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CONVERSATION AS TESTIMONY: A HUNDRED YEARS OF QUAKER MISSION AND WITNESS

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This thesis is organised in a unique way: it is composed of a series of 'conversations'. It records a process in which the author enlists many voices, Quaker and non-Quaker, in the attempt to reach a more fluid understanding of the Quaker concept of 'mission'. The author weaves the contributions of various thinkers from a range of disciplines into a 'conversation' that addresses the idea of 'mission' in today's world. As the research is conducted in the mode of a 'conversation', she begins with the idea of conversation itself, exploring its nature as a process of participation and exchange, dependent on listening and awareness. The 'conversations' that follow focus on the changing interpretations of Quaker mission over the last 100 years (using the historical story of missionaries to China as an exemplar). The author proposes that these changes stem from the most recent paradigm shifts in modern scientific, social and theological thought, and explores their implications for the interpretation of how to live the Quaker Testimonies ('witness') and communicate their value to others ('mission'). She finds that contemporary challenges call for a wider understanding of the concept of 'mission', through a more open intercultural exchange and a deeper analysis of the relationship between the organisation of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and individual responsibility. Finally, she calls for further conversations to continue the process of discovering how the idea of Quaker mission can be sustained in present-day settings, and raises the question of whether 'mission' today should not be regarded as coterminous with 'Testimony'.

Key words: conversation, mission, missionary, witness, Testimonies, China, intercultural communication, paradigm shifts

Key themes:

The conversational 'network' and its importance to a reciprocal and creative research process

The paradigm shifts in thought and belief that have taken place over the last century

Changing understandings of the Quaker Testimonies, and the 'mission' to 'bear witness' to these in the outside world

Useful for: people with an interest in the historical aspect of Quaker missionary work, the Quaker approach to the world, changes in Quaker thought and its attitude to 'mission'

Introduction

Research as conversation

The author argues that an understanding of the Quaker concept of 'mission' can only be reached through a fluid and open conversational process. She begins, therefore, by exploring the nature of conversation itself: the creativity inherent in the process of exchanging thoughts and ideas renders it the most 'acute' form of communication, as opposed to the fixity of the written word. Although the written word 'can and does transcend space and time' to speak to the reader and 'take them beyond themselves', it cannot be immediately answered or transformed through a reciprocal process. She uses the image of the 'wave/particle slipperiness' of quantum physics (the paradigm shift that transformed the nature of scientific discovery in the 20th century) to convey the way that the 'essential perhaps-ness' of conversation can lead to further, more creative questions. She, therefore, reframes her research as less a thesis and more an 'extended first sentence in a conversation about the Quaker understanding of Testimony'.

The concepts of 'Testimony' and 'mission'

The term 'Quaker Testimony' refers to 'the public witness of actions, beliefs and behaviours that Friends [members of the Quaker community] hold to be consistent with Truth' (Abbott 2003). However, the concept of Testimony has varied over time. The author looks at conversations that have reflected these variations over the last 100 years, from the Manchester Conference of 1895 through to its centenary conference in 1995. In the background of these conversations is the association of Testimony with the Quaker concept of 'mission' – the desire to communicate the Testimonies. In his 1916 Swarthmore Lecture, the missionary Henry Hodgkin described the 'missionary spirit' as the passion to spread or communicate something of value to oneself. Hodgkin's images of 'lighted torches' and 'holy sparks' are echoed in the language of Abbott and Parsons (2004), who refer to 'prophetic ministry' as 'a willingness to be continually transformed'. The author investigates whether such an understanding of mission can survive in today's world.

The organisation of the study

She explores these questions through a series of 'conversations' between those involved in communicating 'something of value', describing her work as an act of 'eavesdropping'. She emphasises that the form of her study precludes a conclusion; instead, it represents an attempt to seek a wider, ongoing dialogue. The ideas arising from these 'conversations' offer prospects for new ways of communicating with those who reject religious language or are embedded in other cultural

traditions. In this respect, the dissertation represents the author's understanding of conversation as Testimony.

First Conversation: What is Conversation?

Overview

In the first conversation the author listens to two groups of speakers: those who propose conversational models for creative co-operation and those who wish to share their understanding of the process of conversation. The first participants describe conversation as a network for the exchange and interpenetration of ideas. One of the aims of this study is to discover whether this type of approach is productive for the exploration of the shifting concept of 'mission'.

Conversation as a network

The Tabers (1992) ground their work in a list of opposing religious positions – for example, an intuitive as opposed to a rationalist approach, or the idea of God as immanent versus that of God as transcendent. They believe that a lack of understanding arises from a rigid 'grasping at the extremes'. Instead, they envisage each contradictory position as part of a complex network, which holds the 'paradoxical extremes' in a state of 'dynamic flux'. The challenge of accepting such a picture lies in the struggle to overcome the craving of the human analytical mind for philosophical certainty; conversation requires that participants accept that their experiences of similar situations or understanding of the same idea will differ. Individuals themselves often hold apparently contradictory ideas – the Jungian explanation is that each person possesses an unconscious 'shadow' side that needs to be acknowledged and integrated into an overall sense of self. Thus, the conversational network embraces a host of paradoxical positions, and the intertwining strands of these conversations connect each to the whole.

The process of conversation

The author turns to the sociological study of the shifting 'discourses' of informal encounters, in which meaning is mutually constructed. This, she believes, opens new paths to those seeking to 'make connections in changing societies'. Jeffs and Smith (1999) show how mutually profitable conversation requires an openness to unexpected responses, allowing space for movement between registers. The author also cites the Quaker philosopher Steere (1955), who describes conversation as

a two-way process of listening. The participants must guard against the temptation to impose their own interpretations. An openness to others' ideas entails being 'present in the current moment' and being 'present for others'. Furthermore, in order to capture the inspirational (or 'spiritual') essence of a conversation the participants must also be open to the 'ever-present inward Speaker/Listener'.

Ways of 'being in the world'

Historically, definitions of conversation have stressed its role as an exemplar of how to conduct oneself in society. According to Oakeshott (1991), there are roughly four different registers of 'being in the world': practical/political activity ('constructing the world according to others'); scientific (descriptive, symbolic, measuring); historical (the attempt to capture and interpret clusters of contingent events); and poetic (an attitude of 'contemplation and delight'). Creative conversation is a meeting place for all four categories. For example, the poetic voice, moving among images, creates occasions for sharing spiritual experience. The historical register, meanwhile, requires an acknowledgement of different worlds and cultures, with their different contingencies, interpretations and perspectives. However, when engrossed by the voices of activity and scientific rigour (although, the author emphasises that true scientific enquiry is not didactic but conversable), conversation often loses the essential insights of historical relationality and poetic imagination.

Conversation and relationship

The bioethicist Scully (2002) speaks of 'playing with ideas' in order to determine the relationship between them. This play of conversation, at its best, represents a relationship with others that is creative and dynamic. However, as Zohar (1991, 2000) points out, this cannot be achieved when circumscribed definitions restrict the power of metaphor. The author relates these ideas to Quakerism. She takes as an example of Zohar's comment on metaphorical openness, the Quaker notion of the 'Light', which has no exact definition. Equally congruent with the Quaker idea of worship is the fact that creative conversations include silences, which provide the soil in which new ideas can develop. Fear of silence leads to the impulse to clarify the metaphorical content of conversation, denying an opening to inspiration. Abbott (1997) speaks of 'listening through' preconceived notions, and learning to accept the resulting sense of disorientation. Although the author argues that the Quaker rejection of credal authority and set interpretations of the divine allows for shared intention to produce a truer form of communication (with others and with the divine), they have to continually struggle against a tendency to slip into using 'accepted' phrases that contain their own specific resonances. Steere (1971) believes a deeper understanding of how to live the Testimonies can be reached through the 'experiential sharing' that ideally takes place in inter-

faith conversations. He describes this process as one of 'mutual irradiation'. Taking into account different voices helps guard against a belief in the primacy of any one mode of knowing. As Oakeshott says, 'certainties are shown to be combustible ... in the presence of other ideas and responses'. In her conversations on the Testimonies, the author seeks 'complementary partners', who reflect the different modes in which individuals experience 'being in the world'. Throughout her study, therefore, she presents a diversity of voices that are not assimilated into a single understanding, but exist in oblique relationship with one another – as in a network.

Second Conversation: Changing Conceptions of Mission

Overview

The following conversation concerns the way the interpretation of 'mission' has changed over time. It opens with an overview of early Quaker experiences in Western China, exploring the ways in which people from different backgrounds and cultures have transformed the character of intercultural communication and the concept of mission. It continues by listening to those who argue for ways of acting out mission more fitted to the changing times.

Historical introduction

The Quaker missionary endeavour was established in South West China well before the first Manchester Conference – by 1895 the Friends Foreign Mission Association (FFMA) had its own 'fields' in India, Madagascar and China. These early Quaker missionaries were plainly 'convinced' of the Truth on a deep personal level, and 'moved' by the missionary spirit. The challenge they faced was how to reconcile this with the unpredictable contingencies of everyday life and their problematic interactions with others – relationships with missionaries from other faiths, with the organisation at home and, particularly, with the Chinese themselves were fraught with tensions and misunderstandings. Many of the Chinese who came into contact with foreign missionaries were taken aback by their presumption. The zeal to convert was antithetical to their traditions of morality and propriety – one is quoted by the missionary Robert Davidson in 1905 as saying, 'each country has its own religion; you have yours, we have ours, it is all as one'. In order to bridge the gap of cultural perception, Davidson set up the International Friends' Institute in 1908. This offered lectures and informal discussions as a way of linking the foreigners with Chinese merchants, officials and

members of the intelligentsia. Its success lay in the bonds formed through exploring mutual interests and seeking to find a common language with which to share them.

Rufus Jones: 'building bridges'

Between the two world wars the China mission appeared to be flourishing. However, the political and social unrest following the fall of Sun Yat Sen in 1926 uncovered the Chinese deep-seated suspicion of foreigners. American Quaker Rufus Jones was only too aware of the reasons behind this resentment. Jones, who was instrumental in 're-visioning' Quaker thought at the beginning of the 20th century, wrote of his sadness at the prevailing missionary attitude. He believed the missionary purpose was to provide spiritual help for Chinese people to 'build their own faith in conformity with own religious genius'. The reasons that young Chinese scholars, enamoured of the advances of modern science, gave for their aversion to religion resonated with Jones's own stand against hide-bound resistance to modern scientific thought (a stance which had drawn him towards the young liberals after the 1895 Manchester Conference). Jones's influence can be seen in a 1928 paper to the International Missionary Council in Jerusalem, in which he spoke of God as 'a fresh and living interpretation of vertical truth through society and history'. He was later asked to work with a commission of enquiry (comprising representatives from six denominations) to appraise the missionary situation in India, Burma, China and Japan. Its report, however, incurred trenchant criticism, particularly over its recommendation that governance and finances should be handed over to the indigenous churches – a recommendation that was perceived as a threat to the status of the whole missionary apparatus.

Paradigm shifts in the concept of mission

The missionaries' subsequent expulsion from China by the Communist government was pronounced by Paton (1953) to be the 'judgement of God': he deplored the missionaries assumption of cultural superiority, their lack of political awareness and inflexible way of life, their arrogance in church government, and the narrow, insensitive theology they espoused. He believed that 'faith never acquired truly Chinese experience'. Bosch (1999), half a century later, endorsed this view, and called for a fundamental reform of thinking in both mission and theology, using Kuhn's (1970) notion of 'paradigm shifts' as a framework. The transfer from one paradigm to another brings with it disruption and fear of change – hence, the need for flexibility and a new language with which to express new conceptions. Bosch believed that 'church' and 'mission' could no longer be viewed as separate – the whole body of the Church, not just a few specialists, should take on the responsibility for mission. (In this, he reflected the Quaker approach.) A thematic thread runs through the work of

Bosch and Paton – the need to be open to the shock of new situations and to learn to live through the paradigm shifts in thought and perception that reflect changes in the wider world. The author takes Rufus Jones as an exemplar of how to live through the turbulence of change supported by the power of inward conviction.

Third Conversation: New Challenges in a Changed World

Overview

The third conversation looks at how the changing world has influenced Quakers in their attempts to live their faith, using the two Manchester conferences (see Introduction) as a starting point. Both conferences reflected the impact of the paradigm shifts that transformed scientific and religious thought in their respective times.

The Manchester conferences

The impulse for the 1895 Manchester Conference was an unease that the Quakers were out of step with the new ideas infusing the world, such as those of Charles Darwin and William James. (The desire to spread the inspiration of these new modes of thought lay behind the establishment of the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham.) The centenary conference did not produce such distinct changes as the first, but it also took place against a background of global transformations, including the rapid expansion of information technology. The whole pace of change was new, contributing to a general sense of confusion and isolation in the face of a world marked by war, hunger, disease and the vast movements of populations. The most common response was to either retreat inward or to attempt to understand and confront the situation. The author believes there is also a third way, a combination of the two. In her search to discover this, and to apply it to the idea of 'Testimony,' she listens to a group of thinkers who examine the changing approaches to science, to the place of faith communities, and to perceptions of the divine.

Changing approaches to science

Zohar's (1991) thinking is grounded in the 'new physics': 'the quantum world view stresses dynamic relationship as the basis of all there is'. She contends that human beings today are imprisoned within a narrow, rational view of the self – a product of serial thinking – that breaks down if the 'goalposts' move. By contrast, flexible 'associative thinking', led by emotion and feeling, is

characterised 'less by neural tracts as by neural networks', which operate by 'trial and error' and can therefore re-learn ways of apprehending the world. Capra (1982), similarly, believes the essential nature of things appears absurd or paradoxical when analysed by the intellect. His concern lies with the different symbols used to describe the world, which signify the myriad of perspectives arising from specific cultural environments and religious traditions. The most productive developments arise at the points where such different lines of thought meet. Zohar describes this as an interaction between intuition and rational thinking, which she terms 'unitive thinking' or 'spiritual intelligence' – a blend of modern Western psychology, Eastern philosophy and 20th century science. However, both Wilbur (1984) and Ellis (2004) warn that the idea that the 'new physics' is compatible with a larger mystical worldview does not demolish the boundaries between them. They have their distinct domains of experience and study; each is concerned with aspects of the final, unknown reality. As the Tabers show (see the First Conversation), the inherent tension between these approaches, and their oblique relationship to each other, is a necessary part of the whole.

Faith communities in a changing world

Ward's (2002) model of the 'liquid church' (based on Zigmunt Bauman's (2000) idea of 'liquid modernity') views the church as a verb not a noun (that is, not as a concrete entity but 'a partial expression of an all-encompassing process'). As the certainties of the old social structures and sources of identity have been eroded, consumption has moved to the foreground, and with it the uncertainty of choice, including choice of identity and life-style. Ward believes the church can only reach out (act out its mission) if it recognises itself as part of this 'turbulent sea', accepting the present culture in which it is embedded. The challenge for the 'liquid church' is how it should relate to the culture without losing its 'theological heart'. This he locates in commitment to a community rooted in religious orthodoxy – in whatever form it is embodied. Sacks (2002) (Britain's Chief Rabbi), however, argues that when the speed of change outstrips individuals' ability to change, and events move faster than their understanding, they are thrown into conditions of 'maximum uncertainty'. He sees the need for a few 'relatively simple' moral principles to act as 'compass bearings', based on the 'religious absolutes' of the 'sanctity of human life and the inalienable freedoms of a just society'. Solidarity, he contends, comes not from uniformity but from difference – acknowledging and respecting individual dignity. However, as each person has to make their way in a 'society of strangers', smaller faith communities, where 'habits of cooperation depend on the existence of long-term relationships', is the way to sustain these principles.

Changes in the understanding of the divine

Kaufman (1993) draws on the insights of evolutionary theory and the 'serendipity of history' as it is embodied in culture in different times and places to explain the 'myriad of imaginative constructions' that attempt to express 'the sense of the mystery of life'. Different imaginings can emerge as different 'theologies' or embodiments of faith, but it is 'presumptuous' to believe that anyone can lay claim to special understanding of the nature of life. The most fitting means to share diverse understandings is through 'free-flowing, open and unfettered conversation'. Hick (1999) also believes human beings have an inherent tendency to experience the natural in terms of the 'supra-natural', and how this is experienced is determined by culture. As the 'real' cannot be defined in terms of our conceptual repertoire, and the language used to capture it will always be suggestive and metaphorical, there is a range of ways of 'pointing' to the 'fifth dimension' through myths, metaphors and mystical insights. All deal with a human sense of 'incompleteness'. The test of religious experience, whatever the tradition, lies in its long-term transformative effect.

Fourth Conversation: Witness in a Globalising World

Overview

The fourth conversation investigates how those attending both Manchester conferences tackled the question of how the Quaker Testimonies relate to the world, and how this evolved into discussions around activism and organisation. The resulting 'conversations' are set in the context of practical peacemaking, which highlights the need to develop wider intercultural skills.

Corporate concern

The 'conversations' concern how individuals who are 'driven' to witness react to the challenges of a globalising world: do they become solitary activists, join in demonstrations or protests, or link into wider networks? For example, Heathfield (1994), speaking before the 1995 Manchester Conference, queries how contemporary Quakers might bridge the gap between individual conviction and effective corporate testimony. She looks at whether it is possible for today's Quakers to develop a 'new kind of concern, a corporate concern', but is concerned that they are 'slipping into the kind of institutional thinking in which personal responsibility is avoided under the cloak of unity'. This frustration appears to parallel that felt by the young liberal Quakers at the first Manchester conference when confronted with the lack of vision they saw as prevalent in the Society. Participants

at the centenary conference highlighted in particular the need for organisational structures which would support 'each Friend to live according their calling'.

Cultural languages and traditions

However, when it comes to the individual living according to their interpretation of the Testimonies) the author notes the first problem to be that of arriving at a definition of 'Testimony' free of specific cultural resonances. Despite the insistence that the Testimonies are not abstract qualities but 'vital principles of life', they can be understood as if they were a rigid set of moral principles. By contrast, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, in the preface to the 'peace testimony', states that they embody a 'seamless expression of the universal spirit of Christ that dwells in the heart of all'. Curle (1981, 1999) echoes this understanding in his insistence on the need to be 'fully awake' to 'that of God' in everyone. This means acknowledging the existence of multiple truths – even the word 'peace' has different emphases in different cultures. The author notes how the variations become more 'sensitive as the circles of communication widen'. Despite the internet, with its introduction of global symbolic languages, values remain embedded in culture. He Guanghu (2005), for example, suggests that Chinese culture emphasises tolerance, harmony and peace, whereas he sees in the West a cultural impetus towards competition and confrontation. Similarly, Lin Yutang in the 1930s spoke of the traditional Chinese respect for intuition, poetic thinking and common sense, and a belief in their primacy over rigidly specialised academic reasoning. The author, therefore, argues there is a need to determine whether there could be a common language that could link an individual's 'primary affirmation' of the Testimonies to a wider cross-cultural experience.

Networks of engagement

Fisher (2004) warns that the impulse to interact with other cultural traditions is constantly counteracted by the currently pervasive view of the world as an arena of conflicting interests. Curle (1999) also refers to a 'globalising spirit', which he describes as a 'hydra' of greed, ignorance, fear and the 'misdirected pursuit of happiness' (in many ways, analogous to the concept of the 'liquid society' referred to in the Third Conversation). However, both Curle and Fisher believe that the energy of this spirit can be used to interrupt its direction and transform its outcome. Thus, conversations in this context contain a more radical intent: they must embrace both respect and contradiction, and even confrontation, if they are to lead to real relationships. Curle calls for training in how to act autonomously and consciously, re-examining automatic habits and preconceptions. The author comments that awareness depends on information, both contemporary and historical, about people and situations, including specialised knowledge. This implies building links between

separate lobby groups for peace, human rights and the environment, for example, and for Quakers to link their work with that of other faith traditions as part of a productive network. No faith group can rely solely on its own resources; it needs to access the thought and experience of others.

Living the Testimonies

Curle emphasises the importance of participative education ('meeting and talking with others'). He refers to the transformation of each individual, in the presence of a community, in the belief that individual changes can reach a tipping point into wider transformations (a message, the author points out, that was recognised by many early Quakers). Dale (1996) also speaks of the urgency of 'engaging head on' with the individualism of the age, and decries the tendency towards the separation of spiritual life from everyday concerns, declaring that the 'the political and the spiritual are one'. He believes in erasing the division between faith and action: spiritual growth entails consequences for our actions in the world, while these actions are a means of spiritual growth. Their political essence lies in the fact that living the Testimonies acts as a 'countersign' to powerful structures that would deny them. The author ends this conversation with the thought that the practical difficulties of witness point to the need for intense training and networking – that is, drawing together 'individual calling and meaningful support'.

Fifth Conversation: Private Faith and Public Testimony

The fifth conversation recalls some of the themes of the earlier exchanges, seeking to draw together private faith and public testimony. This concern is both practical and spiritual, and focuses attention on the part 'discernment' (of the will of God or the divine) plays in the process.

Witness in the world

The public testimony of Quaker faith is described as bearing 'witness' in the world. 'Witness', the author reminds us, cannot be 'proved' outside of faith. Thus, to renew a sense of its worth and an idea of how to carry it out, the individual must go back to its source in personal faith. Rowlands, in her address to the 1995 Manchester Conference, raised the question of how Quakers bridge the gap between individual conviction, 'the call to prophetic testimony', and effective witness. She calls for more corporate encouragement for individuals to acknowledge and share their needs. In this way, they can renew their covenant with one another and with God. Cronk (1991) believes that to be

effective in the world, the act of 'witnessing' must embrace three different levels: the inward life of worship and discernment, the interior functioning of the faith community, and the outward embodiment of witness in social testimonies. This resonates with the network approach considered in earlier conversations (see Conversation One). In the early 20th century, Rufus Jones (see Chapter Two) emphasised the interplay of the inward and outward levels. Mysticism, he believed, flourishes best in a communal setting, as the heightened receptivity of the group waiting in silence helps the individual attain an experience of God that they would not have access to in isolation. In all three of Cronk's levels of witness, however, the connections can appear evasive. To discern where they arise calls for an understanding of the way different modes of expression speak to different people.

The process of 'discernment'

Thus the author arrives at the question of how these different levels are brought together in such a way that they emerge as Testimony. Loring (1992) believes the key lies in the Quaker concept of 'discernment', which he describes as 'the faculty to distinguish the true movement of the Spirit from the human urge to share'. Discernment informs both the individual's and community's sense of which course of action to pursue in complex situations. It arises out of the act of 'centring' (a process that is carried out in silence as part of a shared experience). The term that is closest to capturing its meaning is 'the sense of the meeting'. This involves the 'expectation that the perceptions of a person truly under divine guidance will be consistent with the perceptions of others who also are ... attuned to divine guidance' (Loring). The Quaker idea of discernment is not equivalent to compromise or consensus, which are products of a purely intellectual process; as Morley (1993) puts it, 'the sense of the meeting is a commitment to faith'. The process is paramount. It contains a threefold injunction: to set aside intellect; to attempt to see the problem as a whole, in context; and to move towards 'transition to the Light' as embodied in the gathered silence of the meeting. The 'sense of the meeting' can only develop through experience and example. The phrase itself, however, provokes controversy. Morley applauds its flexibility – it can open the way to those who are able to experience discernment but do not want an overlay of religious or spiritual language. Punshon (1990), on the other hand, includes in his definition of discernment the fact that it is a 'shared and tested tradition' with a firm spiritual basis. For him, the process of 'living the truth' and embodying the Testimonies entails that the spiritual and the worldly are inescapably linked. He accepts that there will always be tensions, but contends that discernment provides a perspective with which to reach beyond these, and this perspective is anchored in a commitment to religious values. After listening to these conversations, the author concurs that Quakers should 'trust their tested paths through discernment and the sense of the meeting'.

Final Recapitulation of Themes

The author notes that summarising entails editing, and this is not a process suited to the conversational mode. Instead, she draws out certain consistent themes in order to provoke 'further conversation on the nature of Testimony'. She starts with the theme of conversation itself, which focuses attention on interaction with others. At its best, conversation is a creative interchange, comprising many traditions and cultures, voices and modes of expression. It demands that those engaged in conversation relearn how to listen. This relates to another persistent theme: despite their deep compulsion to share their spiritual experience with others, many Quakers appear to have abandoned the idea of 'mission'. This raises the question of whether its place could be filled by a more inclusive understanding of the Testimonies. Thus, a further theme emerges – that of the rapidly changing world, and the accompanying paradigm shifts in different areas of thought, knowledge and perception. The speed of transformation and the diversity of the modern world call for new understandings and the acquisition of new interpersonal skills. This raises the question of what sort of structures can best offer the 'flexible resources and personalised support' that is needed to 'bear witness' or to 'live the Testimonies' in today's world. This returns the conversation to the central nub of the question. The author contends there can never be a full definition of 'Testimony' but only an approximation, but at the heart of what it means to Quakers is 'a shared rootedness, in as much of the "truth" as we can find in our deepest conversation'. Quaker conversation ideally acknowledges the constant circulation from centre to individual to others, and from 'groundedness to action', whether this takes place in an encounter with the community or in an encounter between cultures. She ends by declaring that each person is responsible for keeping this conversation alive.

Summary prepared by Fran Cetti (2012)