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Double Issue
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

This is a double issue of QRT. It includes major reviews of two very significant Quaker books, complete with responses by the authors, and a set of essays on a very important theme: “Quakers and Science.” The reviews were delivered at the QTDG meetings in Nashville (Nov. 2000) and Denver (Nov. 2001), and the papers by Cantor, Jantzen and Murphy were also presented at the Denver meetings. Since those two sets of meetings, our discussions have continued to move in the direction of how to pursue truth as a living reality, and the next QRT issue will address that theme. Also, responses to the Quakers and science theme will be welcomed in future issues, as these discussions have but scratched the surface of this important theme. So, we invite responses and even distinctive treatments of the theme, “Quakers and Science,” to be considered for a later issue of QRT.

At the outset, it should be pointed out how significant these two books are for Quaker theological discussion! Rosemary Moore’s book, *The Light in Their Consciences*, lays a framework for understanding the first generation of the Friends movement, based on original research and insight. This book is a *must* for serious Quaker libraries, and as our reviewers suggest, it is an important book not only because of its conclusions, but also because of its rigorous approach to Quaker historiography. Of particular interest is the way Moore investigates primary documents during the first two decades of the Friends movement and establishes her own original and well-founded judgments about the genesis of the Quaker movement. Jerry Frost calls this book “the best account of the formative period of Quakerism since Hugh Barbour’s *The Quakers in Puritan England*,” and I believe he is right! Nonetheless, Corey Beals and Steve Angell find plenty to engage in their reviews, and the author’s response is greatly appreciated.

John Punshon’s book, *Reasons for Hope: The Faith and Future of the Evangelical Friends Church*, is also an extremely important book. It poses a strikingly new approach to Quaker faith and practice, and if considered seriously, it promises to make waves within the Quaker movement and beyond for years to come. Rather than treating pastoral and evangelical Friends as step-siblings to non-pastoral traditions, however, Punshon privileges faith and spiritual commitment...
over matters of religious form and organizational structure. He therefore writes his entire book on the faith and future of Christ-centered Friends—whatever sector of the Quaker world they come from—and does so not as a pastor of a Friends church somewhere in California, but as a British Friend who served as the Quaker Tutor at Woodbrooke and the Pauline Leatherock Chair of Quaker Studies at Earlham: arguably the two most prestigious chairs of Quaker studies in the world! Punshon’s exhortation, therefore, to an audience of four-fifths of the Quaker movement around the world, could make a difference, not only for Friends, but for the rest of the world if Friends live up to their calling to be stewards of the truth they have received. Arthur Roberts, Gayle Beebe and Carole Spencer take the discussion further, and Punshon’s response is a worthy addition to the book, itself.

The “Quakers and Science” theme is one that deserves to be addressed, especially in this day and age when science and religion have been pitted against each other as opposites by the media wishing to sell papers and political imperialists wishing to wrest power from one party and garner it for another. Here, Quakers have shown an important set of ways forward. The quest for truth is valued in science as well as religion, and leading examples of Quaker innovation in science and industry have shown that these quests are not incompatible. Rather, Friends have exemplified in the common ventures of life—religious and otherwise—a pervasive belief that God’s truth continues to be discovered by seekers, and even that God desires to lead us into truth if we will but wait, look, and listen.

I attended a conference at Harvard last summer in which the seeking of truth in science and religion was explored. Seventeen speakers, several of them Nobel or Templeton Prize winners, offered presentations on how truth was pursued within their varying disciplines. Of seventy present, only two believed science and religion were at an impasse, but they asserted this disjunction as though it were the “received truth” among “real” academicians. In that setting, advocates of the “conflict” model of the science-and-religion dialogue were greatly outnumbered, but great bastions of the modern era have been founded upon such bases. Quakers, however, have never been greatly impressed by divided approaches to truth and truth-seeking ventures. Indeed, Friends have far outnumbered the rest of society in terms of discovery, and this fact demands consideration within the impressive science-and-religion advances over the last decade or more.
Another point of interest almost reaching mythic status is the notion that in seeking to do good Friends industrialists and entrepreneurs have also done well. The present issue of QRT investigates some of these issues, but in addition to my own essay on the subject it also includes two de-mythologizing essays written by Geoffrey Cantor and Grace Jantzen. Cantor challenges the 40:1 ratio suggested by Arthur Raistrick regarding the excess of Quakers in the Royal Academy, and Jantzen challenges the degree to which it can be said that the Friends of Coalbrookdale were free from contributing to war efforts and other maladies with their industrial ventures and products. Nancey Murphy, then, poses a lucid synthesis regarding how science-and-religion discussions benefit from considering the papers by Cantor and Jantzen. She also discusses what Friends might offer to the larger discussions of science and religion—a worthy subject in and of itself. My hope is that this is but the opening set of volleys on this particular subject, and I look forward to receiving other papers on the subject that may take these explorations further.

A comment about the November Quaker Theological Discussion Group Meetings in Atlanta, GA (Nov. 22-23, 2003) is in order at this point. We will be exploring the subject of Martin Luther King Jr. and the Quakers, and papers have been assigned for this important subject. At this point, we are also prepared to announce a residential QTDG meeting to be held on the George Fox University campus in Newberg, Oregon, the last weekend in June, 2004, so start making plans for a summer trip out to Oregon if you can! In the meantime, the next issue of QRT will include, among other things, an exploration of seeking truth as a living reality and an essay on the Kingdom of God after 9/11.

Happy reading, and happy discovering!

—Paul Anderson
Editor