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# A CHRISTO-TEXTURED LIFE: THE CENTER OF PRACTICAL FAITH

DAVID L. JOHNS

## WHY DO YOU SEEK?

One need go no further than the New Testament resurrection narratives to find the kernels of Quaker Christian faith:

*“Why do you seek among the dead for one who is alive?”*

In their context, these words were not uttered as bitter chastisement, nor were they an indication of untold secrets hidden from the eyes of the world. The words were spoken by a messenger of God to a small band of women who were the first evangelists, the first to proclaim the Christian good news: “Christ is risen!”

He is risen indeed!

Friends have consistently declared that their faith and practice is founded upon reality, not illusion; practicality, not abstraction; life, not death. Consequently, resurrection allusions abound in Friends’ literature. One reference, however, is so familiar and so foundational that it functions as a cornerstone of Quaker faith: “Christ is come to teach his people himself.” We may surmise that this is a post-resurrection image because it conveys a *present* ministry of Christ among his people—“Christ *is* come”—it does not suggest a ministry restricted to three years in the ancient near east. Collapsed into this phrase is not only Easter, but Pentecost, and the *Parousia* as well. Quaker faith is animated by a sincere conviction that the one who once taught on the Mount continues to teach, there is no disunity between the pre-incarnate Christ, the incarnate Christ in Jesus of Nazareth, and the risen and exalted Christ experienced as the Light in Friends worship.<sup>1</sup> This insight has had far-reaching implications for Friends as they have lived with it since Fox wrote the words.<sup>2</sup> If this assertion is in fact true, then it is hardly surprising to find that it influences Friends’ understanding of God, eschatology, humanity, mission, corporate life together, as well as Christology. Because faith and practice are so intimately joined in Friends’ experience of following

Jesus, “Christ is come” also gives shape to practical living and being-in-the-world.

In this essay I discuss in basic terms how this fundamental insight gives rise to a “Christo-textured life,” that is, one lived in awareness of and in fellowship with the risen and present Christ. What are the features of a life so textured? Second, I will discuss how Friends return to the practice of seeking for life among the corpses. What began as prophetic turns pathetic in Quaker self-absorption, in negative self-description, in their relative isolation from the wider Christian Church, and in their insistence upon fighting theological battles that have come to an end, or at least have less significance, in a post-Christendom era. My purpose is not to say something new, and I realize that any attempt to state a fundamental center of Quakerism will be judged as either inadequate, misinformed, or naïve. Nevertheless, it seems worth the risk to ask from time to time *what* makes the Religious Society of Friends what it is.

## SEARCHING FOR LIFE IN EMPTY TOMBS

It is a principle of faith that “Christ is come to teach his people himself.” There is nothing self-evident about this claim. However, in the corporate life of the Religious Society of Friends this claim has in many ways served as a credo, one not deduced primarily through biblical exegesis, but one deduced from Friends’ lived experience. The truthfulness of the claim is manifest in the life that emerges from its appropriation by this community of faith. Friends have understood (even if their critics did not always understand them) that to emphasize the living and immediate presence of Christ is to challenge customary Christian thought and practice. Quaker Testimonies (often wrongly termed “distinctives”), theologically speaking, are less a matter of *protest* or *dissent* in a formal sense, than they are the necessary consequence of believing “Christ is come.” Creeds (as commonly employed by churches), ritual worship patterns, and sacerdotal ministry have been subjected to sharp criticism. These easily become substitutes for reality—empty tombs holding what was once alive. In their stead has been a consistent reference to the inward, spiritual, and continuing ministry of Christ—in all his offices—in the new covenant of God.

The new covenant is ever dynamic. It is one thing, for example, to reject creeds because one refuses to be told what to think or what to say, or to reject them because one does not believe their affirmations

to be true; it is quite another matter to reject creeds because they are unable to lay hold of the Spirit who blows where it will or because salvific power is not to be found in the words. Although the latter is akin to Friends' thinking, it should not be taken as a rejection of the truthfulness of these historic statements. On the contrary, in a number of cases Friends have written credo-like statements that in substance are not altogether unlike the Nicene and the Apostles' creeds. Along with actual catechisms, these have been used to outline specific doctrinal positions of the Society, even to the point of repeatedly using the phrase: "we believe."<sup>3</sup> Examples include: George Fox's, *Something in answer to all such as falsely say, the Quakers are no Christians* (1682), and Edward Burrough's, *Declaration to all the world of our faith* (1657). Nevertheless, the words do not presume to domesticate the living Christ, nor are they viewed as themselves vehicles of divine grace. Statements such as these are premised on the vitality of a living present Lord: "Christ is come."<sup>4</sup>

But for what purpose is the resurrected Christ among us? "Christ is come *to teach his people.*" Early Friends' theology was covenantal and in this new "covenant of light," Christ was believed to function in a variety of offices—Prophet, Priest, King, Bishop, Counselor, Redeemer, Shepherd, and so on.

Christ is the Counselor: "do you hear His Voice from Heaven, concerning your Heavenly state?" He is the Shepherd: "Do you follow him? Do you know his Voice?" He is the Priest: "Do you feel his Blood sprinkling your Hearts, and his pure Water washing you clean?" He is the Prophet: "Do you hear him in all things? Doth he reveal the Father to you? Doth he open the Book of Conscience to you?" Christ is King: "Doth he rule in your hearts of Faith?"<sup>5</sup>

The office of teacher was emphasized frequently as well. In this office, Christ is *the* teacher who instructs the Church and keeps open the channels of a revelation that continues by speaking, guiding, and illuminating. Submission to the present leadership of Christ is *expected* and it is *possible* because his will can be discerned and, through the Spirit's empowerment, followed—even unto perfection.

Christ as present teacher dismantles the mediatory priesthood. No priestly representative is required if Christ the priest continues to fill the role. Church governance may be either structured around and in response to this living presence, or it may take the shape of a tomb, structured around the residue of what was once alive or what was

once necessary in the absence of Christ. Fox was adamant that “there is no true Church [except] where Christ exercises his offices in and amongst [his people].”<sup>6</sup> On one hand, his comments sound similar to Irenaeus’ from the late second century: “For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth.” But upon more careful examination, it is clear Irenaeus was referring to an emerging structure—the Church—wherein offices were held by various human representatives: “‘For in the Church,’ it is said, ‘God hath set apostles, prophets, teachers,’ [1 Cor. 12:28] and all the other means through which the Spirit works; of which all those are not partakers who do not join themselves to the Church, but defraud themselves of life through their perverse opinions and infamous behavior.”<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to deny the explicit biblical rationale for such human agency, outlined as it is in Ephesians 4:11-13. Joseph John Gurney addresses this by recognizing that humans will participate in these roles, but he adds that it is necessary for the roles to be exercised “under the immediate influence of the Spirit.”<sup>8</sup> Through the Spirit, therefore, Christ functions as teacher although human agency necessarily exists in ecclesial governance.

Every effort was made to reduce the likelihood that forms of reality would take precedence over reality itself and to assure that Christ’s authority was not usurped. This is quite evident in Quaker thinking concerning the sacraments. Baptism and communion were believed to be indispensable to Christian existence, but not as customarily practiced by the rest of the churches. Substance and essence were key to reality, not external forms. Ceremonies may mislead by implying something has in fact occurred; Friends insisted there was no necessary relationship between ritual act and spiritual substance, and that in their silent waiting they were able to commune with the Real Presence of Christ. Friends reacted to abuses of ecclesial authority and general religious hypocrisy by internalizing their faith and shifting authority away from outward signs and offices and asserting that the springs of life were interior. They also insisted that external expressions of religious faith were to be viewed with suspicion and that spiritual reality was an inward experience of God, not an outward profession: “...the *more inward*, the *less outward*; the more people come to be taught immediately of God, by the light of his word and Spirit in their heart, the less need of outward means.”<sup>9</sup>

All this could easily result in disengagement from the world, a retreat into the soul, and a general indifference about exterior reality. However, in many cases this did not follow. Instead of closing in upon themselves, Friends were often opened out toward the other. The same William Penn who wrote “...the *more inward*, the *less outward*” when speaking of Christian worship, however, also wrote about a faith engaged in the vital affairs of humanity; from *No Cross, No Crown*: “True godliness does not turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavors to mend it; not to hide their candle under a bushel, but to set it upon a table in a candlestick.”<sup>10</sup> Beginning with their gospel-ordered life together and radiating outward, Quakers distinguished themselves as an important voice of social conscience. Friends’ public witness—Testimonies—integrated practice with what was consistent with Truth. What would life be like if the Kingdom of God were actually here? The Spirit who breathed forth the Scriptures, fired the apostolic imagination, who gave “supernatural endowments” to all gathered at Pentecost, was present and teaching the way of God through Christ.<sup>11</sup> There was no need to seek among the dead for the Living One. Life was textured by the presence of the resurrected Christ. Living in this fashion changed how the world was viewed, how God was heard, how church was structured, and how Friends challenged the wider Christian community.

Therefore, Fox declared: “Christ is come to teach his people himself.”

## TOMBS OF OUR OWN MAKING

But death is enticing, and graveyards are often revisited. After all, among these corpses once pulsed real life. We may visit to honor the dead, but we may do so because we envy the vitality they once possessed and secretly hope to acquire it for ourselves. This is understandable even though unlikely.

Occasionally the dead are sought because of a morbid fascination with one’s own mortality: a need to see and feel what it will be like to be dead. An organization in decline, whose “glory days” are behind them, might find itself drawn to look again into the faces of corpses. Quaker self-fascination, particularly in North America, “Founders’ days” complete with broad-rimmed hats, bonnets, and subcultural continuation of plain speech and dress—these are necrotic fascinations; they look for life where life is not.

The description of Friends offered in the previous section is simplified, idealized, and not a little romantic, but it is not far removed from a popular Friends' self-understanding that speaks of something that once *was*.

“Christ is come...”

Insights drawn from the belief that “Christ is come” gave substance to and impetus for Quaker practice. This Christological understanding provided a theological rationale, though it might have been and may still remain underdeveloped, it provided an assurance of legitimacy sufficient to sustain persons during persecution and imprisonment. Encounter with the living Christ textured the movement and breathed purpose and direction into personal and social practice, and it gave substance to corporate waiting worship. Joined with a second coming eschatology, the Kingdom of God was brought from tomorrow to today.

There is much about which Friends are proud. However, when the Christo-textured element is compromised, practice becomes unintelligible. Practices such as peaceableness and universal ministry make sense when “Christ is come.” Apart from a rationale of this sort, Quaker practice is simply another form of self-righteous moralism, irrelevant utopianism, or vaguely principled idealism. Practice coheres within a particular understanding of faith—“Christ is come”—and the testimonies integrate this faith with appropriate practice.

It is on this point that I disagree profoundly with Rupert Read who argues that *the* center of Quakerism is *practice*, particularly the practice of focused silent worship (although he also accepts “socio-ethical-spiritual principles of action outside of Meeting”).<sup>12</sup> Read interprets Friends' creedlessness to mean faith is unimportant to the Society, but what one does in worship is important. If, however, one uses the silence to meditate upon one's career, this is inappropriate according to Read. But he offers no justification for why one should “seek” together with others in waiting worship—either why or what or whom one should seek, or why this seeking should be done communally, or what one is waiting for, or why waiting should be defined as “worship.” Theological disagreements do not exist for him because theological reflection on experience and the articulation of belief are unnecessary.

“There are no principles which are central to Quakerism any more, save for principles of practice.” (35) Yet, the practice of a *par-*

*ticular ritual form* of worship is required by Read for Friends to be Friends. Why? It is unclear why, save for a tangential argument from tradition; his reticence to explore the theological basis of and implications for practice makes further investigation impossible. So, *is* Christ come to teach his people himself? Who knows, and furthermore, who cares? The Society is based upon a shared form, a custom, a practice.

Ben Dandelion has observed that Friends who have abandoned traditional Quaker theology accept and enforce instead a behavioral creed. Although these Friends may permit a wide diversity in belief-content for Quakerism, they are rigidly absolutist concerning the form in which Quakerism may properly be expressed. This unwritten behavior creed serves as a test of orthodoxy.

Liberal Friends can question or disbelieve the divinity of Jesus but not the sacralisation of silence. They do not have to believe in God, but they need to follow the set of implicit and explicit rules about if, when, and how to break the silence. Discipline is maintained around the *form* of Quakerism, through Elders and Clerks, but not over its content in the Liberal Quaker tradition. Form is prescribed: interpretation of the experience, that the form is designed to produce and protect, is individual.<sup>13</sup>

Enforcement of this sort is the dying gasp of a soon-to-be-corpse, not to mention an inverse of the inner/outer, form/substance pattern of earlier Friends. Rightly understood, the living Christ could be expressed and even incarnated in forms beyond our wildest imagination; if this were not so, why are some anti-ritual Quakers so enamored with the worship patterns of other religions? But to dismiss the *content* of faith in favor of a prescribed *form* is an effort to domesticate God, and it seriously misunderstands the dynamics of divine life.

Granted, it is difficult to speak descriptively about the Religious Society of Friends. Nearly every statement one offers can be countered with examples from other Friends who do not agree and who practice faith quite differently. Faith claims die the death of a thousand qualifications as the diverse subcultures within Quakerism are named and their respective positions enumerated. Yet, even as a *descriptive* account of the Religious Society of Friends, a position such as Read's is unhelpful. It fails to recognize the diverse ways Friends worship around the world today, and it presumes to restrict the many ways the Spirit manifests itself in the wider Church's celebration of vibrant and living faith.

As a *prescriptive* account this view is preposterous. As John Miller argued in a response to Read's article, Read is working with a truncated understanding of "faith"—one that bears little resemblance to how faith is understood either in the biblical literature, the experience of Friends, or the work of contemporary theologians. Read sees faith only in terms of creedal statements and propositional ascent and is apparently unaware of the rich complexity of the concept.<sup>14</sup>

Contrast Read's content-less Quakerism with that of John Wilhelm Roundtree: "The very heart and centre of the Quaker message was a re-discovery and a re-affirmation of the reality and sufficiency of the presence and power of Christ." In this affirmation Friends find a steadying central conception. Quakers have, according to Roundtree, "set up an idolatry of the past, [and] grew into formalists as ritual in temper as the Anglican with his crosses and processions...." Unwilling to abandon all thinking for a simplistic dualism such as Read's, he continues: "If the Society of Friends is to have a wider and increasing service, if it is to hold its young people, if indeed it is to have a continued existence at all, it must produce a modern interpretation of its original conception, and lead the world of thought to a deeper interpretation of Jesus Christ."<sup>15</sup> *Practice of faith* is not separated from the *content of faith*.

Practice is indeed germane to Quaker being-in-the-world; however, practice is a concretization of deeply held convictions. The phenomenon of hyphenated identity, popular in some corners of Quakerism (e.g., Buddhist-Quaker, Atheist-Quaker, Hindu-Quaker), may be a witness to the bankruptcy of regarding Quakerism in terms of practice alone. In the absence of real substance, perhaps it may be necessary to affiliate with a historic tradition of teaching and discipline. If it were not for an apparent bias against Christianity, then, a rich, complex, troubling, and inspiring tradition would be discovered, a tradition inextricably woven into the fabric of Quakerism itself.

Practice also includes *modes of thinking* and *traditions of thoughtful inquiry*. To practice medicine, for example, requires more than simply a desire to help people. Nothing could be more disastrous than handing a merely well-intentioned person a scalpel. Being a medical practitioner assumes that one is adequately schooled in a body of learning that assures one's hands are skilled and informed. Guiding assumptions and even established convictions about the body, about pathology, about neurochemistry are fundamental to being a competent practitioner.

To be a practitioner of a faith tradition, such as the Religious Society of Friends, requires the development of competencies based upon assumptions and convictions. However, in an effort to eliminate conflict over disagreement about these assumptions and convictions, Read reduces Quaker witness to unsubstantiated emotivism (empirical adequacy is “irrelevant” in religious life, he claims). As long as one emphasizes common *experiences* and *actions*, “what we *believe*, perhaps astonishingly, can be almost entirely sidelined, made irrelevant.”<sup>16</sup>

## A NARRATIVE EXCURSUS

In recent years much attention has been given to “narrative” thought, the function of religious teachings as grammar.<sup>17</sup> From this perspective, religious teaching is viewed in terms of regulative theory. This does not reduce faith to law or to moralism, but it asks serious questions about what is necessary for a particular faith community to be what it is. What practices are required without which that community itself would not exist? Traditions comprise “wholes” that require particular practices, particular teachings, and particularly schooled practitioners for their very existence. To remove a piece one likes (or dislikes), renders that piece unintelligible and damages the whole. What is the peace testimony, after all, taken apart from a community that believes the human being can be transformed in will and heart, a community that trusts and practices “Christ is come,” a community that nourishes together with others a life of peaceableness? Apart from such a community that so practices, the peace testimony is utopian—a fanciful hope, a delusional moralism.

For many narrative thinkers, less emphasis is placed upon experiences that preexist faith’s affirmations (or prohibitions, or admonitions, et al.) and more emphasis is placed upon the evocative grammar of the community’s regulative discourse for “giving rise to” experience, giving it shape, defining its expressive possibilities. So, rather than claim that “experience gives rise to language,” narrative thinkers are more inclined to say “language creates the possibility for experience.” The function of a conviction such as “Christ is come” is to provide a narrative framework that evokes faith *and* practice.

Empiricist assumptions have come under fire. The foundationalism of Locke’s “*tabula rasa*” and Descartes’ “*cogito ergo sum*” have been challenged by arguments for the formative role of language in shaping human experience. This has radical consequences in all areas

of thought and it is certainly felt in theology where the assumptions of Friedrich Schleiermacher are, in effect, completely reversed. Schleiermacher, long regarded as the father of modern theological liberalism, established the general method for theological reflection that characterizes both liberal and conservative theology. Correlational or mediating thought seeks to bring together into a coherent and intelligible manner the claims of reason and revelation, of experience and “divine pronouncement.” Church teachings, faith statements are at heart, according to Schleiermacher, accounts of *prior feelings* of piety, feelings of the experience of dependence/contingency in face of ultimacy, of self-ness in the presence of otherness. This is precisely why someone like Read is able to dismiss beliefs—even faith—as “irrelevant”; what matters most is an alleged experience prior to its articulation in language.

Quakers were/are heavily influenced by the philosophical modernism of the Enlightenment, a movement birthed on the continent around the time of the origins of Quakerism itself. Forty years ago, Maurice Creasey noted this influence in an early and persistent misapplication of the concepts, “inner” and “outer.” “Quakerism became wedded to a prevalent and quasi-Cartesian dualism and, as a consequence, set its feet upon paths which, for many a year, led it into the barren places of quietism and formalism.”<sup>18</sup> The results of this thinking are sometimes embraced as a badge of honor. Immediacy and spontaneity over tradition and preparedness; inner religious experience over outer theological thought; silence-based/unprogrammed (or, poorly programmed) worship over word/sound-based/programmed or prepared worship; a propensity toward the apophatic over the kataphatic; claims of *unmediated* experience and/or revelation over acknowledgment of mediated and/or *materially articulated and conveyed* experience/revelation; “spiritual” sacrament over physical/bodily sacramentality (as if “spiritual” exists independent of materiality). This dualism contributes to many of the theological difficulties among Friends from intra-faith contentiousness (particularly regarding worship), to sacramental theology, to rejection of art and the beautiful in favor of the blasé and gray.

Creasey’s study is a provocative call to think seriously about language and how it shapes identity and how, in the case of the Religious Society of Friends, it has perpetuated an unhealthy dualism. Quaker educator, Harold Loukes, recognized this as well:

It is sometimes suggested that traditionalism spells death to religion, and that we must always be attacking it. But while there is a sense in which this is true, it is equally true that all religion arises from tradition. It is never entirely an individual affair; and indeed, it is comparatively recent in the long story of human aspiration for religion to be seen as individual at all. It comes, as all our life does, from others: from the language we learn, the ways of behaviour we unquestionably acquire, the habits of thought which we accept as inevitably as we wear our clothes. Our most intimate and personal religious experience takes its shape from the beliefs and attitudes of those among whom we are born. Even at the greatest moments of dynamic religious movement, the work of tradition is powerful, for the most original criticism takes its form from what it criticizes, and cannot be understood without it.<sup>19</sup>

The interest in language springing from the philosophy of Wittgenstein recognizes that language does more than simply *describe* reality, it *evokes* reality. To utter a word is to create, to give birth to realities that may not have existed previously. Words may “call forth” by evoking that which is latent, waiting to be inspired, summoned, given life. Yet, our speech may actually *create* new and inhabitable worlds, not simply *describe* presently existing ones.

According to George Lindbeck, a religion, “Like a culture or language, ... is a communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of individuals rather than being primarily a manifestation of those subjectivities.” “Instead of deriving external features of a religion from inner experience, it is the inner experiences which are viewed as derivative.”<sup>20</sup> When primary focus is given to experience (of whatever sort) and the development of communities, ideas, and social agendas based upon experiential states (which has been and continues to be reflective of the Religious Society of Friends) then, apart from a common formative experience, the experiential basis is rooted in humanity and not necessarily in the divine (indeed, to follow Read’s position, it would be pointless to understand the shared experience as anything other than non-divine). As Maurice Creasey says again:

Whatever else may be learned from a study of our origins, this much at least is clear: that the early Quaker teaching concerning “the universal and divine light of Christ” was a message concerning the action of God rather than the nature of man... Friends were united in the certainty that the same power, wisdom, and

grace of God which had ever been seeking to save man from his futile desire for autonomy, and which had been concretely revealed and expressed in Jesus Christ, was now available to lead into all truth those who trusted and obeyed it.<sup>21</sup>

“Christ is risen” and “Christ is come” are more than creedal affirmations. As Friends have always known, they are invitations to a new world.

## ROLLING THE STONE AWAY—CONCLUSION

The Religious Society of Friends has offered a vision of faith that is practical and practicable, and it has tried to do so based upon reality not illusion, practicality not abstraction, life not death. Its eschatology collapses time into the present in such a way that all the roles of Christ—past, present, and future—are operative now.

Traditional Catholic and Anglican liturgies, during the eucharistic Great Thanksgiving, bring to bear the comprehensiveness of Christ’s presence in the corporately confessed “mystery of faith.”

Christ *has* died;

Christ *is* risen;

Christ *will* come again!

Without rejecting the past and without rejecting anticipation, Friends have staked their claim in the present.

*Why do you seek among the dead for one who is alive?* “We do not so seek,” is the Quaker reply: “Christ *is* come; *this* we believe and *this* we live.”

The great and mighty day of the Lord is come, and coming to all the world, and his salvation shall be known to all the ends of the earth, and life and immortality shall come to light, and the Lamb’s power known in this day of the Lamb, Christ Jesus who is come to reign.<sup>22</sup>

Whatever can or cannot be said about the actual reality of Christ’s presence or the inner “religious experiences” of Friends, the corporate conviction of “Christ is come” has functioned to give Quakers a Christologically-textured faith and it has inspired a kind of practice animated and intensified by a sense of Christ’s present ministry.

Yet, it is critical to the future of the Religious Society of Friends and, even more importantly, it is critical to the future of the wider Christian community, to realize that while “Christ is come” is a powerful *truth proclaimed by Friends* since their beginning, *it is not a “Quaker truth.”* The best that Friends have to offer has never been, nor should it ever be a parochial, proprietary Quaker conviction. “Christ is come” is the truth of Easter and it is the truth of Pentecost; therefore, it is the proclamation of the entire Church catholic. And because “Christ is come” emphasizes also the *Parousia*, its truth is also the hope of the world.

## NOTES

1. See Maurice Creasey, “The Quaker Interpretation of the Significance of Christ,” *Quaker Religious Thought* 1 (Autumn 1959), 2-15 and Arthur O. Roberts, “A Quaker Understanding of Jesus Christ,” *Quaker Religious Thought* 29 (July 1999), 9-23.
2. *Journal*, 1649, 1655, and letter to Princess Elizabeth, 1677.
3. See Stephen W. Angell, “The Catechisms of George Fox: Why They Were Written in the First Place, What Was Contained in Them, What Use Was Made of Them, and What We Can Learn from Them Today,” *Quaker Theology* 9 (Fall-Winter 2003).
4. “Creeds are milestones, doctrines are interpretations; Truth, as George Fox was continually asserting, a seed with the power of growth, not a fixed crystal, be its facets never so beautiful.” Joshua Rowntree, ed., *John Wilhelm Rowntree: Essays and Addresses*, 2nd edition (London: Headley Bros., 1906), 349.
5. This summary is quoted in Creasey, “The Quaker Interpretation...” 9. The full quotation may be found in “To All the Kings, Princes, and Governors in the Whole World: and All That Profess Themselves Christians, and Others, to Read and Consider. This Was Upon Me From the Lord to Write Unto You,” in George Fox, *Works*, vol. 5 (State College, PA: New Foundation Fellowship, 1991), 308-309. Concerning Friends and covenantal theology: John Punshon, *Reasons for Hope: The Faith and Future of the Friends Church* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 2001); Lucy Davenport, “Christ Jesus the Covenant of God: Two Views of the Quaker Doctrine of the Light,” *Quaker Religious Thought* 26 (March 1993), 7-15.
6. George Fox, Epistle #230, quoted in T. Canby Jones, ed. *The Power of the Lord is Over All: The Personal Letters of George Fox* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1988), 188
7. Against Heresies 3:24:1 [A.D. 189].
8. “Observations on the Distinguishing Views & Practices of the Society Of Friends,” in *Gurney’s Works*, vol. 1 (London: Norwich, 1848), 226.
9. William Penn, *Primitive Christianity Revived in the Faith and Practice of the People Called Quakers*, X.v. (Philadelphia: Henry Longstreth, 1877), 76.
10. William Penn, *No Cross, No Crown*, V.xiii (York: William Sessions Book Trust, 1981), 63-64.
11. Gurney, “Essays on the Evidences, Doctrines, and Practical Operation, of Christianity,” in *Gurney’s Works*, vol. 2 (London: Norwich, 1848), 98.

12. Rupert Read, "On the Nature and Centrality of the Concept of 'Practice' Among Quakers," *Quaker Religious Thought* 27 (1995), 33-37.
13. Ben Pink Danelion, Douglas Gwyn, and Timothy Peat, *Heaven on Earth: Quakers and the Second Coming* (Birmingham, England: Woodbrooke College and Kelso, Scotland: Curlew Productions, 1998), 180-181. Emphasis is in the original.
14. John Miller, "On Faith," *Quaker Religious Thought* 27 (1995), 39-43. For a comprehensive discussion of the concept of faith, see: Avery Cardinal Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Christian Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
15. Quoted in Creasey and Loukes, *The Next 50 Years*, (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1956), 14, 15, 16.
16. Read, 37, fn. 6. Emphasis is in the original.
17. The material in this discussion of narrative theology first appeared in an earlier form as David L. Johns, "Blessing and Cursing: Learning the New Language of Christian Faith," in *Proceedings of the 2002 Friends Association for Higher Education* (Wilmington, OH: Wilmington College, 2003), 28-29.
18. Maurice Creasey, "'Inward' and 'Outward': a Study in Early Quaker Language," Supplement no. 30, *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1962), 20.
19. Creasey and Loukes, *ibid*, 36.
20. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion & Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 33, 34.
21. Maurice Creasey, *Christ in Early Quakerism* (Philadelphia: The Tract Association of Friends, n.d.).
22. Fox, *Works* Vol. 4 (State College, PA: New Foundation Fellowship, 1991), 242.