

# TRUTH BE TOLD!

## *On the True Meaning of Key Quaker Christian Phrases Misunderstood and Misused Today*

This little pamphlet tells the truth about the original spiritual meaning of several old Quaker phrases and their modern corruption, corruption that empties them of their powerful and instructive original meaning. Its purpose is to assist today's readers in grasping the true nature of Quaker spirituality and revelation.

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*The Gospel* is a term that rightly has been translated as "Good News." However, many are confused as to what that Good News is. Is it a set of doctrines which must be believed? Clearly doctrine can be

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important for what one thinks does have consequences. Mistaken beliefs can lead to spiritual and physical disaster or death. Is it our Lord Jesus Christ coming to save us by His sacrificial death on the cross? Clearly, this must be part of it. Is it His resurrection as the first born to eternal life? That sounds like good news!

While all these things sound like Good News and may be part of it, our first Quaker Christians declared that the central Good News was God's power and love to save us not only in our sin and also from it. The Good News is that our Lord reveals Himself to us, can speak to our condition, and not only justify us, but sanctify us. The Good News is that Christ comes today to teach and lead His people, not just to save them individually. He has the power to direct us in His will and help us to be obedient. God's power and love: in reality and indeed, the Good News!

*Fear of God* was not a fear of our angry Creator and the hell to which He might well consign us. "The Fear of God" was, and is, synonymous with being in awe of our Creator, overwhelmed by His love, power, beauty, mystery, and incredible greatness; awe that the One who created and sustains the vast universe in which we dwell is also the One who will love and guide us if we permit Him to do so. This is why the Psalmist declared "The fear [awe] of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Until we stand in awe, we are not in touch with reality.

Those who do not stand in awe of God and His stunning creation have yet to realize the amazing mystery and miracle of our lives and the universe. They are sadly dealing with some small and misbegotten idea that has nothing to do with reality.

*The Light* in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has too often become a default term in circles that are embarrassed to refer to Jesus Christ, and that want little or nothing to do with Him. However, Quaker Christians recognize that the Light is Jesus the Christ who lights everyone who enters the world. “In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world” (John1:3-10).

*Continuing Revelation:* The idea of continuing revelation is at first inviting to today’s seekers. It appears to be a quick escape from the nature and demands of past revelation. It appears to provide a way to leap frog over past revelation and to proclaim that our new revelation today supersedes the old. However, we soon realize that this leap frog approach to revelation brings nothing but confusion, disunity, and bitter conflict.

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If “new truth” is constantly replacing “old truth,” then there is in effect no truth. There is no rock on which to stand, but only shifting sand. The “god” of leap frog revelation becomes a cruel, a macabre tease leaving us no way to live, but by our own mercurial passions and desires. Such a “god” could tell us to avoid sexual immorality in one age and run into it in the next; to eschew stealing at one time and rob our brothers and sisters blind in another; to refuse to murder in one era and to kill in the next. This mistaken idea of continuing revelation is at the root of the relativism that so poisons the present time.

Does our Lord continue to reveal Himself to men and women? Or is revelation finished, once and for all. The answer is: He continues to reveal Himself, but because He and His will are unchangeable, unalterable, any revelation of Himself simply reinforces and builds on His past revelation of Himself. Christ Jesus, by whom we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again later to move us unto it. He does not say “you shall not commit adultery” in one age and later “fornication is now permissible.” He does not say “you must not kill,” on one day, and “you must kill” on the next. True revelation re-enforces and confirms past revelation. It does not reverse and negate it.

***Living in that life and power that takes away the cause of Wars:*** This is a tantalizing phrase that actually has little meaning unless we know what “that life and power” is in which we are to live. Early Quaker preachers realized after a few years of using the phrase that it failed to express that to which they were referring. T. Canby Jones, in his study of *George Fox’s Attitude toward War* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1972), notes that “it appears that Fox stopped using this phrase after 1659.... In his later life he used many equivalent phrases such as “Christ the new Adam ends all war,” “Come to the inward war,” “Walk in the light of the Lamb...which was before enmity was,” and “in the power of the Messiah...here is not war” (36-37). That life and power refers to our lives lived in obedience to God’s commandments and lived under and in witness to His power. Are we living in God’s power? Are we living in the life of the Spirit to which Christ Jesus called us, loving our enemies, praying for our persecutors, accepting and being patient through suffering, and being confident that God will have the victory?

***Silent worship:*** We do not worship in silence or “worship the silence.” A better term for our worship is “Waiting Worship” which refers to our assembling to wait in silence for our Lord to lead us in worship. We wait in faith, believing Christ’s promise that “where two or three are gathering in my Name, there will I be in the midst of them (Matthew 18:19-20). It is He who will move men and women among us to

bring messages of direction, encouragement, comfort and admonition to us. Occasionally, our worship is that of silent awe and adoration of our Lord, but often our worship will be graced with prayer, singing, and messages, punctuated by our silent thankfulness and inward contemplation of what has been given.

***That of God in Everyone*** does not refer to “the spark of the divine in each one of us” or “the little part of God in each of us.” These are misinterpretations of the phrase, dubious late 19<sup>th</sup> century ideas taken from the Neo-platonic philosophical mysticism popular then. Our original Quaker generations, when they spoke of “that of God in everyone,” referred to the hunger and thirst that God has put in man, a hunger to hear God’s voice and be taught what is right, a thirst that leads one to repentance and to seek the wisdom and direction of Christ Jesus, and live in obedience to His will.

***Unity versus Consensus:*** The original Quaker understanding of spiritual unity and the Social Scientific concept of consensus are *not synonymous* terms. Few today have had the experience of being brought to unity by God’s power working among them. When they have experienced God’s power drawing us into harmony and unity, they realize how weak, uncertain, even futile, are our attempts to reach unity by our own feeble means and conflicted intelligences.

***We are Seekers, not Finders!*** How sad to be seeking the Truth all of one's life and die, never having found it. A spiritual search without finding is an exercise in futility and a road to despair. To be seekers who never find is a sure sign that we are on the wrong path, the path to nowhere, for our Lord has declared, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8).

***The Word of God*** is used by many Christians to refer to the Bible. However, that reference is mistaken, as the Scriptures themselves tell us. The Word of God is Jesus the Christ, as the apostle John tells us: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life and that life was the light of men" (John 1:1-4). John emphasizes this further in his first letter: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our

fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:1-3). The Revelation of John makes this identification complete when John sees Christ Jesus in heaven, “...and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God” (Revelation 19:11-13).

Those who would identify the Bible, that collection of books written by writers inspired by God, as the *inerrant* Word of God, make a grave error, for the Book has no power in itself to bring men and women into unity with God and one another. Jesus Christ, alive, active and powerful among His people does have that power, if we submit to Him and seek to live by His direction.

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