

JAMES RENDEL HARRIS: A LIFE ON THE QUEST

Alessandro Falcetta

Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, Bologna, Italy

ABSTRACT

This article outlines the life and research of James Rendel Harris (1852-1941). Harris was a scholar of early Christian literature and wrote extensively on the New Testament, the Fathers, folklore, and spirituality. He also collected many ancient manuscripts in the Near East. Harris played a significant role in British religious life, in particular as a leader of the liberal Quakers and as the first director of Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham. This article takes into account the major archive collections relating to him.

KEYWORDS

James Rendel Harris, Early Christian Literature, Manuscripts, Travels, Spirituality, Woodbrooke.

INTRODUCTION

'Give us, Lord, our daily discovery.'¹ This is how James Rendel Harris used to pray. Rendel² was a Quaker and a scholar whose fame crossed the Atlantic on account of his influential writings, discoveries and relief works. What follows is a biographical sketch, which outlines some major events in Rendel's life and gives notice of a number of his works.³

RENDEL'S SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL EDUCATION

James Rendel Harris⁴ was born to a Congregationalist family on 27 January 1852 in Plymouth, one of eleven children. The name of his mother was Elisabeth Corker. His father, Henry Marmaduke Harris, was a house decorator.

One of his aunts, Catherine Jane, had married a famous engineer, Meadows Rendel, from whom James took his middle name, while another, Augusta Harris, was the mother of the poet Henry Austin Dobson.⁵ After completing grammar school, Rendel studied mathematics at Clare College, Cambridge, where in 1874 he was third wrangler in the mathematical tripos. At Cambridge he attended the Quaker meeting in Jesus Lane, but he also looked elsewhere for religious experiences. He was particularly influenced by the meetings of Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey, leaders of the second evangelical revival who toured Britain in 1873, as well as by the holiness movement preached by the Quaker couple Robert Pearsall and Hannah Whitall Smith.⁶ As a consequence, Rendel had a sort of second conversion, which, in the words of his closest friend Herbert G. Wood, was 'an experience of sanctification over and above the realisation of the forgiving love of God which had come to him earlier.'⁷ Trust in a loving and directly accessible God, and mistrust of creeds and institution-alised churches were probably the factors that brought him to Quakerism. Moreover, Rendel's wife, Helen Balkwill, was already a Quaker.⁸ Rendel married Helen, who was from Plymouth and ten years his senior, in 1880.

The story of his application for membership is quite unusual.⁹ On 5 October 1885 he attended the Cambridge, Huntingdon and Lynn Monthly Meeting at Wisbech. A master from Ackworth, G. Satterthwaite, 'spoke of those who worked for the Lord, unattached, without taking their share of responsibility for the business and life of the organised church,'¹⁰ or, to put it otherwise, the master convinced him of the importance of accepting the duties of membership.¹¹ Rendel later said that if Friends thought he would be more serviceable if in outward connection with the Society, he was willing to apply for membership. He was asked to go out into the graveyard, and three Friends were requested to visit him and to report at a further stage of the meeting. Their report was entirely satisfactory, and thus he was united at once in membership.

FIRST ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Starting from 1875 Rendel was lecturer and tutor in mathematics at Clare College.¹² However, in 1881 he decided to change his field of work to biblical studies. This was partly a consequence of the publication by F. J. A. Hort and B. F. Westcott of a fundamental edition of the Greek text of the New Testament.¹³ Hort, Westcott and J. B. Lightfoot were the so-called triumvirate, which made the University of Cambridge a centre of biblical scholarship of worldwide reputation. Rendel had already been studying Scripture with Hort, who deeply influenced him in the matter of text criticism. Biblical studies may even have been his first call, but it took him some time to make up his mind, because of the British bias against nonconformist biblical scholars.

In 1882 Rendel resigned as teacher of mathematics at Clare College and accompanied Helen to the north-east coast of the USA, where she led

campaigns for the temperance movement. Through influential American Friends he met D. C. Gilman, the president of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, who eventually arranged his appointment as lecturer in New Testament Greek.¹⁴ Rendel worked with enthusiasm, and proved himself to be a very promising scholar. However, in 1885 he left Baltimore. In a letter sent to a local newspaper he had criticised Pasteur's experiments on animals.¹⁵ This critique was felt as an attack on the biology department of the Johns Hopkins, which practised vivisection. Gilman remarked that the letter was out of place. Rendel replied that he could not admit his freedom of speech being limited in the least degree.¹⁶ Thus, he and Helen went back to Cambridge. They remained in Britain only for a short time since there were no vacant positions for Rendel. Returning to the USA, they were welcomed at Haverford College, a Quaker institution near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. For six years Rendel taught biblical languages and Church history, and he deeply influenced the college with his spiritual leadership and scholarly achievements. Rufus Jones wrote about Rendel at Haverford:

His method of teaching was unique and peculiar to himself. The students never knew in advance with what the next lecture would deal, and the marvellous man carried them on wings as eagles from one peak of truth to another across continents and athwart the centuries as though he were at home in all ages and in all lands.¹⁷

Eventually, the favourable critical reception of his essays on early Christian literature persuaded him that the climate was ripe to return to Cambridge, where in 1892 he was appointed a fellow at Clare College and University lecturer in palaeography.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM AND THE SEARCH FOR MANUSCRIPTS

By this time the core of Rendel's work was the early history of the text of the New Testament. In Hort's and Westcott's edition, the New Testament had been reconstructed mainly by using two important codices, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus.¹⁸ Rendel pointed out that an important part of the textual tradition, whose chief witness is Codex Bezae,¹⁹ had been wrongly put aside. The numerous textual variants of this tradition could offer, claimed Rendel, the original reading. The problem is still a thorny one, but Rendel had the merit of providing innovative studies.²⁰

Rendel's research was not limited to working on known manuscripts. Over the course of thirty years he travelled to the Near East in search of lost or neglected ancient documents. In the autumn of 1888 while still in Haverford, he undertook his first expedition to Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt.²¹ Together with Helen, he spent some time in Brummana, a Lebanese village with a

Quaker mission. From there they travelled to Jerusalem, where Rendel quickly became acquainted with the Greek Orthodox Patriarch as well as with leading westerners. After six weeks of research he discovered in the Library of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate the Greek text of a very beautiful early Christian work, the *Acts of the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*.²² This work, which was already known in Latin, tells the story of Montanist martyrs imprisoned and eaten by wild beasts in Carthage in 203. In February 1889 Rendel set out for Egypt. Starting from Cairo, he reached the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai, whose library of very ancient manuscripts was a gold mine for researchers. Rendel soon became fast friends with the librarian, Galakteon, and eventually discovered a Syriac version of the hitherto lost text of the *Apology* of Aristides, an address given in defence of Christians before the emperor Antoninus Pius (reigned 138–61 C.E.).²³

In 1891 Rendel was commissioned by the University of Cambridge to survey the manuscripts of the Septuagint, the principal Greek version of the Old Testament, in Greek and other European libraries. Two years later he undertook another expedition to St Catherine in order to study a Syriac codex of the New Testament. Rendel was part of a team including two Cambridge scholars, R.L. Bensly and F.C. Burkitt, their respective wives, and two twin sisters, Margaret Smith Lewis and Agnes Dunlop Gibson.²⁴ The codex had been found by the two sisters during a visit made to the monastery in 1892 at Rendel's suggestion. The story of this discovery deserves a digression, since it came about in a most unusual way. The monks used to serve butter on a dish made out of a torn page of vellum. Sitting at the dining table, Agnes recognised a few Syriac words on it, and asked the monks to show her any other fragment of the same kind. She was given a whole book, which was carefully photographed. When they returned to Cambridge, they showed the pictures to Burkitt and Bensly, who identified the text as one of the most important ancient translations of the New Testament. It was soon decided to travel to the monastery and Rendel was asked to join the party. The group did not get on well because of mutual suspicion and copyright concerns. In order to avoid misunderstandings and to facilitate the work Rendel acted as intermediary between the twins sisters, who were close friends of his, the two other scholars, and the monks. The *editio princeps* of the manuscript was published the following year.²⁵

ARMENIA RELIEF

The search for manuscripts was not the only reason for Rendel's travels. Near the end of the nineteenth century the massacre of Christian Armenians in the Ottoman empire roused considerable indignation in Britain and other Western countries. With the help of the 'Friends' Armenia Relief Committee²⁶ in March 1896 Rendel and Helen travelled to Asia Minor. After stopping in Constantinople, they visited Armenian and Syriac villages between Alexandretta

and Samsoun facing every sort of difficulty and peril along the way.²⁷ The relief work they undertook among a population which had suffered horrific atrocities of torture, maiming and murder, was aimed at restoring life to the Armenian communities by building schools, orphanages and small manufacturing industries. Rendel remained active in assisting these enterprises for many years.²⁸ While in Armenia he naturally spent some time looking for manuscripts, many of which were being destroyed by the Turks and the Kurds.²⁹ He left the region in August 1896 and went back to his academic duties in Cambridge, while Helen remained behind to carry on the work. Between November 1896 and January 1897 she went to Berlin and to St. Petersburg trying unsuccessfully to meet both the German emperor and the Tsar in order to plead for some intervention on behalf of the Armenians.³⁰

THE LEYDEN APPOINTMENT

In the spring of 1903 Rendel returned to Armenia in order to check on and to support the initiatives undertaken seven years earlier. While he was there, a telegram reached him with the offer of the chair of New Testament at the University of Leyden, one of the most prestigious academic positions in Europe. To the surprise and disappointment of Kuyper, the Dutch Secretary of Internal Affairs who had chosen his name from a list including W. Bousset, J. M. S. Baljon and H. Weinel, Rendel turned down the offer. His refusal seemed inexplicable since he had no chances of upgrading his lectureship into a permanent position.³¹ While there were a number of factors which may have influenced his refusal of the Leyden chair,³² in his reply to the university he made clear that he would have accepted the position, had he not promised 'to assist some of my friends in establishing next autumn a Settlement for religious and social work in the city of Birmingham'.³³ The Dutch Secretary made every effort to persuade Rendel to change his mind, but it was all in vain.

WOODBROOKE

The settlement was Woodbrooke. Before going further, it is better to take some steps backwards, and to consider Rendel's involvement with the Religious Society of Friends and the origins of the college. Rendel was a leader of the Quaker liberal movement. This movement aimed at reforming Quakerism in the light of the innovations and discoveries in contemporary biblical scholarship, theology, philosophy and social sciences. Stress was placed upon understanding faith and Scripture in the light of reason and historical research.

Liberal Friends like John Wilhelm Rowntree were the promoters of the Manchester Conference of 1895, in which the liberal and the evangelical members laid out their positions. Rendel took part in the conference with an

important speech in which he dealt with the necessity of keeping together religion and modern thought, and of using the instruments of the latter to study the former.³⁴

Concerning Scripture and truth he said:

No other century since the beginning has cared for Him enough to try to write His history. But perhaps it is the Scriptures that they are going to steal; they cannot steal from us the truth of immediate Revelation and direct communication with God, which was before the Scriptures, and was the cause of them. We have been told in these meetings that the Scriptures are the ultimate test of truth; if that un-Quakerly proposition be true, the criticism of them is a gross impertinence; but the internal discords of all Scriptures, and of all explanations of Scriptures, ought to be enough to convince us that we have no infallibility in the house, not a drop. [...] But while we have no infallibility we have some splendid probabilities, and one of them in particular is of such high order that we call it 'The certainty of love, which sets our hearts at rest.'³⁵

After the conference the liberal Quakers kept promoting their ideas within the Society. In August 1897 Rowntree and others organised the first Quaker Summer School, which was held in Scarborough. The tutors, many of whom were Cambridge and Oxford scholars, taught Old Testament, New Testament, church history, and social subjects. The students got acquainted with facsimiles of ancient manuscripts, and were introduced to the most recent discoveries in textual criticism.³⁶ Rendel was one of the teachers, and his classes were very successful. In 1899 Rowntree proposed the establishment of a permanent summer school in order to train Quakers for ministry.³⁷ In 1902 George Cadbury, who was already involved in the Summer School work, thought of dedicating Woodbrooke, a house of his in Selly Oak, Birmingham, to train 'young men and women [...] whose hearts the Lord has filled with the desire to do real earnest aggressive Christian work for the Church of which they are members.'³⁸ Cadbury joined with Rowntree in order to found an educational settlement at Woodbrooke.

A problem of paramount importance was the appointment of the first Director of Studies, so that the right atmosphere could be created from the outset and criticism silenced. Considering the concern being expressed by many weighty evangelical Friends, an initial mistake would have been difficult to outlive. In May 1902 J. W. Rowntree, on behalf of the small team working on the project, asked Rufus M. Jones to come to England and to become the head of Woodbrooke. Jones refused. Woodbrooke was a very daring and uncertain educational experiment, while Jones was already committed to the Haverford College and to US Quakers. Cadbury received the decision with some dismay.³⁹ According to his plans after only two years Jones would have been free to go back to the US and would have been replaced by Rendel, presumably because he was one of the stars of the summer schools and a leading biblical

scholar. On 12 December 1902 Cadbury contacted Rendel, who accepted. There may have been several reasons why Rendel decided to move to Birmingham. First, Woodbrooke was a centre through which he could make a serious contribution to the life of British Quakerism. Second, he could shape the settlement according to his own wishes. Third, this position was less time consuming than a university appointment.

Woodbrooke opened on 13 October 1903. The teaching staff was of the first rank, as the Director felt bound to keep the standard at least as high as that of the recently founded University of Birmingham. Cadbury did not want anything less than the best for the institution, no matter what it took. However, Rendel's ideas about the settlement did not coincide with Rowntree's and Cadbury's plans. According to Rendel the aim of the settlement was 'to help young men and women to think things out, to study social and religious problems, to prepare them for practical service.'⁴⁰ He did not consider it as just a centre for training Quaker ministers and promoting the liberal side of the Society.⁴¹

The high level of the teaching entailed that only a small number of students were able fully to understand the lectures. Many, if not most, of the British Friends who attended Woodbrooke had little academic training and they expected practical instruction in Quaker principles and biblical studies, whereas the teaching staff aimed at high academic standards and Rendel laid stress on biblical Greek, Hebrew and Syriac. Especially difficult were the classes given by Rendel on New Testament textual criticism, patristic literature, and church history. These classes were mistakenly based on the assumption that the students had the necessary background knowledge. Moreover, before lecturing Rendel made little or no preparation.⁴² At any rate, Rendel's wide erudition and ingenuity produced a most unconventional manner of teaching, so that the number of anecdotes and tales about his classes grew fast. His students used to say, 'When the Doctor gives a title to a lecture, you may be sure of one thing he won't lecture about.'⁴³ One day Rendel announced an unscheduled lecture on the Epistle to the Ephesians. At the end of it a young student approached to congratulate him on the class, but she couldn't help asking why he did not even mention the Epistle. 'My dear child, why ever should I?' was the reply.⁴⁴

Among the pupils there was for many years a group from the Netherlands with a solid academic training. Since Rendel had not gone to Leyden, the Leyden students came to him. They were most able to benefit from his teaching and a few of them later became important scholars and Church leaders of world-wide reputation.

THE SPIRITUAL WORKS

Rendel's direction influenced Woodbrooke not only from an academic point of view, but also from a spiritual one, in particular with his devotional addresses,

such as the so-called 'Monday Mornings'. Rendel was a prolific writer of devotional works.⁴⁵ The heart of his spiritual beliefs was the idea of direct communication with God. Rendel wrote, 'As we learn to live the life of dependence upon the Lord, we must be not surprised if a great deal of our early theology drops off [...] I am amazed to find how much of true religion may be resolved into that one word 'dependence'.⁴⁶

'Dependence' was a daily experience. He thought that this experience, which goes beyond the limits of a particular Church, brings Christians towards an ever-increasing faith. The Believers must think their relationship with Christ on the highest possible planes, without false modesty:

Hyperbole on the experimental side is one of the characteristics of a Divine revelation [...]. Let God promise like God, and do you believe like a child of God. Make a collection of the hyperbolic promises of God, and you have the materials for the dogmatic statement of a full salvation [...].⁴⁷

Rendel fully relied on God's direct guidance, as he found evidence of it in his own life. He was convinced that this guidance brings about tangible results:

Some may be content with scoring an occasional success: the true prophet aspires after a communion with the Lord, according to which his Master will be with him and *let none of his words fall to the ground*, although he knows that this means not only previous instruction, but also a wary walking and a constant watching.⁴⁸

Not even death can hinder the achievement of a full experience of life; death is not a terminus, but a starting point.⁴⁹ The process of spiritual growth begins with obedience and dependence, passes through divine guidance and the development of one's own personality, and moves towards life beyond death. Rendel held fast to these principles even when, after the death of Helen and the trauma of the Great War, he had to come to terms with the presence of noise in the music of the world.⁵⁰

PUBLIC LIFE

Rendel's spiritual works in addition to his scholarly achievements and his engagement for Armenia were probably among the reasons why he was appointed president of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches from 1907 to 1908. Moreover, some years earlier, Rendel had taken an active role in opposing the 1902 Education Act, which many believed gave a privileged position in the teaching of religion to the Anglican Church. He had reacted very strongly against the Act and promoted tax objection as a non-

violent means of contravening it.⁵¹

RESEARCH ON *TESTIMONIA* AND ON TWIN CULTS

During the first quarter of the twentieth century Rendel's scholarly output was remarkable. One of his most enduring contributions to scholarship on early Christian literature is the *testimonia* hypothesis. Studying early Fathers (Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Athanasius, etc.) he noted the habit of quoting a number of Old Testament passages around a certain theme or a catchword. He found that different writers without apparent connections quoted the same or similar clusters of passages, and made similar errors in attributing them or in the wording of the texts. The most likely explanation was that these authors employed common sources. Initially, Rendel thought that, starting from the second century, Christians produced many collections of what they considered the most important Old Testament passages, and that these works were employed by writers and missionaries to prove that Jesus and the Christian Church fulfilled what had been prophesied in the Scriptures.⁵² He called these quotations *testimonia*, after the traditional title of a famous scriptural collection of the third century, Cyprian's *Ad Quirinum*. However, Rendel is best known for the subsequent theory that Christians produced, soon after Jesus' death, only one collection, the *Testimony Book*, which was modified in the course of time and drawn on by the writers of the New Testament and by the Fathers.⁵³ The testimony problem has been an object of study, with changing fortunes, for over a hundred years, and consensus is growing around the hypothesis that there were many collections circulating among Christians starting from the second, and probably even the first century.⁵⁴ It is interesting to remark that the freedom with which Christians handled the Old Testament, extrapolating passages, associating different quotations, and sometimes altering texts, has been explained in more recent scholarship with words recalling George Fox's journal: these collectors believed that they had the same spirit which produced the Scriptures, and therefore felt justified in working on them as they saw fit.⁵⁵ It is also interesting to note that a similar explanation has been provided for the unusual readings of Codex Bezae and in general for a certain freedom in the transmission of the text of the New Testament in the first two or three centuries.⁵⁶

Rendel also made inquiries in other fields of research. Between 1903 and 1913 he published three books on the phenomenon of the cult of twins.⁵⁷ While working on liturgical calendars, Rendel had accidentally discovered that many saints were actually twins. He then suspected that the Church deliberately used them to displace the worship of the most famous pagan twins, Castor and Pollux. This discovery led him to find traces of twin cults in a number of different cultures. In later years, he carried on research on folklore with the study of the Greek pantheon. He proposed in a number of articles that several Greek gods were originally associated with the cult of plants.⁵⁸

THE LAST JOURNEYS TO THE NEAR EAST

Amidst his continuing scholarly and spiritual activities, Rendel found time to travel. In 1912-13 he spent some months in Constantinople, offering assistance to the Christian war refugees fleeing from the Balkans. Three years later he set off on a new trip.⁵⁹

The death of Helen in 1914 and the outbreak of World War I may have brought about the feeling that his scholarship was inadequate to the immediate necessities of the conflict. This is probably why in 1916 he accepted a warm invitation from his friend, the New Testament scholar James Hope Moulton, to support his missionary work in India. On 17 November 1916 Rendel left from Liverpool on the *City of Birmingham* in order to reach Bombay via the Mediterranean Sea. Ten days later, not far from Malta, the steamer was torpedoed by a German submarine. The passengers were rescued by a steamer after three and a half hours and brought to Alexandria. Rendel recovered quickly and then went off looking for manuscripts. He explored the countryside and contacted the local farmers who sometimes dug up scraps of papyri which, if they managed to escape the surveillance of the authorities, they would sell to western buyers.⁶⁰

After gathering a remarkable collection, he decided to return to England with Moulton, who, in the meantime, had come to Egypt. On 30 March 1917 the *City of Paris* set off from Port Said for Marseilles. On 4 April a German submarine destroyed the ship. Rendel and Moulton managed to board the same lifeboat and, after four harrowing days, Corsica came into sight and a ship from the island saved the survivors. Moulton was not among them. The manuscript collection had been left in the Museum in Cairo, and was safely shipped to Britain at a later stage.⁶¹

Despite these frightening experiences, in 1922-23 Rendel returned to Mount Sinai. He had read in a report on the monastery library the description of a manuscript which seemed to be a famous early Christian work, the *Diatessaron* of Tatian. This is a second century harmony, i.e. a continuous story of the life of Jesus made by pasting together bits of the Gospels. If his guess had been correct, Rendel would have made one of the most striking discoveries in the history of New Testament studies. Eventually, the manuscript turned out to be a valueless text. The disappointment was probably mitigated by the acquisition of papyri in the Egyptian countryside.⁶²

BETWEEN MANCHESTER AND BIRMINGHAM: THE *ODES* OF SOLOMON AND THE MINGANA COLLECTION

Since 1915 Rendel had been Emeritus Director of Studies of Woodbrooke, turning over the leadership of that institution to Herbert G. Wood, whose fresh enthusiasm was more appropriate for conducting the college through the new problems caused by the war. In 1918 Rendel left Birmingham and moved to

Manchester, where he had been appointed Curator of Manuscripts at the John Rylands Library. This appointment reflected his worldwide reputation as a scholar and allowed him to work on his most famous discovery. On 9 January 1909 Rendel had picked up from his library a little Syriac manuscript, which had been in his possession for two years. A rapid survey proved it to contain the hitherto lost *Odes of Solomon*, a masterpiece of early Christian literature.⁶³

This discovery appeared in all the major newspapers, and many translations were made across the western world. The Rylands Library entrusted Rendel and his friend Alphonse Mingana with the task of publishing the manuscript with commentary.⁶⁴

More manuscript findings were made by Mingana.⁶⁵ Mingana had arrived at Woodbrooke in 1913. Coming from Iraq, and fluent in Arabic, Hebrew, Syriac, Persian, Kurdish, Latin and French, but not in English, he was looking for support, a step suggested to him by a western missionary in Eastern Turkey who had met Rendel in 1896. Rendel immediately recognised that a scholar of the first rank was at his disposal. In 1924, 1925, and 1929 he sent Mingana to the Near East with the financial backing of Edward Cadbury, George's son. The outcome of these expeditions is the outstanding Mingana collection, including Syriac, Arabic and Persian manuscripts. Many items are unique, some of them are even autographs.

In 1925 Rendel returned to Selly Oak. His personal library became the Rendel Harris Library, near Woodbrooke, of which he was appointed head. To house the priceless collection gathered by Mingana a new library was built.⁶⁶

THE HOLY GRAIL

Rendel was not only a successful finder of precious manuscripts. After the war his friend Adolf Deissman, the German New Testament scholar, had sent him a first century C.E. chalice. This cup presented a Greek inscription around the rim reading, 'Friend, what are you here for? Be merry!' The Greek of the first sentence corresponds exactly, but without the question mark, to the Greek of Matthew 26:50, according to which Jesus said to Judas in Gethsemane, 'Friend, you are here for this.' According to Rendel, Jesus quoted to Judas words that were inscribed on the cup they had just used to drink. Several other cups of the same type have been found. From a cup of this sort, which Rendel called 'the Holy Grail', Jesus may have drunk.⁶⁷

THE LAST YEARS

Progressive blindness no longer allowed Rendel to study his beloved manuscripts, so that by the end of the 1920s he turned his interest to other

directions. In particular, he studied the migration of cultures and peoples in the most remote past.⁶⁸

For instance, he proposed evidence that the Egyptians colonised Europe and other continents. Some of his hypotheses were most speculative, but they surely witness to a genius who did not fear to enjoy himself in daring scholarly adventures. Rendel carried on research until he died at Selly Oak on 1 March 1941.

NOTES

- 1 Letter of James Rendel Harris to Irene Speller, 28/5/1919 ('Correspondence with Irene Speller Pickard 1912-39', G Har 13, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre archives, Birmingham).
- 2 He used to sign himself as J. Rendel Harris, and only Rendel when writing to his wife. This is the way I will refer to him in this article.
- 3 For reasons of space, I do not aim at a critical assessment of Rendel's works, but at presenting the principal lines of his research. A book-format biography is nearing completion. His written output was very large indeed: besides the British Library catalogue, there is also an almost complete bibliographical list that takes into account unpublished writings (L. Sinclair, 'A List of Writings, etc., of James Rendel Harris (1852-1941)' [typescript, Rendel Harris collection, Woodbrooke]).
- 4 Short biographical notices like obituaries are nearly all the published material about Rendel. The most important obituary was written by Herbert George Wood *et al.*, 'James Rendel Harris: 1852-1941', *The Friend*, 99 (1941), pp. 115-19. See also Wood *et al.*, 'The Doctor', *The Woodbrooke International Journal* no. 41 (1941), pp. 2-15; Wood, 'The First Director of Studies', in R. Davis (ed.), *Woodbrooke 1903-1953. A Brief History of a Quaker Experiment in Religious Education* (London: The Bannisdale Press, 1953), pp. 19-30. A collection of memories has been compiled by Rendel's secretary Irene Pickard: *Memories of J. Rendel Harris* (private publication, 1978). The major collections of Rendel's papers are at Woodbrooke, at the Orchard Learning Resources Centre (University of Birmingham), and at Haverford College (Pennsylvania).
- 5 On Rendel's family see the autobiography of his nephew, W. Harris (*Life So Far* [London: Jonathan College, 1954], pp. 11-28).
- 6 See M.E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Lanham, MD.: The Scarecrow Press, 1996), pp. 129-69.
- 7 Wood, 'The First Director of Studies', 21.
- 8 On Helen Balkwill see the obituary in *The Annual Monitor for 1915* (Gloucester: John Bellows, 1914), pp. 106-116.
- 9 Rendel's application for membership is reported in the 'Cambridge, Huntingdon & Lynn Monthly Meeting, Minute Book', and 'List of Members' (respectively R59/26/5/1 and R59/26/5/8, Cambridgeshire County Record Office, Cambridge).
- 10 Anonymous handwritten note, I would say by Herbert G. Wood, dated 6 August 1936, reporting a conversation with Rendel on how he joined the Society (folder 1, G Har 14, Woodbrooke archives).
- 11 M.A. Backhouse, 'James Rendel Harris', in *London Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends 1942. Reports and Documents presented to the Yearly Meeting together with Minutes and Index* (London: Headley Brothers, 1942), pp. 182-84.
- 12 'J.R. Harris' (Harrison Index, Clare College archives, Cambridge).
- 13 *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (London: MacMillan, 1881). Rendel refers to this conversion in *Sidelights on New Testament Research* (London: Kingsgate, 1908), pp. 8-9.
- 14 On Rendel and the Johns Hopkins University see H. Hawkins, *Pioneer: A History of the Johns Hopkins University 1874-1889* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), pp. 152-54.
- 15 *The Sun*, 13 February 1885.
- 16 The official reason of Rendel's resignation concerned the issue of freedom of speech, whereas

- all the biographical notices mistakenly point to his protest against vivisection. The documentation on this story is kept in 'James Rendel Harris Vertical File', Special Collections, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore.
- 17 *Haverford College. An History and an Interpretation* (New York: MacMillan, 1933), p. 95.
 - 18 These are two Greek codices from the fourth century: the former is kept in the Vatican Library, the latter in the British Library.
 - 19 This is a fifth century bilingual (Greek and Latin) codex, which is kept in the Cambridge University Library.
 - 20 Rendel's chief works on Codex Bezae are: *Codex Bezae. a study of the so-called western text of the New Testament* (Texts and Studies, 2.1; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891); *The Annotators of Codex Bezae (with Some Notes on Sortes Sanctorum)* (London: Clay, 1901). Fundamental on Codex Bezae is D.C. Parker, *Codex Bezae. An Early Christian Manuscript and Its Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). This book takes into account many of Rendel's ideas.
 - 21 I reconstruct this expedition mainly by using the journal Rendel and his wife kept during the journey (James Rendel Harris papers, Orchard Learning Resources Centre).
 - 22 J.R. Harris and S.K. Gifford, *The Acts of the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas. The Original Greek Text* (London: Clay, 1890).
 - 23 *The Apology of Aristides* (Texts and Studies, 1; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891).
 - 24 A.W. Price has written a enjoyable biography of the two sisters: *The Ladies of Castlebrae. a story of nineteenth-century travel and research* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1985).
 - 25 J.R. Harris, F.C. Burkitt, and R.L. Bensly (eds.), *The Four Gospels in Syriac Transcribed from the Sinai Palimpsest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1894).
 - 26 'Armenia Relief Committee (1896-1899)' (Central Organisation Volume, Friends House archives, London).
 - 27 Rendel and Helen gathered the letters they wrote to friends at home in *Letters from the Scenes of the Recent Massacres in Armenia* (London: Nisbet, 1897).
 - 28 A good deal of material on Rendel's and Helen's relief work for the Armenians is in lot 1, James Rendel Harris papers, Orchard Learning Resources Centre.
 - 29 In *Letters from Armenia* Rendel does not give details about the manuscripts he bought.
 - 30 [Correspondence between Rendel and Helen, November 1896-January 1897] ('Book IV', James Rendel Harris papers, Orchard Learning Resources Centre).
 - 31 On Rendel's university lectureship see the minutes of the senate in the *Cambridge University Reporter*, n. 936, 31/5/1892, pp. 854-56. Serious resistance was made against creating a permanent lectureship *ad personam*.
 - 32 It has been proposed that the appointment might have been favoured by Helen's pro-Boer work in the British concentration camps in South Africa in 1901, where Boer families had been confined (see Wood, 'The First Director of Studies', p.21). A different proposal comes from H.H. Hewison (*Hedge of Wild Almonds: South Africa, the pro-Boers & the Quaker conscience, 1890-1910* [London: James Currey, 1989], p. 223). Helen, after visiting the camps, seemed to have softened her position towards the British government, and, therefore, she could have been an object of resentment in the Netherlands. This would have prompted her husband's refusal. However, Hewison notes that we know very little about Helen's attitude towards the camps.
 - 33 Rendel's letter to the Faculty of the University of Leyden, 23/6/1903, enclosed in his letter to his sister Catherine Whibley, 23/6/1903 ('Barbara Angus Papers', James Rendel Harris papers, Orchard Learning Resources Centre). As to the problem of Rendel's appointment I draw on the research kindly carried out by Prof. J. van den Berg in the archives of Leyden University (personal correspondence, September 1995-May 1996).
 - 34 *Report of the Proceedings of the Conference of the Society of Friends, held by direction of the Yearly Meeting, in Manchester from the eleventh to the fifteenth of eleventh month, 1895* (London: Headley Brothers, 1896), pp. 218-26.
 - 35 *Report*, pp. 222-23.
 - 36 Detailed reports on this summer school are in the August-September issues of *The Friend* 37 (1897).

- 37 On Woodbrooke's beginnings see H.G. Wood, 'Origins', in Davies (ed.), *Woodbrooke 1903-1953*, pp. 13-18. Copies of the letters written by Cadbury, Rowntree and Jones about the founding of Woodbrooke are kept in the file 'Woodbrooke History I', C 4, Woodbrooke archives. Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism 1860-1920: the transformation of a religious community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), came to my notice too late.
- 38 Letter of G. Cadbury to E.E. Borne, 18/11/1901 ('Woodbrooke History I').
- 39 Letter of G. Cadbury to J.W. Rowntree, 26/11/1902 ('Woodbrooke History I').
- 40 'Dr Rendel Harris at home', *The Christian Commonwealth*, 7/3/1907.
- 41 'You see the straits I am reduced to in trying to save Woodbrooke from becoming a Friends Boarding School' (Rendel's letter to William C. Braithwaite, 2/3/1906 ['Letters from J. Rendel Harris 1899-1923', G Har 12, Woodbrooke archives]).
- 42 Particularly scathing were the letters sent by the warden William Littleboy to W.C. Braithwaite and the reports he submitted to the Woodbrooke Committee ('William Littleboy. Letters written by W. L. 1905-1907', G Litt, Woodbrooke archives).
- 43 'Dr. Harris' Angus Lectures', *The Old Woodbrookers Magazine* no. 9 (1909), p. 68.
- 44 G.R. Howe, 'The Lighter Side of a Weighty Friend' [p. 3] (typescript, 'Biographical Material', G Har 4, Woodbrooke archives). Probably, the following memory of an affectionate student is the clearest record of Rendel's way of teaching: 'Some of us, indifferent Greeks and faint Hebraists, found ourselves excitedly reading Justin Martyr or Athanasius or the Book of Genesis or Psalms, breathlessly limping along with our lame Greek or Hebrew while he rushed impetuously ahead. He found beauty lurking everywhere; even from the most arid wilderness of Patristic Greek, there were frequent flowers to be culled' (H.M. Heath, 'From an Old Woodbrooker's Point of View', *The Woodbrooke Chronicle* no. 10 [1918], pp. 43-44, 44).
- 45 Rendel's spiritual books are: *Memoranda Sacra* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1892); *Union with God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895); *The Guiding Hand of God* (London: National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, 1905); *Aaron's Breastplate* (London: National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, 1908); *The Sufferings and the Glory* (London: Headley Brothers, 1914); *As Pants the Hart* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924). I give a synchronic account of Rendel's spiritual strongholds, as they kept recurring throughout his life.
- 46 *Memoranda Sacra*, p.40.
- 47 *Aaron's Breastplate*, p. 39.
- 48 *Guiding Hand*, pp. 101-102
- 49 *Guiding Hand*, p. 106. There is a telling story about Rendel's understanding of death. One day, during a funeral a nine-year old girl was sobbing in a corner of the graveyard for the death of her parent. Rendel took her hand, did not say anything, and walked the little girl around the graveyard. Only when she calmed down did he speak: 'Never be afraid of the Road to Paradise, dear. It's a conducted tour.' (Howe, 'The Lighter Side of a Weighty Friend' [p. 3]).
- 50 This is one of the themes of *As Pants the Hart*.
- 51 He wrote a sort of manifesto: 'Passive Resistance. A letter from J. Rendel Harris to the Nonconformists of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely', *The British Weekly* 1/12/1902.
- 52 The first study in which Rendel refers at length to *testimonia* is 'The structure of the Gospel of Peter', *The Contemporary Review* 64 (1893), pp. 212-36.
- 53 His classic work is *Testimonies* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916/1920). It is mostly a collection of articles published over nearly twenty years, with the addition of some chapters written by a collaborator, Henry Vacher Burch.
- 54 An important study which restates the case for the existence of testimony collections is M.C. Abl, 'And scripture cannot be broken'. *The form and function of the early Christian testimonia collections* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).
- 55 Regarding a priest who, expounding 2 Pet. 1:19, had said that the Scriptures were 'the touchstone' of all doctrines, Fox wrote: 'Oh no, it is not the Scriptures [...] But I told them what it was, namely the Holy Spirit, by which the holy men of God gave forth the Scriptures, whereby opinions, religions and judgements must be tried [...]'. G.L. Nickalls [ed.], *The Journal of George Fox* [London: London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1986], p. 40).

- On the freedom in quoting *testimonia*, see P. Grech, 'Testimonia and Modern Hermeneutics', *New Testament Studies* 19 (1973), pp. 318-24.
- 56 See D.C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 202-213.
- 57 *The Dioscuri in Christian Legends* (London: Clay, 1903); *The Cult of the Heavenly Twins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906); *Boanerges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913).
- 58 The articles were collected in one volume: *The Ascent of Olympus* (Manchester: John Rylands Library, 1917).
- 59 The story is told by Rendel himself in *Ulysses to His Friends* (private publication, 1917).
- 60 Some information on Rendel's manuscript dealings are in his correspondence with Irene Speller ('Correspondence with Irene Speller Pickard 1912-39').
- 61 The manuscripts were divided between the Rylands Library and Woodbrooke. The latter is now the Rendel Harris Papyri Collection of the Orchard Learning Resources Centre, University of Birmingham.
- 62 Rendel described the expedition in the letters he sent to his secretary ('Correspondence with Irene Speller Pickard 1912-1939').
- 63 The Syriac text with translation and commentary can be read in the critical edition by J.H. Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).
- 64 *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon* (2 vols.; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1916/1920). The first account of the discovery was given in 'An Early Christian Hymn-Book', *The Contemporary Review* 95 (1909), pp. 414-28.
- 65 S.K. Samir, *Alphonse Mingana 1878-1937 and His Contribution to Early Christian Studies* (Birmingham: Selly Oak Colleges, 1990).
- 66 The library has in recent years moved to a new building across the road and it is now the Orchard Learning Resources Centre of the University of Birmingham.
- 67 See 'Deissman and the Holy Grail', *The Expository Times* 35 (1924), pp. 523-24; 'Glass Chalice of the First Century', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 11 (1927), pp. 286-95.
- 68 See the collections of essays: *Woodbrooke Essays* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1927-28); *Caravan Essays* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1929); *Sunset Essays* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1930-31); *Evergreen Essays* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1931-32); *The After-Glow Essays* (London: University of London Press, 1933-35). See also *The Migration of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1936).

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AUTHOR DETAILS

Alessandro Falcetta was a Woodbrooke student from January - June 1995. He has a B.A. in classics from Bologna University in 1996. He was a Woodbrooke study resident from January-October 1997, Ph.D. in theology at the University of Birmingham in 2000. He was a student at École Biblique et Archéologique Française, Jerusalem in 2000-2002. Alessandro is currently doing a post-doctoral degree in Bologna (Italy) at the Institute for religious sciences.

Mailing address: Alessandro Falcetta, Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, Via S. Vitale 114, 40125 Bologna, Italy. Email: afalcetta@yahoo.com