

## BOOK REVIEWS

Rosemary Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences: The Early Quakers in Britain, 1646–1666* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), pp. 314, including 50 pp. of notes, a bibliography, three appendices, an index and illustrations. Hardback. ISBN 0-271-01988-3. £21.95.

Rosemary Moore's new study is an impressive accomplishment, an engaging text and an important addition to scholarship on early Friends. Moore's method of research is central to her accomplishment. She explains in an appendix how she created a computer database for her survey of thousands of early Quaker tracts, books and correspondence, querying materials with ten basic theological questions. Thus, she has engaged a qualitative subject matter (early Quaker theology) with quantitative methods. By sifting through the literature year by year and by comparing the concerns and emphases of different Quaker writers, she has identified more than any other scholar shifts over time and personal variations in Quaker vision during the movement's formative decades. Nearly every page bristles with useful new information and analysis.

Given this method and the amount of information it has produced, the book focuses fairly narrowly on the Quaker movement itself. There is minimal context-setting in Part I, an overview of Quaker beginnings, 1646–59. Still, Moore's brief characterizations of various contemporary groups and events is concisely accurate. Also, there are places where basic information on developments in early Quakerism is not included. But footnotes usually indicate where to read more on a given subject. It appears that Moore has chosen to focus mainly on new or less noted details of early Quaker history, rather than restate what others have already covered. This makes for a more manageable book, though it also means that the new student of early Quakerism should supplement this book with other standard studies. I was impressed in Part I especially by Moore's treatment of George Fox's formative relationships with Elizabeth Hooton and Margaret Fell, and her balanced view of the Nayler crisis. Her analysis of the different strengths of the early leaders is generally apt, though casting Fox as the 'organizer' does not suggest his remarkable personal effect upon individuals and groups. Later in the

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book, Moore emphasizes Fox's gifts in pastoral theology and counsel, which helps balance the picture somewhat.

Part II focuses on early Quaker theology and use of the Bible. I had more difficulty with a number of points here. Chapter Four on the 'Biblical Framework' of early Quakerism adds helpful information on the differing emphases of the principal Quaker writers and notes key biblical texts. Moore emphasises rightly that Friends had much in common with their contemporaries in their use of the Bible. But I would disagree with her assertion that Friends did not practice the 'allegorical' interpretations common among some other groups (particularly Seekers, Ranters and other Spiritualists). 'Allegorical' is a misleading term that Christopher Hill and others have employed to describe the transposition of liturgical forms and historical events of the Bible into inward and spiritual experience. I would favour the term 'typological', since early Friends assumed the events, practices and characters portrayed in the Bible to be literally true, but found their reality confirmed and refigured in inward experience. Whereas allegory is ahistorical, typology retains historical dimension. This manner of interpreting Scripture is central to early Quaker apocalyptic consciousness, as I have tried to show elsewhere.

Chapter Five, 'The Kingdom of the Lord', grapples with early Quaker eschatology. There is much laudable detail and interpretation here (though Fifth Monarchists took their name from imagery in Daniel, not Revelation). Moore follows the tendency of most scholars to define the politics of early Friends in terms of their attitudes toward and hopes regarding the state. While those indicators are important, they do not define the central thrust of early Quaker politics, which were aimed primarily at the social infrastructure, rather than the political superstructure. The movement was led by radicals who had learned from the hollow victory of the civil war that state power tends to be misappropriated by those who gain it, whatever they may promise. For that reason, I find it hard to conceive that the Quaker invasion of the South in 1654 was inspired by the failure of the Nominated Parliament at the end of 1653. Rather, it was the next step of a radical groundswell from the North operating according to its own logic. Moore does not find the early Quaker integration of these politics with what she calls the spiritual, inward kingdom. She tends to associate 'apocalyptic' with the political or cataclysmic expectations, not seeing its grounding in personal and communal *revelation*. Consequently, she contrasts a frustrated apocalyptic outlook with a realised eschatology of personal experience. It is necessary to see the Quaker *community* as the key mediating element between Quaker utopian politics on one hand, and the spiritual experience and moral transformation of early Friends on

the other. Still, in spite of Moore's bifurcated interpretation of early Quaker eschatology, there are many fresh details and insights along the way.

Chapter Six, 'Putting Experience into Words', suggests that Friends began with an emphasis upon union with God but already in 1653 were shifting emphasis toward the light in human consciousness. Moore suggests that the language of light, while controversial enough, was less liable to lead to charges of blasphemy. It is an interesting question to ponder. The lack of Quaker publications before 1653 makes it impossible to settle. But I have myself wondered if Fox's early emphasis on divine indwelling (known to us mainly through accounts of his court trials) was his answer to the Ranter rhetoric of deification around 1650. Fox often had ways of responding to new developments with his own counter-version (note his restorationist language during the Restoration period, for example). Moore offers in this chapter good, brief characterizations of a number of important Quaker theological motifs: truth, light, covenant and perfection.

Chapter Seven on Quaker controversial literature is a good treatment, highlighted by statistical observations on the ebb and flow of tracts, as well as strong anecdotes from Quaker debates. Chapter Eight on theology rightly notes the centrality of covenant in seventeenth-century theology. There is some problem with her handling of Quaker salvation in relation to Calvinist predestination and Arminian free-will. Early Friends, like some General Baptists and Seekers, held a paradoxical view. They rejected both predestination and free-will. The human will cannot choose Christ but must surrender to the power of the Spirit. Only through that surrender and passive joining to the elect seed of Christ within can one begin to act in Christ—or the seed act through one. Consequently, what Moore hears as Naylor's shift from Calvinism to Arminianism I would understand as shifting emphases within the same Quaker paradox. I also question Moore's interpretation of Quaker perfection as an incapacity to sin. I hear the early Quaker position more along lines defined by Hugh Barbour: first, an assertion of the infallibility of the Spirit; and second, an assertion of the possibility of perfect obedience to it. Moore rightly observes that early Friends were unsuccessful in demonstrating to Puritans that they took the historical Jesus seriously. She also seems unconvinced herself. Certainly, the epistemological stance of early Friends, privileging personal experience over mental constructions based upon Scripture, was scandalous in its day. But I do not hear that epistemological insistence as an ontological denial of historical reality or the significance of Christ's death therein. Finally, like H. Larry Ingle, another outstanding researcher of early Friends, Moore tends to see developments in Quaker theology and organisation as pragmatic efforts to achieve strategic ends. Though I would not disallow strategic consideration altogether, I would rather emphasize these developments as the

necessary elaboration and logical maturation of an initial, charismatic outburst.

Part III devotes four chapters to Quaker practices. Chapter Nine, 'Walking in the Light', covers well a variety of Quaker behavioural topics. Chapter Ten, 'Foundations of the Gospel Order', is less an overall description of the emerging organization than considerable detail surrounding it. This is a place where other sources are especially needed to acquire an overall picture of developments. Chapters Eleven and Twelve, on worship, ministry and persecutions are excellent overall. But I think martyrology was central to Quaker theological consciousness from the beginning and not elicited by James Parnell's death in 1656. Part IV covers 1659–66, the defeat of Quaker radicalism and the struggle for survival. Chapter Thirteen on Friends in the last throes of the Commonwealth is another fine piece. Chapter Fourteen focuses on Restoration persecutions. Throughout the book, Moore's treatment of the ambiguities of early Quaker pacifism is the best I have seen. However, she seems strangely anxious to discover loopholes and pregnant silences in Quaker pacifist statements of the 1650s. Chapter Fifteen on the Perrot controversy is excellent, adding substantially to Kenneth Carroll's fine work. Chapter 16 on Quaker literature of 1660–66 offers some refreshing observations on genre and trends—original contributions. I am especially grateful for her attention to the long-ignored William Smith. Finally, Chapter Seventeen usefully summarizes the major shifts that began with 1666, the right place to end a study of Quaker beginnings.

Every chapter is an estimable contribution to the state of early Quaker studies. Moore's work reminds me of the earlier contributions of Lewis Benson, who first mapped the thought of George Fox through decades of indexing, recording Fox's usage of key words and phrases with the help of a Rolodex file (a 1930s version of a personal computer, one might say). Moore's method utilizes a much more powerful technology, but makes similar progress in organizing a sprawling mass of data. Given her method, there may be moments where she over-interprets shifts in early Quaker subject matter and emphasis. It may also be that posing a standard ten (well chosen) theological questions to each text made it difficult to hear the surprising nuances that sometimes emerge in early Quaker writings. But such questions and criticisms are bound to arise in response to a study this totalizing and bold. It has been an exciting read, bestowing a host of novel insights and raising almost as many new questions. Rosemary Moore has produced a work of painstaking labour, broad vision and infectious passion.

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