

Forty-Three Newsletter

Number 480
April 2019



Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW

Friday with Maddy

Our Friend Madeleine (Maddy) Ward has now been awarded her doctorate on 'The Intellectual Context for the Development of Quakerism 1647 to 1700'. At Friday with Friends on 8 February she talked to us about a key controversy that arose in the period she describes, and about its relevance for today.

George Keith was a Friend and friend of most of the early Quakers, and in particular Robert Barclay who first tried to express Quaker theology in writing. Keith went to America in 1685 and by 1691 he was making controversial suggestions – he had the ear of the only printer in Philadelphia. One such was that applications for membership should make a confession of faith, which was close to the idea of a creed. He was very conscious of George Fox saying that it was the voice of Jesus Christ within him that made his heart leap for joy. Yet for mainstream Puritans, who were still much in evidence, the infallibility of the Bible trumped the inner voice. Keith tried to straddle both approaches. He spoke both of the 'Christ within' and of the divine Christ in the person



George Keith

of Jesus, and was accused of believing in 'two Christs'.

Theology – and in particular Christology – was a matter of current concern in this country at large, with the Civil War just over. The Quaker search for 'that of God' in everyone ruled out Calvinist predestination – salvation being only for the elect. Salvation didn't loom large in Quaker thinking (nor does it now). The deeper matter was whether

Jesus was simply the son of God as a human or whether He was 'consubstantial' with God, and further, whether He was a pre-existent part of God as in the opening of St John's Gospel. This brought us back to Keith (back from America in 1591). He became increasingly sceptical about the inward light, and both London Yearly Meeting and Philadelphia declared themselves not in unity with him. This led him eventually to take orders as an

ordained Anglican priest. We should remember him, however, for explicitly opposing slavery.

Maddy recommended a 1992 book by Richard Bailey – *New Light on George Fox* – which suggested that Fox had been tempted to see the

(continued next page)

Deadline for contributions to the May 2019 issue: noon, Friday 19 April

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, can be emailed to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org, or a paper copy can be left in the pigeonhole of any editor. Items for the calendar (on the last page) can be emailed to office@oxfordquakers.org. For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit www.oxfordquakers.org

inner light in the Gnostic sense of making man one with the divine. A 1656 scandal surrounding the Quaker leader James Nayler, however, in which Nayler had found himself treated as divine by enthusiastic followers, steered Friends away from this thought process. Fox allowed Nayler to be prosecuted for blasphemy and showed him no sympathy (perhaps with a guilty conscience for the adulation he himself attracted).

Of course the whole biblical narrative is open to scrutiny as mainstream Christian theology took shape through successive historical and personal influences. My personal take follows the analysis in *Christian Beginnings*, Géza Vermes' 2012 summary of his lifetime's work. Vermes was Oxford Professor of Jewish Studies from 1989 until his death in 2013.

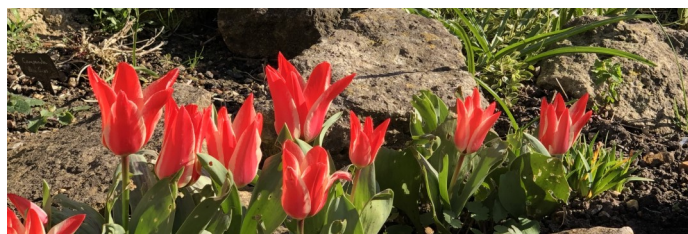
Jesus believed in a heavenly afterlife, if you trust his words to the thieves in Luke's account of the crucifixion. But Jesus was cautious about claiming any divinity, despite the apostles' experience (perhaps echoed by Nayler) at the transfiguration. Vermes suggests, provocatively, that he was not expecting to be resurrected. All four gospels report the resurrection of Jesus, and they imply his later ascension; this is documented in Acts. It is Paul – not the gospel writers – who links this to the 'original sin' by which Adam and Eve doomed humanity. The death and resurrection of Jesus secure for believers God's forgiveness and the promise of salvation. The succession of early theologians left the basic concepts as Paul proposed them, until Arius in about 318 questioned the very divinity of Jesus. This was argued in the Council of Nicea (from 325), at which the newly Christian emperor Constantine bullied the bishops into the newly coined formula of Jesus 'being of one substance with the Father'. The Holy Spirit in this creed 'proceeds from the Father and the Son'. (The Orthodox churches now say only that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father.)

As a further take on this issue, Oxford Meeting has been examining parts of Yuval Noah Harari's book *Homo Deus*. Harari seeks to demolish the idea of a creator god whose instructions for the conduct of human life are discerned from historic texts. (His dismissal of faiths, however, does not address the dominance, in some of them, of the afterlife as the driver of the way we live.) In looking beyond such

rules, humans have veered between ideologies that he defines as liberalism, socialism, and humanism. He fears a future nightmare world governed by data-driven algorithms and by all the internal and outside influences that place us under controls that are outside our true selves. This is tempered by a vision of ultimate human autonomy, but as a personal opinion I do not think he is ready to recognise it when he sees it. In the absence of religious touchstones he seems to leave little space for the varieties of human interactions or altruism that are not deterministically-driven.

For us as Quakers, Penn's words on 'True Godliness ...' and our practice of group discernment, in a partially non-theistic Quaker age, are perhaps grounds for hope.

Richard Seebom



MOOC on Early Quaker History

FutureLearn (an online education platform owned by Open University) is starting a massive open online course (a 'MOOC') on 29 April entitled ***Radical Spirituality: the Early History of the Quakers***. This three-week course is free, open to everyone, and aims to cover Quakerism's origins, key figures, and impact on England. FutureLearn's website says topics will include:

- The context of the English Civil War
- The religious ideas of George Fox and other early Quakers
- The importance of Fox's Pendle Hill Experience
- The role of travel in the start of the Quaker movement
- Fox's sojourn in Sedburgh
- The interiorised nature of Quaker spirituality
- The popularity and unpopularity of Quakerism
- Margaret Fell's role in early Quakerism
- Quaker history post 1652
- Quakerism as a global faith

For more information, see

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/quakers>



Climate Emergency!

I shall be delighted if it is proved that there really is not a climate emergency and that we can just relax. But if I am right and you agree with me then what can you do to make a change?

Please consider going to central London on 15 April, when lots of nonviolent direct actions will be taking place blocking off the central parts of London. In large groups you will be offering support to those taking the actions, and you yourselves will also be blocking in some places, if only temporarily. If you are asked by police to move out of the street you will be able to get onto the pavement, which is where the police want you to be. They are duty bound to assist peaceful protest.

We are protesting to get the Government to take forward all the things needed to prevent the temperature rising by more than 1.5 °C. This is what the Government promised at the 2015 Climate Change Conference in Paris, but hardly any of these things have been done. Direct Actions such as those planned by Extinction Rebellion are essential to stop the runaway problems that are foreseen.



For more information see <https://rebellion.earth/get-active/international-rebellion-a-guide-for-participants/>

Sarah Lasenby

Mobile Phone for a Rough Sleeper

Oxford Friends Action on Poverty funded a mobile phone for a rough sleeper. The OxFAP committee are publishing this warm and eloquent letter of thanks from Hannah, a worker at The Gatehouse, to encourage Friends in their generous support:

"Thank you for the amazing support of the Friends. That mobile has been God's difference in a horrific situation: he's really vulnerable and feels overwhelmed easily and is unable to hold a conversation about support for long... he walked out of here on the day I gave him the phone because he felt he couldn't cope... but the fact he had the mobile, and I had the number meant that when he was more able, we could talk again. He came in last night and we did some important work - this was only possible because of the fact that he had the phone and I was able to reach him! I wanted to share this difference back with the Friends. Last week, I spoke to a youth group on their theme of Acts of Kindness: having an educational background in Physics, I was inspired to use a quote of Lorenz about Chaos Theory: the movement of a butterfly's wings in Brazil can cause a hurricane in Texas. Shifting context just a little: that the small - but reliable and regular - supports such as this make a BIG difference."

Hannah, at The Gatehouse

For more information about OxFAP, see <https://oxfap.webs.com>

Brigid Schroer



The Privilege of Funeral Eldership

"We are here to celebrate the Grace of God as shown in the life of our Friend."

These are the opening words that the attending Elder will offer to the gathering of a Quaker Funeral – and what a privilege this is! The Elder will then go on to explain the tradition of the Meeting for Worship to those who are unfamiliar with our ways.



There are always two Friends who hold the Meeting, neither of which necessarily have the role of Elder within the wider Meeting. One of their first duties is to meet with the family to learn what will be required at the funeral. This may take only one meeting, or several, as it helps to form a relationship before the actual funeral date. On the day of the funeral, both acting Elders meet the family and then liaise with the Funeral Director and possibly the venue officials. During the Meeting their role is the same as that of Elders at any Meeting for Worship. The early explanation about leaving space between each contribution is often not quite understood; it is the Elders role to sensitively monitor this. Bringing the meeting to a close can require skilled judgement because there are frequently time constraints and people still

wanting to speak. After the funeral both Elders reconnect with the family and, if appropriate, accept the family's invitation to join them for refreshments. Often this seems to be important to the family as a way of debriefing.

Ellen said that out of all the roles she has taken within Oxford Meeting, this is the most wonderful.

For further information please contact Jenny Buffery or Ellen Bassani or Tina Leonard. They would all welcome enquiries from those who may feel moved to join them in this rewarding role.

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Thursday Gardening at the Meeting House

The Gardening Team is starting to meet again every Thursday to look after the gardens at number 43. In March we will be spring weeding, bulb planting, and general tidying. We would be delighted if Friends wish to come and join us! We generally work from 1:00 – 5:00 pm with a tea and cake break half way through, and a simple quick lunch and planning session at 12:30. If you can't make these times but wish to garden on Thursday mornings or indeed on other days, the office staff can point you in the right direction. We do have gardening tools but you may wish to bring your own favourite gloves or tools if you have them. We look forward to gardening with you! Any questions contact the office (office@oxfordquakers.org) or see Jacqui Mansfield or Stephen Yeo.

Save the Children: Friday with Friends

12 April 7:00 for 7:30 - till 9:00 pm

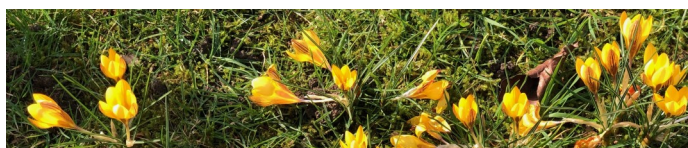
Save the Children celebrates its centenary this year. Do you know how it all began? Who founded it? What the Quaker connection is? What changes it brought about for children in the UK? How many countries it is working in now? What the current major projects are?



Save the Children

If you'd like to know the answers to these questions and hear plenty more about the work of Save the Children please come along to Friday with Friends on 12 April, when Elizabeth Johnston (who volunteers with the Oxford Branch) and Anita Ghosh will be looking after the session.

Elizabeth Johnston



Poems in the Library

Spring and Early Summer Programme.

All welcome !

Mon 29 April, 4:00-6:00 pm. Voluntary theme: Sunshine.

Mon 20 May, 4:00-6:00 pm. Voluntary theme: Solstice. Staying still and moving on.

Mon 17 June, 4:00-6:00 pm. Voluntary theme: If you can have roses you can also have thorns.

Please also plan ahead for:

Sat 5 October, 6:30 for 7:00 pm start, till 9:00 pm in the Meeting House. Jenny Lewis will read in and around her book *Gilgamesh Retold*.

Sat 12 October, 6:30 for 7:00 pm start, till 9:00 pm. Philip Gross and Lesley Saunders will read in and around their latest book, *A Part of the Main*.

Free Admission. Collections on behalf of the Garden Room Project. More details later.

More poetic treats on Saturdays 16 and 23 November, to be announced.

Stephen Yeo

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Research Opportunities....

1. How did you get involved with Quakers?

The discussion will be an exploration of how and why people became associated with Quakers in Britain today. Is it a case of 'coming home' or of continuing to travel with oneself and with others? 'How Did You Get Involved With Quakers?' is the title of a dissertation I am completing at Woodbrooke/Birmingham University under the supervision of Professor Ben Pink Dandelion. The data comes from interviews and written accounts of life stories/spiritual journeys that people are kind enough to have helped me with. If you would like to participate I will be delighted to send you details with no obligation. Please contact me via my university email. All material will be anonymised, and the study has the approval of Birmingham University Ethics Committee.

Richard Bainbridge

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2. The Great Poppy Debate

Katrina Robinson — Oxford resident and freelance writer — has been commissioned to write an article for *Woman Alive* magazine interviewing women of faith about 'the great poppy debate'. On Remembrance Sunday do you wear a red poppy, a white poppy, both, neither? What are your feelings and faith reasons about this? Katrina is particularly interested in hearing from women who wear a white poppy or no poppy, and if this is you, would love to hear from you.

Katrina Robinson

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Sustainable Living and the Library of Things

With great interest I read Alan Allport's article on Quakers and Sustainability. To live more simply, more consciously, and in harmony with the world is of course at the heart of our Quaker testimony.

Edward Hicks' painting *The Peaceable Kingdom* (ca. 1830-32) comes to mind – a Quaker vision foreshadowing prosperity and peace for all. We should not forget about this vision.

In his article, Alan told us about the guiding themes of the 2018 Sustainability Gathering. One is to share our stories – stories of what we and others are doing, stories to inspire and encourage both ourselves and others. In this spirit, I want to tell you about a local initiative I recently got involved in: Oxford's first Library of Things.

The concept behind a Library of Things (and there are quite a few in England already) is that it enables people to borrow, rather than buy, items that are only sometimes or occasionally needed— items such as DIY tools, outdoors and sports

equipment, domestic and cooking equipment, etc. By so doing we encourage and facilitate the avoidance of waste. We reduce our carbon footprint, thus saving space, money, and the environment.

The need to reduce the scale of unnecessary production and consumption, and reduce the impact of waste on the environment, is partially answered by putting into practice ideas that are conceptualised as the circular economy, the sharing economy, zero waste, minimalism, and more. I joined (and am enjoying!) the Library of Things because it takes an important step towards becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community.

If Friends want to get involved with or support the Library of Things, there are various ways. You can become a borrowing member, donate items (we are currently looking for a work bench, gardening tools, and musical instruments), or - like me - volunteer.

Find more information here:

<https://shareoxford.org/>

Suzan Meryem Rosita



Edward Hicks—A Peaceable Kingdom

CALENDAR FOR APRIL 2019

All at 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Tue 2 April	7:00 pm	First Tuesday Group
Wed 3 April	7:00 - 9:00 pm	Quaker Enquirers: 'What we do in Meeting for Worship'
Thu 4 April	2:30 pm	Pastoral Care Group
Sun 7 April	10:30 - 11:30 am 12:00 - 2:00 pm	Meeting for Worship Business Meeting
Fri 12 April	7:00 - 9:00 pm	Friday with Friends: 100 years of Save the Children
Wed 17 April	1:45 - 3:00 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Mon 29 April	4:00 - 6:00 pm	Poems in the Library: 'Sunshine'

Training Evening

Thursday 22 May 7:00 - 9:00 pm

This started as a training session for office staff, but it might also be of interest to Friends on Duty and members of the Pastoral Care Team – who are very welcome to attend. It is aimed at helping us meet and greet and manage visitors to the Meeting House and 43 who may be vulnerable, distressed, intoxicated or visiting with criminal intent. We will be thinking about how we establish boundaries while upholding our welcoming ethos. The session will be facilitated by Chris White and Hoonie Feltham.

Jacqui Mansfield



From Quaker Faith and Practice

Come regularly to meeting for worship even when you are angry, depressed, tired, or spiritually cold. ... Let meeting for worship nourish your whole life.

Quaker Faith & Practice, Advices & Queries No. 10

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

1st Sunday of each month

10:30am at 43 St Giles
(followed by tea and coffee)

2nd 3rd & 4th Sunday of each month

9:30am & 11:00am at 43 St Giles
(followed by tea and coffee)

Monday

7:00pm Young Adult Friends at 43 St Giles
(followed by baked potato supper)

Tuesday & Thursday

7:30am at 43 St Giles
(followed by breakfast at 8:00am)

Wednesday

12:15pm at 43 St Giles
(followed by tea and coffee)

Headington LM worship on Sunday

10:00am at The Priory,
85 Old High Street, OX3 9HT

Forty-Three is available online, at
www.oxfordquakers.org/newsletter

If you are considering writing an article or notice but would prefer it not to go online, please don't hesitate to contribute it. Just indicate that the piece is not for inclusion in the internet version — no reason will be asked for. Articles and notices are very welcome to appear in the print edition only, and the same applies to calendar items.

The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the editors.

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