

**March 25, 1984**

This afternoon our Meeting will undertake something which it is natural and normal to do in any human endeavor. We will gather together to take stock of our past work on issues of militarism and conscription, and to define our leadings for future effort.

As I have reflected on this afternoon's task, I have found the mind less drawn to specific issues of the draft and more to the basic question of why it is that we are drawn together into a Quaker meeting. What animates the formation of a kind of covenant community, a spirit-based fellowship, such as this Meeting? What do we want to get out of it?

In coming to a Quaker meeting, some, perhaps, want a place of calm and quite, a place of acceptance and ease, where few demands will be made upon them. Others, perhaps, want a community from which to enlist supporters and collaborators in their favorite, and sometimes feverish, political and social action crusades. Still others may come because they want to become better persons, yet their idea of what is better is so firmly fixed that there is no room for real growth or new insight.

Some have said that the reason for forming a spiritual community is simply to affirm the love of Truth. Others propose as the primary goal to affirm the truth of Love. One of these formulations emphasizes the intellect, which is drawn to truth, as the organ of spiritual realization; the other emphasizes the heart, or the intuition, which is drawn by love. Thus, these two similar sounding, but seemingly obverse, propositions have been the cause of endless quarrels in Christendom.

In that silent place within us which is beyond the waxing and waning of emotions or the agitations of intellectual ideas, the heart and the mind become one; the division within us is healed, and we come to see these two propositions as blended together. There is no cause to quarrel for those rooted in such a silent and unified place.

So what do we want from a Friends Meeting?

Truly to take the Lord as our shepherd is to lay down our personal ideas of wants and needs, to become inwardly silent, thus clearing and healing our hearts and our minds. Then do we become as serene as the still waters, which reflect the glory of the sun and of all the creative energies of the universe; then do we find calmness and confidence in the face of our enemies; and then, finally, are we enabled to leave in our wake a trail of goodness and mercy all the days of our lives.