

The Quakers and “Clearness”

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“Clearness” and Popular Culture

I don’t know how many of our members have read *The Celestine Prophecy*, by James Redfield. I haven’t read it in decades, but one of the things that I remember about it was that people were trying to get “clear”. **[John Note: I am not a believer or even a fan of the Celestine Prophecy. I read it because a friend wanted someone to discuss it with.]** In *The Celestine Prophecy*, getting clear was about learning about learning how you control yourself and others in stressful situations. Then once you are aware of your behavior, you could begin to understand your relationship to the world.

Did the Quakers “Get Clear”?

Okay, how is a popular, New Age book concept related to the Quakers? Well, the Quakers “got clear” also! In the above issue of “The Hollingsworth Register”, starting on numbered page 97, we read about a speech given by Edward W. Cooch, at the unveiling of the Hollingsworth Memorial at Newark Burial Ground, Brandywine Hundred, Delaware (published in Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine, September 1936). On page 98, third paragraph, Cooch states:

“Henry Hollingsworth, the second child of Valentine, also born in Ireland, came to America a year later than his father. He came on the ship “Lion of Liverpool,” working his way as a redemptioner **[John Note: AKA an “indentured servant”]** to Robert Turner. He was assigned two hundred acres of Valentine’s original grant **[John Note: of one thousand acres]**. After living there five years his heart still longed for Lydia Atkinson, the girl who was waiting for him back in Ireland. In 1688 we find him applying for a certificate from Newark Meeting, showing his **clearness [John Note: John’s emphasis, not bolded in original]**. Armed with this he took the long trip back where he and Lydia were married. The original marriage certificate is in possession of Malcolm R. Gilpin of Elkton.”

What did “clearness” mean to the Quakers?

But what did (and does) “clearness” mean to the Quakers? From [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quakers), members of Quaker meetings ask for guidance on how to respond to a concern or dilemma. These members can be referred to a Clearness Committee. I don’t know that there were Clearness Committees in the 17th Century, but members probably went before elders or leaders of the Meeting. Quakers believe that all people have an “Inner Light” **[John Note: Shout-out to my favorite Star Trek – The Next Generation episode titled “The Inner Light”!]**. The process is to guide the member to find the answer within themselves, rather

than offering outside advice or guidance. This same process is used when someone requests to join a particular Meeting, or seeks marriage.

So you can definitely see that while there are differences between the two concepts of “clearness”, both seem to require the person to look within themselves to find answers to their own questions. The Quakers may have been centuries ahead of *The Celestine Prophecy*!

I hope you enjoyed this article! Take care of yourself, and if you can, someone else. John