

# Quick Quaker History

How much can be crammed into one nutshell?

- I. Beginnings.** Quakerism arose in northern England in the early 1650's.
- A. Background.** The aftermath of the English Civil War — partly a war between Parliament and the king over issues like who had the right to raise taxes; partly a religious war over the future of the Church of England; partly a popular revolution over class distinctions, etc. The king was overthrown and executed and House of Lords disbanded; the bishops were removed from church government and Puritanism/Calvinism became the dominant ideology in the state church. A wide variety of new religious and political groups sprang up: Quakers, Levellers, Diggers, Ranters, Seekers, Muggletonians, Fifth Monarchy Men, etc. As in any revolution, conflict developed afterwards about how far to go...
- B. Quakerism in the Revolutionary Context.** Quakerism emerged as a significant movement in 1652, with George Fox and other preachers traveling throughout England: claiming that Christ spoke through them; calling people out of the established church; condemning the parish priests — whose qualifications (they claimed) came from a university education or family connections rather than a direct commission from God; demanding an end to the system of obligatory tithes which supported them; refusing to bow, remove the hat, use honorific titles or pronouns, or give other indications of social deference; refusing to take oaths in court; insisting that women could preach; etc. They debated the priests in their own churches, sometimes interrupting the sermon; engaged in street theater such as “going naked as a sign”; etc.
- C. Quaker Theology.** Early Friends did not engage much in systematic or academic theology, but did preach and write extensively on what would today be regarded as theological issues. Some major points of early Quaker theology (not necessarily maintained by modern Friends):
1. Christ is present in all people as a spiritual “Light” or “Seed,” whose first function is to show people their sinful nature, condemn them for it, and point the way to redemption.
  2. Redemption comes by crucifying one's natural will, which allows Christ to be reborn or resurrected within. Christ's will replaces the natural will as it dies away, taking control of one's life and leading into righteous conduct.
  3. Sin is forgiven to the extent that this replacement occurs. Salvation does not come by mere belief in the atoning power of the outward, historical crucifixion and resurrection, in the absence of an inward change. Nor is it limited to those who have such a belief, but also may occur among people who have never heard of Jesus, etc.
  4. The direct revelations of Christ within constitute the foundation and ultimate authority for religious faith and practice; the bible is secondary, and is authoritative only because it accords with the inward testimony of the spirit.
  5. Outward “rites and ceremonies” such as baptism and the Lord's supper are inessential, and can lead people into believing they are reconciled with God, even when their inward state is corrupt. Church architecture, music, and icons such as

crosses can also provoke a strong emotional sense of communion with God where none really exists, and therefore should be eliminated.

6. True religion comes from God: ministry, prayer, and other religious speech is legitimate only when conducted under the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, and not by rote recital (as in hymn singing or recitation of a creed), or when composed by one's natural intellect (as in most sermons). Hence, waiting worship.

Quakers shared with Puritans a heavy emphasis on plainness, condemnation of frivolity and "vain amusements," etc. But to many Puritans, who believed strongly in the classical Protestant doctrines of salvation as an undeserved act of grace, justification through faith rather than works, the complete depravity of human nature, imputed righteousness, etc., the Quaker emphasis on inward transformation seemed like a crypto-Catholic claim that one could come to deserve salvation — an impression reinforced by Quaker denial of the principle of *sola scriptura*. Quaker claims that Christ was in them and spoke through them seemed downright blasphemous. But to Quakers, the classical Protestant position that justification (reconciliation with God) is separate from and prior to sanctification (overcoming one's sinful nature) seemed like a rationalization of sin.

**II. Quakerism in the Restoration.** In the 1660's–1680's, Quakers were heavily persecuted, adopted a pacifist stance, developed a systematic organizational structure, and established Pennsylvania as a colony.

**A. Background.** After the revolution, England slipped from rule by Parliament, to rule by a reduced Parliament purged of its more conservative members, to military rule, to rule by an unelected Parliament appointed by military officers, to personal dictatorship under Cromwell, to a quick series of chaotic power shifts after Cromwell's death. Charles II was invited back to be king in 1660, and most of the revolutionary reforms were undone.

**B. Pacifism.** In a public letter intended to reassure the king that they presented no threat, Fox and other Quaker leaders asserted that they were commanded by Christ never to take up arms under any circumstances. Pacifism had not previously been a prominent part of Quakerism — Gen. Monck had actually purged Quakers from the army in 1657 as a threat to discipline — but became a permanent and salient feature of Quakerism from the 1660's on.

**C. Persecution.** Quakers had experienced persecution under the Puritans, exemplified especially by the blasphemy trial of James Nayler in 1656 and execution of four Quakers in Boston in 1658–1660. But persecution intensified after the restoration of the monarchy, as more conservative factions retook control of the state and church. The Quaker and Coventicle Acts effectively outlawed Quaker gatherings, but Quakers continued to meet publicly. Thousands of Quakers were imprisoned, often simply for refusing to take oaths when brought to testify in their own defense in court; a large number died in prison. Many more Quakers were stripped of their property for refusing to pay tithes, etc.

**D. Organizational Structure.** In the face of persecution, Quakers developed a system of group discipline, with enforced standards of personal and corporate behavior. Under the leadership of Fox, the system of preparative, monthly, quarterly and yearly business meetings was established, with separate men's and women's meetings at most levels.

Local meetings were organized as preparative meetings; decisions were finalized at monthly meetings, which were small regional associations. London yearly meeting served as the parent body for the Quaker movement as a whole, and exercised authority even over other yearly meetings.

**E. Colonization.** Pennsylvania was established in 1681, in large part as a refuge for Quakers and other persecuted sects. Unlike Massachusetts, it was not founded as a religious state, but allowed freedom of religion and official separation of church and state; however, its political leadership coincided largely with the leadership of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for decades afterward. Significant Quaker populations also existed in other colonies, and several yearly meetings were established in North America.

**III. Quietism, 1690–1820.** From the late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Quakers functioned more and more as a separate, closed society with a distinctive culture. A series of reforms in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century intensified this trend.

**A. Toleration.** Quaker assemblies were legalized in England in 1689. Quakers were legally allowed to affirm rather than swear in 1695. (Some issues, such as that of tithes, continued for more than a century afterwards.) In this more relaxed and tolerant atmosphere, Friends generally settled into a comfortable and prosperous life; Quakerism became less and less a movement of radical religious enthusiasts, and more and more a respectable religious denomination. The name “Religious Society of Friends,” with all its denominational overtones, came into use in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**B. The “Hedge.”** With the passage of time, certain features of Quaker practice served more and more to mark off Quaker society from the rest of the world and maintain a clear separation — as Friends sometimes put it, they formed a “hedge” around Quaker society.

**1. Plain Dress.** Originally, Quakers wore unadorned versions of the same clothing styles as the surrounding culture. But as a testimony against the frivolity and waste of keeping up with the whims of fashion, they changed their clothing styles only in a very slow and limited way. Before long, Quaker dress was markedly old-fashioned, and Friends were easily recognized by their appearance. Quaker clothing helped discourage Friends from engaging in behavior which might reflect badly on Quakerism, but also discouraged converts.

**2. Plain Speech.** Friends maintained distinctive speech patterns, including the use of *thee* and *thou* when addressing just one person (eventually dropping *thou* in favor of *thee* in conversational style), avoidance of titles (including *Mister*, etc. — even in the case of children addressing non-Quaker adults), and numbers in place of the traditional names for the days and months; all combined with a direct, literal style verging on bluntness.

**3. Endogamy.** Quakers were expected to marry other Quakers. Quakerism quickly became a matter of family identity, and Quaker society was held together through kinship ties.

**4. Disownment.** The practice of disownment began during the era of persecution, as a means of clarifying what Quakers really did and did not stand for: If a Friend persistently engaged in conduct inconsistent with Quaker standards, and refused to make a public statement acknowledging the error of this conduct, the meeting issued a

statement to the effect that offender should not be considered a Friend. Disownment did not involve “shunning”; disowned Friends often continued to attend meeting for worship (but were barred from business meetings, which in this era were limited to members). Discipline was relaxed somewhat in the years after toleration, but disownments increased dramatically with a movement toward stricter enforcement beginning in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. A wide variety of offenses eventually became recognized grounds for disownment: failing to pay one’s debts, denying the divinity of Christ, enlisting in the military, getting married by a priest, and many others. After a long effort by John Woolman and others, slaveholding became a disownable offense in the 1770’s and 1780’s.

**C. Meeting Organization and Architecture.** Most of what we now think of as the traditional system of organization of Friends meetings, and the traditional style of meetinghouse architecture, date from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

1. **Ministers.** Friends have always believed that God might minister through anyone at any time; speaking in meeting was not limited to officially designated ministers. However, Friends did recognize that some people might experience an ongoing gift and calling to be a minister, beyond what others experience; and developed practices for the official recognition of such gifts. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, meetings issued certificates to Friends traveling in the ministry, testifying to their soundness; by the 1770’s, a standard procedure was in place for admission as a minister to local meetings of ministers and elders. Ministers were unpaid, and spoke as led from the silence, without preparing sermons in advance. Many ministers kept journals, especially of their travels; these were published after their deaths for the inspiration of other Friends. Ministry in this era appears to have consisted mainly of long sermons stressing Christian themes like redemption through suffering; exhortations to discipline; and “dealing with states,” in which the minister claimed mystical insight into the spiritual condition of particular Friends (named or unnamed) in the meeting. Ministry was frequently delivered in a chanted “sing-song” style.
2. **Elders.** In very early Quakerism, the term “elder” refers to the more experienced Friends around whom a meeting developed, and who provided most of the meeting leadership. By the 1720’s, meetings were expected to appoint official elders, whose function was to advise the ministers — encouraging sound ministry, led by the spirit of God, and discouraging ministry that wasn’t. Ministers and elders met regularly in closed meetings, which were expected to answer queries about the ministry in the meeting, and whose approval was required for the recognition of new ministers.
3. **Overseers.** By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, meetings were expected to appoint official “overseers,” whose main function was to meet with Friends whose conduct was inconsistent with the discipline; and if necessary, begin disownment proceedings against them.
4. **Clerk.** Each business meeting appointed a clerk, whose function as originally conceived was more like that of a meeting secretary than a meeting president: the clerk formulated and recorded the minutes of the meeting. But because decisions were made without voting, and the clerk was typically given discretion to weigh the

views of different members differently in determining what decisions had been made, in practice the position of clerk was quite powerful.

5. **Meetinghouse Architecture.** Over time, a standard architecture for Friends meetinghouses developed: Meetinghouses were about twice as wide as deep, and divided into separate men's and women's sections by wall about waist high through the middle of the room. Men and women had separate entrances, and sat separately during meeting for worship. Sliding partitions ("shutters") could be lowered to separate the two sides completely so that men and women could have separate business meetings. At the front of the room was a raised gallery, facing the rest of the room, where ministers, elders, and other members of the meeting hierarchy sat.

IV. **Splintering and Separation: 1820–1900.** Quakerism had experienced a number of schisms all through its history; but prior to the 1820's, most of these were relatively small and short-lived. Nineteenth century Quakerism was characterized by a series of major schisms, the effects of which are still felt today. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Society of Friends was splintered into several separate organizations.

A. **The Hicksite Separation, 1827–1828.** The largest separation was the "Hicksite" separation, over the preaching of Elias Hicks in the 1820's.

1. **Background.** In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was an increasing trend toward evangelicalism among Friends, stressing the importance of faith in the atoning power of the crucifixion and resurrection, and reliance on the Bible. This trend was especially strong among urban Friends in London and Philadelphia; less so among rural Friends.
2. **Elias Hicks.** Largely as a reaction against this trend, a prominent Long Island minister, Elias Hicks, traveled among meetings preaching what he took to be the traditional Friends position, that redemption was effected by the crucifixion of the natural will and resurrection of Christ within *and not* by the outward, historical crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. In Hicks' view, these served merely as "figures" of more important inward, spiritual processes.
3. **Separation.** Elders in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, feeling that Hicks' denial of an essential role for the crucifixion and resurrection was contrary to Quaker doctrine, attempted to revoke his travel certificate. Since his certificate was not issued by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, it was unclear whether they had the authority to do so. Controversy developed, and in 1827 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting split into two separate organizations, each claiming to be the legitimate Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. In 1828, all other yearly meetings were faced with which of these two organizations to recognize, and many of them underwent their own schisms over this issue. (London Yearly Meeting did not split, and recognized the anti-Hicks meeting.) The Society of Friends was now split into two antagonistic "branches," usually called *Hicksite* and *Orthodox*. Hicks died shortly after the separation.

B. **The Progressive Separations, 1840's–1850's.**

1. **Background.** Friends had taken the Hicksite side in 1827–1828 for a variety of reasons: some believed that Hicks was right about the traditional Quaker doctrine of the atonement; some felt that the elders of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting had acted

- contrary to good order; some were disturbed at any attempt to enforce doctrinal conformity; some merely wanted to resist the innovations of the evangelical trend. Hicksite Quakerism quickly developed its own tensions, with a conservative wing (led, among others, by the painter Edward Hicks) attempting to maintain traditional quietism, and liberal wing (led by Lucretia Mott and others) favoring greater doctrinal and behavioral freedom, engagement with wider society, and local autonomy. Among other issues, conflict developed over abolitionism: virtually all Friends opposed slavery, but quietists tended to oppose participation in secular abolitionist organizations as an inappropriate mixing in the political tumults of “the world,” and as promoting the rush toward war. (A similar conflict over abolitionism occurred in Orthodox Quakerism, resulting a schism in Indiana Yearly Meeting in 1843.)
2. **Progressive/Congregational Quakerism.** In the 1840’s and 1850’s, elements of the liberal wing of Hicksite Quakerism broke away and established “progressive” or “congregational” yearly meetings. In many ways these were the prototype for modern unprogrammed meetings, with virtually complete autonomy for local meetings (though not many local meetings were established), no overt restrictions on personal belief, no recognition of ministers and elders, considerable interest in Eastern religions and other more-or-less exotic spiritual practices, a heavy emphasis on political activism (especially abolition and women’s suffrage), no sharp distinction between members and non-members, etc. The progressive meetings gradually died away over the course of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries — but most of their program was adopted by the main body of Hicksites, as quietism also faded and disappeared.
- C. **The Gurneyite/Wilburite Schism, 1840’s–1860’s.** Like Hicksites, Orthodox Friends had taken their side in the separation for a variety of incompatible reasons, and new tensions developed. In stages over the course of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the orthodox branch split between a conservative/quietist faction, and an evangelical faction.
1. **The Ascent of Evangelicalism.** Evangelicalism became more and more dominant in Orthodox Quakerism, and by the 1830’s was the mainstream position in London Yearly Meeting and some other locations. Some of the attraction of evangelicalism may be seen in the reminiscences of Sarah Greer, who, after complaining how most Friends ministers preached primarily of the importance of wearing plain dress and saying *thee* and *thou*, writes “Our old acquaintance, Joseph John [= prominent evangelical Friends minister J.J. Gurney], was, to our mind, infinitely superior to anyone else. He rarely descended to the peculiarities of the Society, but preached of faith, and hope, and love.” Evangelical Friends also favored religious education, and increased engagement with the wider society, including cooperation with other churches, philanthropic service such as Elizabeth Fry’s work with prisoners, and participation in the abolition movement. Quaker evangelicalism in the context of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century may be seen as *liberal*.
  2. **The Wilburite Separations.** John Wilbur, a minister in New England Yearly Meeting, criticized the evangelical trend as falling into the opposite error from Elias Hicks: While Hicks had discounted the outward, historical work of Christ,

evangelicals discounted Christ's inward, spiritual work — treating the bible as more reliable than inward revelation, emphasizing faith in the atonement over reliance on the inward guidance of Christ, etc. When J.J. Gurney toured North America in the late 1830's promoting the evangelical perspective, Wilbur expressed concerns about his ministry, and was disowned for criticizing a minister outside of proper disciplinary channels. New England Yearly Meeting split over Wilbur's disownment; other yearly meetings were again faced with the issue of which faction to recognize, and underwent their own splits into "Wilburite" and "Gurneyite" factions. (Unlike the Hicksite separation, these separations spread out over more than 15 years.) Philadelphia Yearly Meeting avoided schism by cutting off all correspondence with other meetings.

3. **Wilburite Quakerism: More Divisions.** Wilburites retained a strong tendency toward quietism, with a heavy emphasis on maintaining correct, authentic, traditional Quaker doctrine. Predictably, this stress on doctrinal purity resulted in more schisms, and several Wilburite yearly meetings split into "Primitive" and "Middleite" factions; many of these underwent further splits into tiny yearly meetings identified with particular individuals: Otisite, Kingite, Maulite, etc. (Joshua Maule even separated from his own Maulite meeting and wound up meeting alone in his living room, convinced that the rest of the Society of Friends was schismatic.) These tiny yearly meetings died out or reunited with larger Wilburite meetings in the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**D. The Holiness Movement and Conservative and Beanite Separations, 1880–1900.**

Over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Gurneyite Quakerism assimilated more and more to Wesleyan evangelicalism. A large segment of it was brought into the "Holiness Movement" in the 1880's and adopted a system of professional pastors. This provoked another round of separations.

1. **Background: The Holiness Movement.** This was a broad movement affecting Wesleyan churches, starting in the 1830's but growing dramatically in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in new denominations like the Church of the Nazarene, and eventually giving rise to Pentecostalism. The central idea was that sanctification is a definite second act of grace, occurring instantaneously subsequent to salvation, and accomplished by the Holy Spirit. The Holiness Movement made heavy use of revivals and camp meetings, with a preaching style designed to provoke a strong emotional reaction which could be interpreted as experiencing the Holy Spirit.
2. **Holiness Friends and the Conservative Separations.** Some Friends saw in the Holiness Movement a reflection of the enthusiasm and emphasis on direct experience of the spirit of Christ of early Quakerism — and a contrast with the dry "idolatry of silence" of 19<sup>th</sup> century quietism. But adopting the standard theology and practices of Holiness evangelicalism meant abandoning key elements of traditional Quakerism, including the idea that the spirit of Christ is present in all people (since Holiness doctrine required that the Holy Spirit dwells only in the sanctified) and the prohibition on paid ministry. Even many Gurneyites could not go along, and a number of yearly meetings split. The anti-Holiness Gurneyite factions in these separations affiliated

with the Middleite Wilburites to form what became known as the “Conservative” branch of Friends.

3. **The Beanite Separation.** After failing to prevent Holiness doctrine from dominating Iowa Yearly Meeting, prominent ministers Joel and Hannah Bean moved to San Jose, California and began a new meeting. It was officially laid down by the yearly meeting and the Beans were stripped of their recognition as ministers, but the Beans continued their meeting anyway; it rapidly became the focal point of an association of independent meetings on the west coast — which eventually developed into three yearly meetings. The Beans themselves were conservative Gurneyites, but these “Beanite” meetings came to resemble liberal Hicksite meetings in their emphasis on doctrinal freedom and unprogrammed worship.

V. **The Development of Modern Quakerism.** A number of developments during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries brought the Society of Friends to something like its current form. Friends General Conference and Friends United Meeting (originally called Five Years Meeting) were established at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the main umbrella organizations for Hicksite and Orthodox Quakerism, respectively. The mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by reunification of Hicksite and Orthodox meetings — but the gulf between liberal and evangelical Quakerism remains large.

A. **The Hedge Comes Down.** By the 1860’s, the traditional prohibition against marrying out was widely perceived as having caused a decline in the size and vitality of the Society of Friends; most yearly meetings dropped this prohibition during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Disownments for other reasons also became increasingly rare. Most Friends dropped plain dress during the period 1860–1920. Plain speech lasted somewhat longer, but was becoming rare by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; a few families still use it at home.

B. **Modernist Theology.** Like other denominations, Quakerism was influenced by the “modernist” trend in Christian theology that developed over the 19<sup>th</sup> century: this trend accepted the results of critical scholarship on the Bible, emphasized the moral teachings of Jesus over the more “metaphysical” aspects of traditional Christianity, and motivated doctrine by its experienced value rather than by appeal to authority. In a Quaker context, this perspective tended to separate the “Inner Light” conceptually from the person of Christ, and view its role as primarily one of guidance rather than conviction of and redemption from sin. Modernism was well established in Hicksite Quakerism by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and in elements of Orthodox Quakerism — particularly among non-Holiness Gurneyites — by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Manchester Conference of 1895 turned London Yearly Meeting in a decidedly liberal direction after decades of evangelical dominance.

1. **Rufus Jones.** More than anyone, Rufus Jones (1863–1948) deserves credit for articulating and popularizing the modern conception of Quakerism. Casting Quakerism as part of a larger tradition of (Christian and pre-Christian) mysticism, Jones was able to portray Quakerism — which had been widely perceived as a quaint, old-fashioned, isolationist sect in clear decline — in a way which made its central elements particularly appealing to 20<sup>th</sup> century intellectuals.

- C. Activism.** An increasing part of the public perception of Quakerism also began to be dominated by the recognition that Friends had been well ahead of the rest of society in their opposition to slavery, support for the equality of women, treatment of Native Americans, promotion of peace, and other areas. Friends mounted a massive and widely admired relief effort after World War I. Quakers came to be seen more and more (by themselves and others) as engaging in a progressive, activist religion, and less and less as a sect of dour old men and women in broad brimmed hats and bonnets. The American Friends Service Committee was established in 1917; Friends Committee on National Legislation in 1943.
- D. Meeting Reorganization.** Many Friends became increasingly dissatisfied with the old, hierarchical form of meeting structure, and found it incompatible with a conception of Quakerism as fundamentally egalitarian. The role of overseers was reconceptualized as providing pastoral care rather than policing individual behavior. In the 1920's, London Yearly Meeting and all the Hicksite meetings eliminated the practice of officially recognizing ministers and elders. Most Orthodox meetings retained this practice on paper, but in unprogrammed meetings, it became increasingly rare. Ministers and elders meetings were replaced with ministry and counsel committees.
- E. New Meetings and New Quakers.** All these changes made Quakerism more attractive to new converts than it had been since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. By the 1930's, new meetings were springing up across the country, particularly in college towns and urban centers. (Urbana-Champaign Meeting was organized in 1939.) Most of these meetings were organized on a completely independent basis, by groups of people who simply declared themselves to be a Friends meeting — without the oversight from an existing meeting which traditional procedures for establishing a meeting required. Frequently such meetings included a mix of Hicksite and Orthodox Friends, with a large number of newcomers to Quakerism who had no interest taking sides in the old schisms. Over the coming decades, Quakerism continued to bring in new people attracted by its doctrinal freedom and activist politics, and became less and less a matter of traditional family identity.
- F. Reunification — and More Separation.** By the 1940's and 1950's, many Friends were ready to heal the schisms of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and most of the yearly meetings which had split were reunified, particularly in the east. (In the midwest and west, where Orthodox meetings tended to be more evangelical and pastoral, unification generally did not occur.) FGC and FUM did not merge. After reunification, most independent monthly meetings affiliated with existing yearly meetings or banded together to form new yearly meetings. But the liberalizing trend which made reunification possible was disturbing to some more evangelical Friends: all through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, yearly meetings withdrew from Friends United Meeting for insufficient commitment to the evangelical perspective. In 1965, several of these banded together to form Evangelical Friends International (originally called Evangelical Friends Alliance) — a third umbrella organization, now comparable in size to FGC and FUM.
- G. Non-Christian Quakerism.** Quakerism originally claimed to be “primitive Christianity revived,” and until the 20<sup>th</sup> century virtually all Friends were basically Christian in

perspective. By 1929, the FGC pamphlet 'To the Scientifically Minded' described *God* as "a word of diverse and uncertain meaning," and represented (Hicksite) Quakerism as Christian only in the sense that "Most Friends agree that the Sermon on the Mount presents the highest ideal for a way of life." By the 1970's, it was not unusual for Friends to identify themselves as atheists, Buddhists or Pagans — or more commonly, to espouse a kind of spiritual activism or universalist mysticism centered on "that of God in everyone," without any special connection to Christianity (or any other religion). Few unprogrammed meetings would now be willing to make an official statement portraying themselves unambiguously as Christian organizations — though of course many individual Christians are involved in such meetings.

**H. Overseas Growth.** Orthodox Friends engaged in substantial missionary work beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century; this was especially successful in East Africa and Bolivia. Some international expansion has also occurred independently of missionary work. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, nearly 100 yearly meetings had been established around the world; the country with the most Friends is Kenya. Quakerism is no longer primarily a phenomenon of the English-speaking world.