

The Canadian Friend

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Multi-faith / Inter-faith

The Canadian Friend

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Editorial:

Quakers are keen on other Faiths, but do we dismiss the Christians in our midst? While we enthusiastically work with multifaith groups, some Friends have shown reluctance for Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) to participate with the World Council of Churches. Yet, welcoming and honouring all Faiths is what Spirit asks of us, and 'all Faiths' also includes Christians.



Like Catherine Novak, I began to question fundamentalist Christian thinking when the Hindu Mahatma Gandhi made it onto the "soul is lost" list. Are Quakers guilty of judging in this way? Could it be there is an odd reversal to the "who's 'in' and who's 'out' thinking"? Are we applying the same limited narrow, un-in-Light-ened holier-than-thou judgment to Christians?

I have heard of Friends giving up Meeting because they felt their faith journey was not valued; giving up because they witnessed exclusion or denial of Christian terms and experiences. One Friend sadly observed, "...in this way their Light is blocked and hidden".

More attention needs to be placed on the Light and the Heart active within. Bruce Sanguin writes: "The home of God is wherever God pitches her tent, and that can be anywhere and in anybody whose heart is ready to be occupied. If you make of your heart a stable, God will be born. God will occupy your life." That's all that matters. William Mueller pens the query: "Do I apply the testimonies in the life of my Meeting, seeking unity irrespective of the source?" And guest writer, John Myhill, claims: "We are united in affirming that the availability of the experience of God to everyone remains a central insight of Friends". If this is true, we are bound to embrace Christians within and without our Society.

Reading our *Organization and Procedure*, I find a significant criteria for membership in the Religious Society of Friends: "...that the applicant is a humble learner in the school of Christ". Perhaps we should explore where our prejudice lies and sort out the difference between true Christ-based values and the stuff that causes us to get squirmy around Christian talk. I think that is the same work George Fox did when he became disgruntled with the Church. He dug down deep to find Christ Spirit. Over the years, Quaker Bible Study has helped me tremendously in this work, and I look forward to Ben Pink Dandelion's *Radical Interpretation* at CYM 2013.

Blessings,
Sherryll Harris



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An Open Letter to Friends from Margaret Slavin



Dear Friends,

Meetings are being approached to evaluate the value of the Quaker Education Program, and also the Youth Secretary work. That in itself may increase awareness among us about these programs, but I am feeling a little alarmed at where things stand.

It has become apparent to me that many Friends have not even heard of these programs, much less have supported them financially. This is the reason why we created the positions in the first place: we are out of contact with one another across the country and are precariously few in numbers. I hope that most active Friends read *The Canadian Friend*, but in reality I know that even this assumption may not necessarily be true. Canadian Friends read Quaker material from the US which is helpful for the spiritual journey, but not for being informed about the movement of Spirit in our own Yearly Meeting. Others read *Quaker Concern* and are aware of our social justice work, but mistake that for the whole national life of Canadian Yearly Meeting.

All I really know about our two new programs is that Sue Starr has produced material that we have been needing and requesting for at least ten years. I know that Katrina McQuail has sent out queries and other materials that are helpful and challenging regarding the role of the youth among us. Also, I hear that Katrina is hard at work among Young Friends. I know from experience that our Society is fragile, and that CYM went through a deep and lengthy process to find itself led to create these two part-time positions. Since then the lack of financial support has been discouraging. The programs would not have gone past the first year if funds had not become available from a one-time source – the J. Ross Rogers bequest. Most Friends and Attenders I have spoken with haven't heard of these positions, and are unaware of the need for support. From these conversations and from what I heard at CYM, I fear that the continuation of the positions remains quite tenuous.

I feel that if we cannot continue these positions for *at least* a second three-year term, then we are risking the demise of the Religious Society of Friends in Canada. Also, we are indicating that we do not really believe in

our process as being Spirit-led. Or maybe we believe it is Spirit-led, but we no longer will follow the Spirit!

According to my own back-of-the-envelope figuring, if each active Friend and Attender sends just \$60 a year to CYM, over and above any usual donations, these programs will have no trouble continuing. If a Friend cannot afford the \$60, send \$6. If a Friend can afford \$600, send that. We don't have ministers and most of us do not have Meeting Houses to support. If we value the role of Friends in our lives we need to support these two positions.

Maybe in another three years it will be appropriate to listen again to our leadings around Quaker education, and around the role of the youth among us, but right now, surely we need to be faithful to our leadings. I am writing this letter in that spirit, hoping it will inform others and that we will continue this good work.

In Friendship

Margaret Slavin, Peterborough Monthly Meeting





Sunderland P. Gardner Lecturer CYM 2013 – Caroline Balderston Parry

I wept in amazement when asked to deliver the 2013 SPG lecture. I will lead the evening from a place of worship, not from a fully prepared script, but by speaking from what I call, the ‘I don’t know’ place: Holy Spirit with me always. My aim is to reflect on aspects of my spiritual journey, access the spaciousness of Spirit, and to invite your response. We’ll share a spiraling process which may involve herons.

Caroline, a religious educator, award winning author*, poet, folk singer and visual artist, grew up in a large Quaker family near Philadelphia. She attended Westtown Friends School in Pennsylvania and, in 1999 taught briefly at Sibford [Friends] School in Oxfordshire. A member of Ottawa Monthly Meeting since 1990, she is/has also been an active Friend in Montreal, Toronto and Victoria Monthly Meetings, and Hull Meeting in Yorkshire.

Currently, Caroline serves as part time Director of Religious Education (DRE) for the Unitarian Church of Montreal, and also leads monthly collage workshops. She moved to Montreal in 2008 after two years as an Interim DRE in Ohio, where she developed her “haiku habit”, following three years as Interim Director for the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa.

She met David, her London born husband, while volunteering at Mitraniketan, a school and community development project in Kerala, India. They emigrated to Canada in 1973. Their daughter, writer/performer Evalyn Parry, was born that year. Their musician/composer son, Richard Reed Parry, was born in 1977. David Parry died suddenly in 1995.

Caroline has led Junior Gathering weeks for FGC, been a Friends Journal Board member, and has served two terms on the former Home Missions and

Advancement Committee (HMAC). She was involved at Camp NeeKauNis for years as a parent, Community and Intermediate Camp director, and cook. A member of the Consultation and Renewal [Cn’R] task force for CYM from 2005-07, Caroline is pleased to sit on the Employment Committee for our Quaker Education Program Coordinator, and to support the Youth Secretary; both are inspiring new CYM positions.

*For details on her published works and upcoming memoir, *The Heron Spirals: A Commonplace Book*, see www.carolinebalderstonparry.com



Bible Study: Radical Interpretation CYM 2013 - Ben Pink Dandelion

The first Friends felt that traditional forms of Christianity belonged to an age passed. They developed a new and radical interpretation of Christianity, based on their experience of personal transformation. This experience led also to a very distinctive style of worship and a particular lifestyle or testimony, a way of being in the world but not of it. Our sessions will outline the key elements of early Quaker thought, and explore how the changes over three-and-a-half centuries came about. We will also ask, “What are the challenges today and what are some of the ways we can meet them?”

Ben Pink Dandelion is Professor of Quaker Studies at the University of Birmingham, UK. He directs the work of the Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies, Woodbrooke and the University of Birmingham. He edits *Quaker Studies* and his books include *Living the Quaker Way* (2012), *Celebrating the Quaker Way* (2010), *The Quakers: a very short introduction* (2008), and *Introduction to Quakerism* (2007). He is a member of Sawley Quaker Meeting in the shadow of Pendle Hill, England.

The Flowers and the Bees: Learning Through Diversity

Keith R. Maddock

“Like the bee gathering honey from the different flowers, the wise person accepts the essence of the different scriptures and sees only the good in all religions.” Gandhi

William Penn wrote in 1693: “The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious, and devout souls are everywhere of one religion, and when death has taken off the mask they will know one another, though the diverse liveries they wear here makes them strangers.”

The value of this insight for contemporary Friends, is that it may awaken our interest in religious and spiritual diversity in an era when secular and material values appear to be in ascendance. It may also remind us that the reality of such diversity in our own communities provides openings for compassion and understanding. A look back into the history of religions is often helpful to appreciate the continuing importance of spiritual and religious care, amid tumultuous changes in our world.

St. Basil of Caesarea (CE 329-379), for example, learned about the Christian religion at home, under the influence of his mother and grandmother. This was customary in the ancient world where the elementary school system taught literacy, mathematics, classical Greek and Roman culture, but made no provision for specific religious instruction. While Christian families did not appear to question the value of a public education, many believed that spiritual values would enable children to lead meaningful lives without becoming absorbed into the mainstream culture.

After pursuing a higher education in Athens, Basil became inspired by the example of mystics who retreated into the desert, adopting contemplative discipline to avoid worldly corruption. But he needed to learn that the contemplative life he desired was also influenced by Platonism and involved progressive discipline leading to the creation of an ideal society. With this understanding, Basil learned to balance the virtues of self-discipline and self-sufficiency with compassion and social service.

In a letter to his nephews he employed the metaphor of bees flying from flower to flower gaining sustenance from a variety of nectars before returning to their hive. This image has become a model for living faithfully and imaginatively in a pluralistic society. Truth can be experienced, to some degree, in the many varieties of religious and secular knowledge that are

available. Mahatma Gandhi may have had Basil in mind when he wrote: “Like the bee gathering honey from the different flowers, the wise person accepts the essence of the different scriptures and sees only the good in all religions”.

Basil realized that the world he knew was rich in diversity. Religious and cultural influences spread throughout the Roman Empire, Central Asia and the Far East. Universal toleration and openness to fresh ideas enhanced the whole life of his community. After Constantine adopted Christianity as the official religion of the Empire, monastic communities – founded by Basil, and others like him – continued to promote intellectual freedom through dialogue with other religions.

The rise of Islam in the seventh century CE was one of the most notable challenges to the hegemony of official Christianity. Mohammed, who received his revelation in 610 CE, did not intend to found a new religion, but to revive the faith that was taught by the ancient prophets: Abraham, David, Moses, and Jesus. His role as “the last of the Prophets” was intended to reaffirm this tradition as well as to protect it from foreign (including Platonic and Gnostic) ideas that had corrupted the original meaning.

When the Islamic empire was less than five hundred years old, the Sufis were attempting to reconcile Greek philosophical ideas with the Koran and the teaching of the Prophet. One of the most respected teachers in this enterprise was El Ghazali of Persia (CE 1058-1111), a scholar in many ways similar to Basil in method and erudition. He maintained that Sufism was the inner teaching of all religions, and used many quotes from the Bible and the Apocrypha to make his point. Often accused of promoting religious syncretism, or trying to cover all bases at once, he described his ideal of the “perfected man” as a person of integrity, whose universal interest in humanity was more than superficial.

The first principle of El Ghazali’s belief system asserted that a student should be free to explore the whole field of contemporary knowledge. The second was that a teacher should convey to his students that which is within range of their personal experience.

The third was that the teacher should not hesitate to express what he understands by inward experience; this was often considered a more advanced level of understanding once the students had learned to cultivate the tools needed for introspection.

Never have we been more aware of the diversity of religious experience in the world and in every cultural and ethnic community. Many adherents of specific religious doctrines may feel threatened by this development as they retreat into fundamentalist enclaves, denying the possibility of enrichment from dialogue. Others may discover that the integrity of religious experience can be preserved only by an appreciation of different faiths, and a deeper understanding of our own heritage in relation to them. Like Basil, we may find that sipping from the most exotic flowers will not be so much a deviation from essential belief systems as an opening into the life of the Spirit at the heart of all true religion.

Relating this insight to his experience, Penn continued: "This world is form; our bodies are form; and no visible acts of devotion can be without forms. Yet the less form in religion the better, since God is a Spirit; for the more mental our worship, the more adequate to the nature of God; the more silent, the more suitable to the language of the Spirit." Do Penn and his spiritual forbearers speak to our condition today? How can interfaith dialogue contribute to peace and understanding in a predominantly secular world? Again, to paraphrase George Fox, **how can Friends today learn "...to speak to people of all conditions..." by reaching through the barriers that keep us apart?**

*Keith R. Maddock, Toronto Monthly Meeting
Chaplaincy volunteer*

[Keith visits inmates in the Toronto jail. "...some of the men have approached me with questions about spiritual and religious values, to find some measure of consolation or meaning in their difficult lives. Seeking an appropriate opening for dialogue, we begin exploring points of convergence in our experiences."]

Notice

Sharing Our Stories:

The First Annual Gathering of Friendly Mystics

Organized by the editors of *What Canst Thou Say?*

June 14-16, 2013, Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana. Registration deadline May 15, 2013.

Call or write Michael Resman 501-281-5838

<resmanmh@aol.com>

Around the Family Around

Montreal Monthly Meeting: We have more attendance on the days we have potlucks and discuss a special topic after Meeting. Recently discussed: Divestment, Boycott and Sanctions. The food is sensational and we learn more about each other. Caroline Balderston Parry offered *Quaker Explorations* on Chapters from the book *Letters to a Fellow Seeker* by Steve Chase.

Victoria Friends Meeting is preparing the Meeting House for its 100th birthday. Restoration is underway with an eye to preserving simplicity and integrity. We managed to make a more accessible washroom for wheelchair access and are working toward creating a cohesive attractive library. While celebrations have begun, we'll have our big day in May!

Yonge Street Monthly Meeting held their Half Yearly Meeting on Saturday, November 3, 2012. It was hosted at Simcoe Muskoka Monthly Meeting, Orillia Friends Meeting House, 231 Westmount drive, Orillia [see report on page 29]. The Spring Half Yearly Meeting is to be held June 7, 8 & 9, 2013 at Camp NeeKauNis. Pelham has been contacted and has agreed to be in attendance at this time.

Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW) is sponsoring the Young Adult Friends Conference:

Continuing Rev_l_tion, at Pendle Hill, June 14 - 19 2013

QEW has sent \$2000 for the 2013 YAF conference and is seeking your support for an additional \$2000. Your financial support will cover program costs, guest workshop leaders honoraria, and support those participants who are unable to pay all of their conference fees. Please contribute \$50, \$100, or whatever you can afford to this initiative. Information details available on the Pendle Hill website. Or, Emily Higgs at ehiggs@pendlehill.org.

I Was A Teenage Fundamentalist

Catherine Novak



“So today at school, Mom, I was telling Jacob about Adam and Eve, and he was rolling around on the ground laughing.”

Twelve-year-old Stephen and I are in the car, heading home for dinner. It’s a great time to talk about our day. Lately, he’s been telling his grade seven buddies stories from the Old Testament.

“Jacob goes, ‘So they eat from the Tree of Knowledge, and the best they can do is figure out they’re **naked**? They get knowledge of **clothes**?’”

Stevie is just as irreverent as Jacob – that people would actually take this “Bible stuff” as literal truth is a completely foreign concept to him. And yet, I still have a guilty twinge at all this mirth at the Bible’s expense. I know that no bolt of lightning will slice through the roof of the car to smite us, but it’s still weird for me not to treat the Bible as a – no, **THE** Holy Book – the literal Word Of God. I grew up with literal Bible believers, went to school with them, hung out at their youth groups. I was a teenage fundamentalist – or at least doing my best to play the part.

Kelowna, BC, is a pocket of religiosity in an increasingly secular Canada. The churches are big, especially the evangelical ones. In my teenage years, the late 1970s, Kelowna was smaller, more remote, less sophisticated. It was a bit like the town in the movie *Footloose*, where youth weren’t allowed to dance, so

some of them snuck out to do more risky things, like drink in the bush. As an insecure, bookish teenage girl, I knew I didn’t want to go to those parties. Why stand by a smoky fire in the cold, just to get drunk, throw up, ride in a pickup truck with a driver almost as drunk as you are, and risk ending up in the hospital, where my mom (the emergency nurse) would probably disown me? Or risk getting arrested and fingerprinted by my dad the cop? Let’s not even entertain the thought that I might end up dead, or worse – pregnant. So if I were to have any social life at all I should probably hang out with those nice kids, the Christians.

My best friend, Lori, beat me to Christianity by a few weeks when we were both fourteen. She had gone with her mother to a Pentecostal women’s dinner and came home speaking in tongues. Church was suddenly the best place ever, particularly the Young People’s group, which had older teenagers and really nice leaders who treated you like a real person and listened to what you had to say. What’s more, Jesus was real and Lori had given her heart to Him.

When Lori asked me if I would come with her to the Presbyterian Young People’s, I was happy to go along. Bible study was actually a natural fit for a book reader like me; we looked in-depth at individual verses, like, “If I have the tongue of men and angels, but have not love, I am nothing”. We sang songs like *Peaceful, Easy Feeling*, only the words were changed to be more Christian. We had intense conversations about the nature of evil. Christianity was actually getting me to *think*. I have the Presbyterian Church to thank for that. It’s a good thing, too, because the *cool church* was one of the big evangelical churches down the road, and things were a little different there.

At the *cool church*, they showed films about the Rapture, and how scary it would be to be left behind while the plague of locusts rained down on apartments and cars. Kids from the *cool church* played Led Zeppelin songs backwards so we could hear Robert Plant sing “my sweet Satan” and be thrillingly horrified. At the *cool church*, they lifted their hands and spoke in tongues after just about every song. The *cool church* had about seventy teenagers in their youth group, and concerts, and really good looking guys. And those really good looking guys hugged everybody, even me.

I tried being baptized in the Holy Spirit, but he was stingy with me – my speaking-in-tongues attempts just came out like “Hey, Shondala shondala”. I felt

completely stupid. I also had trouble believing that everybody was born in sin, and doomed to hell unless they believed in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. I mean, I came from a family full of dead people. My older brother died as a baby. My mother was in a car accident when she was thirteen, and it killed most of her family. Would Oma, Opa, Hans, Leen, and my baby big brother Stephen be in hell because they weren't Christians? Still I straddled these two worlds of Christianity – one cerebral and folksy, the other glitzy and mind-bogglingly scary and literal... because either you were *in* or you were *out*. I wanted to be *in*.

My whole social life revolved around being a Christian. I sang and played piano in the church young people's music group, Koinonia. We actually made matching skirts and toured churches around the Interior. A few times a year, we went to a retreat where we'd study the Bible and impress each other with the verses we'd memorized. We'd sing and sing, and have our own dances, and flirt, and laugh, and stay up all night, lying in big puppy piles and listening to Christian rock... or the B-52s and the Moody Blues. I got to know the Bible very, very well. And I still had trouble with this whole "saved" thing. At least with the Presbyterians, who believed in predestination: being saved was all up to the grace of God. It was up to Him who was *in* and who was *out*, and God's Grace was surely enough to be merciful to a few innocent babies and grandparents I'd never met; and Gandhi I decided after watching the movie about him.

As I was thinking my way into ever-more-liberal Christianity and heading off to university, some of my high-school friends who stayed in town were dating the guys from the Cool Church, and going to Bible School. I could feel the gap widening between me and them. One Christmas, I came home, and the drummer from Koinonia announced that he was throwing out all his rock albums because the rock beat is from the Devil. Right! Another friend stopped cutting her hair or wearing makeup, because long hair is a woman's adornment and pleases the Lord and her husband. We lost touch.

When I was twenty-one, I took a wonderful course in *The Bible and English Literary Tradition*, which finally opened the doors and let me breathe and figure things out for myself. We discussed allegory, Dante, Milton, Mithraism and pan-Hellenic gnostic sects. We looked at the puzzle of Paul the Apostle, and how messiahs and virgin birth stories exist in many faiths. We were introduced to Northrop Frye's *The Great Code*, and the work of the Jesus Seminar. "Wow", I thought, "a

group of Christian scholars who actually respect Jesus enough to try and figure out what really belongs to Him, and what is just stuff that grew up around His reputation!" By this time, I knew much of the Bible by heart, and knew that many parts of it just didn't hang together well enough to take literally. It had to be a series of documents that reflected their time, written by people who created God in their image. I no longer wanted to be *in* at all costs. I just wanted to find out what was real.

The rest of my story is about leaving and coming back to my faith as an adult. I may get to writing that down, eventually. For now, let's go back to the car with Stephen, because I think it's important that as Canadians of European descent, my kids know the biblical references in their cultural background: the stories in the Bible; the basics of mainstream Christianity; and where people have made God in their own image. I want them always to be able to know what they believe, and why. Even if it's just to say "I don't know the answer".

I know that Christianity comes in many flavours, including Quaker. We don't have to accept – or reject – all of it in order to be *in* or *out*. I find that even though I count myself among the Universalist Friends, I understand both historical and current Christ-centred Quakers. Their turns of biblical phrase often resonate with me deeply. I can laugh with my kids at the absurdity of taking creation myths literally, and be thankful that I know the stories anyway. I'm thankful that I grew up Christian, even though I've left both the extreme and the mainstream forms for a version that is both more open and more challenging. As a Friend, I can be both who I am, and who I was.



Catherine Novak
Victoria Friends Meeting



Insight: *by Bruce Sanguin*

The Church made far too much of the virgin birth, and far too much of Jesus being the Son of God, when it came to making meaning of the story of Christ's birth. Mystery religions at the time of Jesus also had their own virgin birth stories. Every great ruler including Caesar, the Emperor of Rome, was believed to have been divinely conceived. As to the title *Son of God*, that too, was a title demanded by Caesar. The virgin birth and the affirmation that Jesus is the Son of God were always intended to be subversive metaphors, not propositional truths about Jesus.

The gospel writers wrote these birth stories as a symbolic way of sticking it to Caesar and all those people who believed that his power represented the exercise of divine power, and that his office, as the powerful man in the world, represented the way God exercised power in the world. The gospel writers were outrageously undermining Caesar's rule. Jesus, they contended – a Jewish peasant nobody – was God's Son, not Caesar. His way, and not Caesar's, was divinely blessed. Jesus, a powerless man from the backwater of Galilee, was divinely conceived, not Caesar. In other words, if you want a model of what God looks like in human form, look to Jesus, not Caesar: not the rich and powerful, not the movers and shakers, not the ones who get first dibs on tickets to the Olympics

and every other event considered to be important by society. Such is the outrageous claim of the Christmas story.

John's gospel doesn't have the story of a virgin birth. No angels. No shepherds. No magi. Rather, it kicks off with some serious metaphysics. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Think of "the Word" as divine Wisdom, Creativity, and Love, that, says John, became flesh in Jesus and dwelled among us. A more literal translation of "the Word became flesh and dwelled among us", is 'God pitched a tent and dwelled in our midst'. It sort of brings to mind the Occupy movement, and the tent cities that sprung up around the world. These ordinary citizens have unleashed the metaphor of 'occupation' to cover just about everything and every institution in society. Occupy Wall Street, the banks, and all forms of commerce. Occupy Congress, democracy, and the education system.

Occupy your self, your life, and your value systems. Occupy church. Perhaps the soul of the people that has long been dormant and hypnotized by the dominant power system and its assumptions about reality, is waking up. The time has come to take back our lives, our planet, and our institutions and imbue them once more with soul. Have you ever considered the possibility that the Occupy movement is one dimension of a new birth story; the story of the collective birth of our species as a kind of new human?

Christianity has always claimed that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. This story is really about the birth of a new human in the twenty-first century, one that understands that what we claimed about Jesus, we are ready now to claim about ourselves collectively – that all the love, healing powers, and compassion we see in Jesus was in anticipation of a collective birth that is now underway.

I'm imagining that the birth of Christ is really about a divine occupation. It's Spirit occupying our world, our planet, our very lives – pitching a tent right in the middle of our comings and goings. The story of the birth of Christ is God's way of getting in our face, and more importantly into our hearts, so that we may undergo an identity shift the likes of which we've never experienced. I'm imagining that there is an empty cavity in the hearts of humans, waiting to be filled. Christ comes once again to occupy the cavernous emptiness of a planet that is trying to get by without love.

Every Christmas, we tell a story about God pitching a tent right in the middle of our coming and going, and occupying our attention – for at least one night of the year – drawn by carols, tradition, family and, I think, hope. I think we hope that this will be the year that our hearts get so divinely occupied that we experience an irreversible transformation of consciousness. The Christmas story is really about God being born in us, through us and as us. This is the birth we are actually anticipating.

religious man. His only religion was love and a passion to make sure everybody – the rich and the poor – felt the love of God to such an extent that they reoriented their faith and their future around love.

God's occupation didn't begin or end with Jesus' birth. God inhabited an entire universe with Creativity, Intelligence and Love. It is a universe still in the process of coming to fruition. God occupied our planet, and every rock and creature. In the fullness of time, when the human ones emerged, God occupied

“I think God is trying to tell us that our species
has gone as far as it can without a divine heart.”

I think God is trying to tell us that our species has gone as far as it can without a divine heart. Corporations have gone as far as they can. There's nothing wrong with corporations, but corporations without a heart wreak havoc on our one Earth community. Our banking industry has gone as far as it can. There's nothing wrong with banks. But banks without a heart end up serving the bottom line, and the bottom line is a voracious, pitiless god. Our energy companies have gone as far as they can. There's nothing wrong with energy companies, but if they are producing energy without love for the planet and future generations, they become an agent of death. You end up with Mr. Potter in *It's a Wonderful Life*. Shareholders, you and I, have gone as far as we can without a divine heart. There's nothing wrong with being a shareholder, but shareholders without a heart invest for security and not a better future. Politics and politicians have gone as far as they can without a heart. There's nothing wrong with being a politician – it is a noble calling – but politicians without a heart end up as strategists, not servants of the public. The church has gone as far as it can without a divine heart – without all the disciples of Jesus awakening to their own divine/human nature. There's nothing wrong with being a church, but churches without a heart end up as servants of Caesar: colonizers, dogmatists and literalists.

Jesus wasn't a great man like Caesar. He was simply a good man. His heart was filled with divine love for the suffering he saw all around him. What others could ignore, broke him open, broke him down. Jesus didn't have the power to create phantom financial instruments that would make him and his cronies incredibly wealthy. The only power he possessed was the power of a self-emptying love – the power to give his life away in the service of love. Jesus wasn't even a

the hearts of the ancient shaman, Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Lao-Tzu, Buddha, Confucius, Isaiah, St. Paul, Augustine, Mohammed, Hildegard of Bingen, Sitting Bull, Baha'u'llah, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr...

As Christians, we celebrate that the whole cosmos coalesced in Jesus to give birth to its full potential for the human species. We interpret Jesus' birth story as a way of making the claim that in this human being, we are given a foretaste of what the whole human species is capable of. We are capable of being the human/divine hybrid identity that we claim for Jesus.

To believe in the Christmas story has nothing to do with believing the details of the story as told by Matthew or Luke. It's a great story, for sure. I hope we never stop telling it. It's a story that never actually happened, but one that is always happening in those who feel the empty space where a heart is meant to be.

To believe in Christmas simply means to believe that the home of God is with creatures of all species, including humans. The home of God is wherever God pitches her tent, and that can be anywhere and in anybody whose heart is ready to be occupied. If you make of your heart a stable, God will be born. God will occupy your life.

Bruce Sanguin
Minister and writer

[Excerpted by permission from a sermon Bruce gave Christmas Eve 2011, at Canadian Memorial United Church, Vancouver, BC.]

Multifaith Unity and the Great Story *Gerald Harris*



When I visited my brother in Southern California, he took me to see Lucy at the Bowers Museum. She lies in a display case, a collection of carefully placed bones. She also stands as a lifelike model, short, hairy Australopithecine, our ancestor. Lucy is the centre piece of a display of Ethiopian discoveries, which graphically shows our journey of millions of years from our ape stage to who we are now. In the journey, our *Homo sapiens* existence appears incredibly recent and new in the world.

Lucy is part of the amazing story science is telling us about where we come from and who we are, a story with power to unite people of all faiths. It provides a meeting place for theists and atheists, science and religion. *The Great Story* offers a shared creation myth to a global civilization - and it's the truth.

The Great Story is the scientifically emerging facts of our origins, contemplated as a sacred story. We open to patterns of continuous evolution in universe, planet, species and civilization, and also in religion. Recognizing ourselves and our faiths as expressions of a universe unfolding by processes we can love and trust, we gain confidence to step into our planetary future with creativity and hope.

The core of *The Great Story* is an evolutionary and revelatory view of the universe and of all being. Being has direction and has characteristic patterns,

observable and verifiable. It evolves. Its direction and patterns, which science is discovering, reveal attributes at the core and essence of being, which or whom we may choose to call God or some other name, or may choose not to name or personify.

Every faith and culture may continue to cherish its own creation story. We may draw wisdom from our traditional myths. They benefit the world. When every faith and culture will accept the revelation of science as true, we will share among all humankind - with or without religious faith - a common origin tale of mythical scale and profundity.

Any of us who adopts an evolutionary view of the universe quickly observes evolution in our own faith tradition. The possibility that religion would freeze permanently at a particular stage of development, or that a particular revelation would be the final Word, seems less likely.

We observe that over centuries and millennia, our faiths progressively grow up in their ideas of how to please God. Even the most conservative Christians today, for example, would shun the glorious genocidal massacres by which we delighted our God a few thousand years ago. Religion evolves. We view theology as the evolving study of how to most successfully relate to reality. We see religion, at its best, leading cultural evolution. Any great religious prophet, viewed in the context of his or her own time, advances civilization. When religion understands itself as the leading edge in an ever-evolving, ever-advancing civilization, we may do some good.

Evolving how? Advancing in what direction? Science is revealing that from the initial flaring-forth of matter and time, the universe has tended relentlessly toward differentiation, individuation, interdependence and complexity. Systems in this universe collapse in chaos to give birth to systems of wider communion and greater complexity. Those of us who use the G-word discover that He or She loves unity in diversity. Whatever or whoever gives the universe its direction loves to see things break apart into new things, which become fully themselves and which reunite into new, more complex interdependence than has previously been - such as the human and human civilization. Of course God loves us. Of course God loves the galaxy, the molecule, the cell, the sparrow, ecosystems and cities. Of course God loves the vastly diverse, complex and interdependent being that now awakens to itself as living Earth.

Earth's organ of emerging conscious self-awareness is humankind. In the human, earth's evolutionary drive appears to have shifted from the biological level to the social. We observe at the scale of civilization, the cycles of individuation and communion, of chaotic breakdown and reorganization at higher complexity and interdependence. We find cause for hope. In apparently destructive forces that threaten to overwhelm culture and economy, we may also discern motivation and means for stepping up into higher expressions of interdependence among humankind, and between the human and the broader community of earth-life.

Standing before Lucy's bones, contemplating the long journey she and I share strengthens my evolutionary view of reality. Evolutionary awareness increases my hope for an ever-advancing civilization and for increasing religious unity in diversity.

These are ideas from a growing body of thought that originated in the Christian tradition, but are rapidly expanding in theist and non-theist communities. One contemporary face of *Great Story* thinking and teaching is the married couple, Connie Barlow and Michael Dowd. Connie, a science journalist and atheist, and Michael, an evangelical Christian minister, travel the US and Canada in a camper van, recognizable by its logo of the Darwin fish and Jesus fish kissing. Yes, it's cute, but Dowd's book, *Thank God for Evolution*, is endorsed by six Nobel Prize-winning scientists and by religious leaders of every stripe. *The Great Story* is, in the words of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, "...worthy of all men (also women and most particularly children) to be received...". Amen.

*Gerald Harris
Victoria Friends Meeting*

Gerald enjoys restoring natural habitats and has strong working connections with Quaker, Bahá'í, United, Anglican, and Catholic groups.

In the beginning was Silence,

and the Silence waited.

Its waiting was everything,
for there was nothing else.

From Silence came the Word,
and the Word echoed everywhere.

The Word waited, and then became Light,
and the Light filled everywhere.

And that is the Light in us,
though we were not yet Spoken.

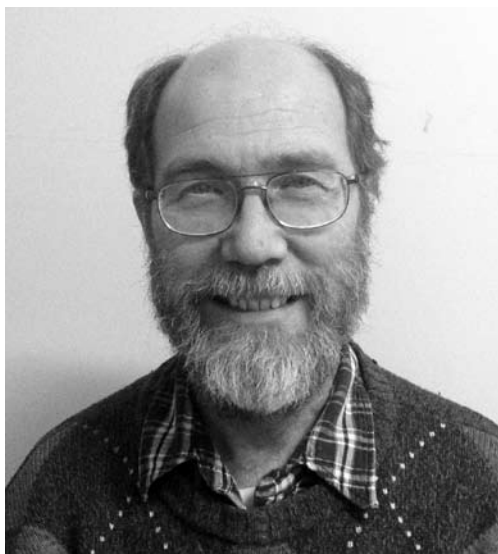
In Silence is our beginning; we wait,
and are gathered together in it.

In this Silence comes Light,
we know not how or why.

We know only that, trusting it,
we live within this Light
and walk its unknown path.

Mark Jokinen

Peterborough Monthly Meeting



Be aware of the spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experience of your daily life. Spiritual learning continues throughout life, and often in unexpected ways. There is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as in our joys. Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come? Do you approach new ideas with discernment?" *Advices and Queries # 7.*

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**Canadian Friends Service Committee
(Quakers)**

A Committee of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada

Report: Ottawa Monthly Meeting Retreat *by Sybil Grace*

Speaking Truth to Power was the theme Ottawa Monthly Meeting explored at our annual retreat. We had assumed this concept was as fixed in Quaker history as the testimonies.

A bit of research revealed it was first expressed by American Quaker, Bayard Rustin in 1942, as the primary function of a religious society to speak truth to power. The phrase next appeared in 1955 as the title of an American Friends Service Committee pamphlet

on the Vietnam War. A bit more exploration in our Quaker library led to the conclusion that speaking truth to power is a transitory experience and to make an impact, words must be turned into action.

A breakout group discussed occasions where our words have resulted in significant initiatives and change. Perhaps there are publications that already identify such actions. I would love to hear of any additions to the list below. Sybil Grace, Ottawa Monthly Meeting.

-
- George Fox setting out to be an apostle of reformation for the Christian church in England
 - George Fox speaking to Charles I and later to Cromwell
 - Prison reform in the seventeenth century
 - The Pennsylvania experiment
 - John Woolman on the ownership of slaves
 - Underground railway to bring slaves to safety
 - Late eighteenth century loyalists and Quakers refusing to take sides
 - Relief work during the Irish Famine (1846-50)
 - Mediation and community reconciliation in Ireland during worst period of sectarian violence ('69-'98)
 - 1832 Irish potato famine, with help from English Quakers and an island hospital near St. Andrews, NB
 - Mid 1800s three UK members met with the Czar in St. Petersburg to stop the Crimean War
 - Subsequently working with the war victims
 - Elizabeth Fry educating women in prisons
 - Organizing in 1914 for the peace that would follow the war
 - Helping German and Austrian prisoners of war following declaration of war in 1939
 - Friends Ambulance Service in Asia
 - QUNO offices in Geneva and NY brought together mid-level diplomats
 - Same happened at Grindstone Island ON
 - Initiating worker and consumer cooperatives in the 1950s
 - AFSC economic committee explored issues of: employment, housing, education, health, justice, natural resources. Sharing of power is essential to economic well-being
 - 1970 CYM: Support of indigenous logging barricades in northern Ontario; Concern over mercury poisoning; The beginning of the Aboriginal Rights Coalition (ARC)
 - Alternatives to Violence begins in NY prisons
 - Goatman Corbett in Texas, led to safety Mexicans who crossed the border illegally
 - QIAP Quaker International Affairs Program working on seed patenting and protecting the Commons
 - Skye Faris red-X project for 110,000 Iraqis killed following "Desert Storm"
 - Kenya and Uganda: recent election / post election work
 - HROC Healing and Rebuilding our Communities – Burundi and Rwanda Yearly Meetings
-

Book Review: *by Eric Schiller*

God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything, Christopher Hitchens.

This is the first book that I have read by an atheist since I read Bertrand Russell's *Why I'm not a Christian* in seminary. It is one of a new breed of books by outspoken atheists. It is probably not one of the most balanced. One should probably look at others such as Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* or Sam Harris' *The End of Faith*. In any event, I think that to read some opposing views from time to time can be stimulating and maybe even useful.

This is not a book for the faint of heart (or the faint of faith), but if you want your faith challenged and possibly even strengthened, then give it a go. Hitchens has done exhaustive work on most of the modern religions. He has catalogued, in distressing detail, many of the foibles and outright cruelties of organized religion over the years. They are indeed multitudinous.

One should not take this as an objective and balanced treatment of religion. The book is disturbingly biased. Hitchens makes constant appeals to science and reason, yet he claims that whereas religion is hopelessly biased and distorts the truth, his point of view is objective.

Let us dwell on the very title of the book: *God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. Consider the word *Everything*. This simply means that no good can come out of religion, because it poisons *Everything*. This is a bombastic statement and the book is full of such bombast. As a result of the claim in the title of the book, Hitchens is at his most defensive when he encounters examples that may show that religion does **not**, in fact, 'poison everything'. When dealing with people like Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Bonhoeffer and some more credible religious groups. Hitchens simply decides to downplay or minimize their contributions. When examples are especially bothersome, he seems to ignore them all together. For example, Bishop Tutu and Jimmy Carter.

Hitchens is attacking religion. Religion is the form taken when people organize their spiritual lives within a structure. The book might have taken a different tack if he had decided to come to grips with spirituality. Instead, Hitchens repeatedly brings up the crudest, weirdest and most outrageous examples of religious behaviour. Granted, there are many examples to draw from. Hitchens, however, fails to acknowledge

the more lofty and wholesome currents of religious thought and action.

Hitchens cannot seem to see the evolution of religious thought. Religion can't be getting any better because, according to him, it is inherently false and must therefore die, or perhaps get even worse. More sympathetic souls have seen a growing trend from ancient religious magic – where people believed they could influence the gods by ritual acts – to a grander view of a religion of awe and mystery, to an emerging view of universal ethics as espoused in a new understanding of compassion to all, and a view of universal human rights. It is true that remnants of the old warlike, nationalistic, tribal religions remain, and still seem to be alive and well. In the end, it is a matter of where you want to put your emphasis and how you want to interpret the world.

Hitchens displays little understanding of the role of mythology. He often takes religious stories literally and ridicules them. **Yet, myth making is one of the most universal traits of mankind.** It has ancient roots. It is still a feature of organized human behaviour.

Historically, secular regimes do not seem to have fared any better than religious regimes. For example, Hitler's Nazi Germany and Stalin's Communist Russia were not religious but were capable of horrendous acts. Religious regimes have been capable of terrible behaviors but so have secular regimes. What we have here is a universal human condition. We will somehow have to learn to control outrageous human behaviours which lead to terrible oppression of others. Sometimes this destructive human behaviour can be exacerbated and inflamed by religion, but sometimes religious impulses can bring out the best in human consciousness. I think the holy experiment of the founding of the state of Pennsylvania by the Quakers is an example of the latter.

I find it useful to distinguish between atheists who are absolutely sure that there is no God, and agnostics who simply claim to have no absolute certainty on this question. In reading Christopher Hitchens, I have met a religious atheist. He is dead sure that he is right and mocks others who hold to the idea of the divine. I have to admit that I would prefer conversing with an agnostic.

Eric Schiller
Ottawa Monthly Meeting

Quaker Book Service



The following titles have been added to our stock. For a complete listing of QBS books, see our 2012-2013 Quaker Book Service Catalogue available on the CYM website, www.quaker.ca/qbs.

Waging Peace: Discipline and Practice by Pamela Haines. Pendle Hill Pamphlet # 420. 2012.

The author calls on us to wage peace actively by becoming non-violent “warriors” through daily practises in our own lives, (35 pp. \$8.45).

Answering That of God: Discovering the Spirit Within, by Peter Parr. The Kindlers, London, UK 2012

The author presents inspiring, practical, spiritual practices and attitudes which can lead one to understand *that of God* within ourselves and in everything, (45 pp. \$7.50).

Love Growing in Us: Questioning the Quaker Peace Testimony by John Lampen. The Kindlers, London, UK. 2012.

This internationally-experienced Quaker deals with two aspects of peace-making: personal responses of people in situations of danger or provocation; dealing with causes and solutions of larger-scale violence and wars, (41 pp. \$7.50).

Nurturing Children's Spiritual Well-Being by Margaret Crompton. Pendle Hill Pamphlet # 419. 2012.

The author deals with four Quaker testimonies: Equality, Simplicity, Truth and Peace, each with practical suggestions on how to present them to children with stories and simple explanations, (36 pp. \$8.45).

Life Lived Inside Out, A Memoir by Bette Logan. Self-published, 2010.

Bette Logan weaves the story of her life around a long friendship with a man in prison. As she works for prison reform she meets Quakers, becomes a Quaker herself, and is now a member of Toronto Meeting, (236 pp. \$23.90).

From My Demi-Paradise: Memoirs by Kathleen Schmitz-Hertzberg. Self-published. 2012

The author began her life of Quaker service in England. While on a Quaker mission to Germany before World War II, she met Fritz Hertzberg, a medical student. After the war they were re-united, married, and eventually immigrated to Canada, where her service with Friends continued.

Heartfulness: Renewing Heart, Mind and Spirit on Retreat and Beyond by Valerie Brown. Pendle Hill Pamphlet, #421, 2013.

Valerie Brown introduces us to opportunities for personal restoration from busyness of life with silence and retreat, to explore such things as meaning and purpose in our lives, (36 pp. \$8.45).

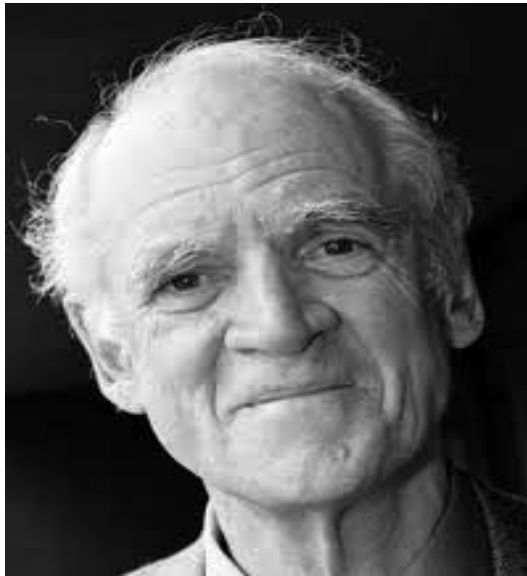
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David Summerhays with Charles Taylor

Interview



Charles Taylor

November 18th, 2012: On this frigid Sunday morning, I received an email asking if I might be interested in interviewing Professor Charles Taylor.

I'm not sure how well Professor Taylor is known elsewhere in Canada. In 2007, Taylor won the extremely prestigious Templeton Prize, a sort of Nobel for Philosophy. In Québec, he is best known for co-chairing the 2008 Bouchard–Taylor Commission, appointed by Québec's Premier to investigate widespread fears of immigrants, particularly Muslims, taking advantage of, shall we say, the largesse of the hosting society, – the pure laine* Quebecers. The Bouchard–Taylor Commission found these fears mostly groundless, tore to shreds most of the reporting, and gained its fame in particular, for a series of controversial suggestions for the “reasonable accommodation” of immigrants and religious minorities (of which I am both).

I'm proud – I think a little too proud – to say that well before the hubbub of the Commission, I was already familiar with Professor Taylor's work from my student days. I had a professor who told us no fewer than three times that he was the most brilliant person alive. Out of curiosity, I'd picked up one of Professor Taylor's books: *Sources of the Self*. Indeed, it resonated with me.

At eighty-one Taylor is one of the greatest and most influential of Canadian philosophers.

These were the very intimidating thoughts swirling around my head as I stared at this offer on that cold Sunday morning. In the end, curiosity won out over intimidation. I wanted to hear his perspective and I wondered if maybe Quakers across Canada might benefit from some of his wisdom.

• • • • •

David Summerhays (DS): The question I want to ask is about dialogue. Since we Quakers don't have priests we have to learn from each other. I've heard you say that dialogue is how we create solidarity with each other in a multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious society. Constitutions and laws are great but they're insufficient. I wonder where you see constructive dialogue happening in Québec – in Canada. I like to say, “Two people talking does not a dialogue make”. I mean dialogue where people are really getting through to each other. If dialogue is essential to creating solidarity in diverse societies like ours, where do you see concrete examples of constructive dialogue? Where are people or communities really getting through to each other?

Charles Taylor (CT): In some schools in Montreal there are people from all sorts of different backgrounds. Where there hasn't been any cause for one group to have been raised up against the other, students just end up having friends who are Muslim or Sikh or whatever. Just in the course of normal living, they feel that as human beings they can relate to them.

The society which has a high proportion of that kind of side-by-side living is a society which is largely immune to the mobilization of hate or distrust by groups who want to do that, because they just can't see their friend Ali or Fatima as a dangerous person. When they are told that all Muslims are dangerous, they say, “Those people are crazy”. That is what can defend us against the growth of absurd stereotypes that easily circulate and stand in the way of our being able to live together.

You can't mandate friendship. You can't pass a law: “Get a friend”. Such relationships can't be engineered but they can be encouraged. You can take small steps in the right direction to promote opportunities that just might spark something and help out. [The political question is] to what extent do people become mobilizable behind absurd stereotypes in order to

direct them against Muslims or other groups? Kids who have been to school together will say, "Forget it". They will never be mobilized. How can we reduce the number of people who are mobilizable [in hate campaigns]?

The image I have often used is that of the fire break. When a prairie fire breaks out, somebody builds a ditch so that the fire can't jump over it. Any friendship across these differences is a kind of mini fire break in your society. The more you have, the more you are proof against these irrational "prairie fires" that these mobilizations against "the Other" constitute. We need to find a way of creating these fire breaks.

DS: Certainly. On the other hand, authentic dialogue isn't easy. In Christian-Jewish dialogue, for example, it is very hard to talk honestly about the political situation in Israel, West Bank settlements and so on. Even people who have known each other for years and who can discuss many things find that very hard [and] awkward, [even] impossible. Maybe it is also a Canadian thing. Nobody wants to be impolite.

CT: It is true that people often don't say what they really think about "the Other". Dialogues where that happens are what I call "minimal, pacifying dialogues" that we use to convince each other that we are not total enemies. [Such conversations may have their uses] but they aren't enriching or revealing. Nor do they lead to any deeper sort of friendship. That can only happen when you can say: "I find that belief of yours very perplexing"; "I don't understand why you want to say that"; "I think it a very questionable moral position that you guys are taking". All these things can be said in a tone of voice that indicates that you really want to understand, and are not just trying to score points in a debate.

government, which I think is doing terrible things for the future of Israel and Israelis.

This sort of thing will get you stuck, because if anyone is carrying the can for the official line then it is very hard to talk. As a Catholic I couldn't talk to people if I felt that I had to defend the present Pope [Benedict] all the time. The really fruitful dialogues, the ones that make these fire-breaks, are the ones in which nobody is carrying the can officially for any position. "I am a human being, I'm a Catholic. Here's my faith. If you want to know why, we'll talk about it." That's the kind of [dialogue] that really works. There is actually something tremendously rewarding about it, and that's why I feel that we are missing these great opportunities – humanly speaking – in our kind of society. People are walled off from each other because they have so much suspicion. It is tremendously rewarding for atheists and Christians to be able to sit down and talk, but if you have the sort of attitude like [Richard] Dawkins, then there is no possibility of discussion. There is also a corresponding attitude on the part of certain Christians who say, "You can't be a moral person if you are an atheist". Then we miss out on tremendous spiritual enrichment.

DS: How would you compare your understanding of 'secularity' with Dawkins' militant secularism?

CT: Well, there are two traditions of secularism in the West. We can identify one with France that arises out of a historical situation in which a Church that had been dominant and had imposed itself on the whole society was challenged by a republican democratic movement. The thought was: "We have to fight back against this Catholic outlook which at the end of the Third Republic was still largely monarchist". Secularism involved putting religion in its place

"...we have to think in terms of the kind of secularism that suits us, which is a secularism of how to live together in diversity not the secularism of defending ourselves against religious tyranny."

What is bedeviling Christian-Jewish dialogue today is the fact that many Jewish organizations have slid into being apologists for the Israeli government as it now exists, and that makes it impossible to talk frankly. It is really very regrettable.

It is a mystery to me how it happened, because I think the majority of American and Canadian Jews are rather dovish and open, but somehow their organizations managed to take this very strong apologetic stance on behalf of the present Likud

and stopping it from overbearing the rest of society. And, of course, in that sort of situation, secularism has an anti-religious or anti-clerical bias that is quite understandable.

The other tradition is the American, which starts off with the fact of tremendous variety among Protestants. Different denominations were established in each of the states or colonies. How do you set up a federal government? The first amendment to the American constitution states: "Congress shall pass no

law to establish any particular church". They were still going to allow various states to keep their established churches, but they didn't want one forced down their throat by the federal government.

This expanded. The Catholics were let in, then Jews and now, we hope, Muslims. Finally, what you got was a notion of secularism in which all possible views could be accommodated. So one basic historical experience involved fighting back against a very powerful religious force; the other evolved out of the question, 'How [do we] live together in diversity and fairness, and in a way that everybody can accept?' Our view in the [Bouchard-Taylor] Commission is that we have arrived at a point in Western societies where the first – French – motivation doesn't really make sense. There are no dominant religious forces trying to push society back. I'm not talking about elsewhere in the world, Egypt or Saudi Arabia for example, but about Western society. We have to think in terms of the kind of secularism that suits us, which is a secularism of how to live together in diversity, not the secularism of defending ourselves against religious tyranny. Because Quebec has recently emerged from a situation not dissimilar to the French experience, there are some who want to cleave to this earlier Third Republic sort of secularism. I think that is a mistake in the world in which we now live.

[*Those with exclusive original French-Canadian ancestry.]

David Summerhays

Montreal Monthly Meeting



In Faith, Between Many Faiths?

Ellen Pye

When I started to learn English and French in high school, one of the early lessons was about the difference between objects that could be counted and substances that could not, which in English determines the choice between 'many' and 'much'. Even in other languages, there were those things for which there was no plural: 'milk' for instance, or 'silver', or 'peace'. I've always felt that 'faith' was in that category, so 'multifaith' and 'interfaith' grate somewhat in my mind.

Dana Mullen's Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture last year, had me prick up my ears when she spoke of the connection between the English word 'belief' and the old Dutch word for 'lovable'. I should have twigged to that. I've always been interested in the derivation of words and their change over time, so I nosed around in my various dictionaries to find the root words for 'faith' and 'belief', to see where that would take me. Echoes across the European languages have often given me a deeper understanding of the meanings of certain words. I hoped the same would happen again.

I was not disappointed. The word 'faith' comes from 'fides' in Latin, meaning 'trust in'; but faith also means 'trustworthiness', 'faithfulness', and 'reliability', so it is a two-way street. With the synonym 'belief', it becomes more interesting. The Latin word for creed – 'credo', shares a root with the Latin word for heart – 'cor', linking it to the 'lief' or 'dear' of which Dana spoke. We hold things dear, but if we hold too tightly, what we hold becomes a tenet (from the Latin for 'to hold'). Credo means 'I trust', which would suggest that there is an element of love in trust.

To me, faith does not need a specific content; it is more a sense of standing on solid ground within, and seeing the surrounding reality as through a slightly opaque window. Yes, there are times when that ground is subject to quakes and flooding, and doubt becomes fear, with faith tested and stretched almost beyond bearing. Yet, enough persists to regain one's footing when calm returns and the waters recede. It is when fear prevails and faith falls short that it is tempting to grasp on to something solid outside us: a faith with a specific, clear content that promises perennial security, becoming tenets that have to be adhered to. That kind of faith is, to me, like a framed painting with very clear delineations in primary colours and definite black and white.

The difference became clear to me while reading *The First Paul* by Marcus Borg and Dominic Crossan. They pointed out that the phrase, 'the faith in Jesus Christ', which occurs often in Paul's Epistles, is definitely an error of translation. Greek grammar clearly indicates that it must be rendered as 'the faith **of** Jesus Christ', which means something very different. It leads from crying out to God, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" to, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit", and shifts us from 'fear' to 'trust'.

Faith as trust is not the same as certainty; it is never absolute. Faith as trust includes an element of doubt. The two are in constant tension, a bit like the pull of gravity that makes the roots of a plant grow down while the stalk reaches up for the light.

Those who had fear instilled in them from an early age or those who were confronted by suffering beyond endurance may find security in the content of a specific faith, with its accompanying picture of reality. Being confronted with a different picture or viewpoint can be frightening. If their viewpoint is the only one they can rely on, their fear may turn into aggression and violence at worst, to deep suspicion at best. We can observe this all around us.

In fact, some of the fiercest conflicts can be between those who share traditions, such as have prevailed between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. In the past, Christianity became mired in multiple internal conflicts. Usually such conflicts were not so much about the content of different faiths as they were about which one would dominate. The power of a trusting love that underlies faith is defeated by the love of power over faith.

It is almost impossible to avoid painting a faith picture of some kind to complement an eclipsed trust, when our foothold seems to loosen and the dim window on reality turns dark. As long as the picture does not obscure the window of faith and its outlines are not too definite, our eye will be able to discern when the light behind that window returns. With the Light, we can plant our feet firmly in faith again, and consciously let go of our viewpoint. We no longer need to cling to it. I wonder whether that is what Jesus meant when, in the book of John, he says to Mary, "Do not cling to me. I have not yet ascended to the Father". Ascending to the Father, to me means being absorbed into the 'ocean of Light and Love' that George Fox wrote of.



We are often oblivious to the Light because it can't be seen except through the eyes of faith. With these eyes we can look at other faiths without feeling threatened by them – even if they have led to untruth, injustice and suffering. Such 'fruits' have to be countered with the 'fruits of the Spirit', not with hostility.

During my further explorations through the dictionaries I discovered that trust, troth and truth were closely linked, through the words for trustworthiness and faithfulness in Dutch and German, as well as the word for 'protectively held' in Norwegian. One dictionary suggests that in the remote past, in very Old English, the root 'tr' was the same as we find in 'tree'.

I was reminded of being shown a tree in Hiroshima, which had been blasted and seemingly permanently blighted by the atom bomb. Yet, after many years, it had started to sprout again. I also saw a tree in Holland that was known to have been growing in a certain spot in the seventeenth century. It was apparently a dead stump, which recently began to put out new shoots after the rotten and diseased parts were removed. The sight of both of these trees moved me deeply. If trees can do that, 'trust', 'troth' and 'truth' can surely also regenerate when the hand of love is applied.

Ellen Pye

Vancouver Monthly Meeting

Guest Writer:

The Ecumenical Challenge *John Myhill*

We challenge ourselves to be open to the Light from wherever it may come. Yet our pride in our tolerance of other faiths is often little more than a child's delight on discovering new colourful toys, previously unknown. Cultural diversity is a wonderful benefit of immigration. Previous generations had to travel to discover the wisdom of Native Americans or the Grand Turk. But 'Light' is more than cultural differences like clothes, food, dance and design.

Are we really shaken in our beliefs by our meetings with Muslims, Hindus or Buddhists? Or are we seeking, in the exotic of other religions, for some vitality to justify our existing beliefs? Do the moral teachings of our parents or teachers seem more acceptable when expressed in terms of karma, without the interference of a personal God? Are we able to accept the limited place of women and proscription of homosexuality when it is expressed by Muslims in Britain because they are a disempowered minority in our country? Why are we horrified by similar statements made by the Christian establishment?

Ecumenical contact is far more challenging, especially as the ideas may be expressed by educated middle class women who share our concerns for peace and social justice, simplicity of lifestyle, and integrity in public affairs. Some of these people may know more than we do about evolutionary theory and yet believe in creationism. They may have lived as homosexuals but now believe they should follow what they understand as Biblical prohibition. They may be respected theologians or physicists and yet believe in miracles. Such beliefs are challenging to most Quakers. Surely we should work with these groups rather than using [differences] as justification for avoiding them.

We seek to "answer that of God in everyone". Of course, we find no difficulty in recognizing that of God in Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. But I seriously doubt that our *answer* has much relevance to them. "Nice people the Quakers, friendly, careful listeners, so helpful at providing connections to other faith communities", is possibly the best they can say about us. That in itself is a great achievement, but....

I feel that among Christian groups we really are another faith. Some believe Quakers: reject the Bible; ridicule miracles; pour scorn on the Trinity; despise sacraments; advocate feminism, homosexuality and free love; favour Muslims over Jews; and advocate extreme left-wing politics. I can see why such a stereotype might develop.

Simply to rectify misapprehensions is easier and more important than attempting to correct our image in the eyes of other faiths; but I believe we can go much further in challenging the views of fellow Christians. Only once they accept that we are rooted in Christianity can productive dialogue begin.

For example: Pentecostals need to hear about our experience of being moved to minister, the broad nature of ministry, the process of discernment, and the history of Friends. Charismatics need to experience the power of Quaker silence. Evangelicals need to try Friendly Bible Study and see that the context of a verse is more than its connection to other verses. The context is also personal discernment at a particular time and place.

There is always the possibility that we might learn from them! Singing is terribly good for you physically and emotionally and, if you cannot say some of the words, you can use words that you feel instead as no-one is likely to notice. Some of their music is so wonderful that many Friends have left the Society simply because they love the music. (Every Area Meeting should have a singing group or two and those who slip away to sing in other churches should be encouraged to see this as outreach or inter-church dialogue.)

Prayer is amazingly diverse: from the rattling spontaneous flow of words that seem to express the speaker's view of what the church should be doing, to the formal liturgies repeated weekly as a mantra allowing the congregation to discover a deeper consciousness. It is not long since a Friend would stand to pray and the rest of the Meeting would kneel; but kneeling to pray is now exceptional in most churches (a fact that would horrify most Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists). Prayer, however, is only a method of opening oneself to the Light.

Ritual can be very comforting. It can be luxurious or austere, complex or simple, dominant or hidden, but it is always present and some aspect of it appeals to most humans. As Quakers we say we can, and should, do without ritual. But when you have been open to ritual in other churches, you will become more aware of the little rituals amongst Friends. Not just those laid down

as right ordering in church government, but the little details of who sits where, who speaks, what the table should look like, and who will arrive late!

Working together with other faiths has benefited substantially from government grants. It was possible to get grants as long as other faiths were included but Christians could not get government money to work with other churches. Of course, Friends were working with other faiths before this funding [was available], but has working together amounted to anything more than lobbying government for laws to protect all faiths equally? Can you imagine working with Muslims on gay marriage legislation?

Working together with other Christians usually has a less selfish agenda: feeding the hungry; protecting the vulnerable; ethical trading and investment; housing the homeless; and peacemaking. We are able to work together on such issues because there is a tradition of voluntary care and support, as evidence of Christian faith. We are accepted as Christians in working together on such projects, where we could not be accepted as part of a Muslim or Jewish-caring charity.

Likewise, we can work as peace builders between the new and established churches because we are currently acceptable to the established churches, and have a tradition of persecution and imprisonment that speaks to many in the new churches.

In contrast, our interfaith contacts tend to be limited to meeting the established traditional leaders rather than the extremists. The traditionalist leaders of other faiths recognize the value of working with the Church of England, and with the established international church of Rome, because of their political influence. Many of them recognize Quakers for our peace building work, but they do not think of us in faith terms: we are just another well-meaning bunch of humanists. What many Friends see as an advantage, our diversity of beliefs, I believe is a barrier to Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists, as each understands another faith in terms of differences of doctrine, scripture and creed.

John Myhill

Norfolk and Waveney Area Meeting, UK.

[Reprinted by permission from the author
and *the Friend*, 11 May, 2012.]

Report:

Unity and Diversity Among Friends

On the one hand, we sense a unity that transcends “Christian” and “non-Christian” identifications. On the other hand, our understandings of the meaning of the word “Christian” may be as numerous as the number of Friends in our group. By some definitions, all of us might be Christians; by other definitions, none of us are.

Much of the discussion centred around the role and significance of Jesus. To some of us, the figure of Jesus assumes overwhelming importance in our faith. Others, while not rejecting the values embodied in his life and teachings, find equal or greater guidance to an experience of God through other paths. Some of the understandings of Jesus, by those who emphasize his importance, are seeing him as a moral example, as an inward experiential testimony to a way of life, or, as the Christ – the key to communion with God.

We recognize a tension between the “Christian” and “non-Christian” tendencies in the Society of Friends. Concerns have been expressed for the meaningful survival of the Christian tradition in our Society. At the same time, to some Friends whose religious experiences have been associated with non-Christian paths, words and symbols of traditional Christianity can be a barrier. The reality of these situations is recognized and a concern is expressed to respect the dignity and wholeness of both the Christian and non-Christian religious experience.

The tension between the “Christian” and the “non-Christian” can be creative, as they challenge each other to deepen their own experiences and exchange insights. We are united in affirming that the availability of the experience of God to everyone remains a central insight of Friends.

[Compiled by Johan Maurer, Derek Day and Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta, and reported to CYM 1977.]



The first thing people of other faiths are likely to ask me when they find out I am a Quaker, is:

“What do Quakers believe?” My answer is “the same thing you believe”. All religious traditions teach the same lesson: “Love your neighbor as yourself for remember, your neighbor is God” (Mark 12.29-31). Matthew adds, especially if you dislike your neighbor, do the exceptional, make them your friend (Matthew 5.43-48; John 15.15).

Why do people always ask this question about “belief”? It is because Western religion over time turned itself to “the letter” over “Spirit” – thus dismissing teachings of the earliest Christians (2 Corinthians 3.4-9)? It is easier to keep people in line! Churches are often about keeping “the faithful” together once they get going. This likely keeps us distracted from the true religious purpose, to love our neighbour as ourself. It is hard work!

People primarily associate “belief” with religion, but belief is a core human faculty. This is why all religious beliefs converge into one truth, the interfaith and multi-faith principle: there is that of God in everyone. In her book *The Great Transformation*, Karen Armstrong shows that all of the world’s religious faiths, as we know them today, formed all at once, everywhere, in response to ethical crises. Though she doesn’t specifically say so, human over-population was the principle ecological factor that instigated a cycle of violence for the first time in history. William L. Ury’s *The Third Side, Why We Fight and How to Stop* clinches the argument with archeological evidence. First came hitherto unheard-of violence, then the great faiths helped humanity find its way back to the garden of Eden safely. The original multi- and interfaith message: We are peace churches! There has to be a better way! It is ironic that the words “peace church” today are associated only with a few, mostly the Anabaptists and the Quakers.

A True Christian Divinity

Multi-faith and Inter-faith

William H. Mueller

Let’s change that Friends! The evidence is that all religious traditions at heart have the same message: Handle God’s creation and His creatures with care as we have been instructed to do – in the Judeo-Christian version – by the everlasting covenant (Genesis 9.8-17), thus effectively bringing God’s kingdom on earth as in heaven (Matthew 6.10).

The Quaker core belief of “that of God in everyone”, leads to the testimonies of our interfaith and multi-faith, faith: Simplicity: we live in a way that allows others to also live and fulfill their God-directed destiny. Peace: we work to end the suffering of war and violence, for it gets us nowhere. Integrity: we live being honest in our dealings with others; after all, they are us. Community: we work to build a world community where everyone is one with the Spirit, no matter their system of belief or unbelief. Equality: as all of us have God in us, we are created equal in God’s view and we treat others accordingly. Stewardship: “God saw all that He had made and found it very good” are the words that end the Hebrew story of the evolution of the universe and all living things (Genesis 1.1-31). Friends honor God’s words by respecting and caring for all the creation, our earth, the plants and our fellow creatures, thus fulfilling God’s intention that the creation and its life rhythms shall not cease (Genesis 8.22).

Queries:

1) Are my beliefs useful in helping me be a better person, and thus a healer, like Jesus, of the tragedies that are playing out in the world around me?

2) What is my idea of the essence of religious purpose? Is it consistent with Friends’ belief in the Inward Light and the testimonies that derive therefrom?

3) Do I apply the testimonies in the life of my Meeting, seeking unity irrespective of the source?

4) What can I do today to put the belief of that of God in everyone into practise?

William H. Mueller

Ottawa Monthly Meeting

[Author’s Note: Quaker theologian Robert Barclay’s 1676 defense of Quakers, is entitled: *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Barclay’s Apology in Modern English, D. Freiday, ed., The Barclay Press, fourth printing, 1991.]

Are Quakers Christian?

Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta

Short answer: This one isn't. On the other hand, Quaker roots *are* unquestionably Christian, even if this was the radical Christianity of George Fox, who rejected the preachers and those he called 'professors', in his day. Fox looked within for his "inner teacher" or inner Light, which he undoubtedly perceived as being a manifestation of "Christ Jesus, come to teach His people Himself". This is an interpretation that early Friends, and probably many today, would accept. But those of us from non-Christian backgrounds, or those who have rejected Christianity for whatever reasons, would use different terminology from Fox to describe the same sense of being in touch with that of G-d or the divine within ourselves and others.

I've been attending Quaker Meetings since 1963. For many years I felt quite isolated as a non-Christian in general, and specifically as a Jew among mainly Christian (Christ-centered) Friends. What was I doing here if I weren't a Christian?

For example, when I first heard the song *Lord of the Dance* in 1971, I was shocked by some of the lyrics, especially the second verse, which begins: I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee, but they would not dance and they wouldn't follow me..."

How could Quakers, I wondered, joyously sing words that repeated what for me amounted to confirmation of the Christ-killer label that has been used as a pretext for the murder of my people throughout the ages? The Pharisees are widely considered to be the spiritual forebears of "normative Judaism". Friends whom I asked about this assured me that no harm was meant.

More recently, this discussion surfaced again and three of us, as well as a non-Jewish Quaker who shared our concern, decided to go public. We put together an article that was accepted for publication in *Friends Journal* and appeared in the April 2010 issue: *Singing 'Lord of the Dance': Reflections on Anti-Semitism and Loving One Another*. I think the publication of this article reflects a really big change over the past few years. As a non-Christian-Jewish-Friend, I have experienced growing support and understanding. I have come to know that I am no longer so isolated.

In 1975, after twelve years of attending various Friends Meetings in the UK and Canada, and after attending two sessions of CYM – where the experience of Quaker decision-making process is particularly intense – I began to seriously contemplate joining the Society of Friends. Then at CYM the following year, I encountered one of those *triggering* comments. A woman in my worship-sharing group said: "There are many paths to the top of the mountain, and the Quaker way is a Christian way".

I had been feeling at last, that my spiritual home was with Quakers, and now I was hit with this! "Is there really a place for me here, after all?" I wondered aloud. [A Friend] suggested I hold a special interest group (SIG) on this issue. Surprisingly, about twenty-five Friends of all ages and stripes showed up for a SIG entitled *Is there a place for non-Christian Quakers?* The next year I was invited to do a follow-up SIG titled *Unity and Diversity: Christian and Non-Christian Friends*. [See page 23].

So what does being a Quaker *mean* to me as a non-Christian, as a Jew? It means that my focus is on my conviction that there is that of the divine in every person, and that I try to act on that conviction. My relationship with what I refer to as "G-d", calls me to listen for leadings, to try to be in touch with what guidance might come my way from this Light, showing me where I need to go. I also regard the historic Quaker testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, and Equality, and newer ones to do with ecology, as arising from this conviction. In other words, not all that different from Friends who are Christian. After all, my Jewish mother *did* refer to Jesus as a great teacher, and that seems to make sense to me. I just don't see him as a deity figure.

Yes, I do maintain a connection with my Jewish roots. I even attend synagogue from time-to-time (though the way I experience God, the divine in that context is very different), and even after forty-seven years among Friends, many of my ways of looking at life have Jewish roots. But in my relationship to God, I ultimately return to Meeting for the sense of direct connection, and communication with the Spirit, that I feel in the company of Friends.

Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta
Vancouver Monthly Meeting



location

Camp NeeKauNis is on a hill above the shores of Georgian Bay. The cabins, outbuildings, woods, and enhanced waterfront provide the perfect location for kids and families to experience northern living within a community environment.

real world skills

Our camp is rooted in the Quaker principles of equality, cooperation, and respect. The interpersonal skills campers learn here will become an invaluable asset in their lives as well as something they can pass on to others.

campers : staff

Our camper to instructor ratio is one of the best and, depending on the camp, will range from 4 : 1 to 2 : 1. This allows each camper to participate in all activities with proper supervision.

camp experience

Everyone has a passion and ours is making sure each camper has an unforgettable experience. Campers will have the opportunity to spend time at the water front, in the sports field, playing drama games, and leaving camp spiritually refreshed.

Programs for families, children, young adults, and mixed groups are offered in a series of camps which provide opportunities for recreation, relaxation, and spiritual growth.

April 19 to April 21	Camp Opening and Work Weekend
May 9 to May 11	Committee Meeting/Work/Training
June 28 to July 6	Work Camp and Skills Training
July 7 to July 17	Teen Camp (ages 14-16)
July 7 to July 14	Digital Film Camp
July 19 to July 27	Family Camp (all ages)
July 28 to August 4	Junior Camp (ages 9-11)
August 5 to August 11	Intermediate Camp (ages 12-13)
August 12 to August 18	Community Camp (ages 12-18)
August 14 to August 17	Pre-CYM Young Friends Retreat
August 30 to September 2	Refugee Camp
September 4 to September 11	C.O.D. Camp (ages 55+)
October 4 to October 6	Young Friends' Thanksgiving Retreat
October 18 to October 20	Camp Closing and Committee Meeting

For more information on camps and travel bursaries, or to download registration forms, please visit our website at www.neekaunis.org

Notice Board

At the Growing Edges of our Faith

2013 FGC Gathering

June 30 to July 6, 2013
University of Northern Colorado
Greeley, CO

**FGC Gathering
in Colorado!**

Week-long workshops

Spirit-led youth programs

Worship with Friends from across the continent

Financial aid (e.g. travel grants for western Canadians)

Register today at
www.FGCgathering.org (or call 215-561-1700 x 2)



Education Outreach

The Education Outreach Committee (E&O) offers grants and loans, or supports referrals to other funds, for members and attenders of Canadian Yearly Meeting who wish to pursue educational opportunities. Examples include attendance at the Friends General Conference Gathering, Pendle Hill, and various Quaker-related conferences. In some cases the Pendle Hill scholarship has provided the space and supportive nurture for writing or artistic projects.

Details on CYM web page or phone or write the E&O Grants & Loans Officer, Brent Bowyer, RR2, Wingham, Ontario. N0G 2W0 (519-357-1883)

Rare and out-of-print Quaker journals,
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Under 35? Come to Canadian Yearly Meeting this summer for the 2013 Youth Challenge!

Why YOU should come

- Your peers will be there. Meet folks across the country, reconnect with others and just have a great time.
 - New Schedule! Experience a more spaced out, funky and intentionally multi-generational Yearly Meeting session.
 - More opportunities for worshipping, participating in Meeting for Business (both the Young Friends one and the CYM ones) and going deeper with your spirituality and Quaker faith.
 - More time for music, balancing, dancing, jamming, hanging out, special interest groups & special action groups!
- Great workshops geared towards Young Friends, Young Adult Friends, and YFs & YAFs together!

HELP to get you there

Canadian Young Friends Yearly Meeting received **\$25,000** to bring together at least 50 Young Friends and Young Adult Friends at CYM 2013. We know that funding can be a major barrier to attending and we're incredibly excited to be able to help YFs and YAFs come together from across the country!

For more info & to apply online by June 1st, visit: yf.quaker.ca.

Questions? Email Young Adult Friend Clerk Maggie Knight at yaf-clerk@yf.quaker.ca.

Apply online: yf.quaker.ca

Report: Yonge Street Half Yearly Meeting *Jean Claridge*

A wonderful turnout of Friends gathered from Hamilton, Yonge Street, Simcoe Muskoka, and Toronto Monthly Meetings. We met in the beautiful Orillia Meeting House, built in 1840 as the home of Frederick Dallas, the local mill owner.

The program titled *The Butterfly Theory* began with Carol Leigh-Wehking (HMM) reading a story by Trina Paulus called *Hope For The Flowers*. It was a story of two caterpillars called "Stripe" (a boy) and "Yellow" (a girl) and their struggles to climb a 'caterpillar pillar' to reach the top. Somehow, while all the other caterpillars pushed and kicked one another, Stripe and Yellow formed a deep, loving friendship. They asked "How far up is the top?" and, "Where are we going?" They wondered if the struggle and climbing over others was worth the effort. Yellow finally decided that there was more to life than this. They wondered, if they helped one another would they get to the top quicker? At one point they took time to just enjoy their friendship and stopped climbing, but Stripe got restless and continued the journey upward without Yellow. Along the way, still not seeing the top, two caterpillars fell and appeared dead. Stripe tried to help a third who weakly said "The top...they'll see butterflies".

Meanwhile, Yellow was desolate without Stripe and tried to find him to no avail. She met an old caterpillar who was hanging upside down on a branch; She tried to help him but he said, "No, my dear, I have to do this to become a butterfly". She asked what a butterfly was, to which he answered: "It is what you are meant to become, with beautiful wings joining the earth to heaven. Without butterflies, the world would soon have fewer flowers...You must want to fly so much that you are willing to give up being a caterpillar." "To die?" she asked, and he said, "Yes and No...Life is changed, not taken away".

Then he taught Yellow how to make a cocoon, covering himself in silky threads, calling it his in-between house, taking time, saying that becoming a butterfly allows you to be free, to really love with the kind of love that makes new life, with the knowledge that there is more to life than fighting.

When Yellow becomes a beautiful butterfly, she flies from high above, searching for Stripe. When she finds him, he recognizes her beautiful loving eyes and remembers the caterpillar who said: "The top...they'll see butterflies". Stripe then tells the others that to

get to the 'top' they must fly, not climb. They didn't believe or understand, but Stripe journeyed downward and went to the old place where he met Yellow.

Yellow showed Stripe the two cocoons on a branch and showed him what to do and he climbed in. Yellow waited and waited for his transition to the end, or to the beginning?

While listening to the story I felt it was a message about why we are here on this earthly journey: to learn about the Big Picture and eternal existence. Death is not the end, but a change in form – much like a science experiment I once witnessed, which illustrated that energy always exists, it cannot be destroyed, and it keeps changing form. The story taught us about Transformation, Growth and Love.

Jean Claridge
Yonge Street Monthly Meeting

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- We learned the importance of a Spiritual relationship with God and Creation; to be patient and accepting; to help one another understand their struggles in life.
 - The cocoon represented a stage of doubting. You must get through it and learn to trust and come out stronger.
 - Silence teaches us to lose ourselves and 'listen' to those with whom we disagree, to allow space and resolution. Knowing there is God in everyone helps us to reach another stage.
 - We learn from other Faiths.
 - There is an Emerging Church.
 - Some churches fear losing security.
 - There is not one answer to "What is the purpose of life". It is different for everyone.
 - One Friend expressed thankfulness for the Journey; for becoming a missionary and a doctor helping soldiers; for learning you can't follow Jesus and kill people; for acceptance of other beliefs and faiths. Eternal Spirit is in the Silence giving us a personal connection with Truth.

Report: *Marilyn Manzer and Stephanie Deakin*

The New Meetings Project

January 18 – 19, 2013, Marilyn and Stephanie represented Canadian Yearly Meeting at a Friends General Conference (FGC) consultation. The discussion, held at Pendle Hill Quaker Centre, Penn., focused on the *New Meetings Project*.

Representatives from all fifteen Yearly Meetings attended. They comprised FGC, plus three FGC staff, and members of the FGC *New Meetings Project* committee: about forty people altogether. The *New Meetings Project* is in the design stage and has been identified by FGC as a high priority. QuakerFinder.org, attracts 80,000 to 100,000 visitors per year, many from places where there are no Meetings. A recent FGC survey identified outreach and integration of newcomers as the most pressing need. FGC has received \$400,000 over two years from the Shoemaker Fund, and has committed to raising an additional \$100,000. Since the inception of the *New Meetings Project* in September, 2012, there have been seventeen requests for support, many from seasoned Friends living in areas where there are no other Quakers.

The goal of the project is to develop a systematic, disciplined and replicable model for helping Friends to nurture the creation of new, vibrant Quaker Meetings and Worship Groups, and to develop resources to help them thrive. These will include web-based, print, and personal resources.

The consultation we attended followed a model of *appreciative inquiry* where we collectively and in small groups examined our hopes for the project, the roles of Yearly Meetings and FGC, and how we might work together. We shared spiritual stories to discover conditions that brought us to Friends, and kept us among them to discover attributes of vitality. We mapped our people, physical, institutional and economic assets all over the walls.

The staff at FGC and the *New Meetings Project* committee will be pulling together mountains of notes from this consultation to use in the design of the project. We are looking forward to receiving the reports and results. CYM's Education and Outreach Committee, formerly known as HMAC, will be following up.

We had half a day to explore historic Philadelphia, only a half hour train-ride from Pendle Hill. What a mind-blast for a Canadian Quaker to walk into the Arch St. (1809) Meeting house and see, not one, but two meeting rooms built to seat 1200 people! One of them has now been converted into a museum. We also visited Friends Center, home of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, the FWCC offices, and another 1200 seat meeting room, just blocks from the Arch St. Meeting house. We enjoyed walking around the city and seeing amazing architecture and numerous tributes to William Penn, with his statue high atop the stunningly beautiful city hall.



WHYM 2012 Report:

Special Interest Group: Faith Action

It is reassuring to hear stories, reflections and images from Quakers, and to be completely comfortable and at home in myself. I see value in all sorts of perspectives and proposed actions. [We are not designed by] a cookie-cutter! I need to be clear as to what my own moral compass is, when faced with a number of people saying what the path is. It is important to find what one is for. *Bill Currie*

Excerpts from Discussions:

Circle Friend: Connection to Quaker activism in California. Spirituality combined in Jesus. An activist prophet, doesn't have home. Living ideal. Telling truth is dangerous.

SIG Friend: An ecumenical experience – a Catholic friend teaching me we need both Annunciation and Denunciation in some ratio. We cannot have only the Good News Gospel, though it is needed for our wellbeing; we must denounce all harm but that's not enough; more must be made of the affirmation of 'that of God' in each Being, while condemning wrong doing. By some restorative, healing means, perpetrators of harm must be held accountable. Friends have a lot to offer.

Circle Friend: Having grown up with "anti-this and anti-that" and "pro-nuclear-disarmament", [negative] forms didn't resonate with me. I am led to what is positive: following and sharing my beliefs in Quaker testimonies, being counted on to tell the truth. I believe if you are passionate and persistent you can make a difference. We have seen this over and over, among Catholics and Mennonites, and from Gandhi. Being retired brings a change in focus from larger to smaller local issues and needs. Sharing food and singing are important.

SIG Circle: I feel my faith is in action all the time. During Central American wars, it was important to work for stopping conflicts and supporting communities; full-time work with immigrants; advocacy; dignity; launching an Ecumenical Peace Vigil: *Embrace the Need for Peace on Remembrance Day*.

.....

Last Words: *Daphne Davey*

I was never satisfied with my attempts to encapsulate the mystery and beauty of our way of worship in a few short sentences. As I mulled over a possible way of expressing the spirit of Quaker worship without resorting to quoted text from other writers, I received an image that I felt would serve as a helpful metaphor. I think I was half-awake in bed at the time, so of course when I fully woke up I couldn't remember it. I lost that image for a whole week, despite attempts to recall it.

I was early for Meeting on Sunday, and had the chance to chat for a few minutes with our host. She remarked how difficult it had been for her, and no doubt many new attenders, to pick up on the concept of Quaker worship, given that most people new to Quakers come from faith communities with very concrete structures of worship. When they come to a Quaker Meeting, they find themselves facing an unsettling void – a blank.

During worship I thought about what this Friend had said – and presto – into my mind popped my missing metaphor. I shared it as vocal ministry, and later Friends encouraged me to write it down.

Imagine two lovely old books, the kind you'd find in an antiquarian book shop. Both are the same, with covers and spines, titles, and an introduction. Beyond the introduction, however, they differ. One has text written on every page, while the other has blank pages.

The "reading" of this image was that while structured faith communities give their adherents a text to follow, the Quaker book with the blank pages, allows each Friend to write his/her own spiritual development and experiences into his/her own book. The introduction for the one, represented a creed or set of rules. The introduction for the other represented our Testimonies – words to live by, but not rules to be obeyed in a way that might restrict individual spiritual growth. We refer to this as "continuing revelation".

By the way, the Divine, always with a ready twinkle, embellished these books with age-related browning of the vintage pages. In the antiquarian profession this is called "foxing".

Daphne Davey

*Prince Edward Island Worship Group
New Brunswick Monthly Meeting*

The Canadian Friend

Editor: Sherryll-Jeanne Harris

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Themes & Deadlines for upcoming issues:

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