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Editorial (Quaker Studies Volume 13, Issue 2)

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EDITORIAL

This issue begins with a George Richardson Lecture and continues with an article consequent to another. Thomas Hamm enthralled the ninety participants at the joint Quaker Historians and Archivists/QSRA Conference in June 2008 with his lecture on the shift in perceptions which allowed the advent of Quaker pastors in a group historically opposed to a hireling ministry. Thomas Hamm's work is always thorough and like his previous contribution to *Quaker Studies* ('A Protest Against Protestantism—Hicksite Friends and the Bible in the Nineteenth Century' in 6/2), we have another tantalising glimpse of his larger work on Hicksite Quakers to accompany his excellent *Transformation of American Quakerism* (University of Indiana Press, 1988). We wait in eager anticipation.

In 9/2, we published Grace Jantzen's 2003 George Richardson Lecture, 'Choose Life—Early Quaker Women and Violence in Modernity'. As the article printed here states:

It was part of her ongoing work on the preoccupation of modernity with death and violence. In the lecture she argued that Margaret Fell and most other early Quaker women encouraged a choice of life over a preoccupation with death, while most male Friends (as Quakers are also called) maintained the violent imagery of the Lamb's War, the spiritual warfare that would usher in the kingdom. While both men and women developed what became the Quaker 'peace testimony' (the witness against war and outward violence), the language used by male and female Friends differed in its description of the inward spiritual life and its consequences and mission. Thus, Grace argued that these women Friends were choosing a language counter to modernity, while the male apocalyptic was indeed counter-cultural but still within the frame of modernity. The Quaker women's emphasis on 'Life' was at odds with modernity's emphasis on death and violence. It led to an alternative mode within the Quaker communities in terms of gender relations and the spiritual equality of the sexes, which extended to the whole range of social testimony and witness.

Grace Jantzen died in 2006 and as part of conference and forthcoming book to commemorate her life and work, four of us within the Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies (Pink Dandelion, Betty Hagglund, Pam Lunn, Edwina Newman) jointly authored a collaborative and interdisciplinary piece (no doubt she would have encouraged us to work in this way), exploring this challenging thesis further in other parts of British Quaker history. Grace Jantzen gave enormously to us as colleagues and also to the Centre in her Lecture, a workshop at a Research Summer School and in subsequent teaching at Woodbrooke. She had planned to join the team here and we feel her loss deeply. We are grateful to Elaine Graham,

editing the volume arising out of the conference, for her permission to reprint the article here where in some ways it also obviously belongs.

Following James Walvin's 2007 George Richardson Lecture, reprinted in the last volume, Elizabeth O'Donnell adds to her published work on nineteenth-century north-east England Quakerism with an article on the Free Produce movement, the Victorian equivalent of fair-trade in its attempts to sell goods that had not been produced with the help of slave labour. Anna Kett at Brighton is now undertaking doctoral work on the wider picture of the Free Produce movement and we can look forward to her findings.

In 2007, the QSRA conference was entitled 'The Quaker Condition' and the twelve papers presented have now appeared as a volume of the same name, published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing. The book looks sociologically at the condition of present-day British Quakerism. As such, it represents an in-depth study of a liberal faith group, when liberal religion is the focus of much scholarly debate at present, particularly with reference to the secularisation thesis. The study of British Quakerism is especially fascinating in this regard, given how the group can be described almost as hyper- or ultra-liberal, prefiguring many of the developments which may overtake currently more conservative groups. The book is divided into four main sections of three chapters each: Identity; Belief and Values; Meeting Culture; and Diverse Forms, and we are pleased that over the next three issues, we can reprint some of those chapters.

In this issue, we carry papers by Peter Collins on identity and Giselle Vincett on Quaker pagans or 'Quagans' from the first and fourth sections respectively. Peter Collins argues in his 'The Problem of Quaker identity' that the issue of Quaker identity is problematic in two senses. On the one hand it would appear to be a problem, a practical problem one might say, for Quakers themselves. Indeed, Quakers seem often to see the problem as a solution or in any case as a cause for celebration. It is a celebration with distinctly postmodern overtones in that a creedless Quakerism allows considerable scope for variation in belief and practice. With its explicit avowal of the importance of individuality, Quakerism would seem to be a religion for today. Quaker identity is, furthermore, sociologically problematic. Given that the Religious Society of Friends has sustained its identity for 350 years, how has this been possible? How can a voluntary organisation, like the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), sustain a coherent identity without charter or creed—without an overt, unifying ideology? One possible answer is the existence of a behavioural creed. In other words, Quakers are Quakers by virtue of *doing* rather than *believing* the same thing. Although an interesting hypothesis, it does not entirely convince. Empirical research indicates that although Quakers (say during Meeting for Worship) appear to be doing the same thing, they are not, and are often aware that this is the case. The central problem remains, then: how is Quaker identity sustained? Peter Collins' response to this question draws on three concepts: *narrative*, *plaining*, and *habitus*.

Giselle Vincett in 'Quagans in Contemporary British Quakerism' draws upon semi-structured interviews with four Quaker women, all of whom also identify as pagan. All the women were long-term Quakers (though none were raised in the

tradition) and all emphasised that their paganism was in no way a rejection of Quakerism. Giselle Vincett introduces the term *Quagan* to refer to individuals who fuse Quakerism with neo-paganism. For these individuals Quakerism is not necessarily Christian, but is based upon 'how you are, rather than what you believe'. Quakerism for these women becomes a way of life, a spirituality rooted in praxis, where praxis includes: ritual (both Quaker and pagan); spiritual experience; and forms of relating to others and the world (social and eco-justice actions, pastoral work, writing). Quakerism is supplemented with images, ritual and new forms of the divine. As one participant related, '...now I know ways to work with symbols, ritual, even micro-ritual... I have a bigger range than I did when I worked solely with the Friends'. This article examines how and where a pagan worldview may merge with Quaker praxis, and where the two spiritualities merge with difficulty.

Mark Cary, Pink Dandelion, and Rosie Rutherford examine the 1990 and 2003 surveys of British Quakerism conducted by Dandelion and Rutherford respectively. The authors argue that while the sampling methods were far more rigorous in the latter survey and it might be argued that Pink Dandelion's can only serve as a pilot for Rosie Rutherford's, the correspondence between the data collected is more than coincidental and indicates the possibility of valid comparability. The piece reports the key differences between the two surveys.

The issue ends with a selection of book reviews, edited by Betty Hagglund.

'Ben' Pink Dandelion