

THE GOSPEL GENERATES MORAL POWER AND FELLOWSHIP FORMING POWER

The power of the everlasting gospel that George Fox preached manifests itself principally in two ways--moral power and fellowship forming power. Fox's original personal quest was for the power that is greater than the power of temptation. He was searching for the faith that overcomes the world and gives victory over that which separates from God. He believed that the gospel he preached was the answer to all who seek for moral certainty and moral strength through faith in Christ.

The gospel that Fox preached spoke to the human condition. It speaks to the problem of man. Fox maintained that the Christianity of Puritan England had lost touch with the human problem. The morality of Puritan England was Old Testament oriented and legalistic. Its rigid moral standards made great demands on the devout Christian but did not give him access to increased moral power. There is an ascetic quality about the Puritan ethic that constricts and binds the human spirit. The term "puritan" has come to stand for a narrow and unloving kind of moralism, and in the twentieth century, Anglo-Saxon peoples have endeavored to expunge the last vestiges of "puritanism" from their culture.

George Fox says: "the law wounds, the gospel heals." He would, I think, have identified the morality that is related to the law as the wounding kind and that which is related to Christ in his office as prophet and teacher as the healing kind.

I have just pointed out that the Puritan morality was Old Testament oriented. The Puritans gave the Old Testament and the New Testament more or less equal value as far as authority was concerned. For them the New Testament dealt with salvation by Christ and the Old Testament dealt with morality and defined morality. The Old Testament was the place to go to learn about morality. There's an old Puritan catechism that puts the question: "How many sins are there?" The answer is: "Ten." The Commandments define sin: It is sin number one, sin number two, sin number three, and so on.

Fox's most serious criticism of Calvinistic Puritan Christianity was that it underestimated the saving power of Christ. It gave Christ the power to forgive and pardon us from our sins, but did *not* give him the power to deliver us from the power of sin and captivity to sin. The Puritans said that the New Covenant brings salvation, which they defined as "pardon for sin." Jesus is therefore our savior because he is our forgiver and pardoner. Hence, they separated morality from salvation. Salvation conceived as forgiveness for sin is that which belongs to the New Covenant, whereas the Old Covenant deals with God's call for righteousness under the Law.

The Apostles saw Christ as one who comes to us in His risen power as a teacher of righteousness. They saw the risen Jesus as a "prophet like Moses" who is to be heard and obeyed in all things, and who would bless all and turn all from their iniquities. Fox claimed that the apostolic gospel that proclaims Christ as the one who brings God's righteousness had been lost. He says that because this gospel was lost "the righteousness . . . hath been lost since the Apostles' days."⁽¹⁾ He maintained that the gospel that the Apostles preached brings the knowledge of Jesus Christ who is the teacher of God's righteousness and gives the power to do what is right. He declared that Christ " . . . is alive, and he, their living prophet, shepherd, and bishop, is in the midst of them . . . he is their righteousness," so let them ". . . know their teacher that makes an end of sin . . . and brings in everlasting righteousness . . . who is . . . the prophet who is to be heard in all things."⁽²⁾ And he puts the question, "Is there any righteousness wrought by the grace of Christ, but

what is by Christ and the power of God, which is the gospel?"⁽³⁾ Where the gospel is preached and received, people come to know the living Christ as he is present in their midst. And so Fox says that where ever Christ is known as he is present in the midst, "Then there is righteousness in the midst."⁽⁴⁾

Fox's message, "Christ is come to teach his people himself," expresses the gospel he preached in its simplest form. But wherever this gospel is preached the question must arise: "How does Christ teach his people Himself?"

It seemed clear to Fox that Christians had erected ecclesiastical structures that were actually preventing the church from being taught by Christ. From the beginning he was seeking for the true order of God's people in the New Covenant. If the gospel is the good news that Christ is alive and present in the midst of his people as their teacher, then the gospel fellowship must be ordered in such a way that the voice of this living teacher can be heard by God's people.

Fox taught that the *everlasting gospel brings with it the order that is appropriate for God's New Covenant people*. He says, "the foundation, government and order of our men's and women's meetings is Christ and his gospel."⁽⁵⁾ "The preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to the intent that all may be heirs of Christ and his government."⁽⁶⁾ ". . . all that receive this gospel . . . in their hearts, receive Christ . . . and his government and order."⁽⁷⁾ He says, "in the name and power of the Lord Jesus was I sent to preach the everlasting gospel . . . and have continued in this [for] twenty-seven years and thousands [by it] have been turned to God and have received it and are come into the order of it."⁽⁸⁾ These two things, the gospel and the order of it, are linked in Fox's mind.

When Fox uses the term "gospel order," he means that the gospel he was sent to preach brings with it a distinctive church order for God's people. This gospel and this order are the gifts of God and not human inventions! He stoutly maintains that "this gospel may everyone testify unto, and the order of it, that it is not of man nor by man, neither is it received but by the revelation of Jesus Christ sent down from heaven."⁽⁹⁾ "I can declare to you all in the presence of the Lord, that the gospel order, which is the power of God, I neither received it of man nor was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."⁽¹⁰⁾ ". . . Our order is not of man nor by man but by Jesus Christ and his gospel."⁽¹¹⁾ "For it is God that gives the heavenly understanding of Christ's established government and order . . . Now the gospel being preached . . . so all that receive this gospel in their hearts . . . receive Christ . . . and his government and his order in the power . . . and such come into the gospel order. . . . So in this gospel . . . they are established in the order of it."⁽¹²⁾

Now all that do *not* receive the gospel of Christ ". . . nor believe in it, how can *they* receive the order of the gospel of Christ . . . or receive him to reign in their, hearts."⁽¹³⁾ There are many more passages in Fox's writings in which he says, "this gospel and the order of it is not of man nor by man," and this is in direct contradiction to the modern Quaker historians who maintain that the whole church order of the Society of Friends is a product of George Fox's organizing genius, an idea that Fox himself would find very disturbing.

Fox's teaching is plain: "gospel order" does not have any reality at all apart from the gospel. Where the living Christ is known and experienced in all his offices as he is present in the midst of his people, this is the central fact of gospel order.

"These are the true meetings and gatherings who feel Christ in the midst of them . . . and here you come to know him in all his offices."⁽¹⁴⁾

"There is no true church but where Christ exercises his offices in and among them"⁽¹⁵⁾

Now, if Christ is to be experienced as present in the midst of his people, it is necessary that they should gather in his name. And if there are to be gatherings, there must be appointed times and places. And, furthermore, it is expedient that there should be a system of *regular* times and places for worship and meetings for church business.

In the seventeenth century, there were a number of Quakers who protested against this and said that the Quakers should only meet when the Spirit moved them, and they tried this out. But it certainly cut down on attendance. If you don't know when or where a meeting is going to be, not many people turn up. So this structure of regular weekly monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings really consists of a number of social conventions which are largely dictated by social, geographical, and political conditions.

Among the Quakers of Australia and Canada, vast countries with relatively sparse population, some of the better known, traditional forms of Quaker meeting structure have had to be revised to meet special needs. There is also a difference between the structure of Ireland Yearly Meeting and London Yearly Meeting. There doesn't have to be one structure for the whole world. In Fox's lifetime, there was a variety of systems or schemes of holding regular meetings. Such systems are revisable, but if they are being constantly altered, their usefulness is diminished. There are Friends who feel the liberty we have to revise the discipline as an irresistible temptation to continually revise it. But if there is doubt as to whether there's going to be a reasonable measure of continuity, your social conventions aren't going to have much weight or be of much value. The particular monthly, quarterly and yearly meeting structures are, in reality, social conventions. God did not say, "You must have a business meeting once a month," or, "You must have a quarterly meeting four times a year." But he did say, "This is my beloved Son, hear Him." And because he said this we have regular meetings at regular places in order to wait upon Christ to hear him.

In any case, the structure itself is not "gospel order." It is a means to an end, and the end is the gathering of God's people so that they may be taught and and governed and ordered by Christ. Fox declares that when any who are so gathered hear and obey the voice of Christ, then, "They know the order of Christ."⁽¹⁶⁾

In these meetings and gatherings, whether for worship or business, there is no presiding officer. Christ is the president of all these assemblies. The clerk who functions in business meetings is not an administrative officer. He or she is the servant of the meeting and serves as minute taker and record keeper.

This minimum structure of "time and place" furnishes the setting for worship in the New Covenant. The worshippers gather in silence because, says Fox, "We can hear our prophet in the silence."⁽¹⁷⁾ He describes the silent gatherings of worshipers as occasions "when Friends sit together waiting upon their teacher."⁽¹⁸⁾ "We are come," he says, "to hear our own prophet, which God hath raised up, Christ Jesus, to open us and him do we hear in all things in our meetings."⁽¹⁹⁾

"And why," he asks, "should we not sit under Christ, our Prophet, shepherd, bishop and priest and hear him?"⁽²⁰⁾ "Why shall we not sit under our prophet whom God hath raised up . . . whom he commands us to hear . . . who is like Moses, who is to be heard in all things."⁽²¹⁾

The gospel that Fox preached is the foundation for the worship he practiced. He believed that there is a way of worship that belongs to the gospel and the New Covenant. Just as the gospel is good news for all men, so the worship that forms a part of gospel order is also for all men. Fox reminds us that "Christ said unto the woman [at the well] 'The hour cometh and now is when they

that worship the Father shall worship him in spirit and in truth;' *then* did he set up his worship . . . in spirit and in truth. . . . So every man and woman in the whole world must come to the spirit and truth in their own hearts . . . and in the spirit of truth to worship the God of truth who is a spirit . . . this is a universal worship."⁽²⁰⁾ He maintains that "every man and woman in the world must come to this worship which Christ set up,"⁽²¹⁾ and that "all people on earth must come to know silent meetings."⁽²²⁾

The gospel order, which includes the worship that begins with silent waiting, is not a formal structure that can stand by itself apart from the gospel. If the living Christ is not known in the midst in all his offices, then there is no gospel order. But wherever a people are brought into the order of the gospel by the power of the gospel, then such a people become living witnesses to the fellowship forming power of Christ and to the power of Christ to raise up a disciplined, ordered people under his leadership. Where meetings for worship and discipline are held on this gospel foundation, *then* such meetings become the means of leading people to Christ--they become living testimonies to what Christ can do. Therefore, Fox says, "keep your testimony of the life and grace of the gospel and the order for it,"⁽²⁵⁾ [the original does not include note numbers 23 and 24] "keep your testimony for . . . your worship in spirit and in truth,"⁽²⁶⁾ "keep your testimony for your worship that Christ set up."⁽²⁷⁾ Worship and gospel order are testimonies. We know about some of the testimonies that have come down to us--the peace testimony and others, but Fox thought that worship was a testimony that would lead people to know Christ, and the gospel order, too.

In an article in "The Friends' Quarterly,"⁽²⁸⁾ we have been asked to consider whether or not Fox was wrong in maintaining that there is an order and a worship that belongs to the New Covenant, and that God gives to his New Covenant people by the power of the gospel. It has been suggested that there is nothing in Fox's central Christian message to prohibit "ministerial training and ordination or any kind of pre-arrangement of a liturgical kind of worship." It is stated that these prohibitions are Foxisms which reflect Fox's personal bent and bias and not the truth of the gospel, and therefore we need not be bound by them.

It is further argued that, although there is an essential permanent Christian core of Christian truth that Fox clearly apprehended, that Quaker worship and church order do not necessarily belong to this central core of Christian truth. Quaker worship and church order can be traced back to Fox, but not to God or Christ or the gospel. If this argument is sound, then there is not now, nor has there ever been, a sound Christian basis for Quaker worship and church order.

I hope what I have said about Fox's teaching on these matters will help to clarify the connection between Fox's gospel preaching and the nature of the worshiping gospel fellowship that was raised up by his gospel preaching. Certainly, Fox is saying that the worship that Friends practiced in his lifetime is the worship that belongs to the gospel and the New Covenant.

In the 17th century, keeping the Quaker testimony for Quaker worship was something that people were willing to suffer for. We know they went to jail for it. We know that when the parents went to jail, the children gathered and held the meetings anyway. This was something of tremendous importance. This was a testimony for Christ. Maintaining this way of worship was one way of preaching the gospel.

There is a worship that belongs to the Old Covenant and it's spelled out in the Old Testament. It's a worship that has to do with certain acts and performances that are prescribed which involve the administration of these rituals by a priestly class who are connected with the temple. We know that Jesus had some pretty terrible things to say about the temple, and we know that what he said

about the temple led to his crucifixion. The temple was the one place where God dwells on earth. In Jesus' lifetime the temple at Jerusalem was more glorious and grand in its physical aspect than it had ever been. If the temple goes, the priests go, and the sacrifice goes. What, then, is worship if the temple and the priests and the sacrifice are all gone. When the Jews were expelled from Palestine and were captives in Babylon, they didn't take the temple with them but they invented the synagogue system which is still going strong. There is a great deal in early Christian worship that was borrowed from synagogue worship. But is this a legitimate way to understand and practice Christian worship--simply to appropriate elements from synagogue worship? There is no more reason to pattern Christian worship on synagogue worship than there is to pattern it on temple worship.

Jesus said to the woman at the well that God wants to be worshiped neither at the temple nor on the mountain, but "the hour is coming and now is when they that worship the Father will worship him in spirit and in truth, and these the Father seeks to worship him" (John 4:23). Fox says we are to worship God in the way that he seeks and not the way we seek. There are people who say, "I couldn't worship after the manner of Friends. It doesn't meet my needs." But I don't think the early Friends ever asked whether Quaker worship was meeting their needs. Their question was: "How does God want us to worship him?" And they were led to gather together in the name of Jesus, to wait to feel his presence in their midst and to be taught by him.

If, today, there is to be a recovery of the moral power that was so abundantly manifested among the early Friends it will come only in so far as there is a recovery of the gospel they preached and a building again on that gospel foundation.

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APPENDIX

Questions and Responses

Chapter 3

Question 1: What is the relation between the different meetings: monthly, quarterly, and yearly, etc.?

Lewis Benson: I think one thing is clear; Fox didn't want a congregational system. As I understand it, Fox saw that fellowship could be experienced on more than one level. Because of the limitations of time and space, it turned out that the monthly meeting level, which was a local level, was where people became members, or where disownment proceedings began. The quarterly meeting level, which was regional, was a channel through which monthly meetings could present concerns to be sifted, and then, if endorsed, they could be sent on to yearly meeting.

Now my own personal experience has helped me to understand this, because my family didn't live in a congregation of Quakers. I didn't know what congregational life was.

But, I went to all the quarterly meetings, and I went to all the yearly meetings all through my youth, and I felt I was a member of those meetings, and they treated me like a member. They weren't just regional conferences. These were meetings of the Religious Society of Friends.

In recent times, Friends have begun to ask themselves: "What is a quarterly meeting?" The answer usually given is: "Well, it's the clerk and the assistant clerk and their agenda and the executive committee--that is the quarterly meeting." But this is not what it was intended to be. The meeting is the people who gather. This is why we use the word "meeting." It is not a building, but neither is it an institution of offices and minutes and structure of this kind. It's the people themselves--that is, the church. So you can think of this as three concentric circles: the monthly meeting is the smallest one, then there's the larger one, the quarterly meeting, then the yearly meeting is the largest of them all, but all of them have the same center. If you don't have the center, then they're not monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, nor yearly meetings.

It's the center that makes them part of the structure of gospel order. I mean, if there's no center, there is no gospel order. I've been asked to write a paper on "gospel order" for the "Faith and Life" panel, and the main thrust of this paper is that if there's no gospel, there's no gospel order. There's no use trying to discuss gospel order if you don't know what the gospel is. *The gospel is that Christ, Jesus Christ, is present in the midst, and the gospel order is a means of experiencing this fact, this great new fact of the Christian revelation.*

Now, most yearly meetings in this country are giving up, or have given up, quarterly meetings, and certainly in this area (Pennsylvania) and in New York, there are very few preparative meetings, and they are not very important organizationally. This means that the local monthly meetings are all congregational. In 1937, Philadelphia Meeting, the Hicksite branch, sent down a directive to all its monthly meetings to make all preparative meetings into monthly meetings. This was done because nobody had any reason to think it shouldn't be done. Of course, I protested, but they went ahead with it.

The result is that at the same time we're getting rid of preparative meetings and quarterly

meetings, we've been building up a committee structure. This is really what Yearly meeting is. We had a representative from New York Yearly Meeting come to Manasquan, and her purpose was to explain the yearly meeting to us. Well, she spent a long time explaining, and she explained what all the committees were. She had a big chart with all the committees of the Yearly meeting on it. The whole inference of this exposition was that, if you know what the yearly meeting committees are, then you know what the yearly meeting is. That is, the yearly meeting doesn't exist at all by itself. It's just committees and that's all it is. So I asked this Friend: "Suppose you just forget about the committees for a minute. What is the yearly meeting? Does it have any existence itself?" "Well," she said, "I don't know."

So, we have on the one hand a congregational system developing, and on the other hand a bureaucratic system based on the committee structure with each committee having a paid secretary with a desk and headquarters, through which the meetings are related to each other. This is the way all the other denominations are set up. And some of them protest about it, too. Baptists, for instance, object to being a Christian group in which all the leaders are bureaucrats, that is, professional people. That isn't the way it was with the Baptists 100 years ago, nor with the Quakers.

So, we've drifted into something which is not only different from what George Fox intended, but contrary to it. It's a real denial of what Fox intended. The general meetings that have survived where the quarterly meetings have been dropped, may have the character of quarterly meetings for awhile, and the one that I visited in England had some of the characteristics of the quarterly meeting. It kept minutes. It had funds. Some of these practices were holdovers from the quarterly meeting era. But the time when people would say: "I belong to this monthly meeting, this quarterly meeting, and this yearly meeting," is rapidly coming to a close. People don't have a sense of being members of a quarterly meeting, and they should have. The quarterly meeting isn't just an artificial structure. It's a part of knowing what it is to be in the body of Christ, which Christ is the head of, and to be part of the fellowship which is gathered around Christ, who is the center. You can have that in the quarterly meeting and the yearly meeting and the monthly meeting and the preparative meeting. It should be experienced in each of these and it is not limited to any one of them.

So, I'm a firm believer in the monthly meeting system because I'm a disbeliever in the congregational system which is presided over and held together by a central bureau. There are drawbacks in this modern development, and one is that a lot of concerns that come up need to be sifted through the quarterly meeting. What's happening now is that every concern that originates in any monthly meeting, no matter how small has to go to the yearly meeting, and so the yearly meeting somehow has to be staffed to deal with all this. That's not a good system from any point of view, either for the monthly meeting or for the yearly meeting.

Now, how is this going to be reversed? First, we have to preach the gospel and its consequences. Then we can build on the gospel foundation. Then we'll have something that's really substantial.

My main concern is that there was a gospel that was lost in the very early years of the Christian era and it was recovered again. And, there was a gospel order in the very early days of the Christian era that was lost, and it was recovered again. And that recovered gospel and its order was lost again after the early Quakers had recovered it, but it is now being recovered again.

I would feel that I've failed completely if people do not see that there is a connection between

the gospel and gospel order: that this gospel produces this kind of order. After three centuries of experience, all know that some things work a little better than others and so on. But the ideal gospel order isn't just putting together all the things that, from a pragmatic point of view, have seemed to work well. It's building on a foundation, and that foundation is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Question 2: What flexibility is there regarding the form of worship and ministry?

Lewis Benson: The late Howard Brinton was one who identified the worship as practiced in Philadelphia as normative, and all other kinds of worship in the world as non-normative, and that's something I can't do.

I think there are a number of meetings that feel that they have been practicing worship the way the original Quakers intended it to be. So nobody can tell them that they're off the track. But some of these meetings do not have a very large vision of the potential of Quaker worship.

I don't think we can talk about worship and not talk about ministry. Ministry is another word that doesn't have the same connotation for all Quakers. For a lot of people it means "speaking in meeting". "Was there any ministry in meeting?" "Yes. Someone spoke for three minutes, etc." If someone spoke, there was ministry, if no one spoke, there was no ministry. But that there could arise in the people of God called Quakers, some whose main vocation in life is the gospel and ministry of Jesus Christ, is something that doesn't enter the minds of 9 out of 10 Quakers. Yet, it isn't so long ago, in the thirties, that I encountered many Quaker ministers: in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, in the Conservative yearly meeting, and even in the Hicksite yearly meetings there were still some that survived from the time before ministers were abolished.

This leads us back to the structure. The quarterly meeting was not only a channel through which concerns of the monthly meeting were passed on to the yearly meeting, and not only was it a separate level of fellowship which would be experienced between the monthly meeting and the yearly meeting, but it was also the center of interest in ministry. The quarterly meeting, not the monthly meeting, was the place where the center of interest in the ministry took place. There was a quarterly meeting of ministers and elders, and the monthly meeting had a preparative meeting to that. I mean, if a monthly meeting had a meeting of ministers and elders, they were called a preparative meeting. The quarterly meeting was the smallest body which considered the problems of the ministry.

This was all going on in my lifetime in Arch Street Yearly Meeting, and this is the way it was all through the 18th and 19th centuries, and the reason was that the monthly meeting shouldn't have the sole concern for its own ministry. The concern for the ministry is something that should be shared by a circle of fellowship that is larger than the monthly meeting, and that was the quarterly meeting.

Silent meetings can be very stereotyped, and it seems to me in very few places do they even begin to realize the potential that there is in this form of worship. One of the major difficulties, I think, is that we come to expect less and less from Quaker worship as time goes on. And if we expect little, we get little. I think this is what's been happening among us.

Everywhere I go, I find that there is dissatisfaction in the meeting for worship. Is the meeting for worship in a healthy condition? Is it meeting your needs? Is it something you think is being

conducted the way it should be? Most people would say, "No," to this, it seems to me. But, of course, there are individual meetings that make a different kind of report, and usually the reason for that is that there are two or three people in those meetings who have the meetings for worship on their hearts and minds 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. That why these meetings are a little different. The form of worship, silence, isn't magic. There's nothing magical about the form--gathering in silence. Great things will not happen just because you gather according to this formula. But if Christ is present in the midst and if he lays his hands on some people in this gathering and calls them to the ministry of his gospel, then there will be things happening in these meetings that we rarely find happening in our meetings today.

Now, how flexible can this be? Well, I don't know. It seems to me that worship is a hard thing to practice throughout a lifetime in a way that is continually helpful and profitable to all who come. If you find a good way to do it, the best thing to do is to stick to it. So, I'm rather conservative, I think, in this. I attended a meeting for 4 years that had hymn singing in it, and although there was more hymn singing than I was happy with (they had about 3 or 4 hymns every Sunday), it was unprogrammed. The hymn singing was usually in relation to what was going on in the meeting. There was a lot of care given to it and a lot of thought given to it in the meeting of ministry and counsel.

It seems to me that there could be a place for hymn singing, but there are a lot of problems. One of the main problems is that hymns as we know them were not written for Quaker meetings: they were not written for churches of the cross. Most were written for individuals who had just been saved or wanted to remember how they were saved some time ago. They tend to be individualistic, pietistic, and be based on theology that we can't endorse.

Now, there has been a lot of experimentation in Quaker meetings, but I think that, for the most part, doing something new because it breaks the old routine, is non-productive. Once you start being unhappy unless something new is going on, you're in a trap. Feeling compelled to have something new every few months becomes the most boring thing in the world. So, my advice is: find a good way and stick to it. And there is a good way and we can find it if we study the way Quakers have tried to see the implications for meaningful worship in the gospel of power that Fox preached.

Question 3: What is the difference between a meeting that sincerely gathers to wait upon the Lord and a Christ gathered meeting?

Lewis Benson: It depends on what you mean by "Lord."

Questioner: Lord or God.

Lewis Benson: Yes, we say "God," then. But Lord is applied in the Bible and by George Fox to both God and Christ, too. That is, Christ is called "Lord," too. "No one can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit," and so on.

So, we're starting with God now.

I think it depends on what we think we're doing when we gather to worship in this way of silent waiting or waiting on God. Do we see here a real new beginning of the coming of Christ: the ending

of the old and the beginning of the new, the ending of the law, the temple, the priesthood, and the beginning of the New Covenant dispensation?

There are meetings all over the world calling themselves Quaker that advertise themselves as "interfaith." That is, they are not attempts to realize New Covenant worship. They are worship on the basis of silence, waiting on God, but are participated in by people who are of different faiths: Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and so on. This happens in India, it happens in New York City, and it can be done. I mean, you can have silent worship in which all the worshippers are not Christian and they claim that they receive some spiritual benefits from it, and I don't doubt it. But the question is: Is this the worship that Jesus was talking about to the Samaritan woman when he said: "The hour cometh and now is . . ." when a special kind of worship is going to be given. It should be different from the worship at the temple and different from Samaritan worship--with a distinctive character of its own. I think a lot of worship is called Quaker that has very little Christian content in it, and intentionally, too, in some cases.

Now, the old "Five Years Meeting discipline," (this goes back some years, into the thirties) said: "Jesus Christ is the president of all our assemblies," for worship and business, and so on. There is a center in this worship and it isn't simply the worship of God. It is the worship of God the Father of our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ--the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Not all Quakers and not all members of other faiths can say this when they gather. Now, does this make a difference? Do they have to say it? Well, I think it does make a difference.

I think Christ gives the worship called "waiting on God" its real Christian dimension when he comes to us according to his promise to be present in our midst, and when he comes to us as a priest and a prophet, a king and a minister, a counselor and all those things. Christ is not just another name for God. Christ is the one whom God has sent for a purpose, and one of the purposes was to lead us to the worship that is beyond that of the temple, the sacrifices, and the Levitical priesthood. Something that brings us closer to the Father.

So, it makes a big difference whether we meet to feel the presence of Christ or not. I'll tell a little story that may illustrate this. It just happened that I was invited to be secretary of a meeting at a time when they were starting in a new location, in a new city, Evanston, (part of Chicago). There had never been a Quaker meeting there. So, should they be pastoral or non-pastoral? About half of the membership was used to programmed worship and the other half to unprogrammed worship. My job was to keep these people out of each other's hair and to have a Quaker meeting there. I tried to explain to all that meeting on the basis of waiting on God, the silent meeting that belongs to the Quaker way of worship, was a way of worship which was based on the experience of the presence of Christ in the midst. I pushed that as hard as I could while I was there. The people who had been used to silent worship said: "Well, we have never heard about this condition and we've been getting along fine for 50 or 60 years on the other basis, and why should we switch?" But the pastoral Friends who had been used to programmed worship said: "We see now why we have to have unprogrammed worship, why we have to have this worship on the basis of waiting to feel the presence of Christ, and they were enthusiastic about it. This kind of shamed the more traditional Friends into co-operating and we managed to have quite an interesting and lively kind of worship under these circumstances.