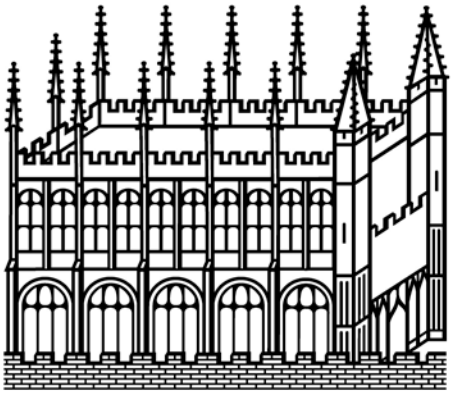

MODERN QUAKERISM.

BY

ALEXANDER GORDON, M.A.

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APPLY TO

JOHN WOOD, CORN MARKET, DERBY.

THE MARCH OF REFINEMENT.

SONS and daughters of Fox, from your slumbers awake ye,
No longer in listless indulgence recline!
From the fetters of sloth and of luxury break ye,
And put on your beautiful garments and shine!

Time was when your fathers, in wisdom grown hoary,
In their doublet of leather, the pilgrim's rude guise,
Contemning the pride of this world and its glory,
Pursued their rough path of reproach to the skies.

Unlettered as they on Judea's lone mountain,
By her wind-ruffled lake, in deep forest or den,
Drawing waters of life from salvation's blest fountain,
Surrounded the houseless Redeemer of men.

Your Sires, by His spirit's blest influence guided,
Regardless of dangers, of prisons, and death,
Alike by the sage and the trifler derided,
Looked o'er this vain world with the keen eye of faith.

From the lure of false glory, false happiness, turning,
With the courage of martyrs they followed their Lord;
Their loins girded close, and their lamps brightly burning,
Unceasing they published His life-giving word.

Those days are long past, and new light rises o'er us,
No longer we suffer such hardship and loss;
The "March of Refinement" now opens upon us,
And points other ways than the way of the cross.

No longer we talk of meek, patient endurance,
Of low self-denial and watchful restraint:
But of confident hope, and exulting assurance,
And the triumphs that wait on the steps of the saint.

Knowledge waves her light wand, and poor wandering
mortals
No longer a rugged and thorny road trace:
The gate that was strait now unfolds its wide portals,
The way once so narrow expands into space.

Religion has softened her features; around her
The attractions of taste and of fancy are shed,
The arts with their graceful adornments surround her,
And weave a rich veil for her delicate head.

Our maidens, no longer the homely task plying,
That once could engage the matrons of yore,
Are all in each liberal accomplishment vieing,
And high on the pinions of sentiment soar.

See our scrap-books and albums, of curious adorning,
The offerings of friendship so richly unfold;
E'en the yearly Epistle, its humble garb scorning,
Now sparkles in silver or blazes in gold.

'Tis true there are some who, these flowery paths fearing,
Again and again tell us plainly we stray;
Who, the standard of ancient simplicity rearing,
Exhort us to pause and consider the way.

But many, though granting their honest intentions,
Deem them rigid and narrow, of prejudiced mind,
And believe that midst thousands of modern inventions,
Some happy expedient yet we shall find

To reconcile things in their nature discordant,
Inclination and duty no longer at strife;
Religion and luxury kindly accordant,
The peace of the soul, with the pride of this life.

Vain hope of blind man! in his fond self-deceiving,
Whilst immutably true stands the Saviour's own word;*
Happy they, who, its sacred assurance receiving,
In lowliness follow their crucified Lord.

* "Ye cannot serve two masters."

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FRIENDS AND THEIR FOES. *Theological Review*, January, 1874.

THE GREAT LAIRD OF URIE. *Ibid*, October, 1874.

THE MARROW OF BARCLAY. *Ibid*, July, 1875.

THE GENESIS OF QUAKERISM. *Ibid*, October, 1877.

"WHAT is Quakerism?" asks the industrious bibliographer of Friends' literature, in the brief Preface to his *Bibliotheca Anti-Quakeriana.* He owns that it is a question which "seems to have puzzled many members of the Society of Friends of late years"; and, while deciding for his own part with William Penn that it is "primitive Christianity revived," he makes the strong admission that considering the existing divisions among the successors of George Fox, touching matters of principle as well as of practice, this "old or primitive Christianity may be said to be scarcely known" in the house of its Friends. This is the judgment of one who, from the exceptional fulness of his acquaintance with the writings of Friends ancient and modern, is perhaps better qualified than any other man living to form a well-instructed estimate of the amount and the drift of the various changes which have taken place in Quaker opinion, since the rise of the denomination amid the ferment of religious life in the golden days of England's Commonwealth.

Joseph Smith does not step out of the neutral place of the accurate and diligent collector of materials. He leaves his exhaustive catalogue of Quaker books, tracts and broadsheets to speak for itself; only expressing a hope, in the prelude to his accumulation of the multifarious bibliography of writings opposed to Quakerism in its successive developments, that his labours "may prove one means of opening the eyes of some." But there have been others, with eyes at length opened, who have felt the burden of the task of recalling Friends to their ancient landmarks, and have conscientiously endeavoured, though with humble means

and on an obscure scale, to present in their own persons a spectacle of primitive Quakerism revived.

Few, perhaps, are aware of the existence in this country of a small but earnest body, which for the last fifteen years has assembled half-yearly as a General Meeting of Friends, in complete independence of the London Yearly Meeting. Such as it is, it was gathered mainly by the quiet exertions of a remarkable man, who from the year 1860 was the subject of an increasing "exercise," to use Friends' phraseology, leading him to correspond with like-minded Friends with a view to bringing them together in regular conference, on what he conceived to be the original lines of Friends' testimony. Of his decease no tidings reached the outside public, dependent for its religious intelligence upon the newspapers. Nor has his life and work found any chronicle as yet, except in the modest "Testimony" of his immediate coadjutors. There is a hope that from his correspondence and his spiritual writings a fuller portrait of his mind may at some time be given to the world by his widow. But, meanwhile, to those who study with reverence the complex manifestations of the religious life of our time, it may be of some interest to make the acquaintance of this conscientious Friend, and to learn something of the meaning of the movement of which he was the originator and the centre.

John Grant Sargent (1813—1883) was a birth-right member of the Society of Friends, his parents being Isaac and Hester Sargent. He was born at Paddington, and apprenticed to a draper at Leighton Buzzard; but his early business life was spent in Paris, where he worked under his father, who was a carriage builder, and owner of a brick-field. Isaac Sargent sat somewhat loosely to Quakerism, and it is not surprising that his son, as a youth in Paris, soon dropped the associations and left off the distinguishing practices of Friends. But the influences of his Quaker bringing-up were only in abeyance. While yet at Paris he was drawn within the power of Friends' principles by a stronger claim than that of a mere birth-right membership. He shared the same experience of the Light Within, which shook the soldiers and shoemakers of

the old Commonwealth time, and made them, as Gervase Bennet said, "Quakers"; quivering beneath the influence divine, though never shaking before the face of man. He became "convinced" of the truth as held by Friends; and his convincement made the Friends' livery of dress and speech no antiquated and meaningless usage to him, but a badge of honour and conscience. Again he sat in the silent waiting upon the Spirit, which is at once the opportunity and the life of the faithful worship of Friends. No matter that oftentimes there was no one to join him. They who truly wait upon the Spirit are ready, if need be, to wait alone. It is a beautiful glimpse of calm resolved sincerity, this picture which we have of the London lad, true to the quickenings of his conscience in a strange land, and, unattended by a sympathising associate, holding amid the great world of Paris a reverent and joyful communion with the Source of life and light, unseen, but inly felt.

Returning to England about 1844, he was for some time a farmer in Norfolk and Surrey, and subsequently the proprietor of a wood-turning mill in Derbyshire. This led him to travel a good deal, for the purpose of disposing of his bobbins. Moving about on business errands, his spirit gradually burned with the desire to be of service in the Gospel ministry, and he became a preacher among Friends. It is a common, and, considering the quietude which for so long a period cast a chill over the mission aspects of Quakerism, it is perhaps an accountable misconception to suppose that the Society of Friends is a Church without regular and recognised ministers. But no error can be more fundamental than that which, while aware of the absence of an order of priests or preachers trained for the performance of professional functions at stated intervals, ignores the presence of a distinct class of heralds of the Gospel, who obey a call not of men nor by man. The number and the activity of such ministers is regulated not by the economic laws of supply and demand. They are in vigour and in plenty when the Supreme Speaker, who deputes them, needs and employs a human voice; their diminished band, and the infrequency of their ministrations, are signs that God wills silence rather than speech. Among

such ministers Sargent at length found his place. From about the year 1851 he exercised his gift in meetings. And it is characteristic of his absolute reliance on the Inward Witness, that while he neither sought nor obtained any official recognition of his claims when he came forward as a preacher among Friends, he was in no way daunted by any coldness that might be shown towards him. There are indeed two classes of Friends' speakers. When a speaker's word finds acceptance, he is by tacit consent permitted to use all opportunities of declaring it which arise; were he unacceptable, he would be "stopped." A further step is taken when a speaker is officially placed upon the list of recognised ministers. In this case he has his certificate, to be read in the meetings which he visits on a missionary journey, and the expenses of such journey are defrayed by the Meeting which authorises it. By the distinct Society which he was chiefly instrumental in forming, Sargent was liberated for Gospel work, and he took with him on his last travels in America the written credentials of that body. This could give him no new status. Already he was a minister of the Spirit, pure and simple.

As with the Friends' ministers from their earliest days the mission laid upon him was international in its range. Twice did he specially visit America (the last occasion being in 1882); several times, when his business journeys took him to the Continent, he found occasion for spiritual labours under the burden of his call; to Ireland he paid a missionary visit, speaking in Friends' meetings. But during the last five-and-twenty years of his life his main work was internal to the quiet circles in which his own views of Friends' principles prevailed. For while working to extend the influence of those truths, to maintain which Friends are bound together, he found reason to believe that another work was equally if not more necessary, namely, to recover among Friends themselves the purity of their original testimony. His object was to unite such Friends as thought and felt with him in a closer bond of sympathy, and to furnish a common expression for their convictions.

In April, 1860, he addressed a circular letter from Cockermouth to several like-minded Friends, inviting them to meet

in conference. There was no immediate result, but on October 17, 1862, the first conference took place in London, and was attended by seventeen persons. For seven years similar conferences were held about every four months in different places up and down the country, the attendance averaging some twenty-five persons. In 1868 Sargent with two others went to America, to visit the little groups of Friends, known as the Smaller Bodies, which had already made a decisive stand for primitive Quakerism as they understood it. On the voyage home these three Friends were strongly impressed with the duty of separating themselves in like manner from the tendencies of the London Yearly Meeting. The last conference was held on October 14 and 15, 1869; in January, 1870, its place was taken by a General Meeting for Friends in England, initiated at Fritchley, in Derbyshire, where Sargent and some of his associates resided and kept up regular meetings for worship This General Meeting has since been held twice a year, usually at Fritchley or Belper, and has maintained an official correspondence with kindred bodies in America. Sargent was the Clerk of the Meeting, and remained its leading spirit until his death on December 27, 1883.

The *British Friend* for July, 1884, contains a report of the last May Meeting at Fritchley, communicated by a member of the Larger Body. He describes the small Meeting House as well filled, and bears testimony to the excellence of the spirit which prevailed. "Neither in meeting nor out of it, did I hear one word approaching a want of Christian love towards those from whose views they differ." The membership of this independent organisation is not exclusively composed of seceders from the Larger Body; it comprises also some who have joined themselves to it on becoming Friends from "convincement," a proof of the vitality of this little flock.

But now comes the consideration of the grounds of the secession, and the question how far the seceders are justified in their contention that modern Quakerism, as exemplified in the spirit and practices of the London Yearly Meeting. and bodies in correspondence with it, has forfeited the true character of the original Society of Friends. Some of those

who are in sympathy with the seceders hold very strong views on this last point. On 20th May, 1871, Thomas Drewry, of Fleetwood, a member of Preston Monthly Meeting, addressed a written protest to the London Yearly Meeting and to the Charity Commision, in which he maintains that "what is called the Society of Friends" has undergone fundamental changes in faith and doctrine, and is now properly speaking "a body of Separatists," and has consequently no right to retain "Trust property, which belongs not to it, but belongs to those who adhere to the original faith of the Society of Friends for whose sole use and benefit the several Trusts were created, by their predecessors in religious profession."* The London Yearly Meeting took no notice of this Protest; and the Charity Commissioners probably regarded it as *brutum fulmen*, for, though strongly worded, it specifies none of the innovations of which in general terms it complains. Yet to those acquainted with Quaker usages it is a very significant document. The Friends when they express dissent from a position advanced in their meetings, as not being in accordance with Friends' principles, do not argue, do not give their reasons. Argument is certainly not excluded in Meetings for Discipline; but it is not to argument that Friends naturally resort in order to produce conviction. They simply state how the matter at issue affects their own feeling. They say: 'I do not feel comfortable about this; I do not feel easy in my mind under it.' A condition of things which produces so decided a discomfort and uneasiness in the mind of any recognised member as is indicated by Thomas Drewry's Protest, is a serious matter among Friends. Their constitution knows nothing of the rule of majorities; they never take a vote; the harmony of sentiment is everything with them; if a member feels and says, 'You are out of accord with your true principles,' and if he is not at once lopped off as a false accuser, the rise of the feeling which he expresses is of itself, from the Quaker standpoint, sufficiently condemnatory of the existing position of the body.

* See this Protest in W. Hodgson's *The Society of Friends in the Nineteenth Century*, 1876, vol. ii. pp. 394-7.

We cite Drewry's protest because it is an English document, but it will be observed that we quote it from an American source,* and to America we must look for the most numerous and the clearest expressions of revolt from the modern drift of the Quaker body. † John Wilbur's *Journal* (1859) is a storehouse of valuable testimony on the subject; and the two remarkable volumes of recent denominational history published in 1875 and 1876 by William Hodgson, of Philadelphia, lay the whole case very fairly before the impartial reader. These publications have been ignored by the official representatives of the Society of Friends in this country; yet they constitute a startling indictment of the modes of thought which now find shelter beneath the retrimmed mantle of Quakerism. In England we have Daniel Pickard's *Expostulation* (1864), and a not inconsiderable number of tracts and pamphlets, uttering warning notes in a similar spirit; but the main body goes on its way unheeding them.

This apathy under remonstrance, this quiet determination neither to cope with the damaging criticisms directed against them nor to retrace their course, which is characteristic of the existing leaders of Quaker opinion, is one of the great difficulties in the way of those who are anxious to fulfil their part in reasserting the ancient principles of the body. They may say what they like; it excites no controversy, and produces no movement. Quakerism has hung up its broad brim and turned down its collar, the writings of its founders lie dusty on its shelves, it speaks a new language and adopts unwonted ways, and to the call of the old prophetic voices, which charmed its younger ears and roused its fresher heart, it is mute.

Another serious difficulty experienced by Friends of the old stamp is that the very things which they feel it their duty to oppose and denounce, as fatal to the real spirit of Quakerism, are contributing to a certain accession of outside interest and favour extended to the denomination by

* It was published as an advertisement in the *British Friend* (a Glasgow monthly) for September, 1871.

† See *Modern Quakerism Examined, and Contrasted with that of the Ancient Type*, 1876, by Walter Edgerton, of Indianapolis.

other bodies of Christians. No doubt the people called Evangelicals hail with increasing satisfaction the new departures of the people called Quakers. They regard them as moving in the right direction, and gladly hold out a fraternising hand, which those who have so long meekly dwelt in the cold shade of popular neglect are gratified to accept. Yet one would think it must be apparent to all but the blind, that not as Quakers is their co-operation welcomed by the outside sects; but they are acknowledged as brethren on the precise ground that what is essentially distinctive of Quakerism they have practically abandoned. Their inconsistency is praiseworthy in the eyes of the successors of their ancient opponents; and just because they are inconstant to the teachings of their founders, they are admitted to fellowship. In the height of the Beacon controversy, that shrewd and strong Evangelical thinker, Dr. Wardlaw, addressed to Friends some remarkable congratulations on an evident revolution in their sentiments. "I have given," he says, "in copious extracts, the views of J. J. Gurney on the doctrine of justification. They are clear, simple and Scriptural. But—are they Quakerism?" He details, with the skill of a practised theologian, the discrepancies on this head between Gurney and Barclay; and he adds, "And, indeed, on this and on various other points, it cannot fail to strike the most superficial reader, what a perfect contrast there is between the writings of Mr. Gurney and those of the early Friends." *

A third and perhaps the most formidable difficulty with which those jealous for the ancient principles of Friends have to contend is the unquestionable fact that the introduction of the new régime has been followed by symptoms of denominational prosperity and success. The chronic leakage from Friends' families to the membership of other bodies has been appreciably checked. While not increasing, or even holding its ground relatively to the population, the Society of Friends has been able to stem the process of further decline. Much new activity prevails within its

* *Friendly Letters to the Society of Friends, on some of their distinguishing principles.* By Ralph Wardlaw, D.D., 1836, p. 367, &c.

borders. Though not activity of a kind which approves itself to those who prize the spirit of the ancient testimony, it is evidence which cannot be gainsaid of reviving zeal, stirring life, and earnest religious occupation. Lovers of the Society's foundation truths shake their heads, and think and say that it is all wrong, that it is going on a false tack, that it is encouraging the tacit substitution of the world's religion for the Spirit's teaching. Nevertheless, the experiment produces what to the experimenters are satisfying results, and so the change goes on.

Of this change, by his industrious writings and his great personal influence, Joseph John Gurney (1788—1847) was the prime mover. With the exhibition of Gurneyism, in its principles and results, Wilbur's *Journal* and Hodgson's history are largely occupied. The names of J. J. Gurney and Elias Hicks are the danger signals on either hand of the true Friend's course. Both are rationalists, in the sense in which Robert Barclay speaks of the "pretended rational" Socinians of his day; and their followers divide between them the characteristics which he condemns. To use words which we have used before, one set, the Gurney party, are "all for concrete Scriptures"; while the other, the Hicksian schismatists, are tending rather towards "natural light." Describing them equally as "fundamental departures from Quakerism," Hodgson is, if anything, somewhat more lenient in his handling of Hicksism than of Gurneyism, though he has not an atom of sympathy with the doctrinal point of view of either. Nor is this unnatural. An outsider, especially one who had not reached a clear apprehension of the difference between the Light of Christ within, and the innate light of nature and conscience, would be inclined to say that Gurneyism is false to the Quaker method, while Hicksism employs it to the production of results foreign to Quaker habits of thought; whereas Gurneyism is wrong root and branch, Hicksism grafts wild olives on the original stem.*

* The best account and defence of Hicksism (and cognate movements up to 1828), from the pen of one of its more Evangelical representatives, is to be found in Samuel M. Janney's *History of the Religious Society of Friends, from its Rise to the year* 1828, 4 vols., 1859—67.

We have nothing to do here with Hicksism. It has never been a power in this country. The Barnard schism, which weakened the Society in Ireland at the beginning of this century, is chiefly remarkable for having been the occasion which gave the Rathbones of Liverpool to the Unitarian body. It left no independent witness, and when Hannah Barnard died, in 1828, she had already survived the memory of the intended separation. Other movements of similar character in more recent years have possessed no inherent vitality, and have rapidly withered away.† But Gurneyism is in full swing; modern Quakerism is Gurneyism.

The fundamental postulate of pure original Quakerism is the supremacy of the Spirit, speaking within, as the only infallible source of doctrines of faith and rules of practice. Take away that, directly or indirectly, and you dig up Quakerism by the roots. In the *Thesis* of his famous *Apologia*, the Scottish laird, Robert Barclay, as is well known, formulated the teaching of Fox in such a way as expressly to confront the positions of the authoritative document of Scottish religion, the Westminster Confession of Faith, The Confession states (i. 10) that "the supreme Judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." 'Nay,' says Barclay —echoing in his scholastic style the sturdy, if uncouth, utterances of the Midland seer—'other there can be, other there is.' The Voice that speaks mediately in Scripture speaks immediately in the soul of man. The Scriptures of Truth "are only a declaration of the fountain, and not the fountain itself, therefore they are not to be esteemed the

† It would, of course, be incorrect to suppose that the Society of Friends in England contains no element in sympathy with more or less rationalistic views. Yet, it can hardly be said that this tendency, well-nigh inseparable from the current literature of religious thought, has within the Quaker fold attained the proportions or the influence of a school. A short series of anonymous papers, by three writers, who may be termed Broad-Church Quakers, has just been issued, under the title of *A Reasonable Faith* (Macmillans). The pamphlet is interesting and noteworthy; but, both in its literary form and its spiritual substance, it betokens a yielding to suggestions from without rather than the spontaneity of a movement from within.

principal ground of all truth and knowledge, nor yet the adequate primary rule of faith and manners." "They are and may be esteemed a secondary rule, subordinate to the Spirit." "By the inward testimony of the Spirit we do alone truly know them." "The Spirit is the first and principal leader."*

It is customary with modern Quakers to decry Barclay, partly on the ground of the scholastic form in which he cast his propositions and his elaborate logical deductions from them. True it is that he captivates the mind rather than entrances the heart; we do not always experience in his pages the same rare sense of spiritual refreshment, as from the gushing streams of a living fountain, which constitutes the abiding charm of Fox's *Letters* or the tracts of Nayler and Deusbery. But in the statement of the fundamental thing in Quakerism he does but put into transparent and solid sentences, crystal clear, the unalloyed substance of the daily teaching of his great predecessors and coadjutors. Rejecting Barclay, Friends must necessarily reject along with him those in whose spirit he speaks; and this they do. With the exception of Fox, whose name is surrounded with a sentimental reverence which few Quakers are hardy enough to disturb,† there is not one of the founders of the Society whose most express statements are not repudiated by the present members.

It is not a case of development, but of laying a new foundation; perhaps it would be better to say it is a desertion of the Quaker foundation for that of the so-called Evangelical sects. The doctrine of the Spirit, in vogue with the majority of Friends at the present day, reaches no higher than the level attained, as we have seen, in the Westminster Confession. The independent testimony of the Spirit, as supreme Judge of the meaning of Scripture

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* Barclay's *Apology; Theses Theol.* prop. 3.

† Yet see *George Fox: his Character, Doctrine, and Work;* an Essay by a Member of the Society of Friends [Edward Ash, M.D.], 1873. In this able pamphlet George Fox's doctrine of the Inward Light in all men is explicitly denied; and it is maintained that there has been no such thing as immediate revelation since the days of the Apostles. The reply by George Pitt *Immediate Revelation True, and George Fox Not Mistaken,* 1873, is a fine piece of genuine Quaker theology.

and first-hand expositor of the mind of God, is becoming, or has become, an extinct factor in Quaker theology. Those who were once pre-eminent for their allegiance to the direct word of the Spirit have succumbed to a bibliolatry, all the more helpless as it is tempered by no internal school of biblical criticism. It is the ancient Quaker doctrine of inspiration, that the spiritual writings of their own founders proceed from the same fountain as the teachings of Holy Writ, and are inspired in the same way; but that for the true understanding and profitable reading of either, the Spirit, the only lawful judge and interpreter, is necessary. The modern doctrine has lost the width of the one position, and missed the depth of the other, and is indistinguishable from crude servility to the letter that killeth. When the London Yearly Meeting put forward in its General Epistle of 1836 the statements that the sacred Scripture is "the only divinely authorised record of the doctrines of true religion," "the appointed means of making known to us the blessed truths of Christianity," "the only divinely authorised record of the doctrines which we are bound as Christians to believe, and of the moral principles which are to regulate our actions," the *raison d'être* of the Society was gone. John Southall, of Leominster, was warranted in declaring that this language "went to the subversion of the very foundation of Quakerism."* For, as Hodgson truly says, the principle always promulgated in the writings of early Friends is "that 'the appointed means' for the soul of man to obtain a saving knowledge of God, is a being taught in the school of Christ, through obedience to the 'Inspeaking Word,' and faith in the revelations of His Holy Spirit immediately in the heart."

From this shifting of the base, every other doctrinal change has proceeded. Wardlaw, with a true instinct, seizes upon the altered aspect of the doctrine of justification, as affording the most conspicuous proof that what is now held and taught among Quakers is not Quakerism; and Wilbur, in three brief sentences, which put Gurneyism into a nutshell, concentrates his opposition upon

* Hodgson (i. 307) incorrectly assigns this to *William* Southall.

this particular point.* The true Friend is saved by the work of Christ within, with which he must co-operate in the persistent self-abnegation of faith and obedience. But the modern Quaker, like the ordinary Evangelical, throws himself upon the work of Christ without, to which he attaches himself by the act of credence, and which justifies him *simpliciter*, without respect to obedience. Here we have the atonement by a work done for us, in place of the atonement of a work wrought in us. "Instead of submitting, therefore, to die with Christ, and to abide the painful struggle of yielding up the will and wisdom of the flesh, these," says John Wilbur, "have moulded and fashioned to themselves a substitute, by professedly extolling and claiming the faith of Christ's incarnate sufferings and propitiatory sacrifice upon the cross without the gates of Jerusalem, as the *whole* covenant of salvation, and by him thus accomplished without them."†

Hence, on the one hand, there is little trace in modern Quakerism of the broad doctrine of the Light of the World, of Christ as the spiritual illuminator who visits every soul in every age, in every clime, in every religion and non-religion, and abides with those who will receive him and obey him, quite independently of the intervention of historical knowledge, or of a written Word of Truth. To the spiritual grandeur and the redeeming efficacy of this old conception the modern Quaker is strangely dull. He cannot trust himself to teach his ancient principles in the full sweep of their original power.

And on the other hand, the high doctrine of Christian perfection, on which Barclay is so nobly strong, is faintly heard if at all, scarce believed in, never preached with the unction and vigour of vital experience, among present-day Friends. Mr. Stopford Brooke's powerful plea for the possibility of sinlessness as a practical aim of living men,‡ which recently startled the decorous believers in "One God and twenty shillings to the pound," takes a position which would flutter if not horrify the elect of modern Quakerism. They betray no sign of yielding an inward response to the

* Wilbur's *Journal*, p. 286. † Wilbur's *Journal*, p. 273.
‡ *What Think ye of Christ?* Unitarian Association Sermon, 1884.

doctrine, at once humble and bold, of Barclay's eighth proposition, in the exposition of which he maintains that "there may be a state attainable in this life, in which to do righteousness may become so natural to regenerate souls, that in the stability of it they cannot sin. . . . Or is Christ unwilling to have his servants thoroughly pure?" To have reached this stage, Barclay makes no personal pretension, but the presence of its ideal is a perpetual inspiration to him. And when even the hope of it has vanished, the glory of the Christian consummation is undreamed of. Among the successors of Fox and Barclay, salvation is reduced to a minimum, and not only the Quaker breadth but the Quaker height is shrunk away.

We have it on the authority of an experienced Friend that the time-honoured usage of family visitation, by Friends under a concernment for the spiritual welfare of the people of their community, is virtually in abeyance. This practice, as readers of Quaker biography well know, found its justification and its point in the power of "speaking to their conditions" with salutary effect, after silent waiting on the Lord. Inquiring how the lapse of this exercise had come about, we received the significant answer: "They cannot do it; they would get wrong." Certainly there is wisdom in declining an office which requires spiritual penetration, if the faculty is amissing or the touch uncertain. But the loss implies that it has fared as ill with the modern Quaker's depth of spiritual apprehension, as with the width of his spiritual vision, and the height sublime of his conscious quest of the saint's pure crown.

Altered views lead to altered methods. And the adoption of the new methods has produced what is called a revival. But it is not a resurrection of the original Quakerism, either in form or in spirit. The revival is the astonishing spectacle of the introduction of nearly everything which the first leaders of Quakerism distrusted, rejected, denounced, and abhorred. Set sermons, constructed prayers, religious services pre-arranged as to time, mode and circumstance, hymns sung to order, Scriptures read by measure, a limping congregationalism intruding on the trustful rest which waited patiently for the Spirit, a deliberate effort

of missionary endeavour doing duty for the rush of the old freedom when the power of the truth came upon all—this is the new picture, this is what Quaker periodicals put on record, sometimes with misgiving, often with satisfaction. Let it be granted that these are all very excellent things in their own way. This, however, is not the way in which we expect to see the people called Friends walking. It is not the way of their birth, their strength, or their testimony. It may be thought a better way; but the plain English of this is, that the quondam Quakers have hit upon something which they conceive to be better than Quakerism. Such, at any rate, is the opinion of some even among their own members.

The innovations do not go on without strong warnings. Among the most remarkable for their outspokenness, and their saturation with the old uncompromising spirit of the Quaker protest (though by one who is not a member), are the incandescent tracts of W. B. S. [Sissison] of Plumstead. He does not directly attack the Society or its members, but there is no mistaking who are intended to come in for a share of the denunciations heaped upon so-called revivalists in general, on those who "preach on heavenly things from a natural ground only," on "blind guides and lying, chattering prophets, with your horn-blowers of the press," on "the fleshly arts of continual singing, mumbling, and 'praying,' to make up for this absence of the *manifest* presence of the blessed and glorious God." We have quoted only some of his mildest words; the direction in which they point is evident. What is to be said on the other side?

The inheritor of a great name, himself a man of rare conscientiousness and self devotion, who consecrated his studies to a radical investigation of the sources of the Quaker movement,* and gave his soul to Gospel labours, Robert Barclay, of Reigate (1833—1876), has left behind

* The historical acumen, combined with elaborate research, displayed in Barclay's *Inner Life, &c.*, must excite the admiration of every competent reader. The book is a key to Quaker history. But how little it is accepted by Friends of the primitive type as justly appreciating the spiritual significance of the Quaker movement, may be seen in an able *Examen* of the work, published in 1878, by Charles Evans, M.D., of Philadelphia.

him a volume of sermons, written for, and delivered in the mission meetings of Friends.* His biographer explains his position as that of one holding with Friends, "that God does enable His ministers effectually to preach His Gospel without any previous meditation or preparation," and also as holding, "with the majority of Christians, that God does *equally bless* the word preached when His blessing has been asked on the diligent study of the Scriptures" (p. viii).† This is, in effect, to place the ministry of the Spirit on precisely the same level as the ministry of the letter; and, whatever else may be said about it, the position is incompatible with the first principles of early Friends. Barclay's sermons were doubtless very effective in delivery, and they are markedly superior to many utterances of the same school, in the stress they lay on the progressive nature of sanctification. But, after reading them carefully, we have failed to find in them a single Quaker sentiment, distinctively such; and have encountered ample proofs that the changed spiritual atmosphere is one in which the original Quakers could have scarcely breathed.

To Barclay of Urie, Plato, Pythagoras and Plotinus "had a knowledge and discovery of Jesus Christ inwardly, as a remedy *in* them,"‡ while Barclay of Reigate can only speak of "invisible rays of light, for a moment perchance rendered visible in the intense moral darkness in which a Socrates or a Plato lived and died."§ If there is any truth which shines clear in the Apologist's pages, it is that of the identity of the guidance under which all true Christians act with that which constituted the inspiration of the Apostles; and that such as have to-day the call to the Gospel ministry, "preach not in speech only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost," and "cannot but be received and heard by the sheep of Christ."‖ Yet his namesake affirms that "this 'demonstration of the spirit and of power' was vouchsafed or given to the Early Church, not only as at the

* *Sermons* by Robert Barclay, author of the *Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth*, with a brief Memoir. Edited by his Widow, 1878.

† The italics are ours.

‡ *Apology*, props. 5, 6, sec. 27.

§ *Sermons*, p. 227.

‖ *Apology*, prop. 10, sec. 24.

present day in the general preaching of the Gospel, but in a way wholly diverse—in a way which enabled the Apostle to say—what none of the most gifted preachers of the Gospel since apostolic times has ever dared to say—'If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.'"* To George Fox, such an expression of his conviction that he was but a mouthpiece of the Spirit which filled and swayed him would have been as natural as it was to the Apostle Paul.†

Like Mr. Gurney, Mr. Barclay may be fairly regarded as representing more than individual views and aims. Comparing the position of the one with that of the other, there is a difference to be observed. A perceptible advance is in progress. Mr. Gurney succeeded in altering the religious standpoint. His writings exhibit intellectually the natural fruits of the theory of birthright membership, when uncorrected by the sedulous inculcation of Friends' primitive principles. But now the object is to give a deliberate wrench to the outer life of the body, so as to make its type of activity correspond with its remodelled ideas.

Mr. Barclay's position within the Quaker fold was perfectly sincere and consistent with itself. He regarded the Society of Friends (with Mr. Herbert Skeats) as a Home Mission Association; Fox he valued as a great religious organiser; and the Quaker testimonies to which his heart responded most clearly were those against oaths, war, and entrusting the work of evangelisation to a State establishment. It was his hope and belief, says his biographer, "that by a fuller development of their principles, the Society of Friends might regain its position as an aggressive Christian Church" (p. 39). Yet it is evident that the tendency of his efforts was in the direction of leading the denomination of the waiters upon the Spirit to follow in the wake of the Dissenting Churches, whose success in laying hold of the masses had very strongly impressed his

* *Sermons*, p. 368.

† See what George Pitt says (*Immediate Revelation True*, p. 19): "George Fox's silver trumpet spoke with no uncertain sound. He boldly said, 'I deliver messages direct from God.' 'God has come to teach his people himself.'"

mind. This programme sketches a future for the Quakers, but is it not a future which is to be realised by the obliteration of the essential Quaker testimony? Wars, oaths, and establishments are testified against by other sects in these days; but on general humanitarian grounds, whose force is derived ultimately, no doubt, from the progress of Christian sentiment. If the Quaker is driven to combat evils with these common weapons, and can no longer plead the Immediate Voice of the living Christ in the heart, what differentiates him from the religious public about him; and where is the inward note of his spiritual succession from his forebears of the Commonwealth?

It may be thought that in this article we are dealing with a matter of no public interest, and touching upon affairs with which we have no just concern. But the Quakers have a history which is of moment to the world. They have done great things in their day for us all. They have been a power in the development of the English people, both here and in the United States. Their power sprang from their principles; we cannot hope that when these have faded the influence should remain. Their fathers lived not by ephemeral methods, nor for imitative and passing results. They knew where strength lay, and were content to be passive when the way of the Spirit was not opened for them.

Few in numbers, resolved of heart, those have the real future of Friends' principles in their keeping, who will have nothing to do with modern Quakerism. John Barclay revealed the secret of their confidence when he wrote: "Yet the blessed Truth shall outlive it all, and emerge out of the very ruins, if it must come to that."