

The Religion
of the
Quaker Journalist

By

Howard H. Brinton

SHREWSBURY LECTURE

THE SHREWSBURY LECTURES

Shrewsbury Meeting was already established in 1672, when George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, visited America. He says in his Journal, published by Cambridge University Press: “And soe wee came to Shrewsbury & on the first day of the weeke wee had a pretious meetinge... & friends & other people came farr to this Meetinge; & on ye 2d of the 7th month wee had a mens (& weomens) Meetinge, out of the most parts of ye new Country Jarsie, which will be of great service in keepinge ye Gospell order & Government of Christ Jesus...and there is a Monthly & A Generall Meetinge sett up and they are buildinge A Meetinge place in the midst of them.”

In preparation for the tercentenary, in 1972, of George Fox’s visit to America, an annual Shrewsbury Lecture is given on some basic aspect of Quakerism. A particular phase of the special emphasis which Quakerism gives to the Christian message is presented. The community and Monmouth County in particular are invited on this occasion, known as Old Shrewsbury Day, to join with Friends who “came farr to this Meetinge” to learn together from him who is the Light of the World.

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PREFACE

“Journals” were not an exclusively Quaker phenomenon. John Wesley’s preface to his Journal says: “It was in pursuance of an advice given by Bishop Taylor, in his ‘Rules for Holy Living and Dying,’ that about fifteen years ago, I had begun to take a more exact account than I had done before, of the manner wherein I spent my time, writing down how I employed every hour.” He evidently meant that literally for he filled twenty-six volumes.

Although Journals were written by Christians of other persuasions, Howard Brinton’s introduction emphasizes that: “Because Quakerism is primarily a religion of inner personal experience rather than a religion based on creeds, books, rituals or sermons, the religious autobiography, usually called a ‘Journal,’ has been the most characteristic, authentic, and frequent form of Quaker religious writing. The Religious Society of Friends is rich in this type of composition. There are probably a thousand or more published and unpublished Journal’s.”

“When we compare the Quaker Journals,” he says, “with other more famous religious autobiographies such as the ‘Meditations’ of Marcus Aurelius, the ‘Confessions’ of St. Augustine, the ‘Journal’ of John Wesley, or Tolstoy’s ‘A Confession’, we find the Quaker writers by and large to have been, by comparison, quite ordinary men and women. They were never religious professionals. They were engaged in farming, store keeping, teaching, milling, shoemaking, pottery making, housekeeping, or some other means of earning a living.”

What is it that makes these Journals, most of which were written between 1700 and 1800, still speak to us in a moving way?

Henry Cadbury’s Shrewsbury Lecture on “The Emphasis of Jesus” pointed out that much of Jesus’ ministry was in the form of “suggestions.” These were not compulsions, but challenges to accept nothing less than the highest ideal and to put it into practice.

The writers of the Quaker Journals heeded these challenges. They focused their spiritual autobiographies on the effort to be obedient to the Inward Light, the Christ within, who speaks in the same spirit as the Christ of history.

There is little consideration of intellectual theological problems and few words are devoted to family or political events. Social problems are dealt with from the point of view of individual responsibility. The Journals are an intimate personal record of the struggle of ordinary and very human people to “accept nothing less than the highest ideal and to put it into practice.”

HOWARD H. BRINTON

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He is the author of Creative Worship, Swarthmore Lecture, 1931; Divine-Human Society, William Penn Lecture, 1938; Prophetic Ministry, Duddleian Lecture at Harvard, 1919; and The Function of a Quaker College, Ward Lecture, Guilford College, 1951; also a number of Pendle Hill pamphlets.

His books include The Mystic Will, Quaker Education in Theory and Practice, Critique by Eternity, and Friends for 300 Years.

Because Quakerism is primarily a religion of inner personal experience rather than a religion based on creeds, books, rituals or sermons, the religious autobiography, usually called a "Journal," has been the most characteristic, authentic, and frequent form of Quaker religious writing. The Religious Society of Friends is rich in this type of composition. There are probably a thousand or more published and unpublished Journals.

Religious autobiography is a stage closer to religion itself than are abstract and general accounts of religious practices and doctrines. It presents a truer portrayal of the inner heart and soul of religion than does any other form of writing. By following the experiences of another person one can often catch something of the experience itself. This essence of the experience is communicated not by the words alone but by that which is potential in every human heart which the words may help to inspire.

In three periods of Quaker history there was also need for books or pamphlets of another kind. During the period of persecution in the 17th century, roughly from 1650 to 1690, Friends were on the defensive. They were accused of not being Christians and of relegating to second place what was primary in the religion of the Puritans - the Bible and the life and work of the historic Christ. In this controversy much was written in defense of the Quaker position, based on the very Bible itself.

In the 19th century the Society of Friends like other religious sects, was torn apart by the influence of two opposing movements, the evangelical revival, often referred to as Wesleyanism, and the rationalistic philosophy of the Enlightenment. Within the Quaker movement, the two sides to this controversy wrote treatises to prove from the same early Quaker writings that each represented the true, original Quakerism.

Again in the 20th century there was a great renewal of writing on Quaker doctrines and practices to meet the challenge of the new science and the new Biblical criticism. A group of Quaker scholars developed. There was also a fresh interest in Quaker history, sometimes simply from an antiquarian motive, but more often from a real desire to know what Friends had done and believed. In the 18th century there was no special need for doctrinal writings of a general abstract character. This was accordingly the greatest period of Journal writing though some Journals were written in all periods. We will deal with the Journals written or partly written between 1700 and 1800 though not neglecting to touch upon others.

In the 18th century the habit of keeping a diary of daily events was common, in fact, all but universal. Most Friends kept a daily record, especially those who traveled in the ministry. Many of the Journals as we now have them were written late in life and were based on diaries in which were preserved notations of dates and places. As is often stated in their introductions, the intention was "to gather up the fragments that nothing be lost." A few Journals were actually published in diary form. Some were begun in early adult life or middle life, the events of childhood and adolescence being recorded from memory. Experience preserved in memory is often the most interesting, as in memory only the most important aspects stand out while the recording of contemporary events often contains much that is dull and routine. None of the Journals of the

category with which we are dealing were published during the lifetime of the writer. Although in recent years, in accordance with the present interest in personal recollection and self analysis, a few Quaker autobiographies have been printed during the author's lifetime (sometimes for private circulation only).

All Journals were, until recently, edited and prepared for the press by committees or individuals whose literary sense was not always trustworthy. Fortunately we now have in print the originals as well as the earlier edited editions of the two best known Journals, those of Fox and Woolman.

When we compare the Quaker Journals with other more famous religious autobiographies such as the "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius, the "Confessions" of St. Augustine, the "Journal" of John Wesley, or Tolstoy's "A Confession," we find the Quaker writers by and large to have been, by comparison, quite ordinary men and women. They were never religious professionals. They were engaged in farming, store keeping, teaching, milling, shoe making, pottery making, housekeeping, or some other means of earning a living. In the early years of Quaker history, as today, there were a number of highly educated men who joined the movement. The Journal of one of these, Thomas Elwood, who was Milton's secretary, gives a vivid picture of the times. But in the 18th century the universities were closed to Quakers¹ and few received more than an elementary schooling or at most the education of some academy of roughly our high school grade. Yet the Journals indicate that their authors were generally self-educated. They were engaged in a life-long process of development. Sometimes during a debate with a clergyman the opponent was surprised to find that the Quaker had not received formal theological training. For example, John Churchman (1705 -1755) writes in 1742 regarding a clergyman with whom he was having a dispute, "he supposed I was a man who had read much or could not be so fully acquainted with the Reformation and he supposed I had a college education. As to the last I told him that I had never been at a school but above three months." (Journal 1779 ed. p. 57)

The Quaker Journalists were on the whole simple persons with a simple religion—simple in the sense that it had little to do with mental gymnastics and disputations on the fine points of theology and philosophy. A few of them, Thomas Story was one, had been educated as lawyers and loved an argument, but it was usually an argument against the refinements and subtleties with which Puritan clergyman so often entertained their hearers. I say "entertained" because the Quakers believed (rightly or wrongly) that entertaining was precisely what they were actually doing. When Quaker preachers faced an audience largely made up of those who had what they called "itching ears," they were silent; to the disappointment of many who had come, not to worship, but to hear a sermon from a famous public Friend.

¹ Until the passage of the University Tests Act in 1871 students at Oxford, Cambridge, and Durham were required to subscribe to the articles of the Church of England, attendance at public worship was compulsory, and other declarations and oaths respecting religious belief were mandatory. Degrees in divinity and professorships in divinity and Hebrew at those universities are still restricted to persons in holy orders of the Church of England. Article six of the Constitution of the United States abolished such tests in America "as a qualification to any office or public trust."

The 18th century with which we are principally dealing has been called by Quaker historians the age of Quietism. This word may be misleading unless it is understood in its purely technical sense. It certainly does not mean that the Quakers were quiet! At that time more than at any other period in their history, American Quakers were active in politics. This was especially true in Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, and North Carolina, although it was not true in England where a man who could not take the oath of allegiance could not hold political office. On this side of the Atlantic a law passed in England requiring the oath suddenly eliminated the Quakers from political control in North Carolina. It was in part the certainty that a similar law would be passed for Pennsylvania which led the Quakers to give up their control of that province in 1756 rather than any aversion to political activity due to their "quietism" as some writers imply.

Nearly all the Journals were written by Friends whose vocal ministry had been approved by their meetings. Usually this approval took place about two years after they had begun to speak. The Journalists traveled widely; most of them crossed the Atlantic. They held appointed meetings on weekdays in addition to the Meetings on First-day in the morning, afternoon, and often in the evening. Many of those appointed meetings were especially for the benefit of attenders who were not Friends.

A Friend who stayed at home would seldom think his life sufficiently important to deserve a published Journal. The so-called "public Friends" interviewed presidents, kings, emperors, and czars. In addition to the concern for the ministry, they usually had some social concern such as anti-slavery, prison reform, education, temperance, peace, simplicity, or equality of respect as between classes and races. Under the weight of a concern the Friends were anything but quiet.

But the Quakers of the first century and a half of Quaker history were indeed quietists in the technical sense of that term, a term which, I believe, was introduced into Quaker history by Rufus Jones and which has been used by subsequent Quaker writers. The Quakers of the so-called "quietistic period" believed that the human will should be quieted or restrained in order that the divine will might manifest itself. They thought, to quote a phrase of Whittier in his poem "The Meeting," that "God is most where man is least." If the mind is cumbered with too much business or too much housekeeping, then the divine is crowded out. He who "stands at the door and knocks" will not enter if the room is cluttered with all sorts of objects.

Perhaps the most typical quietist was John Woolman who is known for his unremitting activity in regard to the abolition of slavery and relief of the poor, though I think other Quaker leaders such as Anthony Benezet should also receive credit for the anti-slavery movement among Friends. But Anthony Benezet, though he wrote several very influential books did not write a Journal, and John Woolman wrote an inspired one. The Journal writers had an advantage in securing support and appreciation for what they did!

Woolman does not use the term Inward Light or "That of God in every man" for the Divine Spirit which ever seeks to regenerate the human soul. He speaks only of that which "is pure," meaning that which is free from all taint of human reason or knowledge. George Fox and other

early Friends occasionally use the word “pure” in the same way. This word is typical of a quietist type of religion, that is, a religion which depends not on human reason but on guidance by the Inward Light purified of all lower and external elements which might obscure it. This is the most important element in the religion of the Quaker Journalists of the 17th and 18th centuries. It is easily misunderstood by us today who place so strong an emphasis on the activity of the self-conscious side of our minds, a side which psychologists now tell us is not nearly as important or as influential in our motivation or in the formation of our characters as we tend to think.

Quietism did not mean a vacant mind where an evil suggestion might enter as easily as a good one. To a mind which is empty in the usual sense of that word, evil has as much opportunity as good. If Quaker quietism had meant that kind of vacancy there would have been no need for preaching in meeting or for writing Journals in order that, as the writers sometimes humbly expressed it, others might profit by their mistakes. The mind must be directed not toward the dark world below, but toward the world of Light above.

Some of the earlier Catholic Quietists called this process “taking aim.” They believed that purgation was the first stage in religious meditation. George Fox sometimes said that the first function of the Inward Light is to reveal sin, that is to make known what it is that stands between the self and the Light. It might be pride, covetousness, hatred or some other sin. Only when these are removed can that which is pure shine into the soul without obstruction. Quietism meant simply the quieting of whatever was opposed to the Light. The speaker in meeting could help the worshipper to “take aim” or the worshipper could help himself by concentrating on some Biblical passage, or something else which might set his mind in the right direction and make him open and receptive to whatever might come from On High.

Another misleading word, and this one, unlike the word Quietism, is often found in the Journals, is the word “worldly.” Friends sharply distinguished between the “world” and their own religious group. One code of behavior prevailed in the world and another in the meeting community. But this did not mean that they retired from the world like a hermit. They were as much in the world as others and were frequently accused of being altogether too successful in business for their own good. Many were also successful in science and medicine. By the “world” they meant that which was conventional, that which was accepted as true by society in general. In listening to the Divine voice they endeavored to exclude the voice of society around them. In their own words they made a constant effort to listen to “That which is pure.”

This it was which made them oppose slavery when society in general accepted the institution of slaveholding. The Quaker way of worship based on the quietistic principle of waiting in silence, separated from the pressure of public opinion, making the mind as open as possible to whatever might enter it from above, made the Quakers pioneers in social reforms. That which arises from within is closer to the ultimate springs of the will than that which comes from without. It is therefore more likely to result in right action.

This attitude of being unworldly or other-worldly, so important an element in the religion of the Quaker Journalists, amounted to nothing more than willingness to be different from the world

around them if God so required. In the 18th century this difference often began with a decision to wear the plain dress and use the so-called plain speech which contained no flattering words such as you instead of thou or Mr. instead of simply the name. Most of the Journalists speak of this decision as very difficult. It seemed a small thing in itself and yet it set them apart as being “peculiar.” Not only were they discarding superfluities of every kind in their conversation, their dress, and in the furniture of their houses; but even in their vocal ministry and their Journal writing. They were telling the world where they stood. There is “an advantage in Friends being outwardly known as such” says George W. Taylor (1803-1811) (p. 17). After this important step, usually involving a long struggle, their friends and business associates who perhaps had not known earlier of their decision to follow the Quaker way, would know what to expect of them.

The adoption of simplicity in dress, speech, and behavior (and no Journal of the 18th century was written by a Friend who had not taken this step) gave the Journalist a precedent and guaranteed courage to be peculiar in more important fields such as war and peace, slavery, prison reform, education of Negroes and Indians, reform of mental hospitals, and temperance (though it was not until nearly 1900 that the meetings advocated total abstinence). Friends were, perhaps, less acutely concerned with sins of the flesh than with sins of the spirit—hatred, aggressiveness, pride, unforgivingness, covetousness—that is, the sins denounced by Jesus. The Puritans believed in total depravity because, as they argued from the book of Genesis, man had fallen into a body of flesh with appetites inclining to evil. The Quaker standard was the Sermon on the Mount which is based, not on mortifying the flesh, but on attaining the simplicity of the flowers of the field and of the pure in heart. The Quakers set up for themselves a serious limitation in thinking of the arts as superfluous, requiring time that ought to be devoted to more serious matters, closer to actuality. In spite of this limitation the so-called “simplicity” in Quaker dress, speech, homes, and meeting houses showed an aesthetic sense which later became appreciated as “good taste.”

The progress of a Quaker in sensitizing his social consciousness may be illustrated from the Journal of Joshua Evans (1731-1798). After a period of inner conflict and then what he calls “a full surrender to the Divine Will” his first concern was to adopt the plain dress and language which he says “was like parting with a right hand or an eye.” His second concern was to speak in meeting. About this he says “to think of preaching to those with whom I had once rioted in folly seemed to be like death.” His third concern was to take up the cause of anti-slavery. In this he joined with his neighbor John Woolman in visiting the families of slaveholders. His fourth was to refuse to use any of the products of slave labor such as sugar or cotton. His fifth was to refuse to pay taxes levied to prosecute the French and Indian war. At long last, the tax collector gave up and left him in peace. His sixth concern was to wear undyed clothing. He believed that dyes were superfluous, injured the fabric, and concealed dirt. Even so, obedience was not easy. He tells us that he made three trips to Philadelphia to buy an undyed hat before he had the courage actually to purchase one. His seventh concern was to refuse the use of tea because it was an expensive superfluity, when so many persons were hungry. His eighth was to refuse to eat meat, because, as he said “I considered that life was sweet in all living creatures.” His eighth concern was to refuse to provide rum for his harvest hands, a universal custom at that time. Instead, he offered additional wages. His ninth was to wear a beard when all his contemporary Friends were clean

shaven. This action (or lack of action) cost him the unity of his own meeting. Apparently a beard was considered an ornament. His tenth concern was to refuse to use imported articles on which a duty had been levied to defray the expenses of war. We have now reached only page 40 of Joshua Evans' Journal. The rest of it has to do with travels in the ministry which took him to every meeting in America. For him, an average journey on horseback, often along rough frontier trails, was about four to five thousand miles.

Other journalists had other concerns different from those of Joshua Evans.

While we are considering the relation of the Journal writer to the world around him we should note his attitude toward business. This is intimately concerned with the testimony for a non-professional ministry. Since Friends believed in the "priesthood of all believers," then all believers must have time for participation in religious duties. The concern regarding business can be summed up by saying that if business is taking up too much time and attention and in that way interfering with attention to religion and religious concerns then business must be decreased. There was no objection to business as such. A livelihood must be earned. But there was a universal objection on the part of the Journal writers to too much business. John Woolman's efforts to free himself from "cumber" are well known and similar efforts are described in almost all the Journals. I shall quote from only one, that of John Barclay of the wealthy English family who founded Barclay's Bank, one of the four great banks of England.

"According to my present feelings and experience" he writes (p. 49):

I do verily believe that the business upon which I have entered is such as requires much more time, close study and attention, than I can conscientiously give up thereto; it does entail such entanglement and engrossment in the things of time as to leave to uncertainty and almost inevitable neglect the things of eternity.

He therefore decides to "sit loose to this world" and undertake a smaller business.

Quaker scientists and physicians also were concerned lest their work withdraw too much attention from their religion. Dr. John Ritty of Dublin (1698-1775) when finishing his important Materia Medica after a labor of twenty years, wrote of it: "An evidence of greater propensity to the tree of knowledge than to the tree of life."

The writers of the Journals at some periods in their lives traveled extensively. In the 18th century nearly all of them visited Shrewsbury Monthly, Quarterly, or Yearly Meetings. Often on visiting a city, the traveling Friend would first go to the jail. On finding conditions there intolerably bad, he or she went at once to the highest authority that could be reached. To him or them the indefatigable Friend described the condition and in most cases secured a promise that changes would be made. In such a circumstance in Russia, the governor of a province said to Stephen Grellet after hearing his suggestions for prison improvement "all this can be done." Later he said "all this has been done." The czar himself said of the conditions: "These things ought not to be,

they shall not continue so.” And yet we know that the simple recognition of an intolerable condition by a ruling authority is not enough. The situation must be watched and followed up.

Thomas Shillitoe held a Friends meeting in each of about one thousand drinking-places in Ireland. Usually he was treated with respect, but sometimes he suffered such indignities as having beer thrown in his face. Undertakings of this kind were of course not easy and Thomas was seldom able to sleep the night before a proposed visit to a drinking-house.

In arguing with others on their peace principles Friends maintained that if peace was to come it must have a beginning somewhere, so why not within themselves. Samuel Bownas, while in prison on Long Island in 1702, had a long discussion with some Indians who agreed with him, except on the subject of peace. “I then asked...if this was not a right principle. They all said it was very good indeed, but feared few could embrace this doctrine. I said all things have their beginnings and it is now our duty to embrace this truth, hoping that others by this example may do the same.” (p. 130)

This essay began with a few allusions to the relations of the Quaker Journalists with their fellow men, but the central emphasis in the Journals is not on these relationships but on the inward life which determines them. The Quakers, agreed with the Puritans, in believing that they could not be saved by good works alone. Unlike the Puritans, they believed that good works were so integral a part of, and so inseparable from, religious faith that faith was incomplete without them. “Faith that worketh by love” says Barclay, the foremost Quaker theologian, “cannot be without works” (Prop. VII sec. X). But the outward expression is secondary, its source is the inward life. Let us then turn to the inward as the primary element in the religion of the Quaker Journalist.

The apostle Paul’s philosophy of history presents three stages in the life of humanity which he called Adam, the Law, and Christ. The Quakers adapted this differentiation to the individual and nearly all the Journals reflect it. First was the age of innocence, when the presence of God was felt, but not understood. Here Friends differed from the Protestants who believed in the total depravity of children. John Churchman says of his childhood, “I early felt reproof for bad words and actions, yet knew not whence it came.” (p. 2) When he was eight years old, as he sat in a small meeting, he discovered “what it was which had reproved me for evil.” “Oh, the stream of Love,” he says, “which filled my heart with solid joy at that time and lasted for many days, is beyond expression; indeed I was early taught to think different from such who hold to the perdition of infants, and am since confirmed in fully believing that the sin of our first parents is not imputed to us.” Such religious experiences in childhood led Friends to reject the doctrine of imputed sin.

Similar intimations are described in nearly all the Journals which cover a whole lifetime. For example Stephen Crisp (1638 -1692) writes “When I was very young, about seven or eight years old...the divine witness cried even then to have my whole mind given up to the Lord and that in thought, word and deed I should serve him, but I knew not it was from God.” (Friends Library XIV p. 138) Stephen Crisp is quoted because, like so many of the early Friends, he was brought up in a strict Puritan household and it was only in later life that he could give a Quaker interpre-

tation to his childhood experiences. This period in early life was followed by a period of childish playfulness which the Journalist generally looks back upon with sorrow, though no more serious sin is recorded than waste of time in frivolous amusements. Sarah Tucker (1779 -1840) writes: "I spent two years of my precious time bestowed upon me for a far more noble and dignified purpose." (p. 13) In those days the psychology of childhood was not understood. Children were treated as small adults as can be seen in the illustrations in contemporary books and in the portraiture of the period.

There then followed a period, sometimes short but sometimes long, which William James describes in his book The Varieties of Religious Experience in the chapter entitled "The Divided Self." The Journalist portrays an inward struggle, usually during the period of adolescence, but often lasting until twenty years of age. Here we see the influence of the current dualism. Two forces are pulling upon him one from the Light above, the other from the darkness below. This contest within is usually described in terms of desperate seriousness, as a life and death struggle. Friends and relatives know nothing about it. Job Scott (1773- 1793) devotes to it ten pages of his Journal:

"The Lord," he says, (p. 36) "in un-speakable loving kindness followed me with his judgements inwardly revealed against sin. The prince of darkness also followed me, with temptation upon temptation to evil and with various subtle insinuation and dark notions to rid me of all fear, restraint or tenderness of conscience."

This feeling of being pursued is often recorded in the Journals. Catharine Phillips (1726-1794), brought up as a Friend, compares this period, as so many other writers do, to the children of Israel traveling through the wilderness:

I had to pass through many deep baptisms and exercises of faith and patience. I was now brought into my own heart, which by reason of the irregularity of its passions and inclinations might well be compared to an uncultivated wilderness through which I must travel and where I must receive the law for the ordering of my outward conduct: and O! the seasons of hunger and thirst, the tossings and perplexities and the 'thunderings, lightnings and tempests' which seemed to threaten destruction which I had to pass through in that day...some of those religious principles which I had received by education were called in question and I was left without any foundation of certainty respecting them. (pp. 15, 16)

In a subsequent passage (p. 17) she speaks of being "gradually resigned to that of God" and she waits "quietly for the putting forth of the divine hand." She first spoke in meeting at the age of twenty-two. Catharine Phillips became a very popular minister and traveled widely in Europe and America. Her particular sacrifice, in becoming a thoroughly dedicated Friend, was to give up writing verses!

We find it acknowledged that in the state of inward struggle and doubt only the outward law could afford guidance. But as Paul found, the outward law produces inward conflict if there is no inward change. "For the good that I would, I do not; and evil which I would not, that I do." (Ro-

mans 7:19) It is a curious fact that 18th century Puritans, like many modern theologians, seemed to stop at chapter seven of the epistle and declared that mankind was doomed to a perpetual sense of guilt and inward tension. The Quakers on the other hand went on to chapter eight in which Paul declares "The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (vs. 2) In the ninth verse Paul calls this redeeming Spirit the "Spirit of God" and the "Spirit of Christ." The Friends were like Paul in drawing no distinction between the two.

Sooner or later the Journal writer describes a time when he is willing to submit his own self-will to the will of God as revealed within by the Spirit. Then the inner conflict ceases. In most cases the transformation is described as gradual. John Woolman writes "As I lived under the cross and simply followed the openings of truth, my mind from day to day was more enlightened."

Friends seldom used the word conversion. Many other words were used such as being "tendered" or "reached." John Croker (1673-1727) writes (p. 285) the result was "that I might be brought to a sense of the power of God to work me into a new lump." Friends distinguished between convincement and conversion, the first being the acceptance of Friends doctrines and the second being a unification of the human will with the divine will. Convincement could admit to membership in a Friends' meeting, but conversion was a life-long process. Membership in a meeting implied the right intention, but not necessarily full accomplishment.

After the state of self surrender is reached, friends and relatives may know nothing about it until, often to their surprise, the young Friend stands up and speaks in meeting. As the Journals were nearly all written by so-called recommended ministers, that is, persons who had received the recorded approval of their meetings for their vocal offerings, this act marked a turning point in their lives. Most of the writers describe how, after the call to speak in meeting was heard within, there followed a period of resistance, sometimes lasting for years. Two women Friends, Martha Routh (1743-1817) and Margaret Lucas (1701-1769) tell how, during this period of hesitation and disobedience, the effect on them was so serious that their lives were despaired of. David Ferris (1707-1779) resisted for twenty years in spite of a series of remarkable dreams which showed him clearly that he was neglecting his duty. Finally the time came when he felt that if he did not obey "the consequence would be death and darkness forever." (p. 68) "I was raised on my feet," he says, "I hardly knew how." Afterwards he felt "like a prisoner who had long been in bonds and was set at liberty."

Many had similar experiences though fortunately less acute. The first utterance in meeting was always short, sometimes simply the repetition of a verse from the Bible, which is often remembered for a lifetime and recorded in the Journal. In almost all cases this was followed by a sense of great inward peace. For example, John Yardley (1786-1858) after struggling for ten years against the call to speak in meeting says, "I trust that the sweet peace which I afterward felt was a seal to my belief that I had been favored with divine compassion and approbation." (p. 29) He afterward made five extensive journeys in the ministry on the European continent and one to South Russia.

Isaac Martin of Rahway, New Jersey, (1758-1828) began his extensive ministry at a meeting at Shrewsbury in 1788. "I felt a concern," he says, "to stand up with a few words, but fearing lest I should be deceived, I earnestly besought the Lord for preservation from going too fast." He continues, "I did not feel a very extraordinary degree of life and power whilst speaking, nor yet such precious incomes of love and peace after sitting down as some I have read, but," he adds later, "the sweet refreshment intended for me was withheld about two days when my heart was unusually tendered and contrited before the Lord." Although he was always in ill health, Isaac Martin's Journal is a record of almost continual travels in the ministry. At one time he remarks, "...had a very large meeting at Shrewsbury made up of different societies. The Master of assemblies was graciously near." (p. 47) But Shrewsbury meeting was not always as satisfactory as this. At another time he was silent. "The seed of life," he says, "appeared to me to be much pressed down in many hearts." (p. 18)

John Griffith (1713-1776) writes (1736) of going

thence through the wilderness to the Yearly Meeting at Shrewsbury which was large and much favored by the Divine Presence, divers ministering Friends from Pennsylvania being there namely Thomas Chalkley, Robert Jordan, John and Evan Evans, Margaret Preston and others. (p.33)

Thomas Chalkley records three visits to Shrewsbury. John Griffith writes of a visit thirty years later, in 1776, to Shrewsbury Quarterly Meeting: "On the third day abundance of people flocked to meeting perhaps with much expectation, but my way was shut up as to ministry." (p. 389) It was probably this expectation of words from him which "shut him up."

The Quaker respect for humility is illustrated by a circumstance in a visit to Shrewsbury of Joseph Oxley (1715- 1775). He tells us that Richard Lawrence "though formerly a member of parliament" waited on guests at table as one redeemed from all worldly pomps and honors. (Friends Library II p. 471)

Some Friends have hesitated to speak in meeting because they expected that the inward call would be stronger and more moving than it turned out to be. John Churchman was worried because, as he says, "the motion was so gentle and low." (p. 23) Job Scott expected the call to be "some extraordinary appearance different far from anything I ever yet had been acquainted with." (p. 28) Then he remembered in what a "low, mean, ordinary appearance" Christ came among the Jews.

Once the writer has reached that higher level of life on which he is willing to surrender to whatever the Divine requirement may be, there are few records of a sense of guilt. Here the Quaker Journals are in striking contrast to Puritan Journals. In Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, John Bunyan over and over again records his sense of guilt and estrangement from God as does Richard Baxter in his remarkable life of himself.

There were times when a Journalist, faced with the divine call to make a long and arduous journey in the ministry, lasting perhaps several years, would find the decision to go very difficult especially if wife or husband were left behind with small children to be cared for and farm or business to be attended to. Daniel Wheeler (1771 -1840) was faced with misgivings when he asked for his meeting's support in his journey to the South Pacific "a prospect," he says, "the magnitude of which made human nature shrink." (p. 175) He was absent for five years, going from island to island in a small boat.

Although we find few references to feelings of guilt, we do find in almost every Journal accounts of periods of depression and darkness. For these the writers have no explanation except that possibly the Lord was testing them by depriving them of the sense of His presence. Rufus Hall (1744-1818) after a "night season of gloominess in which the spiritual atmosphere seemed all overcast with clouds, so that I could not discover even a star to give me light," (p.141) declares, "there are spiritual days and nights as well as natural ones." After a later depression he concludes: "Mankind are so constituted that it is as needful and useful to experience the winter and summer seasons spiritually as it is in the outward world." (p. 163) Sarah Stephenson (1738-1802) found help from others. "My spirit rejoices," she says, "at being favored with the unity of the brethren. It is a great strength in low dipping seasons which are often my portion." (p. 168)

But if these Friends had their periods of depression they also had times of mystical joy. Christopher Healy writes:

Returning from my school at evening, my mind as I walked was fixed on heavenly things and I felt a stream of Divine love flow into my soul... This continued with me until late in the night. (p.48)

Oliver Sansom (1636-1710) writes:

The Lord was pleased graciously to visit me and wonderfully to break in upon me with the sense of his heart tendering love. (p.96)

John Whiting, while a prisoner, though allowed some liberty, writes in 1680:

The Lord was pleased in his infinite love to my soul often to appear in a wonderful manner to me and over shadow me with his Presence; to my exceeding joy and comfort. One time especially which I shall never forget, as I was walking in the fields in a deep meditation the influence of his divine Presence so over shadowed me as if the Heavens had been open to me, that I was as if I had been almost taken out of myself. (p.26)

Since we have spoken of Sarah Stephenson's depressions we should note also her seasons of rejoicing. She writes:

As I rode along my mind was drawn into an abstracted state so that I felt an entire detachment from visibles, and as though I had no connections on earth; and I was much absorbed in divine love. (p. 194)

Many such experiences can be found in the Journals.

I have attempted to depict the religion of the Quaker Journalists entirely through their own accounts of their religious experiences. They also had a theology based on historical events, especially on the life, death, atonement and resurrection of Christ, but in 18th century writers we find little mention of this. It was a definite and important background taken for granted except when they were challenged by an opponent to express their opinions. On such occasions they sometimes used the phrase "Christ died for our sins," but Friends did not always mean by this exactly what their opponents meant. The events in Christ's life, including his atonement, were not, in general, thought of as effective for man in isolation from his own inner experience. It is only as we ourselves are willing to crucify our selfish desires and be raised up into a new and higher life, in other words, only in so far as we share Christ's experiences with him that his experience opens the way for our rebirth into a higher life.

The Friends did not attempt to rationalize the atonement by saying that it was simply an expression of the love of a parent for his erring child, nor did they adopt the doctrine attributed to Saint Anselm that an angry God demanded man's punishment for sin and Christ offered himself as a substitute for man. They were aware of an element of mystery about this great process and other theological doctrines, feeling that they should be approached with awe and reverence rather than that they should become comprehensible to the rational understanding. Friends could not accept a religion of words or what they called a "notional religion" or a religion of ideas which they thought tended to be "afloat on the surface."

Religion, like everything else, was indeed to be thought about. It required a theology, but more important than this, religion was to be felt. For these Friends the coming of Christ meant primarily the end of the old Mosaic Covenant under the Law and the coming of the New Christian Covenant under the saving power of Christ's Spirit, though no man anywhere or at any time has been without some measure of the Divine Spirit.

"In the second or new covenant," says John Richardson, (1666-1753) "there is the blood which sprinkleth the heart." (p. 56) Because of this, their emphasis was not so much God-centered, or Christ-centered, as it was Spirit-centered, though they made no trinitarian distinction. Others had placed their whole reliance on the Christ of history, but the Quaker Journalists of the 18th century, without depreciating the work of the Christ of history, preached the saving power of Christ within. Martha Routh writes of a meeting:

...It waa an open time of labor, though in close expostulation, tending to advance the pure principle of Truth above every shadowy performance, name or profession of religion as the only means of salvation to man. (p. 434)

Catharine Phillips writes:

I was willing to abide the judgements of the Lord for sin, in order that I might witness remission thereof through the baptism of repentance and the sanctifying life or spirit of his son Jesus Christ. (p.14)

The effort to express in words a theology (the word means thinking about God) is an integral part of religion in so far as men do any thinking at all. Quaker theology is unique because of its close link with experience. This experience is not the result of an aimless wandering where some truth might be stumbled upon by accident. The events in the New Testament and in the Quaker Journals, for these also were often read in the home, afforded direction and goal to seekers. That goal is obedience to the will of God as expressed by the recorded words of Jesus and by His Light within the soul. The Journalist writes because he can say with Christ, "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the Truth." (John 18:37)

The 18th century was a time when the Quaker movement was expanding everywhere in America, reaching its climax probably about the year 1800, after which in the 19th century controversies and outside influences led to a decline. The problems and opportunities faced by the leaders of 18th century Quakerism, many of whom I have mentioned, are not those which we face today, but there are certain similarities. Chattel slavery no longer exists but we still have the problem of poverty and racial prejudice and discrimination. Simplicity is no longer attested to by a certain style of clothing or form of speech, but as never before we need to simplify our lives which are complicated and overridden by a multitude of activities. Master and mistress are no longer flattering titles, but today we seek other status symbols which cause others to flatter us.

Obviously the testimony for outward peace is more urgent than it has ever been. It must be striven for with all the light and leading to which we can attain and with all the dedication of which we are capable.

In the search for inward peace, which is no less requisite, we can learn from the Friends of the 18th century. Their solution was as simple as this! Follow whatever measure of Light you have, be it ever so little, free your soul from self-centered desires, do not worry about the past or the future, but seek to know and do what you feel God requires of you in the present and your reward will be peace.

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