

ANOTHER CHALLENGE

Noll's failure to deal with the gendered aspects of his "scandal" (even in a footnote or in an introductory qualifier) has alienated not a few Christian women in the academy. Since it's clear Noll wants all the help he can get in rebuilding the evangelical mind, it is regrettable that in his book he has largely treated half his constituency as if they did not exist. But since he also clearly has another book to write about the actual shape (as opposed to the absence) of the evangelical mind, then he also has the opportunity to plumb the depths of Schuster's and Van Dyne's Stages Four through Six. Let us hope that he takes up the challenge.

Notes

1. Elaine Storkey, "The Hidden History of Women in the Church." Lecture given at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI, March 12, 1991.
2. Marilyn R. Schuster and Susan R. Van Dyne (eds.), Women's Place in the Academy: Transforming the Liberal Arts Curriculum (Rowman and Allenheld, 1985), ch. 2, "Stages of Curriculum Transformation," pp. 13-29.
3. Schuster and Van Dyne, Op.Cit., "Stages of Curriculum Transformation," pp. 18, 19.
4. Ibid., pp. 18, 19.
5. Ibid., p. 20 (my emphases).
6. See for example Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Women's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978); Barbara Leslie Epstein, The Politics of Domesticity (Middlebury, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1984); Janette Hassey, No Time for Silence: Evangelical Women in Public Ministry Around the Turn of the Century (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986); Betty DeBerg, Ungodly Women (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992); Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to Present (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).
7. See for example Carol J. Greenhouse, Praying for Justice: Faith, Order, and Community in an American Town (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986).
8. See for example Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge, Professing Feminism: Cautionary Tales from Inside the Strange World of Women's Studies (New York: New Republic/Basic Books, 1994).

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MARGARET FELL (1614-1702): A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF THE MOTHER OF QUAKERISM

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Margaret Fell, known to many as the "Mother of Quakerism," is arguably one of the most fascinating figures in Western religious history. Though frequently overlooked by historians, Margaret Fell played a germinal role in the development of the Friends (Quaker) movement, and her life presents a compelling picture of the power of faith and the cost of discipleship. From her position as an educated woman of power and social standing in Cromwell's England, Fell was able to defend and nurture Quaker founder George Fox and his followers, many of whom endured persecution or death as the movement grew. In addition to bringing organization and stability to the early Friends movement, she was also an able biblical exegete who authored sixteen books on Quaker distinctives such as pacifism, the role of women in the Church, and eschatology. Fearless in defense of her beloved fellow Quakers, Margaret Fell endured dungeons, met with Kings, and ultimately sacrificed all that she owned for her faith.

Margaret was born in 1614 into the landed Askew family in Lancashire, England. Educated in keeping with her privileged social status, Margaret inherited both money and property at her father's death. In 1632 she married barrister Thomas Fell, a puritan destined for a judgeship and service in Parliament under Cromwell. The couple soon took up residence in the Fell family estate at Swarthmoor Hall; Margaret gave birth to nine children, eight of whom survived into adulthood. It was also there that in 1652 Margaret Fell met George Fox, a powerful preacher with a remarkable command of Scripture. Under his teaching, Margaret experienced a strong spiritual conviction regarding the polite, ineffectual Christianity that she saw about her. Describing this experience, Fell wrote that the words of George Fox

opened me so, that it cut me to the heart; and then I saw clearly that we were all wrong. So I sat down in my pew again, and cried bitterly; and I cried in my spirit to the Lord, 'We are all thieves; we are all thieves; we have taken the Scriptures in words and know nothing of them in ourselves.'

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This dramatic encounter filled Margaret Fell with a passionate faith and a new spiritual direction. She took the message first to her own family, where George Fox's call to spiritual renewal soon touched the entire Fell household. Seven of the Fell children and many of their servants quickly joined the Quakers. More importantly, Margaret's husband Thomas, by now an Assize Court judge, became an invaluable defender of Quaker liberties until his death in 1658. Thus from the point of what she called her "convincement" by George Fox, Margaret Fell and Swarthmoor Hall became central to the growth and development of the Friends movement. From there Fell held regular (though illegal) worship meetings, organized support for imprisoned Quakers and families, circulated epistles on matters of concern, and confronted authorities across England on behalf of Quakers persecuted for their religious practices.

During this time Margaret Fell also began her activities as a writer on behalf of the Friends movement. She proved to be a capable apologist for the movement, eventually writing sixteen books, four of which were translated into Dutch, two into Hebrew, and one into Latin. The year 1660 saw the publication of Fell's *A Declaration and an Information*, the first formal publication of the Quaker position in support of pacifism. In the same year Fell traveled to London where she met with Charles II to plead the cause of Quakerism and secure the release of George Fox from Lancaster prison. Her visit was to some measure successful, and Fox was soon released. However, Fell's bold activities were drawing an increasing amount of resistance from authorities, instigated in large part by gentry who considered her actions inappropriate for the wealthy widow of a respected judge. As a result of such pressure, both Margaret Fell and George Fox were arrested and imprisoned under the Conventual Act of 1664. During this imprisonment Margaret Fell saw all of her land holdings taken in forfeit to the Crown.

This imprisonment, which was the first of two, also saw publication of Fell's 1667 work, *Womens Speaking Justified*. This work, which sets forth a powerful argument for women's unrestricted right to preach, was the first such work ever published in English. Interestingly, the book was not directed at Quakers but was written in support of Fox's own teaching that the spirit of Christ dwells in both men and women, and therefore may speak through a person of either gender. Upon her release from Lancaster Prison in 1668 Margaret Fell worked for the establishment of "Women's Meetings" as a counterpart to the Men's Meetings already in existence. These Women's Meetings, which had the full support of George Fox, were extremely important to the development of Quaker ritual

and practice. Here Fell and other Quaker women met to decide questions regarding marriage, the support of orphans and the elderly, the employment and apprenticeship of young women Friends, and various other issues, in terms favorable to women's leadership.

As Fell continued to work closely with George Fox, the two came under increasing pressure from Quakers to marry in order to avoid the appearance of scandal. This they did on October 27, 1669, and though they were frequently separated due to missionary journeys and imprisonment, their long years of friendship proved an amiable basis for marriage. Both Fell and Fox lived to see James II issue a Royal Warrant and general pardon in 1686. This was followed in 1687 by the 'Declaration of Indulgence for all Nonconformists,' which brought new stability to England's religious and political climate. Fox died in 1691, and Margaret Fell, ten years his senior, died nearly ten years later in April of 1702. In Margaret Fell, the Friends movement had found an able champion whose determination and leadership left an indelible mark upon Quaker history. In the example of her life, history gained another testimony to the power of God unleashed in the life of a woman of faith.

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