

Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Minutes concerning Faith and Genetics

From Canadian Yearly Meeting minutes, 2012:

36. Request from Toronto Monthly Meeting re Biotechnology, Genetics, and Faith: Toronto Monthly Meeting has approved Queries on Faith and Genetics and asks that Canadian Yearly Meeting also approve these so they can be forwarded to the Canadian Council of Churches as an appendix to their curriculum on faith and genetics. Anne Mitchell read the queries and we are asked to ponder these for a day or two before we consider them for approval. We ask Anne and Fred Bass to arrange a discussion with a group of CYM Friends before the queries return to the floor of this meeting.

54. Queries on Faith and Genetics, request from Toronto Monthly Meeting: (refer to minute 36 above) Anne Mitchell reported that several Friends have met since these queries came to the floor of CYM and have made some revisions to the document. We approve this document as follows:

Queries on Faith and Genetics

Quakers believe that “there is that of God in everyone.” And many also believe that this includes the natural world. In the 21st century, as we contemplate the rapid development of biotechnologies and genetics, how should Quakers respond?

During the 1700s Quakers adopted a set of queries as a form of guidance intended to help them direct their thoughts when seeking their way in the world. These queries have been augmented and reworded as time passed and have proved their worth through to the present day. Using the same approach, the following Queries on Faith and Genetics are offered for worship, prayer, discernment, and discussion.

Queries of a General Nature:

1. How does God’s presence in each one of us act as teacher and lead us to act in ways that lead to the betterment of people?
2. The potential to do good in the world and leave it better is present in all of us. As we live out that potential, how can we take into account self interest?
3. What must people of faith do to protect and to maintain hope for the potential good that can come from genetics and technological development?

Queries bearing on Genetics and Technology:

4. What criteria should we use to judge the positive and negative aspects of genetically related technological change?
5. As your congregation (Meeting) studies and prayerfully considers technological change, how do you include its impact on reproduction, on men’s and women’s bodies, their role in families and society, and on those with special needs?

6. How can we evaluate the positive and negative effects of reproductive technologies on the lives of individuals, on families and on society?

7. What are the advantages and disadvantages of particular technologies for individuals, families, local and global human society, and for all other life?

We will forward these queries to the Biotechnology Reference Group of the Canadian Council of Churches to be attached to the Curriculum on Faith and Genetics currently being finalized. The faith groups involved in this project have each been invited to contribute an appendix expressing their particular perspective on the issue. We also ask Friends to consider this document in their own communities.