Each of Us Inevitable

Some Keynote Addresses,
Given at
Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns and
Friends General Conference Gatherings,
1977–1993,
Revised, Expanded Edition

**Becky Birtha, Thomas Bodine, Elise Boulding,
John Calvi, Stephen Finn, Ellen Hodge,
Janet Hoffman,
Arlene Kelly, William Kreidler, George Lakey,
Ahavia Lavana, Muriel Bishop Summers,
Elizabeth Watson,
David Wertheimer, and Dwight Wilson**

Edited by Robert Leuze

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Cover Illustration by
Melanie Weidner
melanie@createstudio.com

Book Design and Production by
Robert Leuze
Robert Leuze & Associates
245 West 104th Street, 16 C
New York, NY 10025
RLeuze@rcn.com
212-662-3252

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"Each of us inevitable,
Each of us limitless—each of us with his
or her right upon the earth,
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports
of the earth,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here."

—Walt Whitman: "Salut au Monde," 11, Leaves of Grass

Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC), until recently known as Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (FLGC), is a North American Quaker faith community within the Religious Society of Friends that affirms that of God in all persons—lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, transgender, and transsexual. It gathers twice yearly: Midwinter Gathering is held over the long weekend surrounding U.S. President's Day in February and Summer Gathering is held with the larger Friends General Conference Gathering the first week in July. Once known as Friends Committee for Gay Concerns, the group has met since the early 1970s for worship and play, its members drawing sustenance from each other and from the Spirit for their work and life in the world—in the faith that radical inclusion and radical love bring further light to Quaker testimony and life.

Preface to the Internet Edition

The new, revised and expanded edition of *Each of Us Inevitable*—the printed compilation of keynote addresses given by beloved Friends at prior Gatherings of Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (FLGC) and Friends General Conference (FGC)—includes all the talks in the original edition and eight additional keynotes, bringing the total to 19. The added talks were given between 1979 and 1993.

In February 2003, the community united on changing its name to Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC). The talks are available as separate Adobe Acrobat PDF files for each author on the FLGBTQC website, <*http://flgbtqc.quaker.org*>.

It is hoped that keynotes given after 1993 also will be published someday; however, the richness of content in these additional already-edited talks suggested moving ahead in the present when the possibility of publication exists.

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It may be helpful for some readers browsing on the internet if I offer here at least brief hints, however inadequate, of that "richness" that lies in specific talks.

Elizabeth Watson (1977: "Each of Us Inevitable") came to help us accept ourselves. Her message is not "love the sinner, not the sin," but, "I love you, and I love you *for* your givenness, not in spite of it." She offers an account of the life story and the healing words of Walt Whitman.

Arlene Kelly (1979: "Estrangement and Reconciliation") brought answers in the form of difficult questions: How can we remain engaged with people who are different? From what do we feel estranged? What has caused hurt and anger within us? Do we see that we come to Gathering both as oppressor and oppressed? Can we find ways to step into the shoes of the other person? What is involved in being "reconciled"?

Janet Hoffman (1982: "Eros and the Life of the Spirit") spoke on themes of exploring and wrestling with new insights; fiery passion; relinquishing our need; and transformation. Eros, she believes, drives us toward God and gives our life its basic meaning. Love demands a complete inner transformation. Love (not guilt) leads to social change.

Dwight Wilson (1984: "Nurturing Our Relationships within an Often Hostile Community") spoke from his personal experience as a black man. His message was concerned with trusting one's own perceptions and understanding—not society's mainstream view, not scripture, not the internalized hatred that society may try to induce in us. He spoke of the sometimes negative role of the institutional church for blacks, women, pacifism, gays, and lesbians.

Arlene Kelly (1984: "Nurturing Friendship and Lover Relationships") sees "coming out" as a step toward taking responsibility for ourselves as individuals. In our friendship and lover relationships, are we feeling defective, she questions; have we relinquished some of our power? She discusses ten factors essential to building relationships that are whole.

Elizabeth Watson (1985: "On Wholeness") recognizes our patriarchal, hierarchal, and homophobic civilization and religious heritage. She discusses the Christian church and Jesus; the power of the human community; "dwelling in possibility," and her personal odyssey into wholeness. Can we take charge of life and healing by imaging a desired outcome?

Elise Boulding (1986: "The Challenge of Nonconformity") acknowledges the need to bond across differences—because we need others to make us whole—and the fact that it's more difficult for those called to "nonconforming witnesses." For "publicly gay" persons, special strengths are needed; they are the social change activists. The "gay witness," she says, includes equality, nonviolence, community, and simplicity; gays should be viewed not as embattled victims but as co-workers in reweaving the social web for us all.

Thomas R. Bodine (1987: "Caring Matters Most"), drawing on his own experience, began with a description of the wide diversity of Friends throughout the world. How to change people? How to bridge the differences? he wondered. What happens if we seriously try to practice Christian "gifts of the spirit" in those parts of the Quaker world that hate homosexuality?

Janet Hoffman (Friends General Conference, 1987: "To Listen, To Minister, To Witness"). Her wide-ranging talk includes: living "without seatbelts"; following a corporate leading, not censoring it; "dis-illusionment"—a good thing ("Offend me!" she declares); to minister—sometimes just by being oneself; to love someone—to become in some sense the person we love; to witness—to be faithful to the spirit. She touches on personal growth, the true evangelist, continuing revelation, seeking, stages of development in pacifism, and committed unions.

David Wertheimer (1988: "Bias-Related Violence, Gay Marriage, and a Journey Out of the Society of Friends") shares some personal, Quaker-related experiences: seeking marriage with his (male) partner under the care of his meeting; studying and later teaching at Quaker schools; enrolling as a Quaker in divinity school. He asks whether Quakerism works well only when it can function one step removed from the harsh realities that it contemplates. He sees FLGC as a committee on sufferings, a critical group to helping Quakerism discover how to survive. Death threats led him to question his Quaker belief in nonviolence. His talk includes input from those present at Gathering.

Ahavia Lavana (1988: "Helping and Healing"). When Ahavia's son Hunter had AIDS and later died of it, what helped and what did not help? What was healing and what was not? She speaks on accepting what is beyond our control.

Bill Kreidler's address (1989: "Tending the Fire") is his intensely personal but often humorous account of learning to tend his spiritual flame following an addictive, abusive relationship—by being honest, by being open, by practicing, and by being easy with himself. He talks of the ministry of our community and of how it helped him reach the goal he had envisioned ("old Quaker ladies" tap dancing).

Ellen Hodge (1989: "Tending the Fire") offers differing images of fire: Kristallnacht, persecution of "witches," a 1963 bomb in a Birmingham church, Vietnam and Cambodian napalm; candlelight vigils for the slain Harvey Milk; the Japanese *Bon* festival. She retells, in modern vernacular, the Biblical story of Moses for its relevance to our situation.

Stephen Finn (1990: "Celebrating *All* Our Being") describes a personal journey, illustrating reasons some people have trouble celebrating their being. He asks, does one feel shameful rather than worthy of experiencing "heaven on earth"? Does one adopt compensatory mechanisms to get through a life without heaven? Does FLGC sometimes serve to shield us from the need to be open about our shame?

Muriel Bishop Summers (1990: "On Living in Integrity") spoke of living with integrity—the quality of one's relationship with all of creation—and with oneself: a process. She discusses the balance between integrity and safety; the need of being whole, not fragmented; some essentials for wholeness; and the Divine Presence as ultimate reality, whose nature is love and whose character is truth.

John Calvi (Friends General Conference, 1990: "Laying Down the Weapons 'Round Our Hearts") offers steps to healing: surrendering; inviting one's angels; receiving, with honesty and tenderness, the messages that are sent; entering upon the dance between hope and fear.

Becky Birtha (1991: "'Accept It Gracefully'— Keeping Our Creative Gifts Alive") shares her personal experiences with healing, growing, dealing with pain, and loving herself—often as expressed in her poems.

George Lakey (1991: "Our Bodies, Our Elves") sought a vision of the new creation. He emphasizes, in six general areas, gifts that lesbians, gays, and bi's can give to the Society of Friends and the larger world; the areas are embodiment (in a human body); the erotic (as a bridge to spiritual experience); vulnerability (seen as a doorway); facing pain; reaffirming difference; and love (moving beyond judgmentalism).

Elizabeth Watson (1993: "Night and Day") relates how the titles of some Cole Porter songs evoke reflections from her own life. "Night and Day"—falsely dividing the world (a continuum) into opposites. (Are we the "good guys"?) "Down in the Depths"—unlearning the shame and guilt inspired by our Judeo-Christian tradition. (If there is sin, it is in not caring.) "In the Still of the Night"—embracing the darkness; finding it full of possibility, a time for gestation, for creation, for rest.

—ROBERT LEUZE

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EDITOR ROBERT LEUZE has been involved with gay Quaker groups since 1973, first in New York City where he attended Morningside Meeting and subsequently with the group that evolved to become the present-day Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns. He grew up in rural Northern New York near the eastern end of Lake Ontario, amid the extreme homophobia of the McCarthy period. During his college years at Yale University no one he knew (or knew of) was openly gay. He came out (to himself and two or three others) his senior year and, a year after graduation, moved to New York City. He and his present wife Sarah fell in love in the late 1960s and were married in 1969, believing that psychoanalysis had changed his orientation. He came out for the second time in the mid-1970s, but he and Sarah remain very happily married after 34 years. He pursued a career as an opera singer in the 1970s and 1980s and continues to perform in solo concerts—concerts that usually include songs relevant to the gay experience. He is a longtime member of the Yale Gay and Lesbian Alumni/ae Association (Yale GALA), and of Outmusic, a GLBT organization for singers and songwriters.

Kim Hanson

Robert Leuze

Caring Matters Most

Thomas R. Bodine

Keynote Address, Midwinter Gathering
Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns
February 14, 1987
Cambridge, Massachusetts

While I was searching for a way to begin this talk, I came across a beautiful editorial quoted in the February 1 issue of the *International Herald Tribune* published in Paris, entitled "Infinity on a Child's Coat." It reads in part:

> Walk out into new-fallen snow and with each step, you will be crushing thousands and thousands of nature's most marvelously varied creations. The snowflake is the product of nothing but water, dust and changing air. Yet from this prosaic mix come structures of intricate design and patterned beauty.
>
> Soft, surpassingly delicate and sadly mortal, the snowflake can be unyielding and enduring. Its packed masses hampered Alexander's armies as they invaded India and Hannibal's elephants as they reached for Rome. Though it falls lightly, the snowflake changes everything. Skiers bless it, suburban shovelers curse it and most people just like to look at it and walk out into it.
>
> No one has ever found two snowflakes exactly alike. Since they have been falling for eons, and cover perhaps half the Earth's surface every year, some mathematicians insist that there must be duplicates, though the odds of finding any are daunting. The snowflake's permutations seem endless. Some people may search for infinity

> out beyond the quasars at the imagined edge of the universe. Others may find it while brushing snow from a child's coat.

How marvelous is the diversity of snowflakes! How far more marvelous the diversity of human beings! Born into the world like the snowflake, soft, surpassingly delicate, and sadly mortal, but infinitely more diverse than any snowflake, diverse by inheritance, environment, and experience, each human being is endowed with the capacity to love and to hate, to suffer and to rejoice, to walk in the Light or to follow the Prince of Darkness, sentient beings with free will to choose between good and evil. How marvelous is our diversity, our challenge, and our strength.

But, like the massed snow flakes piled up by the snowplows across our carefully shoveled-out driveways, human beings can become harsh and rigid, unbending in their opinions, unkind and cruel to those they disagree with. I remember at a meeting of the Friends World Committee at Gwatt in Switzerland in 1979, overhearing a European Friend speaking to a pastor from Northwest Yearly Meeting. "Why do you call yourself a Quaker?" said the European Friend to the pastor. "You're not a proper Quaker. You'd be happier in some Pentecostal church, perhaps the Assembly of God." Later the pastor came to me with tears in his eyes, saying, "Why won't they listen to me? Why must I be condemned unheard?"

Our Quaker form of religion is unusually diverse among the Christian sects. From the beginning we have aimed for a balance between the authority of the group and the Divine leadings in the individual. Even in the more rigid of our yearly meetings, we don't have a centralized church organization with authority over the local meeting. We don't have outward forms or ceremonies universally observed. We stress walking in the Light, and thus from the beginning of Quakerism, there has been much diversity.

The key message of George Fox and the Valiant Sixty—the First Publishers of Truth who came down out of the Northwest of England in the mid-seventeenth century—was that God speaks directly to the heart by the Holy Spirit, that the Inner Light illuminates the soul of everyone who will be open to it, or, in seventeenth-century language, that "Christ is come to teach His people Himself" without any intermediation of priest or church tradition.

Quakerism has been described as an intuitional religion rather than an institutional one. No wonder that down the centuries, many differing forms of Quakerism have developed. Friends among the Ayamara Indians in Bolivia are very different from Friends in Australia and New Zealand. Friends among the Eskimos in Alaska are very different from Friends in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

One can greatly oversimplify by saying that the Society of Friends around the world today can be classified into two major groupings. About one-quarter of the Quakers in the world worship as we do on the basis of silence, without paid

pastors or a fixed statement of belief. Our quarter of the Quaker world population is primarily English-speaking and service-oriented. Some among us unprogrammed Friends may be Christ-centered and Bible-based, but our primary emphasis as a group is on the social gospel and the peace testimony. High on *our* list of priorities are equality and justice and social action.

The other three-quarters of the Quaker world population, including the very large numbers of Friends in East Africa and in Latin America, are pastoral, programmed, "born-again" Christians with a fixed order of worship, paid leadership, and little or no appreciation of silent waiting upon the Lord. This far larger body of Friends churches may support a social gospel and may try to follow the teachings of the historical Jesus, but *their* primary emphasis is on a personal salvation, the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the Bible as the Word of God.

These two major groupings are, on the surface, totally different in both faith and practice. Yet both can cite the words and practices of early Friends in the seventeenth century to support their type of Quakerism as the only valid form of Quakerism. Both groups have an equal claim to be called Quakers or the Religious Society of Friends or the Friends church.

How can we possibly hope for a united Society of Friends in this profound dichotomy? The differences of faith and practice are very deep and very real. In most matters we have to learn to accept the differences and love one another across the chasms that separate us. In the words of Norman Whitney, writing in 1957, "the sincere believer has both the need and the right to proclaim his message, providing always that he does it in humility and with complete respect for the beliefs of others."

John Bellers, the English Quaker Woolman, writing in 1718, put it this way:

> Whereas to bring all to the same opinion is no more practicable than it is to bring all to one degree of understanding, or to the same features, or stature or size; and as there are not two leaves or two grains of sand [or, I might add, two snowflakes!] to be found in [all] the world just the same, neither are there two saints on earth of the same sentiments in all things; and the angels in heaven differ in glory, but yet all are united in the strongest bond of love and humble adoration to the Almighty.

If I may paraphrase John Bellers, the hope for kindness and understanding among friends of strongly differing views is in their mutual love of God and in their experience of the Living Presence. Love God and you will love your neighbor. To the best of my knowledge, that was what Jesus was on about, and John Woolman and Elizabeth Watson. Love God and you will love your neighbor.

During my lifetime I have visited widely among Friends of all kinds and descriptions. It has not always been easy, and I have often had to remind myself of those words of Thomas à Kempis:

> It is no great thing to be able to converse with them that are good and meek, for this is naturally pleasing to all. And everyone would willingly have peace and [would] love those best that agree with him. But to live peaceably with those that are harsh and perverse . . . is a great grace, and highly commendable. . . .

Those of you who have read my bit of history in *Meeting Gay Friends* will know that I didn't always have an easy time of it as clerk of Friends United Meeting, that great body of middle-of-the-road, mainly pastoral, mainly "Christ-centered" Friends headquartered in Richmond, Indiana, with 100,000 members extending around the world from East Africa to California. Some of the Friends on the FUM Executive Committee and FUM General Board over which I presided from 1972 to 1975 came from a fundamentalist Quaker background. From time to time they expressed their feelings about the "sin of homosexuality" in strong language. For example, one of them wrote in his yearly meeting's monthly bulletin:

> A very clear line was drawn by Paul, by direction of the Holy Spirit. Excluded from the Kingdom of God are those who were practicing homosexuality. . . . Let there be no uncertainty as to the position of our yearly meeting with reference to homosexuality. Homosexuality is a sin.

And on another occasion he wrote:

> There is as much hope for the homosexual offender as there is for the prostitute, and the supreme task of the church in this respect is to hold out the hope of redemption and new life in Christ. Many homosexuals have now come out from behind closet doors. They are admitting their homosexual practices and demanding their rights. What rights do they have? What rights do prostitutes have? What rights do thieves have? What rights do murderers have? What rights do drunkards have? What rights do slanderers have? If anyone objects to these sinful practices being all lumped together—as though one were as bad as another—let them discuss it with God. It's God's [own] word which classifies all these practices as sinful (1 Corinthians 6:9–10).

I must say, when I read these words, I was taken aback and wondered if it was honest of me to continue as clerk of FUM.

Whenever Friends take rigid positions like that and draw a circle that rules me out, I remind myself that we are all at different stages of our spiritual journeys and that underlying our differences of opinion remains the conviction that the Holy Spirit or the Inward Christ or the Inner Light, by whatever name we call it, is at work in everyone.

Most of us [desperately] want to change other people. We may even want to change a bit ourselves. We want cruel people to be kind. We long for rigid, uptight people to open their hearts to new light. We want hateful people to be loving.

I also remind myself that behind the vehemence of the language used by some whose training, background, and experience is totally different from mine—behind that vehemence of language by a particular Friend, albeit a leader at the time in his yearly meeting, are a host of ordinary Friends in the same yearly meeting who don't think like that at all and who are quietly working for change.

It also helps me to remember that Quakers by their very nature are strong-minded. Many, at all points along the spectrum from fundamentalist to liberal, are "uptight" in their views, rigid, harsh, set in their ways. What is needed, of course, is patience, openness, readiness to hear the other out—in a word: love. As Daisy Newman puts it in her great history of American Quakerism entitled *A Procession of Friends:*

> The very strength of character which earlier [had] made Friends heroic [and] willing to suffer for their convictions [may] now [make] them uncompromising and wanting in charity.

I said a moment ago that underlying all our differences of opinion is our conviction that the Holy Spirit is at work in everyone. "Let's be friends," as the California yearly meeting leaflet welcoming new members puts it. But it isn't that easy. We can't just sit back and wait for the Holy Spirit to get on with it. We want to act. In our less humble moments, we take seriously Saint Teresa's words that "Christ has no hands now on earth but ours." But what sort of action shall we choose?

Most of us want to change other people. We may even want to change a bit ourselves. We want cruel people to be kind. We long for rigid, uptight people to open their hearts to new light. We want hateful people to be loving. We desperately want to change people. Sometimes it seems right to do it by confrontation. Certainly in the civil rights movement, confrontation has played a role. There are, of course, many kinds of confrontation. John Woolman's way of love and persuasion didn't work quickly. He had to make three visits to my Quaker ancestors on Nantucket over a 30-year period before they responded. They were

making money in the slave trade, buying slaves in Africa, transporting them across the Atlantic and selling them in the Southern colonies. John Woolman's visits up and down the East Coast over a 50-year period were confrontational in a very special way. He asked them difficult questions. He created an atmosphere in which change could take place.

Early Friends liked the metaphor of the seed. They frequently spoke of the Seed in people's hearts, with a capital *S*. For them the Seed was synonymous with the Inner Light, the Christ Within, the Holy Spirit at work in everyone.

I like the seed metaphor, too. In my experience you can't compel somebody to fall in love. You can't force somebody to be good. If you want a seed to grow, you don't pluck at it or tear it apart with your fingers. You plant it in the right soil, you water it with care, you give it sunlight—in short, you create an atmosphere in which growth can take place. And so with human beings. You can't force people to be good. But you can create an atmosphere around them in which growth can take place.

When I was chairman of the Quaker program at United Nations, we did not presume to tell the delegates what they should do. We tried to create an atmosphere in which people from opposing sides could meet and possibly grow in understanding. But always in our work at the U.N. we had to bear in mind that quiet ways of love and peace don't always work. Jesus chose to suffer under evil rather than combat evil with more evil. He died on a cross.

Robert Barclay said that when he came into the silent assemblies of God's people, he felt the evil in him weakening and the good lifted up. I am sure it is our hope that our meetings today would have the effect on people that the "silent assemblies of God's people" in the seventeenth century had on Robert Barclay, but I doubt if many of our meetings would fit the description Richard Davies gave of the effect the word of God had on a meeting he attended at Shrewsbury in 1657:

> Though [the meeting] was silent of words, yet the word of the Lord God was among us, it was as a hammer and a fire; it was sharper than a two-edged sword; it pierced our inward parts; it melted and brought us into tears, that there was scarcely a dry eye among us: the Lord's blessed power overwhelmed [the] meeting, and I could have said that God alone was Master of that assembly.

If our meetings today could create that kind of atmosphere, we might have some hope of changing people. We might actually be changed ourselves. As William Penn put it, "They were changed themselves, before they went out to change others."

The Young Friends assembled at Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1985 were not on about homosexuality. The subject was mentioned, but the time was not ripe. They were on about the great theological differences among Friends

around the world. They met in an atmosphere of love, in which change could take place. The key paragraphs of their epistle to all Friends everywhere read:

> Our differences are our richness, but also our problem. One of our key differences is the different names we give our Inward Teacher. Some of us name that Teacher Lord; others of us use the names Spirit, Inner Light, Inward Christ, or Jesus Christ. It is important to acknowledge that these names involve more than language; they involve basic differences in our understanding of who God is, and how God enters our lives. . . .

The Young Friends Epistle continues:

> We have often wondered whether there is anything Quakers today can say as one. After much struggle we have discovered that we can proclaim this: there is a living God at the center of all, who is available to each of us as a Present Teacher at the very heart of our lives. We seek as people of God to be worthy vessels to deliver the Lord's transforming word. . . . Our priority is to be receptive and responsive to the life-giving Word of God, whether it comes through the written word—the Scriptures; the Incarnate Word—Jesus Christ; the Corporate Word—as discerned by the gathered meeting; or the Inward Word of God in our hearts which is available to each of us who seek the Truth.
>
> This can be made easier if we face the truth within ourselves, embrace the pain and lay down our differences before God for the Holy Spirit to forgive, thus transforming us into instruments of healing.

In his letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul lists the gifts of the spirit as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control." These sound great, but what happens if we seriously try to practice these attributes in those parts of the Quaker world that hate homosexuality?

It is not easy in our own families, in our own relationships or even in our home meetings to be loving, joyful, patient, kind, gentle, and self-controlled. We are apt to get clobbered, as the first Christians were clobbered, as the early Friends were clobbered. The Albigensians in the south of France in the fourteenth century were a gentle, loving people, and they were exterminated, all of them, by the so-called Christian church of their day. The Jehovah's Witnesses in our day in Nazi Germany and in Stalinist Russia were all exterminated. Gay men, wearing their pink triangles, were put to death in the Nazi concentration camps. Going about doing good, practicing love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and self-control does not necessarily change the evildoer or those who

would persecute us. Our peace testimony, our heritage as Quakers, our attempts to follow the teachings of Jesus, call us to do the right thing toward others regardless of what happens to us: to meet evil in the world not with more evil but with good, even if it doesn't seem to work.

Many of us live comfortable, sheltered lives where it is fairly easy to believe in a Loving God. We also live in a success-oriented society where we can fairly easily accept the idea that our acts of love will produce results, that our love will overcome evil and all will be "peaches and cream." We go about doing good to those who persecute us expecting success from our efforts. We assume that our good deeds will transform the evildoer, that being nice to someone who practices violence will change his or her ways. But what if doing good does not work? What if our way of love and kindness produces no change? Are we then to despair? Are we then to give up the way of love and take to violence ourselves? Or are we called to suffer under evil without regard to the consequences? Could this be the message of the Cross, that we are to accept undeserved suffering as God's way of dealing with human wickedness? How hard it is for us to believe that an act of love that fails is just as valid in the eyes of God as an act of love that succeeds. The test is not whether it works, but whether it is right.

Is there then no reward for being good and loving regardless of what it costs us? The Apostle Paul and the early Christians expected their reward in the hereafter. But many modern Friends don't believe in immortality. I don't myself. I don't believe in rewards that may come in an afterlife. Is there then no reward in the here and now for being good and kind and loving regardless of consequences?

I believe that there is a reward in the here and now. If we are obedient as the early Friends were obedient, if we are faithful to the way of love and kindness regardless of whether it produces immediate, measurable results, if we follow Jesus in accepting undeserved suffering as God's way of dealing with human wickedness, we are promised as a reward the peace that passeth understanding.

Think how the early Friends sang for joy in their prison cells. Their willingness to accept suffering for themselves and for their loved ones is relevant to us today. If I read the New Testament correctly, Jesus did not tell us that the going will be easy if we follow his way of love and kindness. What he said was, "If you follow me, I'll be with you." It was the sense of his presence that transformed the lives of early Friends, that led them to sing in their prison cells, that led Mary Dyer to cry, as she stood on the scaffold on Boston Common, in response to a question hurled at her from the crowd below, "Yea, I have been in Paradise these several days."

What we long for, in Rufus Jones's famous phrase, is "a fresh incursion of the Holy Spirit" that can transform our lives as it transformed the lives of the early Christians after the death of their beloved Friend on the Cross, as it transformed the lives of early Friends. We long for a fresh incursion of the Holy Spirit into

our lives so that, like John Woolman, we can create an atmosphere in which change can take place.

Today is Valentine's Day, a particularly appropriate day to recall those magnificent words of Baron von Hügel quoted by London yearly meeting in their epistle of 1957, words that could be the motto of Quakerism across the spectrum of our diversity:

> Caring is the greatest thing; caring matters most.

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Thomas R. Bodine was born and brought up in Philadelphia in the Germantown Coulter Street Meeting. He is a graduate of Wesleyan University at Middletown, Connecticut. He worked for 40 years for Connecticut General Life Insurance Company. He retired in 1976 to live in England for 10 years on the campus at Woodbrooke College (a Quaker college in Birmingham). In 1980–1981 he served as acting general secretary for the Friends World Committee for Consultation. He has served as clerk of New England Yearly Meeting and chairman of the Quaker United Nations Program. He was vice chairman of Friends General Conference (FGC) from 1969–73 and clerk of Friends United Meeting (FUM) from 1972–75. A founding member of Hartford Meeting, he served as chairman of the Hartford Housing Authority for 25 years, and also as chairman of the Hartford Anti-Poverty Program. His health now compromised by Parkinson's disease, he is living in the Caleb Hitchcock Health Care Center at Duncaster, a retirement community in Bloomfield, Connecticut.

Thomas Bodine

Tom Bodine
(recent photo)