

Anthony Manousos (ed.), *A Western Quaker Reader: Writings by and About Independent Quakers in the Western United States, 1929-1999* (Whittier, CA: Friends Bulletin Corp., 2000), pp. 386. Paperback. ISBN 0-9700410-0-4. \$19.95.

As a Western Quaker who is not an 'Independent Quaker', I found this historical anthology of writings about the 'Unprogrammed' tradition as it developed in Western North America to be a source of insight and inspiration. The Independent unprogrammed tradition is rooted in a Liberal movement born out of protest against the emotional fervor of Western Quaker revivalism in the late 19th century.

The spirit and the values of Joel and Hannah Bean, the first Quaker Liberals to come West in 1882, are widely reflected throughout these essays. The brief introduction provides broad historical context, mentioning the Beans as spiritual heirs, but relegating details about the Bean legacy to the footnotes. Perhaps the editors decided that delving into the complexity of the Quaker quarrels and acrimony of this era would be an irrelevant distraction to the general audience to whom the book is directed. But since this 'Reader', will serve as the 'official' history of Western Unprogrammed Friends, one chapter devoted to a reflective and interpretive historical essay of the beginnings of the movement providing some theological, sociological and cultural analysis would have strengthened the book as a whole. Deeper probing into the causes of the animosity between Bean and more evangelically-minded Quakers might have yielded fresh insight into reasons for the perpetuation of distrust between the two branches of Western Friends mentioned in some of the essays in the latter chapters. One writer's reference to 'fearing chapel altar calls' (p. 273) is a good example of a reaction that stems from the long shadow of the Bean controversy over Western Quaker history.

The vast majority of Quakers to settle in the Western parts of the United States in the late 1900s were Friends who had experienced spiritual rebirth and renewal through revival meetings. These groups that formed the first Western Yearly Meetings, now called Evangelical Friends continue to comprise the majority of Western Friends (11,600 to 3,400 according to the text, p. 1). The brief introduction to *A Western Quaker Reader*, attempts to portray the early history in a balanced and unbiased manner, but as the tread of history is traced from Bean to Howard Brinton, the modernist view of Quaker history clearly emerges in which Bean carries the true vision Quakerism to the West. Thus, I would like to offer a slight revision, in reviewing what is otherwise a significant and valuable resource for understanding Western American Quaker history.

Bean did indeed resist popular trends in Western Quakerism by maintaining non-pastoral

silent meetings, but he also wrote disparaging articles on the revival movement as a corruption of Quakerism, and criticized its leadership. Bean's principle of toleration to all who believed in 'the reality of the living Christ' did not extend to the Quaker Holiness Movement, and his unrelenting critiques reinforced the social attitudes of the cultural establishment of Eastern and British Quakerism. His negative image of Western revivalism has colored most standard historical studies (the vast majority written by Liberal Friends) and became the heritage of Western Unprogrammed Friends. Some of his criticisms were certainly valid, but a significant proportion of resistance to the revival stemmed from a lack of appreciation for a different form of spiritual expression that was for many ordinary folk on the Western frontier, a powerful and meaningful religious experience. And the fact that these revival meetings had an uncanny resemblance to Early Quaker Seeker meetings, with public preaching and evangelization, including the evoking of strong emotions, was overlooked entirely.

These inherited attitudes shaped modern Liberal presuppositions that help explain the paradoxical reactions towards mysticism and religious experience that this book documents in its final section. As Marge Abbott discovered in her research (p. 279), Liberal Friends continue to perceive mysticism as essential to Quakerism, yet are reluctant to speak of it, or to provide avenues for supporting and guiding those who have had powerful religious experiences (pp. 278-79). Providing structures for support and guidance, in fact, became one of the strengths of revival Friends, and one of the reasons why they flourished in the West.

Howard Brinton's naming 'Group mysticism' (a term borrowed from Rufus Jones) as the single, most important Quaker quality (p. 27) fails to acknowledge Quaker revivalism as an alternate form of group mysticism. Independent Friends still claim openness to the prompting of the Spirit as the central feature of unprogrammed worship, yet open sharing of faith experiences are so rare and difficult that those who feel prompted to do so compare it to coming out of the closet (p. 279).

The irony, therefore, is that independent, modernist friends who value tolerance and inclusiveness above all, and insist that personal spiritual experience is the basis of Quaker faith and practice, take exception to a Quakerism which finds expression in forms and experiences that are also mystical, but expressed in traditional Christian language and beliefs.

The editors' attempt to be fair and balanced toward all Western Quakers is evident, but undermined by quoting without qualification or critique the triumphalistic claim that Pacific Yearly Meeting is 'closer to the gatherings of the early Friends in its enthusiasm, its spirit of adventure and exploration, and the predominance of strongly convinced Friends' (p. 1). Evangelical Friends could argue for the same statement applied to their Yearly Meeting. For Programmed Friends, enthusiasm, adventure and exploration would apply to their innovations in forms of worship, for Unprogrammed Friends, it means innovation in doctrines and beliefs. Equally problematic is the claim that 'the emergence of the new independent meetings in various parts of this continent is *the most important event in modern Quaker history in America*' (p. 91). Such an unqualified assertion is dismissive of the Evangelical Quaker bodies already flourishing in the West and all the positive contributions they had made, and would continue to make in the history of modern Quakerism in America.

On the other hand, one of the immense values of this *Western Reader*, is found in the concluding chapter on 'growing edges' which highlights some Independent Quakers' sincere

attempts to build bridges, through dialogue and friendship, and to begin to understand and appreciate the evangelical forms of Quaker faith that comprise three-quarters of all Quakers worldwide. This writer can speak first hand of the value of such endeavors having participated in the pioneering small group of unprogrammed and programmed women, the Women's theological conferences that crossed branches of Friends, and an FWCC triennial which included many Third-World Evangelicals. Such efforts often highlight and intensify the differences (which are real) but they also forge deep personal friendships, which can transcend differences, and enrich the spirituality of both groups.

The greatest value of the book for this reviewer consists of the truly inspiring and often moving accounts of Independent Western Quakers who fearlessly lived out the social implications of their Quaker convictions. The underlying mystical consciousness, which I would argue is an essential aspect of Quakerism, is externalized and made visible in the stories of some remarkable individuals whose spiritual experiences became imperatives for social justice. The narratives of Independent Quakers energized by an internal spiritual dynamic to live out their vocations in a repudiation of, and resistance to, the oppressive values that govern the world, are a powerful testament to the prophetic spirit of Quakerism. The many accounts of the life and work of these practical and active mystics help demonstrate the dialectic of mystical experience. On one side, resistance and witness grow out of mystical experience as demonstrated by the work of individuals such as Ferner Nuhn's prison ministry, and Franklin Zahn's pioneering efforts in integrated housing and race relations (both of these in the 'complacent 1950s) Later we read of Bob Barnes, Bill Durand, Jim Corbett and other radical prophets of the turbulent 1960s, directly challenging a culture of materialism and oppression, and Gene Hoffman developing a pioneering 'compassionate listening' approach to peacemaking and reconciliation. On the other hand, these accounts also show how mystical experience and prophetic insight can often emerge from the work itself in solidarity with the oppressed. This is most graphically described in the autobiographical writings of Elise Boulding. Through her experiences of deprivation in India, she is brought to an empathetic identification with all sufferers, and led to a mystical experience of purgation and conversion. Her crisis is described with the metaphorical power that only those who have experienced such moments can give expression to, yet one, she acknowledges, which is also the simplest, commonest, and oldest of religious experiences (p. 204). She ponders her deepened spirituality in relation to the Society of Friends with these honest reflections:

At this time I felt both very distant from and very close to the Society of Friends. Distant from the Friends immediately around me with whom I could find no way to share what was happening within, but very close to the 'Quaker Saints' that had been part of my religious formation in the early years of my life in the Society. I was keenly aware that both Fox and Woolman had come through experiences like mine, and I found much support in that' (p. 204).

Here she has captured poignantly the paradox of Liberal Unprogrammed Quakers as reflected in the pages of *The Western Quaker Reader*. An independent branch of Friends who are essentially post-Christian, but retain deep mystical bonds to the early Quaker Saints and Prophets, and support individuals whose lives give public witness to those same profound

convictions, but who no longer have a common core theological language to express their deepest spiritual experiences to each other.

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Anne Adams (ed.), *The Creation was Open to Me: An Anthology of Friends' Writings on that of God in all Creation* (Wilmslow: Quaker Green Concern, 1996), pp. xiv + 110. Paperback. ISBN 0-9518766-2-7. £4.50.

This is an anthology with a definite purpose. Published in 1996, it was a response by members of Quaker Green Concern to a sense that 'the original Quaker conviction that to be fully in the spirit is to be fully and joyfully aware of oneself as a part of the universe' was not adequately reflected in the new *Quaker Faith and Practice* of 1995. The compilers also express the hope that Friends in Britain will quickly discover a 'corporate testimony on creation'.

The format is similar to that adopted by QFP. After a general introduction, extracts from (mostly British) Friends' writings are grouped under 14 headings. Sections 1-10 deal with individuals' perceptions of nature and of practical ways of living that reflect an awareness of the universe and the natural world, Section 7 specifically with the Earth Summit of 1992, Section 8 with human cultures other than our own, whilst poems are included in Section 10. Section 11 comprises corporate statements from within the Quaker community, Section 12 is about campaigning; Sections 13 and 14 look particularly to the future, and are entitled 'Challenge' and 'Vision' respectively. Extracts, which are limited to about 300 words, are grouped chronologically within each section from the earliest days of the Quaker movement to the present time: the larger part of the material dates from the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Overall, the selection of material is designed to show that, as individuals, many contemporary Friends are re-discovering a strong sense of unity with the natural as well as the human world. This is expressed in different ways, using language that is often inspiring and sometimes very beautiful. A few words of explanation in the Introduction about the use of the term 'creation' would perhaps have been helpful, both to Quaker and non-Quaker readers. Firmly in the liberal Quaker tradition of the late twentieth-century, these extracts reflect inspiration from Christian and non-Christian traditions, and draw substantially on the personal experience of the contributors. They are notably not concerned with theological models of God and the world, or other theological issues, although some evidence for a variety of theological views may be discerned here. This applies also to the extracts from yearly meeting minutes and various editions of British Quakers' book of discipline spanning the period 1889-1995, which make fascinating reading for those interested in the development of ideas within the Society of Friends.

For the researcher, one of the greatest assets of the book is that all extracts are fully referenced in an index of authors. As a starting point for the exploration of early Quakers' views in this area, it would have been improved had it been possible to incorporate more of Anne Adams' own researches at Woodbrooke College, used as the basis for her article 'Early Friends and their witness to creation' (*The Friends Quarterly* 31.4 [1998] pp. 145-52). The omission of any of Edward Burrough's writings is particularly surprising, since, of all the