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Quaker Religious Thought

#61

A Critique of Quaker Accountability

Wilmer A. Cooper

Comments by Patricia Edwards-DeLancey

Accountability: A Biblical Approach

Dorothy H. Craven

Comments by Perry Yoder

Comments on Ruth Pitman's Paper (in QRT #60)

by Larry Kuenning

1

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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.

Edited by Dean Freiday

Editor's Page

Accountability

Space limitations have again made it necessary to separate related papers. Ruth Pitman's (see QRT #60) was one of three on the subject of Quaker accountability presented at the QTDG meeting in Wichita. Comments by Larry Kuenning on that paper and the other two papers with their commentary appear in this issue.

In a sense, QRT #60 was a series of theological case studies of changes that have taken place in Quakerism. NYYM was singled out on the Christological versus Theistic problem which exists in several other yearly meetings as well. Ruth Pitman, on the other hand, applied an unfamiliar norm -- the Ten Commandments -- to illustrate some of the changes in Quaker practice, resuscitating the almost forgotten Hicksite, Wilburite labels to give concreteness.

The labels in QRT #61 broaden to evangelical and liberal and "some varieties in between" in an article by Wilmer Cooper with Comments by Patricia Edwards-DeLancey. His is not a case study, but examines theological shifts under pressure from Protestantism; or dissipation and deformation under primarily secular and "universalist" pressures.

Non-Quaker readers please indulge these frank examinations of some things where more clarity is needed if Friends are to survive. Wilmer Cooper's attitude is neither rigid nor sentimental, but grows out of a conviction that if Quakerism can become theologically accountable it has far from exhausted the potential in the original vision. That vision was centuries ahead of its theological contemporaries and has an enviable history of motivation to creative and innovative faithfulness and obedience and deserves to be cherished.

Dorothy Craven's paper carefully examines NT understandings of accountability, and her Christian horizons are broad enough to evoke resonance from the Mennonite tradition as well. Perry Yoder extends her observations in several respects.

Obviously, the term "accountability" has provided a fresh and stimulating handle on some things which have plagued us, or alternatively offered new depth of understanding where the rootage soil has not eroded as much.

Dean Freiday

1