

A Selection of Readings with Annotations

by Parker Glynn-Adey

All the books and pamphlets listed below are available in full at:

<http://ctrl-c.club/~pgadey/quaker.html>

The following annotations try to contextualize each piece a little bit. Everything listed was written in the twentieth century and the theme is trying to understand modern Quakerism.

[The Religious Society of Friends \(Quakers\): An Introduction](#)

An introduction to Quakerism in Canada as written by Margaret Springer of Waterloo, ON, and printed by [Argenta](#) Friends School Press, BC (1978)

This was written during the "Golden Days of Canadian Quakerism". It was written outside a booming technical/applied university surrounded by Mennonite people, and printed at something like Quaker commune on the West Coast. At this time, large numbers of young families were bringing their children to Toronto Monthly Meeting, and there was a functional community of activists. It is the ideal introduction to "Canadian Quakerism".

[A Zen Buddhist Encounters Quakerism](#)

Written essay form of a forum discussion at Swarthmore by Teruyasa Tamura (1990)

This was written by a native Japanese from a town where a famous Zen monk had lived in the early nineteenth century. The pamphlet above was written after studying influence of Quakerism on American Literature. The pamphlet seems to me to be the most deeply rooted Buddhist discussion of Buddhism and Quakerism. It shows how both can enrich each other.

[Quaker Worship](#)

Notes made for a Woodbrooke course by Gladys Wilson (1952)

A deeply humble and considerate discussion of the various periods in the history of the evolution of the form of worship practiced by the "people known to the world as Quakers". This book treats a complicated theme. It studies the Quaker form of worship from a view inside of the Christian Church; Wilson converted to Quakerism from Anglicanism. It points out various periods of growth, degeneration, and fermentation in the history of Quaker worship. Sometimes it points out grave mis-directions and flaws in the people who were known as Quakers. It provides the best explanation I've ever read of the metamorphosis from the Pentecostal zanyness of the early Friends to the period of quietism in early North American Quakerism and onward to the twentieth century.

[A Testament of Devotion](#)

A book of essays by Thomas Kelly. (1941)

This is the book that made me love Quakerism. This was my introduction to the practical mysticism of the Society. Kelly's lyrical essays about devotion to the Eternal deeply moved me. This is a very dense text with many themes. It stands out, like the Gospel of John, as both an ideal introduction to Quakerism and a mystical classic.

Note: While scanning this I took the liberty of making Douglas Steere's biographical memoir of Kelly in to an end note.

[Quakerism: A Faith for Ordinary Men](#)

A Swarthmore Lecture by R. Duncan Fairn (1951)

This lecture captures something of post-war British optimism and hard headedness. Its author knows that the world can be dreadful, and that people ought to be decent. It seems to speak about terrible things from experience, and cracks jokes about beach manners. It speaks deeply my condition as a modern city dweller.

[Quakerism: a view from the back benches](#)

A pamphlet-manifesto by young and dissatisfied Americans written in [Pomona](#), NY. (1966)

A deeply critical and humourous pamphlet on the then-and-there contemporary Quakerism of 1960s New York. It was written by busy young youth; the five printing dates correspond closely to the academic calendar.

This book speaks deeply to my present condition, despite being written fifty years ago in another country. It seems to me that the authors were young people, tired of corporate bureaucracy who felt that they needed corporate worship. I could feel the writers straining against a prevailing sense of religious mis-direction in culture and The Society. The authors were Friends among Seekers.

[Friends and the Bible](#)

A very pithy and soft pamphlet by Henry Cadbury (1981)

This pamphlet explains clearly a peculiar perspective on the Bible. Cadbury was a New Testament scholar, with a deep interest in the Bible, but does not bludgeon the reader with this fact. This short tract advocates slowly gaining familiarity with the Bible, while always knowing that it allows for progressive improvement and revelation.