

Gospel Ministry

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Chapter 1

Gospel Ministry In The Society¹

THE apostolic solicitude that the brethren at Corinth might not be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts warrants the surmise that Paul would not have withheld his benediction from recent discussions upon the Ministry, so far as these have elucidated the true place ordained for spiritual gifts in the economy of the Christian Church.

It was pointed out by a writer in the *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* of 1893, p. 85, that Friends are not rich in literature on the Ministry. Joseph J. Dymond's booklet, *Gospel Ministry in the Society of Friends*, then under review, and Samuel Bownas's *Description of the Qualifications necessary to a Gospel Minister*, 1750, are almost the only denominational writings exclusively devoted to the work of the preacher. That conception of Christianity which recognises the rule of a spiritual kingdom, controlling the whole life of man, is somewhat unfavourable to concentrated attention upon one department of service, severed from its connection with kindred branches of faith and practice. The spiritual atmosphere at the time of the rise of Methodism was so different from that of our time that the present-day reader finds many of Bownas's pages occupied with matters remote from those which now demand attention. Barclay's weighty discussion in the *Apology* is naturally more antagonistic to usages from which he and his coreligionists had revolted, than constructively helpful for the development of the Ministry on lines which they approved. One may sympathise with the thought which refuses to isolate the work of the preacher from other departments of life, and yet acknowledge a blank in the literature of the Society, in view of such suggestive writings, whether from Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregational, or Baptist authors, as Bishop Lightfoot's essay on *The Christian Ministry*, Phillips Brooks's *Lectures on Preaching*, Dr. John Watson's *The Cure of Souls*, Dr. R. W. Dale's *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, and C. H. Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students*. This blank makes additionally valuable any careful treatment of the Ministry from the standpoint of Friends, in writing or in speech; and though much space has been devoted to it in this magazine, there may be room to offer a few further thoughts on so large a question.

Much which has recently been said about the Ministry emphasises the change which has come over the tone of the Society in two hundred years. In the seventeenth century its adherents strenuously maintained that theirs was a type of Ministry superior to that of the denominations around them, being exercised upon truer and more spiritual principles. Now, the defects of the Friend Ministry are apparently widely felt, and it is frequently contrasted unfavourably with that of other religious bodies. The present generation does not seem to have found the expectations of its spiritual ancestors fulfilled, and it may, perhaps, be maintained that the present condition of the Society affords some justification for current criticism. This state of things may rightly occasion searchings of heart and humiliation of spirit, especially amongst those who deem that a share in the vocal Ministry has been committed to their charge. These will welcome every contribution prompted by the desire to strengthen this department of the Society's administration.

In the Symposium on the Ministry in the *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* of 1903 (pp. 526-569), three of the six contributors maintain that fundamental misgivings as to the place and service of vocal Ministry are really at the root of much of the dissatisfaction felt with it, whilst a fourth practically illustrates the existence of these misgivings. The frequent recurrence of such questionings will hardly surprise any reflective person. From the standpoint of the intellect, "the foolishness of preaching" still demands an apology. Conscious of

¹From the *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, of July, 1904

the manifold weaknesses of our human nature, we are prone to query whether some better plan might not have been adopted than that which gives to human instrumentality so large a share in the service of God's kingdom. A ministry of angels suggests itself as free from objections incident to human ministry. Still more attractive is the idea that all communications of Divine truth should be made to man directly by God's Spirit, so that there might be a complete escape from the limitations and errors that continually assert themselves, where spiritual gifts are enshrined in earthen vessels. This was the plausible position somewhat widely accepted in Commonwealth days by the Ranters and by those Friends who, sharing their opinions, refused to teach children the facts and precepts of Christianity. The deplorable results that followed gave a timely though a rude shock to those who had accepted the fallacy lurking in this reasoning. Christ did not fashion the polity of His Church on lines necessarily commending themselves to human reason, but on principles adapted to the progressive training and education of redeemed men. The logic of the intellect stood corrected before the logic of facts.²

And now, the same authorities that proved so serviceable in respect to the education of the young are available for our guidance in determining the place and functions of vocal Ministry. The pages of the New Testament disclose the Divinely ordained principles regulating human agency in the affairs of the kingdom of God, both by our Lord's example and words, and by those of His apostles; whilst in passages like 1 Cor. 12 & 14, the mutual relationship of these principles, and the conditions under which spiritual gifts are to be received and exercised, are luminously expounded. The long story of the Christian Church is at our service, illustrating the happy results which have followed obedience to these conditions, and the mischief which has followed their disregard. Perhaps still more directly serviceable for our immediate purpose is the experience of the Society of Friends, now extending over a period of two hundred and fifty years, including, of course, the lessons of its present condition. Such a review will surely go far to dissipate the "practical disbelief in any special gift or vocation in the Ministry of the Gospel."³

It is significant that so large a part of Christ's early work was the training and teaching of a body of disciples who were to be the apostles and heralds of His kingdom. These men, after two or three years' companionship with their Master, and an appointed tarriance at Jerusalem, received the Pentecostal endowment of spiritual power, and forthwith entered upon their great work of preaching the Gospel to every creature. Yet they were not insensible of their limitations. They knew in part, and they prophesied in part. But they followed their Master's methods in employing human agency to extend and build up His kingdom. In every Church they appointed elders – office-bearers charged with two main lines of service, the ministry of the Word and the ministry of tables, the qualifications for both being in some conspicuous instances combined in one person, as in the protomartyr. Their doctrinal writings corresponded with their practice. In the earliest apostolic letters, the Thessalonians were besought "to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake."⁴ The Roman Christians were taught that "having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry."⁵ The same writer instructed the Ephesians that Christ, having led captivity captive, was conferring gifts on men, "some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ."⁶ The bestowal of these gifts was appealed to as a token of the continuing care of Christ for His Church; "God also bearing witness with them both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Ghost."⁷ In the presence of these Divinely bestowed gifts, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews saw a symptom of spiritual weakness when the station of the Christian labourers came to be meanly esteemed: "Remember them that had the rule over you, which spake unto you the word of God, and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith." And again, in the same chapter: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account."⁸ Reviewing the methods by which Christianity was diffused, and the Churches built up throughout the Roman Empire, we everywhere find evidences of organisation, and the presence of spiritual

²See George Fox's *Epistles*, Tuke's edition, 213, etc.

³See the *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, 1903, 546.

⁴1 Thes. 5:12-13

⁵Rom. 12:6-7

⁶Eph. 4:11-12

⁷Heb. 2:4

⁸Heb. 8:7,17

gifts – *charismata* – for the edification as well as for the ingathering of disciples.

A humble man was the Apostle Paul, “the chief of sinners,” “not worthy to be called an apostle” when he remembered his pre-Christian days; but this personal humility never obscured his sense of the call to the Ministry received from Christ. Whether writing to the great Churches at Rome or Corinth, or to young men like Timothy and Titus, he prefaces his letters with exordiums like these:

“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God;” or, “called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God”; or, “an apostle of Christ Jesus, according to the commandment of God our Saviour.” The Corinthians were instructed to account him and his colleagues as “ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”⁹ When writing his second epistle, he represents himself and his colleagues as “able ministers of the New Testament,”¹⁰ by virtue of the Divine sufficiency which has been conferred upon them, and he encourages his fellow labourers to cherish corresponding thoughts in regard to their gifts. He charged the Ephesian elders: “Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.”¹¹ Timothy, as a young Minister, is counselled not to neglect the gift that was in him, “given by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy progress may be manifest unto all.”¹² Again, in his succeeding letter, the Apostle says, “I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands.”¹³

One does not forget, when reading these Scriptures, that Paul wrought at tent-making, but it is clear that trade held a very subordinate position in his thoughts and the occupation of his time, as compared with the time and labour given to Gospel Ministry. He saw that men were to be “workers together with God.” He felt in his own case the strength that sprang from the conviction of having received a call to speak to his fellows on behalf of God, and he desired that the same dynamic principle might strengthen other labourers. The action of this sense of vocation is not peculiar to religious work – it is found in many departments of human activity; it may animate the statesman, stimulate the schoolmaster, glorify the life of the wife and mother. On the other hand, the labourer who cherishes doubts concerning the validity of his calling, risks an attack of mental and spiritual paralysis which will retard or will arrest his service.

Turning now to the experience of Friends, it is an historic fact that they were first gathered, as a people, by preachers conscious of having received a Divine call to the Ministry of the Gospel. The years of preparation through which George Fox passed before entering on his mission constitute a memorable passage in religious biography. He does not seem to have done any manual work after attaining his majority, but in spiritual fields he was, as William Penn witnesses, “an incessant labourer,” and so were his most trusted colleagues. The establishment of the Society in London was a great achievement in the Home Mission field. Foremost among the evangelists were Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough. In 1656 these devoted men report that twenty meetings were being held every week in the metropolis; those for “thrashing” being of the most laborious character, which only men of great bodily and spiritual strength could have faced.

Of their service Edward Burrough, writing in 1662, says that after the first opposition had been somewhat surmounted –

“the work of the Lord was much increased and it advanced greater and greater daily, in respect of the service pertaining to it.”

He then specified some of the business which sprang up in connection with the rapid growth of Truth:

“not so proper for us of the Ministry, as for the Friends of the City: neither had we the opportunity of such exercises, being wholly devoted to the work of the Ministry, to which we were ordained of God, and were continually exercised in preaching the Gospel, in answering books and manuscripts put forth against us, and in disputes and contentions with such as opposed the Truth. These and the like services have been our continual work and exercise for these divers years, faithfully performed by us in the sight of God.”¹⁴

⁹1 Cor. 4:1

¹⁰2 Cor. 3:6

¹¹Acts 20:28

¹²1 Tim. 4:14-15

¹³2 Tim. 1:6

¹⁴*Letters of Early Friends*, 299.

At a somewhat later date, Stephen Crisp – a man of large gifts, appertaining both to the ministry of the Word and the ministry of tables – says of his own service:

“And I was exercised, according to my ability, in visiting the assemblies of the Lord’s people in Essex and Suffolk, where it lay upon me; and in helping and assisting the Lord’s people according to my ability, both in their spiritual and temporal concerns, as the Lord God of my life gave me an understanding; for I gave up the ordering of my spirit unto Him; and He opened me in many things relating to the affairs of this world, that I might be as a staff to the weak in those things, and might stand by the widow and fatherless, and plead the right of the poor. In all which, I sought neither honour nor profit, but did all things freely, as I received of God; and He whom I served was my reward, so that I lacked nothing. Therefore, who would not praise the Lord, and who would not trust in His Name?”¹⁵

It is not to be supposed that every Friend Minister of this period was as diligent as those who have been named. Ten years had not passed from the opening of George Fox’s Ministry before he laments a declension in some whose religious work was languishing under the influence of growing earthly prosperity. To these he wrote:

“Take heed of setting your hearts upon riches lest they become a curse and a plague to you. For when ye were faithful at the first, the world would refrain from you and not have commerce with you; but after, when they saw ye were faithful and just in things, and righteous and honest in your trading and dealings, then they came to have commerce and trade with you the more. But [he added] in these things there is danger, and temptation [for] that ye can hardly do anything to the service of God, but will be crying, ‘My business, my business.’ ”¹⁶

It would be a mistake to suppose that the Public Friends¹⁷ of the seventeenth century gave no occasion for anxiety; many of them did occasion anxiety and require counsel; and very pertinent counsel was not withheld. In his correspondence with Fox, Burrough laid great stress on the importance, for Friends’ evangelistic work, of having rightly qualified Ministers. He himself must have exercised a somewhat strenuous control over them; for instance, in 1656, he sent one of the women preachers to Fox with this note:

“This little short maid that comes to thee, she has been this long while abroad, and in her there is little or no service as in the ministry. It were well to be laid on her to be a servant somewhere. That is more her place. I leave it to thee. Friends where she has been have been burdened by her.”

Again, in 1658, William Dewsbury writes to Margaret Fell, asking her to send a man and horse for S–K–, saying, “The Truth is under suffering until she be in her family again.”

In the later years of the seventeenth century the problem how to maintain spiritual liberty along with congregational order confronted the second generation of Friends in an imperious fashion. It is estimated that there were now some 10,000 Friends in the metropolis, not all of them sober-minded persons. The weddings solemnised amongst them averaged more than one a week; funerals to be attended were of course frequent. Hence an organisation was required different from that of the “thrashing-meeting” era in the lifetime of Edward Burrough. The distribution of the Public Friends to the various meetings for Divine worship had to be arranged every Sunday by a simple yet efficient machinery, as well as their attendance at marriages and funerals. A similar organisation existed at Bristol, and the germs of one are discernible in the early minutes of the Yorkshire Ministers. This was the period when the meetings for discipline – monthly, quarterly, and yearly – were coming into existence. These, at their inception, encountered a widely spread opposition, some of the consequences of which are still discernible.

The Wilkinson and Story schismatics numbered amongst their ranks good men who had witnessed to the reality of their faith by patient endurance of imprisonment; but there were also base elements that mingled in the movement. The literature of the controversy reveals great personal jealousy of George Fox and his more prominent colleagues; it discloses the presence of very high spiritual assumption in alliance with selfish motives. There was a disparagement of all Ministry, and, in fact, of all human instrumentality.

¹⁵Tuke’s *Memoirs of Stephen Crisp*, 92, 93.

¹⁶See George Fox’s *Epistles*, Tuke’s edition, 82.

¹⁷See note, p. 7

Objections were raised to appointing either time or place for meetings for worship or discipline. Great exception was taken to the large subscriptions required for the work of the itinerant preachers. Some of the dissentients objected to the boldness of Friends in holding their meetings in the face of cruel persecution, and counselled a more time-serving attitude. It was apparently in connection with this controversy that London Yearly Meeting was founded, or at any rate that its character was changed from being a comparatively small gathering of Ministers to one with a strong representative element. Ultimately, the upholders of Church government through the meetings for discipline were successful, and in the course of years many of the dissentients rejoined the Society.

The work of the itinerant Ministry continued – although with lessening frequency – through the reign of Queen Anne and her immediate successors. Up to the middle of the eighteenth century some of the country meetings received religious visits from travelling Ministers every other Sunday throughout the year. The late Charles Hoyland compiled a list of 2,709 Ministers who died in Great Britain and Ireland between 1700 and 1859; of these, one-half died in the fifty years between 1700 and 1750.¹⁸

There is reason to believe that in 1700 two-thirds of all the Friend congregations had approved Ministers resident within their limits. Fifty years later the number of Public Friends had so diminished that two-thirds of the meetings were without resident Ministers, whilst the distribution of preachers in London and elsewhere had become inefficient. In 1751, Samuel Bownas, whose own Ministry had begun in 1697, wrote: “The Church seems very barren of young Ministers to what it was in our youth, nor is there much convincement to what was then.” It was an epoch of religious lethargy. The meetings for discipline in some districts were discontinued, and the numerical strength of the Society declined.

William Thistlethwaite stated (1865) that from a mass of information which he had collected it was evident that in many districts the number of Ministers, at the date when he was writing, was less than one-third of what it had been in 1700.¹⁹

In the past forty years those taking vocal part in meetings for worship in this country have much increased in number. By the figures laid before the Conference on the Ministry, held at York in 1903,²⁰ it appears that there are nearly one thousand persons speaking not infrequently in meetings for worship, and about an equal number speaking occasionally. The number of Recorded and unrecorded Ministers forty years ago was about six hundred. Along with this larger liberty of prophesying, which may be hailed with thankfulness, other changes have been in progress which cannot be regarded without apprehension. To very few amongst this large number of speakers would the remark apply, made in the memoir of Benjamin Seeböhm: “His Ministry was the most characteristic thing about his life. More than anything else it was evidently that for which he lived.”²¹ Again, whilst undoubtedly many Ministers take part in the weekend visitation of other meetings

¹⁸The following is the Return of Deaths of Ministering Friends between 1700 and 1859, compiled by the late Charles Hoyland:

PERIODS OF TEN YEARS	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
From 1700-1709	144	43	187
1710-1719	192	73	265
1720-1729	205	108	313
1730-1739	159	88	247
1740-1749	155	102	257
1759-1759	116	102	218
1760-1769	123	95	218
1770-1779	93	95	188
1780-1789	80	73	153
1790-1799	51	55	106
1800-1809	47	47	94
1810-1819	33	61	94
1820-1829	34	57	91
1830-1839	42	64	106
1840-1849	35	58	93
1850-1859	25	54	79
	1534	1175	2709

¹⁹*Four Lectures on the Rise, Progress, and Past Proceedings of the Society of Friends in Great Britain*, 108-110.

²⁰This Conference was called in November, 1903, by London Yearly Meeting, to consider the question of the Recording of Ministers, and was presided over by John S. Rowntree. From very early times Friends have believed it helpful to record on their minute books the bestowal by the great Head of the Church, of a gift in the vocal Ministry (See note by J. S. R. in *Journal Friends' Historical Society*, ii. 84.) This record does not in any sense constitute an appointment, and is only made in the case of those members who show unmistakable evidence of having been called to this public service. The Conference heard many expressions of opinion as to the helpfulness or otherwise of the practice of Recording, but did not feel prepared to suggest any alteration. – [EDITOR]

²¹*Private Memoirs of B. and E. Seeböhm* (1873), 7. Benjamin Seeböhm was born in Germany in 1797. Early in life he

than their own, the number who travel with certificate from place to place on religious service is very small. The number of family visits has also greatly diminished; and the occurrence of those unarranged-for seasons of silent religious waiting, ministry, and prayer, frequent at a former period in the hours of social intercourse, has become very uncommon. So, too, have spoken words of thanksgiving before or after meals.

Our review of the Society's experience in regard to Gospel Ministry, imperfect as it is, must not be entirely silent in regard to three significant developments of the past half-century:

(1) The rise and extension of the pastoral system amongst Friends in the United States of America need not detain us, because the extent of the movement and some of its more remarkable features have been sufficiently set forth in the sixth paper of last year's Symposium.²² We agree with the author of that paper in deeming the cardinal significance of the movement to be the evidence it affords of the failure of the previously existing Ministry to supply the spiritual requirements of the Society, especially amongst the newly settled communities in the Western States.

(2) The spread of the First-day School work, a movement still rapidly extending in this country, is a remarkable illustration of the larger reception of the gift of teaching by a religious community, and of the blessing both to teachers and taught following the occupancy of the gift. The New Testament usually ranks the gift of teaching below that of prophecy, but the two gifts are closely allied, and it is often hard to determine where the one ends and the other begins. "Paul and Barnabas tarried in Antioch, teaching and preaching."²³ Very few will question the eminent value of the gift of sympathetic teaching conferred upon the late William White²⁴, of Birmingham, conspicuously qualifying him for service in extending the Redeemer's Kingdom.

(3) The widely increased interest taken in Foreign Mission work during the last thirty years is a very notable feature in the Society's recent history. In the days of Oliver Cromwell a number of Friend preachers were actively engaged in Foreign Mission service, as appears by the records of the early Yearly Meetings at Skipton. These missionaries, both men and women, penetrated into most of the countries of Europe, and some even extended their journeys beyond its eastern limits. The expedition of Mary Fisher to the camp of the Sultan Mahomet at Adrianople has furnished material for picturesque narrative, both in prose and verse. It must, however, be admitted that there was but little apparent result from this missionary activity, and in the course of a few years it subsided, to be followed by a long interval in which but little direct effort was made by Friends to spread the Gospel in non-Christian lands. Through a chain of events, frequently recounted, which it is unnecessary here to repeat, the Friends' Foreign Mission Association was founded in 1866. Since that date its work has been continually growing, both in extent and importance, till, at the present time, it is sustaining the labours of more than one hundred missionaries, men and women, engaged in various forms of evangelistic service in non-Christian populations. The general interest taken in the work has steadily extended through the Society, so that the contributions now raised for its furtherance exceed those subscribed for any other denominational object. Children born among Friends previous to 1870 heard very little about missionary work in connection with the Society to which they belonged. Now the Missionary Helpers' Union familiarises hundreds of boys and girls with a knowledge of the Gospel labours going on in China, Japan, India, Ceylon, Madagascar, Syria, and Pemba.

Imperfect as is our sketch of the experience of the early Christian Church and of the Society of Friends in regard to Gospel Ministry, it has left us but little space to speak of details of rule or usage affecting the Ministry at the present time. Whilst conscious that to many readers the preceding pages will be but as a recital of a thrice-told tale, we can hardly regret the space occupied if it serves to clear our thoughts in regard to principles lying at the threshold of any useful consideration of questions of ministerial arrangement or procedure; for we concur in the opinion expressed in the fifth paper of last year's Symposium: "Until the Church is convinced that gifts exist, it is useless to argue about arrangements for their exercise I believe," continues the writer, "that this tacit disbelief and consequent neglect of gifts is a chief source of the weakness shown in our meetings for worship, of our failure to hold our members, and of our powerlessness

removed to England and took up his residence at Bradford (Yorks.). Here, at the age of twenty-three years, he first engaged in the vocal Ministry, to which service he devoted himself unstintingly during the rest of his life, in this country and in America. He edited the *Journal of Stephen Grellet* and *Memoirs of William Forster*. He died at Luton in 1871, aged 73 years. — [EDITOR]

²²*Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, 1903, p. 550.

²³Acts 15:35

²⁴One of the most efficient pioneers of the Adult School Movement. He was also an earnest worker among Friends, in the vocal ministry and in other ways. He wrote *Friends in Warwickshire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*. Born 1820. Died 1900. — [EDITOR]

to impress the world.”

What, then, are the salient lessons deducible from the pages of past experience? At the outset, one is impressed with the similarity between the experience of the Primitive Christians and that of the Society of Friends. In both we find the Head of the Church liberally bestowing spiritual gifts upon His followers. The faithful preaching of the Gospel in the first century and in the seventeenth proved alike instrumental in bringing sinners to a saving knowledge of Christ. In both, when disciples had been gathered into groups, the presence of the Spirit was known, and the liberty which accompanies that holy presence. Human infirmity was also present; but the Christian community knew itself to be a priestly body possessing spiritual perceptions, and so able to admonish its prophets. Order was shown to be the handmaid of liberty, at Corinth in the first century and at Gracechurch Street in the seventeenth. The proceedings of Christian communities must be subject to certain basal laws. All things must be done decently and in order – all things must be done to edifying. The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. A strong presumption is thus established for the permanence of the conditions enunciated in the New Testament regarding spiritual gifts. One or two of these, like the gift of tongues, have, for adequate reasons, passed away; but the spiritual wants of human nature continuing substantially the same from generation to generation, the weightier gifts of prophecy, teaching, evangelisation, and shepherding are not superseded by time, changes of civilisation, or by any legitimate development of Church life or organisation.

If we limit our view to a more strictly denominational standpoint, the following can hardly be deemed disputable positions:

(1) That the Society of Friends was chiefly gathered through the strenuous labours of men and women believing that they had been called to the Ministry of the Gospel by Christ Himself, and that their gift was to be exercised under the continual anointing of His Spirit.

(2) That the upbuilding and organisation of the Society, in the middle and later years of the seventeenth century, was chiefly the work of its Public Friends, who devoted much time and energy to its service.²⁵

(3) When the number of Ministers lessened, and the visits of the itinerant preachers became less frequent, the life and numbers of the Society correspondingly declined. This decline, it may be noted, went on simultaneously with a remarkable development of itinerant preaching under the administration of the Methodists.

(4) There is no evidence of any Friend congregation having flourished for any considerable length of time, or having efficiently fulfilled the objects of Church fellowship, in the absence of living Gospel Ministry.

(5) When in recent years languishing congregations have again flourished, it is found that they are those in which there has been both the bestowal and the acceptance of spiritual gifts qualifying for Gospel Ministry.

“The outstanding lesson of the London religious census,” says R. Mudie Smith, “is that the power of preaching is undiminished.”²⁶

If, as appears, it is indisputable that a living Gospel Ministry is still most intimately related to the life of a Christian community, it must be the imperative duty of that community sedulously to foster the spiritual gifts conferred on its members. By what methods can this be done? The First-day School and Foreign Mission work going on around us suggest an answer. Through some generations, the exercise of the gifts of teaching and of evangelisation towards those outside the Society’s pale was in abeyance; but when the community awoke to its responsibility in these directions, and prayed the Lord of the Harvest to send out

²⁵Throughout the seventeenth century nearly all the Public Friends travelled “in the service of Truth.” The Monthly Meetings signified approval or disapproval of their service by granting or withholding certificates, in which the labourers might be styled “Elders,” “Ministers,” or “Approved Ministers.” By the payment of their expenses, by the entering of their names in the books kept for the distribution of the Ministry, by their seating in meeting, and in some other indirect ways, the recognition and control of the Ministry by the Society in the first seventy years of its history, was as real as, or probably more real than, when the procedure of recognition became more formal after 1723.

The first Query ever asked by London Yearly Meeting (in the year 1682) was: “What Friends in the Ministry in their respective counties departed this life since the last Yearly Meeting?” In 1696. the corresponding Query was the fifth, and ran: “How many Publick Friends dyed, and when?”

The recognition of Ministers, by whatever method it may be compassed, appears, like the laying-on of hands in the first century, ultimately to rest on two far-reaching principles:

(1) That a Christian Church gathered in the name of Christ possesses spiritual functions qualifying it to judge of the validity of spiritual gifts; and that the congregation, and not the individual, must be the ultimate determining body in regard to the exercise of vocal Ministry, in times of congregational worship. (1 Cor. 12:28-31; 14:29-33.)

(2) That for the efficient discharge of the laborious and faith-testing service of the Christian Ministry, men require tokens of human sympathy and approval, as well as the sense of spiritual call to their work (Acts 9:11,17; 13:2,3; 28:15, etc.).

²⁶See *The Religious Life of London*, 7.

labourers, the labourers were forthcoming; and the Society found, and is still finding, through failure as well as through success, the fitting methods for imparting religious teaching in the Adult Schools, and for the evangelisation of the heathen.

It may have appeared to some that the immediate outcome of the discussions on the Ministry in the York Conference and in the Society's journals has been small and disappointing; but this will not be the lasting result if we have reached a clearer understanding of the conditions under which alone Christian Ministry can flourish. One of those is its thankful acceptance by the Christian community as foremost means for the spread and maintenance of Christian truth. Individuals and congregations need to be instant in prayer for the call and equipment of Gospel labourers, and the service of these labourers requires constant assistance by every legitimate method suggested by Scripture and experience. The Society possesses in its Meetings on Ministry and Oversight²⁷ a machinery which might do far more for the nurture of the Ministry than it is now accomplishing. Woodbrooke²⁸ promises to become a truly helpful centre for the equipment of labourers for diversified fields of social and religious service. The general interest that has been excited, and the numerous modifications of usage which have been proposed, may be hailed as signs that increased thought is being directed to this question of cardinal moment. Nor need we be discouraged if some of these suggestions be crude, and unsuited to meet the needs of our time. Various proposals, seemingly intended to belittle the status of the Ministry, appear to the present writer almost the reverse of what the requirements of the day demand. From the influence of causes on which there is no time now to dwell, the ideal of the Ministry amongst Friends has become too contracted. We do not question that there may be a right call for some whose vocal service is practically restricted to one meeting for worship weekly. It is probably in right ordering that some men are primarily merchants, legislators, magistrates, total abstinence advocates, authors, and what not – and in a very secondary sense Gospel Ministers; but is there not a crying need for men and women to whom the Christian Ministry, in their own country, shall be as distinctively the first object of their lives, as is evangelistic work to our missionaries in China or Madagascar? Do we not need more of the spirit which led Paul to tell his Roman correspondents, “I glorify my ministry”?²⁹ Would it not be right, in speaking of fields of future service to those at school and college, to name the home Ministry in Great Britain and Ireland, as well as adult-school teaching, foreign mission labour, magisterial, municipal, or parliamentary life, as a sphere into which their feet may be rightly led by the constraining love of Christ? The Society should get more work out of its Ministers than it is now doing – more of itinerant service – more of the visitation of meetings – more of teaching, “publicly and from house to house . . . repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” after the manner of Edward Burrough, Stephen Crisp, or Benjamin Seebohm, as illustrated in passages cited in previous pages. And who should do this work? Very largely men and women under forty years of age is the answer that comes to us from the past. So far as any present usages in regard to recognition and the issue of certificates are curtailing the services of the young and vigorous, they urgently demand amendment. And whilst it would be wrong to conceal the terms of discipleship, or to disguise the fact that this is not a pathway to earthly wealth, it is incumbent on the Society to make more generous and efficient provision for defraying all the out-of-pocket expenses of its labourers than has often been done. We do not grudge the Foreign Mission service any of the many thousands of pounds it needs and obtains, but should like to see, say, a modest thousand pounds spent in this country, in discharging the expenses of our Ministers – so giving heed to many Scriptural exhortations, and to such an admonition as this which comes to us from the Friends of the Cromwellian era: “That care be taken for the families and goods of such as are called forth into the ministry, or [who] are imprisoned for the Truth's sake; that no creatures be lost for want of the creatures.”³⁰

But the temptation to enter into the details of methods must be resisted. Many of the practical requirements of Friends in regard to the Ministry have been well set forth by J. J. Dymond in his little book³¹ already referred to, and in several articles which have appeared lately.³² Could we but master the principles that underlie the institution of the Christian Ministry, and seek to give effect to them, so far as this depends

²⁷The “Meetings on Ministry and Oversight” were given up in 1906. The work formerly one by these meetings is now performed by committees. – [EDITOR]

²⁸The Woodbrooke Settlement for Religious and Social Study was founded in 1903. It aims at giving Friends and those associated with them “the opportunity for more fully qualifying themselves, spiritually, intellectually, and experimentally, for any service to which they may feel called.” – [EDITOR]

²⁹Rom. 11:13, R.V.

³⁰*Letters of Early Friends*, 278.

³¹*Gospel Ministry in the Society of Friends*

³²See “The Church and the Missionary,” and companion papers. The *Friends Quarterly Examiner*, 1903, 546, etc.

on human action, working under Heavenly guidance, details would arrange themselves. The ability to adapt means to ends, in the spiritual as in the natural world, “cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in effectual working.”

Chapter 2

The Work And Maintenance Of The Vocal Ministry¹

THE early history of the Society of Friends is remarkable for having illustrated, three generations before the rise of Methodism, the great power of an itinerant Ministry. The Society can hardly be said to have taken root in London before 1653 or 1654, when the visits of some of the north country evangelists, especially Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill, led to such a great ingathering that, in spite of the terrible persecution which recurred again and again in the ensuing thirty years, it seems to be well established that there were not fewer than ten thousand Friends in London in 1678.²

In the later years of Fox's life he repeatedly stirred up his brethren in the Ministry to unremitting labour in the spreading of the truth.³ It is observable that in 1695, six years after the passing of the Toleration Act, the Yearly Meeting issued a strong recommendation in the same direction, *viz*:

“This Meeting desires and hopes that you, whom the Lord hath gifted with a public testimony for His name and truth will, in this day of liberty, be diligent to visit the heritage of God in their Meetings; and, more especially, those least frequented.”

For many years after this, the number of religious visits paid to the meetings of Friends continued to be very large. In his lectures upon the history of Friends in Bristol and Somerset, William Tanner says the number of religious visits received from Friends from a distance was very great. Jacob P. Sturge examined a book of a Gloucestershire meeting, in which was kept an account of the charges for the horses of Friends who came to visit, and found the number averaged one a fortnight for many years.⁴ William Tanner estimated the number who visited Bristol to have been at least as large. The Ministers' horses in that city ate $36\frac{1}{2}$ bushels of oats in fifteen months, apparently a usual quantity. In Skeats's history of the Free Churches we have evidence in the same direction from an historian who was not himself a Friend. Writing of the year 1713, he says, “The Society was kept in vigorous life by the missionary spirit of its members. Like George Fox, the preachers of the denomination travelled throughout the length and breadth of the land, and in such a sense that the Quakers may be justly described as the founders of the first home missionary organizations.”⁵

William Thistlethwaite says⁶ that at the commencement of the eighteenth century the itinerant activity of the Ministry was very great. He goes on to observe that in 1700, fully two-thirds of all the meetings of Friends had acknowledged Ministers residing within their limits. By the middle of the eighteenth century the number of ministerial visits was fast diminishing, yet a correspondent informs us that in 1748, sixteen Ministers, three being Americans, visited Brighouse and Hightown Meetings in Yorkshire. In the nineteen years, 1740-59, 147 ministering Friends visited these meetings.

¹* Portions of a paper published in the *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, April, 1898, under the title of “Meetings on Ministry and Oversight: their place and functions.”

²*London Friends' Meetings*, 32.

³See George Fox's *Epistles*, Tuke's edition, 27, 34, 73, 204, 208, etc.

⁴*Three Lectures on the Early History of the Society of Friends in Bristol and Somersetshire*, 91.

⁵*History of the Free Churches of England*, 210.

⁶*Four Lectures*, 110.

There can be no doubt that it was by strenuous, sustained effort that the Society of Friends was first gathered, and that it was by a continuance of the same class of evangelistic labour in the visitation of families and congregations that it was consolidated and built up, so far as this was accomplished, in the years succeeding the Revolution of 1688. Hence the visitation of congregations is in entire harmony with the usages of the Society from the earliest times. Let us look at this duty of congregational visitation in the light of recent experience.

When the Friends' First-day Schools sprang up, fifty years ago, the appointment of teachers to different classes and the provision of substitutes for absentees became the constant business of superintendents and of teachers' meetings. In these Schools, as elsewhere, it is not always easy to get the right man in the right place, but the inadvisability of leaving Schools to take care of themselves has been deemed self-evident. The most successful teachers will, no doubt, train their classes not to depend upon them for every week's teaching; but speaking broadly, the First-day Schools do aim at, and secure, a suitable distribution of teachers to scholars. So, too, in most of the Friends' mission meetings, the presence of readers or speakers is almost always arranged for beforehand. But the exercise of similar care as respects Friends' meetings for worship has not obtained, to the same extent at any rate, of late times. And yet it would be strange if these gatherings were exceptions to conditions found important elsewhere. It is not our intention to suggest that an Adult School and a Friends' meeting for worship stand exactly on the same platform in relation to the importance of the presence of any particular person. The constitution of a School would seem to involve the idea of persons needing to be taught, and of a person able to teach. A meeting for worship does not necessarily carry with it this idea. It is a glorious feature of the worship of the New Covenant that it is not dependent upon the presence of any humanly ordained person, or upon any local sanctity. But an appeal to facts shows that congregational worship, like all human institutions, has its conditions. Some of these are clearly enunciated in Scripture. The gathering must be in *the name of Christ*. Again, all things must be "done decently and in order." Friends through many generations have rightly insisted upon punctuality, regularity in attendance, and non-drowsiness, as amongst other conditions for having good meetings. So, too, is the orderly distribution of preachers. If, as we see is the fact, the Lord Jesus Christ has in some congregations bestowed gifts of utterance upon many of the members, whilst in others there are few or none possessing these gifts, it is unreasonable to suppose that these congregations are so differently constituted that it can be in right ordering for some habitually to sit in silence, while others rarely or never do so. And here we have the helpful guidance of facts. So far as we know, no instance exists of any considerable-sized meeting having flourished for a long period when habitually held in silence. There are very many cases of meetings so held having decayed and died out. When, therefore, we find one congregation having many Ministers, and others with few or none, we may reverently appropriate our Lord's words and say: "Why even of yourselves judge ye not" that the lack of one congregation is to be supplied from the abundance of the other? It was when the number of Ministers declined that the Friends' meetings declined. It was when the itinerant Ministry lessened in numbers and frequency that the life of the Society as a whole lessened. Thus, then, there is a strong concurrence of testimony that the distribution of the Ministry to meet the requirements of its congregations is an urgent duty of a religious body modelled on the principles of the Society of Friends. And it must be admitted that this duty is now but imperfectly carried out. A few months ago the present writer heard verbal reports given at a Monthly Meeting of the condition of its congregations, by which it incidentally transpired that on the previous day three meetings with upwards of one hundred worshippers, including a number of children, had been held in silence. The next First-day twelve or fifteen Ministers were present at a meeting, about thirty miles distant, which the writer attended.

From an early period in the reign of Charles II., the Public Friends resident in London met at ten o'clock every second-day morning to attend to various matters of Society business.⁷ The censorship of manuscripts which it was proposed to print apparently occupied more time than anything else, in the last years of the century. In addition to this, the Ministers present determined, in outline, at least, on the meetings which each would attend in the ensuing week. Ministers not present sent notes intimating their intentions to Ellis Hookes, the Recording Clerk. Those who were present signed the "First-day Meetings Book" personally or by proxy, placing their names opposite the meeting to be attended. The Ministers met again early on First-day morning, and after a brief time of devotion, walked or rode to the different meetings. Saddled horses were ready for those going to the more distant places. The early records contain very few entries of women's names. The Second-day Morning Meeting consisted exclusively of men Ministers. The aim appears

⁷See *London Friends' Meetings*, 339.

to have been to secure the presence of at least two Ministers for each congregation. On special occasions, as at Whitsuntide, when the Yearly Meeting was always in session, the number of Ministers attending each of the London meetings was much larger; there are then often as many as six or eight names down for the principal congregations. At other times the number of Ministers available seems frequently to have been too small for the number of meetings; and especially as respects the more distant places, the appointments to attend were generally small. Meetings as far north as Hitchin, and south as Rochester, are amongst the places mentioned in these books. The Ministers present at one meeting in London in the morning frequently changed over to another in the afternoon. Those who were at the Bull and Mouth,⁸ for instance, in the morning would go to Devonshire House⁸ in the afternoon, whilst those who had been at Devonshire House in the morning might be found at the Bull and Mouth in the afternoon. Similar appointments, but usually smaller, were made for the week-day meetings. When approaching marriages and funerals were known of, memoranda to that effect are entered in the books, with appointments to attend the same. For instance, on the 5th of 2nd month, 1713, there are brief memoranda of two funerals, “Wapping – a burial.” Robert Curtis and two others to attend. “Horsleydown – a burial on 7th day.” G. Chalkey and three others to attend. Again, “1710, 3rd month 30th, marriage at Devonshire House at 9 of the clock” (the usual hour for marriages), William Penn to attend.

These provisions will, however, be more clearly understood if we reproduce one of the actual entries on the following page:

⁸The Bull and Mouth meeting house, the first possessed by Friends in London, was part of an ancient inn in Aldersgate Street. Howgill and Burrough hired the room, which would hold 1,000 people, in 1654. The Great Fire destroyed the building, which was however re-erected and used until 1740. Devonshire House was originally part of the princely mansion of the Cavendishes, of whom Friends leased certain portions when the Fire had left them without a meeting-place. The beautifully decorated rooms were used until 1678, when pressing need arose for increased accommodation, and the purchase of Sir Thomas More’s old residence of Crosby Hall was considered. Finally a portion of the Devonshire estate was leased and on this a meeting house was built at a cost of £630. The lease became Friends’ property in 1766, and twenty-three years later the Dolphin Inn was purchased, which admitted of two large meeting houses being erected near to the then existing one. This block of buildings, with later improvements and additions, constitutes the present Devonshire House premises. – [EDITOR]

1699 4th mo. 4th	First- Morning Meetings.	Day Afternoon Meetings.	
Brewers Hall	Benjamin Bangs Richard Thomas Richard Hinckson	John Gratton Ambrose Rigg	<i>Croydon.</i> John Kennerly Rt. Soothworth <i>Debtford.</i> Daniel Monroe John Bowater Thomas Clarke <i>Enfield.</i> G. Chalkey Mary Gulson
Devonshire House	John Feddeman Richard Ashbye Joseph Rogers	Samuel Hunt Thomas Cooke Joshua Middleton	<i>Cobham.</i> Theod. Eccleston
Gracechurch Street	John Gratton Anthony Sharpe Ambrose Rigg	Benjamin Bangs Richard Ashbye	<i>Wanstead.</i> William Penn Thomas Pennick
Horselydowne	Peter Fearon Jonathan Free Samuel Overton George Bewley	Joseph Baines John Tompson George Knippe Thomas Chauckley	<i>Newington.</i> Richard Davies Wm. Fallowfield Robt. Atkinson <i>Wansworth.</i> Daniel Flaxman Joseph Nott
Parke	Robert Collier Joseph Baines John Tompson	Richard Thomas Peter Fearon George Bewley	<i>Hammersmith.</i> George Bowles Wm. Bingley
Peel		Samuel Overton Jonathan Free Robert Curtiss John Banks	<i>Mill Hill.</i> Humph. Wollrich
Ratcliff	Nicholas Gates Richard Vivers Luke Howard	Nicholas Gates Richard Vivers Luke Howard	<i>Hunsden.</i> Jon. Lee
Savoy	Edward Edwards John Banks Thomas Aldam George Whitehead		<i>Kingstone.</i> Tho. Knappe
Westminster		Robert Collier Thomas Aldam Richard Hinckson George Whitehead	Monthly Meeting to-morrow.
Wheeler Street	Wm. Hornould	Jonathan Feddeman Joseph Rogers Anthony Sharpe William Warren John Leech Thomas Bevin	
Longacre			

Notes.

The signature of William Penn on this sheet is apparently an autograph.

Between 50 and 60 persons are named in this week's record, amongst whom there is but one woman.

There was a register for week-day as well as First-day meetings.

The existing minutes of the Morning Meeting date from the year 1673: any previous to that date may have been made upon sheets of paper, and lost. The earliest of the “First-day Morning Books” existing – ruled folios sixteen inches by eleven – is that of 1699.⁹ Previous records have perished. The system itself appears to have been organised about 1675, and probably was gradually matured as time passed. There are numerous entries relative to it in the minutes of the Morning Meeting: *e.g.* –

“At a meeting at Edward Mans, ye 17th day of ye 3rd mo., 1675, it is desired that all Friends in and about the city, that have a public testimony for God or Ministry, do meet with the brethren on every First-day and Second-day morning when they can; otherwise to send a note to the meetings, signifying what meetings they intend to be at on the First-days.”

Six years later there occurs the following minute:

“At a Second-day or Morning Meeting, the 16th. 3rd, 1681, it is the desire and advice of this meeting, that the Friends in and about this City, or any others who have public testimony, and shall have it upon them at any time to visit the adjacent meetings near the City upon the First-days, that they come and give good notice on the seventh day, or any other day before, at Ellis [the Recording Clerk’s] his chamber, by writing of their names and what meeting they intended to be at next day, that, as much as may be, those meetings maybe equally supplied so as there may not be several at one meeting and none at another.”

The Morning Meeting at various times reviewed its origin, and the purposes for which it had been established. For instance, in 1697, 11th mo. 31, we find an entry:

“Two papers of George Fox’s relating to keeping meetings quiet when such as Friends have not satisfaction with, or have joined with the separation, comes to impose their preaching – referred to the Six Weeks Meeting to take care therein. John Vaughton and Theodor Eccleston to carry the said papers thither.

“Another epistle read of George Fox’s to this meeting to advise against many ministering Friends going to one meeting and leaving other meetings neglected or not well supplied. Tis ordered the said paper be read again this day week in the Morning Meeting and be recorded in this book.” [This apparently was not done.]

In the same year there is another interesting minute. The 19th of 5mo., 1697:

“This meeting being under a sense of the need there is that some method be considered that the Country Meetings that are at a small distance be duly supplied, and the First-day Morning Meeting observed about or before the 8th hour, as general as may be, by the Friends then in town, that Friends may have opportunity to dispose themselves to the most service of Truth, both in City and County. Whereupon it was proposed as a conveniency for the well supply of the Country Meetings that the Friends of this meeting might be half-an-hour together at the end of the Meeting for Sufferings, whereby Friends might understand each other’s minds more fully. The further consideration hereof and well settling of somewhat in this matter is further referred.”

It will be remembered that there was at this time no formal system for the “recording” or “acknowledging” of Ministers. The object of recording was largely effected in an incidental, and almost automatic way. The giving of a certificate to a travelling preacher by his Monthly Meeting, and the entering of the names upon the “First-day Morning Books” in London and Bristol constituted virtual recognition. As was inevitable, difficulties arose with reference to the right of persons to put down their names in these books, many indications of which can be traced in the old minute books. Whilst the Morning Meeting evidently kept a tight hand over the proceedings of its members, and was especially strict as respects the women preachers¹⁰

⁹An additional volume of this series, presumably, is now in Friends’ Library, 142, N. Sixteenth Street, Philadelphia. It is entitled *First Days Meetings Supplied by Friends in the Ministry in and about London*, 1682. A written copy of this, with photographic reproduction of several pages of the original, is in the Reference Library, Devonshire House, London. – [EDITOR]

¹⁰At a Second Day’s Morning Meeting the 10th of 1st mo. 1700.

“This meeting finding that it is a hurt to Truth for women Friends to take up too much time as some do in our public meetings, when several public and serviceable men Friends are present, and are by them prevented in their services. It’s therefore advised that the women Friends should be tenderly cautioned against taking up so much time in our mixed public meetings. Benjamin Bealing to give a copy of this minute to Sarah Plumley and Margt. Munro, for them to communicate to other women Friends, and that it may be prevented for the future.”

the principle appears to have been maintained that the Monthly Meeting was the body which ultimately determined whether a Friend was at liberty to preach or not. Persistence in doing so contrary to its judgment involved the liability to disownment. Considerable sums of money were paid to constables for excluding persons from Friends' meetings in London, who went there intending to speak when forbidden by their Monthly Meetings. In the later years of the reign of George I., the Morning Meeting appears to have taken more authority upon itself in determining its membership than was approved by the Yearly Meeting, which in 1723 ruled :

"It is the unanimous agreement of this meeting that it does not belong to the Morning Meeting, or any other meeting of ministers, to disown any minister or other person, but that the sole right of so doing belongs to Monthly, Quarterly, and Half-yearly or Yearly Meetings. And that no person's name from and after the 8th day of seventh month next be entered in the Morning Meeting Book of Ministering Friends as a minister, till he or she produces a certificate from the Monthly or Quarterly Meeting to which he or she shall belong."¹¹

We have devoted some space to these details of ancient arrangements for the distribution of the Ministry, believing that readers will not have found them tedious. The main facts have been before published, but there is an aroma about the original records that is lost in a summary of their contents. They are pregnant with suggestion, and that not alone in their denominational aspect. The population of London was about half-a-million at the close of the seventeenth century. What a notable factor in its religious life must the ten or twelve Friend congregations have been, with their band of preachers suitably distributed amongst them every Sunday, thus securing frequent variety and change in the Ministry! It helps the reader of Leslie's *Snake in the Grass* to understand the note of alarm which runs through its malevolent pages. And how interestingly do these Friend Ministers' plans of the Stuart and Hanoverian era antedate the Methodist plans which now cover so large a part of England and Wales! It is sometimes implied, if not said, that it exhibits some lack of spirituality for a Friend to allow his name to be put down on a plan to attend a certain meeting at an appointed hour. Evidently this was not felt by George Whitehead, William Penn, Ambrose Rigg, and Samuel Bownas; and if they were not conscious of it, we may well suspect the validity of our scruple. It is urged that to plan out the location of Ministers on a future day is to interfere with the disposal of them by the Holy Ghost. But is this really the case? The wording of the minute of 1723, which speaks of the dispersing of Ministers "according to their concern or freedom," is significant. Probably in nine cases out of ten, a Minister has no special drawing to one meeting above another – he has a freedom to go where his friends think him the most wanted. In the case of his having a "concern" for one meeting, way would be made for his giving effect to such an apprehension of duty.

The difficulties which were felt, five or six generations ago, in determining who were the Public Friends entitled to enter their names on the First-day Meeting Books have their significance in relation to the existing arrangements for the Recording of Ministers. It is easy to criticise these arrangements: their actual working is often awkward and capricious. But the gist of the question is: What better plan can be substituted for them? The religious meetings of the Society of Friends are almost the only examples of congregational worship remaining, where the apostolic liberty, "Ye may all prophesy," is still the rule. This fact points to propensities in human nature which make it extremely difficult to maintain the "liberty of prophesying," but liberty is worth so much that its price must not be grudged. There must somewhere be an authority which shall determine whether a person is called to be a preacher or not. That individual judgment is liable to be greatly mistaken has been continually illustrated throughout the history of Friends. Many men carry within their breasts something of the spirit of the Papacy; hence we see that the highest claims to spiritual guidance are often associated with a stubborn indisposition to accept the judgment of wiser and more experienced men. In lands where there is no statute law in force, lynch law grows up. And as it is in States, so it is in the denominations as respects their Ministry. My readers will generally concur in the position that the congregation where a preacher resides, or the group of congregations, that is, the Monthly Meeting, must ultimately determine whether he has a valid call to the Ministry or not. If this could be done in a way more simple, and by a machinery that worked more easily than that now in vogue, it would be a satisfaction to many, and might be a cause of strength to the Church. The experience of the eighteenth century, however, assures us that the earlier methods were not unattended by grave difficulties; and it would,

¹¹See *Journal Friends' Historical Society*, i. 22, for account of William Gibson, who made the appeal which resulted in the Yearly Meeting's decision, just quoted. – [EDITOR]

we believe, be easy now to make changes which would weaken the Society in a direction where it is already weak. Whilst Friends have been eminently successful in promoting the growth of individual characters of much strength and distinctive excellence, their organisation has been and is weak for aggressive evangelistic work, and even for perpetuating their own polity. This side of their history has been a commentary on the proverb, "What is everybody's business is nobody's business." Hence we view with some apprehension proposals which tend to make less definite the responsibilities of the Christian Minister in the Society of Friends. We believe, on the other hand, that most of our Ministers would find their Ministry promoted, directly or indirectly, by having more frequently to occupy assigned posts of service. Israel was not happy in the days when every man did that which was right in his own eyes. And so it is in the spiritual Israel now. We need to recognise as a spiritual endowment the faculty for organisation. No people illustrate this better than Friends themselves, outside their meeting houses. In the walls of philanthropy, in the service of Bible, Peace, Anti-Slavery, Total Abstinence, Howard or Arbitration Societies we place definite duties upon certain persons, and hold them responsible for their due discharge. We believe a similar feeling towards the Society of Friends itself was far stronger amongst the preachers in the reign of Queen Anne than in that of Queen Victoria, and that it must exist in every organisation that accomplishes much real work. When Wesley and Whitefield were evangelising England, the latter appeared to be the greater prophet of the two; but his work has been ephemeral compared with that of his friend. John Wesley organised his adherents, and his influence grows in volume daily. Through his classes and his system of local preachers, he being dead still speaketh. In former times, sermons exhorting Friends to faithfulness sometimes wound up with the declaration that if these counsels were accepted and acted upon, "the Church would arise fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." When these poetical words of the Canticles have fallen on our ears, have we reflected on their central thought, that in the army of the Prince of Peace both the soldiers and the officers must occupy their appointed places? Here lies the great difference between an undisciplined horde, and a disciplined army.

We must now hasten on to the other branch of our subject: the provision for defraying the expenses of the Ministry.

Whilst the general care of the meetings for worship in London, and the arrangements for the distribution of the Ministry were, two centuries ago, vested in the Morning Meeting, the duty of defraying expenses of Ministers devolved upon the "Six Weeks Meeting."

"The wants of country ministers, labouring in or passing through London were carefully attended to during their stay in town; sums of money for their benefit being handed to certain Friends by the Meeting of Twelve, [a sub-committee of the Six Weeks Meeting] 'without requiring an account.'"¹²

A great deal of space in the early minute books is occupied with business relating to the horses of travelling Friends. In those days Friends kept a number of the London inns, at which the horses stopped, whilst the riders were usually entertained at private houses. After the establishment of the Friends' Workhouse, in Clerkenwell, the stables of that institution were used for the horses of Ministers. In 1706 there is a record of a gift of a horse, saddle, and bridle, together with £10, for the keep of the horse for the use of Public Friends. Two years later the bills for horse-keep seem to have amounted to about £90 a year. In 1713 there is an entry of £6 spent in buying a mare for the use of Ministers.

From several causes the provision for the payment of expenses in connection with ministerial service has not latterly received the attention which it did in former times, and which it deserves. The decline in the number of ministerial visits has allowed the machinery which provided for the payment of their expenses, to grow rusty. Evidence to this effect reaches one on all hands.¹³ Friends have not yet quite realised the alteration which the spread of the railway system has brought about. Formerly, the travelling Minister set

¹²*London Friends' Meetings*, 126.

¹³It was recently remarked to the writer, by one who had travelled in the service of truth, "In some meetings the Friends do not even think of the matter of expenses." Whilst this paper has been in course of preparation, a Friend thankfully reported the favoured time he had enjoyed in having accepted an invitation to a large and wealthy meeting, but added, "As nothing was said about my expenses, my means will not allow of my accepting many such invitations." A correspondent in a distant part of England writes, "There is one meeting of well-to-do Friends which, at their invitation, I have repeatedly visited, each time costing me 3s. 6d. or more. Not once has a farthing been offered me, nor, of course, have I ever asked. I pay willingly, but for all that, it is not right! To more than a few, I believe, such demands are prohibitive of service." As Treasurer to York M. M., the writer has lately made a payment, through the Recording Clerk in London, for expenses of an American visitor, not defrayed when in this district; one, it was understood, of numerous omissions of the same character.

out on horse-back, and was absent for weeks, or even months, passing from one place to another, lodging at one Friend's house after another, and little, or no expenditure was involved beyond that of provision for himself and his horse.

The Yearly Meeting has laid down with sufficient clearness the general principle which should regulate the arrangements for the payment of expenses.¹⁴

It is, we believe, the best plan for the travelling expenses of *all* labourers to be defrayed by the Society, and that those whose circumstances allow of it shall, if so disposed, return their expenses by way of subscriptions. There is something invidious and even discouraging where the expenses of fellow labourers are defrayed by the Society in one case and not in the other. The area providing the funds for these expenses should be sufficiently large. Some meetings are too poor to bear any expenses of the character referred to. Perhaps in most cases a Quarterly Meeting fund, with local correspondents for making the required disbursements, would prove the most convenient arrangement.

Much observation has led the writer to see how large an influence this matter of expenses has in determining the extent and direction of Christian service. There are one or two special temptations connected with it against which Friends require to be on their guard. One is a distorted idea that what is called the "freedom of Gospel Ministry" is promoted by not paying travelling expenses. We believe this is an entire mistake, and that there is in reality a great democratic principle involved in securing for the Church the services of all its members, irrespective of any qualification through the possession of property or otherwise. Again, there is always in connection with this subject the liability to the presence of selfish motives. It was the complaint of William Rogers and some dissentient Friends in the seventeenth century, that they were called upon to subscribe as much for "the service of Truth," as they paid in tithes before they were Friends. In our own time, it has, we believe, sometimes been urged in favour of the Friends' denomination, that it was the cheapest. This is surely a most unworthy position to assume, and indeed one that is not true. When "the people called Quakers" arose in the days of the Commonwealth, and organised themselves as a Christian community, they had before them the ideal of a Society, all the members of which should be priests, and in which, therefore, there would be no place for a sacerdotal order. But, as has before been shown, they aspired to be a Society founded on Scriptural principles – illustrating "primitive Christianity revived," in William Penn's phrase – and they recognised that there would be office-bearers, persons possessing differing spiritual gifts, and bearing different names. The possessors of these gifts were, by virtue of their spiritual endowment, under the strongest obligation to occupy therewith, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. This necessarily involved large sacrifices of time, money, position and inclination. A faith demanding personal consecration, and protesting against the endeavour to do the service of God by proxy, cannot be worthily held by the covetous or the self-seeking.

It will probably be said by some who read these pages, that the Society of Friends is now poor in men, able and willing to devote themselves to the service of God's people. This may be so – but what is the remedy? For the Church to ask "the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth labourers into His harvest." If the asking be sincere, it will carry with it the willingness to go if sent, and to promote the service of others. How remarkably has this prayer been answered in the last thirty years as respects the Foreign Mission field. Queen Victoria had ruled for half of her memorable reign before the Society of Friends had done anything to speak of in the work of Foreign Missions. To day there are very few denominations which, in proportion to their numbers, are doing more, either in the amount of their contributions, or the number of their labourers. With so remarkable an illustration wrought before our eyes of the faithfulness of God in owning prayer and blessing the use of fitting methods for promoting the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom abroad, why should we doubt His care for the needs of the Church at home? We do not want to fall into the error of the political or ecclesiastical wire-puller, who makes machinery his fetish. But whilst a Church requires the inspiration of true ideals and the support of fixed principles, she also needs the faculty of practically interpreting these ideals, and applying these principles so as to meet the spiritual needs of men.

¹⁴ *Christian Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends*, ii. 25.