

Reading Matters

By David McKay

Over the next year several Friends will visit our meetings and worship groups. These Friends are members of the Consultation and Renewal Working Group (C'n'R). We will be asking questions such as: What does it mean to you to be a meeting? How does your meeting/worship group fit with Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM)? How can CYM and Representative Meeting best meet the needs of Friends in Canada and how can we better be faithful to our leadings together? In preparation for the visits, you might start considering these matters before we arrive. The following pamphlets could inform and inspire such conversations.

Fellowships, Conferences, and Associations: The Limits of the Liberal Quaker Reinvention of Meeting Polity

By Elizabeth Cazden

Boston: Beacon Hill Friends House, 2004

Cazden begins her article with the same-sex marriage debate. Keep reading. This pamphlet is not about recognising same-sex relationships. Its about why well-meaning “small-L” liberal Quaker meetings seem unable to come to agreement about the issue or, for that matter, know whether they have come to agreement on the issue. She explores something she calls “meeting polity” -- how and whether meetings can have authority over members and in some cases other meetings.

She begins in “classical Quaker

polity” — how Quakerism began with a charismatic leadership. Folks who felt led to speak attracted new Quakers who settled into meetings. The structure given them by George Fox was a system of Yearly, Quarterly and Monthly Meetings. But what are the relationships between them?

Two models emerge, borrowed from the Puritans around them and distinctively seasoned with Quaker spices. The congregational model says that authority within the society rests with the monthly meeting. The Half-Yearly, Regional, and Yearly Meetings are consultative bodies and represent the needs of the individual meetings. The Presbyterian model has Yearly Meeting giving direction to the Monthly meeting on matters of wider concern. In other words — a kind of benevolent hierarchy. Both models have long histories with Quakerism.

A newer model emerges called the independent meeting model. Meetings are just loose associations of Friends. Yearly Meetings and Half-Yearly Meetings are irrelevant or only useful because that wider association may be helpful to people’s spiritual journeys.

QUERIES

1. Which of Cazden’s models attracts you the most? Which, if any, scares you? Do you think other members of your meeting or worship group would answer similarly to you?

2. What are the weaknesses of the model you like best? What are the models you like the least? Is a new model that takes the strengths

from all three possible?

3. Cazden also looks at other ways of describing meeting polity. She borrows the language of Jesuit theologian Avery Dulles to describe some of them. Do any of these change how you see your meeting, your Half-Yearly Meeting or CYM?

Meeting

By Deborah Haight

Argenta Friends Press, 1987

This pamphlet — also a Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture — is not so much a history of Friends as a personal reflection by one whose passion was for Quaker history. It is rich and varied. If what you love in being a Quaker has to do with the communities that form amongst Friends you will find this pamphlet worth reading and rereading.

A meeting is not a cold structure created by theological rumination or by business principles. It is a living breathing critter alive with all the messiness of human relationships. Pay especial attention to what Deborah Haight has to say about the differences between *going to Meeting* and *being a Meeting*.

QUERIES:

1. How does Deborah Haight’s distinction between going to meeting and being a meeting apply to your relationship to your meeting or your worship group?

2. When you apply this same distinction to your Half-Yearly or Regional Gathering do you get different feelings or responses? How about Canadian Yearly Meeting?

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Book Reviews...Book Reviews

Resistance and Obedience to God: Memoirs of David Ferris (1707-1779)
Editor, Martha Paxson Grundy,
Friends General Conference, 2001
Reviewed by
Dana Mullen

Quick, now! How many 18th-century American Quakers can you name who travelled widely in the ministry, strongly opposed slavery and kept a journal of their spiritual experiences?

John Woolman, of course, but the name of his contemporary, David Ferris, is less familiar. Now Martha Paxson Grundy has introduced us to this conflicted but ultimately faithful witness, by editing his journal.

Born in New England, David Ferris was brought up in a staunchly Calvinist family. He was 20 years old when the First Great Awakening sparked a wave of revivalism, during which he had a conversion experience and joined the church. His personal religious views were regarded as radical, even heretical, however, for he rejected the Calvinist dogma of predestination, being convinced that all persons were intended to be saved. As a student of divinity at Yale, he constantly wrestled with theological issues. In his final year there, unable to subscribe to church doctrine, he left without taking his degree.

At the age of 26 he attended a Quaker Yearly Meeting, eager to learn whether they were “a living people.” On hearing women preach, he felt that he had witnessed fulfillment of the prophecy that God’s spirit would be poured out on young and old, women as well as men. A year later he was accepted into membership of a Quaker meeting.

Each step of his spiritual journey was a painful struggle for him. Although he felt compelled to refuse “hat honour,” doing so was “a close trial” to him. His greatest problem was resistance to an inner call to offer vocal ministry. For years, he remained silent, finding

excuses, repressing the messages that arose within him, suffering guilt and misery. He was 47 years old before he surrendered and found himself on his feet speaking the words he had been given. Obedience brought him a wonderful sense of peace. Three years later, his Meeting recorded him as a minister.

In his letters, which follow the journal in this edition, we catch a glimpse of Ferris’s efforts against the evil of slavery. He wrote at length to slave-owning Friends, not only to point out the cruelties suffered by the slaves but even more to warn of the destructive moral effects on those who buy, own and sell a fellow human being.

These memoirs have been exceptionally well edited. The comprehensive introduction helps us to understand the religious milieu of David Ferris’s youth. Practical study notes suggest ways of relating the problems that troubled Ferris to our present-day quandaries. The bibliography enables us to identify books that would be particularly useful in pursuing themes of special interest. This book expands our understanding of Quaker history in North America. ☞

Dana Mullen is a member of Ottawa Monthly Meeting.

A Community of Friends: The Quakers at Borden
By Betty Ward
Hagos Press, 2004
Reviewed by June-Etta Chenard

If you became a Quaker after the 1955 unification of the yearly meetings in Canada, like me, you may have often wondered about the Friends who did not join. This book was written exactly 100 years after Joshua Wake took up his homestead in Borden, starting one of the Meetings that did not join Canadian Yearly Meeting. The writing style of these 15 stories reminds me of tales I would hear from relatives and neighbours, sitting on the porch during hot summer evenings.

The names and faces of some Friends may be familiar. For example, Mary Hinde, past editor of *The Canadian Friend* is there. The McCheane family, whose home was used as the meeting-house until the community built one in 1915, are, too. So are Joshua and Hannah Wake, people whom I had seen in *The Canadian Friend* — and in the minutes of that historic 1955 yearly meeting, where they were present. (Hannah is mentioned in the article on page 11 of this issue, too.)

Nancy Penner, the Friend who provided the photo on this page, is one of main people featured throughout the book.

Betty Ward's stories also provided the first view I've had of Quaker pioneers in Canada. The chapter "The First Years" begins, "The West was misrepresented in advertisements overseas. The winters were described as 'bracing,' while the heat of summer, the hordes of mosquitoes, and the everlasting wind that drove some people out of their minds were never mentioned. Overseas ads also claimed that good, sweet water was plentiful, which may have been true, but many early settlers were hard put to find it."

We read of how Mary McCheane had felt different from other people in England and how that changed when they came to Canada. Mary was a remarkable woman, "One of the first summers I was here, I broke sixty horses," she said. "I'd break them and train them, and then we'd sell them at a profit."

The author interviewed many Friends, and one of the questions she asked them was what it meant to them to be a Quaker. I found it worthwhile to read the book just for the answers of these people who so completely lived their testimony of simplicity.

It is not surprising that in matters of ecological



Halcyonia Meeting Friends

From the left: John Wake, Cornelius Penner, Joshua Wake, Hannah Wake, Allen Penner (behind), Bill Wake, Mary Hinde (Editor of *The Canadian Friend* 1957–1962), Rachel Clark, David Penner (behind), Harry Hinde, Mary McCheane, Margaret and Marie (twins) Penner

(Photo courtesy of Nancy [Penner] Henn)

concerns these Friends were ahead of their time. "Both families (the Wakes and Penners) had strong opinions about the care of the land. 'You have to treat it with tenderness,' Neil [Penner] used to say. 'You have to grow things that are natural to it, that's why we grow so many grasses. This land grows grasses naturally, left to itself, and we feel we should let it.'"

With her informal story-telling approach, the author shares with us tiny glimpses into the daily lives of these gentle Friends, dropping in on them, as it were. While there may be errors or omissions, still this is a worthwhile book for anyone curious about the Borden Friends. I had a hard time to put it down — this book with its images of some Canadian Friends, members of my spiritual family, relatives whose presence I miss though I have never known it. 🍷

June-Etta Chenard is a member of Pelham Executive Meeting.

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The foundational minute for the C'nR working group states, "We have heard that Friends are deeply concerned about the spiritual state of

our Society with respect to how we are organised and how we accomplish our work." If this concern is your concern I warmly recommend both these pamphlets. I suggest you meet with the C'nR committee members

who visit your meeting, prepared to engage them with your thoughts, your hopes, and your concerns. 🍷

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