

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE
PRINCIPLES AND TESTIMONIES
OF
THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY
OF FRIENDS

WITH MINUTES OF ADOPTION

FROM

The Yearly Meetings

OF

New England, Canada, Ohio, Western,
Iowa, Kansas and North Carolina

ADOPTED 1912

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MINUTES

At a Conference of Representatives from the Meetings for Sufferings of the Yearly Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends in America, in correspondence with each other; held at Stillwater, near Barnesville Ohio, the 27th of Ninth Month 1911; with delegates present from five of these Yearly Meetings.

This Conference was called for the purpose of considering the propriety of the joint publication, in concise form, by these Yearly Meetings, of our belief in the doctrines of the Gospel, as professed, practiced and promulgated by our early Friends.

After deliberate and weighty consideration, and the harmonious interchange of opinions, and expression of feelings, we were united in offering the following "Brief Synopsis of the Principles and Testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends " to the above-mentioned Meeting for Sufferings, viz New England, Canada, Ohio, Western, Iowa, Kansas, and North Carolina, for their consideration and approval.

Signed by direction, and on behalf of the Conference.

Jesse Edgerton. Clerk.

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE PRINCIPLES AND TESTIMONIES OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

Although there are various works of recognized ability and standard repute, setting forth the principles and testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends, many of them most valuable, in the literature of the society; yet in view of the fact, that in this era of unrest and change, when in many religious denominations, such changes have taken place as have materially altered their belief, within the short span of a generation; it might be well for us to reaffirm our faith in the doctrines of the gospel, as professed and promulgated by our early Friends.

This seems to us the more needful, because the changes above mentioned, are not by any means confined to other religious bodies, but have swept over the Society of Friends as well, until in many places the free gospel ministry, the deep spirituality, the solemn waiting worship of the early Friends, are things of the past.

Our present concern is to manifest, to all with whom we come in contact, not only in word, but in deed, in consistent life and conversation, our belief in those principles and testimonies which George Fox and his co-workers of the seventeenth century, so zealously preached and so consistently practiced.

We are assured that real Friends today believe, as did George Fox, in the one only wise, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and eternal God, "The Creator of all things, in heaven and in earth, and the preserver of all that he has made, who is God over all, blessed forever; to whom be all honor, glory, dominion, praise and thanksgiving, both now, henceforth and forever more. And we own and believe in Jesus Christ, His beloved and only begotten Son, in whom He is well pleased; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the virgin Mary: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins; who is the express image of the invisible God, by whom were all things created that are in heaven and in earth, visible, and invisible." (Fox's Journal, Vol. 2.)

Thus affirming our belief in God, the Father, and in His Son Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, we desire also to affirm our belief in the virtue of His atoning sacrifice on Calvary, for the sins of all mankind. As through the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we are led to repent of, and forsake our sins, so through the atoning efficacy of the blood of Christ, shed for us on Calvary, we are enabled to experience remission of our past sins.

Robert Barclay says, "We believe that the remission of sins, which any partake of, is only in, and by virtue of that most satisfactory sacrifice, and no otherwise."

We desire, here, to introduce passages from the writings of George Fox, and some of his co-laborers, showing that these doctrines are in harmony with the views of sound Friends, from the rise of the Society.

George Fox, in his reply to priest Stevens, when asked why "Christ cried out upon the cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and why he said 'If it be possible let this cup pass from me, yet not my will but thine be done'". "I told him," said George Fox, "At that time the sins of all mankind were upon him, and their iniquities and transgressions, with which he was wounded, which he was to bear and to be an offering, for, as he was man, but died not, as he was God. So in that he died for all men, tasting death for every man, he was an offering for the sins of the whole world. This I spoke, being at that time, in a measure sensible of Christ's sufferings." (Fox's Journal, p. 86.)

George Fox further says, in his "Answer to the Declaration of the Great Turk" after setting forth, "How that Christ suffered in the flesh and died for us," "So it is clear that the eternal, invisible and incomprehensible God was not, nor cannot be crucified. But Christ the Son of God, suffered according to the flesh, not in his Godhead. So Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures of the old and new testaments, 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; and that Christ, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man; so it was not the eternal, invisible, incomprehensible God that was crucified, and died, and that did taste death for every man; but Christ according to the flesh, who was manifest to take away our sins, and in Him there was no sin. Christ was manifest to destroy the works of the devil; and Christ through his death destroyed death that sin wrought, and the devil the power of death. And about the ninth hour, when Jesus hanged on the cross, He cried with a loud voice, saying, 'My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?'

So it is clear the eternal God did not die, nor was crucified, but Christ was put to death in the flesh. Thus testifies Matthew, one of Christ's apostles. So He was the one offering, who made an end of all the offerings among the Jews, through the offering up of the body of Jesus, once for all."

George Fox says furthermore, in the same work, "And therefore Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did by Him; this Jesus the son of Mary, the Jews, with their wicked hands did take, crucify and slay: but it was God who loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it. And though the Jews did crucify Jesus and slew Him and hanged Him on a tree; yet God hath raised Him up the third day, and God hath exalted him, at his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins."

John Gratton, in a treatise concerning the sufferings of Christ, uses this language, "Here is universal love, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. So all the world are put into a capacity, by the sufferings and death of Christ, to come to him; and he that cometh to Christ, He will in no wise cast out."

To show the great necessity of a right understanding of what Christ has done for us without us, as well as what he will do for us within us, as we submit to the manifestations of his will, made known in our hearts, John Crook, in a confession of the faith of the early Friends, shortly before his death, uses the following language: "Neither doth regeneration, or the believing in the light of Christ within, make void the death and sufferings of Christ without, at Jerusalem, no more than believing the Scripture testimony without, concerning Christ's death, makes void the work of regeneration, and mortification within.

"But as saith the apostle in another place, so say I in this, 'For as the man is not without the woman, neither is the woman without the man in the Lord: even so, is not the death and suffering of Christ, without, at Jerusalem, to be made void and of none effect, by anything within: neither doth the light within make that of none effect without, but both in the Lord answer His will.

"For though there is and may be a knowledge and belief of what Christ did and suffered, without the gates, in his own body on the tree, and yet sin be alive in the heart; and the work of regeneration not known, yet it cannot be so where the light within is believed in and obeyed, so as to have its perfect work in the heart, to regenerate, and make all things new, and all things of God. Thus man can never make void what Christ hath done and suffered with out; and yet this new birth of Christ, formed within, and dwelling in the heart, by faith, doth not limit or confine Christ to be only within, and not without also: but both within and without, according to the good pleasure of the Father, to reveal and make Him known, for He fills all things, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and yet He is at God's right hand, far above all heavens, in a glorious body."

Friends believe in the "Three who bear record in heaven, Father, Son and Holy Ghost," and that these are one; yet we have ever been concerned to avoid the word "Trinity" as applied to the Divine Being, as not found in the Bible, as less appropriate, and more confusing than the plain and simple terms used in the Scriptures: or as expressed by Thomas Evans, in his exposition, "Avoid entangling ourselves by the use of unscriptural terms, invented to define Him who is undefinable, scrupulously adhering to the safe and simple language as contained in the Holy Scriptures."

With other evangelical religious denominations, we believe in the realities of a future and spiritual life, after the termination of this state of existence. This fact is most clearly and satisfactorily stated by Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in His answer to the Sadducees. "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." (Luke, XX, 35-36.)

This brings us naturally to the belief of the Society in regard to the Resurrection. We fully accept and believe in the resurrection of the dead, as taught by Christ and his Apostles. Paul has beautifully explained, and illustrated this much discussed subject in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians. With him we believe in the resurrection, not of the body, but of the spirit." But some man will say, 'How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?' Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die! And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him and to every seed his own body. * * * So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. "Not after long years, as some suppose, but when death releases the soul from its tenement of clay, "then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it," (Eccl., XII, 7.) there to be "judged according to their works. " (Rev., XX, 13.)

Holding, as before stated, a belief in Almighty God, and in His only begotten ,Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and in His infinite mercy and goodness; as objects of our gratitude and adoration, we hold it to be our duty and also our privilege, not only to dwell in a reverent attitude of spirit toward Him, who condescends to be a Father to His dependent children; but also to make public confession of this obligation, by assembling with His people, for the purpose of Divine worship. We recognize as true, our Savior's declaration to the woman of Samaria, that "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (John, IV., 24.) This is an act that must be performed between the individual soul and its Creator therefore we endeavor, when thus assembled, to attain to a condition of quiet introversion of mind, waiting upon the Lord, with all our expectation directed unto Him, the great Head of the Church, whose right and prerogative it is to direct the service of all Meetings for His own worship.

In the light of the Savior's definition of Divine worship, as here given, we can see no place for music, in its performance, hence Friends do not have, nor use musical instruments for this purpose. How can we imagine that God who is a spirit, and who listens and longs for the spiritual harmonies of life, will be satisfied or pleased with the artful notes, however sweet, of a mere machine! We believe the effect of music to be dissipating, rather than elevating, in a spiritual sense, and hence to be avoided.

In the performance of this spiritual worship, withdrawing from all outward and distracting things, as we are enabled to attain unto, and maintain a solemn, waiting attitude of spirit, we will often realize the fulfillment of the prophecy, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, etc." (Isa. XL, 31.) and we are brought into a state of mind susceptible to the gospel message, whether received immediately from the Holy Spirit, by its direct and powerful impression on our minds, or through some chosen and qualified, and anointed instrument.

Believing, as we do, in these views of Divine worship, how can we consistently participate with those who presume to direct, or lead in those services or exercises, the direction of which the great Head of the Church reserves as His own right? We do not desire to impugn the motives, or honesty of those, who have not been led into the same convictions, relative to worship, that we have. We believe that as Christian people are enabled to live up to the measure of light and knowledge they have received, their service will be acceptable to our Father in Heaven. Let us also be faithful to improve the opportunities with which we have been blessed, faithful to the light and knowledge vouchsafed to us, and humbly thankful that life has come to us, amidst circumstances and environments, favorable to a practical spirituality.

Intimately connected with our testimony in regard to worship, is the one relative to the ministry. Holding, as we do, the ministry of the gospel to be a gift of God, freely bestowed by Him, upon whomsoever He may call and qualify for His own work and service, regardless of sex; in the exercise of which, he or she is wholly dependent upon the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit; as Paul says, "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. I, 11-12.) Thus we claim it to be by its very nature, entirely outside the domain of marketable commodities. We find nowhere, in the teaching of Christ or his apostles, any evidence that the gospel was to be a matter of barter or sale, or of mercenary consideration. Indeed as we recall Peter's scathing rebuke to Simon the sorcerer, who thought to buy the power of communicating the Holy Spirit, by the laying on of hands, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God." (Acts VIII, 20-21) Recalling this, may we not well wonder at the commercialism which has become so interwoven with the ministry, as a profession, throughout Christendom? How strikingly in contrast with it, stands out the example of Paul, working with his hands, that he might not be chargeable, or burdensome to the Church where he was laboring. "yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me. I have showed all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' " (Acts XX, 34-35.) Our claim is that this gift, freely bestowed, should be freely exercised. "Freely ye have received, freely give. " (Matt. X, 8.) was the command of the Master to His disciples, when sending them forth on their first gospel mission.

The minister, if truly anointed, becomes simply the instrument, or medium, through which the gospel message flows, agreeably to our Lord's declaration to His disciples; "For it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (Matt. X, 20.)

From this view, it follows that the minister's duty may be to speak, or it may be to keep silent; because Christ, the great Minister of ministers, can and often does speak immediately, by the Holy Spirit, to our human souls! How reverently then, should the human minister wait to know the call, and putting forth of the Divine!

On the other hand, the very nature of a paid ministry, presupposes it to be the minister's duty to perform the service for which he is compensated, whether the Head of the Church gives him a message to deliver or not. Another privilege connected with our free gospel ministry, is its freedom for the various gifts of our membership; as free for the right exercise of the humblest, as the most exalted gift; as free for the lispings of the few broken sentences of the "babe in Christ" as for the minister, old in years and experience. And here we would quote a few lines, regarding the ministry, from "The Testimony of the Society of Friends on the Continent of America," adopted by the eight Yearly Meetings, then existing, in 1829-30.

"This gift, (ministry) cannot be exercised, but as the ministers are actuated, and moved by the spirit of Christ; and minister under the renewed influences and openings thereof; according to the apostolic injunction; 'If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability that God giveth, that God, in all things may be glorified through Jesus

Christ.' (1 Peter, IV, 11.) In our addresses to the Throne of Grace, it becomes us to remember that we are but dust, that He who is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders, ought to be approached with holy fear and reverence. But we are emboldened to draw near to Him in living faith, for the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. "

There is a subtle influence at work in many places, not alone among other religious denominations, but to a certain extent in the Religious Society of Friends, to exalt an intellectual, or educational standard for the ministry; seemingly forgetful of the fact, that in the early years of the Christian Church, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble were called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty and base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in His presence." (First Cor. I, 26-29.)

Was it not so in the early days of the Society of Friends? What powerful ministry characterized those early years, when thousands were convinced of the truths of the gospel, as professed by Friends! We do not wish to discourage, in the least, a liberal and thorough education; but we would raise a warning voice against making the ministry of the gospel of Christ, at all dependent upon a college education, or intellectual attainments. Before leaving this subject, we would quote again from "The Testimony " heretofore alluded to: "Notwithstanding this ministry is altogether independent of human learning and wisdom, it has been the repeated advice of the Society, and we believe it is of great advantage to ministers as well as others, frequently to read the Holy Scriptures, having their minds turned to the Spirit, by which they were dictated, and which alone can open the Divine mysteries contained in them. Thus they would become instructed in things pertaining to salvation, and like the good scribe, be prepared to bring forth out of the treasury things new and old."

Another point whereon Friends differ widely from many religious denominations, and one also, on which other bodies differ greatly from one another, is the subject of baptism. The fact that no mandatory, or binding authority for water baptism can be found in the New Testament, is, perhaps, the reason for the wide diversity of opinion regarding its administration: while to us who believe that the one necessary and saving baptism is that of the Holy Spirit, all is clear and plain, and fully in harmony with the simplicity of the gospel!

While water baptism was practiced by some of the apostles, it seems to have been administered only to Jews and Jewish proselytes. Baptism, as well as circumcision, had been practiced among the Israelites for centuries, and it was difficult for them to accept a spiritual meaning for these terms; and they held tenaciously to both, even insisting on circumcision for Gentile converts to the Christian faith.

Paul, whose broad and catholic spirit, seemed to grasp the Truth more readily than some of the other apostles, soon perceived that "Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter." (Rom. II, 29.) He also tells us in Ephesians (IV, 5.) that there is "One God, one faith, one baptism." In the first chapter, First Corinthians, Paul thanks God that he baptized none of them, "Save Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanes; besides I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel." Here the apostle was evidently writing of water baptism, as there had been contention among the Corinthians, which he was endeavoring to reconcile, as shown in the context.

The line of distinction seems very clearly drawn, in the New Testament, between John's baptism, (that of water) and Christ's baptism (that of the Spirit.) John the Baptist says, "I indeed baptize you with water, unto repentance; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire; whose fan is in his

hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matt. III, 11.)

In examining Christ's commission to his disciples, as he was about to be separated from them, we find but one place where baptism is even mentioned, as a part of their mission, and that in such a way that it adds no force to the contention for water baptism. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. XXVIII, 19)

Robert Barclay, in treating of the subject of baptism, holds that the word "in" in the above text, should have been rendered "into" and we find in the revised version, this is the case, and the reading is "Baptizing them into the name, etc."

Mark's expression of the Savior's command on the same occasion was, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (XVI, 15.) Luke's understanding of it was, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (XXIV, 47.) John says, "Then said Jesus unto them again, 'Peace be unto you; as the Father hath sent me, even so I send you.'" (XX, 21.) It is interesting in this connection to recall these words, "As the Father hath sent me, even so I send you." And with it the declaration of John, "Jesus himself baptized not." (John IV, 2.) From these passages it seems clear that the Master did not send his disciples to baptize, but to preach the gospel of the Kingdom!

Considering the whole subject of baptism, does it not seem evident that our Saviour's meaning in Matt. XXVIII, 19th, was this? "Baptizing them (by the Holy Spirit) into the name (or power) of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." We believe this to be the true and logical inference to draw from the text; that it is in harmony with correlative Scripture passages, and with the whole trend of the Master's teaching; enabling us to see with Peter, that the baptism that saves, is "Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter III, 21.)

With these spiritual views of the religion of Christ, it would be inconsistent in Friends to believe in the ritual of the Eucharist as the celebration of the Lord's Supper is termed. Our contention is that our Lord did not, by the eating of the Passover, with his disciples, institute any new rite, or ordinance, but was observing with them, the last act in the Mosaic law, which was fulfilled and abrogated by our Savior's most acceptable sacrifice of Himself on Calvary, for the salvation of mankind; "Having abolished in his flesh the law of commandments, contained in ordinances," etc. (Eph. II, 15.)

A most important part of his mission, was the infusion of spirituality into the religious life of the world; and this could not have been accomplished, or advanced by the introduction of new rites and ceremonies, which, like those of the Mosaic dispensation, were but "types and shadows of the good things to come," and "Can never with those sacrifices which they offer, year by year continually, make the comers there unto perfect." (Heb. X, 1.)

We believe that in the fullness of the gospel plan, communion, like worship, is in spirit and in truth; and we hold it as a most precious privilege, that we may enjoy the reality of direct personal communion with God, through the Holy Spirit. Then when the reality, the substance, is possible, why or how can we be satisfied with the unreal, with the shadow? In the beautiful fourteenth chapter of John, Jesus shows us the relation that should exist between the disciples and their Lord. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself unto him." (John XIV, 20-21.) We quote the following from the "Testimony of Friends" hereinbefore mentioned. "The real and essential communion between Christ and his Church, is only maintained by a real participation of

his Divine nature, through faith and obedience, and is the supper alluded to in Revelations, III, 20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.' "

Perhaps that testimony of our Society, best known to the world, and the one that has brought it most conspicuously into public notice, in this country, is the one against war and bloodshed. For two hundred and fifty years, the Religious Society of Friends, has borne testimony, not only against war, but against the spirit of war, as well, until now the foremost statesmen and jurists of the world, weary of its record of violence and inhumanity, are looking to The Hague Tribunal, in the hope, that ere long a legal court of arbitral justice may be established competent to settle all international disputes, that cannot be adjusted by diplomacy. It is no time, however, for Friends to withdraw from the advanced ground we occupy, as followers of the Prince Of Peace! The whole trend of the Savior's teaching is in opposition to all war! What could be more comprehensive in its scope, what more clear and definite, than his words, as recorded in Matthew, (V. 43-45.) "Ye have heard that it hath been said Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

A Christian is defined as "A disciple, or follower of Christ. One whose profession and life conform to the teaching and example of Christ."

Does the life of the soldier, who kills his fellow men, or the man who condones or justifies, or applauds the killing, conform to the teaching, or example of our Savior, the Prince of Peace? Certainly we can imagine nothing more at variance with the gospel plan, than the hatred and violence of war!!

As we submit our hearts to the dominion of Christ, he will so fill them with love to him and to each other, that there will be no place for hatred, malice, and those other evil passions that precede, and accompany the spirit of strife and war, but we will rather become peace-makers, who are to become the "Children of God." (Matt. V, 9.)

Friends also differ from many religious bodies in regard to the use of judicial oaths. We believe Christ meant just what he said, "Swear not at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." Matt. V, 34-37.) By this it seems evident that our Savior meant to teach the importance of the plain and simple truth, and we believe truth in its simplicity, is more potent than when accompanied by an oath! James says(V, 12) "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth: neither by any other oath; but let your yea, be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. "

The importance of this testimony, and its influence, (through the faithfulness of Friends in supporting it,) upon public opinion, and on the government, cannot be estimated. The success, following the maintenance of this Christian testimony, in the substitution of the affirmation, for the oath, when desired, is cause for thankfulness, and should stimulate all Christian people to its continued support.

In common with other orthodox and evangelical religious bodies, we accept, and believe in the authenticity, and Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, and would quote from Robert Barclay, where, in Prop. third[sic], he says, "Though, then we do acknowledge the Scriptures to be very heavenly and Divine writings, the use of them to be very comfortable and necessary to the Church of Christ, and we admire and give praise to the Lord, for his wonderful providence, in

preserving these writings so pure and uncorrupted as we have them, through so long a night of apostasy. * * * Yet we may not call them the principal fountain of all truth and knowledge nor yet the first adequate rule of faith and manners, because the principal fountain of truth must be the truth itself."

Neither do we call the Bible the "Word of God." This is not because of any lack of appreciation of its precious truths, for we believe that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Rom. XV, 4.) "The prophecy came not in old time, by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter, I, 21.)

We believe also that the New Testament writers moved by the same power and spirit, gave us that portion of the Sacred Record, and "That they are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. III, 16.)

The "Word of God" as abundantly shown in the Scriptures themselves, is a name applied to Christ, and not to the Bible. For instance, in the first chapter of John, we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. * * * And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. " Paul also says, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God." (Heb. XI, 3.)

These and other passages, which we might quote, prove, conclusively, as we believe, that the Bible is not that which the Bible itself calls "The Word of God."

We hope that the foregoing observations make it clear, that Friends in declining to call the Bible "The Word of God" or the primary rule of faith, (assigning that place to the Spirit, which was the inspiration of, and can alone open the Scriptures to our understanding,) do not undervalue its precious teachings. Neither would we have any think that our attitude toward the Holy Scriptures, (which we believe is the scriptural one) is induced by any leaning toward, or sympathy for that refined species of unbelief, known as "Higher Criticism,"¹ which, calling in question many things recorded in the Bible; that are super-natural[sic], or miraculous, doubtless has shaken the faith of many an honest enquirer after Truth. What we, in this age of materialism need, is not higher criticism, but a higher, deeper, broader faith in God, and in his Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; and a deeper reverence for things Divine, not omitting the Bible, which, in its entirety, is always precious to the humble, devoted Christian.

Friends have long been recognized by their peculiar simplicity of speech, with regard to which, it may be briefly stated, that not until about the time of George Fox, did the use of the plural pronoun, as addressed to one person, obtain foothold in public usage.

Ecclesiastical and magisterial officers, pompous, and jealous of their petty honor, became unwilling to be accounted of no more importance than the common people, and began to require their attendants and others, to address them as, "You," "Your Honor," "Your Worship," etc. Thus originated the plural form of speech, to one person, which has become well nigh universal, among English speaking people.

Quick to detect error and pride, in this, as in other things, George Fox and his co-laborers declined its use, as well as the use of complimentary terms and titles, which likewise originated in pride. On account of their faithful adherence to conviction, cruel and unrelenting persecution fell upon the early Friends, because of these testimonies, which today, are so lightly esteemed by many bearing our name.

Our avoidance of the popular names of the days of the week, is not simply to be singular, but they were borrowed from heathen mythology; the days thus named, having been devoted to the worship of the idol, or heathen deity, whose name is thus perpetuated. Against this recognition of pagan superstition, Friends have a testimony to bear.

For somewhat similar reasons, we avoid the popular names of the months, using instead, the numeral designation, this being, not only more correct, but more convenient, as attested by the large number of business firms using this system.

We are well aware that the plea is made, that general usage renders these things correct; but we believe they had their genesis in pride and idolatry, and perhaps retain somewhat of that nature still. Indeed, if asked our honest opinion about it, would we not have to own that pride has much to do with their use today?

Besides these peculiarities of language, Friends have long been distinguished by the simplicity of their dress and manners. Formerly, the simple garb, the scriptural language, the consistent demeanor, of the "Quaker of the olden time," were visible tokens whereby Friends were known wherever they might be.

We believe that as our hearts are filled with the Divine love, and our lives brought under the government of Christ, our dress and behavior will come to conform to the simplicity of the gospel. Peter, in his first general epistle to the Church, says "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness, into his marvelous light." (II, 9.)

We believe the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, according to the testimony of the apostle John. These works being, so far as we are concerned, in the heart of unregenerate man, the power to destroy them must, of necessity, operate in the same place; therefore the power of God, through Christ, is inwardly revealed in the heart of man; first, as a convict for sin, thereby condemning sin in the flesh; and secondly, begetting a hope of emancipation therefrom, through the mercy and power of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners. He does not save us in our sins but from them. Now, as He saves us from sin, we believe there may be experienced an entire freedom from actual sinning, through watchfulness, and earnest concern to be found faithful to the manifestations of God's will inwardly revealed. This condition can be reached, only through a growth in righteousness, in obedience to the light of Christ in the soul, as the Scriptures testify, "The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. IV, 18.)

And the Apostle, in writing to the Hebrews, after recounting their unfaithfulness, whereas they might have been teachers, instead of needing to be taught, says that they had need of milk and not of strong meat; "For every one that useth milk, is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb. V, 13-14.)

He then exhorts them, "Therefore leaving the principles, (or beginnings) of the doctrines of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance," etc. (Heb. VI, 1.) This clearly shows the necessity of a growth in grace, and in the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, in order that a state of perfection, or freedom from sin may be experienced.

To have our aspirations short of this high attainment, would lower the standard of Christianity; for those who do not believe perfection attainable in this life, may be ready to plead that excuse for unfaithfulness, and so frustrate the grace of God vouchsafed to us, and be in danger of making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

Robert Barclay says, "Blessed then, are they that believe in Him, who is both able and willing to deliver as many as come to him through true repentance from all sin, daily forsaking unrighteousness, and forgetting those things that are behind, press forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus: such shall not find their faith and confidence in vain, but in due time shall be made conquerors through him in whom they have believed; and so overcoming, shall be established as pillars in the house of God, so as they go no more out."

However, those who reach this blessed condition, we believe, are not loud in their profession of holiness, but are rather humbled under a sense of their own nothingness, and the omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence of Him, who is sufficient for them in all times of need, "And is able to present them faultless before His throne, with exceeding joy; to whom be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and evermore; Amen!"

In conclusion, we, as a religious body, desire to reaffirm our belief in the doctrines of the gospel, as believed and taught by George Fox and the early Friends, and herein so briefly outlined.

A faithful abiding on the Eternal Foundation, Christ Jesus, the Rock of Ages, is the only safe place for any Christian organization: and believing that the principles and testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends, are, as expressed by some of our forefathers in the Truth, but "Primitive Christianity revived," we would bespeak for them an earnest and careful examination, by the sincere seeker after truth, without regard to his, or her, religious connections.

¹North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) recognizes today (2006) that the use of the term "higher criticism" was an anachronism in 1912; further that NCYM(C) at this time takes no position with regard to "higher criticism."

ADOPTIONS AND APPROVALS BY NEW ENGLAND, OHIO, WESTERN, IOWA, KANSAS AND
NEW YORK YEARLY MEETINGS

At New England Yearly Meeting of Friends held at Westerly Rhode Island, commencing with a public meeting for worship on First Day the ninth of Sixth Month 1912 and on Second Day, the tenth with a meeting for discipline.

The essay entitled "A Synopsis of the Testimonies of the Society of Friends," prepared by a committee of the Yearly Meetings now in correspondence[sic], has been read before our meeting, and being deliberately considered, was unitedly and fully approved as embracing a concise declaration of the doctrines held by the Society of Friends, and the Clerk is directed to sign this minute, and attach the same to the document.

Job S. Gidley, Clerk.

At Canada Yearly Meeting of Friends held at Pickering Ontario, by adjournments from the 21st day of Sixth Month to the 25th day of the same, inclusive, 1912.

"A Brief Synopsis of the Principles of the Society of Friends," compiled by agreement and the joint action of the seven Yearly Meetings in correspondence with each other, viz. Ohio, Iowa, North Carolina, New England, Kansas, Western and Canada Yearly Meetings was read, and Friends of Canada Yearly Meeting now in session, uniting with the same, as a good exposition of some of the most important truths believed by us, we endorse the document, as being in accord with what we have been taught by the Spirit of Truth, and the Clerks are directed to place such endorsement on the document, and forward to the Yearly Meeting to be held first subsequent to this.

Signed by direction of the meeting.

Benjamin W. Wood,
Marianne Richardson,
Clerks.

At Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends held at Stillwater, near Barnesville Ohio, by adjournments from the 28th of Ninth Month to the 3rd of the Tenth Month, inclusive, 1912.

"A Brief Synopsis of the Principles and Testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends," prepared by a conference of delegates from the Yearly Meetings in correspondence, and referred to this meeting by the Meeting for Sufferings, was read and deliberately considered by this and women's meetings, united with, and approved as a satisfactory statement Of the doctrines of the Gospel as professed by early Friends, and in which we fully believe.

The document is referred to the Meeting for Sufferings for publication, in conjunction with the other meetings for Sufferings, if approved by all the yearly Meetings within the circle of our correspondence, with authority to make such emendations, as they may deem proper.

The meeting directs that the foregoing minute be forwarded, in connection with the document to the ensuing Yearly Meetings.

Signed by direction of the meeting.

Jonathan Binns,
Eliza H. McGrew,
Clerks.

At Western Yearly Meeting of Friends, held at Sugar Grove, near Plainfield, Hendricks County Indiana, by adjournments, from the 7th to the 10th of Tenth Month, 1912.

A document prepared at a conference of delegates appointed by the Meetings for Sufferings of the Yearly Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends in America now in correspondence, entitled "A Brief Synopsis of the Principles and Testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends," has been read at this time. After a season of careful consideration, this meeting fully unites with the document in its Representation of the doctrines of the Christian religion as professed by early Friends. The subject is referred to our Representative Meeting for further care in its publication.

The Clerks are directed to endorse, on behalf of this meeting, a suitable extract of this minute, and attach to the document.

Luna O. Stanley,
Annah F. Harvey,
Clerks.

At Iowa Yearly Meeting of Friends, held at West Branch, Cedar County, Iowa, commencing with a meeting for worship on the 16th, and that for business on the 17th of the tenth Month, and continuing by adjournments to the 21st day of the same, inclusive, 1912.

A document entitled "A Brief Synopsis Of the Principles and Testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends," which had been prepared by a conference of representatives from the different Meetings for Sufferings within our circle of correspondence, was read at this time, and being deliberately and weightily considered, was fully approved, and this meeting directs its clerks to sign this minute and attach it to the aforesaid document; and it is referred to the Meeting for Sufferings for their care in publishing it when it is approved by all the Yearly Meetings with which we correspond.

James E. Gooden,
Mary B. Henderson,
Clerks.

At Kansas Yearly Meeting of Friends, held at Spring River, Kansas, by adjournments from the 25th of Tenth Month to the 30th of the same, inclusive, 1912.

The document entitled, " A Brief Synopsis of the Principles and Testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends," prepared by a conference of delegates from the Yearly Meetings in correspondence with each other, has been read in joint session of men and women Friends of this meeting. On deliberate consideration, it is the judgment of this meeting that the document contains a concise statement of the principles and testimonies of the Society of Friends, unites with the same, and directs its clerks to sign the above minute on behalf of the Yearly Meeting.

Hannah E. Bowles,
Levi Bowles,
Clerks.

At North Carolina Yearly Meeting of Friends, held at Cedar Grove, in the town of Woodland, Northampton County North Carolina, by adjournments, from the 2nd of Eleventh Month, to the 7th of the same, inclusive, 1912.

The document, "A Brief Synopsis of the Principles and Testimonies of the Society of Friends, " was read in this Yearly Meeting. After a time of due deliberation it was fully united with, and is referred to a committee of the Representative Body, which is to aid similar committees of the other conservative Yearly Meetings in its publication and distribution.

Albert W. Brown,
Margaret F. Parker,
Clerks.