

BOOK REVIEWS

BRADSTOCK, A., *Radical Religion in Cromwell's England: A Concise History from the English Civil War to the End of the Commonwealth* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), pp. xxvi + 189. ISBN: 978-1-84511-765-8, Paperback, £15.99.

In *Radical Religion in Cromwell's England* Andrew Bradstock aims to provide a concise and accessible history of the most notable radical religious groups of the English Civil War and Commonwealth periods. In addition to an introduction and conclusion, the book is divided into seven chapters, one dedicated to each of the following groups: Baptists, Levellers, Diggers, Ranters, Quakers, Fifth Monarchists and Muggletonians. Bradstock writes in a clear and comprehensible way, making the book suitable for students and general readers as well as the more serious scholar. In handling the content, the author has achieved a good balance between the big picture and smaller-scale detail and, because each chapter stands alone, the book can be used selectively by those who wish to fill specific gaps in their knowledge. Bradstock clearly has a real affection for these radical religious groups, but he does not allow his obvious enthusiasm to detract from the need to offer balanced profiles. Throughout the book, a particular effort is made to address the role of women within each movement, presumably in order to rectify omissions in previous introductory sources.

The book offers a wide range of fascinating insights into the hopes, fears, excitement and disappointment of this turbulent period. Established structures of social control had broken down, apocalyptic expectations were running high and the prospect of further revolutionary change was very real. First and foremost, the radical religious groups under consideration here were regarded as dangerous and threatening to those in power because they were intent on dismantling the very basis of social order within a Feudal society: the Church-State power block. It was commonplace in seventeenth-century English radicalism to attribute the country's ills to the Norman Conquest and the Feudal system it established. Within this system, established religion functioned as the principal agent of social control. Bradstock quotes Charles I saying that 'people are governed by the pulpit more than the sword in times of peace' (p. xv). Not surprisingly, all these radical religious groups faced persecution of one form or other at the hands of the authorities. They were portrayed as what Stanley Cohen has called 'folk devils' and were linked in particular with the greatest religious folk devils of the time, the violent Anabaptists of Munster from a century or so before.¹

1. Cohen, S., *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, New York: Harper Collins, 1973.

In many ways, the first three groups considered (Baptists, Levellers and Diggers) reflected the radical optimism generated by the Civil Wars of the 1640s, whereas the latter four groups (Ranters, Quakers, Fifth Monarchists and Muggletonians) represented a variety of responses to the disappointment and despondency caused when those hopes and expectations were not realised. In particular, the crushing of the Levellers and the Diggers in 1649 appears to have set the scene for the development of the four radical groups that emerged in the 1650s. Of the 'groups of hope', the Baptists were 'free church' pioneers; the Levellers were reformist proto-democrats and the Diggers utopian anarcho-communists. Of the 1650s groups, the Ranters were nihilists raging against the system, the Quakers offered an inward path to spiritual and social transformation, the Fifth Monarchists were violent revolutionaries (the 'paramilitary wing' of the radical Baptists and Independents) and the Muggletonians provided an undemanding if slightly eccentric path to assured salvation.

Given Bradstock's previous research interests and publications, it is not surprising that the chapter dedicated to Gerrard Winstanley and the Diggers is the strongest. He provides a clear and detailed explanation of the Digger vision, in which the fall of humanity was understood in terms of the emergence of private property, causing violence, inequality and injustice. It is interesting to note that, apart from the belief that the earth should again become a 'common treasury for all', most other Digger ideas reappear in the emerging Quaker movement. This includes a belief in Christ's return inwardly and spiritually, a commitment to non-violence and the rejection of social graces such as hat honour.

Having outlined the many strengths of the book, it has to be said that it contains a number of weaknesses. The level of theological analysis offered for each group is quite variable. The attention given to the theological foundations of the Digger movement is both rich and detailed; however, Quaker theology is somewhat neglected in favour of a focus on the political impact of Friends and the response they provoked from those in power. Bradstock notes that none of the Quaker distinctives were entirely new and this may explain the limited attention he gives to their theology. However, one might argue that it was the unique combination of beliefs and practices and the way they were lived in the world that made the early Quaker movement innovative and influential. The Levellers receive the least theological attention and, although Bradstock debates the point, he does seem to accept that this group was essentially a forerunner of secular democratic movements. In his treatment of this period, Bradstock appears to neglect the influence of socio-economic factors, arguing that the English Civil War was essentially a war of religion (p. xiv). However, in seventeenth-century England, religion and politics were inextricably bound together and could not be separated in any meaningful way. Bradstock's perspective is somewhat surprising, given the obvious influence of Christopher Hill and other Marxist historians on his thinking. Some consideration of the impact of the transition from Feudalism to Capitalism on the emergence and development of these groups would have been useful. Bradstock debates the appropriateness of applying the term 'radical' to the groups outlined in the book. The etymology of the word 'radical' suggests a 'return to the root'. In the case of both Baptists and Quakers, it is clear that the desire to return to the purity and simplicity

of the apostolic Church was a key preoccupation. Unfortunately, he pays little, if any, attention to the 'Christian primitivism' evident in many of these movements.

Bradstock's treatment of the Quakers also raises a number of concerns. His profile of the group relies too heavily on Barry Reay's account in *The Quakers and the English Revolution* and his guidance on further reading is not well balanced.² Although he lists valuable works by Catie Gill and Phyllis Mack about Quaker women, he excludes such essential references on early Quakerism as Douglas Gwyn's *The Covenant Crucified* and Rosemary Moore's *The Light in their Consciences*.³ Surprisingly, Bradstock accepts uncritically the traditional account of James Nayler's re-enactment of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem at Bristol in 1656, asserting that his behaviour confirmed people's worst fears and brought the Quaker movement into disrepute (p. 111). This ignores the political machinations of a Parliament intent on repression, the impact of internal leadership struggles and the fact that Nayler's conduct was non-violent and in line with the early Quaker use of outward signs to represent inward spiritual experiences. As a result, Bradstock adopts a perspective that appears to blame the victim for the persecution he suffers. Finally, one or two questionable assumptions are evident. In his description of Fox's Pendle Hill vision, Bradstock suggests that this convinced him of his calling to found a new Church (p. 96). However, it is clear that Fox's outlook at this time was far more eschatological than denominational. Bradstock also refers to Quaker belief in the 'inner light'; a term that Rosemary Moore argues was not used by early Friends.⁴

Nevertheless, despite these reservations, Andrew Bradstock's *Radical Religion in Cromwell's England* represents a valuable introductory reference for anyone interested in finding out more about these intriguing groups and the turbulent religious and political circumstances in which they emerged. As Christians begin to come to terms with the circumstances of post-Christendom where the Church no longer finds itself at the centres of power, the stories of radical religious groups such as these provide valuable insights into the experience of living as disciples at the margins of society.⁵ This book will whet the appetites of many readers who, in addition to exploring the author's recommendations for further reading, will want to seek out more comprehensive bibliographies.

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2. Reay, B., *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, London: Temple Smith, 1985.

3. Gill, C., *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005; Mack, P., *Visionary Women: Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992; Gwyn, D., *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism*, Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1995; Moore, R., *The Light in their Consciences: The Early Quakers in Britain, 1646–1666*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

4. Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, p. 81.

5. Murray, S., *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004.

HOWE, D.D., *A Collection of Townsend Family Letters, 1810–1858*, vol. 1 (Richmond, VA, 2009), pp. 210, Paperback, and facsimile images of the letters on 2 CDs. ISBN: 978-0-615-31771-7, \$30.

HOWE, D.D. (comp.), transcribed by J.G. Davis, PhD and D.D. Howe, *The Diary of Priscilla Kirk Townsend in Fourteen Small Books, 1848–1861* (Richmond, VA, 2011), pp. 542, Paperback, and Kirk and Townsend Family Charts on 1 CD. ISBN: 978-0-615-45290-6, \$38.

Many historians of Quaker Studies tend to rely on letters, diaries and journals to give insights into the domestic lives and thought-worlds of Friends. So it is of considerable interest when new materials are made available as in these two volumes of Townsend family papers. Priscilla Kirk Townsend was a recorded minister in the Hicksite Green Street Meeting in ante bellum Philadelphia. She secretly kept a diary from 1848 to 1861, the year before her death. Her husband, Charles Townsend, and five of their surviving children, plus one daughter-in-law, corresponded frequently with one another when out of town. These papers have been passed down in the family.

Several cousins sent Dana Dunbar Howe images of letters written by their shared ancestors. The letters, written from 1810 to 1858, constitute volume 1 of a planned multi-volume collection. The letters were transcribed by Dana Dunbar Howe and each letter has a catalogue number. The volume includes two compact discs with images of the letters so that a researcher may read the originals. The diary of Priscilla Kirk Townsend, from 11m/30/1848 to 6m/2/1861 was written in secret in fourteen tiny notebooks. Dana Dunbar Howe and Jennifer Gross Davis have transcribed them. A CD of family charts is included with the diaries, but earlier versions cannot easily be opened as the disk was burned with no extension on the file names; this has now been remedied. These two lovingly prepared and handsomely published volumes include full-color facsimiles of many of the letters, the covers and first pages of each diary, photographs of the letter writers, plus additional illustrations.

It is good to have the original images, as more than once I interpreted a word differently than did the transcribers. For example, '[word unclear] ended it much to my satisfaction' I read as 'attended it much to my satisfaction' (p. 32). '...more fatiguing, than we would have supposed thy feeble frame could have borne with impurity' I read as 'borne with impunity' (p. 107). One letter is transcribed as '...thou art comfortable my Sweet Sister and canst get along even cheerfully without me' which is described in the summary as 'her sister cannot' get along without her (p. 187). The criticisms pale in comparison to the value of making these uncut, unedited letters and diaries available.

The compiler has provided some aids to the collection of letters. There is a brief introduction to the Townsend family, to Philadelphia and to some of their better-known friends. I would quibble that a Westtown education provided a 'solid grounding in the classics' although it certainly did teach 'natural sciences' (p. vii). There are biographies of each of the surviving adult children. Transcriber's notes mention orthographic and punctuational idiosyncrasies. For each letter the writer and

intended recipient, date and place, salutation, signature, address and CD reference code are listed. Each letter is also summarized along with a list of the names (but rarely an identification) of anyone mentioned. An index might have been more useful.

For those studying ante bellum natural history and its practitioners, the letters by John Kirk Townsend reveal interesting details to augment his *Narrative of a Journey*. For those looking for information on abolitionist activities there are a disappointingly few off-hand references. Useful material can be gleaned on the close web of extended family and friends, support given and received and struggles with ill health in a time of medical ignorance. The extended family moved within the orbit of Hicksite meetings and there are many references to meetings attended, speakers and F/friends seen.

Priscilla Kirk Townsend wrote her diary very privately for her own improvement. Unlike published Quaker journals it was not intended to edify others by demonstrating the movement of God in her life. At first she tried to evaluate herself each day to see if she had had any missteps either of commission or omission. But gradually the time between entries lengthened and they became more introspective. They can actually be read devotionally and it almost seems wrong to approach them as a dissecting scholar. Priscilla made many sensitive observations about Meeting for Worship, vocal ministry and the need for ministers and elders to be rightly qualified or 'anointed' (in terms that Samuel Bownas described). There is much to learn from this Friends minister, although it is typically understated. Her main thrust is to search herself and her daily actions for submission and obedience to Divine Love. What more jaded worldly readers might see as boring and repetitive strings of platitudes, for the reader who enters Priscilla's worldview the words can be inspiring, encouraging and instructive. Like the writings of earlier Friends, Priscilla's diary is a string of snippets of quotations. The compiler lists them but makes no effort to identify their sources and unpack their resonances. This could provide an interesting study illuminating influences within the early Hicksite branch that would add depth and nuance to the more familiar minority *Berean* theologies. It is interesting to note that Benjamin Ferris was a friend of the family and the family moved in liberal social circles while not, apparently, identifying with the Progressive Friends in Western Quarter who split off from the Hicksites during the time Priscilla was alluding to 'difficulties' and 'stress' at several meetings. The Townsends, especially daughter Mary (d. 1859), were close friends of Graceanna Lewis, who was active in abolition, women's rights, natural history and Progressive Friends.⁶ None of this background was explicitly addressed by Priscilla who seemed to have a much more conventional theology, probably representative of the majority of Hicksites at the time.

Each of the fourteen diaries is followed by a rearrangement of the text by categories: Highlights, Introspective Thoughts, Quaker meetings, Family Members and Friends, Ailments, Domestic References, Weather, Excursions and Travel, and Quotations and Literary References. So parts of each diary are repeated several times.

6. The Lewis-Fussell Family Papers are archived at the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College.

There is no overall compilation of topics, so a researcher must look at fourteen summaries. Instead, a really good index might have allowed the book to be considerably shorter. There is no effort to provide commentary or context.

These are very attractively produced books. Both the letters and diaries can be of great interest to a variety of researchers. Insights into the strained relations between Hicksite and Orthodox Friends; the circle of female (and mixed) friends and relatives with frequent visits both short and extended, correspondence and support; dealing with death and grieving; advice to Friends today who are hoping to deepen the spiritual quality of worship—these are just a few of the research possibilities. We owe a debt of gratitude to anyone who makes such valuable primary material available.

Copies of the books may be obtained from Dana Dunbar (Howe) King at DanaDunbar@aol.com or 13 Ellensview Circle, Richmond, VA 23226, USA. The *Letters* cost \$30 + \$5 mailer and postage; the *Diary* is \$38 + \$6 for mailer and postage in the United States. For Great Britain and Europe the *Letters* cost \$60 and the *Diary* \$75, shipping included.

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LAKEY, G., *Facilitating Group Learning: Strategies for Success with Diverse Adult Learners* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), pp. xi + 291. ISBN: 978-0-470-76863-1, Hardback, \$40.

So many of you believe education to be worthwhile has to be the teacher lecturing, pouring to you from her pitcher... In this workshop, we'll use [a] second method. I hope you will be willing to pour and to receive from each other's glasses. (p. 110)

George Lakey is Visiting Professor and Research Fellow in the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility at Swarthmore College, Philadelphia. He has distilled his long experience of teaching and training adult social change activists into this book and it is a gem of a resource for anyone involved with group work or adult learning. Lakey describes his own journey as an educator and how he came to formulate the approach he calls 'Direct Education', using narrative and case studies to illustrate principles and application.

In the introductory section, Lakey describes Direct Education as building both on the work of later twentieth-century education theorists and on his own wide experience of participating in the civil rights movement, trade union activism and a wide range of United States and international social change activism. Dewey's idea that 'we learn by doing', Freire's participatory methods for building both literacy and political empowerment, insights into learning styles, his own enlightened teachers and his own years of working with groups have all informed his model. This book brings shape and coherence to the mix, showing how Lakey applies the Direct Education model in his own work; it does not deny the complexity of human interactions but gives a framework for understanding why and how various approaches are effective.

Part 1 of the book focuses on the learning group and the individual's responsibility for their own learning. Lakey explores what enables people to risk moving from the familiar into the new; the first task for the teacher is to create a 'safe container' within which learning can take place. He recognises and describes the power relationships present in groups, and uses the theory of 'mainstream and margins' to explain why it is vital to integrate diversity work into the design of any course or workshop. He describes the dynamics of the 'secret life' of groups which can accelerate or inhibit learning, and how a skilled facilitator or teacher can uncover and make use of 'teachable moments' within the group's life.

In Part 2 Lakey moves on to explore in more detail the importance of working with diversity, difference and emotions in group learning. I found his analysis of the ways people of differing social class and different races engage in conflict particularly helpful, as was the recognition that we all have mainstream and marginal identities which come into play at different times. Every group will have its mainstream, but 'the margins are the growing edge of any group'. The teacher's role is to encourage and support authenticity among participants, because authenticity is essential for deep learning.

Part 3 focusses on the design of learning experiences—how to structure content by weaving together threads which allow material to simmer on the back burner and then be brought to the fore again, rather than separate modules that present it in indigestible chunks; how to create effective sequences of activity; and how to allow a workshop's design to emerge from interaction with the group while retaining full accountability as teacher/facilitator to the group's learning goals. In this section, the breadth and depth of Lakey's experience shines through his illustrative case studies; for less experienced facilitators, he makes it clear that his process of 'emergent design' is founded on extremely thorough preparation and is not at all the same as 'winging it'.

The final section, on facilitation, explores the importance of tone setting, building safety in the group as a launching pad for more edgy interventions designed to accelerate learning. Again, Lakey's personal stories speak powerfully, especially when he focusses on working cross-culturally. Useful appendices then discuss ways of sustaining oneself for a lifetime of commitment to this work, provide references and lead the reader to further resources.

This book does not overtly set out to describe a 'Quaker pedagogy', but the author's Quaker principles clearly underlie and inform his thinking throughout. Anyone, Quaker or otherwise, who is involved in teaching and learning with an agenda for change will find it useful. The blend of theoretical thinking illustrated by practical, lived experience seems nicely calculated both to give inspiration and confidence to new practitioners and to reinvigorate the practice of the more experienced.

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CASH, B., *John Bright: Statesman, Orator, Agitator* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), pp. xxx + 328. ISBN: 978-1-84885-996-8, Hardback, £25.

John Bright's nineteenth-century campaigns for political reform were an indefatigable and lifelong enterprise, deserving contemporary scrutiny and reflection. In this context, Bill Cash's recent work attempts to champion Bright's achievements and legacy by serving up a reminder of the global scope of Bright's career. From an important Quaker family background, Bright prided himself on asserting issues of moral conscience and principle in all political affairs. This ability to speak against dominant ideologies is exemplified in Cash's book through its exploration of conflicts such as the Crimean War, where Bright's positioning led to both personal and political crisis. However, Cash does not set out to re-chart faith histories in great detail, but firmly tends towards traditional political biography, imbuing his narrative with a degree of reverence no doubt generated through the author's family link to his subject.

Examining Bright's role in local suffrage movements and social struggles linking Britain, Ireland, America and India, Cash recovers many startling facts framing Bright's international status. In particular, Bright's seemingly radical engagement with the issue of American slavery stands out in this book. Yet, a more penetrating analysis of the race-bound ideologies of the Victorian era would be necessary to better handle Bright's sometimes contradictory positions when it comes to crucially intersecting issues of culture, race, national identity, authority and conscience. For instance, Bright's championing of African-American rights during and after slavery was in many ways both a radical and crucial intervention; but his decision to support the put down of the Indian mutiny in 1865 tells us another story. In Cash's endeavour to present Bright as the shining champion, we miss many of these vital subtexts and ambiguities. But, after all, perhaps this is not so surprising when Cash's own political vision is alarmingly signposted to us in the opening pages of his book. The author's declaration of nationalistic worries about the infringement of European powers on the United Kingdom and ominous threats to 'democratic will' meant this reviewer almost stopped reading on page two.

Fortunately, despite this annoyance, many important stories about Bright's career still manage to emerge successfully. This book would be best read alongside not only Asa Briggs's work on Bright, but also those critical histories presenting a more sophisticated analysis of empire and patriarchal codes of nineteenth-century morality, including Catherine Hall's *Civilising Subjects* (2002). Bright was, of course, an important pioneer of social democratic rights. Yet he was as much a champion of the ultimate authority of the empire, as he was the opponent of those whom he believed to misuse that authority.

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DAVIDSON, J.D., and PYLE, R.E., *Ranking Faiths: Religious Stratification in America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), pp. 219. ISBN: 978-1-4422-0853-7, Hardback, £31.95.

This very interesting book makes an argument for analysing societal stratification through religious affiliation within the last 400 years of US religious life. It is very readable and accessible and clearly structured. It offers indeed a very good overview of (mainly) Christian history of the United States in terms of the societal brokerage of power. The question that remains, however, is whether religious membership is a key variable in the stakes for status, power and prestige or whether other variables such as race, class or gender drove discrimination and inequality.

Davidson and Pyle claim that sociologists of stratification have rarely considered religion and that sociologists of religion have rarely studied stratification. They also claim that these two groups have generally followed different lines of social theory. Those studying stratification have seen society in terms of conflicts exacerbated by social stratification, whereas sociologists of religion have tended to view stratification as part of a healthy functional society. Giving such a strong Durkheimian emphasis to the sociology of religion is contestable but does, however, allow Davidson and Pyle to critique that position and end the book with their own theory about the relationship between stratification and societal stability. They argue that with high levels of stratification and subsequent high levels of systematised prescription, there are low levels of instability. Medium levels of stratification offer a different perception of potential scenarios and high levels of instability ensue.

In a secularising world, it is easy to see why religion is not seen to be key to stratification and five reasons are typically given. Religion is no longer central to social life. People choose their faith voluntarily—rational choice theory would say that if it did not suit their needs, they would switch denomination. Religion is not visible and cannot always be identified when rewards are distributed. Resources affect affiliation, not the other way round, or a variable like education can better explain the inequalities of distribution of capital. If religious stratification was once significant, it is not now. These all seem highly plausible to me and it is a weakness of the book that less than a page each is given to refute these five hesitations about seeing religion as key.

Quakers are mentioned at various parts of the book, and over the longitudinal focus of the book hold their place in the upper middle level of stratification, vastly over-represented as business leaders and in barometers of success like 'Who's Who' (if that itself is not religiously biased in its compilation), but behind the Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Congregationalists who until the twentieth century hold sway over the American Presidency and the Ivy League colleges and business success when they are joined by assimilated Jews and Unitarians who move up past the Quakers. At this stage Quakers are joined by Hindus, Methodists, Mormons and the United Church of Christ. But does being a Quaker in and of itself give access to power, prestige and status? Or in parts of the Society where 85% join as adults, does like simply attract like?

We know that Quakers were hanged in Congregational Massachusetts in 1659 and that Pennsylvania, despite its Quaker origins, excluded Catholics and non-Christians from office-holding like all other colonies. Here political power went with denominational attitude and your affiliation was important. But, when immigration laws were introduced in the early part of the twentieth century particularly to limit immigration of Jews and those from Southern Europe (Catholics and those where were not 'Nordic'), was it religion or ethnicity that drove the ruling classes to protect their position? Davidson and Pyle are clear that Italian Catholics earned less than Irish Catholics because they assimilated less unambiguously. Religion is not the variable here, but ethnicity. Little is made too of self-limiting sectarianism, e.g. the way Quakers were wary of higher education until the late nineteenth century. It only then follows that they would not even place themselves in the running to be presidents of Ivy League Colleges.

Nevertheless the sense that a WASP coalition ran most of the elite institutions and the government of the United States until the mid-twentieth century, vastly over-representing their number, seems clear. That they did so, aided by both discriminatory laws and practices, is also clearly illuminated by this volume. Singular denominational stratification is less easy to identify as time rolls by and the different churches slowly give up their hold on individual States. It is still true that the religious life of presidential candidates is brought under scrutiny but other than the decline in power and prestige of humanists, the ethical position of that allegiance may be seen by voters as more important than its creedal confession.

This book raises an important and thought-provoking line of study and begs, in its vast coverage of so much material, further research on the dynamics of power in a wide variety of social settings. Gender is rarely mentioned, nor are the potential complexities of stratification. Does a white Irish Catholic woman get a position over a black Episcopalian man because race is a stronger variable than religion or gender? Which variable trumps which? This book offers data and theory on religious stratification but I suspect it profitably leads to a set of questions far more than a set of answers.

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