

## BOOK REVIEWS

DANDELION, P., and COLLINS, P. (eds.), *The Quaker Condition: The Sociology of a Liberal Religion* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. x + 265. ISBN (10): 1-84718-565-7, ISBN (13): 9781847185655, Hardback, £34.99.

This book accompanied me to a Sikh Studies conference at the University of California Santa Barbara. Perhaps, then, it is unsurprising that my review of studies of one contemporary religion, Quakerism, is coloured by my experience of academic engagement with another, Sikhism, both—as it happens—small minorities in their land of origin, and both of them reformist movements. Similar themes emerge in both fields of scholarship: identity (see in this volume Peter Collins on ‘The Problem of Quaker Identity’) and self-definition in relation to dominant and emergent traditions (see Kate Mellor’s chapter on ‘The Question of Christianity’); syncretism (see Giselle Vincent on ‘Quagans: Fusing Quakerism with Contemporary Paganism’); new activities and formations (Helen Meads on “‘Experiment with Light’: Radical Spiritual Wing of British Quakerism”); and the behavioural norms of congregations (Derrick Whitehouse on ‘Congregational Culture and Variations in “Gospel Order”’); as well as ethical issues and responses (Helena Chambers on ‘Modern Testimonies: The Approach of Quakers to Substance Use and Gambling’ and Jackie Leach Scully’s chapter ‘Virtuous Friends: Morality and Quaker Identity’).

The contributions are organised into four parts: Identity; Beliefs and Values; Meeting Culture; and Diverse Forms, each part consisting of three chapters. The book’s strengths include all the contributors’ clear discussions of painstaking research, and the evidence of a thoroughly Quaker scholarly process, as the interconnectedness and mutual supportiveness of the contributors’ chapters are striking—clearly the fruit of collaborative work and friendly conversation. Thus Helen Mead draws on Simon Best’s ‘community of intimacy’ (developed in his chapter on ‘Adolescent Quakers’) and Giselle Vincett comments on Gay Pilgrim’s ‘Syncretists’ (see Pilgrim on ‘British Quakerism as Heterotopic’). Another strength is the wide range of their coverage of aspects of the contemporary British Quaker scene: in addition to the chapters mentioned above, the book’s riches include Pink Dandelion’s exposition of not only the ‘Quaker double-culture’ but also the ‘absolute perhaps’. (I thrilled with recognition as he expanded on this: ‘Those who find theological truth or who wish to share it with the rest of the group feel increasingly uncomfortable’ [p. 35], much as I did on my first encounter with Collins’s ‘plaining’.) Thought-provoking, too, are the contributions by Susan Robson and Judy Frith respectively on ‘Grasping the Nettle: Conflict and the Quaker Tradition’ and ‘The Temporal Collage: How British Quakers Make Choices about Time’. I also noted with approval the 2:1 female: male

contributor ratio, departing as it does from a tendency for male authors to preponderate in religious studies literature.

The excellent Foreword by Linda Woodhead and Introduction by Pink Dandelion and Peter Collins situate the research in a broader scholarly setting. Woodhead takes up Pilgrim's concept of 'heterotopia', a 'social space on which it is possible to maintain a different form of social and individual existence than is possible outside it' (p. ix) and suggests its relevance for the study of religion more generally. Dandelion and Collins, too, strongly connect this volume's contents with wider debates in the sociology of religion (on, for example, liberal religion and on secularisation), and indicate the wider applicability of contributors' arguments.

This is particularly important because contributors tend not to have made these connections for themselves—and this is one critical comment that I would make about some of their discussions. My other criticism is the frequency of typographical errors. Most are widely scattered, but in the References the inconsistent punctuation of entries is disconcertingly concentrated.

Each chapter merited discussion by the reviewer, but this is impossible within the word constraints. In conclusion I congratulate the editors on the clever title ('condition' has three meanings) and commend other researchers—seasoned and less seasoned—to work in as collaborative a way, and I recommend all readers with an interest in the dynamics and manifestations of contemporary religion to engage with this book.

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FREEMAN, M., *Quaker Extension c 1905–1930: The Yorkshire 1905 Committee* (Borthwick Paper, 112; Borthwick Publications, 2008), pp. 42. ISSN: 0524-0913 ISBN (13): 978-1-904497-23-3, Paperback, by subscription.

In the early twentieth century, the word 'extension' was used in two contexts: university extension classes offered an introduction to advanced education; among Quakers the term referred particularly to activities which both widened and deepened spiritual experience in the Society of Friends. The object of the Yorkshire 1905 Committee was to make the Quaker message more widely known and to increase vitality in vocal ministry in its Meetings for Worship. It created and distributed a vast amount of literature, arranged lectures at 'settlements' and Meetings, made opportunities for fellowship for young and older, inter-visited between Meetings and set up a small staff to administer and teach. Freeman's thorough and straightforward account sits comfortably between the related texts on the period of Kennedy, Lunn and Whiting. Discussion of the techniques of 'study circles' arising out of the rather laboriously planned 'fireside chats' and 'tea table talks' leads into the wider context of adult education. Freeman notes this contribution to participative adult education as the most significant outcome of Quaker extension work in this period. It spread to the increasingly secular established 'settlements' and diminishing Adult School sessions. Considering only the first 25 years of the 1905 Committee he

concludes that the excitement of the first few years achieved no measurable gain in Quaker membership or spiritual vitality, despite spending a lot of money. However, it should be noted that successor bodies (now Quaker Outreach in Yorkshire) have continued the original parochial commitment for another 79 years so far.

Freeman clearly identifies the tensions which hindered the work of the 1905 Committee. In many respects it duplicated already existing work in Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting, with the creation of a select group, and indeed paid field workers. Social hierarchies among Friends were replicated in the outside world, working men were either inadequately educated to serve a Meeting, or attended the Adult School but rarely became Quakers. Gender equality was lacking. The 60 young men who tramped across Yorkshire in 1905 soon made it clear that women would not be welcome on such occasions. Freeman also points to the lack of attention to the 1914–18 war in the work of the Committee. Was this the same in the business of the Quarterly Meeting? A puzzling reference about the suitability for Meeting intervisitation of ‘young men returning from the continent’ in 1916 could helpfully be explained. What had they been doing, and what were they going to do? All these frustratingly brief allusions to wider contextual issues lead the reader to further exploration in other volumes.

The Paper itself is lucid but I found the use of a footnote system without a separate bibliography made it difficult to track full information about particular books.

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SMITH, H.L., SUZUKI, M., and WISEMAN, S. (eds.), *Women's Political Writings, 1610–1725* (4 vols.; London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), pp. xxxiii + 409, xvii + 380, xiv + 327, xiii + 378. ISBN: 978-1-85196-792-6, Hardback, £350/\$625.

This collection brings together a range of political texts by women in the period before and leading up to the English Civil War, during the Civil War and Interregnum, during and following the Restoration, and concluding with works from the reign of Queen Anne and the early Georgian period. Produced with the care and high-quality scholarship that we have come to expect from Pickering and Chatto, this four-volume, reset and transcribed edition would be a valuable tool for anyone working on seventeenth-century Quaker history.

The authors included write from a wide variety of political and religious positions. Many are, as one would expect, Quakers and the collection includes, among others, Elizabeth Hooton, Margaret Fell, Dorothy White, Anne Dowcra, Judith Boulbie and Mary Howgill. There are ten Quaker authors and one who may have been connected to Friends. Most of the women are represented by more than one text—there are six by Elizabeth Hooton, for example—and each text is provided in its entirety. So often we find ‘snippets’ of Quaker texts in anthologies of early modern women’s writings; these are texts suitable for scholars to work with.

One of the values of a collection like this is the chance it gives to see Quaker writings in their wider contemporary context; to read, for example, Mary Howgill’s

*A Remarkable Letter to Oliver Cromwell* (1657) alongside other women's letters to Cromwell allows for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of her writing. Forty-three individual authors are represented; there are, in addition, ten collective petitions written by groups of women, although no examples of collective writing by Quaker women have been included, which seems a missed opportunity, given the wealth of manuscript material at Friends' House. Topics discussed include 'the power and legitimacy of the state, the most effective forms of government, the relationship between religion and state, the role of gender in determining political standing, the connection between one's social rank or class and one's place within society, and the place of the family in the early modern state and broader political networks' (I, p. xiii). The editors worked on the basis of prioritising the inclusion of those texts which were not already easily available in modern editions.

The set is prefaced with a General Introduction and then each of the volumes, which are arranged in date order, has its own Introduction, setting the works into their particular political and social context. Beyond that, each author is provided with 1–3 pages of introduction including a short biography, information about other works and contextual information for the writings. There are extensive explanatory endnotes to each text and a consolidated topical index, all of which add to the usefulness of the set and to the possibility of making new and interesting connections between disparate texts.

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NEELON, D., *James Nayler: Revolutionary to Prophet* (Becket, MA: Leadings Press, 2009), pp. xxxviii + 218. ISBN: 0-981-7363-2-7, Hardback, \$39.95.

James Nayler (1618?–60) remains little known among Friends other than his 'fall' in the wake of his Bristol enactment of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (1656). For this 'horrid blasphemy' he was tried by Parliament, tortured and incarcerated. Forsaken by Fox at this tragic moment, he was released by the Rump three years later only to die after being set upon by persons unknown while returning to his Yorkshire home.

Neelon's *James Nayler* comprises an Introduction and sixteen chapters, the first five of which provide the background to his subject's public ministry. We learn how Nayler grew up in the confused and volatile political and religious environment of Caroline England in the parish of Woodkirk in West Ardsley near Wakefield. Neelon, scotching Bittle's (1986) supposition that the substantial East Ardsley House was Nayler's home (pp. 3–6), makes much of the local history of Woodkirk since he is keen to paint a comprehensive picture of Nayler's social and working environment, 'a sense of place'. His success in this respect is impressive given the paucity of materials at his command.

In addressing 'Anthony Nutter and the Puritans', Chapter 2 describes the growth of Puritanism through the career of the most famous of Woodkirk clerics. Then, in Chapter 3, we are eased into an examination of 'religious dissent' and the struggle for 'freedom of conscience'. Charles I, the 'abuse' of his personal rule (1629–40) and the

prelude to revolution are the subjects of Chapter 4 after which Chapters 5 and 6 are devoted to the civil wars (1642–51) and Nayler's part in them; included is his role as quartermaster under General Lambert at Dunbar (1650) before illness forced demobilisation. Neelon shows courage in providing a succinct account of the complex politico-religious controversies engulfing the British nations. This is no easy task as the still-turbulent debates among historians over the nature of Puritanism, the protracted disputes within the Church of England, the causes of the wars, the role of the army and the progress (or otherwise) of the Commonwealth and Protectorate clearly show.

So ends in effect part one of the book before we embark on Nayler proper and his part as an itinerant minister in the unfolding drama of 1650s Quakerism. Neelon guides us through Nayler's initial stay at Swarthmoor Hall (1652), the disputes with the Puritan 'priests of Westmorland' and his trial, along with Francis Howgill, at Appleby (1653) for blasphemy, a trumped-up charge by the same priests. The trial proceedings are found in *Saul's Errand to Damascus* (1653), an early collaboration with Fox and important for the nascent Quaker movement's theology (pp. 68–72). All this is well told.

Three chapters are reserved for Bristol. Neelon's treatment of the event is not new but well written, particularly the account of Nayler's exhaustion. The subsequent trial by the Commons is confidently explained. Finally, Neelon makes use of Nayler's recantation and such essential works as *The Lamb's War* (1658) to present not so much a systematic exegesis of a theology that matured while Nayler languished in prison, but an outline of the works' principle themes.

Neelon's approach is less theological than that of Fogelklou (1931), avoids Damrosch's (1996) linguistic territory and is more scholarly than Bittle. He sculpts well the image of the local farmer, the ordinary soldier, the chaste prisoner, the emotional and sensitive, albeit sometimes confused, man who nevertheless possessed considerable religious and writing gifts.

I would have opted for less Anthony Nutter and a de-emphasis of Nayler's letter to Bradford (pp. 107–12) for more of Nayler's theology—for instance, a deeper examination of his subject's eschatology, that is to say, his prophetic and revolutionary *Quaker* orthopraxis in a premillennial environment. And a quibble: *Swarthmoor*, not *Swarthmore*, for the Hall.

*James Nayler* has a pleasing, accessible style and contains some special touches: for example, we learn that at his Appleby trial Nayler was possibly confused with a John Nayler, Leveller (p. 64). The discovery of tracts which mention Nayler's military exploits in Yorkshire is exemplary scholarship (p. 47).

Neelon has written a fine addition to the small number of works surrounding this charismatic yet enigmatic giant of early Quakerism. The work will prove a reliable guide for Quaker continuing theology (i.e. history) and will be especially attractive to students of discernment and Leadings, besides being an excellent resource for discussion groups.

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