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SOME QUAKER ATTITUDES TO THE PRINTED WORD IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

This study uses the evidence of one Meeting House's collection of old books to explore Quaker understanding of the experience of reading. The Religious Society of Friends sought to exercise considerable control over the literary interests of its members, but charges of narrow-mindedness need to be set against the wider historical context and the practice of teaching literacy to all Quaker children. In addition to the patriarchal tone found in much advice and commentary on reading, Quaker books reflected concerns about both rationalism and evangelical 'biblicism'. Although books were an important consolidating and educating force within the Society, reading as an intellectual pursuit was regarded as being of limited value to Quaker faith.

KEYWORDS

History of reading, Quaker books, nineteenth century

This study explores nineteenth-century Quaker attitudes to books and reading in the context of a collection of 129 'old books' in the library of the Friends' Meeting House in Bewdley, Worcestershire. The majority of the books were given to the Meeting House in the second half of the nineteenth century. Of the books that can be dated, two were published in the seventeenth century, twenty-eight in the eighteenth century, and eighty-seven in the nineteenth century. Over a third of the collection (fifty-three books), were published in the 1830s and 1840s, when three distinct strands of Quaker thought have been identified; quietest, evangelical and a small 'Unitarian element'.[1] Although the first two of these strands are evident in the books, none of the theological differences that divided Friends was ever clearly debated within their pages, and Quaker thought held to the common rejection of formal doctrinal statements. Instead of developing Quaker theology, there was a strong tendency in the nineteenth century to reprint older works in order to reinforce what were seen as Friends' founding principles, and no doubt it was the same

spirit of reverence for traditions that ensured the preservation and circulation of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century works.

The Religious Society of Friends exercised considerable control over its members' literary output. It was established in1666 that 'faithful and sound Friends' were to inspect all Quaker manuscripts before printing.[2] From 1673, all Quaker manuscripts 'concerning the principles of Friends' had to be submitted to the Second Day's Morning-Meeting (of Ministers and Elders) in London for revision, and this practice continued until 1860.[3] Those manuscripts that were not approved for official publication might still be printed privately, or published elsewhere, but authors did not thereby escape attempts at control by the Society since they were only 'at liberty to publish or reprint their own works, provided they take the risk upon themselves, where the same have been revised and approved by the morning meeting'.[4]

While the Morning Meeting corrected manuscripts, Meeting for Sufferings was responsible for the production and distribution of books. From 1672, it had 'the care of inspecting, ordering, regulating the press and printing of books'. Monthly Meetings were responsible for paying for a 'quota' of these 'official' Quaker works, being obliged 'to take off two books of a sort newly printed, if under the price of two shillings and sixpence, and one to each meeting, if the value is more'.[5]

From 1682, Quarterly Meetings were to advise Meeting for Sufferings of those who were 'fit to sell and dispose of friends' books', and a minute of 1764 encouraged Friends to 'acquaint all booksellers, under our name, with the painful anxiety occasioned...by a report of some instances of selling or lending' books considered 'pernicious'.[6] What Quakers admitted to reading was seen as an important test of the soundness of their views; in 1812, for example, Thomas Foster was disowned by the Society as a consequence of subscribing to the Unitarian Book Society.[7]

Many Meetings had libraries to ensure that all members had access to approved Quaker works. Meetings were advised both to keep catalogues of their books, and to keep a check on those loaned out 'in order that upon the decease of any friends in possession of such books, or upon any other occasion, the said books may be preserved for the use of the society'.[8] Yearly Meeting of 1821 urged local meetings to encourage circulation of their books.[9]

The evidence of Bewdley Meeting suggests that it was private networks of Friends that supplied the majority of reading material that found a permanent home in the Meeting House.[10] The original catalogue is lost, but the catalogue numbering on the books suggests that there were once more in the collection than the 129 that remain, and some were probably lost in circulation. Most of the surviving books are standard texts on Quaker doctrine and lives, although a few of the books were written by non-Quakers. Many were produced by a select group of printers, and they are remarkably uniform (and plain) in appearance. They may not be entirely representative of nineteenth-century English Quakers. Nevertheless, in a study of the history of reading they form a reasonably coherent body of evidence that can be set in a specific context.

The history of books and reading is a comparatively new but rapidly growing discipline, covering a range of topics from the manufacture, publication and distribution of texts to reception and survival. Jane Desforges has already undertaken an

illuminating study that offers one perspective on Quaker reading in the period 1770–1820.[11] She looks at diaries and correspondence of a small group of 'weighty' middle-class London Quakers, including Joseph Woods and Jasper Capper. Capper, as Clerk to Meeting for Sufferings, would have been involved with the Society's arrangements for (re)printing Quaker works. Woods and Capper were both part of a literary circle of Friends who met regularly in what came to be known as 'Quakers Corner' in the Carolina Coffee House, where they read and discussed a range of newspapers and periodicals. James Phillips, the printer, was also part of this group.[12] The diaries of Margaret Woods and Anne Capper suggest that they concentrated on a variety of mostly religious works and poetry, but travel and natural history also formed a part of this group of Friends' reading, while from Joseph Woods' private letters we learn that he also read Ovid, Homer, Plutarch, Fielding, Swift, Addison, Cervantes and *The Arabian Nights Entertainment.*[13]

Michele Lise Tarter has also opened up a previously neglected aspect of Quaker literary experience. She describes a 'thriving Quaker manuscript culture' in the eighteenth century, in which, as printed works became more formulaic and cautious, individuals were able to retain their 'mystical, enthusiastic connection to the Word', to write experimentally and to read in a way that would allow them to focus on the 'motion of language that opened their bodies and spirits'.[14]

It is important, therefore, to note that constraints on Quaker reading habits in the nineteenth century may be exaggerated by focussing, as this study does, on a Meeting House library. This collection exemplifies not necessarily what Quakers actually read, but what they felt, on an institutional level, they ought to be reading and circulating. Our understanding of attitudes to reading has to be gained from works that were 'approved' by the Society, or at least considered worthy material for openly passing from one Friend to another. So while Desforges has explored material that includes the seven manuscript volumes of Margaret Woods' journal, only the single published volume of *Extracts*, 'restricted to devotional material...intended for the edification of other Quakers', can form part of this study's primary source material.[15]

As well as highlighting what Quakers thought they ought to be reading, this collection also tells us how and what they felt they ought to be writing. In this, Quakers certainly seemed to try to reflect the immediacy of spoken ministry. There was probably something of a self-deception here, given that work had to go through so much scrutiny before publication. Nevertheless, authors seemed reluctant to give the impression that they were embellishing their work with rhetorical or narrative devices. There is a preponderance of reprinted letters, journals and diaries, and the favoured style is of a comparatively straightforward and chronological recounting of events, which, in the case of final illness-accounts, becomes an hour by hour record of the observed progress of the subject. The Society seemed to approve work where writers avoided indulging either their own cleverness or feelings.

It must also be acknowledged that these books may never have been read at all. Certainly, by the time the books found a home in the Meeting House, they were no longer particularly current. Small clues, such as annotation and little bookmarks, suggest at least some use,[16] and it would be surprising if such extraordinary care was taken over books for so long if, privately, Friends thought they had no value. The

existence of collections such as this may certainly be an indication of the way in which particular concerns and views persisted among Friends. Thus, while Desforges' study is able to do much in the way of recovering the 'historical reader' and what was read, it is hoped that this study can do something to recover the Society's perceptions of its own literary and theological values.

Writing of the Society in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Rufus Jones described Friends as being

> withdrawn from contact with the world... They read their own books, read only their own interpretations of Christianity, eliminated aesthetic pursuits, tabooed social diversions, and cultivated a puritanic piety... Their educational ideals were narrow and sectarian.[17]

Other historians of the period echo the view that Quakers were largely 'shut out from many of the ordinary sources of emotion'.[18] But Desforges' and Tarter's pioneering work suggests that we need to be cautious in accepting these stereotypes. Elizabeth Isichei notes that Quakers in this period were sufficiently well educated to be 'placed in a position of real intellectual choice', and yet were deeply 'suspicious of the application of the intellect to religion'.[19] There is something of a paradox here that is worthy of further exploration in Quaker literature. We should also be aware that however much Quakers may have wanted to be separate, they were inevitably affected by outside influences, and it is important to judge them within the wider historical context.

Developments in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had important implications both for the role of religion in England and for educational ideas. The social and economic impact of rapid industrialisation, coupled with the political effect of the French Revolution, brought into sharp relief concerns about the labouring poor. The Evangelical Revival had, since the 1730s, been widely regarded as a dangerously radical movement, but at the end of the eighteenth century it seemed to offer potential as a means of tackling ignorance and disaffection. The publication in 1797 of William Wilberforce's, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christianity* (an 1834 edition of which is in the Meeting House collection), is good evidence of this change in perception, calling as it did for a raising of moral standards and a restoration of evangelical Christianity.

Education was seen as an important part of 'achieving the new moral order', but the nature of that education was a matter of great debate. Sunday schools were established primarily to give Bible instruction, and all therefore taught their pupils some reading skills. However the wisdom of giving instruction in writing was hotly contested, at least until the 1820s. Anglican and Methodist Evangelicals like Hannah More and Jabez Bunting considered writing a dangerous skill, designed to give 'a discontented class...inflated expectations'.[20] Insofar as Quakers were involved in working-class education in this early period, their motives took up the theme of social control. The Bristol Quaker, Thomas Pole, for example, claimed in 1814 that Sunday schools would teach frugality, lessen crime and 'encourage the principles on which society depends for its security'.[21]

This study however is more concerned with perceptions of Quakers' own educational needs. In his study, *A Portraiture of Quakerism*, Thomas Clarkson shows how

attitudes to the education of Quakers differed from the more limiting, evangelically inspired prescriptions for working-class education. He explained that Quaker children

> possess extraordinary knowledge. Every Quaker-boy or girl who comes into the world, must, however poor, if the discipline of the Society is to be kept up, receive an education. All, therefore, who are born into the Society, must be able to read and write... It is a false, as well as a barbarous maxim, and a maxim very injurious both to the interests of the rich and poor...that knowledge is unpropitious to virtue.[22]

Clarkson provides us with a clue as to why the Society seemed considerably exercised by the need to regulate Quaker reading, for, once having put 'the keys of knowledge' into the hands of Quaker youth, it felt a duty to make certain prohibitions 'as barriers against vice, or as a preservation of virtue'.[23] At the same time as advocating education for Quaker children of all classes, the Society urged that poor boys should be apprenticed in trade and husbandry, and girls put into domestic service within Quaker households. Much of the advice given on books and reading in the *Book of Christian Discipline* was directed specifically to Quakers as parents and guardians, or as masters and mistresses of servants and apprentices:

> It is...seriously advised that no friends suffer romances, play books or other idle pamphlets, in their house or families, which tend to corrupt the minds of youth, but instead thereof, that they excite them to the reading of holy scripture, and religious books.[24]

Other advice too was directed primarily at the young. Sophia Hume stressed that no books 'in which there maybe the least indecency' were to be permitted in schools. This proper nurture and education was to be extended to apprentices and servants.[25] Clearly not all Friends could be expected to meet the Society's high standards. At Ackworth School 'a library of suitable books' was provided for the children, but, in 1786, Sarah Grubb described how, because 'other books of a very different tendency have unwisely been sent by their connexions, it has been found expedient to forbid the introduction of any publications but what first undergo the teacher's inspection'.[26]

Stories as such were not necessarily considered a bad thing. Auto/biographical works and journals make up more than two thirds of the Bewdley collection. These tend to be much stylised, concentrating on accounts of spiritual progress, and often with a disproportionate emphasis on last illnesses and death-bed scenes. This follows a common trend in Christian devotional literature, and reflects the high mortality rate of the period. It was argued that 'words of dying persons make deeper impressions on the minds of men, than words spoken at other times', and that accounts of 'happy death' met with 'a very general acceptance...and have often proved incentives to a pious life'.[27] According to Woods, books should serve to remind readers that they were 'beings who may shortly be called from this state of existence'.[28] Some of the 'lives' can give a more light-hearted picture.[29] But it was considered important not to so stimulate the reader as to make everything else appear 'uninteresting or insipid'. 'The contents of our best books', it was claimed, 'consist usually of plain and sober narratives', and give 'no extravagant representations of things, because their object is truth'.[30]

Advice on fictional and 'light' reading was quite confused in this period. Clarkson argued that parables, allegories and fables might all be considered as an aid to 'the promotion of virtue'.[31] This was in contrast to other advice to avoid all types of fictional writing. John Davis (born 1667) explained how, before becoming a Quaker, 'I began to poison my mind with reading plays and romances and other bad books, by which I was exposed to many temptations and very often fell into them'. Later, sometime around 1702, he thought to sell his books, but then 'to prevent them doing further mischief, I cast them into the fire'.[32] By the early nineteenth century, such zeal had cooled. The 'fiction of drama' was still strongly censured, and Clarkson wrote that some Quakers felt novels ought to be similarly rejected, but added that this consideration was 'by no means generally adopted by the Society'.[33] In 1824, Joseph John Gurney simply advised against the reading of 'useless, frivolous and pernicious books' and, in 1834, Josiah Foster told his readers to 'avoid light frivolous reading'.[34]

How individuals were to judge if a work was frivolous without reading it was not made clear. More widely understood ideas of 'literary taste' seemed less important than a contemplative approach, and, in part, it was accepted that some element of trial and error was inevitable. As Edward Foster Brady wrote in his Journal in 1824:

> In looking over the events of the day, I believe I suffered loss from reading the light and frivolous contents of a newspaper. May it serve as a caution for the future. The enemy is ever on the alert to instil poison into our minds.[35]

But just as particular caution was urged for children, so it is clear that some minds were regarded as being more suggestible and in need of protection than others. 'Difference of disposition', wrote Margaret Woods, 'makes the path necessarily narrower for some, than others; some tempers are so intractable, that they may require a tight rein, whilst others may, without prejudice, be allowed more liberty'.[36] Those who enjoyed novels were considered unlikely to be selective. According to Clarkson, novel readers tended to have 'a romantic spirit, a sort of wonder-loving imagination, and a disposition towards enthusiastic flights of the fancy'. Foreign novels ('more than our own') were regarded with particular suspicion, but all novels tended to give the reader a 'perverted morality' in which 'almost every virtue' was placed 'in feeling, and in the affectation of benevolence', as the 'true and only sources of good'.[37] These 'evils' were thought to affect females particularly 'on account of the greater delicacy of their constitutions', while the 'forwardness of character' resulting from novel reading was so 'much more disgusting among women than among men', unsettling them from their 'domestic duties' as wives and mothers.[38] It is significant that immediately following Margaret Woods' vague reference to 'differences of disposition' is the following passage:

> Though male and female are all one, in respect to the gifts of the spirit, and their entrance into futurity, yet a degree of subordination while here, seems strongly enforced; and considering the different stations we have to fill up in life, may tend to the greater union of the body, and be more for our edification, if we do but act with propriety in our different allotments.[39]

The remark that these gender relationships seemed 'strongly enforced', shows her awareness of wider social and cultural pressures on the Society. Certainly, disapproval of novels was not a Quaker monopoly, and it was a 'preoccupation' of the age to point out the moral dangers of such reading, especially for women.[40]

As well as concerns with fictional writing, the Society was exercised by how far it was acceptable to engage the power of human reason. The nineteenth century saw advances among Quakers in scientific enquiry, and certainly 'intellectual pleasures' were regarded as better than 'sensual gratifications'.[41] One of Clarkson's objections to novels was that the reader might be distracted from the 'substantial pleasure [of] books on the study of nature', which would unfold 'the treasures of the mineral or the vegetable world', thus providing both 'an addition' to knowledge and 'innocent food' for the mind.[42] The Society's approach here was generally a pragmatic one. Study in the 'field of natural knowledge' was considered as being 'sometimes beneficial to our present state' as well as keeping 'the youthful mind from temptations'.[43] The 1818 edition of William Thompson's letters stressed that 'everyone is endowed with a certain portion of intellect which it is his duty and interest to improve'.[44] A *Letter to the Young Men of the Society* in 1840 made it clear that 'if knowledge be sought after for the sake of *use*, and not for the gratification of idle curiosity, vanity or self-love, there need be no limit to its pursuit'.[45]

James Backhouse's narratives of visits to the Australian colonies and to the Mauritius and South Africa, between 1832 and 1840, give some indication of the kind of issues that were considered worthy of interest to the Quaker reader.[46] Quaker missionary visits overseas had become much more extensive and organised than in previous centuries, and the published accounts of such visits were almost luxurious. Backhouse's two volumes are the only ones in the collection to be illustrated. The Australian volume runs to 560 pages with 134 pages of appendices, illustrations and maps. The visits were undertaken 'solely for the purpose of discharging a religious duty',[47] Backhouse having been given a certificate to travel in the ministry in 1831. The desire that the work and the books should deal with considerations 'in connexion with the relation of man to his Creator' also led Backhouse to convey wide-ranging information.[48] However, the strictly chronological narratives did not 'pretend to scientific nicety'.[49] In the detailed contents lists at the head of each chapter we find groups of topics such as 'flora of Norfolk Island, sugar cane, rum, Christian discipline'; 'Bible meeting, spring, deciduous trees'; 'excursions, sharks, swearing'. It was not knowledge itself that was avoided, so much as schemes for ordering that knowledge which might detract from an overall divine plan. Elizabeth King in 1842 was critical of those who stored 'mere facts without looking beneath the surface'; but the 'comprehensive and philosophical view' that she felt all 'thinking minds' should take was to look for the 'mighty significance' of God's purpose and judgement in every detail of life.[50]

In this period, then, there was often no clear distinction between religious education and the study of science or history, since, for many, it was axiomatic that God was at work in all his creation. The Society tried to guard against any questioning of God's providence. The *Book of Christian Discipline*, in giving advice on the 'danger of sceptical writing', warned that minds 'eminent in literature and in the successful

investigation of natural science have, in the absorbing pursuit of lower forms of truth, overlooked, doubted or denied the existence of the higher'.[51] Since the end of the eighteenth century, the Society's fears of rationalist tendencies had focussed on those who questioned the literal truth of the Bible.

Edward Foster Brady, as superintendent of Croydon School, showed deep concern for a young friend of his, to whom he wrote in 1838, fearing that he had:

> imbibed sceptical notions on some of the most important truths of religion. As to the *authority* of the Holy Scriptures, they were written by divine inspiration... I grant that parts of the Old as well as the New Testament, are hard to understand... It seems from thy inability to reconcile with reason the New Testament account of the birth, etc., of our Saviour, thou art unwilling to admit the truth of it. Really I tremble for thee if thou art come to that pass, as to refuse to believe anything that poor unassisted reason cannot comprehend.[52]

Josiah Foster also considered intellectual attainments a 'pride' that 'weakened a firm faith in the Gospel'.[53]

In their emphasis on the central role of the Bible, Brady and Foster reflected the growing influence on the Society of the evangelical movement. This had a considerable effect on Quaker reading habits in the nineteenth century by encouraging a much more systematic approach to Bible reading, and an accompanying tendency to emphasise scriptural authority in spiritual matters. In 1818 it was decided that children in Ackworth School should be examined in Holy Scripture, having gained familiarity with all its doctrines, and especially those passages that 'explained' the views of the Society.[54] At Croydon School, in July 1826, Brady wrote that the children were 'examined...collectively, as to their Scriptural knowledge'.[55] Margaret Woods clearly used commentaries to help with her reading of the Bible, and extolled the benefits of those who 'have knowledge of the ancient language' to shed fresh light on difficult passages, but she was emphatically not prepared to speculate on the mysteries of God's government.[56]

Hand in hand with evangelical biblicism, there was a growing tendency to missionary activity, and this had an effect on the production and distribution of Quaker books. When Brady and his companion Henry Binns (who both suffered from consumption) travelled abroad in 1824 for a rest cure, they took with them a supply of tracts which they handed out at every opportunity, notably in Paris, to those whom they found singing, whistling or calling out in the street. Their efforts do not appear to have been particularly well received, although this did not discourage Brady from advising 'any Friends travelling in France to be well supplied with books and tracts' which 'may be the means of doing much good'.[57]

Biblicism and missionary work, however, were not universally approved, and there continued to be a strong emphasis on quietism and insularity. John Barclay in many ways personified this tradition. For him, ignorance of religious principles was 'not the want of having seriously examined such books as might have been written on the subjects'. In terms of religious education, 'contrivances to store and stock the memories of young persons with a literal knowledge' would simply create 'a set of young formalists...whose heads were likely to be filled with notions, rather than the nothingness of self which is...truly the introduction to all right knowledge'.[58] For

Barclay, these issues were linked to a disapproval of the growing involvement of members of the Society in worldly affairs, in what he saw as a drive towards gaining acceptability and respectability, and thereby becoming 'leavened into the mass'.[59] Barclay himself was well educated, and described how he had studied and compared religious doctrines. He accepted that many of the things he had read were 'truths in themselves', but still he had come to feel that everything he had learned in his 'own will' should be given up in favour of waiting on God for 'as much knowledge...as is best for me in my present condition'. 'God appears in and unto all men and teaches us himself', he wrote.[60]

William Thompson's illness kept him often confined indoors, and his 'greatest excursion' came to be found 'in passing from one book to another'.

> I often have to curb my imagination in fancying the benefits that would accrue from a more enlarged acquaintance with mankind; and from the pleasure I should derive from an actual inspection of those curiosities of art and nature, now known only to me through the medium of reading. At the same time, I am satisfied with my allotment... it is perhaps most conducive to my solid growth in every needful, natural, or spiritual acquirement... Christ has promised to come and make his abode with us, but this gracious promise is only fulfilled on condition that we banish every other guest.[61]

Thompson too, then, came to question the ultimate value of book-learning.

Arnold Lloyd has argued that in the early eighteenth century 'Quaker books exercised a deep and consolidating influence on the Society'.[62] How far can we conclude that the same held true for the nineteenth century? Certainly, books continued to be seen as an important means of disseminating Quaker thought both within the Society itself, and, increasingly, to the outside world. Meetings' libraries ensured that, at any one time, members would not miss out on the reading that those currently influential in the Society wished to encourage. In addition, books made their way around social networks of Friends and were passed from one generation to another, so that a range of ideas (albeit limited) was able to persist.

All the specific advice offered on access to books seemed concerned with circumscribing rather than encouraging literary interests. In practice, restrictions were most likely to affect young people in schools and in service, and poorer Quakers whose access to books was through the Meeting. Women were also likely to find themselves subjected to the dominant expectations of gender roles. Quakers were part of the wider culture, and, as Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have noted, 'the fissure between the inner light of spiritual equality and the outer structure of the social world ran deep'.[63]

The nature of Quaker anti-intellectualism in the nineteenth century, however, is a reflection of the Society's unique history and development. Three strands of thought about the value of reading emerge from the books in this collection. First, a development of literary taste was encouraged provided it affirmed Christian faith. Secondly there was a growing evangelical emphasis on scriptural authority as the guide to understanding. And thirdly, there was the quietist tradition that rejected systematic, academic study of the written word altogether, at least in religious matters. In this collection, the strands seem quite closely intertwined. There was a sense in which the

writers of these works saw reading as part of a process whereby a proper understanding could, with divine help, eventually be achieved. Although Thompson and Barclay were both well read, and prepared to write of their experiences, they came to hold less and less store by the intellectually understood fruits of their reading. Those with evangelical sympathies also, ultimately, saw limitations in the printed word as a means to spiritual awareness. Backhouse described how, in 1834, Hobart Monthly Meeting decided to discontinue the practice of 'meeting for reading the Scriptures and the writings of Friends, on First Day afternoons' because 'the persons who attended our meetings being now in the practice of reading their Bibles and religious biography etc. diligently at home, meetings for religious worship by these means, appeared to be no longer necessary'. Instead, Hobart Friends had come to understand the need for 'retirement of mind...in silence' and to 'the teaching of the Holy Spirit, inwardly revealed'.[64]

It might be argued that, above all, attitudes to books and reading in this period reflect a nervous reaction to rationalist tendencies or increased worldliness, and its implications for Quaker identity. There would seem to be little evidence here to support Isichei's claim that the anti-intellectualism that she identifies as 'a persisting trait of quietism' was a 'main line of demarcation from evangelicalism'.[65] Both quietists and evangelicals seemed equally nervous of free-range intellectual enquiry. It was felt that book learning could be useful in the service of God and man, and therefore everyone should be taught to read and write, and books made available to all. But whether it was to come from the 'undeniable authority' of the Gospel, or from the 'teacher within', Quaker faith trusted that a personal experience of the 'deepest mysteries' was open to the 'unlearned and ignorant' as much as to those 'in intellectual culture'.[66]

In the 1880s there was to be a reaction within the Society to anti-intellectualism, and the espousal of 'a reasonable faith'. Edward Grubb, in his presidential address delivered to Woodbrooke Council in 1924, spoke of an agenda for 'a more free use of the intellect in relation to religious truth than has been usual in the Society of Friends'.[67] But, as Isichei notes, a liberal theology that lays stress on the intellectual study of religion is fraught with its own attendant difficulties.[68] Whilst many of the attitudes of earlier Quakers to books and reading have come to be seen as outdated, quaint and even repellent, at least their awareness of the fragility of language in trying to express spiritual experience may still have a resonance.

NOTES

1. Isichei, E., *Victorian Quakers*, London: Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 1-32.
2. Lloyd, A., *Quaker Social History 1669–1738*, London: Longman, 1950, p. 150.
3. Jones, R., *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, 2 vols., London: Macmillan, 1921, pp. 112, 129-30; *Extracts from the Minutes and Advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends*, London, 2nd edn, 1802, p. 12.
4. *Extracts from Minutes and Advices*, 1802, p. 13.
5. These values certainly applied from 1695 until 1802 when the advice was reprinted in the *Extracts from Minutes and Advices*, 1802, p. 13.
6. *Extracts from Minutes and Advices*, 1802, pp. 11-13.
7. Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p. 27.

8. *Extracts from Minutes and Advices*, 1802, p. 14. Evidence such as the catalogue of books for the meeting at Evesham, compiled by H. Fowler in 1718, suggests that such work depended on the willingness and ability of the individual. Worcestershire Record Office, 9234/2vi.

9. Desforges, J., '"Satisfaction and Improvement": A Study of Reading in a Small Quaker Community', *Publishing History* 49 (2001), pp. 5-47 (9-10).

10. Newman, E., 'John Brewin's Tracts: The Written Word, Evangelicalism and the Quaker Way in Mid Nineteenth Century England', *Quaker Studies* 9 (2005), pp. 234-48.

11. Desforges, '"Satisfaction and Improvement"'.

12. James Phillips was the printer of eleven of the books in the Bewdley collection.

13. Desforges, '"Satisfaction and Improvement"', pp. 5-19.

14. Tarter, M.L., 'Reading a Quakers' Book: Elizabeth Ashbridge's Testimony of Quaker Literary Theory', *Quaker Studies* 9 (2005), pp. 176-90 (177, 181).

15. *Extracts from the Journal of the Late Margaret Woods, from the Year 1771–1821*, London: John & Arthur Arch, 2nd edn, 1830, p. 5.

16. For example, in the *Memoir of William Tanner*, London: F. Bowyer Kitto, 1868, a scrap of paper torn from an envelope was obviously used as a bookmark at the beginning of Chapter 4, and the gum on the envelope has stuck to the page. The postmark is 'Welling[ton] Salop MY 2 77' (May 2nd 1877?).

17. Jones, *Later Periods*, p. 982.

18. Prochaska, F., *Women and Philanthropy in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, p. 11.

19. Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p. 2.

20. Evans, E.J., *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain 1783–1870*, London: Longman, 2nd edn, 1996, pp. 57-58.

21. Pole, T., *A History of the Origins and Progress of Adult Schools*, Bristol, 1814, quoted in Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p. 265.

22. Clarkson, Thomas, *A Portraiture of Quakerism*, 3 vols., London: 1806, II, pp. 99-101.

23. Clarkson, *Portraiture*, II, p. 99; I, p. 122.

24. *Extracts from Minutes and Advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends held in London*, London: James Phillips, 1783, p. 223.

25. Hume, S., *Extracts from Divers Ancient Testimonies of Friends and Others*, n.p.n.p., p. 11.

26. *Some Account of the Life and Labours of Sarah Grubb*, Dublin, 1792, p. 266.

27. Bevan, J.G., *Piety Promoted, in Brief Memorials and Dying Expressions of some of the Society of Friends, Commonly called Quakers*, London: William Phillips, 1810, pp. i-ii.

28. *Extracts from the Journal of the Late Margaret Woods*, pp. 61-63.

29. See, for example, *Memoir of John Taylor of the City of York*, York, new edn, 1830.

30. Clarkson, *Portraiture*, I, pp. 129-30.

31. Clarkson, *Portraiture*, I, p. 124.

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