

# Open Library of Humanities

The logo for the Open Library of Humanities, consisting of a stylized black 'O' and 'H' followed by the text "Open Library of Humanities" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

## Editorial

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Editorial from our editor, Rebecca Wynter, and guest editor for this special issue on George Fox, Erica Canela.

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## **The Very Best of Things**

With the turn of season and the shift of political landscape, which will surely bring change to us all, so I open this editorial with a considerably more modest (and, indeed, less harmful) alteration. I have been part of this journal since taking over as Reviews Editor in 2013. You may recall I opened the June 2022 issue of *Quaker Studies* thinking about change then too; at that time, the move from book reviews to Editor, alongside so many other adjustments to the journal. This issue is my final as Editor and as part of the editorial team. Sometimes change, good or ill, is needed to reveal who and what is important, what people and activities need your time, and where you are best placed to affect progressive change. In this quatercentennial year of George Fox's birth, I am reminded that the very best of things might come from turbulent times. We hope in our own small way that the contents of this special issue to mark the Fox 400, Guest Edited by Erica Canela, will make the very best of reading for you all.

Rebecca Wynter

## **George Fox at 400**

2024 marked the 400th anniversary of the birth of George Fox. Born July 1624 in the small village of Fenny Drayton, England, Fox's life and teachings sparked a movement that continues to inspire individuals and communities around the globe. As we commemorate this milestone, it is natural to look backwards and also towards the future. This occasion provides us all with an opportunity to reflect on Fox's enduring legacy and the relevance of his vision in our modern world. For Quaker studies in general, this has been an opportunity to look at the incredible research that has taken place since 1924 and what is to come in the next 100 years.

George Fox lived during a time of profound political, social, and religious upheaval. The British Civil Wars had fractured the nation, and traditional religious authorities were being questioned as never before. Amid this chaos, Fox experienced a deep spiritual crisis that led him to reject the hierarchical structures of the established church and seek a direct, unmediated relationship with God. His central message—that “there is that of God in everyone”—challenged the conventions of his time and laid the foundation for a radically egalitarian faith.

Fox's ministry was revolutionary. He preached that individuals could access the Light within themselves without the need for priests, rituals, or dogma. This belief in spiritual equality could extend to social equality, leading future generations of Quakers to advocate for causes that has a significant impact on society: the abolition of slavery, women's rights, prison reform, and pacifism. Fox himself was no stranger to

persecution; he was frequently imprisoned for his beliefs and his refusal to conform to societal norms, yet his resolve never wavered.

Four centuries later, the world is vastly different from the one Fox knew. Yet, the principles he championed remain strikingly relevant. In an era marked by polarisation and inequality, Fox's vision of a community built on mutual respect, simplicity, and peace offers a compelling alternative. His insistence on "speaking truth to power" resonates in contemporary struggles for social justice and environmental stewardship.

As we celebrate this anniversary, it is also a moment to consider how Fox's legacy challenges us today. Are we living up to the radical inclusivity and integrity that he espoused? How can we adapt his teachings to address the pressing issues of our time? These questions invite us not only to honour Fox's memory but to actively engage with the transformative potential of his message.

In this issue of *Quaker Studies*, you'll find the 2024 George Richardson Lecture by Nigel Smith examining a literary approach to the study of Fox and the early Quaker movement. As guest editor, I am delighted that Rosemary Moore, Stephen W. Angell, Andrew Fincham, and Rhiannon Grant have contributed their scholarship to this issue. In my usual role for *Quaker Studies*, I serve as Reviews Editor. I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank each and every person who has taken the time to review books for the journal during my tenure. In this issue, our reviews are all from the Brill Research Perspectives in Quaker Studies.

As noted above, this is Rebecca Wynter's final issue as Editor. Her meticulous editorial style and laser-focused commitment to *Quaker Studies* over the last 11 years will certainly be missed. Rhiannon and I are both incredibly grateful for her service and dedication to the journal.

The 400th anniversary of George Fox's birth is more than a historical marker; it is a call to action. In these tumultuous times, it reminds us that the seeds of change sown by one visionary can grow into a movement that shapes the course of history. As we reflect on Fox's life and the enduring impact of Quakerism, we should also be bold in our research and challenge the status quo. In doing so, we ensure that his legacy continues to illuminate our path forward to the next 100 years.

Erica Canela

Guest Editor

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### **Competing Interests**

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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