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# Children of the Covenant, Children of the Light

Mary Moehlman

Early Friends sometimes called themselves Children of the Light and sometimes Children of the New Covenant. Light, community, and covenant were closely related in Quaker concepts and practices. An especially active Quaker dream has been a vision of unity and harmonious diversity brought about through living in justice and peace. This is a covenant vision, and we lay special claim to it as we articulate our experiential theology of the Light of Christ within. As Children of the New Covenant or of the Light, we “walk cheerfully over the world” calling others to be attentive, faithful, and accountable to the Light within them. We are given a vision of a universal community of God’s people drawn together by “hearing” and turning toward the Light already present within all the diverse people of the world.

A central first principle of Quakerism is that there is a continuing, inward, unmediated, universal, and saving Light in every human being who comes into the world; regardless of religion, culture, creed, race, gender, age, or understanding. The concept of Light is highly developed and, in many respects, is the most creative notion in Quaker thought. Many Quaker principles stem from this seminal article of faith, and through it Friends understand and express their experience of God in a way that can be empowering for everyone, everywhere.

Quakers have called this Light variously—the Light of Christ within, the inward or inner Light, the Spirit of God or Christ, the Seed, Grace—and a host of other names. By whatever name God’s Light is known and to whomever it is known, it can bring unity and reveal a vision of justice, peace, and love. To those who turn toward it, it can bring inner peace and transformation, and lead to unity and loving, ethical behavior. In a myriad of Quaker writers, teachers, prophets, and journal keepers—be they activist or mystic, preacher or pacifist, contemporary or historical—this principle of universality comes through over and over again, in one way or another.

George Fox stated: “Christ . . . hath enlightened every man that cometh into the world . . . that they might believe in it, and become

the children of Light. . . . And they that walk in this Light come to the mountain of the house of God . . . and to God’s teachings, who will teach them his ways.”<sup>1</sup>

For Robert Barclay: “. . . Previously the law was outward, written on stone tablets, but now it is inward, written in the heart.” Or again: “. . . All of us, at all times, have access to him [Jesus Christ] as often as we draw near him with pure hearts. He reveals his will to us by his Spirit, and writes his law in our hearts.” Again: “. . . the revelation . . . of God is inward, direct, and objective . . . And: “the secret Light which shines in the heart and reproves righteousness is the small beginning of the revelation of God’s Spirit.”<sup>2</sup>

These two early Friends are typical in their references to the Light in terms of both universality and covenant-evoking biblical imagery. Contemporary Quakers speak to the universality of the Light as well. For Howard Brinton: “. . . The Light of Christ has been given to all men everywhere, since the beginning of the human race. . . . This Light is the inward gospel ‘preached to every creature under heaven’ . . . And: “. . . many persons who have never heard of the historic Christ have had experimental knowledge of the Christ Within . . .”<sup>3</sup>

Thomas Kelly wrote: “Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return. . . . It is a Light Within . . . the Slumbering Christ stirring to be awakened. . . . And the Light is within us all.”<sup>4</sup> John Punshon writes: “. . . The Light is in all . . . not many lights, but only one. We all have a different measure of it . . . depending on the stage of our spiritual journey . . .”<sup>5</sup>

Howard Brinton pointed out some of the reasons why—and how—this universal principle was derived: “This principle of the universality [of the Light] was . . . derived not only from Scriptures, but also from the tender sensibilities of persons who could not endure the thought that any man should be condemned by a God of love because of unavoidable ignorance . . .” And: “This doctrine of the universality of the Light was also based on Quaker experiences with non-Christians.”<sup>6</sup>

## *Implications of the Universality of the Light*

The activity of God’s Light within everyone has tremendous implications not only for Quaker universalism but for the whole of God’s people. Friends also know “experimentally,” that is, through their own experience, that God’s Light or Spirit has an impact on the

individual. These very personal and individual results of God's Light within are necessary preparation for the community into which the Light leads.

Often one of the first experiences of the Light's action is revelation of places of brokenness and hurt, and of the ways in which we distance ourselves (or, turn away) from relationship with God, our fellow human beings, and the world around us. We come to a realization that we are neither inwardly nor outwardly really removed from wickedness. Put in terms of orthodox religion, we discover our own sinfulness:

Quietly, undramatically, matter of factly, even, I . . . discovered sin. It was not glamorous or dangerous or thrilling or squalid or extraordinary. It was not being disobedient or breaking the rules or cocking a snook at heaven. It was simply the habit of using your own ego to ignore God, using the numerous resources of your own personality to make yourself the arbiter of your own life, not the One from whom you had it, and to whom it would return. My new-found ordinariness meant that I could not disengage myself from the wickedness of the world. I was not superior, I was involved in it . . .<sup>7</sup>

Sometimes prior to that experience, sometimes simultaneously, or sometimes following it, through the Light's activity within us we experience God's love and care for us, regardless of who or what we are. This can be dramatic and intense, or it may be a quiet revelation that stills a troubled heart and mind. With this often comes an experience of forgiveness, inner peace, and a willingness to open oneself further to a relationship with the God who speaks to us directly. If we listen, God reveals a way, bit by bit, and leads us step by hesitant step, closer and deeper and more truly into relationship with God's self, with our fellow human beings, and with all of creation. We are transformed and led to live and work to make the world just and harmonious and to call others to awareness of God's loving, creative Presence in it. Because the Light is Present in everyone, everywhere, we can learn to see it in all people and come to know in a special way those who are also following its leading. We find common ground or purpose with them:

. . . Because it is common to all of us, *the Light calls us into unity with one another, into community* . . . the Church in God, the general assembly written in heaven. . . you could not practise the

sort of religion George Fox preached in isolation. Your personal experience was of turning to the Light, but the Light now brought you into the true Church . . . *the group experience is as important a part of George Fox's message as his challenge to individuals*, and it is clear why he and his companions first took the name Children of Light. [Emphases added.]<sup>8</sup>

Howard Brinton defined the Light as a "community-creating agent [which] seeks . . . to bring all men into one community. . . . It follows . . . that the Inward Light not only unites us with God but with one another."<sup>9</sup> He saw that it constituted a "definite method for . . . [cultivating] sensitivity and awareness of the Light," and that the revelation of the Light can lead to becoming part of a community "which is better able to survive than a lone individual . . ."<sup>10</sup> Robert Barclay also saw the Light as the "cement whereby we are joined . . . to the Lord and to one another."<sup>11</sup> He described the amazing experience of that process at work in forming a worshipping community of Friends:

. . . when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart. And as I gave way to it, I found the evil in me weakening, and the good lifted up. *Thus it was that I was knit into them and united with them* . . . [emphasis added].<sup>12</sup>

Barclay's description of worshipers knit into each other is essential to understanding the formation of a covenant community, for it is through this revelation and empowerment that the Covenant with the loving God forms.

### *Covenant Community, Light, and the Vision of Shalom*

The special aspect of the community that Friends form is that it is a covenant community. God's revelation through worship and through individual experience of God's love for all creation, and the vision of *shalom* that God reveals through a dialogic Covenant relationship is its basis. Its enabling source is the Light of Christ, the true witness of God's New and Ancient Covenant written in the heart.

Covenant is best understood as a relationship. In the legal sense (which is not being invoked here) it is a contractual relationship, but Friends have properly understood Covenant as a special dialogic or conversational relationship of love. It is freely offered by God

to God's people, whoever and wherever they may be, and indeed extends to all of creation. As in any mutual relationship there are expectations, promises, responsibilities, and accountability that must be maintained if the relationship is to continue and grow. One of the functions of a covenant community is to maintain, encourage, and explore these. Friends have built a theology upon experience of this relationship of covenant community and shaped their worship around this theology of God's inward, unmediated, universal, and saving Light. Experience of that Light and the unity it brings lays the foundation for understanding and finding unity with all people of whatever nationality, race, gender, age, or creed who know and follow the same Spirit of God within their innermost beings.

Is covenant community unique to Friends? Yes and no. Most simply put, a covenant community is a worshiping faith community that comes together and unites around a vision given to it by God. The stories of creation, exodus, the prophets and others in the Bible help to make clearer the vision that Friends hold:

The central vision . . . in the Bible is that all of creation is one, every creature in community with every other, living in harmony and security toward the joy and well-being of every other creature.<sup>13</sup>

In the Old Testament we are told that Israel is drawn into this vision through a community of faith, a covenant community, in which God conveys a staggering, sweeping expression of the vision:

. . . all persons are children of a single family, members of a single tribe, heirs of a single hope, and bearers of a single destiny, namely, the care and management of all of God's creation.

That persistent vision of joy, well-being, harmony, and prosperity is not captured in any single word or idea . . . [instead] a cluster of words is [used] to express its many dimensions and subtle nuances: love, loyalty, truth, grace, salvation, justice, blessing, righteousness. But the [word that most closely summarizes] that . . . vision is *shalom* [italics in original].<sup>14</sup>

As noted earlier, many early Friends spoke of the Light in ways that evoked the biblical notion of Covenant, or made direct reference to that relationship. Fox's "come to the mountain of the house of God" is a direct reference to Zion, the mountain of God where all nations would gather in unity under God's Covenant promises of justice and peace for the whole world (see Isa. 2:2-4). To Fox and early Friends to walk in the Light (" . . . come ye, let us walk in the

light of the Lord" Isa. 2:5) was to walk where nations "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." In the creation, the "wolf will dwell with the lamb" (Isa. 11:6). The vision was one of unity, peace, plenty, and stewardship. And in the New Covenant, the Law would no longer be outward but would be written on the heart (cf. Jer. 31:31-34 and the previously cited Barclay quote).

Early Friends perceived that the vision of *shalom* had been lost by the community of Israel. It was newly revealed, recovered, rearticulated, and revitalized by Jesus only to be lost again by institutionalized, imperialistic Christianity. Today Friends are struggling to maintain this vision. God helps us to resist "all our tendencies to division, hostility, [and] fear . . ." through this vision of *shalom*—the wholeness, harmony, and interrelatedness of the loving God and humanity—as it is to be lived out in covenant community, in human society, and in harmony and well-being with the whole of the created world. In both OT and NT stories "God [entrusts] this vision to all people."<sup>15</sup>

This vision of justice and peace, of a world living in harmony and love, is not confined to the Judeo-Christian tradition. There are similar dreams in other traditions and religions—in Hinduism and Buddhism, in Islam, in Native American beliefs—just to name a few. It is a dream which can be found in political and philosophical thinking and writing, and is being explored in new ways by theologians and biblical scholars.

Traditionally, Friends have been special carriers of this message as it has unfolded through the revelation and action of the inward Light, and in a worshiping community committed not only to inward transformation but the outward action needed to bring this vision to reality. Continuing, direct experience of the Light of Christ through God's ever-present Spirit, and a hearing, responding, dialogic relationship with the living God in our hearts inspires us to try to find unity with all who hold this vision.

A covenant community, then, is a worshiping faith community that carries God's vision of *shalom*. Its mission is to know and to bring this vision into reality for the whole world by holding it up for others to unite with and work toward. While the vision is not unique to Friends, when we are faithful to it our articulation and practice of it, and the formation of a community that combines spiritual-ethical, practical-mystical, inward-outward principles and practices is unusual. And as a basis for understanding and calling others to our

experiential theology of the Light, it is unique. The interplay between the continuing revelations of the Light within individual Friends and the living organism that is the Quaker worshipping community is a creative, powerful force for receiving and maintaining the covenant vision and finding and uniting with others who share it.

### *Covenant Community: Universalism versus Christianity?*

One of the major stumbling blocks for some Quakers is a misunderstanding of the connection between Quaker universalism and Christianity in such a way that puts universalism on one side and Christianity on the other. The key to understanding how Friends can be both at the same time is found in Friends' experience of the Jesus Christ of history, as that relates to understanding the Light of Christ within everyone, and the covenant community of faith and vision that we form and maintain.

Jesus was the embodiment of the heart of God, an earthshattering revelation of God's transforming Presence in the world—in the real time, real space, and real now of creation. Friends' theology of the Light is based on experiential realization that this transforming Presence exists in and is available to everyone. It is what God's being and continuing to become real in the world (incarnation) is about. Although early Friends accepted the divinity of Jesus, the Christ,<sup>16</sup> and believed in the critical importance of knowing and following the historical Jesus and the unmediated Power available to his followers, they did not believe inner transformation of the Spirit was available only to those who had heard of the man called Jesus Christ. However, they recognized that to know Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Light had special efficacy.

They were confident that the Light would lead all people to a more complete understanding of God, into inner transformation, and into right relationships with each other and the world around them. Because they were under urgency to convey this special new understanding of God's vision of *shalom*, and by the Power present in Christ they formed a worshipping community of faith and vision—a covenant community—to encourage and empower one another in living in faithful response to that vision as it was articulated by and revealed through Jesus.

These Friends were Christian universalists who knew and recognized the earthshattering Presence of the eternal Christ (the Light, the Word, the Seed of the Kingdom, the Spirit) in whatever form it

appeared and by whatever name it was called. They proclaimed their brotherhood and sisterhood to all who opened themselves to the covenant vision. They knew that what was revealed by the Light was also real and present within everyone who lived ethically in faithful response to it. They experienced and understood Jesus as the Word of God, who shows us how to live transformed lives. He not only brought us God's word and revealed God's intention that we live in love, but gave us a new law (love your neighbor as yourself) and a new way of living (to live in love is to live in God). Friends saw clearly that living in love is the way to bring about the vision of *shalom*—God's intended justice, peace, harmony, and wholeness for all creation. The reality of the vision of *shalom* is the reality that Jesus called the Kingdom of God.

Friends rejected the institutionalized creed-confessing Christianity-ism which surrounded them and they redefined Christianity by what had been its original basis. Part of their vision was that a necessary, critical aspect of true Christianity lay in knowing, honoring, and responding to the universality of God's continuing, inward, unmediated, and saving Presence within everyone. They were (and to some extent have been ever since) excoriated, ridiculed, discounted, misunderstood, and sometimes persecuted for this unique recognition of the way in which God is Present and active in the world.

Friends have consistently said to the Christian world, you cannot be truly Christian and not be universalist. They have said to people of other faiths: we honor the Light within you and can find unity with you. We must continue to say to each other that we cannot be truly Quaker and not be universalist. But we must also say to some Quaker universalists who call themselves "post-Christian" (meaning, as I understand their use of that term, outside of Christian fellowship) that as Friends have traditionally proclaimed it you cannot be truly Quaker and reject Christianity. For to be a Quaker universalist is, by long-standing definition and practice, to be a Christian universalist. There is no unity (and no tradition) in any other definition.

Some Quaker universalists appear to believe that all religions or spiritual communities, or God's revelations in these faiths, are equal or equally efficacious. It may be understandable how a 20th-century Quaker universalist might question the primacy of a particular form of *belief* in Jesus Christ, or question his divinity (or at least Christianity-ism's Divinity—the kind made to fit only such concepts of God as someone was aware of at a particular time or place). But to proclaim oneself universalist and reject the experience, power, efficacy, or

teachings of Jesus Christ and his followers is inappropriate. And it is equally inappropriate to discount, ignore, or dilute the fullness of continuing revelations through the eternal Christ in this way. Quakerism recognizes that Jesus—as the incarnation of the eternal Christ—is the complete, whole, full, *continuing* revelation of Truth, but not a static *final* word, or a *final* revelation of God's will. The eternal Christ is the Light, and through the living Presence of that Light in everyone, always, everywhere (albeit in different measure in different individuals), everyone has access to God's continuing revelation.

### *The Scandal of Exclusivity, and the Quaker Concept of Church*

The “post-Christian” universalist position may be understandable, however, as a response to Christianity-ism's scandalous claim of exclusivity and of its abuses of creed and practice. One of the dangers inherent in covenant community is for it to claim that its particular understanding of God's vision of *shalom* is “true” in a way that would shut out the continuing revelation of God's Light. Some Friends are not immune to this danger. Some even declare that Christianity or a belief in Jesus is the *only* truth, the final revelation of God. Once again, the Quaker theology of the Light—a clear understanding of and experience of continuing revelation through the inward Light—provides a bridge over waters of darkness and chaos that claims of exclusivity call forth wherever they are found, including those of Christianity-ism.

God's plan is in some ways latent in all creation as it slowly evolves . . . in the long run toward the Kingdom of God. . . . If the plan for the whole is in every cell of my body then the Kingdom of Heaven is in every individual in the community of living things. God's plan is within, but it is also beyond, for it is not yet completed.<sup>17</sup>

The early Quaker metaphor of Light and Seed is unmistakably one of growing into, becoming, or unfolding that which God supplies for our process of attaining the Kingdom, final union with God, and attainment of God's purpose for creation—*shalom*. “As the capacity of a man or woman is not only in a child, but even in the very embryo, even so the Kingdom of Jesus Christ . . . is in every man's and woman's heart, in that little incorruptible seed, ready to be brought forth.”<sup>18</sup>

Friends' faith communities are in a relationship of continuous dialogue with and response to God through the inward Light. Because of that relationship, Friends form(ed) a special ethical-spiritual community (a religious society) of faith acting under the leading of the Light to work for God's plan of justice and peace in the world, a covenant community, a worshiping community. This community is special, or particular, because it is composed of those who name the Presence and are led by the Light. They recognize that they must be joined together in that faith through worship in order to encourage, exhort, and support each other (and others) and to be held accountable for living faithfully within the covenant of love, justice, and peace that we have with God.

However, this covenant community is not exclusive. It can also be universal as it finds unity with others, whether they live in other special faith communities or not, who may not have named nor understood their relationship with God as that of Light and Covenant, but who are led by the action of the universal Light to live in love and to work toward the Covenant vision of justice and peace, of wholeness for all people and all creation.

Robert Barclay once again clearly stated Friends' understanding of covenant community, which he and they called simply the Church:

The Church . . . signifies an assembly or gathering of many into one place. . . . It is . . . the society, gathering, or company of those whom God has called . . . to walk in his light and life. The Church . . . [is] all of those who are thus called and truly gathered by God . . . this Church . . . comprehend[s] all, regardless of what nation, kindred, tongue, or people they may be, who have become obedient to the holy light and testimony of God in their hearts. Although they may be outwardly unknown to and distant from those who profess Christ and Christianity . . . yet they have become [holy]. . . . There may be members of this catholic [universal] Church not only among all the several sorts of Christians, but also among pagans, Turks, and Jews. They are men and women of integrity and simplicity of heart . . .<sup>19</sup>

Friends also have traditionally understood, however, that they were called and gathered into a special fellowship that is within the tradition of the followers of Jesus. Barclay called it the “Church visible,” as opposed to the “Church invisible” or universal Church:

“The church” also signifies a certain number of persons who have

been gathered by God's Spirit and by the testimony of some of his servants. . . . This visible fellowship has been brought to a belief in the true principles and doctrines of the Christian faith . . . <sup>20</sup>

By the "true principles and doctrines of the Christian faith," Barclay means: as opposed to those of institutional, imperialistic, worldly Christianity. (This is the Christianity-*ism* that Fox condemned as the whore of Babylon. This type of Christianity no longer stood within the covenant of love proclaimed by Jesus, and no longer carried the ancient covenant vision of *shalom*.) Barclay continued:

. . . to be a member of a particular church of Christ, not only is [the inward calling of God by the Light] necessary, but also profession of belief in Jesus Christ. . . . [This] outward profession is necessary for membership in a particular gathered church, but not for membership in the Church catholic . . . <sup>21</sup>

As a worshipping community empowered by God's vision of *shalom*, a covenant community, we reach out to others who are in a place of separation, to a multitude who experience God incarnate within, but who have no place of support and interaction. The Quaker community of faith is where we can come to know fully the vision and way of *shalom* and to experience the empowering support of others in an intimate, loving, communal fellowship. Others for whom God's transforming Presence and action in their lives and in the world creates a new reality—the covenant community— challenges the status quo and the sinfulness that is sometimes within us and around us. This newness confronts the old reality which debilitated us and diminished our possibility of living fully in wholeness of life and the creation—unity with God. In a covenant community, the vision of the Kingdom, of *shalom*, is set against a world which would deny that vision.

This worshipping faith community, the covenant community, provides a microcosm of God's activity. At the same time, through the action of the Light, it calls us beyond it, beyond ourselves, to work in the world. As we grow in experience and understanding of the Light, recognizing God in us and others, and begin to experience relationships with others that are no longer broken but whole and complete reflections of God's relationship with us, we find renewal with all humanity and all creation, not simply personal wholeness and personal unity with God. Through our worshipping community we begin to see what the world will be like when love and justice

reign and creation is in harmony. We begin to experience the coming of the Kingdom. We begin to experience *shalom*.

The Church, or gathered covenant community (that is, the Friends' meeting community), is a living entity with its source of life in God—God in a relationship of oneness with people, not just a broader oneness with all creation. But the Church is also spiritual in the sense of subordinating human revelation to the divine. It is both temporal and eternal—transcendently temporal—and in this sense it is the Kingdom, the reality of the vision of *shalom*, come and coming. The Church, the gathered community, is a special kind of community that is rational in nature—the New Covenant community of love for all the people of God. As this, it can be seen and understood as a group of people gathered by God into a special relationship to God, to each other, and to the world—a relationship of mutuality, choice, and acceptance on each side.

Faith (turning toward the Light, responding to God's call) is possible for everyone, even though some have never heard of Jesus nor know the concept of the eternal Christ. Therefore, the invisible boundaries of this community are limitless, and it is an expression of God's continuing universal Grace (Light). Such an understanding of the Church is difficult for some Christians (and others) who have always limited membership to those who accept certain creeds or submit to particular rites of membership. That's why the concept of covenant community in which our relationship to God is interactional and dialogic is so crucial. Interaction can take place at many levels and allows for more dialogue. The closer and more frequent the dialogue, the more intense, interactive, and supportive the relationship. This concept of community also allows for general or universal participation in the closer-knit more intentional community that gathers around a particular understanding and experience of God's revelatory vision. We are all the family of God that consists of brothers and sisters as well as cousins, aunts, uncles, and all sorts of other extended relationships.

### *Unity, Not Uniformity*

The presence and importance of Friends' covenant community can be seen in our obedience to the Light which leads to unity, fellowship, and universality as we continue to be in the world but gathered in response to God's voice within as our guide.

But unity does not require uniformity nor conformity of practice,

opinion, belief, or theologies. Unity necessitates a deep tolerance of others and not the fallible judgments of the few. This can be achieved only by living for and with others in a world in which we are all interrelated and interdependent. We can maintain this diversity without breaking that unity found in God and in the vision for a transformed world that God has revealed to us. But we can only do so if we refuse to make harsh judgments or try to force human-made practices and beliefs on others. This is the beginning step on the path to universality, which need not be seen as a hodge-podge of unrelated beliefs and practices but as a response to God's Light which is exhibited in various forms and practices throughout different cultures, times, and places in the multi-dimensional world God created. The only absolute necessity in that universality will be a fellowship gathered in the Light and committed to God's continuing revelation and unmediated interactive Presence in our lives. The sign of the covenant is a people gathered by God into obedience to the Light. This has been the Quaker claim and practice for more than 300 years.

### *Unity and Diversity: The Need for a Faith Community*

Our covenant community lays close claim to tolerance and its invisible boundaries are broad and elastic. But just as the measure of Light varies with different individuals, it is also present in different measure in different spiritual communities. This must be recognized and explored if we are to remain faithful to the covenant vision we were given. While such boundaries are hard to define, we should begin with that of a worshipping community where the Light is named and will serve to bring unity and knit us into each other. A corporate experience of the Light has amazing Power for those who are faithful to its leading. And we need accountability to, and empowerment from, as well as the encouragement of a particular community dedicated to following the Light. It is from this that we derived the vision of *shalom*, just as other faiths need their communities.

If we truly honor and embrace the notion of the revelation of God's Light and Grace within the diversity of creation and in other people, we cannot view others of other faith communities simply as being just the same as Friends. Quakers are not Buddhist, for instance, and Buddhists are not Quaker. We have different boundaries, although parts of them may overlap. We can find much that is enriching and

valuable as an addition to or insight for our own faith and faith community, but we must honor and acknowledge our separateness as well. Each faith community is distinctive, carries its own tradition, and has chosen a particular path to God. Each has formed faith and accountability around its vision of how to live faithfully in the world. Each may have much to learn or to hear from the revelation of God's voice to others. And indeed we often find unity with other individuals and communities when they work, in their own ways, toward the same covenant vision that God has revealed to us. But if we really respect other religious and spiritual communities, we must face up to the enigma of separateness and unity and the tension that produces.

Because the Light leads us into covenant, into a special community, this tension is especially difficult within our own faith. It calls for a reconciliation between the existing differences. Those who name themselves Quaker universalists must find unity with fellow Quakers of all persuasions, and Quakers of other varieties must find unity with Quaker universalists. The same spirit that brings unity amidst the diversity of creation also commands unity amidst the diversity of Friends. We must join in honoring the spirit, principles, and accountability upon which loving acts of justice and peace are based. One cannot be truly Quaker and dismiss lightly any in our community of faith who are faithful to Quaker principles and practice and who uphold God's vision of *shalom* and who follow the leadings of the Light—by whatever name they know or call it. The task of all Friends gathered in obedience to the Light is to help each other recognize, rearticulate, and find unity in Quaker practices and principles in a way that is faithful and transforming for people of the 20th century. We must lovingly explore and begin to name the boundaries of our community.

One further aspect of universality and the Light of Christ within remains and needs to be thoroughly explored. Because of our experience and understanding of the Light in everyone, Quakerism has always stood for religious toleration and liberty. The experiential Quaker theology of Light could be a powerful force in the world for reconciling Christians to each other and to other faiths. Through an understanding and experience of the Light and the vision of love and *shalom* that it brings, all Christians could begin to see themselves as Christian universalists rather than Christian exclusivists.

The practice of a Christian universalism based on a theology of the Light could be a powerful force in the world for rearticulating Christianity. It could offer a way that would bring harmony with

other religions and other spiritual communities living faithfully in response to God's promptings and revelations in their hearts. Most important of all, Friends can call everyone to be attentive, faithful, and accountable to the Light within them. The Children of Light can be an empowering voice in the world for calling all people into relationship with the loving God so they too may hear and respond to God's vision and call to *shalom*. But we must begin with faithful reconciliation in our own covenant community.

### Notes

1. George Fox, *Journal of George Fox*, rev. ed. by John L. Nickalls (London: London Yearly Meeting, 1975), p. 16.
2. Robert Barclay, *Barclay's Apology in Modern English*, ed. by Dean Freiday (Philadelphia: 1967) [now distributed by Barclay Press, Newberg, OR]. Prop. II, §§ xi & xvi (pp. 38, 39, –, 44). Because of the many editions of Barclay's *Apology*, citations are by Proposition and section. Page references in parentheses, where appropriate, have been added for the Modern English version.  
In the first quotation, Barclay is paraphrasing Jer. 31:31–34.
3. Howard Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1965), pp. 36–37.
4. Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1941), p. 29.
5. John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1984), p. 50.
6. Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years*, pp. 37 and 38.
7. Punshon, *Encounter With Silence* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1987), p. 17.
8. Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, p. 50.
9. Brinton, *Religious Philosophy of Quakerism* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1973), p. 71.
10. Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years*.
11. Barclay, Prop. XI, § vii.
12. Barclay, Prop. XI, § vii (254). Echoing Col. 2:2, 9. There are also OT parallels.
13. Walter Brueggemann, *Living Toward a Vision: Biblical Reflections on Shalom* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1976), p. 15.
14. Brueggemann, pp. 15–16.
15. Brueggemann, p. 16.
16. From "*Christos*," the Greek translation of "messiah" from a Hebrew word meaning God's anointed one, the one sent to speak for God.
17. Brinton, *Religious Philosophy of Quakerism*, p. 73.

18. Barclay, Prop. VI, § xxiv.
19. Barclay, Prop. X, § ii (172–173).
20. Barclay, Prop. X, § iii (174).
21. Barclay, Prop. X, § iv (175).