

Quakerism 101

Unit E Living in the Light: Quaker Witness

February 14, 2010

Reading

Brinton Chapter 7

Margarete Hope Bacon, "Quaker Women as Abolitionists", Chapter 7 in *As the Way Opens*.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, *Faith and Practice*, revised 1997, "Concerns, Leadings, and Testimonies" (pp. 65 – 67) and "Living in the World" (pp. 75 – 81).

Background on Readings

Margarete Hope Bacon, a member of Central Philadelphia Meeting, is a author, feminist, and former news director for the American Friends Service Committee. She wrote *The Quiet Rebels: the Story of Quakers in America*. *Valiant Friend*, a biography of Lucretia Mott; and several other books.

Reflection

Please reflect on the following questions as you read and once you have read the reading.

How do you make major decisions in your life? Do you agree with Howard Brinton that, "In seeking guidance regarding a proposed course of action, we find ourselves using four main tests: authority, reason, results and intuitive feeling" (p. 148), but that ultimately, "the test must be trusted" (p.149)?

What checks do Friends have on individual apprehensions of truth?

Have you ever asked a group of people to help you make a major decision? One example would be asking your Meeting to set up a "Clearness Committee" to help you gain inner clarity about whether to undertake an action, such as a career change or a major commitment to work for justice and peace.

How would you feel about asking for your Meeting's guidance in making an important decision?

What is a "concern"? Have you ever felt led to take action in response to a need that you perceived?

With which testimonies do you resonate? Are there any which make you uncomfortable? Why?

How do you understand Friend's testimony of simplicity? Why have Friends adopted this testimony? How is it expressed today? If you are a Meeting Member, how have you sought to express this testimony in your personal life?

In describing the tense relationship that existed between women abolitionists and the Religious Society of Friends as a whole, Margaret Hope Bacon points to tensions that

arise frequently between those on the “cutting edge” of social change and the bulk of the population. Why do you believe these tensions exist? Are such tensions visible in the Society of Friends today? Where?

Write a brief defense of pacifism. How do you compare the risks of a pacifist defense with those of a violent defense?

William Penn said, “A good end can not sanctify a evil means, not must we ever do evil that good may come of it.” Do you agree? Why of why not?

How do you respond to this statement in Philadelphia Yearly Meetings *Faith and Practice*: “The state has no claim to moral infallibility”? (p. 79)

Have you broken the law on grounds of conscience? If so, describe why you acted as you did?