in the sap which they daily receive from Him."¹³

In their endeavour to carry into daily practice what they believed to be the plain requirements of

13. Isaac Pennington.

our Saviour's teachings, the early Friends and their successors were sometimes entirely in opposition to the views and practices of other professing Christians, and endured much misrepresentation and persecution; nevertheless they continued in singleness of heart to live the principles which they professed, "leaving the consequences to God, and to confess their ideal, even when attainment appeared for the time impossible."

Of these testimonies, the two which cost them the greatest suffering, were their protests against oaths and against war. As regards the former, signs are not wanting that this disfigurement of religion and civilisation will soon be removed; and the sense of this should incite the present members of the Society of Friends to a hopeful patience in following what they believe to be the leading of the Spirit in respect to their testimony against all war, viz.:—that however much the meeting of wrong by wrong may be justified upon the ground of expediency, and because the present condition of mankind appears to admit of nothing else; yet it is a manifest disloyalty to the King of Kings, and a refusal to look for deliverance in earthly matters from Him, who hath done things far greater in bringing His people out of the power of darkness, and translating them into the kingdom of His dear Son. The professing Church may appear powerless in the face of so much opposing strength; but it can at least refuse to justify the doing of evil that good may come—it cannot be ignorant of this fact that "whatsoever we do, whether in word or deed," is comprehended in the exhortation of the Apostle, "if we live in the Spirit, in the Spirit let us walk."

The bearing of such a testimony against war carries with it a heavy responsibility to adorn this teaching in every action of daily life; for if we cannot overcome in ourselves those infirmities of temper which lead to personal misunderstandings—unless

there be in ourselves an earnest care against giving or taking offence, how can we set about to control the misunderstandings which arise between nations? It may be properly said to us, "First cast out the beam from thine own eye, and then thou canst see clearly to take out the mote from thy brother's eye." And again, "If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, how canst thou contend with horsemen; and though in the land of peace thou art secure, yet how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" An active sympathy with the traditional belief of our religious Society may, in times of peace, permit us to leave our true standing unquestioned; but if the flood of devastation, with all its horrors, should come upon us, only a firm reliance in the protecting care of our Heavenly Father will enable us to remain steadfast in such a time of trial. He that is faithful in little, is faithful also in much; if therefore in the daily cares which fall to our lot, help is laid upon One that is Mighty, we may have a good hope through grace that when extraordinary trials come upon us we may be enabled to put our trust in Him, before whom it was in ancient times testified "the earth feared, and was still, when God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth."

Attempts have been made to define clearly what force the advocates of peace can allow, and where the evils of the military system begin; but, as on the border land of the organic and the inorganic in the natural world, it is the presence of life which alone makes the difference; so in respect to right and wrong, that which makes the difference is the presence of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus working that which is well pleasing in His sight, and leading onward from an imperfect conception of Him to know Him more perfectly and serve Him better: "its directions are not imaginary, nor its doctrines loose and indeterminate; but

even in its beginnings, it is light and life to its possessors, and causes them to inherit substance,"¹⁴ to have salt in themselves and to have peace one with another.

The prevalence of the war spirit throughout the world, extending even to these colonies, which are clear of the old world quarrels, must at times bring discouragement to those who see that so little appears to result from the testimony which they feel called upon to bear; yet it is comforting to remember how reward has crowned a patient continuance in other lines of service, where success at one time seemed equally hopeless. The labourers for the abolition of slavery may be specially mentioned; and the cheering words of Whittier concerning one of these, may give strength to the worker in the cause of peace.

"The dear Lord give us patience" said his wife
Touching with finger tip an aloe; * * *

"See this strange plant its steady purpose hold,
And, year by year, its patient leaves unfold,
Till the young eyes that watched it first are old;
But some day, thou hast told me, there shall come
A sudden beauty, brightness and perfume—
The century moulded bud shall burst in bloom.
So may the seed which hath been sown to-day
Grow with the years, and after long delay
Break into bloom, and God's eternal Yea
Answer at length the patient prayers of them
Who now by faith alone behold its stem,
Crowned with the flowers of Freedom's diadem.
Meanwhile, to feel and suffer, work and wait,
Remains for us. The wrong indeed is great,
But love and patience conquer, soon or late."

The testimonies of the Society of Friends above set forth may be again summarized as follows:—
First, that the soul, weak or strong, young or old in the Christian life, should be brought, as it were face to face with God, so that His Holy Spirit may deal with it according to its need, and its expectation be from Him alone.

14. Samuel Fothergill.

Secondly, that "Christ, the second Adam, doth invite *all* Adam's posterity to come to Him; that *all* through Him might believe and come to light, and come to life, and come to peace and rest."¹⁵

Thirdly, being fully convinced that the present is the day of the Lord's manifestation of Himself to every soul that seeketh Him, and that what are called Christian ordinances have no place in a full acceptance of the new covenant, with its exceeding great and precious promises, the Society of Friends can in no way perpetuate such observances, which belong to a previous dispensation, and which indicate that the presence of Christ with His Church is reserved to a time yet in the future.

Fourthly, that those, who thus give testimony of having received a kingdom which cannot be moved, will, if the testimony be a true one, render the tribute of praise and thanksgiving in a daily concern to serve God acceptably with reverent submission. And it naturally follows that they who are thus growing up into their Holy Head (whilst endeavouring to promote the temporal and moral well-being of their fellow men, and whilst desiring in no way to check aggressive movements against different forms of sin) will seek to work upon the lines of their Divine Master, who said "make the tree good and his fruit will be good." "Life *from* Christ—life *in* Christ—must ever be the basis of life *for* Christ. Life in Christ is a continued abiding in His love. * * * Depending on His guidance, waiting on Him for the renewal of strength, the disciple is found still sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening that he may learn, and learning that he may obey. * * * To be guided by the Spirit of

15. George Fox.

Christ is the practical application of the Christian religion."¹⁶

Some of these religious principles of the Society of Friends are cordially endorsed by many of their fellow Christians; but there are other professing Christians who feel difficulties in apprehending the teaching concerning the operations of the Holy Spirit. Of these difficulties it may be well to notice two classes, viz. :—those experienced by the individual in regard to himself; and those uncertainties which he may feel in respect to the leadings of the Spirit, claimed by other men.

As to the first it may be stated, that there is not the kind of manifestation which some persons would desire, if, like the Israelites in the wilderness who wished for Gods to go before them, they look for some guidance appreciable to the outward senses; for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, and those who are led by the Spirit, walk by faith and not by sight. Yet, though this guidance be not by sight, it is often felt, even by those unaccustomed to it, to be plain and strangely close. Isaiah says even as "a voice behind;" whilst a modern writer says, "closer even than breathing, nearer than hands or feet." Frequently, intimations of duty are not thus distinctly manifest, yet, gentle though they may be, in yielding to them there is great reward. Even in an apparent absence of such guidance, the seekers after truth should not grow weary, but be content to follow in the footsteps of living witnesses¹⁷ whom their consciences commend; and give earnest heed to God's gracious promises revealed in the Holy Scriptures, though these for the time be as a light shining in a dark place until the day dawn and the Day Star arise in their hearts.¹⁸

16. London Yearly Meeting Epistle.

17. Song of Songs i., 8. Song of Songs iii., 4. Proverbs iii., 20. Phillipians iii., 17.

18. 2 Peter i. 19, R. V.

And, in the perusal of the sacred writings, such will find comfort and hope in discovering that their condition of mind is not so peculiar to themselves as they have been too quickly inclined to conclude ; but that they have only the same misapprehensions and temptations which are common to man ; and that even the same afflictions are being accomplished in their brethren which are in the world.

Respecting the uncertainties as to the professed spiritual guidance of others, it should be remembered that God cannot deny Himself, and that therefore those who claim union with Him can be tried whether they be of God. Firstly, inasmuch as the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, he who claims to be divinely led, will manifest a willingness to defer to the elders of the Church. Secondly, he will be in harmony with the just men of former times ; for, whilst precedent should not be made a rule of life and conduct, it is exceedingly useful as a *test* of life and conduct. But if any one should refuse to be thus judged, because of infirmities of flesh and spirit in those accounted to be witnesses for Christ, there is thirdly the appeal to the Holy Scriptures, any doctrines contrary to their testimonies being justly reckoned false ; and there are, fourthly, the further tests given by the Apostle John, “ he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love ” ; and “ he that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.” Firm as the Society of Friends have been in their testimony concerning the immediate operation of the Spirit of God upon the heart, “ they disavow any professed spirituality that is divorced from faith in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, crucified for us without the gates of Jerusalem ; for it is a distinguishing feature in the work of the Holy Spirit, that it bears an effectual witness to Christ, and, under the power of heart-

searching conviction, draws the believing soul in contrition and humiliation to the Saviour's feet."¹⁹

Many persons, mistaking the reverent shrinking from familiar speech concerning Divine things, charged the early Friends with taking little account of the sufferings and death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and, notwithstanding the frequent declarations to the contrary, others have repeated the charge since; insomuch that, amongst those in communion with us, there are, in several parts of the world, certain people who share this feeling. It is well for all such to remember that although the fruit of our lips should not be restrained, just as we should not keep back any other fruit of the Holy Spirit's work; yet, unless our speech be the natural product of Divine life within us, as evidenced by the agreement of our outward conduct, it cannot be accounted an offering which is well-pleasing to God. And it must not be forgotten that our Lord Jesus Christ many times enjoined a practical manifestation as the true token of discipleship. On one occasion He said, "The kingdom of God is not in word but in power"—a living force acting in harmony with God's holy will; at another time he said, "Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven," and again, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Whilst the Apostle John saith, "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

And in the same way they truly confess the Lord that bought them, who *receive* the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son, which witness is that God gave to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son; and it is they whose manner of life is worthy of the Gospel of Christ who truly *bear* witness that the Father hath sent

19. London Yearly Meeting Epistle.

the Son to be the Saviour of the world ; in that having been reconciled to God through the death of His Son, they testify to a full salvation through the power of His life—they who believe to the saving of the soul, build themselves up on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, and thus keep themselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life ; “being brought from step to step, in faith and faithfulness, to the full enjoyment in their own souls of the covenant of life and peace.”¹⁹

From the writings of the early Friends which have been already quoted, it will have been manifest that they held fast to the teaching which in varying forms of expression had been constantly given by the Apostles, viz. :—that the earthly nature is altogether distinct from that which is spiritual, the one being contrary to the other ; and therefore what is begun in the Spirit cannot be made perfect in the flesh. Thus the spiritual life is not nourished by anything which is corruptible ; but, as obedience keeps pace with the leading of the Holy Spirit, the believer is enabled to receive more and more of the fulness which is in Christ. “A man that strives in his own strength, either against sin or towards holiness, may well doubt of ever having it accomplished ; but he that can feel the Eternal Power beginning the work and carrying it on daily, cannot doubt that his Almighty Helper who began, can perfect it ; yea, he is encouraged (by the feeling thereof) to hope and wait on the same Bountiful Giver for the perfecting of it * * * He quietly waits and hopes for the salvation of God, that by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus he might be made free from the law of sin and death, and not always be subject thereto. For whom the Son makes free, they are free indeed ; and being made free by Him, they may serve God

in freedom of spirit, without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of their lives. * * * Yet as God is infinite, so for His ransomed children, who are transplanted into Him, there is no end to growth in Him; but as trees which stand in God's holy earth, by His pure streams of water, they shall grow for ever and ever into His endless life and fulness."²⁰

But though the early Friends thus testified that God hath freely given of His grace to the sons of men to make them perfect in every good work to do His will; they also testified that neither the church nor the individual can ever outgrow the blessed duty of prayer. Wm. Penn said of George Fox that "above all he excelled in prayer—the inwardness and weight of his spirit, the solemnity of his address and behaviour, the fewness and fulness of his words have often struck even strangers with admiration, as they used to reach others with consolation." "The Christian life is a continued asking; and a thankful using of that which is received. * * * Prayer and thanksgiving are important parts of worship when offered in spirit and in truth, and with a reverent sense of Divine influence. * * * Whilst the practice of private retirement, and of seeking counsel and blessing from the Lord, in humble dependence upon His guidance, is one of unspeakable value. * * * It strengthens the union of the branch with the vine, and the daily and continued circulation of life from the root gives greenness and fruitfulness."¹⁹

The more truly the various members of the militant church continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving, and thus, as servants waiting for their Lord, breathe the atmosphere of joy and peace in believing; the nearer in heart shall they be to one another—if we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with the other. "In the Holy Spirit which be-

20. Isaac Pennington.

gets, and in the truth begotten by it, is the true unity, and unity in the life is the ground of true brotherly love and fellowship. * * And the way thereto is not in striving to beget into one and the same apprehension concerning things, nor by endeavouring to bring into one and the same practices; but by alluring and drawing into that Divine life, wherein true unity consists, and which brings it forth in the vessels which are seasoned therewith and governed thereby.”

The one God and Father of all hath given gifts unto men suited to the measure of their growth, for the perfecting of the saints to the work of ministering unto the building up of the body of Christ; till we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that speaking truth in love we may grow up in all things into Him which is the Head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together, through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love.

Oh to be nothing, nothing,
 Only as led by His hand,
 A messenger at His gateway,
 Only waiting for His command—
 Only an instrument, ready
 His praises to sound at His will,
 Willing should He not require me,
 In silence to wait on Him still.







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