

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Light in the Dales, Volumes II and III, The Agrarian Background to the Rise of Political and Religious Dissent in the Northern Dales in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. By the Revd. J. Breay, M.A. The Canterbury Press, Norwich, 1996. £14.95. (Obtainable from R.E.G. Hollett & Son, 6 Finkle Street, Sedbergh, Cumbria LA10 5BZ)

John Breay has a place in the long line of Anglican clergy whose industry and scholarship have been the backbone of many learned societies. He has already produced an edition of the Quaker registers of Ravenstonedale, Gisdale and Garsdale, 1650-1837, which forms volume I of the present work. As the title suggests, his account of the rise of Quakerism in the northern dales in the 1650s is set in a framework based on the events of the previous 100 years and on the changing conditions of land tenure in the area.

The dissolution of the monasteries and the change to lay ownership of the land brought about an uneasy relationship and constant struggles between landlord and tenant.

The Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536/37 was a protest against the religious changes, fuelled also by agrarian grievances concerning enclosures, tithes and heavy fines levied on the death of the lord or on change of tenant. The risings were ruthlessly suppressed by Henry VIII. Breay gives lists of the names of men hanged in Cumberland (21 men) and Westmorland (53). He argues that there are pointers to the families of men who suffered, 'who in a later age supported political or religious dissent'.

Breay also points to the Puritan influence emanating from St. John's College, Cambridge on the development of education and religious beliefs exercised by parish priests and schoolmasters, and particularly by Robert Holgate, President of the Council of the North in 1538 and later archbishop of York. Schools like Sedbergh became centres of Protestant teaching, laying the foundation for later dissent.

Possibly a more important factor was the greed of the new lay landlords, whose high-handed treatment of tenants stirred up discontent. When there arose rivalries among the great families, or family disagreements, as in the case of the Cliffords, earls of Cumberland, it was the tenants who suffered. When Lady Anne Clifford finally inherited the family estates, 'she spent more money on restoring useless castles, than improving the lot of her tenants.'

In the later part of the sixteenth century there were divisions of larger farms in Mallerstang into smaller units, which created a poor tenantry, unable to resist a succession of bad harvests or disease.

When James I came to the throne he adopted a policy of extracting money from tenants in confirmation of their customary tenures. All these causes, and the distress and poverty created by the civil war combined, in John Breay's thesis, to produce a climate favourable to George Fox's message when he came to Sedbergh in 1652.

Breay has been at pains to understand the thinking of George Fox and his followers, as shown in the *Journal* and in other Quaker writings. In spite of some disapprobation of the vituperative language used by early Friends against the clergy, he gives a sympathetic account of their steadfastness under extreme persecution, and concludes that 'despite all the sufferings of the dalesmen from the sixteenth century, that they remained Christian

is due to George Fox and the Religious Society of Friends'. It is a striking tribute to the power and moving quality of the words for readers of today, that he brings the account to an end with the words of Edward Burrough ('We went forth as commanded of the Lord') and the Testimony of Francis Howgill, 1663 (see *Quaker Faith & Practice*, 1995, para.19.08).

The debate will no doubt continue as to how far the rise of political and religious dissent in the northern dales was conditioned by the agrarian troubles of the northern customary tenants. John Breay has provided ample material for consideration. Some of the material seems ill-digested, and the numerous extracts together with the thorough documentation may well discourage the general reader. Nevertheless, this will remain a valuable source for Quaker and other historians of the northern dales. A map would have been helpful.

Jean E. Mortimer

The Early History of Thaxted Monthly Meeting. By Joyce Whittington. William Sessions, York, 1994. Pp vi + 113, facsimiles in text. £7.80.

Joyce Whittington's account of the early history of Thaxted Monthly Meeting, building on work by Mary Whiteman, is sub-titled at the beginning of part I 'with special reference to Saffron Walden' and this is an important qualification which should have appeared earlier. It draws largely on monthly meeting minutes and the brief text quotes very extensively from them. The journals of John Farmer of Saffron Walden (1667-1724) and some later yearly meeting minutes are also used as sources. There are neither footnotes nor bibliography. The index refers solely to Friends within the monthly meeting.

This short book contains a number of interesting extracts from minutes and illuminates some of the typical transactions to be found in them. Such illustrations may be of interest to those working on other areas for the same period. Examples are certificates for Farmer to travel in the ministry in 1699 and 1705 and for his widow to do so in Holland and Germany in 1725. The final substantial quotation is the moving 1760 testimony to William Impey. The more common business of tithes, marrying out, differences between Friends and financial difficulties of individuals is accompanied by lists of all the marriages recorded.

David J. Hall

Conscientious Objection to Compulsions under the Law. By Constance Braithwaite. William Sessions, York, 1995. £11.95 + £3.00 p&p.

This is an interesting book for two reasons. It provides a great deal of information which the layman may not easily find elsewhere and it also makes perceptive comments on various aspects of conscientious objection in general.

The book is divided into two parts. The first and longer part gives an historical

account of a number of fields where conscientious objection has been recognized in law and one area where it occurs, although not legally recognized. It covers the taking of oaths, compulsory vaccination against smallpox, compulsion for military service and allied defence purposes, provisions relating to the right of a parent to withdraw a child from religious worship in schools and provisions relating to the duties of parents in respect of the medical care of children. It will be appreciated that some of these matters are of historical interest and some are still topical.

As is mentioned in the book, one field that is not covered is the payment of tithes. The concern over the payment of tax for defence purposes, although mentioned, has expanded significantly since the book was written.

The second, shorter, part of the book, comments on various facets of conscientious objection as described in the historical accounts set out earlier.

The first chapter of this part of the book describes ways in which the state penalizes the illegal conscientious objector and comments on the problems of illegal conscientious objection from the state's point of view.

The tests that had to be satisfied before a person's conscientious objection was recognized are described in the following chapter. Sometimes all that was necessary was to complete a form but on other occasions one had to satisfy a tribunal. This raises the question, is it possible for a person or a group of people to ascertain the sincerity of someone else's conscientious objection? If so, how can it be done? From these queries the final chapter considering certain ethical and philosophical problems of conscientious objection follows on naturally.

In a future edition of the book there are two changes that might be considered. One relates to the notes at the end of each chapter. Where an unnumbered section of a statute is quoted or referred to in the text, it would be helpful if the number of the section could be listed in the notes. The other change suggested arises in the penultimate chapter, dealing with the various tests of conscientious objection. This contains considerable detail relating to tribunals considering conscientious objection to military service which might be more appropriately included in the earlier historical chapters.

As the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Justice affect national law, it is increasingly likely that they will impinge upon the sphere of law covered in this book. In the future in order to obtain a complete picture it will be necessary to consider such decisions.

In conclusion, this is a book that individuals and Meetings may well decide to acquire. The first part gives useful factual information. The latter part stimulates thought on one aspect of the perpetual problem of the relationship between the individual and the state, with which Friends are rightly concerned.

Peris M. Coventry

Hear the Word of the Lord: a Critical and Bibliographical Study of Quaker Women's Writing. 1650-1700. By Rosemary Foxton. (BSANZ Occasional Publication). Melbourne: The Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand, 1994. ISBN 0 9598271 3 7.

This short book is in two parts, the first being an account of Quaker women's writing during the first half-century of Quakerism, part of the author's Ph.D. research into the

publication of women's writing in England, 1660-1714. Published writing by women increased rapidly during the latter part of the seventeenth century, and Quaker women may have provided 20 per cent of the total for the century as a whole. In recent years the subject of Quaker women and their lives, including their writings, has received a considerable amount of attention, and readers familiar with the field will not find here much that they do not already know. Other readers may find it a useful brief summary, but should be warned that there are several minor errors.

The main value of the book, which is considerable, lies in the second, bibliographic, section. The author has painstakingly traced 261 published writings by 234 women Quakers, and also by women who wrote against Quakerism, as against an estimate of 80 in Barbour and Roberts *Early Quaker Writings*, and she has done this by including contributions by women to books whose main author may have been a man, signatories to epistles from women's business meetings and testimonies signed by a number of people. This means that a number of women are included who are only known as signatories to Women's Meeting epistles, and some of these names recur regularly. Cases of multiple authorship are cross-referenced up to a limit of fifteen signatories. Alternate forms of authors' names are given. Bibliographic information includes Wing and Smith references, and in many cases a brief note is added regarding the purpose and content of the publication.

My one grumble concerns the chosen format. The entries are set out according to regular bibliographic practice, with each entry as a separate paragraph. Reading through such a list is always tedious, and in this case the sheer wealth of information provided makes it more difficult than usual. A researcher wishing, for instance, to arrange this information by date, or to find out if particular publishers were favoured, would have a long and trying task. What a pity the author did not break with tradition and lay the information out as a database. Perhaps the publisher, a bibliographical society, objected.

Rosemary Moore

Richard Davis Webb, Dublin Quaker Printer, 1805-1872. By Richard S. Harrison. Red Barn Publishing, Co. Cork, 1993. Pp. ii + 84. Illustrated. No price.

Richard Davis Webb spent most of his busy life as a Friend, actively engaged in many of the radical and philanthropic activities of his time. Although he resigned from the Society in 1851 this did not prevent him undertaking, in 1852, the printing of the *Transactions of the Central Relief Committee*. This detailed account of Quaker responses in Ireland to the Great Famine, in which he took part, remains one of the most important documents in nineteenth century Irish Quaker history. What emerges from Richard S. Harrison's sympathetic portrait is a man of honesty, principle and deep concern for both Ireland and the wider world beyond it. Some striking insights are presented on the character of Irish Quakerism and the changing nature of Irish nationalism before 1850. However the study does raise reservations.

These lie principally in the structure and organisation of the text. A chronological narrative is adopted but this does not present the subject or the material to the best advantage. Thus in a chapter dealing with the onset of the Great Famine in 1846 the author devotes nearly two pages to Mrs. Asenath Nicholson, one of the many lively and difficult

radicals who found hospitality with the Webb family. It becomes difficult to keep adequate track of the several major preoccupations of Webb's social and religious concerns. These included abolition of slavery, peace and temperance. Webb also shrewdly observed Irish nationalist activities in the 1840s. (The index, useful in many details, does not unfortunately have entries for these major interests). This also affects the evaluation of Webb and his concerns not made easier by squeezing the last 20 years of his life into 1½ pages. This is too abrupt and fails to do justice to the ongoing course of Webb's interests in these years. Some effort is made to relate Webb to his radical contemporaries, Quaker and non-Quaker, but more needs to be done here. How does Webb compare, in methods and achievement, with other Quaker radicals, notably Bright and Sturge? Above all, there needs to be a move from a personal account to a critical evaluation which studies Webb and his activities in a wider historical context of the fortunes of the various movements he devoted such time and energy to. How far, for example, did splits and differences between radicals, both as individuals and as groups, affect the effectiveness and ultimate realisation of the goals Webb and others sought? A thematic approach, in separate chapters, would have allowed a critical and more concentrated examination of the several topics in Webb's biography and interests. A clear and more balanced account would then have been possible. Professor Alex Tyrrell's study of Joseph Sturge (1987) provides an interesting contrast here.

Nonetheless this book is valuable and worthwhile, not least in the questions it raises. I hope opportunity might allow Richard S. Harrison to take his researches further and engage more deeply with some of the issues here indicated.

Howard F. Gregg

Friends in York The dynamics of Quaker Revival 1780-1860. By Sheila Wright. Keele University Press, Keele, Staffordshire, 1995. Pp. 253. £35.00.

Sheila Wright's *Friends in York* is a short work. 123 pages of text are supported by 58 of appendices, 13 of bibliography and 35 of notes. Extensive statistics (30 tables in chapter seven as well as the material in the appendices) underpin the text. Like any other study of Friends in a particular area it can be read in at least two ways, as an account of part of a local community that sheds light on that, or as a local study that contributes to the picture of Quakerism nationally and in this case for a relatively neglected period. The absence of adequate comparable studies helps neither the author nor the reader in seeing just how far the local conclusions might apply more broadly. Sheila Wright's thesis is essentially that York meeting saw a significant revival in the period between 1780 and 1860 as the result of the development of a unique internal dynamic. She argues that women ministers in particular encouraged the growth of evangelicalism amongst York Friends. Evangelicalism in turn encouraged convictions and the retention of membership, major forces in the demonstrable numerical growth of the meeting. It is not always quite clear whether the subject is York Meeting or York Monthly Meeting. The growth was also the result of movement into the meeting motivated by economic reasons with York's increasing Quaker middle class providing employment, schools and the Retreat (an employer as well as a facility). Thus York does seem to have been an exceptional case in English Quakerism where our perception up to the mid-nineteenth century is generally of continuing numerical decline. The growth in numbers in York

was not the result of improving fertility or lower mortality rates. The demographic revolution of the late eighteenth century described in Vann and Eversley, *Friends in life and death* (Cambridge, 1992) was not responsible. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the York meeting house had to be extended to accommodate 130 more Friends while the membership of the Monthly Meeting rose from 108 in 1800 to 155 in 1820.

At the root of the evangelical movement in Quakerism there was the work of two York Friends, Henry Tuke and Lindley Murray. Sheila Wright gives a useful account of both, and especially of the development of Tuke's thought. Other members of the Tuke family were influential in the meeting too and three of Henry's sisters were evangelical ministers. It might be worth mentioning that Murray's *Power of Religion on the Mind* (1787) had at least 20 printings in the period covered by this work. Stephen Allott's *Lindley Murray* (York, 1991) is one of several relevant works which appear to have escaped Sheila Wright's notice. Her description of women's ministry and its organisation in York is valuable and the comparisons made with other nonconformist traditions particularly so. Women ministers were important before the spread of evangelicalism among Friends. Women were also of the greatest importance in the continuing Quaker tradition of pastoral care. A good part in the narrative is taken up with Friends' involvement in the community politically as well as philanthropically. Even before the 1828 Corporation Act they were deeply involved in York, perhaps rather more so than the Yearly Meeting would have liked as a general rule. Samuel Tuke campaigned on behalf of William Wilberforce in the 1807 election. Naturally major causes were the abolition of the slave trade and then of slavery. In some campaigns partnership with the Anglican evangelicals became natural. Philanthropic activity ranged widely and included the foundation of the Retreat and the encouragement of non-denominational education. Sheila Wright makes a serious and welcome contribution to the process of re-examining the history of English Friends in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

David J. Hall