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Justification and sanctification from a Quaker viewpoint

I. Introduction

This paper is written from the standpoint of European Quakerism. American evangelical Friends would be much happier with doctrinal language than European Friends are. When George Fox began preaching, he had no academic credentials. „What drew people to hear him was not so much his treatment of Christian doctrines as such, as his ability to describe and make vivid the Christian experience.“¹ He rejected doctrinal talk as „airy notions“.² Thus in our response to the WCC Faith and Order Paper on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (The Lima Text), London Yearly Meeting 1986 endorsed:

„We are not generally drawn to speculative theology. We try as individuals and as a body to be faithful to the truth we have discovered. We prefer not to crystallise our understanding of the truth; our corporate experience is a growing and living tradition.“

Friends in the seventeenth century until this day used and use different words to describe the experience of justification and sanctification, and I will give examples below. This paper cannot deal with the whole of Quaker Faith and Practice as this would result in a book, and the bibliography will enable you to read up on anything you do not know. Friends experience an inner authority, „a corporate guidance which tests and informs individual leadings. At the heart of this is the meeting for worship where Christ, the Inward Light, is present and is met. Fox often wrote that Christ has come to teach his people himself.“³ So for instance Robert Barclay:

„Not by strength of arguments or by a particular disquisition of each doctrine, and conviction of my understanding thereby, came [I] to receive and bear witness of the Truth, but by being secretly reached by [the] Life. For, 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 until the hungering more and more after

¹ Gwyn, *Apocalypse*. 1984, p. 58.

² Fox, *Journal*, ed. Nickalls. 1952, p. 19 line 37.

³ Faith and Practice (Britain Yearly Meeting) 1994, 19.19 Introduction.

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; ...⁴

Hence:

„We understand the Bible as a record arising from similar struggles to comprehend God's ways with people. The same Spirit which inspired the writers of the Bible is the Spirit which gives us understanding of it: it is this which is important to us rather than the literal words of scripture.“⁵

For George Fox „the bible are the words of God, but not the Word of God“. At Carlisle being questioned „whether the Scripture was the word of God, [he answered] God was the Word and the Scriptures were writings; and the Word was before writings were, which Word did fulfil them“.⁶

Similarly Robert Barclay:

„[The Scriptures] are only a declaration of the fountain and not the fountain itself, therefore they are not to be esteemed the principal ground of all truth and knowledge, nor yet the adequate primary rule of faith and manners. Yet, because they give a true and faithful testimony of the first foundation, they are and may be esteemed a secondary rule, subordinate to the Spirit, from which they have all their excellency and certainty; for as by the inward testimony of the Spirit we do alone truly know them, so they testify that the Spirit is that Guide by which the saints are led into all truth: therefore, according to the Scriptures the Spirit is the first and principal Leader.“⁷

Eloquently George Fox describes his own awakening:

„Now the Lord God hath opened to me by his invisible power how that every man was enlightened by the divine light of Christ; and I saw it shine through all, and that they that believed in it came out of condemnation and came to the light of life and became the children of it, but they that hated it, and did not believe in it, were condemned by it, though they made a profession of Christ. This I saw in the pure openings of the Light without the help of any man, neither did I then know where to find it in the Scriptures; though afterwards, searching the Scriptures, I found it.“⁸

⁴ Faith and Practice, op. cit. 19.21. Robert Barclay, Apology, London edn. 1678; prop. 11, sect. 7, p. 240.

⁵ To Lima with Love, § 25.

⁶ Fox, Journal, ed. Nickalls. 1952, p. 145 line 30; p. 146 line 9; p. 159 lines 26-28.

⁷ Faith and Practice, op. cit. 27.28; Barclay, Apology, prop. 3, sect. 2.

⁸ Faith and Practice, op. cit. 19.04; Fox, Journal, ed. Nickalls, pp. 2-3.

„This I knew experimentally“⁹ is Fox's great affirmation. However, spiritual experience is neither static nor an experience which can be dated. This is how Hugh Doncaster puts it:

„I am thinking of continuing experience. and therefore of varying experience, experience which grows and deepens. It is the whole person's experience and may be known primarily in felt emotion, in decision of the will sustained in disciplined living, and in the intellectual discoveries of thought. All these, separately and mixed together, are involved in our experience of God. Such personal experience will vary from person to person and for one person from time to time.“¹⁰

Early Friends' imagery of „the Seed“ is therefore most apt.

„In some letters Fox calls Christ 'The Royal Seed' and goes on to insist that he 'has Dominion over all the world', Letter 131 (1656). In others he says that 'The Seed remains, Christ, the Power of God, which goes over the power of the Devil ... And so, all in the Power of the Lord God and the Seed live ...' He concludes the letter saying, 'My love to you in the Seed, in which there is Life'“¹¹

In the same Epistle (131) Fox recommends „... dwell in love and life, and in the power and Seed of God ...“

„Give over thine own willing, give over thy own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee and be in thee and breathe in thee and act in thee; and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of Life, which is its portion.“¹²

And John Wilhelm Rowntree in 1904:

„Creeds are milestones, doctrines are interpretations; Truth, as George Fox was continually asserting, a seed with the power of growth, not a fixed crystal, be its facets never so beautiful.“¹³

Canby Jones' comment is apt, but applies to the other Quaker writers as well:

⁹ Fox, Journal, ed. Nickalls, p. 11.

¹⁰ Hugh Doncaster, 1963, p. 2.

¹¹ Fox, Letters, ed. T. Canby Jones 1989, pp. 101-103 (1656).

¹² Faith and Practice, op. cit. 26.70; some directions to the panting soul, in: Works, p. 168.

¹³ John Wilhelm Rowntree, 1905, p. 349; Faith and Practice 27.21.

„From the standpoint of our materialistic and technological society I find Fox's organic and earthy references to Christ as a living Seed, which may grow up within us into everlasting life, both refreshing and inspiring.“¹⁴

Thus different images, symbols and metaphors express truths which more credal churches may express in such terms as Justification and Sanctification. As you will see Early Friends used these terms, though sparingly, but often meant something rather different than Lutheranism or Calvinism does.

II. Justification and Sanctification

Friends have always stressed the love of God rather than God as the judge of individuals. It is our relationship with God that changes us and brings us from darkness into light.

„They were changed men themselves before they went about to change others. Their hearts were rent as well as their garments, and they knew the power and work of God upon them ... And as they freely received what they had to say from the lord, so they freely administered it to others. The bent and stress of their ministry was conversion to God, regeneration and holiness, not schemes of doctrines and verbal creeds or new forms of worship, but a leaving off in religion the superfluous and reducing the ceremonious and formal part, and pressing earnestly the substantial, the necessary and profitable part, as all upon a serious reflection must and do acknowledge.“¹⁵

It is the power from God that overcomes sin. As the Christ spirit is allowed to grow, power flows into our lives from him.

„Friends are often chided for a shallow optimism regarding human nature, which underrates the ghastly reality of man's capacity for sin. But Friends do not close their eyes to the evil in the world and think of men as angels. On the contrary, the first operation of the Spirit toward man lying in ... sin, is to convince him of the sin', as Penington puts it.¹⁶ Light cannot be thought of apart from darkness, and Friends are as committed to the one as to the other. The light shines in darkness. The one without the other has no meaning.“

„But it is not only recognition of sin in ourselves and in others, individually and collectively, which comes as we are aware of the reality of God. He that shows a man his sins is he that takes it away', as Fox told

¹⁴ T. Canby Jones, 1989, p. xviii.

¹⁵ See W. Penn's preface to George Fox's Journal, 1694 (Note 9 below).

¹⁶ I. Penington, Works, 1681, Pt. 1, p. 50.

the trooper who visited him in Derby gaol.¹⁷ As we turn in obedience to God, and let the Christ spirit be formed in us (Gal. 4, 19), we are reconciled to God. 'Christ saves not as he stands without at the door knocking, but as he is let in', says Penington, and elsewhere, 'It is not the outward name but the inward life and power which is the Saviour'.¹⁸

Thus expresses James Naylor his experience of this power of God that overcomes sin, written after his „fall“:

„So thou that lovest holiness, it is near thee;
Power over sin and Satan is near thee;
Salvation is at hand.
Go not forth to seek that abroad which thou hast lost in thy own house.
He that reprove the wicked is with thee;
He that is pure is thy peace:
He that never consented to sin but stands a witness against it.
If thou hast such a spirit in thee, thou hast the Spirit of Christ the Saviour.
So take heed unto *him*, and to mind *his* leading, and to foilow *him*; if thou part not from *him*, *he* will be thy everlasting peace and overruling power to subdue thy sins...“¹⁹

It is the Light that leads to holiness/sanctification. Here is one expression of this by George Fox:

„So as man and woman come again to God, and are renewed up into his image, righteousness and holiness by Christ, thereby they come up into the Paradise of God, the state which man was in before he fell, and into a higher state than that, to sit down in Christ that never fell.“²⁰

Isaac Penington expresses it in different language:

„The sum and substance of true religion doth not stand in getting a notion of Christ's righteousness, but in feeling the power of endless life, receiving the power, and being changed by the power. And where Christ is, there is his righteousness.“²¹

The testimony of William Penn concerning early Friends (quoted at [15] above) sums it up well.²²

So it is perhaps not surprising that by and large for Friends „Justification and Sanctification are one, for Christ, who is the Justification and

¹⁷ Fox, Journal, ed. Nickalls, p. 64.

¹⁸ I. Penington, op. cit. Pt I, p. 50; Pt. II, p. 335. L. Hugh Doncaster, 1963, p. 11.

¹⁹ James Naylor, Works. 1716, p. 368.

²⁰ Faith and Practice 19.29; Fox, Journal, ed. Nickalls, p. 665.

²¹ Faith and Practice 19.30; I. Penington, Letters, ed. John Barclay, 1828, p. 40.

²² Faith and Practice 19.38; Penn's Preface to George Fox's Journal, 1694.

Sanctification, is one".²³ There are innumerable quotations. Here is another: So far as a man is sanctified, so far he is justified and no further; for the same that sanctifies a man, justifies him.²⁴ George Fox's letter 17 to Francis Fines deals largely with this matter but is much too long to quote here. Suffice one sentence: "... justification is not the first thing, but the power of life, in and through which (revealed in Christ) the soul is both justified and sanctified, through the working of the faith, which is from the power."²⁵

Robert Barclay (1648–1690) is the only early systematic Quaker theologian. He wrote his „Apology for the true Christian divinity“ in Latin in 1676 and translated it into English in 1678.²⁶ Barclay was „convinced“ at 18 in 1666. His mother was a cousin of Charles II. He had a strictly Calvinistic upbringing in his youth leavened by Roman Catholic schooling. The Apology follows the sequence of the Westminster Shorter Catechism (not the Apostles' Creed). It is no systematic treatment of „notional“ Christianity, but examines most of what was at issue between Quakers and the major contemporary denominations.

In his introduction to the Apology, Dean Freiday reminds us that the Quaker belief in continuing revelation (in a biblical sense) leads more to an applicational or interpretative insight, an unfolding or opening of Truth rather than to any novel doctrine.²⁷ The primacy of the Holy Spirit as authority and source of revelation is in contrast to Luther's „Scripture“ alone or the Roman Catholic view of tradition and scripture. Barclay refutes both concepts. „It is the Spirit who reveals to us both the Word and the Son.“ Christ Himself, not the scriptures, was the Word. Revelation, reconciliation, sanctification, regeneration, all are based on the works of the Spirit.²⁸ However, it is the true grace of God transmitted by the Spirit, that frees from evil, rather than any natural light. Redemption purchased by Christ's death was considered universal. The pagans' ability to distinguish right from wrong is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts and consciences. This runs directly counter to Calvin's double pre-destination. This and the doctrine of perfection relate to the cornerstones of the later Methodism. Barclay was pessimistic regarding what he called „natural“ man's present condition, but optimistic in respect to man's capa-

²³ George Fox, *The Great Mystery*, 1659, pp. 293, 463.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 450.

²⁵ Fox, *Letters*, ed. T. Canby Jones 1989, pp. 101-103 (1656).

²⁶ This Apology in modern English is edited by Dean Freiday, third printing 1980.

²⁷ Barclay, *Apology*, ed. Dean Freiday, p. xxi.

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

city for regeneration and union with God even in this life.²⁹ He thought that with divine help, man might, as God's creation, become perfected here and now.

Luther's primarily three-pronged assault on the faith of Roman Catholicism (justification by faith, an emphasis on preaching and a denial of all but three sacraments, later only two) found as little reception in Quakerism, as Quakerism has had in Lutheran countries.

Barclay's treatment of justification is a review of the whole controversy in the century following Luther's battle cry.³⁰ Justification through the righteousness of Christ might well be the name for the Quaker version of this doctrine (as indeed it was so called by Samuel Fisher in 1660). This shifted the emphasis from the antagonism over works, placing it instead in sanctification or holiness of life.

Barclay's doctrine of perfection and its correlative perseverance were adopted by a major part of English speaking Protestantism, partly through the later Methodism. But Quakerism stresses corporate as well as personal obedience.³¹

Barclay sets out his arguments in propositions or theses which he then elucidates. I will only give you, in part, the relevant propositions. else this paper will be too long.

Propositions 5 and 6 – The Universal Redemption by Christ, and also the Saving and Spiritual Light by which Every Man is Enlightened

Proposition 5: God, out of his infinite love, takes „no pleasure in the death of the wicked man‘ (Ezek 18:32; 33:11), but God has given his only Son, that whoever „has faith in him may not die, but have eternal life‘ (John 3:16 NEB). And makes visible everything that is exposed to the light. And teaches all temperance, righteousness, and godliness. And enlightens the hearts of all to prepare them for salvation.

It is this light which reproves the sin of every individual, and if it were not resisted it would effect the salvation of all men.

This light is no less universal than the seed of sin, being purchased by his death who tasted death for everyone: „For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made to live‘ (1 Cor 15:22 Cath-CCD).

²⁹ In Barclay, „natural“ man means sinful man, but he presupposes a primitive state of happiness and wish to regain it.

³⁰ Op. cit., p. xxiv.

³¹ Op. cit., p. xxv.

Proposition 7 – Justification

For those who do not resist the light, but receive it, it becomes a holy, pure, and spiritual birth in them. It produces holiness, righteousness, purity, and all those other blessed fruits that are acceptable to God.

Jesus Christ is formed in us by this holy birth and by it he does his work in us. By it we are sanctified and we are justified in the sight of God. Paul has said: 'But you have been through the purifying waters; you have been dedicated to God and justified through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God.' (1 Cor 6:11 NEB).

It is not by works produced by our own wills, or by good works themselves, but by Christ, who is not only the gift and the giver, but the cause which produces these effects in us. While we were still enemies, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit'.

Proposition 8 – Perfection [or the Achievement of Spiritual Maturity]

He in whom this pure and holy birth occurs in all its fullness, finds that death and sin are crucified and removed from him, and his heart becomes united and obedient to truth. He is no longer able to obey any suggestions or temptations toward evil, but is freed from sin and the transgression of the law of God, and in that respect perfect. Yet there is still room for spiritual growth, and some possibility of sinning remains if the mind is not diligently and watchfully applied to heeding the Lord. (Rom 6:14; 8:13; 6:2.18; and 1 John 3:6).

Proposition 9 – Perseverance in the Faith and the Possibility of Falling from Grace

Even though this gift of the inward grace of God is sufficient to bring about salvation, yet for those who resist it, it not only may become their condemnation, but does. Moreover, by disobedience, those whose hearts have been partly purified and sanctified by this grace may fall from the state, turning to licentiousness (Jude 4) making shipwreck of faith (1 Tim 1:19). They fall away again after they have tasted the heavenly gift and have partaken of the Holy Spirit (Heb 6:4-6). Nevertheless, it is possible to achieve such an increase and stability in the truth in this life that total apostasy is impossible.

Thus Barclay too links justification and sanctification which then leads on to perfection or, which sounds much more modern, spiritual maturity.

The eighteenth century as far as Quaker theology is concerned brought nothing new in its thinking. The early nineteenth century was influenced by two different strands, the evangelical revival and the holiness move-

ment. Both influences are present to this day, though evangelicalism is practically absent in today's European Quakerism. Joseph John Gurney (1788–1847) was a brother of Elizabeth Fry. His best known writing known today is „A Peculiar People: The Rediscovery of Primitive Christianity“ published in 1824 and can be read today, published by the Friends United Press 1979. He describes the distinct steps for conversion (justification) and baptism with the Holy Spirit (sanctification) which are one heritage of the holiness tradition (see below). He equates the Light with the Holy Spirit rather than with Christ. He differs from earlier Friends in the question of sanctification as a state of sinlessness or empowerment separate from the experience of conversion to Christ. Sanctification, for Gurney, was a work of the Holy Spirit, not integral with the „act of faith, belief in Christ, an act that imparted the righteousness of Christ to the believer“. ³² In common with Christians of the evangelical revival he quotes Scripture extensively but also points out where the peculiar Quaker emphases lie.

„The serious and enlightened Christian of every name will readily confess that it is only through the influence of this Holy Spirit, that he is enabled rightly to apprehend God, to know himself, and to accept Jesus Christ as his all-sufficient saviour – that it is only through such influence that he is converted in the first place, and afterwards sanctified and prepared for his heavenly inheritance.

The differences of sentiment which exist in the church, on this great subject, have respect, not to the question whether the Holy Spirit does or does not operate on the heart of man (for on this question all true Christians are agreed) but principally, if not entirely, to the mode in which that Spirit operates.

On this point there appears to exist, among the professors of Christianity, and even among serious Christians, a considerable diversity of opinion ... with Friends (and probably with many persons under other names) it is a leading principle in religion, that the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul is not only immediate and direct, but perceptible. We believe that we are all furnished with an inward Guide or Monitor, who makes his voice known to us, and who, if faithfully obeyed and closely followed, will infallibly conduct us into true virtue and happiness, because he leads us into a real conformity with the will of God.“

Quoting Paul extensively Gurney continues:

³² Thomas D. Hamm, 1992, pp. 20-22.

„Now, to walk in or after the Spirit, who dwells in us, can be nothing less than to conform our life and conversation to his dictates; and this we could not do, unless those dictates were perceptible to the mind. On the same principles the apostle has, on two occasions, described Christians as persons who are led by the Spirit. „If ye be *led* of the Spirit, ye are not under the law‘ (Gal 5:18). „For as many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; (Rom 8:14). Any one, who impartially examines the two chapters from which these quotations are derived, will easily perceive that the *leading*, of which Paul is here speaking, is to the instruction derived from inspired preaching, or from divinely authorised Scripture, but an internal work carried on by the Spirit in the soul of man. If, then, there be given to us an internal communication of the Spirit of Truth, by which we are to be *led*, it is surely very plain that such communication must be made manifest to our mental perception, or otherwise we could not follow it ...

Hence, therefore, it follows that the true believers in Jesus, of every description, and in all ages, are, in a peculiar manner, visited and guided by the Comforter. No longer are they to depend on the teaching of their fellow-creatures; for the anointing which they have received of Christ *abides in them, and teaches them of all things, and is truth, and no lie.*“

The influence of preaching is discounted. All is due to the influence of the Holy Spirit whose work is not only immediate and direct, but also perceptible.

The Holiness Movement associated in its origins with the revivals of the nineteenth century tends not to acknowledge that Friends had a doctrine of perfection long before Wesley. George Fox believed that „be ye perfect“ meant that men and women were in principle perfectible (to use modern terms). Through God’s power they are enabled to live in obedience to Him and know „righteousness being renewed tūp into the state of Adam which he was before he fell“. ³³ It is the Light that leads to holiness. ³⁴ However the Wesleyan Holiness Revival saw the process they called „sanctification“ as an instantaneous event, Quakers historically believed the process to be slow and difficult as indicated in a pamphlet by George Fox and Thomas Lawrence.

„Perfection of Believers from sin hath Degrees in it.

First, to believe that Perfection is attainable, such are in measure perfect

2. There is a Growth, and in some more than others ...

3. There is Perfection from sin, transgression finished ...“³⁵

³³ Fox, Journal, ed. Nickalls, p. 271, line 22; p. 283, lines 21-28.

³⁴ Faith and Practice, 19.29; Journal, ed. Nickalls, p. 665.

³⁵ Concerning Marriage, pp. 8-9; cited J.W. Frost, 1970, p. 517; quoted in M. Post Abbott 1997, p. 27.

„Barclay's Proposition 8 in his *Apology* also describes perfection as a process involving continued growth. In the modern edition, perfection has been equated explicitly with „spiritual maturity“ reflecting the Greek work used in the Gospels. Barclay's vision sees people transformed in Christ and freed of sin. Perfection starts with the „pure and holy birth“ in which death and sin are crucified. Those who know this new birth may become God's people and „come to share in the very being of God“ yet there is still room for daily growth.³⁶ The modern Quaker vision of holiness is a sometimes uneasy blend of early Quaker tradition; the nineteenth-century Friend, Joseph John Gurney; the influence of John Wesley; and the work of Charles G. Finney, Dwight L. Moody, and other mainstream American evangelicals.³⁷

„Everett Cattell, former president of Malone College in Ohio and one of the twentieth century's most articulate Quaker advocates of holiness, firmly understood that holiness was an on-going process, not simply a one-time event. In his preface to *The Spirit of Holiness*³⁸, he writes about the confusion caused by the emphasis within the Holiness Movement on the „sanctification“ or „second blessing“ experience. Cattell believes that while there is truth in that experience, making it the central focus meant neglect of ongoing nurture of the spiritual life.“

Holiness theology still informs some American Yearly Meetings.

„Sanctification brings empowerment and provides the means to live a holy life. Holiness involves orienting one's life to God, an ongoing practice of prayer, study and devotion, creativity, joy, and a way of living in the world which reflects this inward journey. This Vision of perfection is one which finds echoes among Friends of all persuasions. The passionate search to know the Spirit and to act out of divine love is the heart of liberal Quakerism. „All aspects of life are holy; distinct lines cannot be drawn between secular and religious.“³⁹

„The wholeness of the spiritual and everyday life is integral to these Friends. Action ideally must flow from belief, and belief without action is not sufficient. To follow the Light, to live in obedience to the Spirit, to respond to that of God which is in every person, to know Jesus as their teacher, to know Jesus as Savior: these are some of the ways Friends express the roots of their faith.“⁴⁰

³⁶ Barclay, *Apology*, ed. Freiday, p. 155; op. cit., Post Abbott, 1997, p. 27.

³⁷ Philip Taylor, 1987, p. 22 ff., op. cit., p. 27.

³⁸ Everett Cattell, 1963, p. 7; op. cit., p. 27.

³⁹ North Pacific Yearly Meeting; Faith and Practice 1986, p. 40.

⁴⁰ Margery Post Abbott 1997, pp. 27-29.

British Friends, being denied a university education till later in the nineteenth century, became not only renowned business men but also famous innovative scientists. Friends' stress on personal religious experience which had always questioned external authorities whether of the Bible or eloquent preachers made it easier for them to study the emerging modern biblical, philosophical and historical insights. Unlike American Friends, they managed not to split into different sections. The Manchester Conference of 1895 marks the advent of modern European Quakerism. Many papers deal positively with the vexed question of science and religion, warmly advocating the study of science. The theological papers are still written in a language today's Friends would no longer use, but are relevant to this discussion. Joseph Bevan Braithwaite (1818–1905), an evangelical Friend, remained within the Yearly Meeting because he saw the grace of God as shown in the lives of Friends, even if they did not use his language.

„I listened with an open mind to all that passed, whilst I was at the same time writing a pamphlet explaining my views in opposition to Friends ... But I heard the testimonies [concerning] deceased ministers and was ashamed and self-condemned for my harsh judgement ... I had been through unutterable mercy to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour; now I saw somewhat of His unspeakable preciousness as ‚the Good Shepherd‘ and ‚Counsellor‘ of His people, ‚always, even unto the end of the world‘.“⁴¹

This is part of his address to the Manchester Conference:

„Ours is an emphatic testimony to the work of this Blessed Spirit upon the heart as the enlightener of the conscience, the reprover of the world for sin and the witness for Christ who applies with sanctifying efficacy to the soul His words and works when upon earth, and His mediation and intercession for us in Heaven. It is through His converting and transforming power that the promises are graciously fulfilled.“⁴²

or John Wilhelm Graham (1859–1932):

„Our society has avoided systematic statements of the method of salvation. It has shunned any attempt to describe the eternal workings of love in the language of law, or in terms of business ... The strength of every form of

⁴¹ Faith and Practice 18.01: Testimony of Westminster and Longford MM in London Yearly Meeting Proceedings 1906, pp. 215–216.

⁴² Manchester Conference: The Attitude of the Society of Friends towards Modern Thought 1895, p. 213.

faith is the absorption of self in God."⁴³

HS Newman:

„Sin is a fact that has to be reckoned with as certainly as any scientific fact. As the crust of the earth by the displacement of its strata proves that some incursion from below has intruded itself, so the human mind bears evidence that sin has rent the likeness of God."⁴⁴

„A mother, a wife, a husband rejoice to suffer and to toil for the family they love. Shall God alone be denied this privilege of suffering for others? Shall Christ be ruled out of count because he willingly laid down His life for His fallen brethren? We honour self-sacrifice in men, let us most of all honour the freewill offering of God."⁴⁵

Women too gave papers. Here is Mary Snowden Braithwaite:

„A traditional presentation of spiritual truth can never be effective if we hold the truth traditionally only, it is like a very precious heirloom, precious from its antiquity, and becoming more and more valuable as the years go by, but of very little practical use to anyone, not even the owner himself. A traditional Quaker thou camest into this house; a traditional Quaker thou goest out from it, and what shall the end of these things be? The answer to that, it seems to me, might truly be ‚deadness, flatness, unprofitableness, want of spiritual life and power‘. ... We are to go today (as our forefathers did) to Christ Himself in humbleness of mind, with no preconceived notions of our own ... but with childlike expectation and joyfulness of heart. ... What we, as Friends, need is not carefully arranged doctrines, carefully arranged methods, carefully arranged editorials. All these we have ... But we want men and women full of the Holy Ghost ... whose witness will be received because it meets the needs in the hearts of the men and women to whom they speak ... This generation needs to see Christ. It does not want doctrine, dogma, creeds; it wants the Living Christ in the power of his spirit."⁴⁶

Richard H. Thomas has a message of hope, a message of no limited salvation and one not dependent upon any external authority whatsoever.

„Therefore, the message we have to give to mankind is a message of hope, is a message of no limited salvation, is not a message of salvation dependent upon any external authority whatever, is not a message that some are born to obtain grace and life, and some are not; but the Lord God of

⁴³ Op. cit., p. 245.

⁴⁴ Op. cit., pp. 249-253. *The More Effective Presentation of Spiritual Truth.*

⁴⁵ Op. cit., p. 253 *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Op. cit., pp. 261-266 *ibid.*

heaven and earth is everywhere seeking to find those who are lost, in order that He may save them, and is not confined in His operations to those who have an outward knowledge of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth, but wherever there is a human soul, there is the Spirit of Christ, striving to embrace that soul, and bring it to the highest life of which it is capable.

This brings me to the other point, that we not only believe that every soul is visited by God, but that every soul that will submit itself to God may be filled with God, may have God to be the living power of its life ...

The purpose of God for you and me is, not that we should have a little of His Spirit, not only that we should be able to respond to the touch of His finger, but that we should live in His Spirit.⁴⁷

There is a great deal more in these conference papers, but I will finish with two extracts from Joseph Taylor's paper which most European Friends living one hundred years later would echo. Having witnessed an actual sacrifice, the shedding of blood with the idea of obtaining remission of sins, he asks „Is this the language of today?“⁴⁸

„We need to study and speak in the language that will be understood by whomsoever we address. May we use the common sense that God has given us to speak in all cases in language that will be understood.“⁴⁹

This brings me to our own day and generation. European Friends rarely use theological language, though a great deal of symbolism and metaphor. We may be accused of having a defective sense of sin because our experience is of the love and forgiveness of God who in common with our Jewish sisters and brothers we do not always name. The early Quaker emphasis on perfection changed in this century, into a modern view of progress. However, the events and experiences of the last fifty years re-emphasise the early Quaker language of darkness and light, or use psychological language. Thus Lorna Marsden:

„In this century we have been newly filled by the conscious knowledge of our own darkness – that we carry this darkness within us. We no longer need to project our darkness outward into demons or scapegoats – or, if we do, we know we are evoking disaster. It is by encounter with our own darkness that we recognise the light. It is the light itself which shows us the darkness – and both are summoned within us.“⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Op. cit., pp. 381-383. The Message of Christianity to the World.

⁴⁸ Op. cit., p. 274. The More Effective Presentation of Spiritual Truth.

⁴⁹ Op. cit., p. 273. The More Effective Presentation of Spiritual Truth.

⁵⁰ Faith and Practice 21.10; Lorna Marsden, 1983.

OR

„Directly I admit that my life might be better than it is I have a sense of failure and feel a need of help from something or someone outside myself This sense and this need are to me the meanings of the terms ‚sense of sin‘ and ‚need of salvation‘. I recognise absolute moral or, rather, spiritual values, quite beyond reason or argument; very often indeed contradicting reason and flouting even scientific law ...“⁵¹

OR

„We can respond to the Christ-event in such a way that we see Jesus as a symbol of God, a concrete example of divine being and action. When we do this, though we make statements focused on Jesus, we are in fact trying to talk about God. Using this symbol we can talk about God as helpless and humble, sharing human vulnerability with us. We can see the brokenness of God, the giving up of power in order to take on pain and mortality; the creativity of love which remakes hope out of despair, promise out of sin; the incarnation of the divine in the human, making all of life sacred; the fusion of holiness with life; the divine self-offering.

Using this symbol we can talk about comfort; about the light that shines in the darkness; about the certainty of love and joy We can see the presence of God in every aspect of our lives, so that whatever our situation it is shared and understood.“⁵²

Harvey Gillman puts it this way:

„Quakers do not spend much time talking about sin. They tend to emphasise the good in people. The feeling of a lack of self-worth is strong enough in most people without ‚preaching up sin‘ as early Quakers put it. But when we read many of the early journals (and it was the custom of Quakers to write journals instead of books of theology – personal experience over intellectual theories again), we can see a process of overcoming this sense of low self-worth. There is at first a feeling of inauthenticity, of life not lived fully or honestly; then there is a flicker of an ideal that life does have meaning ...

The period of inauthenticity, of dullness, of alienation, is often described as a period of sin. But then gradually the individual feels that there is a power working within which says ‚No, you can't go on like this. Something has to change‘. This is accompanied by an almost physical apprehension, a quaking even, or a nagging feeling that you have to take up your tent and move on. This struggle is in most of us a continuous one. At times we feel we have come through, made it to the light; at other times we feel, here we go again into the darkness ... Quakers do not believe this

⁵¹ Op. cit., 26.10; Francis Knight, 1945.

⁵² Op. cit., 26.50; Janet Scott 1980, pp. 60-61.

journey of spiritual growth is for a few exceptional people. It is one which all people are making at all times and in all places. Quakers do not make a distinction between the sacred and the secular.

This does not devalue the sacred but upgrades the secular. Quakers share with other mystics the insight that God can be found in the everyday experience of all people. It is in the here and now that communion, real sharing, can occur. ... I have noticed more and more that if we think that we can escape from the world's problems by taking on a 'holy' life we are often much mistaken. This world is always with us even in the most set aside places. This is one of the deep insights of monastic life. One monastic tradition which I find very appealing is the law of hospitality: each guest is Christ at the door waiting to come in. At this point the Catholic and the Quaker traditions are very close, for the holy is part of ordinary experience, the guest and Christ are one, when seen with the eyes of faith and compassion.⁵³

The American, Douglas Gwyn, moves easily back and forth among the varied traditions. His prophetic message can speak to a generation raised in the shadow of the atom bomb and the prospect of world self-destruction. He reminds us that

„the experience of Christ is the revelation of history – not only the history recorded by scripture, but also the end of history *foretold* by scripture. Christ first reveals one's alienation from God giving an understanding of Adam's Fall in Genesis. If one remains in the light of this revelation, Christ will empower one to enter the city of New Jerusalem as envisioned by John at the end of Revelation ... [the] relationship between experience, scripture and history led Fox to understand Christ's revelation as an apocalyptic event. And while the revelation of the end may remain in the personal realm, the thrust of Fox' work was to gather a new community through the public preaching of the apocalyptic gospel. This Church would take Christ's revelation into social and historical realms by establishing Christ's rule, the Kingdom of God, on earth ... Christ is incarnated within the individual ... the gospel gathers individuals into a unity of common experience, understanding and obedience which corporately incarnates Christ. The church as the body of Christ that does the will of its head creates social, economic and political transformations that change the course of history according to Christ's command. ... Fox defined the true, catholic worship of God as *waiting upon the Lord*. He understood this approach in apocalyptic terms as the silencing of the first birth according to the flesh so that the second birth according to the Spirit may be heard ... as the spiritual birth is raised up, a new world comes into view. In other

⁵³ Harvey Gillman 1988, pp. 8-14.

words, the new creation begins with the raising up of the new creature. Friends insisted that this experience is the spiritual baptism that Christ bestows upon those who will wait upon him.⁵⁴

„In the end of history, all will recognise the truth in Christ. That moment of recognition will contain elements of joy and regret, confirmation and surprise, for Christians and non-Christians alike: both Paul (Rom 2:5-11) and John (Rev. 20:13) affirm that all will be judged according to their actual deeds, not their beliefs. But the point of the gospel is that we may recognise Christ now, that we may come to the end of history before it comes to us. That recognition occurs inwardly in the heart. Yet, it does not – it must not – end there. The apocalyptic revelation of Christ has an explosive force. It moves from the inside out. The recognition of Christ begins inwardly as a new way of knowing, but it moves outwardly into the ethical and social realm as a new way of acting. The present apocalypse of Christ, therefore, reaches its true power as we actively *give recognition* to Christ in our words and deeds.

Life in Christ thus fuses ethics with witness: to give recognition to Christ means to preach Christ with our lives ...

The Christian community, if it claims to consist in the lived reality of Christ present, must not succumb to the ideological tendencies of tradition and doctrine. When our religious ideologies become fixed and conformist, we dwell no longer in the truth, but in our truths.

The Christian community, therefore must be constantly open to redefinition by the Spirit of Christ. It must be continually in the discipline of waiting upon Christ, of living in the end-time. ... Here Christ teaches disciplines by the power of the Spirit more decisively than the written code of Scripture. Here the Holy Spirit ministers directly to all who love Christ truly, rather than indirectly through those who claim to represent Christ officially. To recognise Christ is to repent of all Church ideologies and structures that do not partake of our actual experience of Christ ... We recognise that there is nothing to defend but the truth; we understand that we further the truth not by taking the lives of others but by offering up our own. We recognise that God's blessings are not rewards accrued permanently to us for 'being good'; they represent God's faith in us to be creative in doing good. Therefore, to wait upon Christ is to expect to serve God. We thereby become not the fixed reservoirs of God's goodness but the flowing channels of God's grace in the world ...

Finally, to recognise Christ is to anticipate the end of the world, to declare and enact the transformation of the social, economic, and political categories that separate us from one another and from God.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Douglas Gwyn 1984, pp. 209-210.

⁵⁵ Douglas Gwyn 1989, pp. 140-144.

The last British revision of our „Quaker Faith and Practice, the book of Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain“ came out and was approved by the Yearly Meeting in 1994. In its index neither Justification nor Sanctification appear though the thoughts underlying these traditional doctrinal words can be found in many extracts, as these cover the whole period of the existence of the Religious Society of Friends.

Pam Lunn makes this comment:

„Within the Society of Friends we have our own problems with the traditional language of Christian spirituality ... There are those who can comfortably talk in Christian language, because they experience it deeply as expressing truth and reality as they perceive it. For them it is not ‚just a language‘; it *is* the truth. The words used are inseparable from the underlying truths, the stories, the tradition, the nature of God as revealed in Jesus. There is no ‚gap‘ between their experiences of faith, their beliefs and the language used by the Christian tradition. There are those who just cannot use that language at all, because for them it precisely does not express their deepest truths, and may in fact be felt to deny or even violate them. For these people, their deepest experiences of spiritual reality, as they have encountered it, cannot be encompassed by a language that has acquired so many historical accretions and distortions that it has become at best meaningless and at worst a falsification of truth. So they must grapple with the equal inadequacy of contemporary language to express the depths of their searching.“⁵⁶

However

„This is the truth which we know and try to live ... that every person is capable of response to the divine Spirit; that this Spirit, or light, or God reaches out to each one directly and freely; that if we follow the leadings of this Spirit faithfully we are led out of sin into unity with the divine will; that this unity leads us into love of and care for all humankind, who are our kin, that what the Spirit shows us is living truth which cannot be fettered by words.“⁵⁷

For Friends, justification and sanctification is as much a community experience as an individual one. The suffering of humankind on this earth has given to many the experience that the meaning of Christ crucified is that God suffers alongside us, that He has deliberately abdicated His power. Hugh Pyper puts it this way:

⁵⁶ Faith and Practice 26.76; Love and Politics, 1990–91, p. 51.

⁵⁷ Op. cit., 27.26; Janet Scott 1980, pp. 4–5.

„Here the questions of action and achievement, of God and humanity, are brought to a focus in the paradox of triumph on a cross, of God dying as a man, of a man living as God. Here the question mark which death and suffering put against the love and joys of this world is itself confronted with a question: ‚Death, where is thy sting?‘“⁵⁸

Jocelyn Burnell might give this as an answer:

„The resurrection, however literally or otherwise we interpret it, demonstrates the power of God, to bring life out of brokenness; not just to take the hurt out of brokenness but to add something to the suffering, and to turn it into a gift. The resurrection affirms me with my pain and my anger at what has happened. It does not take away my pain; it still hurts. But I sense that I am being transfigured; I am being enabled to begin again to love confidently and to remake the spirit of my world.“⁵⁹

For Friends „justification“ and „sanctification“ come in a variety of guises expressed in many different ways. The Holy Spirit, personal and corporate experience, faith and works, continuing revelation, all contribute and go hand in hand. „By their fruits you shall know them.“ Justification, sanctification, holiness, perfection, wholeness, spiritual maturity, discipleship, obedience, spiritual formation, inner healing, are all words Friends use to describe their religious experience. Most Friends would stress obedience to the Holy Spirit, responding the Inward Light, to the Risen Christ.

„We all believe that as we turn towards God, then are obedient to divine guidance, we will experience an inward peace and act with compassion, humility, and righteousness. We can, through the work of the Spirit, live out God’s reign here on earth. All Friends seek to live out of the love expressed in the Sermon on the mount:

You have heard that it was said, ‚You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy‘. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be the children of your Father in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48).

Obedience to the Light of Christ allowed these Friends to respond to the world around them with great compassion, power, and joy despite immense trials and personal suffering.

⁵⁸ Op. cit., 26.55; Hugh Pyper 1986, p. 9.

⁵⁹ Op. cit., p. 26. 56; Jocelyn Burnell, pp. 51-52.

To be in this inward state is to be holy, to be in a new covenant with God. Early Quakerism was shaped by a strong core group of individuals inspired by inward knowledge of a covenant with God and with each other as a 'people of God'. They proclaimed entry into the New Covenant as promised by Jeremiah: 'I will put my law within them, and I will write another ... for they shall all know me' (Jeremiah 31:33-34). Waiting on God to touch and guide the heart grounds the ministry of all Friends in the expectant waiting on God in the silence in meeting for worship and in Friends' business practice. Obedience to the Divine is at the heart of the testimonies – the belief that religious faith is manifested in integrity, equality, plain living and peacemaking ...

Perfection also is much more than ethical living. It is obedience to the 'power of the Lord' which is close and present to each person, yet still remains 'profoundly mysterious – an uncertain visitation of grace, not under human control to be turned on and off at will, but also responsive to human need'.⁶⁰

What then can we contribute to ongoing ecumenical dialogues? ... Perhaps little more than our testimony to such fruits of the Spirit as may still be evident among us. Over more than three hundred years we have witnessed to a redemptive religious experience ... it has been a consequence of personal and repentant response and corporate worship in the context of silent, receptive waiting upon God.⁶¹

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