

The Quaker way, a vision for the new century

That all people may have a direct awareness of the divine at any time and at any place;
that this relationship may be deepened through a communal quiet listening to the divine
within and between;
that any awareness of the divine has practical consequences in how we live our lives;
that the words in which this is expressed are secondary; it is the experience which is
primary.

Everything else is commentary.

[PAUSE]

Now the commentary.

Good evening, Friends. It's both an honour and pleasure for me to be back here at Jordans, to see again the faces that I know, to meet new faces, and to take delight in the restoration of the meeting house. In an article in the Friend almost two years ago, Michael Phipps wrote:

“Our vision is to create a restored and enhanced Meeting House, enabling it again to be a vibrant place of Quaker worship, witness, outreach and pilgrimage.”

In a sense I hope what I have to say this evening will be in that spirit. In fact those words have prompted the structure of my talk and my vision: which is about restoration and enhancement; the vibrancy of the Quaker vision in its worship, its witness, what it has to say to the world, and how it affirms the spiritual path of each of those who worship after the manner of Friends. To this I would add the vision of the New Jordans Steering Group: “We see New Jordans as both a place and an idea”. I see Friends in general as a place of hospitality, an idea of nothing less than spiritual liberation, and also a community of kindred spirits, a people travelling and worshipping together, open to truth or in the words of Jesus: bringing life, and life in abundance.

And so it is a great privilege for me to come here and to be able share my vision with you. As some of you know, for almost twenty years I was outreach secretary for Britain Yearly Meeting. In that period I met many Friends, seekers, explorers, many people who were hurt by previous encounters with religious institutions or simply baffled with the whole religious business. It was indeed a pilgrimage on which we told each other our stories, as pilgrims do. The stories came in many shapes and sizes, in many different languages of the spirit. I have been a member of Friends now for about thirty years, but for long before that I was a pilgrim, even in my atheist days. I have journeyed through my childhood orthodox Jewishness, my fascination with Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, and forms of psychology. I see myself in some way on the path of the mystics, still I hope a dreamer, still trying to understand what it means to ‘answer that of God in everyone’ which was the dream of George Fox, the great early prophet of the Quaker movement.

When I agreed to give this evening's talk, I pointed out that the last thing I wanted to do was yet another analysis of Quaker identity. It seems to me that many churches at the moment are going through periods of intense introspection together with a severe bout of dyspepsia. I prefer to be more of an Isaiah than a Jeremiah. I am by nature an optimist. I believe that one of the main gifts that a religious community has to offer the world is hope – and more of that later – so I am not going to ask the question as to whether the Religious Society of Friends will have died out by 2030, which is the forecast of some. I actually believe that the guiding S/spirit (with both a capital and small S) is more important than an institution and that if we did die out in one form, the principles for which we stand will be resurrected in another. An Anglican, former Roman Catholic, friend of mine told me recently that cemeteries are filled with indispensable people. And sometimes Quakers do think we are indispensable. But in the long term the Spirit may have other plans for us.

By the way, the written lecture is longer than this evening's talk. In the talk I am trying to emphasise certain points which I go more deeply into in the written format. I hope the written form will be available after tonight.

The spiritual life is not about what we believe or how successful we are. It is about how we trust. Did you know that the origin of credo is cor do – I give my heart? How sad that creeds, intellectual formulae, have often taken over from the promptings of the Spirit which offer themselves to the human heart. Faith as knowledge so often takes the place of faith as trust. The real question is: to what do we give our hearts? And the following question is: after the deep and immediate encounter with Spirit which is at the core of the Quaker movement, do we have trust for ourselves and therefore hope to offer the world?

When I accepted the commission of speaking this evening, it was this relationship between the human heart and the promptings of the Spirit that I felt would be my basic theme. And so, what I did say I would consider was the state of spiritual seeking as I find it today and how that might be addressed. This interplay of seeking and finding are really questions of trust and hope. To do this we need a wider perspective than that of church history or politics or sociology however useful it is to engage with these. We need to consider the world in which we find ourselves, the language we use to express our deepest longings, the needs of the world itself. The church, however we define it, does not exist for itself. We are not here simply to prop up old foundations. We are here to explore the past and examine the present in order to discern the signs of the future. In the words of the Roman Catholic Cardinal Suhard: The church at all times must both *be* and *become*. It must be changeless in its invisible reality, and century by century, it must become in its visible reality. I believe the basic truths are eternal; how we live them out day by day requires the worshipping discernment of the community. Past, present, and future are all part of the continuing revelation.

If I say I am optimistic and speak of hope, this is not a form of facile optimism. The great image of George Fox after a period of depression stays with me: "I saw (also) that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. And in that also I saw the infinite love of God: and I had great openings".

On the one hand we have this vision of George Fox and the early Friends, and we have the great song of Paul of Tarsus in Corinthians – the celebration of trust, hope, and love in the early church with its vision of a transformed world. On the other we have the ocean of darkness. It is out of the flow of these two vast oceans that my vision springs. Let us consider first of all something of the darkness: in the latest edition of Amnesty International's magazine, it states: "11.4 people across the world are refugees, according to the UN refugee agency, up from 9.9 million last year. Another 26 million are internally displaced. And in an article in a different journal published in Sept/Oct 2006: I read that over 40,000 Indian farmers had committed suicide since 1997 in despair of their inability to earn enough income to repay their debts for high-tech input. That six million die every year as a result of hunger. That according to the World Health organisation, 5000 children die each day due to consuming water and food polluted with bacteria. That according to UNESCO, over a billion people lack access to clean water and 2.4 billion lack access to basic sanitation services. With the credit crunch at the moment, with increasing food scarcity, with ethnic conflicts in so many parts of the world, what have we, a tiny, generally unheard of, group of people to say to the world? With the worldwide churches, including Quakers and other religions, split on how literally to understand sacred texts, however inspired, arguing over church constitutions and who has power, where is the voice of the Spirit that affirms the human soul, that has something to say to refugees who are very unwilling pilgrims in lands totally foreign to them.

And then we might consider the land in which we find ourselves with the growth of so much despair, loss of a sense of purpose, with the old political narratives in decay; with growing fearfulness about members of different communities, with the growth of fundamentalism and the decline of religious liberalism, with many regarding all religion as irrelevant, and with some religions obsessed with sexuality and gender as if that alone was of divine concern. In *Religion in the United Kingdom, Diversity, trends and decline*, Vexen Crabtree writes: With over 170 distinct religions counted in the 2001 Census, the religious make-up of the UK is diverse, complex, multicultural and surprising. Less than half of the British people believe in a God, yet about 72% told the 2001 census that they were Christian, and 66% of the population have no *actual* connection to any religion or church, despite what they tend to write down on official forms. Between 1979 and 2005, half of all Christians stopped going to church on a Sunday. Religion in Britain has suffered an immense decline since the 1950s, and all indicators show a continued secularisation of British society in line with other European countries Where religion is growing it is among newcomers to these shores, especially their children, for whom religion is an antidote to alienation, a community in a fragmented land.

There has been vast ignorance of religion on the part of younger generations for some time. When my pupils thirty years ago discovered that I had become a Friend, one boy asked what it was that I could no longer do, as I had become religious. To become religious meant giving up the good things of life. In his book, *Post-Christendom*, Stuart Morris wrote of two anecdotes:

“The first is of a teenager in a London school who hears the Christmas story for the first time. He is amazed and captivated by it, and at the end of the lesson asked his teacher, ‘Why did they give the baby a swear word for his name?’ The second is of a man visiting a church in Oxford one Sunday to collect something for his partner who runs an art work-shop in the multi-use building during the week. He arrives as the congregation is leaving and says to the minister, ‘What are all these people doing? I didn’t know churches were open on Sundays.’”

In addition to this, there is also the trivialisation of the spiritual into products of consumerism – where the word spiritual loses all meaning except that of a fuzzy sense of well-being – with the slogan “because I am worth it”. And as I intimated many groups are worried about their survival. No wonder then that one year there was a demonstration in one French city in protest against the coming of the New Year – the demonstrators wanted the United Nations to abolish it!

And yet, and yet. There is the growth of religion as an oasis in an uncertain world; there is a growth of witches and shamans; there is the growth of the need for therapies of all sorts, serious and amazing. The longing of the human heart for meaning and for community is not in decline. The need for belief runs deep, but its flow may take many diverse forms. And a very recent survey has shown that the number of pupils taking A level religious studies is increasing. This is part of the challenge to Friends in the new century.

Although the word does not go down well with many people, in my *Blackbird* book, I described this context as a sort of postmodern condition and I described some of its characteristics as transitional. There is a movement:

FROM organic community based on family ties
TO communities based on work or friendship...

FROM a sense that there is a universal Truth
TO a multiplicity of truths.

FROM doctrine
TO experience;

FROM deference in the face of authority
TO listening to the inner voice;

FROM reverence for particular sacred texts
TO the idea that the whole of reality is a text to be explored;

FROM the norm of the white upper class male
TO respect for the multiplicity and diversity of human experience. (P. 56)

So there is the need, the discontent, the desire to relate, the struggle to make sense of a reality that often seems overwhelming. There is curse and blessing of the human being, who realises that one day all she or he knows will come to an end. This is the challenge of the Spirit to the seeker of today.

Now you might have thought that some of this would make me despair, or at least betray my earlier promise of being more of an Isaiah than a Jeremiah. Well, we do need not to flinch from the ocean of darkness – Isaiah also preached disaster as well as rebirth. But we know also that a seed needs darkness to grow. And there is Advice and Query no 33 which amongst other things tells us to bear witness to the humanity of all people and to discern new growing points in social and economic life. And there is Advice no 42 which tells us to Rejoice in the splendour of God’s continuing creation.

How then do we deal with this paradox of light and darkness. The threats of global disaster and the transformation into a new sort of society with new, more inclusive values. Can we look upon the ocean of darkness itself as part of this creativity? How do we answer the dark places, how do we say with the Psalmist in Psalm 139, “when I make my bed in hell, there you are also?” Perhaps visions need to contain aspects of the ocean of darkness, in order, as Fox said, that we may have a sense of all conditions, so that we can speak to all conditions. Any visionary must be able to see the darkness within as well as the darkness outside – but then he or she must carry some of the light within to make sense of that darkness.

What I have found in Quakers

It is at this point that I want to look at what Friends may have to offer. By the way, I am aware that no everyone in this room will find my use of language straightforward; indeed they might prefer that I did not use such theological language. I use this sort of language to point to a dimension of depth which the language of scientific rationalism does not illuminate for me. “The function of faith is not to overcome reason but to take us into places where reason alone is not enough.” is one of the quotations I have collected from an excellent book by Brian Phillips with John Lampen, called *Endeavours to Mend*, about British Quaker work today. Reason and the scientific enterprise are essential ingredients in any discussion of spirituality, but to me they are limited and certainly are not the last word. My favourite Catalan theologian Maria Corbi, wrote: “The mythic gave content to our moral lives; science has taken over from myth but cannot provide a moral basis for our lives.” The disappearance for many people of the old mythic religious story, and the inadequacy of the scientific quest as a source for daily living, has led them to seek in what I call the domain of spirituality new living myths. I am trying to use language here not to define but to explore, more in the nature of poetry than of theology. I hope you will bear with me.

So back to the Quaker message. I am well aware that we don’t have, by any means, the monopoly on trust, hope, and love. Neither do we have the answer to life’s great questions. I am not even sure that there is an answer, but there are lives, there are

patterns and examples of truthful living. When I became a Friend, it was not because I thought, at last here is the meaning of the universe, but because my questions had changed. I came to Friends after a deep experience that fundamentally there was both diversity and unity, and they were not a contradiction; indeed that natural diversity is part of divine creativity; I experienced also that within the human was a seed of the divine; that I did not have to go from one temple to another, from one book to another, from one guru to another, to find the key which would open all the doors (and I love temples, books, and gurus) - because the door was not locked anyway. My whole spiritual development has been a rejection of the exclusive way, which I think is profoundly cruel and destructive. I see the Quaker way as an internalisation and spiritualisation of the Judeo-Christian tradition which has learned to sit lightly with the old metaphors of divinity and may be open to new ones. There has been a shadow side to this in terms of the rejection of the physical world and the arts in Quaker history but I think we are getting over that nowadays. And above all I found Friends who offered a sense of community to the pilgrim I was who needed affirmation on his journey. They were the sort of people whose lives could teach me, as they did not offer creeds but valued experience. They did not offer their theories, they offered themselves.

I was asked recently by some Friends in Brighton how would put the Quaker path in a nutshell and I would like to share this now with you. It is not a formula or creed but a provisional description. I began this evening's talk with a considered reflection of the response I gave to them. Quakers hold that a direct relationship with the divine, however defined, is possible for all people not just the chosen few. This relationship is deepened through quiet communal waiting. The relationship is expressed in how we live out our daily lives with other people and with the planet on which we live. None of these are unique to Quakers in themselves, but together they form a basis for a spiritual and religious path. They involve trust; worship; community, and testimony.

I should like to expand a little on these points. The Quaker movement was a revolt against the Calvinist view that salvation was for the few only; that as the old prayer book has it, "that there is no health in us". The great opening words of Advices and Queries: "Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts" for all that they sometimes sound like a Quaker cliché, are revolutionary. There is health within the human. We are to nurture it both in others and in ourselves.

In his *The Faith and Practice of the Quakers*, Rufus Jones wrote: (excuse the sexism of the language):

The Puritan saw in man a wreck like that of a ship hopelessly stranded on a reef of jagged rock. The Quaker saw in him a wreck, if wreck at all, like that of the buds in spring, burst from within by the warm sun, after having been tightly sealed all winter against sleet and storm, wrecked indeed, and by the push and power of a deeper, larger life working within and preparing for vast future possibilities.

Here is the ocean of light springing out of the ocean of darkness. The Quaker way therefore offers possibility of change. We are not condemned by the sins of our

ancestors in a mythical garden. It is true that early Friends did have a much more dualistic understanding about the world; indeed their writings do suggest that they often see it as a fallen place. They did try to bring the world to Christ, even if this Christ spoke to them more directly in the heart than at the pulpit or the altar. Today in Britain and in other places in the Quaker world we tend to talk more in terms of the Light within. It is a Light which not only shows up the darkness and the pain of the world around us, but is a lantern to guide our footsteps. With this light we can move forward to make the world a better place; we can help bring about the divine commonwealth. We are still confronting Calvinists; still encountering those who in the name of a punitive God are condemning millions to eternal flames. There are still those who so know the will of God that they are willing to carry out divine punishment on God's enemies. But - if there is that of God in everyone, there cannot be enemies. (I read this last week – enemies are people whose stories we have not heard).

Chris Lawson, who used to be a tutor at Woodbrooke, the Quaker study centre in Birmingham talked of the characteristics of Friends worldwide: the centrality of personal spiritual experience; the collective experience of the worshipping group; our insistence on the inseparability of faith and practice; our belief in the sacredness of life. We must remember, of course, that the silent liberal Quakers, those of our tradition, constitute only nine percent of world Quakers, and we might add to Chris Lawson's list, that for us the collective experience when tested out by the group is a form of revelation; that the experience of worship is one of listening through expectant stillness; that spirituality only makes sense to us as a form of lived-out ethical demand; and that the sacredness of life has political, economic, ecological and psychological consequences as well as narrowly religious ones. This is the core. Preaching and sacrament become part of daily living; let your life preach, said Fox (as did Francis of Assisi); our relationships are our sacraments where the divine is made manifest in the flesh and physicality of everyday encounter.

Encounter is a key word here. For me the spiritual process is one of deepening relationships: with the self, with the neighbour who shares the planet, with the planet itself, all enfolded in the sacredness of reality itself, which some call God or Spirit. This deepening is done through listening, sharing, being attentive, caring, admitting to our limitations, and loving. Indeed this would be my definition of spirituality.

Quakers are not alone in this enterprise. In his *Restless Souls*, the making of American spirituality

Leigh Eric Schmidt wrote of characteristics of liberal religion. He writes of :

- individual aspiration after mystical experience or religious feeling
- the valuing of silence, solitude, and serene meditation
- the immanence of the transcendent – in each person and in nature
- the cosmopolitan appreciation of religious variety as well as unity in diversity
- ethical earnestness in pursuit of justice-producing reforms or “social salvation”
- an emphasis on creative self-expression and adventuresome seeking.

All of these are characteristic of a vigorous Quaker witness for today.

Duncan Fairn, a Quaker whom I met in the 80s, echoes this when he wrote of the five elements of Quakerism as being the mystical, the evangelical, the rational, the social, and the ethical. My list would include the contemplative, and the prophetic. Any vision of Quakerism today should I think cover these elements. But some points need to be kept in mind. Visions are not mission statements, nor blueprints. They are not detailed calls for action. They are dreams which spring out of reflection on experience and perhaps contain elements which some people might think wishful thinking. I am aware also of the great challenge of the spiritual life to transcend ego. Visionaries in particular need to be conscious of this. I hope what I am about to say will be the result of years of reflection with many seekers. I have taken tonight's task with me to meeting for worship. I offer you the results. Forgive me the many limitations that they include.

And so here is the vision I lay before you

My vision is of a community that is open to the possibility of transforming encounter with Spirit. The community affirms, offers stillness and reflection, offers space and understanding, hospitality, and the prophetic voice that challenges. This is another way of stating the old adage: God loves us as we are, and wants us to be what we might become. My premise that we become our full selves in communion with others. I find however the stress in some aspects of religion on personal salvation or even the redemption of the tribe distressing and limiting. What I bring from my Jewish background is the concept of the redemption of the world. We know that in no way can we achieve this but we can walk towards it. What I bring from my days exploring Buddhism is the insight that we are all part of each other and that no light is for the self alone. Earlier this year in the columns of *The Friend* there was a debate about the meaning of the word 'answer' in the phrase 'answer that of God in everyone'. One synonym was elicit or evoke, as if there were a dormant seed in everyone and that we were called to help that seed to germinate. In the words of Eckhart, the German mystic I am fond of quoting, we are thus called to be midwives to the divine in each other. And in this process the seed in ourselves grows stronger. Spirituality is a mutual process. This is at the heart of any vision of a vigorous Quakerism for this new century.

And I cherish a community that values its time together in worship, that is not afraid of exploring the meaning and the reality of prayer, uniting contemplation with action, self-awareness with the need for social reform.

My vision is of a community that does not confuse spirituality with culture. Coming myself from an immigrant working class family, I realise how terribly offputting the assumption can be that to be a Quaker means being a white middle-class educated English person.

My vision is of a community that respects the need for quiet discernment but which is truly experimental and adventurous and is not afraid of passion. In a wonderful book on desert spirituality, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, Sheldon Lane, a Presbyterian minister wrote:

“The spiritual life extolled in popular religious circles today is eminently unexceptional, generically inoffensive, and (almost without exception) culturally correct. We too often substitute availability for friendship, agreeableness for dialogue, pleasantries for compassion.”

My vision is of a community that allows a narrative of inclusiveness to emerge, that honours the human story, finding in it echoes of the divine. Thus we need to be a community that listens to the voices that are rarely heard. Friends are already involved in many parts of the world with the victims of warfare, with seekers of asylum, with helping people overcoming paedophile behaviour, with communities suffering economic hardship through unjust treaties, with objectors to military service and so forth. What I rejoice in about Friends is that we are not about converting people to be Quakers, but we are about living out Quaker insights which might lead people in very different directions.

... a community that can honour the excentric living out of personal conviction, that does not count numbers of majorities or minorities, but respects individual conscience. But also a society where the individual recognises accountability to the group, and where the group values its responsibility to its participants. We attract individualists but may be overwhelmed by an anarchic individualism.

.... a community that affirms the gifts of all of its members, irrespective of age, social and educational background, and sexual orientation; that treats people as equals but with diverse gifts. I would hope also that we are accepting of other people's use of language which may not be ours, but may well be part of the other person's truth.

... a community which can make the holistic connection between the life of the Spirit, the life of the individual, and the future of the planet. We are to be practical witnesses to this deeper reality. In Quaker language this is living the testimonies. I would love us to be practical mystics.

..... a community that welcomes religious refugees, loves them over their past hurts, but also challenges them to a new boldness and exploration. This challenge which is a challenge to members also involves some grappling with the world of ideas and if I dare say some theological concepts. We live in a society of growing biblical and religious ignorance. The revolutionary understanding of early Friends was based on a serious exploration and reinterpretation of Christian history. We need as a Society not to base our outreach on outdated and ignorant pictures of other forms of Christianity and other religions.

..... a community that is evangelistic, in the sense of not being afraid to share what it

has found, of being willing to affirm its good news which is what the word evangelistic is all about. (And I do wish Friends would distinguish between evangelistic – proclaiming good news – and evangelical which is a having a particular doctrine about Jesus Christ). We are proud of being seekers, almost proud of travelling without arriving, but it seems to me that each step of the journey is a discovery. We timidly confuse reserve with respect. If we listen to others, it is respectful also to hope that others will listen to us. Dialogue, even respectful conversation which admits of difference and even dissension, is not the same as the conversion of souls.

.....a community of prophets and peacemakers who undertake the great risk of speaking truth to power and who together sustain each other in the sharing of uncomfortable visions.

.....a community of people walking tenderly over the planet answering that of God in all life.

And to echo words of the American Quaker historian Douglas Gwyn in his description of early Friends: egalitarian communities of faith living a peaceful and plain life that stood in stark contrast to (and radical critique of) the conspicuous consumerism of the capitalist society around them.

In this year's Swarthmore lecture, *Minding the Future*, Christine Davis encouraged Quakers to see that stewardship is about far more than money and buildings. It is about handing on wisdom and insights discerned from experience. "We are stewards of vision and values," she said. So we are all responsible for realisation of the vision into daily life.

Some reflections and perhaps reservations

When I first came to Friends, I fell in love with the Society. It makes me smile now when I think that the first time I attended Yearly Meeting, I thought I had reached heaven. As I get older, however, especially as I have stopped working for the institution, I feel a resurgence of my young revolutionary fervour about the spiritual life. But I have learned that Friends are human after all. We are often timid and unsure. We make great claims, as indeed I have done this evening, and we fail as does everyone else. We don't talk much about sin, but we are aware, at least in private, of some of our limitations. For religious revolutionaries we are often very conservative, hiding behind phrases like, "this is what Friends have done for three hundred and fifty years".

In fact it is very helpful to remember our limitations and weaknesses. It is when we remember that we are part of the human race that we can really speak to others not from an impossibly high moral ground but from real love. We know also that there will be people who will have great difficulty with what we have to say, to understand our

language however we translate it. There are people who cannot come to terms with the light within; who feel they need an outward guide, a body of rules which give them the certainty for which they crave.

In 1955 Harold Loukes wrote: We live in a rationalist society that has shed the security of dogmas it found it could not accept, and now finds itself afraid of its own freedom. Some look for an external authority, as they did of old; but in this situation there are many who cannot just go backwards. They ask for an authority they can accept without the loss of their own integrity: they ask to be talked to in a language they can understand... With these people our point of departure is not a mighty proclamation of Truth, but the humble invitation to sit down together and share what we have found, in the spirit of Woolman setting out on his Indian journey, 'that I might feel and understand their life, and the spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them.' We approach them without pressure to accept a statement, or with proselytising zeal, but with 'love as the first motion'.

I question that we live in a rationalist society today, as in many ways we do live in a very superstitious society, but I accept the gist of what he says. Visionaries need the humility to sit down with others, to try to understand what inspires them and what frightens them - to have a sense of all conditions, even of those who reject the vision. And what do we say to those who maintain our dreams are just day-dreams, that we are impractical idealists? Rowan Williams wrote recently of: "the obstinate uselessness of witness to God's truth". We wish to be useful, but when it comes down to it, our vocation is to be witnesses; to point to another way; to cherish the fragility of the world around, to reverence the sacredness of all people and the planet, to share what we have seen. Above all to let our lives be the message – that is the greatest risk of all. I still dare to think that we have a revolutionary message.

In a materialistic society whose judgement is success and materialistic accumulation, this message is countercultural. It challenges commonly-held values and assumptions about human beings and society. It dares to base its understanding of truth on an act of worship which is not about targets, or quotas, or agendas, or a long list of petitions – but on the worshipper opening him or herself up to the sacredness at the heart of reality - and trusting that sufficiently without the help of definitions or theories. It dares to seek the image of the divine in each person and in the planet. It dares to believe that things can be better if each person follows his or her leadings. However in a world which is also seeking more spiritually and which is characterised by an emphasis on inwardness and authenticity of experience, there are many ways open to us. However as I have said, we are not an empty space or a lowest common denominator nor a mind-free zone. Though we are limited and often frail, we may still be a community of prophets, mystics, contemplatives, activists, and people who would deny any of these labels, and simply open themselves up to the quiet and possibly devastating promptings of love and truth in their hearts.