



Lecture 1955

William Penn

*Living  
in the  
Kingdom*

*Elfrida Vipont Fouldes*

William Penn Lecture 1955

## Living in the Kingdom

*Delivered at*  
*RACE STREET MEETING HOUSE*  
*Philadelphia*

by  
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Published by The Book Committee  
Religious Society of Friends  
Philadelphia and Vicinity  
302 Arch Street, Philadelphia

The William Penn Lectures are supported by the Young Friends Movement of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, which was organized on Fifth month thirteenth, 1916, at Race Street Meeting House in Philadelphia, for the purpose of closer fellowship; for the strengthening by such association and the interchange of experience, of loyalty to the ideals of the Society of Friends; and for the preparation by such common ideals for more effective work thru the Society of Friends for the growth of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The name of William Penn has been chosen because he was a Great Adventurer, who in fellowship with his friends started in his youth on the holy experiment of endeavoring “to live out the laws of Christ in every thought, and word, and deed,” that these might become the laws and habits of the State.

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Pendle Hill Publications  
338 Plush Mill Road  
Wallingford, PA 19086-6023  
Email: [publications@pendlehill.org](mailto:publications@pendlehill.org)

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ISBN:

ebook design by the [Quaker Heron Press](#)—2024

# Living in the Kingdom

The First World Conference of the Society of Friends, known as the All-Friends Conference, which was held in 1920 shortly after the conclusion of the first World War, issued a challenging statement in which Friends declared that “Christianity involves living, even at this imperfect stage, as though the Kingdom of God had come, and as though Love were the supreme force of life.” They realised the necessity of having “a nucleus of people who practise it here, in this very difficult world, who have faith enough in it to make a venture and experiment of trying it, of living by it and, if need be, dying for it.” It is thirty-five years since that statement was made, yet in 1952 it was necessary for the Third World Conference of the Society of Friends, held at Oxford, to remind us that “What we need to-day is not a new message, but new lives.”

This is no new interpretation of Quakerism. It was surely in the minds of those who founded this lecture. For when the Young Friends Movement of Philadelphia decided in 1916 to found the William Penn Lectures, they graced them with the honoured name of William Penn “because he was a Great Adventurer, who in fellowship with his friends started in his youth on the holy experiment of endeavouring to live out the laws of Christ in every thought and deed, that these might become the laws and habits of the state.”

Here in Philadelphia one is irresistibly reminded of that great man and his holy experiments in Christian living and

Christian statesmanship. Yet I am no less forcibly reminded of these holy experiments when I am at home in the north-west of England, in that green fell county which has been called the Galilee of Quakerism or, more recently, the 1652 country. Not far from where I live, in a secluded dale with a little stream running through it and nothing to be seen on either hand but the quiet fields, or heard save the sounds of Nature, stands a grey farmhouse. There is nothing imposing about it. It is no more picturesque than any other old Westmorland farmhouse —less so than many. Nevertheless, when I take visitors there, I seldom fail to remind them that they are standing on the roots of Pennsylvania.

Inside that farmhouse can still be seen a panel from the brideswain on which John and Mabel Camm carved their initials during the first winter of their married life. Outside, the scene can have changed little, if at all, since John Camm left his home to take the message of Quakerism out into the world, or since that later day when he returned for the last time, to die in sight of the green fields he had tilled.

Fell country farmers are not given to talking about themselves or enthusing over their own experiences, but we can have little doubt as to the high lights of John Camm's life — his marriage, the birth of his son, the coming of George Fox and his own mission to Bristol. His mission to Oxford was another matter, for there lay failure, and we seldom love to recall our failures. Yet who are we to judge?

It is sometimes the seed that has been sown in tears that bears the richest harvest, though the sower himself may not live to “come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him,” or even know in this life that there has been golden

corn to reap. We must sow the seed in faith and leave the harvest in God's hands.

It was from failure at Oxford that John Camm's life-work sprang into fruition, for there he convinced Thomas Loe, who in his turn spoke to the heart of the young William Penn, and that is why the narrow lane from the farmhouse door of Cammsgill leads out into the world, so that pilgrim feet which tread thereon have found the highway to Pennsylvania.

Every time I stand on the threshold of Cammsgill, I feel anew the inspiration of the lives that were lived there in the seventeenth century —by John and Mabel Camm; by their son, young Tom, who at twelve years of age attended the General Meeting of the Seekers at Preston Patrick and, hearing George Fox preach for the first time, knew it for “a day of God's power, a notable day indeed, never to be forgotten by me, Thomas Camm”; and by their servants, Jane and Dorothy Waugh.

Jane was to be imprisoned at Banbury in a dungeon where “frogs and toads did crawl”, and Dorothy was to forge another link between Cammsgill and these shores, for she was one of the passengers in the *Woodhouse*, that little ship which Robert Fowler of Bridlington felt called to build “in the cause of truth”, which later crossed the Atlantic under a guidance which was so vividly felt by those who experienced it that they could only describe their hazardous voyage as having been directed throughout by God, “as it were a man leading a horse by the head.”

All this uprising of spiritual adventure and human endeavour must have sprung, first from the time of patient seeking, and then from the day of glad recognition when John and Mabel Camm first heard George Fox declare the

message of the Risen Christ on Firbank Fell —a message to be shared, a message to be experienced, and above all a message to be expressed in human lives, through holy experiments in Christian living.

Monsignor Ronald Knox has said: “Fox did not theorize about the Inner Light; he walked in it.” George Fox did indeed preach a living gospel which must be *lived*. In 1656, from his dire imprisonment at Launceston, he sent forth his well-known challenge to Friends: “Be patterns, he examples, in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one.” How often the latter part is quoted without the first, as if you could have the joy of fellowship, share in the spiritual experience, and preach the gospel, without paying the price in Christian discipline!

Christian discipline is the price to be paid for fullness of life, for entering into the Kingdom. Friends of every generation have found their inspiration in that Kingdom of God in which the First World Conference challenged all Christians to live, but each generation has found, within the universal vision, the aspect which has appealed most strongly to its own day.

Some have concentrated upon the joy of commitment and the saving power of Christ; some have rejoiced in the release into service which the vision of the Kingdom engenders; some have cherished the Seed of God in the heart which flowers in a life of quiet devotion; some have let the

Inner Light so shine through their lives that the lives of others have been illumined; some have known mystical experience and some have expressed their Quaker faith in the busy world of public affairs. Yet all these things are words—beautiful, inspiring maybe, but nevertheless mere words—until we have experienced them in our own lives. We cannot take our religion, or our religious ideas, or our religious experiences at second hand. The faith of our fathers is indeed living still, but only if it lives in *us*, a first-hand, vital, living spiritual experience.

In this connection I have often quoted the story of the young Samuel Bownas, and I make no apology for doing so here, because he and other members of that second generation of Friends have much to teach us. He was a working lad who could remember from his early childhood the days of the persecution and the sufferings of the Quakers. As a little boy he was taken to worship with the Quaker prisoners at Appleby, and as they took leave of one another he noticed that the prisoners were weeping—or “greeting”, as the local dialect has it. “And thee greet too, Mother,” he said wonderingly to his widowed mother. “Why did thee?”

There was to be no “greeting” for Samuel Bownas, or so it seemed. The battle for religious freedom had been won, the heroic time was over and done with, and all that remained for the young blacksmith's apprentice was a peaceful interlude in his busy working life when he could slumber away a quiet hour or so with the Friends who worshipped in Brigflatts Meeting House. I never enter that old seventeenth-century meeting house, with its low-browed porch, and mellow woodwork and the quaint pen



for the sheepdogs inside the door, without remembering the incident which changed young Samuel's life. For he suddenly became aware that a ministering Friend, named Ann Wilson, was speaking directly to him —“A traditional Quaker! Thou comest to Meeting as thou went from it, and goes from it as thou came to it, but art no better for thy coming; what wilt thou do in the end?” Those words aroused Samuel Bownas from his lethargy for good, and so he took up his Quaker heritage —a tradition still, but a living tradition, because he had entered into a living spiritual experience.

We cannot take up our Quaker heritage at second hand, any more than we can live in the Kingdom of God at second hand, and for both these gifts of God there is a price to be paid in spiritual discipline. Our own generation is surely due for some hard thinking about discipline in all its aspects. I never knew there were so many theories about discipline until during the war, when I became associated with a Quaker evacuation school run by a voluntary staff. Regarding school discipline, I found that some believed in none at all and others in what might have seemed excessive —eventually I came to the conclusion that the latter probably did less harm in the long run.

Regarding adult discipline, again opinions varied. All the workers felt that their voluntary service was an expression of their ideals, but they differed enormously in their ideas on how that service should be given. Some believed that voluntary service demanded absolute freedom for the individual, and these almost inevitably gave less than

might have been hoped for. Others, feeling that voluntary service demanded a hundred per cent more than conscripted service, tried to carry out the ideal maintained in Studdert Kennedy's well-known words:

*To give, and give and give again  
What God hath given thee;  
To give thyself, nor count the cost—*

but here the human element sometimes broke down. The only solution for all alike was the acceptance of discipline, so that all might to some extent conform with Whittier's conception of ordered living—

*And let our ordered lives confess  
The beauty of Thy peace.*

In the wider world of Quakerism, we recognise the ideal when it is set before us. George Fox's message that our lives should be patterns and examples, so that we may walk cheerfully over the world answering that of God in everyone; William Penn's holy experiments in Christian living and Christian statesmanship; the challenge of the First World Conference that we should live as if the Kingdom of God had come; all are expressions of the sacramental conception of life which lies at the heart of the Quaker message.

A sacrament has been defined as the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. Quakerism envisages the whole of life as being the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace which is the Inner Light, the Seed of God in the heart of every man

and woman. Even so the whole world order is ultimately envisaged as the outward and visible sign of the Kingdom of God on earth. We can and do accept this conception as part of our spiritual heritage, but that does not necessarily involve entering into it. It will only become an integral part of our lives if we can exclaim with George Fox: "And this I knew experimentally!" and we shall only know it experimentally if we are prepared to pay the price in Christian discipline.

A beloved Friend of the last generation used to declare over and over again that every Friend must hammer out his own faith in the workshop of his daily life. In a very real sense, this is true. Moreover, it is essentially true for Friends who are descended from many Quaker generations and who sometimes even feel that they have to go right outside the Society and come in again as "convinced Friends." Personally, I worked out most of my theories about Quakerism in the workshop of my daily life, and then found that I had come back to the faith of my fathers. The workshop of my daily life happened to be the practice of the Arts.

In my youth, this was not exactly a familiar workshop for members of the Society of Friends. The Quaker movement originally sprang up against a Puritan background and certain Puritan traditions became mingled with the stream. George Fox might sing in prison and Margaret Fell wear scarlet and Thomas Holme spread the Quaker message through the valleys and hills of Wales in song, but a later age brought uniformity, and what had been a protest against licentiousness and extravagance, and a testimony

for righteousness, became a narrowness of outlook and an avoidance of “superfluities.”

This affected almost every department of life. Margaret Fox, in her old age, realising that the positive Quaker testimony for simplicity in dress was rapidly becoming a negative testimony against colour and variety, protested vehemently in more than one epistle to Friends. I often think Margaret must have been a woman of good taste; she was undoubtedly beautiful, and in the days when she was the Judge's lady, she must surely have graced her husband's exalted position. “It's a dangerous thing to lead young Friends much into observation of outward things,” she wrote, “for that will easily be done... But this will not make them true Christians; it's the Spirit that gives life.” And in a later epistle she protested against the idea that “we must look at no colours, nor make anything that is changeable colours as the hills are, nor sell them, nor wear them.”

Nevertheless, by the time William Savery visited London Yearly Meeting in 1797, he found that Friends were prepared to spend almost a whole day discussing the type of headgear suitable for men Friends. That was the pity of it, of course. There was, and is, nothing inherently wrong about the Quaker dress; Elizabeth Fry must have found it a source of strength to her in Newgate, where its dignity and unfamiliarity caught the attention of the screaming harridans even before she held them subdued by the loveliness of her voice, and to Charles Lamb its appeal was irresistible— “The very

garments of a Quaker seem incapable of receiving a soil; and cleanliness in them to be something more than the absence of its contrary. Every Quakeress is a lily; and when they come up in bands to their Whitsun conferences, whitening the easterly streets of the metropolis, from all parts of the United Kingdom, they show like troops of the Shining Ones.”

What was wrong was that Friends should be preoccupied with their own clothes at a time when the naked, the starving, the sick and the prisoners were calling for help; when there were great wrongs to be righted and war, illiteracy, slavery and oppression to be fought.

The same subtle tendency by which a testimony for simplicity narrows into a rigidity of outlook affected for many years the attitude of Quakerism towards the Arts. There were Friends in my own meeting who gently protested when I trained as a singer, just as there were Friends in my Great-Grandmother's meeting who protested when she bought a piano.

“Edith Crafton, what is this that we see in thy drawing room?” asked the Elders who had been appointed to visit her. “Friends,” said my Great-Grandmother, rising to her feet and pointing to the offending instrument, “that is a piano! And I do as I wish in my own house.”

Judging by her silhouette, which hangs at the foot of my own Bechstein, my Great-Grandmother was dignified as well as independent and music-loving. The incident was regarded as closed.

When I began to practise as a writer, I still encountered certain amount of prejudice in that some Friends regarded the first duty of a Quaker writer to be the conveying of a "message", whereas obviously the first duty of a writer, Quaker or otherwise, is to maintain the artistic integrity which is part of the integrity of the human soul.

Even in my student days, I became interested in the fundamental laws governing artistic expression. Lascelles Abercrombie had recently published his "Towards a Theory of Art", which must have influenced a good many artists, musicians, and writers of my generation. He defined art as "the expression of aesthetic experience", and this definition still seems to me satisfying, though some might prefer the term "inspiration" to "aesthetic experience."

Yet whether we call it an aesthetic experience or an inspiration, we can recognise it as something common to us all, a touch of glory in our everyday lives. We feel it when we see the Yorkshire moors blazing with heather or the hills of Ohio yellow with goldenrod; we recognise it in the still moment when we push open the heavy door of an ancient cathedral and see traceried windows and soaring arches and recumbent figures carved in stone, or when we stand on the deck of some ship on the high seas and watch the moonlight striking silver from the curling wave crests, or when we reach the top of a mountain and see peak after peak rising heavenward with snowfields glistening in the sunshine, and far in the distance, perhaps, the blue glimmer of the sea. The first spring flowers, the pageantry

of the fall, the winter snowdrifts, the song of a bird, the slumber of a child, the beauty of holiness reflected in a human face—all these provide the very essence of aesthetic experience.

When Wordsworth wrote:

*My heart leaps up when I behold  
A rainbow in the sky:*

*So was it when my life began;  
So is it now I am a man;*

*So he it when I shall grow old  
Or let me die!*

He was not voicing the unknown. Our hearts leap up no less than his, and will so long as we have eyes to see. When Gerard Manley Hopkins voiced his sudden uprush of praise to God for pined beauty, he caught a thousand similar impulses in our own lives and made their inner meaning clear to us in one shimmering moment-

*Glory be to God for dappled things—  
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;*

*Fresh fire-coal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
Landscape platted and pieced—fold, fallow and  
plough;  
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.*

*All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him."*

When Beethoven walked through the woods and then was suddenly brought to a standstill, crying: "Heilige! Heilige!", he was not passing through a unique experience. We too have stood still in the woods and cried: "Holy! Holy!" Only with Beethoven that moment was to live on in imperishable music. In the year when he finished the seventh symphony, he wrote: "Almighty One, in the woods I am blessed. Happy everyone in the woods. Every tree speaks through thee. Oh God! What glory in the woodland! On the heights is peace—peace to serve Him!"

After all, he could not put it into words. But it still speaks through the first movement of the symphony, with the radiance of the place "where words come from." For the truth which the artist seeks and which he expresses through his Art is part of the Universal Truth, just as the truth sought and expressed by the philosopher and the scientist and the theologian is part of the Universal Truth. "The judgment of beauty is not, I believe, anything set apart from the rest of spiritual life," wrote Lascelles Abercrombie. "There is but one faculty of judgment; and according to the sphere in which it operates, its final verdicts are given as truth, morality and beauty." The man who can only see the significance of his



own specialised field of vision may not mar his own contribution but inevitably he will improve it. Happy is the artist, the philosopher, the scientist or the theologian who recognises that all Truth is one.

The poet sees the rainbow or the flash of dappled beauty; the musician cries “Heilige!” as he walks through the woods; the artist senses the loveliness of a flower or a human form; and a work of art is created. Is that all there is to it? Many people must think so, judging by the number who seem to be under the impression that painters, musicians and writers only need inspiration to paint wonderful pictures, compose beautiful music and write immortal poetry, prose and drama. In fact, they appear to believe that there is something miraculous as well as effortless about it. If this were indeed the case, great works of art would be as innumerable as the sands of the sea. Their precious rarity and the frequency of his own failures will soon combine in impelling the young student to investigate the link between the aesthetic experience and the artistic expression, between inspiration and achievement.

Johann Sebastian Bach, one of the greatest musicians of all time, was once asked by a somewhat fatuous woman how it was that he played so wonderfully well. He answered simply: “I have always had to work hard.” She was probably very disappointed by the answer. There is nothing miraculous or out-of-the-ordinary about hard work. Nevertheless, hard work is essential to success in any of the Arts. I have heard Mozart wondered at for his amazingly youthful genius and praised for his

apparently effortless purity of style, yet he once wrote: "It is a mistake to think that the practice of my art has become easy to me. I assure you, dear friend, no one has given so much time to the study of composition as I." And the modern interpreter of Mozart knows that it takes years of hard work to achieve the simplicity which is one of the hallmarks of his genius. You have only to study the drawings of the Great Masters, or watch a sculptor at work, or even look into an author's wastepaper basket, to know how much effort goes into the creation of a work of art.

There is a saying which defines authorship as ten per cent inspiration and ninety per cent perspiration. Few authors would dispute this definition, which might apply equally well to any of the other arts. Nevertheless, there is more to artistic discipline than hard work, though the importance of hard work can hardly be overstressed. There is the element of self-sacrifice which is involved in devotion to an ideal, and the willingness to give up many pleasures and enjoyments, harmless and often beneficial in themselves, for the sake of that ideal. This is not a puritanical narrowing of life, but a voluntary choosing, a giving-up of the lesser for the sake of the greater aim in view. With this is combined a sense of balance, a realisation of the fullness and wholeness of life; and the one is incomplete and ineffectual without the other. If your life is fussy and formless, your art will be fussy and formless too; on the other hand, if you strip yourself of too much for the sake of your art, your art may have little or nothing to give.

Another important element in artistic discipline is humility, which involves the capacity to learn by one's mistakes. It is as easy to make mistakes in Art as in any other department of life, but it is terribly difficult to learn from them. Yet this is part of the price to be paid for growth, a price to be paid in true humility of spirit.

Incidentally, the writer of fiction learns this in the practice of his craft. There can be few things more hard for an author than to let a favourite character make a humiliating mistake, yet deliberately to avoid such a situation, once the plot has begun to develop, will kill the life of a book as surely as if one had strangled the inspiration at birth. Characters as well as authors must learn by their mistakes if they are to grow in grace.

Moreover, the artist, whichever of the arts he practises, must be prepared to learn from his mistakes by accepting criticism, and he will be fortunate if he has friends and relations with good judgement who will spare him the worst of this by criticising his work before it ever appears in public. But with this quality of humility which enables him to learn by his mistakes and accept good criticism, the artist must have the courage to stand by the integrity of his work, whatever the critics or the public or even his closest friends may say. For the integrity of his work—the thing he is trying to express, however imperfectly; the ultimate vision which is the mainspring of his art—belongs to a life apart from which his art has no meaning, either for himself or for the world at large, so that there comes a time when he must say: “Here stand I, I can do no other, so help me, God!”

Beyond these qualities—hard work, self-sacrifice, a sense of balance, humility and courage—there is another which is even rarer and which is only achieved by the very greatest. It was a long time before I realised from my own experience what this quality was, and still longer before I learned to give it a name. I met a great singer at the height of her powers, a woman who had not only the world at large at her feet but the musicians also – a much more unusual achievement! I met a writer whose name had long been a household word on both shores of the Atlantic. In both cases I was deeply conscious of my own inferiority; in both cases I was met as if I had been an equal. In both cases I came prepared only to receive; in both cases I was met as if I too might have something to give.

This quality of greatness which has no sense of self-importance or self-assertion; which aspires to learn as well as to teach, to receive as well as to give; which brings John Woolman irresistibly to one's mind—("Love was the first motion and thence a concern arose to spend some time with the Indians that I might feel and understand their life and the spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them, or they might be in any degree helped forward by my following the leadings of truth among them.") — this is surely the heroic quality of meekness which Jesus recognised as belonging to the truly blessed, the truly great — "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

In so far as any one of these qualities is lacking or imperfect, the work of an artist will lack true greatness, in

that it will only be a partial expression of the aesthetic experience, the whole inspiration. The way of the artist is hard and the path is strewn with failures, but the responsibility for these rests not upon bad luck – as we so often like to suggest —nor upon lack of opportunity; nor upon God who gave us the gifts of aesthetic appreciation and artistic expression, but upon ourselves because we have fallen short in that which has been demanded of us.

Art is a facet of the diamond of life. Have the laws governing our service to God and man in this facet of life any relevance to the laws which govern our service to the Kingdom? Or is this particular workshop of our daily lives something entirely cut off from the significance of Christian experience? We have worked out for ourselves some kind of link between inspiration and expression, a many-stranded link composed of the necessary qualities which go to the forging of artistic discipline —that discipline which must be accepted before we can *live* in the realm of Art.

Can artistic discipline tell us anything about Christian discipline? — that discipline which must be accepted before we can *live* in the Kingdom? Surely the answer is yes, because they are part of the same thing. The Light Within, or the Seed of God in the heart, is as common to us all as the aesthetic experience, the inspiration we have shared. Only this time the field of expression knows no limit, for it is that of human life and human experience. And to give that expression calls for no miracle; it calls for Christian discipline—hard work, self-sacrifice, a sense of

balance, the humility to learn from our mistakes, courage and the heroic quality of meekness.

In England during the war years, when travelling was frowned on by the authorities, we used to see notices asking: "Is your journey really necessary?" Is this journey, which involves the acceptance of so rigorous a discipline, really necessary? Here again we may learn something from the study of the Arts. The aesthetic experience or inspiration of the artist has no ultimate value or significance if he does not express it or share it. It may even atrophy with disuse, making him sour and embittered. Yet the more he gives out, the more he receives. Surely the same is true of the Light Within. "Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

A small child was once banished from the room for misbehaviour and sent upstairs. As she left the room, she turned to her mother and enquired: "But what's the use of me being good all by myself upstairs?" What, indeed, is the use of a religion which tries to keep goodness to itself? Surely one of the requirements of true religion is that it should have significance; in short, that it should be reasonable.

I have never forgotten hearing the late William E. Wilson speak in a meeting for worship on the text: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." He emphasized the

word “reasonable”, pointing out that this wholehearted devotion, this sacramental living which is surely the very essence of Quakerism and of Christianity itself, is nothing extraordinary, nothing particularly praise-worthy, nothing unreasonable to be demanded of us, but just plain sense and the least we can offer to God, the Father, the Creator and the Preserver of us all.

This sacramental conception of life involves living as if the Kingdom of God had come. It is not something given to a few by chance and withheld from the rest of us; it is something we can all achieve through the grace of God and by the acceptance of Christian discipline. In this way we can learn to use all our gifts in the service of the Kingdom, even those which might otherwise be destructive.

However “reasonable” this service may be, it may take us a lifetime to achieve it. We have only to look at the lives of some of our Quaker saints to realise that even for them there has had to be a growth in grace. Behind the calm strength and beauty and dignity of Elizabeth Fry, whose first waking thought was ever how she might serve the Lord, is the lively, irrepressible Betsy Gurney, fidgetting on the hard bench in Goat Lane Meeting House and shocking the grave elders with her purple boots and scarlet laces; behind the heroic, indomitable figure of Isaac Hopper lurks the naughtiest little boy who ever scandalised a respectable, hard working community with his outrageous pranks; behind the challenge of John Wilhelm Rowntree, triumphant over suffering, sharing his vision for the future and urging the Society of Friends to

go forward, is still the memory of the tempestuous child whose uncontrollable tantrums sent his playmates scurrying to their hiding places. "Does the road wind uphill all the way?" asks the poem which I as a schoolgirl used to think sounded so very tiring. "Yes, to the very end!" is the answer for most of us, and so it will be until we have passed the last milestone, and found for ourselves the meaning of Elizabeth Fry's last words: "It is a strift, but I am safe!"

We can take the analogy a step further, if we will. The sacramental interpretation of life is not for individuals only, but for the whole human race, and the sacrament will only be fulfilled when the whole world mirrors the image of its Creator. Yet when we consider these wider implications, we become even more painfully aware of our own inadequacy and feel that only a miracle can save the world.

Just as the Westmorland Seekers, John Camm amongst them, were waiting for a teacher, a leader and a prophet, so we wait for a teacher, a leader and a prophet, above all for a miracle. We shall, of course, be ready enough to follow when we have been shown the way. But George Fox's message to the Westmorland Seekers on Firbank Fell is as true now as it was three hundred years ago. We *have* a teacher, a leader, a prophet and an abiding miracle in the Risen Christ, and He is risen here to-day as He was in Palestine two thousand years ago and as He will be tomorrow, and everywhere, and forever. We are not asked to follow a forlorn hope or wait for an unknown pilot; we are asked to accept the Christian discipline of our calling as



disciples of Jesus Christ and to go forward under His leadership and with His guidance.

The Kingdom of God will come through the power of God experienced in human lives, in the lives of men and women who have accepted the challenge of Christian discipline and are prepared to live in the Kingdom here and now. Is the challenge too great for us in our human weakness?

Surely Paul spoke truly when he told the Corinthians that God could use their human weakness to carry out His Divine Purpose. “ For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

Our own Quaker forbears in the seventeenth century were few of them remarkable men and women. Gammsgill is a very ordinary farmhouse, and so far as we know John Camm, however lovable and hard-working and honourable, was a very ordinary farmer. It was not his extraordinary brain or his super-human strength or his genius that made the narrow track from Cammsgill into the highway to Pennsylvania. It was his acceptance of

Christian discipline; his following of a high calling in Christ Jesus; above all his sowing of the seed in a faith that left the harvest in God's hands.

I am reminded of a story about an ill-assorted group of climbers who set out to do a climb under an experienced leader. The leader looked round for the weakest member of the party so that he might put him second on the rope, which is the safest place, and it did not take him long to pick out a puny lad who looked as if he had never done a day's climbing in his life. So puny did he look, in fact, that the leader promptly chose the strongest member of the party for the third place, so that the weakling would be doubly safe.

When all had been arranged, the leader gave his instructions; they were to follow him, obey his orders, and never to look down. For some time all went well; the climb was straightforward and the climbers, experienced and inexperienced alike, were on their mettle. At last they came to a place where the leader had to go ahead, and here the weakling was told that he must watch every movement so that he might follow when the time came. He watched obediently as his leader disappeared from sight and then suddenly he realised —by the feel of the rope—that down on the pitch below him something was going wrong. For a while he resisted the temptation to look downward, but at last he did so, only to find to his horror that the strong man of the party had lost his nerve and was trembling in every limb as he clung to the bare rock, his face ashen, his eyes staring downward into the abyss. "Look up, man, look up!" called the weakling, but the strong man paid no heed. Then the weakling looked

frantically round for a place where he might belay the rope, but there was none. So at last he belayed the rope round his own puny body and again he called down to his comrade. "Look up, man; look up! You can't fall—I'm holding you!" At last the ashen face was raised and the wide open eyes met his. "You can't fall!" shouted the weakling again triumphantly. "I've got you—I'm holding you!"

The signal came from the leader and they followed him up the climb, the strong man looking up and the weakling looking down, encouraging him, showing him the way, a handhold here, a foothold there, until they rejoined their leader at the top of the climb. There the strong man collapsed. It was some time before he raised his head again and saw the weakling standing beside him. Then he burst out laughing. "But you couldn't. have held me!" he exclaimed.

"No, I couldn't!" agreed the weakling, with a puzzled expression. "But I did!"

The climb to which we have been called is not an impossible one. There is not a pitch where the pierced hands and the pierced feet have not gone before us. Nor have we been asked to make the climb alone. Yet there may be times when we know by the feel of the rope of prayer that disaster threatens us and our comrades, when the only thing is for us to do what we cannot do, in a strength that is not our own. Even so there may be times when the followers of Christ know full well that the whole world is surely slipping towards the abyss, when the only thing is

for them to do what they cannot do, in the strength that is Christ's alone.

Christianity does indeed involve “living, even at this imperfect stage, as though the Kingdom of God had come, and as though Love were the supreme force of life. It is time we took up the challenge and set out to make our own experiment in Christian living, the “experiment of endeavouring to live out the laws of Christ in every thought and deed.” To do this requires the acceptance of Christian discipline—hard work, self-sacrifice, the acquirement of a sense of balance in life, humility, courage, and meekness—which enables the Sacrament of Life to be fulfilled. Every aspect of life holds out its challenge to us.

There is indeed no facet of the diamond of life which cannot mirror the image of its Creator, no path of life where God's knights-errant have not made their way. John Camm went out along a farmhouse track and founded the highway to Pennsylvania. He never saw the end of the road; neither perhaps may we. Nevertheless; the road remains and is akin to that highway where the redeemed shall walk and which shall be called the way of holiness. “ Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.”

## About the Author

Born in Manchester (England) in 1902. Elfrida Vipont Foulds grew up in a Quaker family. She worked as a freelance writer, lecturer, and singer before and after her marriage to R. Percy Foulds, a research technologist. During the Second World War she was headmistress of the Quaker Evacuation School at Yealand Manor, while he—still doing full-time research—was treasurer. After the war she returned to writing. Forty-three of her books have been published thus far, and she was awarded the Carnegie Medal for the best children's book of 1950, *The Lark on the Wing*. Living in Yealand Conyers, she has served on a number of local and central committees, and for some years was Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings in London. She has journeyed in various countries overseas, lecturing and visiting schools, colleges, children's libraries, and Quaker groups and conferences. She is also chairman of the committee which arranges visits to the historic Quaker "1652 Country" in the north of England, of which the present pamphlet gives us tantalizing glimpses. Widowed in 1954, she has four daughters, thirteen grandchildren, and (so far) four great-grandchildren.

## About the Lectures

The William Penn Lectures started as a ministry of the Young Friends' Movement of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. In the beginning of the last century, "Young Friends" was the community of young adults from both the Hicksite and the Orthodox Philadelphia Yearly Meetings, which reunited in 1955. The Young Friends Movement began the lecture series "for the purpose of closer fellowship; for the strengthening by such association and the interchange of experience, of loyalty to the ideals of the Society of Friends; and for the preparation by such common ideals for more effective work through the Society of Friends for the growth of the Kingdom of God on Earth." The name of William Penn was chosen because the Young Friends Movement found Penn to be "a Great Adventurer, who in fellowship with his friends started in his youth on the holy experiment of endeavoring 'To live out the laws of Christ in every thought, and word, and deed; and that these might become the laws and habits of the State.'"

The first run of William Penn Lectures were given between 1916 and 1966, and are warmly remembered by Friends who attended them as occasions to look forward to for fellowship with our community, inspiration, and a challenge to live into our faith. The lectures were published by the Book Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has granted Pendle Hill and Quaker Heron Press permission to reproduce the lectures as free ebooks.

Although it was [announced](#) in 1960 that the series would be discontinued several lectures were published in the early '60s. It appears that the lectures given between 1923 and 1931 were never published. If we come upon manuscripts of these lectures, we hope to publish them in future.

In 2010, the Young Adult Friends of PYM revived the series, officially launching the second run of the William Penn Lectures in 2011. [The series was renamed](#) the *Seeking Faithfulness* series in 2016, as part of the Young Adult Friends of PYM's concern for dismantling racism within the yearly meeting and the wider society. It no longer felt rightly ordered to have a major event named after a slaveholder. The [Seeking Faithfulness](#) series is hosted by the Young Adult Friends for the benefit of the whole yearly meeting community, and invites a Friend to challenge us all to explore new ways to practice our Quaker faith. The Seeking Faithfulness series seeks to nourish our spiritual lives and call us to faithful witness in our communities and throughout the world.