

Universalist Friends

The Journal Of The Quaker Universalist Fellowship

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The Quaker Universalist Fellowship is an informal gathering of persons who cherish the spirit of universality that has always been intrinsic to the Quaker faith. We acknowledge and respect the diverse spiritual experience of those within our own meetings as well as of the human family worldwide; we are enriched by our conversation with all who search sincerely. Our mission includes publishing and providing speakers and opportunities for fellowship at regional and national Quaker gatherings.

Universalist Friends is published twice a year and pamphlets on an irregular schedule. All are free to on-line subscribers. These publications are available as web pages (HTML) for browsing, ebooks (PDF) for on-line reading, and pamphlets (booked PDF) for printing. Visit our website at <http://www.universalistfriends.org> to enter a free on-line subscription.

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A Message From The Clerk

The Quaker Universalist Fellowship is current and reflective.

Global Listening Opportunity: Anthony Manousos provides a perspective on the recent Parliament of World Religions, which took place in Australia in December, 2009. The Parliament meets only periodically. These parliament meetings represent a shared path among religious leaders. There is also interfaith movement among American seminaries. There is movement in the minds of people in communities. This common movement is reaching from mutual toleration toward shared understanding. This Parliament meeting is an important event for chronicling those movements in the world's religions.

Struggling Engaged Buddhism: You will also find here a report on a May, 2009 conference on politically engaged Buddhism, which was held in Thailand. Sallie King, who was invited to speak there, provides an important current perspective on the growth and evolution of engaged Buddhism in Asia. These themes parallel those of struggling peoples of other religious traditions throughout the world. The kinds of concerns and the kinds of actions taken and planned are universal in these conditions. Does success matter?

Readings: As always, there are diverse book reviews in this issue. These book reviews are offered to stimulate your reading and thought. If you know of books you would like reviewed here, let us know.

FGC Gathering: The Quaker Universalist Fellowship's Watson Lecture at the upcoming Friends General Conference gathering at Bolling Green, Ohio, in July, 2010 will feature Quaker Philip Gulley, who will address the scope of salvation and the Quaker community. Philip Gulley is a minister within Friends United Meeting. He has written two books, with his colleague, James Mulholland: *If Grace Is True: Why God Will Save Every Person* (2004) and *If God is Love: Rediscovering Grace*

in an Ungracious World (2005). He is also the author of the many books in the Harmony series.

Additional Wisdom: The Quaker Universalist Fellowship is pleased to welcome Anthony Manousos to service on the QUF Steering Committee and to our Quaker reflection on the common core of values and commitments that are essential for our human family.

Financial Support: Quaker Universalist Fellowship publishing services is supported financially by foresighted contributions and bequests, supplemented by subscriptions. Subscribers like you recognize the importance of the conversation initiated and sustained by the QUF in exploring universalist themes in relation to the Quaker tradition. Quaker Universalist Fellowship has stewarded these funds effectively in support of an all-volunteer work of publications and lectures on universalist themes.

Our work depends on your financial contributions. Except for the subscriptions from meetings and other institutions, your support is treated as tax-deductible contributions for which we send written confirmation. To this purpose, enclosing your email address with your contribution saves us expenses and volunteer time in promptly recognizing your contribution to the Quaker Universalist Fellowship.

If you would consider a gift in your will to Quaker Universalist Fellowship, please contact us for further information. The correct technical reference to the QUF is Quaker Universalist Fellowship c/o 15160 Sundown Drive, Bismarck ND 58503-9206. Quaker Universalist Fellowship is a registered 501c3 nonprofit organization with the IRS.

If you consider a life income annuity that provides income to you and that will later benefit the work of the Quaker Universalist Fellowship, please contact us for information. We have arranged for the Friends Fiduciary Corporation of Philadelphia to make the arrangements for this kind of gift to Quaker Universalist Fellowship.

We are determined in our services to provide assistance to Quakers and others in their reflection on universalist themes within the Quaker tradition and in the creative witness of Quakers in the world. This is important for our world, our understanding, and the safety of future generations.

Suggestions: We welcome your suggestions for topics regarding universalist themes for future Quaker Universalist Fellowship pamphlets and books and for our web site services or for speakers on universalist themes within the Quaker tradition. We welcome your manuscripts for potential publication on universalist themes.

We appreciate your support and encouragement in this important task.

Larry Spears

Editor's Note

The articles in this issue of *Universalist Friends* have both been written by members of the QUF Steering Committee. Anthony Manousos was for a number of years the editor of *Friends Bulletin* (now *Western Friend*), a joint publication of Intermountain Yearly Meeting, Pacific Yearly Meeting, and North Pacific Yearly Meeting. He is also the author of *Islam from a Quaker Perspective*, a pamphlet published by the QUF and *Friends Bulletin* in 2002. The following words were written by the clerk of his monthly meeting in granting him a travel minute to visit Friends in Australia and to attend the Parliament of the World's Religions:

Anthony . . . first joined [Santa Monica] Meeting 20 years ago. Since then he has served our Meeting as clerk of the Peace and Social Action Committee as well as Adult Education Committee. In addition he has served as our liaison to an organization called Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace. We have supported and benefited from Anthony in his concerns for interfaith peacemaking, compassionate listening (which took him on a special trip to Israel/Palestine), as well as his research and writing about the Brintons.

Sallie King is both a Buddhist and a Quaker. She teaches philosophy and religion at James Madison University and has served as co-clerk of Valley Friends Meeting in Harrisonburg, Virginia. She was co-editor of *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (1996) and is the author of numerous publications, among them the fall, 2009, QUF pamphlet, *A Quaker Response to Christian Fundamentalism*. For a description of her contribution to a recent collection of writings on Christianity and Buddhism, see my review of *Beside Still Waters*, following in this issue.

Rhoda Gilman

Hearing Each Other, Healing The Earth

A Report from the Parliament of the World's Religions

By Anthony Manousos

In December, 2009, I attended the gathering of a Parliament of the World's Religions (PWR) in Melbourne, Australia. This gathering has taken place in a major world city every five years since 1993. Despite the global economic downturn, more than five thousand people from all over the world showed up for this extraordinary occasion. There were religious leaders and seekers from every imaginable religion, including many I had never heard of, such as the Mandaeans, a pacifist gnostic sect that was driven out of Iraq after the United States invasion. (Many of them have settled in Sydney, where they have close ties with Friends.) This was a unique opportunity to get to know sects I had read about but never experienced, such as the Zoroastrians, Jains, and Rastafarians. It was also an opportunity to hear and meet with major religious leaders like the Dalai Lama, Joan Chichester, Jim Wallis, Michael Lerner, Hans Kung, Tariq Ramadan, and others. I have jokingly described the event as the "Olympics" of interfaith work, only here everyone received a gold medal!

The theme of this year's gathering being "Hearing Each Other, Healing the Earth," there was a major focus on the environment, with religious leaders from around the world affirming the need to take action to prevent global warming. The timing of the Parliament gathering—just prior to the Copenhagen Climate Conference—helped to amplify those voices. It was significant that Muslims, Christians, Jews and those of other faiths joined together on this historic occasion. There were not only panel discussions and plenary speeches, but a Hindu "Declaration on Climate Change" was read out and ratified by an august assembly of Hindu saints from India and around the world. The Parliament is not a legislative body, so it did not pass any resolutions, but petitions relating to the environment were circulated among attendees and sent to Copenhagen.

Former Irish president and winner of the Presidential Medal of Peace, Mary Robinson, spoke to the gathering on the question of environmental justice. “The justice comes in because of the stark injustice of who has created the problem and who is suffering,” Robinson said. “It is those of us with more developed lifestyles based on carbon that have caused greenhouse gas emissions.” Representatives from the Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other faiths also called for moral leadership by the world’s religions in the effort to abolish nuclear weapons, fight poverty, and end war.

During the opening plenary on Thursday night, an aboriginal elder danced and played the didgeridoo while the Melbourne symphony orchestra played and singers from various traditions sang. There were benedictions by Jews, Sikhs, Muslims, and Buddhists, as well as speeches by various religious leaders and dignitaries. Other plenaries that focused on the concerns of indigenous peoples and youth were just as extraordinary.

There are parallels between the Parliament and the Friends General Conference (FGC) gathering. Like the gathering, the Parliament is an educational forum, not a deliberative body. There are also parallels between the Parliament and the World Council of Churches (WCC). Unlike the WCC, the Parliament is bottom up, not top down, in structure. Its goal is to create a worldwide grassroots movement—to raise awareness and to transform the religious cultures of the world. That is an ambitious goal, but one that it is accomplishing not only by its five-year gatherings, but by creating a network of “partner cities” that organize local events with a global perspective on interfaith work.

It is exciting to be part of a movement that is not just a “talk fest,” but has a clear program that seeks to change the world. I see the interfaith movement as comparable to the ecumenical movement which began in the 19th century and came to fruition with the formation of the WCC in 1948. The WCC, which was supported by many (but not all) Friends, including FGC,

dramatically transformed Christianity, especially after Vatican II, and helped to foster a spirit of cooperation and trust among Christians. The interfaith movement and the Parliament will undoubtedly bring about an even more historic transformation of religious cultures throughout the world in the 21st century. Hans Kung, who attended the first modern PWR in 1993, summed up the program of the interfaith movement with these memorable words: “There can be no peace among nations without peace among the religions. There can be no peace among religions without dialogue. And there can be no dialogue without a common ethic.”

Friends who take our peace testimony seriously appreciate the importance of the interfaith movement. I am grateful to the Christian Interfaith Relations Committee of FGC for giving its blessing and providing funds to help me attend this event. I also had a travel minute from my monthly meeting (Santa Monica) and Southern California Quarterly of Pacific Yearly Meeting (PYM) so that I could go as a representative of American Friends.

During the gathering I gave a workshop on “Listening with a Heart of Mercy” that was well received. The room was packed with over sixty people. Among them was George Hunsinger, the Princeton professor who has been leading the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, and several Friends from the US as well as from Australia. I showed the documentary “Compassionate Listening,” talked about my trip to Israel/Palestine with the Compassionate Listening project, and led the group in a compassionate listening exercise. My co-leaders were Noor Malika, a Sufi Muslim, and Ruth Broyde-Sharone, a Jewish filmmaker. Both work with me on the local chapter of the Parliament. They did an outstanding job of discussing how to overcome obstacles to deep listening through a process very similar to our Quaker clearness committee.

After this presentation, I went to Friends House in the Melbourne suburb called Toorak, where we had a potluck dinner and a time of fellowship and worship. Toorak Friends allowed

Friends attending the Parliament to stay at no charge for eight nights—another blessing for which I am grateful.

There were so many outstanding workshops it was difficult to choose which to attend. I took a workshop with Michael Lerner and had a chance to talk with him later about compassionate listening. I attended a session in which Jim Wallis, Joan Chichester, Rabbi David Saperstein and others discussed what the religious communities need to do to help end poverty. I attended a session on spiritual healing led by aboriginal people which I found fascinating. I took this workshop because I will be giving a summer school class at Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM) on “Healing, Caregiving, and Grieving in the Light.”

Over the course of a week, I was impressed by the diversity of programs and how they met the needs of an incredibly wide range of people. There were academic workshops with notable scholars giving papers. The one I liked best was a panel of young Yale and Harvard professors—all women—who were earnestly discussing various modalities for interfaith dialogue. It was good seeing women scholars taking the lead in what had once been bastions of male privilege.

This Parliament will no doubt have a far-reaching effect on future religious leaders in the US, and perhaps the world. Over a hundred seminarians from the US—future ministers, imams, and rabbis—came because of a generous grant from the Henry Luce Foundation. They are part of a program entitled “Prepare Religious Leaders for a Multi-Religious World.” Each of 15 seminaries and theology schools sent from four to ten students, each school one or two faculty members. These future leaders were given educational opportunities and experiences that they could not possibly have had if they had stayed at home.

We had the opportunity not only to hear panel discussions with major scholars like Hans Kung, Tariq Ramadan, and Evelyn Tucker, but also to take part in workshops by charismatic religious figures who are not well known but had much to teach, like the

Rastafarian with whom I felt a heart connection. There was singing, dance, and meditation, as well as art from all over the world.

On the last day of the Parliament I felt a leading to go to a session in which the famous Muslim scholar and intellectual Tariq Ramadan was speaking. I have read one of his books and was deeply impressed by his wisdom as well as intellectual depth. He was denied a visa and not allowed to enter the US and teach at Notre Dame University during the Bush years because of alleged ties to terrorism; he currently teaches at Oxford University.^{1} He was giving a reflection on Islam and justice, and I felt led to speak about the injustice of his not being allowed to come to the US. During the question period, I got up and said:

“I am so happy and grateful to be able to see you in person. The last time I saw you was when you were the keynote speaker at the Muslim Public Affairs Council in Long Beach. At that time, you were forbidden to enter the USA so you had to speak via satellite. I was deeply ashamed that my government would not allow a wise, compassionate scholar like you to enter our country and I feel the need to apologize to you on behalf of Americans who care about justice.” I also told him that I am a Quaker and have fasted during Ramadan to connect with the Muslim community, and have been deeply enriched by Islamic spirituality. I told him that I belonged to a mystical branch of Christians and asked him what he thought about Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam. Several people came to me later and expressed gratitude that I made this public apology for my country’s shameful behavior.

When Dr. Ramadan answered my question, he was obviously moved by my public apology and told me that he makes a clear distinction between Bush and the American people and knows that many Americans support him as I do. He also made very interesting observations about Sufism. He said that “true Sufism is the heart of Islam,” but he was careful to distinguish true Sufism from inauthentic forms. He said that some people use Sufism as an excuse to avoid issues of justice and political engagement. He believes that real Sufism involves a commitment to justice.

(Quakers of course believe the same thing: mysticism does not preclude a concern for justice since, as William Penn noted, “true godliness [or spirituality] does not lead people out of the world but excites their desire to mend it.”) Ramadan observed that real Sufis usually do not advertise their identity as such. He also noted that the involvement of some Sufis in politics has not always been a positive thing since some have been supportive of authoritarian regimes. I appreciated his thoughtful, nuanced response. After the session I gave him a copy of the pamphlet, *Islam from a Quaker Perspective*, which was originally published by QUF and *Friends Bulletin*.

I was also impressed with a session given by Australian Quakers, which was attended by more than sixty people. The four presenters—Catherine Heywood, Susan Ennis, Beverly Pozlin, and Sieneker Martin—each discussed a different aspect of Quakerism: history, worship, decision-making, and service. A period followed in which we broke into small groups to reflect on what was said. Then there was a time for questions, and finally, a short (20-minute) meeting for worship. The format worked well and people seemed very interested. There was literature—brochures, pamphlets and books—for people to take home with them. Alleluiah!

I was a bit concerned that all the presenters were women, which seemed like too much of a good thing. I think male presenters need to be included to let people know that pacifism and our Quaker way are not just “women’s business” (as the aboriginals say); they are also “men’s business.” I was told that there were no male presenters because Quaker men were unwilling to pay the \$170 per day to show up. (It cost around \$500 per week, which is a bit more reasonable). A couple of the Quaker women were volunteers so they could attend for free. So I wonder: why didn’t any Quaker men volunteer? One of the presenters said that we need to be sure to have a Quaker presence at the next Parliament—a sentiment with which I totally agree. I want to commend the Quaker women who were willing to sacrifice their time and money to ensure that Friends had a voice at this Parliament.

The closing plenary included not only blessings by various religious leaders, but also a statement by the indigenous leaders

who met from around the world to discuss their common issues. They provided a seven-point program for addressing the concerns of indigenous peoples. These included taking care of the earth, respecting indigenous people and their traditions, adopting the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People, and returning the bones and relics of their ancestors.

The other highlight of the closing plenary was an address by the Dalai Lama. His appearance generated lots of excitement as hundreds of people rose and applauded and took pictures with their cameras and videos. Having become one of the best known, beloved, and respected religious leaders of the world, he gave us a lot of encouragement but also some “eldering.” He concurred with our concern for the environment and for the rights of indigenous people, but he also warned us that we need action, not simply words. “You need to put our faith and principles into action and make a difference in the world. Otherwise you will become sleepy,” he said, smiling. I hope we take his admonition to heart. I know that I feel very awake and energized after this gathering and look forward to sharing this energy with my religious community.

After the gathering, I traveled for a month to visit Australian Friends in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, where I attended AYM. Everywhere I went and gave presentations, I found Australian Friends keenly interested and involved in interfaith work. This is not surprising since Australia, like the US, is a pluralistic society with people of diverse religious backgrounds. Many are immigrants and some have experienced mistrust and discrimination because of their religious beliefs. Quakers are needed to help create understanding and trust among these diverse groups, who sometimes feel alienated and need support.

Friends are also drawn to interfaith work because we are a universalist religion. We honor “that of God” in everyone and are open to learning from others as well as sharing our own experiences of the Inward Light. This attitude is indispensable to those engaged in interfaith work.

A Canberran Friend gave me a booklet containing AYM advices and queries, which were adapted from those of Britain

YM. I was favorably impressed by how Advice No. 6 characterizes interfaith outreach:

Do your work gladly with other religious groups in the pursuit of common goals. While remaining faithful to Quaker insights, try to enter imaginatively into the life and witness of other communities of faith, creating together bonds of friendship.

The words that spoke to my condition are “gladly,” “imaginatively,” and “friendship.” These words beautifully describe how I experience interfaith work and what we need in order to experience it as a spiritually transforming experience.

It is my hope and prayer that Friends everywhere will open their minds and hearts to the interfaith movement and discover what it means to be part of what early Friends called “the kingdom of God,” and what Martin Luther King felicitously called “the blessed community.” This is the community that calls us to move beyond our narrow circle of Friends into the worldwide family of God.

{1} On July 17, 2009, the Second US Circuit Court of Appeals reversed this ruling by the district court, and it is hoped that the Obama administration will soon end Professor Ramadan’s exclusion.

East-West Puzzlements

By Sallie B. King

In May of 2009 I was fortunate to attend a Buddhist conference in Thailand. Professionally, I am a scholar of Buddhism and for the last fifteen years or so I have been especially focusing my studies on the socially and politically activist form of Buddhism called Engaged Buddhism. It was in this capacity that I was invited to participate in this event. It was a delightful experience. It also raised some challenging questions for me.

I was invited to Thailand to speak at the United Nations Day of Vesak celebrations, May 4-6 in Bangkok, sponsored by the government of Thailand, the Thai Buddhist Sangha (community of monks) and Mahachulalongkorn University. This was a three-day celebration of Vesak—the day of the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha, a day celebrated throughout the Buddhist world. In Thailand, thousands of Buddhists, perhaps half monks and half laypeople, attended the official celebration. The events included a great deal of ceremony, statements of greeting from Buddhist leaders around the world, and one day of “academic papers.”

I was invited to speak on the “academic papers” day as part of a panel of Western scholars speaking on “Buddhism and Politics.” The topic of my presentation grew out of a question that I was asked in a radio interview about Engaged Buddhism a year or two earlier. On that occasion, the interviewer asked this: “There have been many successful nonviolent struggles around the world; however, none of the Buddhist struggles has been successful. Do you think this is because the Buddhists have no God?” I found this question both audacious and insulting to Buddhists, but I had no real answer to it. It did start me thinking, though: why haven’t the Buddhists been successful yet in any of their struggles? I decided to investigate that question by using Gene Sharp’s insights into the power dynamics of nonviolent struggles to analyze contemporary Buddhist

nonviolent struggles. My talk was titled, “Buddhism, Nonviolence and Power” and investigated the workings of nonviolent power in the Buddhist struggles in Vietnam during the war years, and in Burma (for democracy and human rights) and Tibet (for autonomy and self-determination) today.

Two startling things came up for me during the course of the conference. The first was the response I got from Asian Buddhist monks at the conference when I told them the topic on which I was speaking. When I said that I was investigating why none of the Buddhist nonviolent struggles had as yet been successful, the inevitable response from the monks was along the lines of: “what is it to ‘succeed’”? asked in an ironic tone. The implication of this response appeared to be that in this world of change and ambiguity, what seems to be success may not truly be success, or, similarly, that there is no such thing as success in this world of *samsara* (the world of inherent imperfection in which we live, according to Buddhism).

I have a certain amount of sympathy for these views. However, not only do views like this—which are quite widespread in the Buddhist world—render inexplicable the life and death struggles in which many Buddhist monks, nuns and laypeople are actually engaged in Burma and Tibet at the present time; they also could be contributing factors to the lack of success in Buddhist nonviolent struggles and in that sense are a little worrisome. After all, if there is no such thing as success, or if success is a deeply compromised thing at best, why risk one’s life in any kind of struggle? Moreover, I daresay that the Burmese and Tibetans who are risking their lives in these struggles do have a good idea of what it would be to succeed in their situations. The surprise for me, then, was in perceiving that such negative attitudes towards the very idea of nonviolent struggle persist despite the fact that Buddhists are in fact very prominently engaging in such struggles!

The second occasion for me to be startled at this conference actually came from a German Christian colleague (a Buddhist scholar) when he pointed out, passionately, that at the same time that the Vesak conference was being held, the civil war in Sri

Lanka was at a point of great intensity—and yet nobody at this large and prominent gathering of Buddhists was saying anything about it at all! This was a war in which Buddhism itself, sadly, was playing a significant role, with “Buddhist nationalism” being used to challenge the Tamil Hindu minority’s right to live on the allegedly sacred Buddhist island of Sri Lanka. To make matters worse, in the final phase of the war, at the time of the Vesak conference, a large number of Tamil noncombatants—men, women and children—were trapped together with the last of the Tamil fighters in a situation of dire humanitarian crisis.

Imagine a similar scenario in a Christian or Jewish country at a time when a large number of Christian or Jewish leaders were meeting and no one saying anything about it. That simply would not happen! But here, after my colleague raised this issue in my mind, I went around asking Buddhists about the war in Sri Lanka and why no one was talking about it. They always seemed quite surprised by the question and often seemed to think it very odd that anyone would think they should be discussing it. The most thoughtful replies indicated that while they were concerned about the situation, they did not feel that they should be intervening or even making pronouncements about a situation that they saw as foreign and that they felt they did not entirely understand. In other words, their shared identity as Buddhists did not make them feel that they had sufficient entrée to even speak up, much less take action. In a way, the Asian Buddhists’ puzzlement at the question should not have surprised me—after all, I had not come up with the question until my colleague raised it. Significantly, he looks at things from a more purely Christian perspective than do I, who consider myself both Quaker and Buddhist. Although this may sound odd, it somehow seems difficult to raise this kind of question in a Buddhist context.

This is, in fact, why Westerners such as myself are invited to these kinds of events. As a foreigner and a guest, one feels at all times the need to be polite; however, one also feels the need to be of some use. In the end, we are invited to events like this

precisely because we do, as Westerners, look at the world in a different way, and our Asian Buddhist hosts want us to raise the challenging questions that are very difficult for them to raise from within their own culture. It is incumbent upon us to speak up; that is the whole point of our being there. Of course, the reverse is also very much true.

Reflecting back upon all this, I am left with many fruitful questions to continue pondering and investigating. Who is right, the Westerners who perhaps are too eager to intervene all over the world—sometimes with negative outcomes, despite good intentions—or the Asian Buddhists who are reluctant to do so—despite their Buddhist worldview which calls for a compassionate and helpful response to suffering? On these and many other issues, it is sometimes difficult for Asian Buddhists and Westerners to deeply understand each other. But this is precisely why it is so important to try, again and again, to exchange our points of view—and such a pleasure, although it can be uncomfortable at times. We are fortunate to live in an age when it is more and more possible to interact and to learn from each other. Indeed, the opportunity for the most profound learning across cultural and religious lines comes precisely at the points of greatest difficulty in understanding.

Book Reviews

Beside Still Waters: Jews, Christians, and the Way of the Buddha, edited by Harold Kasimov, John P. Keenan, and Linda Klepinger Keenan (Wisdom Publications, 284 p., 2003)

Reviewed by Rhoda Gilman

On today's worldwide scene there is no aspect of interfaith relations that has shown more power and holds more hope for a united human approach to our desperate problems than the ties of Buddhism with liberal Christians and Jews. And I think it is safe to say that in no corner of the Christian world has Buddhism in its Western forms had more impact than among unprogrammed Friends. The reasons are not hard to find: both Buddhists and Quakers practice silent meditation; both deny the possibility of a "good" war; both esteem simplicity as a way of life; and neither group clings to creeds or dogmas concerning the origin and nature of the universe. There are other parallels also, and as a result, one finds few Quakers who have not been touched by Buddhism in one way or another during the past half century. For some, the two practices are almost inseparable.

Quakers are, of course, not the only Christians to be swayed by the teachings of the Buddha, and there is much evidence of his powerful appeal for Jews. Of the many books on the subject of Buddhist relations to Western spirituality this is, quite simply, the best I have seen, with the possible exception of *The Ground We Share*, by Robert Aitken and David Steindl-Rast (1994). The strength of *Beside Still Waters* rests on the personal stories of the contributors, seven Jews and seven Christians, most of whom are teachers and spokespeople in their own traditions and all of whom have found in Buddhism a vital step on their spiritual journeys. A closing section discusses the meaning of these encounters from Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and sociological perspectives. Here

the conclusion is clear that melding into a single whole seldom occurs, but one religious culture supplements another.

Quakerism is represented by Sallie King in a touching essay on “The Mommy and the Yogi.” In it she recounts her struggles to reconcile detachment from *samsara* (the world of delusion) preached by the Buddha with her own instincts as a loving mother. Drawn to Quakers by the need for a religious community as her children grew, she came to see “learning to love more and more genuinely as the point of living a human life.” Detachment became at last a condition of love when the time came for her children to leave home and find their own paths in life.

Each story is different, and yet they have great similarities. In nearly all cases the authors either continue or return to their religious roots, yet they find those roots both deepened and strengthened by the practice of Buddhism. The contribution of Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi, founder of the Jewish Renewal movement, is in the form of an interview. Asked “Has Buddhism deepened your practice of the Jewish faith?” he answers: “Imagine how many times you do things by rote with a formula. And to be here and present and now in doing it, that of course deepens it. At the same time what is so wonderful is that once you do it that way and you go back to your own literature you see that it’s there in the faith of the religion of origin.”

For this reviewer, who considers herself a Quaker-Buddhist, the “religion of origin” is not a question. Unlike the authors in the book, I was raised as an agnostic with a scientific understanding of the world and the Marxist conviction that religion of any kind is a tool for exploitation. Drawn to Quakers by their work for peace and justice, I felt no deeper connection to their practice until I experienced the profound silence and equanimity of Buddhist meditation. Then I began to find Quaker silent worship meaningful.



Seeing, Hearing, Knowing: reflections on Experiment with Light, edited by John Lampen (William Sessions, 105 p., 2008)

Reviewed by Lois Yellowthunder

Rex Ambler, a former professor of theology at Birmingham University and a British Friend, began a search for the ideas and beliefs that formed the foundation of early Quaker faith. Instead, what he uncovered was a practice or process followed by the early Quakers. He summarized the steps of the process described in the writings of early Quakers such as George Fox, Isaac Pennington, and William Penn as: 1) mind the light, 2) open your heart to the truth, 3) wait in the light, and 4) submit to the light. Ambler presented the results of his inquiry in two volumes: *Truth of the Heart* (2001), containing selections from the writings of George Fox arranged to present Fox's vision in its entirety, and *Light to Live by* (2002), describing the process in Ambler's own terms.

In the course of explaining this discovery to others, Ambler learned of a similar process – “focusing” – developed by Eugene Gendlin, a professor of clinical psychology at the University of Chicago. This process emerged from Gendlin's observation that many people did not seem to benefit from traditional therapy. Those who did improve appeared to be engaging in an internal process that resulted in insight, a physical sense of relief, and subsequent positive action. The focusing process consists of six steps or movements: 1) clearing a space – seeing what comes into that space; 2) felt sense – noting the body sensations that accompany the issue(s) that come into the space; 3) finding a handle – a word or expression that describes the felt sense; 4) resonating between the handle and the felt sense to test the appropriateness of the handle; 5) asking – what is it about this problem/issue that evokes the felt sense; and 6) receiving – what insight comes that results in a physical shift in the felt sense. A reduction of tension may or may not come initially.

Both the early Quaker practice and focusing represent a process of going inward, fixing attention on what emerges in the silent space, asking, and receiving. Early Quakers used religious concepts and language to describe the process as they experienced it. “Light” referred to “the Light of Christ,” “the Christ within,” and “the Seed,” among other referents. Light was also a dynamic concept as reflected in the words of Margaret Fell, quoted in *Light to Live by* (p. 7):

Now, Friends, deal plainly with yourselves, and let the eternal light search you...for this will deal plainly with you; it will rip you up, and lay you open... naked and bare before the Lord God from whom you cannot hide yourselves... Therefore give over deceiving of your souls.

In the 1990s light groups began forming in the UK, America, and Europe. In 2002 Ambler estimated that there were approximately 50-60 light groups worldwide. The movement is called Experiment with Light. “Experiment” was a reference to the famous remark by George Fox, “This I knew experimentally.” In the 17th century when science was separating from philosophy, knowledge based on experience rather than logic became the standard for truth. Experimentation was the means to obtain knowledge, and the process outlined by Fox was considered an experiment.

Seeing, Hearing, Knowing: reflections on Experiment with Light represents a snapshot of the movement from a variety of perspectives more than a decade after its inception. It contains many voices through time and space, beginning with George Fox and concluding with Isaac Penington. The book is divided into three topical sections: Beginnings, Practice, and Developments. Each section is interspersed with sections entitled Personal Experiences. The appendix contains meditation guides for workshops and light groups as well as resources consisting of books, tapes and CDs.

The first essay in the book, “George Fox’s Message on Firbank Fell,” written by Rex Ambler, provides the historical context. Fox

refused to address the thousand or so people gathered there in and around the chapel. Instead he addressed them outside on the fell, recalling, "I was made to open to the people that the steeplehouse and that ground on which it stood were no more holy than the mountain." Fox told them that the system of priests, bishops and prophets was not necessary to access the message of Christ. Ambler concludes, "...the system which idolises Christ is a blatant contradiction. It says one thing and does another." Fox told the people that the spiritual teacher – the Christ – is within themselves. In later writings, according to Ambler, Fox outlined the elements of a process for accessing this inner wisdom. These elements include a physical and/or emotional feeling that all is not well, looking at the situation that is causing those feelings, seeing the reality/truth of it, being silent and staying open, and beginning to see things in a new light. Ambler sums up the results of this process:

The truth would free them from their dependence on authorities and enable them to trust their own inner resources. It would free them from fear of others (and of life) and enable them to love one another and bond with one another. Out of this a true, viable community would emerge, which would give them all the support needed.

An epistle from Friends gathered at Glenthorne, Grassmere (UK) in November 2004 is included in this anthology. It differentiates the Experiment with Light from therapy and defines it as a spiritual practice. The epistle concludes with hope for its continuing development and expansion:

We are convinced that the Experiment with Light should not be the special interest of a minority, as it is a practice that could immensely enrich the life of our Meetings. We invite all Friends who have not yet done so to share this treasure with us by embarking on the Experiment yourselves. May you be blessed with the same sense of healing and joy that we have found, and may we all grow together in listening

more attentively to the promptings of love and truth in our hearts.

A number of themes and insights emerge from the personal experiences of individuals who have participated in light groups:

- The importance of connecting with the meeting by reporting back periodically and providing demonstrations of and information about light groups for those who may be interested.

- Light groups are not a practice that appeals to everyone.

- There are a variety of ways of conducting a light group.

Some are open, some closed, some larger, some smaller; there are many modifications of the prompts that Rex Ambler provided; some light groups have incorporated some of the focusing movements into their practice.

- Light groups do not have to be face-to-face. They can use e-mail, telephone and other means of communication.

- Answers or insights are not guaranteed from participating in the process. Sometimes answers come much later or after repeated sessions.

- Sometimes answers or insights come in the form of images as well as words.

- There is great value in the presence of others in clarifying one's own insights by sharing and listening.

- Light groups are not therapy groups; they are neither meetings for clearness nor meetings for worship.

- Light groups can focus on the individual, the meeting, the community and/or the world.

- Light groups are tools, not ends.

Alex Wildwood in a thoughtful essay, "The Future: a personal view," sets out some of the future challenges facing the Experiment with Light:

It seems to me that we have to be faithful to what we need to do with it in this generation; if we get that right, it may well have a life beyond our age. But we should be careful not to

set up a rigid structure, mainly to take care of the more distant future, because that is how we institutionalize something and kill its spirit. It is wiser to do what is effective now and let it continue to evolve, just as it has already done in its few years of existence.

Wildwood concludes that, “The mission of Experiment with Light is to offer a process to Friends which they can use for discernment and spiritual growth.” In this statement, he echoes the sentiments of Isaac Penington who wrote of his experiences with the light over three hundred years ago:

[Each of us] may feel and know the power of this life by its nature, properties, manner and end of working in the heart. It enlightens the soul, it quickens to God, it draws the heart from that which is manifestly and sensibly evil without dispute, it opens the eye to see and discern that which is holy and good, inflaming the mind with desires after it. Now, this is the appearance of the Holy One, who thus appears and begins to work.



The Journal of Elias Hicks, edited by Paul Buckley (Inner Light Books, 509 p., 2009)

Reviewed by Larry Spears

In this text the journal of Elias Hicks covers the century from 1748 to 1830. It is the story of a traveler in the faith of Quakers. Guided by his internal sense of the leading of the Holy Spirit or Inward Light, Hicks went far from his home on Long Island, speaking in consolation and encouragement that arose out of the experience of deep silence in worship in the presence of God as he

saw it. In this process, his line of thought led to the split among Friends, the fruits of which we still deal with today.

This was a remarkable person who had little education and grand spirit. With vivid language, earnest energy, and unshakeable integrity he engaged others in the inquiry, “What cans’t thou say?” Respecting Quaker tradition and embracing personal experience in the Light of God, he spoke with authority.

Elias Hicks was a beacon and attraction on the early 19th-century frontier. He was a star. Among Quaker ministers he stood out in personal magnetism. He was the Quaker example of the charisma and inspiration carried by ministers of all sorts and messages who traveled on circuit to small meetings and churches in isolated communities.

The editing of this journal is well done. There is no perfect original manuscript, but Paul Buckley, who teaches at the Earlham School of Religion, has produced the best text possible with the resources available. It is readily readable. Buckley provides an introductory overview of the life of Hicks as theological lightning rod, abolitionist and writer. He carefully describes his manuscript sources and the guidelines followed in editing them. Footnotes throughout the text define terms and provide scriptural references and short notes to aid the reader.

There are also helpful supplementary materials, including a description of Quaker processes and terminology, lists of Quaker words and phrases, an index and short biographies for the people mentioned in the Journal, and an index and descriptions of the geographical places mentioned. There are drawings and photographs of the remaining meetinghouses that Hicks visited, and customized maps help the reader follow Hicks in his travels. The bibliography is extensive, even including a list of on-line resources for further reading. To Buckley’s work is added a foreword by Quaker scholar Larry Ingle, author of *Quakers in Conflict: The Hicksite Reformation* (1998) and *First Among Friends: George Fox and the Creation of Quakerism* (1994).

In this journal we see that Hicks was a traditional Quaker in his thought and life. It is clear that he was not a deist, unitarian, rationalist, secular humanist, scriptural literalist, Trinitarian, nor an advocate of such ideas as the substitutionary atonement of Christ for humanity's sins. He rejected interfaith cooperation and communication but advocated for religious toleration in civil society.

Like the majority of 19th-century Americans, Hicks was a personalist regarding social action, urging religious education for youth and social change through spiritual change in individuals. He was a vigorous abolitionist as a matter of personal piety, but he did not push for public action. He saw himself as an encourager of Quaker values, but not as a reformer and did not advocate or contemplate division among Friends. His idea was to separate Quakers from the people of this world in order to preserve their holiness and to avoid the contagion of worldly values and practices.

Hicks's words were not contemporaneous with the experiences recorded. Like the journal of George Fox, this journal was not written as it was acted but was the product of retrospective reflection later in life. It is fundamentally a travel journal with added hints at his later thought and personal magnetism. It is the picture of vivid and immediate sensibility to his temptations and to God's mercies in protecting him on the right path as he saw it.

His spiritual life appears to have been a lone one, without notable peer support other than from Jemima Seaman, his wife. It was a process of progressive conviction of the Truth for which he became an important Publisher on the then American frontier. He was a normal person whose ideas evolved along with opportunities to develop his gift of earnest speaking. He and his wife labored with children who had disabilities. He moved progressively away from hunting toward non-killing and recognition of the value and balance of nature.

This book is a sobering portrait of an early Quaker leader, uneducated and charismatic, theologically conservative and

courageous, determined and gentle, separatist and tolerant, socially committed and isolationist, who strengthened the Quaker sense of non-creedal heritage and the ascendant importance of the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit through personal experience. His witness impressed a large portion of 19th-century American Quakers. This well-edited journal provides a welcome introduction into the life and movement of an important ancestor of us all.



True Christianity and the Inner Life, by Marjorie Post Abbott
(Pendle Hill Pamphlet #402, 36 p. 2009)

Reviewed by Sally Rickerman

This is Marjorie Abbott's latest writing on understanding the commonalities and the depth and breadth of present-day Quakerism. In it she thoughtfully examines her own growth in becoming cognizant of her inner world and that of others who accept the religious identification of Quaker/Friend.

The moment at the beginning of her spiritual journey came to her in Meeting as she felt physically held by her Guide. Although "Some *Christian* Friends tease me about my conversion, yet there was no impetus in it for me to name Jesus as my Savior," she says. Nevertheless, she reports that "this opening, did send me reading every book on or by Quakers that I could lay my hands on."

While familiarizing herself with and discerning the messages of the early Friends, she came to see that their 17th-century understanding of "primitive Christianity" preceded its rediscovery by 20th-century biblical scholars. (One might note, for example, that historian Christopher Hill, in his *The World Turned Upside Down*, says that Samuel Fisher, a Friend and graduate of Trinity College, Oxford, was the first educated biblical critic of the 1600s.)

Abbott's account of her journey is fascinating, and she comments, "This essay points to some of the ways we may learn from our tradition, whether or not we name our faith today as 'Christian.'" One item I found missing was mention of how the fruits of her opening led to, or were the result of, the amazing work she has done in collaboration with Peggy Parsons, the pastor of Freedom Friends Church in Salem, Oregon. The Freedom Church has "semiprogramed" worship but is not affiliated with any branch of Quakerism. It has aided many from both "liberal" and "evangelical" Oregon Quakers to find the common ground of Spirit in meeting together rather than relying on divisive words to describe belief. If you wish to see how they express their universalism go to www.freedomfriends.org

Altogether the pamphlet is a thoughtful, stimulating read. The writing is clear and succinct, and the reader is guided by Abbott's helpful section headings: "True Christianity," "Our History as Radical Christians," "Experiential Knowledge of Christ," "The Cross Is the Power of God," "The Light of Christ," "Gospel Order and the Meaning of Community," "Scripture and Community," and "True Religion?" I heartily recommend it.



The Intrepid Quaker: One Man's Quest for Peace, Memoirs, Speeches and Writings of Stephen G. Cary (2004)

Reviewed by Larry Spears

Stephen Cary was at the center of Quaker life. He was a conscientious objector during World War II in the Civilian Public Service Corps (CPS), the manager of relief services in Europe for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in the postwar period, and during his later years an activist in the civil rights and peace movements and an administrator at Haverford College.

This is neither an objective biography nor a thorough autobiography, but a chronological series of selected stories and writings from one life applied to Quaker service. There is a theme here of competence and trust in miracles, of love in real time and in hard and murky places.

The book is light on theology in the stories and more explicit in the appended writings, but it is consistently earnest in linking faith to practice in a long life of service with determination. It is a testimony to what one person can do to put values to work in even the most difficult conditions. After reading it, you will be hard pressed to ask, "What difference can one life make?" A little love goes a long way...and a lot longer than you expect or plan.

Cary recognized that engagement with public policy is an important dimension of spiritual practice in the Quaker tradition. Everyone cheers giving a cup of water to the thirsty, but enthusiasm wanes when the prevention of thirst is addressed. This perspective requires reflection and bridge building. For example, he recognized that militarism is a great threat to human rights, subject to no real civil authority, fed by the arms trade and flourishing everywhere at escalating levels, which must be addressed by society.

He was a thoughtful advocate for civil disobedience as the most powerful and dangerous instrument of social change. Since it is dissent outside the law, civil disobedience can be undertaken, Cary believed, only when the issue is so compelling that conscience demands a visible and public response. Improperly exercised, it can have dangerous consequences, undercutting the framework of law and social order. Through his experience in occasions of discernment about the application of civil disobedience, he offers some firm guidelines: set a clear goal; be determined in adhering to nonviolence; and embrace the penalty. In addition he urges wise assessment of a few more flexible guidelines: first exhaust all other procedural remedies; maintain full transparency (except at risk to others); and avoid obstruction of others in their conscientious duty.

Publications Also Noted

Writing Cheerfully on the Web: A Quaker Blog Reader, edited by Elizabeth A. Oppenheimer (273 p., 2009)

From its beginnings in the 1990s the internet has provided a ground for lively discussion and controversy among Friends--a space in which the QUF has been an active player. As technology has advanced from personal e-mail lists to listserves to social networking and the "blogosphere," the intensity of the discussion has kept pace. Here, one suspects, is where to look for the cutting edge of Quaker thought, even as the world careens onward at ever-increasing speed.

Liz Oppenheimer has caught a segment of that thought and, with skillful editing, has frozen it in print for the world to remember. The book is arranged by topics, among which are: Worship and Ministry, Reclaiming and Re-examing Our Traditions, Convergent Friends, and A Friendly Look at Christianity, Jesus, and the Bible. If, as some claim, there is a worldwide turn toward Christianity among Friends, this book seems to reflect it.



Universalist, 30th Anniversary Issue (#85, February, 2009)

The Quaker Universalist Group of the UK observed its 30th anniversary in 2009 by reproducing the first issue of its journal, the *Universalist*, using as closely as possible the original type face and format. Edited by QUG founder John Linton, it included extracts from letters written by members and supporters of the new group. As noted in an editorial, the movement faced considerable opposition among British Friends at that time. The first issue of the *Universalist* closed with these words from Linton, who concluded by emphasizing two points:

1) For universalists there can be no question of schism. Our aim is to unite, not divide; and 2) for our part we wish to retain all that we consider true and precious in Christianity.



Hawk Rising, Soaring on the Wings of Desire: How to Manage Creative Anxiety, by John Cowan (113 p., 2009)

John Cowan, whose article “You Are the Light!” appeared in *Universalist Friends* No. 50 (August, 2009), has published a small self-help book that draws upon both Christian and Buddhist traditions. Written in a breezy, readable style, each chapter includes suggested exercises. The purpose is “to get our functions of observing, picturing, and intending, settled down and pulling together in good order so that the anxiety they create is freedom producing and not dysfunctional, and that the anxiety is minimal, or even at times absent.”



Evolution Evolving: What Everyone Needs to Know, by Patricia A. Williams (113 p., 2009)

The evolution of the theory of evolution is addressed in this small book by Pat Williams, a former editor of *Universalist Friends* and editor of the QUF Readers number 2 and 3. Trained in the history of science as well as in theology, Williams summarizes what might be described as a “tectonic shift” in human understanding during the past 150 years. She outlines three essential steps: Darwin’s theory explained changes in species over time by descent with modification and by natural selection, but it did not account for the mechanism of inheritance. The necessary second step was provided by the experiments of Gregor Mendel, which came to the attention of the scientific world in the 1890s. The resulting science

of genetics remained a system of logical abstractions until the third step in the mid-20th century, when the gene was identified as a physical reality and its chemical composition and molecular structure were described. As in her theological writings, Williams' style here is notable for its brevity and clarity.



Quaker Theology: A Progressive Journal & Forum for Discussion and Study (#16, Fall-Winter, 2009)

This small journal was launched ten years ago by well-known Quaker author and liberal, Chuck Fager in association with theologian and educator Ann Riggs. The intention of publishing two issues a year fell short because, as editor Fager writes: "Life got in the way." The present issue is co-edited by Stephen Angell, who serves on the Steering Committee of the QUF. Angell is also the author of an article on "Howard Thurman and the Quakers" in this issue of *Quaker Theology*.

Another QUF connection in the journal is a brief excerpt from a forthcoming book by Philip Gulley, who will deliver the third Elizabeth Watson lecture at the 2010 FGC gathering. Gulley's book, entitled *If the Church Were Christian*, promises to be a subject of controversy among Friends in Indiana, where he is pastor of Fairfield Friends Meeting near Indianapolis. His earlier work, *If Grace Is True*, brought calls for his expulsion from the ministry.

Poetry

Sudden Cover-up!

Our sullied world is covered
With both white and pureness
As beautiful as a new-born babe.

Pure — freed from dark
And sin and evil —
Open to love and honor
For All, both far and near.

But we know with our awareness
That this moment of glory
Will, too, pass —.

But even so,
We have been given
That promise, hope and love
To send us on
Our lengthy earthly journey.

Sally Rickerman
February 4, 2009

The work of the Quaker Universalist Fellowship expresses Friends' belief that there is a spirit of universal love in every person, and that a compassion-centered life is therefore available to people of all faiths and backgrounds.

Through publications, lectures, and conferences the Quaker Universalist Fellowship seeks to encourage appreciation of the diverse paths to that spirit available in humankind's various spiritual cultures, to overcome discord, and to foster openness and listening among people of different religious faiths. In carrying out this work we cooperate with Friends from every branch of Quakerism.

We seek, or create, opportunities for all Friends to engage in constructive dialogue among Quakers and with representatives of other spiritual traditions, in the hope that religious faith, although diverse, will become a force which unites rather than divides the human family. We seek to nurture that unity through lives of simplicity, humility, justice, mercy, and peace so that it becomes a beacon drawing together the human family in love and service to all earthly life.

QUF Steering Committee, October 2009

SUBMISSIONS

We are seeking articles from 500 to 3,000 words. These may be essays on personal experience of arrival or maturation in Quaker universalism or of worship or they may be scholarly works focused on Quaker universalism, history, biography, sociology, scripture, and theology, both Christian and non-Christian. We also welcome book reviews, poetry, personal essays, and letters. Use inclusive language. Please send your submissions by U.S. mail on diskette or CD in WORD to Rhoda Gilman, 513 Superior St., St. Paul, MN 55102 or as WORD attachments to email to rhodagilman@earthlink.net. Please put UF in the subject line. We do not accept anonymous submissions without very good reason. **Deadline for next issue: June 15.**

Universalist Friends

The Journal Of The Quaker Universalist Fellowship



Quaker Universalist Fellowship