

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

*Historical Dictionary of the Friends (Quakers)* Ed. by Margery Post Abbott, Mary Ellen Chijioke, Pink Dandelion, John William Oliver Jr. (Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements, No. 44) Lanham, Maryland and Oxford: Scarecrow Press. 2003 xxxii +432pp. £61.

This volume is in a series designed for libraries and presumably therefore mainly for those readers outside the movements or religions treated, so that no previous knowledge on the part of the reader should be assumed. It "attempts to describe the scope and history of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) worldwide and the modern diversity of its theology and practice". The list of just over one hundred contributors includes many well-known Quaker writers. The four editors were supported by an advisory committee of sixteen. The dictionary portion runs to 312pp accompanied by an 8pp chronology, a helpful and interesting if rather breathless 12pp introduction summarising the development and present state of Friends worldwide, 3 appendices: "Friends worldwide: Origins of Yearly Meetings", Yearly Meetings and number of members (including smaller groupings such as Moscow or Seoul Monthly Meetings) based on FWCC figures for 2001 and diagrammatic family trees showing the development of Yearly Meetings in Africa and North America. The book concludes with a comprehensive bibliography, index and details of contributors.

Despite the title, the dictionary does cover contemporary themes, e.g. under "Peace" there are references to the 1990s and September 2001. There is some overlap between the entries though the extensive cross-reference should prevent confusion. A good example is the comparison between the entries for "Peculiarity", "Simplicity" and "Testimony" and their more specific aspects such as "Plain Dress and Speech" or "Times and Seasons". Oaths do not receive an entry of their own but there are a number of references in the index, the main one being under "Truth". Occasionally useful information may seem to be in the wrong entry, detail about marrying out in Britain being under "Peculiarity" rather than "Marriage" and perhaps oversimplified, or scattered not so helpfully between entries as for the Friends Foreign Mission Association (appearing in three very slightly different ways). The international approach and constraints on space mean that individual entries may seem inadequate on the British aspects of a subject. Here I have in mind "Education" or "Bible" as

examples but more on the Beacon episode would have been helpful. Bankruptcy or insolvency receive only the briefest implicit mention under "Business and economics" so may have been unimportant in North America. However the editors and advisory committee must have weighed the relative importance of such points in the world Quaker picture when determining the balance of articles.

The volume cannot of course provide anything like a comprehensive collection of biographical entries for Friends in the space available. Nor are any two reviewers likely to agree on the most obvious omissions leaving aside living Friends where inclusion or exclusion must have resulted from some difficult decisions. I would have hoped to see Samuel Bownas (mentioned on p.226, not 225 as in the index) James Jenkins, Willem Sewel or the Darby women included. This may be an unfair comment because extensive random sampling did produce a result for almost every name tried, brief mention of some individuals being embedded in subject entries. Given the obvious constraints on length, the fuller entries are generally good though some of the briefest, for example James Logan, Job Scott or Isaac Sharpless seem barely worth including. A real strength of the dictionary is its extensive coverage of Friends from outside North America or Britain. A specialist might quarrel with entries in his or her own field, not I suspect for accuracy but because of what has to be left out, as with Rufus Jones. The article on Jones presents his achievements concisely but does not refer to the later debate about his views on the precursors of Friends (though two relevant articles are listed in the bibliography) or adequately to his role in Friends' affairs in the 1890s and the early decades of the twentieth century. In Jones' case as others it is important to use the index to find other references. This also applies to the name of a European country where material is gathered under "Continental Europe'.

Given the very concise nature of many entries, the thorough 48pp. bibliography is valuable. The emphasis is on published work "most likely to be available to the general reader, particularly in the United States" and preference is given to more recent titles with a deliberately limited number of journal articles. This explains most of the gaps that puzzled me on first perusal and other titles may still be there as the arrangement in subject categories can make finding things slightly hard work. Many readers will expect to use the internet to search for information and the web addresses of major Quaker research libraries are given.

The overall result is a dictionary that with a little practice is user friendly and extremely useful. The price will deter many individuals

who could make use of personal copies from acquiring them. For British Friends and students it makes available a good deal of unfamiliar information about individuals and Quaker practice elsewhere. One does have to bear in mind reading general articles that the basic perspective is North American. There are some inconsistencies and minor errors where proof-reading has failed but these do not detract significantly from the substantial achievement presented here.

*David J. Hall*

*Knowing the Mystery of Life Within: Selected Writings of Isaac Penington in their Historical and Theological Context*, selected and introduced by R. Melvin Keiser and Rosemary Moore, Quaker Books, 2005, pp.vii + 319, £18.00

This is a book which will be useful to Friends who want to learn more about the 'rock (or part of the rock) whence they were hewn' and people like your reviewer from a different tradition who wish to know more about a strand of seventeenth century history that has not hitherto commanded their attention.

The book is arranged in two parts: the first part is largely concerned with the story of the life of Isaac Penington (this by Rosemary Moore) while the second part is a collection of extracts from his writings (with commentary by R. Melvin Keiser), the latter helpfully organised under topics.

Penington is a subtle thinker. His writing tends to be dense and prolix (see, for instance, the last sentence on page 80!) and requires close attention from the modern reader who is unlikely to be accustomed to a style which characterized much of the Christian literature of the seventeenth century. He is clearly driven by a pastoral concern and usually writes with much warmth, and even when he feels it necessary to rebuke he does so with admirable straightness and boldness. His sensitive spirit suffered a good deal from imprisonment but his firmness in standing up for what he thought to be right and true is inspiring.

Penington (c.1616-1679) came from the kind of home which valued a good education and he received one. This stood him in good stead as he grew up in a world of great theological and ecclesiastical turbulence. In the wake of the Reformation a variety of 'denominations' had arisen which engaged in sometimes bitter disputes over points of doctrine and questions of order. The reaction of a gentle spirit, given to bouts of depression and troubled by

controversy was not at all surprising. We find him writing in 1653: 'Religion is grown so outward, and hath spread forth into such various forms. pleasing itself so much in that dress which it most affects, that the inward substantial part viz. the life and power of it, is almost lost in the varieties of shapes and shadow.....'

It was this sentiment that encouraged him to focus on 'experience'. The 'life' of which he often writes is for him something deep and beneath the outward appearance of things. Keiser explains that we are aware of the 'life' by sensing it, feeling it, abiding in it, being transformed by it. Though mysterious at its heart, if we ask Pennington to give further account of it he may answer in terms found in St. John's Gospel or may speak of the notion of a formless energy. It is broadly this understanding that led him to have such a horror of set forms of worship which he regarded as a great hindrance to the maturing of people in the 'life'. Indeed he says that the Lord 'always loathed' a formal way of worship.

One needs to remember that Pennington was writing at a time when the Protestant Church in general laid an immense amount of stress on the Bible, expounding its message and applying it in preaching and in other ways. He was reacting against what he thought to be the distortion and shallowness of spiritual life to which such a Bible-centred faith could lead. But as Keiser says, '...the Bible has shaped irrevocably the nature of Quakerism...', and we cannot help but notice in this selection, Pennington's use of language derived from the biblical text even though his usage seems to betray from time to time more of what he 'felt' within himself, than what the text actually says. It was at this point that the most distinguished among the Puritan teachers joined issue with those of similar mind. They believed that the Bible, properly understood, is a book of historical divine revelation that is always authoritative yet at the same time a book of spiritual experience. The doctrines of the Bible must be taught from the standpoint for which Scripture presents them, i.e. to convert, to edify, to strengthen the spiritual life. While it is true that not all of the Church's leaders followed this rule but sometimes handled Scripture in a doctrinaire kind of way, yet the great Puritan physicians of souls followed a better path as do their successors in every denomination to this day. It is really a matter of dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the individual Christian heart.

There are, it must be said, deeply affecting and challenging, passages in this selection. Not least in pieces where Pennington insists on faith involving the whole of a person's life. Christians of whatever persuasion would applaud that emphasis. Unfortunately his words are set within a doctrinal framework which many would find hard to

accept. He does indeed grasp quite clearly the importance of 'heart religion'. For instance, in his piece of 1675 on *'The Flesh and Blood of Christ'* he says, 'That which God ...hath given us to testify of, is the mystery, the hidden life, the inward and spiritual appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' His critics would say that what God has given us to testify of is the mystery of our redemption historically wrought by Jesus Christ. He goes on to say there are those who hold to, 'The historical relation concerning Christ' but yet are 'alienated from the life of God, in the midst of their literal owning and acknowledging of those things'. Such no doubt is a plain sad fact but his critics would argue that the Word of God, embracing the life, death and resurrection of Christ once given and proclaimed in the Church because of its permanent validity, intends not merely to shape a person's thought while leaving his heart unaffected, but to engage the whole of his life. Any sort of intellectualism is ruled out by the purpose for which Scripture was given in the first place. They would argue that the rational mind has a very important role to play in grasping hold of God's truth and meditating upon it so as to direct the whole of life in the way of holiness. Richard Baxter (1615-1691) writes that, 'Consideration (his word for reflecting with the mind)...opens the door between the head and the heart'. He was fond of the phrase, 'heart-work'. No wonder that one definition of theology among the Puritans was to the effect that it was the science of living for God.

The book has two appendices: Appendix A lists 'Short Titles and Notes on Works', and Appendix B gives 'Quotations from Isaac and Mary Penington's Writing' as these appear in *QUAKER FAITH AND PRACTICE* (1995). The customary bibliography, index of biblical references and a general index of admirable fullness complete the volume. Altogether a helpful and illuminating piece of work that will hopefully be read by many.

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Judith Jennings, *Gender, Religion, and Radicalism in the Long Eighteenth Century. The 'Ingenious Quaker' and Her Connections*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2006

The role of an eighteenth century 'celebrity' in British society seems improbable for a Quaker woman of provincial origin, and yet that was the achievement of Mary Knowles. She achieved this position by a mixture of personal attraction, intelligence and vigorous self-

promotion, which Judith Jennings' study describes with great clarity. In Boswell's words, she was "well known for her various talents". Although admired for her literary and conversational gifts, her own public career and her husband's lucrative medical practice were both made possible by her skills in needlework and the royal patronage they secured. She was brought to the attention of Queen Charlotte by the good offices of the artist Benjamin West. Her son was named George in honour of the king, and she presented him at court aged five to recite 14 couplets of her heroic verse ending:

I must, I will assume the man this day.  
I've seen the King and Queen! Huzza! Huzza!

Mary Knowles is not an entirely convincing radical, for all Judith Jennings' determination to present her as such.

The book gives a very clear view of this author's interests and commitments, which are far removed from the dynamics of royal patronage and the emergence of a celebrity culture in eighteenth century London. Her writing is repetitive and relentless, which does scant justice to her subject's charm, but she has succeeded in tracing the details of Mary Knowles' social context. She is much less happy in exploring the intellectual world which formed her and to which she gave expression. Quakers contributed to the culture of sentiment which marked the early eighteenth century and were themselves profoundly marked by it. Many of Mary Knowles' characteristic attitudes were derived from it. It is also surprising that the writings of William Penn receive no attention, not least because he was the first Quaker to have direct access to the royal court, and she must have been quite as aware of him as of Robert Barclay, the only Quaker influence alluded to in this study. If Penn's role in the politics of James II remains controversial, Mary Knowles trod a more domestic and perhaps self-serving path. Summarizing the result of little George's loyal exhibition at court, Jennings concludes, "she facilitated the social integration of Quakers as loyal Christian Britons even though pacifism precluded them from military service" (p.74). Nowhere does Jennings suggest that the remarkable self-portrait now in the Royal Collection may have been Queen Charlotte's own commission. It was completed the following year, and if commissioned would not have been unrewarded.

Students of Quakerism will particularly regret that Mary Knowles' defence of her faith is here neither analysed nor reprinted. It is a sad irony that in this respect Judith Jennings has herself repeated the neglect, which Mary Knowles so resented and contested in Boswell's

*Life of Dr. Johnson.* Without that document it is very difficult to assess either her significance as a Quaker controversialist or the wisdom of her tireless defence of its importance. In conclusion this reader was struck by the sad contrast between Mary Knowles' own approach to death and the smug certainties with which she had once rebuked Boswell and Johnson. In that respect at least 'the children of this world' were 'in their generation wiser than the children of light'.

Graham Shaw

*Journey into Silence: How and Why I Joined the Quakers* by Margaret Norton; Sessions, York; 44 pages.

My first reactions to this little book were thoughts of Gerald Priestland who wrote: 'I have had as many churches in my life as a rather flashy film star has had wives - though I never regarded myself as divorced from any of them...Yet I am not ashamed of it. It is not my purpose to advocate plural membership for everyone; but if you do some day feel the urge to move on as I did, my advice is not to feel that you must let go of everything in your past-for in the life of the spirit, no experience need ever be wasted.'

I love those words and they could have been effectively used in the recent discussions in *The Friend* of Paul Oestreicher's position in the Society of Friends. Being a dual member myself I was tempted to enter those discussions but decided against it since I feel that it is my problem, not someone else's. And like Priestland I don't really see it as a problem. Also like Priestland, I have had various exposures to religious practices.

I was raised in a strongly Lutheran parsonage and was expected to follow my father and grandfather into the Lutheran ministry. Being a rather independently minded youth I was early converted to ecumenical thinking and fifty years ago this year when I was 20, I raised enough money to go from America to an ecumenical youth camp operated by the World Council of Churches high in the Italian Alps.

Later that same year I became an Episcopalian because I admired its strong ecumenical record. In 1961 I became an Episcopal minister but most of my ministry was in a teaching capacity. When my mother died I started reading materials she had left on the Quakers. When eventually I joined the Society I had no idea of dual membership. To my surprise that was suggested by the monthly meeting.

So it is easily seen how varied are the experiences of those who join

us and why. You cannot assume anything as the norm for all. Margaret Norton's spiritual journey is multifaceted involving groups which some of us will have no knowledge of. Just who are The Budos? But I especially enjoyed Margaret's Methodist background and the services conducted by Mr Chenhalls who 'looked like Lloyd George and rolled a magnificent R'.

When Margaret attended the Anglican Church it was largely to satisfy her fiance's family: 'It was an occasion which left me deeply shocked...(these people had to read their prayers out of a book!)

The formality of Anglicanism was frozen: 'Had those chanted words any meaning for them at all?' Margaret's boyfriend, John, defended the church by saying it was 'One of the things that happen in the family on Sunday'.

To which Margaret asks: 'Like roast beef and Yorkshire pudding?'  
'Yes, if you like...'

But in John's defence it must be said he had acquired a healthy tolerance: 'My belief, my love, as you well know is to respect the beliefs of other people.' This attitude helped his future wife in her pursuit of religious truth.

It would not be until over thirty years later that Margaret found the Quakers. First she studied Christian Science; then the teaching of Gurjieff, Budos, Schools of Meditation and Theosophy. To a point Christian Science was appealing, but neither her children nor her husband showed interest, so much so that later neither child could ever remember the experience at all.

Margaret admits that she didn't take the Schools of Meditation she encountered very seriously. For a while Theosophy satisfied her religious needs. The modern movement originated in the United States in 1875 and followed chiefly Buddhist and Hindu theories. Margaret admits that 'there is no way in this short account I can do justice to Theosophy or any of the other teachings I came into contact with.' Rather than saying this I would think it better to say nothing than giving that old excuse. After all, we are all aware the book is only 44 pages.

When her husband gets ill the family goes back to Malta where Margaret had first 'met silence' and started on her quest. John's condition worsened and demanded more and more time from his wife. They returned to England where John died. Now she had to learn how to be a widow.

One day she passed a Quaker meeting house which was open and one of the members gave her literature on Quakers including some written by good old Gerald Priestland.

Chapter 8 presents a useful summary of Quakerism, and I was

particularly pleased to read Margaret's statement: '...the liberal compassion and welcome to all manner of beliefs and diversity of people has developed over the years in a way which seems to be not only wholly admirable but an attitude which is sorely needed elsewhere including some of the English, European and American churches'.

It is that attitude which permeates her little book; it is also a chief strength of modern-day Quakerism. There are far too many denominations especially in my natal land (America) which feel they have a monopoly on the truth.

*David Sox*

*A Pilgrimage towards Peace*, Joan Simkins. Sessions of York, 2006.

'This book', Joan Simkins writes, 'is a straight forward description of my reaction to the whole concept and experience of war.' (px)

She aims to show through this 'Biographical Strand' of her life that each individual 'can make a small contribution to the elimination of the shadow of war' (pxi) How then can I or you the reader, use the writers experience and thinking in our own Pilgrimage?

Unfortunately the book is anything but straight forward, and in spite of the beautiful clear print, and an apparently comprehensive contents list my enthusiasm was quickly lost. There is indeed a wealth of interesting biographical material but interwoven with endless conversations only vaguely related to the subject. How, for instance, was being a tenant of George (p79 ff), or the close observation of the author on the train to Leicester (p106-7) and the delightful cameo portrait of Dr Stanley Browne (p114-5) part of the Pilgrimage towards Peace?

The author's visits to Germany (pp41-45, 48-49) and her meeting with Dominican Brothers (p87-92), though interesting add little to the clarity of the story. Each chapter has its quota of similar conversations, and it was all too easy to lose the writer's train of thought, the strand. In the absence of an index this reader spent many fruitless hours trying to get a clear picture of the author's Pilgrimage. The juxtaposition of narrative, travelogue, reminiscences and academic analysis make for difficult comprehension.

The narrative takes us through childhood influences, family and personal experiences of war (WWI and WWII), staffroom strife and other people's marital problems. Academic progress through first degree at Birmingham to Ph.D at 'Edinburgh is recounted interspersed with insights into her arguments against the 'just war'.

Each stage provided sociological, theological and psychological strands, but their integration into the narrative may leave the reader bemused if not actually confused.

The author's studies interspersed with and followed by teaching, lecturing, travels and writing both here (UK) and the USA, and 'Holiday' visits to Germany and Egypt are remembered in some detail, to the disadvantage of many of her contacts.

Since retirement as a College Religious Education Lecturer the author having married, has settled in the West Country and found some satisfaction as a Methodist Lay Reader and District Tutor. Her pilgrimage has increasingly revolved round showing how she believes Christian tradition (and its ministers) has got its theology wrong. The final chapters of the book become a polemic against the Church. (politely done of course!) This is an unfortunate development in a 'Pilgrimage towards Peace'.

In the later chapters too there is a disconcerting variation in print style - underlined section headings (none up to p260); capitalized phrases; and even (p269) a newspaper article about a Vatican ruling in the middle of an account of a District Preachers' Committee.

There had been another question in my mind as I read about the author's PLD thesis on 'The Just War in Aquinas and Grothius' whose writing had so influenced the author's thinking? Sadly, I finished the book still not knowing! The lack of an index, and very inadequate notes about the many references in the text were a major frustration; And what happened to the appendices listed in the notes?

Some twenty years ago a friend of the author, after reading a collection of her cameos (presumably to assess their suitability for a book) suggested. 'You've got to be a bit ruthless, select some on a particular theme and string them together in an autobiographical strand (p225). The 'stringing together' is painfully obvious in the text, but the solution has not been nearly ruthless enough.

However reader, if this Journal may agree with the late Lord Soper that this is an 'essay in sincerity', and you may feel the excitement of reliving your own past (Foreword pix). An 'essay in sincerity' though is not necessarily a essay that will engage the general reader, and I was disappointed to have got frustration rather than inspiration from this book.

*Janet Rawlings  
June 2006.*