

INNER



“Howard’s Paint Can” by American artist and Baptist minister Howard Finster, 1916– 2001.

THE LIGHT WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Dear Friends

I have been worrying since January over possible themes for my first letter to the Fellowship. In my retirement my main interests, outside of family, have been Quakers, art and reading. So what kind of offering can I make that uses these interests?

Not surprisingly, recently, when I was reflecting while reading an art magazine, on the recurring controversy in the art/ craft world – are they separate, is one “better” than the other, what about the myriad of crossovers, what about design?—my thoughts drifted off and I recalled this picture from Facebook.

The sentiment printed on the pictured paint can speaks to me.

“My Brain is Computerized Direct From God To the End of My Paintbrush and Pencil to Write and Do Art Work”

Quakers may not have a creed but the idea of the ‘light within’ is pretty well ingrained in Quaker thought. These thoughts of Finster’s speaking as they do of a direct connection between his brain and God, transcend the supposed differences between art, craft and design. For me they also transcend any differences between any activities that we might undertake. We are ‘enlightened’, the light of the spirit passes through us, brain to hands or mouth, I suppose, into the work we are making.

I have been laughing at the recent commercial on TV about the son in a family wanting to take up a trade apprenticeship to his father’s horror instead of going to university.

This made me think of a poem I really liked when I was in high school, by the early 17thC poet George Herbert, called The Elixir. (Please understand I was a fervent young Anglican at the time.) These three verses from the poem point out another way of looking at our relationship with the spirit. We might consider it our interaction with the spirit.

**The Elixir**

Teach me, my God and King’  
In all things Thee to see:  
And what I do in anything,  
To do it as for Thee.

All may of Thee partake;  
Nothing can be so mean  
Which with his tincture, "For Thy sake,"  
Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause  
Makes drudgery divine:  
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws  
Makes that and the action fine.

...

Our philosophy of life is often formed when we are young, but it must be able to be shaped and enriched by our life experiences and our openness to others' experiences and most importantly to the spirit. While Howard Finster's paint can declares one part of my own beliefs, George Herbert's poem contains yet another part. In *Advices and Queries*, Section A: God and ourselves, parts 7 and 8 say:

**7** Consider the means of spiritual growth in your life.  
*Do you make time for regular meditation, prayer and reflection? Are you gaining insights and inspiration from the Bible, from other writings including the literature of other faiths, and from the religious experiences of Friends and others, past and present?*

**8** You can gain inspiration from people of all ages whom you meet throughout your life and also from the example of people throughout history, including the present day. You can find inspiration all around, in the natural world, in the arts and sciences, in your work and friendships, in your sorrows as well as in your joys.  
*Are you open to new light from whatever source it may come? Do you approach new ideas with discernment?*

Yours in friendship

Carril Karr

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***Any person who finds the fundamental Quaker testimonies and the Quaker way of life, with its emphasis on sincerity and simplicity, compatible with his or her philosophy of life is welcome to join the Fellowship.***