

**INTERIM  
FAITH AND PRACTICE  
2014  
(2015 EDITION)**



**NEW ENGLAND  
YEARLY MEETING  
OF FRIENDS**

# 1 ILLUSTRATIVE EXPERIENCES OF FRIENDS

This chapter states some essentials of Quaker faith, not by articulating them, but by expressing them through the living personal and corporate experiences of Friends. Friends find that faith grows and matures through reflection on experiences of the Light. This rhythm of experience and reflection continues throughout life, opening us to continuing revelation.

An aspect of grace is that the Spirit communicates with us in words, images, and feelings that engage us. It is our task as individuals and as meetings to discover how to live faithfully a path we have been given.

The Spirit may break into our lives in powerful moments of altered consciousness or clarity. The Spirit may also work in a gradual unfolding of understanding and confidence. Often our lives contain a combination of both. What matters is living with integrity, faithful to our own experience.

It is often hard to find words to convey our experiences. How do we express that which is beyond description? Some may be led to use art, music, movement, or other non-verbal ways to express it. Let us listen not only to words, but to actions and lives which witness to the workings of the Spirit.

These extracts show the variety of ways Friends have been inspired to convey in words their experience of seeking and finding truth. While each one expresses a particular experience, together they convey something of the breadth and diversity among Friends, both past and present. They invite us to listen to the spirit from which the words arose.

The Spirit is timeless and Friends may find in the extracts a similarity of experience which serves to draw us together into that which is eternal.

## CONVICTION AND CONVINCEMENT

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*“And this I knew experimentally.”*

*George Fox 1647*

Now after I had received that opening from the Lord that to be bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not sufficient to fit a man to be a minister of Christ, I regarded the priests less, and looked more after the dissenting people ... But as I had forsaken all the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those called the most experienced people; for I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, Oh then, I heard a voice which said, ‘There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,’ and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy. Then the Lord did let me see why there was none upon the earth that could speak to my condition, namely, that I might give him all the glory; for all are concluded under sin, and shut up in unbelief as I had been, that Jesus Christ might have the pre-eminence, who enlightens, and gives grace, and faith, and power. Thus, when God doth work who shall [hinder] it? And this I knew experimentally. **1.01**

*George Fox 1647*

In the year 1652 it pleased the Lord to draw [George Fox] toward us ... My then husband, Thomas Fell, was not at home at that time, but gone to the Welsh circuit, being one of the Judges of Assize, and our house [Swarthmoor Hall] being a place open to entertain ministers and religious people at, one of George Fox[’s] friends brought him hither, where he stayed all night. And the next day, being a lecture or a fast-day, he went to Ulverston steeplehouse, but came not in till people were gathered; I and my children had been a long time there before. And when they were singing before the sermon, he came in; and when they had done singing, he stood up upon his seat or form and desired that he might **1.02**

have liberty to speak. And he that was in the pulpit said he might ... .[George Fox] went on and said, How that Christ was the Light of the world and lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and that by this Light they might be gathered to God, etc. And I stood up in my pew, and I wondered at his doctrine, for I had never heard such before. And then he went on, and opened the Scriptures, and said, 'The Scriptures were the prophets' words and Christ's and the apostles' words, and what as they spoke they enjoyed and possessed and had it from the Lord.' And said, 'Then what had any to do with the Scriptures, but as they came to the Spirit that gave them forth. You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of Light and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest, is it inwardly from God?' This opened me so that it cut me to the heart; and then I saw clearly we were all wrong. So I sat me down in my pew again, and cried bitterly. And I cried in my spirit to the Lord, 'We are all thieves, we are all thieves, we have taken the Scriptures in words and know nothing of them in ourselves' ... I saw it was the truth, and I could not deny it; and I did as the apostle saith, I 'received the truth in the love of it,' And it was opened to me so clear that I had never a tittle in my heart against it; but I desired the Lord that I might be kept in it, and then I desired no greater portion.

*Margaret Fell 1694*

- 1.03 Now to return to my apprenticeship; I had a very kind loving master and mistress, and I had meat enough, and work enough, but had little consideration about religion, nor any taste thereof. On First-days I frequented meetings, and the greater part of my time I slept, and took no account of preaching, nor received any other benefit than being there kept [me] out of bad company, which indeed is a very great service to youth ... but one First-day, being at meeting, a young woman, named Anne Wilson, was there and preached; she was very zealous, and fixing my eye upon her, she with a great zeal pointed her finger at me, uttering these words with much power, 'A traditional Quaker, thou comest to meeting as thou went from it (the last time) and goes from it as

thou came to it, but art no better for thy coming, what wilt thou do in the end?’ This was so pat to my then condition, that, like Saul, I was smitten to the ground, as it might be said, but turning my thoughts inward, in secret I cried, ‘Lord, what shall I do to help it?’ And a voice as it were spoke in my heart, saying ‘Look unto me, and I will help thee.’

*Samuel Bownas 1696*

At last, after all my distresses, wanderings, and sore travails, I met with some writings of this people called Quakers, which I cast a slight eye upon and disdained, as falling very short of that wisdom, light, life, and power which I had been longing for, and searching after ... After a long time I was invited to hear one of them (as I had been often, they in tender love pitying me, and feeling my want of that which they possessed) ... when I came, I felt the presence and power of the Most High among them, and words of Truth from the Spirit of Truth reaching to my heart and conscience, opening my state as in the presence of the Lord. Yea, I did not only feel words and demonstrations from without, but I felt the dead quickened, the seed raised; insomuch as my heart (in the certainty of light, and clearness of true sense) said, ‘This is he; this is he; there is no other: this is he whom I have waited for and sought after from my childhood; who was always near me, and had often begotten life in my heart; but I knew him not distinctly, nor how to receive him, or dwell with him.’ 1.04

*Isaac Penington 1667*

I was walking across one such green oasis—the lawn outside of St. Michael’s House—when it happened. 1.05

Someone spoke to me.

Not with words at first, but with a tremendous physical sensation. I have described it, ever since, as being as if a great hand seized me by the spinal column. I stopped. And I knew something all the way down to the core of me.

The words that came to me reflect just a ghost of the power of the knowing. I'm still working on finding all the implications of that knowing, so no single set of words was going to capture it, but the words were these:

If half a dozen men, armed only with box-cutters<sup>1</sup>, can kill thousands, then the day when force could 'settle' conflicts—if it ever could—is over and done.

Mostly, though, what came to me was a sense that the idea of force as a means to peace was just done for me. I had come to believe that, as the chestnut goes, there is no way to peace; that peace is the way.

It was in response to this that I began attending Mt. Toby meeting.

I remember sitting in that first meeting I attended, almost weeping with gratitude, watching Friend after Friend arrive. I'm just a single leaf, I thought. I'm just a single leaf, on a single tree, in a great Forest of those who are seeking peace. And as each Friend settled into their seat, I felt gladness. I felt that I was, at last, surrounded by teachers. I felt that everything was going to be All Right.

My only fear was that I would not be seen as belonging there. It was so transparently clear to me that I did that it made me a little afraid.

*Cat Chapin-Bishop 2008*

- 1.06** I was at a very low point. I was sleeping out of doors on the porch close to the hill. A light breeze rustled through the overhanging branches of a great walnut tree. I was very tired. I looked up at the stars edging over the hill in my mood of great despondency.

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1 Box-cutters were the weapons used by the men who hijacked the planes flown into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the plane that crashed in Pennsylvania on September 11, 2001.

I said to God, ‘It’s no use. I’ve tried all I can. I can’t do anything more.’ All of a sudden I seemed to be swept bodily out of my bed, carried above the trees and held poised in mid-air, surrounded by light—a light so bright that I could hardly look at it. Even when I closed my eyes I could feel it. A fragrance as of innumerable orange blossoms inundated my senses. And there was an echo of far-off music. All was ecstasy. I have no idea whether it lasted a minute or several hours. But for the rest of the night I lay in a state of peace and indescribable joy. How impossible it is to explain such a phenomenon in everyday language, but whatever it was changed my life. It was not a passing illusion. I never was the same again. For days I was terribly happy. The whole world seemed to be illumined, the flower colors were brighter, bird songs gayer, and people were kind, friendly and loving. This exaggerated brilliance faded somewhat with time and the intense sense of communion fluctuated. Later on there were, of course, low moments amidst the high peaks, and there were failures, dry seasons, and the recurring need for patience and perseverance. But I never lost the clarification of mind and spirit that was revealed to me on that night.

*Josephine Duvenek 1978*

At age thirty, discouraged, broken, facing a profound spiritual crisis, I found myself under the care of a Presbyterian minister who engaged my services in helping edit his doctoral thesis on the subject of community. He was studying the history of Quakers, Mennonites, and the first-century church. I was required to read the Journals of George Fox and John Woolman, works by Elfrida Vipont, Samuel Bownas, and others. I was moved to tears by these works and would cry out in joy, ‘This is it, this is what I always hoped against hope was true—Christ can teach his people himself!’ I began diligently to put myself in a place to hear God speak. Day after day I sat on a chair in my living room determined that I was going to hear God speak or die. Eight months went by without a word. After those long months, I finally heard God’s voice clearly and undeniably. **1.07**

That experience has been the high point of my spiritual journey.

I continued my listening and began to record in a journal every possible thought that came to me that could possibly be God's voice. I made note of how each thought felt, tasted, smelled, and shaded. I noted if I felt moved, if it was a new thought or old one, or whether or not there was a sense of character attached to it. Then I studied those notations as I watched my life unfold to see which of those thoughts panned out to be actual leadings. I learned that for me, leadings that were indeed from God came with a sense of being unquestionably true, they came often with an accompanying feeling that gave them color and direction. They came from deep inside rather than from the shallow place in my mind, and they always came in the character of God reflecting the virtues spelled out in the Beatitudes [Matthew 5:3–12]. I became suspect of leadings that were self-serving, self-aggrandizing, judgmental, arrogant, or possible weapons against those who disagreed with me.

Two things subsequently happened that changed my life forever and set me on my present path. One was that without my realizing it, during the time I was waiting to hear from God, I was being transformed radically. Friends and family commented on the changes that were to me imperceptible. At their urging I had to admit that my very basic paradigms had miraculously shifted. My view of money, power, and sexuality had been transformed. My love of attention, control, and material possessions had softened to the point of almost disappearing. Other changes, too profound to describe, were subtly shaping a new person within me. Shortly I recognized the changes in me as being the same virtues described in the passages in Matthew called the beatitudes: poverty of Spirit, meekness, mercifulness, love of peace, purity of heart, hunger for justice. I recognized these virtues as a description of Christ and believed that it was Christ's Spirit that was doing the transforming work within me. A passion arose in me to make one of my life's goals to become the embodiment of those virtues ... to be like Christ.



Secondly, I realized that Friends' spirituality was the only path I knew which believed in transformation directly from God's spirit rather than as a reward for some act or acts of obedience or self-discipline. I embraced that spirituality with a passion and a second life goal presented itself—I wanted to make a difference among Friends.

I now believe that God was teaching me how to receive revelation and respond faithfully to its message. Though I often falter and miss the truth, I have at least found a way to hear and recognize the voice of the one who sees.

*Stan Thornberg 2001*

*Hannah Whitall Smith became so sensitive to the misery she saw in the world that she took to wearing a heavy veil. The following account is her response to that misery seen in the faces of two men sitting opposite her on a tram-car in Philadelphia.*

1.08

'O, God, how canst Thou bear it? Thou mightest have prevented it, but didst not. Thou mightest even now change it, but Thou dost not. I do not see how Thou canst go on living, and endure it.' I upbraided God. And I felt I was justified in doing so. Then suddenly God seemed to answer me. An inward voice said, in tones of infinite love and tenderness, 'He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.' 'Satisfied!' I cried in my heart, 'Christ is to be satisfied! He will be able to look at the world's misery, and then at the travail through which He has passed because of it, and will be satisfied with the result! If I were Christ, nothing could satisfy me but that every human being should in the end be saved, and therefore I am sure that nothing less will satisfy Him.' And with this a veil seemed to be withdrawn from before the plans of the universe, and I saw that it was true, as the Bible says, that 'as in Adam all die—even so in Christ should all be made alive.' As was the first, even so was the second. The 'all' in one case could not in fairness mean less than the 'all' in the other. I saw therefore that the remedy must necessarily be equal to the disease, the salvation must be as universal as the fall ...

I hurried home to get hold of my Bible, to see if the magnificent fact I had discovered could possibly have been all this time in the Bible, and I had not seen it; and the moment I entered the house, I did not wait to take off my bonnet, but rushed at once to the table where I always kept my Bible and Concordance ready for use, and began my search. Immediately the whole Book seemed to be illuminated. ... I turned greedily from page to page of my Bible, fairly laughing aloud for joy at the blaze of light that illuminated it all. It became a new book. Another skin seemed to have been peeled off every text, and my Bible fairly shone with a new meaning. I do not say with a different meaning, for in no sense did the new meaning contradict the old, but a deeper meaning, the true meaning, hidden behind the outward form of words. The words did not need to be changed, they only needed to be understood; and now at last I began to understand them ...

I had always thought of Him as loving, but now I found out that He was far more than loving: He was love, love embodied and ingrained. I saw that He was, as it were, made out of love, so that in the very nature of things He could not do anything contrary to love ... I saw that, because He is love, He simply, in the very nature of things, must be loving. It is not a matter of choice with Him, but a matter of necessity. And I saw that, once this fact was known, to trust in this God of love would be as natural as to breathe. Every doubting question was answered, and I was filled with an illimitable delight in the thought of having been created by such an unselfish God ... Since I had this sight of the mother-heart of God, I have never been able to feel the slightest anxiety for any of His children; and by His children I do not mean only the good ones, but I mean the bad ones just as much.

*Hannah Whitall Smith 1903*

- 1.09** At times the sense of Presence would well up in me. I seemed to feel the anguish of God at all the suffering in the world. Sometimes I had to turn away because I could not bear it.

The experience confirmed my intellectual awareness of God as a process, rather than an omnipotent deity outside our human struggles, holding life and death power over mortal. This I know experimentally: God is not outside the universe, but part of it, limited by the same laws of cause and effect, involved in our struggles, working beside us, and unable to save us from the chance disasters that befall us. As I experienced the anguish of God in my own grief, so in time I experienced the compassion of God. God suffers with us. We are not alone. This too, I know experimentally.

*Elizabeth Watson 1977*

*Bill Kreidler tells of a conversation with a Friend who wanted to hear spiritual stories of the times when things happened to people that they didn't expect, when they were "kicked into the presence of God, heard voices, had a dream that completely changed them."*

1.10

I remembered that very early one morning several years ago I had such a dream. It was during that period early in the morning when you're in the slow process of waking up ... I kept dozing off. It was also at a very difficult period in my life. I was trying fairly unsuccessfully to cope with some very serious health problems and I was feeling very alone. I was feeling bereft. I was feeling hopeless. ...

It was a very simple dream. I dreamed that Jesus was walking toward me. Jesus got very close to me and he smiled and said, 'When things grow dimmer, you always have me.' And then he walked away.

When I woke up and remembered the dream, the first thought I had was, 'Well, I wasn't really asleep, so it doesn't count.' And then I thought, 'No, if Jesus appears to you in any kind of a dream, it counts.' ... Jesus was saying that if I needed him, he would be there for me. In the times when I was blind, he would help me see.

During the next few weeks, I realized something else: I did need him. To my surprise I realized that I had a new companion on

my spiritual journey. I didn't expect this companion, I didn't expect that it would be Jesus, I didn't expect he would ever be this important to me, but at this stage in my spiritual journey, he's exactly the companion I need. It reminds me of an old gospel song, 'Jesus may not come when you want him, but he's right on time.'

To be honest, I'm a little amazed and a little uncomfortable sometimes, to hear myself say, 'I'm a Christian.' I really haven't a clue where this leg of my spiritual journey is going to take me. I do know that I love where I am, even though I don't know where that is. I'm in another cycle of coming out, coming through, coming home.

*Bill Kreidler 1993*

- 1.11 I want to know not only conscience, but Christ. Yes, but to the sincere experimentalist, using his conscience as a guide, and seeking always to focus his life on that of Jesus Christ as he knows Him in the Gospels, and recognizes Him in His faithful disciples, there comes a time when the line between conscience and Christ grows very thin. There comes a time when the higher life of which I am always aware, and which I have tried to follow, becomes so merged in my thought of Christ and my devotion to Him, that I can hardly distinguish the two in my mind. There comes a time when suddenly I am on my knees, my whole soul flooded with light and love, tears in my heart and eyes, an unspeakable peace enfolding me. The pierced hands have reached through to me at last and draw me gently forth to Him. 'Come unto Me and rest,' and I answer, Yea, for I am hid with Christ in God.

I have sketched, you say, a hypothetical career. No, it is a story from real life. You say I have spoken in mystical language. I answer, Yes, the supreme moment cannot be defined in the dry language of theology, nor can words express it. You say the experience is the result of mental suggestion practised over a term of years. I answer, No one believes that who has once been there and taken off his shoes on holy ground,—the reality is too overpowering, the effect too profound.

*John Wilhelm Rowntree 1905*

On a certain summer afternoon towards the end of the first quarter of this century, I came home after a long and tiring day and, sitting down in the shade of the garden, I fell into a brown study. Quite unexpectedly I began to talk to myself, and to my surprise, I heard myself saying to myself, ‘If you don’t take care, you will end up by losing your soul!’ The humour of this remark struck me, since, as far as I was aware, I did not believe at that time that I had a soul to lose. Looking back now I realize that particular afternoon marked a turning point in my life. Anyone who begins to refer to his soul as something that can be lost and found has discovered a new field of experience and a new inner reservoir of facts to be studied and related to the outward facts of his ordinary life. This redirection of my search—from an outward search for truth in nature, to an inward search for truth in myself—was the next step necessary for the healing of my own divided mind.

*Howard E. Collier 1953*

*Luke Cock (1657–1740), a butcher by trade and a noted singer, preached at York, England, in 1721. His idiom may be unfamiliar to modern readers, but a translation into today’s English could not do justice to his words.*

Necessity, Friends, outstrips the law: necessity has made many people go by the Weeping Cross ... I remember I was younce travelling through Shrewsbury, and my Guide said to me: ‘I’ll show thee the Weeping Cross.’ ‘Nay,’ said I, ‘thou need not; I have borne it a great while.’ Now this place that he showed me was four lane ends.

I remember when I first met with my Guide. He led me into a very large and cross [place], where I was to speak the truth from my heart—and before I used to swear and lie too for gain. ‘Nay, then,’ said I to my Guide, ‘I mun leave Thee here: if Thou leads me up that lane, I can never follow: I’se be ruined of this butchering trade, if I mun’t lie for a gain.’ Here I left my Guide, and was filled with sorrow, and went back to the Weeping Cross: and I said, if I could find my good Guide again, I’ll follow Him, lead me whither He will. So here I found my Guide again, and began to follow Him up this lane and tell

the truth from my heart. I had been nought but beggary and poverty before; and now I began to thrive at my trade, and got to the end of this lane, though with some difficulty.

But now my Guide began to lead me up another lane, harder than the first, which was to bear my testimony in using the plain language. This was very hard; yet I said to my Guide, ‘Take my feeble pace, and I’ll follow Thee as fast as I can. Don’t outstretch me, I pray Thee.’ So by degrees I got up here.

But now I was led up the third lane: it was harder still, to bear my testimony against tithes—my wife not being convinced. I said to my Guide, ‘Nay, I doubt I never can follow up here: but don’t leave me: take my pace, I pray Thee, for I mun rest me.’ So I tarried here a great while, till my wife cried, ‘We’se all be ruined: what is thee ganging stark mad to follow t’silly Quakers?’ Here I struggled and cried, and begged of my Guide to stay and take my pace: and presently my wife was convinced. ‘Well,’ says she, ‘now follow thy Guide, let come what will. The Lord hath done abundance for us: we will trust in Him.’ Nay, now, I thought, I’ll to my Guide again, now go on, I’ll follow Thee truly; so I got to the end of this lane cheerfully. ...

My Guide led me up another lane, more difficult than any of the former, which was to bear testimony to that Hand that had done all this for me. This was a hard one: I thought I must never have seen the end of it. I was eleven years all but one month in it. Here I began to go on my knees and to creep under the hedges, a trade I never forgot since, nor I hope never shall. I would fain think it is impossible for me to fall now, but let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

I thought to have had a watering: but ye struggle so I cannot get you together. We mun have no watering tonight, I mun leave you every yan to his own Guide.

*Luke Cock 1721*

The first gleam of light, ‘the first cold light of morning’ which gave promise of day with its noontide glories, dawned on me one day at meeting, when I had been meditating on my state in great depression. I seemed to hear the words articulated in my spirit, ‘Live up to the light thou hast, and more will be granted thee.’ Then I believed that God speaks to man by His Spirit. I strove to lead a more Christian life, in unison with what I knew to be right, and looked for brighter days, not forgetting the blessings that are granted to prayer.

*Caroline Fox 1841*

My brother, Russell, and I were jamming away one afternoon nearly 30 years ago when the improvisation took a turn. We both felt a sense of being taken over by the Spirit, of being played. In the music, we heard a sound of a tune we both knew, and, all of a sudden, we found ourselves moving into an improvisation around that song. As we were playing, we both experienced three waves of light passing through and among us. My eyes were closed, but I saw and felt a warm, powerful light passing through my body and the room. Russell said that he was looking at the linoleum-tiled, flecked floor, when one of the white flecks jumped off the floor, expanded to fill the room and passed through his body. In that moment I experienced a musical and spiritual breakthrough. I was taught the musical concept of modal improvisation and I was given tangible assurance of divine reality. Along with the waves of light, I heard various other instruments and voices of a great orchestra and chorus joining our song. Or, perhaps more likely, we were joining that song. Music is a metaphor for my spiritual journey. In my life, music has moved from a place where I retreat, to fill my soul, to a place of prayer, where my soul overflows. ... In recent years, I continue to play music. I love to accompany singing on guitar and still jam away at my violin. Now there is jamming, or improvisation, with a group and then there is doing scales. Spiritual discipline, individual prayer is like playing scales. Meeting for worship is like jamming together with Friends. I cannot control the ways in which God’s grace is offered, but I can work on my receptiveness to that grace.



The experience of the waves of light passing through my brother and me was grace. The preparation to receive that grace took a lot of scales.

*Jonathan Vogel-Borne 2000*

- 1.16** What is salvation? Salvation, for me, is the coming into harmony with the song God is singing. I can only express it as a musical metaphor. There's something visceral and non-verbal about it. If you've ever been trying to come into harmony and you've not been in harmony and then you are, you know what I mean. It is not an event, it is a place, it is happening always anew, and yet it's a place to reside. When I find the center, when I am still and open, I find myself in that harmony, and since time is not a property of God, when I am there I am adjacent to eternity, and if that is what is waiting for me when my body falls away, I am eager for it, and I know it will seem familiar.

*Brian Drayton 2005*

- 1.17** During the fall of my freshman year in college I used to escape the stress of crowded high-rise dorm life by taking my books onto a grassy stretch of lawn to study. One afternoon as I stretched out on the grass to take a break I found myself growing more and more relaxed and peaceful. I wasn't falling asleep, I was just resting. My breathing slowed and the outside world fell away. I became aware of the most delightful soft laughter and felt a profound sense of welcome, as though I had entered a room full of people who had been eagerly waiting just for me. As I lay there, a young man approached and asked me the time. I sat up when I heard his voice but was so disoriented I couldn't understand him until he pointed to his wrist indicating a watch. I managed to tell him the time but he looked at me very strangely when he thanked me. The same young man found me in the same spot again the next day and introduced himself. I apologized having been so vague but he said he'd actually come back particularly to find me. He had been astonished the day before, because when I had turned to face him, I was glowing.

*Marion Athearn 2011*



I do personally experience the presence of Christ. Usually when I am singing. And sometimes when I am praying or even occasionally during the preaching. I feel the presence in my body but it's not like any other feeling I ever have. I feel closer to God and close to other members of the choir. We often all feel the feeling at once but in different ways. I forget the rest of the world in that moment. It is just me and the choir and God. It is good that we forget the world at these times. Often members of my choir lead hard lives. Some have been chased out of their house at night by war. But they come to church and sing. Singing heals us. I have recently learned that some Friends call this 'being gathered,' and that they experience it in the silence. It amazes me that you can have this without singing. 1.18

The first time that I really experienced God for myself came through prayer. I started praying on my own when I was nine years old. One day I prayed for protection and I really saw a response from God. Since then, prayer has become important in so many ways. I feel good and peaceful after talking to God. God always puts feelings in my heart to warn me of danger.

*Hayo Daniella, age 15, 2005*

As a teenager I looked for proof of the existence of God, but soon realised that there would be none. I chose to adopt as a working hypothesis a belief in God, and to go on from there. I have not felt the need to revise that hypothesis—yet. I believe in a powerful, all-knowing God, but a caring and a forgiving God. I believe he says to us: 'All right, you've got life, get on with it, live it! I am there behind to guide you, to help you live it; but don't expect me to interfere to make life smooth for you—you are old enough to stand on your own two feet.' 1.19

*Jocelyn S. Burnell 1976*

*While Caitlin Caulfield was spending her 17th year far away from her Alaska home, she had to deal simultaneously with an unfamiliar culture, a friend's death, and her mother's life-threatening illness.* 1.20

Well, I've been doing a lot of thinking. Meditating, more like it. Today, in my first class, it came to me that what I should be doing is making origami cranes for Mumma. And now, after having made a hundred, I know why. It's partly for the cranes, partly for Mumma. But mostly, the folding allows me time to go inward ... I haven't 'got religion.' But I felt God while I was folding cranes. I also had an epiphany of sorts about the concept of 'holding in the Light.' I always had this vague idea that it was praying, asking, 'Please, let Mumma get better' (for example). As I was folding, I realized I was truly holding Mumma, and my friend who died, in the Light ... As for holding in the Light, it's not about praying. It's about saying, 'Look here, God. This stuff is devastating. Right now, the world doesn't make sense. But I can't make it make sense. I wouldn't even know where to begin. So whatever needs to happen—that is what should happen.' Holding in the Light is an act of complete surrender, completely letting go and just trusting. Just trusting.

*Caitlin Caulfield 2005*

- 1.21 While I was too young to have any religion of my own, I had come to a home where religion kept its fires always burning. We had very few 'things,' but we were rich in invisible wealth. I was not 'christened' in a church, but I was sprinkled from morning to night with the dew of religion. We never ate a meal which did not begin with a hush of thanksgiving; we never began a day without 'a family gathering' at which mother read a chapter of the Bible after which there would follow a weighty silence. These silences, during which all the children of our family were hushed with a kind of awe, were very important features of my spiritual development. There was work inside and outside the house waiting to be done, and yet we sat there hushed and quiet, doing nothing. I very quickly discovered that something real was taking place. We were feeling our way down to that place from which living words come, and very often they did come. Some one would bow and talk with God so simply and quietly that He never seemed far away. The words helped to explain the silence. We were now finding what we had been searching for. When I

first began to think of God I did not think of Him as very far off. At a meeting some of the Friends who prayed shouted loud and strong when they called upon Him, but at home He always heard easily and He seemed to be there with us in the living silence. My first steps in religion were thus acted. It was a religion which we did together. Almost nothing was said in the way of instructing me. We all joined together to listen for God, and then one of us talked to Him for the others. In these simple ways my religious disposition was being unconsciously formed and the roots of my faith in unseen realities were reaching down far below my crude and childish surface thinking.

*Rufus Jones 1926*

## CORPORATE WORSHIP

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*“... the kingdom of heaven did gather us, and catch us all, as in a net ...”*

*Frances Howgill 1663*

[F]or, when I came into the silent assemblies of God’s people, I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart; and as I gave way unto it I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up; and so I became thus knit and united unto them, 1.22  
hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed; and indeed this is the surest way to become a Christian; to whom afterwards the knowledge and understanding of principles will not be wanting, but will grow up so much as is needful as the natural fruit of this good root, and such a knowledge will not be barren nor unfruitful.

*Robert Barclay 1678*

[And] the kingdom of heaven did gather us, and catch us all as in a net; and his heavenly power at one time drew many hundreds to land; that we came to know a place to stand in, and what to wait in; and the Lord appeared daily to us, to our astonishment, amazement, and great admiration; insomuch that we often said one unto another, with great joy of heart: ‘What! is the kingdom of God come to be with men? And will he take up his tabernacle 1.23

among the sons of men, as he did of old? And what! shall we, that were reckoned as the outcasts of Israel, have this honour of glory communicated amongst us, which were but men of small parts, and of little abilities, in respect of many others, as amongst men?’

*Francis Howgill 1663*

- 1.24 On one never-to-be-forgotten Sunday morning, I found myself one of a small company of silent worshippers who were content to sit down together without words, that each one might feel after and draw near to the Divine Presence, unhindered at least, if not helped, by any human utterance. Utterance I knew was free, should the words be given; and, before the meeting was over, a sentence or two were uttered in great simplicity by an old and apparently untaught man, rising in his place amongst the rest of us. I did not pay much attention to the words he spoke, and I have no recollection of their purport. My whole soul was filled with the unutterable peace of the undisturbed opportunity for communion with God, with the sense that at last I had found a place where I might, without the faintest suspicion of insincerity, join with others in simply seeking His presence. To sit down in silence could at the least pledge me to nothing; it might open to me (as it did that morning) the very gate of heaven. And, since that day, now more than seventeen years ago, Friends’ meetings have indeed been to me the greatest of outward helps to a fuller and fuller entrance into the spirit from which they have sprung; the place of the most soul-subduing, faith-restoring, strengthening, and peaceful communion, in feeding upon the bread of life, that I have ever known.

*Caroline E. Stephen 1890*

- 1.25 In Quaker meeting I’ve had the remarkable sensation of observing the room through the eyes of a bird perched high on a window looking in; and sitting quietly with my eyes closed, I’ve felt everything in the room—plants, people, furniture and the Presence penetrating everything—melt together. In the shining joy that accompanies this phenomenon, my differentiated consciousness is a drop of water in the divine sea, not separate but

flowing together with all consciousness, all experience. The drop does re-separate and I return to just being myself. But in the lingering glow of what I've seen, everything I touch, every person I pass, I recognize as—well, as me, as part of the same sacred identity. There is really in essence no I, you, and it—just we, and we are within the much larger identity of holy universality.

*Warren Ostram 1986*

I have experienced in some silence-based meetings for worship, especially memorial meetings, the overwhelming, loving presence of the Spirit in a silence which is almost physically heavy, as though a great chord has just been played. Beyond doubt the whole meeting feels it together. Once we have experienced this, we know the existence of the living God, and nothing that ever happens can take this certainty away from us. 1.26

*William Burt Kriebel 2002*

*In pastoral meetings it is common for the pastor to give a message at meeting for worship, for which preparation is made ahead of time.* 1.27

Often, as I work, I sense a stirring, an excitement, a focus, that seems more than just a pleasure in the creative process of finding the right words to express something. I feel the quality of message in my body, coming through my typing fingers, rather than out of my mouth; knowing that when those words come to be spoken on Sunday, there will be that stirring of the Spirit once again ... I do my best work when I prepare well ahead of time and give the message time to soak into me. Often I find it is what I really need to hear myself.

*Maggie Edmondson 2007*

## MINISTRY AND ELDERING

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*“All faithful people are not called to public ministry, but whoever are, are called to minister of that which they have tasted and handled spiritually. The outward modes of*

*worship are various, but whenever men are true ministers of Jesus Christ it is from the operation of his spirit upon their hearts ...”*

*John Woolman c. 1742*

**1.28** In the year 1755, being in company with Comfort Hoag and her companion, from New England, then on a religious visit to Friends in this part of the country, I attended a meeting with them in which I felt a concern to speak to the assembly, but, as usual, evaded it.

After meeting Comfort said to me, ‘David, why didst thou not preach today?’ I smiled at the query, seeming to wonder that she should ask such a question, and endeavored to appear innocent and ignorant of any concern of that kind. As she knew nothing of me but what she had felt, (having never before seen or heard of me) she said no more.

On the following day a similar concern came upon me, and I evaded it as before. After meeting Comfort again said to me, ‘David, why didst thou not preach today?’ I endeavored to pass it by, as I did before; but she said it was not worth while to evade it, for she was assured that I ought to have preached that day, and that I had almost spoiled her meeting by refraining, which had hindered her service. When I found I could not conceal my faults, I confessed the whole, and told her I had been for more than twenty years in that practice; and then gave her a history of my life from the beginning down to that day. She admired that divine kindness was yet manifested toward me in such manner, seeing I had so long rebelled against it, and then gave me suitable caution and advice.

The following day, being at meeting, I again felt a concern to speak to the people, but endeavored to evade it. ... Thus I spent the greater part of an hour. At length my divine Master, the great Master Builder, thus addressed me, ‘Why dost thou still delay. Desiring to be excused until a more convenient season? There never will be a better time than this. I have waited on thee above twenty years; I have clearly

made known to thee my will, so that all occasion of doubt has been removed; yet thou hast refused to submit until thy day is far spent; and if thou dost not speedily comply with my commands, it will be too late; thy opportunity will be lost.’

I then clearly saw that if I were forsaken, and left to myself, the consequence would be death and darkness forever! At the sight of the horrible pit that yawned for me, if I continued in disobedience, my body trembled like an aspen leaf, and my soul was humbled within me! Then I said, ‘Lord! Here am I; make what thou wouldst have me to be; leave me not in displeasure, I beseech thee.’ All my power to resist was then suspended; ... and was raised on my feet, I hardly knew how, and expressed in a clear and distinct manner what was on my mind.

When I had taken my seat Comfort Hoag rose, and had an open, favorable opportunity to speak to the assembly.

After meeting she told me that, during the time we had sat in silence, her whole concern was on my account; that her anxiety for my deliverance from that bondage was such, that she was willing to offer up her natural life to the Lord, if it might be a means to bring me forth in the ministry; and that on making that offering I rose to speak. On which her anxiety for me was removed, and her mind filled with concern for the people present.

*David Ferris 1755*

When I grew to about thirteen years of age, I began to discover something about me, or in my mind, like the heavenly anointing for the ministry; for the Lord had revealed His word as a hammer and had broken the rock in pieces in my living experience; and I was contrited under a sense of power and love; saying even vocally when alone, ‘Lord, make me a chosen vessel unto Thee’ ... 1.29

With respect to my first appearances [in ministry, when about seventeen years old] ... I shrunk from it exceedingly; and often have I hesitated, and felt such a reluctance to it, that I have suffered the meeting to break up without my having made the sacrifice: yea, when the word of life in a few words was like a fire within me ...



It pleased the Lord to call me into a path much untrodden, in my early travels as a messenger of the Gospel, having to go into markets and to declare the truth in the streets ... No one knows the depth of my sufferings and the mortifying, yea, crucifying of my own will, which I had to endure in this service; yet I have to acknowledge to the sufficiency of divine grace herein ... In the year 1801, I wrote thus: 'O heavenly Father, Thou hast seen me in the depth of tribulation, in my many journeyings and travels ... It was Thy power which supported me when no flesh could help, when man could not comprehend the depth of mine exercise ... Be Thou only and for ever exalted in, by and through Thy poor child, and let nothing be able to pluck me out of Thy hand.'

*Sarah Lynes Grubb 1832*

- 1.30** I remember an instance in my own experience, very painfully corroborating this danger to which ministers—especially those who have abundant words at command—are exposed; and it has been instructively brought to my remembrance, as a watchword of caution and warning, to keep me from falling again in this way. Many years since, while traveling in Truth's service, I attended a meeting in which I felt my mind much enlarged in Gospel love, and in travail on behalf of the people then assembled, and I think that I have very seldom, if ever, been more favored with a distinct and clear opening for extensive labor, than on this occasion. I stood up in this opening, and began by repeating three or four disjointed passages of Scripture, as they had been presented to my mind, expecting to go on and show how they harmoniously blended together when properly considered, in establishing and enforcing important principles of Christian doctrines and testimonies. I had, however, no sooner uttered these disjointed and apparently opposite sentences, than I felt a check in my mind, with a gentle intimation that I ought at once to sit down and proceed no further. But feeling a fear that some tender, seeking minds then present, would be stumbled and wounded at what they would probably think to be the opposing sentiments which I had uttered, I concluded, after standing awhile silently considering my painfully embarrassing position, that I had better, in as



few words as possible, inform the meeting how it had been with me, so that no tender mind might be hurt; firmly intending, after this short explanation, to take my seat. But before I got through with my explanation, the subject a little revived, and words came so pressingly upon me for utterance, that I could find no place for stopping; and so I went on, pouring out words, and passing from subject to subject, with a rapidity such as I have never known before or since. During all this time, I trembled in every limb with fear and amazement, feeling an unholy fire in my heart; so that at last I concluded, that it was the devil that had now set me to preaching, and that he would never suffer me to stop, but that I should have to stand there, preaching at his bidding, till I died.

It is a fearful thing to slight even the gentlest intimations of the Lord's will; and I had additionally transgressed, in endeavoring, with the best intentions, but in my own will and wisdom, to patch up and mend that which the Lord had marred, and dearly did I pay for my presumption and disobedience.

*Joseph Hoag 1832*

When it was time for the 'keynote' I carried a chair over my head 1.31 through the sea of people and chairs so I could sit up front, but off to one side. [JH] stood near the fireplace and spoke on her feet, with just a chair near her containing a few pages of notes. A centering silence to begin, and then the words began to flow out of her, at first a well-organized and well-delivered flow of ideas to flood the expectant openness with a first calm lake of shared understanding. But the calm, quiet stream began to build in depth and power to a message of elegant, one-pointed coherence and wisdom and saving power, full of Life. There was not one false or hesitant note. I did not look at her, I was deeply submerged in prayer—she was the only person in the room for me. I could feel her drawing energy from my prayer. I could feel her making her way into deeper and deeper waters, surely, clearly, with complete trust. The words and quotes came to her exactly when they were needed. I could feel something hugely important coming; it was just out of sight. I felt her gather herself. I 'woke-

up' intensely alert in my prayer, and found this prayer form in me: 'Please Jesus, stand near to her; hold her and whisper in her ear the words You would have her say.' And just then she paused for the briefest moment and turned her message in a new and far deeper direction saying 'But these are just words, a lot of words, when what is really asked of us is communion, instead of communication—a communion that is beyond all words.'

And I said, 'Why thank you Jesus for saying so clearly that you are here and this is what you want us to know.' This was maybe 2/3 of the way through the 40-minute talk. I was so drawn in by hearing Jesus that my brain stopped working. I couldn't imagine there was anything more to say. But there was, and she went gracefully back to edifying us about the need for, and importance of the disciplines; about how it is open hearts and listening ears that draw out the Divine messages. Towards the end I asked myself if there was anything more she had wanted to talk about and I realized she had not really explained 'elders.' So shortly after that she fully and beautifully expressed the elder's gift, the loneliness and missed opportunity of unrecognized, uncalled-out elders in a meeting; Friends who come with their natural gifts of eldering exercised every week but who are ignored and unrecognized in their meetings.

When she finished and sat down next to me I was moved to reach over and place my hand on her knee, firmly, and squeeze. She instantly clasped my hand and held it tightly for a long, deep moment until she just as decisively let go. We settled into a deep held silence until it was time to close the meeting.

*Susan Davies 2007*

- 1.32 *Despite feeling ill-qualified for the task, Sue Reilly agreed, after praying with her care committee, to give a presentation to a meeting dealing with a distressing conflict on the topic of spiritual health of meetings.*

I began the presentation while Friends listened politely. When I came to the subject of how meetings handle conflict, I remarked that they knew something about conflict. It was then that God took over the evening and I sat back, holding the process in prayer. For the first time, they were able to talk with one another without emotional distress.

As I was driving home, I was overcome with a sense of total oneness—a sense of being part of everything and not existing as a separate entity. Words do not begin to convey the power of that unity—floating, a total lack of fear, being held in perfect love, not disappearing but becoming more. I had a feeling of gratitude for being able to live in holy surrender, that anxiety and feelings of inadequacy for the task did not prevent me from saying ‘yes’ when it was clear from the discernment that it was mine to do. I realized that if I were truly following a leading I would not be abandoned and did not need to be afraid.

*Susan Reilly 2009*

## **DARKNESS AND LIGHT**

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*“I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. And in that also I saw the infinite love of God; and I had great openings.”*

*George Fox (1647)*

I was under great temptations sometimes, and my inward sufferings were heavy; but I could find none to open my condition to but the Lord alone, unto whom I cried night and day. And I went back into Nottinghamshire, and there the Lord shewed me that the natures of those things which were hurtful without, were within in the hearts and minds of wicked men ... And I cried to the Lord, saying, ‘Why should I be thus, seeing I was never addicted to commit those evils?’ And the Lord answered that it was needful I should have a sense of all conditions, how else should I speak to all conditions; and in this I saw the infinite

1.33

love of God. I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. And in that also I saw the infinite love of God; and I had great openings.

*George Fox 1647*

- 1.34 I often remember a time when I was in some sadness of spirit, and I went into our little village church at evensong. One of the psalms we were chanting suddenly had something to say to me. ... [W]e came to a passage which had often puzzled me: 'Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well,' I found the words were different. They were translated: 'Who going through the vale of misery use it for a well.' At that moment I realised that our times of despair, our times of sorrow, our times of suffering, can all be used as a well. ... Let us not waste our sorrows, our sufferings, our moments of despair. We must use them. We must use them for a well, and the living water will spring up and refresh our spirits, and the spirits of those around us.

*Elfrida Vipont Foulds 1983*

- 1.35 *Sandra Cronk writes of her experience after her father's death.*

In the pain and loss, which were acute, I had a curious experience of God's presence. That was true at the beginning and it has remained true these two years. It was curious because I had heretofore assumed that such pain and emptiness were incompatible with a strong sense of God's presence. But that is untrue. Those people who recommend a stronger prayer life as though grief is synonymous with loss of faith in God are quite mistaken. I could and did have experiences of joy and loss at the same time in God.

*Sandra L. Cronk 1985*

- 1.36 My beloved daughter faces a life threatening, life-changing disease. It is not in my belief system to ask God for a miracle cure but to be present with us as I walk along the path of her illness. I am faithful to the practice of lighting a morning candle, opening the window to the outside world, no matter the weather. I look

to see what God has brought to me this day; what beauty, what changes, what companions from the natural world. I read sacred literature and I pray. I ask with hope that the mist clears from my eyes so that I glimpse/feel/understand the presence of the Spirit and I am always utterly surprised when insight pops into my consciousness. Most of all, I relinquish my heart to utter trust. This faithful, everyday practice builds my own sensitivity to the movement of the Spirit in my heart. It nourishes me enough to face the challenges I am given and to embrace gifts of happiness and wisdom. At the darkest moments, the Spirit is my resource.

*Marybeth Toomey 2010*

Thus having in a great measure lost my own Guide, and darkness being come upon me, I sought a place where I might have been alone, to weep and cry before the Lord, that His face I might find, and my condition recover: But then my adversary who had long waited his opportunity, had got in, and bestirred himself every way, so that I could not be hid, and diverse messages came to me in that case, some true, some false (as I have seen since). ... [Y]ea, the provocations of that time of temptation was exceeding great against the pure love of God, yet He left me not; ... my adversary so prevailed, that all things were turned and perverted against my right seeing, hearing or understanding, only a secret hope and faith I had in my God, whom I had served, that He would bring me through it, and to the end of it; and that I should see again the day of my redemption from under it all: And this quieted my soul in my greatest tribulation. **1.37**

*James Nayler 1659*

It was a memorable meeting—held in silence, however, as usual, never to be forgotten. Very soon after sitting down, great was the awfulness and the reverence that came upon me. It was succeeded by such a view and sense of my sinful life, that I was like one crushed under the mill stones. My misery was great; my cry was not unlike that of Isaiah; ‘Woe is me, for I am undone!’ The nearer I was then favoured to approach to Him ‘who dwelleth in the light,’ the more I saw my uncleanness and my wretchedness. But how can I set forth the fullness of heavenly joy that filled **1.38**

me when the hope was again raised that there was One, even He whom I had pierced, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, that was able to save me? ... On my earnest petition being put to Him, the language was proclaimed: 'Thy sins are forgiven, thy iniquities are pardoned.' Floods of tears of joy and gratitude gave vent to the fullness of my heart!

*Stephen Grellet 1798*

- 1.39** *Tom Fox was a member of the Christian Peacekeeper Team in Iraq. Margaret Hassan, an aid worker, was kidnapped and killed in 2004. Tom Fox was kidnapped in 2005 and killed in 2006. This extract is from his journal for Saturday, December 25, 2004.*

At a team worship time soon after the kidnapping of Margaret Hassan I [had] a very clear image. It was of a land of shadows and darkness. But within that land candles were burning; not many but enough to shed some light on the landscape. Some candles disappeared and it was my sense that their light was taken away for protection. Other candles burned until nothing was left and a small number of candles seemed to have their light snuffed out by the shadows and the darkness. What was most striking to me was that as the candles which burned until the end and the candles whose light was snuffed out ceased to burn more candles came into being seemingly to build on their light. ... [It's] my sense that removing ourselves from the shadows and darkness will never create the capacity for those living in the shadows to grow in the light.

*Tom Fox 2004*

- 1.40** As many candles lighted and put in one place do greatly augment the light, and makes it more to shine forth; so when many are gathered together into the same Life, there is more of the glory of God, and his powers appear to the refreshment of each individual for that he partakes not only of the Light and life raised in himself but in all the rest.

*Robert Barclay 1678*

Our witness is that the Kingdom of God is among us now, accessible to all who will allow it to re-orient and guide their lives. You and I and any who wish to join us can live in a profoundly different way, and we don't have to wait for permission from some human authority to do so. Our meeting communities are the primary locus for this witness—but only when we learn to love one another. That means loving the Friend who annoys me most, whose spiritual vocabulary sets my teeth on edge, who is most different from me or most challenging to me. That means loving all those who call themselves Friends who have adopted the pastoral system, or call themselves evangelicals, or seem to be stuck in old-fashioned ways of speaking and dressing, or who seem to be more concerned about their political activism than their spiritual health. If we can't love one another, we have no ground on which to stand for witnessing to the rest of the world that they can and should love one another across much more profound divisions.

*Lloyd Lee Wilson 2006*

I cannot escape from the reality of pain, but I can experience 'joy' in trying to stop (and at the very least lessen) the impact of social and economic injustice on the larger community. As a Friend I am called to witness to a living goodness that exists in all women and men. For me that often means confronting that which negates a positive life experience. I must reflect in the silence of worship, finding strength in my spiritual community, and move onward towards an active expression of my belief. ... As a Black, I view the relationship of Christianity to people of color as radical in its expression, serving as a liberating force. An important voice in the Black religious community, James Cone, points out that 'Being black in America has little to do with skin color. To be black means that your heart, your soul, your mind and your body are where the dispossessed are.' ... This is where I stand as a member of the Religious Society of Friends.

*Greg Williams 1983*



**1.43** It's a long journey, this hike to Zion, and as much as God's kingdom is here and now—and I believe it is—the journey is neither short nor easy. Zion is a long way off, and it takes a lot of marching, a lot of loving, and Spirit-powered GPS. It's so long that it's generational. Walking along with our spiritual ancestors is not as quaint as it might sound on first blush. Surely Elias Hicks studiously avoids Joseph Hoag and Stephen Grellet; John Wilber and Joseph John Gurney look askance at each other. Plain friends roll their eyes at Margaret Fell's red cloak and Elizabeth Fry's purple shoes. A whole group of Friends shun Hannah and Joel Bean. But it is easy for us modern Friends to feel some kind of bond with these folk, to see the places we're connected and to look with generous eye at differences. It's an arduous trek to get to the 'beautiful city of God.' We need to lean on each other's love today just as we love our spiritual foremothers and forefathers, accentuating our commonalities and looking kindly at our differences. We need the wisdom of our spiritual ancestors. We need the forgiveness and love of each other, and we need the good hiking shoes of an open heart.

*Carl Williams 2009*

**1.44** Someone in worship today gave a brief summary of the naturalistic interpretation of religion. How rational, judicious, and powerless seemed our intellectual expressions and how little they met the need of a young attender, obviously in need of deeper ministry, who left, overcome by emotion, in the middle of meeting. The real ministry of our meeting came from the concern of several who followed him out to give him comfort. I saw that such loving kindness, call it love or agape, is the manifestation in the natural world of that which transcends it. Love does have power—not the political or mechanical power the world seems to covet, but a basic power that works in another way, not by overcoming but by reunion. Such a working, when it points to its source, can be called a miracle—not a breach of nature, but an inbreak of love.

*Carol Murphy 1989*



I have felt welcome through the open doors of the Quaker Meeting as a refugee from church. I have been given space and direction to make my peace with God, with the Spirit, with Jesus in the loving mix of Christians, Jews, Universalists and Atheists whom I love and who are here to stay. And I love to unite with them in that Friend of Friends that may or may not be God, that is here in the sanctuary of the heart always present to teach us directly ...

1.45

I am more Christian in Spanish than in English: more Universalist in English than in Spanish. What I believe does not matter as much as what I can say with conviction, what I hear inside me lovingly convicting me, what roots me to a life established and convinced.

*Benigno Sanchez-Eppler 2007*

*Thomas Kelly was working in Germany in 1938 when he wrote the following in a letter to his wife.*

1.46

This summer has opened up what was already opening up before, a new sense of unreserved dedication of oneself to a life of childlike devotion to God. This comes not of the feeling that one has of having looked into the awful depths of human woe, overwhelming as that is. What I want to say does not grow out of any specific external influence—it seems to grow out of an internal influence, which is so overwhelming that I can only recognize it as God working within me. Last winter you know I was much shaken by the experience of Presence—something that I did not seek, but that sought me. ... And the work here this summer, or, in the midst of the work here this summer, has come an increased sense of being laid hold on by a Power, a gentle, loving, but awful Power. And it makes one know the reality of God at work in the world. And it takes away the old self-seeking, self-centered self, from which selfishness I have laid heavy burdens on you, dear one ...

It would be easy to say that what I say here is growing out of the summer's deep experience with tragedy. One often says to one-

self, ‘What right have I to live in such comfortable circumstances at Haverford, when the world is aflame?’ And we can’t, as the average American is now living, accepting things as naturally our right. If we use them, and live in such parklike surroundings, with privileges I never appreciated before, it is a holy trust, out of which we must make something that is an offering to the wounds of this terrible world. But what I have said goes deeper than this reaction to human suffering. It is grounded not in time and suffering, but in the Eternal, as He breaks into us and teaches us His final nature, as love. But the suffering of the world is a part too of the life of God, and so maybe, after all, it is a revelation.

*Thomas Kelly 1938*

- 1.47** *Corder Catchpool served in the Friends Ambulance Unit during the first World War. When conscription was introduced he refused to accept conditional exemption from military service and was imprisoned. He then devoted himself to work for peace and reconciliation particularly in Germany where he and his wife and family lived from 1931 to 1936.*

I often wish earnestly that I had a more unwavering and unshakeable conviction, more of Paul and less of Thomas. But I am with the man who said: ‘I believe; help thou my unbelief.’ Perhaps such a frail faith brings me nearer to others who suffer similarly, and even better able to help them, as I have always been clear that I could not take the negative attitudes. By this I mean, I am for Christ, not for doubt—only I wish there were not so much that I don’t yet understand. The difficulty is a hesitation as to whether I really desire ‘revelation’ in the sense of striking experience such as has brought conviction to some ... I am by nature on my guard against subjectivity and feel that in my own case it may be best to share the occasional gleam with the multitude, rather than stand in the blaze on the mountain-top with the elect.

*Corder Catchpool 1934*

- 1.48** *Corder Catchpool wrote that he “seemed to be at least fifty per cent rationalist in make-up” and that part of him*

*demanded answers to the difficult questions of Christian thought. While on an alpine ascent, he had the following experience.*

The lazy clouds, that had hung all day as a light veiling about the snow-powdered rock peaks, were just breaking up in the clear splendor of sunset. The dazzling mantles of Combin and Courbassière caught the last rays. It was no moment for reasoning. Too often my spiritual life runs shamefully shallow, lamentably in need of more living water from the eternal springs. May I be pardoned—I was utterly unworthy—but at that moment there swept over me unbidden, the experience of Christ. No mere tiresome ratiocination, interpretations or misinterpretations, dogmas and differences. Just the fact that, in Christ, God was and is sharing the tragedy and sorrow, and the joy of the world. And—most glorious assurance—in his death and resurrection he faced the worse the world can do, faced these same problems and perplexities with all their mental anguish, which so often beat us till we cry inwardly for quarter—Christ faced them and triumphed over them and through them, with and for man in his struggle after righteousness, for all time.

*Corder Catchpool 1935*

## WITNESS

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*“Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts, which are the leadings of God.”*

*Epistles of the Yearly Meeting of Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, 1694 and 1695*

I had to do it. ... I think that is the real essence of a leading: **1.49** you have to go do it ... to the extent that it makes you laugh at yourself. I think if you can laugh about the amount of absurdity and the contradiction and the amount of passion that comes through, that to me is a sign of active spiritual life rather than misguided egotism. ... One of the blessings and burdens in my leading is that I've always had a great deal of certainty. I've not

had any doubt from the beginning that this is a life work. ... I did not know where it was going or what it was leading to or what it would look like. But I knew that they (my guides) had me, and I was theirs forever, and they called me to surrender.

*John Calvi 2001*

**1.50** I was at the plow, meditating on the things of God, and suddenly I heard a voice, saying unto me, 'Get thee out from thy kindred, and from thy father's house.' And I had a promise given in with it. Whereupon I did exceedingly rejoice, that I had heard the voice of that God which I had professed from a child, but had never known him. ...

[A]nd when I came at home, I gave up my estate, cast out my money; but not being obedient in going forth, the wrath of God was upon me, so that I was made a wonder to all; and none thought I would have lived. But (after I was made willing) I began to make some preparation, as apparel and other necessaries, not knowing whither I should go: but shortly afterward, going a gate-ward with a friend from my own house, having on an old suit, without any money, having neither taken leave of wife or children, not thinking then of any journey, I was commanded to go into the west, not knowing whether I should go, nor what I was to do there: but when I had been there a little while, I had given me what I was to declare; and ever since I have remained, not knowing today what I was to do tomorrow ...

[The promise was] that God would be with me: which promise I find made good every day.

*James Nayler 1652*

**1.51** *Drafted into the Union Army July 13, 1863, Cyrus Guernsey Pringle of Charlotte, Vermont, and a small group of Friends steadfastly not only refused to fight, but refused to engage in the common practice of paying a "substitute" to fight in their places, or to provide any service that would free another man to fight. Despite imprisonment, psychological distress, and torture, these Friends held fast to their Guide and stayed*

*firm in their conviction not to provide alternative service, even when urged to do so by the wider body of Friends. Pringle and his fellow resisters were finally released by order of President Lincoln at the urging of influential Friends.*

Here we are in prison in our own land for no crimes, no offence to God nor man; nay, more: we are here for obeying the commands of the Son of God and the influences of his Holy Spirit. I must look for patience in this dark day. I am troubled too much and excited and perplexed. ... Yesterday my mind was much agitated: doubts and fears and forebodings seized me. I was alone, seeking a resting-place and finding none. It seemed as if God had forsaken me in this dark hour; and the Tempter whispered, that after all I might be only the victim of a delusion. My prayers for faith and strength seemed all in vain. But this morning I enjoy peace, and feel as though I could face anything ... Oh, praise be to the Lord for the peace and love and resignation that has filled my soul today! Oh, the passing beauty of holiness! There is a holy life that is above fear; it is a close communion with Christ. I pray for this continually but am not free from the shadow of the tempter. There is ever present with us the thought that perhaps we shall serve the Lord the most effectually by our death, and desire, if that be the service He requires of us, that we may be ready and resigned.

*Cyrus Pringle 1863*

*William Rotch (1734–1828), a leader in the Quaker community on Nantucket, had a consignment of bayonets taken from muskets which he had accepted 12 years earlier in payment of a debt and sold as hunting pieces. In 1776 the colonial army demanded Rotch give them the bayonets.*

1.52

The time was now come to endeavor to support our Testimony against War, or abandon it, as this very instrument was a severe test. I could not hesitate which to choose, and therefore denied the applicant. My reason for not furnishing them was demanded, to which I readily answered, 'As this instrument is purposely made and used for the destruction of mankind, I can put no

weapon into a man's hand to destroy another, that I cannot use myself in the same way.' The person left me much dissatisfied. Others came, and received the same denial. It made a great noise in the Country, and my life was threatened. I would gladly have beaten them into 'pruning hooks,' but I took an early opportunity of throwing them into the sea.

A short time after I was called before a Committee appointed by the Court then held at Watertown near Boston, and questioned, amongst other things respecting my bayonets.

I gave a full account of my proceedings, and closed it with saying, 'I sunk them in the bottom of the sea, I did it from principle, I have ever been glad that I had done it, and if I am wrong I am to be pitied.' The chairman of the Committee Major Hawley (a worthy character) then addressed the Committee, and said 'I believe Mr. Rotch has given us a candid account, and every man has a right to act consistently with his religious principles, but I am sorry that we could not have the bayonets, for we want them very much.' The Major was desirous of knowing more of our principles on which I informed him as far as he enquired. One of the Committee in a pert manner observed 'then your principles are passive Obedience and non-resistance.' I replied, 'No, my friend, our principles are active Obedience or passive suffering.'

*William Rotch 1814*

- 1.53 *The writer's brother joined the Army National Guard and served in Iraq.*

I must also live out my understanding of peace and what it means to me, and risk everything. We both carry ministries against war. As different as they might be, I must believe that one God led us each to our own life's work. My brother's calling is a reaction to establish peace, while my heart calls for proactive measures against the conditions for war. We must both risk our entire lives for what we believe. We are the necessary balance of idealism and realism. In this imperfect world, we must steady our aims and breathe fire to ignite whatever future will have us.

*Stephen Willis Dotson 2010*

Consciousness of the spiritual, of God—whatever that means—is at the heart of who I am. Yet I appear to myself and quite probably to those who know me as an ordinary, daily sort of person, as mundane, as worldly, as anyone else, living a life made up of bills, telephone calls, computers, car-washes, work, food, laundry and so on. Yet my life is aware of a spirit in things. ... 1.54

But the sense of a spirit in things is what keeps me alive. I suspect such a recognition is common. I suspect many do not speak of what they deeply recognize as faith. ...

I believe that many lives as ordinary as my own are founded in a sense of the spirit. I believe that faith, consciousness of the unseen Other, works constantly in ordinary lives like mine in a wonderful and mysterious way. Even though no one but the one who knows such faith may feel its power, I believe that in those who are silent faith may be profound and strong, may be the very force which brings about miracles of light.

*Phyllis Hoge 2005*

The leading to marry, and the wedding worship itself, were powerful spiritual experiences for me. I stand now in that memory, as I seek to say something useful about the words I use to express my faith. To me, God (whom I most often call Spirit) was the source of the nudge I felt. In following the leading to marry Polly, I believe that I was following Spirit's guidance, which expressed itself within me as a yearning, a growing sense of rightness, and trust. I came to believe that, should Polly and I fall on difficult times in our relationship and our lives, divine assistance (coming through loving friends, worship, prayer, the Quaker clearness and support process) would help us. The Spirit I understood to be leading me into marriage with Polly isn't a white-haired old white man up in the sky. It is, she is, he is, a spirit of love that yearns for us all like a lover, a spirit that yearns for justice, and suffers with us when tragedy and cruelty occur. The God I have glimpsed needs us to be God's hands and feet and voice, needs us to be the face of Love in our families and in the world around us. 1.55

*Wendy Sanford 2005*



**1.56** All my life I had wanted to live with integrity, that is, to make my personal behavior a reflection of my professed values. But it did not occur to me to seek support for this newfound environmental concern within my Quaker Meeting. Some Friends in my Meeting were practicing a form of simple living, which they linked to the testimonies of Peace and Equality. But no one talked about the Quaker faith itself as a primary source of guidance and inspiration for living more lightly on the planet. ...

This is what had been missing in my earlier frantic environmental activism—an understanding of the spiritual transformation that is essential to curbing our ecologically disruptive behavior.

*Louis Cox 2007*

**1.57** About this time an ancient man of good esteem in the neighbourhood came to my house to get his will written. He had young Negroes, and I asking him privately how he purposed to dispose of them, he told me. I then said, 'I cannot write thy will without breaking my own peace,' and respectfully gave him my reasons for it. He signified that he had a choice that I should have wrote it, but as I could not consistent with my conscience, he did not desire it, and so he got it wrote by some other person. A few years later, there being great alteration in his family, he came again to me to get me to write his will. His Negroes were yet young, and his son, to whom he intended to give them, was since he first spoke to me, from a libertine become a sober young man; and he supposed that I would have been free on that account to write it. We had much friendly talk on the subject and then deferred it, and a few days after, he came again and directed their freedom, and so I wrote his will.

*John Woolman 1756*

**1.58** *Tom Jackson visited Iraq twice in 2000 with Voices in the Wilderness to observe conditions for ordinary Iraqis living under UN sanctions.*

Upon my return from Iraq I went back to my job at the high-tech firm, but I found that all I could do was stare at my computer



screen. It was very difficult to focus on anything, as I kept remembering the people I met in Iraq, the children lying in hospital beds with no hope of recovery, and knowing that my country's policies were part of the cause of their suffering.

Deep down I realized that God wasn't leading me to continue working at a high-tech firm. God was leading me to become a voice for the voiceless. It is a blessing when a leading is made eminently clear because way opens at every turn. Such was the case in this journey. At the end of July 2000 I left my job and went to Basra to live with a family in the city's poorest neighborhood (Al Jumhuriyah, which means, ironically, 'the revolution') for six weeks. I bought only the equivalent of the meager food rations my Iraqi friends received from the UN, rested in the extreme summer afternoon heat, heard the U.S. and U.K. fighter jets patrolling the sky, and took in the squalor and suffering that was the life of most Iraqis in summer 2000.

In the act of following this leading, I realized that in reaching out to people thought of as 'the enemy,' I found that they were, in fact, not our enemies.

That of God was quite apparent in these kind, welcoming people. It was all the more clear to me that I was led to not only share this witness with Friends and others, but also to speak truth to power on this issue.

*Thomas Jackson 2009*

[A] knot of my old acquaintances [at Oxford], espying me, came to me. One of these was a scholar in his gown, another a surgeon of that city ... 1.59

When they were come up to me they all saluted me after the usual manner, pulling off their hats and bowing, and saying, 'Your humble servant, sir,' expecting no doubt the like from me. But when they saw me stand still, not moving my cap, nor bowing my knee in way of congee to them, they were amazed, and looked first one upon another, then upon me, and then one upon another again, for a while, without speaking a word.

At length, the surgeon ... clapping his hand in a familiar way upon my shoulder, and smiling on me, said, 'What, Tom! a Quaker?' To which I readily and cheerfully answered, 'Yes, a Quaker.' And as the words passed out of my mouth I felt joy spring in my heart; for I rejoiced that I had not been drawn out by them into a compliance with them, and that I had strength and boldness given me to confess myself to be one of that despised people.

*Thomas Ellwood 165*