

1-1-1984

Front Matter--Quaker Religious Thought, no. 57

Dean Freiday

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Recommended Citation

Freiday, Dean (1984) "Front Matter--Quaker Religious Thought, no. 57," *Quaker Religious Thought*. Vol. 57 , Article 1.

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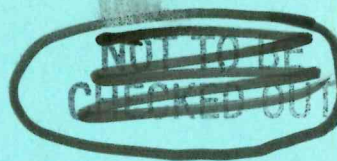
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Living in the Life and Sharing It

Ellen Pye

Comments by Howard R. Macy and Fritz Hertzberg

Friends, Sacraments, Sacramental Living

Alan Kolp

Quaker religious thought 57

summer 1984 (vol. 20, no. 3)

\$2.00

Quaker Religious Thought

Cumulative Number 57

Volume 20, Number 3

Summer, 1984

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.

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Subscriptions: \$8 for four issues, \$15 for eight issues.

Additional copies of this and previous issues, and a complete listing of topics and authors, available on request from:

Quaker Religious Thought, Rt. 1, Box 549, Alburtis, PA 18011

European distribution:

Extra-Mural Services, Woodbrooke College, 1046 Bristol Rd.,
Birmingham, B29 6LJ, England

Subscription rates on request.

International Standard Serial Number 0033-5088

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Editor's Page

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1 RSV). The enabling power of faith is testified to in the following verses by giving example after example of what men and women accomplished by it throughout Israel's history. These examples are a reminder that the meaning of faith and its effects are real only when they are embodied in individual lives.

Those who can still appreciate the biblical types or metaphors can identify with these "strangers and exiles on the earth" who were seeking a homeland. We might be more apt to call it a home base. The epistle speaks of looking "to the city whose maker and builder is God."

And although these Israelites conquered kingdoms by their faith, enforced justice, and received strength out of weakness, even more "has been promised to us." While we strive for peace and holiness (12:14, 22), we are already at Mount Zion and the heavenly city which God has prepared for us.

The wonderful byplay between the struggles to prepare for God's leading and the magnanimity of God which characterize this account in the epistle can also be phrased in modern ways. And they need to find confirmation from our own experience if faith is to have meaning for us as well.

Ellen Pye has caught the essence of this byplay in refreshingly frank and uncomplicated terms. We see ourselves at many points. And there is therapeutic value in that recognition.

She has a perceptive understanding of the role of language, both in the creating of obstacles to faith and in removing them. While the dangers in departing from traditional language are real, her calculated risk has been on the whole very successful. It is a beautiful picture of a personal journey of faith.

Alan Kolp's paper is rushed into this issue to provide material to answer those who ask the perennial question: "Why don't Friends observe the sacraments?" In short, his answer is that it is an improper question. What we should be talking about is ways in which God makes his presence known. Certainly he can use "sacraments," but there are manifold ways in which he can and does manifest his presence — not the least of which is a Christ-like life.

D. F.