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Preface and "Thank You, Arthur!"

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Preface

This festschrift volume's title, *Truth's Bright Embrace*, echoes Arthur Roberts' Quaker heritage and, more importantly, his life. In personal integrity and public witness, Arthur has embraced and been embraced by truth. He has also, as he reports, been "drawn by the Light" and felt showered by its brilliance. The Light streams through the prism of Arthur's life, and its splendor draws us, as well.

The variety of topics and forms in this collection witness to Arthur's own wide range of interests and contributions. Trained in church history, his teaching responsibilities and personal interests drew him also into biblical studies, philosophy, Quaker history and interpretation, and much more. His contributions have come in books, articles, lectures, poems, sermons, musicals, and art, especially in wood. This volume's cover design draws on a portion of Arthur's black walnut sculpture on display in the Religious Studies Department at George Fox University. He describes this sculpture in *Drawn by the Light* as "depicting seed and flame, symbolic of birth by the Spirit" (p. 171).

We thank each the twenty-four contributors for their splendid work here. They are all former students of and/or colleagues with Arthur in various enterprises—the church, the academic community, the Quaker community, and public service. Their eagerness to collaborate in this work testifies again to Arthur's faithful service. The list of contributors at the end of the book contains personal reflections that say more of his work and influence.

Thanks is due as well to several individuals who helped bring this volume to completion. Katie Bartlett, Sandy Maurer, and Shannon Smith each helped in numerous ways, especially to bring order to the flow of manu-

scripts and electronic files. Darwin Melnyk of e.media, inc. generously guided us through all stages of production, including his designing the book cover. His experience and creativity in publishing have been invaluable.

We are also grateful to Edward F. Stevens, President of George Fox University, who supported this collection of essays as the inaugural volume from George Fox University Press. His appreciation of Arthur Roberts, his confidence in this project, and his vision for the potential of George Fox University Press have made this work possible.

As editors and contributors, this collection is a way of thanking Arthur and celebrating what he means to us. We hope you as a reader will join us in that. We also hope you will enjoy the contribution these essays and poems make to our common life.

Paul N. Anderson
Howard R. Macy

“Thank You, Arthur!”

You have led us by example,
you have encouraged us with timely words and deeds,
you have taught us in and outside the classroom
to be seekers of Truth and minders of the Light.

Thank you for your faithfulness.

Thank you for your courage.

The work of Christ is furthered through your endeavors,
and ministries of the Holy Spirit are carried out
through your energies.

From you we learn to be seekers of peace—as well as of holiness,
to be stewards of creation—
as well as builders of the new Gospel Order,
to be comforters of the disturbed—
as well as disturbers of the comfortable.

From you we learn to attend, discern and do the work of God.

We thank you, Arthur, as we thank God,
for your exemplary service and steadfast witness.

They inspire us to be stewards of the Truth ourselves,
and to offer our lives in service to humanity as a spiritual vocation.

We have written and gathered these essays
as a small way of saying “thank you”

in some of the same coin with which you have enriched our lives
—the written word—

and yet the real mark of gratitude
always comes into being through more incarnated ways,

which these essays represent, and we hope effect.
 They reflect our embracing truth
 inspired by the bright radiance of your witness,
 and their writing and reading alike declare in polyphonic unison:
 “Thank you, Arthur!”

As his readable and inspiring autobiography explains,¹ Arthur Roberts was raised in the Quaker community of Greenleaf, Idaho and received his formal education at Greenleaf Friends Academy, Pacific (George Fox) College, Nazarene Theological Seminary, and Harvard and Boston Universities. Arthur served as pastor of Everett and Kansas City Friends Churches, helped to start the Friends Church in Tigard, Oregon and has given much support as an elder or a pastoral team member to North Valley, Reedwood, Newberg and other Friends Churches along the way.

He also has contributed significantly to Northwest Yearly Meeting, serving on or clerking many of its boards, including participation on the Board of Elders, always providing directional guidance at crucial times. From 1985-1987 he helped the yearly meeting rewrite its Discipline (coinciding with the centenary anniversary of the Richmond Declaration of Faith), producing one of the finest expressions of evangelical Quaker faith and practice available today. He edited *Concern* magazine, the journal of the Association of Evangelical Friends,² participated in the Faith and Life movement during the 1970's and now serves ably as Editor of *Quaker Religious Thought*. Arthur has written many articles and books, and these are listed in the bibliography below.

Most of us associate Arthur Roberts, however, with George Fox College—the place he taught and wrote for nearly half a century.³ While Pacific College had many fine instructors, Arthur helped the college raise its standards academically, and he prepared his students to be effective in service

1. *Drawn by the Light: Autobiographical Reflections of Arthur O. Roberts*, Newberg: Barclay Press, 1993. Far more is contained in that book than can be included in this brief introduction to Arthur's life and service, and the reader is highly encouraged to read it.

2. Arthur was the editor of *Concern* magazine during the duration of the existence of the Association of Evangelical Friends (1947-1970) and wrote its history in *The Association of Evangelical Friends: A Story of Quaker Renewal in the Twentieth Century*, Newberg: Barclay Press, 1975.

3. Arthur began teaching at George Fox College immediately after completing his Ph.D. program at Boston University in 1953. While he retired from regular teaching in 1988, he continues as Professor at Large, visiting the campus several times a semester, speaking for Quaker Heritage Week and providing guidance and encouragement as needed. From 1968-1972 he served as Academic Dean, and for most of his tenure he chaired the Department of Religious Studies. Ralph Beebe comments on Arthur's coming to GFC, “A brilliant scholar who became an internationally heralded Quaker thinker, Roberts provided stability and a deep Friends conscience.” (*A Heritage to Honor, a Future to Fulfill: George Fox College 1891-1991*, Newberg: Barclay Press, 1991, p.71).

and to attend the finest graduate schools in the land. Arthur was also instrumental in suggesting the name George Fox College when a name change was considered in the late 1940's. By pointing to the founder of the Quaker movement this new name for the college became the hallmark of a new institutional identity, signaling commitments to spiritual renewal and social impact commensurate with Friends' rich heritage.

On personal levels, Arthur encouraged students individually, helping each to develop gifts of thought and expression. Such well-known Quaker writers and leaders as Richard Foster, Howard Macy, Chuck Mylander, Ralph Beebe, Lon Fendall, Nancy Thomas, Daniel Smith-Christopher and many others have been mentored by Arthur personally. He and his wife Fern held Bible studies for students in their home for many years. Arthur founded "Samuel School" —a way of encouraging young Friends leaders (pre-high school) to listen as did young Samuel for the divine voice calling them into the service of God. He has inspired us all to communicate effectively, think clearly, pray fervently and live prophetically.

Arthur has helped us see that every significant and enduring movement must be understood on a foundational, philosophic level. Not the sort of thing a typical undergraduate student would warm to ahead of time, but absolutely the stuff of enduring leadership once it is grasped. Because of Arthur's combined interests in philosophy, church history, Quaker faith and practice, personal righteousness and social justice, these important fields become seared on the hearts and minds of all those who know him and are taught by him. In all of this Arthur's life has been characterized by seeking, discerning and minding Truth. The following essays group themselves accordingly, but so does his life.

1. *Truth Revealed in Scripture*: As a teacher of Bible and as a public speaker, Arthur has interpreted the Scriptures dynamically. He insists the interpreter stay true to the text, and at the same time helps us apply biblical meanings to our existence. As a philosopher and theologian, Arthur invites us consider what it means for Christ to be the *Logos*: the Word of God made flesh (John 1:1-18). He even presented a paper to philosophers in the Soviet Union on the theme that Christ the *Logos* should be considered the center of moral ideology, pointing a way forward in an era threatened by moral relativism and nuclear holocaust.⁴ On another occasion Lee Nash recalls Arthur at the very beginning of his teaching career standing and challenging

4. Having attended the 1985 St. Louis meeting of International Philosophers for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Arthur also met with Russian philosophers in Moscow during June 1989 and again presented a paper. His essay, "Good and Evil in a World Threatened by Nuclear Omnicide," developed the thesis that, "every culture and ideology has a moral center, which for the Christian word is the *logos*, the revealed 'word' from God, and that these moral centers can be appealed to in finding mutual peace." (*Drawn by the Light*, p.210; cf. pp.185-186 and 207-212). This paper illustrates the way Arthur's interpretation of Scripture and his spiritual convictions transcend personal issues to include global ones as well.

one of the Northwest's leading holiness figures on the pivotal text from Hebrews 12:14: "Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."⁵ This speaker had emphasized the personal aspects of holiness but had failed to even acknowledge the clear emphasis on peace within the biblical text he was using. Likewise, Arthur never let his students escape the Sermon on the Mount and its implications for Christian living, or the message of the Old Testament prophets. He often said things like, "It is not only we who examine the Scriptures, but the Scriptures also 'examine' our lives and convict us toward the righteousness of God."

2. *Truth Displayed in History*: As a historian, Arthur embodies the conviction that the genuine renewal of any movement hinges upon recovering the best from its earliest chapters and applying it meaningfully in later settings. The water is always purest at its source. For Christians this means taking the teachings and leadership of Jesus Christ seriously. For Friends it implies taking a good look at Fox, Barclay, Pennington and Penn, among others, and asking how their discoveries and convictions ought to be applied today. Arthur's first book⁶ carried with it not only a narration of historical events in the life and experience of Fox, but it also made connections for the present reader designed to lead him or her into the same quality of transforming experience as those of the Quaker founder. In 1973 Arthur Roberts and Hugh Barbour published a highly significant collection entitled *Early Quaker Writings*.⁷ This collection and many essays written for *Quaker Religious Thought*, the Faith and Life movement, and other settings have made Arthur's contribution to Quaker historiography one of the most significant in America—certainly among evangelical Friends. One of his most notable (and overlooked) historical contributions is the narrative history of the Quaker movement among Alaskan Eskimos.⁸ In this book one detects Arthur's great sensitivity to nuance and his creative ability to identify the workings of Christ across cultures as well as time.

3. *Truth Interpreted Among Friends*: Sound historiography leads to sound interpretation. A significant result of Arthur's work on George Fox was to

5. Lee Nash (interview, March 1996) recalls that while the speaker rebuked Arthur for bringing "sectarian" interests into the discussion of holiness, Arthur defended the plain meaning of the biblical text with energy and vigor. This event illustrates Arthur's willingness to be controversial—in the name of Truth—especially where scriptural teaching and spiritual conviction are concerned.

6. *Through Flaming Sword*, Newberg: Barclay Press, 1959, digested findings from Arthur's graduate work on Fox in ways accessible to the common reader.

7. Published by Eerdmans, Grand Rapids. This valuable collection put in the hands of students and teachers alike essays, pamphlets and letters of early Friends helping one attain a far more representative picture of the early Quaker movement than would have otherwise been possible.

8. *Tomorrow Is Growing Old, Stories of Quakers in Alaska*, Newberg: Barclay Press, 1978, is one of the most significant treatments of the religious history of Alaska. It is also written in narrative style, which suits the theological character of Eskimo spirituality.

forge him into a cadre of young scholars who since the 1950's have challenged the leading interpretation of Fox during the first half of the twentieth century. Rufus Jones had constructed an extensive platform arguing Fox and early Friends should be regarded in the category of European mysticism, implying the priority of an inward orientation of Quaker spiritual experience. Such a view, however, diminished the clear scriptural and at times the clear Christocentric experience of Fox and early Quakers. In his essay on evangelical Quakers in Francis Hall's *Friends in the Americas*⁹ Arthur writes, "Of major importance has been the scholarly recovery of the evangelical perspectives of our early Quaker heritage. The labors of Canby Jones, Wilmer Cooper, Hugh Barbour, Maurice Creasey, Lewis Benson, the present writer, and others attest to the current recognition of the essentially Christ-centered character of normative Quakerism." In his many articles in the *Evangelical Friend*, addresses given at yearly meeting sessions, and contributions elsewhere Arthur has been a front-running interpreter of Quaker faith and practice.¹⁰ He not only employs the power of the spoken and written word, but he also is a mender of damaged words and concepts, wresting them from parasitic usages and distorting abuse. While Truth transcends finite words, it also is conveyed by them—at times even effectively.

4. *Truth Experienced Through the Senses*: Creative leadership discerns needs quickly and makes adjustments accordingly. As a rationalist himself, Arthur also realizes not all people perceive or experience God's Truth intellectually. Revelation also comes through the senses, and God's Truth deserves to be expressed though such media as art, music, poetry and sculpture. After all, all Truth is the Lord's, and even the created order bespeaks his glories in ways transcending human words. Why shouldn't the keeper of the Garden also speak beyond words? Arthur's earlier explorations with painting and carving have given way to producing great numbers of black walnut clocks and sculptures, largely during the 70's and 80's.¹¹ To this day, the Religious Studies Department, the new Prayer Chapel and the Herbert Hoover Academic Building display evidence of Arthur's artistry with

9. Philadelphia, 1976, p.50. See also my treatment of this scholarly shift of opinion, including the commissioning of new introductions to the Braithwaite volumes of the *Rowntree Series* by Henry Cadbury, in my epilogue to Walter Williams' *The Rich Heritage of Quakerism*, Newberg: Barclay Press, 1987, pp.254-257.

10. Notice the Quaker course he designed bears both emphases: "History and Doctrine of Friends." Arthur's consistent emphasis upon sound Quaker historiography, faith and practice has been one of the foundational reasons for the ideological success of the Evangelical Friends movement. Without such considerations movements too easily lose historical perspective and become vulnerable to trend and short-lived convention.

11. Arthur writes in his autobiography (*Ibid.*, p.170), "As I worked in wood ... God seemed to move nearby, to look over my shoulder, and when I could not pray with words in formal settings, kneeling at bedside or at some church altar, I could discern the Spirit in the chips that flew from my chisel ... Eyes strained by introspection regained their ease by tracing grain and growth rings in the wood. Sculpting became an aide to spiritual insight."

wood.¹² Arthur also has written lucid poetry over the last two decades and has published many of these in book form.¹³ He has written the text for musicals: the first being a musical dramatization of the life of George Fox and the second portraying the life of Jonah the prophet.¹⁴ Even his spiritual autobiography contains a combination of suggestive poetry and lucid prose in each chapter. Through his versatile contributions, as well as his latest book,¹⁵ Arthur reminds us that not only are many aspects of God's Truth best expressed artistically, but they are also experienced through the senses.

5. *Truth and Its Implications in the World*: The Word of God makes a difference for us personally but also in the world. During the Vietnam era Arthur, along with many other thoughtful Christians, came to be more and more concerned with the social implications of the evangelical faith. Peace instead of belligerence, simplicity rather than consumerism, justice above complicity, cultivating and not abusing natural resources, and service before selfishness all became themes clearly articulated and lived by Arthur Roberts from the 1960's forward. A critic of the man-made city and its struggle against the created order, Arthur became actively engaged in the work of seeking to make the world a better place for the glory of God and the betterment of humanity. Participating in the political arena has been a longstanding venture for Arthur Roberts, who served many years on Newberg Planning Commission and has been given added opportunity during retirement. He was elected to the Yachats City Council for a four-year term in 1988, and Governor Roberts appointed him to the Ocean Policy Advisory Council in 1992.¹⁶ Arthur was a contemporary of Martin Luther King, Jr. at Boston University, and he has sought to transform systems redemptively, not just oppose them when flawed. In all, we learn from Arthur to consider civility a Christian responsibility while seeking to transform the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of God. The abandonment of that mission by many "Christians" falls short of the teachings of Jesus and the ministries of early Friends, according to Arthur Roberts. The Truth of Jesus Christ is both personal and social in its implications, and followers of

12. The 1661 Quaker Declaration to Charles II, "We deny ... all outward wars and strife and fightings..." is carved in walnut and displayed in the Hoover Academic Building, a rustic kneeling bench graces the new Prayer Chapel, and various artistic pieces by Arthur adorn the Religion suite in Ross Center.

13. Three of these collections are *Listen to the Lord*, Newberg: Barclay Press, 1974; *Move Over, Elijah*, Newberg: Barclay Press, 1967; and *Sunrise and Shadow*, Newberg: Barclay Press, 1984.

14. "Children of the Light" was written and first performed in 1983, and "Jonah ben Amittai" was first performed in 1987. Both were joint projects by Arthur Roberts and Dave Miller, who composed the musical scores.

15. *Messengers of God: The Sensuous Side of Spirituality*, Newberg: Barclay Press, 1996.

16. *Drawn by the Light*, Newberg: Barclay Press, 1993, pp.212-213.

Jesus must be willing to further his work in the world for which he died. As Arthur says at the close of his spiritual autobiography:¹⁷

The four dimensions of time-space afford boundaries that lie within a larger world. Each of us lives within a world delineated overtly by articulated clusters of human relationships we call culture, or civilization—a fifth dimension. We live, too, in a realm hardly contained in the boundaries of reason but rather hinted at covertly in dreams and longings too intangible for words although strong enough to quicken our yen for the yet-to-be-revealed. Ultimately, however, I find my strongest sense of being in a seventh dimension—the Kingdom of God—which encircles all others and defines their meanings and their limits.

This Kingdom Christ reveals so fully in the heart as well as in history, gives coherence to all circles of relationship. All belonging comes within the judgment of this perimeter, whether ethnic, or political, or social, or family, whether the tight circles of the inward self or the rippling circles of the social self ... Most of all, Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord, is here among us. We are Jesus' disciples. This place, this Kingdom, is not just a spot to visit occasionally, it is not a fantasy within a 'real world' of stuff and realpolitik. The Kingdom of God is more real to me than the Pacific Ocean, or the animals I have known. The Kingdom is more real than America or Yachats or George Fox College. To put it another way, the Kingdom frames these geographical places to reveal the artistry of God.

Paul N. Anderson

17. *Ibid.*, pp.229-230.