

*The*  
QUAKER  
STRUGGLE  
*for the*  
RIGHTS  
OF WOMEN



An address by  
MARGARET H. BACON

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The Quakers know a great deal about our history as opponents of slavery, as friends of the Indians, as early prison and mental hospital reformers. Strangely, however, we seem to know very little about the leadership role our Society has played in a movement of equal or greater importance: the centuries long struggle for equal rights for women. Today as that struggle enters all our lives and seems to have important ramifications for the restructuring of society, we need to get closer to our historical roots, find out where the pioneers drew spiritual sustenance for their struggle, and examine why it is that we have been slow to play a leadership role--or any at all--in the newer and more radical manifestations of the movement.

The origins of Quaker belief in equality of women go back as far as the Society itself. Before George Fox first saw the Light, while he was still wandering and seeking, he wrote in his journal that he came across a strange sort of people who thought women had no soul "no more than a goose." He reprimanded them, reminding them of Mary's statement, "my soul doth magnify the Lord." A little later he interrupted his first church service to argue with a priest who was refusing to answer a woman's question, telling her instead to go home and ask her husband, as St. Paul suggested women do. Still later, after his own conversion experience, he made

as his first convert a woman, Elizabeth Hooten, who spent the next thirty years of her life as a Quaker minister, carrying the Quaker message to the American colonies as well as up and down England.

None of this is to suggest that George Fox believed in women's liberation as we understand that term today. He believed that women had souls, and the right to preach the message. He disputed St. Paul's attitude toward women by stating that in the Fall woman had been placed under the dominion of man, but in the restoration of the Kingdom of the Lord, through the risen Christ, she was restored to her rightful position as the "helpmeet" of man. He wrote two books using biblical quotations to justify his position, and he frequently disputed priests and others on the matter. On the other hand, he was not entirely free of the culture of the day in matters not relating to religion, and was capable of writing at least one long epistle to the colonists in America urging women to obey their husbands, etc.

As important to the founding of Quakerism as George Fox, was Margaret Fell, often called the nursing mother of the new movement. It was her home, Swarthmoor, that served as headquarters for the Valiant Sixty, and it was her love and care, expressed through letters and much travelling that bound the new group together into a loving community. Margaret also wrote a book justifying the preaching of women, the first such book written by a woman. More important, perhaps, she followed her conscience wherever it led her without regard to the restrictions of her sex, arguing with the King of England at one point, submitting to a long term in jail at the next.

When Fox saw the necessity for organizing the infant Society of Friends and establishing monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings for business, he thought only in terms of men, since this was the custom of the day. But having learned from the women ministers, such as Elizabeth Hooten and Margaret Fell, what strengths and potentialities women possessed, he determined to unleash this new resource for the use of his infant society. It was therefore his inspiration to establish women's meetings as a way of dealing with the poor, the sick, the young servant maids, and other matters relating themselves to women's concerns. When attacked by some dissidents about the women's meetings, he pointed out that when women met with men they were apt to be silent, while by themselves they were capable of conducting a great deal of business with maximum efficiency.

Today, the idea of separate women's meetings sound like a form of separatism, providing women with a separate but equal status. But in their day these meetings were unique in giving Quaker women experience in conducting meetings, keeping minutes, handling important matters. As Lucretia Mott once explained, they were kindergartens in power, kindergartens in providing women with the experience of speaking out. As we shall see, it was this experience which led to Quaker leadership in the nineteenth century women's rights movement. And it appears to many contemporary students that the separate women's meetings provided Quaker women with a support group which they have somehow lost in the progress toward equality.

As important to the development of Quaker women as the separate meetings, was the role of some of them as travelling Quaker ministers. From the beginning

it was understood that if women felt a leading to travel they were free to leave family and children, perhaps for years at a time, to undertake whatever mission God laid upon them. The first three persons to bring Quakerism to the American colonies were women: Anne Austin and Mary Fisher in Boston and Elizabeth Harris in North Carolina and Virginia. Many suffered for their beliefs and one, Mary Dyer, was hanged on Boston Common. Their travels and their heroism was a living witness to Quaker belief that "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither male nor female."

Once the first period of spreading the Seed, and resulting persecution, was over, Quakers settled into a period of relative quietism, strengthening their organization, refining their beliefs, and disciplining their members. In colonial America, in addition, Quakers were busy hewing a living for themselves from the new land, and in many cases building up businesses and trades in which they came to prosper.

Even during this period of quiet, however, Quaker women were making advances toward equality. A number played important roles as Quaker ministers, travelling through the colonies, writing books and journals about their experiences. Others plied trades or pioneered in the professions. Debby Logan was one of the first historians in the country, Sybillia Master one of the first inventors, Patience Wright the first sculptor, Betsy Ross, who reputedly designed the American flag, was a Quaker and so was the lively Dolley Madison.

Recent studies made from Meeting records seem to suggest that Quaker women married later, were given more freedom in deciding whether to marry or

remain single, and lived longer than women from other sects. At least two Quaker women proposed to their husbands during this period. The most famous of these was Elizabeth Haddon, founder of Haddonfield, New Jersey, who is supposed to have said, "I have a charge to love thee, John."

Quakers during the colonial period were concerned that their children, male or female, receive an adequate, guarded education. That is, they did not want them to be exposed to the ideas of other sects. They therefore established schools in connection with their monthly meetings whenever feasible. As a result of the need for teachers for these schools, they established in the latter part of the eighteenth century a small number of institutions of higher education, or academies. These were all coeducational in that they accepted the same number of boys and girls, and generally taught them the same subjects. For many years, however, the schools kept boys and girls strictly apart and they paid women teachers less than men.

As Quaker women graduated from these academies they often turned their energies to educating the less fortunate. Quaker women were the first to establish schools for the blacks--in Connecticut and in Washington, D.C.--against violent mob opposition, and after the Civil War many Quaker women went South to establish schools for the newly freed slaves. In New York City, Quaker women started the public school movement, and in Philadelphia a Quaker woman introduced public kindergartens. Several Quaker women were involved in the development of education for the deaf and dumb.

Not believing at first in the virtues of a college education, Quakers were slow to establish colleges.

Swarthmore, which opened in 1864, was the first co-educational Quaker college. Earlham and Guilford began as academies and evolved into colleges. However, Quaker women played a leadership role in pioneering in higher education in the second half of the nineteenth century. M. Cary Thomas, president of Bryn Mawr, pushed for the extension of higher education for women, as well as improvement of its quality. Emily Howland helped to persuade Ezra Cornell to make Cornell University coeducational. Helen Magill White, a graduate of Swarthmore, was the first woman in the United States to earn a Ph.D.

Since Quaker women were among the first in the nation to receive a higher education, it was natural for them to become the pioneers for their sex in many professions. Because of the strong feeling among Quakers against the arts, most turned their attention to the sciences. The first woman to become a doctor in the United States, Elizabeth Blackwell, had Quaker leanings and Quaker support.

Among the first eight women doctors, in fact, five were Quakers. Maria Mitchell of Nantucket was the first woman astronomer. Anna Comstock is still remembered as a naturalist. Rebecca Lukens was a famous manufacturer of boiler plates for steam engines. Hetty Howland Green was the first millionaire. A Quaker named Lydia Estes Pinkham developed an herbal remedy for female complaints. A Quaker named Annie Oakley was a famous sharpshooter.

There were many women writers in the nineteenth century. Of these, Hannah Whitall Smith was the most successful and the most famous. A Quaker called Eliza Farnham wrote about travels in the West, and about the natural superiority of women. There were several Quaker abolitionist writers. Several

Quaker women became artists of note despite the Quaker attitude toward the arts. Mary Vaux Walcott is known for her very beautiful illustrations of wildflowers. A woman called Alice Barber Stephens was a book and magazine illustrator, supporting herself and her family from the age of fifteen. Two Quaker women in the nineteenth century pioneered in the field of library science. And there continued to be peripatetic Quaker ministers. We all know of Eliza Gurney, who went to see Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, and of Sybil Jones, who travelled with her husband over much of the globe and helped to found the school at Ramallah, Palestine. Elizabeth Comstock, a noted midwest abolitionist, was also an inspiring minister.

Although the advances made by Quaker women in the professions are significant, the field in which they really shone forth is reform. Quakers had always been blessed with a deep humanitarian concern, and in the romantic humanitarianism of the nineteenth century this concern flowered.

The greatest strides were made in the field of working with prisoners. Elizabeth Fry, an English Quaker, brought reforms to women prisoners in Newgate prison, London, early in the century, and inspired American Quaker women to similar pursuits. In Philadelphia a group of women under the leadership of Mary Wain Wistar, began to visit women in prisons and eventually sponsored a half-way house for women prisoners. In New York another group, led by Abby Hopper Gibbons, established the Isaac T. Hopper house, the first half-way house in the world for women prisoners. Abby herself was a frequent visitor at the Tombs, and at Randall Island, an asylum where the children of the prisoners were kept. Later in her life she campaigned

for hiring police matrons to handle women offenders, and for the establishment of a separate facility for women prisoners, a dream finally realized just before she died.

Eliza Farnham, the Quaker writer, was also deeply interested in prison reform. She volunteered for the job of matron in Sing Sing, and here initiated humanitarian reforms, including the breaking of the inhumane rule of silence. She was often in trouble with authorities as a result of her crusading, and finally lost her job. Later she wrote a critique of the prisons of San Francisco.

Other nineteenth century Quaker women combined a lifelong interest in prison reforms with other concerns. Thus Elizabeth Buffum Chace of Rhode Island, an abolitionist and women's rights advocate, campaigned for a separate women's reformatory and served for six years as a visitor to the Rhode Island prisons, and Elizabeth Comstock, an abolitionist and Quaker minister, visited prisons and insane asylums wherever she travelled. A Quaker social worker, Martha Falconer, pioneered in the establishment of Sleighton Farms, a reformatory for girls near Philadelphia.

Quaker concern for the Indians, which began with the first settlers, continued throughout the nineteenth century, taking the form primarily of setting up schools and training centers. Many Quaker women went to live among the Indians as school teachers, and became in time natural advocates of Indian rights. It remained, however, for a friend of the Friends, a Quaker by marriage, to advance the cause of Indian rights most widely. Comparatively late in life Helen Hunt, of Massachusetts, a childhood friend of Emily Dickinson, married William

Sharpless Jackson of West Chester, Pennsylvania, and shortly thereafter developed what she called a Friendly concern for the rights of Indians. Her "Century of Dishonor" was a scathing report on American injustices, the Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee of her generation. But because the public response was less than she hoped for, she wrote a romantic novel, Ramona, which became one of the best sellers of all time.

A concern for prisoners, and for minority members led Quaker women step by step to a concern for getting at the roots of poverty. Some saw drink as the demon that destroyed the working class family, and turned their efforts to the temperance crusade. Others, looking deeper, felt that housing reform was the solution. In New York City Ellen Collins, daughter of the famous Quaker printer Isaac Collins, bought three slum properties with her small inheritance, fixed them up, and rented them to poor families at moderate rentals. Later she added other properties, and felt she was able to prove that a clean, well kept environment was an aid to those families, while the landlord was able to maintain them properly and still make a modest profit. In Philadelphia, Cornelia Hancock, a civil war nurse and school teacher to the freedmen, spent her later years helping to manage a housing development called Wrightsville, where tenants were encouraged to buy their own properties, with similar good results.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century a new and more radical breed of Quaker women reformers arose. These were the advocates of the poor who drew their inspiration from Hull House and from Jane Addams, a self styled friend of the Friends. Grace Abbott, a Quaker social worker at Hull House, campaigned

for better conditions for immigrants and later became head of the U.S. Children's Bureau and a life-long advocate of a constitutional amendment prohibiting child labor. Florence Kelley, a Philadelphia Quaker turned Socialist, investigated sweat shop conditions in Chicago and served as factory inspector under the governor of Illinois. For many years she was head of the National Consumers League, a group that attempted to bring pressure on the garment industry by boycotting sweat shop products. Helen Marot, another Philadelphia Quaker who became radical, also investigated sweat shop conditions in Philadelphia, then went to New York City where she helped to found and edit such radical publications as the Dial and the New Masses.

Quakers, male and female, had always maintained the peace testimony, but the nineteenth century saw the beginning of the organization of peace societies, aimed at developing international gatherings and programs for the peace of Europe. Some Quakers belonged to the American Peace Society while a very few followed William Lloyd Garrison into the more radical and more absolute New England Non-Resistance Society. Two Quaker women, Lucretia Mott and Abby Kelley Foster, braved the displeasure of their meetings by belonging to this group. Lucretia was an inspiring leader, while the more fiery Abby was perhaps the first American woman to use nonviolent resistance against both civil and clerical authority.

All these reforms and concerns were dwarfed by the one overriding issue of the nineteenth century: the abolition of slavery. It was in this field of reform that Quaker women were in the forefront, and it was from their struggle to be heard that the women's rights movement arose.

First to be mentioned in this connection are two gallant sisters from North Carolina, Angelina and Sarah Grimke. Raised in a wealthy slaveowning family, the two grew up to abhor slavery and eventually moved to Philadelphia in order to get away from the institution. Here they became members of the Society of Friends and began to speak of their first hand experiences with slavery in the South. Their eloquence drew large audiences. They spoke at first only to women, since this was regarded as proper in the early nineteenth century, but such was their eloquence that eventually a few men began to slip into the back of the auditorium to hear them. In Lynn, Massachusetts in the summer of 1837 the Quaker meetinghouse opened its door to a "promiscuous" audience, an audience composed of men and women, to hear the Grimke sisters. This immediately caused a storm of controversy throughout New England. New England clergymen generally believed in taking literally St. Paul's injunction against women speaking in churches, and even those clergymen who were abolitionists felt that the Grimke sisters were doing more harm than good. A Pastoral letter was sent out, urging local ministers to beware of itinerant female lecturers, and reminding congregations that woman's role was to be a clinging vine, not a stalwart tree.

When the Grimke's and their allies continued to speak forth, a second letter was written urging congregations to close their churches, and to do what they could to prevent the speeches from taking place. As a result, there were mob scenes and general pandemonium. Sarah Grimke took pen in hand to rebuke their critics, writing "The Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women." "I ask no favors for my sex," she wrote. "I surrender not our claim to equality. All I ask of our brethren is that they will take their feet from off our necks,

and permit us to stand upright on the ground which God has designed for us to occupy."

Within the American Anti-Slavery Society itself a split began to develop over the issue of women speaking in public. John Greenleaf Whittier and Theodore Weld were among those to oppose it believing that it would detract from the antislavery movement to mix the two issues. Since Theodore was engaged to marry Angelina Grimke, his position put a great strain upon her and may have contributed to the breakdown of her health.

On May 17, 1838, a tumultuous gathering was held in Philadelphia outside the newly built Pennsylvania Hall. Inside, a "promiscuous" audience was meeting to hear women talk against slavery. Angelina Grimke, married the night before, spoke, it turned out, for the last time. So did Lucretia Mott, so did Abby Kelley Foster, a young Irish Quaker school teacher from Massachusetts. For Abby it was her maiden speech. Pennsylvania Hall was burned by an angry mob the very next night.

Abby's career, thus born in flames, was to continue for many years. Throughout the 1830s she was regarded as the symbol of woman's demand to be heard on the issue of antislavery. Mobs gathered wherever she spoke. Stones, rotten eggs, the contents of outhouses were flung at her. Every minister and every editor reviled her. Yet she went on, saying "when woman's heart is bleeding, shall woman's voice be hushed?"

In 1839, and again in 1840, Abby's efforts to speak up at the American Anti-Slavery Society caused a split in its ranks. In 1840 when she was placed upon a committee, the split became final, the

Society separating into two organizations, the Old, under the leadership of Garrison, and the New, or clerical wing. When Lucretia Mott and several other Quaker women arrived in London in the summer of 1840 to be present at the World Anti-Slavery Convention, as delegates of their state and national organizations, they found that the New Organization had persuaded the British delegates not to seat them. Instead, they were forced to sit on a balcony. Here William Lloyd Garrison joined them on his arrival, as did Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the young bride of an abolitionist from Massachusetts. Lucretia and Elizabeth went for a long walk between sessions, and determined that something must be done to permit women to speak forth on a concern so dear to their hearts. This meeting flowered eight years later in the Seneca Falls Convention.

In her travels, Abby Kelley Foster inspired younger women, and recruited them as antislavery lecturers. Among these recruits was Elizabeth Jane Hitchcock Jones, later a famous woman lecturer on hygiene; Sallie Holley, founder of a school for freedmen in the South; Lucy Stone, and Susan B. Anthony, famous women's rights leader. The development of the crusades for women's rights emerged directly from the abolitionist crusade, and from the concern of Quaker women that they be allowed to express themselves in the way in which they felt they had a Divine leading. Thus the early concept of Quaker women's rights to preach and prophesy, defended by George Fox and Margaret Fell, was now expanded to include woman's right to follow her conscience in public utterance in religiously inspired reform.

It is impossible in this short time to mention all the Quaker women who contributed to the abolitionist

crusade, aiding black fugitives escape their slave masters, raising money through antislavery fairs for the cause, organizing schools and relief for freedmen in the South and later in Kansas, helping to support those schools. One woman who must be mentioned is Sarah Douglass, a black Quaker, who spoke against slavery, and stubbornly tried to make the Society of Friends more liberal, at a time when black Friends were consigned to a special back bench in the meeting houses, and blacks were not encouraged to join the Society.

The crowning star of the abolitionist movement, and the one connecting link to the women's rights movement was Lucretia Coffin Mott, a small but dynamic woman from Nantucket Island who grew up with women's rights in her bones. Lucretia went to school in Nantucket and in Boston, and later attended Nine Partners' Boarding School where she met James Mott, and where she first discovered that women teachers were paid less than men. Marrying Mott in 1811, Lucretia settled in Philadelphia and shortly became recognized as a gifted Quaker minister. She and her husband were both impressed with the testimonies of abolitionist and unorthodox preacher Elias Hicks, and when the separation came, became Hicksites. Lucretia was present when the Anti-Slavery Society was formed in Philadelphia in 1833, and herself led the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, as well as the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women. For many years she spoke against slavery, helped with the underground railroad and supported the cause wherever possible. A serene mother of a large family and hostess to a huge table, she managed household duties and a public life in a way that was a source of inspiration to both men and women. In her later years she became a friend of the transcendentalists and

an inspired leader to the cause of liberal religion, without sacrificing her membership in the Society of Friends.

Ever since they met in London, Lucretia and Elizabeth Cady Stanton kept alive the dream of doing something about women's rights. It was not until eight years later, however, when Lucretia was visiting some Quaker friends and relations in upstate New York, that an opportunity arose. Elizabeth Stanton, living nearby, seized the opportunity to call upon Lucretia. Five women, four of them Quaker, sat around a kitchen table in a farmhouse that afternoon and planned to hold a convention in just a few days and to make a declaration of the rights of women. So inexperienced were these women still that they felt they needed a man to chair this first session. James Mott, Lucretia's husband, obliged. Despite stormy opposition the meeting was held a few days later and some 300 people attended, one third of them willing to sign the declaration of rights of women.

From this time forward, conventions were held annually until the Civil War, Lucretia, her sister Martha Coffin Wright, Abby Kelley Foster, Elizabeth Buffum Chace and other Quaker leaders usually attending. In 1850 Susan B. Anthony, a school teacher and temperance worker, joined the organization and became, as we know, its recognized leader. She was a Hicksite Quaker, the great, great, great, great, granddaughter of Abraham Anthony, one of the first converts of Mary Dyer.

The Civil War itself brought a time of distress to the Quaker abolitionists. As pacifists, should they support the Union cause when emancipation was one of the war aims? Some overcame their scruples and

were Civil War nurses. Others remained aloof. All campaigned for the Thirteenth Amendment prohibiting slavery. Later, however, they split over the Fourteenth and more especially the Fifteenth Amendments, giving the votes and guarding the civil rights of blacks, but black men only. Should they settle for half-a-loaf, and push later for women's rights? Was this, as some of them argued, the Negro's hour? Or should they insist on joining the two causes? Since the American Anti-Slavery Society was organized to push for the blacks, a new organization, the American Equal Rights Association, was formed to work for both black and women's suffrage. After a particularly stormy session of this group in May of 1869, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton formed a new woman's organization, the National Woman's Suffrage Association. To their surprise and dismay, the abolitionists who had agreed to support the Fifteenth Amendment formed a rival organization, the American Women's Suffrage Association, and began to issue a rival paper. These two organizations remained separate for twenty years. Many Quaker women were active on both sides of the fence, and many seemed able to support both groups with equanimity.

The 1870s and 1880s were periods of intense activity for the women's movement, as women crusaded for the vote in various of the western states and intensified their campaign to win it nationally. The means used to protest their disenfranchisement were various: In 1873 Abby Kelley Foster and her husband refused to pay taxes on their farm on the theory that this was taxation without representation. Sold at auction to the highest bidder, their farm was bought by a neighbor determined to teach them a lesson, but reclaimed by the city of Worcester, Massachusetts and eventually bought back for the Fosters by friends; In 1872 Susan

B. Anthony led sixteen women, the majority of them Quaker, into the illegal act of actually voting in a national election. Though charged and found guilty of this act, Susan was never sentenced; In 1876 Susan B. Anthony interrupted a solemn moment at the Centennial celebration held in Philadelphia to issue a new declaration of the rights of women. In 1878 a friendly congressman introduced a federal amendment, the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, onto the floor of the House. This was the amendment finally passed by Congress in 1919.

In 1904, as a very old woman, Susan B. Anthony attended an international conference on women's rights in Berlin, then went on a speaking tour of England. A young suffragist, Christabel Pankhurst, interviewed her for a newspaper article, and came away disturbed that such a woman should struggle all her life to get the vote for women, yet not see the end in sight. As a result Christabel and her mother Emmeline, decided it was time to turn to more drastic methods. The British suffragists subsequently began to picket Parliament and the homes of the Lords, to resist arrest and go on hunger strikes in prison. They even turned to violent methods, throwing stones and blowing up mail boxes.

Studying in England at this exciting time was a young Quaker from New Jersey, Alice Paul, a graduate of Swarthmore and the University of Pennsylvania. With Lucy Burns, another American woman, Alice participated in the picketing and the hunger strikes in jail, and returned to the United States determined to introduce these more militant methods to the American movement. With the encouragement and support of Jane Addams and M. Carey Thomas, they began to campaign once more for the national amendment, and turned to picketing the White House when

more moderate efforts failed. After the United States entered World War I, this picketing was regarded as unpatriotic by the man on the street, and ugly crowds began to surround the picketers. The police did nothing to protect them, and the women were arrested for disturbing traffic, although their behavior was perfectly legal. Refusing to accept fines they were sent to jail, where many of them promptly entered upon hunger strikes. The government responded by force feeding them, and a prolonged struggle ensued which galvanized the attention of the nation. Many Philadelphia Quakers, some of them older women, participated in the struggle, which most observers believe led directly to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

Though pleased by the victory, Alice Paul was not through. In 1923 she helped to write the Equal Rights Amendment, the Lucretia Mott Amendment now before the states. "I grew up in a Quaker family," she recently told reporters, "and the Quakers believe in the equality of the sexes. It is hard to grow up in such a family and never hear anything else. When you put your hand to the plow, you can't put it down until you reach the end of the row."

From the end of the First World War, and the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, until the late 1960s, there has been a long lull in the women's rights movement. A devastating succession of wars and depressions has drained energy from the struggle to complete the job of winning equality. Quaker women in particular have devoted the long years to a struggle for peace. Through such organizations as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom founded in 1912, the American Friends Service Committee, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the War Resisters League, Quaker women have struggled along

with Quaker men against the nightmare of recurring wars. Jane Addams, a daughter of a Quaker and Emily Green Balch, a Quaker woman, received the Nobel Peace Prize for founding the WILPF. A Quaker woman, Marion Bromley, founded the organization Peacemakers. A Quaker woman, Barbara Reynolds, sailed with her former husband into the danger zone where the A-bomb was being tested. A Quaker woman, Elise Boulding, helped to found the Peace Studies Institute. Other Quaker women have been active in such organizations as Women's Strike for Peace and Another Mother for Peace.

As the nightmare of Vietnam engulfed the nation, there was time for little else. Young Quaker women as a consequence did not play as significant a role as they might otherwise have played in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the developing New Left, and the radical feminist organizations that grew from the New Left, replicating the history of the nineteenth century. Older Quaker women were also too caught up in the struggle for peace to play leadership roles in the development of the more traditional women's organizations such as NOW.

There are other reasons perhaps for the slowness with which Quaker women have responded to the new militant phase of feminism. Having won--or felt they had won--their long struggle to be accepted as persons in the Society of Friends, and having advocated personhood for all minorities, they have tended to wonder if the separatism of blacks or of women were a step backward from the ideal. Only slowly, one by one, here and there, have we begun to understand that true personhood must be based on an adequate sense of self, and that until blacks, and women, and native Americans, and others rid themselves of the ingested sense of inferiority which

they have absorbed from their culture, they cannot hope to achieve true equality.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, most Quaker meetings gave up the practice of having separate women's business meetings, and women demanded their fair representation on all major committees. Many Quaker women have served as clerks of their meetings, and many on both ministry and oversight committees. Nevertheless, observers point out that the major governing bodies of the Society, especially those which handle business or investments, lean heavily toward male members, and that those women who meet with the men are less apt to speak up when matters of true weight come before the body. There are exceptions to this, but the pattern of the centuries seems still to hold true: men take care of property, women serve teas, tend First Day School, bring casseroles.

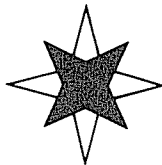
Some Quaker historians wonder, therefore, whether in giving up their separate meetings Quaker women lost a strong bond of sisterhood without replacing it with a true position of personhood. No one wants to go back to separate meetings, but it is becoming clear that Quaker women need to reestablish their sense of pride in their own sex and in themselves in order to push forward the parameters of equality.

The time is ripe and the seed has been planted. Here and there in New York Yearly Meeting, in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, in Germantown Monthly Meeting, in the AFSC, in Friends General Conference, at Pendle Hill--here and there, there is a stirring. As Quaker women become aware of the sexism in the society in which they live, and which they have for so long taken for granted as natural and normal,

they are turning to their history to find out where they started and what has gone wrong, and they are joining together and preparing themselves to take their rightful place as sisters in the new movement, contributing their own unique gifts of spiritual sensitivity to a movement that needs spiritual dimensions. They have caught the vision of the formation of a new society, once men and women alike escape the stereotyped roles of sex, a society where man need not prove his manhood by war and by acquisition, where he is free to be tender as women are free to be strong. They will be ready, perhaps soon, to join hands and walk cheerfully over the land, answering that of God in everyone.

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Margaret Hope Bacon is a special writer for the American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia. She is a member of Central Philadelphia Friends Meeting, a member of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, Friends Historical Society, the Philadelphia Women's Coalition. Her name is listed in *Who's Who Among American Women*. She is the author of a number of books: *I Speak For My Slave Sister*; *Lamb's Warrior: The Life of Isaac T. Hopper*; a history of American Quakers, *The Quiet Rebels*; and a book about black resistance to slavery, *Rebellion at Christiana*. She is currently at work on a biography of Lucretia Mott.



American Friends Service Committee

1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102