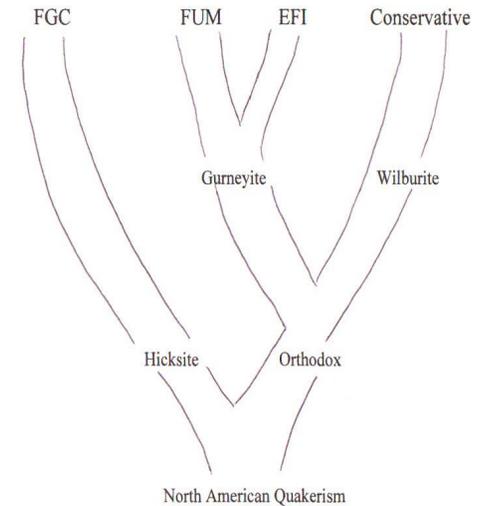


IYM Quakers

Session Six

The Quaker Family Tree



The Quaker Family Tree

- *Elias Hicks and the Hicksites*
- *Joseph John Gurney and the Gurneyites*
- *John Wilbur and the Wilburites*

Elias Hicks and the Hicksites		
--	--	--

The three largest groupings of Friends in America are Friends United Meeting (FUM), Friends General Conference (FGC) and Evangelical Friends International (EFI). Each of these groupings of Friends have their own personalities, in some part reflecting the personalities and thought of prominent 19th century Quakers.

Elias Hicks (1748-1830) was a Long Island farmer and a traveling Friends minister. He was a powerful preacher who related especially well to rural farmers – he was one of them! In the later years of his life he became especially alarmed by doctrinal intolerance and earnestly contended for freedom to follow the Inward Light and believe only what Truth reveals.

Hicks' teaching was in sharp contrast to the emerging evangelical movement in America with its emphasis on the necessity of doctrinal orthodoxy and a personal salvation experience. This and other factors laid the foundation for a deep division among American Quakers. A deep schism was created between those Friends embracing historic orthodox Christian theology and those drawn to the less intolerant approach espoused by Hicks. "Hicksite Friends" and "Orthodox Friends" were the two branches of this initial split in the Society of Friends.

Today Hicksite Friends tend to find their home in Friends General Conference where a traditional Quaker worship style and theological tolerance are prized.

Joseph John Gurney and The Gurneyites		
--	--	--

Joseph John Gurney (1788-1847) was an English Friend who traveled widely in ministry including three years spent visiting and speaking in the United States. Historian Elbert Russell describes him as one who did more to shape modern Quakerism than any other single person.

Indiana Yearly Meeting was one of the stops on his visit to America where he found a crowd of about 3,000 in the Richmond meetinghouse and a similar number outside who could not fit into the building. Gurney's version of Quakerism was in stark contrast to the strict traditions of Friends in the previous century. He followed customs of Friends that seemed valid, but willingly discarded traditions that seemed to hinder effectively relating to the times. He was willing to associate with Christians of other denominations and was at times criticized for depending on the Bible too much.

Gurney left a huge mark on the Orthodox branch of the Friends church which includes Indiana Yearly Meeting. IYM Quakers are "Orthodox Gurneyites!" Both Friends United Meeting and Evangelical Friends International originated from this branch in the Quaker family tree.



John Wilbur and the Wilburites		
---	--	--

Not everyone welcomed the influence of Gurney. John Wilbur, a minister of New England Yearly Meeting, energetically opposed the methods of Gurney, considering both his teaching and conduct to be “un-Friendly.”

A number of Quakers, sharing the concerns of John Wilbur, have maintained to this day a form of Quakerism that carefully avoids any apparent compromise of the traditional Friends way of life and worship. Known as “Conservative Friends” or “Wilburites,” these Friends embrace the unprogrammed worship style and are skeptical of leadership styles or methods that they would describe as “creaturely activity.”

Wilburite Friends share some common ground with the larger groups of American Quakers. They are similar to FUM and EFI Quakers in that they have come from the “Orthodox” branch of Friends. They find many similarities with FGC Quakers who, like the Wilburites, have eschewed the pastoral system and embraced an unprogrammed manner of worship.

Conclusion

So what does 21st century Quakerism look like? There is a significant diversity among Friends as a whole. Indiana Yearly Meeting, a member of Friends United Meeting, has largely embraced the Orthodox Gurneyite approach to living out our Quaker faith.

The Quaker Family Tree		
-------------------------------	--	--

Mark 7:5-13

The scripture in Mark 7 is a challenging one. In it Jesus confronts religious leaders who were valuing their traditions over the commands of God. Friends need to pay heed to these words, for we too have a rich tradition that can easily be valued more highly than the Word of God.

Most Quaker historians divide Friends history into three segments. The first period, beginning with the ministry of George Fox until the time of his death (1647-1691), comprises the rise and rapid growth of this spiritual movement.

The following decades (1691-1827) are often referred to as “The Age of Quietism.” While this period included the pioneering of notable causes such as opposition to slavery and defending American Indians, Friends during this era began to lose their original evangelistic fervor. Becoming introspective, strictness and silence were in abundance during this age.

The third period of Friends history (1827- present) has been marked by competing understandings of what it means to be Quaker. As Friends leaders arose with differing visions of Quakerism, division was a result. In this session we will focus on three Quaker personalities who have largely shaped the world of Friends today.