Contributors -- Quaker Religious Thought, no. 29&30

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before the money comes in Friends spend hours haggling over it. It happens, incidentally, that God always gets lost (not just equal or second place) under all the money. This shows up in the fact that unity behind a money matter draws out the big guns (!) and all the fire from Friends, when a matter such as worship draws out much less. We have more pressure for fiscal honesty than spiritual honesty. There is a lot of outlay and bickering, but not much of that good religion that some say we have to buy.

This is, then, how things go wrong. However, we have procedures for finding the right way forward; we do not seem to use them very often. We lack religious discipline in that there is little concrete group religious responsibility or process, and I mean this in business and worship. Who knows what it is to have God call you to do something or be something? Who has seen solid group searching for light in our meetings recently, if at all? It is all very well to do what we can in areas of social concern, and very fine to emphasize to others that we are a religious society, but it is not exactly a matter of clear and thresholded-out action in the first case or of honesty in the second. I am not anxious now to hear a remark that “religion isn’t in the worship so much as in the action,” for while that is true, the basis of the Religious Society of Friends is that the actions come out of the worship and testing and out of that inspiration which comes from a religious discipline or sensitivity. We are not Quakers because we believe in (say) a peace testimony but rather because we have worshipped with others, sought together, and then threshed out together a peace testimony from our experience. (How can we teach this in First-day school?) So, as a society, we base ourselves on the idea of going where the inner light leads each of us and on the idea of group seeking to uplift those lights in each of us. You help me, I help you, they help us, we help them, etc. This, I believe, is the kind of thing we should be after — I just wish that we could begin to be willing to do this more closely together than we do. All the good intentions get us nowhere.

John L. P. Maynard
New York Monthly Meeting

Contributors

Otto M. Boetes and his wife Lia are members of Netherlands Yearly Meeting who are spending a sabbatical year at Pendle Hill. They joined the Society of Friends directly after the second World War. Otto Boetes studied theology, psychology and philosophy at Amsterdam University and now lectures in philosophy and political science at a Christian college for social work in Amsterdam. His involvement in politics dates from 1966 when he became widely known as an organizer of demonstrations protesting the Vietnam war. In 1967 he was elected as a member of the Dutch Senate on the pacifist-socialist ticket. That same year he visited Hanoi. In 1969 he resigned as a senator to give all his energies to the student movement for democracy at his college. Lia Boetes has been very active in the Dutch Training Center for Non-Violent Action. The paper included in this issue is a shortened version of one presented as Otto Boetes’ fall term paper at Pendle Hill.

Hugh S. Barbour’s essay in this issue is a revised version of the Illinois Yearly Meeting Lecture presented August 18, 1971. Hugh Barbour is chairman of the Department of Religion at Earlham College and Professor of Quakerism and Church History at the Earlham School of Religion. He and Arthur Roberts are co-editors of a forthcoming collection of the most important early Quaker writings (apart from Fox’s Journal and Barclay’s Apology), to be published by Friends United Press under the title, Truth Proclaimed.