

BOOK REVIEWS

Villani, S. (ed.) *A True Account of the Great Tryals and Cruel Sufferings Undergone by Those two Faithful Servants of God Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers: La vicenda di due quacchere prigioniere dell' inquisizione di Malta* (Class of Letters and Philosophy, Vol. 24), Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore. pp. 366, ISBN 88 7642 121 1, Paper, €30.

This is a very fine edition of the account of the travels and imprisonment of Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheever. Cheevers and Evans left England at the end of 1658 for Alexandria with the aim of publishing the gospel of the 'Light within' in Egypt. They arrived in Malta and were arrested and tried by the Holy Office of the Island. The two women remained in prison for more than three and half years but were released in 1663. Between the end of 1661 and the beginning of the following year, the Quaker Daniel Baker went to the Island to pursue Evans and Cheevers' cause and in 1662, a little before the two women were released, Baker published a report of their arrest and of their detention, based on the documents and the accounts given to him by the two Quakers. Baker's book was republished in London in 1663, perhaps edited by Evans herself, just after her and her companion's return to England. It also included the story of what happened to the two women after the departure of Daniel Baker and, as a kind of appendix, two theological texts written by Evans and Cheevers, and the account of the misadventures of a young Quaker missionary in the Holy Land.

The book, edited by Stefano Villani, Lecturer of Early Modern History at the University of Pisa, is organised in three parts. In the first part, the story of the two women is reconstructed from the extensive research undertaken by Villani in Italy, Malta and England. In the second part the entire unabridged English text of *A True Account of the Great Tryals and Cruel Sufferings of 1663* is published. The third part consists of the trial documents kept in the Inquisition archives of Malta at Mdina. The first and third parts are in Italian.

Villani has a long track record of historic Quaker research and this latest publication appears as meticulously researched as his earlier work. It has a good index and a listing of other work by Cheevers, and the bibliographic history of this particular account. There is also a full index to Scripture cited within the account.

Pink Dandelion
University of Birmingham, England