Of a similar council Catherine Phillips notes:

> Several of their women sat in this conference who for fixed solidity appeared to me like Roman matrons.[10]

Such councils where sex equality is maintained and voting unknown indicate that the organic method is in accord with human nature as it evolved out of primitive, matriarchal conditions. The more mechanical method of voting becomes natural in a later stage of development when society has become more individualistic. But there is a still further stage when self-conscious individualization is surpassed but not eliminated, in a divine-human community so inspired by the one Spirit that it can act as a unit. The third stage resembles the first but it is higher because those who are in it have passed through the intermediary condition and become individuals. In the first stage there is unity; in the second, individuality; in the third, the synthesis of unity and individuality which makes possible participation in group life with freedom.

*Notes*

1. *Letters Etc. of Early Friends,* edited by Abram Rawlinson Barclay, 1841, p. 282.
2. *Letters,* p. 288.
3. *Letters,* p. 289.
4. *Letters,* p. 319.
5. Thomas Story, *Sermons,* 1785, p. 61.
6. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World,* 1925, p. 266.
7. William Halse, Rivers, *Instinct and the Unconscious,* 1924, p. 95.
8. John Richardson, *Journal,* 1856, p. 135.
9. Thomas Chalkley, *Journal,* 1754, p. 49.
10. Catherine Phillips, *Journal,* 1798, p. 144.

# CHAPTER VII

## *The Meeting Community*

THE QUAKER MEETING with its double function of worship and business constitutes a community. If it carries out its functions successfully, it becomes a well-integrated group in which the individual is united to the whole as a cell is united to an organism. "Organism" is a figure of speech used to suggest the kind of unity which exists in a group of free self-conscious personalities. Obviously, this is different from the coherence which exists within a biological organism where individuality and freedom of the parts is nonexistent. A unity based not only on a single free choice at the beginning, but on a continued series of free choices, is an achievement which can take place most easily in a comparatively small group. Having been achieved there, it can then be carried over more readily by the same individuals into a larger group. The habits of behavior formed in the small group inevitably spread to wider associations.

The family, for example, is a small group which can be a valuable training ground for right behavior in a larger community. The members of a normal family co-operate with one another and share equally the family resources, the weak being entitled to receive what they require on the same terms as the strong. The food placed on the table is distributed according to need, not power to seize it. This kind of behavior differs from that of the competitive world. For example, in an area where oil is discovered, everyone

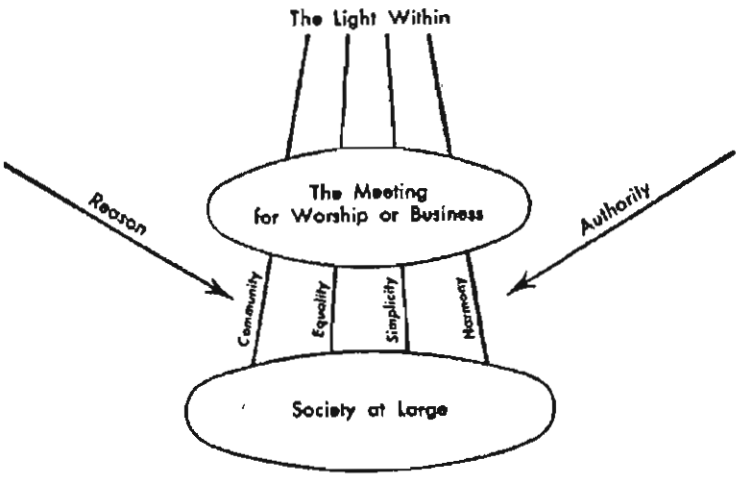
seizes as much as he can regardless of other persons. Yet the difference between the code of behavior in the family and the code of behavior outside it is mitigated by the fact that the habits of cooperation and sharing found within the family frequently continue to be exercised when its members go out into the world. In similar fashion, a religious group may so conduct its affairs that the habit of behavior formed within it as a direct result of its doctrines and habits may find expression beyond its borders. The early Christian Church did not condemn slavery. But when Paul wrote to Philemon asking him to take back his escaped slave who had become a Christian, he said that master and slave were equal within the Church. This equality within the Church led Christianity eventually to condemn all slavery.

Participation in the activities of a group is the oldest and most effective form of education. It' is older than the human race. Beginning at birth, it can continue to the end. Such an education of the whole person in body, mind and spirit becomes deeply ingrained in character. By participation in group activities the members learn by living rather than by formal instruction, though instruction may prove to be an important part of life itself. Participation in life as a whole reaches down below the level of ideas to the deeper feelings which move the will. Ideas in themselves, received in the schoolroom or from books, have little motive power unless they are linked to this deeper process. They require reinforcement through activity. If the bridge between thought and action is crossed often enough, thought and action become integrated and the result is training in its most profound and enduring form.

### *The Origin of Social Concerns*

The meaning of the group in Quaker practice can be suggested by a diagram. Light from God streams down into the waiting group. This Light, if the way is open for it, produces three results: unity,






Concerns originating in the Quaker Community as a result of the impact of the Light Within become directed toward Society at Large. Concerns may result from the impact of Authority or Reason though this is not typical of the Quaker Method.

knowledge and power. As a result we have the kind of behavior which exists as an ideal in a meeting for worship and a meeting for business. Because of the characteristics of the Light of Christ, the resulting behavior can be described in a general way by the four words Community, Harmony, Equality and Simplicity, though these are not to be taken as all-inclusive. These four types of behavior which are closely interrelated, being first generated in the intimate circle, become applied more widely as its members go out beyond its limits to the larger world. The members acquire habits in the meeting which are inevitably retained, at least to some degree, in whatever business they may engage. But because these habits can be acted upon with less opposition in the small, conge-

nial, comparatively homogeneous group than in society at large where conditions are less favorable, there will probably be a certain adjustment and compromise. Some members, more devoted than others, will attempt to avoid compromise.

In a vital and dynamic meeting a concern may arise first in a meeting for worship or for business which is at the outset thought of as applicable only to the membership. It may, however, eventually emerge as an activity to be performed outside the little group in the field of society at large. Thus a sense of responsibility for extending economic aid to fellow members who need it should become a concern to extend economic aid to all who are in need. A habit of dealing with members of the meeting in a peaceable manner should similarly become a habit of dealing with others in a peaceable manner.

A requirement may originate, not as a result of the Light Within operating upon the soul of an individual, but through the compelling power of some authority or as a result of a logical process of reasoning. This would be a process different from the usual Quaker method. Authority and reason are indispensable supplements to inward guidance. Their absence would indicate a state of ineptitude. But by themselves they are not enough. To take a specific example, if someone should refuse to be drafted into the army, this refusal might arise out of obedience to the Sermon on the Mount, or it might arise out of a philosophic or scientific theory, or a knowledge of instances of the futility of war. It might also arise out of the guidance of conscience illumined by the divine Light while waiting upon God.

The Quaker stresses the guidance of the enlightened conscience. He relies upon illumined reason and authority as checks. His position may appear, even to himself, to be contrary to reason and to respected authorities. But if the Light in his conscience gives him a clear leading, he must follow it as the primary organ for ascertaining religious and moral truth. Conscience is cogni-



tive in its field as thought is in its field. The psychologist Jung, in describing the principal mental functions which he calls Thought, Feeling, Intuition and Sensation, lists thought and feeling as cognitive. Feeling gives us our knowledge of values. This agrees with the Quaker point of view. In a Quaker meeting for worship or for business a speaker seldom remarks "I think" but generally "I feel." If he agrees with another speaker, he will probably say, "That is in accord with my feelings," or, "I would feel most comfortable [or perhaps 'most easy'] if that were done." A sense of inward tension and discomfort is frequently interpreted as a sign that something needs to be done. A feeling of inward peace is a sign that the right thing has been done. Authority and reason are transferable tests. Because of this they are essential in convincing other persons. Feelings arising out of conscientious scruples cannot be transferred from one person to another any more than aesthetic judgments can be transferred. But the conscience of another person can be appealed to on the theory that the same Light is within all men to illumine and bring all consciences into agreement. In this way the Light in one person will "answer" the Light in another, to use George Fox's figure of speech. This kind of "answering" can take place under any conditions but most effectively in a small worshiping group.

In addition to authority and reason there is also the pragmatic test. An action is judged to be good if its results are good. This test has some affinity to that of reason because the results of a proposed action must be viewed in the light of similar past actions. Reason makes the comparison and concludes that if the results were good or bad in the past, they will be good or bad in the future if the conditions are the same. The pragmatic test also has its roots in feeling, for it is by feeling that we judge whether results are really good or bad. If we used only the pragmatic test, we might fail in decision because immediate results would have to be judged in terms of their results, and these results in terms of further re-

sults, and so on without end. Since no one can foresee a final result, some test not wholly pragmatic is essential.

That Friends do not, as a rule, judge the merits of a proposed action in terms of apparent consequences may be illustrated by two examples. William Allen, highly successful both as a scientist and businessman, writes in his diary:

> I think I have been instructed not to look for great things in religious matters but to go on in the simplicity, to labor more and more to get rid of all reasonings and the apprehension of consequences.[1]

John Woolman writes in his *Journal:*

> Travelling up and down of late I have renewed evidences that to keep pace with duty and to be content with the allotments of Divine Providence, is a most necessary and useful lesson for me to be learning; looking less at the effects of my labor than at the pure motion and reality of the concern, as it arises from heavenly love.[2]

In seeking guidance regarding a proposed course of action, we find ourselves using four main tests: authority, reason, results and intuitive feeling. If the four agree, we have a secure basis for action. In using authority we appeal to the insights of persons past and present whose judgment we respect. As most of our knowledge is based, not on our own experience, but on the experience of others, this test is probably the criterion most often used. A scientist, for example, can test very little of his scientific knowledge by his own experiments. He must accept as fact what he has learned from the experiments of others. In the same way the Christian will depend on the insights of the writers of Scripture, the Church Fathers, the outstanding persons of his own religious group, and others whom he respects as being of saintly character. Important also is the test of reason which, as has been pointed



out, is the test of consistency. The pragmatic test is also helpful. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

But it can be shown that ultimately in the field of religion and morality the test of feeling must be trusted. By feeling in this field is meant our intuitive apprehension of the Light of Truth. By feeling we accept some authorities and reject others. By feeling we accept certain premises as a basis for our reasoning and reject others. By feeling we accept certain results as good and reject others as bad. When early Friends placed the Light above Scriptures, Church, Reason and short-range experience of results, they assumed a tenable position.

The position of the Quakers would have been more difficult in practice if they had based the test of feeling on a purely individual apprehension of truth. In appealing to the group to confirm each one's inward leading, a useful check is provided. Nevertheless, if the individual feels clearly and strongly that the group is wrong, he may be obliged to ignore its judgment.

Instances of appeals to the group, followed by disregard of all other tests but that of feeling, not infrequently appear in the Quaker *Journals.* An event in the life of Thomas Shillitoe will serve as an example. Traveling in the ministry in Europe, he came to the German city of Hamburg in 1821 and found the Sabbath observed as a time of merry-making with scant attention to religion. He had no friends in the city and did not know the language, but he resolved after a time of inward retirement to attempt to remedy the situation. He prepared an address to the people of the city and forwarded it to London for the approval or disapproval of Friends there. Finally, his address came back, translated into German, with the approval of London Friends. He himself aided in distributing the appeal throughout the city. His arrest brought about some desirable publicity for his concern and an opportunity to speak with public officials. His main objective was constantly present to his mind—that "I should be clear in the sight of my

Maker was all I was to aim at." When he was put in prison, he said, "My heart leaped for joy to feel myself once more so much of a free man." This freedom resulted from the sense that he was no longer carrying the burden of an unfulfilled requirement. Thomas Shillitoe left Hamburg with a feeling of inward peace in spite of the fact that his work apparently had no result. He had followed feeling when his reason might have told him that his mission was hopeless. He had secured the approval of his meeting and his conscience. The results could be left to God.

One more instance may suffice. In 1762 John Woolman felt "a motion of love" to visit Indians two hundred miles from Philadelphia because "some of them were measurably acquainted with that Divine Power which subjects the rough and froward will of the creature."[3] He laid the matter before his Monthly, Quarterly and General Spring Meeting and secured approval. Before starting, he learned that the Indians were on the warpath. He writes:

> My heart was turned to the Lord for his Heavenly instruction. . . . In this conflict of Spirit there were great searchings of heart and strong cries to the Lord that no motion might be in the least degree attended to but that of the pure Spirit of Truth.[4]

Proceeding on the journey he saw many signs of war with the English. Though in danger of being captured and tortured, he writes that "the Lord in great mercy gave me a resigned heart in which I found quietness." A satisfying meeting was held with the Indians. John Woolman returned home safely. It would be difficult to say just what was accomplished by such a journey, but John Woolman never for a moment doubted his leading. The evidence of right guidance was the constant inward sense of peace and resignation, not the results in more visible terms.

When John Woolman was a member of a committee to persuade Friends who held slaves to give them their freedom, his appeal had little to do with the evil results of slavery, though mention of these was not wholly omitted. The appeal was to the feelings of the slaveholder. Did he feel comfortable in holding these men and women in bondage? The slaveholder often had to admit that he did not feel comfortable about it. He could reason that he needed slaves in order to compete successfully with others who held slaves, and he could quote authorities, even scriptural authorities, in support of slaveholding, but his feelings, if he admitted the truth, did not give him inward peace.



The Quaker methods for guiding conduct were implemented by two devices: committees to visit those who fell short of the standard, and the Queries. In the early years of the eighteenth century the visiting committees were gradually replaced by overseers appointed to exercise pastoral care, especially in matters involving morals. The overseers (or special committees appointed for the purpose) usually visited every family in the meeting at least once a year. Moral offenders were lovingly and sympathetically labored with and, if brought to repentance, were asked to make an acknowledgment of their error in writing and to bring it in person to the monthly meeting. If the offender refused to make an acknowledgment, the committee continued its labors for at least a year. If no signs of change or repentance were observed and the offense was sufficiently serious, the offender was then dropped from membership by the meeting.

The overseers were guided by the Queries, which were questions answered by the lower meetings to the higher meetings at first vocally by appointed representatives and later, after 1755, in writing. Answers to the Queries were expected to reveal shortcomings in the membership. Thus the Quarterly Meeting could learn the state of the Monthly Meetings, and the Yearly Meeting could learn the state of the Quarterly Meetings and extend advice and help as might be required. The Queries were a kind of group confessional by which every individual and every meeting was able

at regular intervals of a year or less to check actual conduct against an ideal standard of behavior. The Queries covered all that was expected of the consistent Friend. They were frequently revised as new moral insights prevailed or old testimonies become obsolete.*

The following entry in the minutes of Sadsbury Monthly Meeting in 1780 will indicate the procedure:

> The committee appointed in that weighty service of reformation with respect to due and wakeful attendance at our religious meetings, plainness of speech, behavior, apparel and household furniture, with other deficiencies complained of in the Queries, report they attended to the service and find that there appears a willingness in most to endeavor to remedy deficiencies; and many things that appeared superfluous have been removed.

To be successful such committees must proceed in the right spirit. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1719 declared:

> It is the advice of this meeting that in speaking to or dealing with any, it be done in a Christian spirit of love and tenderness, laboring in meekness, by laying the evil before them, to bring such persons to a sense of it in themselves, that they may be restored if possible. And although such as transgress or lose their hold on Truth are apt to be testy, while they are in that condition, yet we ought patiently and meekly to instruct and advise them, that so we may not only have a testimony of peace within ourselves, but that it may likewise so affect the spirit of the Friend spoken to, that he may be sensible we have performed a truly Christian duty and an office of brotherly love toward him.

* A modern set of Queries appears in Appendix II.



## *Community*

The Quaker meeting used to be, and to some extent still is, both a religious and an economic unit. The members sometimes found themselves dependent on one another for material support. This was especially important in the early days when the Quakers lost much of their property through fines and imprisonment. Some were dismissed by their employers because they became Quakers. Others found themselves engaged in businesses which had to be abandoned because of their principles: for example, employment which had to do with luxuries or equipment for war. This economic interdependence still exists to some extent in Quaker meetings and continues to be the subject of an annual Query.

In 1737 a list of persons entitled to support was drawn up by each meeting. This list constituted the first list of members and introduced the concept of a definite membership. Since the children of members would also be in need of help, their names appeared on the list. This occasioned the provision for birthright membership. Birthright membership results from the assumption that a meeting is like a large family whose members are dependent on one another, not only for material necessities, but for intellectual and spiritual well-being. Children are born into the meeting in a sense similar to that in which they are born into a family. As in the case of the family, they are free to detach themselves at the age of maturity. Since they are children of the meeting as well as children of their parents, their education is a meeting responsibility. If the parents cannot pay for the education of the children, the meeting is expected to do so, or at least to assume the responsibility. That the children are considered members of the meeting community from the start is an important factor in their education. As has already been pointed out, participation in community activities is the most potent form of education. Birth,

marriage, death, all the important events and crises of life, are concerns of the meeting and call for its care.

As membership in the meeting is membership in a community, the test of membership is compatibility with the meeting community. Members are either born into the meeting or join it because they desire to fit into the pattern of behavior peculiar to the meeting and find themselves able to do so. The test of membership is not a particular kind of religious experience, nor acceptance of any particular religious, social or economic creed. Sincere religious experience and right religious belief are both important, but they develop in the course of participation in the activities of the meeting. Anyone who can become so integrated with a meeting that he helps the whole and the whole helps him is qualified to become a member.

The following selections from early minutes are typical of many that indicate the character of the economic interdependence developed in the meeting community:

> Ordered Caleb Pusey and Walter Fawcett take care to hire a cow for the Widow Rudiman and the Quarterly Meeting is obliged to answer them 30s. [Chester, 1689]

> Information being given this meeting that W.P. is very poor and in necessity, the meeting orders A.B. to get a good pair of leather britches and a good warm coat and waist coat, one pair of stockings and shoes and make a report of the charge to the next meeting. [Falls, 1701]

> The condition of J.C. (a Friend of Bucks County) being laid before the meeting, having lost by fire to the value of 162 pounds, this meeting orders that a collection be settled in each particular First Day's meeting and two appointed to receive them. [Chester, 1691]



> The friends appointed to make Inspection concerning Mary Moot report she hath a right to our meeting and also is in real need of relief, we therefore recommend her to the Friends appointed for the care of the poor of this meeting as a proper object thereof. [Concord, 1763]

The following minute indicates the care which Friends took of those not in membership with them who suffered from the blockade of the New England coast during the Revolutionary war:

> The Friends appointed to take in subscriptions for the relief of the poor and destitute in New England reported they have taken in subscriptions in the amount of £33 14s. [Darby, 1775]

Because of its responsibilities in taking care of the poor, the meeting was alert to prevent poverty. It watched over its members to see that they were not taking undue risks in business and not spending more than they earned. "Are Friends careful to live within the bounds of their circumstances and to keep to moderation in their trade or business?" was long an annual Query. The following minute of a Yearly Meeting was issued in 1710:

> It is the advice of this meeting to the several Quarterly Meetings, that care may be taken that substantial Friends be appointed to visit every family among us where they think there is occasion to suspect they are going backward in their worldly estate.

That the meeting exercised oversight over the members as all parts of one family may be indicated by the following acknowledgments of error:

> William Williams, son of Robert, and Joan, daughter of James Pugh declared their intentions of marriage with each

other before this meeting and he acknowledged his misstep in proposing his mind to the young woman before he had her father's consent, but is allowed to proceed. [Goshen, 1723]

Whereas I was forward and hasty in making suit to a young woman after the death of my wife, having made some proceedings in that way in less than four months, which I am now sensible was wrong. [New Garden, 1740]

In the early eighteenth century business meetings were attended only by those who because of the excellence of their judgment were invited to attend so that aid to the poor, personal delinquencies and quarrels between members which ought not to be made public could be discussed within closed doors. Today, as the business meetings are open to all members and to the public as well, personal matters are considered more privately in special committees. For this reason examples of meeting action in such matters can only be found in the older minutes.

The meeting community is probably more needed today as a stabilizing element in society than ever before. The family is small and often unable to withstand the storms which sweep over it in our unstable economic system. This was less true in the days of the large, patriarchal family, which often included grandparents, aunts and uncles as well as a number of children. For the unmarried woman the Society of Friends has always had significant work of an educational, social or religious nature to claim her full attention.

Today the state is assuming the function of providing a degree of economic security. But the state is so large that its functioning is impersonal. It may provide economic maintenance, but it is not in a position to offer the psychological support which is equally necessary. The family being too small a unit and the state too large, the religious group, the meeting or church, in which all the members have a strong interest in one another's welfare, may be able to fulfill the need. Within such a group the required aid can be extended with the same warmth and understanding as within a family. More groups of this size and kind, having a certain degree of economic interdependence, are urgently needed at present to offset the increasing atomization and disintegration of our social structure. Due to the disappearance of the village form of life and of the even older types of multiple family life, modern society finds itself to be an incoherent mass of lonely individuals.



### *Harmony*

The means of obtaining harmony within the meeting have already been discussed in connection with the Quaker method of reaching decisions in the meeting for business. By harmony is meant a pacifist technique by which unity of action is reached without the use of any form of coercion, such as the exercise of personal authority or the prevailing of a majority over a minority. The appeal to the Light Within as the source of unity does not imply the victory of a person or a party over another person or party, but the victory of Truth which is often on the side of the weak.

The Query which has been longest in continuous use by the Society of Friends is this: "Are love and unity maintained amongst you?" It dates from 1682. Any quarrels or disagreements within the group become an object of concern to the meeting and the old Query, "Where differences arise are endeavors made speedily to end them?" could usually be answered in the affirmative. It was contrary to the Discipline for any Quaker to settle his difference with another Quaker by a lawsuit. He must appeal to the meeting. A few examples will illustrate the action of the meeting in settling differences.

> Considered and agreed upon by the hearing of differences between Joseph Richards and Charles Ascham about the admeasure of land—that the said Joseph shall pay Charles for the same without any further disturbance. The same is ended between them and the money is paid in the presence of the meeting. [Concord, 1684]

> The difference between Joseph Richards and William Woodmansey offered to the meeting in order to a composure of the same. William Woodmansey acknowledges he spoke foolishly in comparing him to a London pickpocket and the like and that he was grieved and sorry for the same, which Joseph Richards did accept of, desiring and intending hereby that there be n end of strife from the beginning to this day. [Chester, 1686]

> Friends, whereas I contended with my neighbor William Shipley for what I apprehended to be my right, by endeavoring to turn a certain stream of water into its natural course, till it arose to a personal difference, in which dispute I gave way to warmth of temper so as to put my friend William into the pond, for which action of mine, being contrary to the good order of Friends, I am sorry and desire through Divine Assistance to live in unity with him for the future. From your friend Joshua Way. [Wilmington, 1751]

Sometimes the meeting did not believe the claim of Friends who had quarreled that they had composed their differences.

> It is our opinion that Concord Friends have been put by their proper business in the case of John Larkin and Robert Pyle by giving way to their outward appearance of love and friendship being restored between them, when their hearts have been evilly affected toward each other. And, as we fear the testimony of Truth has suffered by too much delay, we think that unless something more of love appears between them than has hitherto done, Friends should testify against them.

This report was signed by a committee of twelve of Concord Monthly Meeting in 1769 after laboring with the offenders for two years. Both were in consequence disowned from membership.



### *Equality*

Equality was the earliest Quaker social testimony. Even before the Quakers became pacifists Quaker soldiers were dismissed from the army because they refused to treat their officers as superiors. This testimony may have been in part an inheritance from the Levellers and Diggers, pre-Quaker groups with strong equalitarian leanings. Lilburne, the leader of the Levellers, became a Quaker, but Winstanley, leader of the Diggers, did not. Except for his communism, Winstanley's opinions coincided with those of George Fox.

The Quaker doctrine of equality does not mean equality of ability, economic resources or social status. It means equality of respect and the resulting absence of all words and behavior based on class, racial or social distinctions. It did not, for example, place on an economic equality employer and employee or master and servant. The Quakers agreed with the Puritans that each person must follow his vocation, a religious word indicating God's call to a particular kind of occupation appropriate to one's ability and interest. The doctrine of equality tended to eliminate the sense of superiority or inferiority attaching to different callings.

Advices concerning the treatment of servants appear as early as 1656 in statements on church discipline. Dewsbury writes in a letter that "now mistress and maid are to be hail fellows well met."

Some of the greatest of the early Quaker women ministers were maidservants. One such was Mary Fisher who addressed the Sultan of Turkey and his Court, and Dorothy Waugh who was jailed by Peter Stuyvesant for preaching in the streets of New York. Servant and master addressed each other by their given names and servants often ate at the family table.

Within the meeting equality appears in the equal opportunity for all to take part, regardless of age, sex or ability. No persons enjoy special privilege, though some, because of unusual gifts, have more weight than others in the meeting's deliberations.

Outside the meeting this doctrine brought the Quakers of an earlier time into serious disrepute, many of the prevailing customs having as their base the highly stratified condition of English society. Friends were compelled to disregard these modes of behavior and in consequence they often appeared rude or ill-mannered.

Friends refused the use of titles of honor and salutations which implied that one person was superior to another. There were three reasons for this. First, the Quakers wished to remove all recognition of social distinctions based on class or race. Secondly, they were opposed to any form of flattery which tended to puff up self-esteem. And, thirdly, most titles were out of harmony with the truth. Addressing a superior by the plural "you" instead of "thou"* which was customary practice in the seventeenth century was given up for these reasons. Barclay writes of the prevailing custom of saying "you" to one person:

> This way of speaking proceeds from a high and proud mind . . . because that men commonly use the singular to beggars and to their servants; yea and in their prayers to God—so hath the pride of men placed God and the beggar in the same category.[5]

* In America "thou" has become "thee." It is not unusual in the development of language for the accusative to replace the nominative, as, for example, "you" an accusative has replaced "ye" a nominative.



Friends might have avoided this distinction by using "you" to everyone, but that would, with the then current norms of speech, have been considered as flattery. Also "you," being a plural, would have been considered untruthful. For similar reasons "Mister" and "Mistress" were avoided as no one used these titles to persons rated as inferior. Titles such as "Your Grace," "Your Highness," "Sir," "Your Honor," "Your Humble Servant," "The Reverend," "Your Majesty," "Your Obedient Servant," were ruled out not only as flattery, but because they were false descriptions of the person addressed. The prefix "Saint" was omitted even in place names.

> Who are they that are honorable indeed? Is it not the righteous man? Is it not the holy man? Is it not the humble hearted man, the meek spirited man? . . . Now of these may there not be poor men, laborers, silly fishermen?[6]

The "plain language" included also the designation of the names of the months, and the days of the week by numerals rather than by their usual names which were derived in most cases from heathen deities (Ex. 23:13). At one time the adoption of the "plain language" like the adoption of the "plain dress" followed a spiritual crisis and was a symbol of the new way of life and the "taking up of the cross." Today the plain language, including the use of the accusative "thee" as a nominative, in America has become a sign of family intimacy and religious fellowship rather than a testimony.

The Quakers were often hailed into court for one reason or another. On such occasions their refusal to doff their hats as a mark of respect to the judge aroused anger and resulted in harsh treatment. Though they never removed their hats to any human being, in worship the head was uncovered during vocal prayer in

reverence to God. Young converts appearing before their parents wearing their hats suffered stern rebuke and sometimes violence. This happened to young Thomas Ellwood who lost three hats in rapid succession. Sometimes the hat was quietly and deftly removed by a servant or official deputed for this act, as was the case when Stephen Grellet had an audience with the Pope. Advices issued by Yearly Meetings condemn all "bowings and scrapings" and every form of subservience whatsoever.

Before the Friends freed their slaves they treated them with respect. Slaves were taken to meeting, which was against the law in the West Indies, and often their children were sent to Quaker schools along with the white children. It took Friends some time to realize that slavery was not a "calling," like that of a servant.

In general, except for a few notable exceptions, such as John Bellers who in 1695 proposed a communistic form of community life, and William Allen who was associated with Robert Owen in the ownership of the colony in New Lanark,[7] Friends were not interested in radically altering the social order. "Any form is good if administered by good men," writes William Penn. Perhaps Friends came the nearest to being social radicals when, like John Woolman in his "Word of Remembrance to the Rich," they found the seeds of war in the love of possessions.

A recent Query is a sign of modern interest in the reform of the social order.* There are a number of examples of Quaker businessmen who have introduced a considerable degree of labor participation in the management of their factories, but this has not been sufficiently extensive to merit particular attention.[8] Quaker relief workers frequently try to put themselves on an equality with those among whom they labor. This is particularly true of the work camps of the American Friends Service Committee. Racial equality is being slowly realized in Friends schools today, but not in all.

* See Appendix I, Query 7.



Many Quakers have an active concern against all forms of racial discrimination. They maintain committees to seek solutions to this pressing problem. There is a growing endeavor to eliminate what Joseph John Gurney called "the aristocracy of the skin."[9]

### *Simplicity*

Simplicity, the fourth aspect of the Quaker code of behavior, finds primary expression within the meeting for worship in the simple manner of waiting upon the Lord in surroundings unadorned in respect of furnishings and architecture. In the eighteenth century simplicity was insisted upon. The meeting houses of that period exhibit not only plainness but fitness, beauty and proportion. In the nineteenth century this good norm was departed from, but recent structures show a return to functional simplicity. While the concern for simplicity was fresh and living, its expression showed good taste, but when it became largely traditional, Quaker meeting houses as well as Quaker homes and furniture degenerated in form and style.

Friends have had no testimony against excellence of quality. Their testimony was against superfluity in "dress, speech and behavior."

In general, Friends are not ascetics who find virtue in a mortification of the flesh. They condemned pleasure when it existed as a superfluity, interfering with more serious undertakings. The following passage from Clarkson's *Portraiture of Quakerism* illustrates this attitude:

> Music, if it were encouraged by the Society, would be considered as depriving those of maturer years of hours of comfort which they now frequently enjoy in the service of religion. Retirement is considered by the Quakers as a Christian duty. The members, therefore, of this Society are

expected to wait in silence, not only in their places of worship, but occasionally in their families, or in their private chambers, in the intervals of their daily occupations, that, in stillness of heart, and in freedom from the active contrivance of their own wills, they may acquire both directions and strength for the performance of the duties of life. The Quakers, therefore, are of the opinion that, if instrumental music were admitted as a gratification in leisure hours, it would take the place of many of these serious retirements and become very injurious to their interests and their character as Christians.[10]

The same used to be true of the arts in general. Simplicity meant the absence of all that was unnecessary, such as ornamentation in dress, speech, manners, architecture, house furnishings. Dispensing with that which was qualitatively and functionally good was not advocated.

There was also an economic reason for simplicity. William Penn says that "the very trimming of the vain world would clothe all the naked one."[11] John Woolman writes:

As He is the perfection of power, of wisdom and of goodness, so I believe He hath provided that so much labor shall be necessary for men's support in this world as would, being rightly divided, be a suitable employment of their tune; and that we cannot go into superfluities nor grasp after wealth in a way contrary to His wisdom, with out having connection with some degree of oppression and with that spirit which leads to self-exaltatiou and strife, and which frequently brings calamities on countries by parties contending about their claims.[12]

Luxuries and superfluities cause an increase in the amount of labor required of men. They therefore, contribute to oppression



in exacting this labor, and oppression leads to self-exaltation and war. John Woolman would have had small sympathy with the modern argument that in buying luxuries people aid the poor by providing employment. He firmly believed that luxuries are a source of vanity, oppression and ultimately war. If men would remain humble and coufine their desires to real needs, overwork, oppression and strife would disappear and there would be enough of the necessities of life to go around.

In his *Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind,* John Woolman expresses the intimate connection between his religion and simplicity:

If I put forth my strength in any employ which I know is to support pride, I feel that it has a tendency to weaken those bands which . . . I have felt at times to bind and unite my soul in a holy fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

From the Quaker dress all the ornamentation, so characteristic of the age of the Stuart kings, was removed. Sober-minded Puritans bore a similar testimony. Later the Quakers continued to dress in the fashion of an earlier time. Eventually this became standardized and was adhered to on the theory that submission to changes in fashion which compelled people to buy new clothes when they did not need them was a useless concession to worldly ways. There is nothing in Quaker theory to support the avoidance of bright colors except, perhaps, their tendency to increase self-esteem. Margaret Fox condemned what she saw to be a growing insistence on drab in the early eighteenth century.

The uniform costume which became habitual was a quick and effective way of telling the world where one stood, and some Quakers claimed that it kept them out of places where they should not go. Once having assumed the Quaker dress they felt compelled to live up to it. Eventually many came to recognize it as an empty

form, modern dress being for the most part plain and functional.

Simplicity in speech was also a distinguisbing mark of the consistent Friend. Ornamental and superfluous words were omitted in speaking and writing. This gave the Quakers a reputation for bluntness. In speaking in meeting or elsewhere oratorical flourishes were discouraged. Attempts at fine writing are seldom found in Quaker books. Reverent restraint is always shown in speaking of the deepest religious experiences. William Penn in listing twelve characteristics of Friends gives as number eight, "They recommend silence by their example, having very few words upon all occasions."

The doctrine of simplicity or absence of superfluity is applicable to all aspects of life. Committees are appointed to see to it that plainness is observed at weddings and funerals. For more than a century tombstones were testified against as superfluous. When they came to be used as markers, they were small and inconspicuous. In the testimony for simplicity in house furnishings the most modern usage has now come around for aesthetic reasons to the early Quaker point of view. Friends objected to the arts not only because they seemed useless but also because they were representations of life, which tended to take the place of life itself. The actor in a theater, for example, expresses feelings which he does not genuinely feel, and the writer of a novel gives an account of events which never took place. Music arouses feelings which find no outlet in action and hence may be harmful. For similar reasons St. Augustine calls singing "this contentment of the flesh, to which the soul must not be given over to be enervated."[13] The arts were thought to cultivate an untrue and misleading picture of reality inclining those who follow them to live in an imaginary, unreal world. The modern motion picture is an example of an art which may have the effect of causing its viewers to live in a realm of dreams.

The early Quakers were certainly mistaken regarding the true nature of the world of imagination. Art has a reality of its own and



a language of its own which can convey meanings beyond the reach of ordinary action or speech. Modern Friends do not hesitate to give to the arts their appropriate place, though long disinclination to appreciate some forms of beauty has left the Society of Friends somewhat dormant aesthetically.

Since Friends condemned superfluities, Quaker businessmen could not sell them and this often limited their business severely. Tailors, hatters, booksellers, funeral directors, printers, silversmiths and merchants were affected by this tenet. John Hall (1637-1719), a Quaker tailor, "was willing to lose all rather than his peace with the Lord."

But business itself could become a waste of time and a superfluity if overindulged in. When its claims became too absorbing the Friend found that he could no longer attend to his religious duties. If religion was his primary interest, he reduced his business. That was most frequently true in the case of traveling ministers. Almost all the Quaker *Journals* contain examples of curtailment of business when it had become so engrossing as to require time that properly belonged to religion.

A few examples taken from the *Journals* will indicate the reasons for this limitation of business. Daniel Wheeler found his business as a seed merchant so prosperous that it interfered with his career as a Friend:

> As I have from time to time endeavoured to dwell near and abide in and under the calming influence of His power, I have been led to believe that something sooner or later would be required as a sacrifice on my part. . . . I therefore fully believe that it will be most conducive to my present peace, as well as future well being, entirely to give up the trade I am at present engaged in, and retire with my family into a small compass."

William Evans (1787-1867), when offered a partnership in a large dry goods business, refused it:

> My present business, being small and one that I understood, was managed with ease. It required little capital and involved me in no engagements that I did not hold the means to meet; so that I was free from anxiety on that account, and at liberty to attend, unincumbered, appointments of the Society or any impression of duty to go to a meeting that I might have. . . . It seemed that if I pursued the prospect of adopting the proposed change of business, that I should be lost to religious society and to the work of religion in my own heart. . . . I looked forward with renewed peace and satisfaction at the path and the business before me, though small, remembering that the earth is the Lord's and the cattle on a thousand hills.[15]

Thomas Shillitoe (1756-1836) speaks of an

> apprehension which at times presented to my mind that the time was fast approaching when I must be willing to relinquish a good business and set myself more at liberty to attend to my religious duties from home. The language which my Divine Master renewedly proclaimed in the ear of my soul, was "Gather up thy wares into thy house for I have need of the residue of thy days."[16]

Thomas Shillitoe had five children to settle in life, but he left that "to the same Almighty Power who had so abundantly cared for us." Nevertheless he writes, "The prospect of relinquishing a good business was at times a close trial to my soul."

Martha Routh whose school was too large for its quarters describes how she went out to look at a larger house:

> As I passed from room to room I was attended by a secret but clear intimation that I was not to entangle myself with a greater number of scholars than the house we already had would accommodate, so I entirely gave up the thought and found peace.[17]



Sometimes Quaker scholars found it necessary to reduce their studies in order to give more time to religion. William Allen, a notable scientist, writes in his *Journal:*

> Rather comforted this morning, it seemed to open on my view with respect to my great attraction to natural science that when I felt it strong and likely to get the ascendency, it would be my duty to indulge less in it, abridge the time devoted to it and fast from it.[18]

John Rutty, Irish physician and author of important medical books, prays:

> Lord deliver from living to eat, drink, sleep, smoke and study.[19]

Simplicity not only meant absence of superfluity in speech. It also meant genuineness and sincerity. Quakers leaned over backwards and sometimes made themselves objects of ridicule in their efforts to tell the exact truth. Fearing overstatement they resorted to understatement. Phrases like "As far as we know," "Nothing appears," were used in answering the Queries. A Friend would not say, "I object," but more probably, "I cannot see my way clear to unite."

One by-product of truth-telling was the initiation of the one price system in business. It was the custom in the seventeenth century for merchants to ask more than they expected to receive and for the customer to offer less than he expected to give. By a process of bargaining a price was agreed on. The Quaker stated at the outset the price which he was prepared to accept. As a result Quaker business flourished. A child could be sent to make a purchase from a Quaker merchant.

The search for an understanding of the creation and insight into its beauty, sincerity and genuineness led many Quakers to scientific pursuits, particularly botany and ornithology. Some became professional scientists. Science seemed closer to reality than did art. With the exclusion of many forms of amusement, it also afforded delight. Superfluities in education were eliminated as completely as other nonessentials. Jonathan Dymond, the Quaker moralist, writes in 1825:

> Science is preferable to literature, the knowledge of things to the knowledge of words.[20]

Verbalism and formalism were opposed in education as they were in religion. Knowledge of nature as God's creation was thought to bring man nearer to the divine than a knowledge of man's works. To quote Dymond again:

> It is of less consequence to man to know what Horace wrote or to be able to criticise the Greek anthology than to know by what laws the Deity regulates the operations of nature and to know by what means those operations are made subservient to the purposes of life.[21]

As a consequence of this scientific interest, which was a direct result of the effort to come closer to sincerity and reality, the list of Quaker scientists is a long one. A. Ruth Fry observes in *Quaker Ways* that between 1851 and 1900 in England a Quaker "had forty-six times more chance of election as a Fellow of the Royal Society than his fellow countrymen."

No testimony resulted in more suffering than the Quaker stand against judicial oaths. Many Friends spent long years in foul prisons and some died there in support of this testimony. The Quaker refused to swear for at least two reasons: (1) swearing was contrary to the command of Christ—"Swear not at all." (Matt. 5:34)—and of James—"But above all things, my brethren, swear not" (James 5:12); (2) it also set up a double standard of truth, one in the courtroom and one outside it, with the implication that untruth would be uttered in the absence of an oath. When Quakers were brought to trial and the evidence against them was faulty or lacking, they could be tendered the oath of allegiance and imprisoned for refusing to take it. By refusing to take an oath, Friends were also disqualified from conforming to customs regulations, from suing for debts, from giving evidence in court, from defending titles to property, and from holding office. Penn's epigram, "People swear to the end they may speak truth; Christ would have them speak truth to the end they might not swear"[22] summed up the Quaker case. Penn points out how futile oaths had been in the past hundred years in England when each ruler required an oath for the support of a particular form of religion which was quickly renounced by many of the clergy when an oath to support another form of religion was required by the next ruler. Finally, after a long struggle, an act was passed by Parliament in 1696 permitting affirmation. But a minority of Friends felt that they could not use the new formula because it contained the word "solemnly," a religious word. For twenty-five years London Yearly Meeting struggled to agree on a form of words which would satisfy everybody. This was an example of the extremely patient efforts made by a majority to satisfy a minority. Finally, in 1722 a formula was agreed upon and its enactment into law was secured.



In Pennsylvania, Penn's Charter allowed affirmation, but it was not until 1725 that a special act of the Colonial Assembly was ratified by the King in Council permitting a form of affirmation which satisfied all Friends. Quaker magistrates who administered oaths were disowned in the early period.

> Joseph Thornton so far condemns his having administered an oath, as to declare himself determined not to accept of any office for the future which may subject him to the ne-

cessity of doing it, and that he now sees the practice inconsistent, both with the rules of the Society and the convictions of his own mind, which this Meeting agrees to accept of as satisfaction for what is past. [Middletown Monthly Meeting, 1762]

After the Revolutionary War laws were enacted imposing a test oath or affirmation abjuring the King and declaring allegiance to the new government. Many Friends suffered for refusing to take this oath, with the result that enforcement of the law was soon given up. Although affirmation was permitted, the Yearly Meeting declared, "We cannot be instrumental in setting up or pulling down any government."

In America the meeting community, acting according to a well-defined code of behavior, reached its highest development in colonial times when the number of competing interests was small and when the meetings were surrounded by a population largely Quaker. The minutes of this period contain many references to the care taken for implementing the testimony for simplicity. A few typical examples follow:

Our Women's Meeting enters a complaint against Elizabeth Bennell for much deviating from plainness in dress and address and frequenting places of musick and dancing. John Milhouse and Liba Ferriss are appointed to joyn women Friends in treating with her and report her disposition at next meeting. [Wilmington, 1778]

N. H. hath given in a paper condemning himself for his playing at cards, which paper the meeting receives, and orders him to read the said paper in the place where he was playing, in the presence of Benjamin Fredd and William Halliday and he is desired to forebear coming to meetings of business until Friends are better satisfied with him as to conversation and sincerity to Truth. [New Garden, 1725]

A Concern having taken hould of this Meeting to suppress pride and it seems to appeare somewhat in women in wearing of hoopes pettecouts which is a grate truble to many friends minds and it is the unanimous sense of this Meeting that none amongst us be in the practis thereof that all our Overseers and other solled friends do inspect into their members and where any appeare to be guilty do deal with them and discharg them either in that of hoops or other indecent dresses. [Concord, 1739]



On two occasions, 1695 and 1723, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting issued warnings to its members to keep clear of all astrologers, sorcerers or anyone professing to practice the black arts. Acknowledgments of error were required of all who had recourse to such persons. Joseph Walter offered an acknowledgment "for going to a man to be informed concerning my horse. I can truly say I had no desire he should make use of any bad art in that affair" (Concord, 1738).

From the earliest days the Quaker meetings were swift to deal with members who used intoxicating beverages to excess or who were engaged in manufacturing or selling them. The following Query was answered beginning in 1755:

Are Friends careful to avoid the excessive use of spirituous liquors, the unnecessary frequenting of taverns and places of diversion and to keep to true moderation and temperance on account of births, marriages, burials and other occasions?

This Query was gradually modified in the direction of greater strictness. "Spirituous liquors" was changed to *all* liquors. The inclusion of *all* liquors in the Query was brought about in Phila-

delphia by a revolt in 1874 of the young men against the older men on the facing benches of the meeting. Joshua L. Baily, writing of this, says: "It was like the House of Commons against the House of Lords and the Commons prevailed."[23] Finally, but not until near the beginning of the twentieth century, was the Query applied to total abstinence.

The ancient doctrine of simplicity might be applied today to diminish the superfluous activities which prevent leisure and relaxation. The multiplication of time-saving gadgets seems, paradoxically, to increase the general busyness and complexity of life. The baton of some invisible conductor seems to be gradually increasing the tempo of life. The solution, as the sages and seers of all the great religions have pointed out, is not to increase our attainments but to decrease our desires; in other words, to follow the path of simplicity.

*Notes*

1. William Allen, *Life*, London, 1846, I, 41.
2. John Woolman, *Journal*, edited by Janet Whitney, 1950, p. 61.
3. Woolman, *Journal*, p. 118.
4. Woolman, *Journal*, p. 120.
5. Robert Barclay, *Apology*, p. 528.
6. Barclay, *Apology*, p. 523.
7. See William Allen, *Colonies at Home*, 1832.
8. Thomas Carlyle considers the Quaker an ideal type of employer in his *Past and Present*, 1918.
9. John Joseph Gurney, *Chalmeriana*, or Colloquies with Dr. Chalmers, 1853, p. 64.



10. Thomas Clarkson, *Portraiture of Quakerism*, 1808, I, 34.
11. William Penn, *Reflections and Maxims*, 1850, No. 73.
12. Woolman, *Journal*, p. 114.
13. Augustine, *Confessions*, Chap. X, sec. xxxiii.
14. Daniel Wheeler, *Memoirs*, London, 1842, p. 44.
15. William Evans, *Journal*, 1870, pp. 30-31.
16. Thomas Shillitoe, *Journal*, in *Friends Library*, III, 93.
17. Martha Routh, *Journal*, in *Friends Library*, XII, 419.
18. William Allen, *Life*, London, 1846, I, 32.
19. John Rutty, extracts from *The Spiritual Diary*, 1840, p. 9.
20. Jonathan Dymond, *Essays on the Principles of Morality*, 1830, Essay II, Chap. XI.
21. Rutty, *Spiritual Diary*, p. 9.
22. William Penn, *A Treatise on Oaths*, sec. ix.
23. Joshua L. Baily, *The Friend*, Jan. 7, 1915.