

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

John Wilhelm Rowntree 1868-1905 and the beginnings of modern Quakerism. By Stephen Allott. Sessions Book Trust, York, 1994. Pp. xiv + 138. £7.00.

Stephen Allott's concise and appealing account of John Wilhelm Rowntree makes very considerable use of quotations. It is well-illustrated.

Rowntree was one of the most influential Friends of his day and made a great contribution to the Society despite his involvement in business, his chronic ill-health and his sadly early death at the age of 36. Allott provides a valuable addition to the studies of British Quakerism in the crucial period around the beginning of this century. It is timely background to the consideration of the impact of the Manchester conference of 1895.

Rowntree will now be known to Friends not so much as a pioneer in writing Quaker history as for being part of it. He had hoped to make a major new historical study and gathered a collection of Quaker literature in preparation for this, later to pass to the Woodbrooke Library. His lectures on the rise of Quakerism in Yorkshire in his *Essays and Addresses* form his main published historical contribution. They went beyond narrative to exhortation and explained his vision for the Society of Friends. History for him was not a matter of satisfying academic curiosity but of tracing the evolution of contemporary Quakerism and explaining the relevance of the past to the questions of the day. The Rowntree series of Quaker histories built on his vision, effectively as his memorial. His deep friendship with Rufus Jones led to Jones's major contribution to the series alongside W.C. Braithwaite's important volumes.

Much of that history of Friends is now being rethought and Rowntree's importance is probably more as a prophet than as a catalyst to historical study. His plea for the tolerance of intellectual doubt was a major stimulus to the Manchester conference. Out of that came the development of Summer schools building on the Adult School movement to which he had been wholeheartedly committed. Then to meet the need for further education in Quakerism and in a Quaker residential context came Woodbrooke, the idea developed by George Cadbury but springing from the desire by Rowntree and his friends to nurture gifts of ministry and to sustain British Quakerism in its non-pastoral form. While fuller studies of the period are still needed Stephen Allott's book is to be welcomed for bringing Rowntree's name back before a wider audience than will probably see a more substantial academic study.

David J. Hall

The Peace of Europe, the Fruits of Solitude and other writings. By William Penn. Edited by Edwin B. Bronner. J.M. Dent, London, 1993. Pp. xxxiv + 322. £6.99.

This collection comprising ten of Penn's most important published works first appeared in the invaluable Everyman Library in 1915. Since then it has been the most

accessible edition of Penn's works other than *No Cross No Crown*, the best known of his writings. The new Everyman edition has the bonus of an all too brief eleven-page introduction by Edwin Bronner.

Bronner reminds us quite rightly that Penn is held in higher regard in the United States than in Britain. Perhaps the accessibility of this collection may help redress the balance. Penn should be seen as more than a trans-Atlantic political figure. His essay, included here, *Towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe* is topical and practical. Here there are also some of the reflective works which should appeal to the more general reader as much as the rapidly written polemical works at which Penn excelled. *Some Fruits of Solitude* and the related texts offer maxims of guidance through life.

David J. Hall

The Largest Amount of Good: Quaker Relief in Ireland 1654-1921. By Helen E. Hatton. McGill-Queen's University Press, Kingston & Montreal, 1993. Pp. 367.

This book is largely based upon a doctoral thesis (produced some years ago) dealing with Quaker relief in famine-stricken Ireland in the 1840s. The author has since added a brief section dealing with Irish Quaker relief in the pre-famine period (1654-1840).

The real contribution of this volume is to be found in the section dealing with Irish Quaker relief during the famine years. The author carefully calendars the Quaker efforts - the millions of dollars/pounds gathered (largely from America but with heroic and sacrificial gifts from Irish and British Friends). Food and clothing also arrived in great amounts, all meticulously accounted for and distributed by a greatly overworked Irish Quaker committee (which worked closely with British Friends). Page after page of statistics and cases leave one almost overwhelmed by the scope of the outpouring of aid. Yet it was too little and too late to keep a million Irish from dying from starvation and disease. The writer quotes from first-hand accounts, giving such a graphic picture of the almost unbelievable suffering and widespread death that one is still tremendously moved by the situation a century and a half later. No wonder that one 1847 observer wrote 'Our wonder was not that people died, but that people lived!'

Readers of the *JFHS* will be especially interested in the differences between Quaker and other relief efforts. Unlike evangelical religious groups, Quakers made no attempt to use their aid to convert the recipients. Unlike the British government, Quakers did not insist on a show of destitution. They gave assistance on an impartial basis, frequently working through priests and curates (in those areas where such cooperation was possible). They also lobbied officials, seeking to change the harsh policies and inefficient machinery of the British government. Today, therefore, it is the Quakers who are remembered for feeding the starving and not the British government or the evangelicals! The account of one 1847 observer helps us understand the ongoing affection for Quakers and their efforts: '...the scenes I have witnessed, when some box of warm clothing was opened and the naked starving women and children would drop upon their knees, clasp their emaciated fingers and bless the gifts that the blessed Quakers had sent them.'

The author, a Canadian professor of history, should have limited her book to the famine period, not attempting the pre-1840s introduction - where her limited

knowledge of Quaker history leads to a number of glowing errors: (1) The earliest Quakers never called *themselves* 'The First Publishers of Truth' [p.15], (2) evangelical American Quakers never called themselves Hicksites after 1828 [p.23], (3) Friends travelling in the ministry were not *sent* to other meetings [pp.66-67], (4) the author appears on p.67 to be unaware of pre-twentieth century women's meetings. A number of other errors of fact or interpretation might be pointed out if desired. Equally disturbing is the lack of proofing and updating the bibliographical material before the 1993 publication of a manuscript largely done years before as a thesis. The 'taught teach' on p.73 probably can be traced to a computer error. The Dublin Friends centre formerly on Eustace Street was never called Friends House (x, introduction) and was removed to Swanbrook House on Bloomfield Avenue long before this 1993 work still lists it as being on Eustace Street [p.330]. Friends House in London is on Euston *Road* rather than Euston *Street* [p.331]. It also seems a bit odd for a historian to cite Edmundson as quoted by Richardson rather than from Edmundson's own 1715 *Journal*!

Kenneth L. Carroll

John Bellows of Gloucester: 1831-1901, A Many-Sided Man. By Kate Charity. William Sessions Ltd., York 1993. Pp.130. £7.50.

Written by his granddaughter and published by the great-nephew of his friend, Frederick Sessions, this tribute to John Bellows reveals him as more than a weighty Friend, and more than a successful business man. Moreover, he not only had his own printing and publishing house, but also a fluent and gifted pen. This account of his life, based largely on his memoirs and letters, shows the wide range of his interests and achievements - as a lexicographer producing the first pocket dictionary in French and English, as an archaeologist particularly associated with the Birdlip grave group and the Roman wall remains in Gloucester, as the inventor of an ingenious wages calculator, and as an indefatigable traveller, returning to report to Friends on missions accomplished and to record, often magically, the sights and sounds of places that were much further away than they are today:- the country around Metz, Bulgaria, Norway, Russia, the South Caucasus and, lastly, America where he was awarded an honorary degree at Harvard.

He had an ongoing friendship with Oliver Wendell Holmes by correspondence, and with Tolstoy in person. His wife Elizabeth, née Earnshaw, bore him nine surviving children and ably looked after home and family during his travels. She accompanied him to Harvard and edited his letters and memoirs after his death.

The book has an appendix by the Archaeological Director of the Gloucester Museum, Malcolm S. Watkins, evaluating the work of John Bellows in relation to the archaeological standards of the period.

John Bellows himself also needs to be seen against the background of his own times. He was 28 years old in 1859 when the *Origin of Species* was published, and when Higher Criticism of the Bible emerged from Germany. For the next 40 years the Society of Friends, with others, was coming to terms with the changes in scientific and religious thinking, and with both new attitudes towards social problems at home and the role of Empire abroad. From the disownment of David Duncan in 1871 for 'modern views' it moved to the Manchester Conference in 1895 where, under the guidance of its own

scholars and the inspiration of John Wilhelm Rowntree, it committed itself to going forward.

There is helpful reference in the book to the fearless divergence of John Bellows on occasion from his fellows. The chapter on *The Boer War* is a sensitive account of his painful, public dispute with Frederick Sessions on the subject. But Frederick Sessions was not alone. There were many Friends of stature and standing outside as well as within the Society, including the author's other grandfather, George Cadbury, who were openly critical of British policy towards the Boers.

One must recognise and respect the limitations of a book that is primarily a personal tribute, but it would have been good to see more of John Bellows among his Quaker peers. Though sometimes he would have had to be seen in a very small minority, he would not have been diminished.

Hope Hewison

A Testimony to the Grace of God as shown in the Life of James Nayler. By Dorothy Nimmo. William Sessions Ltd., York, 1993. £2.50 + 50p p&p.

In this very readable booklet Dorothy Nimmo succeeds in capturing effectively the manifestation of the grace of God as shown in the life of James Nayler. The medium of poetry that she employs throughout is particularly successful in depicting that rare and delicate spirit Nayler later became. By also choosing material from George Fox's early life and contrasting this with a similar period in Nayler's life the author cleverly brings out the delicacy of his spirit comparing it with the more robust style of Fox. The selection of incidents from Nayler's life guides one through his development from rough diamond to polished gem.

The style of poetry used by Dorothy Nimmo throughout is tense and compact. It varies from being turgid to highly smooth and polished: thus reflecting the highly enigmatic character of Nayler.

The author's use of exam-type questions and guidance in answering at the beginning and end of this work I found rather successful as she leads the reader very sympathetically to his or her own conclusions about James Nayler's life. The poetic language throughout is very powerful. In conclusion this work presents the complex nature of its subject in an easily understandable form.

Roger T. Jarvis

Protestant Dissent and Controversy in Ireland 1660-1714. By Phil Kilroy. Cork University Press. Pp.300. £27.50.

Dr. Kilroy's study explores the origins of an important aspect of modern Irish history in the growth and survival of four Dissenting traditions. He has used a rich variety of manuscript sources, for Church, Government and the Dissenting groups to pursue his theme. These include materials in the Quaker Libraries in London and Dublin. Starting

with the Reformation he shows that efforts to establish a State Church in Ireland had failed before the Civil Wars, when it was suppressed. Between 1642 and 1660 Scottish Presbyterianism was refounded in Ulster and English Presbyterians, Independents and Quakers established themselves in Ireland. There were 30 Quaker Meetings in Ireland in 1660. At the Restoration, the Anglican Church of Ireland was again revived as the State Church but the 'sects' it refused to accept as churches survived a period of persecution and pressure to become, by 1714, firmly established as part of the Protestant community in Ireland. All these remained however minority groups in a majority Catholic population.

Dr. Kilroy adopts a two-fold approach to the exploration of his theme. He first explores each of the four Dissenting groups chosen, concentrating on theology, organisation, worship and regional strength to illuminate the process of how each rooted themselves in Ireland. Secondly he examines the crucial and creative role of controversy for each group in the clarification and development of belief, structure and discipline. This is undertaken from three active exercises in controversy: that within each group; that between each group; that with the Anglican Church in Ireland. Finally relations between each group and successive English governments and Irish executives are detailed. The Scottish Presbyterians with their considerable strength in the north of Ireland, their refusal to compromise with Anglicanism, and rebellion in Scotland in the reign of Charles II incurred the closest attention and hostility of Government and State Church. English Presbyterians and Independents were not large in number in Ireland and had some hope of a better relationship with the State Church. Incurring considerable hostility for both their religious radicalism and theological nonconformity Quakers, despite some extreme examples of early witness, quickly settled into a distinctive and stable group, upheld by well defined organisation and discipline, and making an important contribution to the economic life of the country. Their wealth and commercial success aroused the envy of some of their critics, but helped make them acceptable to government, as they were not politically active in the general sense of that term. In his valuable and scholarly synthesis of early Quakerism in Ireland, Dr. Kilroy has drawn on the work of several modern historians of this theme, including Isabel Grubb, John M. Douglas, Kenneth Carroll, Richard S. Harrison and David Eversley. The relation of Quakers to the broader theme and the participants involved gives a deeper perspective to their historical and spiritual significance.

Sadly, the lack of modern studies in detail of the Church of Ireland and the Roman Catholic Church in this period prevents Dr. Kilroy, as he usefully notes, from a full overview of his theme. A lack of maps is to be regretted for these would have been helpful for denominational locations and growth. However, this remains a stimulating and worthwhile book providing much insight and giving much to think about.

Howard F. Gregg

New Light on George Fox, 1624-1691. Ed. Michael Mullett. William Sessions, York, 1994. £12.50.

We live in a time in which our Society has an ambivalent attitude to leadership, so perhaps it is not surprising to find a volume of essays which concentrates on Fox whilst at the same time resisting any tendency to hagiography. Richard Bailey's title, *The Making and Unmaking of a God*, illustrates this paradox.

The essays are a selection from the papers given at the 1991 conference at the University of Lancaster which marked the tercentenary of the death of George Fox. Many of the pieces are exhilarating, especially where they deal with the early years of Quakerism in the 1650s, those years which have been subsequently rewritten and reinterpreted, not least by Fox himself. Christopher Hill suggests that the acceptance of the peace principle marked the end of this epoch, as Quakers gave up the radical expectation of the immediate establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth. He also asks how far Fox was the leader before 1661, pointing out that he outlived the other early leaders.

Larry Ingle is in search of the 'real' George Fox and deals with the question of where the money came from which financed his activities, as well as suggesting that Fox was not very likeable, being 'a prig who took himself seriously'. Other writers look, for example, at the Naylor episode, at slavery, and at Fox's use of metaphor. Overall what is highlighted is the picture of an enthusiastic millenarian group struggling to make sense of its religious experience in a difficult political situation. Surprisingly, no author notes the similarities to the New Testament church and the similar resolution of difficulties through the development of theology and organisation.

In his introduction, Michael Mullett looks at the writing of Quaker history, showing how Fox has been interpreted according to the needs and interests of the times of the historians. Thomas Hamm then looks at the politics of Quaker historiography in the nineteenth century. 'If' he says, 'all history is political, or at least all acts of doing history are, it is no surprise that an examination of Quaker historical writing shows that concerns of ecclesiastical polity and politics have shaped it... Friends have written to preserve, protect and defend, not just the memory of those who had gone before, but also their own visions, accepted or heterodox, of what Quakerism was.'

With this in mind, it is interesting to pursue the question of what vision of Quakerism is presented in this volume. What vision is being defended? Perhaps primarily it is an academic vision, of Quakerism as a proper subject of study in universities. This can be worthwhile but also has its dangers, for academic values and Quaker values are not the same: the academic thrives by overturning tradition, the Quaker by living it. The claim in the preface is that contributions were sought to reflect some of the variety of strengths in the conference. There is a variety of viewpoints as an academic might see it, but the contributors are overwhelmingly male (all but one) and mostly North American. This is reflected in the pieces. There is a handful of references to Margaret Fell and a few other women, but through most of this book one would hardly guess that there were any women Quakers, let alone that they had any influence on Fox or on Quaker history. In this respect at least, this volume has a flawed vision.

Janet Scott