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Cumulative No. 130

March 2018

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Sponsored by the Quaker Theological Discussion Group

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Old: <http://theo-discuss.quaker.org>

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 application of our faith.

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Early Quakers were prolific essayists and pamphleteers. Their theology was worked out, defended, and proclaimed in the public forum of seventeenth century print culture. Since that time, Friends have engaged in public conversations about what it means to be Quaker and how Quakers may best navigate and influence social and religious forces in the broader culture. This issue of *Quaker Religious Thought* on “Quakers and Public Theology” adds to that discussion.

Each of the three articles featured in this issue wrestle with the public face of Quakers as they have attempted to function with integrity, whether that wrestling concerned slavery, human sexuality and gender, or public perception and purpose. The first article is my own, “Anthony Benezet’s (1713-1784) Revolutionary Rhetoric: Slavery and Sentimentalism in Quaker Political Remonstrance.” This article was first given as a paper at the Quaker Theological Discussion Group in Boston last November. It argues that Quakers like Benezet tried to enter the political conversation regarding liberty in the lead-up to the American Revolution, but found it difficult to translate their convictions to popular culture.

The other two articles are timely pieces in light of ongoing discussions among Friends. British Friend Rhiannon Grant’s thoughtful piece, “After Same-Sex Marriage: Emerging Quaker Perspectives on Further Questions about Sexuality and Gender,” explores the primary values that have informed British Quakers in their understanding of human sexuality and gender. Grant’s article shows how Quakers in Britain have incorporated their values into a larger public witness. This paper was first given in the Quaker Studies session of the American Academy of Religion in November of 2017. We have maintained British spelling and grammar in Grant’s article.

The third article in this issue is Robin Mohr’s wonderfully researched discussion of North American yearly meetings, “Beyond the Bureaucracy: The True & Proper Purpose of Quaker Yearly Meetings in the 21st Century.” The schisms among programmed yearly meetings that have characterized the twenty-first century have resulted in experimentations with new organizational forms, and new conceptions of how Friends relate to each other and work together. Mohr’s article is a helpful reminder and useful resource as this process continues in several segments of American Quakerism today.

When space allows, we enjoy including reviews on recently published Quaker books. There has been a recent flourishing of published research on Quakers and scholarly treatments of topics of interest to Friends. The book reviews in *Quaker Religious Thought* are up to 2,000 words, which gives reviewers a chance to do more than summarize a book's contents. They are encouraged to engage with the book's ideas. These reviews are a helpful service for those who want to keep abreast of cutting edge ideas in Quaker theology.

This issue includes reviews of two books from Quaker publishers. Canadian Friend and philosopher Jeffrey Dudiak has reviewed Daniel Coleman's *Presence and Process: A Path Toward Transformative Faith and Inclusive Community* (Barclay Press, 2017). Coleman's book is a provocative engagement of Christian and Buddhist spirituality. Dudiak's review raises very important issues regarding Quaker worship and religious experience.

The second book reviewed is David Johnson's *Jesus, Christ and Servant of God: Meditations on the Gospel According to John* (Inner Light Books, 2017). Lorraine Watson, pastor of North Seattle Friends Church, reviewed this book using her experience as a pastor who is called upon to bring messages to her church most weeks to inform her reflections on the book. Watson contends that the book is best read slowly, in keeping with the author's deliberate and reflective method of writing.

This is my first issue as editor of *Quaker Religious Thought*. I am pleased to follow in Howard Macy's footsteps and grateful for both Howard's and Paul Anderson's encouragement and direction along the way. Both Howard and Paul excelled as recent editors of *Quaker Religious Thought*, and, more importantly, have served the cause of Friends with distinction. Additionally, I am pleased to work with Phil Smith who serves faithfully as Business Manager and who keeps the journal on course. We should all be appreciative of their witness and leadership.

Quaker Religious Thought is maintained by subscriptions. As always, we welcome your subscription renewals and any recommendation of our work to institutions, libraries, and interested scholars.

— Jon R. Kershmer

Editor