

Quakerism 101
Unit C Quaker Universalism
January 31, 2010

Reading

Samuel D. Caldwell, "The Inward Light: How Quakerism Unites Universalism and Christianity."

Dan Seeger, "The Place of Universalism in the Society of Friends, or Is Coexistence Possible?"

Background on Readings

Samuel D. Caldwell, former General Secretary of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, presented "That Blessed Principal ... " as an address to the Quaker Universalist Fellowship in 1988. It is a clear, succinct argument for a Quaker Christian Universalist perspective.

Dan Seeger, Executive Secretary of Pendle Hill until 2002, is a writer and spokesperson for a Quaker universalism that recognizes and draws from the spiritual wealth of many religious traditions. This article is one of many he has written on this general theme.

Reflections

Please reflect on the following questions as you read and once you have read the reading.

What do you believe? Write down, in a few sentences, some of the religious beliefs you hold that are important to you.

How did you come to these beliefs? What experiences in your life have shaped your religious beliefs?

What characteristics does Sam Caldwell list for the light? How does his description fit your experience?

How is Friends' concept of the Light universalist? How is it Christian?

What is "pseudo-universalism"? Why does Sam Caldwell see it as threatening to Quakerism? Do you agree? Defend your perspective.

How would you react if Milwaukee Meeting declared that it was not a Christian group? Why? How would you respond if Milwaukee Meeting said that membership should be restricted exclusively to professing Christians? Why?

How do you respond to the Quaker universalism expressed by Dan Seeger? Why does he say, "genuine universalism is very demanding of its practitioners"? Do you agree?

How do you feel about the diversity of religious belief in the Society of Friends? What are the advantages of openness to a wide variety of perspectives? What are the disadvantages?

Do you believe that all Friends should adhere to certain minimal beliefs? If so what

should they be?

QUAKER UNIVERSALISM

Materials Needed:

Nametag for each participant
Easel, pad and magic marker, or blackboard and chalk

PLAN FOR TODAY (Share with participants)

- Full group response to the readings for today
- Presentation
- Break
- Small group discussion on beliefs
- Worship

FULL GROUP RESPONSE TO READINGS

Ask the group for their response to the readings by Dan Seeger and Sam Caldwell. What did they resonate with? What statements expressed what they themselves believe? What turned them off? What questions do they have concerning Quakerism, Christianity and universalism that they'd like the class to wrestle with today? Write down any questions on the easel pad or blackboard.

PRESENTATION

It is no secret that Friends are diverse in their beliefs. While unprogrammed Friends today are generally homogeneous in ethnic background and socio-economic class (many are white middle-to-upper-middle-class professionals, often in the "service" field), religious beliefs vary considerably. How did this diversity come about?

The roots lie in early Friends' emphasis on direct spiritual experience as more fundamental than either biblical teaching or tradition. While 17th century Friends were steeped in the Bible (many early writings are made up largely of Bible passages woven together to express a message), and both tradition and corporate discernment came to be key elements in community solidarity, individual spiritual experience has been understood from the start as foundational. George Fox's question, recorded by Margaret Fell, "Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say?" remains compelling. Friends do not want to claim to believe what they themselves do not know in their own experience.

Second generation Quakers Robert Barclay and William Penn have been cited both for their universalism and for their Christianity. So has eighteenth century Friend John Woolman, whose *Journal* expresses a life of extraordinary faithfulness to the promptings of the Spirit. The writings of many early Friends reveal both a living Christian faith, including relationship with

Christ as Inward Guide and Teacher, and affirmation, as their spiritual brothers and sisters, of non-Christians who live according to the leadings of the Spirit.

Given the primacy of personal spiritual experience for Friends, controversy over matters of belief has occurred since the beginning, with resulting splinter groups and schisms. The first major division, called the Hicksite-Orthodox Split, occurred in 1827-28, with tragic consequences for Friends' unity and witness in the world.

The 18th century has been called the Quietist period; Friends emphasized obedience to the immediate leadings of the Spirit and distrusted what they called "creaturely activity," or actions which derived from their emotions, thoughts or wills. John Woolman's long witness against slavery grew from a Quietist faith and trust in the Inward Guide. Many Friends who ended up on different sides of the Hicksite-Orthodox split were Quietists.

During the late 18th century and into the 19th century, several movements were afoot which helped to cause the Hicksite-Orthodox split:

1. A new spirit of democracy and individual freedom of conscience which exploded into the American and French Revolutions spurred some Friends ultimately to oppose what they saw as the "oppressive authority" of the elders; elders had the responsibility of maintaining the discipline of the traditional Quaker way of life;
2. The Evangelical movement, which began with John Wesley in the 1730's, emphasized direct religious experience, the necessity of correct faith for salvation, and social reforms in a way that attracted many Friends;
3. Some Friends, especially those living in the city, became wealthy, cultured, politically powerful, and fairly well educated while their country counterparts did not, leading to uncomfortableness and distrust between them;
4. The influence of rationalism led some Friends to believe that religion must be rational; there was opposition to arbitrary dogma and religious intolerance.

(1) Democracy and Freedom of Conscience

The spirit of democracy and belief in individual freedom of conscience gradually came to clash with the belief, generally held in the Quietist period that a Meeting had authority over the faith and practice of its members. Friends became used to phrases like "liberty and equality" and "the consent of the governed." Even country Friends came in touch with the ideas that had sparked revolution, and many were influenced by them.

The Meeting elders came to see younger Friends as "raw and undisciplined," while some younger Friends disliked what they saw as repressive authority on the part of elders. The elders interpreted the stirrings toward democracy and freedom of conscience as lack of discipline, waywardness, disrespect, and unsoundness of belief, and reacted with more discipline.

The statement of John Comly, which announced the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting split in 1827, read in part, "... God alone is sovereign Lord of conscience, and with this inalienable right no power, civil or ecclesiastical, should ever interfere. "

(2) Evangelical Movement

Many Friends were influenced by the Evangelical movement, first in England and then in the United States, largely through the messages of traveling ministers.

There were several similarities between Evangelicalism and traditional Quaker belief:

- Emphasis on direct personal religious experience;
- Belief that salvation is available for all, including the poor and oppressed;
- Concern with social and moral issues, including opposition to slavery, prison abuse, and alcoholism.

However, there were also important differences between Evangelical belief and Quietism. Evangelicals stressed:

- Acceptance of Jesus Christ as your personal savior, often in a dramatic experience, while many Friends' experiences were less dramatic;
- Belief that the Bible is direct divine revelation and has final authority, while Friends stressed the guidance of Christ Within;
- Belief that people are saved through Christ's vicarious atonement on the cross, and more focus on the afterlife as a motive for faith, while Friends focused on "sanctification," or personal transformation;
- Acceptance of the full deity of Christ;
- Emphasis on Bible study and religious education, which some Friends feared would lead to neglect of inward spiritual experience.

City Friends were more influenced by the culture of influential people around them and were the first to be moved by the evangelical spirit. In 1806, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting discipline was revised and a new article was included, stating it was cause for disownment to "deny the divinity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the immediate revelation of the Holy Spirit, or the authenticity of the Scriptures." Among Friends influenced by the Evangelical movement, the priestly type of personality tended to take precedence over the prophetic, meaning a focus on discipline, tradition, and creedal statements.

(3) City/Country differences

The wealthy and politically influential city Friends basically controlled Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. At Yearly Meeting sessions, their words were heeded, while country Friends' words were often considered of less worth. Samuel Bettle, the Yearly Meeting Clerk, tended to discount what country Friends said.

Country Friends deplored the "worldliness" and, in some cases, luxury of city Friends and felt uncomfortable in their homes at Yearly Meeting time. Also, country Friends opposed the way

decisions were sometimes made at Yearly Meeting, feeling they had little chance to influence a decision.

(4) Rationalism

The ideas of rationalism originally expressed by Paine, Voltaire, and Hume influenced some Friends directly and others indirectly. Rationalism supported the tendency toward mysticism and away from Evangelicalism. It opposed what was perceived as irrational dogma and lack of religious tolerance. Elias Hicks, whose name is linked to the split, rationalized the idea of the Inner Light.

Hicksite-Orthodox Split

The immediate cause of the tensions that led to Friends' division was the attempt by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting elders to forbid Elias Hicks to preach in 1822. Hicks was born in 1748 and by this time was an old man. He was a popular traveling minister and a Long Island farmer, a Quietist with a rational mind. The Inner Light was to him the sole authority~ he believed that the Bible and life of Jesus should be studied as an aid to inner spiritual life, but not accepted as authoritative on their own.

Some of Hicks' beliefs shocked Evangelicals. He did not believe in "imputed righteousness" through the sacrifice of Christ, but held that a person actually had to live righteously. He believed that Christ was different because he possessed a limitless measure of the Spirit. Further, he felt that the Bible was useful but not necessary for personal spiritual life.

Some Friends who didn't agree with Hicks' theology supported him in the name of freedom of conscience. These included John Comly, a Pennsylvania school teacher who disliked the Evangelical's aggressiveness and lack of religious tolerance. Comly was a mystic and Quietist who wanted peace to return again to the Society of Friends. His answer to the tensions of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1827 was "a quiet retreat from the scene of confusion."

Another key player in the Hicksite-Orthodox split, Samuel Bettle, was a Philadelphia merchant who had been clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for fourteen years. He was an elder concerned with maintaining discipline.

At the start of the 1827 Yearly Meeting difficulty arose in over who should serve as clerk, and Bettle continued to serve. The Hicksites felt powerless and decided to draw apart after the closing session of Yearly Meeting in 1827. Later, they formed their own Yearly Meeting. The results were splits in the Yearly Meeting, Quarterly Meetings, and Monthly Meetings; legal suits over property~ and divided families. In Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, at least two-thirds of some twenty-four thousand members became Hicksite; country Friends were mostly Hicksite, city Friends mostly Orthodox.

The split did not stop with Philadelphia. New York Yearly Meeting divided in 1828, as did Baltimore; both became mostly Hicksite. In the newly created Indiana Yearly Meeting, the vast majority were Orthodox~ there was a small Hicksite group. In Ohio Yearly Meeting there was a fiasco - a scuffle to seize the clerk's table; there Friends were about evenly divided. In the

United States overall, about half of Friends were Hicksite and half Orthodox; London and Dublin Yearly Meetings both recognized Orthodox Meetings, if they are included, the majority of Friends in the world were Orthodox.

The split lowered the Society of Friends in the eyes of the public, as Quakers proved unable to practice internally the love and sensitivity toward others that they had long professed.

Wilburite-Gurneyite Split

The Wilburite-Gurneyite split occurred only among Orthodox Friends; the Hicksites did not have any more major splits. It occurred in 1845 in New England Yearly Meeting, and 1854 in Ohio Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) and a Monthly Meeting in Iowa.

Joseph John Gurney, a British Friend and evangelical, came as a traveling minister to the United States in 1837. His family of wealthy and influential Friends included his sister Elizabeth Gurney Fry, known for her work for prison reform. Gurney was well-educated and a Bible scholar. He strongly encouraged Bible study and Sunday School programs, although he did not believe the Bible to be more primary than the Spirit. He emphasized Christ's atonement as necessary for the satisfaction for human sins (God's "legal requirement"), believing that the blood of Christ is necessary for salvation. Gurney died before the time of the paid pastorate, and did not favor physical sacraments; in these ways his beliefs were traditional.

John Wilbur was a conservative, Quietist Friend who spoke out against Gurney's preaching. He opposed religious education and Bible study as detracting from attention to the Spirit within. His Quarterly Meeting succeeded in having him disowned over the firm objections of his Monthly Meeting. In New England Yearly Meeting a split occurred, which resulted in about five hundred Wilburites and six thousand, five hundred Gurneyites; there was also a split in Ohio Yearly Meeting (Orthodox).

Organization of Quaker Meetings Today

Over time, these and later divisions resulted in the pattern of organization which exists among Friends today.

In the 1870's, many Gurneyite Meetings took on pastors as a means of securing vocal ministry and providing for the nurture of an influx of new people. Today there are two organizations of Friends made up largely of pastoral Meetings: Friends United Meeting (formed as Five Year's Meeting in 1902 - also includes Meetings without pastors), and Evangelical Friends International (formed in 1965).

The other two major groupings of Friends in the United States are Friends General Conference (begun in 1900 and nonpastoral, except for some Meetings which are also part of Friends United Meeting) and Conservative Friends, a small group of Meetings which has sought to maintain a Quietist approach.

Within many unprogrammed Meetings, Friends tend to feel spiritual unity with each other more through the experience of Meeting for Worship and small group sharing than through

common beliefs. Friends are often joined together through experiences which can be called mystical - spiritual communion with God and with each other. Unlike some other mystics, Friends' ultimate common beliefs. Friends are often joined together through experiences which can be called mystical - spiritual communion with God and with each other. Unlike some other mystics, Friends' ultimate goal is not so much union with God alone, but more communion with the Spirit that leads to concern for others and action in the world.

The Inward Light: How Quakerism Unites Universalism and Christianity

by Samuel D. Caldwell

We are all well aware of the long-standing tension in the Religious Society of Friends between Christianity and Universalism. Each pole of this historic tension has had its partisans over time. The Quaker Universalist Fellowship represents one pole of the contemporary debate. Evangelical Friends International is an example of a group that represents the other. Each side of the debate claims that its own view of Quakerism is the true one, and each side feels that the other side's position is a negation of its own. Typically, the debate is cast in logically exclusivist terms: if one position is true, then the other must of necessity be false~ both cannot possibly be true at the same time.

For my part, I have never accepted the terms in which the debate has been cast. It is my own view that Quakerism is neither exclusively Christian, as some Quaker Christians would have it~ nor is it exclusively Universalist, as some Quaker Universalists would have it. The fact is Quakerism has always been a powerful amalgamation of both. My thesis is that not only is it possible to be *both* Christian and Universalist at the same time, but it has always been the very essence and peculiar genius of Quakerism to join the two in holy matrimony! I wish to explain how this is so.

Let me start with the Universalist side of the equation. What many Christian Quakers fail to understand or accept about the Quaker approach to Christianity is that it is Universalist to the core. Universalism is thoroughly embedded in the Quaker perspective precisely because it is intrinsic to our most central and distinctive religious insight: the principle of the Inner Light.

It is helpful to remind ourselves of the essential core of this important insight. Historically, it is this: God gives to every human being who comes into the world a measure of the divine spirit as a Living Witness and a Light to be inwardly guided by. Those who learn to heed the promptings of this Light within them come to be "saved" - that is, they come into fullness and wholeness of life and right relationship with God, themselves, and one another.

Those who resist, ignore, or otherwise deny the workings of this pure spirit within them, though they make a profession of faith, are "condemned" - that is, they become alienated from God, from themselves, and from one another. The chief end of religious life, therefore, is to hearken to and act in accordance with the promptings of the Inner Light in one's life. This description closely parallels George Fox's original "opening" concerning the Light in 1648, as recorded in his *Journal* (Nickalls edition, p. 33).

A number of important characteristics of the Light can be readily inferred from this description. First, this Light is "*divine*" or "*supernatural*." That is, it pertains to God and God's activity. Numerous Friends, among them George Fox and Robert Barclay, have been urgent in cautioning us against confusing the Inner Light with such natural phenomena as reason or conscience, both of which are physically and socially conditioned. Rather, they have emphasized that the Light is God's eternal and indwelling power resident within our mortal frames, there to enlighten and inform the natural reason and conscience with truth of a higher order.

This Light is *personal*. It is no mindless, purposeless, undifferentiated force or power. It is the mind and will of God - the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Sarah - who indwells our souls. To claim, as we do, that we are led or taught by the Light is to accept by inference that the power by which we are led or taught is capable of actively leading or teaching us. This requires a personal or theistic conception of the Spirit, which Friends have traditionally held.

This Light is *saving*. It is the instrument or means by which we are drawn into fullness and wholeness of life and right relationship to God, ourselves, and one another. It is not primarily through the mechanism of assent to certain theological propositions, however heartfelt, nor by participation in certain established rituals, however sincere, that one comes to be "saved" in Quaker faith and practice; it is chiefly through the operation of this Saving Light in human hearts - in the hearing and doing of the Living Word as inwardly revealed in the course of common life.

This Light is *eternal*. It was before time, is now, and will be forevermore. As the writer of John says, "In the beginning was the Word." Friends have always identified the Inner Light with this "logos" or Eternal Word. It is by this Eternal Light and Word that all of the saints and sages down through the ages have known and spoken the Truth. It is by this Light that the Holy Scriptures of the ages have been written (and must be read). It is by this Light that whatever is true, good, and beautiful has been brought forth in human community over time. This Light is and has always been the source and fountain of all human creativity.

This Light is *resistible*. It is not an inevitable force or automatic power; it can be resisted, ignored, or otherwise denied in the human heart. To quote C. S. Lewis, "God does not ravish; He only woos." Although we receive this Light freely and from birth, we are free to choose whether or not and how to respond to its promptings. As someone once remarked, "We are predestinated and foreordained to decide for ourselves!"

This Light is *persistent*. The Light never ceases to make its Living Witness within each and every human heart, even when it is resisted. Although stubborn resistance and persistent disobedience may greatly dim its luminosity, the Light can never be fully extinguished within us. This is the unfailing love and mercy of God which passes all understanding.

This Light is *pure*. It is utterly infallible and perfectly good. Although we may err in our discernment of the Light's witness within us, for any and all who turn to it in humility of heart, the Light is an inerrant guide to truth and wisdom. And, because it is the pure love of God within us, this Light is completely good and trustworthy.

This Light is *ineffable*. It defies complete and accurate description. Like much in the realm of spirit, the Light cannot be completely understood, but it can be experienced and known.

Lastly, and perhaps most important to the present discussion, this Light is unequivocally *universal*. It is freely given by God to each and every human being who comes into the world, regardless of race, sex, nationality, philosophical orientation, religious creed, or station in life. It is the divine birthright and inheritance of all, not the privileged possession of a few. To paraphrase the scripture, it is the Good News of God "preached to every creature under heaven" (Colossians 1: 23).

Now it can readily be seen from these characteristics that the Quaker concept of the Inner Light is radically universalism in its thrust. As such, it offers a strong challenge to many of the exclusivist assumptions of conventional Christian faith. Here is where the tension between Christianity and Universalism in Quakerism begins to be felt.

It is hard to overstate, for instance, how radically different the Quaker view of salvation is from the popular Christian conception. According to our understanding of the Inner Light, any person of whatever religious persuasion, who turns in sincerity of heart to the Divine Light within, and lives in accordance with its promptings, will be saved. All of God's children, Christians and non-Christians alike, have equal access to salvation through the Light.

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This view constitutes an outright denial of the exclusivist Christian assumption that salvation comes *only* to those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and participate in certain established rituals of the Church. One need not be a professing Christian, in other words, to be saved; and many who are professing Christians are (apparently) not saved.

Similarly, Quaker Universalism challenges the now-prevalent evangelical Christian view that the Holy Spirit "comes into one's heart," presumably from outside, at the moment of conversion. Friends have testified throughout their history that this Holy Spirit is already resident as a Divine Seed in every human heart, waiting to be decisively accepted and nurtured through attentive obedience in daily life. This difference in viewpoint explains the real distinction between Quaker "convincement" and evangelical "conversion."

Salvation and conversion are not the only fronts on which Quaker Universalism challenges conventional Christianity. From the beginning, for instance, Friends have vociferously challenged the fundamentalist Christian assumption that the Bible is the Word of God, insisting instead that the Holy Spirit, the Christ Within, is the Word of God. The Bible is a declaration of the fountain; it is not the fountain itself. The fountain is Christ, the Living Word. George Fox argued disarmingly that, if the Bible were really the Word of God, then one could buy and sell the Word of God and carry it around in one's pocket!

In a similar vein, the Quaker doctrine of "continuing revelation," which says that God continues to reveal Truth to those who have ears to hear, directly challenges the fundamentalist Christian belief that God's revelation was completed when the books of the biblical canon were finalized by the Church.

Quaker Universalism also challenges the conventional Christian definition of the Church, insisting that the Church is not a building. Nor is it an identifiable group of confessing Christians. It is, rather, the universal fellowship of all those persons, of whatever background or persuasion, who know and live in accordance with the Living Witness of God's Light within them. Unlike the standard Christian definition, the Quaker definition of the Church embraces non-Christians, and even theoretically excludes professing Christians who have no real inward, life-changing experience of God.

These few examples should make it clear how deeply-rooted and fundamental the Universalist perspective is in Quakerism, and how profoundly, in turn, this perspective affects the Quaker approach to Christianity - so much so that Quakerism takes a strongly prophetic stance over and against a number of widely accepted interpretations of Christian faith.

It should also be clear, however, that Quaker Universalism, as we have described it here, has little or nothing to do with that brand of eclectic, humanist philosophy called "universalism" that is so prevalent in liberal Quaker circles today. This sort of pseudo-universalism - "pseudo" because it bears a superficial resemblance to Quaker Universalism, but is really contrary to it in a number of crucial ways poses such an insidious threat to the true Quaker view that I would like to spend a few moments describing in more detail how the two are different.

While Quaker Universalism is strongly religious in content and devotional in orientation, pseudo-universalism typically maintains a pronounced philosophical detachment from all religious traditions (especially, as we shall see, from Christianity). Unlike Quaker Universalism, which calls for a faith commitment to a specific religious path, pseudo-universalism teaches non-adherence to any particular religion at all, preferring a kind of smorgasbord approach to religious ideas instead.

Quaker Universalism acknowledges the differences between the major religions of the world, but calls them all to the same universal standard of Truth: the Living Witness of God within. Pseudouniversalism often ignores, trivializes and obfuscates the real differences between world religions, claiming that "all religions are essentially the same." In effect, it denies all religions by affirming all equally and embracing none.

While Quaker Universalism is a specific religious path that leads the seeker toward transformation and salvation, pseudo-universalism institutionalizes seeking and is highly suspicious of finding in religious life. Partly because it considers the major religions of the world to be primitive (and therefore false?), and partly because it is highly intellectual in orientation, pseudo-universalism discourages the sort of existential faith commitment that is essential for real spiritual growth and transformation. It offers no genuine spiritual path of its own, while discouraging its adherents from embarking on any established path.

Because it is a view of religion and not a religion itself, and because it accepts no particular religious tradition as normative, pseudo-universalism has within it no principle whereby it can discriminate between what is true and what is false in any particular religious view. To what standard, for instance, would pseudo-universalism appeal regarding a membership application from an avowed practitioner of the religion of satanism? Quaker Universalism, on the other hand, is founded on the premise that there is one true principle of discernment, and that is the Inner Light. In addition, as we shall see momentarily, although Quaker Universalism radically challenges Christianity at many points, it also has historically accepted Jesus Christ and the gospel tradition as normative for faithful living.

Lastly, while Quaker Universalism is firmly rooted in the Christian tradition (albeit not always comfortable with it), pseudo-universalism often acts as a smoke screen for anti-Christian sentiment. In my conversations with Friends who have been influenced by this kind of universalism, I frequently encounter significant discomfort with, if not open hostility to, Christians and the Christian faith. This, of course, is in direct contradiction to their own professed principles. To this sort of universalist, it seems, all religions are equal *except* Christianity!

Perhaps you have heard of H. L. Mencken's famous definition of a "puritan" as someone who is obsessed with the fear that somehow, somewhere, someone is having fun? The pseudo-universalist is one who is obsessed with the fear that somehow, somewhere, someone has "gotten religion," especially the Christian religion.

As you can see, the two types of universalism, while similar on the surface, are as different as night and day. It is easy to see why pseudo-universalism is uncomfortable with the practice of Christianity. The two are philosophically incompatible. True Quaker Universalism, however, has a uniquely symbiotic relationship with Christianity. And this brings us to the Christian side of the equation.

If I did not make the Christian party happy with my remarks on Quaker Universalism, it is certain that I will not make the Quaker Universalist party happy with my remarks on Christianity. As we have seen, Christian Quakers have to accept the fact that Quakerism is radically universalist in its interpretation of Christianity. Universalist Quakers, on the other hand, have to accept the fact that Quakerism is radically Christian in its interpretation of Universalism. For, the truth is that, despite its somewhat testy relationship with conventional Christianity, Quakerism is and always has been decidedly Christian.

We have already sketched how the Quaker view of Christianity is distinctively Universalist. How is the Quaker view of Universalism distinctively Christian? It is really quite simple: Friends have always identified the Inner Light with the living Christ. Christ, in Quaker theology, *is* the Light. "There is One, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition," said the voice to George Fox at the moment of his

convincement. And this Christ Jesus, Fox perceived and subsequently preached, was the Eternal Risen Christ, the Light of the World, come to teach *all* people who would hear his voice, not just professing Christians. To be Quaker is to be a follower of Christ, Who witnesses within each one of us as we walk through life.

This strict equivalency of Christ with the Inner Light is the *key* to understanding how it is that Christianity and Universalism are so inextricably bound together in Quaker faith and practice. Not only is it possible to be *both* Christian *and* Universalist at the same time; it is the very essence and peculiar genius of Quakerism to marry the two in one powerful synthesis through the doctrine of the Inner Light. In the final analysis, the Quaker doctrine of the Inner Light is really a radically Universalist interpretation of the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit. To be Quaker is, therefore, to be radically Christian.

As a result of this unique marriage that Quakerism has effected, the quintessentially exclusivist text of the Christian faith - "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes unto the Father except by me" (John 14:6) - is transformed into a powerful Universalist message for the *whole* world. Friends have witnessed for 350 years that the Light of Christ Within *is indeed* the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one comes to God except by it. This Light is the universal, saving, eternal, personal, resistible, persistent, and pure Witness of God within every human heart, and no one is excluded from partaking of its riches. As a friend of mine is fond of saying, "Christ has returned, and *everyone* is invited to the reception!"

And, how fortunate for both Christianity and Universalism that Quakerism has joined them together. Fully embedded in the context of Christianity, Quaker Universalism is richly informed by all of the pregnant imagery and profound meaning of the Judeo-Christian tradition and the transforming story of Jesus Christ. In the Quaker synthesis, Christianity saves Universalism from the vapid sterility of mere abstraction. Universalism, in turn, saves Christianity from the spiritual poison of religious parochialism and exclusivity. The two not only complement each other, they are essential to one another.

In the end, the marriage metaphor we have been using is not very satisfactory, for it implies a kind of voluntary association that is not applicable here. The union of Christianity and Universalism in Quakerism is one of mutual entailment - more like two sides of one coin than like a marriage. Friends on both sides of the discussion need to face the fact that divorce is out of the question. Quakerism is, by definition, *both* Universalist *and* Christian at the same time.

