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T. Vail Palmer Jr.

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## HIGHLIGHTS OF *QRT* #S 39-71 (1974-1989; PALMER & FREIDAY, EDS.)

T. VAIL PALMER, JR.

These issues come from the period in which I served first as sole editor of *QRT* (issues 39-46), and then with Dean Freiday as guest editor and co-editor (issues 47-54). I look back on this period as one of transition for *QRT* and the Quaker Theological Discussion Group, in a number of respects.

The first 38 issues of *QRT* were identified in the cover only by date and by volume and number within the volume. I initiated the process of identifying issues also by their cumulative number. The first issue which I edited was a double issue, identified as “vol. 16, nos. 1 & 2, winter 1974-75, cumulative nos. 39-40.” This combined form of identification continued until 2003, when double issue #s 99 & 100 was the first to appear without any volume number.

In one very significant respect, the years 1974 through 1982 marked a coming of age for QTGD within the larger Quaker context. In the very first *QRT* issue during this period, I wrote a review of the first Faith and Life Panel booklet, *Quaker Understanding of Christ and of Authority*. I noted that the Faith and Life Panel had been created by the 1970 Faith and Life Conference in St. Louis—a delegated conference, whose attenders had been appointed as representatives by their yearly meetings. The editor of this booklet and the writers of the papers that appeared in it had all previously either written articles in *QRT* or read papers at QTGD conferences. As I put it:

The authors of the papers in this booklet write as members of the Faith and Life Panel....The authors have therefore written these papers as representatives of the various institutions that constitute the Religious Society of Friends in North America.

In other words, the Society of Friends has looked at what the Discussion Group has been doing for the past fifteen years, pronounced it to be good, promoted these dialogues from the individual to the institutional level, and then assigned persons, most of whom have gained their expertise in the unofficial

discussions of the QT DG, to do the same thing now officially on behalf of the whole Society. (#s 39-40, p. 72)

The final *QRT* issue (#54) in the period returned to the work of the Faith and Life Panel. Two articles, by William Stafford and Lorton Heusel, and a book review by Duane Hansen, commented on or responded to the final two Faith and Life publications—again, with major authorship by QT DG stalwarts. Dean Freiday’s editorial reviewed the decade of work by the Faith and Life movement and noted the completion of the Faith and Life Panel’s work.

The second issue which I edited also reflected a close tie between QT DG and “official” Quakerism. Controversies had erupted, particularly within Friends United Meeting, over the issue of “speaking in tongues.” Some Friends claimed that people could not be fully committed Christians unless they engaged in this practice; others tried to discourage or condemn speaking in tongues within the Quaker community. Planners of the 1975 sessions of Friends United Meeting had decided to devote a full evening to a consideration of this subject and asked *QRT* to publish an issue devoted to a theological consideration of the work of the Holy Spirit, with particular attention to the question of speaking in tongues, which Friends could use as a relevant study guide. With the almost inevitable delays in the publishing process, the first copies of our “Ministries of the Holy Spirit” issue (#41) came off the press just in time for me to pick them up at John McCandless’ Hemlock Press in eastern Pennsylvania, and drive them out to Wilmington College in Ohio. With some delays from car trouble, I did not arrive at the FUM meeting in Wilmington until after the evening session had already begun; some Friends, including Canby Jones, acclaimed the desperately timely arrival of this publication as itself a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit!

I have made a quick overview of the authorship of articles, comments, and reviews. I counted a total of forty-three authors during this period. Only thirteen of these had written for *QRT* during the fifteen years prior to my editorship! I look on the advent of thirty new authors as a significant transition. We were beginning to find successors to the generation who had provided the strong impetus for the beginnings of QT DG and *QRT*. A number of these new writers were to become significant scholars or leaders among Friends—including Howard Macy, Stan Perisho, Kara Cole [now Newell], William Taber, and Sandra Cronk.

I would like to pay special tribute to two of our “new” writers. Alan Kolp was already author of a published book and Dean of Earlham School of Religion when his first article appeared in *QRT*; his subsequent journal articles and books have established him, in my mind, as one of the premier contributors to Quaker theology in our time. When I received an unsolicited interdisciplinary paper for publication (“Was George Fox a Prophet?” by William Durland [#43]), I decided that I needed to invite comments on the paper from one specialist in Quaker studies and two specialists in Old Testament studies. One of the Old Testament scholars was a recent graduate of Union Theological Seminary (New York), who had concentrated there in Old Testament studies and who had already undertaken significant responsibilities for QTDG: Douglas Gwyn. Doug—never a person to be neatly pigeonholed—responded by focusing his attention on the work of George Fox! He has since then become an important second-generation leader in QTDG and a prolific author, particularly in early Quaker studies, whose interpretations are always thought-provoking and frequently mind-bending!

Not all attempts at transition succeed. In my first issue, I reported that the QTDG executive committee had noted that only one *QRT* article had been written by an author who did not come from England or the United States; we issued a call inviting papers from parts of the world beyond these two countries. The response: during my editorship and co-editorship, we had one article by Roswith Gerloff (#41), an ordained minister of the United Protestant Church in Berlin-Brandenburg, Germany, and one comment by Barrie Pittock (#44), an Australian Friend.

But during these years, we did have the first signs of another significant geographical shift. Before 1977, the geographical weight of QTDG, measured by the location of our annual conferences and of the editorship of *QRT*, was entirely on the East coast and eastern Midwest—nothing west of Richmond, Indiana. Holding the 1977 conference in Wichita, Kansas, was a radical westward step indeed! The next shift came in 1979, when my transition from editor to co-editor coincided with a geographical move from Ohio to Portland, Oregon. This change could not be maintained; geography was one factor in my decision to step down from co-editorship of *QRT* in 1982. The geographical shift to the West coast was premature, but it was a harbinger of the future. The present and immediate past editors of *QRT* have both been Oregonians, and the only full-scale QTDG

conferences in recent years have been held at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon.

As I look back from a quarter century later, I discover noteworthy shifts in my own evaluation of the importance of two *QRT* articles from the 1974 to 1982 period. If most of the founders of QTDG had one outlook in common, it was a belief that Rufus Jones's interpretation of early Quakerism as an example of mysticism or mystical religion was mistaken (or, as I had once claimed in an attack of purple prose: "an egregious misunderstanding!"). When Daniel Bassuk's unsolicited paper, "Rufus Jones and Mysticism," (#46) reached me by a roundabout route, I eagerly seized on it in the hope (never publicly acknowledged) that his expose of the inconsistencies in Rufus Jones's understanding of mysticism would finally lay this interpretation of Quakerism to rest. What has happened instead is that a new generation of scholars has arisen who have used a much more careful analysis of mysticism as a basis for re-affirming an understanding of Quakerism as a mystical movement!

An article which I had read with interest at the time was Alan Kolp's "The Biblical Basis for Evangelism and Outreach." (#53) It is only in reviewing it for this essay that I have come to recognize it as a truly important piece of biblical theology, with his emphasis on the community of faith as the center and thrust for the evangelistic enterprise and his insistence that "the aim of evangelism is discipleship." (p. 11) I believe these words of Alan Kolp are a fitting and enduring testament to what has been contributed to Quaker thought through the medium of my editorship:

The divine intervention is not the story of God acting only and solely through Jesus, but God through Jesus founding once again a community—a community of chosen disciples in covenant. (p. 16)

### QRT UNDER THE EDITORSHIP OF DEAN FREIDAY, 1983-1989

After five years as co-editor with me, Dean Freiday became sole editor of *QRT* in 1983. He continued in that capacity until 1989.

Dean Freiday brought some unique factors to his service as editor. He had taken a leading part in producing a remarkable series of publications: Catholic and Quaker Studies. He also served for many

years as Friends General Conference's representative to the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. Through these activities he gained a wide variety of ecumenical contacts. These contacts made it possible for him to draw in a significant number of authors for *QRT* from outside the Quaker community.

In particular, the first ten issues of *QRT* after Dean Freiday became sole editor contain articles by eight non-Friends: three Roman Catholics, four Protestants (Baptist, Methodist, Mennonite, and Presbyterian), and one Orthodox Jew.

Even though Dean Freiday's own research interests centered on the thought of early Friends, his editorial thrust seems to have focused more on contemporary issues. My impression is that there was less emphasis on the history of Quaker theology than had been the case under earlier editors. The contemporary emphasis is seen in a series of theme-oriented issues of *QRT*:

- Prayer (#55)
- Marriage and the Family (#56)
- Justice, Peace, and Hope in a Nuclear Age (#58)
- Latin American Liberation Theology (#s 63-64)
- Martin Luther King, Jr. (#67)

I want to devote the rest of this review to four essays from the Freiday period, which I now believe have made significant, lasting contributions to the ongoing dialogue of Quaker religious thinking. I had immediately recognized the importance of two of these essays, when I first heard them read.

The first of these is "Friends, Sacraments, and Sacramental Living," by Alan Kolp (#57). Clear evidence that I am not the only one to appreciate the significance of this essay can be found in *QRT* #109, published some twenty-three years later. Three of the four primary essays printed in this issue, devoted to "A Friendly View of the Sacraments," cite Kolp's essay or list it in a very select bibliography; Paul Anderson even expressed his belief that it is "the finest essay on a Quaker view of sacramental living in recent years." (p. 42)

To highlight my own assessment of the importance of Kolp's paper, I go back to my own admission (in 1973) that I was "not really sure why we do not practice baptism and communion in ways that resemble the practices of most Christian groups." (#34, p. 1) I noted

that George Fox's own argument for the Quaker position, at least on Communion, "was that Jesus Christ *had now come*.... He meant this in terms of the final coming of the Kingdom of God.... But history since then has proved that Fox was...premature, in his expectations of the final coming of the Kingdom." (p. 4) More recent arguments for Quaker practice have been based on premises that were seriously divergent from the original understanding of what Quakerism is all about. Alan Kolp's understanding of George Fox and early Friends is itself clear and convincing; his appreciation of contemporary Christian thought is equally well-informed. For me, listening to his essay was the *first* time I had ever heard a convincing argument for Quaker practice, in regard to the sacraments—particularly Communion! I would go further even than Paul Anderson, in my belief that this is "the finest essay on a Quaker view of sacramental living *ever written*."

The second essay that powerfully impacted me when I first heard it is "Theology and Bloodless Revolution," by Lon Fendall (#s 68-69). Friends and other pacifists have often argued that Gandhi's *satyagraha* movement in India and Martin Luther King's Civil Rights movement show that it is possible to achieve national independence or justice on a large scale without resort to violence. Just-war advocates and many liberation theologians have countered that these victories were possible because the ultimate power holders in these situations—Great Britain and the United States government—were fundamentally committed to the ideals of justice and democracy and hence could appreciate and respond to the rightness of the cause of the non-violent activists. Dictators and totalitarian governments, on the other hand, understand nothing but violent power and would have no compunction about ruthlessly crushing any non-violent resistance movement. Lon Fendall in his article pointed to "the bloodless revolution that finally overthrew the deeply entrenched regime of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines" in 1986 (p. 1). His article was anchored in a conversation which he had with a Roman Catholic priest in the Philippines; he brought to our attention the writings of this priest and two other Philippine Roman Catholic priests who had developed a theology of nonviolent struggle. Undergirded by this theology, and with organizational help from leaders of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, this large-scale popular movement had succeeded in forcing the unscrupulous, ruthless dictator, Ferdinand Marcos, to flee the country. Lon Fendall's paper offered a powerful counter-argument against the claim that nonviolent action would be helpless in the face of entrenched, heartless tyranny.

Perhaps the brilliance of Lon Fendall's paper so dazzled me, when he read it at the 1987 QTDG conference at Guilford College, that I fell asleep at the switch when Lonnie Valentine read his "Power in Pacifism" at the same conference. Or perhaps it was a couple of remarks near the end of the paper that let me jump to the conclusion that he was simply offering a warmed-over version of Trueblood-style "vocational pacifism." In any case, I did not recognize the importance of this paper until I re-read it as part of my preparation for this review essay. Christian pacifism was popular in American Protestant churches in the early twentieth century. One reason for its decline in the 1930s was that Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr offered a trenchant criticism of this position, which was particularly effective in sight of the world-wide economic depression, the rise of Naziism and Fascism, the Holocaust, and World War II. In the later twentieth century, John Howard Yoder had offered a theological vision for a new version of Christian pacifism; but in doing so, he had largely bypassed Niebuhr's critique. What Lonnie Valentine did in "Power in Pacifism" (#s 68-69) was to fill in that gap. Early twentieth-century Christian pacifism, including much Quaker pacifism, was based on the optimism of the Social Gospel movement, with its belief in the essential goodness of human beings and in the inevitability of moral progress. Valentine showed how Niebuhr had exposed the inadequacy of those assumptions, but then in the main thrust of the paper he carefully spelled out the inconsistencies in Niebuhr's arguments. In this way, his paper provides a valuable theological complement to Fendall's paper; both of them offer effective responses to the critics of Quaker and other Christian pacifism and non-violence.

In recent years I have been aware of a number of Quaker women's theology meetings and conferences, at international, regional, and local levels. Many of them have used the approach of narrative theology as a way of helping women from contrasting Quaker traditions to overcome their historical barriers. I can now recognize an article in *QRT* as being a significant pioneer of this approach: "Living in the Life and Sharing It," by Ellen Pye (#57). At first glance, this may have seemed to be simply a personal spiritual memoir of her pilgrimage to Quakerism and her discovery of the message of George Fox—the journey of one who claimed to be "most ordinary and typical—much the same as most other people." (p. 3) But it was far more than that: it began with the recognition that "in George Fox, man and message are inseparable.... One of the things which strikes me again and again in reading Fox's *Journal* is the way in which he describes...what is



going on inside him.” (p. 2) What we today call narrative theology had its roots within George Fox’s own approach to spirituality and theology!

Finally, Ellen Pye’s narrative theology comes to a climax in “the insight that *God is Love*, that *that* is undeniably the focal point of our vision. We are asked to obey...because it is only by our working with God that his loving plan for us can unfold. He is on our side, whole-heartedly on our side, and if that is not Good News, then I don’t know what is.” (p. 11) She is clearly in line here with the central insights of such spiritual and theological giants as Julian of Norwich and Karl Barth. But she doesn’t stop there; she shows in quotation after quotation from George Fox’s *Journal* and Epistles (pp. 12, 20-21) how central God’s love for us is to Fox’s own thought and spirituality!

This essay is a gem, whose value I would never have realized if I had not undertaken our present editor’s assignment to review Dean Freiday’s legacy as editor of *QRT* between 1983 and 1989!