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# On Changing the Letters... in the Quaker Alphabet Soup

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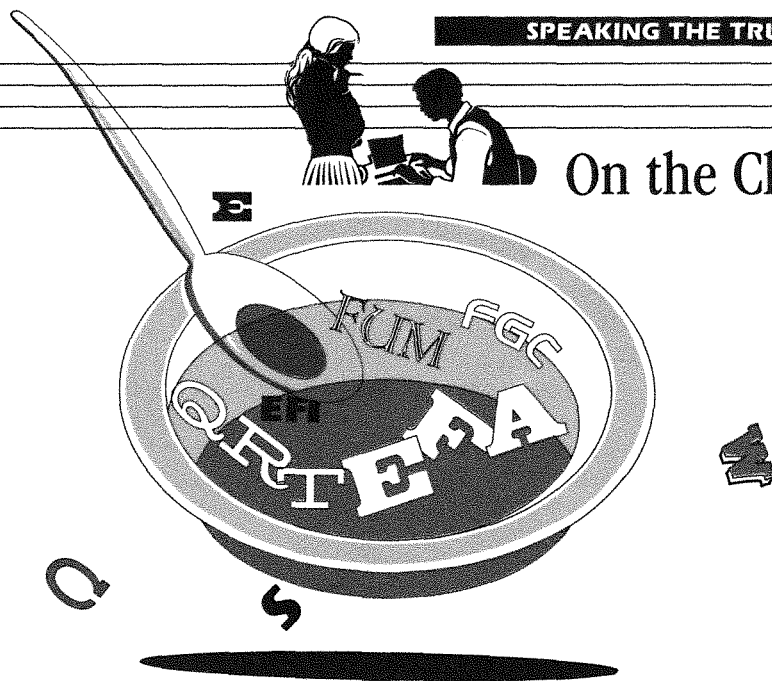
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## On the Changing of Letters . . .

# In the Quaker Alphabet Soup

BY PAUL ANDERSON

**T**O SOME, the changing of EFA to EFI may appear to be an insignificant change of organizational initials, while to others it may seem more like simply a different spoonful of letters from the Quaker Alphabet Soup. But what does the change really mean? Only time will reveal the true differences prefigured by changing the Evangelical Friends Alliance to Evangelical Friends International. However, even from our perspective today, a few implications may still be drawn.

These implications are suggested in image form, each related to an event involving different Latin American Quaker leaders. The first involves a letter written to James Morris by Isaias Cordero Molina, who is a missionary leader in Calexico, California. Here Molina describes the joy of Latin American Friends who have joined EFI. Citing the 1987 Friends Conference on Evangelism in Guatemala as a significant contributor to their sense of oneness with evangelical Friends from other lands, Molina says,

"The present (letter) is to let you know that in this region of the world, north of Mexico and south of the United States, we have a great vision for prayer and the growth of the Lord's work . . . We will be praying for the strengthening of this alliance, and we will perform the assignments that come to us in the future for the honor and glory of the Lord."

This gesture illustrates the fact that, **1. Evangelical Friends from around the world are captivated by a common desire for fellowship with one another.** The same desire underlying the creation of EFA is

the motivating force behind the emergence of EFI.

This shift toward an international fellowship of Christ-centered Friends also reflects what God is doing among followers of Christ around the world, as provincial and temporal interests give way to eternal and universal concerns. Where Christ's Spirit blows freely, His followers become bonded together in unifying love.

A second illustration is actually multiple. Recently, our North American yearly meeting sessions have been blessed by the ministries of African, Taiwanese, Indian, and Latin American Friends. In fact, last year Francisco Mamani was one of the main speakers at Northwest Yearly Meeting, and many were impressed with the fact that, **2. Ministry goes both ways.**

As mission projects mature healthily, parent groups come to assume less of a "parental" role, and mission groups come to be more autonomous. The convinced become convicers, and eventually those whose lives have been touched by missions work return to minister to the parent group, and beyond. They even begin missions projects of their own, which also beget spiritual "offspring." In other words, while missions work needs our support as never before, Friends from developing nations have much to share with us as well. Ministry goes both ways, and to miss this fact is to miss a vital part of what God is doing in the world today.

A third implication is suggested by the article written by Manuel Guzman in this issue. Notice that in his appeal for Friends to meet together and to explore

what it means to worship God "in Spirit and in Truth," he points to the fact that, **3. Together, Friends can accomplish far more than we can individually.** Only God knows what may result from working together with evangelical Friends from around the world. Certainly the world will be changed, and if we are fortunate, so will we.

Changes of organizational names, like a new spoonful of letters at a noon meal, may seem quite insignificant. However, the workings of God are always hidden, beyond superficial views.

If the expansion of the Evangelical Friends Alliance to an international level does indeed reflect the leading of Christ for the near future, our belief is that He will also open the next doors in due timing. Lord, give us the faith to be responsive . . . and the responsiveness to be faithful. **EF**

## Thanks, Lon!

For nearly five years now, Lon Fendall has edited the *EVANGELICAL FRIEND*, and his service is deeply appreciated. As well as helping us think about the personal and social implications of the Gospel, Lon has challenged us to deeper lives of devotion and service to Christ. So thanks, Lon, for your thoughtful editorials and your prayerful editing of the magazine. Our lives are better for it, and if we have at all understood, the world will be as well.