

1-1-1997

Front Matter – Quaker Religious Thought, no. 89

Paul Anderson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/qrt>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Anderson, Paul (1997) "Front Matter – Quaker Religious Thought, no. 89," *Quaker Religious Thought*. Vol. 89 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/qrt/vol89/iss1/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Quaker Religious Thought by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact arolfe@georgefox.edu.

QUAKER RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

The Presence in the Midst. 13

Janet Scott

**Christian Accords and Contentions
on Peace 25**

Thomas D. Paxson, Jr.

**Liberal Friends' Responses
to Other Faiths 41**

Margery Post Abbott

Book Reviews 59

Pilgrims in Holy Land

By Geoffrey Waring Maw

E. Anna Nixon

Reclaiming the Soul

By Jeffrey H. Boyd

Arthur O. Roberts

Cumulative No. 89

Volume 28, No. 3

QUAKER RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

Cumulative Number 89

Volume 28, No. 2

August 1997

Sponsored by the Quaker Theological Discussion Group

The purpose of the Quaker Theological Discussion Group is to explore the meaning and implications of our Quaker faith and religious experience through discussion and publication. This search for unity in the claim of truth upon us concerns both the content and the application of our faith.

Arthur O. Roberts, *Editor*

E-mail, arobert@pioneer.net

Paul Anderson, *Associate Editor*

E-mail, panderson@georgefox.edu

Gayle Beebe, *Associate Editor*

E-mail, gbeebe@msmail.apu.edu

Advisory Council: Max Carter,

David Johns, Howard Macy,

Ruth Pitman, John Punshon

Address editorial correspondence only to:

Arthur O. Roberts, P.O. Box 215, Yachats, OR 97498

Quaker Religious Thought is published two or more times each year.

A volume comprises four issues.

Send all business and subscription matters to:

Quaker Religious Thought

c/o Paul Anderson, Religion Department
George Fox University, Newberg, OR 97132

Subscription rates

\$16 for four issues, \$30 for eight issues.

European distribution:

Friends Book Centre

Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ, England

Subscription rates on request.

International Standard Serial Number 0033-5088

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This issue contains the three major papers that were given at the June 1996 Quaker Theological Discussion Group meetings held at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. As the theme of the conference was “Quakers and the Larger Christian Movement,” the first two papers especially dealt with Quaker contributions within the broader ecumenical dialogue on the topics of sacramentality and peace over the last several decades. The other major paper represents the research of Marge Abbott, who received a Gest Fellowship at Haverford recently and has been working on a book-length treatment of the topic. While the original first two papers were introduced by historical overviews, and all papers were responded to by two respondents, space unfortunately does not allow the accompanying papers to be included in this issue of *QRT*, excellent though they were. Nonetheless, summaries of the introductory and responsive papers are included below.

The first essay by Janet Scott contributes significantly to understandings of sacramentality from a Quaker perspective. Rather than approach the issue, however, from an overly common negative standpoint (here’s what Quakers don’t believe or do) Scott develops the positive side of the testimony and does so in ways that have extensive implications for ecclesiology as well. While not citing his essay explicitly, Janet Scott expands on the thesis of Alan Kolp’s excellent 1984 *QRT* essay on the sacraments (“Friends, Sacraments and Sacramental Living”—in my view one of the finest treatments of sacramentality anywhere) by means of a thoughtful exposition of Matthew 18. In so doing Scott develops what may be considered an “incarnational” (my term) view of sacramentality. The locus of Christ’s “real presence” is the gathered meeting of believers, and the true outward evidence of Christian faith is the changed and changing lives of those who serve him and are immersed in and indwelt by his Spirit. Such is the essence of communion and baptism proper.

This “incarnational” view of sacramentality is both biblically sound and experientially adequate. The importance of such a doctrine is that if indeed the gathered meeting comes to be understood as the *topos* (place) of sacramental reality—much as the *misa* is within Catholic teaching—not only Friend’s, but also others’, understandings of how God is experienced and expressed in the lives of

persons is considerably enhanced. Not only is the Catholic/Reformed compromise of “Word and Sacrament” expanded to include “Meeting for Worship,” a valuable balance in itself, but the low-church traditions are thereby included in *Koinonia* fellowship, and Christian communion becomes recognizable far beyond the institutional measures formerly used. Will “Worship, Word and Sacrament” provide an improvement to the earlier dyad? Only time will tell. Whatever the case, the Friends testimony regarding the true character of sacramental reality, if understood rightly, becomes a positive thrust pointing to its central essence and expression rather than being mistaken for a superficial challenge to symbolic or ritual means of conveyance.

In introducing Janet Scott, Barbara Bazett, who had represented Canadian Friends on the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches since 1991, and at the 1983 and 1991 World Council assemblies, spoke of her experience ecumenically. She reminded us that as dear as “The Presence in the Midst” is to Friends, it is “not a concept unique to Friends, and that for all Christians it is a mystery embedded in a fellowship, which to be rightly explored, must not only be discussed among ourselves, but experienced with them in worship.” Jesus’ prayer that his followers “might be one in order that the world might believe” becomes a calling to all members of the larger Christian movement, first to discern how to embody—to give outward form to—this Oneness, this “sacramental fellowship,” in order that finally the world may believe.

Historically, as early as the 1927 Conference on Faith and Order in Lausanne, the Quaker perspective on the sacraments became a “storm center.” The three Friends present drew up a luminous statement, part of which read: “We believe that a corporate practice of the presence of God, a corporate knowledge of Christ in our midst, a common experience of the work of the living Spirit, constitute the supremely real sacrament of Holy Communion....” Bishop Charles Gore settled the day-long debate by quoting one of the early church fathers: “The Grace of God is not limited by His own sacraments.” This led to the inclusion of Friends in the larger ecumenical dialogues, although the larger Christian movement has been more willing to welcome us than we have been willing to join (see Ferner Nuhn, *Friends and the Ecumenical Movement*, 1970).

At every World Council of Churches Faith and Order conference, Friends have addressed this issue of sacramental fellowship. In 1993

Janet Scott and Dean Freiday attended the 5th WCC Faith and Order Conference in Santiago de Compostela (Spain), entitled “Towards Koinonia in Faith, Life and Witness.” The influence of Friends had already been felt within the decade or so of deliberations leading up to the conference (consider for instance “To Lima With Love,” the 1985 document prepared by British Friends), and these contributions are represented in such statements as the definition of fellowship (WCC Faith and Order Paper 164, item 9):

“Koinonia” is above all, a gracious fellowship in Christ expressing the richness of the gift received by creation and humankind from God. It is a many dimensional dynamic in the faith, life and witness of those who worship the Triune God, confess the apostolic faith, share the Gospel and sacramental living and seek to be faithful to God in Church and world.

And, in the final report of the 1993 conference, we find (*Ibid.*, item 10):

Different churches may articulate somewhat differently the relationship between sacramentality in the broader sense and the particular sacraments, but respect for diversity in this matter is not precluded....Some of us recognize that certain Christian traditions understand, and experience baptism and communion in individual and corporate ways that are non liturgical and non ritual.

Barbara summarized her own hopes by citing item 27 of the above paper:

...As we strip ourselves of false securities, finding in God our true and only identity, daring to be open and vulnerable to each other, we will begin to live as pilgrims on a journey, discovering the God of surprises who leads into roads which we have not travelled, and we find each other true companions along the way.

Responses to Janet Scott’s paper were made by Carole Spencer and Gayle Beebe. Carole raised significant questions with the interpretation of Matthew 18, especially with regard to the decisions of the church representing (becoming?) the will of God, and Gayle raised a considerable number of questions about ecclesiology. Essentially, Beebe’s concerns focused on the institutional functions of community and its need for organization. He challenged tendencies to regard less formal approaches to structure as qualitatively other

than more formalized ones in that both serve the needs of the larger community and its purposes. This being the case, Friends may not be as different from other Christian bodies as we might have thought.

Tom Paxson's paper on peace was introduced helpfully by Dean Feiday, and he described several channels on which peace work has been conducted, especially over the last several decades. These include interfaith conferences (consider World Peace Conferences and Hans Küng's *Toward a Global Ethic*), work conducted by the "Historic Peace Churches" (Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethren—see *New Call to Peacemaking* conferences and the book, *A Declaration on Peace* by Gwyn, Hunsinger, Roop, and Yoder) and ecumenical initiatives toward peace and nonviolence. All of this must be seen within the larger scope of Western history over the last four centuries plus, where in this century alone more "Christians" have been killed by "Christians" than the total number of killings in the rest of world history combined! Largely out of this reality, the World Council of Churches was organized in the late forties, and one of the questions early asked within it was whether Christians could at least agree to resist killing other Christians on their way toward closer adherence to the commands of Jesus with regard to all. As John Howard Yoder's chronology (in *Declaration*) suggests, peace and justice interests have been a (and perhaps "the") central interest of ecumenical dialogue over the last half century.

Recognizing that "peace" has ironically been a great source of division within the larger Christian movement over the last half millennium and more, the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches of Christ—USA has invested a great deal of concentration on peace issues. The consultation on peace proposed in 1988 has involved three major consultations so far, and Tom Paxson has been present at all three of them. The first was held at Bethany Seminary (then located at Oak Brook, Illinois) in 1990, and it drew together various papers on peace issues within the history of the church. The second consultation was held at Douglaston, New York, and the focus was on the churches' use of scripture regarding peace. Five papers on biblical treatments of violence and peace were presented (the one on "Jesus and Peace" offered by myself) and papers from these two conferences were published in 1994 by Eerdmans in *The Church's Peace Witness*.

A highlight of the second consultation was a survey of 11 church statements in favor of nonviolent approaches to peace and their uses

of scripture written by Howard John Loewen (Dean of California Mennonite Seminary). Ranging from the American Catholic Bishops' statement on peace to ones made by Lutherans, Baptists, Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, and others, the 1980s is characterized as a resounding "No!" to arms proliferation—especially with nuclear genocide a clear threat—by Christians in North America, and even worldwide. Could it be that this grassroots religious-based declaration of conscience may have had more to do with the demise of the Cold War and the collapse of the Berlin Wall (consider the three-year nightly prayer vigil at St. Nicholas' Church in Leipzig, for instance) than the strategies of politicians? Such a thesis is not groundless.

The third consultation was held at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame in June 1995, and its focus was on "the fragmentation of the church and its unity on issues of peacemaking." Several papers were given describing ways various church traditions had dealt with the issue of peace theologically and historically. Responses were also made to the papers, and Tom Paxson responded to Lois Barrett's paper offered from a Mennonite perspective. The hope is that these papers too will be edited for publication, and they should also be available soon from Eerdmans. While many points of contention remain, learnings from this consultation begin with the following paragraph (from the summary statement):

We are agreed, on the basis of the Apostolic Tradition, that Christians, following our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, are called to be peacemakers. We consider this a common confession of the faith once delivered to the apostles, basic to our Christian unity. In a world of violence, be it in the streets or in warfare, churches affirm that peace is the will of God, and that peace has been shown to us most clearly in the life, teachings, and death of Jesus Christ. Peacemaking is rooted in Christian unity, and such unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit linked to penance and forgiveness. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to practice peacemaking as a way of participation in the life and death of Christ. A primary vocation of every believer is love, out of which peacemaking flows. Our peace with God impels us toward peace with neighbor and love of enemies.

Probably the main point of contention remains the reluctance to renounce totally the use of military force, especially where the protection of civilians or the need to resist aggression are involved. Here just-war thinking is still embraced among many Christian traditions. And yet, just-war theory becomes obsolete with nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the discussion. These issues also emerged in the responses by Barbara Bazett and Ron Mock. Barbara added the contexts of the “Larger Christian Movement” by outlining Friends’ peace work at the World Council of Churches since 1948. After years of statements on war and a study on nonviolence, the Churches took action. A “Programme to Overcome Violence” (POV), initiated by the delegates from the Friends and Brethren, was approved unanimously at the 1994 World Council Central Committee, and is now one of the WCC’s major programs. Until recently, the theology of a “just war” has been a stumbling block; but in the fall of 1997, the POV and Faith and Order plan a small consultation on *the theology of a just peace*. Ron Mock’s response raised questions especially with regard to what he described as “Constantine’s Dilemma.” How, for instance, does the ruler with responsibilities to provide care and protection for his or her people deal with aggression and injustice from without by means other than forcible ones? Perhaps further work on these important matters will make the way clear.

Marge Abbott’s paper was responded to by Chuck Fager and John Punshon. Chuck raised several questions about the dynamics of the issue and offered an alternative approach to it. Chuck especially accentuated foibles of non-liberal Friends, and his views may be considered in greater detail in his new book, *Without Apology*. John commented on the value of Marge’s work and raised several issues for liberal Friends to consider as they move ahead into the next century. In particular, two stand out: first, the degree to which a center can hold where its definition is unclear. A second concern regards the question of whether transformation by the saving and empowering work of Christ represents a phase of earlier Quakerism, or whether it is foundational to the essence of Quaker faith and practice, including universalizing concerns. On these important matters further discussion is merited, preferably drawing from the deeper pools of Christian thought and beyond. Marge Abbott’s essay below is itself part of a larger project comprising several published pieces.

By way of announcement, one further item is called for in this editorial, and a couple more will be put forward by Arthur Roberts. The first is that all are invited to a Quaker Theology Group meeting held from 7:00 to 9:30 PM on Friday, November 21, and from 9:00 to 11:30 Saturday morning the 22nd of November in San Francisco in the Magnolia Room of the Park Five Hotel. Gayle Beebe, Hugh Pyper, and Earl Grant (among others) will be presenting on the themes of the universal work of Christ and the non-Christian (esp. Islamic) traditions. This short meeting (not a full-fledged Quaker Theological Discussion Group meeting) will be part of the pre-conference offerings of the national American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature 1997 meetings, and all are welcome. Inquiries should be addressed to me or to Gayle Beebe. Possibilities for the next QTGDG meeting will also be explored at the final session on Saturday.

—*Paul Anderson*
Associate Editor