

1-1-2008

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Recommended Citation

Jones, T. Canby (2008) "Highlights of QRT #S 11-20 (1964-1968)," *Quaker Religious Thought*. Vol. 111 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/qrt/vol111/iss1/8>

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HIGHLIGHTS OF *QRT* #S 11-20 (1964-1968)

T. CANBY JONES

It is a strange experience to go back forty-four years to read, examine and interpret articles and issues of *Quaker Religious Thought*, of which I was the editor in a previous generation! These ten issues of *QRT* cover on a wide variety of issues, on which I must comment. I will list them all and share comments on several.

The first is Vol. 6:1, #11 with the lead article by T. Vail Palmer, Jr. on “The Peace Testimony: Does Christian Commitment Make a Difference?” Vail clearly distinguishes “the liberal pacifist approach to the resolution of conflict” from the then radical non-biblical pacifist view of the concern. He proceeds to recommend a Christ-centered biblical approach as the true alternative to either of the other two views.

In Vol. 6:2, #12 Christine Downing, then Professor of Religion at Douglas College (Rutgers University; New Brunswick, NJ), tackles the large topic: “What is Theology?” She maintains that “theology is a rational interpretation of faith.” As such, it is condemned by George Fox as “human notions,” in contrast to life-giving faith. She goes on to say that “The Word become flesh communicating its meaning to us is the heart of theology.” She goes on to elucidate: “Theology is conscious reflection on the [biblical] text and its meaning for us today, on the relation between text and the living Word.”

In Vol. 7:1, #13 Francis B. Hall, then director of Powell House (a Quaker Retreat Center near Albany, NY), examines “The Thought of Robert Barclay.” Hall is enthused by Barclay’s vision that “the Light” is one, universal and saving. This knowledge of the Light is not literal, but is an inward illumination of the heart and life. Barclay insists that the Light is not part of human nature but is a divine gift. He goes on to say that “the Light is the vehicle of God in which God dwells....It is the channel by which the Spirit comes in to active work in the life of a man.”

In Vol. 7:2, #14 J. Calvin Keene, my predecessor as editor of *Quaker Religious Thought*, examines “Historic Quakerism and Mysticism.” Quakers owe to Rufus M. Jones the identification of Quakerism as

a form of “mysticism” in the tradition of the medieval mystics of the late Middle Ages in Europe. One of Keene’s main points is that early Quakers were a group movement seeking to convince others of the power and presence of Christ within, and not individualistic seekers of the inward presence of God, as are mystics. For Quakers, “God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with social concerns based on group silent worship in the family God, committed to doing his will and building his kingdom of righteousness among men—a far cry from the individual vision and enlightenment of the mystic.”

Volume 8:1, #15 both deals with “The Death of God Theology,” which enjoyed a spectacular but short existence as a challenge to both the evangelical Christian orthodoxy and the existentialist Christian thought of the time. This theology maintained that “God has died and we are left only with the man, Jesus, ‘the man for others,’ in which to put our faith. Such a God obviously cannot be experienced and therefore cannot be spoken of.” We are left then, with Jesus Christ, “who alone can reveal to us the nature of an authentic life.” One of the commentators in this issue of *QRT*, Clinton Reynolds, was a proponent of the “Death of God” movement.

Quaker Religious Thought Vol. 8:2, #16, with the theme, “The Future of Quakerism,” was the basis for Quaker Theological Discussion Group’s very successful workshop at the next summer’s 1967 World Conference of Friends held at Guilford College, NC. Its contributors were Roland H. Bainton, Everett L. Cattell and Maurice Creasey. Cattell puts very well the needs of Quakers at that time. He queries, “Could God use us again? No amount of tinkering with organizational structures or alignments or realignments is going to be the answer to this question....Those were the answers God used for bygone days. God must now be looking for a people who understand the agonies of today’s questions and who have found Christ speaking directly to their condition.”

I raise the query as to whether we Quakers of today may be too stereotyped to hear the Word for today.

Volume 9:1, #17 tackles the theme “Holiness and Christian Renewal,” with the very perceptive lead article by Arthur O. Roberts and comments by Eugene Collins, Cecil Hinshaw and Dan Wilson, plus an addendum by Kelvin Van Nuys on “Continuing Discussion of the Future of Quakerism.” Arthur Roberts focuses on five points: 1) “God’s grace is regenerative.” 2) “Justification includes sanctification” and means “the imparting of righteousness.” 3) “Holiness is the norm

for Christian life. It is a relationship to God made possible by grace.”

4) “Love is the essence of the life of the Spirit in the hearts of men.”

5) “Holiness relates to the whole man, not just to some special part.”

6) “The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a more biblical term than either ‘entire sanctification’ or ‘Christian perfection.’”

Quaker Religious Thought Vol. 9:2, #18 presents Rob W. Tucker’s indispensable essay on “Revolutionary Faithfulness.” He sees early Quakerism as a movement that was “prophetic, catholic and revolutionary.” Rejecting much of contemporary Puritanism, early Friends fully adopted the Puritan concept that we live in a “covenant” relationship with God. In that relationship God “is concerned to save the world.” But Friends rejected the determinism inherent in Calvinism and held to a revolutionary vision of a society ruled by free obedience to divine imperatives discovered in Scripture and by direct divine guidance. Quakers “built a divine apparatus to accomplish their goals.”

Volume 10:1, #19 develops the theme, “Quakers and Ecumenism.” Its contributors include: A. Burns Chalmers, Gerald W. Dillon, Dean Freiday, T. Canby Jones and John H. Yoder. A. Burns Chalmers presents a very perceptive and informed response to the Vatican II Council of the Roman Catholic Church in 1965. This is followed by Gerald Dillon’s examination of the “Ecumenical movement” among Evangelicals in St. Louis. Evangelical Friends came to have important connections with N.A.E. in following years. An important fruit in subsequent years has been the discovery by evangelical Friends of “an inner security” that releases them to encounter the world, the liberals and the atheists without suspicion or fear of contamination, but with a released concern to share the whole Gospel with them.

This issue also contains an editorial by me, T. Canby Jones. In it I stress that I have discovered a strong hunger among evangelical Friends to recover a strong “Peace Witness,” and a “Christian Social Concern.” Several Friends united with Brethren and Mennonites in a “Conference on the Concept of the Believer’s Church,” which met at the (Southern) Baptist Seminary in Louisville, KY in June 1967. Together we confronted the “*vicit agnus noster*” theology of the Anabaptist/Quaker tradition. This wonderful Latin phrase means “Our Lamb has conquered!”

This vision of “The Lamb’s War” is a radical program for evangelism, social renewal, peacemaking and justice for all peoples brought

about by the only weapons that produce results that last: proclamation, free obedience, faithfulness, persuasion, and suffering love. I am enthusiastic about the motto of Berea College in Kentucky. It says “*Vicit Agnus Noster, Eum Sequamur!*” “Our Lamb has conquered, let us follow him!”

Quaker Religious Thought Vol. 10:2, #20 features “A Theology of Quaker Education” by Thomas Shipley Brown. Far from a systematic theology, this issue of *QRT* is a dialogue of questions and answers between T. Canby Jones and Thomas S. Brown on the topic mentioned above. This dialogue occurred in Tom Brown’s home in 1968. Commentary on the dialogue is by Sam Legg, Joyce Blake and David LeShana.

My dialogue with Tom Brown is so full of “meaty substance” it is difficult to select one topic on which to focus this discussion. I have chosen our treatment of “Authority,” which occurs late in the article. I began the discussion by quoting to Tom an aphorism about authority which intrigued me at the time. The aphorism states that “Where coercion comes in authority goes out and apostasy begins.” I went on to ask Tom, “Do you think that this is in any sense true, and if so does it apply to Quaker education?” Tom gave a very penetrating answer:

Proper authority is not dictatorial or coercive but is a structure in which growth can occur. [It] is the kind of authority that sea water has for a fish. It is the medium in which the fish {can} swim, breathe, feed and propagate. It seems to me that this is the kind of authority that should permeate Friends Schools, a structure calculated...to foster the growth of all persons within the community. Sometimes it must be remembered that the nourishing structure of the school has got to say a very firm, clear-cut “No!” to activities which strike at the life of the school. In other words, one might think of the wrath of God as this aspect of the authority of God in which God deals jealously and zealously with forces that would separate men from him. Without that...wrath his love would be meaningless.