

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

**Alan Sell, *Testimony and Tradition - Studies in Reformed and Dissenting Thought*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005**

Alan Sell was for a time Theological Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches but these recent essays, written during the nine years he held the Chair of Christian Doctrine and Philosophy of Religion at the United Theological College, Aberystwyth, are a reminder of his roots in the distinguished and distinctive world of learned Dissent. His previous work has ranged from a commitment to the philosophy of religion and the importance of Christian apologetic to the careful historical examination of the doctrinal debates, which have marked and often disrupted the Congregationalist tradition. This miscellany of papers provides an attractive introduction to those who are unfamiliar with his thought, and helps to place that work in a personal and ecclesiastical context. Both the doctrinal and the historical studies are marked by a concern for balance and fair mindedness, which the title of his inaugural lecture exemplifies - *Conservation and Exploration*. Only the proof reading could have been more rigorous.

Two wide-ranging historical surveys of worship in English Congregationalism, and the diversity of the English Baptists are balanced by two detailed examinations of comparatively neglected figures, Henry Grove and Andrew Fuller. In 'A Renewed Plea for 'Impractical' Divinity' and *Reformed Theology: Whence and Whither?* there is a robust restatement of the importance of theology in an intellectual and ecclesiastical climate that is often discouraging. There is a fascinating account of the developments of Congregational Ecclesiology in the 1960s, to which Sell himself contributed and which he was well placed to observe. Throughout one feels the influence of Richard Baxter and P.T. Forsyth. Temperamentally in his careful good sense Sell is much closer to Baxter, but he is obviously entranced by Forsyth, whose pungent style has a passion and excitement, which Sell rarely attains. He may deplore the polarizing rhetoric, but opposites attract. Forsyth having first dallied with liberalism gave powerful and thrilling expression to the claims of revelation.

Friends will be interested in two aspects of Sell's thought. First, his account of the Church Meeting in Congregationalist and Baptist thought is a reminder that many of the features which are most distinctive of the Quaker Meeting for Worship for Business are common

to the whole English Independent tradition. Sell's stress on the importance of the Church Meeting and his lament of its neglect will find an echo among many Quaker Clerks. Secondly, he happily describes himself as a 'Minister of the Gospel, of the Dissenting sort'. At a time when ecumencial good manners have often inhibited Christian criticism of the Anglican establishment he has not been afraid to draw attention to its continuing dangers and doctrinal incoherence. It is a criticism which many Friends would wish to make their own.

Sell's approach is always towards the comprehension of 'both/and'; he distrusts the contrasts of 'either/or', yet he seems to remain ultimately uncritical of a Calvinism which aligns itself uncompromisingly with the latter rather than the former. One might have imagined that he would have found R.S. Franks an altogether more congenial theological partner than P.T. Forsyth. In an earlier work he described Franks' account of the Atonement as 'among the most intellectually stimulating books I have reviewed'. Sadly, perhaps, that stimulus seems to have left little trace.

*Graham Shaw*

***Yorkshire Friends in historical perspective: an introduction* by David Rubinstein; Quacks Books York YO1 7HU 2005, pp. 50 + illus. £3.00**

This substantial booklet has been published in good time to be a most helpful source of information for Friends attending Yearly Meeting in York in the summer of 2005. It ably links growth and decline in the numbers of Yorkshire Friends compared with those in the country generally and the development of movements which affected the whole Society with the response to such development among Friends in Yorkshire Quarterly (later General) Meeting.

The author claims Balby as the birthplace of Quakerism in contradiction to assigning the birthplace to the 1652 country but gives scant recognition to Scrooby and none to Ollerton and Mansfield, all in Nottinghamshire, where groups had received Fox well as early as 1647-48. However this thinking is in line with that of nearly all historians of Quakerism who pay little attention to Nottinghamshire but this view depends on how one interprets "birthplace". The movement grew rapidly in Yorkshire despite persecution under Cromwell which intensified after the Restoration in 1660. Despite legal restrictions upon gatherings, Friends were able to build meeting houses even before the era of greater tolerance after 1689 and the author gives a most useful guide to the early meeting houses in Yorkshire.

Persecution can lead to growth in numbers and by 1680 the best estimate is that 1 in 130 of the population were Friends, the equivalent

of about 460,000 today. Older Friends who were members of the Society between 1939 and 1945 will recall the feeling of togetherness we experienced during those years. During the quietist period the national membership fell from about 40-60,000 in the late seventeenth century to about 20,000 in 1800 and 14,000 by 1851 but some places, notably Whitby where a new meeting house to hold 500 was built in 1813, bucked the trend. Some of the wealthier families like the Barclays, Buxtons and Lloyds left the Society but in Yorkshire fewer wealthy families left Friends than elsewhere. In the early nineteenth century Friends collaborated with Evangelicals in several crusades; for prison reform, to abolish slavery, to establish schools, to discourage drunkenness and in the treatment of mental illness where they were pioneers. While membership decline was less in Yorkshire than nationally in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the decline since 1945 has been 38 per cent compared with 23 per cent in Britain Yearly Meeting as a whole. One of the causes of decline which the author has not researched was a growth of Methodism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which attracted many Friends in some parts of the country, possibly for example in Lincolnshire.

The author deals well with the changes that came in the Society in the mid-nineteenth century; the abandonment of disownment for marrying out and the abolition of the compulsory plain dress. The end of that century saw greater acceptance of new ideas in a turn away from evangelicalism towards more traditional Quaker beliefs that had found expression in the Manchester Conference of 1895 and had been anticipated by some Yorkshire Friends a few years earlier. Change was in the air but not such drastic change as in the later twentieth century. What change! The first Yearly Meeting held outside London was at Leeds in 1905 when the meeting 'almost spontaneously sang "When I survey the wondrous cross"'. .

Change took place in the disuse of the plain language. I last remember its use in 1941 when Philip Radley addressed his mother Maria, 'thee knows mother'. It is interesting to note the ungrammatical use, never 'thou knowest', always 'thee knows'. Also change in the form of address to given and family name whereas for some years after becoming a Friend Anna Barlow was still called Lady Barlow. The changes in the Society at the turn of the century showed that many Friends had not thought through the peace testimony for differing views were held by Friends on the Boer War, the 1914-18 War and again, though with less division in 1939. Friends became more active in political life. The first Member of Parliament was Joseph Pease in 1832 and in 1904 *The Friend* listed 36 M.P.s. since that date.

This booklet offers a very good introduction to Yorkshire Friends and

the author demonstrates his wide reading of secondary sources: it will be most helpful to Friends seeking information, on schools, meeting houses and burial grounds in the county. There are well chosen illustrations including one of a previous Y.M. held in York in 1941.

*Gerald Hodgett*

[Editor: copies of the booklet can be obtained from: David Rubinstein, 6 Portland Street, York YO31 7EH at £3.00 each, including postage and packing.]

***Sufferings of Early Quakers: South West England 1654 to 1690, introduction by Michael Gandy, Sessions Book Trust 2004, £12.***

This is the sixth volume which forms a part of Besse's *Sufferings*. It is a facsimile of the entries for South West England from the original 1753 edition compiled by Joseph Besse - an edition which is not easily available to researchers. Five previous volumes have appeared between 1998 and 2003 and the publisher's intention is that the whole country will be covered in due course. The facsimile is reprinted in reduced size but it is easily readable by all except those with eye problems.

This volume is essentially a tool for historians and researchers into the early history of the Society of Friends but for others who may wish to peruse it, light is thrown on legal practice and prison conditions in the seventeenth century. In view of the current discussion on inhumane treatment and humiliation of prisoners in Iraq and Guantanamo the events chronicled here reveal that unacceptable standards were present in the seventeenth century as they still are in the twenty-first.

On looking through the indexes the names of some old Quaker families now or recently resident in the south-west do not appear but Clark, Ellis and Fry are present.

*Gerald Hodgett*

**Charles F. Foster, *Seven Households: life in Cheshire and Lancashire 1582 to 1774*, Arley Hall Press, 2002, pp. 248, £11.95**

**Charles F. Foster, *Capital and Innovation: how Britain became the first industrial nation*, Arley Hall Press, 2004, pp. 373, £16.95**

Charles Foster is obviously a man of parts. He has been a financier and a self-employed entrepreneur, so that he is much more familiar than most historians with 'capital and innovation'. He married into a family with an enviable collection of records of commercial enterprise in the north west of England, centring on Arley Hall south of Warrington, and in retirement has turned himself into a skilled

historian and his own publisher. The reader is much in his debt for his meticulous examination of archives at Arley Hall and elsewhere.

Quakers figure largely in both books reviewed here, partly because of the ready availability of Quaker records, partly because of the prominence of Quakers in business and commerce in north-west England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One of his *Seven Households* is the Fells of Swarthmoor Hall, geographically distant from the others studied, and *Capital and Innovation*, which is particularly lavishly illustrated, devotes a chapter to the Quaker Hough family and their connections around Warrington.

The author is not a Friend and his books (these are the last two of four devoted to the economy of north-west England in his chosen period) are not intended to be a major contribution to Quaker history. One does tend to become a little impatient to read yet again that Quakers were successful in business because of their honesty and fair dealing. Quakers, it must be realised, were only one group of successful businessmen before 1880. In his foreword to *Capital and Innovation* the historian François Crouzet reminds us that in the eighteenth century many entrepreneurs were Anglicans.

As time passed and Quaker businessmen became well known their reputation for fair dealing was no doubt an asset in business; more important was the fact that, excluded from the professions by inability to attend the ancient English universities and from state employment they were compelled to enter other occupations. Still more important was the feature stressed by John Rule in *Albions' People* (1992): 'The Quakers were exceptional and indeed the mutual support, especially financial, available within their small world had as much to do with their success as any special attitude, education or motivation.' Roy Porter, another prominent historian of eighteenth century England, wrote in 1982: 'Nonconformists *were* prominent as entrepreneurs, though not because of their creed, but because they formed a tight-knit, "marginal" group spared the fashionable world of dissipation - Quakers in particular'. The chief criterion for Quaker success in business, that is, was neither fair dealing nor theological doctrine, but their exclusion from important areas of the national life and, in particular, membership of a religious society whose adherents actively supported each other. At the same time it is fair to note that any economic history of Britain between 1650 and 1880 (and later) cannot omit Quakers.

I am also sceptical about Foster's assertion that Quakers were 'all fighting [sic] to establish a more just, fairer and more equal world and equal for women as well as men'. If there was Quaker concern to establish a fairer secular world it was limited to a relatively brief period in the seventeenth century. There is little evidence that Friends in the

eighteenth century were fighting or even seeking to establish a better world until opposition to the slave trade became prominent late in the century. Quaker historians will be surprised to learn of gender equality amongst early Friends - it would be more accurate if inelegant to say that women were less unequal among Quakers than in other religions.

It is also surprising to read that by the beginning of the eighteenth century the only legal disadvantage suffered by Friends was 'the regular distraint of small sums for non-payment of tithes'. Leaving aside the question of whether regular distraint was as minor an annoyance as implied, one must remember that Protestant Nonconformists could not legally vote or sit in Parliament until 1828 or enjoy equality at Oxford and Cambridge until 1871. Historians must be wary of making generalisations outside their own field unless supported by evidence.

Having said all this, it must be stated that these complaints are of minor blemishes in books which offer a great deal to Quakers interested in their past. We should be grateful for the reworking of the detailed accounts of the Fell family in the 1670s. The account book used by Foster was published as long ago as 1920, but his discussion is full of interest. The Fell agricultural practices, textile production, trading ventures, iron smelting and 'primitive banking service' are all discussed. Dairymaids, even those who bore considerable responsibility, seem to have been paid no more than £2 a year, but Susannah Fletcher received a surprisingly high interest rate of 5¾ per cent for depositing £100 for a year with Sarah Fell, one of the seven daughters of Thomas and Margaret Fell. Foster concludes his account of the Houghs by noting that Quakers were no more devoted to their business enterprises than Anglicans or other dissenters, and even their philanthropy and social activities were not strikingly different from contemporary non-Quakers. 'What may have distinguished [Quakers] was not their earning but their spending habits. We find no mention of the grand houses they built, the parks they laid out or the great entertainments they provided. They invested spare capital in income-producing farms and probably saved large sums annually for reinvestment.'

Foster ambitiously sets out the criteria for creating an industrial revolution, comparing his chosen area with the south-west of England and with other countries. Not surprisingly he finds a 'large group of fairly rich manufacturers' deserves most credit. Some of them boldly set out to discover how to spin more quickly and find an improved source of power. In the south-west, on the other hand, 'the culture of the small business communities ... seems to have been submerged by the gentry culture of the landowners and the old established business families'. The industrial revolution, on this reading, was the product of a

relatively egalitarian society with many families each with a small amount of capital, not a small number of super-rich landowners.

The theory seems both convenient for the author and over-simple. As François Crouzet muses, 'one can wonder if this was enough'. 'Yet there does seem much of value in it. As Crouzet also says, it is refreshing to come to grass roots level and meet real individuals. I would, however, recommend more enthusiastically the meticulous detail provided by Foster than his generalisations.

*David Rubinstein*

The books are on sale at the Friends Bookshop on Euston Road and can also be purchased free of packing and postage from the publisher; tel. 01565 777 231

**Pendle Hill Pamphlets 357 and 376 *A Plea for the Poor* by John Woolman, 2001, pp. 56**

**Henry J. Cadbury: Scholar, Activist, Disciple by Margaret Hope Bacon, 2005, pp. 38**

Pendle Hill, the residential study centre at Wallingford, Pennsylvania has since 1934 published a variety of pamphlets on Quaker faith and practice, the inward journey, social concerns, religion and psychology, biblical exegesis, literature, art and biography.

I have chosen two of Pendle Hill's fairly recent publications which deal with two pivotal Quaker personalities.

As I wrote an appreciation of John Woolman in 1999 (*John Woolman: quintessential Quaker*) as well as his entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, I was attracted to pamphlet 357. It is a highly welcome reprinting of Woolman's *A Plea for the Poor*. That writing was originally published in 1793, twenty years after the anti-slavery pioneer's death, and it became one of his most cited works.

The Fabian Society founded in England in 1884 used it as one of its tracts. George Bernard Shaw belonged to the socialist society which advocated social change through gradual reform rather than by violent revolutionary actions associated with other socialist groups of the time. You need go no further than the opening paragraph of *A Plea for the Poor* to see why socialists would find it appealing.

'Wealth desired for its own sake obstructs the increase of virtue, and large possessions in the hands of selfish men have a bad tendency, for by their means too small a number of people are employed in things useful; and therefore they, or some of them, are necessitated to labour too hard, while others would want business to earn their bread were not

employments invented which, having no real use, serve only to please the vain mind.'

Of course, Woolman was no socialist, but his thinking always appealed to those who saw inequities in the world. As did he. Though largely remembered for his extraordinary anti-slavery campaign, Woolman also wrote about the plight of the Native Americans. In fact, *A Plea for the Poor* is thought to have been composed soon after his journey to Wyalusing to Indian settlements where, as he said, 'I might feel and understand their life and the spirit they live in...'

Woolman saw that the Indians' future plight was similar to that of the Negro slave and for both 'the seeds of great calamity and desolation are sown and growing fast on this continent.' In his essay he related poverty to wasteful consumption. It is truly remarkable just how far-sighted he was.

And it goes further: man's attitude toward creation and what we have come to call the environment:

'Our gracious Creator cares and provides for all his creatures. His tender mercies are over all his works; and, so far as his love influences our minds, so far we become interested in his workmanship, and feel a desire to take hold of every opportunity to lessen the distresses of the afflicted and increase the happiness of the Creation. Here we have a prospect of one common interest, from which our own is inseparable, that to turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of Universal Love becomes the business of our lives.'

Prophetic words and it has taken us 300 years since Woolman's death to recognize the inter-connection of man to creation; of poverty to our wasteful consumption of Earth's resources. In a later work, *Conversation on the True Harmony of Mankind* composed in 1772 before his fateful journey to England, Woolman put it even stronger:

'The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.' How we need to heed those words today!

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Henry Joel Cadbury (1883-1974) was one of the most respected and influential Quakers of the twentieth century. With his brother-in-law, Rufus Jones, he brought to American Quakerism a remarkable intellectual stimulation which is evident even to our own day.

For twenty years Cadbury was Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School and in her Pendle Hill pamphlet, Margaret Hope Bacon wisely says Cadbury was 'one of the finest scholars the

Religious Society of Friends has ever produced.'

He was one of the translators of the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament and during his lifetime published thirty nine books as well as over one hundred scholarly articles. But Cadbury was also a social activist and liked to say: 'Why must it be belief into action? Why not action into belief?'

A committed pacifist Cadbury was a founder and twice chair of the American Friends Service Committee. He guided the organisation into the world-wide service which brought it the 1947 Nobel Peace Prize.

Cadbury's writing on the Gospel of Luke won him the respect of other scholars. I remember Bishop John A.T. Robinson once telling me that because of Cadbury he could easily be a Quaker. Like Robinson, Cadbury believed that the Bible should never be interpreted with the assumptions of the modern age. Instead, interpreters must immerse themselves in the culture and language from which the scriptures sprang.

With Rufus Jones Cadbury helped to heal the outmoded and disgraceful split in Philadelphia Quakerism. His conclusion was that the difficulty came not from doctrinal differences but the assumption of authority of a few Philadelphia Quaker families.

Ironically one unifying element came with the passage of the Conscription Act in America. With Rufus Jones the various groups of Friends came together to cooperate in the practical task of providing alternative service for conscientious objectors.

Cadbury also rigorously stood up for academic freedom in colleges and universities in America. Personally he suffered at his beloved Haverford College when after the First World War he attacked the hysteria toward Germany when the government there was making peace overtures. Unfortunately Cadbury used Haverford stationery to make his protest and left Haverford on a leave of absence.

He continued to speak up for the Germans when it was reported by the American Friends Service Committee that there was widespread starvation among children in Germany.

Cadbury continued his varied efforts to his death in 1974. One writing particularly interesting to me was one of his last: *John Woolman in England in 1772* published by the Friends Historical Society in 1971. It is a masterpiece of scholarship and Cadbury corrected a number of erroneous assumptions concerning Woolman. I can only imagine what a work by Cadbury on the entire life of Woolman might have been.

Cadbury has, however, left a great legacy. Would that the Society had more intellectual titans such as he.

*David Sox*