



FIRST THE BAD NEWS: Having held off as long as possible, I regret to announce a subscription rate increase, effective 11/15/1991. The unhappy details are on the flyer inside. But let me emphasize here that early renewals and gift subscriptions will be accepted at the **old rates** until then. As they say, shop early for the holidays and save!

A Friendly Letter

ISSUE NUMBER 124

Selected for Who's Who In Religion

EIGHTH/NINTH MONTH, 1991

Dear Friend,

For several months, I've been carrying around a letter from subscriber Nadya Spassenko of Cornwall Meeting in upstate New York, waiting for the right time to report on its contents. This is the right time, because Friend Spassenko wrote about Russia. When I called a few days ago to catch up with her, she was "*sitting on my suitcases*," waiting to leave for Moscow and Kiev, to become, in effect, a Quaker missionary there.

Spassenko was raised in the United States in a family of Russian nationals, speaking fluent Russian, because they expected to return to Russia. But World War Two and then other gloomy events of the long dark decades of communist rule kept delaying a return. She decided, as she says, to "*make my life here*," which she did, among other things becoming a Quaker in the 1960s. But she also continued to hope for a way to return to Russia.

That way seems to have opened now through the work of the Quaker U.S.-U.S.S.R. Committee, that amazing seedbed of future Quaker-Russian relations. After reading about the Committee and its first Executive Secretary, Janet Riley, in AFL#70, Spassenko began working with the group on its second major project: translating a series of Quaker writings, including Thomas Kelly's *A Testament of Devotion*, into Russian; they hope to distribute 100,000 books and booklets in all.

Interest in religion has been burgeoning in Russia as communism collapses and restrictions on churches and press freedom have eased. Big-time evangelists of all stripes have barnstormed the country, drawing large crowds. Friend Anthony Manousos, visiting Moscow this summer, even saw a multivolume set of newly-translated Hare Krishna writings on sale in kiosks around the city!

Inquiries about Quakerism are also coming in, especially in the wake of the Committee's first project, the jointly-edited and published book *The Human Experience*, 50,000 copies of which were sold in Russia. One letter, sent to Spassenko last winter, said in part, "*For us this is not just a letter, but a ray of Light, a thread of Hope at the end of a much too long search!We must acquire all of the information and knowledge that you already have, so that we do not make unfortunate errors. We need your help....How wonderful it is to be among friends.*"

Can such yearnings be met effectively from halfway round the world, or only through books? Or does this require a presence on the scene? Nadya Spassenko intends to work on the scene. She hopes to be able to stay in her ancestral home town not far from Kiev in the Ukraine, and work at responding to inquiries, in Russian, and nurturing any emerging indigenous worship groups.

A tall order? You bet. But Spassenko visited Russia last spring, and way has opened amazingly: A publisher there has agreed to print the Quaker books as soon as they are ready; Spassenko held a very covered worship meeting with inquirers in Kiev; a sympathetic official has promised the Committee an office in Moscow. And perhaps most remarkable, she and the Committee have been invited to plan a month-long family gathering next summer on the theme *Life In the Manner of Friends*.

The Committee hopes to draw in knowledgeable Friends from various countries to help make the summer gathering an experience which can equip interested Russians to plant and nurture their own meetings. And who knows what doors will open next?

Nadya Spassenko has arranged her affairs so that she will be a self-supporting released Friend, under the care of Cornwall Meeting. But the Committee also needs to raise about \$17,000 to get their translated books into print; and more to meet the costs of the family gathering next summer. To assist the group in exploring these almost unimaginable opportunities, contributions can be sent to the *Quaker U.S.-U.S.S.R. Committee, % Treasurer Toby Riley, 721 Park Avenue, Plainfield NJ 07060*.

Where all the current turmoil in Russia will lead, no one knows. But I suspect that one positive outcome, when the time is right, will be the formation of one or more Russian Yearly Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends. Sound farfetched? Watch and see.

Yours in the Light,

Chuck Fager

Chuck Fager

TWO QUAKER THEOLOGIAN IN THE SHADOW OF BARCLAY

While keeping up with a respectable sampling of current Christian theologizing, I have often regretted that Friends are not better represented in this contentious field. Following the ongoing debates on such doctrinal issues as the nature and use of the Bible, the place of Jesus, and the shape and limits of the Christian community, I often find myself saying, "Yes, but the Quaker position on that makes much more sense."

Yet these Quaker positions, however telling, are rarely articulated in that arena today, except occasionally and then typically in a form diluted almost beyond recognition. Not only are the debates thereby impoverished, but the Society of Friends is left as something of a denominational Rodney Dangerfield, getting no respect. Even more, the practical sides of these debates, their implications for questions of personal ethics and group action, are similarly deprived of the insights our tradition could bring to bear.

A THEOLOGICAL NINJA TURTLE

Once upon a time, however, Friend Robert Barclay's *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* leaped into the theological fray with both fists flying (nonviolently, of course). Addressing, indeed accosting "the Clergy, of every kind...but particularly...the Doctors, Professors, and Students of Divinity in the Universities and Schools of Great Britain..." he announced his purpose to be no less than "...that you may perceive the simple naked truth which man's wisdom has rendered so obscure and mysterious."

Whereupon, he tackled everybody at once: Cutting through Catholic pretensions with the sharp words of their own church fathers; snatching the Bible from Calvinist hands to show how using it as a literalist weapon violated its own words; then deftly tripping up the Socinians, the semi-secular humanists of the day, on their notion that salvation was essentially a rationalist, intellectual, human affair.

Now admittedly, to get the maximum enjoyment out of this

combat, maybe you had to be there, in 1676; even then, no doubt it was sometimes hard to tell the contestants apart without a program, which would have filled a long shelf in a divinity library.

Nevertheless, even at this distance, it is evident that here was a scrappy Quaker thinker and writer holding his own with the heavyweights in the field. Much of this comes through in the excellent Modern English edition of the *Apology*, where editor Dean Freiday has added many helpful footnotes filling in the lost context. Certainly his targets took notice, responding both with pamphlets and persecution.

All of which, unfortunately, has made Barclay's *tour de force* a hard act to follow, theology-wise. Few Quaker writers since then have even tried. But two books I read this summer take up, in very different ways and from radically different perspectives, important aspects of Barclay's heritage.

RIDING THE DOCTRINAL RANGE

Of the two, *A Living Faith* by Wilmer Cooper (Friends United Press, 240 pages, paper), was written consciously in Barclay's shadow; he is cited in its pages more often than any Quaker except George Fox. And given that Cooper has been teaching theology for thirty-plus years, his book is organized along the lines of the classic works of systematic theology: chapters deal with the Quaker understanding of the central Christian doctrines of God, Christ, human nature, the church, etc.

But *A Living Faith* differs from the *Apology* in one crucial respect: Here you will find no polemics against other denominations; it is addressed primarily to Friends, and those occasional non-Friends who come to us asking, *Who are the Quakers?* and *What is Quakerism?*

These are useful enough inquiries to take up, particularly given Cooper's range of study on the subject; and since his main audience is Quaker, he spends a good deal of time explicating the often wide spectrum of views among Friends on most major

theological points. Moreover, he is usually evenhanded in this, especially when dealing with one of the most important of these issues, the relation of the Light Within to the outward life and work of Jesus Christ.

For instance, he notes that while the first Friends were certainly Christian, "one question that seems never to have been clearly resolved for [them] was whether the historical redemptive work of Christ was a necessity" for salvation. The question arises because the Light and its potential were declared to be universal, regardless of one's knowledge of Christianity.

Cooper rightly cites careful Fox scholars like Rachel Hadley King, who found that, in Fox's writings at least, formal Christian profession is not needed for the Light to work salvation. Barclay compared the work of the Light, which he was sure was of Christ, as being like an effective medicine, which could cure an illness even if the patient did not believe it would.

NORMS AND AMBIGUITIES

Cooper is not the first to recognize this ambiguity in what he calls "normative" Quakerism; but to have it affirmed by someone of his stature ought to give the honest differences on the point among Friends more credibility for strongly Christ-centered Friends than it seems to have for many. And it is typical of the overall fairness with which he handles most of the issues on which there is a range of belief among Friends.

On the other hand, a serious limitation of the book is Cooper's repetition of the thesis that early Quakers were mainly a peculiar sort of Puritan: "For all practical purposes," he writes, "George Fox and early Friends accepted the central doctrines of the church...even though some of the emphases they gave differed from the Puritan theology of the day."

Well, no. One could say with equal truth (as some have in fact said) that Stalin and Roosevelt agreed on the centrality of industrialization to modern society; they only differed on a few

points of organizational detail and criminal law procedure. In fact, it was precisely for all *practical* purposes that the differences between Quakerism and Puritanism were most important:

Take war, for instance; it is not a big hermeneutical deal whether Jesus was speaking literally or figuratively when he said "*resist not evil*"; but practically, it is a matter of life and death. Or the role of women: the fate of half the community has been hung on quibbles over two or three marginal passages in Paul. Then there were the debates over obscure biblical passages relating to church government, and whether the state should enforce the views of the reigning orthodoxy on dissenters; they marked the boundary between liberty and tyranny.

POST-PURITAN QUAKERISM

Thus, early Friends may indeed have agreed with the Puritans on many doctrines; but the communities and societies created by their varying "emphases" were radically divergent--as different as the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which hung "witches" (and Quakers) and exterminated Indians, and Pennsylvania, whose Quaker founder laughed witchhunters out of court, welcomed other sects and lived in peace with the natives. As Marx rightly (for once) put it, at a certain point differences in quantity become differences in quality. And Quakerism is not and was not merely Puritanism with a peculiar accent.

This point is not merely of academic interest, because all these minor but practically profound differences are still very much with us, down to and including witchhunting (Cf. AFLS #114-115, and #121).

This is where I wish Cooper had turned his attention to the larger circle of Christian theologizing, because of all the continuing conflicts between Quaker belief and mainstream theology, the original--the Quaker assertion of a Christian universalism--is still the greatest: Barclay's declaration that "*There is an evangelical and saving light and grace in everyone....*" is still rejected by many Christian denominations, from Catholics to fundamentalists, and tragically including many of the

Evangelical Quaker groups, who have thus lost touch with their patrimony. For that matter, it is also in contention between Christians and the imperialist wings of other major religions.

And this, by the way, is not a minor point in theology; and the practical implications of this conviction, especially for war and peace on the brink of the 21st century, are hard to overstate. That's why it's a shame that this "normative" Quaker conviction, to use Cooper's term, is not more vigorously projected into that debate.

On the other hand, one can't be too hard on Cooper for ducking present controversies in favor of past ones. In his last chapter, on future prospects for the Society, an offhand comment on "*the possibility of the realignment of Friends in America*" was claimed by advocates of that notion (See AFLS #119 and #123), as proof that Cooper supported their scheme to split Quakerism. Cooper in fact opposed it, and has just published an open letter in *Quaker Life* (7-8/1991, p. 44) saying so. *Friends Journal* reportedly plans to publish the letter also.

POST-"REALIGNMENT" VIEWS

However, a careful reading of the entire passage shows why the "realigners" thought Cooper was on their side--because, in the text, he *sounds* like it. He opines that the idea "*deserves careful study and thought*," and acknowledges that "*it would mean a realignment of Friends into two main bodies, one evangelical and the other liberal.*" The "realigners" plan hardly amounts to more than that.

Admittedly, the passage was written before the "realignment" notion surfaced actively again; yet one can't help but wonder whether Cooper, the leading scholar of Quakerism, who lives in the same city, Richmond, Indiana, where the "realignment" plans were being hatched, should not have been a bit more prescient about this, and less equivocal in his comments on it.

Another major shortcoming of the book is that on its penultimate paragraph, Cooper reports a conversation with "*a thoughtful and perceptive young Friend who believes that there is 'an*

emerging Quaker spirituality, which he has experienced among some Friends."

This intriguing and suggestive comment ought to be the beginning of an entire section, sketching in and weighing some of the varieties of religious expression among Friends today; we certainly could use his informed discernment in this area.

But Cooper only expresses the pious hope that his informant is correct. He does not ask what this young Friend was talking about, where it might be found, or if it has any real promise. This omission, especially after the "realignment" flap, further clarifies the book's orientation: *A Living Faith* is most useful about the past. To glimpse the present and future of Quakerism, especially to evaluate candidates for the mantle of an "emerging Quaker spirituality", one must look elsewhere.

POST-DESERT QUAKERISM

Fortunately, one need look no further than a new book by Friend Jim Corbett. To be sure, one might not expect "emerging Quaker spirituality" to be a prominent theme in a volume entitled *Goatwalking* (Viking, 238 pages, cloth); but in the case of this stunning book, one would be mostly mistaken.

I say *mostly* because it's hard to characterize *Goatwalking*--and its author. Corbett, of Pima Meeting in Tucson, Arizona, has been a rancher, cowboy, horse trader, shepherd and wilderness guide. He also breezed brilliantly through college in three years, and finished a masters in philosophy at Harvard while spending most of his time partying. He cites the classics of Western--and Eastern--thought with the same familiarity and confidence that he explains how to become part of the society of goats.

In the course of his "errantry" (to use one of his favorite terms, which means a quest for personal and spiritual adventure, best exemplified by Don Quixote) Corbett once, in the early sixties, considered suicide, but instead "*turned Quaker*"; then, a decade ago, he began an adventure which became the Sanctuary movement and made him notorious enough that federal prosecutors worked for months to put

him behind bars, without success.

Corbett's unique "resume" alone has the makings of a fascinating book. But this is not autobiography, nor a history of the sanctuary movement. *"Goatwalking is a book for saddlebag or backpack,"* the Preface advises, *"to live with awhile, casually. It is compact and multifaceted, but for unhurried reflection rather than study. It is woven from star-gazing and campfire talk, to open conversations rather than to lead the reader on a one-way track of entailment to necessary conclusions. I prove no points. This is no teaching."*

Err, exactly. But *Goatwalking* is also valuable even if, like me, you lack a saddlebag in which to carry it. From my urbanite viewpoint, it is a collection of reflections on his remarkable spiritual journey, with a special concern for what Corbett calls his discovery of the church and the prophetic faith.

THE CHURCH IN THE DESERT

Before these discoveries, however, Corbett spent years in the practice of the title: wandering arid rangelands with a herd of goats, becoming part of the natural landscape, moving outside the standard, schedule-obsessed, nature-dominating way of life most of us lead most of the time. Goatwalking is not for the faint of heart, however: when he brought students from John Woolman School along for a week, they only lasted a few days: there was *"nothing to do"* (which was precisely the point), and they couldn't stand it; how many of us could?

Yet Corbett notes that the reflective, even often mystical experience evoked by goatwalking, though formally "useless," is hardly unproductive, especially in one important field:

"Leisure, solitude, dependence on uncontrolled natural rhythms, alert concentration on present events, long nights devoted to quiet watching--little wonder that so many religions originated among herders and so many religious metaphors are pastoral....As a way to cultivate a dimension of life that is lost to industrial man [and woman], goatwalking may put us in touch with a mystery more real than we are."

(The religions which originated in wilderness experiences include not only Judaism, Islam and Christianity, but also a little-known sect which germinated in the wanderings of a youth who in 1643 *"left my relations, and broke off all familiarity or fellowship with young or old...[and for more than three years] fasted much, walked abroad in solitary places many days...."* If England lacks deserts, it still had its share of wilderness, both outward and inward, in which George Fox wandered alone for several years.

It was Corbett's intimate familiarity with the Arizona-Mexico border country that made him invaluable in the early days of what was to become the sanctuary movement. And it was the religious encounters he had then which had much to do with what Corbett says produced a major personal turnaround for him, while working to help some of the flood of Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees crossing the Arizona border.

A PECULIAR RELIGIOUS ORDER

Fleeing imprisonment, torture and death in their homelands, the refugees all too often faced imprisonment, torture and death in the Mexican underworld or in prisons there and in the U.S.--not to mention the prospect of deportation back into the hands of bloodthirsty military governments.

Following this growing concern, Corbett traveled anonymously through Mexico and into Guatemala, following hunted refugees and narrowly escaping capture by hostile authorities more than once. And he came to know not only the victims, but also people from many denominations dedicated to aiding them. Joining a priest to visit refugees in a filthy Mexican prison, he was introduced as *Padre Jaime*, whose non-clerical language and gestures the priest said were characteristic of his peculiar order, *La Sociedad de los Amigos*. The priest even introduced him to the archbishop as *un quákero muy católico*--not a bad description.

It was among such people of faith within outwardly quite different faiths that Corbett began to sense the presence of something beyond the

visible denominational structures--what he called the church. *"During recent weeks,"* he wrote in a letter to friends in mid-1981, *"I've been discovering this catholic church that is a people rather than creed or rite, a living church of many cultures that must be met to be known....And my discovery is that the church is truly catholic, a people of peoples that incorporates not only a multiplicity of nations and cultures but also divergent beliefs, rites and perspectives...."* This church can even include "unbelievers", since all names for and ideas of God are necessarily false in essence.

Still, one outcome of this discovery, he notes, was that *"After having been Quaker for almost two decades, I decided to seek formal membership in my meeting, in order to join the church....Until I began discovering the church, I had no intention of becoming a member, because I thought of denominational membership as separative rather than unitive.... [But] Just as there's no generic form of marriage that transcends and precludes marriage to someone in particular, there's no generic form of membership in the church I'd come to know."*

A PEOPLE OF PEOPLES

His experience of the church both resembles and differs from the traditional--and still controversial--Quaker view, articulated in Barclay's *Apology*. It is similar in its universalism. For Barclay, the church *"is nothing other than the society, gathering, or company of those whom God has called out of the world and the worldly spirit, to walk in his light and lifeThere may be members of this catholic church not only among all the several sorts of Christians, but also among pagans, Turks [Muslims], and Jews."*

Corbett differs from Barclay in that for him the church is not primarily a collection of individuals, but rather *"a people of peoples,"* an organic network of persons working from within traditional structures that are meaningful to them, with people in other such groups, for common purposes, or in a common pilgrimage. Perhaps a useful metaphor for this might be a patch of wildflowers, variegated in color and form, yet all

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Here's An Excerpt From *Beethoven In The Basement*

Back in the library, Louisa sat down behind the desk and spoke firmly. "This is the third night that music has been playing in the clothing room. I've run that room for Cambridge Meeting for twenty-two years and nothing, I repeat nothing like this has ever happened before. I don't like it." Her voice was severe, as if reprimanding a particularly stubborn pupil.

"Have you gone down there?" Kevin asked. "You have a key."

"Certainly not," she snapped. "It's not safe. Who knows who, or what, is down there."

* * * * *

Kevin was more than a little bit nervous as he stuck the large, worn key in the lock. He and Louisa had paused on the way across from Friends Center to peek around the corner, confirming that the blue light was still shining through the basement windows, and the music was still playing.

"Might as well get it over with," he muttered as the doorknob turned and moved silently away from him. "All right, we're coming down!" he shouted as he pushed past the door, fumbling with one hand for the light switches as he groped towards the stairway in the dark.

"Here," Louisa murmured from behind; her fingers, intimate with the building, found the switches on the first try.

The entryway lit up, and there was the stairway in front of him.

"Here I am!" he called, thumping down the steps, "I don't mean you any harm---"

He hit the light switches by the bottom step, and swung through the doorway....

What on earth is going on in the venerable AFSC CLothing Room underneath the Friends Meeting house in Cambridge, Massachusetts? To find out, send for your copy of ***Beethoven In The Basement***. Copies are \$5.00 postpaid. And look for news of more in a series of spine-tingling, heart-tugging Quaker ghost stories in future issues of ***A Friendly Letter***.

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leaning parallel under the breath of the same invisible wind.

Corbett doubts that this notion of church can be adequately expressed intellectually: *"This is the kind of meaning one discovers only in meeting those who share it, much the way a language lives among a people rather than in a dictionary's afterthoughts."*

Nor is it easy to lay analytical hands on what constitutes one of these "peoples". For Corbett, the distinguishing feature of groups like the Quakers is a "covenant", a voluntary association for *"worship, sustenance and service."* Any such specific group, such as Quakers, will emerge from a specific culture and history, and be shaped by them. While this history is typically turned into doctrinal walls and denominational barriers, that is a mistake which can be overcome, and overcoming it opens the way to finding the same spirit at work in other groups—the discovery of the church.

THE COVENANT VS CONJURERS

Moreover, for Corbett there are covenants, and then there is *The Covenant*. This central Covenant is a group commitment *"to be cocreators of a social order in which humankind lives in harmony with one another and all that lives."* Or, more briefly, *"to hallow the earth."* It is, in sum, a mystically-based common religious experience that groups may express through their practice but which language and theology almost inevitably corrupt. From his goatwalking, Corbett believes he knows what is behind it; but alluding to biblical phrases, Corbett cautions *"This is where words darken counsel and all names are blasphemy."*

Talk of *The Covenant* points to another way in which his pilgrimage into sanctuary turned Corbett's preconceptions topsy-turvy. As a child he had become a Christian after a Baptist preacher told him *"that was how to live forever."* But he soon decided that such faith built on the expectation of rewards was only *"a conjurer's trick."* Thereafter, *"Until I was almost fifty I used Taoist and Buddhist traditions to provide a cultural context for goatwalking. I never sought guidance from the Bible....Yet I couldn't avoid seeing*

that the way had already been blazed.... Contrary to my preconceptions and aversions, goatwalking is biblical—even liturgically biblical."

And true to this insight, much of *Goatwalking* consists of *midrash*, Hebrew for reflective commentary on the scriptures. There are sections on Lady Wisdom, Job, the Jewish credo the *Shema*, as well as an anguished encounter with the way of the Cross, as viewed in the light of the murder of Bishop Oscar Romero and thousands of unknown Salvadorans like him.

But to see the book as exclusively theological or biblical is inaccurate; Corbett also talks about desert ecology, and the difference between civil disobedience and what he calls civil initiative. This is an important part of the activist testament that *Goatwalking* also contains, and one well worth pondering.

CIVIL INITIATIVE AND TRUE LAW

Corbett considers much of the activist protest descended from the movements of the sixties to be a kind of *"ritual disorder and...unarmed civil war"* aimed at disrupting the social order; and he has little sympathy with it. Instead, when he helped bring refugees over the border in defiance of U.S. law, he called it "civil initiative": an action aimed not at breaking law but rather at *extending* the rule of law.

In this case, Corbett insists that the government was the lawbreaker, because exclusion of refugees violated numerous treaties and United Nations covenants which assert their rights to asylum. *"Civil initiative maintains and extends the rule of law,"* he insists, *"unlike civil disobedience, which breaks it, and civil obedience, which lets the government break it."*

He points out that such "lawmaking from below," which is what he believes the sanctuary movement was doing, is the way in which much of what is called *common law* developed, and that when done conscientiously and steadfastly, especially through instruments like the network of sanctuary churches, it will eventually be recognized and formalized by courts and legislatures.

He argues that this is essentially what has now happened in the case of most Central American refugees: mass deportations of Salvadorans and Guatemalans have been stopped; and, Corbett concludes, *"the sanctuary movement's real victory during the decade had been the development of sanctuary as an enduring institution within the fully catholic church."*

There are more themes and ideas in this richly-packed book which there isn't space to go into here. But in sum, while I don't know whether Wilmer Cooper would consider *Goatwalking* as a specimen of an "emerging Quaker spirituality," or not, I certainly do. In fact the unique combination of thought, experience and reflection distilled in it puts *Goatwalking* in the running for the a spot on my short shelf of Quaker classics, maybe even close to Barclay.

IN SEARCH OF OPEN EARS

Mainstream theologians ought to be grappling with the ideas in *Goatwalking*, especially Corbett's subtle and daring concepts of the church and The Covenant. He affirms, with formidable intellectual skill, that they are thoroughly biblical; and his case is strengthened, for me at least, in that his ideas germinated in the desert, and have been seasoned in the livesaving ministry of sanctuary.

Unfortunately, though, there is little likelihood academic theologians will notice *Goatwalking*, any more than *A Living Faith*. Corbett has no "credentials"; Cooper is a Quaker; and *"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"* (John 1:46) This won't bother Corbett; he doesn't think much of the academy as a locale for fruitful theologizing. And if I didn't think so highly of Wil Cooper, I'd be inclined to agree with him. Well, that's their loss. But if the mainstream folks won't pay any attention, at least we can, and should; like the Teacher said, *"They who have ears to hear, let them hear."* (Mark 4:23) Is thee listening, Friend?

[NOTE: All three books featured in this issue can be ordered from the FGC Publications Service, 1-800-966-4556 or the Quaker Hill Bookstore, 1-800-537-8838.]

Forwarding & Address Correction Requested

From: Chuck Fager, A Friendly Letter
P.O. Box 1361
Baileys Crossroads, VA 22041

THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

Four Quakers were hung on Boston Common in 1660 and 1661. *"When they were put to death,"* George Fox wrote of them, *"as I was in prison at Lancaster, I had a perfect sense of it, as though it had been myself, and as though the halter had been put about my neck."*

If the intuitive Fox was out of action, however, other Friends were not. And there was no time to lose: By the autumn of 1661, dozens more Quakers were in Boston prisons, at least one under a sentence of death.

King Charles II, still freshly restored to the British throne in Ninth Month, 1661, wanted to stop, or at least diminish, the conflict and violence among his subjects over matters of religion. His sentiment was understandable; after all, such conflicts had produced a civil war in England less than two decades hence.

Thus on 9/9/1661, Charles granted an audience to Friend Edward Burrough, because Burrough wanted to talk about persecution of Quakers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The rulers of the colony, Charles well knew, were of the same Puritan stock whose victory in the English civil war had led to the execution of his father, Charles I, and had sent the younger Charles fleeing into years of exile.

These colonial Puritans had just sent the new king a long letter fulsomely declaring their loyalty and attempting to show that any "persecution" of Quakers and other heretics was strictly the fault of the fanatics themselves, because they wouldn't stay away from the Boston despite repeated warnings.

Charles was unimpressed by this letter. He listened sympathetically to Burrough, who was eloquent on the sufferings of harmless British subjects in Massachusetts. As Fox later summarized it, Burrough "told him there was a vein of innocent blood opened in his dominions, which, if it were not stopped, would overrun all. To which the king answered, *'But I will stop that vein.'*

"Edward Burrough said, *'Then do it speedily, for we do not know how many may soon be put to death.'*

"The king answered, *'As speedily as ye will...the secretary and I will do it presently.'* The secretary being called, a mandamus was forthwith granted."

This "King's Missive" did not end all persecution of Friends in Boston, but it did stop executions. And as a final ironic twist, it was delivered to Boston by a Friend, one of the Puritans' former prisoners.

QUAKER CHUCKLES

In 1904, the British Friend Edward Grubb, on a visit to America, managed to obtain an interview with president Theodore Roosevelt. Grubb spoke earnestly to the chief executive, praising him for recent stands on issues of social justice. According to Grubb's biographer, Roosevelt replied that, *"I have always had a strong sympathy with the American humorist who said it was much easier to be a wise dove than a harmless serpent. I have done my best with the problem, but it is a very hard one."*

A thoroughly modern Quaker became entranced with silent Zen Buddhism and joined a nearby monastery. Twelve months later, though, he was back in meeting. "What happened?" asked the clerk. The Friend replied, *"We were only allowed to speak one sentence every three months. My first sentence was, 'The beds are too hard.' The second was, 'The food is awful.' The third was, 'My room is freezing.' Then the abbot said, 'In a year, all you've done is complain. Get out.' So here I am."*
