



# **Quaker Theology**

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# Quaker Theology

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## Contents

Editor's Introduction	v
Current Conflicts in Two Midwestern Friends Meetings. Stephen W. Angell	1
Postscript: From <i>The Autobiography of Allen Jay</i>	29
My Theology of Peacemaking, David Zarembka	34
The Quest for an Authentic French Quakerism A Conversation With Jeanne-Henriette Louis	45
Can The AFSC Get Its Quaker Groove Back? Chuck Fager	61
Reviews:	
Thomas C. Kennedy, <i>A History of Southland College: The Society of Friends and Black Education in Arkansas</i> Reviewed by Stephen Angell	79
An Excerpt from <i>A History of Southland College</i>	85
<i>To Change the World, The Irony, Tragedy, &amp; Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World.</i> James Davison Hunter Reviewed by Chuck Fager	88
An Excerpt from <i>To Change The World</i>	94
About the Contributors	96



## Editor's Introduction

Okay, readers, here's a pop quiz:

What is UP with Indiana pastoral Friends?

Can AFSC get its mojo back?

And not least, is it possible for Quakerism to take root in France, or is the Society so incorrigibly Anglo that it only thrives in territory over which the Union Jack flies, or once flew?

(Answers below.)

Pardon the lapse into pedantry. All these questions are taken up in detail in this issue.

And more: there's a remarkable glimpse of what peace-making looks like after a community falls into genocide, and in which both victims and perpetrators have to live with the aftermath, together. Plus a consideration of whether faith communities like Friends can really change the world for the better – or just screw it up with ever-new combinations of naiveté and fanaticism? (This is not a trick question.)

Then there's the richly ambiguous fate of one idealistic Quaker project which did set out to change the world, or at least part of northeastern Arkansas in the wake of the Civil War. How did that turn out? Thomas Kennedy, a superb historian, found the answer, and now you can too.

In short, another full and provocative issue of *Quaker Theology*.

Happy reading, and thinking; and keep those articles, reviews and letters coming. Subscriptions too.

– Chuck Fager, Editor



## Two Current Conflicts in Midwestern Friends Meetings

Stephen W. Angell

### Part I: Freight Train Bearing Down? West Richmond Friends Meeting and Indiana Yearly Meeting

By Stephen W. Angell

West Richmond Friends Meeting in Richmond, Indiana, might seem to be an odd ground zero for the newest intra-Quaker conflict, but that is where the Meeting has found itself in the past two years, after approving a “welcoming and affirming” minute for everyone, including gays and lesbians. Located just two blocks from the Earlham College campus, it celebrated its centennial in the past year. Allen Jay, a beloved Indiana Friend who cultivated good relations with all the fractious groups of Indiana Quakers, was instrumental in its founding. Numerous luminaries, including the recently deceased Wilmer Cooper and Tom Mullen, have graced its membership list over the years. Its congregation is known for its civic engagement. The Richmond Friends School uses its facilities. A 2004 photograph posted on the Internet on a civic-oriented Wayne County website notes that “West Richmond Friends is also home to Boy Scout Meetings, play groups, adult schools, and AA Meetings.”

Many members of West Richmond were deeply involved in the process that led to the approval of this minute. Recently, I sat down with two of them, Stephanie Crumley-Effinger and Eric Dimick Eastman, to discuss the changes that the Meeting has undergone in the recent past. The Meeting went through a thorough re-examination of itself; Eric says that the process was well underway before he became a member five years ago. In 2004, the Meeting approved a new mission statement: “As a Christian Quaker fellowship, we seek to discover God’s truth, proclaim God’s love, and live our faith.”

As the Meeting continued to explore the implications of its mission, the Meeting wondered whether it should become a “welcoming and affirming” congregation. “Welcoming and

affirming” churches encourage the full participation of all, so West Richmond Friends believed such a stance might facilitate the growth of the meeting. These discussions were not all about sexual orientation; indeed meeting-wide engagement on “sexual orientation” was only “objective F,” sixth on the list. Nevertheless, perhaps inevitably the controversial dimension of their welcome is that they welcome persons in gays and lesbians to their congregation. The “welcoming and affirming” statement eventually approved by West Richmond Meeting was not uni-dimensional by any means; it offered to “affirm and welcome all persons whatever their race, religious affiliation, age, socio-economic status, nationality, ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, or mental/physical ability.” Nevertheless, in the discussions that took place both prior and subsequent to the adoption of this minute, “sexual orientation” loomed the largest and required the most careful discernment of any item on this list.

West Richmond’s process was impressive, involving much small group discussion, under the careful eye of the Ministry and Membership (M&M) committee. One issue that they looked at was the interpretation of Scriptures on this matter, and they considered various interpretations of Scriptures that appeared to deal with homosexuality. Resources that discuss the difficulties of interpreting these Scriptures are easy to find on the Internet; one superb resource is Walter Wink’s article on “Homosexuality and the Bible.” Wink makes several useful points. He finds nothing in the Bible that is at all relevant to a loving and mutual relationship between a same sex couple. He thoroughly discusses the ways that morals and ethics on many matters, including slavery, have evolved in the thousands of years since the Biblical texts were written. Theologically, he argues that Christians have always maintained the impossibility of keeping the old Hebrew laws in full and that they “reserve the right to pick and choose.”

Wink argued, “There is no Biblical sex ethic. Instead, it exhibits a variety of sexual mores, some of which changed over the thousand year span of biblical history. Mores are unreflective customs accepted by a given community. Many of the practices that the Bible prohibits, we allow, and many that it allows, we prohibit. The Bible knows only a love ethic, which is constantly being brought to bear on whatever sexual mores are dominant in any given country, or culture, or period.” Wink then appeals for tolerance of differing opinions on this issue, reminding Christians that we are commanded “to love one another,” including “all of us who are involved in this debate.”

West Richmond Friends, for the most part, ended up in a similar place to Wink in this debate. They quickly found a fairly broad consensus to go ahead with a welcoming and affirming minute. There were, however, two or three Friends who had misgivings about the minute and ultimately stood aside.

According to Dimick Eastman, the major issue which was debated between this small minority of the Meeting and the majority was the issue of theological anthropology. The two or three who did not favor the approach of the Meeting as it was evolving believed that same-sex relationships do not represent the fullness of the relationships that God intended for human beings to have with each other. These Friends pointed to Where Grace Abounds, a Christian organization in Colorado that “provides support for those that are sexually broken.” According to its website, its “core issues” include sexual abuse, sexual addictions, same sex attraction, sexual anorexia, and transgender issues. However, while Where Grace Abounds seeks to heal sexual brokenness among those in both opposite-gender and same-gender relationships, the website implies that there is sexual brokenness present only in some opposite-gender relationships, while it is present in all same-gender relationships. Where Grace Abounds also posts articles on the theme of “Bible and Homosexuality,” by an instructor at Denver Seminary, but here a different conclusion than Wink’s is reached from the author’s Scriptural interpretation: “I do not believe that homosexuals should be treated as criminals; at the same time I do believe that homosexuality is sinful.” (Emig, “Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13”)

However, Dimick Eastman reached a very different conclusion on theological anthropology: He is sure that men and women living as committed partners in same-sex relationships can indeed have every bit as much fullness in that relationship as opposite sex couples. In other words, same-sex relationships are not sinful. Dimick Eastman is 37 years old; he grew up in unprogrammed meetings, mostly in Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, and West Richmond is the first pastoral Friends meeting that he has belonged to. He has known men and women in same-sex relationships as long as he can remember. Many of his friends when he was growing up happily lived in households anchored by same-sex relationships: “most young people have an ‘out person’” somewhere among their friends and acquaintances. For himself, and also for a large proportion of his age cohort (as well as those younger than he), same-sex relationships are just as normal as opposite-sex ones.

On the matter of theological anthropology, the great majority of West Richmond Friends agreed with Dimick Eastman, and not with the position of Where Grace Abounds. West Richmond Friends quickly evolved toward a consensus of being a welcoming, affirming, accepting and inviting meeting toward gays and lesbians, including persons in same-sex relationships. For the sake of clarity, their statement specified that “members and attenders of West Richmond Friends meeting are welcomed and encouraged to: attend and participate fully in meetings for worship; take an active part in the life and activities of our meeting; contribute their time, talents, spiritual gifts and resources to God through our meeting; apply for and serve in positions of paid, public ministry or other positions of leadership in our meeting; test and shape their personal beliefs and daily practices and help others to do the same; invest themselves in our common efforts to improve and heal the world; and help our meeting to discern God’s will in our meetings for business.”

Still, there were areas in this discussion that were more difficult for them than others. The Meeting realized that its reception of gays and lesbians incorporated both a civil rights dimension and a sexual ethics dimension. Although West Richmond Friends reached consensus on most civil rights issues fairly quickly, they found the sexual ethics issues to be tougher. Led by their M&M committee, they wanted to look at sexual ethics with respect to everyone, including both same-sex and opposite-sex couples. But that was going to take more time, so they decided to go ahead with their welcoming and affirming minute and to look at the ethical dimensions later.

West Richmond Friends also did not have unity on the celebration of same-sex relationships. Their difficulty of finding unity on this matter is partially reflected in the minute which they ended up approving, which stated: “Neither the State of Indiana nor the Faith and Practice of Indiana Yearly Meeting currently makes provision for the marriage or civil union of same sex couples. In the absence of such legal or denominational provisions, we regard same sex couples who are in committed relationships as families.” Both Dimick Eastman and Crumley-Effinger recall that some Friends had additional reasons for being uneasy about holding ceremonies to celebrate the commitment of same-sex couples, but the lack of recognition by the state and by the Yearly Meeting were the only reasons to be mentioned in the minute.

West Richmond’s “welcoming and affirming” minute was finally approved by the Meeting on June 15, 2008. At some time shortly thereafter, the minute was posted on the Meeting’s website.

<http://www.westrichmondfriends.org/affirming.htm> Certainly not all meeting minutes are posted on the meeting website. However, Crumley-Effinger pointed out that it would hardly make sense to have a welcoming and affirming minute and not to make it highly visible to the public. Joshua Brown recalls that consideration of how to make the minute public was conducted in one or more of the Meeting's committees, and based on a positive recommendation from them, he posted the minute on the Web. Meeting members differ on whether that issue was not ever brought to monthly meeting as a whole; Brown's recollection was that it was not.

#### The Minute's Aftermath

The last sentence of the "welcoming and affirming" minute stated the Meeting's willingness "to engage in open discussion on these issues with others, and we respect the Christian beliefs and spiritual integrity of those who may not fully agree with us."

During their discussion, West Richmond Friends gave extensive consideration to the possible reception of their minute within their Yearly Meeting. Not only were they the first Meeting within their Yearly Meeting (composed entirely, or almost entirely, of pastoral Friends Meetings) to approve a "welcoming and affirming" minute, but the whole yearly meeting had previously approved statements on homosexuality that were at odds with the stances on Scripture interpretation and theological anthropology that West Richmond had come to through its extensive internal discussions. In August, 1982, over the objections of some Friends present, Indiana Yearly Meeting minuted its sense that practicing homosexuality was sinful: "Indiana Yearly Meeting believes homosexual practices to be contrary to the intent and will of God for humankind. We believe the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures witness to this (Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:21-32; I Corinthians 6:9-10; I Timothy 1:9-10). We further believe that, whatever our condition of sinfulness, forgiveness, redemption and wholeness are freely available through our Lord Jesus Christ. (I Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 1:7)."

Thirteen years later, the Yearly Meeting approved an "additional minute on homosexuality" that added details and nuance to the barebones 1982 minute. This new minute acknowledged a "diversity of beliefs" within the Yearly Meeting on Scriptural interpretation. It affirmed that God can "heal the wounds of sin" and "desires wholeness for all and offers unconditional love and grace." The Yearly Meeting affirmed a long list of specific kinds of positive ministries that might be offered to individuals who

“encounter Christ” and are undertaking ministry. The Yearly Meeting also called “for the fair treatment of homosexuals and their full protection from physical and verbal violence.” The yearly meeting statement even had its own form of a welcoming affirmation, noting that “sexual brokenness . . . affects us all,” and as “each person is encouraged to remember his/her own condition before God and his/her inadequacy to minister apart from God’s grace,” so “we welcome all people to our meetings to worship and join in becoming fully devoted followers of Christ.” The 1982 and 1995 minutes, taken together as they were intended to be, were still quite a distance from the “welcoming and affirming” minute that West Richmond Friends approved in 2008. While the subject of the 1982 minute was sexual acts, the subject for the 1995 minute is more about pastoral care of, and response to, people with homosexual orientation.

Consideration of West Richmond’s minute by the Yearly Meeting would not take place in a theological or cultural vacuum. The Yearly Meeting had recently gone through an exhausting and polarizing discussion over the Quaker understanding of the sacraments, with the Yearly Meeting as a whole not feeling clear to adopt a new position that administration of the outward sacraments in Friends Meetings could be voluntary, thus leaving intact the teaching of the Richmond Declaration of Faith that baptism and the Lord’s supper are solely spiritual experiences: an “inward work” (baptism) and an “inward and spiritual partaking” (Lord’s Supper). (*Faith and Practice*, 30; for commentary, see Angell 2007-2008)

Many of the members of West Richmond have worked for Earlham, where, for decades, there have been sharp conflicts between Indiana Yearly Meeting and Earlham College over a variety of the college’s curricular and extra-curricular practices. Some of these conflicts have occurred with a sharp focus on Earlham’s perceived disregard for the Yearly Meeting’s scruples over practicing homosexuals; for example, in the 1990s, there was a concerted effort to block the re-appointment of certain Earlham trustees appointed by the Yearly Meeting and have them replaced by Friends who more fully embodied the views of most Indiana Yearly Meeting Friends on issues of homosexuality and sexual ethics. (Hamm 1997, 290, 339-346) As Yearly Meeting members became aware of West Richmond’s minute, there was already a mutually agreeable process underway between Earlham and the Yearly Meeting, which sought to transform the relationship between the two from one where the Yearly Meeting appoints trustees to a looser “covenanting” process, which would relieve the Yearly Meeting from an oversight relationship with a college that

many Friends feel only very imperfectly represents their Quaker ideals.

West Richmond Friends had kept Indiana Yearly Meeting superintendent Doug Shoemaker informed of their deliberations, and they were prompt in informing him of the minute's approval in June of 2008. Word of this minute was slow to spread throughout the Yearly Meeting during the following two years. Doug shared it with the Yearly Meeting Executive Committee on October 6, and the Executive Committee requested that West Richmond be contacted with its concerns and that follow up be handled by the Ministry and Oversight Committee. Joshua Brown notes, "Doug gave a full, fair and even-handed account of all of the communication up to that point. M&O allowed me to speak for a few minutes, then I was excused from the rest of the discussion, and the outcome was the first minute which M&O sent to WRF." Shoemaker subsequently met with West Richmond Friends on Nov. 19. Delegations from Indiana Yearly Meeting have met with West Richmond Friends twice.

In March 2009, West Richmond Friends received a request from the Yearly Meeting's M & O Committee to take its Welcoming and Affirming minute off its website. No explanation was given at the time as to why West Richmond Friends were being instructed to take the minute off of the website. West Richmond Friends were puzzled and taken aback by the peremptory nature of this communication, and they were not willing to comply with these instructions. Doug Shoemaker notes that West Richmond Friends "were perplexed by this request, and that Ministry & Oversight was perplexed by the refusal of their request."

Some months later, in a face-to-face communication between West Richmond Friends and the M&O Committee of Indiana Yearly Meeting, this first message was clarified. What had been intended to be communicated was that West Richmond Friends should take their Minute off their website, so that West Richmond Friends and others in the Yearly Meeting could more easily have a discussion about the minute. Both sides were startled, Yearly Meeting Friends by the fact that this fuller message which accurately communicated their intent was not the message that had been conveyed, and West Richmond Friends, by a dawning awareness that the first message had in fact been an invitation to dialogue rather than a peremptory command to submit to the Yearly Meeting.

Dimick Eastman and Crumley-Effinger see a parallel between the coming out process for lesbians and gays and the "coming out" of their Meeting. By putting their minute on the

website, the Meeting was “coming out of the closet” and testifying to the love that Christ requires of them. Others in the Yearly Meeting who critiqued West Richmond’s position objected to their openness about their stance to be as much of a difficulty as their position itself. One Indiana Friend stated that the Meeting’s “being open about” West Richmond’s welcoming and affirming stance “is the problem.”

The Ministry and Oversight Committee of the Yearly Meeting eventually identified two major problems that many of its members had with the West Richmond minute. First, under the guidance of the Indiana Yearly Meeting minutes, it should not have allowed the possibility of membership for practicing homosexuals. Second, under the guidance of those same minutes, it should not have opened the possibility of leadership within the Meeting for gays and lesbians. Shoemaker states that the membership and leadership issues in the minute have “gained the most attention.”

But the M&O Committee also objected to West Richmond identifying “same sex couples who are in committed relationships as families.” Even though West Richmond had decided not to include same-sex marriage as part of its Welcoming and Affirming minute, Doug Shoemaker stated that some Indiana Friends still wondered if this minute was an “end run” around the Yearly Meeting’s marriage discipline, which contained gendered language indicating the Yearly Meeting’s understanding that marriage was to be between a man and a woman. (IYM 2002, 87-88, 134-137)

What West Richmond Friends decided to do was to clarify the differences between their “understanding of Christ’s call to love everyone” and the Yearly Meeting’s beliefs and practices, by providing a link, beneath their website minute, to the full text of the 1982 and 1995 minutes of Indiana Yearly Meeting, cited above.

The discussion between the M&O Committee of the Yearly Meeting, clerked by Peggy Caldwell, and West Richmond Friends Meeting, came to center on a paragraph (“Subordination,” 108C) in Indiana Yearly Meeting’s Faith and Practice. This is a rich section of the Faith and Practice, one that lends itself to both moderate and conservative readings. Ministry and Oversight Committee argued that West Richmond needed to “subordinate” itself to the Yearly Meeting’s guidance, as provided under the 1982 and 1994 minutes.

However, a close reading of Section 108C shows that hierarchical subordination is not all that is intended by that section of Faith and Practice: “Subordination . . . does not describe a hierarchy but rather a means, under divine leadership, of common protection between Indiana Yearly Meeting and its Quarterly Meetings and Monthly Meetings. It is a relationship among Friends

‘submitting themselves to one another in the fear of God.’ (Ephesians 5:21) In the spirit of Christ who ‘humbled himself and became obedient unto death’ each member, each Monthly Meeting, each Quarterly Meeting and the Yearly Meeting submits to each other in the love of Christ. Subordination is the assurance that no Monthly Meeting is alone, autonomous or independent. Thus Monthly Meetings recognize the legitimate role of the Yearly Meeting in speaking and acting for the combined membership. Likewise the Yearly Meeting recognizes the freedom of Monthly Meetings and the validity of their prophetic voices. Each needs the other in order to be strong and vital, and both need the mediation of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” (Faith and Practice, 98-99)

West Richmond Friends argued that the central concept of this passage in their book of discipline was the “mutual submission” of Meetings to one another. Furthermore, this passage recognizes the “validity of the prophetic voices” of Monthly Meeting. West Richmond Friends see their “welcoming and affirming” minute as thoroughly in accord with this passage of the discipline. What they are attempting to do is to exercise their prophetic voice within the Yearly Meeting, not asking that the Yearly Meeting change. Doug Shoemaker says that the Yearly Meeting is “struggling to find a balance” between the very different readings of this section of the discipline by West Richmond Meeting and the M&O Committee.

M&O has maintained that if there is a need for a “welcoming and affirming” minute at West Richmond Meeting, meeting members should first go to the Yearly Meeting to try to get the Yearly Meeting to achieve clearness on a new policy concerning gays and lesbians. West Richmond Friends, however, never gave much consideration to the Yearly Meeting option. They believed that initiating discussions at that level would be a waste of time, because there were so many Friends who were so strongly invested in the current Yearly Meeting policy on homosexuality. But they also felt that the lack of fruitfulness of bringing a minute to the Yearly Meeting floor at this time did not entail the need for them to abandon their concern. Instead, West Richmond Friends felt called to adopt a prophetic stance, even within the Yearly Meeting, if necessary. Crumley-Effinger observes that “John Woolman was not stopped in his witness because of corporate unclearness about slavery” in his own yearly meeting, or in others that he visited.

Thus, in the aftermath of West Richmond’s approval of this minute, a third theological topic was engaged. In addition to Scriptural interpretation and theological anthropology, West Richmond Friends – indeed, Indiana Yearly Meeting as a whole –

found itself engaging questions of ecclesiology. In many Christian denominations, the decision-making process is clear. The ultimate decisions can be made by bishops (in denominations that are “Episcopal”), or by councils of elders or “presbyters” (in “Presbyterian” denominations), or by “synods” of church members (Lutherans are often organized in this way), or by congregations (in “Congregationalist” denominations). Of course, there are many hybrid formats. Among members of the Religious Society of Friends, which claims to find unity in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is sometimes difficult to discern a coherent ecclesiology. Friends have different preconceptions or interpretations of what the Holy Spirit calls for. (E.g., Cazden, 6-40). West Richmond appears to be arguing for an approach to Friends’ polity, or ecclesiology, which emphasizes the congregations’ role, while not denying the importance of larger decision-making bodies.

The concept of “subordination” has a long, interesting history in Friends’ disciplines. An early Indiana Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) book of discipline, published in 1839, counseled that “The connection and subordination of our meetings for Discipline are thus: preparative meetings are accountable to the monthly; monthly to the quarterly; and the quarterly to the yearly meeting. So that if the yearly meeting be at any time dissatisfied with the proceedings of any inferior meeting . . . such meeting or meetings ought, with readiness and meekness, to render an account thereof when required, and correct or expunge any of their minutes, according to the direction of the superior meeting.” Very similar language, unambiguous in its meaning, could be found in most or all Orthodox and Hicksite books of discipline throughout the nineteenth century. Thus, the classic method of Friends’ ecclesiastical organization bears a strong resemblance to the synodal or presbyterian models.

Indiana Yearly Meeting’s language on subordination changed in 1900, when the Five Years’ Meeting released its uniform book of Discipline for the Orthodox Yearly Meeting. That committee, on which Rufus Jones served, discarded the above language for a statement that emphasized, in good social gospel fashion, the responsibility for the Yearly Meeting to work for the Kingdom of God on earth, while being considerably less precise on the concept of subordination: “The Yearly Meeting has the power to decide all questions of administration; to counsel, admonish, or discipline its subordinate meetings; to institute measures and provide means for the promotion of truth and righteousness and to inaugurate and carry on departments of religious and philanthropic

work.” That language remained unchanged in Indiana Yearly Meeting’s Faith and Practice for over eight decades.

The discipline revision committee formed in the 1980s sought to clarify the uniform discipline language by specifying that the subordinate bodies to the Yearly Meetings were the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings, but soon found itself facing a storm of criticism, led by Friends in Spiceland Monthly Meeting, a well-endowed meeting that, according to Tom Hamm, does not fit into any neat ideological boxes. Spiceland Friends felt that the Monthly Meeting was not a subordinate, but rather a coordinate or equal body, to the Yearly Meeting. On the other hand, there were those, including the Yearly Meeting’s lawyers, who argued staunchly that the word “subordinate” needed to remain in the book of discipline. The resulting language as cited above, first approved by Indiana Friends in 1986 and unchanged since then, was an obvious compromise, a hybrid of synodal and congregationalist approaches, of a kind common in books of discipline across the Quaker spectrum by the late twentieth century. The new discipline, and the 1985 Yearly Meeting minutes on the deliberations over discipline revision, contained detailed instructions as to when it was appropriate for the very rare circumstance of the Yearly Meeting’s intervention in a Monthly Meeting’s affairs.

The 1985 minutes indicate that Indiana Yearly Meeting may intervene in a Monthly Meeting’s affairs to uphold essential principles, such as Friends’ spiritual conception of Baptism, but not in the case of purely social concerns, such as a Friends meeting giving insufficient attention to the peace testimony. (Minutes of Indiana Yearly Meeting, 1985, 11, 90)

West Richmond Friends held several called Meetings as it labored with the M&O Committee’s response to its “welcoming and affirming” minute. In its report to the 2010 sessions of Indiana Yearly Meeting, Peggy Caldwell, reporting for the Ministry and Oversight Committee, was sharply critical of West Richmond Friends:

“Ministry and Oversight has labored with West Richmond over concerns regarding their ‘Welcoming Minute.’ They asked them to remove the minute from their website hoping that it could be revised in such a manner to be compatible with the positions on homosexuality held by Indiana Yearly meeting. With deep concern they recognize that West Richmond Friends Meeting has chosen to not submit itself to the guidance of Indiana Yearly Meeting Ministry & Oversight. They are concerned that this unwillingness to act in subordination jeopardizes the relationship between their meeting and the yearly meeting. They are prayerfully considering

what further steps may be appropriate and necessary concerning West Richmond.”

In the ensuing “extensive” discussion during the 2010 yearly meeting sessions, there was concern over the sharp, even threatening, tone of the M&O Report on this matter. A personal letter from the pastor of a neighboring meeting, West Elkton, was read, on the desirability of Friends being “inclusive rather than exclusive, . . . followers of Christ’s example, dedicated to loving one another and avoiding actions and attitudes which hurt others.” At the same time, there were meetings that disapproved of West Richmond’s minute. It was also clear that many Friends were not familiar with the minute, so that more time was needed to have an informed discussion; this was at least partly by design, because M&O had tried to keep the matter quiet.

The M&O Committee was charged with continuing to labor with West Richmond “in tenderness and love.” The Yearly Meeting clerk, Greg Hinshaw, in summarizing the sense of the Meeting as he discerned it from this difficult discussion, drew points from both sides, the M&O Committee and from West Richmond. He used the relationship descriptor of “mutual submission” favored by West Richmond (“all of us have a mutual submission to one another”), but made clear that that descriptor carried at least some of the connotations being advanced by the M&O Committee: “When we independently make decisions in a local meeting without regard to the ramifications for the larger body, we often get into messes.”

Hinshaw concluded, “We are not going to be well-served to keep having the same discussion over and over because all of us have deeply held convictions so things will not change. God is the only One big enough to change those issues.”

In the five months since Yearly Meeting sessions, West Richmond and the Yearly Meeting M&O Committee have indeed stayed in communication. In order that the other meetings in the Yearly Meeting understand clearly where West Richmond stands and why it approved its “welcoming and affirming” minute, West Richmond sent a letter, signed by its clerk, Rich Sinex, and dated December 5, 2010, to their “brothers and sisters in Christ” in all the other meetings in the Yearly Meeting. They carefully described their “extensive process of discernment,” and explained that they felt their position was harmonious with the 1995 statement’s exhortation: “As each person is encouraged to remember his/her own condition before God and his/her inadequacy to minister apart from God’s grace, so each meeting is responsible to determine the

ministry roles of those who attend.” This key passage in the 1995 minute has never been mentioned by IYM M&O.

West Richmond Friends affirmed their intention to follow the teaching of Jesus that “Whatsoever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do unto me.” (Matthew 25:40) They disclaimed any intention to change Yearly Meeting policies or practices. They offered to engage in “direct, caring conversations” with any Indiana Friends who “feel concern, discomfort, and hurt about our minute.”

Then they moved to addressing the theological issues at the heart of the discussion. They quoted the last three sentences of Section 108C (see above), including the commendation of Meetings’ “prophetic voices.” They assured Friends that they “treasure the Bible” and “have paid attention to” the passages cited in the 1982 minute, but that “different approaches to interpretation of the Bible are deeply held, and we do not want to be in dispute about them. We are, however, very happy to have conversations with those who understand scripture differently from us to share about why we have these different understandings.”

In closing, they plead for a strong continuing relationship: “Finally, we ask Friends to remember that evangelical Christians with a family member who discloses that he or she is gay or lesbian do not necessarily reject or disown that person, despite the conviction that s/he is wrong, but treasure the person as a beloved family member anyway. As Indiana Yearly Meeting Friends consider their relationships with us, we hope that those who believe that West Richmond, as a member of Indiana Yearly Meeting family, is wrong in its position will model their response on families who stay in relationship with their gay/lesbian family member.” These questions have implicitly been raised by the witness of West Richmond Friends: What does Friends’ testimony of unity mean? Can we stick together as Friends, even when we have profound disagreements on a matter that many may feel is a vital aspect of our corporate witness, implicitly trusting that continued searching for divine leadings over time may bring us to a greater sense of the Light?

In the same month that this letter was sent out, the U.S. Congress passed the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” regulations for its armed forces, and President Obama signed the repeal into law. This coincidence was of interest to West Richmond’s pastor, Joshua Brown, as he notes that the Spirit-led prophetic stance of his Meeting is becoming increasingly mainstream in American culture.

There has been other correspondence on this issue in the early weeks of 2011. Another meeting in Indiana Yearly Meeting has written a letter in support of West Richmond, sent to all other

meetings in the Yearly Meeting, vouching for the carefulness of their discernment process. Peggy Caldwell, writing on behalf of IYM M&O Committee with two members of her committee standing aside, has reiterated the concerns of most committee members with West Richmond's actions appearing "to value individual liberty and leading over corporate accountability," and asking for a timely response from other monthly meetings. The Yearly Meeting office expects to receive several more letters from monthly meetings in response to Caldwell's request, and the matter will be taken up again at the M&O Committee Meeting on March 5, 2011.

What happens then is unclear. Shoemaker states that West Richmond Friends seem to feel that a "freight train" is bearing down on them, but what he sees is that the M&O Committee doesn't have clarity at this point about follow up steps. He still hopes that West Richmond Meeting and M&O Committee can come to an agreement prior to Yearly Meeting. Shoemaker is correct, however, in intimating that West Richmond Friends anticipate, or fear, that their welcoming minute will be a major item on the yearly meeting agenda this summer. If that happens, a lively discussion is probable. Shoemaker observes that "large numbers of Friends care passionately" about the issue of West Richmond's minute, and that the issue is "building in momentum."

As West Richmond's minute has only been approved, at the time of this writing, for a little more two years, during which it has found it necessary to vigorously defend its minute much of the time, it may seem premature to ask what the effect of the minute has been. But West Richmond Friends speak very positively of its im-pact, even in the short time since it has been approved. It is true that there has been no avalanche of new members. But Eric Dimick Eastman notes that it would have been hard for him, and others of his generation, to remain a part of the Meeting, if this "welcoming and affirming" minute had not been approved. "I wouldn't have felt comfortable staying." Many current attend, and former attenders have expressed gratitude for this minute. A particular gift was the ministry of a gay Earlham School of Religion graduate, David Zier, in the summer of 2010. Zier, a member of the Metropolitan Churches of Christ (MCC), wished to support West Richmond in its stand by choosing the Meeting as the place for meeting the requirement for internship hours for his denomination.

## Conclusion

In recent decades, many monthly meetings and yearly meetings, not just West Richmond Monthly Meeting and Indiana

Yearly Meeting, have sought the Light of Christ on how to minister to those of differing sexual orientations. For example, the website of Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns lists 241 meetings throughout the world that have approved minutes affirming their willingness to oversee same-sex marriages. Behind each of those minutes is undoubtedly a story about the meeting's deliberations, and more of these stories need to be told and preserved. Undoubtedly, many of these stories have profound spiritual and theological implications, as the consideration of West Richmond's "welcoming and affirming" minute has impelled Friends in that meeting, and the Yearly Meeting, to examine issues of Biblical interpretation, ecclesiology, and theological anthropology, among others. Conflict may indeed lead us to a place of deeper spirituality, as all Indiana Friends are recognizing the power of prayer, and calling us to partake in it on their behalf.

## Part II. Train Wreck Alert: Western Yearly Meeting

The recent decade has also been eventful for the other Friends United Meeting Yearly Meeting located mostly in Indiana, i.e., Western Yearly Meeting. We have reported on the travails of Western Yearly Meeting in these pages previously. (Gulley, #16, Fall-Winter 2009; Angell, #14, Summer-Fall 2007-2008; Fager, #9, Fall-Winter 2003) However, the conflicts in that Yearly Meeting are not letting up. When one talks to persons holding positions of responsibility within Western Yearly Meeting, the words "tired" and "exhausted" are heard often, because the sources of conflict there are debilitating and seemingly never-ending. People are "damaged" and "scared," said one person familiar with the yearly meeting. Another said the events seemed reminiscent of those leading up to the Hicksite-Orthodox split in 1827-1828.

Some urge taking a long view. In 1991, the General Secretary of Friends United Meeting, Steve Main, proposed a realignment of FUM into evangelical and liberal organizations. Although Main's proposal was rejected, and Western Yearly Meeting offered no support for it at that time, similar proposals have come to life in the two decades since, and Western Yearly Meeting's present co-superintendents, Steve and Marlene Pedigo, have strongly encouraged them.

The retirement in 1993 of a popular, long-serving Western Yearly Meeting superintendent, Bob Garris, is mentioned by one WYM Friend as a watershed event. In this view, Garris was able to transcend the theological battle lines and bring WYM Friends together. Then again, the cumulative challenges of the past two

decades may have been more than even Garris could have held together.

Between 1988 and 2001, four monthly meetings in Western Yearly Meeting have sanctioned and held same-sex marriages, to the horror of theological conservatives in many other monthly meetings. All the monthly meetings that sanctioned same-sex marriages were unprogrammed, dually affiliated with a Friends General Conference Yearly Meeting (either Ohio Valley or Illinois). It is probably no surprise that the opposition to these same-sex marriages arose among mostly pastoral meetings, evangelical in their theology, with a sole affiliation with Western Yearly Meeting. An Administrative task force in 1997 stated unambiguously that “it is mutually understood that no meeting within Western Yearly Meeting holds the authority to conduct a same-gender union.”

The last of these same-sex marriages, by Evanston (IL) Monthly Meeting in 2001, came after this clarification had been agreed upon, and thus was convincingly portrayed by many as out of the good order of Friends. Western feels the same tensions between congregational authority and synodal authority that exist within Indiana Yearly Meeting, although the conflict in the latter is much further developed. In an American culture where politics became more sharply polarizing during the 1990s and thereafter, these tensions gathered even more force.

Three of the four monthly meetings that performed same-sex marriages have either voluntarily withdrawn, or have been forced to withdraw, from Western Yearly Meeting. These congregational separations do not afflict just one side of the theological spectrum within the Yearly Meeting. Both evangelical and liberal meetings have withdrawn from the yearly meeting during the past decade. Perhaps learning a lesson from the nineteenth century separations, the Yearly Meeting has neither contested the property rights of the monthly meetings leaving, nor has it engaged in any court actions regarding these separations. It seems likely that if Indiana Yearly Meeting experiences any separations, of West Richmond Friends or of any other meeting, the same pattern will hold. But this loss of meetings who are discontented for various reasons does nothing to build the sense of unity that has always been at the heart of Friends’ ecclesiology and spirituality.

But the most important issue that has convulsed Western Yearly Meeting in the most recent decade is the issue of doctrinal purity. This issue is often posed in regard to a single personality (Should the ministerial recording of Phil Gulley be removed?), but Western Yearly Meeting ministers and members often insist that the

issue of doctrinal purity transcends any single individual. As an example, let's consider a passage from the most recent Annual Message of Western Yearly Meeting's two co-superintendents, Steve and Marlene Pedigo:

"Healthy churches gather, inspire, and equip leaders to grow spiritually and work together for the mission of the church. When the integrity of the church is compromised, the identity of the church is shifted. There seems to be at least three alternate models for the identity of Western Yearly Meeting. The first model is a Humanistic Para-church Organization that invites people to join in 'good works.' The second model is a Syncretistic Quaker Club, focused on happiness and love. A third model is the Quaker Foundation that raises funds, manages assets and disburses financial resources. Healthy churches do include service, fellowship and stewardship, but they also include worship of the Christ Jesus as our Lord and Savior. . . . Although all people are welcomed to worship with the church and we each grow at our own pace in our spiritual journey, the leadership of Western Yearly Meeting must be committed with integrity to work together as the church of Christ Jesus. As Friends we do not swear an oath to a creed, but leaders are called to serve together to fulfill the purpose of Western Yearly Meeting of Friends Church and support the approved Western Yearly Meeting of Friends Church Faith & Practice, 2005 Edition with clear transparency and full disclosure."

In other words, the superintendents would like to apply the Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice, or more accurately, their interpretation thereof, as a measuring stick to determine who is and is not fit to serve the Yearly Meeting. If that is not a creed to which, as they observe, Quakers are opposed, it comes very close. Steve and Marlene Pedigo, who for many years had pastored a Friends' mission among African-Americans in Chicago, a mission that inspired many, intensified this pursuit by many of Western Yearly Meeting's evangelical Friends, when they became co-superintendents in 2005, but again, this quasi-creedalism did not originate with them. It is best seen as a conflict that transcends personalities.

If the conflict in Western Yearly Meeting is not, as I am arguing, primarily one founded on personalities, it is definitely one with two strong parties, with perhaps a small group with some weighty Friends in the middle. If we are not to refer to these parties as "pro-Phil-Gulley" or "anti-Phil-Gulley," what labels would best work? Gulley's supporters are united in wanting to tolerate diverse theologies within their yearly meeting, but they are by no means united on which particular theology is most persuasive. The range

of theology among the ranks of Gulley's supporters ranges from very liberal to quite evangelical.

Gulley's opponents want the yearly meeting's leaders, including its recorded ministers, to witness more faithfully for a theology drawn from the yearly meeting's Faith and Practice, including three documents included in the text: George Fox's Letter to the Governor of Barbados; the 1887 Richmond Declaration of Faith; and the Essential Truths. The Pedigos' impassioned pleas for greater purity of doctrine, however, do not seem to speak for everyone, even within their own yearly meeting faction.

In the broader American context, the militant pleas for purity that characterize the Pedigos' appeals are generally a telltale sign of fundamentalism. However, that is not the label that either Phil Gulley's opponents in Western Yearly Meeting, nor the critics of West Richmond's welcoming minute in Indiana Yearly Meeting, seek to embrace. They would like to claim the label of "Orthodox," or more specifically, "Gurneyite Orthodox." That might imply (in my view, erroneously) that the Gulley supporters are heretics!

However, it is not clear that either the Gulley supporters or the West Richmond welcoming minute supporters are ready to cede the label of "Orthodox" to those who differ. Those well posted on their Quaker history, such as Stephanie Crumley-Effinger, point out that there have been many significant developments in the 180 years since the Orthodox party first formed in Quakerism. These include the revivalism of the late nineteenth century and the modernism of Rufus Jones and others, developing within the Orthodox branch of Quakerism early in the twentieth century. There may well be different flavors of Orthodoxy, say, a progressive Orthodoxy and a more conservative Orthodoxy, but all sides of these debates have a plausible claim to Orthodoxy. One reason that the Western Yearly Meeting debate, and Quaker debates going back two centuries, keep getting labeled in terms of personalities is the lack of concise descriptors for the theologies held by the various sides.

If the issue in Western Yearly Meeting is not Phil Gulley's recording per se, it is the doctrinal purity of anyone who might wish to hold a Western Yearly Meeting recording. April Vanlonden, who describes herself as a "Bible-toting Gurneyite," is one person who entered the recording process early in the decade. She received her Master of Divinity degree through her studies at the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis (a well-regarded school sponsored by a mainline Christian denomination, the Disciples of Christ) and the Earlham School of Religion (which Western Yearly Meeting holds a trustee relationship with, a relationship with which

Western Yearly Meeting has been more comfortable than Indiana Yearly Meeting).

When Vanlonden entered the recording process, she felt that she was treated in a distinctly unfriendly fashion. She traveled long distances to meet with the committee, which only found brief times to meet with her. "No one even offered me a drink of water when I sat down." She was asked to re-write the Richmond Declaration of Faith in her own words. The Richmond Declaration is a long and, to many, impossibly turgid document. In Vanlonden's words, she "walks more easily with the Richmond Declaration than many." Nevertheless, not only was this a daunting and onerous task, but she also objected on principle, as it seemed to her to be basing one's ministry on a creedalism alien to Quakerism. Then the clerk of the recording committee took her recording file to his home and lost it.

In tears, Vanlonden contacted the clerk of Western Yearly Meeting, Mary Lee Comer, a kind-hearted and weighty Friend, asking whether she should withdraw from the recording process. Firm in her reassurances, Comer intervened on Vanlonden's behalf with the Committee. Her file was found, and Vanlonden's name was brought forward to the August, 2004 session of Western Yearly Meeting, and her recording was approved.

Vanlonden was approved for recording in the same session as two male graduates of Earlham School of Religion were also approved, and one of the thoughts recorded in the minutes was "commendation of ESR, for all three candidates are ESR graduates." In truth, however, not all persons in Western Yearly Meeting are supporters of ESR. There is, indeed, strong support for ESR, among many liberal, conservative, and evangelical members of Western Yearly Meeting. The trustee relationship between WYM and Earlham is on strong footing. When monthly meetings in WYM hire ESR graduates, there is great satisfaction among these local meetings in their integrity and the good preparation that these ministers have received. But among some evangelical Friends in Western Yearly Meeting, there is a perception that Earlham School of Religion is too liberal, and Steve and Marlene Pedigo recommend that aspiring ministers from their yearly meeting receive their training from the staunchly evangelical, remote Barclay College in Haviland, Kansas, rather than ESR. ESR graduates sometimes feel under the microscope from some persons in the Yearly Meeting hierarchy.

Since Vanlonden received her recording in 2004, the control over the recording process has been tightened further, and Friends who don't meet the theological litmus test of the recording committee and the yearly meeting superintendents have a very

difficult, if not impossible, view of discerning any road to recording, or indeed, to receiving any ministerial credential. Those who aspire to be recorded in Western Yearly Meeting are now required to sign a statement of faith. In the past, a Western Yearly Meeting pastor who was not recorded could receive a “Ministry Certificate” from the Yearly Meeting office, but the Pedigos refuse these Ministry Certificates to anyone who is not a recorded minister or is in the recording process. The Pedigos counsel pastors not in the recording process to obtain letters attesting to their ministry from their monthly meetings. The non-approved pastors in Western Yearly Meeting resort to whatever stratagem they can think of to provide proof of their ministerial status, including using credentials issued by prior, non-Quaker, churches they have served.

It is in these contexts that it is best to think of the controversy over Phil Gulley’s recording, which has lingered most of the decade, but erupted in full force on the Western Yearly Meeting floor in 2007 and 2009. Phil Gulley, a graduate of Christian Theological Seminary, developed a career as a best-selling writer of Christian short stories during the 1990s. He was sought after as a speaker for both Indiana and Western Yearly Meetings in 2001, e.g., leading the devotions prior to the Western’s Administrative Council in March, 2001. The minutes record that Gulley “told us about a group of Baptists, Catholics, and Quakers working together today at Westside Bait & Tackle Shop to distribute food to the poor. It is a good thing if you have too much money to give it to the poor. He stated we are an opinionated and diversified people, always with a difference of opinion, but where Christ is lifted up, there will be love.” (Western Yearly Meeting 2001-2002, 66)

In our issue #16, Gulley reminisced about how his embroilment in controversy in Western Yearly Meeting began with a statement to an interviewer that was seen as questioning the divinity of Jesus, but in fact was meant to emphasize the great importance that Jesus’ life and example had for him: Jesus “was a monotheistic Jew who did not see himself as divine. He saw himself as a rabbi, probably a prophet. . . . But I certainly understand the personality of God through the person of Jesus. That is, I believe God’s priorities were also Jesus’ priorities, and those priorities were to care for the poor and the marginalized.” (Gulley, Fall-Winter 2009)

The controversy really took off after Gulley published a theological book, *If Grace Is True: Why God Will Save Every Person*, in 2003, espousing a Universalist theology.

Besides salvation, the list of theological issues that have surfaced in the recent conflicts in Indiana and Western Yearly Meeting, must include Christology. The pro-purity forces in Friends

United Meeting Quakerism today want to specify that all Quakers in good standing must believe in the divinity of Christ. Furthermore, they maintain that there should be a separation (sometimes the phrase “redemptive separation” is used) between those who believe in the divinity of Christ and those who don’t.

What this simplistic rhetoric masks is that there are many kinds of Christologies within Quakerism, and within Christianity generally, that explain the divinity or the special character of Jesus in diverse ways. “Low” Christologies see similarities between Jesus and the rest of us; Jesus, like everyone else, is filled with God’s light and spirit, but Jesus was more filled with God’s light and spirit than others. “High” Christologies emphasize the awesomeness of Jesus’ divinity; in the words of the fourth-century Nicene Creed, Jesus is “very God of very God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father.” Without delving too deeply into the details here, either kind of Christology can be supported convincingly with appeals to Scripture. Orthodox Christianity has tended to emphasize the High Christology contained in the Nicene and other creeds. Early Quakers made use of both High and Low Christologies, but rejected the idea that any of the church creeds, including the Nicene Creed, were binding among Friends.

Orthodox Quakers in the past two centuries have often differed greatly about what the Quakers’ non-creedal tradition means, with the modernist faction of Rufus Jones and others holding to a very robust view of Quaker non-creedalism. Jones’s views of Jesus were generally in line with Low Christology. Nineteenth-century Quaker revivalists like David Updegraff and their heirs, however, generally held to a High Christology. In short, there has never been broad agreement in Quakerism, or even in the Orthodox branches of Quakerism, as to what kind of Christology is best, and that aspect of Friends’ belief has generally been left up to an individual’s conscience. (Musser and Price 2003, 92-97; Barbour and Frost 1994, 32, 62-63, 206-212, 227, 239-240)

Gulley attempts to cover these details much more simply and personally in his reflection upon the controversy: “If I use any divine language in regards to Jesus, I tend to use the language of my Quaker tradition, which talks about ‘that of God in all people.’ This understanding allows me to celebrate God’s presence in Jesus, while affirming that same divine reality in others. Perhaps Jesus lived more fully in this presence than most, but within everyone exists the potential to live as he did. I realize this distinction isn’t sufficient for many Christians, that they will insist on the unique divinity of Jesus, but this Christian believes the same God which so enlivened Jesus also enlivens others. Unfortunately, such hopes,

when voiced aloud, are often silenced or scorned.” (Gulley, Fall-Winter 2009)

Attempts to rescind Phil Gulley’s recording lasted about eight years, from about 2001 to 2009. We will focus here primarily on the 2009 events, but a brief summary of events prior to that point would be helpful. The Western Yearly Meeting Board on Christian Ministry and Evangelism met in 2002 with Phil on the complaints received and reported to Yearly Meeting Executive Committee that “we find no evidence that Phil has lost his fit and usefulness in the ministry . . . nor does he meet the criteria set forth . . . as the basis for rescinding his recording.” The Board was not overly concerned about any divergence in Phil’s theology from the Richmond declaration, noting, “Western Yearly Meeting of Friends adopted the Richmond Declaration as a standard, not a creed.” (Western Yearly Meeting 2002-2003, 9-11) Other Friends, however, were of a different opinion than CM&E; thus, in March 2003, WYM’s Executive Committee advised Gulley that “we find some of his stated beliefs to be out of harmony with Faith & Practice, and he is urged to make his public teachings sensitive to Faith & Practice.”

Gulley’s recent books have not figured too prominently in the discussion. The accusations laid against him in WYM have centered more on his alleged denial of the divinity of Christ than the Christian universalist theology that he and co-author Jim Mulholland have explicated in their books. Still, it is undoubtedly true that Gulley’s move away from publishing short stories (where his generous and tolerant theology was merely implicit) to publishing theology (where his ideas must be made explicit) was a factor in how he was regarded in Western Yearly Meeting. When Gulley announced his intention to co-author a book on Christian universalism, his evangelical publisher (Multnomah Press in Oregon) instantly dropped him, and Gulley went from a beloved author to persona non grata among evangelical Christians rather quickly.

Still, the well regarded press Harper San Francisco picked him up and published his theological works, and, as an author whose works sold well and who is not dependent entirely on his pastorate for an income, Gulley could absorb the brunt of criticism knowing that, whatever the outcome, his livelihood would not be imperiled. Thus Gulley would not walk away from his pastorate, which he loves, nor from his recording. One reason he stayed was because, if he gave in, others more vulnerable might be exposed to the onslaughts of the pro-purity faction within the Yearly Meeting. Others in Western Yearly Meeting have cautioned that one ought not overlook the powerful psychological forces that afflict all of us in our humanness from time to time. One WYM Friend felt that the

efforts to rescind Gulley's recording "began as a case of jealousy when some folks have more public success than others!"

With the arrival of the new co-superintendents Steve and Marlene Pedigo in 2005, there was a renewed attempt to rescind Gulley's recording. As we reported in issue #14, the Executive Committee brought to the floor of Yearly Meeting in August 2007 a proposal to rescind Gulley's recording. After studying Gulley's writings and other information, the Executive Committee in 2007 had concluded that Gulley was "in substantial disunity with WYM Faith and Practice" and thus "concluded that he was no longer in good standing as a recorded minister of Western Yearly Meeting." However, "after much discussion and various expressions of opinion, . . . the clerk did not sense that the meeting could either approve or disapprove" the rescinding of Gulley's recording. (Western Yearly Meeting 2007-2008, 11-12)

In January 2009, the Board of Christian Ministry and Evangelism met with Phil Gulley. Three theological issues were highlighted in the Board's summary of the report: the divinity of Christ, the nature of the atonement, and Easter.

On the first, "Phil acknowledges that he once believed in the Deity of Jesus as God's only Son, as taught in Scripture and in our Faith and Practice, but that his ideas have evolved to the point that he doesn't accept the unique, exclusive Deity of Jesus. He calls himself a Christian, though, because he believes that Jesus was fully infused with the Spirit of God and that He is the fullest representation of what God wants us to be and as such provides the Path to God. Further, each of us can be infused with the Spirit of God, too, and be children of God."

In articulating this classic Low Christology, Gulley implicitly raised a theological issue dear to the hearts of most liberal Quakers, the issue of continuing revelation. Continuing revelation is affirmed in Western Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice: "Human understanding of truth is always subject to growth. . . . While fundamental principles are normal, expressions of truth and methods of Christian activity should develop in harmony with the needs of the times." And: "The canon of Scriptures may be closed, but the inspiration of the Holy Spirit has not ceased." (Western Yearly Meeting 2005, 11, 13)

As Friends, we are expected to grow in our knowledge of truth and of the love of Christ. That is the kind of growth that Gulley describes in the passage above. If we are truly faithful in that regard, how can it be said that we no longer have a place in ministry? Are we really better off not sharing the truths which Christ's Light has communicated to us, because it is safer and it

will not offend others whose understanding of spiritual truth may differ from ours? If we are thus reticent, we are not living up to the example of Quaker forbears like John Woolman who dared to challenge the entrenched pro-slavery orthodoxy which had regrettably found a home in eighteenth-century Quakerism. That is not to say that Gulley is right; it is merely to say that thoughtful and loving deliberations and discussions on issues that are raised during the process of continuing revelation benefit everyone in the Society of Friends, and can enable Quakers as a whole to live into a fuller revelation of God's truth. While it is probably true that all Quakers allow some role for continuing revelation in their theology, it is probably also true that evangelical Quakers tend to see some danger in continuing revelation and want to circumscribe it carefully, whereas liberal Quakers tend to be more welcoming toward continuing revelation.

Suffice it to say that this was not the stance toward continuing revelation that most members of the CM&E Board adopted in 2009. Reversing its stance of seven years earlier, the Board "recommends the rescinding of Philip Gulley's recording due to his substantial disunity with Faith and Practice, particularly as regards the Deity of Christ Jesus and the atonement." However, this minute was far from unanimous: three Board members requested that their disapprovals of this minute be recorded, and two others stood aside. (Western Yearly Meeting 2009-2010, 11-12)

When this minute reached the Yearly Meeting floor on Saturday, August 1, 2009, discussion occupied most of the day, including a special business session in the afternoon. The discussion was extremely emotional. One participant remembered that, to him, it seemed like the participants in the Yearly Meeting were almost equally divided, with the supporters of Gulley sitting on one side of the room, and Gulley's opponents sitting on the other side of the room. The minutes only hint at the contents of what was an extremely tumultuous, even disturbing session:

"The Clerk stated that he was seeking 'a way forward.' Suggestions heard included approving a minute stating that some of Philip Gulley's views vary from those of Faith & Practice, choosing three elders to make the decision, setting the issue aside for now and waiting on a resolution, and a separation of the yearly meeting. After more painful discussion, the Clerk stated that he was unable to gain a sense of the meeting or a way forward. He called the question of approving the rescinding of the WYM recording of Philip Gulley. Because there was no unity, the recommendation was not approved and Friends are still waiting until the Holy Spirit comes upon us." (Western Yearly Meeting 2009-2010, 12-13)

One Western Yearly Meeting Friend on the pro-tolerance side was heartened because “this is the FIRST time in years that a strongly controversial issue has been dealt with without violating Quaker business process.” Many Friends felt that WYM had fallen into a culture of *de facto* voting. For example, at the Fall Administrative Council in 2002 where Evanston Friends Meeting had been “released” from membership in Western Yearly Meeting, thirty Friends were minuted as not in unity with the decision. Of these thirty, eleven had been willing to stand aside, and nineteen had been unwilling to stand aside. Many Friends felt that this quasi-vote taken over Evanston’s departure had set an unfortunate precedent, and they were glad when in 2009 that precedent was not followed in the issue over the proposed rescinding of Phil Gulley’s recording.

The bitterness erupted anew in the Yearly Meeting on the afternoon of the closing day, Monday, August 3. Over strenuous protests from Gulley opponents, the clerk, Jim Crew, made clear that the proposed minute regarding Phil Gulley was terminated. A visitor from Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Mary Lord, addressed the conflict evident in the Yearly Meeting: “Peace is possible, although it may require help. The greatest indicator of success is whether people want peace; and in gathered meetings when the path can’t be found, the path is one that hasn’t been seen yet. There is a path, and I pray you can find it.”

The leaders of the pro-purity forces wasted no time convening a meeting to examine their options, and they gathered at Plainfield on the following Friday, August 7, 2009. The Pedigos were present, as was the WYM Christian Education director, Katy Palmer, and at least ten pastors of other meetings in the Yearly Meeting. Steve Pedigo spoke of his anger and upset at criticism of his job performance as Yearly Meeting superintendent, and he felt that he deserved much stronger support from the yearly meeting pastors. Pedigo remarked, “I do not believe in tolerance.” Many of the pastors present expressed their support for the Pedigos.

The other purpose of this meeting was to plan a division of Western Yearly Meeting. It was proposed that an independent yearly meeting be created, and that local meetings who dissented from the previous week’s action could have dual affiliation with both Western Yearly Meeting and the new Yearly Meeting. The unstated premise was that this would be a transitional stage providing protection for a meeting’s assets prior to its leaving Western Yearly Meeting altogether. Some were in favor of leaving Friends United Meeting altogether, and possibly exploring a new relationship with Evangelical Friends International.

However, some influential Friends in Western Yearly Meeting who had strongly opposed Phil Gulley's recording wanted no part of this new strategy, and thus were not part of this pro-purity party, or at least dissociated themselves from it at this crucial stage. Among the persons who want no part of separation from Western Yearly Meeting are Bill Clendening, pastor at Plainfield; Bill Medlin, pastor at Noblesville; and Wayne Carter, a retired pastor and weighty WYM Friend.

The Western Area Meeting (equivalent to a Quarterly Meeting), convened at Georgetown Meeting, one of the Meetings that would soon petition to withdraw from WYM, sent a minute to the Fall, 2009, Administrative Council, affirming unity with the WYM Faith and Practice, affirming "faith in the deity of Christ Jesus and the need for atonement as Christians," and insisting that WYM "monthly meetings and leadership . . . be in unity with Faith and Practice." Those not in unity should separate. The discussion of this minute provoked the usual polarized reaction. Some Friends perceived that "the core beliefs of WYM are being bombarded" and "Faith and Practice is not being followed by our leaders." Other Friends felt that "Faith and Practice is being made into a creed" and WYM Friends face a "challenge in not becoming Pharisees."

In July 2010, Plainfield Friends Meeting approved a minute that was a plea for unity within WYM: "We seem to have lost our sense of Mission, direction, and spiritual empowerment because of the amount of time and energy required in dealing with the issues brought before the Yearly Meeting. We sincerely believe that God is not calling us to conflict and division, but rather to renewed affirmation and re-dedication to bringing the message of Hope in Christ, which has been the message of Friends ever since George Fox heard the voice saying, 'There is one, even Jesus Christ, who can speak to thy condition.'

"We recognize that there is a variety of theological interpretations and experiences within our fellowship because God has not created us mindless nor without feelings. These differences may be challenging, but they need not destroy us. The spirit in which we approach our differences may be as important as the differences themselves. It may be here where we triumph or where we fail our Lord. Across the spectrum, our usual approach has been to 'dig in our heels,' to raise our voices, to close the circle of our fellowship, or to believe that God is expecting everyone to conform to 'my own' partisan position. Perhaps God's love and grace are greater than our expectations. Unfortunately, the limitations of our own human abilities prevent us from perfect understanding of God's Truth and Love, which come to us through our Lord Jesus

Christ. Because God ‘cuts us a lot of slack,’ can’t we also ‘cut our Chris-tian Brothers and Sisters a lot of slack?’ And, let the Eternal God be our judge, rather than trying to be the judge of one another?”

Plainfield Friends asked that WYM Friends commit themselves “to remember our Lord’s command to love one another, even as Christ has loved us; to remember the Scripture declares all who are in Christ belong to one another, that we are to bear one another’s burdens; to commit to finding ways to respect one another, remembering that Christ dwells within us . . .; to commit to remaining in fellowship with one another.”

On the last point, it is clear that a number of meetings were not able to maintain a commitment to fellowship with one another. In the past two years, at least nine meetings have sought some sort of withdrawal or separation from Western Yearly Meeting. The withdrawal of the following monthly meetings have been approved by the WYM Administrative Council; in Fall 2009, Irvington Meeting; in yearly meeting sessions in July 2010, Vermilion Grove; in Fall 2010, Georgetown, Ridge Farm, Hinkle Creek, and Westfield Meetings.

Of these six meetings, only Irvington members were staunchly in favor of Phil Gulley (Gulley had pastored at Irvington prior to his present pastorate at Fairfield Meeting). The other five meetings had all figured in the opposition to Gulley. Most notable among those five is Westfield Meeting, pastored by WYM’s co-superintendent, Steve Pedigo. Westfield is interested in joining Indiana Yearly Meeting, the other FUM body in the state. It is not known yet if Indiana Yearly Meeting will accept this request from Westfield. Irvington had 54 members; the other four meetings have a total of 524 members.

In addition, three meetings, Paoli, Bethel, and Amo, have asked for dual affiliation with another yearly meeting. Dan Smetzer, pastor of Paoli Meeting, has personally filed papers of incorporation for a completely new yearly meeting. The WYM Administrative Council has only approved “to research the request and to send a letter to the meeting as to what they expect concerning membership in Western Yearly Meeting.” These meetings comprise an additional 193 members. Altogether, the nine meetings that have requested either withdrawal or a change in relationship constitute 771 members, or nineteen percent of Western Yearly Meeting membership as of 2008.

The negative impact of this turmoil is evident in the numbers: in 2000, there were 63 monthly meetings in Western Yearly Meeting. In the past decade, more than one-third of these

(22) meetings have withdrawn, been laid down, are being laid down, or are seeking a change in relationship. At its peak membership in the 1890s, Western Yearly Meeting had more than 16,000 members; in 1962, it was down to 12,528; in 1982, 9116; in 2002, 5024. Depending on how one counts Paoli and the two smaller Meetings, the current membership of Western Yearly Meeting is either 3440, or 3245, in approximate terms.

How these very recent changes, whether accomplished or still in progress, have affected Western Yearly Meeting is somewhat difficult to say. Some meetings are dissatisfied, because they feel that the wrong meetings have withdrawn from WYM. Of this group, some still seem committed to stay within WYM, despite their members' disgruntlement. But other departures may well be ahead.

The status of the Yearly Meeting leadership is also unclear at this writing. Katy Palmer, from now-departed Westfield Meeting, who had served as Western's Director of Christian Education, has already resigned her position. Her report seems almost apocalyptic in channeling God's wrath: "Like the foolish man who built his house on the sand; we have whittled away the foundation, which is Jesus Christ; the foundation this Yearly Meeting was originally built on and we've replaced it with the idolatry of money and power, of Quaker history and culture, and of the façade of unity. This organization is sinking and God will not honor the work as long as we attempt to be the Church without our precious cornerstone . . . our sure foundation . . . our true vine . . . Jesus Christ." Sadly, Palmer's leadership of the Christian Education program seems, among other things, to have swayed many of the youth to opposition to Gulley, and these youth did not handle it with any more grace than did many of their elders. The pressing need for healing from these conflicts is evident in all age groups of WYM.

As of this writing, Steve and Marlene Pedigo are still co-superintendents of Western Yearly Meeting. But the irony that Westfield, the meeting they pastor, has withdrawn from the selfsame Yearly Meeting is lost on no one. The Pedigos' contract runs out in 2011, and the Yearly Meeting procedures call for a thorough review, with evaluations of the Pedigos requested from all monthly meeting clerks and pastors, and those in the Western Yearly Meeting leadership structure. Some of the feedback that will be gathered by the Executive Committee will undoubtedly be highly critical. With the withdrawal of some of their staunchest supporters, it is possible that the feedback gathered will be somewhat more critical than it would have been otherwise. Indeed,

Valley Mills Meeting has already approved and made public a minute declaring flatly that it “has lost confidence in the leadership of the co-superintendents. The co-superintendents were hired to facilitate the Meetings with reconciliation. Instead, we have witnessed division, discord, dogma, secrecy and distrust within the Yearly Meeting, as evidenced by the numerous Meetings leaving Western Yearly Meeting within the last few years. Our Yearly Meeting must heal and find a way forward, and this will not happen under their leadership. We recommend that the Yearly Meeting begin the process of selecting a new superintendent as soon as possible.” (*Friendly Voice*, Jan. 2011, 4)

However, the Pedigos undoubtedly still have some supporters in WYM, as well. As to how all of this pans out, stay tuned to this journal.

I asked April Vanlonden, lifelong member of Western Yearly Meeting, to look into the future for her Yearly Meeting, and also to share her hopes for WYM. She responded, “For a while Western Yearly Meeting will appear to be dead or dormant. Western Yearly Meeting has forgotten how to dialogue about much else. They missed out on a lot of Quaker spirituality as a corporate body. My hope is that conservative and liberal Friends will begin to talk to each other in true respect.”

#### Postscript: Allen Jay on the Spirit of Separation

Joshua Brown, pastor of West Richmond Meeting, is also the editor of a new edition of the *Autobiography* of Allen Jay (1831-1910). Jay, an Indiana Friend, was a successful revivalist during the late nineteenth century, as the Gurneyite branch of Quakerism moved toward the pastoral system. Jay’s success as a revivalist came despite his cleft palate, which made it impossible for him to speak without a lisp. He was much beloved by almost everyone with whom he came into contact, and was an extraordinarily persuasive fundraiser for Earlham College and other Quaker institutions.

We wish to highlight here, however, Jay’s vocation as a peacemaker, especially among Friends. The Hicksite-Orthodox separation occurred a few years prior to Jay’s birth, and thus comes in for only a cursory mention in his journal, but Jay extensively comments upon later divisions between Gurneyite, Wilburite, Conservative, Anti-Slavery, Otisite, and Kingite Friends, among others. His overriding perspective was to celebrate occasions when divisions were averted and to deplore every case in which they occurred. Jay was able to listen to both sides in a conflict and to see

value in what each of them had to say. He hoped others would do likewise. Here is a sampling of what Jay had to say on this topic, after visiting Nantucket Island, where rampant divisions among Friends hastened Quaker decline and vanishing:

The old meeting-house where I preached many years before is now occupied by the Nantucket Historical Association, and there you can sit and study the history of Friends when they held control of the island and there was no other denomination there. . . . You sit down and wonder if their descendants have learned wisdom from their fathers. Have they learned the great truth that, "Separation is no cure for the evils of Church or State?" Have they been able to grasp the fact that you cannot make people see the great truths of the Gospel just alike? The Saviour presented himself in His glorious saving power to one in one way and to another in another, but was precious alike to them all and they all alike precious to him . . . As I listened methought I could hear a voice saying: "My children have not learned the lesson. They are still finding fault. They are still judging. They are still asking if they may call down fire from heaven to burn up those who do not see me as they do." . . .

Now, as I hold my pen and look around my desk, I need only to reach out and turn over the pages of some of our church periodicals and see that the controversy is still going on. The fire of persecution is still burning. If some one is pro-claimed a heretic, there are those who are ready to throw the wood on the fire, and all in the name of the meek and lowly Jesus. Then comes the question: "How long shall these things continue?" The answer from those who judge is "Until every-body believes as we do. We are right. God has chosen us to stand for the faith once delivered to the saints." Such are their actions, though they do not dare to put them into words.

But I have said enough to give my views on separation, and close by asking: Has a separation ever caused more people to hear the Gospel? Ever enlarged the Church? Ever shown to the world more of the gentleness and meekness of Christ? Has a separation ever caused the world to exclaim, "Behold how these Christians love one another?" Has it ever caused those who held wrong views to turn and hold right ones?

On the other hand, some of us who have been connected with families in which husbands and wives,

brothers and sisters have been arrayed against each other, know something of the bitterness that it engenders which lasts to this day. Some one says: "We must come out and be separate from sinners." "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone." During that separation in Nantucket, a dear Friend who passed through it said sadly: "I have seen men of natural kindness and tenderness become hard-hearted and severe. I have seen justice turned back and mercy led aside."

Enough of this history.

During the time that the spirit of division was most intense among Orthodox Friends in the mid-nineteenth century, Jay was a member of Western Yearly Meeting and thus was especially concerned about the divisions that took place among the conservative and revivalist Friends in his own Yearly Meeting:

I enjoyed the revival movement, and remember how determined we were to save souls, not thinking of those we might injure in the attempt or how we might cripple the Church and mar the harmony by pressing our views too fast. Today we would all rejoice to see Western Yearly Meeting one united body, and I believe it would be a stronger and more healthy body, better prepared to carry forward the Lord's work, if some of the conservative element that was driven out was today mingled with the extreme radical element that at times manifests itself in various places. I close this article by quoting: "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love."

Source: Joshua Brown, ed., *Autobiography of Allen Jay (1831-1910)*. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 2010. [First edition, 1910.] Pp. 92-94, 96.

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## My Theology of Peacemaking

By David Zarembka

### Revenge or Reconciliation?

Do you believe that reconciliation is possible between enemies? Is revenge and retaliation a basic human trait that makes true reconciliation remarkably unlikely?

Western literature considers the discussion of “revenge” as a serious issue. Homer and the Greek classics are filled with stories of revenge. When driving from Washington, DC to St Louis one day, I happened to turn on the radio just as the female protagonist in an obscure Italian grand opera whose name I don’t remember was exuberantly praising her brother for killing their mother in revenge for her participation in helping to kill their father. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is based on the issue of whether Hamlet should revenge the death of his father by killing his uncle. In *Moby Dick*, Captain Ahab is seeking revenge against the white whale because he bit off his leg – when you think about it, this is a rather absurd reaction and the story “works” only if one considers Captain Ahab to be obsessed. Then the United States has the late nineteenth century example of the Hatfield and the McCoy families who killed each other in revenge for thirteen years until the Kentucky and West Virginia state militias were called in to restore order.

When I was a boy and went to Sunday school, I was told the story of Joshua and the Battle of Jericho where his army walked around the city for seven days and then blew their trumpets and the walls fell down. I remember drawing a picture of Joshua, his soldiers with trumpets, and the falling walls. As I grew up I thought this might be a nice example of a non-violent method of warfare. It was only when I was an adult that I read the following verse of Joshua 6:21:

<sup>21</sup> They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it – men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.

In other words Joshua committed genocide and these days would be in front of the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity and genocide.

Although revenge and retaliation are still an accepted concept in the international community, for instance the 1998 Clinton bombing of a factory in Sudan in retaliation for the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, I do not think this is the way to a more peaceful world

When Laura Shipler Chico finished a twenty month tour in Rwanda as a volunteer with the African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI), she wrote the following passage in a report:

Is it the Quaker notion that there is that of God in each of us that gives the Friends here such gall? Is it that unwavering hope that even a man who has butchered and hated and thieved can be redeemed? Or is it simply a thirst that comes out of raw hurt, to find each other again? Whatever it is, Rwandan Evangelical Friends, through Friends Peace House, are doing something that very few other groups in Rwanda have tried. They are bringing killers and survivors together. They are inviting them to sit down and look each other in the eye.

Venancie is a Tutsi survivor of the 1994 Rwanda genocide. In 2007 she attended a Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC – pronounced HE-rock) workshop. Before the workshop she said that she didn't think she could ever forgive the killers. The workshop was also attended by the Hutu man whom she witnessed killing her two brothers and younger sister. He had just been released from prison. On the third day of the workshop there is a trust walk done in pairs. One person is blindfolded and the other leads the "blind" person around; then they switch places. Here is what Venancie said when she was, by chance, paired up with the man who killed her siblings:

During the trust walk, the person who killed my family was my partner. I was shaking because my partner was a known killer and very strong. I thought he might throw me down. But he also had fear and he took me gently, kindly. I asked, "Will you lead me in peace?" After the trust walk with him, I felt it was not good to stay in my grief and had no fear against him.

Bethany Mahler, a master's student from the School for International Training, attended this workshop and wrote:

When you come from a place of comfort and security, where there was always someone to tuck you in at night, trust is easily built because there is no reason not to trust. In Rwanda, there is every reason not to trust. To behold a shy, widowed woman close her eyes and offer her hand to the man that destroyed her once-happy life was singularly beautiful. This small movement, this slight touch was everything. You imagine there is that kind of strength and benevolence in the world, but you rarely get to witness it. That day in September, I saw a world transformed through the eyes of every Rwandan in that room, a transformation in the richest, most profound sense of the word.

Here is an example from a Hutu prisoner after he confessed and was released:

I have accepted what I did in the genocide and I have been released. Through this workshop I see that I caused trauma to many people, especially those whose relatives I killed. I traumatized myself because I had an animal heart. I had done that, but I ask pardon. Forgive me. I did bad to you, to all Rwandans, even to myself. I believe since now we become brothers and sisters, we can all say together, "NEVER AGAIN."

When people, usually mothers, see their children fighting with each other because of ethnicity, they begin to think, "When these children grow up, will there be another cycle of violence worse than the last one?" "Worse than the genocide" is hard for me to imagine. But the next round will not be genocide, rather a mutual slaughter, so perhaps it will be much worse. People who have survived this kind of experience realize that reconciliation and return to normal living with the neighbor (enemy) is essential for long term peace. As Salvator Ndayziga from Burundi said, "We adults ought to find ways to get along together as different ethnicities so that our children would start from there."

Sylvain Toyi, a Hutu from Burundi, makes another point:

Before the workshop, I liked to be alone most of the time. My heart was exhausted from carrying all the bad stuff I had. After the workshop, I remember that is when I slept more deeply than any other single night since 1993 [when the Burundi civil war began].

This is a frequent comment. People who have been carrying around anger, bitterness, hostility, and fear for years talk

about how a great load or burden has been lifted off of them when they realize that reconciliation is both possible and necessary. When reconciliation occurs, people report feeling that they have rejoined the human family. Frequently their first step is to stop beating/screaming at their spouse, children, family, and neighbors. It is these who are closest at hand who suffer from the anger and bitterness of those traumatized by events. I think it is backwards when we say that peace begins in the family. Rather trauma frequently originates from conflicts in the larger world which then brings violence into the family as wounded people take their anger and bitterness out on those closest to them. We need a peaceable community, meaning more than just the absence of violence but the right ordering of human relationships including, most importantly, economic ones.

What strikes me most about the peacemaking theology in the New Testament is that it goes beyond the usual responses of flight or fight. Jesus' time was one full of repression and resistance. Some of the common people passively endured the oppression by the Roman Empire and the Jewish high priests. This included the Essene who migrated to the caves near the Dead Sea awaiting a more propitious time. Others resisted by banditry or in religious revivals such as were led by John the Baptist. Jesus indicated that there was a third way as in this passage written by the apostle Paul:

<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup> No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12: 17-21.

This third type of response can lead to reconciliation, to the reforming of normal human relationships between the oppressor and the oppressed, the perpetrator and the victim. This allows for the establishment of the "peaceable community" here on earth.

The Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities program really is no more than an attempt to implement, in a concrete, personal way, this third method of resolving violent conflicts. Mahatma Gandhi and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., were well known in the last century for using the concepts of non-violent

direct action in specific campaigns to end oppression. There are hundreds, even thousands, of other less well-known examples. This, I feel, is the path the world needs to pursue if it wishes to have lasting peace rather than continuous cycles of revenge and retaliation.

### Forgiveness

My understanding of forgiveness has been transformed through my work in the African Great Lakes region. I have traveled throughout Rwanda, Burundi, the eastern Congo, Uganda and Kenya, listening to the people who have attended our HROC programs. Prior to this work, I had assumed that someone who had wronged a person had to ask for forgiveness. Then the victim needed to assess the sincerity of the perpetrator's remorse and decide to forgive or not to forgive. My concept of forgiveness was challenged when I read the following testimony of a Tutsi survivor from Burundi who attended one of the early HROC workshops.

I am a Tutsi living in the internally displaced person's camp. I was around ten when the war reached our area. I remember that day when a Hutu beat my young brother. My mum asked our Hutu neighbor to escort her so that she could take my brother to the hospital. Pitilessly, he told her "Don't you know where you have buried your husband? Take him there too!" Hopelessly, my mum and I went to the hospital but my brother died in mum's arms before we could reach the hospital. We turned back and took the trail to the cemetery. Only two of us, two females, buried my brother. This would never have happened before the war. After we were done, we went home crying. Since that time, I considered the Hutu man as a monster as well as his wife and children.

...After the HROC workshop I attended, I used to sit and meditate. One day, I decided to rebuild the destroyed relationship with that family. Unfortunately, the man had died. Still, I went to his daughter, who is almost my age, and told her my sad story. I openly told her that this was the only reason that I hated them. She was very sorry to hear what her father did to us. In tears, she humbly asked if I would be eager to forgive her father though he had died, her family and her too! I responded to her that that was my aim for coming and talking to her. We are now friends, real friends. I have forgiven! Without HROC

workshop skills, especially the tree of trust, I am not sure if I would have come to that decision.

Clearly if a person had died since the offense, he or she can not ask for forgiveness. My assumption that the offending person needed to ask for forgiveness was invalid. In another case, a rape survivor from the North Kivu district of the Democratic Republic of the Congo indicated that she did not even know who her attackers had been and she would not want to meet them anyway. She forgave them nonetheless. This made me realize that forgiveness is an internal action on the part of the victim.

Often times, victims report how they were filled with grief, anger, hostility as well as thoughts of revenge and retaliation. When a victim releases these ideas by seeking forgiveness in his or her heart, we frequently hear about how that person feels like a heavy load had been lifted off his or her shoulders. One man commented, "Now, I feel human again." In another case, a woman who had been badly treated by her relatives realized that her anger and bitterness towards her relatives was not hurting her relatives, but herself. She went to forgive and reconcile with those relatives who had mistreated her.

The first half of this verse is one of my favorite Biblical passages.

<sup>34</sup>And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. Luke 23:34.

The question, though, is "Who are the 'them' that should be forgiven?" I think that it is first of all the Roman soldiers who were executing Jesus, the Roman administrators of justice including Pontius Pilate, and the Jewish religious elite that wanted him out of the way. I think it also includes Judas Iscariot.

In 2001 I attended an inter-denominational prayer breakfast in Bujumbura, Burundi at Novahotel, which was supposed to be the finest hotel in Bujumbura, but was rather run down at that time because of the Civil War in Burundi. More than fifty people, mostly pastors of various Protestant denominations, were in attendance. The pastor leading the discussion used verses in the Bible about Judas Iscariot as his text. He gave the usual explanation that Judas was an evil person because he was the one who betrayed Jesus. Judas has come to mean "one who betrays another under the guise of friendship." When the pastor had finished his ten-minute presentation, others in the audience were encouraged to give their

opinions. Other speakers were not so hostile to Judas. One pastor said that Judas did not think he was doing anything particularly important when all he had to do was to identify with a kiss on the cheek the person who was Jesus. For this he was paid the small sum of thirty pieces of silver. “Didn’t everyone at one time or another do some simple, seemingly minor transgression like this?” Another participant commented, “Didn’t Judas, when he realized the implications for what he had done, throw the money on the ground and commit suicide and thus atone for his betrayal?” I have wondered why I have remembered this discussion so vividly. I think it is because I was seeing Judas, the betrayer, from a completely different, much more sympathetic angle.

In the healing from the violence in Rwanda, Burundi, and the eastern Congo, the survivors many times forgive the perpetrators as they realize that they didn’t know what they were doing. In Rwanda for instance, genocide survivors say that the perpetrators were under “bad government” because it was the then Rwandan Government that asked, even forced, people to kill their neighbors. Many of those in Rwanda who refused to participate in the killings were killed themselves for refusing. Rather than focusing solely on the transgression, the survivors were looking at the conditions that made the acts of violence possible.

Forgiveness is how a person can recover from anger and bitterness and become again a normal, loving person. The following testimony from a Kikuyu pushed out of his house during the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya illustrates this point:

HROC has really changed my living style with my neighbors. During skirmishes, my house was burnt down by people I knew. I had promised never to forgive, talk, or even greet them. But after learning in the workshop that when one wants to heal, you start with yourself then others, I cooled my temper down, took action of forgiveness, and now my enemies are my great friends. Some came last month to help me boma [build] my house.

This testimony from a HROC participant from North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, also shows the benefits of forgiving.

[Before the workshop], forgiveness was not in my vocabulary. If you offend me I will keep it and sometimes I used to write it in a certain book for reference. I never thought of others when I do offend them. When we did the

mistrust tree, I realized how I am filled with hatred, anger and pride. I realized what kind of fruits I am producing especially in my family.

There are people who offended me when I was not yet married. Now I have three children and I keep on talking about it. Maybe my children have heard me talk evil about those people and they will also hate them because of me. My first step is to burn the record book. If someone offends me, it's better to talk to the person. And she may, in her turn after realizing her fault, ask for forgiveness. Even if she doesn't ask for forgiveness, it's ok because I will have done my part.

Forgiveness is often the first step in resolving a conflict, a restoring of the wounded relationship. It looks forward towards the future rather than dwelling on the past injustices.

I cringe when I often hear people ask, "Do you forgive the person who harmed you?" Forgiveness is something internal, the Inner Light, as Quakers like to say. It must be completely voluntary, a self-realization on the part of the forgiver. It cannot be induced by a question. For this reason the HROC program does not push or ask for forgiveness, but allows it to develop naturally. As people go through the process of recovery from trauma – feeling safe, remembering and grieving, reconnecting, and realizing their commonality with others in the group, they begin to reassess their inner wounds. As they listen to people who have similar or even different stories to tell, they realize that they are not alone. I remember the testimony of one woman who said that others had worse stories than she did –she survived by being at the bottom of forty-eight people who were killed around her. I myself can't imagine what could be worse! This, then, can lead to real, restorative forgiveness.

Conflicts are not resolved when they are suppressed by violence. They only fester and later explode. Resolving conflicts, including those large, seemingly intractable international ones, can only happen when the various sides are given opportunities to both speak and listen. This can lead to true, internal forgiveness, as one HROC participant commented, "Hatred is replaced by love."

The soldiers, the Roman judges, and the Jewish elite crucifying Jesus did not ask for forgiveness, but Jesus, in his wisdom, forgave them anyway.

## Transforming Power

In January 1999, when I visited Rwanda for the first time after the genocide, Rwandans had a good understanding of the mechanics of the genocide. They understood how the Hutu Power genocidaires used the downing of the plane carrying the Rwandan president as an excuse to seize power and eliminate the Tutsi and those moderate Hutu who opposed them. They also understood how the genocidaires had organized the interhamwe youth militias who – with the support of the army, police, and government apparatus – had perpetrated the genocide. They knew how the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front had militarily defeated the interim Hutu Power government and took control of the country. What they couldn't comprehend was "How could we have killed each other like this?" Essentially this is a religious question.

The trappings of Christianity had been brought to Rwanda early in the Twentieth Century – churches, priests and ministers, songs, prayers, holy days – but the essence of the religion had been missed. Killing one's neighbor was clearly not part of the ethics of the Christian Bible. Before the genocide, Catholics were estimated to be more than 80% of the Rwandan population. The Catholic Church was heavily involved in the genocide. The Catholic Archbishop of Rwanda, Vincent Nsengiyumva, had been part of the Hutu Power inner circle until he was told by the Pope that he had to withdraw from such a politicized position. He was later assassinated by Tutsi soldiers. Many priests encouraged their Tutsi parishioners to congregate in the Church compound and then brought in the interahamwe to slaughter the Tutsi members of their congregation. One of my former Tutsi students told me that none of his children would now walk into a Catholic Church because of what the Church did during the genocide.

This existential question of "How could we have done this to each other?" is one of the main reasons that the AGLI programs of Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) and its offshoot, Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC), have resonated so well with Rwandans.

AVP is based on the Bible verse Romans 12:2, which says,

Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God – what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.

The AVP program was developed in 1975 as a non-sectarian program to attract people of all faiths or no faith to develop non-violent methods of conflict resolution – particularly for long-term prisoners in US prisons. The program emphasizes the transforming power to do good that everyone has regardless of what he or she has done in the past. Unlike some other religions that emphasize the evil in people and that people are born in sin, the Quaker theology is based on the idea that there is that of God and that of goodness in everyone. The reason AVP workshops are so effective in Rwanda is that they answer the question posed above thusly: “Perhaps we did terrible things to each other, but we can be transformed again.” This is a statement of hope, a statement of love, and a statement of the power to change.

Immediately after the genocide over 120,000 suspected perpetrators of the genocide were imprisoned; often for ten or more years. If a prisoner confessed to what he had done, he went before a local gacaca; a grassroots court in his community. If the community/court felt the prisoner adequately confessed to what he had done, he was released back into the community, but required to do restitution work. We must realize that the perpetrators of the genocide are wounded and traumatized like the survivors. Here is the testimony of one Hutu perpetrator:

Prison, it was bad, beyond understanding. You could not sleep lying down, there was only room to sit; many died from disease. Even sometimes there was no water, and once I went four days without food...I realized I had many symptoms along with the others who had been in prison. When I remembered sleeping among the dead in prison, it made me want to be alone and not speak. Even though I was released, I still felt imprisoned and didn't trust others...I was only doing my thing, I could not talk to people about my problems. I thought I could only live with prisoners. But after the workshop I felt free in my heart, it let me release my fears and helped me to form relationships with survivors... even if I have a conflict with someone, it no longer destroys the relationship

The purpose of Quakerism, of Christianity, of all religions, is to make people better. That is to love, support, and interact so that, as the Lord's Prayer says, “thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” There are no evil people, but only people who have done evil things. Anyone can be changed for the good,

anyone can be transformed. In evangelical terms, anyone can be “saved,” anyone can be “resurrected.”

Evangelical Quakers have complained that the AVP and HROC programs are not explicitly “Christian” and sometimes do not support these programs. I think that this misjudges the programs. It is the implicit nature of the workshops that allows people to decide on their own volition to become “better”; to realize that they can leave behind whatever very bad or evil things that they did in the past and become model human beings. The punitive nature that is common in too many American religions and that has made American society a leader in retribution and punishment, is, in my opinion, an unchristian one as it denies that of God in everyone; it denies that anyone can be transformed into a caring, loving human being.

I once sat in front of almost 1,000 Rwandan genocide perpetrators in a re-education camp before they were going to be released back into the communities where most had done atrocious things. I have met the killers and their accomplices face to face. I was in a workshop where one of the men had killed another participant’s son during the genocide and have looked them both in the face as they reconciled.

The world of hate, bitterness, animosity, and violence can be transformed, if and only if, we try; only if we open our hearts and minds to allow it.

The Quest for an Authentic French Quakerism:  
A Conversation with Jeanne-Henriette Louis

*[Note: This conversation was conducted at the Friends International Center in Paris, in Twelfth Month (December) 2010.]*

Chuck Fager[CF]: Jeanne-Henriette [JH], I'm interested in your academic career, but I want to know a little bit about you. You say you are from Bordeaux, where did you grow up? Why did you become an academic instead of a doctor or lawyer or politician? Other than the fact that you were from France and spoke French, why were you teaching French? Why did you decide to go to American Studies?

JH: I was born in Bordeaux in a Protestant family in the [French] Reformed Church. That's the religious education that I received from my family and when I was 24 years old, I was no longer interested, I didn't stay with the Church. I found it was a very good place and very reliable, trustworthy, and so on, plenty of qualities. But it had become a little boring for me. They were too good. So when I left Bordeaux and came to Paris for my studies, studying English to become a professor of English, I did not register with any Protestant parish in Paris, so I went just unnoticed. I was a bit up in the air, but only toward Church, still doing some exploration, I was a seeker. I didn't know Quakers at all at that time, but I enjoyed following a lot of talks, lectures, and so on. I experienced freedom, so I liked it much more than when I was with the Protestant parish.

At that time I was studying in order to get a diploma to teach English in a Grammar School. I was given the diploma and then I decided that I should go to the United States for a while, because when I taught English, my students were much interested by the American classes. Part of the curriculum was the British Isles and the other part was the United States and I could tell the difference in the interest of my students. They really liked best classes about American civilization, that's what we called it. But after two years, I thought, well, I've never been to this country it's a little difficult to give classes, it was a little abstract, so I applied for

a position in the United States, for a grad position in an American college and I was offered a position in Wake Forest University [1968-69].

It was comparatively quiet in Wake Forest University, but now I remember much of the arguments about ROTC, so the student's protest was about ROTC. They talked about the Vietnam War. So it was not completely quiet. But meanwhile we heard news from California, from Berkeley and this was the beginning of the protests, the visible protests in Berkeley. And I found that Wake Forest was a little too provincial for me. I wished to have one more year in the United States, and I happened to learn that there was a position in Berkeley for a French citizen and I applied. I thought it must be terribly difficult to obtain, but why not try? And it worked. I was surprised. And very happy, because California was going to be a good contrast to North Carolina, so I would know two sides of American Civilization. In Berkeley, I taught French again, French language. [1970]

CF: That was not a quiet year in Berkeley.

JH: No, not at all. But most interesting. At the end of the 1970 academic year, I decided to go back to France since I had two years, and I wanted to get a position in a French University, which I got in Orléans, not too bad. I wanted to be in Paris or near Paris and I got near Paris, but anyway I often went to Paris. And I started teaching American Civilization to freshmen in the University of Orléans, and this time I really enjoyed it because I had two years experience in the United States, so it was more concrete.

Then I was told of course, that I must write a PhD. dissertation, which I did not look forward to. I thought perhaps I would have to spend all my vacation doing that. And I found that it was rather sad, and I didn't know what topic to chose. I liked the teaching very much, but the research side, not too much. But I had to find a topic, and a director.

And the topic I chose was the period of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, which was the period when I was a child. I was born in 1938, and I had some memories of the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. That period was a mystery to me and I really wanted to explore it more, to try to understand what this war was all about. And it was about psychological warfare within the United States from 1939 until the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.

CF: Can you say a little more about World War Two, your memories of it, and the mysteries that you felt you needed to explore?

JH: Yes, yes, actually, at this time my family did not live in Bordeaux. We lived in France, in the Pyrenees, because my father had his position there.

[Parts of southern] France [were not] occupied by the German army after 1942, so we were in a free space for longer than Paris for instance. But we didn't suffer too much from the occupation in the war. Still those years were not good years to have one's childhood, but we were comparatively fortunate. My father was not called back to the army when the war started, because he already had several children so he was exempted. And he was a pacifist at heart, so he liked not being drafted.

And then I remembered when prisoners, French prisoners came back from Germany, by this time, I think we did live in Bordeaux. So it was, of course, Germans who were enemies for us. Although, my father, being a very peaceful man, 4enever insisted too much about that. And he said we should not hate our enemies, so I had good preparation for Quaker philosophy. Although, I don't think he knew Quakers, or did I. My brothers and sisters, we were both in a good context, I think. We were encouraged more to love our enemies than to hate them. My father had become a Protestant, he was Catholic before, and we were brought up in the spirit of evangelical love or brotherhood. He quoted the Bible very often.

CF: What were some of his favorite verses or quotes that you can recall?

JH: The New Testament. He particularly likes St. John chapter 3, in French *Car Dieu a tant aimé le monde qu'il a donné son Fils unique, afin que quiconque croit en lui ne périsse point, mais qu'il ait la vie éternelle*. So did you follow that?



**Jeanne-  
Henriet  
te Louis**

CF: Is that verse 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

JH: Yes, I believe that was it. And he loved these quotes so much that we had it hung in the dining room. I think it was in red; it was embroidered I think. So he read the Bible to us. He was really a deep believer, actually. Until I started at the University, I went to school normally, that was nothing extraordinary. I chose English. Already, at the age of 10, I wanted to be a teacher of English.

CF: What was your father’s profession? Did you say that?

JH: No, I didn’t. My father was an agricultural engineer. He had studied at the Institut National Agronomique in Paris. He was very close to nature, and he was given a high position. But he was more or less stuck in the career of which he was French director. He was responsible for Agriculture in the South west of France. It was a good position, but when the war ended, he was dismayed because he was asked to do things he was not ready to do in terms of philosophy. He was asked to encourage Industrial Agriculture, and he could not accept this. This was a conscientious objection of its own, so he was very unhappy. Then we went to Angoulême, and in 1948, this is where he was asked to encourage Industrial Agriculture, and he just could not do it. It was against his conscience. And he already had several children to raise, so my mother was very worried about the whole situation. And then he tried to find something he could do for a living. He could not keep his profession.

And fortunately, he found an alternative position, which was teaching in an agricultural school. And one was found near Bordeaux, and he taught mainly arboriculture, how to take care of trees; and he was very, very good at this. He could cure trees that were ill. And vines, and Bordeaux is a country of wine, of course. He became a specialist of wine growing, and he taught these to his pupils. He was already a dissident, but he was not ejected from his job. He taught his pupils: *I am asked to teach you things which are wrong*. Some of his pupils remember that now. We got in touch with some of them, and they tell us, my brothers and sisters and me: “Your father was right, he was so right!”

CF: Rebels and pioneers.

JH: Yes, so he remained a dissident . . . Then I registered for my PhD. dissertation and the subject was psychological warfare. And everyone knew that I was working on that, working on war, studying war. I wanted to clarify, even for myself what an enemy was, I remember, of course, Germans were our enemies, but I had to clarify this more. So I taught American Civilization in Orléans for seven years. After these years, I thought that I must go back to the United States because I didn't have enough documents for my dissertation. I applied for a Fulbright grant, and then I had 1 year for full-time research. This was going to be good. But, at the same time, I was uncomfortable about my topic. And I thought, how could I choose such a bad topic for myself?

CF: Why was it such a bad topic for you? I ask because psychological warfare was a very real thing and certainly worth studying and understanding. It didn't make you feel you were becoming a militarist, did it?

JH: No, no, it did not. But working on that was very dark. It put me in a warlike atmosphere. I went, I studied at the National Archives in Washington, D.C, and the place was so unpleasant, the offices were very dingy looking, it was very sad, so my morale was affected by that. Plus working on warlike, wartime documents, the whole thing made my search painful, dark. Of course I learned things, I have documents for that. But, I thought, when I went back home, Bordeaux, I told my brothers and sisters, why did I choose this topic? And I chose it, so I don't have to blame anyone for it, no, I chose it.

And meanwhile, I could tell that the Green Movement, for organic agriculture, was developing in the United States. This was recent. And when I returned to the U.S. in 1977, I realized that the organic agriculture movement was rising. Whereas, when I chose my topic a few years before, it was not really visible, particularly from France, so in these years 1976-77, I thought, Oh dear, I chose the wrong topic, I should have chosen the Green Movement, because I would have felt much more at home with the education I had received through my father.

So what was extraordinary, what happened afterwards when I found out about peace movements and Quakers, this was in nearly 1980, after I had come home with a lot of documents from the military department of the archives, very sad stuff that I had collected.

I wrote something, which was a kind of draft for the dissertation, I gave it to my supervisor, and he said, it's not bad, but

it's a little dry. And I couldn't do much about the style at this time. And then when I found out about Friends in 1980, and the idea of non-violence, Quakers, Mennonites, William Penn, founding of Pennsylvania, Oh I said, but half of American History has been missed out.

CF: Now let's stop a little bit. You said, "when you found out about Friends." Say a little bit about how and when you found out, if you remember.

JH: Yes, yes, I remember, because this was a crucial turning point. Some of my research in these years I did at the British Library in London, a very good library, they even have a lot of American documents, and one day, in order to finish the dissertation, I had to check a few things, and this saved me from traveling to the United States, so I spent several weeks there. And by chance, if I may say so, at the British Library, I came across a Quaker text.

CF: What Quaker text?

JH: The first one I found was an American one, by Richard Gregg, have you met him, do you know about him?

CF: I know his work. Was it *The Power of Non-Violence*?

JH: Yes, yes. And this was in the Journal of Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) an article by Richard Gregg, I came across it, but I was drawn, attracted by the title, "Should we Kill Hitler?" or "Would Killing Hitler Solve Anything?" A rather provocative title. I had never seen the like of it. I read it and felt, Ahh, this man is right. And then I realized I had missed out on so much.

CF: Now wait a second. The question of his title was, "Would Killing Hitler Solve Anything?" And his answer in the article was—?

JH: He said it would not.

CF: Because?

JH: Because humanity carries war in itself. And if we do not do work on ourselves, by ourselves, killing an enemy doesn't help. So killing itself was not the solution. So it was very much Quaker philosophy that I was discovering, and I said, Oh, yes, that's right.

So at the British Library, I took this opportunity to learn more about Friends, and I read about Gandhi, and Tolstoy, and William Penn. I read all that I could. So, I was much disturbed by that, but at the same time very happy. Because a whole space was opening before me, and I could tell it had been very little studied. I had taught American Civilization in Orléans for several years, without meeting Quakers, so I thought teachers, university teachers, do not know about Quakers, so their students do not know about them, and so on. So this was very good news. And then I thought, I should have written my dissertation on American Quakers.

When I came home, in Paris, I talked to my supervisor. My poor supervisor was really at a loss with me, because the first time I told him, I should have worked on organic agriculture—no, no, no, too late, too late; and then I said, Oh, I should have written my dissertation on Quakers, and I was supposed to finish the dissertation within 1 year. So I said I'm not going to change the topic itself, but I'm going to change the way, my interpretation of the documents, the way I look at these events.

I didn't change the topic and my supervisor said, "Oh, if you were going to write about peace studies, you could do that, but you should have given this as title. But I could not have written about something I did not know. It was a surprise. It came mainly because of the hard work I had done and which had enabled me to reach more peace in this context.

And I said, "Okay, I'm not going to change topic because I did a lot of work on psychological warfare, I have documents, I find they are very sad and depressing, but, since I have them I'm going to expose them too, yes, write about them, but with a different comment and comparing the warlike and the peace interpretations"

So for peace, I had no time in one year to get enough documents. I just took a few Quaker documents. I kept it in the background and I thought, I shall deal with this as a post dissertation work, in French we call it post-doc. So it reconciled me with the dissertation that I had taken, but, sometimes in the dissertation I talk about peace, and for the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War I could reference Quakers like Richard Gregg, but not too much, I didn't have much time for that.

And when I defended my dissertation, this was in 1983, I said, Now I was going to change the century I work on, I had started with the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and I said, Oh, but what is more important is the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, so I said, That's what I'll do after as post doctorate work, and I said we should start with the founding of Pennsylvania and something which did not last very

long, the Holy Experiment, but we can follow on from there. And this is what I did. And the panel, they were very nice, very kind.

CF: I recall there was someone who has been quite meaningful in my own development on your panel. Or, at least I thought you had told me there was.

JH: That there was?

CF: Yes, on your panel, a scholar who has been very influential in my own development.

JH: Jacques Ellul. [*Jacques Ellul, 1912-1994, was a Professor of Sociology and law at the University of Bordeaux. His writings on the growth of technology and its domination of modern society have been seen by many as prophetic. He was also a lay theologian based in the French Reformed Church, whose many religious works have also been widely influential. He espoused a kind of Christian anarchism.*]

CF: Yes.

JH: Yes, yes, and I knew him because he was Protestant, the same church as my family.

CF: So now we have to stop here and talk about Jacques Ellul and Bordeaux...

JH: He was a friend of my father's.

CF: I'm not a bit surprised.

JH: Yes, I read several of his books and really appreciated them very much and when I came to build a panel, I was given some freedom for that and I told my supervisor, I would like to have Jacques Ellul and he agreed, he invited him, yeah.

CF: So you defended your dissertation, and it was successful, I presume.

JH: Yes, yes, the defense went very well because I felt comfortable with this new version, it was no longer dry. You know the first version was dry, I was told, and I didn't know how to make it more attractive, but afterward, I wrote in a natural way, my style had

much improved, because I agreed with myself. So, yes, it went very well and afterward, I started in my post-doc work, starting with the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and I'm still working on it now.

CF: Okay, then let's leave that for a moment, but I want to go back, you first learned about Quakers at the library in London. But then did you learn more about it mainly by reading or did you seek out a Meeting, or in terms of actual contacts or association?

JH: Yes, so I looked for Quakers in France, there were about the same number as now.

CF: Or more.

JH: Yes, there was more. A friend knew the Quaker Center and when I told him I had found out about the Quakers, he told me, "I can take you there one Sunday", so he took me here.

CF: Okay. Do you remember what year that might have been?

JH: 1981. The end of 1981, I was still working on my dissertation but it was almost the end. And I found when I met [an American Quaker living in Paris] Gretchen Ellis at this time, she had come here before me, and said, is this Quaker Center going to last or not, because they were not numerous, and particularly, they were quite old and depressed because we thought maybe they would have to close this place. They were very seriously talking about closing it. And Gretchen and I and a few other ones, we decided to apply for membership. We had mixed feelings about that because it was a big responsibility, it was not a thriving meeting at all, but we thought, well, we can't just let it die and watch it dying. We couldn't do that. So we applied for membership, and the age average dropped.

CF: Okay, so you were attending that, and being active with the center while you were finishing your dissertation and then continued in the 1980's. Can we move to the development of your concern for Quakers in France, I assume there are connections there.

JH: There are. I found out about Congénies, [*the Quaker settlement in the south of France, now a Quaker conference center*] which at the time had not been restored, later on it was restored. Now it is beautiful, you saw it. But I read a textbook about French Quakers, by Henry Van Etten. He had a Dutch origin, but he lived in France

and he was Secretary for France's Yearly Meeting for several decades, and his book is a summary of the history of French Friends. And we had it re-published this year, because it was sold out. And I found it illuminating. Now I had the story as a whole. And I thought, Oh, France Yearly Meeting is in a bad condition because it has been too much influenced by English-speaking Friends, particularly the British and it was a little stifled, it could not find its identity freely, so I found it rather sad, and I thought I might help French Friends to find their identity.

CF: Now, let me interrupt for a minute because this book by Henry Van Etten, can you identify 2 or 3 high points in the history that he covered? How far back does it go?

JH: It goes back to the history of French Protestants, 16<sup>th</sup> century and 17<sup>th</sup> and so on. And this is how, after my analysis, I say this should be emphasized: the history of French Protestants is the history of persecution, it's little known. Well, Protestants know about it, but non-Protestants do not know much. French who wanted to learn about Quakers studied mainly British Quaker history, and their head was full with Quaker history, and persecution in Britain.

They knew about Quakers at the time of George Fox and even after, but did not know much about the persecution of French Protestants, so they had adopted the history of Quakers given by Quakers, British Quakers, which is normal for British Quakers. I think it's normal, there may be a little regret on my part [about that British emphasis], but it can be understood. But for French Quakers, if the whole space is taken by the history of British Quakers and there's no space left for the persecution of French Protestants, then the basis [for French Quaker history] is wrong.

CF: So French Protestants were persecuted. Do I remember you saying there was a small group in France of Protestants who, a long time ago, announced that they were identifying with Friends? Can you say a little bit about that?

JH: Yes. Well, the first French Quakers were spiritual descendants of French Protestants, and so they were mainly in the south of France, near Nîmes. Yes, they were spiritual descendants of Camisards, who had refused to fight during the Camisard war, beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

CF: What is that, Camisard?

JH: It was a war among Protestants and Catholics, where Protestants were persecuted. In the mountains [of the Cévennes region] they had to hide in order to hold their meetings. And the Camisard war [a revolt against the repressive Catholic monarchy] broke out in about 1702, and some of the persecuted Protestants, fought valiantly, but some of them would not fight, even to defend themselves and these were the spiritual forefathers of Quakers to be, future Quakers. And the meeting between pacifist Protestants and British Quakers took place in 1785, when, what would be a long story.

CF: Please say more about the meeting?

JH: Yes, a British Quaker shipowner named Joseph Fox had some ships [of which he was part owner] seized by the French. The ships had been involved in [the American Revolution] they worked against the French on the British side. So some of his ships that were ships were seized by French authorities.

CF: This was a British Quaker in France?

JH: Well, he was a British Quaker, and he learned after this war, the American war of independence, he learned that his ships had been involved in looting old French ships.

Because he was co-owner of the ships, so he was very sorry about that and he went to the co-owners that were not Friends, who wanted to give him a share of the money they got from selling the goods looted from French ships. First Joseph Fox refused it, then he accepted, and he put it in a bank or something in order to give it back to the victims. And he sent his son, Edward to France, in order to find the victims. And the son published an ad, somehow, in the Gazette of France, saying they wanted to find those who had lost property because of his ships, and compensate them, and this became known to the people in [the village of] Congénies [in the south of France].

Now in Congénies, a group had started. They were not Quakers, but they were Protestant pacifists, and they had a lot of philosophy that was not very different from British Quakers. And one of them, I think it was Jean de Marsillac, who wrote a biography of William Penn, he was French, he had become a French Couflaire, as they called them. [The Couflaire were French Protestants who held views similar to Quakers. "Couflaire" in French means "inspired ones."]

And when de Marsillac saw the letter of Edward Fox, he said we must get in touch with him, and so they wrote him, the group wrote to Edward Fox, and they told him, we don't know anything about the looting of ships, but we think we are brethren, we are much impressed by your Quaker philosophy. So maybe we should meet. And Edward answered, and in the following years, contacts were made, letters were written and Jean de Marsillac was invited to London to the British Friends, and three years later, the Couflaires became Quakers because they had said that they would like to be part of the Religious Society of Friends, and this was done in 1788, when Friends from Britain and Nantucket in America came to Congénies. And they had a ceremony and they had a meeting for worship. So that's the beginning of French Quakerism.

CF: You're keeping me in suspense. The Friends from Congénies were not connected to the case of the looted ships. Did Edward Fox ever find people from the ships, to give money back to?

JH: Yes, he did. He did give them the money. It was completed, yes, in the following years. The father and the son were called Fox, but they are not from George Fox's family. *[In fact, it had been a compensation payment made to a boat owner in Sète, a coastal town not far from Congénies, that alerted the Couflaires to the existence of Quakers.—Ed.]*

CF: Okay, so we've got French Quakers started in Congénies in 1788, an unknown story even in France. Are there other high points between then and when you come along, that we ought to know?

JH: There is the building of the meetinghouse in Congénies in 1822. With British Quaker money and American Quaker money.

CF: With, you say, British and American Quaker money that meetinghouse was built in 1822. When I first visited with you, you showed me an album of very old photographs of Quakers who spent time there. It showed that Congénies became kind of a summer place for Quakers who could afford to go to the south of France.

JH: Yes, it was a missionary grounds, missionary for Quakers. And Congénies was the main place where one could find Friends, or in the next villages, but it was much limited, it never went beyond maybe 300-400 people, but the majority of the people in Congénies had become Friends.

CF: But it sounded like that meeting died out at some point. About when was that?

JH: At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One reason was that in the United States it was easier to be considered a conscientious objector than in France. So, some men chose to immigrate to the United States. And the other reason was marriage. There were a lot of Protestants in the area so some men or women married Protestants.

CF: “Married out” is what we formerly called it in the States. In the States they were disowned when they did that.

JH: Yes. I don’t think they were disowned then. But anyway, the meeting dwindled until it ended at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*[The last meeting was held in April, 1905, and the building was sold in 1907. – Ed.]*

CF: And when was it revived?

JH: Well, it was supposed to be revived at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. And this was done by British and American Friends. The first Quaker Center in France was opened in 1920 at Hôtel britannique , Avenue Victoria.

CF: So there was a Paris Quaker Center established at some point, and Congénies was revived eventually, and it’s operating now.

JH: Yes, but much later, because it was revived here, in Paris, and in Congénies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Congénies there was hardly anything left . . . and towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century some Friends in France thought it would be good to buy the house back, they kept the memory about the history, and I was one of those who spoke in favor of buying the house back and when the Tomlins came [retired British Friends], and decided to live in Congénies, they were instrumental in the buying of the house and reviving the Congénies group. So the house in Congénies was bought by France Yearly Meeting in 2003, with the help of many British Friends. And then it was renovated; the renovation was really well done.

CF: I want to go back to your concern for taking this unknown French Quaker history, and somehow extending it, or making it the basis for shall we say, a renewed indigenous French Quakerism, and how evidently that has been a challenging thing to pursue.

JH: It is a challenging thing, something difficult, because it has been tried many times and it never worked. Beyond 300 Friends in Congénies it did not really spread, some in the Paris area, but we have a lot of pushing from the British Friends, American Friends, and though I tried to analyze that and it must be something very deep in people's minds, in subconscious.

Because when you think about it, quite a number of French people share the Quaker philosophy, so why do they not choose to belong to Society of Friends? And one reason, I think, is it is very close precisely to the Reformed Church. Quite a lot of people have been in the Reformed Church, why should they go elsewhere? And actually, French Reformed and French Quakers hardly know each other, even now. The Reformed Church in France likes simplicity, like Friends, there are many values in common. So, somehow, it is a handicap for Quakerism, and then I asked myself, well, after all, if people are happy with the Reformed Church why not just stay?

CF: But what about the 90-plus per cent of French people, as I've read, that don't go to any church?



JH: Yes. I think they don't go to any church because they're not sure that these churches can bring something that they do not have; and there is also the tradition of *laïcité* in France, you know, separation between church, which was the Catholic Church at the time, and the state, and being an agnostic is very well accepted in France. Quakerism in France is possibly the nearest thing to, agnosticism, or, how

do I explain that? We have a poster here somewhere, and I think it is very relevant now. [The poster reads: In English: "Do you aspire to a secular religion without dogma or ritual? The Society of Friends (Quakers) may interest you."] The poster has been there for a long time but now with all the changes that happen about *laïcité* and all, I think this poster is relevant. And it's the idea, at the

time of the French Revolution there was a lot of interest for Quakers.

CF: Okay, of this let's say 90+% of Parisians that don't go to church, how many of them are going to see this poster that's on that wall in there? Could it be useful if it were seen somewhere else? Now walking from the Metro as we did to this building earlier today, we saw a lot of signs, posters, billboards, and I didn't see any for Quakers, that said "Quaker Center this way."

JH: No, but possibly, we could put it on our website.

CF: What this is raising for me is the question of what we would call in the States outreach. How are others here going to hear about Quakerism? I know that in the States, even though Quakers are better known than it sounds like they are in France there are still huge, huge portions of the population that have no idea. I still run into Americans who say, "What are Quakers?" And I say, "We're a church, kind of like Baptists, or Methodists, only smaller." So there's still an awful lot of people we've missed. Outreach is a never-ending task, even for us. So. What do you think?

JH: God will provide.

CF: God will provide. Okay. I mean I don't know what, posters on the busses...

JH: Do you know how much that costs?

CF: No, but... what about bumper stickers, they are cheap...

JH: I rely more on the awakening of teachers, even teachers of English, who do not know about Friends and who are discovering them now, because they discovered their role in the evolution of slavery and once they wake up, a lot of things will happen, I think. It's just a beginning, because when teachers do not know about us, thousands of children are left in ignorance so I rely on that, because I know it's beginning now.

CF: How do you get to teachers?

JH: They're my colleagues. University teachers train grammar school teachers.

CF: So you're pursuing an initiative to spread information among University teachers who we hope will be training lower grade teachers about Quakers

Is there anything else we need to know about your hopes and dreams and initiatives for French Quakerism? Let's say I come back in 20 years and things go well, what would you hope that I would be able to see? Say my grandchildren come to visit.

JH: More spirituality in France, although I think there is a lot of spirituality already. There's more signs of Quakerism in France now. I think the role of Quakers since the beginning of the movement was to awaken people. I'm convinced that we are in a very crucial time for humanity, when there should be a shift of spirit and matter being reconciled and spirituality growing.

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**Friends Meetinghouse and Center, Congénies France**

## Can The AFSC Get Its Quaker Groove Back?

Chuck Fager

### I: The Background of a Concern

What we've dubbed "The Great Quaker Turnover" has been rolling through Quakerism over the past year. Practically all the "alphabet soup" Friends groups have been changing their top executives: FUM, QUNO, FCNL, FGC, FWCC, Friends Journal. Several top posts in Britain Yearly Meeting have turned over as well. Even this writer will be leaving his post at North Carolina's Quaker House in late 2012.

One of the most closely-watched transitions came in September 2010, when Shan Cretin took over as the American Friends Service Committee's new General Secretary. She no doubt got lots of advice about how to renew and revive the organization, which is struggling to recover from an organizational near-collapse. Several months later, discussion about this once-eminent, now ailing Quaker group still seems in order; so we're going to join the queue. To lay the groundwork for that, first a bit of background, and some diagnosis.

This Quaker's attitude toward AFSC has gone through a couple of phases. First, for a long time I put considerable mental energy into the state of the AFSC, worrying, talking and writing about what had happened to it, and what might be done. This phase lasted nearly twenty years, from the mid-1970s to the mid 1990s.

My concerns about the AFSC centered primarily on its loss of grounding in the Religious Society of Friends (RSOF), and first emerged during my term on AFSC's New England AFSC regional Executive Committee, 1970-75.

Toward the end of that stint I began to notice what seemed to be an increasingly pronounced drift toward a lefty secularism. The "lefty" part didn't bother me much; the secularism was something else.

I wasn't the only one noticing, inside or outside the RSOF. In June of 1979, a cover article in *The New Republic* attacked the AFSC, and by extension American Quakers generally, for

supposedly abandoning the tradition of pacifism. (It was called "Shot From Guns: The Lost Pacifism of American Quakers," by Stephen Chapman, in TNR's June 9, 1979 issue.)

(This article is not online, at least where I can find it. But it is discussed in detail by David Hostetter in his doctoral dissertation, which is online here:

<http://www.lib.umd.edu/drum/bitstream/1903/1681/1/umi-umd-1651.pdf>. It's a searchable PDF: look for "Shot From Guns.")

A month later, Chapman's article became the hook for a series of well-attended open discussions of Quaker concerns about AFSC at the FGC Gathering in Richmond, Indiana. As convenor, I drafted a summary letter listing the points raised. It was signed by 130 individual Friends, including the President of Earlham College, and passed on to the AFSC Board.

Two years later, in 1981, I launched an independent monthly, *A Friendly Letter*, which continued until 1993. The newsletter covered a wide range of topics in its 134 issues, and AFSC was the focus at least once a year. (All print issues of "A Friendly Letter," are online here, with an Index:

<http://afriendlyletter.com/AFL-archives/AFL-archives/Issue-List-Online-01.html> )

From time to time, other Friends also spoke up about AFSC concerns. Their experience seemed to mirror mine: AFSC wasn't good at listening to Quakers, especially those with criticisms. We felt mollified, patronized, undermined, but mainly ignored.

Another major outside expression of concern appeared in 1987, in a book called *Peace and Revolution: The Moral Crisis of American Pacifism*, (Eerdmans, 1988) by a conservative scholar, Guenter Lewy. Lewy repeated the charges that AFSC had abandoned pacifism and religion. But he did more: he based his case on extensive research in AFSC archives. Lewy's Cold Warrior bent was clear, but his book was not simply polemic; he had done plenty of homework, and had chapter and verse to back it up.

I took Lewy's challenge seriously, respecting his research while rejecting his political stance. Even with his evident bias, Lewy had done a job which Quakers should have done for ourselves, but had mostly been too lazy or timid to undertake. *Peace and Revolution* merited a careful, Quaker response, sifting out the wheat from the chaff, revising and re-framing his critique of AFSC for the RSOF's benefit.

This reaction led me to organize, edit and publish another book, *Quaker Service at the Crossroads*, (1988, Kimo Press).

It included essays by more than a dozen authors, all but one Quakers, both defending and critiquing AFSC; Lewy contributed a concluding response. The Introduction described my own concerns in detail and offered them as an alternative to Lewy's critique. (This Introduction is now online here:

[http://afriendlyletter.com/Quaker Service At The Crossroads – 1988.pdf](http://afriendlyletter.com/Quaker%20Service%20At%20The%20Crossroads%20-%201988.pdf) )

Much of the book still seems relevant more than two decades later. However, in the months following its publication I noticed that my concerns about AFSC seemed not to strike the chord of reforming enthusiasm I had hoped for among the wider Quaker community. The subject did not draw a crowd for discussions, as it had in 1979; and the book sold slowly.

In response, I found myself talking and writing less about AFSC, while listening and watching more. This observer's stance marked the next phase in my AFSC concern. It crystallized after I started work at Pendle Hill, from 1994-1997, and has continued since.

In these years, I visited many Friends meetings, and made dozens of presentations about peace issues. In them, I made a point of not mentioning AFSC, or my concerns about it. Partly this was professional etiquette: as one Quaker hireling, it was bad manners to go around bashing other Quaker hirelings. But it was also a kind of research project: if concern about AFSC was no longer a big item among Friends, what place, I wondered, did the organization now hold in Quaker awareness and priorities?

The trend of the data soon became clear, and has been reinforced by the scores of visits I've made to Friends Meetings and Churches in the thirteen years since leaving Pendle Hill, including many workshops and presentations, mainly on peace issues.

What did this "research" show? One incident tells the story:

*On a Saturday in the mid-1990s, a large Meeting in the Philadelphia area held an intensive, day-long exploration of ways to re-invigorate its peace witness. I was there as an interested visitor, sitting quietly and taking notes.*

*One exercise asked the thirty-plus Friends present to name their deepest peace-related concerns, and the organizations they were most eager to work with on them. The results were written on large sheets of butcher paper, brainstorming style, without discussion or debate. The exercise took more than an hour, until lunch.*

*I lingered in the room, going over the butcher paper lists. The issues were familiar enough: the arms race, Middle East*

*tensions, military recruitment, and so on. The groups mentioned were many and varied, from local to international.*

*More than seventy were scrawled on the sheets. But there was one name I hadn't heard spoken, and I double-checked the list to see if I had missed it.*

*Nope. Of the seventy-plus groups named by thirty-plus Friends in an active Philadelphia area Meeting, none – not one – had identified the AFSC as a body they were eager to work with.*

*This was the more striking because the Meeting was home to a very high-level AFSC executive, so one could hardly imagine it being somehow unknown.*

Less dramatically, this result was confirmed again and again over the next fifteen years, and across a wide geographic span. If I didn't mention AFSC while talking about peace-related concerns, hardly anyone else ever did.

Not that the group had disappeared entirely: occasionally I saw a stack of mail awaiting a Clerk's attention. Sure enough, envelopes from AFSC were there. Plus the occasional poster or brochure. But the surrounding silence was thunderous, and all but complete. (There are a few exceptions; but they prove the rule.)

My conclusion: AFSC has essentially dropped off the radar screen for active American Friends. We aren't against it; we've just quit thinking about it. It's mainly "divorced" from our life as a faith community. It's become one more group with an agenda and frequent fund appeals, one more envelope in the stack.

For a long time, this fact did not seem to make any difference to AFSC; it rolled on, with a budget climbing past \$40 million per year, doing whatever it was doing. And for my part, while unease about the group's *de facto* secularization continued, the topic slipped onto my own back burner. There was, after all, still plenty of room for Quaker action on peace and related issues, especially after September 11, 2001. So I was busy, as were other active Friends, in our Meetings and with many other groups.

AFSC hadn't exactly been forgotten by me and these other Friends. Perhaps worse, it had simply become irrelevant.

From time to time, I wondered: could this situation go on forever? Or were there within it, chickens waiting to come home to roost? The answer to that question came in the crash of 2008-2009. AFSC's chickens circled and came home; but they turned out to be buzzards.

Now the organization is in a time of rebuilding, and re-assessment. And one hopes the re-assessment includes the group's attitude toward the RSOF and its relationship with Friends.

I wonder, though, if such a reassessment is in the cards. I mean a serious one, not posturing or ritual patronizing.

It's evident from the records turned up by Guenter Lewy and other researchers, that there has been a generation or more of dominant AFSC staff which mainly shrugged off this disconnection: Quakers were, if anything, seen as mainly part of the problems the group worked on, rather than part of the solution. They (we) were (are) overwhelmingly white, middle class, politically unreliable, consumerist in fact (despite our organic protestations), shot through with racism, classism and homophobia, preoccupied with private and local matters, religiously parochial and given to nagging and complaining when approached. (Other than that, we're fine.)

Besides which, we wielded little political influence and provided only a puny proportion of AFSC's funds.

There are many grains of truth in this brief. Yet it is perhaps not decisive. It's missing a key factor: that \$40 million per year which AFSC used to raise -- it was harvested from the "F" for Friends in its name, from the Quaker reputation. Not AFSC's on its own. So even if the funds didn't come direct from Friends to AFSC's coffers, there's something about the Religious Society of Friends, despite our many shortcomings, that can ultimately be "taken to the bank," in large amounts.

Given the AFSC's current straitened circumstances and acknowledged need for renewal, maybe this mysterious Quaker "something" deserves another look.

## II: A Brand In Trouble

What would such a review show? Here is a thesis: that AFSC's relationship to the RSOF is more important to its overall financial future than the immediate numbers suggest. That is, the direct proportion of donations from Friends today may be small compared to the group's total income. But it is the Quaker "Reputation of Truth" in the larger world -- the "F" in the AFSC -- that attracts the bulk of the funds. It's what makes the organization financially viable at all.

Hence I believe the road back to health for AFSC winds through the sources of this Friendly "Reputation." And I contend further that this "Reputation" itself is in trouble, and needs attention, from AFSC as well as other Quaker actors.

What's the trouble? Think of Quakerism as like an apple tree: while AFSC and others have been busy picking its fruit, eyes on the branches above, beneath their feet the roots have been

neglected, and have begun to wither; no wonder the crop is getting sparse.

These “roots” are no less than the actual constituency of people around the globe who make up the Religious Society of Friends, in its varied incarnations, and with its 360-year history. For better and for worse, that (plus the Spirit) is what “Quakerism” is.

And these roots are tangled, no question. Actual Quakers are an unruly and confusing lot. Our history is convoluted and contested. Furthermore, my view is that the past generation or two of Quakers (i.e., mine) has been a rather undistinguished lot: mostly uninspired and uninspiring.

But there’s the rub: Amid this disarray, actual Quakers are still the seedbed and incubator of whatever empirical Quakerism has been and is to become. And if actual Quakerism is a mess, its wider “Reputation” is sure to suffer, eventually if not right away. And with that larger decline, those bodies that depend on that larger esteem will suffer as well.

I believe such a broader decline is well underway.

Here let me switch from horticultural metaphor to a more mundane frame: marketing. “Quaker” is a brand, for more than oatmeal. It’s a brand which has commanded a lot of public goodwill, for a long time.

And now the brand is in trouble. Not catastrophic, dramatic, BP-oil-spill trouble. More like melting iceberg trouble: drip, drip, drip.

AFSC didn’t create this brand and doesn’t control it. Yet AFSC is built on the brand, and has a big role to play in repairing it.

Such “brand maintenance” has not been seen as an AFSC responsibility for a long time. And no wonder: when actual Quakerism is viewed warts and all, without sentimentality or romance, it’s easy to experience at least a flash of panic, even an urge to flee.

Over the past couple of generations, that’s what many Quaker institutions have done – one thinks of the schools as well as AFSC: they have carefully distanced themselves from these snarled and messy “roots.” Instead they’ve taken cover under something called “Quaker values”: nonviolence, equality, peace, consensus, and so forth.

Unfortunately, when examined, these values turn out to be little more than a set of safe, generic abstractions. There’s hardly anything distinctively “Quaker” about them, and it’s hardly a surprise that in the groups espousing them, agendas appear driven by secular cultural (excuse me, “spiritual”) fashions and factions, with a more or less lefty tinge.

Not that these values are “false”; they’re simply disconnected. AFSC’s own Mission Statement says as much: “We recognize that the leadings of the Spirit and the principles of truth found through Friends’ experience and practice are not the exclusive possession of any group.”

Well, sure. But in that case, what if any “exclusive possession” *does* AFSC have? If it’s only these “values,” why bother with AFSC?

T a k e  
“peace.” Many groups seek and work for it. Equality? The NAACP was there first. Justice, gay



rights and civil liberties? Try the ACLU. Nonviolence? There are numerous other advocates nowadays. Relief work? AFSC is small fry in that world.

Any good marketer knows that a brand has to maintain some “exclusive possession,” a distinctive identity to stay viable in the marketplace. And here, it’s not a set of generic “values” that distinguish AFSC; it’s the Quaker brand.

And the Quaker brand needs work. AFSC has a substantial role to play in that renewal project. Given its history over the past several decades, however, taking up the role will likely be traumatic for AFSC’s corporate culture. Which is why this period of retrenchment and the “Great Quaker Turnover” is as good a time as any to make the pivot.

### III: Down & Dirty With Compost Theology

Why has the Quaker “brand” been worth so much until recently? I think the basic answer is simple, and twofold:

First, because the Religious Society of Friends has done many great and good things; and

Second, for a long time the RSOF did a superior job of letting the world know that.

Today the Quaker brand is in decline. Recent Quaker generations, in the US particularly, have been undistinguished; and we have also become particularly undistinguished and inept – lousy comes to mind—at telling the world about ourselves and our faith.

(BTW and just for the record: when speaking critically about recent American Quakerdom, I am including myself in the number.)

Why is contemporary Quakerism undistinguished? There are some good books, and better doctoral dissertations waiting to be written in response. Here only a brief sketch will be attempted, based on four decades of participant-observation.

This sketch returns to horticultural metaphors, and starts with what I call “Compost Theology.”

Here’s how Compost Theology works:

As an “institution,” the RSOF takes physical form primarily in its Meetings, then in associations; concern-based committee, plus their organizational offspring; and schools, camps, and colleges. These structures, populated by actual Friends and their experiences therein, along with their communications about them, make up the “compost” of Quaker experience.

As in your backyard compost heap, what often looks like an undifferentiated pile, when well-mixed and heated up by the Light/God/Spirit energy, produces a surprisingly rich and fertile soil base. From this “soil” spring up a variety of hardy plants – many of which are unexpected, and any of which may at first look like “weeds”–but many of which have proven again and again to be fruitful and useful in the world.

For awhile, I thought my Compost Theology notion was perhaps something new. Then I re-read the Parable of the Sower, in Luke’s Gospel, 8:5-8.

Wouldn’t you know, Jesus got there first: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. . . . Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.”

So this is in fact a familiar story; but I’d forgotten that “good soil” was the punch line.

Note that when Jesus finished telling it, “he called out, ‘They who have ears to hear, let them hear.’” I hadn’t been listening so well.

Anyway, the Sower is definitely a “universalist” – the seeds of the Spirit are scattered all over. The point for us is to be tending and developing “good soil.” Then good stuff will grow.

But what will sprout there is not always predictable. AFSC was one such shoot that appeared, grew and (for a long time) flourished.

Okay, so what’s happened to make our recent compost not so productive?

One big factor is, we’ve lost our history. Here’s an example, drawn from my pamphlet, *Study War Some More* (Quaker House, 2010): during peace workshops I often write three lists of five names on a blackboard, and ask the group how many they recognize.

The first list is of second-tier famous US generals (e.g., Stonewall Jackson). Almost everyone is familiar with the names, because our society is steeped in military lore.

Next is a list of several Friends who made outstanding contributions to peace work (e.g., Lewis Fry Richardson, the British Friend who invented peace research. You remember him, right?) <http://afriendlyletter.com/Lewis-F-Richardson.jpg>

Who knew he would sprout up and singlehandedly invent peace research in the 1920s and 1930s, in his “spare time”??

Consistently, almost no Quakers ever know any of the names of these Friendly giants.

But the third list is always immediately recognized: announcers from National Public Radio.

Here’s what I draw from this (and lots of other related data): With but few exceptions, contemporary Quakers have bought into the media-centered view of the world, including war, peace, change, even religion. This media-centered view is also Washington-centered, and sees these matters in almost exclusively political terms.

Thus Quakers’ specific political views vary predictably based on their demographics: in the early autumn of 2008, for instance, in the liberal groups all were hard at work for the Democratic ticket. And when I visited a pastoral yearly meeting just after the Governor of Alaska had been put on the Republican ticket, the place was electrified and agog. The spirit of secular politics reigned in both places.

There are many problems with this political-media fixation (whether it be on NPR or Fox), not the least of which is that it is completely dis-empowering, since the “Quaker vote” (for whichever party) is but the tiniest of microblips on any worldly radar screen.

And it’s dis-empowering in another, perhaps more important way: the historical amnesia it breeds puts us ever more out of touch with the potential strength of our own tradition, and its achievements, which are many. One of my favorite quotes here is from Sun Tzu, in his strategic classic, *The Art of War*:

*“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”*

(And never mind “battles”; if we don’t know our history and its achievements – which we don’t – just how are we supposed to tell the world about them? Actually, that is a “battle,” for our

own identity and brand, and it's one US Quakers have been losing for almost fifty years, not only with Washington or other churches, but with our own children.)

Most American Quakers today are caught in a mass media "matrix" that leaves us in just that "know-nothing" plight. It's hardly a surprise that I so often hear Friends speak about feeling as if their efforts are futile. They're not wrong; in secular political terms, they pretty much are.

AFSC too, with exceptions. One recent exception was the "Eyes Wide Open" exhibit. It succeeded because it substituted a powerful visual symbol for the usual political rhetoric, and moreover took the symbol to the people, not merely to Washington. Big (rare) win for AFSC.

Liberal Friends have another debilitating cultural characteristic: despite being generally highly educated, we are resolutely anti-intellectual about our religion, and religion in general. Since we live in a world which is increasingly shaped by religious ideas and movements (many of them bad), this is a distinctly dysfunctional stance; yet we cling to it.

AFSC is little better here. This is from its Mission Statement: "The American Friends Service Committee is a practical expression of the faith of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). . . ."

Really? And what might that "faith" be that they're getting practical about? (Never mind credal precision; how about just approximately?)

There's no indication of that, except to assert that whatever it might be, "the leadings of the Spirit and the principles of truth found through Friends' experience and practice are not the exclusive possession of any group."

In institutional terms, this is a rationale for why the large majority of AFSC staff has long been non-Quaker. But theologically, it is utterly vacuous. Its Quaker "faith" is emptied of any distinct content, and with it, any reason for separate existence.

AFSC is hardly alone in this. One hears widely among liberal Friends the conviction that above all and before all we are about "seeking," typically in a privatized "spiritual-but-not-religious" manner. All tradition, scripture, and the witness of those that went before are of only incidental interest. (The Evangelicals have a somewhat different form of this spiritual virus, with distinct but not much better outcomes.)

To sum up: a mass media, Washington-centered, politicized but dis-empowered view of the world, and our witness

within it. A Quaker faith without content or history; a religious “community” of privatized “seeking.”

This is a recipe for mediocrity, and that’s how it has turned out.

Again, any claim to originality in this analysis is already trumped in the Parable of the Sower. (Why does this keep happening to me?) There some of the seed of the Spirit (Mark 4:5-6) fell “where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.”

That about nails it.

Note that I am not here trying to blame AFSC for this unhappy development. That would be facile, and give the body too much credit to boot. Yet AFSC certainly shares in this condition, contributes to it – and has paid the price.

AFSC also has a role to play in ameliorating the situation. It could be an important role; possibly even a pivotal one. Such an effort would mark a drastic departure from its path of the past several decades, and I am not counting on it. But it’s possible; and there are models.

Let’s glance at a couple of them.

#### IV: A Suggested Survival Kit

Let’s take another quick quiz:

Two of the three church-related service projects below are holding their own, and one is in trouble. Can you tell which one has problems?

- A. The Mennonite Central Committee
- B. The Mormon Church missionary program; and
- C. The American Friends Service Committee

To help with your answer, here are a few clues:

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has for decades coordinated thousands of volunteer Mennonites working around the world, doing service and missionary work, with considerable support from their local churches. When these volunteers get back home, most resume their “normal” lives, including in their churches. There they typically become solid supporters and advocates for MCC: they donate and raise money for it, and help

defend it against the vocal right-wingers in their denomination. And raise their kids to do likewise.

The Mormons do something similar with their young adults. Close to ninety per cent of young Mormon men from active church families go out on two-year missions, for which they raise their own funding. These missionaries likewise later resume their “regular” lives, and typically become solid supporters of their church and its projects; and when *their* sons come of age, most eagerly go out in their turn. Unsurprisingly, the Mormon church is one of the fastest-growing denominations in the world.

Now to AFSC. Up until the mid-1960s, AFSC ran pioneering work camp and volunteer service programs, for Quakers and other like-minded folks, mainly youth, with lots of involvement by local Meetings. If you talk to some of us gray-heads, you can still hear about how important, even life-changing many were.

But then AFSC dumped the work camps and the whole idea of training and facilitating Quakers for service, in favor of “identifying” with “the oppressed.”

Now, back to the quiz: which of these groups is in trouble – I mean, really serious, organizational life-threatening trouble?

If you picked “C”, as in AFSC, you win. And Quakers lose.

It’s now generally admitted that this dumping-the-Quakers-and-service-projects move was a bone-headed idea.

A disaster, not to put too fine a point on it. And I say this as one of the generation which bequeathed the notion to AFSC.

*What the hell were we thinking??*

Well, there’s no rolling back history. Yet the culmination of the trajectory launched by this shift is now clear: a trainwreck.

How bad is it? According to a report in the Philadelphia Inquirer, forty per cent of AFSC’s staff has been laid off, and its income has dropped more than thirty per cent, with little relief in sight. Inside sources suggest the decline has been even steeper. (“Painful cuts for American Friends Service Committee,” Christopher Hepp, Philadelphia *Inquirer*, June 5, 2010.)

From a fundraiser’s perspective, the story appears still more grim: since the Sixties, AFSC has been sustained financially above all by the loyalty and largesse of a World War Two generation of donors which, as an internal AFSC report recently out it, “can remember the work camps and the heady days of AFSC receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947.”

But these faithful donors had one big flaw: they were mortal (like the rest of us). And now they’re mostly dead, with the rest soon to follow. That means their donations have ebbed, and their bequests are largely distributed.

For years, when I've talked with AFSC staffers, especially those involved in fundraising, I've asked one question again and again. It is:

"Have you found a replacement for your World War Two generation of donors?"

Finally, this summer I got a straight answer from a national AFSC fundraiser; and the answer was, in sum: "No, not yet."

I appreciated the candor, but this was a very ominous reply.

Consider the parallels suggested by our opening quiz: since the mid-1960s—for nearly fifty years—the MCC and the Mormons have been cultivating a growing constituency of dedicated supporters and advocates, rooted in their founding churches, mindful of both generational and organizational continuity, and applying their considerable spiritual and organizational energies. As *their* World War Two donors die off, there are plenty more waiting behind them.

Meanwhile, AFSC has been seeking new donors and supporters—where?

While there are a few exceptions to this gloomy sketch, I'll tell you where, in AFSC's own words: "people of many faiths and backgrounds who share the values . . . ."

Which people is that?

And which values are these?

Why "Quaker" values, of course.

And what are those? "nonviolence and justice."

We already saw how inadequate these abstract "values" are as a base for anything "Quaker," since who isn't for nonviolence?? (Even the U.S. military favors it, "when possible.") Or "justice"??

From a marketing perspective, a brand built on such platitudes is an empty vessel; it has no identity, no "edge," no roots, no history, no culture of its own, nothing to distinguish it from the thousands of other groups working for "justice" or "nonviolence." Especially when its stewards aren't even using the values the way the Mormons and Mennonites do, to build a trans-generational home base of support for the ongoing service work.

So from a rebuilding standpoint, AFSC is close to starting from scratch. How can it recover?

To replace lost donors, a non-profit group goes prospecting, looking for likely new ones. It works to capture their attention, and (in fundraiser jargon) "cultivate" them so they gain a favorable view of the charity, then asks them to give, in varied and compelling ways, to support work that speaks to their deep motivations and high values.

This process too is basic to a non-profit's survival. And here's how AFSC could get re-started on it.

The core prospects, in my view, are the children and grandchildren of the Quaker segment of the "Greatest Generation," especially those old enough to have living memories of the turmoil of the 1960s and early 1970s.

The material needed to gain their attention and cultivate their loyalty is contained in the high points of this decade-plus of activism, and AFSC's extensive involvement in it, from civil rights through the Vietnam War, women's and gay liberation.

The compelling message drawn from this history comes down to this: there was a time in our lives when our Quaker witness and sacrifice for noble values had meaning, and helped make a big difference, in many ways. AFSC was there alongside you, and with your support, working together, we (and our children) can make such a meaningful difference again.

In one sense, this message is the flip side of that conveyed by AFSC's latest big success, the "Eyes Wide Open" exhibit. That display made visible the futility of the troops' sacrifices in the Iraq war. This new initiative would evoke the lived alternative.

Tragically, this rich alternate history has been largely erased from public memory, even among many Friends: lost in the miasma of mindless distractions, diminished and discounted by decades of unrelenting right-wing propaganda and revisionism, compromised and counterfeited by politicians, all compounded by our own ongoing failures to articulate and pass it along.

But it's still there, and doesn't have to stay in the shadows. There are several million now middle-aged Americans who lived it, directly or at close range, and they can still be moved by these fugitive, exiled recollections and aspirations.

These memories of what once was, and the hopes for what could yet be, are not only a precious heritage. They are the keys to turning those who cherish them into AFSC's next generations of supporters, i.e., donors.

Finding new donor prospects is an expensive and time-consuming process. It's not clear AFSC has enough resources left to do what's being urged here; yet it's not clear that any other path is viable.

"But why," I can hear some object, "are you asking us to turn back to the past, when there are so many burning issues facing us now?"

Good question, and the answer is straightforward: this "look back" is not about nostalgia. It's about finding hope for a

potential generation of donors which has had a hard time sustaining hope.

Put more starkly: help the Boomers and their kids recover their hope, and they'll help you (i.e., send money). Then you can afford to take on the burning issues of today and tomorrow. And you better start with Quakers, because those are your roots; then build out from there.

What might this effort look like? Here's one sample scenario:

*March 7, 2015, Selma, Alabama. For the fiftieth anniversary of the Selma-Montgomery march, which won voting rights for millions of black citizens across the South, pilgrims came from around the world. President Barack Obama led the crowd of international dignitaries and thousands of anonymous movement veterans and their children across the historic Edmund Pettus bridge over the Alabama river.*

*AFSC is in Selma with a high-visibility major exhibit and program, focused on its civil rights work in the South, and in particular the murder of AFSC staffer James Reeb, who came to Selma to join the protests and was murdered by white toughs. Two years in preparation, the exhibit was organized and mounted by a team of interns mainly drawn from Quaker meetings and churches around the country, working with movement veterans and local partners.*

*After the Selma celebrations conclude, the exhibit will go on the road, making stops at several sites in the South and elsewhere in the country.*

Because of my personal history, I look to Selma as a landmark of the era; but such work doesn't have to wait until 2015 to begin.

The donor marketing rationale here is straightforward: the Boomer activists found a sense of achievement and promise in Selma (and similar events). Their children have heard a bit of the stories, and will respond to more. Remind both of that in an inclusive way, and you can help them regain their hope for today. Do that, and you can ask them for support for current and future projects.

Of course, any such connection has to be reinforced; donors need to be "cultivated."

Fortunately, history provides a succession of similar landmark events in the period 2015-2025. Consider just a few:

1966/2016: The movement for open housing in Chicago; the debate over “Black Power.”

1967/2017: Dr. King joins the antiwar movement; big antiwar protests; second wave feminism begins its rise. And AFSC’s Centennial. (What a combo!)

1968/2018: The murder of Dr. King; the Poor Peoples Campaign; the Chicago Democratic Convention.

1969/2019: Stonewall; the AFSC’s “March Against Death.”

Etc.

From this could be drawn a series of events. Let’s call it the “Half Century of Hope” campaign, bringing back this past not for its own sake, but as the basis for a renewed future.

Among these events are plenty of “hooks” with which to gain and then hold the attention of Boomers and their older children (and done right, their grandchildren after them). AFSC was involved in much or most of it in one way or another. But again, the purpose of this campaign is not antiquarian. Connect with those who lived through this epic time of hope, especially as Quakers, and as hope revives you can gain their support for programs of today and tomorrow.

As this recovery of hope is expressed in concrete projects, a parallel task will be to “embed” – or better, “re-root” – AFSC in the donor constituency (that seething Quaker compost heap). This process will involve some analogue to the work camps. Not the same thing (we can’t go home again), but intentional efforts to involve the target donor community in the group’s work, on as broad a scale as possible, on a continuing basis. This is, after all, the “secret” of the Mormons’ and Mennonites’ success. Though it’s not really a secret at all.

And there’s more to this “embedding” idea. American Quakers have not all been idle since AFSC dumped us. Numerous small-scale projects have sprung up, not only domestically (such as, for instance, Quaker House in Fayetteville/Fort Bragg NC) but internationally as well, from Bolivia to Africa. For the most part, though, they work on their own. I suggest AFSC take on a ministry of service to these groups, for instance by offering to convene consultations where they could share and brainstorm and, as way opened, collaborate.

Something similar would be advisable for Shan Cretin and her new leadership team. What if they made it part of their regular routine to go on tour among American Friends, but not primarily to talk, rather to listen and learn. To ask, “Given this shared history,

how can we serve Quaker work and ministries?” and make notes on the responses.

Doing so would mark a sharp break with the routine practice I and so many others have been accustomed to (and alienated by) for decades: of AFSC dog-and-pony shows show-casing (bragging about) all their projects, dunning us to support them, and sidestepping real questions. Such a process would be a stunning (and overdue) example of organizational humility. It would also likely yield some valuable insights and ideas, once they got the hang of it.

For that matter, I would include the pastoral and evangelical groups on the itinerary. Shan might have to put up with some airing of old theological and political grievances, and more altar calls than a liberal Quaker prefers. But much is to be learned there as well. Most of these groups are in ferment; and there will be openings for those who know how to discern them and respond.

One more thing: if the new leadership was ready to make a truly dramatic, visible break with AFSC’s failed old order, here’s a radical proposal: move the main offices OUT of Philadelphia.

In fact, I’d leave Pennsylvania entirely; maybe head for North Carolina, where there are actually more Quakers. But most any state that was in “flyover country” would do. I bet it would save money too. After all, the Mennonite Central Committee is headquartered in Akron, PA, a hamlet in the heart of Dutch country. And the Mormon missionary program is run out of Provo, Utah. Being in flyover country seems to do them good. (But, Akron PA?)

Note that I’m not suggesting AFSC somehow put itself under the authority of Yearly Meetings or any other body. But the changes contemplated here involve be-coming a participating “mem-ber” of the Quaker commun-ity, rather than some sovereign power taking time from power lunches in Geneva and Capitol Hill to mingle with the bumpkins. (Lots of these bumpkins haven’t been fooled by that routine for a long time.)

If this sounds snarky, don’t get me started repeating all the comments I’ve heard from highly accomplished Quaker professionals about being patronized, put down and ignored by self-important AFSC poohbahs over the years. Hello, Philadelphia? This is Quakerism calling; and it’s humble-pie time.

What’s the hopeful outcome of all this scenario spinning? It’s like this: imagine ten years from now, AFSC has substantially re-rooted itself among American Friends, drawing much of its support (not all) from this base constituency. It is also involving large numbers of Friends in its work at all levels, especially younger ones, as interns and in other service-training roles.

It might be smaller, but it would have a much more solid donor base than it does now. It would also have some great new ideas, wildflowers from a well-stirred theological compost heap. And my sense is that such a re-embedded organization would have considerable appeal for non-Quakers as well, based on, of all things, our old buddy the “Reputation of Truth.”

Speaking of which, did you notice that the Selma scenario, like the other events drawn from the Half-Century of Hope campaign, would be putting Quaker achievements and witness before the world, as well as Friends? And it’s worth underlining that such canny and careful self-promotion had a lot to do with the successes of AFSC’s “classic” period (up to the Nobel Prize). It wasn’t only that Friends did good things; but they also managed to let the world know that, without being too obvious about it.

So to recap, here’s the laundry list:

AFSC survives by finding new generation(s) of donors. It finds them by:

Mounting a “Half Century of Hope” campaign of exhibits and events highlighting renewing the legacy of the 1960s-early 70s.

“Re-rooting” AFSC in its Quaker base community in a multi-generational way.

Moving the offices out of Philadelphia & PA.

Listening to, learning from, and serving Friends and their varied witness.

What are the chances of any of this happening? Such an agenda will doubtless face lots of internal opposition, from forces dedicated to protecting old turf and keeping AFSC more in tune with the latest movement trends than with a bunch of bourgeois Quakers. But such forces should be seriously in question already, and if AFSC is to survive, the old ways are overdue for an even more fundamental shakeup than they’ve had so far.

My inside sources have predicted that the changes coming in AFSC will be big and basic.

Let’s hope so; I’m not so sanguine. The Great Quaker Turnover is but a moment. The window for basic change closes. Odds are long and times are tough; AFSC’s margin for error has shrunk; and those old donors keep dying off. There isn’t much time. And there are no guarantees.

(Note: This essay was adapted from blog posts at:  
[www.afriendlyletter.com](http://www.afriendlyletter.com) )

## **Reviews**

Thomas C. Kennedy, *A History of Southland College: The Society of Friends and Black Education in Arkansas*. Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2009.

Reviewed by Stephen Angell

Thomas C. Kennedy is probably the most significant historian of Quakerism writing today that most American Quakers have never heard of. He has recently retired from the history faculty of the University of Arkansas. Most of his research has involved British pacifists. His *British Quakerism, 1860-1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community* (Oxford University Press, 2001) may be the definitive treatment of the transformation of British Quakers at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, from primarily a group of Evangelical Christians to a group of Liberal Christians (with a trajectory, after the 1920 close of his book, toward a community with a generous number of post-Christians). He also provides insights into the manner that the peace testimony took a more central role in the faith and practice of Liberal Quakers. He has also written on the World War I anti-draft organization, the No-Conscription fellowship, and other related issues.

His foray into research on American Quakers evidently came as something of a surprise to him, as a Europeanist. But, about three decades ago, he stumbled onto the fact that, not far from his home in Arkansas, the Society of Friends had sponsored a momentous work in African-American educational and religious life from 1864 to 1925, an institution known as Southland (at times styled an "Institute," at other times a "College."), based in Helena, in northeast Arkansas. He became fascinated by a subject that required less travel than his British researches, and in a rather unlikely set of circumstances stumbled onto a voluminous collection of Southland resources in a meeting attic in my hometown of Richmond, Indiana.

The result is a 349-page work that displays his usual clarity, thoroughness, and good sense. I join with the assessment of Earlham archivist Tom Hamm, who on the book jacket opines that this is “the most detailed portrait we will ever have of Southland College.” Other Quaker historians, including Henry Cadbury in a 1935 article in the *Journal of Negro History*, Linda Selleck in her book *Gentle Invaders*, and Donna McDaniel and Vanessa Julye in their landmark work *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African-Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice* (Quaker Press of FGC, 2009), have taken notice of Southland. (In the case of McDaniel and Julye, they rely to some extent on articles published by Kennedy in preparation of this volume.) But Kennedy’s book provides us with a much fuller story.

Kennedy’s story is an intricate one. The whites who lived at Southland College were ostracized by the Southern white community in no uncertain fashion. The black community surrounding Southland could be expected to be loyal supporters of the enterprise, although violence against black Arkansans by Ku Kluxers and bulldozers sent many fleeing to Kansas and other locations where peaceable living seemed more obtainable. Tornados and a flooding Mississippi River posed additional challenges. There was more than one horrendous case of lynching or white-on-black mob violence in the near vicinity of the school, although it would be hard to tell that from the written communications of Southland Quakers. They were willing to discuss the natural disasters, but not the intimidation and violence unleashed by the majority population.

The financial ability of the black community to support Southland was always modest, and determined to a large extent on such vicissitudes as the size of the cotton crop and the price of cotton. Southland College thus could only be kept alive by considerable and determined donations from the outside to the Indiana Missionary Board. There were efforts to raise an endowment for the school, with some meager results, but it was not anywhere near enough to ensure that the school would prosper. In some ways, what is most surprising is that Southland endured as long as it did.

In the beginning, Southland was both a religious and educational enterprise. Southland’s founders, Calvin and Alida Clark, were determined to spread Quakerism among black Arkansans. The Clarks were Orthodox and evangelical; they valued both waiting worship and revivals. They would emphatically not follow Ohio Yearly Meeting’s David Updegraff into his embrace of the physical sacraments. As a result of their work, a group of black Quaker ministers and members were raised up. The Clarks clearly

sought to create a black Yearly Meeting in Arkansas, but any attempts to establish meetings at locations other than Southland itself were short-lived. It is hard to determine how many African Americans became converts to Quakerism; hundreds were claimed on the membership list, but there were few attempts to determine how long the converts remained active.

Much of the fate of the Quaker meetings in Arkansas rested on the indefatigable labors of black ministers. Kennedy mentions such homegrown Quaker preachers as Daniel Drew, Joseph Coleman, George Wilburn, Arthur Crump, Calvin Kerr, Chandler Paschall, and Henrietta Kitterall. Kitterall was one of the first students and graduate at Southland, an orphan who the Clarks considered their adopted daughter. At Southland, she learned her Bible and came to “love [her] Savior,” and she sought a useful way to serve Christ. She was accepted into membership in the far-off Whitewater Monthly Meeting (the Clark’s home meeting) in Richmond in 1868, and was recorded as a minister sometime in the 1880s. She subsequently became a teacher at Southland, and married another Southland graduate (and Presbyterian) Benjamin Knox.

On religious matters, the Clarks became quite dependent on Daniel Drew, an African-American Civil War veteran who was recorded in Quaker ministry, again in Whitewater Meeting, in 1870. Drew was apparently an accomplished minister and revivalist. When he left Arkansas in 1880 to minister in Maryville, Tennessee, evangelistic and ministerial work among African Americans in Arkansas languished; when he returned three years later, it picked up again. The Clarks testified to his “passionate” rejection of outward sacraments and his firm advocacy of temperance.

Kennedy notes the exaggerated content of one Southland supporter’s statement that fuller financial backing of evangelists like Drew would result in “a Yearly Meeting in Arkansas in a short time,” but that expression was clear testimony to the Indiana Quakers’ high regard for this “humble,” “efficient,” and eloquent Quaker minister. When a Northern Quaker revivalist had to cancel his visit to Southland with little notice, “a spontaneous meeting of students and faculty gathered under the ministry of Daniel Drew, and all but one of those in attendance were saved.” (133) In 1902, Drew requested a transfer of membership to the Friends Church in Portland, Oregon, again dealing a blow to African American Quakerism in Arkansas by his departure. One of Kennedy’s footnotes informs us that, in 1907, Drew, still in Oregon, had transferred his membership to the AME Church.

A review published in a recent issue of *Quaker Theology* (#16) noted the Philadelphia-centered discourse of McDaniel’s and

Julye's *Fit for Freedom*. Among other things, Kennedy's book begins to correct a narrative of African-American Quakerism that is too centered on liberal, unprogrammed Friends and on the vicinity of Philadelphia. McDaniel and Julye did take notice of such African American Quaker revivalists as Noah McLean and William Allan (and made one reference to Drew), but Kennedy's portrait deepens our picture of African-Americans' contributions to evangelical Quaker culture away from the East Coast.

Naturally, Kennedy's account also raises further questions for historians to explore. To mention only one: Why, after more than three decades of indefatigable labor among Friends, did Drew defect to the African Methodists? Something must have caused him to overcome his scruples against outward sacraments. Kennedy provides us with no clue, but, to be fair, Oregon is outside of Kennedy's geographic scope in this book.

In the final decades of its existence, Southland remained religious, but it was less distinctively Quaker. The Southland Meeting came to celebrate broadly Christian virtues, first and foremost. Employers still praised the morals and character of Southland's graduates. But nobody spoke any longer of a black Yearly Meeting of Friends in the South.

Assessing the educational accomplishments of Southland is a difficult task. There were many who praised Southland's graduates. It was known especially for the training of teachers, and Kennedy tells us that "appeals arrived from across the South, from Texas to Florida, pleading for instructors trained at the Quaker academy. Not all such requests were for teachers, the students of one black medical school [pleaded for Southland to] "send us more students; they are our very best." (196) It provided an alternative to the very bad public schools for African-Americans.

But accomplishments were not always achieved by means that would be approved at other Quaker schools. The teachers had tremendously high teaching loads, and were paid intermittently. White teachers were paid more than black teachers. Students were allowed to enroll after the crops had been harvested, and sometimes that was weeks into the session. Harry Wolford, president of Southland for all but one year between 1903 and 1922, engaged in extensive buying and selling of land; he claimed he was doing this with the best interests of his students and their families in mind. And indeed African Americans in Arkansas staunchly backed Wolford and his school. Wolford was perhaps the only president of Southland who was accepted by both the white and black communities in the vicinity of Helena, Arkansas.

The changing convictions on the matter of racial equality by the Quakers who administered Southland are important parts of Kennedy's story. He covers the debate that was raging at the time between the literary education which abolitionists and many black intellectuals favored, versus the vocational or "industrial" education advocated by Booker T. Washington and many northern white philanthropists. Following the sentiments of abolitionist Calvin and Alida Clark, the Southland Meeting had always been racially integrated, but as the abolitionists (especially with the death of Alida in 1892) began to fade from the scene, their successors did not always have the same commitment to racial equality.

William Russell served a short term as President of Southland in the 1890s, and he chose to remain in the area after stepping down from the Presidency. It was after he relinquished the Presidency that he proposed a new meeting house be built just for whites. He was quietly but clearly rebuked for this request by the Indiana Missionary Board. He then asked for his membership to be transferred from Southland Meeting to Whitewater Meeting in Indiana. This request too was apparently refused. Southland Friends finally acceded to his request to transfer his membership to the local Methodist Church.

The 1920s, when Southland College was closed down, saw many low points and perhaps a high point or two in Quaker commitments to race relations. The newly-founded American Friends Service Committee established a program to build interracial understanding. But, in Indiana, many Quakers joined the Ku Klux Klan at its height of activity in that state, engendering fierce (but hard-to-trace) disputes in meetings such as Newcastle, where Daisy Douglass Barr, head of the Klan's female auxiliary had just become pastor. Oral tradition has it, that after two years of controversy, Klan opponents at Newcastle gathered just enough strength to force Barr out of the pastorate. (Newcastle's handwritten minutes reside in the Earlham archives, but the minutes for those two years – and only those two years – are missing.)

Kennedy lays out the complex story of Southland's demise. The Indiana Home Missionary Board came under new management, closely allied with the modernist faction in Friends United Meeting. Kennedy suggests that the modernists partook of some of the racial idealism and some of the casual racial bigotry of the time. They entrusted management of Southland to an energetic twenty-five-year-old Earlham graduate named Raymond Jenkins, who managed to upset many apple carts and alienate many supporters of the school, including the still-influential Harry Wolford, who would stop at little to undermine Jenkins. The Missionary

Board and Jenkins were dissatisfied with the important role played by Southland in local Arkansas society, and sought to raise its national profile, but that would have taken large amounts of funds, which despite some concerted fundraising attempts, were not forthcoming.

The faltering of the always-precarious funding base, combined with the disagreements over the school's mission, were enough to make the school's closing seem the most logical step in 1925, and that is what the Indiana Home Missionary Board decided to do with Southland that year. In a brief epilogue, Kennedy observes that there is no physical trace of Southland College today, but Southland graduates had kept its memory alive for a long time among African-American Arkansans. For the latter, the school's demise was "an inexplicable tragedy. 'We never did understand what happened in Indiana,' said one." (267)

If this was significant only as a local history, it could be allowed to fade into the kind of semi-obscurity whereby only a few scholars of history know about it, and everyone else could safely ignore it. But this is a much more important book; it is a well-researched, well-written, and highly insightful account of the most sustained effort by American Quakers to build up institutions that would serve African Americans, and of the noteworthy successes and failures that ensued from this worthy effort. As one of the most informative windows into the past of Quaker race relations, it deserves a wide reading among Friends. Buy it for your personal and your Meeting libraries.

An Excerpt From:

Thomas C. Kennedy, *A History of Southland College: The Society of Friends and Black Education in Arkansas* (Fayetteville, Ark.: Univ. of Arkansas Press, 2000) Pp. 48-49, 84-85, 99, 119.

[In 1868, four years after Southland's founding,] things were most assuredly looking up for Friends' work in Arkansas. Republicans had gained control of the state's government, a new school system had been initiated, local whites were accepting rather than threatening Quaker teachers, and, as a parting gratuity, the Freedmen's Bureau promised a special appropriation of five thousand dollars for the building of "ampler school buildings" at Southland. . . . Had the curse of slavery and war finally been lifted from the selfless Quakers and their destitute charges? Friends, as always were inclined to hope. Certainly their influence for good seemed to have been recognized in Arkansas. Elkanah Beard, while visiting with public officials in Little Rock on behalf of Indiana Yearly Meeting early in 1869, received a special vote of thanks from the Republican-dominated legislature for the role Friends had played in pioneering educational development for the state's freedmen – a signal honor for a northern ambassador. Nevertheless, Beard, for one, remained wary. In his travels through the state, he had discovered that many individuals in "responsible positions" seemed determined to hinder the progress of education for ex-slaves while other elected officials, including blacks, had proved themselves unfit for public office. Beard's unhappy, and ominous, conclusion was that even "the dreadful scourge of war and bloodshed that has swept our beloved country does not seem to have lessened the prevailing vices of the Southern people." . . .

Meeting minutes for 27 December [1882] noted the visit of Isaac Sharp, a weighty English Friend, and Joel Bean, a minister of San Jose, California, and former clerk of Iowa Yearly Meeting. Alida Clark described their ministry as a great boon to the school and the meeting, eliciting, in the words of Lydia Chace, "an increase of interest in the plan of salvation among the unconverted." The significance of Bean's visit was that by 1882 Bean had become the central figure in the ongoing endeavor of the holiness faction to silence or expel Friends who resisted the imposition of their

revolutionary brand of Quakerism. . . . Joel Bean's visit to Southland, in the company of a moderate evangelical English Friend like Isaac Sharp, seems to indicate that while the "revival wave" continued to sweep over Southland as membership rapidly expanded (reaching 378 in 1884) the extreme holiness faction had been kept at bay. General meetings were still described as "filled to overflowing, many standing in doors and outside" while "gamblers, fiddlers . . . and 'such like' characters prostrated themselves at the altar of prayer" begging to know how to be saved. Alida Clark's answer to their pleas – "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" – reflected her policy of steering the middle course, encouraging revivalism without yielding to radical holiness practices. Mrs. Clark also continued to insist, in contrast to the untrammelled emotions of holiness gatherings, "the greatest quiet & best order prevailed" at Southland. . . .

[Also in 1882,] Alida gave particular thanks for the return of Daniel Drew from his ministry in Tennessee. He was, she said, "our main nursing father" who, in imitation of George Fox, traveled the area in evangelical service "refuting the foolishness and false doctrine preached amongst his people." Still the primitive conditions in which this sojourner for truth was forced to live and work were starkly revealed after the death of the horse he depended upon for both his traveling ministry and subsistence farming. As Mrs. Clark noted, he had "not a single dollar" to pay for a new animal, being at once the "poorest . . . but the most diligent" of ministers. Since the local meeting had spent its sustenance in paying two hundred dollars toward rebuilding the meeting house in Hickory Ridge, she pleaded for some kind Friend to come to the aid of this courageous and saintly figure who "works hard, lives poor [and] preaches Jesus." Generous Friends did provide the means for Brother Drew to acquire another horse, enabling him to carry on "extensive Evangelical service." . . .

[In 1890,] Southland continued to be a stopping off place for distinguished English visitors like Henry Stanley Newman, a minister and longtime head of the Quaker Men's School at Leominster. Newman and his wife Marianna stayed at Southland for a fortnight. He praised the school's beneficial influence in providing the only remedy for uplifting black people given that the renewed effort to restrain and repress their social and political rights was "the burning question of the hour in America." Marianna Newman seemed charmed by the place and its students, especially when some of them sang "their old negro melodies, so strange and quaint . . . as they kept time with their feet upon the floor." She even allowed as how "they seem to have hearts like white people."

From the hindsight of a century, such reflections point up the reasons why maintaining a school and mission station like Southland was always a difficult, demanding, and chancy proposition. The minutes of Southland Meeting recorded that the Newmans “preached the Gospel with great clearness and simplicity . . . [with] the power of the Holy Spirit attending their services” and asked God’s continued blessing upon them. Still, with the best will in the world, a two-week stay at Southland for good people like the Newmans was truly an exotic adventure, akin to an African safari or a trek through the Gobi Desert. A brief, close-up experience with unsophisticated, rustic folk in a strange, even alien, environment might serve to enhance the visitors’ standing among coreligionists and their comments on and praise for the work being done might bring incidental funds into the school’s coffers. But the Quaker mission station in Arkansas was, for most of the Friends who briefly ventured there, part of another world, frightening or inspiring, but never entirely real. All of this makes the dedication and sacrifices of those who stayed in Arkansas, for years or decades, to work for the glory of God and the raising-up of their fellow men all the more impressive. Finally, the most difficult, and rarely accomplished, task for any of them was to somehow close the cultural gap between the selfless giver and artless receiver and for outsiders (northern Friends were always outsiders) to truly believe that those they sought to serve should be equal not only before God but before man as well.

James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World, The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*.  
Oxford University Press, 360 pages.

Reviewed by Chuck Fager

Quakers don't like to remember Prohibition, and the Temperance movement which birthed it. From liberals to evangelicals, I can't recall a serious discussion – and but one incident of reminiscing – about it in four decades among Friends.

Yet for several generations, outlawing the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages was one of the prime Quaker priorities, pretty much across the board. Lucretia Mott and Susan B. Anthony, while advocating for women's rights, also campaigned against demon rum – as did evangelical leaders like John Henry Douglas. The various factions may have had their own committees operating independently, but all aimed at a similar goal.

And in 1919, they finally achieved it. The Volstead Act amended the Constitution so that “the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within . . . the United States . . . is hereby prohibited.” Alongside abolition of southern slavery, this has to stand as the high water mark of Quaker and other religious reformers' impact in the arena of American law and social policy.

So why don't Friends remember and celebrate this landmark of “social change”? Probably the biggest reason is that by 1933, Prohibition was widely deemed to be, not only a failure but disastrously counterproductive, and repealed. Who wants to remember such a humiliating fiasco? Denial is much more than a river in Egypt; such strategic forgetting is a pillar of organizational as well as individual self-esteem.

But James Davison Hunter remembers Prohibition. And in his ironically titled, *To Change the World*, this misbegotten crusade is cited as a model of the failure of religiously-motivated reform – not only its failure, but its larger cultural irrelevance.

For while Prohibition's end left America such enduring but unanticipated artifacts as the Mafia, it was also falling abysmally short of its prime objective, which was to reduce or eliminate the damage done by the very real plague of alcohol abuse.

That epidemic is still with us, wreaking havoc every day, almost a century after the Prohibition experiment began. Further, Volstead's bastard children live on in the various "wars" on drugs, which annually ruin tens of thousands of lives, cost us tens of billions, and have now plunged Mexico into a bloody drug war right on our doorstep. No wonder Quakers don't want to remember Prohibition, or how deeply they were invested in it. (Though of course we should remember, and ponder deeply.)

Yet Hunter's book is not about the past so much as the present, and ongoing American religious-based reform efforts. He identifies three of these, not of equal influence, but worth comparable attention: the currently pre-eminent Religious Right, the much smaller Religious Left (epitomized by *Sojourners* and its spokesman Jim Wallis), and, even smaller still, a pioneering Neo-Anabaptist trend that has attracted his attention.

Hunter is known for his pathbreaking book *Culture Wars*, which helped many of us get a better grasp on what we were up against in the 1990s. I opened his latest tome hoping to better understand our prospects ten years into the twenty-first century.

*To Change the World* is less a book of prophecy than of analysis. Nevertheless, Hunter spends many pages explaining why he believes none of these three religious reform movements is likely to reach their goals of "changing the world," or even changing America, particularly in the ways they say they want to.

Why not? In sum, he asserts that each of these movements, in its own way, basically misunderstands how cultures change, and thus their varying recipes are likely to fail, at best, and boomerang, at worst.

And how do cultures change? His argument here is complex and nuanced. In sum, he says they change from the top down, as rising elites challenge and change (or replace) existing ones, and then inject their new plans and values into the dense thicket of existing cultural and social institutions, changing them incrementally, overcoming resistance slowly but surely. And such change is usually not recognized until it has already happened, that is, retrospectively; in the hurly-burly of daily social jostling and struggle, it's almost impossible to see which way the river of history is "really" flowing.

His three target movements, he argues, have at best only a dim understanding of this larger process of change, each for their own reasons. For the Religious Right, the problem centers on a combination of idealist individualism which believes that "changing hearts and minds" one by one is the path to redeeming society from its state of decay – and then when that doesn't work, the

mobilization of these “transformed” individuals into political forces which will install “good Christians” in positions of public power, where they will govern in a transformative way. “The hope Christian conservatives place in politics is quite astonishing,” Hunter writes. “. . . Political action [they believe] will return ‘a sense of cultural ownership to Christian citizens nationwide.’ . . . As the late D. James Kennedy has put it, ‘Our job is to reclaim America for Christ, whatever the cost . . . .’”

Yet while individual change may be good for the individual, Hunter believes, that doesn’t do much about the larger cultural structures and currents. Further, once the “transformed” are set marching into worldly politics, they become captive to the narrow notion that formal politics is where all the action is, which it isn’t. And then become subject to all the predictable corruptions thereof, plus that special vice of the “saved,” namely the conviction that their holy ends justify whatever unholy means seem necessary to achieve them in this “practical” world; which puts them on the well-worn path to religious tyranny.

The Christian Left looks to social justice more than the saving of individual souls. It cherishes the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, and the years of activism for peace and related issues, cresting in the Vietnam years. They regard the agenda and tactics of the Religious Right with disdain as a perversion of the Gospel. Says Jim Wallis, their best-known spokesman, “I don’t think Jesus’ top priorities would have been a capital gains tax cut and the occupation of Iraq.” Their distress has increased with the successes of their opponents.

And they fail to impress Hunter as amounting to much more than a smaller, weaker mirror image of the Right: “In its commitment to social change through politics,” he concludes, “. . . in its conflation of the public with the political, in its own selective use of scripture to justify political interests, and in its confusion of theology with national interests and identity, the Christian Left (not least the Evangelical Left) imitates the Christian Right. The message is obviously different . . . but in their framework, method, and style of engagement, politically progressive Christians are very similar to their politically conservative counterparts.”

To the progressives, this judgment that they are an imitation of the Right could hardly be more wounding; and even worse is its corollary that the record shows these Christian Leftists to be a pale imitation of their conservative nemeses, because it’s the latter who have been winning most of the major elections for thirty years.

Against this backdrop, many readers may turn with relief to Hunter’s “third force,” the Neo-Anabaptists, whose guiding spirit

was the late Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder, and current guru is theologian and ethicist Stanley Hauerwas.

While the smallest of the three groupings, Hunter pronounces it “intellectually serious,” which is “one reason why it has growing appeal among young Christian adults. It provides a credible, even compelling, script for those who find the account offered by the Christian conservatives distasteful if not dangerous and the narrative offered by Christian progressives unconvincing and irrelevant.”

It also resembles the secular libertarian movement in its disdain for the state, though for the Neo-Anabaptists this stance is theological, based in a recognition of the larger reality of both the modern state, economy, and communications technologies as forces in themselves, “principalities and powers,” in biblical terms. Similar scorn is aimed at most Christian churches: these too have been corrupted and absorbed by the fallen, corrupting powers. For the Neo-Anabaptists, as Hunter puts it, “Christianity in America, as it is believed and lived by most believers, is just not Christian enough.”

The Neo-Anabaptists’ stance in relation to the principalities and powers, including churches, is one of resistance, sometimes from within, sometimes from without, even if it takes mainly an intellectual form. For some it has also been embodied in a “new monasticism,” of small communities that work with the poor, prisoners, or other outcasts. These groups embody an effort to lay aside the conventional political focus of both right and left, as the way of challenging the powers and their destructiveness.

For them the real challenge to the worldly “establishment,” is not a newer, better establishment, but the church itself, the purified, faithful church, in the form of independent, worshipping, active communities, typically (though not necessarily) small, often persecuted, and rejecting as much of the world as is practical.

For those weary of the back and forth of conventional political jousting, even in clerical garb, the Neo-Anabaptist’s views can seem fresh and radical. And they insist that their path is not one of withdrawal: “Our response to the call of discipleship not only threatens the powers of the world,” one of their advocates declares, “but positively and publicly overthrows them.”

Maybe. Hunter faults the Neo-Anabaptists for being naïve about the clutches of the powers and over-estimating the potential of their efforts to escape them. Indeed, such declarations as that just cited have more than a whiff of magical thinking about them; one might remark sardonically that the Pentagon, after all, is still standing. He also calls them out for being relentlessly negative,

citing a characterization of their ethos as a “passive aggressive ecclesiology.” He points out that such narratives of negativity (“the establishment is evil, the culture is corrupted, the church is sold out, nobody is any good except thee and me, and I’m having doubts about thee”), far from being “counter-cultural,” are instead all-too typical artifacts of our culture, available in as many varieties as tee shirts with snarky slogans.

So. With the shortcomings of these various religious reform movements laid out, what does Hunter propose? How does he recommend that churches work “to change the world”?

Well, in one real sense he doesn’t. Instead, he describes a program of “faithful presence,” which comes down to the church being the church, within and yet in tension with the larger culture. Summarized that briefly, it sounds almost like a cliché, and there were points in his exposition when this reader felt Hunter was on the brink of sliding from the profound into the banal. Certainly the “bottom line” is very modest: accompanied by what seems like a weary sigh, the book ends with a wistful hope that “by enacting shalom and seeking it on behalf of all others through the practice of faithful presence, it is possible, just possible, that [Christians and their churches] will help to make the world a little but better.”

Such modesty is certainly welcome, if somewhat astringent. Religion is surely a crucial force in American culture; yet this influence is largely contextual and institutional. Within its realm, particular churches large and small are prone to exaggerated views of their overt ability to have impact on the culture.

Take, as Hunter notes, the steady advance of American acceptance of homosexuals as full persons, even able to marry. The Religious Right has a long track record of winning practically every referendum and legislative fight on the issue. Yet somehow the acceptance of gays and same sex marriage continues to spread anyway, quietly, relentlessly nullifying all the political “victories.” Whatever are the real sources of this change, the Religious Right’s political skills seem to have little real impact on them.

Yet this doesn’t mean their actions are meaningless. Such election victories often do have effects, too often negative and unpredicted. Hunter pauses near the end of the book to underline this: *“It should be clear at this point that good intentions are not enough to engage the world well. The potential for stupidity, irrationality, cruelty, and harm is just as high today as it has ever been in the past. God save us from Christians who are well-intentioned, but not wise!”*

I wish he had devoted more attention to this point. His mention of Prohibition’s failure did not go into the catalog of

dismal long-term impacts on American society, which are far from exhausted. This case is one I wish Friends would study in depth, to gain better understanding of the pitfalls of our reforming zeal, which is undiminished, if pointed now in other directions.

Hunter also pays no concentrated attention to the militarism-entwined-with-religion that is such a major reality of American life. This is a major failing. After all, the United States has just been through a period of calamitous “rule by the saints” from 2001 to early 2009, when devotees of Christian conservative ideology controlled both the White House and Congress. In the wake of their un wisdom, we are left with two ugly and pointless wars, frenetic preparations for more, the legitimation of torture, huge holes in our civil liberties, and an economic crash of near-apocalyptic proportions. “God save us” from such Christianity regnant, indeed.

I have another bone to pick with Hunter. His focus on big-picture, top-down processes of change is largely valid. Yet he gives much too short shrift to the potential of small groups that have good ideas, tactical shrewdness and persistence. He does acknowledge the latter: “Persistence over time is essential; little of significance happens in three to five years.” That’s right; but there’s more to it.

On numerous occasions in Quaker history, good ideas and persistence have combined to have a salutary influence on the larger world. Not always, of course: sometimes persistence has combined with bad ideas, like Prohibition, which was the wrong remedy for a real problem. Likewise, as Friends adapt to the ever-shrinking attention span of our times, even our best ideas are pursued with less and less of the needed persistence and skill.

Still, these complaints are the basis for fruitful thinking and discussion, rather than a reason to set aside Hunter’s many insights and depth of historical/theological analysis. If your religion calls for changing the world, *To Change the World* is a book to reckon with.

*From To Change The World:*

Imagine, in this regard, a genuine “third great awakening” occurring in America, where half of the population is converted to a deep Christian faith. Unless this awakening extended to envelop the cultural gatekeepers, it would have little effect on the character of the symbols that are produced and prevail in public and private culture. And, without a fundamental restructuring of the institutions of culture formation and transmission in our society— the market, government-sponsored cultural institutions, education at all levels, advertising, entertainment, publishing, and the news media, not to mention church – revival would have a negligible long-term effect on the reconstitution of the culture. Imagine further several social reform movements surrounding, say, educational reform and family policy, becoming very well organized and funded, and on top of this, serious Christians being voted into every major office and appointed to a majority of judgeships. Legislation may be passed and judicial rulings may be properly handed down, but legal and political victories will be short-lived or pyrrhic without the broad-based legitimacy that makes the alternatives seem unthinkable.

Such is the story of one of the most powerful transatlantic social reform movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the temperance movement. This movement failed, of course, not least because it did not and could not address the culture of restraint on which the particular interest of temperance depended. In the end, the ideal of “temperance” finally expired in derision with the repeal of the Volstead Act in 1933, the word now having disappeared from our public vocabulary. This same logic accounts for the contemporary failure of the Christian Right to stop the growth and legitimation of homosexuality, abortion, and pornography, among other concerns. The passion and earnest resolve generated by all such movements may change people and may affect communities and they may, for a time, change laws, but they generally will not influence the course and direction of the culture as a whole unless they are tied to larger structural changes in the culture.

Culture, at root, provides the very terms by which life is ordered. In our own culture, the inherited categories derived largely from biblical and classical sources by which we understand the

most basic aspects of human life have been and are being transformed by very powerful forces over which individuals and social groups have little control, forces such as consumerism, communications technology, and so on. The most humane understandings of personhood, relationships, community, time, space, freedom, obligation, material wealth, cannot be established or recovered through a five-year plan or even in a generation—certainly not through politics, not through social reform, and not even in and through revival. In this light, the call to this generation of Americans to repent and pray for revival to renew the values of the national culture may be welcome, but no one should be under any illusion about its capacity to fundamentally transform the present cultural order at its most rudimentary level . . . . All such engagement may be worthy, but if the end is to “save civilization,” it most certainly is naive. By themselves or even together, evangelism, politics, and social reform, then, will fail to bring about the ends hoped for and intended.

The important qualification one must make in all of this is that even when successful, change does not always occur in the direction that people propose or with the effects for which people hope. There are almost always unintended consequences to human action, particularly at the macro-historical level and these are, often enough, tragic. The architects of the Enlightenment who understood the power of science and predicted the progressive amelioration of human suffering through it, would never have desired or predicted the development of nuclear weapons. The Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century never would have imagined that the turn toward individual conscience and moral asceticism would have contributed to an economic system that would “act back” on the culture as a cause of secularization. Likewise, the Puritans who founded Harvard and Yale would have never expected that their schools would become strongholds of secularity. And the missionaries who brought aid to impoverished parts of the Third World would have never wished for the growing cycle of dependency they unwittingly helped foster. And so it goes. One can never quite predict where things will go.

Culture is endlessly complex and difficult, and it is highly resistant to our passion to change it, however well intentioned and heroic our efforts may be.

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