

# The Christ of History and of Experience

By

MAURICE A. CREASEY



**SHREWSBURY LECTURE**

“Now was I come up in spirit through the flaming  
sword into the paradise of God.” GEORGE FOX

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# THE SHREWSBURY LECTURES

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Number 7 - **The Christ of History and of Experience** by Maurice A. Creasey, Director of Studies at Woodbrooke, in Birmingham, England.

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# **THE CHRIST OF HISTORY AND OF EXPERIENCE**

**By**

**MAURICE A. CREASEY**

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## **PREFACE**

In this seventh of the Shrewsbury Lecture Series Maurice Creasey makes good use of his extensive studies in early Quaker Christology to reinterpret the Quaker experience of Christ and critically evaluate some of the ways in which Quakers have interpreted their experience in the past.

He begins by telling us what the first Friends said about Christ, why they said it as they did, and why we must find new language and new ways of interpretation. He concludes by suggesting a possible way of thinking and speaking about Christ today.

Maurice Creasey brings fresh insights to his treatment of this subject and deals forthrightly with some traditional Quaker interpretations. It should challenge Friends to move out in new directions in their thinking about Christ.

L.B.

## **MAURICE A. CREASEY**

Since 1953 Maurice A. Creasey has been Director of Studies at Woodbrooke, the Quaker College in the Selly Oak group of Colleges in Birmingham, England.

He is an Honours Graduate of London University, King's College, in Mediaeval and Modern History. He received the degrees of B. D. and Ph.D from the University of Leeds where, in addition to the usual Biblical and Theological disciplines, he made a special study of the theology of Robert Barclay and of early Quaker Christology.

He is a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and of the Faith and Order Department of the British Council of Churches. For five years he was Clerk of London Yearly Meeting's Committee on Christian Relationships.

He is a contributor to **Quaker Religious Thought** and **The Friends' Quarterly** and many of his addresses and articles have appeared in pamphlet form.

# The Christ of History and of Experience

The Quaker experience of Christ has been a main source of the Society's strength; but the Quaker inability to interpret and explain that experience has been a main source of weakness and division amongst us, and has hindered us from sharing our experience with others.

I shall begin by reminding you of what I believe the first generation of Friends wanted to say concerning Christ, and by explaining why it was in fact this that they wanted to say. Then I shall go on to give you a brief description of how they actually spoke of Christ; to suggest some of the reasons why they spoke in the way they did; and to describe some of the consequences which followed. In the third place, I shall try to face quite frankly the fact that we today, however deeply we may desire to share their experience, cannot and ought not to try to think in their terms or to repeat their language. Next, I shall try to state what I believe we ought to mean when we affirm that 'every man is enlightened by the divine light of Christ'. This will lead me, finally to outline a way of speaking about Christ which is possible for us today, and which, I believe, enables us not only to understand our own experience but to relate it to the experience of our contemporaries.

I have two main reasons for dealing thus with the theme of this Lecture. In the first place, it is the one which comes most naturally to one who, over the years, has found his studies as a Quaker focusing more and more compellingly in the field of Christology. In the second place, I cherish the hope that I may be able to make some small contribution to the unifying recognition amongst us of Jesus Christ as the creative center, not only of Quakerism but even of our common humanity. It is also my hope that, in this way, I might be able, as a British Friend addressing an audience of American Friends, to do something to advance the healing of theological divisions for which, over a century ago, certain British Friends visited among you bore a heavy responsibility.

A further remark, by way of clarification of my purpose, may be in order. It is not my intention to enter into the current 'debate about God', or to meddle with the 'death of God controversy', although we all need to be aware of the important issues which are being canvassed therein. But I am adopting for myself, and assuming in my audience, a willingness to use 'God-language' to express our conviction that our human existence, in all its fragmentariness and mystery, proceeds from and feels after that mysterious fullness of Being to represent which to ourselves we are compelled to speak of purpose, holiness and love. I am further assuming that, for all of us, whatever confidence we may possess in using such language derives, in some way we may be unable or unwilling too closely to define, from our knowledge of Jesus Christ.

## **What the first Friends wanted to say about Christ and why it was this that they wanted to say.**

It seems clear to me that, in all that they said about ‘the light that enlighteneth every man’, the first Friends were in fact speaking about Christ, and that by so speaking they wanted to emphasize two points concerning him. The first emphasis we might call ‘extensive’ and the second ‘intensive’. I use the word ‘emphasis’ deliberately, because they never imagined for one moment that they were charged with the responsibility of proclaiming new truths concerning Christ. But the contemporary understanding of Christ seemed to them defective. It was narrow, and it was shallow.

It was narrow, they felt, because it did not sufficiently recognize the mysterious relationship existing between Christ and every man. It seemed to confine it, for all practical purposes, to men who had some knowledge of the gospel story and who were held, therefore, to be capable of appropriating to themselves, by faith, the benefits of all that Jesus Christ did and suffered.

It was shallow, they felt, because it did not sufficiently emphasize the profound moral transformation which such faith in Jesus Christ should produce. Many of their contemporaries claimed to be ‘believers’, but their faith did not in, any obvious manner produce in their lives the fruit of the Spirit. Nor did it unite them with one another in such a manner as to enable them both to bear a corporate, suffering testimony against all ungodliness, and also to rule out participation in war and in all manner of violence, oppression, luxury and untruthfulness.

But the first Friends had not so learned Christ. The Christ whom they had come to know in the depths of their own individual ‘conditions’, as well as in ‘the silent assemblies of God’s people’, was the same Christ who was to be ‘answered’ in every man, What he was to them was what he would be for all men. And his purpose in them was nothing less than their liberation not only from the guilt but also from the power of sin, nothing less than their renewal ‘up into thy state in which Adam was before he fell’.

If what I have just said is a sufficiently accurate characterization of what the first Friends said about Christ, I want now to indicate why they found themselves wanting to stress just these two particular points, which we are calling the ‘extensive’ and the ‘intensive’ aspects of Christ. At the risk of great oversimplification, I think it may be said that, on the one hand, they were reacting to the Renaissance spirit and the newly-emerging world picture; and, on the other, they were reacting against that hyper-Calvinism which was the mould into which the Reformation movement had for the most part hardened in mid-seventeenth century England.

If they were to justify the ascription to Christ by orthodox theology of a truly universal, even cosmic, significance, then it seemed to them clear that Christ must be related in some way to every man. And if they were to justify the ascription to Christ by orthodox theology of a truly

radical power of salvation, then he must be able to liberate men from habit and convention into a genuine newness of life. Moreover, they felt it intolerable to represent the ground of salvation, as so many of their Puritan contemporaries appeared to do, as some kind of 'transaction' between an inflexibly and legalistically 'righteous' Father and a compassionate and forgiving Son. If Christ is indeed the 'image' of God - and Friends were at one in believing this - than God's attitude to men must be eternally what Christ's was historically. And if men are created 'in the image of God' - and no Friend doubted this - then there must be some affinity, some point of contact, some capacity in every man for the God whose 'image' is fully declared in Jesus Christ.

- II -

## **How the early Friends said it, and why they said it as they did.**

To give expression to these two emphases, the 'intensive' and the 'extensive', early Friends employed two main doctrines. To emphasize the reality of Christ's universal significance for every man, simply as man, they spoke of Christ as the 'divine and universal light' which 'enlightens every man coming into the world', and they spoke of 'the threefold appearance of Christ'. To stress the morally transforming and corporately uniting reality of Christ's presence wherever he is inwardly obeyed they drew a sharp distinction between the 'history' and the 'mystery' of Christ, between the knowledge of Christ 'without' and the knowledge of him 'within'. I want now, very briefly, to try to bring out the significance of these two characteristic patterns of early Quaker speaking about Christ.

The doctrines of the threefold appearance of Christ and of Christ as the divine and universal light envisage a divine personal being who mediate's the presence and power of God among men in three successive modes. Prior to the life of Jesus, this 'Christ' who is 'the Light' is present in the hearts and minds of all men, illuminating the intellect to perceive truth, sensitizing the conscience to perceive duty, and strengthening the will to refrain from evil and to do good. Then, in the historic life of Jesus of Nazareth, this divine presence receives perfect expression, thus demonstrating the consequences, of the yielding up to God of a full obedience to the Light which is 'Christ'. Finally, as the consequence of the Resurrection, this divine presence, forever reinforced and identified with the spirit of Jesus, is liberated into the world to draw all men into a like obedience. Those who yield themselves to its leadings are united into a fellowship of worship and service powerful enough to withstand all opposition and called to a worldwide mission and witness.

Against such a background, it is not difficult to understand the stress laid by early Friends upon their other characteristic doctrine, the distinction between the 'outward' and the 'inward' Christ, between the knowledge of the 'history' and the 'mystery' of Christ. As I have shown



elsewhere<sup>1</sup> the words ‘inward’ and ‘outward’ were originally used by Friends to point the contrast between a transforming ‘acquaintance with’ and a mere ‘knowledge about’ Jesus Christ. But it quickly came to denote a contrast between, in effect, two ‘Christs’, a Christ who, as identified with the man Jesus, is known by ‘tradition’, and a ‘Christ’ who, whether or not identified with Jesus, is knowable only by ‘inward and immediate revelation’. Between such ‘tradition’ and such ‘revelation’ the connexion was either left unexamined or was, by some early Friends, even denied.

I am prevented by time from dealing adequately with the reasons why the early Friends expressed their understanding of Christ in such doctrines. But it may be sufficient to say that both these patterns of thought bear very distinctly the imprint of the-seventeenth century. Like most thinking in the fields of religion and philosophy prior to Hume and Kant, and under the influence of the outlook exemplified by Descartes, it was practically inevitable that the Quaker attempts to emphasize the universal and (as we today might call it) ‘existential’ significance of Jesus Christ should take the forms they did. These forms would now be called ‘mythological’ and ‘dualistic’. They seem to tell a story of a personal divine being. ‘Christ’, who in some sense dwells within, but is not essential to the humanity of, every human being. This divine ‘Christ’ entered in a special manner, never satisfactorily defined, into relationship with one particular human being, Jesus of Nazareth, in such wise that Jesus can now properly be designated ‘Christ’. Despite this, the divine ‘Christ’ is still to be encountered in the depths of every human soul who will make the effort to encounter him, whether or not that soul is acquainted with the story of Jesus. But, just as the relation of the divine ‘Christ’ to the human Jesus is so to speak an external one, so is the relation of the divine ‘Christ’ to all the other human beings he indwells but of whose moral and spiritual being he forms no intrinsic part. Thus we appear to be confronted by two ‘Christs’, and it is clear both that the relation between them is obscure and also that the significance of the non-historic and divine ‘Christ’ is regarded as greater, both in extent and in inwardness, than that of the historic and human ‘Christ’.

- III -

## **Why we cannot still use their language with their meaning**

In the last few sentences I have deliberately taken the risk of trying to express in all their starkness some of the implications of the early Quaker way of interpreting or explaining their own experience of Christ. But the features of that understanding which were so suitable to the outlook of the seventeenth century, and which help to explain the phenomenal growth of Quakerism in that century, have become for many Friends in the twentieth century archaic and obscure, with little convincing or communicating power.

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<sup>1</sup> See my “‘Inward’ and ‘Outward’: a study in early Quaker Language” (Presidential Address to the Friends Historical Society, 1962) Obtainable from Woodbrooke, Selly Oak, Birmingham 29. price 3/6d.

In this situation, what is to be done? Some light on this question may be found by recognizing that in the history of Quaker thought concerning Christ two tendencies have manifested themselves. One has been to make central the idea of a universal and progressive divine immanence in mankind, the spiritual counterpart of the imminent 'drive' of man's biological evolution. From this standpoint, Jesus is simply the man who, so far as we know, exemplifies most completely the direction of that spiritual evolution, and who by his example, encourages us to ally ourselves with it. The other has been to make central the figure of Jesus, and to adopt with more or less thoroughness the traditional Protestant evangelical interpretation of him as the incarnate Son of God, faith in whose atoning self-offering and reliance upon whose continuing spiritual presence bring the forgiveness of sin and moral regeneration.

Among those Friends who incline to the first of these positions, there has been a consistent tendency to concentrate upon the 'inward', the 'mystical' and 'extensive' aspects of Christ, to claim much for 'the Light' and to feel embarrassment with Biblical and theological categories. Among those Friends who, on the other hand, incline to the second of these two positions there is a no less clearly marked tendency to play down the 'mystical' and 'extensive' aspects, to stress the vital importance of a knowledge of the historic facts concerning Jesus and an acceptance of something like the traditional Christian interpretation of those facts. It is not too much to say, I believe, that the religious and theological history of the Society has been decisively shaped by the tension between these two emphases in our understanding of what is involved in our central conviction that 'every man is enlightened by the Divine light of Christ'.

It is therefore easy to understand why, notably in the early years of this century, when the theological and philosophical content of historical Quakerism was studied as never before, attention was focused upon this tension and its importance in the Society's history. This fact is illustrated with notable clarity in Edward Grubb's Swarthmore Lecture for 1914 on the theme 'The Historic and the Inward Christ'. In very much the same way as I have done, Edward Grubb demonstrates the existence of the "two elements, the mystical and the evangelical, that were both present, though imperfectly combined, in the early Quaker thought". (op.cit. p.48). He begins the conclusion of his Lecture with these words: "The greatest of the problems that confront the Society of Friends today ... is the reunion ... of the outward and the spiritual elements in our faith, of the historic and the inward Christ". He continues, "It is, I believe, idle to ask which of the two elements is the more important. Unless the two are harmonized and held together, we can no more do our real work in the world than we can cut with one blade of a pair of scissors". (pp.71-2). He goes on to refer again to "the historic Jesus" and "the inward Christ" and to the "task of seeking for a thought of Christ which will unite these two elements".

What is specially noteworthy here is the fact that Edward Grubb, by the very manner in which he formulates the problem, accepts the fundamental dualism between 'the outward' and 'the spiritual'; 'the historic' and 'the inward' which derives from the seventeenth century and which is, as I believe, the cause of most of our trouble. Consequently, he sees the solution of the problem in terms of 'harmonizing' and 'holding together' in a balanced manner these 'two elements'. I believe it must be said, on the contrary, that if we persist in formulating the problem in

these terms, we effectually prevent ourselves from finding a solution, for the problem is an unreal one, residing in the terms not in the realities of the situation. It is not at all a question of 'holding together' or 're-uniting' the outward and the spiritual, the historic and the inward, as if these were inert and static components which have to be assembled like parts of a machine or, to use Edward Grubb's simile, like the two blades of a pair of scissors. Rather it is a question of rightly discerning in 'the historic' and in 'the outward' the dimensions or perspectives of the inward, the spiritual and the eternal. Of the spiritual, the inward and the eternal that are not so perceived we can have no knowledge.

The last few pages of Edward Grubb's Lecture contain what he called a "few hints" as to the path along which a solution to the problems he had thus formulated might be sought, They are, in themselves, unexceptionable, for the most part, embracing as they do "coming to terms with modern Science in its largest sense", (p.75) recognizing with Ritschl and his followers that "religious doctrine, to be of value, must be the outcome, not of intellectual scrutiny merely, but of personal religious experience" (p.78); the need to combine, despite the difficulty of doing so, a strictly scientific attitude to the "facts" concerning Jesus with the intuitive "response of our whole being to the Person we recognize as perfectly beautiful and good" (pp. 79-81); the perception in the Logos doctrine of "the essential and most serviceable truth" of the culmination in Jesus, the incarnate Christ, of the "upward movement of the human soul toward God" and "that downward movement by which, in his self-revealing love, He has always been seeking man," (pp. 81-83).

With most of this we may be in much sympathy. But when we see in the concluding paragraph of the Lecture how Edward Grubb himself is led by such considerations to define "our faith as Christians and as Friends", we must regretfully recognize that our difficulties remain, (p. 83). Our faith, he said, centers in "a Person who has always been present in the souls of men"; "a Person who in the fulness of time took outward form in Judaea and Galilee ... who brought the age-long process of revelation and redemption to its climax by laying down His life to save" us, and who "through the very depth of humiliation and sacrifice reached His exaltation in glory" and "ever lives ... in our midst, evermore to be the inward source of light and love, of power and joy, to those who are united to Him by faith and obedience."

But, I must press the question, what meaning can we today attach to the idea of "a Person who has always been present in the souls of men"? And what is the significance of the "outward form" which this Person "took"? And who is it who "ever lives" in our midst, to be the "inward source of light and love, of power and joy"? Is he present in a sense which includes that "outward form"? [sic] or is he present only in the same sense as he was present prior to that 'taking'? If so, what significance can that temporary assumption now have? And, in any case, does incarnation mean no more than the 'taking of an outward form'? Is it not clear that in all this we are still firmly in the grip of mythological and dualistic thinking? Does Edward Grubb really do more than state the problem, and state it, indeed, in terms which come straight out of the seventeenth century, and therefore fail to communicate with a great many of us? Here again we have two 'Christs'; the one into the facts of whose human life we are to enquire with the utmost scien-

tific objectivity, the other who indwells every human soul, whether or not that soul has every heard of the existence of Jesus. I believe it must be stated quite frankly, that in posing the problem in this way, we are being set a quite impossible, because unreal and unnecessary task.

## - IV -

### **The meaning of Some traditional Quaker language about the ‘divine and universal light of Christ’, ‘the inward Christ’ etc.**

Friends, as we know, have always felt a certain coolness towards the ancient Christological language of ‘substance’ and ‘nature’ and ‘person’ - partly, perhaps, because few Friends have ever taken the trouble to understand what such terms were originally employed to express. But few Friends realize, I think, how uncritically attached we have become to other terms and distinctions which are just as firmly rooted in a bygone world of thought. We applaud the efforts of scholars and theologians as they seek to ‘de-mythologise’ the language of Scripture and creed. Are we, as Friends, prepared to recognize that a good deal of our own cherished and traditional language calls no less urgently for de-mythologisation?

To de-mythologise our language does not, of course, mean that we no longer use it. It means, rather, that we continue to use it, but use it now with a clearer understanding of what we mean by it. Let us, then glance at a few of the consequences that would follow if we adopted such a reinterpretation as I have tried to suggest of our traditional ways of expressing the significance of Christ. What, in other words, ought we to mean when we affirm that ‘every man is enlightened by the divine light of Christ’, or speak of ‘the Christ within’?

I think the obvious first thing we have to be clear about is that what such phrases mean depends upon whom we mean by ‘every man’. Perhaps I can best suggest what I mean by saying that we need to think of ‘every man’ in terms of three concentric circles.

Within the largest we must include quite literally every human being, in all parts of the world, throughout history. What do we mean when we say that each and every one of these has been, is, and always will be, ‘enlightened by the divine light of Christ’? I believe that, as Christians, we are entitled - indeed, compelled - to affirm that, running through nature and history, there is a direction, a ‘grain’, a pattern, a purpose. Man is man by virtue of the fact that he alone, so far as we know, of all created beings, is to some extent aware of this, and knows himself under obligations to conform his life to it. His religions and his cultures are his ways of expressing and conforming to that purpose as he understands it. In some cases, it may seem to us that they only hinder his recognition and distort his response. But when we assert that every man is enlightened by the divine light of Christ we should mean no more - and no less - than Augustine when he said “Thou has made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in thee”. We are affirming our faith that the tendency, direction and purpose which are felt after and in measure, re-

sponded to, by every man, just because he is man, have been effectually declared and confirmed in the life of Jesus Christ. We are, if I may put it so, affirming the 'Christ-destination of every man.

But there is, within this vast circle, a much smaller though still very large one, embracing all those to whom some knowledge of Jesus Christ has come, and also the even greater number of those who, even though they do not know of him, have been touched by influences which in fact derive from him. However little they may be aware of it, the ways in which they think and feel and act have been shaped and coloured by his influence, mediated through the social, cultural and political institutions which have shaped, their lives. Thus, for all in this circle, the light of Christ means all that it means for mankind in general, but, in addition, some specific though, difficult to analyze and define, historically mediated consequences of the life of Jesus Christ. Their self-understanding, their conception of the meaning of life, the customs and practices they deem acceptable, are what they are because that light which has its source in Jesus Christ has touched their lives. And with this has come greater responsibility as well as the possibility of greater achievement.

But again, within this second circle there is a third still much smaller one, for those for whom Jesus Christ has become the focal, translucent symbol of God. By reference to him they represent to themselves and interpret to others the character and purpose of God, and they seek to live their lives in conscious fellowship with one another, committed to the fulfilling of that purpose in the world. For them, obviously, the light of Christ describes the conscious recognition of a profoundly personal and social creative relationship to God as he is revealed in Jesus Christ.

In view of all this, it seems to me that, however difficult it may be to give a clear and consistent meaning in all these different contexts to such a phrase as 'the divine and universal light of Christ', there is one thing we must not do. We must not use it to mean that, regardless of the rational, moral and religious differences among men, there is, built into every individual, some undefinable entity which, if attended to, can inform him of all that he needs to know of God and of the meaning of his life, or can do for him all that the historic Jesus Christ can do. The light does not thus make men independent of Jesus Christ. As early Friends so often said, the light comes from Christ and leads to Christ. Their message was not simply 'You must see things with your own eyes'; it went on to affirm 'There is, in fact, something of a quite specific kind to see'. We need always to remember that 'light' is the condition of seeing, not the object seen. If there is an error as serious as that of ignoring the reality of 'the light' it is the error of making sweeping, unsupported and uncritical claims for its uniformity, effectiveness and sufficiency.

## **A possible way of thinking and speaking about Jesus Christ today.**

What, after all, is it that we as Friends want to say about Jesus Christ today? It seems to me that we want to say two things, above all. The first is that in Jesus we see one who, in the concreteness and particularity and temporality of his historic life, reveals us to ourselves as none other has done. Inflexibly and penetratingly, he reveals to us our shams, our evasions and our cowardice. If this were the whole story of what he does we should indeed be undone. But it is not; for he also stirs in us desires for something better, and assures us that our weak efforts and faltering desires will be in the end fulfilled because the last word in this universe lies not with immensity, with unheeding regularity and impersonal energy, but with compassion, with unselfishness, with love.

All this he does for us because to us the knowledge of him has been brought by the human community which looks back to him as its origin, which has preserved and interpreted the memory of his life and its meaning, and which, within its own life, has continued to find him creative. All this, we can truthfully say, is a matter of experience for us, as we know it has been for generations of Friends.

But when we reflect upon this experience that has come to us through our contact with the creative tradition springing from Jesus, we recognize that, in opening our eyes to the reality of our own humanity, Jesus has opened our eyes to the humanity of every man, and this is the second thing we want to say. What Jesus has shown to us is the truth of every man, whether that man realizes it or not. The desires and fears and hopes which, in ourselves, Jesus has quickened and assuaged and fulfilled are, we realize, the stuff of our common humanity. Jesus is therefore for every man in the sense that, in him, is given the very pattern of humanness, enabling us to recognize what we are, and how we may become authentically ourselves. And he is for every man in the sense that every man needs to know about him in the concreteness of his historical existence, as this is mediated to us today in a context of experientially validated interpretation.

I am suggesting, therefore, that such a way of understanding Jesus Christ meets our need, as Friends, to emphasize the two aspects which, earlier, I called the 'intensive' and the 'extensive'. It does justice to the fact that, whereas the 'intensive' significance of Jesus Christ is, indeed, a matter of our direct experience, his 'extensive' significance is not; although it is, we may assuredly believe, a valid inference from our experience. Moreover, I am claiming that all that we, as Friends, are entitled by our experience to say about Jesus Christ can be said adequately and relevantly at the present time without employing the unclear and dubious distinction between the 'Christ of history' and the 'Christ of faith and experience'. Nor, it may be added, need we lose ourselves in the speculative labyrinth concerning a pre-existent "Person who has always been present in the souls of men".

I am also claiming that such an understanding of Jesus Christ can make sense to many of our contemporaries in a way that our traditional language about 'inner light' does not. As Friends, our characteristic approach to most matters has always been marked by a preference for the concrete rather than the speculative, the particular rather than the general. This is also characteristic of the outlook of many of our contemporaries. Yet, arising directly out of our attempts to make sense of our environment, we find ourselves compelled to face the questions "Who are we? Have we any meaning amidst the immense and inexorable features of the physical universe disclosed or suggested by science? Have we any possibility of learning to use rightly the double-edged powers which technology has placed in our hands before we, through inexperience if not through malice, destroy ourselves? What is the status in reality of what we call personality, community, freedom and responsibility?" These are, and will increasingly be seen to be, universal human questions, asked not out of detached, speculative interest but out of a necessity which our attempts to deal satisfactorily with our relationships and our environment impose upon us. Against such a background, I believe we have an obligation to hold forth, as a fact of our own experience, a unified conception of Jesus Christ as the definition, demonstration and declaration of the reality of man.<sup>2</sup> He proves himself to be this, in our own experience, as he enables us to recognize in such questions our ultimate concern, and as he gives us assurance of an affirmative answer to them. And he does this for us as we see him totally involved in the contingency, finitude and suffering of life, and finally in the reality of death. But it is precisely in his encounter with all these features of our common lot that, for many of us, there has come the recognition that in him we have the definition, demonstration and declaration of the reality - not only of the man but of God.

Let me close by recalling to you two occasions when George Fox, in 1672, met with 'the Indians'. To them, so far as we know, no knowledge of Jesus Christ had ever come. But George Fox approached them on the basis of his conviction that God had not left himself without witness among them, a witness which George Fox was able to interpret to them in terms of their moral experience. But he did not regard his task as complete when he had established this basis of communication. He did not say, in other words, 'They have the light; no more is needed'. Rather, he proceeded to tell them the Biblical story, beginning with creation "and so along to Christ", as he says<sup>3</sup>, For he knew that in this way he was 'answering that of God' in them; for Jesus Christ is God's Answer to the divinely implanted question in the heart of every man. For it is thus, as question and answer, that the inward and the historic Christ are, in experience, one.

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<sup>2</sup> See David E. Jenkins, Bampton Lectures for 1966 on 'The' Glory of Man' p. 84 and passim.

<sup>3</sup> Journal (Ed. John Nickalls) pp. 642-43.

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