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# WHO TOOK THE CHRIST OUT OF QUAKERISM? RUFUS JONES AND THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

GUY AIKEN

Throughout his adult life, Rufus Jones remained committed both to liberalism and to Christianity. The polestar that guided him between the extremes of secularism and fundamentalism was his conviction that Jesus Christ illuminated all history and anthropology by consummating the evolution of humankind and uniquely revealing the divinity and humanity of human nature itself. In Quaker denominational terms, Jones melded the liberal Hicksite emphasis on the humanity of Jesus with the conservative Orthodox and Wilburite emphasis on the divinity of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

At the 2010 American Academy of Religion conference in Atlanta, a Quaker minister said in conversation, “It would have been better if Rufus Jones had not been.” Jones, he thinks, took the Christ out of Quakerism and left Quakers with nothing but a humanistic “inner light.” True, Jones did more than any other Friend to create the liberal, social-justice-oriented Quakerism most Americans associate with the Society of Friends today (though liberal Quakers constitute a minority of worldwide Quakerism). Yet, Jones saw himself as working passionately to steer historic Quakerism between the bulking Scylla of dogmatic evangelicalism and fundamentalism on one side and the swirling Charybdis of secular science and psychology on the other.

Jones lived these tensions out in his own life. Born in Maine in 1863 to a family of Orthodox Gurneyites, Jones grew up a moderate evangelical. By 1893 he had moved permanently to Philadelphia, where Quakers had for decades been split into (liberal and modernist) Hicksite, (culturally moderate and theologically conservative) Orthodox, and (culturally and theologically conservative) Wilburite factions. In Philadelphia, Jones assumed a professorship at Haverford, an Orthodox college, and the editorship of the moderate *Friends' Review*, which he soon merged with the Holiness *Christian Worker* to create the *American Friend*. Then, in 1897, he traveled to England, where, under the influence of John Wilhelm Rowntree and other

English Quakers, he embraced a modernist agenda of adapting Quakerism to modern culture, higher criticism of the Bible, and the theory of evolution. In 1907, Jones worked tirelessly to prepare and orchestrate the modernist takeover of the Orthodox Five Years Meeting.<sup>2</sup>

Fired with “a new vision of Quakerism”<sup>3</sup> after his visit to England, Jones departed from the prevailing historiography of his time and envisioned early Friends not as evangelical “missionaries” and “proto-pastors,” but as capacious mystics.<sup>4</sup> More recent historiography has judged that the Society of Friends most likely began as an eschatological and evangelical sect with universalist tendencies.<sup>5</sup> Jones, however, saw in early Friends a mystical brotherhood (a premier stylist, Jones was also a stylist of his time and wrote almost exclusively in masculine terms) that revived direct experience of God in Puritan England. Jones’s mystical reinterpretation of Quakerism allowed him to sidestep doctrinal debates and to adapt Quaker theology and Christology to the latest developments in science and psychology. He did so in a literary style that spoke felicitously but plainly to the burgeoning American middle class, publishing upwards of fifty-seven books.<sup>6</sup>

One should not question Jones’s ardent, mostly orthodox theism. At sixteen, Jones suffered his major “crisis” of faith, when his mother died. “I could not remember a time when I had not loved God and felt sure of His love,” he remembered later. Now he could not “square” this tragedy “with my idea of a God of love.” “But little by little the memories of sixteen years came over this dark event with their trail of light.” Jones remembered how intimately his mother had talked with God, how “fully” she had “expected to go on living with Him after death should come to her.” Soon Jones “settled back on all the sure evidences that all my life had been in the love of God.” He realized he had not lost his mother, “that she was nearer to God than ever.” He emerged from this struggle “no longer a child,” but also with his belief in God forever secure. “I had passed a crisis.”<sup>7</sup> Jones emphatically and unwaveringly believed in the Christian God.

One may, however, doubt Jones’s Christocentrism. Gary Dorrien overstates the case: “[Jones] could be quoted either way on the question whether Quakerism should be Christian.”<sup>8</sup> Jones did not subordinate historical Christianity to his mystical Quakerism. Early in his publishing career, in 1904, he wrote that “faith” was “an actual appropriation of the Divine Life” and that it “produces a religion as first-hand as [mysticism].”<sup>9</sup> Five years later he elaborated, “To insist

on mystical experience as the only path to religion would invoke an ‘election’ no less inscrutable and pitiless than that of the Calvinistic system—an election settled for each person by the peculiar psychic structure of his inner self.” He asserts the equal validity of “faith” as a pathway to God—“the soul’s moral or appreciative apprehension of God as *historically revealed*, particularly” in “Jesus Christ...whose experience and character and incarnation of life possibilities seem at last adequate for all the needs—the heights and the depths—of this complex life of ours.” Jones explicitly distinguished historical faith from “present inward experience.”<sup>10</sup> He retained Christ as the paradigm of human being and cleaved to Christianity as the faith that embodied God’s historical revelation in Christ, as well as in Christians down through the centuries. One should not ask, therefore, “Did Jones interpret Quakerism as Christian?” but rather, “Did Jones interpret Christianity, and so Quakerism, as Christocentric or theocentric?” And likewise, “If so, how so?”

### CHRIST’S PERSON

“Another truth which I endeavored to interpret...was the perfect union of the divine and human nature of Christ.”<sup>11</sup> Jones notes “two well-known tendencies” in Christology at the turn of the twentieth century: the divinization of Christ at the expense of his humanity (the conservative tendency) and the humanization of Christ at the expense of his divinity (the liberal tendency). Jones spots dualism as “the real trouble”—God and humanity as cleanly separate one from the other. If Christ be divine, he cannot be human; if Christ be human, he cannot be divine. “For me that ‘chasm’ was unreal.”<sup>12</sup> He states, “*God and man are conjunct.*”<sup>13</sup> No original sin or Fall ever sundered humanity from God, nor has God ever withdrawn God’s presence from humanity. In fact, the “social law [of] the spiritual world” evinces the impossibility of such severance and separation. If God be a God of love, as the New Testament insists, then love would necessitate that God be in relationship with God’s beloved, humanity. Also, if personhood characterizes God, then just as a human being can only attain personhood by relating to other persons, so God can only exercise personhood by relating to God’s created other, humanity.<sup>14</sup> “We could not be persons in any real sense without partaking of God, nor could He be really God and not share with us in grace and love and fellowship. He needs us and in a deeper sense we need Him.”<sup>15</sup>

Jones everywhere elides Christ and the rest of humanity. Christ is historically, not ontologically, unique: “Christ is the highest and completest (*sic*) person through whom [love and unselfish goodness] have broken into manifestation in our world....In Him we see what God is like and in Him we know at last what it means to be a completely normal human person.” Any “completely normal human person,” in other words, is as completely divine and completely human as Christ. “Speaking...in terms of evolution, *I* think of Him as the type and goal of the race—the spiritual norm and pattern, the Son of Man who is a revelation of what man at his height and full stature is meant to be.” Again: “The historic incarnation was no final event. It was the supreme instance of God and man in a single life—the *type* of continuous Divine-human fellowship.”<sup>16</sup> Jones capitalizes “He” and “Him” not because of Christ’s nature, for then Jones would have to capitalize every “he” and “him.” No; Christ’s life, not his being, merits Jones’s reverent capitalization. Jones superlatively sets Christ at both the pinnacle and the center of anthropology and history—“the highest and completest *person* through whom [love and unselfish goodness] have broken into...*our world*.”<sup>17</sup> Jones, therefore, is anthropologically and historically Christocentric. Both human nature and human history have Christ and no other at their center.

But neither history nor humanity has any absolute need of Christ. Jones writes approvingly of the spiritual reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that for them “heaven and hell” abide not as “eschatological” realities but as “inward conditions.”<sup>18</sup> Jones betrays no millennial tendencies, whatsoever. No bodily Second Coming will bring the end of history, when Christ will catch the righteous up into heaven and consign the rest to perdition, or establish everlasting peace on earth. Such an eschatology presupposes a supernaturalism that Jones rejects. “The two, sundered-realm conception is a mistake. There is no divine realm above the sky; it is just space.” Jones holds instead to an “organic conception of the Life of God,” “revealed in... the historical process.”<sup>19</sup>

Jones’s rejection of supernaturalism also shapes his soteriology, his conception of Christ’s salvific work. Jones confronted the evangelical Christianity of his day that held to “a definite ‘plan or scheme of salvation’ expressed in [such] doctrinal form” as sacrificial and substitutionary theories of atonement, “the acceptance of which was essential to ‘salvation,’” or “the attainment of heaven after death.” Jones found this transactional view of salvation antithetical to his view

of salvation as “a process of life.” “To be ‘saved’ ought to mean to be living a certain kind of life here and now, not to be able to report crossing a boundary on a certain day in the calendar.”<sup>20</sup>

Jones himself, as befit his moderate evangelical upbringing, could point to a day in the calendar on which he crossed a boundary. He recounts how when he was a boy, a traveling Quaker minister held meeting in the old schoolhouse in South China, Maine. After several nights of hymn-singing and other “fun,” it “grew more serious, for I saw that I was approaching an unescapable (*sic*) decision.” He had led his group of friends in “a hundred boyish pranks,” but now this minister had convicted him of his sin and compelled him to decide for or against Christ, and thus for or against “a thousand threads which wove my life into the past and bound me up with this society of my fellows.” Finally, the young Rufus reached “a bursting point, and I arose with every artery in me throbbing and my heart pounding so hard that I thought everybody must hear it. With a tremendous effort I made my tongue say, ‘I want to be a Christian.’” Though the boy knew he “had crossed a line,” no rapture swept over him and settled his character forever. Even at this moment, “when I knew I had really passed a crisis in the incubation of a new life, I still found that the old self was far from dead.”<sup>21</sup> The boy’s salvation, as the man’s, waited every day on his concrete and often mundane decisions to turn from the “narrow, private ‘I,’ ‘me,’ and ‘mine’ to the Unchangeable Good.”<sup>22</sup>

He—anyone—can so decide, not because one’s acceptance of Christ’s death and resurrection has imparted purely supernatural grace to a merely human being, but because one’s humanity by its very God-given nature has from its inception as one of its constitutive elements a divine-human “light” that does not at all depend on, or derive from, Christ. This light does, however, depend on, and derive from, God. Jones directly contrasts theistic humanism to Barclay and early Friends’ Calvinistic conception of the Inner Light as “something foreign” to human beings. Epistemology, Jones maintains, has shown that awareness of infinity is native to humanity: the innate capacity of human consciousness to become aware of the finite necessitates correlative awareness of infinity. And modern psychology, per William James, has discovered a porous center of consciousness surrounded by an unconscious region that might well house “some real shekinah where we may meet with [God].”<sup>23</sup> This innate reason, capacity for infinity, or inner *shekinah*, Jones equates with the Inner Light, which

he defines as an “actual inner self formed by the union of a divine and a human element in a single, undivided life.”<sup>24</sup>

Jones was not a secular humanist. He was a theistic humanist who believed deeply (albeit sometimes tacitly) in the conjunction of God and humanity, this conjunction being the Inner Light. Jones first learned of the concept of the conjunct self from his Haverford professor Pliny Chase. Jones: “The core and nucleus of man’s inner life forms, so [Chase] believed, a living junction with the Eternal Reality of the universe, and through this point of connection the life of man can be kindled and set burning with a light of truth and a warmth of love that reveal *God*.”<sup>25</sup> Jones never surrendered either the human or the divine element of this idea of the conjunct self that he inherited from Chase.

From the first, I always thought of man as finite-infinite, a time and space transcending being. He was, I held, himself *plus* more. He could not be a person in any true sense without his essential environment, and that complete environment includes the infinite and eternal Spirit in Whom we live and move and are.<sup>26</sup>

For Jones, Christ exemplifies the glorious life any human being in human history could live if she or he fully embodied, as Christ does, “the insight that grace or self-giving is the divine way of life.”<sup>27</sup> Jones subscribed to the Johannine Christ’s understanding of his mission, “I come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10 KJV). Christ, however, does not give one abundant life; he merely shows one how to get it for oneself.

## CHRIST’S WORK

The historical conception of Christ’s work that most nearly coincides with Jones’s is the “moral influence theory of atonement.” This theory holds that Christ’s death saves not by transaction, ransom, satisfaction, or substitution, but by compelling (not coercing) those who learn of his death to emulate his obedience, love, and willing self-sacrifice. As Jones puts it, Christ is the “Type toward which personal life should move,” the ideal “in front” that is “drawing” humanity toward it.<sup>28</sup> Or: Christ’s acceptance of his fate, in Gethsemane, confirms “self-sacrifice as the principle of human redemption.”<sup>29</sup> Or: Christ is the “*pioneer in the discovery of God as Father and in the insight that grace or self-giving is the divine way of life.*”<sup>30</sup>

This theory, like every other atonement theory, has ancient roots in the New Testament but only comes to doctrinal fruition in the minds of early church fathers and medieval scholastics. Athanasius in his tract *De incarnatione* (ca. 318) writes, “For this reason was he born, appeared as man, and died and rose again...that, whithersoever men have been lured away, he may recall them from thence, and reveal to them his own true Father.”<sup>31</sup> Peter Abelard in the twelfth century gives classic formulation to this theory:

Our redemption through the suffering of Christ is that deeper love within us which not only frees us from slavery to sin but also secures for us the true liberty of the children of God, in order that we might do all things out of love rather than out of fear—love for him who has shown us such grace that no greater can be found.<sup>32</sup>

Though this theory departs definitively from supernaturalism and the ontological necessity of Christ’s death, it retains the absolute necessity of Christ’s moral example. Without Christ, human beings would not know God as Father. Nor would they act willingly out of love instead of reluctantly out of fear; they therefore would never know redemption.

Does Jones retain the absolute necessity of Christ’s moral example? No, he does not. For the divine-human light, or reason, or capacity for infinity intrinsic to human nature, proves sufficient for turning persons away from “sin” and toward the “Unchangeable Good.” Here Jones the modernist philosopher wins out over Jones the traditional Christian. Giving the West Lectures at Stanford in 1941, Jones can define the Inner Light as “spirit” or “mind” without reference even to God, let alone Christ. “By *spirit* I mean a conscious self, an experiencing subject, with organizing dominion over its objects of experience, together with a persistent self-identity and a purpose of its own.” Moreover, “the spiritual...does not come down from above...as a purely heavenly ‘emergent.’ It comes rather as a new and subtle elevation, a sublimation, of what was here before. The spiritual...‘breaks through’ the natural as its organ of expression.” Jones’s radical immanentism borders on, without ever merging with, purely secular humanism. Jones derives his conception of spirit from Kant’s “transcendental unity of consciousness,” “native to us as men,” which means that “*unity* of consciousness...is presupposed in all our experience,” “is constitutive of knowledge, and cannot be a

product of it. It is what gives our type of experience its *universal* and *necessary* character.”<sup>33</sup>

One may infer from Jones’s other writings that he believes that God ultimately has created this “unity of consciousness.” But Jones’s ability and willingness to drop God from the explicit discussion understandably resulted in his contemporary and future critics branding him a “mere” humanist. Jones could explain not only the epistemological self without reference to God or Christ, but also the moral self, or “the deep self,” as he calls it in his West Lectures. “The most august thing in the world is the moral imperative of *ought* in us, the consciousness in a crisis...that ‘I *must* do this,’” he writes. “You do not become Adam—the man—until something of that order of *must* appears.” This *sine qua non* of humanity, this “oughtness,” depends on “experienced time,” the ability to “recover a past..., bring it up into our present, and out of it forecast a new future”—an ability “utterly unique” to persons of the “spirit type,” or “full-fledged” human beings. Though Jones does not explicitly connect “experienced time” to the Inner Light, the preceding quotations suggest that for Jones this “extraordinary” and “unique” “time-experience” further grounds the reality of a “beyond within.”<sup>34</sup>

This human experience of time hinges not only on memory of the past, but also on “ideals” or “values” that furnish “ideal forecasts” with which human beings can create a “new future.” About fifteen years before giving his lectures at Stanford, Jones wrote, “We create our own ideals and we are the makers of the ends toward which we live.” Later in the same book he identifies the ultimate values as “happiness, beauty, love, goodness, truth, God.”<sup>35</sup> Now, Jones knew God as a real referent of experience, so he certainly could not have meant that humanity “creates” or is “the maker” of God. Yet, about a decade later: “A person that can create these values and live in and through and by them is something more than a collocation of atoms in a space-time frame.”<sup>36</sup> Surely Jones meant only that men and women arrange their own peculiar *constellations* of ideals and *hierarchies* of ends toward which they live, no?

Returning to the West Lectures, Jones gives a similar list of “ideal values”—“Beauty, Truth, Goodness, and Love”—without any reference to God *per se*, though he does call these values “eternal,” “unmoved movers,” invoking Aristotle’s definition of God as first cause.<sup>37</sup> Jones incorporates “experienced time” with these “ideal

values” to render an “elevated humanistic”<sup>38</sup> account of the formation of the moral self.

This feature of a beyond within us, this capacity of before and after, this power to see our deed in the light of an ideal forecast, furnishes us with a fundamental form of distinction between what was, or is, and what might have been—between a good and a possible better. Then we slowly roll up and accumulate through life-experience with others a concrete or dispositional conscience which becomes, or may become, a perennial nucleus of inward moral wisdom and guidance. This becomes, or may become, to us the deep self which we really *are*, the self we propose to be, the self which we would even die to preserve. This deep-lying nuclear moral guardian in us is one of the most amazing features of a rightly fashioned life, but one must have it in order to appreciate it.<sup>39</sup>

In other words, human beings create their own essences, albeit out of spiritual endowments. “We are in large measure the makers of ourselves; but...we start with a precious impartation, or birth-gift, which is big with its potentiality of spirit.”<sup>40</sup>

As “birth-gift,” this “precious impartation” does not come from Christ. Nor does the “accumulation” of the “deep self” find indispensable guidance or inspiration in Christ. No, by their very humanity human beings have the Inner Light (early Friends called it the inward light—the light of Christ conveyed inwardly), a sense of time, and an appreciation of values, which together prove sufficient to move human beings to realize eternal ideals and thus form of their own accord their own essential selves. Jones predicates all this human action on the existence of a loving God and on humanity’s absolute dependence upon this God. But Jones dispenses entirely with both the ontological uniqueness of Christ’s person and the saving power of Christ’s work. Christ thus becomes nothing more, or less, than the fullest instance of humanity.

Jones, by interpreting Christianity as a religion of self-actualization of which Christ is only “an exemplar,”<sup>41</sup> did remove Christ from the spiritual center of Quakerism. Jones urged, in effect, that Christians—and therefore Quakers—ought to focus their religious energies not on devotion to Christ, but on the development of the self with Christ as guide and model. In fairness to Jones, one should read this conception of Christianity as reflecting not so much a low Christology, or a devaluation of Christ, as a high anthropology, or a revaluation of

humanity. Every human being has the same capacity as Christ for love, sacrifice, and direct experience of God. This lattermost capacity lies at the heart of Jones's definition of "mysticism," that "type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence," "in which all the deep-lying powers of the personal life come into positive exercise and function."<sup>42</sup> Consistent with Jones's theistic humanism, the first part of this definition centers on the divine roots of mysticism, the second part focuses on the human fruits.

Jones (intentionally?) might have misread early Quakerism as a mystical renewal, rather than an eschatological and evangelical revival, movement, yet his absolute insistence on every person's capacity for direct experience of God affirms the radical spiritual democracy of historic Quakerism and witnesses to the perduring Quaker testimony of equality. Though Jones wished to retain the "fear-aspect of religion," and though he attested to the "ministry of pain" and the "significance of the Cross"<sup>43</sup> in his own life, he rarely writes of divine judgment, let alone the excruciating but spiritually necessary inner apocalypse of Christ's revelation and eradication of sin that early Friends called the Lamb's War. As part of his saving work among early Friends, Christ reconciled early Quakers to God by mercilessly exposing and then mercifully destroying the sin that separated them from God.<sup>44</sup> Though Jones would have agreed that sin can indeed obscure or even distort humanity's relation to God, he passed right by Christ's priestly office of reconciliation and went directly to God. Moreover, Jones, no orthodox Trinitarian, neither posited a three-Personed Godhead nor identified Christ as the Second Person of that Godhead. Jones's disciple, Thomas Kelly, speaking of angels, voices his and Jones's conviction that God deals directly with humanity.

I have always felt sure that God Himself could deal directly with my soul, without sending any intermediaries. In fact, one of my joys as a Quaker is in the removal of all the earthly apparatus of mediation between me and God, and I should find small comfort in discovering that, on the other side of this world the whole array of intermediaries is duplicated. No matter how benevolent such beings might be, I long for God, not for them.<sup>45</sup>

Kelly thoroughly spiritualizes Christ and so can assert that the "Eternal Christ...is this same God."<sup>46</sup> Jones never so spiritualizes Christ and hence never equates Christ with God. Therefore, even in working to reconcile humanity to God, Christ would be as much an intermediary

as any one of Kelly's angels. On this view of Christ it follows that Jones, as a good Quaker, would want communion not with Christ, but with "God Himself."

Jones's decidedly theocentric Christianity might have "opened the door to a religion of spirit that dispensed with [any] confession" about Christ.<sup>47</sup> And according to one of his most recent critics, Carole Spencer, his high anthropology

took Christ out of the Light, the soul itself was the Light, and the soul became divine....Thus Jones created an 'inner light mysticism' in which the soul was its own authority, an elevated humanism which severed the inward light from Christ. Consequently, liberal Quakerism developed a humanistic confidence in the soul as supreme.<sup>48</sup>

While this judgment might rightly ascertain Jones's fontal relationship to twentieth- and twenty-first-century liberal Quakerism, it rests, unfairly to Jones, solely on his enthusiastic quoting of the Upanishads at the end of one of his books: "When the sun is set, and the moon is set, and the fire is gone out, THE SOUL IS THE LIGHT OF MAN."<sup>49</sup> Jones himself never conceived of the human soul apart from God, though clearly he proved willing and able to adjust his philosophical language to humanistic psychologies on occasion. For Jones, the soul could be the "light of man" *only because* "God as Spirit and man as spirit are inherently related and...there is something in man which is unsundered (*sic*) from God."<sup>50</sup> Jones at times might have attenuated this intrinsic bond between God and humanity, but he never "severed" it.

In fact, one could see Jones's "pattern-type" theory of atonement and high anthropology as a liberal revision of "early Quaker holiness," which, Spencer argues, "was closer to patristic concepts of deification than to Protestant Reformation soteriology."<sup>51</sup> Christ's role in early Quaker perfection is often obscured by early Friends' emphasis on the "light." The "light," James Nayler wrote, "which we witness in us, is sufficient to lead us out of darkness, bring into the fear of God, and to exercise a pure conscience before God and man in the power of Christ." Jones, in an archaic mood, might have written this sentence himself, the phrase "power of Christ" being suggestively vague. The early Quakers' Puritan and Baptist opponents never tired of charging the Quakers with blasphemously deifying all of fallen humanity by conflating the "light" *in* the conscience with the "natural" light *of* the

conscience. “Every writer who entered into serious argument with the Quakers picked up this point.”<sup>52</sup>

Though this critique of early Friends anticipates Spencer’s critique of Jones, the early Quaker riposte differs markedly from Jones’s philosophy. The early Quakers insisted that they clearly distinguished the conscience, which was “natural,” from “the light in the conscience,” which was “spiritual” and thus no part of human nature.<sup>53</sup> Natural and spiritual—human and divine—constituted a sharp dualism for early Friends. Jones, as shown above, rejected this sharp dualism and elided the separation, and sometimes even the distinction, between human and divine. But perhaps where Jones meant elision some of his readers perceive elimination, and they cry out, not as the Puritans and Baptists once did (“blasphemy!”), but as Spencer does—“humanism”!

When compared with many liberal Protestants of the first half of the twentieth century, however, Jones sounds almost mainstream. For instance, at Berkeley in 1908 University of Chicago theologian George Burnham Foster exhorted his audience, “We can never be satisfied with this Jesus religion as a finality. We must pass from faith in man to faith in a new eternal Messiah—*our* Messiah, a creation of the spirit of modern humanity.” And at Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1910, William Adams Brown described Christ as “the type to which all mankind is ultimately destined to conform.”<sup>54</sup> In this context, Jones was not revolutionary; he merely shepherded a portion of Quakerism into the larger fold of liberal American Christianity. And he did so without ever effacing Quakerism’s distinctiveness from Protestantism, as well as from Catholicism, as he persistently and eloquently asserted the capability of *every* individual to experience not only conversion but also *mystical union* with God.

## A BRIEF NORMATIVE APPRAISAL

The preceding has argued that Jones did in fact take the necessity and ontological uniqueness of Christ out of his mystical vision of Quakerism, and he replaced Christ with a divine-human Inner Light. Two normative questions remain, to which this outsider to Quakerism will assay only tentative answers. First, should Jones have taken the Christ out of Quakerism? This question needs an article unto itself. Jones’s reaction against what he saw as Holiness and Evangelical Quakerism’s untenably miraculous supernaturalism might have pushed him further into the liberal christological camp than

he otherwise would have gone. Yet Jones erred not in theologically decentering Quakerism from Christ—a perhaps necessary and healing theological move in the dawn of a thoroughly modernist and religiously pluralist world—but in literarily omitting Christ from much of his discussion about mysticism and inward religion. In other words, Jones erred tactically, not strategically. He should always and explicitly have referred his theistic humanism to its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus, whatever the context in which he was writing or speaking. He should have kept Jesus as his literary touchstone even as he removed Christ from his spiritual center. Such a tactical move would not have distracted his critics from his tendency to replace Christ with a purely theistic-humanistic Inner Light. But it might have kept liberal Quakerism rooted in its Christian heritage and thus more relevant, not only to the wider Christian community, but also to the increasingly global religious dialogue.

Second, should Jones have crusaded for such a positive anthropology? Again, Jones's reaction against the Philadelphia Wilburites' ascetic quietism might have pushed him further into humanism than he otherwise would have gone. Yet William James's psychological typology of "once-born" and "twice-born"<sup>55</sup> might prove more helpful here than historical analysis. Jones was a "once-born" type, meaning he had an almost unbroken sense of God's love for him from the time he was born. He never had or needed the experiences of alienation from God and subsequent reunion that characterize the "twice-born" type. His theistic humanism insisted on the inseparability of God and humanity and on the intrinsic and indestructible goodness of every human being. For those souls sick with sin and with a terrible longing for Home, evangelicalism has good news: Jesus can heal you and restore you to God. But for those congenitally healthy souls who have never strayed far from Home, Jones has even better news: you already live and move and have your being in God, so embrace your life and live into it as fully as possible. "The fundamental end of life is living...the fullest and most expansive life for which we are made."<sup>56</sup> This "faith in the infinite worth of human personality" might not have been the "message of the Gospel" Jones's Aunt Peace had in mind when she prophesied that infant Rufus would grow up to become the Paul of his age, "bearing" the good news "to distant lands and to peoples across the sea," but it was, and still is, very good news indeed.<sup>57</sup>

ENDNOTES

- 1 Thomas D. Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1988), 16-17.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 147-148, 171-172.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 148.
- 4 Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge, 2007), 2.
- 5 For instance, Rosemary Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences: Early Quakers in Britain, 1646-1666* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2000), 66, italics added. “During 1654, the Quaker proclamation shifted away from the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth, toward emphasizing their belief that the Kingdom was to an extent *already realized* among Quakers.” These Quakers believed that “they, the only true Saints, had a special destiny *to lead the spiritual transformation of the world*, as the necessary preliminary to the coming of the ‘new earth’ that they still hoped for.”
- 6 On Jones’s enthusiastic embrace of the new mass book market, see Matthew Hedstrom, “Rufus Jones and Mysticism for the Masses,” *Cross Currents* 54:2 (2004), [http://www.crosscurrents.org/Hedstrom 0204.htm](http://www.crosscurrents.org/Hedstrom%2004.htm).
- 7 Rufus Jones, *Finding the Trail of Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1926, 1931), 128, 129.
- 8 Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900-1950* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 370.
- 9 Rufus Jones, *Social Law in the Spiritual World: Studies in Human and Divine Inter-relationship* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co., 1904), 222.
- 10 Rufus Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (London: Macmillan, 1914), xxii-xxiii; xxxix, italics his; xli.
- 11 Rufus Jones, *The Trail of Life in the Middle Years* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), 232.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 233.
- 13 Jones, *Social Law in the Spiritual World*, 19, italics his.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 17. Much recent Trinitarian theology stresses that God’s immanent, or intrinsic, relationality “is” God’s economic, or extrinsic relationality (Rahner’s rule). Jones, however, will move from necessary relationship to necessary ontological conjunction.
- 15 Jones, *The Trail of Life in the Middle Years*, 233.
- 16 Rufus Jones, *The Double Search: Studies in Atonement and Prayer* (Philadelphia: John C. Wiston Co., 1906), 34, italics his.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 43; italics added.
- 18 Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, xlviii.
- 19 Rufus Jones, *A Call to What is Vital* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 111; Rufus Jones, “Why I Enroll with the Mystics,” in *Contemporary American Theology*, Vol. I; ed. Vergilius Ferm (New York: Round Table Press, 1932), 214.
- 20 Jones, *The Trail of Life in the Middle years*, 88, 90, 242.
- 21 Jones, *Finding the Trail of Life*, 115.
- 22 Jones, *Social Law in the Spiritual World*, 250.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 135. But “sudden irruptions” of the unconscious into consciousness “are no more sacred than are the more slowly gestated products of our inner life” (Jones, *Fundamental Ends of Life*, 105).

- 24 *Ibid.*, 77; quotation, 176.
- 25 Rufus Jones, *The Trail of Life in College* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 69, italics added.
- 26 Jones, *The Trail of Life in the Middle Years*, 103, italics his.
- 27 Rufus Jones, *Some Exponents of Mystical Religion* (New York: Abingdon, 1930), 24.
- 28 Jones, *Social Law in the Spiritual World*, 253.
- 29 Rufus Jones, *The World Within* (New York: Macmillan, 1918), 139.
- 30 Jones, *Some Exponents of Mystical Religion*, 24, italics his.
- 31 In *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed., Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 37.
- 32 In Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK, and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997): 407-08.
- 33 Rufus Jones, *Spirit in Man* (Berkeley, CA: Peacock Press, 1963), 4, italics his; 6; 8-9, italics his.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 13, 36, italics his; 16, 18, 12-13, 14, 15.
- 35 Rufus Jones, *Fundamental Ends of Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), 16, 135.
- 36 Jones, *The Trail of Life in the Middle Years*, 235.
- 37 Jones, *Spirit in Man*, 14.
- 38 Carole Spencer, *Holiness: The Soul of Quakerism. An Historical Analysis of the Theology of Holiness in the Quaker Tradition* (Eugene, OR, and London: Wipf & Stock, with Paternoster, 2007, 2008), 204.
- 39 Jones, *Spirit in Man*, 13, italics his.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 22.
- 41 Dorrien, 370.
- 42 Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, xv; Rufus Jones, "Introduction" to William C. Braithwaite's *Beginnings of Quakerism*, in *Quakerism, a Spiritual Movement: Six Essays*, ed. Mary Hoxie Jones (Philadelphia: Reprinted by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1963), 127.
- 43 Jones, *The Trail of Life in the Middle Years*, 90, 177, 248.
- 44 Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven: Yale, 1964), 40-41, and Michael Birkel, *Silence and Witness: The Quaker Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 22.
- 45 Thomas Kelly, *Reality of the Spiritual World* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1942, 1954), 29.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 32.
- 47 Dorrien, 370.
- 48 Spencer, 204.
- 49 Rufus Jones, *New Studies in Mystical Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 205, capitalization his, in Spencer, 204.
- 50 Jones, *The Trail of Life in College*, 123.
- 51 Spencer, 2.
- 52 In Moore, 102.
- 53 Moore, 103, 109.

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54 In Dorrien, 172, italics his; 57.

55 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Mentor, 1954), 83-151, *passim*. James avowedly borrows this typology from Cardinal Newman's brother, Francis.

56 Jones, *Fundamental Ends of Life*, 85.

57 *Ibid.*, 18; Jones, *Finding the Trail of Life*, 20.

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