

entry for

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# Spiritual *not* Religious

## the future for the Religious Society of Friends

*I'm spiritual not religious* is a phrase of the times. The Essay examines causes for this and the strategies developed to meet the problems identified, and thus the background to some of those attending or in membership of the Society. The Essay goes on to suggest a common ground could be found not in the search for a Quaker theology, but in a Quaker anthropology i.e. what it is to be human, and suggests sources in the Quaker tradition which indicate how this might look.

Length about 6000 words : autumn 2009

## Spiritual *not* Religious the future of the Religious Society of Friends

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### *Introduction*

One of the phrases of the times is '*I'm spiritual but not religious*'. It is said by someone who has found their way out of the secular world but not into conventional church traditions. And on the shelves of a city bookshop Religion lies between Philosophy and Mythology followed by 'Mind Body Spirit' and then by Self-Help (spiritual d.i.y. of the positive thinking or personal development kind). Those shelves in the Religion sector allowed for Christianity are largely filled by Richard Dawkins for and against, Gnostic and non-canonical gospels and the Bible in various translations. Katharine Armstrong seems the only writer on popular theology with her latest book on the topmost shelf. Academic theologians appear to have no input into popular culture in the way their colleagues in other departments such as Philosophy do, and conversely the general reader has little or no access to their ideas and researches. Fortunately, the local library has a far more interesting collection of books on Religion (in which Spirituality is included) of which *Quaker Faith and Practice* is one. It is sited between Psychology on one hand and Sociology at the other. This gives an idea of the area in which Religion is supposed to operate and the challenges to its territory.

*'I'm spiritual but not religious'* is also said with the assumption that there is a shared understanding and acceptance of the terms; that one person knows what the other is referring to. The distinction seems to be that Spirituality is a technique for gaining inner peace and finding the inner self, whereas religion is a set of doctrines and teachings. Spirituality is autonomous; it is where you craft your own spiritual beliefs. Religion is heteronomous; where you are guided by others, and learn pre-conceived norms of conventions, beliefs and the wisdom or folklore of the tradition.

However, 'Spirituality' covers a vast range from the umpteen forms of meditation on offer at any community centre or education centre to the very disciplined forms specifically associated with, say, a school of Buddhism. But I have not seen any thing to suggest that spiritual exercises of the Christian tradition and its mystics and contemplatives are included though the Celtic tradition does find favour on the bookshelves. The phrase '*I'm spiritual not religious*' may also be said with a certain sense of superiority over traditional church-going implying that the speaker has access to higher knowledge and superior wisdom.

Buddhism is well-accepted, Islam respected or possibly feared, and Hinduism and Judaism, let alone other faiths, are not in the popular mind. 'Religion' is used as a code term for Christianity partly because Christianity is the predominant religious tradition in this country and the establishment nature of the Church with its traditions of power in community and society; partly also because of the nature of the message, especially as given in the preaching and

oratory of Hell-fire Evangelists. We may not believe it but its power still has its aura and leaves a shadow.

So should Quakers go with the flow and retitlе themselves as 'The Spiritual Society of Friends' or do they have good reason to stay with the current name?

### *Origins of the problem*

So how come this division of spiritual and religious, and the nervousness about making any personal claims at all in this direction? The main reason I would say is the rise and rise of human reason and its attack on religious faith from within and without, and doubts about 'subjectivity'. But a second reason is the rise of individualism and personal responsibility, and loss of community.

The Copernican Revolution and the trial of Galileo are standard starting-points for the rise in power and authority of human reason over church authority and hierarchy. Around the same time the expansion of the world through the discoveries of Columbus and others also challenged the historical and geographical world-view of Christendom. In this the early Quakers played their part, and the success of the sciences and technology in understanding and manipulating the natural world has been unlimited. Human reason has become the pre-dominant authority. Repeatability of experiments as verification/falsification of a claim to knowledge have become the key determinants of truth.

Human reason has not only challenged church authority from without, it has also challenged the church from within by its challenge to scriptural authority through the development of the historical-critical method of biblical study, increasing knowledge of the historical detail of the Judaeo-Christian Romano worlds and archaeological excavations in the Near East. The Bible which was the sure foundation of the Protestant tradition is now not so sure.

In this last century too the arguments have been presented in scientific terms as we live more and more in a scientific culture rather than philosophic. They are, too, possibly more powerful because of their visual, indeed, televisual appeal. Darwinian evolutionary theory does create a third way between designer and happenstance as explanation of the world being as it is.

The objectivity of an impartial observer is a key requirement. This has extended into the human sciences and into the general mind as a deep distrust of emotions and affections. Judgements about the arts are deemed 'subjective' which is taken to be invalid, unimportant, without supporting argument. Judgement based on knowledge or experience in these fields is disregarded.

Philosophy has also made its own contribution to the power of human reason in Immanuel Kant's arguments that we do and can live only within the realm of human knowledge. Wherever we go we take it with us, and we cannot go outside or beyond it. This argument is also enhanced or increased by the Wittgenstein argument that we live in a language-ordered world similarly. And Jacques Derrida has cast doubts about the possibility of an overall Grand Narrative; we are all in his view and can only be '*bricoleurs*'- 'odd-job men'.

This is not to say that all this is consciously in the minds of most people but that these ideas, rigorously worked out in the areas of thought concerned and with their opponents, leach out into the general state of culture.

The culmination of it all is that it is taken to be not possible to hold a coherent world-view including faith and reason. Especially as the time-line of the Drama of Salvation with a neat Beginning (God's Creation of the World and the Fall of Adam), Middle (the Reconciliation of the World through the Atoning Acts of Jesus Christ) and End (the Last Judgement and the Realisation of the Kingdom of Heaven) cannot fit to a theory of an expanding universe or, if that were not mind-boggling enough, to a multiverse.

### *Coping Strategies*

Various strategies have been developed to cope with this situation.

1. To stay within the realm of reason especially science alone. This strategy writes off any form of religious belief as delusion, illusion, unnecessary or just plain wrong.
2. To accept the limitations of human knowledge and the range of mind and language defined by modern philosophy. The Beyond is the Beyond and stays that way and there is no ultimate Reality beyond the phenomenal world. This excludes God as the foundation of physical and moral worlds. Nevertheless the religions of the world have important stories which could be of value if translated out of the supernatural terms.
3. The Dogmatic solution claims that there are two distinct spheres heaven and earth for which theology is the pertinent discipline in the former and the exact sciences in the latter. Theology has the point of departure for its method as Revelation. God is beyond our comprehension and only in the revelation of God in Christ is that distance between God and humanity overcome.
4. The fundamentalist view also accepts the dominant scientific mode of thinking as the authority. But claims the Bible is true as science and history and true as the Word of God.

Indeed, what I have set out above may be taken as the non-believers belief about religion, that it is a set of propositional statements and nothing more. 'I believe in One God ...'. And for those who can no longer say the Creed with a clear conscience it is a relief to find that Quakers put no great emphasis on such things. Not surprisingly there has been an exit from the churches, some of whom have come among the Quakers, with its easygoing attitude to formal beliefs and creeds. And others come from the 'spiritual' culture and share in Quaker Meeting for Worship as a meditation group.

But to us creeds have no value save as they testify to the eternal realities by which men must apprehend spiritual experience and express by life and conduct. Viz. CFP \*116 (1920)

Yet some incomers may be disconcerted to find that while believers and non-believers are accepted Quakers may be unaware of the many and varied in-between positions. Meetings may state they offer a welcome both to those who believe in God and those who do not, or may declare some more general commitment to God.

But it is no cut and dried matter; so the framework in which to discuss this very subject - *what do you mean 'God'* - *'what do you think about Jesus'* - is denied by this liberal outlook. What it is likely to reveal is that Quakers are uninterested in ideas and out of date. But this also can cut them off from their own history. The religious language used by George Fox and the early Quakers is no longer a living language and with that comes the loss of what can be expressed with it. And in the general cultural milieu of the times Spirituality rather than Religion may seem more attractive.

But also:

It ought to be recognised that at the present time ...the real danger is ... from an inveterate haziness of mind, a half-heartedness and general belittlement of the importance of true thinking in religion. ... I do not think it likely that terms like 'theology', dogma and 'creed' will ever evoke enthusiasm among members of the Society of Friends. But it ought to be possible to allay what almost amounts to a phobia with regard to them. CFP123 (1947)

### *There's more to religion*

However, the Church has lived with such challenges throughout its history and the broad church of believers has better things to do than worry about the minutiae of theological niceties or philosophical pedantries. Indeed, they take comfort when men of the intellectual calibre of Rowan Williams can share and lead their faith.

For many people religion – Christianity – is not about belief primarily, but about *praxis*, about participation in and practice of the Christian life. Because the churches are about community, and participation in whatever form of liturgy they use, and the good life. It is more like learning on the job, learning not only the skills and language but the ethos. These are what the liturgies of the various churches offer. The medium is the message. Uplift, comfort, hope and inspiration are delivered through the participation in the communal activities. Who can not sing the *Te Deum* and feel the better for it, as it were by reflected glory?

Some churches are obviously more liturgical in a narrow sense than others, with a real choreography and sense of theatre to their services and the laity as

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\* Christian Faith and Practice in the experience of the Society of Friends

almost spectators of what occurs within the proscenium arch of the sanctuary. In the nonconformist tradition The Word of God as preached by the minister takes centre stage and the art is chiefly that of rhetoric, perhaps difficult to practise in these days when oratory is out of favour. And perhaps for the fundamentalists where hell-fire preaching may not yet be a lost art the phenomenal world as the expression of the Word of God is the liturgical structure.

Quakers are not apart from this. Meeting for Worship can be seen as related to street theatre, performance art, or theatre in the round. Passing traffic brings its own ministry. And like other forms of Worship it takes about three-quarters of an hour for the meeting to centre down until finally the internal radio has switched off and rests content, at a time when in other churches the Mass is being celebrated, or the nonconformists are settling down for the stimulating and perhaps inspirational address. Of course, there are always those for whom the whole thing passes by and for them, the Quaker meeting is where the service is so slow you wait an hour for the coffee.

However, this is internal *praxis*. The good life that the Gospel proclaims also requires outward practices too and relationships with others and the world at large. And so religion is also seen as being about 'being good' or being a 'do-gooder', together with the concept of God as the source of notions of what it is to be good and as wielding the stick or offering the carrot as means of bringing this about.

And Quakerism too has been deeply imbued with the necessity of an appropriate outward way of life and concern for social issues. Yet the search to be good has many traps. It can lead to morals and way of life as what religion is mostly concerned with. This in turn can become little more than supporting fashionable liberal causes. These are techniques for executing the mission statement, not the mission. But at once I feel guilty that this may seem a snide remark and I humbly recognise that more good is being done in society and help and benefit provided at a personal level by the 'do-gooders' than anything I engage in.

While the concern of this essay is that Quakers are part of the general cultural-religious scene and are affected by these issues as much as anyone, the Quaker movement may have its own coping strategy. It may settle down into being an '-ism' an enclosed order and ideology that lies apart from the challenges and resources part of a wider community can bring. The extreme strategy is to give up on religion and take an exit line into spirituality away from all the God problems.

#### *A Copernican revolution*

But one reason for rejecting religious beliefs in modern culture is also a very old one. There is a jibe which goes back to the Greeks to the effect that the claim that God created man in his own image, should be the other way round: mankind has created God in his own image. But the jibe does not follow up to consider for what reason this came about.

In the first version one is heading for a theology; and secondly for an anthropology – what it is to be human. Yet in rejecting religious beliefs one is rejecting an anthropology as well, the kind of space they offer people to be human in. However, to think about religion in terms of its anthropology is it to bring the Copernican Revolution to its logical conclusion, or will it leave us with a very flat earth?

For the positions set out above also offer a concomitant anthropology, searching for a non-mechanistic view of what it is to be human. Position 2 as outlined on p3 offers an anthropology which ranges from a kindly liberal humanism where the reality of God moves into the psychological realm and into our hearts and minds. Jesus is a sound moral teacher, undoubtedly inspirational but no more. Position 3 may result in a devaluing of human life in its present form in that while we are all Children of God the real, true, good life comes only in the life hereafter when we attain 'spiritual bodies'. Position 4 views human life as better explained by a sphere of relationships, but the primary one is to God. Man is animated by God directly and personally, so possesses the image of God by relation to God. Real man is known only as human reality is revealed by God in the one true man, Jesus Christ.

And if religious anthropologies of the kind just outlined are rejected, then Evolution remains as the nearest thing to a Grand Narrative of what it is to be human with the consequence that it is also required to explain the development of moral behaviour and to give moral guidance. If evolution is taken to be in Herbert Spencer's phrase 'survival of the fittest' rather than Darwin's own disinterested description of 'descent with modification' then the macho alpha-male becomes the model. How or why to be altruistic, or to think in terms of the community as opposed to a horde, is a challenge.

Even 'I'm spiritual not religious' may also be said with a certain defiance or at least nervousness. Partly the nerves or defiance is about the whole insecurity anyone has who has moved into an area not part of the rational world. But it is also a brave recognition that more is involved and the evolutionary grand narrative may also be rejected as reductionist.

Some comfort may be found for the way in which much of the experience associated with churchgoing has become hived off and developed in its own right. The great religious music, the great Masses are heard in the concert halls. Great religious art is displayed in the art galleries for all to see. The religious buildings themselves become great works of architecture and visited by tourists in their thousands. Admired as great public art in general, yet the understanding of the vision which inspired them may be lost.

What anthropology can Spirituality itself offer? It is connected at its roots with bodily disciplines such as Yoga, Tai Chi, Reiki and even Kung Fu martial arts come from the Zen tradition. But these occur quite separately on the Adult Education programmes or on the events lists of community centres as exercise for the body only unconnected with the mental disciplines of Spirituality. Without its roots Spirituality may claim to benefit the body in its psycho-somatic troubles and spiritually to energise the body. The body is there to enable the

mind to be empowered by Spirituality. But that does not appear to offer anything of its own to satisfy the Mind. It takes itself as separate from reason though this too is part of being human. We the subject are uncommitted, unaffected, can pick and mix our disciplines of thought.

But if those anthropologies as above do not satisfy as too reductionist or too ethereal, what can be done? If there were to be such a question and answer within the realms of human reason and knowledge there would be an appropriate discipline of knowledge by now.

The world view or overall compass that the church has offered has been hived off into separate disciplines. The last thing to be hived of is spirituality. So that the Church is faced with the question what is its own area that no one else can supply? As the bookshelves indicate, there are other areas of thought ready to move in on its territory. And what is the need the non-theist, the non-believer, still has to deal with without the benefit of church. Can he even ask the question?

We are all living in the Light these days but within Descartes' Light of Reason. The Church of Reason is the predominant faith of the age. Indeed the problem for the Church of Faith is that it too is entrapped in the Church of Reason. But if the question and answer religion addresses is outside the realm of human reason how does one make sense of it, or what can there be of interest or concern to us?

*Tell me the old, old story?*

Christianity, like most religions, has the contrast gods and humans so it can ask questions about humans as such. So having an alternative available what it is to be human can to some extent be defined. There are in the current scene, of course, several alternatives. Animals and how much we have inherited from our animal ancestry not only biologically but in terms of social behaviour is part of the Evolutionary Grand Narrative. Another one is research to see how much we are still inhibited by our own Stone Age, hunter-gatherer, and pre-modern life.

But there is a third alternative; which is also some kind of rejection of the limitations of the light of reason. If not quite in the spirituality mode of being at least it appeals to the imagination. It is where 'spooky' is a commendatory term. Dr Who and Harry Potter tell a different story (sci-fi in general) in which humans are set against aliens forces and powers. Although the aliens start off being bigger and better and more powerful than Our Hero, he wins through in the end. Not only that, Our Hero is good - morally superior to the aliens who are evil.

But religion tells a story in which humankind is not superior either in terms of power and control but is also morally not superior - we are the bad guys in religious stories, or at least the Judaeo-Christian tradition. This does not lessen their appeal to Hollywood! However, perhaps it is the case that being ordinarily bad is *not* the problem, as it first seems.



*'In the beginning God' etc.,* but the point of the story in Genesis is not so much the fact of creation, or explaining why or how there is something when there could be nothing. This is to take it that it is answering a question that the scientist would pose, and that only. It may be that that was part of the story when first conceived but there is more to the account than that. God creates the world and all *'and behold, it was very good'* (Gen: 1.31)

The story is about value and worth. So the question perhaps peculiar to religion – Judaeo-Christianity – is something like 'Is it OK to be me?' Is it OK the way I do things and see the world? Is it OK to be human?' It just has to be some sort of daft question like that, and it may be that it can be best addressed within a gods-human scenario.

In these cynical and spin-ridden times how are we to believe in other people's goodness. It is taken that They are all the same; all have their hands in the till and their feet in the trough and, with their head in the clouds have no understanding of life at grassroots level (!) Which collection of clichés saves one from action, commitment or getting involved.

Thirdly, how are we to believe in the value of worth or goodness of the world at large as we watch the news of some terrible crime of rape murder or mugging and believe that outside our very own front door that sort of thing is going on all the time. There is no basis anymore for being good, having worth, or justifying nice kind feelings, or believing we are 'good'.

But we have also lost the confidence that there is a world outside our comfort zone, static social pattern, outside the church of reason narrowly defined. Can there be a Beyond, of what kind to step into, and in any case, how? The Church, the Society has to find a way out or back, as much as people still need to find justification for themselves as good, having quality, or worth.

The world needs deliverance from the bondage of fear, a fear which makes men selfish, cruel and callous. Everywhere significance and security have faded out of the lives of men. Our society should be witnessing from its own particular angle of approach to a God who delivers from fear, and in whom men may find strength and abiding peace. We recognise that our ability to give this witness will depend upon the quality of our spiritual life in our meetings for worship. It will also depend upon whether we have sought to fit ourselves both spiritually and intellectually to speak to the conditions of men and women in the modern world. The witness should be expressed in the language of today. CFP382 (1938)

#### *Towards a Quaker anthropology*

The 1980 Swarthmore Lecture was entitled, *Towards a Quaker theology*. My suggestion would be that we could be working towards a Quaker anthropology.

It may seem as if I'm pushing everyone down the religious plughole, but I want to be more ambivalent about that and indeed believe that therein lies the possibility for a Quaker contribution. Quakers can offer an interpretation of

traditional religious thinking from with their own tradition and link it to the current Mind Body Spirit genre. Quakers can offer, in what some call post-Christian times, a unique space, a common ground.

I am expressing the problem in religious or biblical language and terminology but also suggesting that while it may be believed as such, it is equally acceptable to regard these as structures by which to discuss and reach distinct problems. Both ways have their ramifications but Quakerism with its reservations about the importance of beliefs has room to accommodate both. Nor do I wish to be didactic about naming what the problem is. The church has always been pretty vague about what Sin is; it covers a multitude of sins!

However, it may be that the Quakers have a straightforward and simple answer to the Genesis problem in the well-known phrase that there is of 'that of God in everyman' (QF&P<sup>†</sup> 19.32) If that is the case then, apart from finding some relevance and resonance in the phrase, there is no problem. We are OK.

However, this may be rushing ahead too much. Is it as easy as that? Isn't this more of a threat than a promise? Isn't this the problem again? For this really is where self-consciousness comes in. For the story of Adam and Eve and the Fall is the coming of self-consciousness and awareness of shortcomings, not just moral. How do we accept the 'that of God in us' and not run scared? What are we accepting or 'cheerfully answering'?

So what do you mean God? I quote what I always think of as George Fox's *Te Deum*.

He is the living God that clothes the earth with grass and herbs and causes the trees to grow and bring forth food for you, and makes the fishes of the sea to breathe and live, and makes the fowls of the air to breed, and causes the roe and the hind and the creatures and all the beasts of the earth to bring forth whereby they may be food for you.

He is the living God and causes the stars to arise in the night, to give you light, and the moon to arise to be a light in the night. He is the living God that causes the sun to give warmth unto you, to nourish you when you are cold. He is the living God that causes the snow and frost to melt and causes the rain to water the plants.

The living God is He that gives you life and breath and strength, and all things that are good and would have you to feel after Him, with that which checks you for sin and evil; and would have you to worship Him in spirit, and serve Him who is holy and righteous and to live in peace.  
CFP135 (1672) – *my paragraphing*.

It is very practical; concerned with the physical, and the needs of the **body**. It is about food, warmth, light to get around by. Here is the practical God. This

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<sup>†</sup> Quaker Faith and Practice

has been followed in the Quaker tradition as providers of timetables, dictionaries, clocks, chocolate; as ironmasters, seamen, scientists as the preamble to Chapter 1 of CFP makes clear. Quakers have not shied away from the industrializing and technologizing of society – all to the glory of God and benefit of mankind. The general religious tradition has been to regard the body as something to be got rid of, the epitome of human finitude and infirmity, from which the Mind and spirit need to be freed. In the Quaker tradition the body, the physical world and the man-made urban world are not to be rejected. Rather the body is the companion of the mind and bears the strains of the world.

But it is also about order for the **mind**. Clocks and timetables may represent a belief that the trains will run on time, but science and the whole idea of scientific verification/falsification as a means to knowledge requires that events are repeatable; that is, they must be ordered not chaotic. God in this instance is answering the question why is there order? It is a personable form of a metaphysical belief. In practice, our world is ordered by language according to local need and custom.

But it is also about God as producer. God is both order and creator. And that is the problem. That is where the self-consciousness comes in and all the tensions. We need clocks and timetables; we need new inventions and discoveries. God is both a noun as order and stability, and a verb in terms of innovation creativity and movement, dynamic quality. So it is also saying, in a personable form, creativity is built into the scene.

For an age is a dream that is dying  
or one that is coming to birth.<sup>‡</sup>

And in the third paragraph, God is our aspirations and high standards, our conscience too, our judge of what we fail at. So the problem of Genesis, in the anthropological version, is concerned with losing one's nerve at one's own talent or creativity. The Quakers mentioned above exercised their originality with the phenomenal world.

But the problem of self-consciousness in this religious context really means more like the awareness of being always at the leading edge of one's own life, always outward bound, losing one's nerve about one's life and the range of complexities that is oneself; that is being or becoming a 'subject'. 'Subjectivity' is a despised term these days, taken to mean what you fancy without much thought behind it. But it is the reverse. It means a committed personal view as in Luther's phrase, '*Here I stand I can no other*'. This is the way you see things and have to take that route, at least until someone shows you a better way. But the personable form of 'He is the Living God' shows that the best structure for what it is to be human and developing being subject, yourself, is in relation to and with other people, 'cheerfully answering that of God in every man, as said.

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<sup>‡</sup> From the Ode *We are the Musicmakers* by A. W. E. O'Shaughnessy. It may also be the source of the phrase, 'movers and shakers'

So that may expand that problem of self-consciousness in the presence of others if not God, but how is it to be eased.

The artist whether musician, painter or writer *et al.* has an objective medium by means of which to structure his talent and through which to express his own vision and understanding of the world. By this third-party language we are then able to peek into his world and thereby have our own understanding or emotional range and perceptions enlarged. But it becomes somewhat convoluted with self-portraits, of which Rembrandt was the master painter. It is something like using himself to say something general, or to give himself a context in which to understand himself, even to laugh at himself. The conditions of possibility for such a self-portrait as his last one of himself, with his eyes open looking at himself in a tousled sort of way include a tolerance of himself. As the psalmist might have said, *'Thou knowest our foolishness and our sins are not hid from Thee'*. (Psalm 65:5).

Similarly we want a context for ourselves and confidence to be ourselves. We need confidence to get on and describe our own small world or to do our own small thing as we see it. Such is my reading of some of the miracles where Jesus says to the guy, 'Take heart', as in Mt.9:2-8. The sufferer has done all the work to get to the point where it is the final glass ceiling he has to break through to get on with his life, and has not quite the courage to do that, and this is Jesus is saying to them, 'you can do it'.

The context and confidence which Jesus was offering which is also the drive is the **spirit**. James Naylor's paean to the spirit describes a phenomenal event not a metaphysical.

There is a spirit which I feel, that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty or whatever it is of a nature contrary to itself. It sees to the end of all temptations. As it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thoughts to any other. If it be betrayed it bears it, for its ground and spring is the mercies and forgiveness of God. Its crown is meekness, its life everlasting love unfeigned; it takes its kingdom with entreaty and not with contention, and keeps it by lowliness of mind. In God alone it can rejoice, though none else regard it, or can own its life.. It's conceived in sorrow, and brought forth without any to pity it nor doth it murmur at grief and oppression. It never rejoiceth but through sufferings; for with the world's joy it is murdered. I found it alone being forsaken. I have fellowship with them who lived in dens and desolate places in the earth, who through death obtained this resurrection and eternal holy life. (QF&P 19:12, 1660)

So if Mind Body and Spirit have been brought together as Subject, what more is to be done? Finally, I would like to suggest a way in which the traditional unease of Quakers at creeds and statements and those who seek Spirituality primarily may have some common ground.

What the religious struggle and structure gives is both a general understanding of what is going on in various ways and circumstances as particular skill or in general with one's life as a whole, together with the language in which to discuss it. This is what the third paragraph does offer. The point of it all according to George Fox's final paragraph in the passage quoted is to '*worship [the living God] in spirit, and serve him who is holy and righteous*'.

However, this sense of purpose is just the final reason for taking action and as with, '*fame is the spur, the last infirmity of noble mind*', one has to go beyond even that. To fight your way up through the rankings is difficult enough but to take that last step when one is fighting nerves and self-doubt as well as the opposition to become The Champion is doubly so. And in religious terms to be a subject one has to go beyond the purposefulness of it even as it may be considered in relation to God. In many a church one sees inscribed the phrase '*ad maiorem gloriam Dei*' – to the greater glory of God. But how does one add to infinity? Rather one has to think in an equivalent of Mallory's phrase 'because it is there'.

That is what the accounts of Jesus' Death and Resurrection tell of as, in actuality rather than just through language, his unique relationship with *Abba*, Father was universalized and made it available to the world at large as the Holy Spirit.

James Naylor was aware of a different version of the spirit in his younger, wilder days from that quoted earlier; of the Holy Spirit as the Till Eulenspiegel of the religious world. The Quakers then were almost the 'happy-clappies' of their day, before they settled into the quietist, pietistic manner of the present times. The Holy Spirit generally seems to be the junior partner of the Trinity, its will o' the wisp nature not sitting easily in institutional practice. But it is not to be overlooked for it sits comfortably with notions of creativity and originality. It is both our driver to go beyond the limits of our known world and comforter as we brave the beyond.

That 'going beyond' would be to live in the Light and that is what one seeks in the Meeting, confronting one's self-doubt in the ordered silence, in the Spirit, in the Light and, take heart. It is perhaps in the Spirit, by whatever route one takes, that the members of the Quaker family may, in a not too dysfunctional way, meet up and share their experiences of what it is to be human.

### ***Conclusion***

As they say in Balby, we do not lay these things upon you as a rule or form (QF&P. 1:01). I am not greatly in favour of those who write such phrases as 'the Church needs', 'the Society ought' and then leaves it to others to put forward some actual provision.

Rather if the purpose of this essay has been at all achieved then, given the mixed membership of the Society, it would have indicated the need for discussion on a common ground such as Quaker notions of what it is to be human, a Quaker anthropology for short; and given some kind of layout of the

area. Furthermore, it would have indicated the possibilities of a much-needed discussion which could have as its focus the suggestion to change the name to, say, the ***Religious and Spiritual Society of Friends***.