

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the second issue in Volume 5, the volume which has heralded a new look for Quaker Studies and has been an important landmark in the academic history of Quaker studies worldwide.

As is usual, this issue covers all periods of Quaker history and through a number of disciplines. David J. Hall's address to the 1999 Quaker Studies Research Association conference on eighteenth-century Quaker history and historiography is reprinted here; Mel Keiser writes on the dualism, or not, of Barclay's theologizing in his *Apology* and a contemporary essay; Camilla Leach and Joyce Goodman analyse the views of the Quaker educationalist, Priscilla Wakefield, across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; Peter Collins explores the enduring role that 'the plain' has within Quaker morals and aesthetics, and how it offers a significant challenge to the dominant 'aestheticization' inherent in late modernity, that is, the process through which everything is aestheticized, or treated in primarily aesthetic terms. The issue also includes book reviews by Douglas Gwyn, Sylvia Stevens, and Jeanne-Henriette Louis.

In 1997, Larry Ingle, Professor of History at the University of Tennessee (and International Advisory Panel member) gave the Friends' Historical Society Presidential Address, held that year at Aberystwyth. With typical vigour, energy, and forthrightness, he gave an overview of the current state of historical research into Quakerism. David Hall contests Larry Ingle's view that 'from the end of the seventeenth century to the very end of the nineteenth English Quaker history is pretty much a void' (*Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* 58.1, 1997: 10). Drawing initially on the Rowntree series of histories written by Rufus Jones and W.B. Braithwaite, but including numerous other twentieth-century scholars, Hall outlines a mosaic of different types of historical work on the eighteenth century. Jones' work remains the most elaborate general history but is framed within a view of the quietistic century as one of

decline and moribund spirituality. Hall points to the possibility of a collaborative new general history of the eighteenth century which would reveal an alternative view of that century as eventful and important. The recent PhD thesis from Richard Allen, 'Friends in Wales, 1654-1836' (University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1999), while on Wales, is surely part of the new scholarship Hall finds so much hope in, as is the work of Adrian Davies (*The Quakers in English Society, 1655-1725*, published by Oxford University Press, 2000—see the next issue for a review) and the current doctoral work on Quakers in north-east Norfolk in the eighteenth century by Sylvia Stevens.

Mel Keiser contributes an academic piece with a personal element. As a Quaker as well as a Quaker studies scholar, he turns his academic findings to personal use in his own theologizing. Robert Barclay is one of the few systematic Quaker theologians and his *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1676) was and is a standard work. It is held to have become a standard Quaker household text in the eighteenth century, contributing in its anxious and self-less spirituality to a more passive and world-rejecting form of Quakerism. Later it became a critical marker of orthodoxy, in either its presence or absence on Quaker bookshelves, Yearly Meetings choosing to reprint it or not, depending on their theological hue.

Keiser draws a distinction initially between a theological method based on Cartesian dualism and 'relational' theology, a theological process relating personal experience to the collective worship event. In this process, theological principles emerge as secondary consequences to the felt experience. Descartes, on the other hand, in his rational search for certainty separated mind and body, self and the world, self and God. While he found certainty in reason, and Protestantism found certainty in Scripture, Keiser argues that Quakers found certainty in experience. He says that Quaker terms such as inward and outward, spirit and letter were paired in a complementary rather than dualistic fashion. The outward, for example, emerges out of the depth of the inward. Keiser disagrees with Creasey, Endy and Punshon in claiming that Barclay only adopted Cartesian dualism when in conversation with dualists rather than throughout his texts. In a paper which also critiques Pyper's recent work, Barclay emerges as an early Liberal Quaker who only adopted tools other than his own (non-dualist ones) when confronting the users of those tools. It is a compelling thesis even while it fits so well with Mel Keiser's personal theological preferences and processes.

Barclay's descendent, Priscilla Wakefield, is the subject of the next piece. In 1798 she published *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex, with Suggestions for its Improvement*, and a year later the Anglican Hannah More published *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*—both written in the anxious years following the French Revolution. Camilla Leach and Joyce Goodman explore Wakefield's views, compare them with More's, and account for the ways in which Wakefield's Quakerism underpinned her writing. Wakefield argued for a rational education for women (a) to save them from what they might otherwise become, and (b) to help advance the nation and keep it from the fresh revolutionary impulse of its neighbour. It is never easy to identify which source ideas spring from, but Leach and Goodman claim Wakefield's literary journal makes it clear that her Quaker beliefs underpinned her ideas of gender and nation. We can wait with interest for Camilla Leach's PhD thesis and see how far her findings fit with those of Elizabeth O'Donnell, who concluded in her study of Newcastle Monthly Meeting of Women Friends ('Woman's Rights and Woman's Duties: Quaker Women in the Nineteenth Century', PhD thesis, University of Sunderland, 2000) that the more feminist or proto-feminist often felt their interests would be better served outside the Society (see the article in the next issue).

It was in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* in 1996 that Peter Collins introduced us to his concept of 'plaining' and the way in which 'plain' for Friends has been both a product and a process. Plainness as a concept within British Quakerism became connected to 'simplicity' in Victorian times, and in the 1860s London Yearly Meeting decided it need no longer demand plain speech and plain dress from its Members because they could exercise 'simplicity' without the help of anachronistic outward forms. Collins finds the continuation of plaining in the present-day emphasis on simplicity. It is found, Collins, argues, in a Quaker cognitive and moral approach, a 'way of seeing': anything can be plain, he suggests. Its history is pre-Quaker and Collins shows that the plain has been locked into a dialogue with 'the grand', one construct with another. Wolfgang Welsch has argued that in the commodification of life, everything, now consumerable, is also aestheticized, as the pleasure of consumption has become so foregrounded in late modernity. Reality itself becomes an aestheticized commodity, relayed to us through stylized globalized computer media. Collins concludes that the plain, as an alternative construction, can at least allow the dialogue to continue,

and thus prevent dominant ideological values from becoming so normative as to be seen as 'natural'. Whether the plain is as resilient as Collins suggests, and whether, within a secularising Quakerism, it still carries the moral and spiritual imperative Collins attributes to it, will be fertile ground for future research.

Sheffield Academic Press, the Editorial Board and myself continue to try and make this journal the cutting edge of new scholarship into Quakerism. I hope you will continue to support that process by submitting material yourself and by helping spread the word. Equally, I hope you enjoy this issue.

'Ben' Pink Dandelion
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