

Editorial

Welcome to the second issue of our 25th volume year. In June last year the Quaker Studies Research Association (QSRA) and the Centre for Research in Quaker Studies (CRQS) hosted an anniversary conference to mark the 25th QSWRA conference and 20 years of CRQS. Now we have our own quarter-century anniversary and this issue contains a fine selection of scholarship particularly focussed on the study and nature of texts and the study of religious expression.

The George Richardson Lecture at the 2019 conference was given by Hilary Hinds, well known for her book *George Fox and Early Quaker Culture* as well as articles in this journal. Her theme was the early Quaker poet Mary Mollineux and the ways in which the form and construction of her poetry allowed it to be accepted within 'second-period' Quaker circles at a time when the movement was opposed to the creative arts. It was a gripping lecture, meticulously researched and finely crafted, and the text version reflects the level of scholarly expertise.

Michael Birkel offers a translation of a 1650s Samuel Fisher letter 'To the House of Jacob', originally written in Hebrew. In a very helpful introductory preface to the translation, Birkel explains that this was part of the Quaker campaign to engage with the Jewish community and to try and gain their readmission to England as a precursor for the second coming of Christ. Birkel argues that Fisher constructed the letter carefully, using his Oxford-taught biblical Hebrew to good effect, displaying both a sensitivity to his audience and an integrity with the themes of Quaker theology.

Stephen Angell's article on William Penn investigates two books he wrote while imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1669 and suggests that his selection of biblical references created a coded narrative to comment on his estrangement from his birth family, and how his father may have been complicit in his imprisonment. The first part looks at Penn's history of relations with his family, the second at the two texts. Reflections on method are included in an appendix.

Judith Roads' work on corpus linguistics has created a new thread in Quaker studies scholarship and her article in this issue investigates a 1668 tract by the under-researched Stephen Crisp in particular detail to better explore the early Quaker rhetorical strategies of persuasion. Quaker rhetoric is not a common

topic—I can only think of work by Michael Graves—but Roads’ article shows that it is rich area of investigation.

Mark Russ takes the concept of *theatrum mundi*, ‘theatre of the world’, in which all of humanity are both players and audience, to help better interrogate and articulate the nature of British Quaker eschatology over time. This is not a simply teleological metaphor as is, for example, the alarm clock metaphor of the end of time with God as a watch-maker, but involves God as author, director, player. It implies judgment, not just timing. It implies imminence, not just transcendence. Russ concludes his theological commentary with an analysis of what the term ‘postmodern Quaker eschatology’ means and some of the risk it faces.

It was with great sadness that, at the start of 2019, we learnt of the death of Ian Toombs, a much loved and respected member of the CRQS student community. I had worked with Ian on his MA at Sarum College and had gladly accepted him onto the PhD programme at Birmingham to conduct further research on the Sunday Assembly and the spirituality of the so-called ‘nones’. He threw himself into his research in spite of his cancer and was half way through his degree when he died. I remember in the few years I knew him his dry humour, his compassion towards all, his dedication to whatever he was involved in, and his love of Cyprus. He was a committed Anglican but not an uncritical one: he wished for an accessible, open and just Christian community that would welcome everyone. He showed his emotions freely but was a rigorous scholar. In his time, he had studied sociology, theology and researched Japanese business practices as well as his work on humanist religiosity. Here, Rhiannon Grant has taken his MA thesis and some of his PhD material to give a sense of the direction he was working in. The argument is that ‘nones’ *do* engage in spiritual practices and have spiritual aspirations and that this needs to be taken into account when researching those who claim no religious affiliation (including Quaker humanists).

The issue ends with a selection of book reviews, compiled by my dedicated colleague Rebecca Wynter, to whom I am forever grateful.

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