The Universal Dimension: William Loftus Hare's Pivotal Contribution to London Yearly Meeting

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THE UNIVERSAL DIMENSION:
WILLIAM LOFTUS HARE'S PIVOTAL CONTRIBUTION
TO LONDON YEARLY MEETING

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ABSTRACT
The origins of Christian universalism in the Religious Society of Friends during the seventeenth century are reviewed. A Hicksite shift among some Friends in the nineteenth century is seen as paving the way for a radical extension of Inner Lightist philosophies of universalism. A doctrine of Inner Light mysticism, as presented by Rufus Jones, is considered in the context of an extension of universalism among Quakers.

As editor of the Socialist Quaker Society journal _The Ploughshare_, and in later published studies, William Loftus Hare (1863-1943) forwarded a form of theological universalism at some considerable variance with its previous meanings throughout Quaker history. His association with the Theosophical Society informed his support of conscientious objection in WWI that affirmed witness to the _ahimsa_ and _satyagraha_ principles of the reformed Hinduism of Mohandas Gandhi's religious pacifism. Hopes for a future underlying universalism of faith and witness are seen as a development that constituted a pivotal period of London Yearly Meeting (LYM) Friends in the twentieth century. Hare's contribution, with his hopes for a unifying common language of spirituality, is assessed.

Shifts within Quaker Universalism during the later modernist period after WWII are presented through the publications of a recognised 'special interest' group within LYM. Major features of diversification that resulted from the emerging impact of post-modernist culture on the philosophy of the Quaker Universalist Group's (QUG) publications are reviewed. Recent drifts of transitional trends within Friends away from both the priority of Light of Christ and from Gandhian universalism are appraised. The emerging significance of pluralistic stances is considered, with their influences on Quakers of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM).

KEYWORDS
Light of Christ, Inner Light, Universalism, Theosophy, mysticism, pluralism

From the outset, universalism was a significant feature of the Quaker faith. The possibility of salvation beyond the particularism of the Jewish race that had been voiced by Amos (9:7), and by Paul's assertions (Rom. 9-11) that the special call of Israel was not a privilege but a responsibility, which he envisaged as a re-integration of all mankind in Christ, was taken up seriously. The divine power or principle of the Holy Spirit was said by George Fox to have been active not only during Old Testament times in Jewish society, but in other cultures too. Referring to Paul's first letter to the Romans, he asked:

Now consider, was there not something of God in these heathens that learnt to know God, though they did not glorify him as God, though they had not written letter nor written gospel?²

Robert Barclay pursued a universal Christian viewpoint further:

if all men have received a loss from Adam, which leads to condemnation; then all men have received a gift from Christ, which leads to justification. But the first is true; therefore also the last. From all which it naturally follows, that all men, even the heathens, may be saved, for Christ was given as a light to enlighten the gentiles, Isa. xlix. 6. Now, to say that though they might have been saved, yet none were, is to judge too uncharitably.³

Scriptural language upheld the universal saving power of the light of Christ, but an alternative terminology was to be introduced by Robert Barclay when, in communicating with a contemporary peer, he had recourse to the language of Cartesian dualism. He asserted that, as the organs of sense perception apprehend the outer, mundane world, so a non-material, spiritual organ apprehends the inner, spiritual realm. This was to open the door to an Inner Light philosophy that had previously been rejected by Quakers in debates with the Cambridge Platonists. This terminology, in the fullness of time, was to come to prioritise the notion of an inhering presence of a spiritual capacity in the human individual, whose goal was that of attaining enlightenment. Such terminology was to come to offer credence to widened universalist claims concerning the availability of enlightenment to all, of whatever faith or none.

Assessments of a range of the historical features of Inner Light philosophies were included in Leeg Eeg-Olofsson's extensive study undertaken at Woodbrooke, published in 1960.³ In his analyses, there were several features of the Light in Barclay's theology that were weighted towards Neo-Platonism. He observed similarities with the Ranters' general use of the Inner Light as a manifestation of pantheism and individualism, but conceded that Barclay wished to defend himself against such an interpretation. He referred to Barclay's criticism of the Ranters for their view of God being an impersonal power similar to Stoic's original fire with its divine sparks in every man.
While Barclay’s allegiances to the light of Christ remained central and his contribution remained within a tradition of Christian universalism, his academic theology became a source of some unease. By probing beyond the boundaries of contemporary Christian doctrine, Friends involved themselves in a range of theological problems with their critics. For instance, Dr John Owen criticised the Quaker universalist interpretation of the prologue to John’s Gospel. He maintained that its true meaning was Christ, coming into the world, enlightening all men, as opposed to Christ enlightening every man that comes into the world. He concluded that the Quakers’ light was merely the natural, ‘blinking’ light of reason—a secular universalism devoid of the religious dimension of redemption.

William Penn further extended the limits of ‘gentile divinity’. He recognised Christianity before Christ, and was said to have recognised only pagans as fellow Christians, and disowned all who professed to call themselves Christians—other than Friends! George Keith, who made this remark, became so critical of a younger generation’s wilful ignorance of the historical events of scriptural faith that he transferred to the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge in order to educate Friends in the New World. His argument was that even the first Quakers had ‘allowed no distinction between the religion of the best sort of heathens and the Friends.11

Braithwaite’s view, it was in the Quietist period that a vagueness of experience came about which reduced Christianity to an indefinite principle of life in the soul for Friends. For him, this reduction was related to the quietist passivity of the period. A Friends!11 George Keith, who made this remark, became so critical of a younger generation’s wilful ignorance of the historical events of scriptural faith that he transferred to the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge in order to educate Friends in the New World. His argument was that even the first Quakers had ‘allowed no distinction between the religion of the best sort of heathens and the Christian religion, but made them to be one’.12 As a result of these criticisms, Second Day’s Morning Meeting in 1693 was prompted to issue a statement, drafted by George Whitehead, reaffirming the true Christian basis of the Quaker Faith.20

H.G. Wood has written of early Friends that ‘they underestimated their dependence on the Christ of the Gospel’,13 but the prospect of detaching silent worship from its particular cultural context lay dormant until the earlier Quaker prophetic tradition of the leadings of the Light of Christ eventually became overlaid. In W.C. Braithwaite’s view, it was in the Quietist period that a vagueness of experience came about which reduced Christianity to an indefinite principle of life in the soul for Friends. For him, this reduction was related to the quietist passivity of the period. A resulting depersonalisation was thus germane to the Inner Light, and the meaning of ‘that of God in everyone’ could then begin to be taken up to imply something different from earlier appreciations of the light of Christ Jesus.14 This experience of spirit was consequently to be detached from scriptural tradition and religious education.

Eventually, particular techniques of worship were to become separated from their cultural roots and viewed as a common, universal core of all faiths. Quakers were hardly original here though, for by the mid-nineteenth century ‘Shepherd Smith was gathered up a number of mystical religion that a global presentation of Inner Light universalism became explicit when it was disseminated among Quakers in London Yearly Meeting.'
Although Friends had previously been prepared for such an approach through the depersonalisation processes of Inner Light philosophy, in his studies a broad approach to world faiths was to be combined with a presentation at considerable variance to the original Quaker one. A radically extended meaning of the term universalism appeared in Hare's writings: it was to hold such a degree of resonance for Friends that it eventually developed as something approaching a norm.

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perception. These 'thought-forms' were to be given illustrated expression in a book by Besant and Leadbeater that was to have a remarkable influence on the emergence of abstract, non-objective art from its religious origins in Christianity. Blavatsky's teachings asserted that:

Theological Christianity must die out, never to resurface again...to be replaced by other ideals, unassailable, because universal, and built on the rock of eternal truths instead of the shifting sands of human fancy.

It was from these origins that a radical presentation of universalist spirituality was to take off for Hare. It was one influenced by claims of reformed Hinduism to be at the centre of an essential, global faith, a substratum common to all religions, to which others could partake.

When Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869–1948) came to London as a law student in 1889 he too came under Blavatsky's influence. It was from these Theosophists that Gandhi himself in 1908: 'holding on to truth' – opposing injustice with love) at its core.

Conforming with Gandhian principles of remaining within the faith of one’s cultural background, Hare remained in membership of the Christian based Society of Friends, placing an emphasis on a new means of achieving the pivotal character of his spiritual goal:

The new ideal is not that of a new religion, but of a new means of assimilating the soul to the Universal Order. In the philosophies of Greece and India different means of reaching the Highest were recognised for different men, and from this conception we should be ready to extend a great toleration to all in their various searches.

As the Great War dragged on, his researches into world faiths was further reflected in his editorial comments and articles for The Ploughshare. His interest in Eastern religion led him to assert that:

Pantheism is merely the half of theology which the East was given to see more clearly than the West. Quietism is merely that half of morality which all men of faith and vision come to somewhere and somehow.

An ideology of Social Darwinism that was perceived to support war as a healthy process of struggle between the industrialised top-dog nations was deplored in The Ploughshare. It had to be countered. Hare's comments on this presentation of evolution were specific: while accepting that in the depth of the ocean, and even in a drop of water, there could be observed the struggle for life, to the contrary, religious faith was intended to free the human race from such competition and suffering.
classes of Europe were engaged in mutual slaughter, dimmed the hopes of Hare and others who were critical of the Bolshevik revolution. In one of his bleaker moments as editor of The Ploughshare, he confided to his readers: 'And yet...we do not seem to have the power to replace the force of arms by moral force. What, actually, is the first step?'

Turning away from those dark days of bloodshed and destruction, his search was to take him far from the immediate problems of Europe’s turmoil. Retiring from his editorial mission for the SQS in 1919, and now over fifty years of age, he wrote a supportive review of Rufus Jones’ work on the mystical tradition within Christianity. The hopes of the Quaker socialists had been severely tested by their ‘absolutist’ C.O. peace witness, and by the advance of international ‘oil powered’ capital. Hare’s support for The Ploughshare promoters’ espousal of a socialist utopia attainable in ‘the long and hastening evolution’ was now under review. He wrote that the way ahead lay not with a ‘League of Nations or Capitalism or Socialism or Bolshevism or Communism or Anarchism – but mutual love’. Whereas his previous commitment had been to assist the reconstruction of an economic system that would give more freedom to the inner life, the spiritual life alone was now to be given his undivided attention.

Later copies of The Ploughshare included articles and flyers on the Garden City movement. Hare and some other socialist Friends were turning their hopes for social reconstruction towards an involvement in this direction. He moved to Letchworth, and became the editor of Town and Country Planning reports. Meanwhile, his researches into world faiths developed apace: he continued to lecture for the Theosophical Society and contributed to a conference on religions of the Empire, editing its proceedings. It was his long-standing concern with the encounter between world faiths that drew him to set up this conference at the British Empire Exhibition in London in 1924 with Sir Francis Younghusband, who had led the first expedition to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. As co-secretary, Hare edited the collected papers, published as Religions of the Empire, in 1925. In his own contribution, entitled ‘The Ideal Man’, his ideal man was to be free from any influences of historical particularity, and he concluded that ‘this process of unfoldment, of assimilation to the order of the universe, is Religion itself’. For Hare, the ideal man’s light might shine out unshackled from all cultural conditioning.

His recommended techniques of worship were to be mystical ones, freed from specific cultural contexts. Like Robert Barclay before, Hare referred sympathetically to the case of Hai Ebn Yokdan, the (spurious) record of a boy brought to spiritual maturity by deer in an equatorial forest. This unspoilt child of nature was said to have developed without learned language or other culture influences into sophisticated spiritual adulthood. In the climax to Ibn Tufail’s tale the ascetic hero attained lengthy states of ecstatic mysticism where everything disappeared, even his own Being, to leave only the experience of the One, the eternal self-existent Being of the Quietist goal of mysticism: that of a refined spiritual ecstasy to be achieved without the supposed hindrance of cultural conditioning.

Techniques of meditation remained at the core of Hare’s ideals in his Mysticism of East and West of 1927. He wrote of religion as being ‘the return journey of the soul to its source’, and of the process of evolution as being ‘the return of the Spirit to its pure supremacy’. He attempted to achieve an underlying formulation capable of embracing his attachment to the theosophical revisions of Hinduism. By doing so, it may be seen that his universalism also echoed the mystical Neo-Platonic tradition that had been known to – but rejected by – George Fox and his generation in their debates with Cambridge Platonists, that later, by way of George Keith’s notes and translations, were to be given a brief airing by Robert Barclay in his Apology.

A founder of The Society for Promoting the Studies of Religions, Hare became editor of the Religion journal from 1930 to 1935, and in 1937 there appeared a final major study, Systems of Meditation in Religion. It contained analyses of such systems, grouping them according to the channels of tradition through which they flowed, to their philosophic backgrounds, and to the methods they employed. Under this last heading he included Positive Effort, Negative and Quietistic, Artificial (drugs and quasi-intoxication) and Spontaneous Mystical Experience (nature mysticism) as his four sub-headings. His stated aim was ‘to suggest that religion is valid independently of the philosophical terms in which it is confessed’. It was in this work that Hare overtly identified the Quaker faith with Quietism:

In particular, I may point out that Quakerism, which appeared in England in the second part of the seventeenth century, belongs properly to the Quietist movement.

Supporting this, Hare referred to Fr Augustine Baker’s Sancta Sophia, the work Barclay had quoted from in his Apology when suggesting a likeness between Friends’ silent worship and the leaps into mystical states of heightened consciousness recommended to Roman Catholic nuns by their mentor. Hare came to rest his hopes on a universal system of meditation to attain ‘the assimilation of the soul to the universal order’. But, while his search led him to attempt to identify an Absolute behind God, he retained a streak of pragmatism:

I am well aware that, superficially at any rate, the dominant views of life held, say, by Brahmins, Buddhists, Taoists, Christian monks, Platonists, Quakers, or Christian Scientists are much at variance, and even on the higher levels (are) not entirely reconcilable.

However, while he accepted that some irreconcilability might well persist, it was in his final study that he nevertheless hoped that a common language of faith might yet be established:

Thus viewed, the experiences of Buddhist, Taoist, Sufi, Yogi, Platonist, Orphist, Christian ascetic, or Quietist might be translatable into a common terminology, even though that terminology should not yet have been invented. ‘Here, perhaps’, he commented, ‘is a task awaiting us’.

Retrospect

Millennial hopes of economic, social and spiritual progress had enthused some young Quakers at the end of the nineteenth century. Hare had been won over to occult mysticism in the form of Theosophy propagated by Blavatsky, which, despite all her charlatanry, appeared to offer an attractive alternative to what were felt to be the perils of aggressive, scientific materialism in Western society. Hare’s initial plea to
Friends had been for a new economic and political order as a necessary precondition for the development of the spiritual life of the inner man, but, by the end of the War, he had come to identify mutual love as the only hope.\textsuperscript{97} It was in the face of such odds that he ploughed his lonely furrow. His post-war interests subsequently led him to make a scholarly appeal for a quest for mysticism that he upheld until his death in the London Blackouts of WWII. The theosophical philosophy to which he subscribed was significantly at odds with the competitive aims and consequences of the ‘quantity production’ of oil-powered capitalism,\textsuperscript{88} and his concerns retained their ahimsa\textsuperscript{99} principles with distinction.

His knowledge of Eastern faiths was extensive, and he sought a universal essence, beyond the specifics of any particular cultural context, in which forms of meditation, rather than worship, were the norm. This was at considerable variance with the original Quaker faith of primitive Christianity revived. Although he conceded that to try to make a new religion was not a viable option, he still hoped that some new means of achieving a common goal from various faiths was a possibility. The mystical techniques of attaining this were to be similar to those fostered inside monastery walls, but they were bereft of Fr Baker’s nun’s extensive grounding in Christian faith and continuing daily attendance at Mass.

Recurring at the core of Hare’s studies into universal spirituality was an ideal of the pure reign of the individual’s inner light blossoming into adult genius – like the unfolding petals of a flower, if only left alone, as in the fanciful Hai Ebn Yokdan tale. But, earlier in the Quaker tradition, this proposed form of mystical asceticism had been viewed askance. Barclay’s usage of the term ‘immediate’ was intended to mean that clergy and sacraments were redundant, but the inclusion of the Yokdan illustration was judged to be a step too far, and Meeting for Sufferings saw fit to expunge that particular passage from the Apology.\textsuperscript{99} However, the quest for ideal of immediate experience, which claims not to be inherently interpretive, has held a recurring fascination for some Friends, despite implications of indifferentism.

At the time of Hare’s death in 1943, while in membership at Golders Green Meeting, there were harsh wartime economies, including severe paper shortages, so his obituary notices were brief, and assessments curtailed.\textsuperscript{99} Unlike that of his contemporary, Rufus Jones, his contribution was not well broadcast. Nevertheless, his researches were significantly wider, and many issues that were of concern to his faith and philosophy can be detected in his wake. Assertions concerning the mystical basis of Quakerism were coming in to prominence within LYM: it was during that same year that Lewis Benson wrote his essay detecting a seismic shift in the Society of Friends away from its Christian prophetic roots into mystical philosophy.\textsuperscript{92} There continued to be a growing interest in this field within LYM, and a ‘special interest’ group was to be founded in 1977. The QUG’s adherents published a succession of pamphlets and newsletters with Ralph Hetherington as secretary,\textsuperscript{93} such that it became a mainstream feature within BYM. In this development, Hare’s contribution was a pivotal, if unrecognised, influence.

To his credit, Hare never defamed any particular religion, for he had hoped to penetrate behind the particular forms of all faiths in the utopian anticipation of developing a common language of spirituality. Nor is the reader made to feel that the Christian faith is being degraded as outmoded or otherwise untenable. However, the dynamic master-disciple character of religious faiths, in which a charismatic personality has a unique and fundamental mediating role, was diminished. While his appeal to mutual love pricks the conscience, the question of how to gain the enabling power to pursue such an ideal was problematic. Here lay the central problem that he had previously discerned and voiced, but which remained unresolved. This restriction gave his studies a philosophical rather than religious character at some considerable variance with the Christian universalism of the prophetic Quaker mainstream tradition. His preferences were for an Eastern mystical philosophy of pantheism – or perhaps panentheism – as related to the contemporary input of process theology. It was to have growing allegiances both inside and beyond the Religious Society of Friends.\textsuperscript{94}

### III

**QUAKER UNIVERSALIST GROUPING**

The essentials of Hare’s mystical philosophy of universalism, based on Eastern features, were to be taken up by a later generation, self-named as the QUG.\textsuperscript{79} Formed as a ‘special interest’ group within LYM in 1977, its first publication was titled *Quakerism as Forerunner* by the chairman, John Linton, who had lived in Delhi, and like Hare, was much taken with theosophical Neo-Vedanta.\textsuperscript{96} With selected quotations spanning the interval since Hare’s studies (Christopher Isherwood; Aldous Huxley), Linton urged that Quakerism should be superseded by a movement with new terms of membership that rejected the superstition and parochialism of Christianity, and he argued that Quakers could effect a transformation to such a grouping: Jesus as one avatar among others. Horace Alexander, who had spent several years in India working with Gandhi, wrote the second QUG pamphlet. The common factor here may have been that, through contact with the East, and Gandhi’s witness in particular, the principles of ahimsa and satyagraha were paramount for that generation of Friends.\textsuperscript{97} For Friends in the twentieth century, new appreciations of their Peace testimony were an extension of their non-seditious witness to the world. They felt they had lived through the institutional violence of global warfare that conventional Christianity had generally conditioned. Gandhi’s outstanding dedication – both to the unarmed struggle for Indian independence from the British Empire and in facing the growing religious conflicts of the day – was claimed to have been based on ancient Hindu universal principles of non-violence that appeared to offer the prospect of an alternative spiritual grouping to which Quakers had acted as forerunners.\textsuperscript{98}

In the following decade, Jan Arriens, who had worked in the Far East, expressed an unabashed Inner Lightist philosophy for the QUG that further aimed to sideline its previous discerned and voiced, but which remained unresolved. This restriction gave his studies a philosophical rather than religious character at some considerable variance with the Christian universalism of the prophetic Quaker mainstream tradition. His preferences were for an Eastern mystical philosophy of pantheism – or perhaps panentheism – as related to the contemporary input of process theology. It was to have growing allegiances both inside and beyond the Religious Society of Friends.\textsuperscript{94}
Richard Allen took up more of the current New Age interests in his exhortations to Seeker readers about green concerns in his emphasis on global ecological balance. In *The End of Words*, Rex Ambler briefly addressed questions concerning the range and commensurability of various theological claims of Quaker Universalism. Four main levels were categorised: universalisms of potential, of experience, of belief, and of salvation. But as only the third item was thought to be problematic for Friends, the author posed the dismissive question: ‘So what after all is the fuss…?’ Nevertheless, QUUG publications continued to bring to the surface anomalies of compatibility with the Quaker tradition:

a. *The Universalism of an Inner Light Philosophy at the Core of the Originating Faith*  
The universalism of an Inner Light philosophy has been claimed to be at the core of the originating Quaker faith. But, to the contrary, this term was not in use, and its underlying philosophy was not a feature of early Friends. Their emphasis was on experiencing the Light of Christ inwardly – as in the phrase ‘taking things to heart’. A pantheistic neoplatonic/oriental conception of the Inner Light as sparks from a divine fire shining out from an individual was not theirs.

b. *The Quaker Faith as Essentially Mystical*  
It has often been asserted that the Quaker faith is essentially mystical. However, this claim is anachronistic, as mysticism is not a scriptural term and its concept was foreign to Fox and his generation. Barclay briefly referred to it in a passage in which he was trying to convey to his peers some parallels between Friends’ silent worship and monastic techniques of meditative prayer – in an effort to convince them of Quakers’ true Christian allegiances. Their central claim that ‘Christ has come to teach his people himself’ was in the prophetic tradition. Forms of Eastern mysticism (unless so vaguely defined as to be synonymous with the term ‘experiential’) – concerning the attainment of states of bliss reserved for an elite – was incompatible with the Quaker claim of the Holy Spirit being poured out on all.

c. *Quietist Aims Central to the Quaker Movement*  
Quietist aims have been said to be those of the Quaker movement. But Ilm Tufl’s paradigmatic fantasy of spiritual enlightenment, to which Barclay alluded, was recognised as unsound by YM, and expunged. Spiritual refinement was not their goal. Quietist means were contrary to their faith: theirs was not a faith whose goal was that of a void beyond image and narrative.

d. *The Unmediated and Immediate Basis of the Quaker Religion, without Clergy and Sacraments*  
The Quaker religion, without clergy and sacraments, has been said to be unmediated and immediate. However, an apophatic faith that strains towards mystical zero is contrary to the originating Quaker faith that did not reject doctrine, corporate discipline or the fundamental mediating presence of Christ Jesus. Quakers’ appreciation of immediacy was centred on an informed appreciation of the Holy Spirit: the Light of Christ functioned to bring about an inner experience of the outward facts in their hearts.

e. *The Unnecessary Encumbrance of Scripture*  
Although Fox and his generation emphasised the experiential priorities of their silent worship, their grasp of Scripture was thorough and devotional. Theirs was not a faith whose goal was that of a void beyond image and narrative.

f. *Faiths are of Equal Validity*  
There are many paths to God. But, to the contrary, there was no suggestion in the Quaker movement that their Christian faith was on a par with any others. Quaker universalism was that of Paul’s commitment to the re-integration of all mankind in Christ.

g. *Quakerism as a Celebration of Diversity*  
However, relativism was not a feature of Friends’ faith: it did not, and does not, guarantee harmony, as relativists will only be tolerant if their own cultural values happen to be so. Further, pluralism (the ideology of global consumerism) contains its own paradoxical exclusivist truth claim – one that is incommensurate with the historic Quaker faith.

h. *All Humans have within Themselves the Potential or Resources to Find Life’s Meaning*  
Whilst a minority view within Friends, the influence of humanist philosophy has come to offer a ubiquitous alternative interpretation to ‘that of God in everyone’. In the wake of the dominant Darwinian paradigm of naturalism, the humanist stance that sees faiths as projections of the human imagination may well be a strong one, but Quakers insisted that human autonomy was inadequate. Only through waiting in silent worship could the inspiration of the divine Light of Christ break into their lives.

Despite such anomalies, many claims were to be found acceptable by BYM and features were to be included in the 1994 revisions of *Christian Faith and Practice*, renamed as *Quaker Faith and Practice*. The changes were most stark in the provisional rewrite of *Advises and Queries as Questions and Counsel*, the contents of which marked a major de-Christianising shift in the ‘silent revolution’, features of which were retained in the diminished theology of the revised publication of 1995. These stratagems were promoted by accommodations of variable soundness, including:

1. *Support for a range of theological trends and converging pantheistic perspectives on Western and Eastern religions.*

2. *Claims concerning the perception of two conjoined aspects of the Quakers’ Light: the prophetic Light of Christ and the mystical Inner Light, claimed to have equal validity for Friends.*
3. Assertions about what it was that Quakers really meant, despite themselves: if only they could have freed themselves from their brainwashed cultural trappings concerning the Light of Christ. 113
4. Presentations of the Inner Light as being at the core of Friends' faith from the outset, and experience of it as essentially interpretation free. 114
5. Views to the effect that it doesn't really matter what the Quaker theological tradition once was anyway, or how Friends used to identify their faith. Different models will suffice: testimony is all. 115
6. An inclusive acceptance of the equal validity of all other religions, accompanied by the concomitant erasure of references to the Christian priorities of the Quaker faith. 116
7. Emphases on light as an innate goodness capacity/potential, existing in every one by virtue of his/her humanity, characterised by a crucial shift in the understanding of the phrase 'that of God in everyone'. 117 God as a projection of the human imagination: religion as psychotherapy.
8. Affirmations of 'new light' from whatever quarter. This much-cited phrase has been reiterated in assertions to the effect that Quakers served as forerunners of a 'post-Christian' grouping. 118 New light supersedes old light.

With the influence of the 'special interest' grouping in BYM, Hare's plea for 'a great acceptance of the equal validity of all other religions, accompanied by the concomitant erasure of references to the Christian priorities of the Quaker faith. 119 Two main phases in this silent revolution may be identified:

At first, the QUUG's general aims can be seen to be a continuation of the venture of the modernist period, with hopes of attaining an underlying mystical experience common to all faiths. This theological movement had at its root the principles of satyagraha and ahimsa that were acclaimed as a perceived ancient source of pacifism within religious Hindu universalism, which Friends also espoused. It included an ameliorative stage in which supporters sought to include further theological aspects to the Light of Christ as originally experienced and identified by Fox's generation. An image of the two foci of an ellipse had been used to express a bonding together of two sources of the Light that, for Maurice Creasey in his Swarthmore lecture of 1969, constituted the genius of Friends. 120 In 1993, Ralph Hetherington, in his 'Spirituality in the Society of Friends', placed the Inward Light and the Inner Light back-to-back by suggesting they were two aspects of the Quakers' Light, both having a scriptural basis. 121 But, whilst it was intended to be a unifying statement, the scriptural basis was questionable, 122 as was the terminology of aseption, once dear to psychologists and philosophers alike. 123 In the same way that the brain is capable of holding only a single interpretation consecutively of Jastrow's duck/rabbit picture by a process of mental oscillation, so an equivalent effect of teetering theological instability was also problematic. 124

A lecturer in psychology himself, it was ecstatic 'peak-experiences' - states of paranormal, mystical consciousness - that Hetherington forwarded as the underlying universal, common-core factor. 125 His presentation was intended to be cumulative in character, expressing the overall significance of a single, unified Light, but the conditioning cultural features that encourage, identify and award special value to experience were circumvented. 126 It may well have had the appearance of an age of equipoise for some but, in retrospect, it appears that, however worthy this project of equilibrium may have been, it was theologically unattainable, and was to be confined to a brief, transitional period of a hastening revolution. Overall, the crucial link between the Light and Jesus Christ that had been one of Friends' controlling assumptions for three centuries was being dissolved. 127 An emphasis on spirituality as an end in itself appeared for some to ease the transition: Transcendental Mediation 128 was the basis of an approach recommended by Damaris Parker-Rhodes. 129 Indeed, the position known as Quaker universalism in the twentieth century has been identified to be the more or less inevitable result of laying primary emphasis on the symbolic and psychological processes of religion rather than its doctrinal content. 130 For its supporters, however, it offered commitment to additions to the Christian basis of Friends faith. 131

Secondly, an overlapping stage appeared with some profusion. In a mirror image of the negative appreciation of Hinduism received by the young Gandhi - that he overcame only with the influence of the London Theosophists - so too Quaker Universalists began to voice pejorative views of their own religious culture as being parochial and superstition ridden. They too were unappreciative of the benefits of their own heritage - that of Christianity. 132 This was to lead to accommodations that have been associated with much-vaunted expressions of pluralism within Quaker post-modernism. John Hick, making use of the now obligatory 'scandal of particularity' argument in his QUUG Pamphlet, 133 voiced criticisms of the priority of Christianity. However, in Keith Ward's analyses, 134 when this critique is extended to other faiths, Hick's pluralism has implied not so much that all faiths are equally true, but that they are all equally false. In the event, a subsequent influx of sceptical theological stances was to have a major effect on the QUUG, shifting its priorities away from the single, common-core goal. 135 This ongoing stage became contrary in character, involving forms of atheistic philosophy at odds with those introduced by Hare to Friends, and initially taken up as Quaker Universalism: new light was claimed to replace old light.

The universalism of the Christian faith that had offered Friends unity with the reformed Hinduism of Gandhi's satyagraha and ahimsa was under review, and was no longer centre stage within BYM. Along with this, the burning issue of military conscription - that had been a main feature for Quakers during WWI and WWII and also during following a decade of post war national conscription - was no longer a CO stand-up-and-be-counted priority issue for individuals and their families. 136 The pivotal period of universalist theology that had been intertwined with pacifist witness had passed. 137 Already by the early 1960s a younger generation was to be heard voicing the priority of other concerns - including those of a sexual character. 138 The priority of the Peace Testament that had been painfully developed since the days of The Peace Shoe into a central feature of the theology of Friends' faith was being displaced by a diversity of concerns that were also to be accommodated as a
result of the clamorous influences of 'special interest' group representations during the revisions of Quaker Faith and Practice, finalised at YM in 1994. 190

EPILOGUE

By way of an epilogue to the millennilial hopes of the QUG for a single, pure spirituality on Gandhian lines, it may be observed that irreconcilable conflicts between faiths remain endemic. Here's 'far-seeing vision' contained within it the assumption that what is common is primarily what matters, and differences are presumed to be of lesser importance, intellectually and spiritually. But the weaknesses of academic dialogue using common-core models have become distressingly apparent. In the everyday world, there remains the task of working out appropriate language for significant differences to be talked about for continuing dialogue — rather than being used as excuses for violent separation.140 Recommendations for the convergence of spiritualities appear unfocussed when faced with the particular conflicts between Abrahamic faith communities alone. In the heat of such struggles, desires for a retreat into a theology of quietist mysticism may well seem to be an attractive alternative, but Eastern views of the world as illusion were not those of the Quaker faith, even in its extreme quietist phase.

Following the BYM revision in 1994 of Faith and Practice which emphasised diversity, some claimants variously began to marshal their arguments around perceived needs for transitional post-Christian replacements for the experience of the Light of Christ.141 In this shift, assertions have been made that new light of continuing revelation renders all else outdated and untenable. The latest new light formulations have been deemed to be the valid ones: a 'post-Quaker' grouping has been envisaged.142 Paradoxically, while having originated within an environment of pluralism, this project has nurtured its own exclusivist dimension: didactic arguments in support of its own precedence have taken on an increasingly contrary character. This later phase grew out of the earlier QUG project but, whereas previous hopes had been for a unified global spirituality of peace, later offshoots diverged away from the pivotal Gandhian commitment. The pluralism that has rapidly become an ideological cornerstone of both East and West may now be defined primarily in terms of the ethics of consumer choice, identifiable life-style groupings, and their purchasing potential on a global scale. To what extent such new light will be espoused by Friends remains to be seen.143

New Testament exhortations of the urgent need for redemption, for reconciliation with God, of salvation through the sole mediation of Christ Jesus and His Light, that originally informed the Quaker faith, lost their priority among many BYM Friends. When the 'new light' term had originally been introduced at LYM144 it was intended to allay fears that biblical higher criticism might weaken Christian faith. The scriptural basis of continuing revelation appears in John's Gospel, but the guiding Spirit of Truth does not supersede the historical presence of Christ there, but functions also as a 'remembrancer'145 of Him.146 Contrary to this, calls for non-Christian options for a basis to Quaker faith increased - but with limited critical analyses of their contextual significance and practices.147 A universe of concerns was replacing the universalist concern. Several such emerging concerns can be grouped together as biology orientated - sexual issues, ecological interests, animal rights - aspiring to a supernatural status by association with a religious institution. In view of its inherently religious stance, the pantheism of the Quaker Universalist venture could be accommodated, but the impact of evolutionary naturalism that has contributed to the collapse of religious paradigms in the West remains an unresolved issue in the survival of the Religious Society of Friends.

Since the time of William Loftus Hare's essentialist researches into the universal dimension of religions, antipathies to the originating fundamentals of Quaker Christian faith have become increasingly strident. The base on which Friends once stood, and from which they could relate to other faiths, has shifted. Having provided a useful platform for Indian independence148 and a support for expressions of religious dissent in the West, the theosophical influences of Quaker Universalism have also waned, and philosophies of pluralism enshrining religious and social diversity have come to the fore, further undermining the theological and social values of Quakers' origins in primitive Christianity revived. Efforts to graft on new blooms of questionable hardness to the roots of the Quaker faith have taken precedence.149 Paradoxically, while a surging pluralism nullifies the criteria for deciding on truth or falsity in religion, when its own ideology prevails and its own covert exclusivist truth claims become dominant, it may provide proof to Fox's warning that when a faith that distinguishes uncreated Spirit from created spirit is lost,150 it is not so soon to be regained.151 Supporters of naturalism could hardly wish it otherwise.152

Questions concerning the extent that BYM may see fit to accommodate emerging assertions concerning the validity of personal experience of non-purposiveness and outsidelessness have yet to be addressed.153 If such a degree of diversity is found acceptable, the Ranter stance, from which the early Quaker movement struggled to distance itself, may become endorsed. The reduction of revelation and grace to questions concerning the extent that BYM may see fit to accommodate emerging assertions concerning the validity of personal experience of non-purposiveness and outsidelessness have yet to be addressed.153 If such a degree of diversity is found acceptable, the Ranter stance, from which the early Quaker movement struggled to distance itself, may become endorsed. The reduction of revelation and grace to distance itself, may become endorsed. The reduction of revelation and grace to questions concerning the extent that BYM may see fit to accommodate emerging assertions concerning the validity of personal experience of non-purposiveness and outsidelessness have yet to be addressed.153 If such a degree of diversity is found acceptable, the Ranter stance, from which the early Quaker movement struggled to distance itself, may become endorsed. The reduction of revelation and grace to distance itself, may become endorsed. The reduction of revelation and grace to

NOTES

2. Barclay, R., An Apology for the True Christian Divinity as the Same is Held Forth and Preached by the People, in Scorn, Called Quakers, 14th edn, Glasgow: Murdoch, 1866 (Latin 1676; English 1678), Prop. V & VI, Para. XXV, p. 129.


5. Eng-Olsson, L., The Conception of the Inner Light in Robert Barclay's Theology, Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1954, pp. 9, 47, 78. Of the title, it may seem remiss that no criticism has been made of the fact that Barclay never used the term 'Inner Light' in either the original Latin or in the English translation.

6. That God's plans included not only the Jewish people but also other obedient peoples, but not Origen's apocatastasis - the claim that all moral creatures will be saved - which was formally condemned at Constantinople in 543 AD.


10. Frost, J.W., The Keithian Controversy in Early Pennsylvania, Norwood, PA: Norwood Editions, 1980. The author observes that although Friends were offended by the contentious manner of Keith's presentation, they were obliged - after his demise - to agree with the content.


19. DNB V. XVIII, p. 472.


24. Jones, Later Periods, p. 457, see also Cadbury, 'Additional Notes', p. 687, on 'an experienced, inner, spiritual apprehension of a historic revelation'.

25. Jones, R.M., Social Law in the Spiritual World, Philadelphia: J.C. Winston, 1904, Chapter 5. However, many years later, Jones eventually recognised a crucial distinction between the two Lights in 'A Call to a New Institution of Heroic Spirit', Friends Intelligencer 105/29, Phil., 1948, p. 408.


32. Ahoms (non-killing) were here acquiring an extended usage (non-violence); see Soares, G., 'Mahatma Gandhi', in Jesuit Scholars, Religious Hinduism, Chapter 28, pp. 292-300 (298).


34. November 1914.

35. 'Open Letter', SQS, 1911.

36. May 1915.


38. Jesuit Scholars, Religious Hinduism, pp. 273-76. The history of the origins and development of universal religion emanating from India is extensive. Rajam Mohon Roy (1774-1833) had set up the Brahmo Samaj (Brahman Society) in 1828 to promote universal religious worship with the intention of restoring Hinduism to its claimed primitive purity. With the help of the British Government, he suppressed ideas (‘widow-burning’) in 1828. He was in England, staying with the Unitarian minister Lant Carpenter on a mission in 1831, when he died in Bristol in 1833. A memorial to him was erected by Dwarika Nath Tagore, who was also to be buried in England. The latter was the statesman Rabindra Nath Tagore, the poet. The next leader of the Society to proclaim ‘The New Dispensations’ (the harmony of all scriptures and prophets and dispensations) was Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-1875), who came to England on a mission in 1870, meeting many distinguished religious representatives, including Max Muller. See Sen, N.C., 'Brahma Samaj', in Hare (ed.), Religion of the Empire, pp. 278-92.


41. The Publisher, Thu Speke Sri Ramakrishna, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1980, pp. viii-xvi.


43. Fallon, ‘Ramakrishna, Vivekananda & Radhakrishnan’.


46. Besant, A., An Autobiography, London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1910. The first whisper of the Theosophical Society came to her in 1882 (p. 280), and she joined in 1889, stating in a letter to her close associate Charles Bradlaugh that the Society’s aims were to found a Universal Brotherhood, whose founders deny a personal God, but support a form of pantheism (pp. 351-52). For an overview, see Caputt, The Sea of Faith, pp. 171-75.

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QUAKER STUDIES

49. The first prime minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), received part of his education here.
51. Her book, The Key of Theosophy, London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1889, was widely influential: in fine art, it led to the creation of non-objective, 'spiritual' painting through the work of Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian.
52. Jesuit Scholars, Religious Hinduism, pp. 280-82. This Society was founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875 in another attempt to develop a universal faith, but retaining the Vedas as a scriptural base. See Pherwani, S.N., 'The Arya Samaj', in Hare (ed.), Religious of the Empire, pp. 293-303.
59. Winston Churchill's contemporary parliamentary statement.
61. Easwaran, E., The Key of Theosophy, London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1889, was
65. November 1914.
66. February 1913.
70. Quaker Universalist literature remained silent on Central/South American Mayan and Aztec ritualised human slaughter.
72. The Truth is Christ.
73. Benson, L., Prophetic Quakerism, in The Truth is Christ.
74. The Universalist, QUG, 1978–
77. In this, it may be said that this essay illustrates an observation made by Punshon, Portrait in Grey, of a peculiarly Gandhian form of Quakerism, p. 243.
79. Hetherington, K., Universal Quakerism (reprinted in Readings for University, No. 0), QUG Pamphlet No. 4, 1984.
which both 'Inward' and 'Inner' aspects of the light were felt to be justified by Scripture: "Perhaps the terms might usefully be employed to describe two aspects of the light, illustrated by the two texts: "That was the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (Mt. 5:16). The first text could be said to refer to the Inward Light, the Christ Jesus that can speak to thy condition. This is usually experienced as not being part of oneself: a light shining inward lighting every man or woman who comes into the world. This light, Fox asserted, helps us to distinguish right from wrong and leads us into unity and is experienced subjectively by the individual. The second text could be said to refer to the Inner Light or that of God in everyone. This is the innate divinity which exists potentially in everyone as an element of their humanity. For those spiritually developed souls, it becomes obvious to all those they meet; an inner light shining outwards, objectively observed by others.

- Arries, The Place of Jesus in Quaker Universalism, p. 2.

- Advice and Queries, 1994: diminished references to the mediation of Christ Jesus, compared with 1964 compilation.


- See Quaker Faith & Practice, 1994, in which item 27.04, Heron, Hetherington and Pickavance attempted to paste together disparate views.
- See Freud, S., Civilization and Its Discontents, Vienna, 1929; London: Hogarth Press, 1930; Pelican Freud Library, 12, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985, pp. 245-73, where the 'oceanic' experience is identified as that of the infant's undifferentiated ego, but is assessed to be of no particular spiritual value.

- See Punshon, Portrait in Grey (p. 125), on the consequences of the abandonment of Harley's second controlling assumption.
- Neo-Hindu cults and Zen Buddhist disciplines have been taken up by Friends.
- Punshon, Portrait in Grey, p. 260.

- Its 'essentialism' was of a metaphorical aspiration carrying a theological claim of the notion of personal experience that would be infallible, as the result of sloughing off all received opinion. In this it may be said to be a form of fundamentalism transposed into an adjacent discourse; see the comments by Kerr, F., Theology after Wittgenstein, Oxford: Blackwell, 1986, p. 24, to Paul Feyerabend's assessment.


- Cudjoe, D., Philosophy's Own Religion, London: SCM Press, 2000, includes a fourfold listing of disparate sources to the detriment of an essentialist, common-core faith. The very fact that at least four different accounts of the essence of religion are forthcoming should set alarm bells ringing and, in fact, we can be pretty confident that we will from now on hear no more about a supposed common core of religion", pp. 19-25.

- Brock, Pagans, pp. 471-87. To the discomfort of sociologists, in his conclusions stated at the end of his study, the author included a typology of pacifism. He also identified a contributory cause for the displacement of pacifism as a pivotal feature of faith in a denomination's shift from social alienation to social adjustment -- the application of which might invite perusal into the current legitimisation of Quaker studies through the processes of academic accreditation.

- Pilgrim, G., 'Taming Anarchy: Quaker Alternate Alternating and Otherness', in Dandelion, P. (ed.), The Creation of Quaker Theory: Insider Perspectives, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, p. 216, for a consideration of the assertion made by T.C. Kenorey (British Quakerism 1860-1920, OUP, 2000) that, without the elevation of the Peace Testimony into a central organising motive, the Religious Society of Friends would have ceased to exist as a distinctive religious group.


- Quaker Faith & Practice, IYM, 1995. One of the significant changes was the new chapter, 'Close Relationships', which replaced 'Marriage and the Home' of the previous Christian Faith & Practice, IYM, 1960. The majority of the entries of the earlier edition were jettisoned, and in came entries from Towards a Quaker View of Sex. The index of the new edition accordingly includes a list of new entries under 'Sexuality' (same sex): 22:15-19; see also 22:28, 29, 45, 49, 69.


- Brock, Pagans (pp. 483-86), gives examples of religious denominations that have abandoned commitments to pacifism.

- IYM, 1931.


- See Gawronski, R., SJ (ed.), Word and Silence: Hans Von Balthasar and the Spiritual Encounter Between East and West, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995, for von Balthasar's assessments on a global range of mystics, including his view on some mysticism as a systematic process that constitutes a homosexual assault on God.


- See Teagle, Steps to the Future.


- The Works of George Fox, II, p. 182 (1676).
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Tony Adams is an artist, and was a lecturer in art and in complementary studies. He spent two formative years in the Far East before training in Fine Art at Chelsea School of Art, London, in the 1950s, and in Art Education at Bristol University. During a sabbatical year at Leicester University he made a study, *The Socialist Quaker Society (1898–1924)*, published as *A Far-Seeing Vision* by the Quaker Socialist Society in 1990. He has written occasional pieces on art and religion in *The Friend*, and is making a series of montage prints to accompany them. He has served as a governor at Sidcot School, and is currently a member of Bournemouth & Swanage Monthly Meeting.

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**PETERS, University**

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