



The New York Times 2/17: "No one is ever going to convince me that it's all right to kill unborn babies....

But...if this is not to become the Vietnam of the 1990's, we have to learn to sit down and talk to each other."

--Loretto Wagner, a Missouri anti-abortion leader, on why she is seeking "common ground" with pro-abortion leaders.

A Friendly Letter

ISSUES NUMBER 130 & 131

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THIRD & FOURTH MONTHS, 1992

Dear Friend,

Last month we took note of the prospect of major change coming to the American Friends Service Committee. As the spring and summer of 1992 come on, the breezes of change are stirring through other Quaker organizations as well. One is Friends United Meeting: late last month word came that FUM's General Secretary, Steve Main, had submitted his resignation, as has his assistant, Kim Niles. Another FUM staffer, Ben Richmond, had announced his departure earlier.

Regular readers will know that Main's tenure at FUM has been highly controversial, particularly after he emerged last year as the main champion of the ill-starred campaign for "realignment" (See AFLs #119, 123 & 125). His resignation came to light on the eve of FUM's spring board and commissions meetings this month, which were held in the form of a retreat aimed at finding a way forward for the group following "realignment's" overwhelming rejection by FUM yearly meetings.

Some reflections on this retreat are presented in this issue. FUM, as the centrist umbrella association in American Quakerdom, is showing strains in many areas: Many of its core pastoral YMs have been losing membership for years, and a succession of evangelistic gimmicks has failed to stem the losses; FUM's main mission efforts, in Kenya, have been plagued by chronic internal strife and misappropriation of FUM's contributions; the circulation of its magazine, *Quaker Life*, has declined steadily in recent years; even FUM's Quaker Hill bookstore has been losing money lately, after holding its own for several years. Further, FUM's ability to take on these problems has been sapped by the diversion and dissipation of energy produced by the small faction which wanted to purge its more liberal YMs.

Whether new leadership will enable FUM to turn this situation around remains to be seen; but new leadership is what it must now set out to find.

At first glance, FUM's situation seems to parallel that of Friends General Conference in Philadelphia, where Marty Walton, FGC's Executive Secretary since 1986, announced at its annual meeting last fall that she plans to leave her post once a successor is selected. But the resemblance stops there: Walton's tenure at FGC, while

challenging and arduous, has been all but unmarked by the kind of internal turmoil that has dogged FUM. Walton is highly respected, both within and outside the office, and the transition to a successor should be relatively smooth. Staff morale, by all reports, is high.

Externally, FGC's major programs have been doing well: The annual FGC Gatherings have been packed for each of the last several years; and its publications distribution program, expanding to fill the vacuum left by the closing of the Friends Book Store in Philadelphia, has grown rapidly and become steadily more professional. Many FGC member YMs are growing, some rapidly; their strains and problems are those of expansion, not decline.

One other important but invisible difference between FGC and FUM affects their respective fates more than may appear at first glance: Many of FUM's founders conceived of it as a denominational headquarters, which would set and enforce the limits of Quaker orthodoxy among its members. While FUM has never effectively functioned that way in fact, the notion still clings to it like an incubus, as the retreat showed. FGC on the other hand has seen itself as a service body for its member groups, which set their own standards and directions. A "realignment" controversy is all but inconceivable in FGC; no one would pay any attention to such a dictum.

FGC has its struggles, however, especially when it comes to meeting its budget. It has the misfortune to be serving one of the most skinflint of religious populations, namely liberal Quakers. We give less to our service bodies than most other denominations, and far less than the average among pastoral Friends. FGC, mirroring these attitudes, is exceedingly timid about asking.

Maybe that pattern, in this season of change, will be revised by Marty Walton's successor. Whoever follows Steve Main at FUM will have a longer and more daunting agenda, and change there should be more sweeping.

Yours in the Light,

Chuck Fager

Chuck Fager

TWO UPDATES: CHALLENGES FOR MINISTRY AND MISSION

"Love is the hardest lesson in Christianity," wrote William Penn, *"but for that reason it should be most our care to learn it."* Such learning, though, is not simply a matter of pure will or sentiment; nor are commandments, rules, advices are sufficient. In the world of real community life, there are no substitutes for judgement, insight, decision, risk, and continuing revelation.

A case in point is unfolding in Cambridge (Mass.) Meeting, where Friends are anticipating the return to the area of a former member, John Van der Meer. As reported in AFLs #76 and #81, Van der Meer is a pedophile, and in early 1987 he acknowledged having had a sexual encounter with a child in the meeting.

At the time, Van der Meer defended his action, as many pedophiles do, on the basis that sex between adults and children can be beneficial and healthy. This view was, however, explicitly condemned by the meeting in a formal minute. Further, following disclosure of his action, the meeting reported Van der Meer to the authorities and terminated his membership. Van der Meer was subsequently arrested and charged with rape of a child.

A CHANGE OF PLEA--AND HEART?

After some consideration, however, he changed his view about his action, stating to the meeting and to me that what he had done to the child was wrong and harmful. While he still thought that in theory some adult-child sexual encounters could potentially be positive, he was not able to make such a judgment and planned to avoid any further sexual involvement with children. As evidence of this shift, he changed his plea to guilty, and was sentenced to twenty years in prison; it was not his first offense.

Van der Meer also stated at the time that despite his disownment, he still identified with Friends, and felt he had been treated fairly by Cambridge Meeting, even though he did not agree with all its actions. And he asked to be allowed to continue attending worship

there. The meeting directed that he not attend any meeting function where children were present, but he could attend a midweek meeting, which normally was an adult gathering. This he did with some frequency until entering prison in late 1987.

Fast forward now to 1992: Soon, perhaps in only a few weeks, John Van der Meer will be released from prison. And the question of how to deal with him is again before Cambridge Meeting, where it has evoked intense and continuing exercise, not to say debate.

Van der Meer has indicated that he still considers himself a Friend, and would like to attend meeting, but said he will defer to the meeting's decisions on the matter. He has been visited by Cambridge Friends in prison, and has written occasional letters to Friends. His current thinking regarding pedophilia is not clear; a Friend pointed out that it is neither easy nor safe to discuss such proclivities openly in a prison setting, pedophiles are very low in the prison cultural pecking order.

KEEPING IT OUT IN THE OPEN

One striking feature of this discussion is its high visibility. When the 1987 incident was revealed, it also came out that some members of Cambridge Meeting had known about Van der Meer's pedophilia for some time, but this had not been made known to others, and some Friends felt betrayed. But this time, no one is in doubt about what's going on.

Additionally, the meeting is attempting to educate itself about what is at stake. For instance, a therapist who works with sex offenders was invited to speak to Friends about his experience with pedophiles, their prospects for change, the risks of repeat offenses, and the role of a community in addressing such behavior. And a second informational session has been scheduled as well, with a counselor who deals with children who have been sexually victimized. There have been small group threshing sessions, and a committee of three Friends is preparing to meet with Van der Meer after his release.

In the discussions so far, several points have been strongly voiced. Some Friends insist that the safety of children in the meeting must be the paramount concern, and they have pointed out that there are really no meeting functions that are strictly "adults only." What happens if someone comes to midweek meeting with a child in tow?

Other Friends have said they are troubled by the focus on whether Van der Meer can attend a midweek meeting; they would rather see a discussion of how, in a meeting context, a process of healing and restoration could take place. Still others find the whole matter exhausting, and wish the meeting could get beyond it and turn its attention to other concerns.

THE PRICE OF QUAKER PROCESS

It could be months before there is any clear outcome. But perhaps more important here is the process itself. Given the emotionally-laden quality of the behavior and issues involved, the temptation to denial or panicky and reflexive responses is strong (such a case is described in AFL #49). But thus far Cambridge Friends have not yielded to this temptation, even while facing up to the strong feelings being expressed.

Even so, the meeting may pay a price for its labor. A few people quit attending in 1987 when the original incident came out. They could lose more this time, whatever is decided: Particularly cautious parents, or adults who identify as abuse survivors, and who say they would not be able to attend any meeting with Van der Meer.

But does this mean the meeting must exclude him entirely? What of his spiritual welfare?

This issue is one that crops up more often than one might think; every few months a letter comes in, asking for copies of my issues on the topic, and expressing concern about actual or potential incidents. I believe the labor in Cambridge provides an important example of a meeting attempting to

cope with it concretely.

There are no simple answers here; we will see what happens next. But as Penn also said--no cross no crown.

* * * * *

Equally difficult, if less controversial, is the course of the developing Quaker mission field in the ex-Soviet Union; but along with the problems has come an almost overwhelming array of possibilities.

Even the name is a problem nowadays: There was a Quaker US-USSR Committee, reported on here in AFL #70; but what should it be called now that there isn't a USSR anymore?

The Committee has agonized over this, but has not seen its way clear to changing the name; I guess the Quaker US-Commonwealth-of-Independent-States Committee just doesn't have the right ring to it.

EVERYBODY'S GOT PROBLEMS

In any case, the Committee's work continues. One major thrust of this was described in AFL #124, in the person of Nadya Spassenko of Cornwall Meeting in New York. Spassenko, of Russian extraction and fluent in the language, returned to that country last fall. She hoped to settle there, help with a committee project of translation and publication of Quaker writings, respond to inquiries about Quakerism, and nurture nascent Quaker groups there.

Spassenko is back in the US, taking a break from what turned out to be a lengthy series of problems. Among these are not only the general chaos of the society there, and the frustration of dealing with a leaden bureaucracy. In addition, what were thought to be solid arrangements with a Russian publisher to get the Quaker materials printed turned out to be not solid after all, and the cost of what has been printed was much higher than the original estimates. This fact makes the Committee's chronic lack of funds for the publishing program more of a burden.

All in all, Spassenko said her three months in Russia were very difficult. But she intends to return by

next fall, and plans to build a home in a Ukrainian town where her ancestors lived. And once settled, she has big ideas for things to do, not only specifically Quaker projects but especially talking with women about the rudiments of feminism, for which she says there is great need.

The Committee has managed to print and distribute 5000 copies of a leaflet about Quakerism; 10000 more have now been printed. The translations of Quaker writings by Thomas Kelly, Douglas Steere, Mary Moehlman and William Taber are proceeding, even if hampered by penury.

While Nadya Spassenko is in this country, another pillar of the Committee, Janet Riley, is in Russia, aiming among other things to find a reliable publisher. She will be followed in a few months by Janet Chapin, of Downingtown Meeting in Pennsylvania. Chapin has had experience with East-West high school exchanges, and she is slated to visit a formerly closed city east of Moscow, where there are people talking about starting a Quaker school.

BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES

If starting a Quaker school in Russia sounds wildly impractical--and it is, at least in the immediate future--the very fact that this idea has come to the Committee from Russians points out the range of mind-boggling possibilities that are opening up there.

"The harvest is plentiful," said Jesus, "but the laborers are few." (Matthew 9:37) Well, maybe not so few as they seem. In fact, the more one looks, the more one discovers is going on. While the Quaker US-USSR Committee draws mainly from the east and Midwest, there is a spate of activity on the West Coast as well:

David Hartsough, a longtime activist and AFSC staffer, led a month's worth of nonviolence training sessions in Russia last fall, under the auspices of Pacific Yearly Meeting; Tony Manousos, of Claremont Meeting in southern California, has led study tours, follows events closely, and has written an excellent summary of projects and prospects, which he'd be glad to send you. (Write to him at 1446 E. Ralston

Ave., San Bernardino, CA 92494; enclose a SASE, and ask for "Fishing in Troubled Waters: How to Help the Russians During Their Time of Crisis.")

Another new effort, Access Exchange International, was begun last year by Sue and Tom Rickert, a retired Quaker couple from San Francisco, to help teach Russians how to set up nonprofit social service groups, which will be key building blocks in the new Russian infrastructure. The Rickerts need help, and not just money (Write Access Exchange International, 112 San Pablo Street, San Francisco CA 94127.)

Back East again, the Washington Area Quaker Work Camp program, originally organized to provide service opportunities for area Quaker youth, has for the past two summers sponsored work camps including several Russians, and has yielded at least one convinced, though still isolated, Russian Friend among its participants.

WHEN IN DOUBT, SEND MONEY

On the other hand, the Quaker US-USSR Committee does need money for its publishing project; send a donation to its Treasurer, Toby Riley, 721 Park Ave., Plainfield NJ 07060.

Amid all the problems, there's something very special and very Quakerly going on here: Ministry-evangelism; grass roots support for society-building; conflict resolution; mutual exchange on many levels.

The fact that this field has been developing spontaneously and anarchically is in a way evidence of its authentically Quaker character. Yet there is clearly an opportunity--and a need--for some coordination here; somebody should call a national conference, if only to get all these various efforts talking to each other and to the rest of us.

Memo to Quaker umbrella organizations: The group that helps these various projects get their acts together and helps mobilize support for them by Friends and meetings will be riding the wave of the future.

I wonder who will have the vision, and the gumption, to catch this wave? Stay tuned.

REFLECTIONS ON FUM'S CULTURE WAR RETREAT: NO CLEARNESS, PERHAPS A TRUCE

James Davison Hunter did not attend the Retreat for Clearness of Friends United Meeting over the weekend of 3/13-15 in Richmond, Indiana, but if he had, he would have felt right at home.

Hunter wrote one of the hot new books for people concerned about American culture and its prospects: *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (Basic Books, 420 pages, \$25.00 cloth). It is no criticism of Hunter, a University of Virginia sociologist, to say that the book makes generally depressing reading; but then, the FUM retreat was not exactly a barrel of laughs either.

Hunter's thesis is basically that our society is increasingly torn between two competing and incompatible forces, which he calls *orthodox* versus *progressive*. They clash over many issues, from abortion to gay rights to pornography and so forth--a familiar list.

A BATTLEFRONT IN RICHMOND

Hunter believes more is involved than simply disagreements over issues; would that it were so simple! Instead, he says, *"the culture war emerges over fundamentally different conceptions of moral authority, over different ideas and beliefs about truth, the good, obligation to one another, the nature of community, and so on. It is, therefore, cultural conflict at its deepest level."* The winner, he says, will gain no less than the power to define American culture as it enters a new millenium.

Culture war battles are more often fought within groups such as churches than, as was once true, between denominations: "orthodox" Protestants, Catholics and Jews have more in common with each other than with the "progressive" wings of their own sects, and *vice versa*. Similarly, many in each party are more at home in alliances with like-minded folks in other denominations than the opposition in their own.

That description fit the FUM Richmond retreat, all right, in spades.

It started out promisingly enough: The facilitators, Jan Wood and Lon Fendall, of Wilmington College, were excellent: skilled in group process, they also presented a fine example of

egalitarian leadership, a model all too rare in pastoral Quakerdom.

Further, Wood and Fendall knew the turf: Since FUM had just emerged from a bruising conflict over "realignment," they spent much of the retreat leading participants through a process aimed at promoting forgiveness and reconciliation, as a base for renewed vision and greater unity. Through most of this time, many felt there was progress being made along these lines, though there were difficulties as well.

Chief among these difficulties were repeated, ominous proclamations by various pastoral Friends that there was in the group some monstrous evil that had to be isolated and exorcized before FUM would be right. Scarcely an hour went by without a call to *"renounce and denounce the devil among us"* (Shirley Settle, Iowa YM); or to unmask those *"giving the Judas kiss"* (Ardee Talbot, staff); or to beware of false prophets who justified evil and who were liable to be struck down by God at any time, as foretold in such scriptures as Ezekiel 14:9 (Charles Mylander, Southwest YM).

SATAN AND THE TWO BIG "LIES"

Exactly who or what was thus referred to, was not made clear. In part, I suspect, it may have been a covert way of expressing anger at my reporting and comment about "realignment," which its advocates still resent. But this was hardly all of it; something more seemed to be implied, some transpersonal, demonic spectre threatening the whole enterprise.

Yet despite these recurring discordant notes, as the final worship and business session opened on First Day morning, 3/15, the retreat seemed to be on track, and many were hopeful of a positive outcome.

Not long into this session, however, all these hopes vanished. Hugh Spaulding, a North Carolina pastor with Indiana roots, stood and announced that he had a message for us, direct from God.

Spaulding's "oracle" identified the source of evil in FUM which had been so often spoken of earlier. This turned out to be none other than what are central principles of the

faith and practice of the liberal FUM yearly meetings, such as Baltimore namely their affirmation of pluralism, in theology and in views of the Bible.

To Spaulding's God, however, these notions were *"two lies"* which had been *"poisoning the Society of Friends for 175 years,"* (circa 1820, and the controversy that yielded the great Separation of 1827). These "lies" had to be exposed as the evils they were.

Spaulding repeated his thesis several times in increasingly frenzied tones, while reassuring the group that what he was speaking were not his, but *God's* words. At his crescendo, he was waving his arms and crying out, *"Do you believe it? Do you believe it?"* Several Friends leaped to their feet with shouts and cries of agreement. Among them was Billy Britt, Superintendent of North Carolina Yearly Meeting, who then underlined and reinforced Spaulding's message.

THE MOUNTAINTOP-OR THE PITS?

To those who agreed with it, these messages came as an epiphany and a catharsis, a chance to trumpet triumphantly what they feel they have too often had to whisper about and apologize for. But for many other Friends, they were shocking and assaultive. Sally Otis, a Friend from New York YN, tearfully protested, and asked plaintively why Spaulding and Britt could not admit that the diversity of faith in her Quaker community was in any way legitimate.

The response to Otis came from James Le Shana, a young pastor from Southwest. Opening a Bible, he cited Paul's familiar image of the Christian community as a body. Repeating Spaulding's "poison" image, Le Shana compared the kind of Quakerism found in unprogrammed YMs to a deadly toxin lodged somewhere in this sacred body. Such a lethal intrusion must be gotten rid of, cut out, he insisted. Why? Here he quoted Paul: *"What fellowship has light with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? ...Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no*

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unclean thing...." (2Cor. 6:14-17; Belial, incidentally, is a synonym for Satan; it also means "worthless" and "wicked.")

By now, many more unprogrammed Friends were weeping. This writer, too, was in great distress at hearing my faith and that of my entire branch of Quakerism subjected to such a stream of verbal abuse and spiritual violence, probably the worst such outburst in my 26 years among Friends; this was culture war in stark combat. Perhaps this is why my response was combative, outrage rather than tears. When Le Shana finished, I stood and, I confess, began an angry retort. For this I was shouted down twice and silenced; another landmark in my Quaker experience.

Thus the morning went. Finally, with but few minutes to spare before lunch, the group approved, without discussion, a summary minute, drafted by a committee of three. This minute, approved without discussion, bears some examination. Here's the text:

NOT JUST ANOTHER MINUTE?

"We as gathered Friends recognize and proclaim a new birth among us. We affirm as a corporate meeting that we are now visited with new life. We do testify this life is not of our own creation, rather it is God-given, birthed by God's very Spirit, laboring among us.

"We name our own sinfulness, particularly the sins of rebellion, arrogance, self-righteousness and fear, by which we have relied solely upon our own strength, and have created mistrust of God's work among us.

"We announce that all our actions in Friends United Meeting will be governed by the one God--Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit--who is present among us to teach us himself.

"We commit ourselves as the FUM General Board and Commissions to nurture this understanding of Christ as revealed in Scripture, sound reason and the gathered meeting. We further commit ourselves to elder those who would criticize this understanding of FUM's mission.

"We welcome all Friends who feel the divine call to worship with us on this basis."

At one level there is little new here: FUM has always been defined as a Christian Quaker body; no one to my

knowledge has proposed that it be otherwise. But also since the beginning, there has been conflict over what is and isn't Christian and biblical. This minute's key phrases are as wide open to multiple and competing interpretations as ever--no change here either.

Where, then, is the "new life" that the minute proclaims? Clearly, some Friends left feeling FUM had somehow been changed for the better. But for many of those who had been left stunned and sobbing by the "lies" and "Belial" harangues, confusion, unease and a sense of having been violated and brutalized were common responses, even several days later.

One person who is certain about where the "new life" came from is Stephen Main. In a 3/18 letter, sent with the minute to various FUM clerks, he acclaimed Spaulding's message about "lies" and "poison" as *"the authentic word from God"* to the retreat, adding: *"The lie that one can be a Quaker without following Christ and that one can follow Christ without being faithful to the Scriptures was renounced as unacceptable among us."*

BACK TO BARCLAY'S BASICS

But in fact the minute speaks only about FUM, not about who qualifies as a Quaker, and the retreat would certainly not have united on the Spaulding-Main-Le Shana propositions. Indeed, quite the contrary: the affirmation of theological pluralism and a variety of understandings of Scripture is foundational to the unprogrammed FUM yearly meetings' faith.

They have excellent warrant for this, too: such authoritative Quaker founders as Robert Barclay said much the same thing: *"There may be members of this catholic[i.e., universal-Ed.] Church not only among all the several sorts of Christians, but also among pagans, Turks[i.e., Muslims-Ed.], and Jews.* As Barclay also points out, similar sentiments are found in the gospels.(Cf. Matthew 25:31ff; for more on this topic, see AFL #53.)

Barclay wrote in 1676. Thus the "lies" that so exercised Spaulding have been around much more than 175 years; try 320 among Quakers, and 1962 among Christians. Yet evidently some feel the retreat minute provided divine ratification of their partisan interpretation of Quaker orthodoxy.

And therein could lie the minute's novelty, mostly a potential for mischief. The commitment to "elder" those who "criticize" could be used as a club. But any "new life" in FUM will not last much longer than the first time this faction attempts to swing such a club at another FUM group, particularly on partisan doctrinal grounds like those in Spaulding's supposed "revelation." Then, to anyone who knows FUM's history, it will be back in an all-too-depressingly familiar cycle.

Is this too pessimistic? A more optimistic take, offered by one experienced observer, is that the evangelicals needed a clear "win," and feeling that they got one, they should be able to let go of the siege mentality evidenced there and in the "realign-ment" campaign, and things will get better.

Maybe. Much will depend on the decisions made by four Friends: Bob Garris and Marilyn Bell of Western YM, David Brock of Indiana and Marvin Hall of Wilmington YM. They are the search committee for Stephen Main's successor. If they find someone whose heart and ears are open to all the branches of FUM Friends, then anything is possible.

THE CALL TO BUILD CONSENSUS

Real progress will only come about with careful building of consensus and coalition among the varying strands of FUM's diverse membership.

But another round of heresy-hunting, homophobic, incompetent "leadership" such as it has been afflicted with for the past few years would probably be fatal, achieving FUM's "realignment" via self-destruction at the center. So the search committee deserves the prayers--and input--of all those concerned with FUM's future.

Still, if the FUM Retreat seemed unhappily to confirm James Davison Hunter's thesis in *Culture Wars*, fortunately it is not the whole story. At many other, perhaps more important points among us, Friends from the "orthodox" and "progressive" camps *do* manage to work together effectively across their lines--from the Friends Committee on National Legislation to the Quaker US-USSR Committee. These efforts offer signs of hope for a genuine Quaker peace witness in the culture wars, hope that the FUM retreat, sadly, fell far short of providing.

INSIDE: Double Issue--Cambridge Meeting and
The Pedophile; the New Quaker
Mission Field in Russia Keeps Growing;
And FUM's Vain Search for Clearness
Eleventh Anniversary Issue

Forwarding & Address Correction Requested

From: Chuck Fager, A Friendly Letter
P.O. Box 1361
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THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

On Nantucket Island, off the Massachusetts coast, one of the great Quaker communities flourished for more than a century, second only to London and Philadelphia in size and wealth. In its heyday the island was home to large, thriving meetings, and was an economic powerhouse, hub of the world's whaling industry and a major shipping center.

Remarkable as it was to find such a prosperous settlement on the small, windswept island, the story of its origin is even more remarkable, and peculiarly Quaker. It centers around a remarkable woman, Mary Coffin Starbuck. Like many other early Nantucket settlers, she moved to the island to escape Puritan religious strictures. There she raised eight children and became a leading citizen in the fledgling community, in virtually all areas: economic, political and religious.

When a Quaker missionary, Thomas Chalkley, came to Nantucket in 1698, he found Mary Coffin the leader of a local unaffiliated worship group, one which did without formal clergy and stressed the inward nature of religious truth, congenial soil for the cultivation of Quaker evangelism. Chalkley was followed in 1702 by John Richardson, who held a

crowded meeting in Mary Starbuck's large living room. Under Richardson's intense preaching on the need to be born again, Starbuck was reduced to tears, and emerged from the experience a fully convinced Friend.

Thereafter, Quaker worship was held regularly, and on Third Month 26, 1708 Nantucket Monthly Meeting was formally organized, again in Starbuck's living room. Mary Starbuck's eight offspring provided a solid core of membership: all but one joined Friends, along with their spouses, and thirty-six grandchildren. But this was more than a family affair: by 1736, a new meeting house was built to hold 1500 Friends.

Island historians note that it was about the time that Mary Starbuck was converted and regular Quaker worship began that Nantucket's great economic boom was also organized, and some speculate, very plausibly, that these two phenomena were related. Quakerism provided the solidarity for group endeavor, and unusual opportunities for the expression of the talents of women in the public arena; the combination produced one of the high points of Quaker culture, which lasted until the tides of war and revolution washed over their undefended island stronghold seventy years later.

QUAKER CHUCKLES

Father Feeney, a Catholic priest, became good friends with a strict and plain Quaker minister named Scattergood. The priest often joshed the Friend about his rigid teetotalism; and one afternoon, taking a long sip of his beer, Feeney said, "*Friend Scattergood, tell me: When are you going to get liberal enough to have a drink with me?*"

Scattergood didn't miss a beat. "*At thy wedding, father.*" he replied.

Speaking of liberals, one such young Friend ran for Congress, and approached the wealthiest member of his meeting about a campaign contribution. The affluent Friend heard the candidate's request, then immediately wrote out a large check. The younger Friend was amazed. "*Doesn't thee want to know my platform, what I stand for?*" But the older man said, "*Not at all, Friend. In fact, if I knew what you believe in, I'll probably want my money back.*"