

# FORTY-THREE

OXFORD FRIENDS' MEETING  
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## NEWSLETTER

[www.oxfordquakers.org](http://www.oxfordquakers.org)

Number 359

February 2009

40 pence

### Quakernomics?

Along with the rest of society, Quakers will be affected by the current financial crisis, and some may be hit severely (job losses, home repossessions, savings lost, pension investments losing value). How do we respond to this? As individuals? As a Meeting? A crisis on this scale also presents a radical opportunity to do things differently in the future. What are our ideas on this? What would we propose as a better set of principles for the economy, as Quakers? A number of Friends are meeting, writing, discussing the economic crisis, and ministering in Meetings for Worship. Quaker Faith and Practice contains some gems of advice, for example:

*On market economics:* "We are now required to critically assess the capital driven market economy and identify it as a false religion, a fabulously productive but ultimately destructive system bringing closure on God's goodness in creation and bringing a creeping atheism to the soul..."(25.14) "Challenging market economics...is to join a spiritual struggle...."(25.14)

*On equality:* "Peace stands on a precarious footing so long as there is unrelieved poverty and subjection. This situation demands sweeping political and economic changes." (24.50) "The personal responsibility which we hand over to governments, trade unions, committees and churches has failed to banish world poverty." (24.52) "Our

bank interest rates link us to the debt burdens which are forcing many countries to destroy their environment to produce cash crops and foreign currency."(25.11)

*On company structures:* "Scott Bader [synthetic resin and polymer manufacturing company in Wollaston, Northamptonshire] was founded in 1920 and organised along orthodox lines of corporate

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### *From Quaker Faith and Practice*

Love is the will to nurture life and growth in oneself and in another... Love is personal; it is the sacred trust of living things. Likewise, love is neither need nor dependency. 'I need you' is not the same as 'I love you'. Need as the basis of a relationship may lead one person to suffocate another through demands. Need may drive me to manipulate, intimidate, or coerce you into fulfilling me.

Love is so vastly different! It is freeing; it acknowledges the separateness of the beloved. It treasures the unique otherness of the beloved that is each one's contribution to the relationship. Love calls for submission and sacrifice. It does not seek to possess, but rather to empty itself in nurture of the loved one.

**QF&P 22.42 Donald A Green, 1982**

**Deadline for contributions to the March 2009 issue: noon, Friday 20 February**

*Contributions, of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated, preferably by email: [oxfordpm@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:oxfordpm@yahoo.co.uk). Paper copy can be left in the 43 pigeonhole at Oxford Meeting House. For information: tel. 01865 557373.*

authority. During the 1940s he and his family decided to re-organise his firm upon stewardship principles. In 1951 he and his co-founders gave 90% of their shares to the Scott Bader Commonwealth, a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity, inviting employees to become members; in 1963 they gave the remaining 10% of their shares to the Commonwealth." (23.57)

*On work:* "The ultimate criteria in the organisation of work should be human dignity and service to others instead of solely economic performance... mutual."(23.57); "Unemployment not only results in a lowering of living standards, it also induces a feeling of insecurity, of being unwanted, that we no longer have a place in the community. Any economic system which possesses an inbuilt tendency to reduce human involvement in its day-to-day engagements is both unnatural and unkind."(23.67)

An ad hoc Friday with Friends on 30 January is discussing "What would Quakers recommend for a robust financial/economic system in the future?" There will be a separate discussion group in February to look at practical ideas for how we should respond individually and as a Meeting to the financial crisis.



**Fiona Mullins and Alan Allport**

### *Creature*

Creatorgod  
Axle of the spinning world.  
This carousel of chaos  
And fields of flame.

O breaker down of doors  
That cannot be gone through.  
Praisemaker.  
How could I not praise you?

**MJG**

## **Introducing Members and Attenders of Oxford Meeting**



**Catherine Walton,**  
talking to  
Tanya Garland

I was born in London 80 years ago, to Quaker parents originally from Yorkshire. My father's family were Quaker since very early days —

17<sup>th</sup> century. Historically, Quakers did not throw anything away so we had lots of old papers; marriage certificates from when Quaker marriages were illegal, deeds of apprenticeship and property deeds — but now I think I am the last of the line. My father was a staunch pacifist. He spent two years in jail during the First World War and was teetotal. My older sister, still jealous of me, despised me and constantly put me down, contributing to my inferiority complex. My younger brother and I were very close, almost like twins. We lived in the Cambridgeshire village of Duxford and went to the Friends School at Saffron Walden. Later we moved to the progressive St. Christopher's School in Letchworth, where the Head was a Quaker friend of my father's from prison. I boarded for four years, then left early at 16, and went first to France and then to Denmark as an au pair. My brother (16) committed suicide ten days after I arrived in Denmark. The whole family was devastated. We had no idea why. He drank cyanide at school. It was the worst thing that has ever happened to me. My parents persuaded me to stay in Denmark, saying there was no point in me coming back. They left the family home and moved to the coast, so when I did come home it was to a new house, new area and a new situation altogether. My parents were pretty tough Yorkshire people and were coping, but I couldn't even cry properly. I went to college, learnt typing and shorthand, and got a job at the Trade's Union Conference in London. We shared the building with the Labour Party in the late 1940s and '50s, and it felt as if I were really in the midst of things. I played table tennis with Denis Healey and mingled with lots of interesting and well-known people of that time. I was frightfully left wing and flirted with the Young Communist Party. I met my husband John Walton, who was Press Officer for the TUC and we married in 1952. In '56 I had Caroline and stayed home to bring up the family. My father died just before Tim was born in 1959 and some years

later, my mother, suffering from cancer, killed herself.

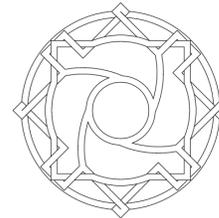
As the children grew up, I had time to do all sorts of things: voluntary social work, meals-on-wheels, I learnt to paint, did O- & A-levels and an Art foundation course. I got involved with Quakers again, joined Uxbridge Meeting and was an Overseer. As John was not a Quaker I thought of myself as a semi-detached Quaker. He called himself a Humanist or Pagan, but was happy to have a Quaker wedding and liked the idea of us marrying ourselves. He was a good man but a heavy drinker. It was always a problem in our marriage and I realise now he was alcoholic — a weakness in his family. After she had got help from the AA, our daughter told me she was also an alcoholic. She now runs AA groups herself. They were clever kids. Tim read Philosophy at Oxford, got a good job and married a lovely Italian girl. Their son Ivan is now 11. Caroline studied PPE at LSE, travelled, lived in Russia, learnt Russian and has written books on Russia. She is now happily married to a Ukrainian. I had banished any belief in God from my life after my teens, but it came back to me when I started a family. I followed a spiritual exercise called Subud, and for five years I went twice a week to a farmhouse where we sat still, shut our eyes, sang, danced, moved around the room and did whatever came in complete freedom. One felt absolutely marvellous afterwards and renewed.

When John retired, I suggested we start afresh and we moved to a little village near Banbury. You could walk out the back, up a hill with cows and country space. John stopped drinking without the pressure of work and we had ten happy years there. My painting developed to using fabric and I did creative embroidery. I also got involved in Banbury Meeting, was an Elder and got to know lots of people. But the village was dying. The school closed, there wasn't a shop or any doctor, and when John's health started to deteriorate we moved to Oxford where John was diagnosed with a condition connected to Parkinson's. It affected his mood and, frankly, the following six years were hellish. He was a heavy man and it was a full-time job for me until he died.

Two and a half years ago I moved to Wheatley. I like the peace of being on my own. I've done lots of demos in my time, with CND and Greenham Common, and taken classes at Ewert House in Geology, poetry, & Eng. Lit, but now I find doing one thing a day is enough. I do virtually nothing in the evenings. I still go to Meeting but declined being an Elder or Overseer – it feels a bit much for

me now. I ran a 'Hearts and Minds' course and worked in the bookshop at 42 for some years. I do believe you don't necessarily have to go out and be active, but when I look around and see what other people have done, I feel I should have achieved more. I comfort myself with Milton's 'They also serve who only stand and wait', and I do find that things come to you. I think one may serve in little ways one may not be aware of, just by 'being' and having time for people.

One new interest is evolution. I think Buddha, Christ and Muhammad were evolved ahead of their time. I call myself a Christian, but I don't believe Jesus is God or that there is 'God'; but there is this feeling that there is something spiritual outside of us and in us and we are part of it, even though our brains can't understand it yet. I have found that if you need help and guidance and ask for it, it will come. I really do think there is some sort of power you can call upon within ourselves, which doesn't let you down. By now I should have arrived at some conclusion, but I am still travelling – hopefully; and I hope I will one day meet the people who have died again.



## The Poetry of Silence

Working on silence/silences for Quaker Quest, I began to focus on poets who address this topic. A whole anthology of poems about silence could easily be compiled. Is there one already? W.S. Graham (1918-86), a Scotsman who lived and wrote in Cornwall, was very preoccupied with silence as part of the recalcitrance of language and the difficulties of communication. Harold Pinter (another expert in silences) was a great fan of Graham's poetry. Opening an exhibition in Ilkley devoted to Graham in 1994, called 'The Constructed Space', Pinter said: 'he's dealing with such delicate potentials – silence and the other side of language'. One of Graham's poems is also called 'The Constructed Space'. Even though the poem is addressed to one other person, rather than to God or a Meeting, when I read it I cannot keep the constructed space of a Meeting for Worship out of

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my mind, in particular the experience all of us must have at most Meetings for Worship – the experience of suppressed ‘almost-Ministry’ which, unuttered, joins the Quaker silence. Here it is.

### *The Constructed Space*

Meanwhile surely there must be something to say,

Maybe not suitable but at least happy

In a sense here between us two whoever

We are. Anyhow here we are and never

Before have we two faced each other who face

Each other now across this abstract scene

Stretching between us. This is a public place

Achieved against subjective odds and then

Mainly an obstacle to what I mean.

It is like that, remember. It is like that

Very often at the beginning till we are met

By some intention risen up out of nothing.

And even then we know what we are saying

Only when it is said and fixed and dead.

Or maybe, surely, of course we never know

What we have said, what lonely meanings are read

In to the space we make. And yet I say

This silence here for in it I might hear you.

I say this silence or, better, construct this space

So that somehow something may move across

The caught habits of language to you and me.

From where we are it is not us we see

And times are hastening yet, disguise is mortal.

The times continually disclose our home.

Here in the present tense disguise is mortal.

The trying times are hastening. Yet here I am

More truly now this abstract act become.

W.S. Graham

Introduced by **Stephen Yeo**



### **Thank you, Ruth!**

This issue of *Forty-Three* is the first from a new editorial team: Rebecca Howard, Mark Ebdon and Penny Ormerod will now be responsible, along with Dave Dight, for putting together the articles, notices and news of past and future events that make up our monthly newsletter. We hope readers will forgive any glitches while we get used to the process.

Initiation for the new editors took place on a cold Saturday morning in January, in a meeting that lasted over two hours while the previous editor, Ruth Mason, patiently went through the various complex procedures that go into every issue. As the session went on, all three of us began to look at our predecessor with increasing admiration and astonishment. For the past six years, she has been faithfully producing the newsletter. We would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her magnificent contribution to Oxford Meeting, and also for all her support and encouragement to the new editorial team.

Thanks must also go to Clare Pickard and Tasha Alden, who rotated with Ruth as editors until they left Oxford last year. Finally, we would like to thank Deborah Filgate, who has kindly offered to proofread. We look forward to working together and welcome new ideas, articles, poems and