

bership a strengthening of their conviction that a vital Christian faith ought to include the peace testimony, and their dedication to this particular concern frequently works like a leaven in the growing number of churches which are opening up to considerations akin to the traditional Quaker testimony for peace. Others join the Fellowship because of the impact which Friends relief work abroad and at home has made on their thinking. Again, as with the peace testimony, Friends hold no monopoly in relief projects, and lately a growing number of churches have undertaken most efficiently organized activities of this kind. Nevertheless, Friends may still be able to stimulate such broader enterprises through some of their pioneering "pilot" projects which are meant to open up new ways and means for relief and interracial understanding.

But the most immediate need of modern man is to belong to a living community of faith. "The essential Church is in the lives of men," as T. Ralph Morton once wrote. It is not enough to commemorate personalities and events of the past. We must, moreover, project them upon the future. We must make it a service to life and an expression of love for our fellow men. Those who translate their experience of God's love for man into the practice of love for their fellow men belong already to that invisible order of which Julia Lee Rubel's

article in this issue speaks, one that will create justice, brotherhood, and sincerity among all human beings irrespective of race, color, creed, and social standing.

A Great People to Be Gathered

When young George Fox set out to "gather" like-minded seekers in the North of England, the "Galilee of Quakerism," he was little concerned about matters of organization. The early Friends kept no membership rolls, and early Quakerism was truly a movement, not a sect. Something of the outgoing enthusiasm of Pentecost was alive among the men and women of that time. The Wider Quaker Fellowship wants to preserve this spirit. It aims at strengthening the essence of all religious faiths beyond creeds and rituals. Many of its members will continue to live in isolation, geographical or spiritual; yet their knowledge that in this Fellowship kindred minds are linked together by friendship, prayer, and the mutual nurture of our inward life is a service of strength to them, as we know from personal contacts and the numerous letters that reach our office.

We want to heed God's call as His obedient servants. Only such dedication will realize His will for His children. And only such fellowship can create the higher reality of brotherhood that may lead us toward living in the Kingdom.

The Spiritual Message of the Society of Friends

By HOWARD H. BRINTON

IN assigning me this subject I presume that those who planned the program were emphasizing the spiritual as contrasted with the social message of the Society of Friends. I accept this contract as a valid one, though everyone knows that "spiritual" and "social" are as intimately related as the two sides of a door; you can't have one without the other. However, as in the case of a door, it is possible to concentrate attention on one side or the other; we can think of the "spiritual" as primarily concerned with our relation to God and the "social" as primarily concerned with our relation to our fellow man. Each is dependent on the other. In the literature of Quakerism the phrase "joined to the Lord" seldom appears without the corresponding phrase "and to one an-

other." To be joined to the Lord results in being joined to one another, and being joined to one another results in being "joined to the Lord."

The word "spiritual" has many meanings, most of them vague. I shall use the word in two clearly defined senses. First, the word "spiritual" designates our relation to the Divine which is within us, and also beyond and above us; and, second, the word "spiritual" describes a religion in which the outward form is a genuine and sincere expression of the inward state.

The Inward Light

The first definition brings us to the Quaker doctrine of the "Inward Light" or "Christ Within" or "That of God in every man." According to this belief, God reveals his Life, Truth, and Love to every human being of every race and religion, directly, without the requirement of any intermediary such as church, priest, or sacred books. There is nothing unique about this doctrine. The unique point is that the Quakers carried it to its logical conclusion in their worship, their church government, and their relations with their fellow men.

This article is a summary of an address delivered to a meeting of the Wider Quaker Fellowship for the Philadelphia area held at Pendle Hill on August 19 to 21, 1955.

Howard H. Brinton, formerly director of Pendle Hill, has been active in Quaker work in Europe and more recently in Japan. He is the author of numerous books, the most recent of which is *Friends for 300 Years*, and of several pamphlets, including a number of Pendle Hill Pamphlets.

In the middle of the seventeenth century in England, because of printing, the Bible was becoming widely known, and it appeared to many who read it that the early Christian Church depended very little on ecclesiastical structure, elaborate ritual, and formal creeds, but that it depended greatly on the Spirit in the midst of the worshiping group and on prophetic utterances inspired by the Spirit. The Puritans wished to "purify" the Church of its so-called "popish" accretions. The Anglicans, being the most conservative, took out a few of these elements, the Presbyterians a few more, the Congregationalists a few more, the Baptists a few more, and finally the Quakers, being the most radical of the new sects, took out everything except dependence on the Divine Spirit for guidance and power. Quakerism was therefore a new revival of the old prophetic religion. The Spirit was not for them a third person of a Trinity but God Himself revealing Himself inwardly to men as He had once revealed Himself outwardly through Jesus of Nazareth. This was the Word, Light, Life, Truth, and Love in the language of John and "the Spirit" and "the Christ in you" of Paul.

This was all-sufficient for salvation because salvation consisted in becoming completely obedient to it or, to use the term of a different theology, "in union with it." It is interesting to note how the process of conversion occurs, as told in the most typical Quaker journals or autobiographies, though the word "conversion" is seldom used. There is no effort to save one's soul by accepting some theological formula, though conviction of Quaker principles is generally the first step in the process. The journalist describes how, gradually, after alternate victories and defeats he becomes at last fully obedient to the will of God as inwardly revealed and centers his life in the Light. Victory is never final and complete, but future lapses are more rare.

The Divine Spirit

This Divine Spirit, revealing itself in the depths of the soul, is thought of as a source of religious and moral knowledge, a source of power to act according to that knowledge, and a source of unity with one's fellow man. Religious and moral knowledge, like the knowledge of beauty, is not

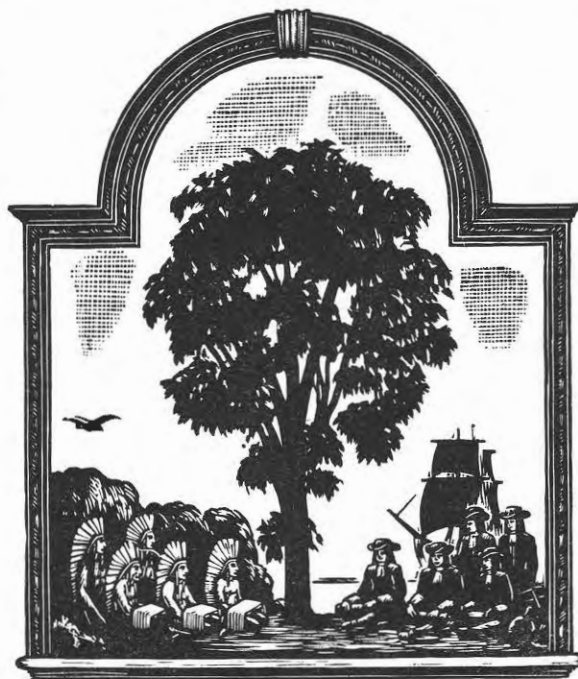
revealed by a logical process of thought but by feeling. As some of our greatest psychologists have pointed out, feeling is as much an organ of knowledge as thought, though it reveals values rather than facts. Outward authorities such as the Bible and the tradition of the church are secondary sources of truth. They can be understood and applied only through the Spirit which first produced them. Conscience, as the particular organ which discerns moral truth, must be obeyed, but it is a true guide only in so far as man permits God to speak through it. Obviously conscience is often influenced by prejudices and conventionalities.

Such a doctrine might appear highly individualistic but, as the Quakers applied it, this was far from being the case. As well as functioning in the individual, the Spirit also works through the group as a whole, and individual insights must be checked and tested in the light of the insight of the whole group and the teachings of Christ. Even so, there can be no claim to infallibility. Man must follow such Light as he has, however dim, trusting that, if he be faithful to his one talent, more will be given.

The Spirit is also a source of strength. In reading the Quaker journals, which are our best source of information since they portray the lives of what might be called "standard Friends," it is surprising to find what extraordinary power has sometimes been given to very ordinary men and women, farmers, housewives, merchants, and others, who without any special education or training for the task set out on long journeys to preach the message of Quakerism to all ranks from the very lowest to kings and potentates. Once convinced that they were doing the Lord's work, nothing could stop them.

Unity with All Men

The Spirit is also a source of unity, both within the group and with all men everywhere. The same identical, infinite Spirit of Truth exists in all of us, and the nearer we come to it the nearer we come to one another. Friends, accordingly, do not vote in making decisions as a group, for, since there is only one Truth and this Truth is, in the long run, accessible to all, a patient search for it will eventually lead to unity. This means that each person



in the group is there, not to defend an opinion, but to join in a common search and a united finding. A group of scientists would not think of arriving at a scientific truth by voting. For the same reason, the Quakers do not believe that the truth of an opinion is dependent on the number of those who hold it. For this reason the Quakers are not seriously concerned about the smallness of their own numbers, though they recognize a responsibility to convince mankind of Truth. History shows that Truth has generally appeared first in the possession of a small minority.

This method of arriving at decisions reveals the basis of the Quakers' peace principles, for which they are most widely known, perhaps because these principles are at present the least generally accepted. Everyone today believes in peace, but a refusal to take any part in war or the preparation for war is an extreme to which few are willing to go. Yet if we believe that the Divine light of Truth is in every human being and that differences can only be settled rightly and permanently by an appeal to that Light—what George Fox called "answering that of God in every man"—then violence is the wrong method. An appeal to exclusively peaceable methods is not always in the world's eye successful. Therefore he who uses this appeal must be prepared for loss and suffering. This, however, is also the case with the use of violence.

Absence of Forms

We come now to the second meaning of the word "spiritual." A religion is spiritual if every outward word and act is a genuine and sincere expression of an inward

state. Such a religion avoids all forms which are routine and planned in advance, for such forms tend to become hollow and empty of content. For this reason the Quakers abandoned the outward form of the sacraments even though these manifestations are often genuine evidences of inward states. The meeting for worship is as nearly without forms as possible in order that whatever occurs may be a true and spontaneous expression of the life within. A sermon prepared in advance might be a true expression of the feelings of the minister at the time he prepared it, but it does not necessarily arise out of the life of the meeting as a fresh and living revelation through the Spirit in the meeting. Hymns are not sung in the meeting because they put into the mouth of the worshiper words which may not at the time truly express his spiritual state. The Bible is not usually read in a meeting, for this, too, can become an empty form. The worshipers sit in silence, each endeavoring to commune with the Divine Presence in the midst and ready to express to the meeting any message which may arise as being clearly intended for the meeting as a whole.

It can be said that silence itself is a form. This is true, but it is not a form which commits anyone to any insincere act or speech. Friends are not opposed to addresses or lectures on religious subjects announced in advance, to Bible reading or to hymn singing; but such exercises are not appointed for a meeting for worship. This is considered to be a special kind of spiritual exercise where every effort is made to attain spontaneity, sincerity, and a fresh facing of reality.

In the past Friends leaned over backward in their



I CAME home with hope but with a feeling that all of us nations and peoples are trapped. Good will and the desire to express it in action are widespread, but no nation can be expected to take the risk involved in breaking, by itself, out of the armament system which is holding us apart and preventing our normal relations with each other.

We are all groping in a dark and complicated labyrinth from which none of us alone can find the way out. Yet we know that, outside our black prison, there is a landscape of peace and plenty. And, in the center of the prison which has us entrapped, we can hear a huge bomb inexorably ticking. The passages of the labyrinth are blocked with piles of guns. Only if we can break down some of the partitions which separate us, can we together open up the passages and together escape. Meanwhile the bomb ticks.

But we are not even struggling to escape! We are apathetic because we have lost hope. When shall we realize how thin are the partitions between us? Shall we discover, in time, that he who but presses on one of them can push his hand right through? And, on the other side, his hand finds the hand of someone else—where he sits groping in the dark and afraid to hope.—DOROTHY HUTCHINSON, *From Where They Sit*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet No. 84

efforts to attain complete honesty and sincerity in speech, and many humorous anecdotes are based on this peculiarity. Such titles as Mr. and Mrs. (meaning master and mistress), your honor, your majesty, and reverend were avoided as not only being untrue, but as flattering the individual and ignoring the equality of all men before God. For the same reasons the plural pronoun "you," formerly used to social superiors instead of the singular "thou," was for a long time avoided, as was taking off the hat, bowing, and other conventional manners. Closely allied with this effort to attain truth and sincerity was the testimony against every form of superfluity in dress, speech, and behavior. Simplicity is a form of genuine-

ness. It means concentration upon that which is genuinely functional.

I am describing Quakerism in terms of its ideals, not necessarily its attainments. In avoiding one form, Friends sometimes slipped into another. Forms and creeds are inevitable. They have important uses, especially in education, where forms are used to show what ought to be their real content. Our Christian religion would be weak and vague without the doctrines which undergird it. Quakerism did not aim at formlessness and undiluted mysticism, but rather it was a peculiar and unusually stubborn effort to create a kind of religion in which the outward form should, as nearly as possible, express the inward thought and life.

A Discipline for the Wider Quaker Fellowship?

By JULIA LEE RUBEL

WHEN Rufus Jones extended his invitation to join the Wider Quaker Fellowship, he used the descriptive phrase "a kind of Franciscan Third Order." Doubtless many who accepted this invitation have wondered what dream of the future that phrase quickened in his mind.

The Order was, of course, founded by that magnificent, winsome and beloved medieval saint, Francis of Assisi. A book used by the members of the Franciscan Third Order today, *The Tertiaries Companion*, gives this information about its beginning: "St. Francis rose like a flame of fire and preached penance to the people. . . . His glowing words and, still more, his holy example induced many to amend their lives. On account of family ties a great number were not in a position to bid farewell to the world. For them he compiled a rule to help them attain to perfection. . . . The Rule inculcates the spirit of poverty, chastity, and obedience, . . . humility, simplicity, and love."

Paul Sabatier in his *Life of St. Francis* says of the founding of the Order: "The bases for the Brothers and Sisters of Penance [as it was originally called] were very simple. Francis gave no new doctrine to the world; what was new in his message was wholly in his love." He required them to "reduce their wants as far as possible; to do with joy the duties of their calling; to give a holy inspiration to the slightest actions; to keep pure from all debasing interest; to use things as not possessing them; to close their hearts to hatred, to open them wide to the

poor, the sick and all abandoned ones. . . . To lead them into this royal road of liberty, love and responsibility, Francis and his disciples make the painful ascent of the mountain heights impelled solely, but irresistibly, by the inner voice. The only foreign aid which they accept is the memory of Jesus."

Another rule stipulated that no member should carry arms. This with the insistence that nobleman and serf should be treated equally within the community dealt a serious blow to the feudal society of his day.

The genius of Quakerism is not unlike that of St. Francis in many respects. Both advocate a life of simplicity sustained by meditation and a way of gentleness and love opposed to force and violence; but the area in which they are most markedly similar is in the extraordinary ability of both to translate the Inspired Word into the affairs of life.

The Source of Quaker Faith

The world knows and understands the expression of the Quaker faith much better than it does its source. The onlooker sees a Friends Service Committee team successfully working to alleviate suffering in a postwar German village. He asserts vaguely, "Good thing to do. Wonder why it isn't done oftener." He has no concept of the great bulwark of faith and discipline and love that form the background for these more conspicuous ventures. He does not realize the generations that have waited quietly in Meeting, trusting that the way of love and helpfulness will open; nor does he realize the hours of prayer for strength to sacrifice a pleasantly usual life to go afield and serve. He does not know of the years of tedious drill in teaching race rela-



Julia Lee Rubel, a member of the Wider Quaker Fellowship, lives in Philadelphia.