

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Print Culture and the Early Quakers Kate Peters, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005. xiv + 273pp. ISBN: 0 521 77090 4 (hardback) Price £53

From the first Quaker publications in late 1652 an average of more than one item a week was published to the end of 1656, a total of 291 according to Kate Peters, by almost one hundred authors. Of these authors eight men were responsible for more than half the titles published while many tracts had composite authorship and half the total number of authors were contributors rather than sole authors. This flow of tracts is clearly an important factor in the early history of Quakerism, in establishing that history in the broader context of the English revolution and in the history of English print culture, Kate Peters argues, on the basis of a systematic reading of those early Quaker tracts and many contemporary manuscript letters, that: "Quakers were highly engaged with contemporary political and religious affairs, and were committed in very practical ways to the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth" and that their published pamphlets were fundamental to this engagement. The introduction presents a valuable survey of the considerable secondary literature on the period, much of it relatively recent, with its fierce arguments and notes the reluctance of modern political historians to give sufficient value to the contemporary printed material. While the book is firmly grounded in the study of the original literature there is abundant and valuable consideration of the writings of other modern historians, illustrating the great interest in early Quakerism from very varied and developing viewpoints.

The book is divided into three sections. These cover:

- I the organisation of Quaker pamphleteering in the early 1650s;
- II the part played by printed texts in the emergence of a recognisable Quaker identity as a national movement, the early use of the term "Quaker" in print and the role of women's public preaching;
- III the evidence of printed texts for intention of the Quakers towards religious reform nationally and the establishment of a godly commonwealth.

Tracts were initially circulated in manuscript, printing them enabled much more widespread distribution and was often intended to support the oral use of their content as well. Much of the later

Quaker printed literature was a record of religious experience; while this did feature in the earlier tracts their use was directed to proselytising and publishing Quaker belief with an expectation that the writings would reach and persuade others. Tracts were aimed variously at opponents, the less literate general population and at informing those already convinced. Kate Peters demonstrates that effective writing and publishing was possible from prison with the example of Thomas Aldam as a prisoner in York. She quotes contemporaries not in sympathy with Friends noting that Quaker tracts were an efficient means of propaganda. Publishing activities of Giles Calvert, a radical printer not a Friend (though his sister Martha Simmonds was), and Thomas Simmonds who worked from the Bull and Mouth meeting house are described. Kate Peter's figures for early Quaker publications (p.48) vary, though perhaps not that significantly, from those published by others. She explains some of the discrepancies but it may be interesting to compare table III in Rosemary Moore's *The Light in Their Consciences* (University Park, PA 2000). The vast majority of Quaker tracts were, predictably for the times, printed in London. They were sometimes specifically relevant to areas in which ministers were travelling. Distribution was facilitated by a growing network of ministers and local groups of Friends who might raise funds or buying tracts. There is a useful description of the role of the Kendal Fund in financing publications and the travels of ministers and in supporting prisoners. There is then an original case-study of the introduction of Quaker ideas to East Anglia.

Part II has a substantial discussion of the name Quaker and its early usage, reminding us that Friends used it themselves and that its appearance in the titles of a large number of tracts identified their subject to readers very promptly. It goes on to look at the role of women; despite the Quaker doctrine of equality and the acceptability of women's ministry (presented in print in only four tracts) this was sometimes problematic. It was also untypical in contemporary protestant churches and Quaker women contributed a disproportionately large part of women's writing overall in England in the 1650's.

Part III is devoted to the contribution of Quaker tracts to religious and political debate in England and to the Quaker aim that everyone should become involved in the moral and religious reform of the country. Many tracts formed part of debates with particular ministers of other denominations. Kate Peters describes the general nature of the national debate and illustrates its variety with reference to

particular exchanges. Quakers mounted an active defence in print of those imprisoned on both legal and theological grounds and expressed their concerns at magistrates interfering in matters of religion. Some of these tracts were addressed to Parliament but there was no well-defined specifically political Quaker programme. Kate Peters concludes her main argument with the literature resulting from the Nayler crisis and provides a valuable case-study examining the constitutional issues raised, or fudged, by Nayler's trial by Parliament. She also looks at the involvement of Martha Simmonds and the possibility of there having been a leadership struggle with Friends partly based on gender with Nayler as a figurehead for the Simmonds faction.

Kate Peter's stimulating and thoroughly argued book ends: "Only when we understand why and how people made use of the press, and why and how they read printed pamphlets, can we properly assess the likely significance of the actual material in print". It is important to recognise her argument that the study of the production, distribution and readership of these tracts is needed as much as that of their content. Her work is thought provoking not only to those seeking an up-to-date understanding of early Quakerism but also to those studying print culture in England and indeed the English revolution.

David J. Hall

The Art and Science of William Bartram Judith Magee, The Pennsylvania State University Press in association with the Natural History Museum, London, 2007, 264 pages, £30.

In *Quaker Plant Hunters* I noted a remarkable connection of Quaker botanists in Britain and North America in the eighteenth-century. Among them were father and son John and William Bartram, Peter Collinson, William Curtis and John Fothergill. Collinson was pivotal to John Bartram and Fothergill was the patron of William Bartram.

William Bartram (1739-1823) was a prototypical late bloomer. It was not until he was 34 (four years before his father died) that he explored southeastern America on his own. Previous to that experience Billy (as he was known) had made unsuccessful attempts to be an independent trader and agricultural worker. After Peter Collinson died (1768) Billy wrote from Cape Fear in North Carolina that he was finally ready for 'the only business I was born for and which I am only good for'.

It was Fothergill who saved Billy. The English botanist was greatly impressed by botanical drawings by Billy sent by his father. Fothergill suggested that Billy might collect plants for him in southeastern America and make botanical drawings of them as well. He ended his proposal with touching advice:

'But in the midst of all this attention, forget not the one thing needful. In studying nature forget not its author. Study to be grateful to that hand which has endowed thee with a capacity to distinguish thyself as an artist. Avoid useless or improper company. Be much alone, and learn to trust in the help and protection of him who has formed us and everything.'

The drawings to Fothergill from Bartram make up the bulk of the Bartram collection held at the Natural History Museum in London. Now for the first time all 68 drawings at the Natural History Museum have been published. Judith Magee is Collection Development Manager in the Library of the Museum therefore in an excellent position to use the remarkable collection. It is these drawings which make this book so valuable for naturalists and libraries.

Magee's scholarship also insures a comprehensive survey of Bartram's background, explorations and scientific contribution to early America. Bartram's *Travels* is his major achievement and I feel that we must turn to Francis Harper's 'naturalist edition' to fully appreciate Bartram's poetry which so inspired Coleridge, Wordsworth and Chateaubriand. Magee can be coldly analytical at times.

It is good, however, that she notes Bartram's observations on the extinction of various animals and plants. He was well ahead of his time in this respect. Magee also remarks on the rare concern Bartram had for Native Americans and animals. His Quakerism is much in evidence here when he states that the animal creation 'excites our admiration, and equally manifests the almighty power, wisdom, and benefice of the Supreme Creator and Sovereign Lord of the universe'.

David Sox

David Sox volunteers in the botany department of the Natural History Museum, London and his *North America's Early Frontier to the South Pacific* was published by Sessions of York in 2004.

The Diary of Joshua Whiting (1861-73). Compiled by Sarah Graham. ISBN 1 85072 318 4 122 pages Publisher: Sessions of York £9.50
From Sessions, Huntington Rd, York YO31 9HS tel 01904 659224
And from Friends House Bookshop, or from other booksellers.

Why do we keep diaries? Why write a Journal? Joshua Whiting would never declare (like Cicily, in *The Importance of Being Earnest*), "I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train." Nothing in Joshua's diary, or in his life, is "sensational". He is not a George Fox, recording in his travelling Journal the contentious and exhilarating birth of a religious movement. Nor is he a Samuel Pepys, at the hub of the nation's affairs (and affaires) in London. If he recalls any well-known diarist it is probably Gilbert White of Selborne whose writings Joshua owned and enjoyed.

Nevertheless, the surviving part of Joshua's diary that Sarah Graham presents to us is both charming and compelling reading. She writes in her Introduction: "Its first attraction for me is simply in the family link with the writer, my great-great uncle; but that receded as I began to realise that this is a rich document for Quakers, for Hitchin residents, gardeners, bankers and beekeepers, and indeed for anyone interested in how a quiet life was lived in unquiet times." That list probably includes just about everyone who reads the FHS Journal?

Does Joshua Whiting's *Diary* portray "a quiet life"? Yes. It records the weather, the seasons, the doings of his neighbours, the life of a small market town, events in his own family, comings and goings at the bank where Joshua is a clerk, walks and picnics, the ministry at First Day Meeting, MM agendas, family gatherings, birthdays, outings on foot or horse, the building of the local railway branch line (LMS), moving house, planting up gardens, catching swarms.... Like all personal diaries, it captures the preoccupations and activities of daily life in a certain time and place. In this case: a husband and wife in a Quaker family household in a Hertfordshire market town in the mid nineteenth century.

Was this "an unquiet time". Yes. In Quaker terms (on both sides of the Atlantic) there is a struggle between the dogmatic evangelical Friends who are Bible literalists keen on original sin and the liberal questioning Darwin-minded Friends keen on social reform and service. Whilst Joshua was in his teens, this Beaconite Controversy nearly split the Society of Friends. Joshua inclines to the liberals, and sighs "Where will it all end?" when the evangelicals in his Meeting insist on long passages of the Bible being read by appointment in

Sunday Morning worship. He is clearly more comfortable with upholding those local Friends who are packing their bags for Paris, where poverty and homelessness are rife in the wake of the German occupation after the Franco-Prussian War and where the new Republican government has ruthlessly crushed the communards of the Paris Commune.

And there are plenty of other areas for Quakerly concern in 1861-1873. The American Civil War starts in 1861; in 1865 Abraham Lincoln is assassinated, American slaves are freed, Nobel invents dynamite, there are Fenian uprisings in Ireland and England, Africa is opening up and there's a vigorous Friends' Mission in Madagascar. Such world affairs rarely appear in Joshua's diary. (But world issues rarely feature, I realise, in my own daily diary). Joshua and Rebecca Whiting live a life of closer focus: their concerns are for ageing neighbours in the local Union (workhouse), the loss of local woodlands to new house building, the witness made by a hospitable home and a carefully, joyfully tended garden, the care of their local Meeting community, the cherishing and sustaining of a widespread Quaker family, long beekeeping or gardening chats with good neighbours. As Sarah Graham comments, the diary gives "a picture of the Whitings as very good Christians" but never (to quote *Middlemarch*) "too religious for family comfort".

Readers who are keen gardeners will delight over the guidelines for landscaping that Joshua and Rebecca favour, and the careful lists of varieties of fruit trees, roses and vines they plant and tend. Keen beekeepers (like me) will be hugely grateful for the frequent notes supplied by Will Messenger (a Quaker historian of beekeeping) which explain the techniques and equipment that Joshua uses with his bees, at a time when beekeeping is transformed by new discoveries. Naturalists will enjoy his keen and careful observations of the local flora and fauna.

Quaker genealogists will relish Sarah Graham's lively appendix of "Biographical Sketches" of the family names that repeatedly appear: Allen, Alsop, Brown, Gilpin, Harvey, Latchmore, Lucas, Ransom, Seebohm, Sewell, Sharples, Shillitoe, Steed, Tuke and (of course) Whiting. Joshua worked forty years as banker's clerk for Sharples, Tuke and Co. which became Barclays Bank in 1896, 13 years before Joshua's death. In these "Biographical Sketches", and in her "Notes", Sarah Graham reveals herself as a meticulous and lively Quaker historian, and social historian. For example she reports Francis Lucas (1816-1896) sitting in Yearly Meeting amongst Friends who are "too intent on their mortgages and bonds, their interest and compound

interest". Of the session he wrote: "The silence of meeting is such that the drop of 1/8 in consols is clearly audible." And there are some startling revelations of Friends who "walk disorderly". Sarah Graham comments: "Never think you can guess the contents of a Quaker family's bran tub."

Finally, the illustrations. Wonderful early photography from Joshua's nephew Thomas Benwell Latchmore, which captures Joshua and his fellow Quakers, but also Hitchin's local history. Pen and ink sketches by Quaker Samuel Lucas, but also his colourful portraits of the Hertfordshire countryside. The book is a delicious "Period piece". Do buy it.

David B. Gray