FRIENDS JOURNAL at 50

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THE SEPARATION AFTER A CENTURY

by Elbert Russell

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FOREWORD

So many calls have been received for the back numbers of the *Friends Intelligencer* containing the series of articles by Elbert Russell on the Separations of 1827–28, that some of the issues have been exhausted. Rather than have anyone disappointed in not being able to read what have seemed to many Friends the extremely interesting and valuable articles which appeared in eleven issues of the paper (Tenth month 1st to Twelfth month 10th), the managers decided to reprint them in pamphlet form. Extra copies for distribution may be obtained from the Advancement Committee, 15th and Cherry Streets, Philadelphia, as long as the supply continues.

Elbert Russell, the author, is well known to Friends everywhere. He was born in Friendsville, Tennessee, August 29, 1871. He took his A.B. at Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana, in 1894, and his A.M. at the same college in 1895. He was a Fellow at the University of Chicago from 1901–1903, taking his Ph.D. there in 1903. From 1895 to 1901, he was Professor of Biblical Studies at Earlham College, and from 1915–17 he was a Fellow at Johns Hopkins. From 1917 to 1924, he was Director of Woolman School, Swarthmore; during this period he was also special lecturer at Swarthmore College and the Haverford Graduate School. He was special lecturer for the American Friends' Service Committee in Germany and Austria in 1924-25. He is at present Professor of Biblical Literature at Duke University, Durham, N.C.

In addition to many articles published in various magazines, Elbert Russell has written *The Parables of Jesus* and *Jesus of Nazareth in the Light of Today*, both published in 1909, and *As Each Day Comes*, published in 1923.

He approached the subject of the present series of articles unusually well equipped and with a deep spiritual insight as well as an understanding of the unfortunate events of 1827–28 which have had such a profound effect upon the Society of Friends in America. As one who feels that the time is near at hand when more active and definite steps should be taken to heal the wounds of the separations, I am glad to be partially responsible for the re-publication of these articles, believing that they cannot but be helpful to this end.

Charles F. Jenkins

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It was a hundred years ago in April that the first great division came in the So1ciety of Friends in America. In consequence of it the Society has been divided into mutually exclusive, suspicious, and often hostile groups. During this century it would be truer to the facts to speak of the Societies of Friends or of societies calling themselves Friends, for the Society as a religious denomination existed only in the vague and general sense of groups inheriting the same name, literature, ideals and practices, but having no official relations or spiritual cooperation.

Perhaps the changes of a century have carried us far enough from the original separation to view it in the calm perspective of history. Many things make a judicial attitude easier today. The actors in the tragedy have passed off the stage and the issues over which they contended are no longer living issues. No group of Friends today cares to uphold either the theology of Elias Hicks or the final authority of the Philadelphia elders. The passions of the original controversy have spent their force. The lessons of the struggle have not been wholly lost. The Society as a whole is sadder for it and, I believe, wiser.

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On the other hand the passage of a century makes it more difficult for us in many ways to understand the separation or to view it sympathetically. It is hard to comprehend why people should have been so excited over things that no longer excite us or to sympathize with the actions of men whose motives no longer move us. Time and custom have tended steadily to set the "branches" of the Society further apart and thus to increase the difficulties of present fellowship and cooperation. This latter difficulty has been lessened within the past decade by increasing association and cooperation between sections of the Society. The others may be surmounted by careful study of the ancient records and a genuine desire for the truth.

The story of the separation has been well told for this generation in three Quaker histories. The first of these is Thomas' *History of Friends in America*. Shortly before his death, Allen C. Thomas told me that he found great satisfaction in the fact that no one had ever questioned the impartiality of that account. Edward Grubb's little volume, *Separations in the Society of Friends* is particularly valuable because London Yearly Meeting dealt with the issues which caused the separation in America without a separation and because the book emphasizes in particular the part which certain English Friends had in causing or aggravating the separation in America. In his *Later Periods of Quakerism*, Vol. I, Rufus Jones treats the separation fully in the light of the historic position and development of our Society.

The writer has associated freely and worked happily with present members of both "branches" of Friends and shares the desire of most of the present generation in those Yearly Meetings most vitally affected by the separation to remove as far as possible from our work and spirit as a religious society the effects of that ancient tragedy. It is with the hope of helping make the centennial of the separation an impulse toward closing the century-old crevasse in our organization through which such floods of weakness, estrangement, and bitterness have engulfed the spirit of Friends, that he undertakes a brief review of the original break.

The State of Society 1776–1827

The separation of 1827–28 was due to the collision of a number of historical forces that had been developing during the preceding half-century. The form and direction of their development was largely determined by the conditions of the Society during that period. The life and thought of Friends were dominated by the Discipline, the administration of which had come to be almost wholly in the hands of the elders. Unofficial members were not supposed to have copies of the Book of Discipline.

In the local meetings the Select Body was the dominating group. As the ministry declined in numbers and influence the elders came to control it. Its members grew accustomed to identifying their policies with Quakerism. They believed that the "weight of the meeting" lay with them. The expressed views of other members in the business meetings were practically ignored by the clerks in taking the sense of the meeting.

The affairs of the Yearly Meeting were in the hands of the Meeting for Sufferings, which was composed chiefly of elders. It was a matter of concern to a few discerning Friends that this meeting was growing in power at the expense of other elements in the Society. In the Yearly Meetings where there was a large city membership, such as New York, Baltimore, and especially Philadelphia, the city elders controlled the Meeting for Sufferings and through it the Yearly Meeting. This was not through any deliberate purpose, but because their wealth, culture, education, and habit of managing men gave them a dominating influence. It was easy for them to communicate with each other and to have definite and common policies. In addition, it had become the custom in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for some of the country meetings, particularly those in Delaware and on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, to appoint Friends residents in Philadelphia to represent them on the Meeting for Sufferings, since otherwise, on account of the difficulties of traveling, they would rarely be represented.

There were Friends who were interested in human welfare and philanthropic reform and there were here and there men of spiritual vision; but in the mind of the ordinary Friend the maintenance of the "peculiarities" was the primary matter. Great stress was laid on conformity to the Discipline in outward matters, such as "dress and address." The outward strictness was balanced by undirected inner freedom to follow one's spiritual leading.

There was practically no teaching ministry in the meetings for worship, and little doctrinal instruction anywhere else. The ministry was largely hortatory: Friends were exhorted to be faithful to the testimonies, to "dwell deep," to "center down," to "mind the Light." Many meetings were held entirely in silence.

The Bible was not read in meeting, for fear that it would become a lifeless form or interfere with the leading of the Spirit. A similar fear of creaturely activity prevented regular family worship. In some families the Bible was frequently read together, but many did not even possess a copy. There were, of course, no Bible schools and teaching the Bible in the day schools was unheard of. The younger generation was thus without appreciable Biblical or other religious education. "While there is abundant evidence that there were among Friends during the whole of this period able ministers and experienced Christians who were careful of the younger members, nevertheless the condition of the spiritual life throughout the body was low, and a large proportion were Friends rather by tradition than conviction, and many were careless and some unbelieving" (Thomas, *Hist. Friends in Am.*). The monthly meeting minutes show also that there was much immorality.

The state of the Society was such that, if a theological issue should arise, a persuasive preacher or a magnetic leader could easily draw the younger members after him. On other issues their policy would be little influenced by regard for purely religious or doctrinal consequences.

Causes of the Separation

The separation of 1827–28 was the result of the collision of historical forces working within the Society in the half century following the Revolutionary War. Of these the four most important had their roots in movements outside the Society, although their influence on Friends' history was retarded by the general aloofness of Friends from contemporary events.

First among these in time and importance was a new spirit of democracy and of personal freedom. The social philosophy, which asserted the natural rights and the political equality of men, originating with John Locke, had become widespread in America before the Revolutionary War. Jefferson embodied it in the Declaration of Independence. The American and French Revolutions affected profoundly the thinking of all classes. Even a group as secluded as Friends came in contact with the new spirit directly or indirectly in many ways. During the Revolution many young men broke away from the Society and joined the continental armies. Some of them refused to be disciplined after the war and formed the "Free Quakers." During the same war French soldiers and officers were often quartered in Friends' families in Philadelphia. Friends could not be indifferent to the demands of the revolutionists in France for liberty, equality and fraternity, however much they repudiated the warfare and bloodshed by which it was sought to secure them, nor was the Society untouched by the struggle for freedom of speech and the press against the Alien and Sedition Acts under John Adams' presidency at the end of the century.

Gradually Quaker tongues grew accustomed to such phrases as "inalienable rights," "consent of the governed," and "liberty and equality." The younger generation even in the country meetings grew to be, to the minds of the elders, "raw and undisciplined."

After a half century these tendencies took the form of a revolt against the Discipline and the arbitrary authority of the elders. From this point of view, the Separation was our belated "French Revolution." To one party its chief purpose was to get rid of autocratic authority. In the manifesto put forth by John Comly and his sympathizers in Philadelphia in 1827, we read: "They (i.e., early Friends) were made powerful instruments in opening the door of Gospel liberty, and removing many of the fetters that had been formed in the dark night of superstition and error that preceded them. Hence they were prepared to promulgate the glorious truth, that *God alone is sovereign Lord of conscience*, and with this inalienable right no power, civil or ecclesiastical, should ever interfere."

The elders felt these new tendencies but had no idea of their true nature or of the powerful forces behind them. It was easy to confuse them with immorality or unbelief, which seemed all too prevalent in the world. They attempted to repress them by more rigid discipline. The successful use of external discipline tends to beget blind faith in outward compulsion and skepticism as to the worth and power of spiritual forces. The result was a revolt, in the name of freedom.

This outcome was made more certain by a second movement, closely allied to the first. The French Revolution was a revolt against arbitrary authority in the Church as well as in the state. The Bourbon dynasty and the Catholic hierarchy in France hunted heretics and revolutionists together. Both were enemies of liberty. The struggle for freedom against both was carried on in the name of reason. Men demanded the right to believe and follow what was reasonable. This idea of freedom from dogma and of rational religious beliefs originated with the English Deists, spreading afterward to Germany and France, where it became identified with the struggle for personal rights and liberties, led by Rousseau, Voltaire, and the Encyclopedists.

The back of English Deism was broken by the Wesleyan religious revival, and as an intellectual movement it never rallied against the argument of Bishop Butler's *Analogy*. But Butler, in achieving this rational defense of orthodox doctrine, conceded tacitly the demand that religious beliefs must be defensible before the bar of reason. Paley's *Evidences*, which makes the same concession, came to America with the Evangelical movement early in the 19th century.

These various rationalistic influences were strong in sections of America, where they touched Friends at many points. In 1795, when Timothy Dwight became president of Yale College, he could find only 20 students who would confess they were Christians. It was the common assumption that a scholar could

not consistently be a Christian. Since Yale drew the bulk of its students from the surrounding territory this indicates a rationalistic tendency in the younger generation in Connecticut, southeastern New York and on Long Island. The "New Light" movement in New England affected Friends to some extent. Tom Paine was of Quaker ancestry and a Quaker was among the few who attended his funeral. His *Age of Reason*, a crude version of Voltaire, was widely read in America in the first quarter of the 19th century. Elias Hicks found a Quaker community in Virginia who were quite under its influence. Butler's *Analogy* exercised a great influence over the Gurney family in England and discussions of the "evidences" of Christianity and its "rational probability" were carried by influential English Friends to America.

The leaders of the revolt against arbitrary authority in the Society were neither Deists nor Freethinkers. They insisted merely that religious doctrines should be in accordance with reason and that men's minds should not be subjected to arbitrary dogma. Elias Hicks in his travels frequently came in contact with Deists and Atheists and expressed abhorrence of both. He was positively and profoundly religious after the Quaker pattern of the 18th century. But the new tendencies did influence him. He regarded any disposition to religious intolerance with horror and abhorrence and, like a Quaker Butler, he attempted to rationalize the doctrine of the Inner Light. His theology was not important in itself, since it was never adopted even by the section of the Society which championed his right to think for himself and which has been called by his name. It was, especially in its negative aspects, merely the occasion of the conflict which would probably have arisen over some other issue in any case.

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A third cause of the separation, although of less importance than the others, was the growing differences between country and city Friends. In the half-century following the Revolution there was a great increase in the wealth and culture of city Friends, especially in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York. In consequence there were departures from pioneer simplicity, an increase in luxury, and a growing spirit of worldliness. John Woolman and Job Scott both note its first signs with misgivings. John Comly, a country Friend, complains of these changes especially in New York and New England. To be sure, the city Friends still wore the "plain" clothes, but the materials were more expensive and their homes were more luxuriously furnished. They were somewhat influenced by the newer literature and modes of thought.

On the other hand, life in the country remained nearly stationary. Roads were poor and travel slow and difficult. Elizabeth Drinker tells us in her diary that the 25 miles from Philadelphia to Westtown made a long and hard day's journey by carriage. Country people produced nearly all they needed on the farm and in the home. They rarely visited the city and had no rural mails or daily papers to keep them in touch with urban life and the wider world. Consequently country and city Friends drew apart. When the country Friends came to the city to attend Quarterly or Yearly Meeting they felt strange. In the luxurious homes where they were entertained, they were ill at ease and under restraint. In many topics discussed and opinions expressed at their hosts' tables they sensed worldliness and non-Friendly innovations. In the business meetings they found the minds of city Friends already made up on issues new to them. The clerks paid little attention to their views but gave weight to the word of the city elders and recorded the sense of the meeting accordingly. Samuel Bettle, the clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, testified in court after the separation, that as clerk he was accustomed to give no weight whatever to the opinions of practically all who afterwards became leaders of the separation. When the country Friends returned to their homes confused and baffled by their experiences, they felt that policies had been put over on them and that the city leaders were worldly and autocratic.

Elias Hicks was a Long Island farmer. He traveled very extensively under a religious concern and made frequent circuits of the country meetings, especially in New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore Yearly Meetings. He sat at the farmers' tables as one of them; his simple logic appealed to the plain people, and he spoke the familiar language of 18th century Quaker Quietism. When he incurred the disapproval of the Philadelphia elders, some of them were sent out to follow him on his country visits and try to undo the harm he was doing. But their broadcloth clothes and shiny hats "queered" them with the country Friends, who had come to look on Elias as the champion of the common people against the usurpations of the city elders.

The fourth of these tendencies, which culminated in the separation, is the "Evangelical" movement. This movement, which must be distinguished from the common Protestantism which is called Evangelical Christianity in the wider sense, has a long history, running back to Wiclif in England and to the pietists on the continent. But it became a powerful force in England with the Wesleyan movement about the middle of the 18th century. Later it produced the "Low Church" or "Evangelical" movement within the Church of England. It produced a great revival of religious life and activity both in England and America and it carried with it new programs and methods of religious work. The Wesleyan movement included revival meetings, class meetings, and Bible classes. Later Evangelicalism included in its programs foreign missions, Sunday Schools and Bible societies. It produced a number of leaders of the Anti-Slavery and prison reform

Philadelphia Friends Meetinghouse, Orthodox, Arch Street, 1828

movements. It has always been interested in popular religious education and eager to convert the world. It has been about equally insistent on personal religious experience and on a certain creed as a necessary condition to saving faith. It has promoted education of a circumscribed type while afraid of liberal learning and intolerant of free thought.

The Evangelical Movement began the wider reconstruction of American religious life about the beginning of the 19th century. About this time Timothy Dwight in a series of sermons converted Yale College into an Evangelical stronghold. The great Kentucky revival broke out in 1801. The famous "Haystack Prayer Meeting" at Williams College (1803) marks the beginning of a new vital interest in foreign missions. The American Bible Society was organized in 1807.

The main points of the "Evangelical" creed in the narrower sense are (1) the plenary (or even verbal) inspiration and final outward authority of the Bible; (2) the "deity" of Christ, and (3) his "substitutionary" death on the Cross; (4) the total depravity of human nature as a consequence of the Fall; and (5) the necessity of a definite personal religious experience.

Evangelicalism had certain important points of contact with Quakerism: its insistence on religion as a vital personal experience; its gospel of salvation for all men, even of the neglected classes and the heathen nations; its passion for morality and social reforms. But its doctrines of the final outward authority of the Scriptures and the total depravity of human nature were radically opposed to the early Quaker doctrine of the Inner Light and its new vocabulary and program were alien to 18th century Quaker Quietism both in methods and spirit.

The Evangelical Movement influenced Friends in England in may ways. Mary Dudley, a friend of John Wesley in her youth, joined Friends and united the Evangelical passion and theology with the Quaker mystical worship and "prophetic" ministry. Even more influential in this direction was Thomas Shillitoe, who came into the Society from the Church of England. Many English Friends were associated with Clarkson, Wilberforce, and other Evangelicals in the Anti-Slavery movement. The Gurneys, Frys, and other Quaker leaders were similarly associated with Evangelicals in the Bible Society and in prison reform work. Charles Simeon and Henry Venn, leaders of the Evangelical wing of the Church of England, were close friends of Joseph John Gurney, who had been educated at Oxford. Through such contacts English Friends gradually absorbed Evangelical views and ideals.

In America the leaders had no such vital contacts with outside religious workers. But there was a strong group of ministers who came into the Society from other denominations bringing new susceptibilities with them. Rebecca Jones, of Philadelphia, came from the Episcopal Church and paralleled in America the work and influence of Mary Dudley in England. David Sands had been a Presbyterian and Stephen Grellet, the son of an exiled French nobleman, had been a disciple of Voltaire. When these two became Friends, they brought a doctrinal consciousness new in Quaker experience. The former felt a special mission to cry out against Deism, and the latter almost leaned backward in his reaction against his former infidelity. These ministers were closely associated with the leading Friends especially in Philadelphia and New York.

Thus when English Friends, with their new enthusiasm for Evangelical views, began to come to America, they found groups in the city centers prepared to receive and listen to them, and the new tendencies got a firm hold in the Meetings for Sufferings and among the city elders, who controlled the Yearly Meetings.

The Society, especially in New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, thus become like a Leyden jar charged with passions of high potential concentrated in two opposing groups. One consisted mainly of the country Friends, clinging to the phrases and practices of 18th century Quietism, fearful of the new doctrines and growing "worldliness" of city Friends, but having themselves imbibed a new revolutionary spirit of democracy and liberty and chafing under the autocratic authority of the elders. The other party was composed chiefly of the elders and their sympathizers in the cities, who were alarmed at the growing disregard of the Discipline and opposition to it, who grew determined to suppress the new tendencies by more rigorous disciplinary measures and who were especially fearful of any modes of doctrinal expression which seemed unsound by Evangelical tests. Neither side understood the motives of the other nor sensed the real meaning of the new forces with which they were dealing. The Evangelicals ascribed the attitude of their opponents to mere obsti-

nacy or to the desire to find a cloak for the irreligion of intellectual pride or moral license. They had no realization of the degree to which the love of freedom and democratic control had returned to the Society. On the other hand, the opponents of the elders thought they were animated solely by religious bigotry and the lust of power. They had no realization of the new religious life and fervor which had come with the Evangelical Movement, nor of how vitally their new and precious religious experiences were bound up in their feelings with the Evangelical doctrines. Neither party knew the explosive quality of the new wine they were trying to hold in the old bottle. And neither party had the understanding, sympathy, and patient love that alone would have made it possible for them to get on together.

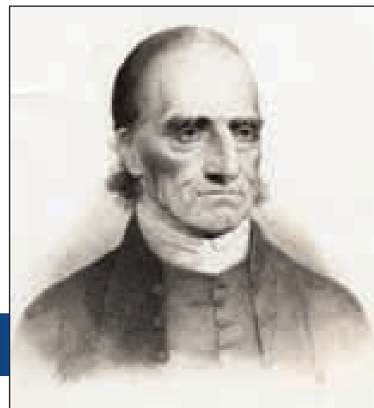
Thus the stage was set for a fierce struggle animated by religious passion and made tragic by class estrangement and personal misunderstanding. The ministry of Elias Hicks was the spark which set off the explosion; but some other incident, like the letters of Paul and Amicus, could as easily have been the occasion of it.

The Four Saints of the Separation

The separation of 1827–28 in the Society of Friends was the joint achievement of four outstanding Quaker saints in whom the historical tendencies just described became incarnate or around whom they crystallized. They are Elias Hicks, Samuel Bettle, John Comly, and Thomas Shillitoe.

Without knowing these men, one cannot fully understand the separation. They were all conscientious men, sincerely devoted to the Christian ideal as held by Friends, and devout students of the Scriptures. They were all quietist mystics, seeking God in the silence of the creature, looking within for the Divine leading, following Truth and doing God's will as Light and Strength were given them. Each deeming himself a special guardian of a particular treasure in the Quaker patrimony: Bettle of authority, Hicks of truth, Comly of peace, and Shillitoe of duty. The outcome showed that these are not enough. Unfortunately, there was none to maintain patience and love as supreme Christian virtues.

Bettle was a Philadelphia merchant; Hicks a Long Island farmer. Comly was a Pennsylvania school teacher, and Thomas Shillitoe a London shoemaker. Both Hicks and Shillitoe were traveling ministers after the 18th century pattern. To characterize a man by an epithet is usually to caricature him; but it may help to understand these men in connection with what follows to remember Bettle as an elder, Hicks as a lover of liberty, Comly as a quietist, and Shillitoe as a crusader. It is possible to find in the experience of these men the crucial moments which determined the future course of Quaker history, to see when the separation began in each soul, and possibly to find the flaw which caused it. Such a study should help our generation to avoid such catastrophes and even help us to recover the lost unity.



Elias Hicks (1748–1830)

Elias Hicks

Elias Hicks, born in 1748, was a younger contemporary of John Woolman and Job Scott. Like them, he passed through early struggles on account of his love of youthful diversions, yielded gradually to his convictions of right, felt, and finally yielded to a call to the ministry. He brought new intellectual and spiritual energy to the ministry, but it ran in the old channels. He traveled widely in America under a special concern with a minute from his home meeting, and strove carefully in meeting not to "outrun his Guide" and to attain inward peace. His preaching was concerned chiefly with the mystical and philanthropical phrases of Quakerism. Thus he lived and labored until he was past 65 years of age. If he had died in 1815, he would have passed into history alongside Woolman and Scott as the third of a great trio of 18th century itinerants.

He had a limited education but a logical mind. He liked to think things out to logical clearness. He did not realize that by purely logical thinking one gets in his conclusions only that which is already implicit in his premises, and that he got his premises from a quite limited experience. He felt the breath of a new age, when Rationalism and Evangelicalism penetrated into Quaker circles. Deism and Atheism he abhorred; but the rationalistic method appealed to his logical mind. He grasped it as a new implement with which to build a shelter against the attacks of Evangelicalism which was repugnant to him equally in its methods of religious work, its theology, and its intolerant spirit. He attempted to vitalize the quiescent Quaker quietism by rationalizing the doctrine of Inner Light, and in order to demonstrate the sole sufficiency of the inward Guide and Savior he thought it necessary to minimize the importance, as well as to deny the necessity, of all outward helps and authority such as church, Bible, and historic Christ.

He owed a certain quickening of religious activity to contact with the Evangelical fervor. He was himself filled with a missionary zeal. He often preached in Presbyterian and Congregational churches, and in public halls to non-Friends, and to Negroes; but it was all done in the old ways, "as Way opened," without organization or settled plan. Missionary and Bible societies, which were involved in the Evangelical program, although Friends had not yet taken them up, were to Elias Hicks an abomination.

As early as 1808 Stephen Grellet had labored with Elias, because he felt that the latter had uttered sentiments "repugnant to the Christian religion." Stephen was not a birthright Friend and was unusually sensitive about doctrine. The Evangelical movement spread rapidly among American Friends, stimulated by a succession of visiting Friends from England. It grew more and more vigorous, aggressive, critical of doctrines, and intolerant. In a manner quite unknown to previous Quakerism, it not only set up the Scripture as an outward and final authority, but it tacitly identified its own doctrines with Scripture and allowed other interpretation: to reject the Evangelical theology was to reject Scripture. Thus it sought to impose a doctrinal yoke on the Society and to use the authority of the elders to enforce the new orthodoxy.

So it appeared to Elias Hicks. He was a close student of the Bible and has left touching testimonies as to its religious value. But he knew how, as an external authority, it had been used uncritically and unspiritually in the past to defend inhuman institutions and practices, such as tyranny, slavery, and war. Consequently he minimized its place, lest through it the Society should be brought again under a yoke of bondage. And in so doing he shocked and grievously hurt the Evangelicals. They owed so much to the Bible, through which they had been brought into a very precious peace and salvation, that they were jealous of anything that seemed likely to diminish faith in its teaching. A qualified acceptance, critical study, or rational interpretation seemed to them one and the same as infidelity. Neither side could understand the motives or feelings of the other.

It was in 1815 that the crisis came in Hicks' experience. Detained at home from meeting by a slight indisposition, he spent the time reading in Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History of the Fifth Century* the story of the bitter and fierce struggle out of which the early creeds emerged, and the hatreds and persecutions they engendered. He saw there the first ugly fruit of the spirit of doctrinal intolerance—that same spirit which he thought he now detected entering in to destroy the peace and freedom of his beloved Society of Friends. From that hour he went forth to contend valiantly for the ancient Quaker freedom to follow the Inward Light and to believe only what Truth reveals.

Thus he became the storm-center of the contending forces struggling for liberty and democracy in the Society, and one of the most powerful and popular preachers of his time in America.

∞ Samuel Bettle ∞

It was chiefly as an official, as an elder and as a clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, that Samuel Bettle had a part in the separation. But his action as an official was the product of his character as a man. He was a strong character, quiet, determined, and persistent, accustomed to managing men. Conscientious, high-minded, careful of his inward peace and the integrity of his motives, he was ruled less by emotion than Comly or Shillitoe, and less by reason than Hicks. As a businessman he was accustomed to deal with men on the basis of business ethics and legal rights. In the Society, the maintenance of the old order by rigorous and impartial enforcement of the Discipline seemed the only guarantee of a satisfactory state of affairs. But while he was thus contentedly conservative as to the Discipline and organization of the Society, he had adopted the new Evangelical doctrines. How far the new doctrines expressed a fresh spiritual experience, as they did with Rebecca Jones, Stephen Grellet, or Thomas Shillitoe, it is impossible to say. More probably he simply accepted the current doctrines of influential Philadelphia Friends, such as Rebecca Jones, Thomas Scattergood, William Savery, Samuel Emlen, and John Pemberton. Possibly he had read Henry Tuke's little manual, "The Faith of the People called Quakers, etc.," which by means of carefully selected passages from the writings of early Friends identifies the Evangelical position wholly with early Quakerism.

The Quakerism of the 18th century was vigorous in enforcing uniformity on externals such as dress and speech, but scrupulously avoided interference with the spiritual freedom of the members. Only the Divine Spirit could dictate how the soul should worship or what manner of message it should give. To this freedom there were practical limits set by the spiritual judgment of the Society, but the limit of tolerance was very wide. With Bettle and his generation a form of doctrine came to be regarded as an essential part of Quakerism. Unbelief in this doctrine became "unsoundness" within the meaning of the Discipline, and the elders set themselves to deal with such "unsoundness" as the overseers dealt with outward infractions of the Discipline. As in the Catholic Church, heresy thus became rebellion against authority. This identification became the easier since the group in revolt against the arbitrary authority of the elders largely coincided with those who clung to the older modes of doctrinal expression. In the meantime Elias Hicks became, as we have seen, the leader of this twofold struggle for freedom within the Society.

In 1822 Elias made a tour of the country meetings in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting down the Brandywine and up the Delaware. When he returned to Philadelphia the elders had received two letters, one from New York and one from Wilmington, charging him with unsoundness. A group of elders arranged for an interview with him regarding his reported unsound utterances. Elias brought with him to the meeting some of his friends. This was a reasonable precaution in view of the very divergent impressions which may be honestly carried away from such an interview. The elders, however, insisted that the meeting be "select," that is, composed only of ministers and elders, who are charged by the Discipline with dealing with unsoundness. Elias would not agree to the meeting without the presence of his friends, and the attempt at a conference failed.

If both the parties had only been willing to forego their personal and disciplinary "rights" and had met together with mutual respect in a sincere effort to get at the Truth, some of the bitterness and misunderstanding might have been avoided. In the

correspondence that followed between ten elders and Elias Hicks, he denied that the alleged utterances truly represented his beliefs or what he had said or the impression which his hearers received, for they were quoted out of their context and otherwise garbled. It is doubtful, however, whether he could have satisfied the elders entirely of his soundness in general. As it was, from this time the elders set themselves to crush out Hicks' influence; and as clerk of the Yearly Meeting Bettle became their leader and instrument, although he was not one of the group who arranged the original interview. It is doubtful, however, whether this interview represents the real watershed of the separation in Bettle's experience. He had adopted a policy that was to lead to a tragedy which none of the parties yet desired or foresaw. Nearly 30 years afterward Bettle publicly stated that he believed that patient labor and suffering would have been better than division. If so, the most promising moment for the exercise of patience and forbearance was the interview with Hicks in 1822.

Even after this incident, however, it was not too late for him to turn back. On two other critical occasions he faced the problem with fuller opportunity to foresee the outcome. In 1822 as a consequence of a newspaper controversy involving Friends' views, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for Sufferings adopted a thoroughly "Evangelical" statement of belief drawn from standard writings of Friends, and had an edition printed for public distribution. When the minutes of the Meeting for Sufferings were read in the Yearly Meeting of 1823 a great storm arose, because the approval of the minutes would make the document the official doctrinal statement of the Yearly Meeting. After long and exciting discussion extending through two sessions, Samuel Bettle as clerk finally made a suggestion of compromise which was accepted: "to avoid both difficulties by simply suspending the publication; not taking it off the minutes, and not circulating the pamphlets, but leaving the subject."

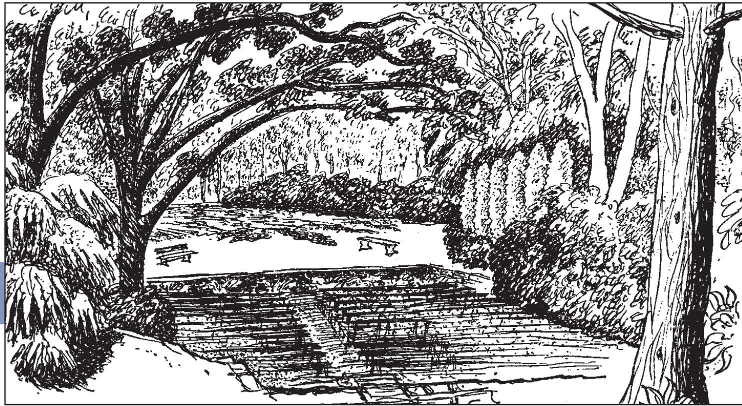
If both the parties had only been willing to forgo their personal and disciplinary "rights" and had met together with mutual respect in a sincere effort to get at the truth, some of the bitterness and misunderstanding might have been avoided.

In the sequel the opponents of the statement, who were largely country Friends, felt that they had been tricked again by the political finesse of Bettle and the other city elders; for they discovered that the document appeared on the official minutes as part of an approved report, even though it was not officially circulated as a separate document. This gave a quasi-official standing to the Evangelical doctrines and a ground of official authority to the elders in their procedure against the liberals. It is not necessary to suspect Bettle of conscious trickery in his action. Nevertheless the normal procedure in face of such opposition to receiving the statement would have been to announce that there was not sufficient unity for the Yearly Meeting to take action. Bettle was sincerely anxious to have the statement adopted and according to his own testimony in court at the Trenton trial he was accustomed to attach no weight to the opinions of the Friends who opposed the acceptance of the statement. His action had further unfortunate consequences, for it led both parties farther in the direction of seeking to gain advantage through disciplinary technicalities rather than by relying on fairness, patience, and truth.

Early in 1827 John Comly proposed to his friends, who were chiefly sympathizers with Elias Hicks, and whom we shall call the "liberal" party, that they withdraw from the Yearly Meeting, but they were not yet ready for such an extreme measure. They determined to make a last effort to beat the "orthodox" (as the Evangelical party were now called) at their own game and seize control of the Yearly Meeting by electing a clerk from the liberal party. The Discipline provided that the clerks should be nominated by the representatives from the Quarterly Meetings, but did not specify the number of representatives to be sent by each Quarterly Meeting. Custom had, however, fixed an appropriate quota for each. The three "liberal" Quarterly Meetings sent about double the usual number to the Yearly Meeting, thus "packing" the nominating committee in their favor. When the representatives met to nominate the clerks, however, after the first session of the Yearly Meeting, they were unable to agree and the meeting was prolonged until after the hour for the Yearly Meeting to convene. Then according to the custom that the former clerks should sit until new ones were appointed, Samuel Bettle resumed his place as clerk. By the simple device of holding the representatives in session until the hour for the next session came, the orthodox secured a clerk against the will of the majority of the representatives.

This was the last straw for the liberals. Despairing of outmaneuvering the orthodox in disciplinary procedure, ignored by the clerk in making up the "sense" of the meeting, with the great bulwarks of official authority—the Select Meeting and the Meeting for Sufferings—in the hands of their enemies, they were faced with the alternative either to submit or secede.

Even then a separation could have been avoided by a gesture of conciliation on the part of the orthodox. If Samuel Bettle had promised to serve as clerk only until a new one could be regularly nominated; if the orthodox members of the representative body had deferred to the majority for the sake of unity; or if the clerk had assured the liberals that due weight would be given their voices in determining the will of the meeting, there might even at that late hour have been no separation. Such an attitude of consideration would have been safe for the orthodox, because the liberals were not seeking to impose a theology on them, or infringe their liberty of preaching, or deny them the place which their numbers, wisdom and Christian character would give them in a Christian democracy.



The Greenwood Shakespearean Theater at Westtown School, where John Comly started out as a teacher in 1801.

But "feelings averse to reconciliation" had been aroused. The sense of disciplinary rectitude was strong, and the elders could not believe that Friends would actually revolt.

∽ *John Comly* ∼

John Comly went to Westtown as a young teacher in 1801, when the school was but two years old. His description of the natural beauty of its location, as he approached it the first time on a spring morning, shows a spirit as rarely sensitive to outward beauty as it was to the inward harmonies of the spirit. After a few months there he married a fellow teacher, and set up a private Friends' school at Byberry, north of Philadelphia.

He was pre-eminently a quietist mystic, with a soul as clear and beautiful and as responsive as the surface of a mountain lake. He strove ever to keep it unruffled by winds of outward circumstance or by the breath of evil desire that it might perfectly mirror the heavenly glory above. The early pages of his *Journal* are largely taken up with accounts of his feelings during meeting, with his efforts to attain inward collectedness and quietness of mind. At times he uses the phrases of the current political and theological discussions, such as "rational probability" and "inalienable rights," but they were little more than schoolmaster's jargon. He was probably one of the most scholarly Friends of the period. But in his religion it was not intellectual certitude which he sought, but rather the mystic's peace.

When the doctrinal controversies and struggles over the appointment of officials began to rage in the business meetings and the vocal exercise of the meetings for worship were occupied by thinly disguised and intense theological debates, his soul was sore troubled. In such an atmosphere, he could not keep the inner mirror unruffled. He could not make out the "accents of the Holy Ghost" amid the clamor. His religious experience was not of the Evangelical type, and he shrank from the Evangelical aggressiveness and intolerance. His city Friends soon marked his lack of sympathy, labeled him as "unsound," and avoided him. He felt very lonely amid the strife, which robbed him at once of the inner consolations of the meeting for worship and the outward solace of friendship. In his *Journal* he records the critical points in his experience in the following revealing words:

> Having thus viewed the awful state of Friends in the city and having seen the spreading of the same spirit in various parts of our Y.M., my mind had shared with others in deep exercise on account of these things, and became impressed with a religious concern to make a visit to the city, in order to mingle with Friends, and see and feel whether any opening might be present for active labour, in endeavoring to promote a reconciliation between the two contending parties. In accordance with this view and impression, I attended the quarterly meeting of ministers and elders held there in Second Month, 1827, in which I had a full view of the nature of that spirit that was seeking to bear rule in the Society. I beheld also the confusion of languages among them, so that they could not understand one another's speech. As I sat silently observing the operations of the meeting, my heart melted in a feeling of brotherly compassion and pity toward Friends of both parties, and strong desires were raised in me that there might be a restoration of peace and harmony among them. . . .
>
> The meeting not being able to get through its business till near four o'clock in the afternoon, occasioned a long sitting, trying to the patience but more so to the gentle feelings of Christian meekness and love.
>
> Although this painful meeting afforded little prospect of a reconciliation, my mind was turned toward seeking for an opening to converse with some of the active ones in order to see and feel whether any door of hope remained for healing the awful breach. But some of them having long appeared to regard me with an eye of suspicious jealousy afforded no opportunity for such interview. Cold, distant, inhospitable, they passed by and left me to myself.

"My mind was open to see," he declares a little later, "that this contest would result in a separation of the two conflicting parts of the Society, as the only means of saving the whole from a total wreck; and the way and manner of the separation was clearly unfolded to my mental vision; that on the part of Friends it must be effected in the peaceable spirit of the non-resisting Lamb—first by ceasing from the spirit of contention and strife, and then uniting together in the support of the order and discipline of the Society of Friends, separate and apart from those who had introduced the difficulties, and who claimed to be the orthodox part of the Society."

This then was to be the way out: "A quiet retreat from the scene of confusion." It had the apparent simplicity of genius. He

and other Friends together should quietly abandon the meetinghouses, offices, schools, and other outward paraphernalia of the Society to the contenders, and themselves meet and rebuild in quietness the spiritual fellowship that had been lost.

He traveled among the country meetings during the winter and spring of 1827, urging upon his sympathizers his plan of separation, "clothed in peace in the discharge of this duty." But Friends were not ready for such an extreme measure and it was determined to make the ill-starred effort to control the organization of the Yearly Meeting, which we have already narrated. He foresaw the futility of such an attempt as clearly as he failed to foresee the outcome of his own plan of separation, but he yielded to the judgment of his friends. The coup which kept Samuel Bettle in the clerk's chair also retained John Comly, over his own repeated protests, as assistant clerk of the organization he was determined to abandon.

It is clear that Comly had no real conception of the organic nature of human society. He was too much under the influence of the individualist social philosophy of the 18th century. He was naive enough to believe that it is possible thus to "unscramble eggs." He did not dream of the dividing of families, the breaking of lifelong friendships, the bitter struggles and lawsuits over the possession of property, the weakening of country meetings by division, the warping of the minds and hardening of the hearts of Friends in both groups, and the spiritual paralysis of the Society for two generations.

He lived to see this unexpected and inevitable fruit of his plan and to record later his disgust and despair over the contentiousness, loquacity in meeting, shallowness and spiritual desolation where he had hoped to secure the garden of the soul's peace; — inevitable as well as unexpected, for the peace he sought was unconsciously a selfish peace, an abandonment of the effort to overcome evil with good, rather than the peace that comes through the patience and victory of self-denying love.

⁂ *Thomas Shillitoe* ⁂

The part of English Friends in causing the division in American Quakerism is variously estimated. Edward Grubb and other Quaker historians believe that without the active interference of a number of earnest, if somewhat tactless, English Evangelicals, the crisis might have passed without splitting the Society asunder, but this is by no means certain. Among the most active of this group were William Forster, Anna Braithwaite, Elizabeth Robson, George and Ann Jones, and Thomas Shillitoe. They were filled with missionary zeal, preached the Evangelical doctrines "unsparingly, and spoke with great plainness of speech of what seemed to them heresy."

Among these the most influential was Thomas Shillitoe. He was a convinced Friend who brought a Church of England background, the Evangelical creed, and a fine missionary fervor into the service of a mystic devotion. He was as sensitive to spiritual atmosphere and visitations as John Comly. In "strippedness of the creature" he sought only to be true to the Inward Guide. Grellet, Hicks, and Shillitoe were probably the most powerful preachers heard by American Friends in the first quarter of the 19th century. All possessed magnetic personalities, and brought new forms of thought and expression to the Quaker galleries. All traveled extensively, and appealed to a public beyond the Society of Friends. Hicks reached the largest public, and his appeal was largely intellectual. Grellet was the more cultured and charming personality. His interests and influence, especially in Europe, included all classes and social agencies, and he interested himself in new social reforms as Hicks interested himself in the traditional Quaker philanthropic causes.

Shillitoe had a passion for lost souls and for hardened sinners and his preaching had something of the power and method of Whitefield. But he kept close to the traditional Quaker methods, as Hicks did; working only under a special concern and avoiding organized and long-planned evangelistic effort. When he came to America in 1826, he prayed before he landed in New York, that "quietness might cover his mind as a canopy." He kept in touch at first with both sides, and the liberals entertained hopes at one time that he would espouse their cause. The crucial moment seems to have been during a visit to Jericho, Long Island, Elias Hicks' hometown, where he was entertained in a Friend's house near Elias' home. While in Jericho he was visited by some liberal Friends, who urged him to call on them. At first he was inclined to acquiesce, but "after waiting where the Divine Counselor is to be met with" he changed his mind. His *Journal* records the crucial experience:

> We took our dinner with G. Seaman; after which we proceeded to Jericho, and took up our abode this night with our kind friends Thos. Willis. In passing through the village of Jericho, E. H. was at his own door, he invited me into his own house to take up my abode. . . . I refused his offer in as handsome a manner as I well knew how. He then pressed me to make him a call. I was careful to make such a reply as would not make it binding upon me, although we had to pass his door on our way to the next meeting. I believe it was safest for me not to comply with his request.

Who knows what might have been the result if those two had come together and discovered their spiritual oneness underneath the divergent outward forms of speech and thought?

Soon after this Thomas threw himself into the struggle on the Evangelical side and from that time he was the stormy petrel of the controversy. He conceived it his duty to follow Elias about, attending the same meetings, exposing his errors, and denouncing his soundness with the fierce fervor of a crusader.

There was a possibility that the separation in Philadelphia might have been localized there and not spread to other Yearly Meetings. Neither in New York nor Baltimore was the feeling so intense nor were the lines so sharply drawn. But when New York Yearly Meeting met in 1828, Thomas Shillitoe stretched a customary courtesy into a claim that his minute from London Year-

ly Meeting constituted him temporarily a full member of New York Yearly Meeting. Using this privilege he objected to the presence of "disowned members" (i.e., members of the liberal branch) from Philadelphia. At that time none but Friends and only those in regular standing were allowed to attend business meetings. This proposition to treat the Philadelphia liberal visitors as non-Friends was rejected, but precipitated the division, the orthodox withdrawing from the house. Thomas was also present at Ohio Yearly Meeting the same year, where his uncompromising attitude contributed to the final schism.

Here were four saints—all conscientious, sincere, devoted. All were Quaker mystics, each following carefully the inward leading of God's Spirit, as he believed. Each was uncompromising in the struggle against terror and evil as he saw it. What was lacking, that together they made havoc of the Society they loved? They lost sight of the fact that love is the essence of Christianity, that the fruit of the Spirit of God in the soul is first of all love. They considered something else more important than patience, forbearance, unity, mutual respect, co-operation, and love. They needed, as we all do, to pray Whittier's prayer, "Forgive Thy creature when he takes for the all-perfect love Thou art, some grim creation of this heart." All life is a venture. The mystic way is the highest and the most hazardous. Those who venture upon it need to keep close to the historic Christ, and to follow no spirit as of God which leads away from Christ's Spirit of comprehensive love as well as of devotion to truth. For God is love and he that loveth is begotten of God.

The Effects of the Separation

Under the stimulus of the separation which occurred in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in the spring of 1827 the conflicting tendencies in four other Yearly Meetings produced divisions the following year. There were violent scenes in New York and Ohio Yearly Meetings on account of the efforts of the contending parties to control the organization, involving even physical violence over the possession of clerks' desks and possession of the official records. In Baltimore and Indiana the division was more peaceable. In the former the orthodox minority walked out quietly and reorganized in another place. In the latter the liberal seceded and set up a separate organization before the time of the regular Yearly Meeting. New England, Virginia and North Carolina Yearly Meetings were not divided and aligned themselves with the Orthodox Yearly Meetings. London and Dublin Yearly Meetings also recognized the Orthodox Yearly Meetings.

It is impossible to get exact statistics concerning the numerical strength of the two "branches" after the separations. In Philadelphia, where after about two-thirds of the membership went with the liberals, there were approximately 16,000 liberals and 8,000 orthodox. But in the city of Philadelphia the proportions were reversed: about 1,500 liberals and 3,000 orthodox; which shows how largely it was a division between country and city.

In New York the liberals had approximately two-thirds of the membership; in Baltimore three-fourths; in Ohio about half and but a small proportion of the members of the Indiana Yearly Meeting. The membership of the liberal Yearly Meeting at the time of the separation probably numbered between 35,000 and 45,000—by far the majority of the divided Yearly Meetings. Counting the three undivided Yearly Meetings, New England, Virginia and North Carolina, the numbers of Orthodox and Liberals in America were about equal. London and Dublin gave the orthodox groups a decided preponderance of those who bore the name of Friends in the world.

Lawsuits to determine the ownership of meeting property occurred in New Jersey (for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting), New York and Ohio—all instituted by the orthodox. The liberals offered to divide on the basis of relative numbers, but the orthodox regarded themselves as trustees of property left for the use of Friends and could not conscientiously surrender any of it to those whom they regarded as no longer Friends. The Chancery Court of New Jersey decided in favor of the orthodox. Later the State Legislature passed a bill providing for the division of the property in New Jersey. In Baltimore Yearly Meeting and in the State of Pennsylvania the liberals generally remained peaceably in possession of the property where they were in the majority. Thus most of the country meetinghouses remained with them. In Philadelphia the bulk of the city property and the control of Westtown School and Frankford Asylum remained in the hands of the orthodox. The lawsuit in New York to determine the ownership of the property was won by the liberals, the one in Ohio by the orthodox. These suits did much to deepen the division and accentuate the bitterness between the two branches.

Before going on to trace the historical and spiritual results of the separations we may stop to estimate the character and strength of the two branches into which the Society was to be divided for a century. On the whole, the orthodox was the more promising group. The great majority of the official class—elders, overseers, ministers and members of the Meeting for Sufferings—were found in this branch. The city Friends, especially in Philadelphia, New York and Baltimore, constituted the more influential element among them and contributed a greater degree of education, culture and wealth. They were a positive and unified group. All who were undecided between the two contending parties or who refused to take sides or who were not decidedly "orthodox" in doctrine were rigidly disowned by the orthodox. No one was allowed "to sit on the fence"—all who were not for them were against them. They were thus a fairly homogenous, disciplined body, united by positive doctrinal beliefs, which carried with them by implication a working program and for the moment, at least, opened the way for progress. A teaching ministry was revived. They had Westtown School and *The Friend* (just established 1827) and inherited the awakening interest in education which led to the founding of Haverford College, shortly after the division (1833). There was a revival of literary activity among them. Thomas Evans published

Philadelphia Friends Meetinghouse, Hicksite, Cherry Street, 1828.

his *Exposition* of early Friends' views and he and his brother William edited early Friends' writings in the "Friends' Library," which ran to 14 volumes. They had the active support of the English Evangelicals, some of whom—notably John and Hannah Backhouse—did much to organize Bible classes and distribute Bibles among them. In 1830 a Bible Society was organized. The inherent intolerance of the Evangelical attitude toward intellectual progress, the conservatism of the elders and the rigidity of the Discipline were destined, however, ultimately to neutralize these advantages to a great extent and to nullify much of the early promise of this branch.

The liberals, on the other hand, were a relatively heterogeneous group. Few of them shared Elias Hicks' doctrinal views. Probably most of them went with the liberals merely as a protest against the arbitrary proceedings and theological intolerance of the orthodox party. Many sided with them chiefly for social or family reasons. Many were simply disowned into this group by the orthodox. They were essentially a conservative group, except for the element of insurgency against the ancient authority of the elders. They shared the common Quaker traditions and practices in regard to meetings for worship and business, "dress and address," and philanthropic causes. At first they were even more conservative toward these traditions than the orthodox.

The doctrine of the Inward Light they held, as Quietist Friends of the century previous had held it, as the central and sufficient doctrine of Friends. They protested that they had no new gospel to promulgate (Comly's *Declaration*), and their Philadelphia Yearly Meeting kept for a generation the old Discipline which made it a disownable offense to deny "the authenticity of the Holy Scriptures and the divinity of Christ." In the lawsuit over the possession of property in New York the liberals submitted a statement of doctrine that was quite orthodox. But they held doctrines not as essentials of Christian faith but as fruits of it. The form was nonessential, if the life were present. They were consequently very tolerant toward divergent statements of theological belief. The doctrine of the Inward Light which was their one common theological belief, was construed generally in terms of individual responsibility and freedom of conscience and tended toward pure individualism with little attempt at common standards of doctrine or practice. They lacked the corporate discipline and common working program which would make progress and cooperation on any but traditional lines easy. They were consequently nearly a generation behind the orthodox in educational, literary and other new lines of corporate religious activity. But their tolerant spirit saved them further separation and from the violent struggles against organized conservatism and doctrinal intolerance which have befallen the orthodox groups.

After the separation, Friends were to remain for at least a century a small religious sect with its testimony weakened and its energies dissipated by division. The spectacle of its contentions and divisions weakened its prestige. For a generation, the energies that should have gone into the work of building a kingdom of Christ on earth had to be spent largely in the processes of revision and reconstruction which the divisions necessitated. The bitterness of the struggle tended to spiritual paralysis. Happily our generation can no longer realize the intense feeling that alienated neighbors, separated life-long friends, and divided families a century ago. One reads with mixed feelings—comic and tragic struggling for dominance in us—of two Quaker brothers, partners in business but belonging to different "branches," who would not speak to each other on the First-day morning, if they happened to pass each other on the way to meeting, so great was the fear of seeming to condone one another's error!

The separation led to a mutilated Quakerism. The Quaker heritage was divided among the branches, with the result that no group remained as a witness to the full-rounded Quaker gospel. The Pennsylvania Dutchman who attempted to explain to a neighbor the commotion among their Quaker fellow-colonists was only wrong as to the basis of the partition. Without attempting his dialect his explanation ran thus: "They found out they couldn't agree, and so they agreed to disagree and divide up what they had. So the Orthodox took the theology and the Hicksites took the religion; and each got what he wanted." They divided up the literary heritage and religious emphasis. Penn and Job Scott were popular with the liberals; Barclay and Woolman with the orthodox. One stressed the mystical manifestation of Christ; the other the historic. The Inner Light came to be regarded by the orthodox as a "Hicksite" expression; the phrase "the blood of Christ" became a badge of orthodoxy.

The dismemberment of Quakerism went even deeper when the principle of separation had worked itself out in the orthodox bodies into the conservative (Wilbur-Gurney) separations and the isolation of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting from the progressive Yearly Meetings. At the opening of the 19th century Quakerism had come to include three things: (1) the doctrine of the Inner Light as a principle of spiritual power and guidance in the individual; (2) a body of teachings and practices handed down from the founders, or developed during the ensuing century and finally embodied in the authoritative traditions and in the Discipline of the Society; (3) a working organization for the purpose of applying Christian principles and leadings to the concrete needs of the membership and of the world. In the various divisions of the Society each main group has retained and specially emphasized one of these heirlooms of the larger Quaker heritage. The liberal branch stands on the first; to them nothing is essential in Quakerism except for each individual and generation to follow faithfully the inner leading of Christ. Historical forms of Quakerism are interesting but not vital as such. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting orthodox and the conservative Yearly Meetings stress the second element; they have regarded more or less (less in recent years) the traditional beliefs and practices of the Society as essential elements in Quakerism. The Progressive (Five Years' Meeting) branch has laid great stress on the third element; it is the Society as a working body that is most important to them. If old methods of preaching, worship, and moral reform will not work, they may be or must be changed. It is in accordance with this emphasis, that many of their Yearly Meetings have substituted the name "Friends Church" for "Society of Friends."

After the separation of 1827–28 each branch went its own way. Each developed its own religious vocabulary; cultivated different modes of thought and different lines of activity. Each branch found religious fellowship with a different group of denominations. The orthodox came more under the influence of the Evangelical churches. They used their Sunday School literature and borrowed their religious music. The liberals associated more with the non-creedal denominations. The result of these developments has been to make it difficult for the two branches to understand or to cooperate with each other. In London Yearly Meeting the various types of Quakerism have remained together. They have worshipped together, served on committees and transacted meeting business together. Consequently they understand each other and know how to cooperate in worship and religious work. But in America, when the two groups began to associate together a generation ago, an interpreter was needed sometimes to enable Friends to realize that they meant the same thing by the different ways they expressed it.

It happens occasionally in human experience that periods of division and struggle are the unavoidable accompaniments of progress. They are due to new ideas or new forces struggling for realization. In such cases as the Protestant reformation of the Quaker movement in the 17th century, we feel that there is some compensation for the moral wastage of the struggle. If it bears much fruit, we are reconciled to the loss of the grain that falls into the ground and dies. But there is little such compensation for the bitterness and lost opportunities of the separation we have reviewed. The Evangelical influence was a sign of change, which ultimately led to new life and activity in the Society. It came, however, not as a victory of the Quaker interpretation of Christianity but rather as an abandonment of it for an outside essentially alien view. We may credit its adherents with sincerity, tenacity of belief and partisan loyalty. But neither party in the controversy tapped afresh the "infinite ocean of victorious love" which George Fox found; neither party found again the high tension line of Divine power which had furnished the amazing energy of the first Quaker movement. The whole episode showed only the unworthiness of that generation to bear such a name as "Friend" and the spiritual bankruptcy of their testimony to a religion of goodwill, peace and overcoming love. We can only hope today to profit by the lessons of that failure, and set ourselves resolutely to make the broken circle of our fellowship whole again; and let it become again the free and eager agent, in our sinning and suffering world, of the divine redeeming love of Christ.

The Problem of Unity in the Society of Friends

After a hundred years of separation, the problem of unity among American Friends is urgent and vital, demanding our utmost efforts to solve it. Urgent and vital, because historic lines of division no longer correspond to real differences in the Society; because it is impossible to explain satisfactorily to the new groups of Friends in Europe and other parts of the world why we American Friends remain divided; because of the wide-open doors for service in the modern world, which we cannot enter effectively except as a united Society.

The native churches of the Protestant foreign mission fields are challenging American Protestantism to explain and justify its divisions and even refusing to perpetrate them in their own countries—notably in China, where a united church of China is just announced. It is asked, "Why should a southern Methodist Chinese Christian, who lives in north China, refuse to unite with a northern Methodist who lives in South China, when neither of them ever heard of the Civil War in America?" The question is equally embarrassing when a German Friend asks an American messenger of a universal peace and love, why American Quakerism remains divided. The problem of unity becomes then not merely a historical problem but a vital spiritual one; for the fact of our divisions nullifies our testimony in an appreciable measure. We owe it to ourselves and to our foreign Friends at least to face the problem frankly and see what are the difficulties in the way of unity and what prospects there are of speedily ending our divisions.

There are three general conditions that make the problem of reunion easier than at any time within the century just past. In

the first place, the spirit of Christian unity is in the air. A hundred years ago Protestants were divisive and exclusive in spirit. Rigid conformity was demanded within each sect; liberty, variety and progress could be secured only at a price of expulsion or secession. There are in the United States 17 varieties of Methodists, 17 of Baptists and about 12 of Lutherans. Friends have been as a rule tardy in responding to the tendencies of the world about them, but never wholly insensitive to them. It is certainly not to our credit that as small a body as we are, emphasizing as we do the elemental place of love and peace in Christianity and the spiritual basis of church fellowship, should have so far succumbed to the spirit of the age as to achieve four major divisions during the century just past. Even today one regrets to have to confess to the conviction that with many Friends the unity that is in the air gives greater promise of reunion in the Society than the unity that is "in our blood."

All about us in England, Canada and the United States we find divided denominations reuniting and separate denominations coming together. For a year past I have been in close touch with the Southern Methodists, who recently made a heroic effort to reunite with the Northern Methodists, which failed only for a lack of the necessary three-fourths majority. It has been embarrassing, when they are discussing how to make the effort successful next time, to be asked how we Quakers who have always pioneered in unity and good-will, solved the problem! There is hope, however, that the example of our neighbors may help with that section of our Society in particular which is slowest to consider the question, since the tide of the present age is setting so strongly toward Christian union.

WE OWE IT TO OURSELVES AND TO OUR FOREIGN FRIENDS AT LEAST TO FACE THE PROBLEM FRANKLY AND SEE WHAT ARE THE DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF UNITY AND WHAT PROSPECTS THERE ARE OF SPEEDILY ENDING OUR DIVISION.

A second favorable condition is that the issues which resulted in the separation of 1827–28 are dead issues. The same is measurably true of the issues involved in the later divisions. The struggle of democracy in the Society has been won. The elders, so far from oppressing anyone, have come to be mere figureheads in most meetings. In the Progressive Yearly Meetings the power has passed into the hands of the ministers. The young Friends no longer have a grievance, for they are listened to all too gladly. In all but a few of our Yearly Meetings country Friends predominate in the membership and have the controlling voice in the meeting. The theology of Elias Hicks was never endorsed even by the branch of the Society that is often called by his name. Most of the liberal Friends, who sided with him, did so simply as a protest against the intolerant spirit in which he was dealt with. The liberal Philadelphia Yearly Meeting kept unchanged for a generation the Discipline of the undivided Yearly Meeting, making it a disownable offense to deny the "authenticity of the holy scriptures and the divinity of Jesus Christ." In a lawsuit over the possession of meeting property, Elias Hicks' own Yearly Meeting—New York—presented a statement of belief so thoroughly orthodox by any ancient Quaker standard that the court adjudged it to be the true Yearly Meeting. In the manifesto issued by the liberal Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, they protest that they have no new gospel to present and in an epistle to London Yearly Meeting in 1830 they insist that they hold essentially the same doctrines which they have always held. Today there are none who call themselves Friends who would defend Elias Hicks' system of theology or who find in it an adequate statement of their own religious beliefs. And there are certainly none among the so-called orthodox bodies who would accept the declaration put out by the Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings in 1823 as an accurate or sufficient statement of his doctrinal beliefs. One has only to compare this statement with those of the new disciplines of London or Philadelphia Yearly Meetings or even with the Richmond Declaration of Faith (1887) to see how thoroughly the theologies of the original controversy have been outgrown. The present generation of young Friends especially does not use their vocabulary nor think in terms of their categories.

In the third place, the present branches of the Society do not correspond to any vital differences in the Society. Once upon a time Cupid may have been a heathen god, but he is also a thoroughly non-sectarian Christian. He has refused to recognize our Quaker party fences or to submit to the Discipline. A dozen years ago I spent a summer in a country community in northwestern Virginia, where there are two Friends' Meeting Houses: the "White Brick" and the "Red Brick." The first is supposed to be liberal and the other orthodox. But when I went to the Red Brick, I would meet some sturdy Quaker farmer who would say, "My people worship at the White Brick, but I married Susan and we attend here." At the White Brick some charming young wife would say, "My people all go to the Red Brick, but I married John and we come here." The fact is that the grouping at these meeting houses has lost its religious significance. One cannot tell with any certainty the position of a Friend in that community on any live Quaker issue by noting whether his house of worship is red or white. And this is to an unconfessed extent the case in most of the communities where the two branches have lived side by side—especially if the young folks have attended the same schools.

On the other hand, the real differences among Friends today do not correspond to the historical lines of division. Our real differences are between pastoral and non-pastoral Friends, between theological conservatives and liberals, and between socially progressive and socially conservative Friends. At first glance one might believe that the division between pastoral and non-pastoral does correspond to the old divisions; that the progressive (Gurneyite or Five Years' Meeting) Yearly Meetings are pastoral

and that the conservative (Wilburite) and liberal (Hicksite) are non-pastoral. But why then do the Philadelphia orthodox line up with the liberal Yearly Meetings? New York progressive is officially pastoral, but Twentieth Street and Croton Valley Meetings are non-pastoral. Baltimore Yearly Meeting Progressive is officially non-pastoral, but several of its meetings are pastoral. There are many members of the Five Years' Meeting scattered over the country who are by preference non-pastoral and the Young Friends' Movement in that body has been accused of leaning that way. On the other hand, there are liberal Friends who are frankly pastoral in their preferences and a few of their meetings have secretaries whose functions are hardly distinguishable from those of many so-called pastors.

As for theology, one cannot tell with any degree of assurance what is the working system of doctrine of a Friend in any of our branches simply by ascertaining to what group or Yearly Meeting he belongs. We have our "fundamentalists" and "modernists" as other denominations do and, as with them, the line of division between them cuts right across all our branches. In all our meetinghouses in the day when doctrines are discussed, there shall be two sitting on the same bench: one shall be taken and the other left. And as in other denominations the conservatives in our different branches find themselves closer to each other theologically than do the conservatives and liberals within the same branch.

The same is true of our attitude toward the social applications of Christianity. One cannot foretell a Friend's attitude towards war, industrial democracy, the social equality of the white and colored races or any such social problems from the branch to which he belongs. During the All-Friends' Conference in London, 1920, a group of delegates from America were much disturbed by the manifest social radicalism of many young English Friends. They asked me, as a member of the message committee of the conference, to "see to it that none of this socialistic nonsense got into the message." Puzzle: To which branch did these men belong?

There are other conditions that augur well for the prospect of reunion, besides that fact that the issues which caused the original separation are dead issues and that no live issues keep the historical branches of the Society apart. The present generation of young Friends are receiving practically the same general education, whether in the public schools or the Friends' schools. They have the same modern outlook on life, talk the same religious language and are interested in the same problems. Through the study of early Quaker history they have recovered some of our undivided Quaker heritage. Through it, they have got in touch with our common basis of early history and doctrine.

In England the diverse tendencies, which separated from each other in America, have remained together within the one Yearly Meeting. They know from experience how possible it is for these different groups to remain in one organization and to work and worship together. Many of our English visitors in recent years find points of sympathetic contact in more than one of our branches and refuse to be limited by our party fences. The young English Friends, in particular, have been the means of bringing about joint meetings of the young Friends from different branches and thus exerting a strong influence toward mutual acquaintance and cooperation among them.

During the last quarter of a century an actual unity of spirit, cooperation and organization has been coming into being, as members of the different branches have been increasingly brought into association. Common study, work and worship help them to understand one another and to adjust themselves to one another's ideas and methods. Without such mutual acquaintance it is easy for members of one branch of Friends to misunderstand and misinterpret the other; for the fact is, that there is a wide variety of belief and practice *within* each distinct branch of the Society. Each group has its hobby-riders, cranks, and even fanatics. Within the group we learn to tolerate or endure them and to make allowance for their eccentricities. But when an outsider comes in contact with them, he is apt to think they are representative of the whole group. I know of one Friends' meeting that has or has had a vested choir; of another which take the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and of others which conduct their meetings much like a Holiness camp meeting. An outsider knowing nothing of Friends and happening into one of these meetings might easily make the mistake of thinking *all* Friends were like them. In the same way it is easy for liberal or orthodox Friends, who do not worship together, to get very erroneous ideas of one another. An orthodox Friend once remarked in my hearing that he thought Hicksite meetings must be very unspiritual, for he had recently attended the funeral of a Hicksite business friend and the only vocal exercise at the funeral was the reading by a Friend of Lincoln's Gettysburg oration. If he had been acquainted with this group of liberal Friends, he would have known that this particular Friend had an obsession for reading Lincoln's Gettysburg address and did it on all occasions! I myself once heard a speaker, standing in front of the gallery in one of the largest and weightiest orthodox meetings in Philadelphia, tell a story which ended with this statement attributed to one of the characters in it: "You can't believe a word these damned Jews say." If I had been a stranger in the meeting, I might easily have drawn strange conclusions as to the character of orthodox Quaker sermons. As it was, I knew that the speaker was a stranger who had dropped into the meeting and was abusing its liberty. As we get better acquainted we learn not to attribute such eccentricities to the group as a whole.

However great the divergence in expression and practice between our branches, at bottom all have the same Quaker inheritance. As we come to know each other, we recognize how large this common inheritance bulks in all varieties of Quakerism. At the All-Friends' Conference it was discovered that all brands of Friends still knew how to worship and conduct business together in Friendly fashion. There were nearly 80 American Friends, representing all branches, on the steamship Baltic

going to the conference. We sailed from New York at noon on Saturday. The next morning at 10 o'clock we sat down together in the ship's library in a meeting for worship. There was not even a head of the meeting appointed. It was not only a very satisfying season of worship, but no one could tell by what was said to which branch the speaker belonged. After the ship had been out two days a Friend from the Middle West came and sat down by me on the deck. "Professor," he said, "you know most of these Friends, don't you?" I told him that I could call them all by name except four or five. "There are some Hicksites among them, aren't there?" he asked. I replied that I thought nearly half of them belonged to that branch. After a moment he exclaimed with evident puzzlement: "Well, Professor, I can't tell who they are!"

With our labels off, we do seem to be just Friends!

The forms of association and cooperation that have developed within the last 30 years may be grouped under four heads, although they are not separated by any hard and fast lines and they are more or less contemporaneous in their development. There is, first, the unofficial association of members of the different branches in study and work:—at tea meetings, in joint lectureships, pilgrimages, Quaker "tramps," summer camps and summer schools. Some of the summer schools were at first simply attended by members of both branches, but afterward jointly managed. Such were the Haverford summer school, the summer school held at Swarthmore College and at George School; the summer terms of Woolman School; the Young Friends' Conference held first at Winona Lake and later at Earlham College and at Oskaloosa (Iowa); the Eastern Young Friends' Conference held in Westtown, George School and last summer at Guilford College; the Whittier Guest House and Woolman School. Here should be placed the Friends' Peace Conference held in Philadelphia in 1901. The Haverford Graduate School and Westtown School have both served in some measure as Quaker melting pots, although the latter has been only very recently opened to the children of liberal Friends.

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The second group included joint celebrations, mostly official of centennials or other notable anniversaries of Quaker meetings or meetinghouses. These began with the joint celebration in 1895 of the 200th anniversary of the establishment of New York Yearly Meeting. The centennial celebrations of the setting up of Ohio (1912) and Indiana (1921) Yearly Meetings were less notably joint occasions; but the observance of the 250th anniversary of Baltimore Yearly Meeting (1922) was in spirit very thoroughly a family reunion and love feast. Among the individual meetings that have celebrated centennials jointly are Waynesville (O.), Whitewater (Ind.), Goose Creek (Va.), Sandy Spring (Md.), and Wilmington (Del.). The list is not complete. Here should be noted also the many joint celebrations of the bicentennial of the birth of John Woolman in 1920 and of the tercentennial of the birth of George Fox in 1924.

The third class includes the cooperation, mostly official, of Friends of different branches in peace and relief work. The two New York Yearly Meetings had a joint peace committee before the outbreak of the World War. This joint committee had been enlarged to include 14 Yearly Meetings of different branches by 1915, and in that year it sponsored the Winona Friends' Peace Conference. The two Philadelphia Yearly Meetings have had a joint peace committee on the social order. Although it involves cooperation of a different order one should not fail to mention in this connection the Associated Committee on Indian Affairs, which since the days of President Grant's Quaker Indian agencies has united the work of Philadelphia orthodox, Ohio orthodox and the Yearly Meetings that now constitute the Five Years' Meeting on behalf of the Indians of the old Indian Territory. In this kind of cooperation should be mentioned the London All-Friends' Conference (1920) and the Young Friends' Conference at Jordans the same year.

The greatest of these cooperation agencies for peace and relief work has been the American Friends Service Committee. Not only did it draw practically all branches into cooperation in work of reconstruction and relief in Europe, but it brought young Friends from all groups into association on a new basis. The vital question in this work was not what were the theological beliefs or religious practices of the young men and women, but what they could do and what they had the consecration to want to do for the stricken of Europe—not, are you conservative, liberal or progressive; but "can you use a typewriter, drive a tractor, build a house, care for children, nurse the sick, handle shipments or manage an office?"

This cooperation has gradually been extended to include official recognition and cooperation in *regular* Quakerly activities. The two New York Yearly Meetings have a joint committee on closer cooperation. In 1917 the Yearly Meetings held a joint session to receive and consider the report of their joint peace committee. In 1924 they held three Yearly Meeting sessions jointly in celebration of the tercentenary of the birth of George Fox. They are now planning to hold an entire Yearly Meeting together in 1928 as a gesture of reconciliation and regret for what happened in 1828.

Since the separation of 1827 the question of official correspondence has been regarded as crucial. To exchange epistles with a Yearly Meeting was to "recognize" it as sound in doctrine, correct in its action, and a genuine member of the true Society

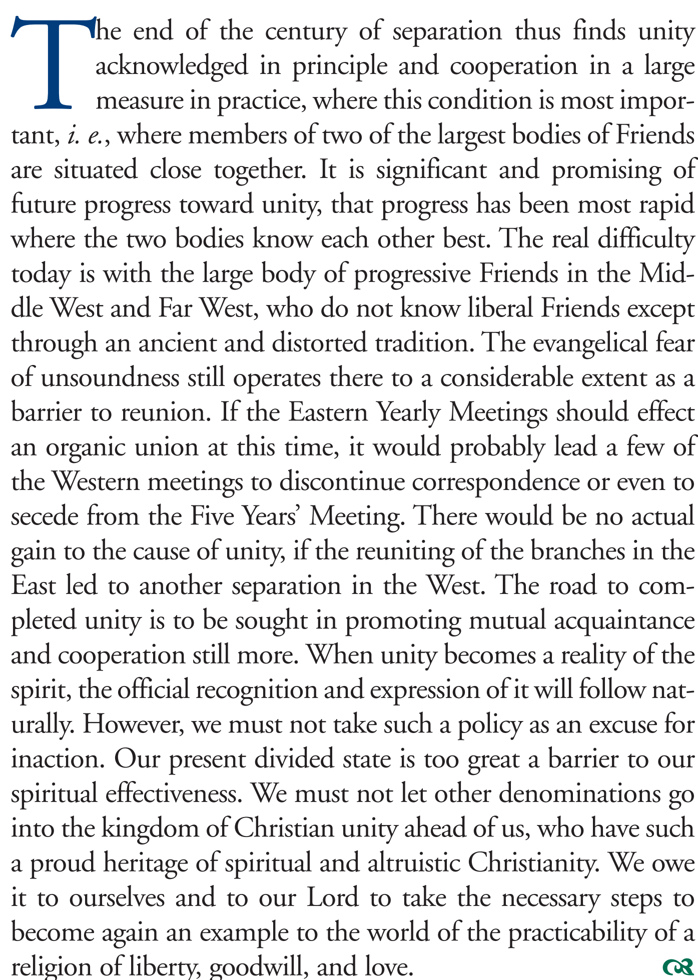
of Friends. After each separation each party sought the recognition of other Yearly Meetings, especially London. Thus each separation threatened to involve others, and the question of "recognition" was often the occasion of extending the process of splitting up the Society. It was to avoid this danger that Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, orthodox, gave up the practice of official correspondence entirely in 1857. In 1921 London Yearly Meeting abandoned its ancient discrimination between recognized and unrecognized Yearly Meetings in America and addressed one epistle "to all who bear the name of Friends." Gradually epistles have come to be exchanged on occasion between liberal and progressive Yearly Meetings, and the Philadelphia orthodox has begun to exchange occasional epistles not only with the conservative and progressive Yearly Meetings but with the Liberals also. This general resumption of the practice of correspondence had been helped by the new and struggling Yearly Meetings, which have been the fruit of our missionary and relief work. They have been sending epistles to those who bear the name of Friends regardless of the ancient divisions, and have thus added to the new common interests of all groups.

Among the examples of official cooperation are to be mentioned the joint organization of Young Friends in the two New York Yearly Meetings, which reports to both and the similar organization in Baltimore, which has a secretary supported by appropriations from the treasuries of both Yearly Meetings.

In 1926 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, orthodox, took action to recognize the liberal Yearly Meeting as a Yearly Meeting of Friends by receiving members from them by certificate and opening Westtown School to their children. This action was heartily reciprocated by the liberal Yearly Meeting, so that their relations are now much the same as those between any two progressive Yearly Meetings, such as Ohio and Indiana. As far as official relations are concerned the policy of recognition and cooperation is now accepted "in principle" by the three Yearly Meetings, in which the first separations occurred and the only ones in which there are considerable numbers of both branches.

In the fourth group we may record those meetings where Friends have begun to worship together again. At Hopewell, Va., the two meetings worshipped in the same house on opposite sides of the partition for a number of years. Then the meeting house had to be repaired. They remodeled it and left the partition out. At Pelham, Canada, Waynesville, Ohio, Chester, Concordville and Birmingham, Pa., the two meetings have united in their worship. At Wilmington, Del., the mid-week meetings are held together. At Sandy Spring, Md., the two branches meet together every other week; at Woodbury, N.J., once a month. At London Grove, Pa., and Moorestown, N.J., the Friends' schools have been consolidated under one management. In several places the First-day Schools have been united, and in many other places occasional joint meetings for worship are held, as in Germantown and recently at Westbury, N.Y. It is difficult to keep such information up-to-date, since developments are so rapid.

In many Eastern cities and universities meetings have come into existence, composed of members belonging to different branches of the Society. Such meetings are those at Dayton, Ohio, Detroit, Mich., Buffalo, Cornell University, Cambridge, Mass., Montclair, N.J., New Brunswick, N.J., State College, Pittsburgh and Chestnut Hill, Pa. These meetings make the problem of unity acute. The members do not, as a rule, like to sever official connection with the work of their own branch of Friends. It does not seem courteous to compel new members, who have no interest in our historic divisions, to choose between our meaningless branches. So far it has not been found practicable (except in Buffalo) for such a monthly meeting to belong to two Yearly Meetings. Some of these mixed meetings have solved the problem by incorporating as independent monthly meetings; others nave been content to remain as unofficial meetings; in both cases the members retain an absentee membership in their own branch. A few, as in the case of Detroit and Dayton, have joined the Yearly Meeting to which the majority belonged and in the territory of which they were situated.



The end of the century of separation thus finds unity acknowledged in principle and cooperation in a large measure in practice, where this condition is most important, *i. e.*, where members of two of the largest bodies of Friends are situated close together. It is significant and promising of future progress toward unity, that progress has been most rapid where the two bodies know each other best. The real difficulty today is with the large body of progressive Friends in the Middle West and Far West, who do not know liberal Friends except through an ancient and distorted tradition. The evangelical fear of unsoundness still operates there to a considerable extent as a barrier to reunion. If the Eastern Yearly Meetings should effect an organic union at this time, it would probably lead a few of the Western meetings to discontinue correspondence or even to secede from the Five Years' Meeting. There would be no actual gain to the cause of unity, if the reuniting of the branches in the East led to another separation in the West. The road to completed unity is to be sought in promoting mutual acquaintance and cooperation still more. When unity becomes a reality of the spirit, the official recognition and expression of it will follow naturally. However, we must not take such a policy as an excuse for inaction. Our present divided state is too great a barrier to our spiritual effectiveness. We must not let other denominations go into the kingdom of Christian unity ahead of us, who have such a proud heritage of spiritual and altruistic Christianity. We owe it to ourselves and to our Lord to take the necessary steps to become again an example to the world of the practicability of a religion of liberty, goodwill, and love.