

A Friendly Letter

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First Month, 1985

Dear Friend,

Last month *A Friendly Letter* reached a milestone of sorts: our subscription total passed the 500 mark. There are readers in many states, England, Japan, Korea, Colombia and Canada. Five hundred is not much as the world counts such things, but scattered among Friends it gives broad currency to the reports published here. I am grateful to all of you for your support, and pledge again to do my best to deserve it.

One new idea for extending our reach which with the new year seems worth a trial is this: For the next six months, *A Friendly Letter* will consider publishing articles written by *other* Friends. We'll even pay \$35 for any article published. (Which is high wages among Quaker journals!) So if you have ever wanted to try your hand at being a Quaker investigative journalist, now's your chance!

Here are specifications: Articles should not exceed 1400 words, typed double-spaced and submitted with a SASE. Please Query First! The subject matter can be anything Quakerly which fits with our purpose, which is to offer readers reliable, lively reports of significant Friends events and issues not adequately reported on elsewhere. Solid reporting, good writing and a Friendly tone are prerequisites; expressing opinions is fine, but pure opinion pieces are not welcome. All editorial judgments and decisions will be made solely by your editor; no committees here.

Can this new policy make *A Friendly Letter* more serviceable to Friends? I hope so; let's find out.

Finally, apropos of this month's article, let me call your attention to a fascinating book which has just come to mine. It is *Philadelphia Merchant: The Diary of Thomas P. Cope, 1800-1851*, edited by Eliza Cope Harrison and published in 1983 by Gateway Editions of South Bend, Indiana. During Cope's latter years, Orthodox Quakers were in the throes of the Gurneyite agitation, which produced separations in many YMs and nearly split Philadelphia YM as well. Cope, a pillar of Orthodoxy himself, wrote often and sadly about the effects of this agitation. One of his most telling entries was that of 11/27/1845: "Yesterday was held our monthly meeting. The principal business--as usual, the disowning of our members. These meetings have but little interest to me, a spirit of intolerance being too prevalent, and the person who may bespeak a charitable judging of offenders will hardly escape a tart rebuke...." But Cope also had a sense of humor, as this month's *Quaker Chuckles* show.

Yours in the Light,

Chuck Fager

Chuck Fager

Forty months ago, in Issue #6 of this letter, I wrote optimistically that the spirit of divisiveness seemed definitely on the wane among Friends, substantially replaced by that of ecumenical dialogue and cooperation. Yet in the past year, it has become clear that a struggle between these conflicting attitudes is continuing and may well be intensifying, and that its outcome is by no means clear.

Two men in particular, Edward Mott and Everett Cattell, seem to me to epitomize these contrasting attitudes. While both are deceased, their statements and attitudes still sum up best the forces at work among us. Indeed, repeatedly in 1984 it almost seemed as if I were witnessing a clash between these two eminences, which has led me to nominate them as Quakers of the Year. Both were evangelicals, Mott from Oregon(now Northwest) YM, Cattell from Ohio YM, now the Evangelical Friends Church-Eastern Region. Mott was prominent in the 1920s through the 1940s, as clerk of Oregon YM and a well-known preacher; Cattell spent most of these years as a missionary in India, returning as president of Malone College in Ohio. Both were active in Quaker ecumenical relations, but from almost exactly opposite directions, and to opposite effect.

Does Continuing the Conversation Spell Death?

Everett Cattell, while a lifelong, committed evangelical, was also a pioneer of recent Quaker ecumenical contacts. Two of his most memorable statements in this regard came out of the 1970 St. Louis Conference of Friends leaders, the first when he admitted candidly, "I struggle in my heart to define what a Quaker is today. I do not know the answer." The second remark came later, when as conference chair he gravely recommended, "Let the conversation continue."

Cattell's remarks and attitudes contrast starkly with those of Edward Mott. As he stated plainly in his memoirs, "Orthodoxy and heterodoxy cannot coalesce....The attempt to fellowship and work with unbelievers(*which is what he considered other varieties of Friends --Ed.*) spells death. Any conclusion to the contrary is ruinous to all concerned." At an All-Friends Conference in 1928, he delivered a speech intended, he said, "To thwart the very purpose for which the conference was held, the promotion of fellowship among the groups." (It largely succeeded, too.) As Clerk of Oregon YM he led it out of the Five Years Meeting (later renamed Friends United Meeting), and pushed successfully to cut its ties with the AFSC. He railed repeatedly against the moves toward yearly meeting reunification then underway in Philadelphia, New England and elsewhere. Mott's sentiments were sincere and consistent, and not unusual among fundamentalists of his generation, Quaker and otherwise.

Dealing With a Born-Again Separatist Movement

For his part, Everett Cattell did not minimize his differences with liberal Friends. Yet his was an evangelicalism which, contrary to Mott, was able to conclude at St. Louis that "There are good reasons for continuing dialogue with such folk...." Again, like Mott, Cattell practiced what he preached, both among Friends and other denominations.

If Cattell's attitude was in the ascendant only three years ago, what has happened to put these sentiments in eclipse? Much of the answer, I believe, can be found in a recently-published, widely-read book by a very influential non-Quaker fundamentalist: *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, by the late Francis Schaeffer. It is a clarion call to action by conservative Christians in denominations which are, in Schaeffer's view, fatally infected with notions of "the pluralistic church." Such a body is one in which there is room for more than his brand of theology, based on his view of the Bible as "objective, absolute truth in all the areas it touches upon," and the interpretations he draws from it. Most Friends groups would fall in to this category, even many of the evangelical ones. Schaeffer's manifesto is not only widely-read; the outlook it expresses is also being heeded by many, including some Friends, as a platform for action.

Schaeffer calls on his adherents to "stand clearly for the principle of the purity of the visible church...." To do this will require "discipline of those who do not take a proper position in regard to the teaching of Scripture." This discipline is to be imposed at all levels and in all settings of church activity, because "the church belongs to those who by the grace of God are faithful to the Scriptures." However, if "a denomination comes to a place where such discipline cannot operate," then the orthodox members must prepare "to step out." (Quotes from Schaeffer, pp. 55, 74, 82, 85, 87.)

In the light of these passages, both the rationale of many recent events and the echoes of Edward Mott's broadsides against association with "Hicksite modernistic Friends" of half a century ago are unmistakable. For that matter, Schaeffer also hears echoes of the 1920s and 1930s here. He insists that "we must recognize that there is a direct parallel between what happened in the early decades of this century and what we are facing today...."(p.88)

Have we really been treated to such rhetoric as this among Friends in 1984? My answer is yes, repeatedly: in the pages of *Quaker Life*; at the FUM Triennial; in the flap over Elizabeth Watson and the Friends Ministers Conference (see Issues #35 and #44); and in other incidents. As these have accumulated, I have attempted to maintain the earlier optimistic attitude about the overall trend of events: I still thought I heard more of Everett Cattell in the air than of Edward Mott and Francis Schaeffer.

Riding the Wave of History Onto the Rocks of Division

But no more. In the political arena, supporters of the Schaeffer-Mott perspective won a smashing victory in the 1984 presidential election; they feel confident they are riding the wave of history. And events show that they are determined to press ahead with their vision of a purified Christianity, in Quaker circles as elsewhere. Indeed, they can hardly do otherwise: as Schaeffer and Mott repeatedly pointed out, their basic principles are at stake; this is a matter of conscience for them.

What will be the outcome of such efforts? If the parallels with 50 years ago hold true, they will likely yield a melancholy harvest of separations, bitterness and recriminations, even among the orthodox. That is due not least to the fact that their Number One targets for "discipline" are not liberals—who are considered already lost—as much as other evangelicals, particularly those who are prepared to tolerate liberals in an "unpurified," pluralistic Quakerism. Schaeffer admits and laments this unhappy record, and urges the church's "true owners" to exercise their discipline over heretics in a loving spirit, rare as such a process may have been in church history, Quaker and other.

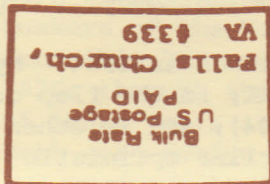
Everett Cattell On Coping With Such Campaigns

The arena in which this struggle among Friends should become most intense is likely to be, as it long has been, Friends United Meeting. Yet it is clearly not limited to FUM. There are also several yearly meetings, spanning the continent, whose unity seems to me to be at risk from such drives to establish the "purity of the visible church" against the infiltration of pluralism. Everett Cattell understood the divisive potential of these trends, even in 1970. He called for Friends to consider some form of organizational "realignment" which would "set each other free to be himself," and make dialogue and cooperation possible within a symbiotic relationship of mutual respect without compromise. He argued this might be the only real alternative to eventual acrimonious ruptures.

Here as elsewhere, Everett Cattell now seems to have spoken wisely to our condition. And the question can fairly be asked: Is it now time for some Quaker bodies, faced with the likelihood of a rerun of the upheavals of the 1920s and 1930s, to explore the idea of Cattell's realignment? And is it time for those Christian Friends who are comfortable with the diversity among Friends today to consider how best to preserve and defend their conviction in the face of this intensifying challenge?

A year ago I would have considered this whole topic a minor matter, and the names of Cattell and Mott would not have occurred to me as possible Quakers of the Year. It does not seem minor anymore; and these two, while not perhaps the happiest nominations, now seem unquestionably the appropriate ones.

INSIDE: QUAKERS OF THE YEAR--
HERALDS OF CONFLICT AMONG FRIENDS



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THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

This time we will look, not backward but at the present: on 1/22/1985, Beryl Hibbs and Maisie Birmingham, clerk and assistant clerk respectively of London Yearly Meeting's executive committee, were scheduled to appear in Mayor and City of London Court to defend themselves against legal action for refusing to remit to the Inland Revenue about \$3,000 in income taxes withheld from the pay of 33 members of the LYM staff, amounts the staff determined would go for war preparations.

LYM's executive committee is known as Meeting for Sufferings, because of its origins as a body which worked to cope with the persecutions of early Quakers by successive British governments. At this point it is not clear just what modern "sufferings" the clerks might be subjected to in the instant case, but there seems no doubt that Her Majesty's Government, like governments elsewhere, is determined to get the tax money.

Meeting for Sufferings is reportedly a staid, normally scrupulously law-abiding body, and only decided to take on the government over tax resistance in 9/1983, following requests by staff members and extensive discussion among British Friends. The decision was not universally supported; a few longtime Friends were so upset by such corporate Quaker lawbreaking that they resigned their membership when it began.

QUAKER CHUCKLES

Thomas Cope Stories, Adapted from his Diary

Samuel Emlen, a plain and sober Philadelphia Quaker minister, once challenged a non-Quaker acquaintance named Tom about his gallantly fashionable coat, made of fine blue cloth cut in a double-breasted style and set off with large gilt buttons. "Tom," the minister asked, "why dost thou not wear a plain coat, in place of that gaudy one?"

"Why should I do that, Mr. Emlen?" Tom inquired.

"To mortify thyself," the minister answered.

"Well, Mr. Emlen," Tom answered, "if you will wear *my* coat, I'll wear yours, and then, I think, we shall *both* be mortified."

Daniel Trotter was another eminent minister of that day, who often observed solemnly that "There is nothing but trouble this side of the grave." One day at a Friend's funeral, he stood to speak at the freshly dug mound just as a curious sailor poked his head into the Quaker burial ground to see what was going on. Trotter then looked down and said, characteristically, "There is nothing but trouble this side of the grave."

"Well in that case," called the sailor helpfully, "come on over to this side, there's none here."
