

QUOTES, APHORISMS AND EXCERPTS

I enjoy reading books of quotes, looking up quotes on the internet, and even saving quotes from books I've read.

Quotes are the words of a person written or spoken, but importantly attributable to that person. The first quote I learned by heart, as I suppose many of us did, was, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" This is found in the gospel of John in the New Testament, chapter 3, verse 16. So it's attributed to St John.

An aphorism is sometimes a quote, attributable, sometimes not, but is according to the internet dictionary, "a pithy observation which contains a general truth." Polonius' statement in the play Hamlet, attributed to Shakespeare, "*Brevity is the soul of wit*", is an aphorism that is a quote. "*Haste makes waste*", can't be attributed so is just an aphorism.

One of my favourite quotes, growing up in the 1950's, was this of Charlotte Whitton, the first female mayor of Ottawa, Canada, who said, "*Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult.*"

Sometimes quotes are quite long, maybe several or more paragraphs. The internet dictionary says an 'excerpt' is a short extract from text, music or broadcast. Last March's Mid North Island monthly meeting (a weekend gathering at Pori Pori Homestead near Tauranga) included this from Quaker Faith and Practice in Aotearoa New Zealand, part of 5.19

"...It is unrealistic to think that conflict is something that must be resolved. Every community has its irreconcilable groups. They will never agree. But they can still live together, in love and acceptance. Friends, it is not necessary that we agree. Outward harmony is not required of us. What is necessary is that we love one another."

Clive Packer-Doust(1978)

This quote is part of a longer piece of text which I suspect was an excerpt from an even longer piece of writing. It was chosen on purpose because it reflected the subject of the previous day's workshop on Conflict.

Words splash!

On a Sunday several weeks ago when I was preparing to go to Meeting for Worship and half listening to a church service on the television, I heard the minister talking about words, about the importance, the power, of words. I turned up the TV. He particularly stressed that we needed to take care for the power of words, for good or for ill, when used in groups of people. I can't quote him exactly because I didn't write his words down or record them, but, he said that words affect the culture of the group. Words splash all over!

And if what we say affects the culture of the group hearing it, then surely when people read what we have written the same happens. What we write affects the culture of the group reading it.

Consider this quote from 1649, attributed to Garrard Winstanly, the founder of the True Levellers, "*Was the earth made to preserve a few covetous, proud men to live at ease; or was it made to preserve all her children?*"

Who did those words splash over?

One of the great entertainments for the common people of the 17thC was to gather on a hill or in a hall to hear whichever itinerant preacher had come to their district. The messages the preacher gave were

soon passed around by word of mouth or printed broadsheets.

Levellers were just one of dozens of dissenting religious groups. The Bible was newly, openly available, translated into English. People, unhappy with how the established church transmitted the stories, read the bible and made up their own minds. And they talked about their ideas, and preached, and shared their words. Surely those words affected the culture of the groups of people receiving them.

Another of the dissenting groups was the Seekers, who were soon renamed becoming Quakers. We know the story of being renamed because those words were preserved and the story retold time after time.

Over three centuries Quakers have talked and written and shared their thoughts— their powerful words. Quaker culture has changed in many ways over those three centuries, but the basics of our beliefs have remained remarkable steady largely due to our preserving what seems to be the best of our thoughts.

Most Yearly Meetings gather up and print these accounts and testimonies in books of faith and practice, and books clearly outlining the practice of how meetings are organised and run, and books containing both the questions we can ask ourselves to guide our individual and group life choices and some suggested actions. These excerpts of writings and thoughts of Quakers over the centuries give each new generation words to consider— words of joy, of explanation, of considered thought on public questions, of commiseration, of consolation, of history, of peace and more.

Besides our books of Faith and Practice, Quakers, being great readers, also search for the truth in other publications. One of my favourites is *God of a Hundred Names: Prayers and meditations from many faiths and cultures* collected and arranged by Barbara Greene and Victor Gollancz. This is an older book published in 1962. I met it first in the library at the Quaker settlement and eventually found a second hand copy to purchase.

This is a favourite quotation from that book;

“Dance, my heart! Dance to-day with joy.

*The strains of love fill the days and nights with music,
and the world is listening to its melodies:*

*Mad with joy, life and death dance to the rhythm of this
music. The hills and the sea and the earth dance. The
world of man dances with laughter and tears.*

*Why put on the robe of the monk, and live aloof from the
world in lonely pride?*

*Behold! My heart danceth in the delight of a hundred arts;
and the Creator is well pleased.”* Kabir 15th century

(Kabir, the weaver mystic of Northern India, is claimed by both Hindus and Muslims. The translation is by Tagore.)

Many Friends own and read Faith and Practice books from other Yearly Meetings such as Britain, Canada, the numerous American YMs, and Australia YM whose Faith and Practice is called *This we can Say*.

Quaker Faith and Practice in Aotearoa New Zealand was published in 2003. It brought together history and Quaker thought in Aotearoa from the time of the first Quaker settler in 1836 to its publishing date.

Currently a working group of New Zealand Friends is leading the search to find and bring together more information and wisdom from the earliest Quaker contact to the present in order to produce a revised Faith and Practice for Aotearoa. Your help and ideas would be most welcome. Any quotes must include the name of the writer, the publication it comes from, and the date of publication.

Email Faith-practice@quaker.org.nz

Yours in friendship

Carril Karr

The Wider Quaker Fellowship is an association of persons of diverse backgrounds who wish to have ties with the Religious Society of Friends without necessarily being in its membership, or who, through isolation, illness or some other circumstance are unable to attend Meeting for Worship. The purpose of the Fellowship is to reflect Quaker life and thought.

Any person who finds the fundamental Quaker testimonies and the Quaker way of life, with its emphasis on sincerity and simplicity, compatible with his or her philosophy of life is welcome to join the Fellowship.

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Kiwi bank has stopped accepting cheques if you don't do internet banking you will need to deposit any donation directly into the YM account at a Kiwibank branch.



Dear Friends

I haven't mentioned any upcoming Quaker activities because plans may well be changing as a result of the lockdown.

Take care.

In peace

Carril