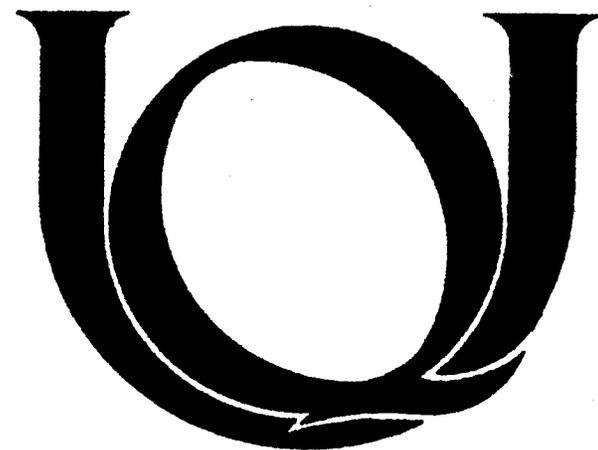


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## SEVERAL SORTS OF QUAKERS

STEPHEN ALLOTT

Stephen Allott

Stephen Allott was brought up as a Friend and has belonged to meetings both in Ireland and England. He taught at Bootham School as well as in schools in the state sector. He is well known as a writer, contributing regularly to Friends' periodicals and has published a number of books.

This paper develops the theme of an article that the author wrote in *The Friends' Quarterly* in April 1992 entitled 'On calling ourselves Christian'. In the present paper, Stephen Allott examines in detail and with some care, the origins of the term Christian and sets out the range of meanings it now holds and examines the implications of applying the term to the Society of Friends.

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Robert Barclay, in his chapter on Ministry in the *Apology*, declares the church to be the gathering of those whom God 'has called out of the world and worldly spirit to walk in his light and life,' and adds that there may be members of this Catholic (or universal) church 'both among heathens, Turks, Jews and all the several sorts of Christians'. It is not surprising that, 'as with Christians, there have now come to be several sorts of Quakers also. An important cause of this severality is the variety of ways we have taken of thinking of ourselves as members of the Christian church rather than the 'Catholic church' of which Barclay wrote.

#### The origin of the term 'Christian'

It was in Antioch that the disciples were first given the name of 'Christians'. So says Luke in Acts (11:26). And he makes King Agrippa use the term in his riposte to Paul's arguments, 'You think it will not take much to win me over and make a Christian of me' (Acts, 26:28). Paul seems to have taken the title as a compliment, for he replied, 'Much or little, I wish to God that not only you but all those who are listening to me today might become what I am, apart from these chains.' In his speech to Festus and Agrippa, Paul had not, in fact, spoken of Christ, but only of Jesus of Nazareth; so 'Christian' was already (i.e. by AD 59) a term used, at least by the authorities, to describe the followers of Jesus. Paul had described himself as belonging to 'the Way, which they call a sect', and this is the term often used in Acts (cf 9:2, 18:25f, 19:9 & 23, 22:4, 24:14 & 22). Yet it was the name of Christ which was picked on to identify his followers: they kept preaching Christ, so they were 'Christians'.

The only other use of the term in the New Testament, in I Peter 4:14-16, is pejorative: the name had become a vehicle for abuse. 'If Christ's name is flung in your teeth as an insult, count yourselves happy, because then that glorious Spirit which is the Spirit

of God is resting upon you. If you suffer, it must not be for murder, theft or sorcery, nor for infringing the rights of others. But if anyone suffers as a Christian, he should feel it no disgrace, but confess that name to the honour of God.'

*Christiani* is a Latin formation, which suggests that it may have originated in Roman governing circles. It was therefore the natural term for Festus and Agrippa to use. The Roman historian Tacitus, in describing the persecution under Nero in his *Annals* (XV 44), says 'Christian' was a name given by the populace, 'for they hated them for their crimes' and he adds that Christ was the originator of the name. He was writing early in the second century AD and reflects the attitude of the educated Roman of his time. Pliny, who as governor of Bithynia in NW Asia Minor in 112 AD where there was a growing Christian population, was better informed. He punished those accused of being Christians who would not renounce the name by cursing Christ. He was not clear whether claiming the name 'Christian' itself was a crime in Roman law or whether those accused of being Christian should only be punished for offences connected with the profession. He noted that they committed themselves, 'not for any criminal purpose, but not to commit theft, robbery or adultery or to break their word or to renege on a trust'. Yet he took the curious view that even if being a Christian was not an offence in itself the obstinacy of refusing to deny the faith deserved to be punished.

Names first given in hostility or derision (like 'Quaker!') are often adopted and used with pride. How soon the followers of the Way were happy to call themselves 'Christian' is hard to say; the writer of I Peter urged his readers to feel it no disgrace, and he may have been writing as early as the persecution of Nero in 64 AD. Ignatius of Antioch, as he approached martyrdom in 107 AD wrote, 'Let me not merely be called 'Christian', but be found one.' Pliny's letter to Trajan (X96) shows that there were many like him who were prepared to suffer for their faith.

The name was sometimes derived, not from Christ,

but from the Greek *chrestos*, meaning 'good' and the form *Chrestiani* is found. Christians accepted the implication - they were committed to being good - but they rejected the derivation. It was for their loyalty to Christ that they suffered persecution, as Jesus had predicted (Luke 21:26): 'Some of you will be put to death, and all will hate you, for your allegiance to me.' For it was by Christ that they lived and achieved the goodness they attained.

It is not surprising that 'Christian' does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. Paul's letters and the Gospels were the private literature of the movement; there was no need for 'believers', 'disciples' or 'brethren' as they called each other, to distinguish themselves from the outside world in what they wrote for internal consumption. It was persecution that forced the distinction upon them, and the title was coined by others. Eventually, in western culture at least, 'Christian' became a complimentary term, necessary for social approval. It could be used to describe anyone who did a kind or self-denying act. 'You're a real Christian' carried no implication of faith in Christ.

### Christianity as the name of a tradition

The historian of religion, certainly, would want to restrict the term 'Christian' to those societies or churches which have evolved from the early church as described in the New Testament. This would include those who no longer take a biblical view of the meaning of Christ. The Unitarians, for example, clearly belong to the Christian tradition, and in any normal categorisation of religions they must be classed as Christian, both on the grounds of the origins from which they have evolved and on broad principles of classification, that is, as distinguished from Jews, Muslims, Buddhists or agnostics. The fact that they do not believe that Jesus was the incarnation of God distinguishes them from the majority of orthodox Christians but does not put them outside the Christian family.

The same applies to those, like many Friends

today, for whom Christ no longer occupies a central place in their thinking or religious life. They can still claim to be in the Christian tradition, for they have been brought up in, or have joined, a religious culture which owes much to what has been handed down from those committed to Christ in some sense.

A statement issued by the Friends World Conference at Oxford in 1952<sup>1</sup> declared: 'Historically our Society stands in the Christian tradition'. This may refer simply to a fact about our religious origins, or it may mean that we still live by this culture and are concerned to pass it on to those who come after us. Such tradition may be thought of as passing on a torch, keeping the flame alight, as it was from the beginning, or it may be part of a sequence, in which old torches are used to light new ones in a developing tradition, for which spiritual life is an evolving process. Is our faith based on a perception of Truth which does not change, however much expressions of it may vary with the times? Or is it a journey to new discoveries? Does true orthodoxy (right thinking) press on to new truth, or merely interpret the old truth in the language of the times? 'Christian' can apply to both. There may come a point, however, when those who journey must acknowledge that they have now passed on to another country. Dietrich Bonhoeffer<sup>2</sup> wrote of religion having 'come of age', so that Christianity was now 'religionless'; Daphne Hampson<sup>3</sup> regards herself as 'post-Christian' but still religious. If 'religion' implies belief in a creator-God, then John Robinson in his *Honest to God*<sup>4</sup> and Don Cupitt<sup>5</sup> in his more recent writing, are taking Christianity beyond the old frontiers of faith into another country, one might claim, and many Friends of the silent tradition follow them in one way or another. If Christianity is bible-based - and what do we know of Christ without the Bible? - how many of us can still base our faith on the Bible with its miracle and myth, its patriarchal ethos and its setting in a world so different from ours? Many Friends do not: despite some nostalgia for Bible-study, silent Friends do not live by it as singing Friends do - the Bible remains

on our meeting-room tables unopened and often unquoted. It belongs, in the main, to a tradition we have left behind.

### Christ as Lord and Saviour

Can we say, then, that most Friends could accept some kind of commitment to Christ as a description of their faith? How various would be the meaning of this commitment was made clear at the World Gathering of Young Friends from 34 countries held in North Carolina in 1985. The Gathering found itself divided 'by language, race, culture, ways we worship God and beliefs in Christ and God.' So Young Friends asked themselves 'whether there is anything that Quakers today can say as one.' After much struggle they felt they could proclaim, 'There is a living God at the centre of all, who is available to each of us as a personal teacher at the very heart of our lives.' They urged Friends to 'wrestle with the conviction and experience of many Friends that this Inward Teacher is in fact Christ himself.' But they also declared that 'the life-giving Word of God' can come 'through the written word (the Scriptures), the incarnate word (Jesus Christ), the corporate word as discerned by the gathered meeting, or the inward word of God in our hearts, which is available to each of us who seek the Truth.'<sup>6</sup> This Epistle from the World Gathering was not the result of long and careful deliberation, through which a coherent statement might be sought; it sprang from the spiritual turbulence of a meeting of over 300 Young Friends longing to find a deep place in which they could be united. It reflects a variety of commitments, only some of which were to Jesus Christ in any ordinary sense; it reflects the variety which exists in the Society world-wide.

It would be surprising if the new *Discipline* of London Yearly Meeting did not contain a similar variety, though with a different balance, as one would expect in a document expressing the experience of a yearly meeting where there is a much smaller proportion of

evangelical opinion than in the Young Friends Gathering or among Friends world-wide. It will, no doubt, centre on commitment to Christ *in some form*, both in our origins in the seventeenth century and as expressed by a variety of Friends with a wide variety of experience throughout our history and especially in recent times. Indeed, one might say that our primary objection to the declaration of belief proposed by ecumenical movements seeking unity is not so much to their commitment to Christ as to their credal tendency and to the inclusion of the words 'according to the scriptures', which suggests a text-based understanding of Christ rather than one springing from experience.

The meaning of 'Christ' is the nub of the question. The overloading of the term with theology, the variety of interpretations, the resulting confusion and the possibility of unacceptable implications have led many Friends to prefer to speak of Jesus. It is possible to know Jesus as he is in the Gospels (however different that may be from what he actually was in real life). His humanity, his spirituality, his personality shine through the inadequacy of the texts, and both he and his teaching can form the living centre of a religious life. The impact of his death and of his resurrection as experienced by his disciples has given a transforming power to his influence. To many 'Christ' is another name for Jesus. It has been added to Jesus like a surname, needed in cultures in which a single name seems bald. Jesus Christ is more dignified than plain Jesus - as though to say 'Here is something more than a Galilean peasant.'

The question is, 'How much more?' According to the Scriptures Christ meant Messiah, the One whom God was to send into the world to be anointed, as were the kings of old, to redeem Israel and, by a remarkable extension, as expressed in Isaiah, to restore the errant Gentiles to faithful worship of the one true God. He was thus to be the Saviour of the world. The uniqueness of this role was expressed as a uniqueness in his relationship with God. While disciples were taught to pray to God as 'Our Father', there was a sense in which only Jesus could say 'My Father', so that he

could offer his disciples a unique possibility of coming to know God through him. The birth stories in Matthew and Luke show how God arranged for him to be born into the world as his only son, so that his sonship was not only a spiritual relationship; the miracles proved that Jesus had the creative power of his Father; the death and resurrection showed not only that he could not be conquered by death, being God's son, but that the role of Messiah was to be reinterpreted as that of the Servant who saved by giving his life for others.

How the Saviour saved those who believed in him was elaborated by later Christian thought. Was it from sin, or from punishment for sin? Was it by the sacrifice on the cross to placate a justly angry God, or by teaching what God was really like, to deepen spiritual life, or in some other way in which the experience of the early church could be rationalised?

The first requirement of a Christian in those early days was simply to accept belief in Christ, whatever that meant. Early disputes with the Jews centred on the question whether Jesus was the Messiah whom they were expecting. But as time went on and more non-Jews joined the churches, the Jewish background faded and Jewish conceptions like the Messiah were less understood. The use of 'Christ', the Greek translation of 'Messiah', no doubt facilitated the change. It was more important to believe that Jesus was the son of God than that he was Christ in the original sense. The early Christian declaration of faith at baptism was, therefore, not 'Jesus is the Christ', but 'Jesus is Lord'. Lord (*kyrios*) was a common term for God in the Greek Old Testament, but this was not necessarily the implication in its use by Christians; it meant 'Master', primarily the one whom we serve, so that Christians were the servants (even the slaves) of Christ, that is, of God. 'Lord' was often added to the name of Jesus so that he became 'our Lord Jesus Christ'.

Hence the most obvious form of the Christian gospel as expounded both by Paul and by John is that those who believe in Jesus Christ will be saved. This

was primarily belief about the nature and mission of Christ, but it implied living the Christian life also. Faith included faithfulness and is hypocritical without works, as works are inadequate without faith. Committing one's life to Christ or accepting Christ as one's personal saviour is a spiritual act which means accepting both a way of thought and a way of life, and using the Bible (principally the New Testament) as one's text-book. Something of this sort is what it means to be a Christian, both for the majority of those who belong to Christian churches and for the majority of those who call themselves Friends and look back to George Fox as the founder of their sect. Was not the turning-point of his religious search the experience in which he heard a voice which said, 'There is one even Christ Jesus that can speak to thy condition'? Most silent Friends probably realise now that they are far outnumbered by the pastoral and evangelical Friends of America and the Yearly Meetings which their missionary work has established in third World countries. We may even admit that if some of the Valiant Sixty could return and worship with us, the evangelical Friends would be more comfortable with their ministry than we should. But we may wonder if the first Friends would feel any happier than we do at being asked to join in evangelical singing. Modern evangelical Quakerism is not primitive Quakerism revived.

### Christ as the Universal Spirit

But there is another strand in New Testament teaching. Paul speaks of 'being in Christ' and Christ being in him, and Jesus in John's Gospel describes his purpose as being that the disciples should be one with him as he is one with the Father. This suggests that Christianity is a mystical religion with a good deal in common with mystics of whatever religious allegiance. Early Quakerism, with its insistence on the primacy of spiritual experience and its exhortation to 'return within' can be seen as essentially mystical, even if the influence of earlier Christian mystics was

less important than Rufus Jones suggested. However authoritative Scripture was in practice for early Friends, their principle as described by Barclay was that it was confirmatory, not fundamental: they knew the Bible to be true because it echoed their own experience - they did not base their faith on texts, and therefore were not fundamentalist.

'Christ', for such Christian mystics, does not refer principally to the role of saviour for which Jesus came, but to a universal and eternal spirit, as in the Prologue of John, where it is described as the Logos which was in the beginning with God and in fact was God, and was incarnated in Jesus. This spirit was the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. It was the comforter which could lead into all truth. It was both light and love and is known in all human hearts. It has often been described by Friends as 'that of God in everyone'.

This description, like the Inward Light, is not specifically Christian, and it is arguable that many 'silent' Friends, whose emphasis has been on this kind of spirituality, have moved away from Christian types of Quakerism. The evangelical basis of a century ago has been dropped for a more tentative 'seeking' approach, and the Bible is no longer read for daily spiritual nurture. The theological implications of the word 'Christ' as used in most churches are felt to be foreign to Quaker freedom from dogmatism and are little studied or understood. It is easy to see Quakerism as practised in London Yearly Meeting, for example, as evolving from a Christ-centred phase to one in which it also finds something in common with other faiths. That such a post-Christian Quakerism is still Quakerism can be argued by pointing to statements of the universal nature of our faith by early Friends. Indeed, we can still regard it as Christian, if we believe that Christianity also includes the mysticism of faith in the universal Christ, as well as the creeds of the churches. Iris Murdoch, for example, told Rosemary Hartill that she thinks of herself as Christian because it is the mystical Christ she feels close to.<sup>7</sup>

This was certainly the faith of early Friends. Fox, for instance, wrote in 1659, 'Our faith, our church, our unity is in the Spirit, and our Word, at which we tremble, was in the beginning before your church-made faiths.'<sup>8</sup> Barclay describes his early experience of Quaker worship, 'I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart; and as I gave way under it I felt the evil weakening in me and the good raised up; and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed, and indeed this is the surest way to become a Christian; to whom afterwards the knowledge and understanding of principles will not be wanting, but will grow up as much as is needful as the natural fruit of this good root.'<sup>9</sup> So too, William Penn, in a much-loved passage, declared the fundamental unity of all true religion, 'The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious and devout souls are everywhere of one religion; and when death has taken off the mask they will know one another, though the divers liveries they wear here makes them strangers.'<sup>10</sup>

Feminists, too, are often naturally uncomfortable with the biblical account in which a patriarchal God is revealed in the form of a man whose most intimate term for God was 'Father' and who preached a kingdom of God - and we must all surely now accept the main thrust of feminist criticism. The Bible story puts women in a subordinate role, for Jesus picked only male disciples, and completely ignored the vision of divinity which other religions offer through goddesses such as the Earth Mother. Hints in the Bible of a female side to deity, as in Wisdom whose gender is feminine, are quite inadequate to correct the imbalance. Paul, it is true, said that in Christ there was neither male nor female, and it has been pointed out that women play an important part in the gospel story on some occasions. But the story remains masculine in its main emphases and is unacceptable to many feminists so long as Jesus is seen as the principle illustration of the Christ-spirit.

## Jesus as the Way

Yet it is precisely this connection with Jesus which many value. It offers a basis, for example, for liberation theology which looks back to the story of Jesus reading from Isaiah at Nazareth, 'He has sent me to announce good news to the poor, to proclaim release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind . . . Today in your hearing this text has come true'. (Luke 4:18ff) It provides a 'window upon God' for many for whom the idea of God is otherwise abstract and remote. Jesus is used as a model for what we mean by God. This incarnation, even if unacceptable as a theological idea, is nevertheless accepted as offering a way into religious experience. Loving reverence for Jesus enriches worship and strengthens devotion.

Some see Jesus as a stimulating teacher who lived out his own teaching of complete self-giving. For others, he showed how divine and human meet, so that at once divine life was humanly lived and human life divinely lived, as Yorkshire QM declared in 1919.<sup>11</sup> In what sense Jesus was divine may be left to specialists to define. What matters for religion, as distinct from theology, is that what we know of Jesus should enrich our experience and strengthen our service. We know we cannot recover what the man Jesus was actually like, and that the historical search is beset by the perils of seeing a different culture with modern eyes. But we know too, that through Christian devotion a 'Jesus-experience' has developed which is based on reading the Scriptures in the spirit which gave them forth. This is one of the ways in which the spirit works, and those who claim to have a personal relationship with Jesus are describing a genuine experience which merits respect, however others may wish to explain it. It is not for us to judge the validity of others' experience, though we may suggest the criterion of Jesus himself, 'You shall know them by their fruits'.

Friends have varied in their interpretation of 'Christ' as the distinctive title of Jesus, and particularly during the past century. But we can also trace a general

shift in understanding. John Wilhelm Rowntree wrote in 1904, 'I think of God in terms of Jesus Christ; I pray to Jesus as representing the Father to my consciousness or to the Father as I see him in Jesus.'<sup>12</sup> For Ruth Fawell in 1987, 'Jesus is a window through to God, a person who in terms of personality, in a way that can be grasped by our finite minds, shows what mercy, pity, peace are like in human life . . . I do not pray to him - I look at him, dwell upon him, love him.'<sup>13</sup> Rowntree Gillett, writing early in the century, describes a typical evangelical commitment experience: 'Just thirteen years ago I became convinced that God was a living reality and had revealed Himself to humanity in the character and personality of Jesus Christ. From that time on I dedicated myself to Him, and have tried to lead men and women into a realisation of God's love and care for them.'<sup>14</sup> Roy Farrant in 1974 describes a similar experience without mentioning the name of Christ at all, 'My experience came after many years of doubting and uncertainty. It came to me one evening in the sitting room at home. It came as a moment when God, who through many people and events over a period of several months had been pursuing me, put his hand on my shoulder. I had to respond - yes or no. It was unequivocal, inescapable, unconditional. It was also completely unemotional; I was stone cold sober - no heavenly visions or lumps in the throat. It was a challenge to the will, a gift of faith for me to reject or accept - and I accepted.'<sup>15</sup> Hugh Doncaster, in 1963, wrote of Jesus in clearly trinitarian terms, 'The first disciples . . . had a threefold experience of one reality: they knew God the Father; they knew the person of Jesus who was so identified with him that Thomas could burst out with his great affirmation ('my Lord and my God'); and they knew the continuing inspiration of the spirit which they identified with him.'<sup>16</sup> Others were seeing the revelation of God in Christ in less orthodox terms. Ormerod Greenwood, for example, wrote in 1973, 'I decided long ago that God was not the most powerful thing in the universe. He much more resembles a barefoot Galilean prophet

speaking in up-country dialect, followed by tax-gatherers, fishermen and prostitutes, who becomes a nuisance and ends up (very properly) by being crucified while guards dice for his clothes'.<sup>17</sup> Damaris Parker-Rhodes called for a new insight into the nature of Christ: 'For two thousand years there has been emphasis on the Yang aspects of Christ, that is on the amazing teacher, healer and master of all spiritual power . . . The Yin or feminine aspect of Christ now awaits our discovery. This is the Christ in the second period of the Gospel story. He who, echoing his mother's receptivity of the divine, in the garden of Gethsemane, prayed, 'Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt.' Just here in the rending of the material, which the cross betokens, a new invasion of spirit into matter occurs.'<sup>18</sup>

Some Friends are still able to talk in Christian language, but there are others, as Pam Lunn has pointed out 'who just cannot use that language at all. . . . Their deepest experience of spiritual reality cannot be encompassed by a language that has acquired so many historical accretions and distortions that it has become at best meaningless and at worst a falsification of the truth.'<sup>19</sup> Neither the Jesus experience nor the mysticism of the universal Christ offer a congenial form for their faith. Indeed, they might claim that the religion which Jesus himself taught and lived was not at all about himself; he preached the Kingdom of God, but the Christianities we have developed from his work have added various forms of personality cult which were not his way. Is Christianity what Jesus gave us, or what we made of him?

### The dilemma for Friends

Whether we claim the title Christian for ourselves or for the Society of Friends (as it is at present in London Yearly Meeting, for example) will depend partly on the sense in which we speak of Christ and partly on our own understanding of our personal experience and of the present character of the Society. If we accept Penn's definition, 'To be like Christ, then, is to be a Christian'<sup>20</sup> - we may feel that few if any

of us should make such a claim. If we use a dictionary definition of Christian as applying to those religious bodies which stem from the early church, we must accept that we are Christian as a matter of historical fact. If Christian means that spiritual experience and religious practice centre in some way upon Jesus of Nazareth as recorded in the New Testament, we must ask if this is still true of us as we are in our meetings. Our religious culture has been enriched by Christ more than by any other influence. The character of our deepest experiences and our vision of the finest that human beings can be, owe much to the faithfulness of orthodox Christianity. But for many of us as individuals and for many meetings this influence is no longer explicit. As we seek to know one another in that which is eternal we do so without mentioning Christ. We can claim that the universal Christ is only another name for the Eternal, for the Spirit, for the Light. We can say, if we like, that the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, the Light is the Light of Christ. But we do not usually find it necessary to do so. Yet such descriptions make sense of the equation of Christ with God in the Gospel of John. They help us to maintain some sort of unity with Friends for whom Christ is central. But there are many 'silent' Friends, perhaps the majority, for whom this is not the natural way in which to express their faith. As *To Lima with Love*<sup>21</sup> cautiously observed, 'many Quakers would prefer less specifically Christian terminology.' Observation of the ministry in many of our meetings for worship will amply confirm this.

We can use the title 'Christian' of our Society, therefore, to describe its religious origins or to make it easier to have a fruitful relationship with the churches. But if we do so, we shall be giving an impression to those who do not know us well which is ambiguous if not misleading. If we draw nearer to orthodox Christianity (and to evangelical Friends), we set up barriers between ourselves and those seeking a way of religion free from dogma as well as those of other faiths. We can, of course, say that the spirit of Christ is not one which divides: it unites us with our past and with all who seek

and practise real religion - *that* is how we understand being Christian. We may feel that it is not our fault if others take a narrower view. Yet it is our responsibility in using words to try to ensure that they convey the meaning which we intend. Do we Friends know what we intend by 'Christian'?

All Friends today, at any rate, would accept Barclay's definition that we are called to walk in the light. We acknowledge our spiritual ancestry through evangelical and quietist phases to the pioneers of the seventeenth century, and indeed through all the history of the Christian church to the early days of the movement, of which we read in the New Testament. The dividing point for modern Quakerism came just one hundred years ago, when John Wilhelm Rowntree in London Yearly Meeting in 1893 made his appeal for religious doubt to be tolerated in the Society. His position won respect and British Friends came to accept new thought in science and biblical study. Quite a new outlook was sanctioned when the first revision of the *Book of Discipline* in the twentieth century stressed the importance of basing faith upon personal experience.<sup>22</sup>

For John Wilhelm Rowntree the new openness meant a more purposeful study of the Bible and a renewed devotion to Christ; he saw in Quakerism the simple spiritual faith, freed from dogma, hierarchy and ceremonial, which the church needed. He called Friends to prepare themselves to give this message to a world which sorely needed it. But the freedom to doubt has had more far-reaching consequences than he expected. The central pillar of belief and practice which tradition gives us has lost the clarity of its outlines in the varied light of experience, and this has happened in other churches as well as amongst Friends.

So there have come to be several sorts of Quakers. But the differences between us are in the forms in which we express the faith we profess. We are still all called to walk in the light because that religious experience is the heart of our Quakerism.

We should never forget, in all such considerations, that we are dealing with the most precious of human experiences. We seek to use words to express truth as

we see it, but if we do not begin in love and end in love, we shall be missing its meaning.

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#### THE QUAKER UNIVERSALIST GROUP

The Quaker Universalist Group believes that spiritual awareness is accessible to men and women of any religion or none, and that no one Faith can claim to be a final revelation or to have a monopoly of truth. The group is open to both Quakers and non-Quakers.