

Levi Pennington

People

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Pennington to Parker Pennington, May 18, 1965

Levi T. Pennington

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May 18, 1965.

Dear Brother Parker:--

Before my letter of yesterday gets out of town, here comes your letter of the 14th, with its clippings, one about the bicycle and the other about the future life. I found both decidedly interesting.

I don't remember who had the first "safety" bicycle in Traverse City. The first one I had any experience with was owned by A. H. Perry's son, and I rode on it the first time I tried -- keeping my balance on a moving bicycle seemed to come natural to me, and when I had a bike of my own I could turn a corner with my hands off the handlebars, and I've carried an extension table on a bicycle; I rode up the hill from the south end of the second bridge at Wabash with ~~Bertha May~~ on the handle bars, and various things of that sort. And I was in one race, and won it, the half mile novice, and with the old machine I was on, not a racer, I was only a second slower than was Charley Carver in the half mile open.

I've always regretted that I never rode on a high-wheel -- they say it was easier to balance on a high wheeler than on the "safety", just as it is easier to balance a long stick on you hand than it is to balance a short one. I think I could ride a high wheel now, but if you think I am going to prove it, think again; that first think was wrong.

I have no doubt that you are right about Alec Steinberg and George Raff, and their race. I remember when it seems to me it was Charley Vader and Daisy Roland had a so-called race, but there was more show than speed. The real races came when Charley Carver and his Victor bicycle with its big red ~~machine~~ ^{wheels} beat the crack racers from Grand Rapids with their Rambler Racers -- they had called Carver's bicycle the "little red road cart", and they had plenty of opportunity to look at it from the rear. Charley was the man who gave me my shove in that half mile race I was in. And Ralph Hastings succeeded Carver as the bicycle racer of Traverse City. I'd rather see a good bicycle race today than the 500 mile race at Indianaopolis May 30. I always liked a contest between men better than a contest where machines were the big element -- machines or horses or dogs.

You ask about the beliefs or statements of Friends about life after death. It isn't an easy question to answer, for the same reason that it would be hard to answer such a question as "What is the attitude toward segregation/" or "What is the belief of Friends on capital punishment." There is probably no statement that I could make about the future life that would be accepted by all Friends, or by all "branches" of Friends.

As in the beginning of Christianity there was only one church, so in the beginning of Quakerism there was only one "Religious Society of Friends. But in the first half of the 19th century there were two "separations", one called the Wilburite, a minor one, toward the middle of the century, and the much bigger one in 1827-8. There have been other separations, but the one

2. That has meant most to Quakerdom was the big one in the late 1820's, the Hicksite Separation.

There was no central organization of American Friends till the 1890's, when the Five Years Meeting was formed. All of the so-called "orthodox" Friends yearly meetings joined that body except Ohio and Philadelphia, and Philadelphia had not had the Wilburite Separation. Oregon Yearly meeting, Kansas yearly meeting and Rocky Mountain Yearly meeting are no longer in the Five Years Meeting, Oregon and Kansas having withdrawn and Rocky Mountain having withdrawn from Nebraska Yearly Meeting and never having been in the Five Years Meeting at all.

When the Five Years Meeting was formed, yearly meetings entered it on acceptance of a Uniform Discipline, which contained a briefer "Statement of Belief" and "the Richmond Declaration of Faith" and "George Fox's Letter to the Governor of Barbadoes." Since this Uniform Discipline is the official document of the main body of "orthodox" Friends, its statement about the future life is at least the supposed belief of more Friends than any other statement.

Well, with all that (and I could give you a lot more) as a background, I can quote from this Richmond Declaration.

THE RESURRECTION AND FINAL JUDGMENT

We believe, according to the scriptures, that there shall be a resurrection from the dead, both of the just and of the unjust (Acts 21:15) and that God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ whom He hath ordained, (Acts 17:31). For, as saith the apostle, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, whether they be good or bad." (II Cor. 5:10).

We sincerely believe not only a resurrection in Christ from the fallen and sinful state here, but a rising and ascending into glory with Him hereafter; that when He at last appears we may appear with him in glory. But that all the wicked, who live in rebellion against the light of grace, and die finally impenitent, shall come forth to the resurrection of condemnation; and that the soul of every man and woman shall be reserved in its own distinct and proper being, and shall have its proper body as God is pleased to give it. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. (I Cor. 15:44); that being first which is natural and afterward that which is spiritual. And though it is said "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:53), the change will be such as will accord with the declaration, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. (I Cor. 15:50) We shall be raised out of all corruption and corruptibility, out of all mortality, and shall be children of God, being children of the resurrection. (Luke 20:36)(Luke 20:36.)

"Our citizenship is in heaven (R.V.), from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it shall be fashioned like His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. (Phil. 3:20, 21.)

We believe that the punishment of the wicked and the blessedness of the righteous shall be everlasting according to the declaration of our compassionate Redeemer, to whom the judgment is committed. "These shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (R.V. Matt 25:46.)

Well, that's the statement in the Richmond Declaration, adopted in 1887, and read, if my guess is correct, by a very small minority of all the Friends in of "orthodox" Friends, most of whom read very little of ~~read very little of~~ our official statements.

To suppose that all Friends believe in all the declarations of the Richmond Declaration or to any statement of any yearly meeting on a vast number of things with which various disciplines deal would ~~be~~ far from accurate. Most Quaker statements, in regard to war and peace are neither believed nor practiced; the statements about divorce, the use of liquor and tobacco, capital punishment, race relations, and other things do not have acceptance by all Friends but are observed by the great majority of us.

I was sure month after month that next Saturday morning as soon as it was daylight would see me just below the Pacific City bridge offering a bucktail Royal Coachman to any cutthroat or rainbow foolish enough to take it. Now I know that there'll be nothing of the kind. There is an American Friends Service Committee meeting in Portland Friday evening, from which I'll get back here some time not far from midnight in either direction. If I were 50 or 60 years younger, I'd drive out there when I got back to Newberg, grab a little sleep and be at the river to pick 'em off the roost at daylight. As it is I'll probably sleep late and spend the day right here at 1000 Sheridan Street.

But I must get a lot of letters ready for the mail, and I'd better end this.

With love to my only brother,

Parker O. Pennington,
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Detroit, Michigan.
48202