"QUAKERS in BRIEF"

Or

"QUAKERISM made EASY"

(An over-view of the Quaker movement from 1650 to 1990)

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1995

PREFACE

My alternative title is adapted from that of a book on Calculus written by the eminent Quaker scientist, Silvanus Thompson, in 1910. It was called "Calculus made Easy" and was derived from lectures he gave to his Engineering students, whom he wished to interest in Mathematics as well as to instruct. He said that his learned critics would complain that he had made it easy simply by leaving out the difficult part; and he said "THAT THIS WAS QUITE TRUE". Still, he made no excuse about it for, as he said: *"Any subject may be made repulsive by presenting it bristling with difficulties."* This is true not only of Mathematics, but also of History, Theology, and much else... including Quakerism! So I propose to give you this "overview", leaving out the "difficult parts". In fact, I shall be leaving out a great deal, for there have been many good books written on the story and nature of Quakerism, to which anyone may refer, if they wish to read further and deeper.

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CHAPTER 1

When, Why and How it began

Many people shy away from the idea of learning about the history of something. "The present," they say, "is what matters. Why is it necessary to go delving into the past?" The answer is that a much better understanding of the present, whether in science, history, social events, religion or whatever, is gained, if there is some knowledge of how things have developed or evolved from the past.

(a) WHEN did Quakerism begin?

Is the answer to this really important? Yes, it is; just as it is important for an understanding of Christianity to realise that it began at the time of the Roman occupation of the Middle East, which followed the Greek civilisation.

Quakerism began in the middle years of the Seventeenth Century. This century has aptly been called "The Century of Revolution". This does not mean simply the **political** revolution in England, which led to the Civil War. There was a revolution in science, in religion, in thought generally; people were questioning authority in a number of ways, all about the same time. Thus:

Round about 1630, Galileo was questioning the wisdom of the ancients: of Aristotle with regard to falling bodies and to mechanics in general; of Ptolemy with regard to the motion of the planets. As a result he came into conflict with the established *thought of the* Church.

About the same time, William Harvey was questioning the established anatomical teaching of the Greek scientist, Galen, and developed his own view of the circulation of the blood.

In 1620, a small body of religious dissenters (often known as "The Pilgrim Fathers") who had gone to Holland to escape persecution, sailed to America in the "Mayflower".

The 17th century might also fairly be called the "Century of Dissent"; meaning that it was a time when people were not content to accept established authority, but claimed the right to think and find out things for themselves. Not only in science, but also in religion, direct personal **experience** was to become the all important thing. So now it is possible to answer the second question.....

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(b) WHY did Quakerism begin?

The group of "dissenters", who first went to Holland and then to America, was only a fraction of those who were dissatisfied with the Church. They were not able to express their dissent openly and fully, with the result that there developed small groups scattered through the country, who met for worship and for discussion. The general term "Seekers" has been applied to them. How much communication there was between them it is hard to say, but there was no cohesion and, most importantly, there was no leader to inspire them and to weld them together. Probably many of them were in a state of expectation, waiting for such a leader, as it were for a "Messiah" for their time. This leader came in the person of George Fox.

(c) HOW did Quakerism begin?

It began through the agency of George Fox; and the date which is generally accepted as the "birth time of Quakerism" is 1652. For some five years, Fox had been travelling round the country, spreading his message. He was understood and welcomed by some, but he also met with considerable opposition; he had been imprisoned in Derby gaol on a charge of blasphemy and had suffered considerable ill-treatment. He had been working very much on his own and he had certainly not initiated any sort of religious movement. Then, in May 1652, he was in Lancashire and had climbed to the top of Pendle Hill, near Clitheroe. It was a strange thing to do, for people did not climb hills for fun in those days, especially one well-reputed as an abode for witches; still, Fox had a habit of doing unaccountable things! The view from the summit of the far spread countryside inspired him and shortly afterwards he had a vision, or an insight, of "a great people to be gathered". It was, in fact, the district where he would meet groups of interested people, for instance those known as the "Westmorland Seekers".

The really significant visit which he paid, one to have far reaching and permanent effects on the history of Quakerism, was to Swarthmore Hall, near Ulverston (reached by crossing the dangerous sands of Morecambe Bay). This was a large house and property occupied by Judge Fell and his wife Margaret. Both were of a liberal outlook in religious matters and visiting preachers had already been made welcome there. Margaret Fell welcomed George Fox with great enthusiasm and was quickly "converted" to his teaching. Fell, though he never formally associated himself with the Quaker movement, was supportive and permitted meetings of Fox and his followers to take place in the Hall. Presumably because of Judge Fell's standing in the county (and also in the nation), these group meetings were not subjected to harassment by Church and Law, which was otherwise common. Thus, for many years right up to the time of George Fox's death, Swarthmore Hall was the "headquarters" or "powerhouse" of the Quaker movement. It was from this Hall that the early Quaker "missionaries" were sent in small groups of two or more to spread the message in different parts of the country.

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CHAPTER 2
The Foundation Years. (approx. 1650 to 1690)

The history of any new movement and, in particular, of the Quaker movement, concentrates to a great extent on those individuals who were responsible for the beginning and maintaining of the work, and without whom the enterprise might well have foundered. There are dangers, however, in concentrating too much on biographical details. For one thing it is possible to idolise these pioneers - to put them on to saintly pedestals. There were indeed many courageous and spiritual women and men in those days; I intend in the next chapter to say something of their work and influence; but we should not live in the past or attempt to copy it. This has been well said by Elton Trueblood in his book "The People called Quakers" (p.l9):-

"The past cannot be repeated and ought not to be repeated even if it were possible. What is important is that the vision of greatness demonstrated in an earlier time may help man and women of this generation to know how to discover the secret of an equal vitality, with relevance to their contemporary situation."

Furthermore, by concentrating too much on details of individuals, it is possible to lose sight of the general situation; how it may have appeared to people living at that time who were outside the movement, or how it may appear to those like ourselves of a later generation.

So I hope in this chapter to give some sort of over-view of events and ideas; to pose and possibly to answer some further questions such as:- "What were the Quakers trying to say?", "Why did so many people listen and what sort of people were they?", "Why did they meet with such opposition?"

We must always remember that the Quakers were people of their times and that some understanding of those times is necessary for understanding the Quakers themselves and what happened to them.

Although the Quaker movement had no recognisable beginning until about 1650, we must start by looking at the previous century, namely, in "Good Queen Bess's Glorious Days".

They are glorious enough as they are portrayed in the school history books: how she defeated the Spanish Armada; how she put the Church of England on a firm foundation. But it was not so glorious if you happened to disagree with her politically or religiously (the two were closely connected). History books remind us of the executions and martyrdoms during the reign of her half sister Mary ("Bloody Mary") but say little about those in the reign of Elizabeth herself. There were probably about as many, although they were spread over a longer period. It has been said that during her reign freedom of opinion may have been permitted, but there was no freedom of religious observance. Of the several forms of deviation from orthodoxy two have special significance as having a

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particular place in the Quaker explosion of the next century. These are the **Puritans** and the **Separatists**.

The **Puritans** have had a bad press (as did the Pharisees of New Testament times). They did develop a rigidity and a fanaticism; as we know, many of them in the 17th century were iconoclastic, delighting in knocking off the heads of statues considered to be idolatrous. Still, basically they stood for a "purer", more spiritual, religion than was to be found generally among the Church and clergy of the late Tudor times.

They aimed at a regeneration not only of religion, but also of personal morals and behaviour. It was only later that this developed into political resistance to the established Church.

The term "Separatists" refers more to groups of free-thinking people than to any organised movement. These groups would include many who are referred to as Anabaptists or Mennonites, some of whose ideas had much in common with Quakers later on. They were forced to be in a silent minority and, as a result, many looked for support to the Low Countries; as has been mentioned, it was from there that the "Mayflower" expedition in 1620 was initiated.

"The Quaker Explosion"

This is a somewhat dramatic expression to apply to the beginning of the Quaker movement, but it is not inappropriate. Before 1650 the Quakers were comparatively unknown; in a year or two they seemed to be all over the place. We hear how George Fox saw "a great people to be gathered" and this "people" included Puritans, Separatists, Seekers and, presumably, others without label. Among all these, what was there in common to make them feel that Fox had just what they wanted? The answer is probably that they were looking for a spiritual religion, rather than the religion of conformity which was insisted upon by Elizabeth and also under the early Stuarts. There was resentment against ecclesiastical authority and so a readiness to listen to Fox's assurance that there was only one authority - namely Christ himself; and that this authority was to be known directly in the human heart. The message that "Christ has come to teach his people himself" may be called the slogan of the early Quakers.

The "Quaker Explosion" was made all the more easy by the already well established custom of listening to visiting preachers. It was a kind of public entertainment to gather to listen to sermons and to enter into religious debates. It is traditionally reported that there were over 1000 people present to listen to George Fox, when he preached from his rock "pulpit" above Sedbergh on his way to Swarthmoor in 1652.

This visit to Swarthmoor Hall was critical in the history of Quakerism. Margaret Fell was a "Separatist" at heart; she had already welcomed visiting preachers at the Hall and was

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emotionally ready to listen to George Fox, when she arrived home one day to find him visiting at Swarthmoor. The really important factor was the attitude of her husband, Judge Fell, who refused to accept the verdict of friends who met him on his home across Grange sands with the alarming news that his wife had been "bewitched" by Fox. He made Fox welcome and later permitted the Quakers to use the Hall as a meeting place. His influence and status, not only locally but also nationally, ensured that this was one place where they were free from persecution and where they were able to consolidate their strength.

THE YEARS OF OPPOSITION AND PERSECUTION

(a) Under the Commonwealth.

George Fox had already met with opposition and indeed with imprisonment before he visited Swarthmoor and the nationwide spread of the Quaker movement began. In 1649 he was imprisoned at Nottingham for interrupting a church service (if he had waited until the end, he could have had his say without infringing the law!); in 1651 he was imprisoned at Derby under a new Blasphemy Law. This pattern of opposition and frequent imprisonment developed increasingly when the movement spread after 1652.

In fact, like most vigorous movements based on deeply held convictions, the early Quakers invited opposition. Although they were a "peaceable people", they were not "Quiet" in a worldly sense. Many spoke loud and long and wrote in the same manner. Confrontation and vituperation were common in 17th century religious writings and the Quakers did not lag behind. Those of the present day who uphold the value of "conflict" would find much to support their views in the writings of these early Quakers! They were a very determined people and their determination was inevitably seen by their opponents as obstinacy - (the distinction between determination and obstinacy is a highly subjective one). Nevertheless, it was this steadfastness which eventually enabled the Quakers to survive as a group.

Doubtless, they were frequently infuriating. They were full of confidence that they possessed the "Truth of God"; and they were not slow to point out that others were in darkness. Above all, they refused to give in to violent treatment; a response which always brings out the worst in those in power. Still, it is matter of some surprise to learn the extent of the hatred and brutality which these first generation Quakers engendered. They encountered this from the magistrates and from the judges, from the prison warders and, in a less physical manner from many of the clergy. The crimes they were charged with were such things as blasphemy and disturbing the peace, but their offences were really against the authority of those in charge locally. There seems to have been little direction from the State Commissioners for this ruthless persecution. Cromwell, who was ruling until his death in 1658, did have some understanding of the Quakers. Fox met him in 1656 and in each of the following years; Cromwell listened to him when Fox told him of the persecution of the Quakers and also, apparently, when Fox urged him not to accept the

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Crown which was being offered him. Still, Cromwell seems not to have been able to do anything about the harassment at the local level and so this continued.

This period of history is the occasion of many often-told stories of Quaker happenings, the details of which may be found in the many Quaker histories. (Elizabeth Vipont's "The Story of Quakerism" is as easy to read as any.) The stories tell of Quakers, ordinary men and women, who showed amazing enterprise and courage and who, spurred on by the strength of their faith, felt the need to "publish the Truth" against all odds.

In addition to the many who suffered in Britain, there were some who felt called to go further afield. A notable example was Mary Fisher who, having suffered imprisonment and brutality at York and at Cambridge, went with Ann Austin across the Atlantic, first to Barbados and then on to Boston (Mass.). Boston was governed by a Puritan regime, who regarded all Quakers as dangerous heretics and enacted strict and harsh laws against them.

Mary Fisher and Ann Austin suffered no more than imprisonment followed by banishment, but the laws against Quakers were strengthened in the following years. Some, including Mary Dyer in 1660, were executed. The spread of Quakerism into America during these years makes a remarkable story. The best known event is the voyage in 1657 of the "Woodhouse", which was sailed to New Amsterdam (New York) by a group of Quakers "acting under guidance"; their safe arrival in America is a matter for wonder. It was this group of Quakers which later met with such persecution from the Puritans of Boston.

There are many more stories about the doings of Quakers of this period. Just one may be mentioned here because of its bizarre nature. Once more it is about Mary Fisher; in 1658, she decided that she must visit the Sultan of Turkey - and so she did. How she managed the journey, which included some 500 miles on foot, and how she persuaded the Grand Vizier to arrange an interview with the Sultan remains a mystery! However, she did meet the Sultan and he listened to her; and Mary Fisher was satisfied.

INTERLUDE.

Before going on to a summary of the events during the 30 years after the Restoration of the monarchy, we may go back to the general questions posed at the beginning of this chapter:-

"What were the Quakers saying?"...
"Why did some people listen so eagerly?"...
"Why did others oppose equally eagerly?".....

Here are some indications; they are not meant to be definite answers.

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The message centred on "The Inner Light". More correctly this should be termed the "Inner Light of Christ", because a basic part of the message was that "Christ had come to teach his people himself". People listened because it was a message of hope - of sureness. No longer did they have to look to Priest, or Church, or Book as the final authority; the authority and the "Truth" (a much used word, though hard to define) was to be found by the individual through direct knowledge of the spirit of Christ - the "Christ in the heart". They became convinced that by "waiting on the Lord" they would come to know the will of God through direct communication.

It is easy to see why this was bound to cause opposition. The authority of those who had the responsibility for the religious faith of the people was threatened, whether Priest or Minister of the Church. Those who reject the authority and the dogma of any "Establishment", whether religious or secular, are accused of Anarchy and Heresy. The Quakers were accused of both these and, in many cases, the crime of Blasphemy was added to the indictment. (The Blasphemy Act was passed in 1650, so Blasphemy had become a secular crime as well as an ecclesiastical sin.) It may seem strange that a group, which maintained that they were living under the guidance of God and who claimed Christ as their Lord and Teacher, should be charged with blasphemy. Presumably it arose from the Quaker conviction that all people could be in possession of the Inner Light, the Light of Christ. Some of their accusers interpreted this to mean that they were claiming to have divine powers, thus assuming a God-like nature for themselves. It was a charge which was seldom used and even then was not made to stick when brought to the courts. When in the case of James Nayler (described later) there was no valid charge of blasphemy which the magistrates could bring.

The most common charges were such things as "disorderly behaviour", "breach of the peace", "contempt of court", the usual sort of reasons given for dealing with those thought by authority to be an intolerable nuisance. There were numerous cases of imprisonment, a number of sentences of whipping, but in Britain no cases of execution, as did occur in America.

(b) After the "Restoration" in 1660.

From the outset of the Restoration, both the Monarchy and the Church were anxious to establish their authority. The perennial plea of the "defence of national security" (though the phrase would not have been used at that time - the term **treason** was used instead) was a strong weapon against dissidents. Admittedly, there was some cause for concern during the early years of Charles II's reign. There were certain religious enthusiasts, notably the **Fifth Monarchy Men**, whose aim was the establishment of the rule of God (or Christ) on earth and felt that this necessitated the overthrow of the present temporal monarchy. Not unnaturally, such people were accused of treason. The Quakers, though proclaiming the rule of Christ, did not see this as a temporal rule.

They were in no way concerned with any treasonable plot to overthrow the monarchy and they were determined to disassociate themselves from any thoughts of violence. This was

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the main reason for the famous letter, written by Fox and other Quakers to Charles II in 1661 - a letter which has been widely accepted in the Society of Friends as "Our Peace Testimony". This letter appears to have served its purpose, for there were few if any charges of treason made against Friends.

The persecution of Quakers, however, continued; in fact, it was greater than before because of an increasing number of edicts which were brought in. These formed part of the "Clarendon Code", introduced by the Lord Chancellor Clarendon to enforce conformity with the Church of England.

Two of these which most affected the Quakers were the "Quaker Act" (1662) and the "Conventicle Act" (1664). Quakers were known to refuse oath-taking on religious grounds and the former Act made the refusal to take the Oath of Allegiance illegal - tantamount to treason. Under both Acts it was made illegal to hold any religious meetings other than those of the established Church. The Quakers continued to meet openly, rather than in secret as many dissidents did. As a result, many Friends were imprisoned in the middle 1660s, including most of their leaders. Fox was in prison from 1664 to 1666. His release in 1666 was providential, because the Society was being badly weakened for lack of leadership.

The statutory penalty for repeated conviction under these laws was transportation, but it was easier to prescribe such a penalty than to have it carried out. It was not easy to find captains willing to use their ships for this purpose; partly perhaps through a revulsion against the harshness of the penalty, but also through a shortage of shipping. Consequently, few if any Friends were transported.

In 1670 there was a new Conventicle Act passed; transportation was abandoned, but sequestration of goods and property was increasingly used as a penalty. There was also a more aggressive approach to any preaching in a "Conventicle". This resulted in Friends' Meetings being broken up and some Meeting Houses destroyed, as well as a considerable number of imprisonments.

It was at this time that the famous "Bushel's Case" took place. This is well worth reading about. Briefly: two Quakers, William Meade and William Penn (more about him later) were arrested for holding a Meeting outside the Meeting House in Gracechurch St. Ill-advisedly, they were charged with "causing a riot", a charge which required trial by jury. The Judge directed the jury to return a verdict of guilty but, led by their spokesman, Edward Bushel, they refused to do so, although under considerable physical duress.

This case established the right of juries to bring in independent verdicts (and probably indirectly helped the Quaker cause in the public mind).

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Consolidation of Friends into a Society.

The period 1660-1670, although one of persecution, was also one of consolidation. What was originally a number of scattered groups was gradually forming into a larger body with some sense of unity and community. During the 1650s, Friends had begun building Meeting Houses, the beginning of the establishment of local stable worshipping groups. There were already many of such groups up and down the country when Fox was released from prison in 1666.

During the next two or three years, Fox spent much time organising these groups. The first step was the establishment of monthly meetings, the origins of the modern Society of Friends. Part also of the process of consolidation was the regularisation of Quaker marriage procedures and the founding of schools for Quaker children. Both of these steps did much to ensure the continuity and survival of Friends as a Society. The establishment of a centrally organised representative body took some time to accomplish, but finally in 1678 "London Yearly Meeting" came into being and was recognised as the Meeting which exercised the representative authority of the Society of Friends.

Details of organisation inevitably take a low place in the interest of those wishing to learn something about Quakerism; personal exploits and accounts of ill-treatment patiently endured make much more exciting reading! Nevertheless, there is cause for wonder that this work of organisation should have been able to continue during such a troubled period. One must acknowledge this and have respect for those responsible; without them, it is likely that there would be no Quakers today.

During the next ten years or so matters remained much the same, but there was a great change when James II was deposed and William-and- Mary came to the throne. In 1689 the Toleration Act was passed, which greatly reduced the pressure on all dissenters, giving them liberty of conscience and making it an offence to disturb anyone else's worship. The Quaker scruple about taking oaths was apparently recognised and, while Quakers may have been seen as a very peculiar people, they were no longer regarded as a potential threat either to secular or religious authority.

These forty years, 1650 to 1690, were very rich in Quaker people. It was the period of George Fox himself, of the "Valiant Sixty" (those who in early days travelled the country "publishing Truth"), of Margaret Fell, of William Penn and of others. Too much attention to biographical details, even about the best of women and men, can become burdensome; I propose to give little. Still, the work of any society is done by its people and the life of it resides in them. So, in the next Chapter I have chosen to say something about a few of those living in the 17th century. My choice is made partly to show the variety of those who were attracted to Quakerism and who furthered it during these years.

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CHAPTER 3
Some Quaker people of the l7th Century.

I am dividing these into two groups; although any division is rather arbitrary, for all were closely interlinked as the Quaker movement developed. I have been selective

rather than inclusive; there are plenty of others whom I might have added.

In the first group I have put:

George Fox .

John Camm, John Audland and their wives .

Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough .

James Nayler .

Margaret Fell (Fox) .

The main reason I have grouped these together is that they all stemmed from or were closely connected with the movement in 1651/2 at Swarthmoor. Their main contribution was the establishment and development of Quakerism through their preaching. ("Preaching" in those days did not just refer to preaching in churches, but also to speaking in informal meetings)

In the second group I have put:

Isaac Penington .

William Penn .

Robert Barclay .

These three were all highly educated and came from aristocratic backgrounds. They exemplify the wide variety of people who were attracted to Quakerism and were its strength in the l7th century. There may have been differences of educational and social upbringing, but all brought to Quakerism thoughtful and independent minds, coupled with a deep sense of religious conviction.

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What the three in this second group share in particular is their scholarly and literary ability; each left works which can be described as "Quaker Classics":

William Penn " No Cross no Crown"

Robert Barclay " The Apology"

Isaac Penington " The Inward Journey".

These works are not easy to read and only a very small minority of modern Friends will have fully read them (I am one of the large majority who hasn't!). So a useful contribution to their understanding has been made by the publication of extracts of these three works in one paperback entitled "Quaker Classics in Brief"; this also has useful introductions.

GEORGE FOX

I have to begin with Fox, because he was without doubt the dominant figure among l7th century Quakers. There has been a great deal written about him, so much so that I have met many Quakers, especially the young, who feel they have heard quite enough about him. If you do not know much about him and wish to know more, I suggest beginning with one of the shorter accounts of his life and message (e.g. one by Philip Wragge) to add to what may be found in the various histories of Quakerism.

He was undoubtedly a remarkable and complete person. In spite of the ruggedness of his personality, he was someone with considerable charm and with a capacity for attracting the most unlikely people (including such as some of his jailers, who were notably pretty tough men!). In modern terms we should say that he had a very pronounced charisma.

He was a visionary with well developed psychic powers and there is good evidence that he had the capability of a healer. Still, on top of all this, he was a very human person, very much "of this world". He was of considerable physical stature, powerful and possessing great endurance and courage; he suffered imprisonment eight times, some in very bad conditions, which he survived. He was an excellent organiser, the best example of which is the way in which, after his imprisonment in Scarborough in 1666, he established the various types of Meeting in the Society, putting it on a sound and lasting basis.

His life, 1624 to 1691, spanned the whole of the Civil War. In common with some other leading Quakers he met Oliver Cromwell and impressed him considerably. He resolutely refused to get involved with military activities, although the Parliament Army would gladly have had him as an officer. So, when after the Restoration he was arraigned for refusing to take the Oath of Allegiance, he was able to maintain that he had never taken up arms against the King.

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Like so many religious leaders of his time, he wrote much. Among his best known writings are his "Epistles" (an excellent introduction to these is the modern selection by Cecil Sharndan, entitled "No More but my Love") and the famous Journal. This is not journal in the sense of a contemporary record of day-to-day events, but an autobiography which was written and edited in later life. Fox spent part of his time during his final imprisonment in Worcester (1673-5) dictating his Journal

George Fox was no "Saint" (in the ecclesiastical sense); to suggest that he was does him a disservice, for it encourages his detractors to point out his human failings. He was a man of his time and some of his utterances and his threats against ill-doers strike harshly on modern ears. But he was a very interesting and influential person; he was indeed the Founder of Quakerism and played an important role in the l7th century history of religious thought and action.

JOHN CAMM, JOHN AUDLAND and their wives MARY and ANN.

I doubt whether these names are known outside Quakers (and at the present time very little among them). I have included them as a reminder that so much of the early work of Quakerism was done by ordinary men and women - if indeed "ordinary" is an appropriate word to use!

These two families provide a good instance of the indefatigable missionary work which was done by "non-professional" people. Camm and Audland were both of the original "Westmorland Seekers" both of the farming community. They were among those who went south after 1652. In 1655-56 Camm and Audland were conducting a very successful campaign in Bristol, at the same time that their wives were spreading Quakerism in Banbury. Both Mary Camm and Ann Audland were arrested there. Mary was released and rejoined her husband; Ann, however, was arraigned on a blasphemy charge. Though acquitted of this, she refused to give a bond of good behaviour and suffered imprisonment in very squalid conditions.

It is clear that Quaker steadfastness (or obstinacy, as some might say!) was not confined to men.

FRANCIS HOWGILL and EDWARD BURROUGH.

I am treating these two together, because so much of their work was done in close companionship and because they provide a striking example of the travelling Quaker preachers who originally came from the North West, notably Westmorland.

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Francis Howgill was born in 1618 (six years before Fox) in a farming community and also took on the trade of a tailor; probably he was more or less financially independent before he became actively involved in Quaker work.

He was a serious minded boy; critics would say "puritanical". He was subject to religious depression and, as a teenager, was already trying to find out which. if any, of the established or dissenting denominations would satisfy his condition. None of them did and his religious experience was very similar to that of George Fox. Consequently, it was only to be expected that, when he heard Fox preach at Firbank Fell (near Sedbergh) in 1652, he found that the Quaker message was exactly what he had been waiting for.

He was soon in conflict with the authorities and was imprisoned in Appleby for five or six months. After his release he joined with Edward Burrough, then only 19 years old, with whom he formed a close and life-long friendship. Their first work was in London, where they were responsible for establishing Quakerism. During this period, Howgill, as well as other Friends, made a direct approach to Cromwell, both by visit and by letter, appealing to him to consider the injustices which were being inflicted on so many men and women. He and Burrough worked also in Bristol and in Ireland.

Finally, he was arrested in Appleby and was imprisoned there for some years. His stay in prison was not unproductive; many people visited him there, family, friends, and some who, though not in sympathy with Quakers, valued his friendship and sought his advice. He died in prison in 1668.

Edward Burrough's life was closely parallel to Howgill's. Born in 1634, he came from Underbarrow (near Kendal) and as a teenager he also began to think seriously about religion. At the age of 19 he associated himself completely with Quakerism. largely influenced by Fox, and was consequently rejected by his family. He formed his close friendship with Howgill who was l6 years older.

In spite of his comparative youth, he took a leading part in the establishment and spread of Quakerism, especially in London, but also in Bristol and in Ireland. Some have considered him to have been a sort of second in command to Fox. In 1661, he had an interview with Charles II whom he persuaded to intervene on behalf of the Quakers in Boston (U.S.A.) and to stay the persecution there. He was one of the leading Quakers imprisoned in the l660's and finally died in Newgate prison in l663.

•JAMES NAYLER.

James Nayler was already one of the group at Swarthmoor Hall when Fox first visited there and he helped to persuade Judge Fell to welcome Fox. He was a deeply religious man, who had been a soldier in Cromwell's army but after joining Fox he turned to full time preaching. He was a man of considerable presence and in 1656, when Fox was imprisoned in Launceston, he assumed the leadership of Friends in London. Unfortunately,

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at this time he suffered from a psychological state, which could be termed a form of religious mania, and he allowed himself to be unwisely influenced by adulatory admirers.

The culmination of his aberration was a "Triumphal Entry" into Bristol, modelled on Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Inevitably this caused Nayler to be arraigned on a Blasphemy charge. In fact, Nayler made no claim to be Christ. The action was rather a dramatic representation of the Quaker message that "Christ had come to teach his people himself"; it was a "prophetic" assertion, rather in line with the acted preaching of the Old Testament prophets. Nayler suffered brutal physical punishment, followed by imprisonment. He became alienated from Fox and many other Friends, because his action did damage to the Quaker movement which might have been irreparable. After his release from prison, he became reconciled to Friends. Today, he is best remembered for a personal statement, made shortly before his death in 1660, which remains one of the most beautiful and moving passages in Quaker literature. It says in part:

"There is a spirit which I feel that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things..... Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself..... As it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thoughts to any other....."

•MARGARET FELL later MARGARET FOX

Margaret Fell played an indispensable part in the growth and survival of Quakerism. Her influence and activity centred on her home at Swarthmoor Hall. Supported during the early days of Quakerism by her husband, Judge Fell, she provided free use of the Hall for meetings and as a base over many years for those who were involved in travelling preaching.

After Judge Fell's death in 1658, she continued to give unabated help to Friends, as well as bringing up her family. As soon as Charles II came to the throne, she took the opportunity to visit him. She reminded him of the promise of religious toleration which he had made at Breda, and she aimed to clarify the position of Friends with regard to the taking of oaths and their rejection of violence. However, now that she no longer had the support of her husband as an influential person, she was much more vulnerable to the opponents of Quakerism.

In 1664 both she and George Fox were brought to trial. Margaret was imprisoned, but was told she could be released if she promised to hold no more meetings at Swarthmoor. This she refused to do and her imprisonment at Lancaster was continued. There was a threat of sequestration of property hanging over her, which would have meant the disastrous loss of Swarthmoor to Friends. Fortunately, Margaret Fell was stoutly supported by her daughters, two of whom had an interview with Charles II to plead for their mother. Finally. Charles promised that Swarthmoor should never be taken from Margaret and her children. It is interesting how it was possible that such personal appeals to be made to the monarchy and to be listened to with sympathy.

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She was one of the very few of the early Quakers who survived into the l8th century; she died in 1702, aged 87.

Already the Society was drifting into formalism and was paying undue attention to the plainness and details of dress. She warned Friends against this and she is especially remembered for her protest:-

"....(s) we must look at no colours, nor make anything that is changeable colours as the hills are, nor sell them, or wear them. This is a silly poor Gospel...."

ISAAC PENINGTON and THOMAS ELLWOOD.

I have added the name of Thomas Ellwood to that of Isaac Penington because they form a pair which may well be considered together. There was a close family friendship between them; also, their way of life and their Quaker work were very similar.

Thomas Ellwood (b. 1639) joined Friends in 1659, shortly after his meeting with the Peningtons; later he came to live with them as a member of the family. It was a peaceful, scholarly household, but this did not protect them from the persecution of Quakers in the 1660's. Both Penington and Ellwood suffered terms of imprisonment.

What Ellwood is best known for outside Quaker circles is his connection with John Milton. He wished to improve his classical knowledge, so Penington arranged that he should become Milton's reader in exchange for tuition in Latin. This connection developed into a friendship and, when in 1665 the Plague was rampant in London, Milton asked Ellwood to find him a house in Buckinghamshire; this is how Milton came to live in Chalfont St.Giles.

Isaac Penington was almost a generation older, being born in 1617. He was a Southerner, living on his own estate in Buckinghamshire and joined Friends in 1658, shortly before he and Ellwood first met. Thomas Ellwood's father was a friend of Mary Springett, whom Isaac Penington had married; she had a daughter by a former marriage (Gulie), who later became the wife of William Penn. I mention these family details, because they show how interlinked the Quaker network at this time could be.

Penington came from a distinguished Puritan family, has father having been at one time Lord Mayor of London. He was a well educated scholarly person, having as his friends distinguished men of letters, such as John Milton and John Locke. He was thus well established in Buckinghamshire society, an unusual and difficult position for a convinced Quaker. However, once he and his wife Mary had joined Friends, they gave themselves wholeheartedly to Quakerism, finding it a great joy, but also sharing in the sufferings. Penington was in prison for about half of his Quaker life. He died in 1679.

He left behind him a number of writings, from which was published what might be called a devotional autobiography. It has been considered one of the outstanding pieces of Quaker

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literature. It is very long and not readily available, so that the condensation, published as "The Inward Journey of Isaac Penington" (in Quaker Classics in Brief) is very welcome.

The Penington home at Chalfont St.Peter became an important meeting place for Friends, particularly for the leaders of the movement, such as Fox, Nayler, Burrough, Penn among others. It has been called "The Swarthmoor of the South", an apt comparison, because it played a significant part in supporting Friends in a period of considerable difficulty.

ROBERT BARCLAY.

Robert Barclay (1648 to 1690) was foremost among Quakers as scholar and theologian.

He was born at Ury in Scotland, his father being David Barclay, who became a Colonel in the Commonwealth Army. In 1665, after the restoration, David Barclay was imprisoned at Edinburgh because of his association with Parliament forces. He was influenced by a Quaker who was a fellow prisoner, as was also his son Robert when he visited him. They both joined Quakers in 1666.

Robert returned to Scotland to continue his studies both at home and abroad. He had been brought up a Calvinist and among his early studies was a period at Scots College in Paris.

His family were "well-connected", his mother being distantly related to the Royal Family. These connections were of support to Robert Barclay during the restoration period, though he was not immune from sharing in the sufferings of Friends in Scotland, where he spent a term in prison. In later years, through his connection with James II, he was appointed Governor of New Jersey, a position he held by deputy from 1682 to 1688.

So Robert Barclay was one of the small number of aristocratic-scholar Quakers, who were able in the l7th century to exert considerable worldly influence.

Most of his Quaker work was done in Scotland, but he did meet and travel some of the leading Quakers, including Fox and Penn.

He is best known for his writings and, in particular, for his "Apology for the True Christian Divinity" always known as "Barclay's Apology". This was written in 1676, the first edition being in Latin, which was followed two years later by an English edition. It is a very long work and the best introduction for us is the abbreviation in "Quaker Classics in Brief". This as a series of extracts, in Barclay's own words, comprising those parts which are most likely to be of interest to Quakers of the modern day.

These extracts are well worth some study, though the reader has to accept some difficulties in interpreting the l7th century language. (Thus, for example, Barclay frequently uses the phrase "natural man". By this he means sinful, unredeemed man; not, as we might think, man with his natural goodness).

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There are three sections - Belief, Worship, and Testimonies - and together they give a thoughtful and unemotional account of the ideas and practices of Quakers of his time. He gives a particularly clear explanation of the reasons behind the distinguishing Quaker practices, such as the method of address (Thou instead of You), simplicity of clothing, refusal of oaths, the renunciation of violence. It gives us food for thought to consider to what extent this was only relevant for his time and how much is of universal importance.

There is little theology in these published sections, but there is a great deal in the portion omitted. Barclay's theology has had considerable influence, but it does not readily speak to modern Quakers (at least in Britain).

Still, Barclay's "Apology" was a work of great importance and was translated into many languages. It is remarkable when one realises that Barclay was only 28 when he wrote it.

WILLIAM PENN 1644-1718.

William Penn has been described as being a "Public Friend" in two ways: first, he was much in touch with public affairs, usually at a high social and political level; secondly, he became very much a person who represented Friends to the public mind. His life-story is very different both from that of the early Northern Friends and also from that of a quiet scholar such as Isaac Penington.

His father was an eminent Admiral who, however, got into trouble with Cromwell and was imprisoned for some months when Penn was 12 years old; the joy of his unexpected release appears to have triggered a religious experience for Penn - a conviction of the availability of God. This fundamentally Quaker concept made him ready to receive the message of Thomas Loe in Ireland two years later.

After two years in Oxford (he was expelled for anti-clerical opinions), 3 years in France at a Protestant College (absorbing ideas of religious liberty), he had about 3 years in London, studying Law; this he put to good use later on, as in "Bushel's Case" and in the numerous occasions when he helped Friends legally.

His father was now in Royal favour and away on Navy business; William was essentially head of the family and was sent to Ireland to look after family estates. Here, in 1667, he again heard Thomas Loe preach; he became a Quaker and his life as an active Friend began.

For two years after his convincement he was estranged from his father and worked very closely with Friends in London and began the writing of his many books and pamphlets. He was imprisoned in the Tower, where he wrote the first edition of "No Cross, no Crown". After his release in 1669 (by the King's express command!) he was again in Ireland where he succeeded in obtaining the release from prison of all Quakers in Ireland.

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In England, with other Quakers, he frequented the Penington home; here he met Isaac Penington's step-daughter, Guli Springett, whom he married in 1672. It was through another Buckinghamshire Friend that, in 1676, he first became involved in America. This Friend had acquired a part of New Jersey and Penn became his trustee concerning this. During the next few years many Friends emigrated there and Penn worked hard to establish a well governed colony.

Then, in 1681, he petitioned the King for the grant of a tract of land to the West of New Jersey, in lieu of a debt still owing to his late father. This was the beginning of PENNSYLVANIA, the name given by the King himself to Penn's new domain.

The land, in fact, belonged to the "Indians" and the remarkable story of the friendly relations which Penn established with them has been much written up. Penn visited the colony in 1682, but only for a couple of years; still, the new colony had become well established.

Back in England, he became embroiled in business and also in Court affairs. When James II came to the throne in 1685, Penn was a close friend and adviser; but he failed to moderate James' religious and political unwisdom which caused his downfall. Penn, himself, was in deep disfavour for some five years after the accession of William-and-Mary. It was during this period of comparative withdrawal from public life that he wrote two of his most notable works: the "Essay towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe" (relevant today) and "Some Fruits of Solitude", a devotional work.

The closing years of his life are unfortunately a story of troubles, disappointments and, finally, mental disability.

Penn's great concerns were for **religious liberty** and for **Peace**. His was a towering personality among Quakers; not a great theologian (like Barclay) or social reformer (like Woolman), but perhaps the greatest "all-rounder".

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CHAPTER 4
The Eighteenth Century.

Introduction.

Logically it does not seem to make sense to divide history up into "Centuries"; to pass from one to another is simply an arbitrary piece of arithmetic. Yet, particularly in the l7th, l8th and l9th centuries, the division seems more than a convenience. Towards the end of each of these there were events or developments in thinking, which ushered in changes that had lasting influence throughout the following century. Before explaining this further with regard to Quakerism, we can take examples from developments in the physical sciences.

Towards the end of the l7th century the work of Robert Boyle and others put Chemistry on a scientific basis, liberating it from the influences of alchemy and astrology; this was followed by the mathematical work of Isaac Newton, which rationalised the planetary motions. The l8th century built on this, though more in the line of new inventions than in new discoveries and theoretical concepts.

At the end of the l8th century came the experimental work of the French Chemist, Lavoisier (who was executed at the time of the Revolution). This was followed shortly by the publication of the Atomic Theory by John Dalton in 1808; and modern Chemistry based on the atomic nature of matter was established.

Finally, to complete our trilogy of "end of the century events" the year 1895 was the time when radioactivity was first observed and examined. This, together with other important discoveries about the same time, opened the door to the modern Physics of the 20th century: the so-called "Atomic Age".

In an analogous manner, we can see the development of Quakerism in relation to these same three centuries.

The l7th century was the time of the "Quaker Explosion", the rapid growth from the small beginnings in 1650. It was the time of religious fervour, of spreading the knowledge of "The Truth", stimulated rather than suppressed by the years of persecution. At the end of the century there was a dramatic change. specifically brought about by the Toleration Act of 1689, which carried through to the l8th century. The identity of Quakerism had been established and the need was now rather to preserve this identity than to gather more adherents; a period of "quietism" set in.

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The end of l8th century Quakerism is somewhat less clearly defined, but it was in the closing years of this century that Quakers under the indirect influence of Wesley's work, became more outward looking. This resulted in an increased sense of social concern and activity. together with a strong evangelical influence in Quaker thinking. This influence was very powerful throughout the l9th century.

Finally, looking at the end of this third century. there was a vigorous re-appraisal of thought. The most significant example of this was the Manchester Conference, which took place in 1895 - the same year as radioactivity was discovered!

This then is my justification for thinking in terms of "centuries" and of having "18th Century Quakerism" as the subject of this chapter.

Quakers in the 18th Century

Two events at the end of the l7th century were of particular significance for the transition to the next epoch. These were: the Toleration Act of 1689, and the death of George Fox in 1691.

The Act of 1689 did not make everything easy for dissenters. It itself gave no relief from tithes; and other Acts remained in force which still closed for non-Anglicans the entry into higher education and public service. However, the great thing was that the penal Acts for dissent were suspended and so gave freedom of conscience.

The death of George Fox was essentially the end of the "Founding Quakers"; Margaret Fox was still alive, but many had died during the persecution following the Restoration and the early leaders were all gone. There was no longer the need for pioneers to take on leadership and to inject fervour as in the early days. Active persecution had ceased and it was actually an offence to interrupt and interfere with the public worship of others. After the forty years of persecution during which the Quakers had suffered much, there was a natural desire for a more peaceful life in which to recuperate. So Quakers began the process of consolidating and developing their own particular faith and way of life.

A religious group, which finds itself in a minority and which also has had to struggle to keep its identity, is apt to close in on itself and to emphasise those rituals and customs by which it is identified. The danger is that this can run to extremes and can produce a rigidity of outlook; what begins with a justifiable purpose of cementing loyalties and of supporting the individual by the strength of the community can develop into exclusiveness and into what may be called a "laager mentality". An example, which to my mind forms a good parallel with the l8th century Quakers, is the society of the Pharisees.

We hear about this religious group of the Jews in the Gospels, which give them a thoroughly bad press. We hear of Jesus's denunciation of their excesses, their insistence on the minutiae of Law observance, their rigidity of outlook and their self-righteousness.

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Many of the l8th century Quakers could be accused of similar failings; a "discipline" developed, which demanded a close adherence from those who wished to remain in the Society. If the judgement of the Quakers were to depend on a consideration of these extremes, Friends would have an equally bad press as the Pharisees.

The Pharisees developed when the Persians allowed the Jews to return to Palestine after a period of isolation and repression in Babylonia. Their single-minded religious fervour had kept the Jews together as a fairly consolidated group - or nation - and it was felt to be of the utmost importance that this unity, based on a monotheistic worship, should be strengthened and preserved for future generations. They had great difficulties to contend with: first, the danger of being absorbed into the multiculture society of those who were now indigenous Palestinians; and then the even greater danger of being overcome by the dominant Greek culture and religion. There was a period of intense persecution.

So they employed protective methods to preserve the identity of their group and of the Jewish people. They insisted on observance of the "Law", the code of faith and practice hallowed by tradition. However, this insistence degenerated into pettyfogging and burdensome restrictions. As Paul put it, observance produced bondage rather than freedom.

So there is a parallel to be drawn between l8th Century Quakers and lst Century Pharisees, both in their bad and their good aspects. Although after 1690 active persecution of the Quakers had ceased, they remained a weak and vulnerable group. In the absence of their pioneering leaders, their former flame of inspiration could easily have fizzled out. The social climate after the Restoration, though cultured and gracious at its best, was fairly loose-living; absorption of the Quaker group into it could easily have meant a weakening of the Quaker principles which had developed over the past fifty years: the "testimonies" as we are still accustomed to refer to them. These included a rejection of any elaboration of life-style, as expressed in dress. in language, in entertainment; and, above all, the maintenance of purity of worship was a precious thing. Doubtless many individual Friends would have adhered to these principles, but the support of the **group** gave the strength which was needed.

Almost inevitably, the requirements of group loyalty led to a demand for uniformity. Quaker dress, in fact, became a sort of uniform. The absence of adornments, such as ornamental buttons or lapels on the jacket, made Quakers readily recognisable. They were further marked out by their "plain speech" (such as "thee and "thou" for "you") and their practice of retaining their hats when others would remove them out of respect.

However, the Quaker life-style, besides producing inevitable ridicule, brought a considerable measure of respect. Quakers became known for integrity both in personal relations and in business affairs; they honoured contractual promises and they maintained fixed prices for goods, rather than using bargaining methods. The academic world was still closed to Quakers as dissenters, which meant that many of those with the greatest ability went into commerce or manufacturing. The growing success of l8th Century Quakers in the business world was largely due to these causes: namely, the confidence generated by Quaker business methods and the presence of men of ability and enterprise.

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What of the more overtly "religious" life of the Quakers of these times? It is hard to find any description of a "typical" Meeting for Worship. The general pattern seems to follow on from the procedures of the l7th century: namely, a gathering of Friends to wait in quietness for the guidance of God, with vocal contributions (some probably of considerable length) from individual Friends. But it is clear that as time went on, with the growth of quietism, the emphasis was less on speech, more and more on silence. This sometimes reached the condition when it was considered that any vocal contribution was a human intrusion into the working of the Holy Spirit. As a result, many Meetings must have become lifeless.

At the same time the "discipline" became stricter. The practice of "disownment" was applied both before and after formal membership was established by Yearly Meeting in 1737. Friends could be disowned for a wide range of offences against the accepted code, including what we should consider trivial breaches of the dress code. Two reasons for disownment, which today

come in for much criticism (and some ridicule), were the rules against any musical activity and against marrying outside the Society of Friends. Both these bans had some good reason for being introduced, but unfortunately both continued well beyond their period of usefulness - well into the l9th century.

To sum up: it would probably be true to say that the Society of Friends would not have survived at all, if they had not entered into this period of withdrawal and consolidation. However, quietism and restrictive discipline were carried to excess and the Society came near to strangling itself in the process.

"What did individual Quakers do in the 18th Century?"

The answer to this question is a very different one from that to the same question asked about the previous century. In that case the quick answer would be that Quakers were preaching, teaching, protesting and generally founding Quakerism as an established and, in later years, a respected religious movement. Such activity, of course, continued into the l8th century but, with the growth of toleration, it became quieter and more private. To the outside world of that day and, largely, to history Quakers became known for quite different things. They established a reputation for **making** things and for **selling** things and for doing both these rather well.

Consistent with a faith which applied its principles in every day life, they were widely to be found in the production of commodities which were useful to society (and which were sold at fixed and fair prices). Among such commodities were iron and steel and the products of the chemical industry, such as soap and matches. (The development of the "safety match" originated in the social concern over the ill health of the workers in the phosphorus industry, where they contracted a serious disease). Among foodstuffs produced were biscuits and chocolate. The chocolate industry, so much associated with the names of Fry, Rowntree and Cadbury, can hardly be said to be producing an "essential commodity";

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nevertheless, its development in the early stages was certainly encouraged to provide a beverage alternative to alcoholic drink. (Further, it was recommended by certain Quaker apothecaries that cocoa had a beneficial medicinal effect).

Quakers began to make an impact on industry and commerce fairly *well* on in the l8th Century. This carried on without a break right through to the l9th century (and beyond), so in this respect there is no point in trying to separate the centuries. Their success was partly due to the fact that places of academic learning were closed to them, so that they brought to their industrial activities not only a tradition of hard work and sense of purpose, but also an enquiring and experimental approach, which caused them to be pioneers in a number of enterprises. By no means did all this ability go into industrial manufacture; to mention just a few examples of other fields of work, there were well known Quaker apothecaries, doctors, botanists, clockmakers.

The fullest and best account of this period of Quaker history is to be found in Arthur Raistrick's classic book "Quakers in Science and Industry". Even a cursory glance at this will give an idea of the richness and the variety of the enterprise of Quakers during this era.

The most outstanding of the Quaker contributions to industry in the early l8th century was undoubtedly that of the "Ironmasters", particularly associated with the Darby family in Coalbrookdale (in Shropshire). It was Abraham Darby (one of a number of that name) who developed the use of coke instead of charcoal for smelting and who was responsible for the famous Iron Bridge. Both Darby's original furnace and the bridge itself are part of the large industrial museum complex in and surrounding Coalbrookdale.

Among other Quakers connected with the iron and steel industry was the Lloyd family, but this name is much better known at the present time in connection with Banking. This is another commercial enterprise in which Quakers were closely involved. There were Quaker Bankers even in the latter part of the l7th century, and they extended their activities when they became involved in industry during the l8th. The best known names are Lloyd, Barclay and Gurney (the family in Norwich of Elizabeth Fry). The first two names remain today in Banking, but there is no longer any Quaker connection.

For any further details in which you might be interested, you are recommended to Raistrick's book. Another worth looking at is "The Quaker Enterprise" by D.B.Windsor. This gives biographical details of the most prominent Quaker manufacturers of the l8th century and after; as well as the ironmasters and chocolate makers already mentioned, it tells of the soap makers (Crosfield of Warrington), chemicals (Allen and Hanbury), biscuits (Huntley and Palmer).

This may seem rather a worldly picture of Quakers in the l8th century; a story of business success and the growth of wealth. It is indeed a "worldly" picture; perhaps none the worse for that, for it reminds us of William Penn's famous dictum "True godliness don't turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavours to mend it..." The best of these Quaker employers and manufacturers tried to allow their personal principles of truth, simplicity and caring to overlap into their business

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lives. Their caring was demonstrated by their social concern for their employees, the provision of good housing and working conditions and, to some extent, education. In these modern days of workers' independence they are frequently accused of paternalism - and with some justification. Nevertheless, it is only fair to ask. when does "fatherly care" become "paternalism" (or indeed "mothering" become "smothering") ?

However, a true appraisal of l8th century Quakers goes much deeper than an account of worldly success and acquisition of wealth. In the local Meetings there was a growth of quietism and in the Society as a whole there was a strengthening of "discipline", designed to maintain its integrity and indeed its identity. There is no doubt that this period did much to strengthen the bonds of Quakers as a Society and to form a springboard, as it were, for its future activity. But at the time it was inward looking, concerned very much with the religious (spiritual) welfare of the individual. It tended to inhibit the expression of Quaker principles as matters of social concern.

Still, there were individuals who had a vision of human social rights, beyond the role of "master-employer", which has already been referred to. A notable example was John Bellars (1654-1725). He had social and international visions which put him very many years in advance of his time. He was concerned about unemployment, feeling that it was detrimental, not only to the individual, but to the country as a whole; even before 1700 he had published a suggestion for the alleviation of the problem, namely "Proposals for a College of Industry". In the international field he proposed a Parliament to deal with political matters and a General Council to reconcile the varying Christian sects and Churches.

In these brief surveys of Quakerism in the various centuries I have deliberately avoided giving too much detail about any individual Quaker; such can be filled in, if desired, by further reading. However, in the l8th century there was one man who, in his quiet way, has so much influenced Quaker thought and action that it is right to give considerable attention to his life. This Friend is the American Quaker, John Woolman.

JOHN WOOLMAN (1720-1772)

Comparisons are unwise and dangerous, but it would not be outrageous to suggest that what Francis of Assisi was to the expression of Christian faith through action, so John Woolman was to the expression of Quaker faith in the l8th century.

Suggested reading.

There are numerous sources of information about John Woolman's life and work. Pre-eminent is his own Journal, which is usually published together with various other writings, such as "thoughts on the Keeping of Negroes". This Journal is very readable (more so than the Journal of George Fox !); it is a simple personal account largely of his own travels and visits, and by the end the reader has some knowledge of Woolman. For

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further knowledge and understanding, there is "Janet Whitney's "Life of John Woolman" and "The Wisdom of John Woolman", by Reginald Reynolds. The latter contains extracts from the Journal and other writings, with helpful comments by a Friend who, to my mind, possessed some of Woolman's spirit. A brief history of Woolman's life and work, including some account of the attitude of Friends in the l8th century to slave owning, is to be found in Ch. 15 of Elfrida Vipont's "History of Quakerism"; this makes good easy reading.

Woolman's life and work.

John Woolman was born in New Jersey (U.S.A.). After work in early days as a farmer, he entered into the retail trade, at the same time learning skills as a tailor. He must have had considerable ability, for his business flourished, setting Woolman on the way to prosperity. However, this began to trouble him and he deliberately decided to curtail his business and to concentrate on his work as a tailor. He felt that the pursuit of monetary wealth tended to "cumber" a person, taking the place of more important things. An entry in his Journal expresses this well:

"Until the year 1756 I continued to retail goods, beside following my trade as a tailor, about which time I grew uneasy on account of my business growing too cumbersome; ...at length, having got a considerable shop of goods, my trade increased every year and the road to large business appeared open; but I felt a stop in my mind...

The increase of business became my burden; for, although my natural inclination was towards merchandise, yet I believed that Truth required me to live more free from outward cumbers.... I then lessened my outward business and, as I had opportunity, told my customers of my intention, that they might consider what shop to turn to; and so, in a while wholly laid down merchandise, following my trade as a tailor, myself only, having no prentice. I also had a nursery of apple trees..."

(Wisdom of John Woolman. p.132-3)

Throughout his whole life, Woolman felt a strong sense of unity with all human beings. There is a famous passage, written fairly late on in life, in which he recounts a form of vision which came to him during a severe illness:-

"In a time of sickness with the pleurisy.... I was brought so near to the gates of death that I forgot my name. Being then desirous to know who I was, I saw a mass of matter of a dull gloomy colour between the south and the east, and was informd that this mass was human beings in as great misery as they could be and live, and that I was mixed in with them, and henceforth I might not consider myself as a distinct or separate human being. In this state I remained several hours...

...I was then carried in spirit to the mines, where poor oppressed people were digging rich treasures for those called Christians, and heard them blaspheme the name of Christ; at which I was grieved; for his name to me was precious. Then I was told that these heathen were informed that those who oppressed them were followers of Christ; and they said

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among themselves: "If Christ directed them to use us in this sort, then Christ is a cruel tyrant."

It was this sense of unity, which from quite early days made him uneasy about the keeping of slaves. In Woolman's early years there was no clear testimony among Friends about slave-owning. It appears to have been accepted as a social fact. The concern among Friends, which was voiced by Fox among others, is that slaves should be well treated by their owners and should be educated as Christians, so that they should come to share in the life and worship of the family. There was no bar to selling them (though to carefully selected purchasers) or to bequeathing them.

Woolman maintained that the owning of slaves was wrong, however well they were treated. He had no hesitation about pointing out to Quakers and to others. When he received hospitality from someone who kept slaves, he had a habit of making his host accept payment for their services.

Woolman's travels among the American 'Indians' are of particular interest. His journeys must have been very demanding and frequently dangerous; but a reader of the Journal would be disappointed if expecting thrilling accounts of adventures. Woolman was more interested in the personal and the inward.

The occasion of the Indian journey of 1763 was to meet an Indian chief, Papunahung, who was already known to Woolman as the result of a visit to Philadelphia. He was known to be of a peaceable nature, but this was by no means the case with Indians in general; in fact, Woolman set out at a very dangerous time. On an occasion during the Indian Journey, he ponders on what inspired him to set out and records his thoughts:-

"Being a rainy day, we continued in our tent; and here I was led to think on the nature of the exercise which hath attended me. Love was the first motion, and then a concern arose to spend some time with the Indians, that I might feel and understand their life, and the spirit they live, if haply I might receive some instruction from them, or they in any degree be helped forward by my following the leadings of Truth among them. And as it pleased the Lord to make way for my going at a time when the troubles of war were increasing...I looked on it as more favourable opportunity to season my mind and bring me into a nearer sympathy with them."

(Jour.l763; WJW p.116)

Much of Woolman's life was absorbed with everyday affairs, buying and selling, writing wills, etc. His final adventure was his travel to England in 1772. Typically, he travelled steerage on the boat, no light thing to undertake in those days. He attended London Yearly Meeting and at first met with a cool reception. He was uncouth in appearance, partly due to his dress of undyed cloth - a protest against the condition of slaves in the dye industry. Fortunately, he had good friends, who accepted him and recognised for his true worth; he died in York soon afterwards.

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In a chapter designed to give an overall picture of Quakerism in the l8th century, it may seem out of balance to give so much space to one man. However, not only was John Woolman an outstanding person, but he has been a model which, even if not followed, has been an inspiration to the conscience of many Quakers, both in his day and later.

Conclusion.

While Woolman undoubtedly stirred the consciences of Quakers and others who were becoming uneasy about slavery, there were other social conditions, which were beginning to become the concern of thoughtful people. By the end of the century, Quakers had begun to come out of their "quietism" and were ready for the new thought and action characteristic of the l9th century.

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CHAPTER 5
The Nineteenth Century.

When we were thinking about the beginnings of Quakerism in the seventeenth Century, we saw how it came into being at a time of great revolution of ideas - in religion, in science, in politics. In this country, the revolution brought about the English Civil War.

After 1688, things quietened down for about 100 years - for the nation in general and for Quakers in particular. Friends entered into a period of quietism in their worship and in their contacts with the outside world. This carried right through the eighteenth century, but in the outside world movements were developing, to which Friends were increasingly exposed. These began to have a pronounced effect on Friends in the early part of the nineteenth century. For convenience, one can divide these movements into three:

(a) Religious.

The outstanding religious figure of the l8th century had been John Wesley. He and his followers felt that they had a distinctive and very important message to preach: the "gospel" of Jesus Christ to all people. Since all had a right to hear it there was a duty laid on those able to preach to do so. This "gospel" included the necessity to improve the physical and social conditions of the less fortunate. Consequently, social betterment was closely connected with evangelical ideas.

(b) Intellectual.

The second half of the l8th century was the period of "The Enlightenment", a time when philosophical thought was questioning formerly accepted ideas. (Scientifically, there is a parallel with the beginning of the l7th century. Those years saw pioneering work in Physics and in Astronomy; the end of the l8th century saw the beginning of modern Chemistry, with scientists such as Lavoisier). One of the best known names of "The Enlightenment" is Rousseau, a pioneer in the proclaiming of human rights.

(c) Political.

The political development of social concepts followed from these two movements. The culmination was the French Revolution during the last ten years of the l8th century; this had an impact far beyond the borders of France.

Another political change of great significance came from the American War of Independence. This, in today's terms, was the result of a "democratic revolution"; by 1780, the people of America had finally rejected the colonial governance of Britain.

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These ideas took some time to permeate into the general thinking of the Society of Friends; but they inspired certain individuals and it was such individuals who, in the later years of the l8th century, had helped Friends to break out of their excessive quietism and to take more part in the outside world. Two examples are:

(i) Friends and Education.

Interest in education was becoming an important field of activity among Friends. One of the leading figures was John Fothergill, a doctor who realised the importance of the cultivation of the mind. He is best known for the culmination of his educational work, namely the foundation of Ackworth School, in Yorkshire, in 1789. This was followed in the l9th century by the foundation of a number of other Quaker schools. However, the interest of Friends in education extended beyond the establishment of schools for their own children. The best known example is the work of Joseph Lancaster, who initiated an experiment in popular education by opening a school in 1801 in Borough Road, London. Owing to the lack of money to pay assistants, he established a system of "monitors", whereby the older and more able pupils were able to teach the younger ones. The school flourished and received much interest, including the active support of King George III. This work extended beyond Friends and from it developed the British and Foreign Schools Society, one of the pioneers of popular education.

(ii) Friends and "The Retreat".

Another pioneering work of the same period was that of William and Esther Tuke, who were concerned with the welfare of the insane. They felt that the Quaker principle of recognising the "Light within" in all people was relevant to the treatment of the mentally ill. Their work culminated in the establishment by Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting in 1796 of "The Retreat". This may fairly be said to have been the first "mental hospital", where the emphasis was on treatment and cure, as opposed to the usual "asylums" with their emphasis on security and containment. The values of the methods used at "The Retreat" became widely recognised in this country and in America.

These examples of the increasing outward activity of Friends come from the last decades of the l8th century and were powerfully influenced by the growth of evangelism which, particularly in America, was beginning to produce deep doctrinal differences in the faith and practice of Friends. This is a complex story and it is not necessary to go into details here; and certainly not to portray it as a struggle between "sound" and "unsound" Quakerism.

As we have seen, Friends had come to place great emphasis on Quietism - the supremacy of "The Holy Spirit within". Even the Bible became discredited and, on occasions, Friends who brought a Bible to Meeting were firmly reprimanded. This was in sharp contrast to the evangelical message, which was Bible-centred and preached the saving power of faith in Jesus Christ. The reforming zeal of those Friends who were working with the outside world in social activities was clearly more in line with this latter doctrine.

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It was in America that the evangelical message spread more rapidly; this was partly due to the network of itinerant ministers, whose preaching in the numerous isolated Meetings was increasingly acceptable. Gradually two bodies of Friends developed: one with an emphasis on evangelism, concerned for the preaching of the Christian doctrine, and welcoming outreach in social activity; the other based on the quiet of the inward life and fearful that insistence on doctrine and on Biblical authority would undermine the truly mystical basis of Quakerism. In fact, each of them had much of the best of true Quakerism, but their differences drew them apart, culminating in America in the serious split of 1827-8.

These two main groups of Friends became popularly known by the names of leading exponents. Those following the emphasis on the Inner Light were termed Hicksites, named after Elias Hicks; the evangelical group was first known as Gurneyites. This division, known as the Great Separation, lasted without reconciliation for more than 100 years. Unfortunately, London Yearly Meeting 'took sides', recognising the Gurneyites as the 'orthodox' branch, and for many years restricted the sending of their Epistles to this Group.

Joseph John Gurney was, in fact, an English Friend, a member of a well-to-do Friend family in Norwich. As a young man he was influenced by the preaching of Stephen Grellet, a French aristocrat, who had come to America as a refugee from the Revolution and who had become a leading evangelical Quaker.

Joseph Gurney is himself little known outside Quaker circles, while his elder sister Betsy, later Elizabeth Fry, is one of the best known of all Quakers. Her work, originally with the education of women in Newgate prison and later as a leading pioneer of prison reform, has given her a world-wide reputation.

Summary of the first half of the 19th Century

The period of quietism, particularly in worship, gradually changed as a result of the evangelical approach. Meetings were still based on silent worship and were not programmed as some of those in America became; but there was more preaching in the Meetings and visiting preachers were welcomed. Quakerism once more became firmly Bible based.

At the same time, although the rigidities of quietism lessened, a strong discipline was maintained. Friends felt it important to preserve a tradition of distinctness from "the world". Such distinctions included plainness of dress, amounting almost to a uniform, and "plainness of speech", especially illustrated by the use of "thee" and "thou" instead of "you". (This continued in some Friend families well into the 20th century.) Orthodox Quakers, often called "plain Quakers", persisted in their opposition to music.

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Still, Friends could not keep themselves wholly from worldly events. Criticism of Friends becoming involved in "creaturely activities" diminished and it was during this period that Quaker activity in social work became firmly established. As well as examples already mentioned (e.g. education, mental health, prison reform) there was direct social work among the poor. A notable example of this was the work of Peter Bedford in Spitalfields in East London; he worked with and among those in poverty, organising food relief and becoming a friend of the community, many of whom were gaining their livelihood through crime.

Friends continued to flourish in business and became as good employers, who had a concern for the well-being of their employees.

The second half of the 19th Century

During this period there were developing changes of thought which, though later on they had a profound effect on the Society of Friends took some little time to permeate.

In the religious field, a critical approach to the Bible was gaining strength among scholars. The traditional view, which had been universally accepted, was that the writings were not only inspired, but were factually accurate in detail. There were for instance certain accepted ideas of authorship, e.g. that Moses wrote all the first five books of the Old Testament, and that David was responsible for all the Psalms. The chronology, which was usually to be found printed at the headings of the chapters in the "Authorised Version", was generally agreed; for example, this placed the Creation at a precise point in history, namely 4004 B.C.

The main liberal approach came through the application of critical historical study. In 1860, a small group of leading Anglicans published a book called "Essays and Reviews", which proclaimed the results of modern biblical scholarship. John Punshon, in his "Portrait in Grey", calls this a theological time bomb.

In the **scientific world**, at the same time, discoveries and new ideas were having a profound effect on religious thought.

First there was the work of the geologists, foremost among whom was Charles Lyell. In 1830 he published "The Principles of Geology", which showed that a rational reading of the message of fossil discovery pointed the way to a world far older than the biblical span of less than 6000 years.

Secondly, and even more disturbingly, came the publication in 1859 by Charles Darwin of "The Origin of Species". This maintained that the wide variation of plants and animals had come into being through evolutionary processes, not by individual acts of creation as portrayed in the first chapter of Genesis. Most disturbingly of all, the later publication of "The Descent of Man" asserted that humankind was itself the product of evolution.

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It took a few years before these liberal and modern ideas permeated to any extent into the Society of Friends. Then, in 1884, there appeared a small book entitled "A Reasonable Faith", first published anonymously by "Three Friends". They were prominent Friends who must at first have felt diffident at identifying themselves with what was thought at the time to be a disturbingly unorthodox document. The meaning of the word "reasonable" in the title has changed somewhat over the years; it did not imply, as it might now, that other faiths were unreasonable - or stupid - but that human reason could rightly be applied to the study of religious faith. It is still quite readable today and is interesting in the way that it shows how thoughtful people were beginning to question the literal rigidity of some Christian doctrine.

Inevitably, such excursions into liberal thought produced much consternation in the Society of Friends. This was particularly so in America among the "orthodox" Friends, those who earlier on had rejected the ideas of the Hicksites and who followed the evangelical thought of Joseph John Gurney.

There was a widespread unease that Friends were straying too far from their basis and could no longer give a clear statement of what the Quaker faith was. Accordingly, there was an important Conference held in Richmond, Indiana, incorporating all the main orthodox Yearly Meetings. This Conference issued a very long and detailed "Declaration of Faith". This was accepted, and still remains, as the official statement of these Yearly Meetings.

One of the participants was a distinguished British Friend, Joseph Bevan Braithwaite, who favoured the evangelical attitude of J.J.Gurney. He brought the "Richmond Declaration" before London Yearly Meeting and was bitterly disappointed when the Meeting did not wish to adopt it; the reason being that it was of too credal a nature. Most members of the present L.Y.M. would agree with this decision. To modern ears it is, in fact, an amazing document, running to some 20 pages of print, containing some 150 quotations (or near quotations) from the Bible. Still, to be fair to it, it remains an interesting and important document, for in addition to all the detailed theological affirmations, it sets out clearly and positively what was then the Society's position on the important social and political issues of the day.

Meanwhile in Britain, there was developing a movement in exactly the opposite direction from that which produced the Richmond Declaration in America. Following the publication of "A Reasonable Faith", a number of younger Friends of more liberal tendencies began to feel that the Society should take serious stock of itself; in particular, that it should pay careful attention to developments in modern thought, such as the literary and historical criticism of the Bible and also the new scientific discoveries and theories. Accordingly, in 1895, there was held in Manchester a Conference of Friends of London Yearly Meeting.

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This was a gargantuan Conference at which over 30 full length papers were read. The session which is most relevant to our study was the one on the Thursday evening (those Friends must have had great stamina; this was the third full length session of the day!). It was on the subject: "The Attitude of the Society of Friends towards Modern Thought". Three of the papers read were by comparatively young Friends, who later became prominent in the academic field:-

J.Rendel Harris, a theologian and biblical student of international repute, who later became the first Director of Studies at Woodbrooke College.

John William Graham, a leading educationalist.

Silvanus P. Thompson, an eminent experimental physicist, for many years Principal of Finsbury Technical College. The title of his paper is particularly significant, as indicating the anxiety of Friends concerning recent scientific ideas:- "Can a scientific man be a sincere Friend?" His answer, of course, was strongly positive.

Inevitably, there was a mixed reception to this session of the Conference. Two of the recorded comments may be quoted:

(A) "I feel concerned to utter my earnest protest against the views uttered here tonight. It seems to me that this Conference, representing London Yearly Meeting, cannot do justice to itself without registering a protest."

(B) "Many of us feel that never in our lives have we so appreciated the privilege of being Quakers as tonight."

I have already suggested that some significant revolutionary movement seems to take place towards a century's close. There is no doubt that the Manchester Conference was revolutionary for the Society of Friends. The flow of liberal thought could not be stopped. In 1897, an important Summer School was held at Scarborough to follow up the Conference. This was followed by others and a little later by the establishment of Woodbrooke College, as will be described in the next chapter.

These were the foundations of 20th century Quakerism in Britain.

Addendum. Overseas work of Friends.

Little has been said yet about the work of Friends outside Britain, except for some references to the growth of Quakerism in America.

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Overseas work has been a very important part of Quakerism in the 20th century and here again the roots are to be found in the l9th. Two aspects of overseas work were:

Missionary work. This was a natural development of the evangelical movement, both in Britain and in America. Although the primary purpose was the spread of the Gospel, Friends rapidly became involved in social work, applying their skills to what seemed important locally. Thus, in different places, Friends worked in education, in health, in agricultural development. The official body of London Yearly Meeting which was responsible for this part of the overseas work was the Friends Foreign Mission Association (FFMA), started in 1868.

Peace work; Relief and rehabilitation. Just before the outbreak of the Crimean War (1854), a few Friends went to Russia to present an address to the Czar, in the hopes of avoiding hostilities; they were received in a friendly spirit, but the war could not be avoided. Immediately after the war, two Friends (one of them Joseph Sturge, who had also gone to Russia) went to Finland to see what could be done to help those in certain coastal towns and villages, which had been devastated by bombardment by the British Navy. They were able to raise a relief fund at home to provide essentials of food, housing and clothing and equipment.

These early efforts, mainly due to individual Friends, developed during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 into a major relief action by the Society of Friends. The Friends War Victims Relief Committee was established and Quaker relief work obtained international recognition by the adoption of the "Quaker Star" as an identifying symbol.

These two spheres of Friends activities were the foundation of Quaker work overseas, which has been so much a feature of the 20th century. They will get further consideration in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 6
The Twentieth Century (So Far!)

Twentieth century Quakerism really began with the Manchester Conference of 1895. As has been said, this was followed by important Summer Schools at Scarborough and elsewhere and then came the foundation of Woodbrooke College in 1903.

The motivation for all this came from a number of forward looking Friends who, to put it bluntly, felt that when Friends spoke in Meeting for Worship or elsewhere about Quakerism, the Bible, etc., they had better know what they were talking about. There was no merit in ignorance as such; and a good contribution to overcoming ignorance was to provide a study centre. This would be open to any Friends able to take advantage of it, who in their turn would be able to disseminate their knowledge among their local Meetings. Thus, Woodbrooke College came to be founded. It was situated in a large house on the outskirts of Birmingham, which was donated by George and Elizabeth Cadbury. The house is set in a large garden, which still today provides an oasis of quiet on the edge of the city.

Woodbrooke College

This is not the place for a detailed account of Woodbrooke, but the work done there sufficiently reflects the work and action of twentieth century Friends that it is worth giving some outline.

The first Director of Studies was J. Rendell Harris. A visitor to Woodbrooke will see there a photograph of an elderly bearded figure taken in later years; and perhaps will think "a venerable Doctor indeed, but a figure of the past". A different impression is received if one reads his address on "The Bible and modern thought" to the Manchester Conference, delivered only eight years before going to Woodbrooke; this address was one of those which prompted a Friend to urge the Society to register a protest against what was being said. Rendell Harris went to Woodbrooke from a Professorship at Leyden in Holland and some of his Dutch students, not wishing to lose him as a teacher, followed him there. This was the beginning of the international connections which have always been such an important part of Woodbrooke life.

A regular course of study became established at Woodbrooke, based on the studies of Quakerism, the Bible, and International Relations. The students were by no means limited to British Friends. Many came from overseas to learn more about Quakerism and to take

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their experience back to their own countries. There came a time when it was not unusual to have 20 or more different nationalities together at Woodbrooke at one time.

There have naturally been very considerable changes over the years in the nature of the studies and the service which Woodbrooke provides for the Society; but Woodbrooke has been a strength to the Society and a unifying factor throughout its history. There has always been a welcome for Friends (which of course includes Attenders) from any part of the world and of all religious or theological affinities, although there have doubtless been times when more evangelical Friends will have felt out of sympathy with the liberal approach of most of the Woodbrooke scholars.

The increasing "liberalisation" of the Society of Friends in the 20th Century

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What I have to say about the changes taking place during this century refers primarily to British Friends ("London Yearly Meeting"); there have been parallel changes in the U.S.A and elsewhere, but the extent and nature vary widely according to the location and to the traditions of the Meeting concerned.

"Peculiar" Quaker habits

All through the l8th century and to a considerable extent in the l9th, it was easy to identify a Quaker by certain "peculiar" habits. Most noticeable would have been "hat-honour" (i.e. not removing the hat when in the presence of a "superior"), plain dress and plain speech.

"Hat-honour" disappeared fairly early, as the removal of one's hat gradually became recognised more as a matter of courtesy than of deference. The rigid adherence in the l8th century to a particular form of "plain dress" (e.g. no lapels or buttons) did not survive the l9th.

Only the "plain speech", noticeably the use of 'thee' and 'thou' and of numbers for the days of the week and for the months continued into the present century. The use of 'thee/thou' was not unusual during the first half of this century among Friends who had been brought up in Friend families (then termed "birthright Friends") but was little used in public. The use of day and month numbers became largely confined to formal Minutes and announcements; (an interesting survival outside Quaker writings was the use in Bradshaw's Railway Guide, continued into the 1920's if I remember rightly. I should point out that Bradshaw was a Quaker).

Music and "The Arts"

The tradition of rejecting music, not only in worship but in entertainment and as an art form, dated from the l7th century and took a long time to die. During the early years of

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this century, the use of music by Friends would have been confined almost entirely to private homes. Only in rare instances would it have been heard in Meeting Houses. Quaker Schools were beginning to become more tolerant; (one Friend I knew was allowed to have music lessons, but because no piano had been permitted in the school she had to use the piano in the gardener's cottage!) However, well before the mid-century the objection had vanished completely; there was no distinction between Quakers and others either in the use of musical ability or in the enjoyment of musical performances.

There has never been a strong 'testimony' against the arts of painting, sculpture, etc., though probably some will have thought that they were not of sufficient importance to warrant the time spent on them. It was largely to emphasise the importance of all the arts that the "Quaker Fellowship of the Arts" was formed. This continues with considerable interest, though it is less a Quaker activity as such than an opportunity for like-minded people to share their interest in group activities.

The "Testimony for Simplicity"

"Simplicity" has never meant for Friends a 'hair-shirt' austerity but rather the avoidance of extravagance and ostentation. Within these guide lines, personal life-styles have been left to the interpretation and consciences of individual Friends. The positive affirmations of John Woolman, as described earlier, are highly respected but, while he remains a pattern and examples, it is only a few who have felt able to follow him closely. There have, indeed, been Quakers of considerable affluence, largely through their business enterprise in the l8th and l9th centuries; still, many of these have aimed to share surplus by endowing social projects and setting up charitable trusts.

Quaker activity in the 20th Century

The history of Quaker work in this century has been a continuation and development of activities in which Friends were already deeply involved in the l9th century. There have been considerable changes in the nature and the extent of the action, consistent with changes of need and opportunity, but the motivation has remained constant; namely, the concern to give service where required, regardless of nationality, race or social class. For the sake of simplicity, I have given an outline under various headings, but there has always been considerable overlap.

Peace Activities

The "Peace Testimony" has been a continuing tradition throughout Quaker history, although it has seldom been imposed on Friends with credal force. During the present century it has remained a powerful influence on Friends' thought and action, based as it is on a religious conviction.

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When conscription was introduced during the first World War, there was some provision for conscientious objection. Tribunals had the power to give exemption on condition of undertaking some approved service or even unconditionally. Tribunals were in general unsympathetic; exemption was hard to obtain and an unconditional exemption was very rare. An appreciable number of Friends and Attenders, who claimed unconditional exemption, suffered long terms of imprisonment. There is little doubt that the sincerity and the steadfastness of those who made the protest had a considerable influence on later attitudes. So, by the time of the second War things had changed considerably; there was greater tolerance to those claiming exemption on conscience grounds and many Friends were granted exemption either absolutely or more frequently on undertaking alternative service.

The corporate action of Friends towards peace and war may be said to have had two purposes: the healing of the hurt done by war, and the establishment of a condition of peace. Among the ways in which Friends reacted to the 1914-18 War were three organisations which need special mention.

(a) **The Emergency Committee.** This was set up in 1914 to counteract the danger of mass hysteria and violence likely to be directed against 'enemy aliens'. There were large numbers of Germans, Austrians, etc., either employed in this country or simply stranded here. Many of the men were interned or at least lost their jobs. The Emergency did what was possible to support them and their dependants.

(b) **Friends War Victims Relief Committee**, originally set up in 1871, was revised to undertake overseas work of relief and reconstruction. The name inevitably connected with this is A. Ruth Fry. A first-hand account of her work is to be found in her book "A Quaker Adventure". Much medical work was done in France, including the founding of a maternity hospital at *Chalons-s-Marne*. The work expanded, especially after America joined in the war in 1917 and extended to some nine countries, including Poland, Russia, Belgium.

(c) **The Friends Ambulance Unit.** This was an unofficial body, which started at a training camp in 1914 under the leadership of Philip Noel-Baker. It was composed of pacifists, Quaker and non-Quaker, who originally worked in France under the direction of the military, but purely in a non-combatant manner. The work was both with the civilian population behind the lines and with the wounded at the front.

Quaker peace work continued after the cessation of hostilities, taking on different forms as different needs developed. An immediate opportunity came in Germany and Austria, where large student populations were seen to be suffering severe deprivation. Food relief was undertaken through both British and American Quakers. This relief, known as "Quaker-Speisung" in Germany, made a lasting impression on the people. Later on, in the days of the Hitler regime, there were a number of Germans now in positions of responsibility who had benefited from this help and had remembered it. There were occasions when Quakers were enabled to give help to those suffering in Germany when others could not.

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Towards the close of the 1914-18 war, The Council for International Service was formed with Carl Heath as its Chairman. He had conceived the idea of "Quaker Embassies" to be situated in capital cities. As a result, Quaker centres were established in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna. The extension of this vision has been the offices set up to work with the United Nations in New York and Geneva; and, more recently, the Brussels office.

In 1927, there was an important step forward in the amalgamation of the Council for International Service with the Friends Foreign Mission Association (FFMA) to form the Friends Service Council (FSC). Much of the 'missionary' work had developed into 'service' work and it was eminently sensible to have one body to be responsible for all types of overseas work, relief, mission, service.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, attention had to shift again to immediate action. The F.A.U. and the F.W.V.R.C. were both re-constituted. The nature of the latter developed differently and was succeeded by the more widely involved Friends Relief Service (F.R.S.). In the immediate post-war years relief and reconciliation work internationally was a major pre-occupation of Friends through the Friends Service Council; and, in 1947, the F.S.C., together with the American Friends Service Committee, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Friends have always tried to adjust their Committee structure to current requirements and have been conscious of the need to avoid overlapping and duplication of the work of the various Committees. Consequently, over the years, there has been a number of amalgamations. It would make complicated reading to go into details, so it is best just to say what the present situation is.

There are three main Committees, responsible for Friends' work, which report to Meeting for Sufferings:

(a) **Quaker Peace and Service (QPS).** This was a merger of the former FSC and the Peace and International Relations Committee (PIRC). It had been realised that 'Service' and 'Peace work' could not really be separated.

(b) **Quaker Social Responsibility and Education Council (QSRE).** A uniting of the former Social Responsibility Council and the Friends Education Council; with a wide range of interests e.g. housing, prison reform, addiction, etc.,

(c) **Quaker Home Service** (formerly Home Service Council) (QHS); essentially unchanged, with general responsibility for the religious life of the Society through the constituent Meetings.

The general development of the Society during this century

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I have given much space to the practical work of Friends during the century, concentrating on overseas work. This is, in fact, appropriate, because for the first three-quarters of the century "The Quakers" were best known for their relief and reconciliation work abroad; it was their response to world events. To turn now to other things:

Quakers in America

In these "Smatterings" I have tried to keep things simple and that is why I am saying very little about the development of Quakers in America; the story of American Quakerism is far from simple. However, before returning to Quakers here, the fact of American reconciliation must be told.

The year 1827 was that of the great Separation and matters stayed like that for some 100 years; London Yearly Meeting continued to send its Epistle only to the Yearly Meetings of the "Orthodox" tradition, repudiating those of the "Hicksite" persuasion.

However, things did change gradually and the most dramatic reconciliation came in Philadelphia. Here there were two main Meetings; though in Meeting Houses only one mile apart, they were not on speaking terms. The tradition of separation was so strong that it was not until 1955 that there was full unity between them.

There are still the two main groups of Yearly Meeting in America: "Friends United Meeting", based on the "orthodox" tradition, and "Friends General Conference, mainly unprogrammed. However, although there is this difference, the feeling of bitter separation has gone.

Quakers in Britain

The Quaker renaissance, which can be dated from the Manchester Conference (1895) and which was firmly established in the first decade of this century, ushered in a 'liberalism'- I should prefer to call it an 'openness' - which has developed and evolved over the years.

Bible study, stimulated by Woodbrooke and to some extent by Friends Schools, has been much more widespread. Friends no longer look askance at the discoveries and research of the bible scholars of the l9th century. Evangelical thought has lost the dominance it once had. There are indeed evangelical Friends, but the spectrum of belief has widened and now is very wide indeed.

Social work has continued to be an important concern of Quakers, but as the structure of such work throughout the country has changed, so have Friends' activities. The number and extent of specifically Quaker organisations diminished and, increasingly, Quakers have become involved in work which has not been initiated by them. Still, it has been said that

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if one is concerned with social work of any kind, it is not long before one bumps into a Quaker.

As already indicated, the general way of life has become more relaxed than it was among orthodox Quakers of the last century. For example, all restrictions and hesitations about music, art, drama, have completely gone.

Total abstinence is no longer a 'testimony' among Quakers (remember I am still speaking of British Quakers), though there are many Friends who do abstain. For the rest, moderation is the general pattern.

Peace, which implies the rejection of the use of military force, is still basic in the Society; but there are many who are conscious of the dilemmas produced by a policy of pacifism and it would not be true to say that pacifism among individual Friends is universal.

Finally, a word about Friends Meetings.

As regards Meetings for Worship, the only structural change has been the abolition of "Recorded Ministers" in 1924, following the gradual disuse of the practice among Meetings. While the system had its value in maintaining the quality of ministry, it was felt that it caused a sense of separation in Meetings and inhibited the ministry of other Friends. Otherwise, the character of Meetings for Worship has been essentially unchanged - at least during the 50 years that I have known the Society.

There have been two changes with regard to "business Meetings", which have had an effect on the life of the Society. The first has been the abandonment of "Quarterly Meetings" in the vertical structure of the Society; they have been succeeded by "General Meetings" which are intended to serve different purposes.

The second innovation has been the regular holding of residential Yearly Meetings (once in four years). At these the sessions of Yearly Meeting itself have been supplemented by a very full programme of meetings of "special interest groups". The annual gathering at the time of the holding of London Yearly Meeting has for a long time been used as an opportunity for meetings of committees and other groups; the greater time available at a residential Y.M. has greatly increased this opportunity and in recent years the number of meetings has greatly proliferated. For many these meetings of special interest groups have become a major reason for attending Yearly Meeting and have attracted Friends who are unlikely to attend other business Meetings of the Society.

This concludes my "Smatterings" account of the development of Quakerism over the past three and a half centuries. I am conscious that much has been left out, particularly perhaps with regard to developments

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and activities in USA and elsewhere overseas; but it was never my intention to be complete.

I have tried to be objective, not that anyone dealing with events can be fully so. I am, however, adding an Appendix, which is highly subjective - and meant to be. It tells how I see the Society of Friends now (with some reference to how I feel it has changed since I first knew it 54 years ago; and, very tentatively, how it may go in the future).

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APPENDIX

The Society of Friends now (and ? in the future).

We all know that the correct title of our Society is "The Religious Society of Friends", frequently with (Quakers) added.

Many of us don't like the word 'religious' and some of these would like it removed when next there is a revision of the "Book of Discipline". We don't like to be labelled 'religious' - it smacks of Phariseeism, religiosity, etc., things we would like to be free from.

However, there are also many of us who want to assert that we are not a purely secular society, though we should dislike having to define the word 'secular'. It is not just a Quaker platitude to say that our "Meetings for Worship" form the core of our Society. In whatever terms we, individually, understand the word 'worship', we can be said to be a 'worshipping community'. That would justify our calling ourselves a "Religious Society".

In the USA, the term Friends Church is widely used. British Quakers don't much like that; but if the original meaning of "church" as an assembly (essentially a religious assembly) is kept in mind, then American Friends aren't far wrong. After all, this is what Fox thought was a "Church" and why he called buildings 'steeple houses'.

Anyhow, whatever we term ourselves, we are a society (or Society) and it is as well to have a look at the structure as it is at present and at its stability. The general structure is well enough known and it would be tedious to go into details again, but a look at the structure is a convenient base for personal comment and assessment.

1. Local Meetings.

The regular coming together in "Meeting for Worship" clearly means a great deal for those who attend, whether "Members" or not. The meeting for business affairs, the "Preparative Meeting" is probably fairly well supported in most local Meetings; but personal circumstances do very much influence Friends' interest in attending and opportunity to do so.

For a considerable number there is little interest in the affairs of the Society beyond the local Meeting. Widespread changes in personal and family life have increasingly caused this to be so.

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2. Monthly Meetings

These remain the central meetings for business of the Society; particularly since the abolition of Quarterly Meetings. In such business meetings, it is quite common for a Minute to be accepted with which an appreciable number of those present may not agree. If such Friends do not feel that the "sense of the Meeting" has been found, they will not be able to accept the 'discipline of the Meeting' (which is the only true discipline in the Society) and tensions will arise. The difficulties and tensions are increased when decisions are made by a Committee, for in the nature of it a Committee cannot be attended by all individuals.

So, we have to ask the question:-

How far is there unity in the Society of Friends?

I recently heard a speaker on a religious programme say "Unity is something that may be **sensed**", meaning that you may not be able to put your finger on it, but you feel it is there.

Unity is not the same as **agreement** - and certainly does not mean **uniformity**.

There are great disagreements theologically (a word most Quakers don't like!) even within London Y.M. and even greater with some of the more evangelical, or even fundamentalist, Meetings overseas.

In Britain it has become common to think of Friends as widely polarised into "Christo-centric" and "Universalist" (with an indeterminate number in between in a sort of middle ground). Any such labelling or categorisation works against unity; for it leads to an exclusiveness of held beliefs, with a consequent *disinclination* to listen creatively.

(I happen to be writing this at the close of the week set aside by many Christians as the "Week of prayer for Christian Unity". I heard the view expressed that, although there is no quest for uniformity, the walls which have been erected to protect entrenched positions need to be removed. There is a strong parallel here with the Quaker position.)

However, great though the differences are, there is still a sense of unity in the Society. It can be sensed as one visits Meetings other than one's own; as one meets groups of Friends involved in some common work; and, not infrequently, even in the large (over-large?) sessions of London Yearly Meeting.

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What of the future?

Throughout these "Smatterings" my suggestion has been that some considerable upheaval seems to have occurred towards the end of a century - religious, social, political, scientific, etc. - which has permeated into the thought of Friends, even though after some time-lapse.

We are now in the final decade of a century. Has there been any happening which we can see as being of a 'revolutionary' nature?

There is no doubt that in the international political field the 'revolutionary development' has been the growth of self-determination in Eastern Europe, in the Soviet States, in Yugoslavia. Is it fanciful to suggest that there has been a parallel in the social-personal world? There has been an increase if individualism in this country ("There is no such thing as society, only individuals"!). Has this permeated into the Society of Friends? Is there an increasing number of Friends, who put self-expression as a priority and have less regard for the ties and the 'discipline' of the Society? George Fox had difficulties with the "Ranters"; is the Society of Friends going to have difficulties with the late 20th century equivalent?

In the religious field, there has been a growth in the churches of the quest for unity (in other words, a move towards a greater ecumenism, but I prefer to avoid this term as it is widely misunderstood). In the Society of Friends there has also been a move towards unity, but this has been taking place in two quite different ways; one has been towards greater unity with faiths other than the Christian, the other towards the established Christian Churches. This has already produced the polarity which I have mentioned.

There is another factor which may have a definitive effect on the future of the Society of Friends. This is the 'servicing' of the Society. We are still very much a "do-it-yourself" society. In these days of change in social circumstances, how far shall we be able to continue to be so? During the last century, in mid-west USA, the increased occupation with farming and the general demands of making a living made one reason why a pastoral system for meetings was adopted. In London Y.M., there is no pastoral system and few paid secretaries in the Meetings, but can this situation last? Many Meetings, local, Monthly, etc., are finding it increasingly difficult to find Friends to fill the various offices: Clerks of Meetings, of Premises Committees, etc. (This is not unique to Friends; many churches have similar problems, but they do have ministers.)

This difficulty has extended to central offices at Friends House. There was a time, 40 or more years ago, when there was quite a number of Friends free to do voluntary work there. This has now passed and, at least for those who can remember former days, Friends House has appeared to become more remote and more bureaucratic.

Finally, there is one other matter which also has a bearing on all this. That is the question of membership. This is a sensitive matter and I have no intention of going deeply into it

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now. One can understand that, in many local Meetings, Members and Attenders may be indistinguishable. Yet, membership does imply a commitment which extends beyond the local Meeting. Any increasing reluctance to take up the commitment of membership is likely to make the 'servicing' of the Society, both spiritually and materially, a good deal more difficult.

Thus, I see the present as confused and somewhat perilous. The future will depend on those who are in a position to give time and thought to it.

(Please remember that this Appendix is entirely subjective, that it is just me thinking with pen and typewriter.)

READING SUGGESTIONS

There is no "required reading" either in preparation or in follow-up, but some of you may want to go further, or deeper. There is a wide range of literature suggested.

Books giving a general account of the history and thought of Quakerism

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"The Quakers, their Story and Message" (Neave Brayshaw, 1921). A much used "text-book"; a sound and quite interesting study.

"The Story of Quakerism" (Elfrida Vipont, 1954). A thoroughly good and readable account through the centuries... not just "factual history".

"What is Quakerism?" (Edward Grubb, 1917). Not much known or used today, because it is "old". Still, I continue to rate it highly. It is about the ideas and spirit of Quakerism. Quite straightforward reading.

"Quaker by Convincement" (Geoffrey Hubbard, 1974, paperback) Inclusive account of history, practice, ideas. Sound and informative.

"Quaker Ways" (Ruth Fry, l933) Covers much ground, very readable.

"Portrait in Grey" (John Punshon, 1984) A thoughtful survey of Quakerism, past and present, in its historical context. The best of recent books.

"A Living Faith" A Historical Study of Quaker Beliefs. (Wilmer Cooper, 1990) By a leading American Quaker. A valuable modern contribution.

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Writings by and about Early Quakers

"George Fox and the children of the Light" (Jonathan Fryer, l991) An excellent edited and shortened issue of the Journal. Quite easy to tackle.

"Quaker Classics in Brief" Extracts of writings from Penn, Barclay, Pennington. It makes these (rather erudite) authors available.

"Journal of John Woolman" Personal account of travels; much more readable than George Fox's.

"The Wisdom of John Woolman" (Reginald Reynolds, 1948). An excellent introduction to Woolman. Contains substantial extracts as well as comments.

"The Valiant Sixty" (Ernest Taylor, l947). An account of some early Quakers and of the N.W. country where they lived.

"George Fox and the Quakers" (Cecil Sharman, 1991). A new definitive account of his life and work.

Short introductions for newcomers and enquirers

"Introducing Quakers" (George Gorman, 1969). For many years used as the standard issue to enquirers. Easy to read.

"You and the Quakers" (Alison Sharman, 1977). Primarily designed for teenagers, but actually good for any age (or experience).

Booklets by Quakers. I have chosen just four out of very many:

"God in Every Man" (Hugh Doncaster, 1968). As good an assessment of Quakerism as anything I know.

"Quaker Strongholds" (Caroline Stephens, 1890). Well written by a highly educated and perceptive woman.

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"The Reality of the Spiritual World" (Thos. Kelly, 1944).

"Search for Reality in Religion" (John Macmurray, l965). Personal account by a classical philosopher, who came to Quakerism late in life.

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