

Quaker Education

IN the course of the past five years the Reference Library at Friends House has been enriched by two detailed studies of Quaker education presented for master's degrees in English universities. The first production in order of time was Dorothy G. B. Hubbard's *Early Quaker education, c. 1650-1780* (University of London, M.A. in Education, 1940, pp. v, 338, typescript), which covers the first half of the period included in L. John Stroud's later thesis *The history of Quaker education in England, 1647-1903* (University of Leeds, M.Ed., 1944, pp. v, 208, typescript). By the kindness of the author we have also seen a third dissertation, entitled *A critical estimate of the educational theory and practice of the Society of Friends as seen in their schools in England* (1947, pp. ii, 583; xx, typescript), presented by W. A. Campbell Stewart for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of London. This study covers the whole period of Friends' educational activity in monumental fashion.

It is not often that dissertations on the same subject are produced within so short a space of time, but the multitude of facts and local instances collected by Dorothy Hubbard, the clarity of systematic approach in John Stroud's work, and Campbell Stewart's detailed survey of school development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries give each a value of its own.

All three writers unite in marking down the close of the eighth decade of the eighteenth century as a turning point in Friends' educational activities, conveniently dated by the foundation of Ackworth school. With some pardonable over-simplification, the earlier period is regarded by John Stroud as one of primarily local activity, while from 1779 education became largely a national concern. His first four chapters give a short general survey of the rise and organization of the Society of Friends, a broad survey of the developments in the first half-century, and the later period from about 1695 to the middle of the next century, and a study of early provision for the education of the poor, covering Bellers' schemes and the Workhouse schools. The chapter on the formation of schools for the children

of Friends "not in affluence" is the key to the modern period. It commences with the abortive Meeting for Sufferings report in 1760 and leads on to the foundation of Ackworth and the later schools, with steadily widening curriculum and provision for moral training and leisure activities. The sixth and seventh chapters are devoted to Bootham, the Mount, and Leighton Park, schools serving wealthier Friends in the nineteenth century, and to the industrial and agricultural schools established during that period for the children of non-members. The final summary chapter is preceded by a survey of Friends and adult education, devoted to a summary of early Friends' attitude to the universities, teacher-training, apprenticeship and the Quaker settlement movement, culminating in the establishment of Woodbrooke. The bibliography reveals that reliance has had to be placed on secondary authorities for a large amount of the work, and this, rather than typing errors, probably accounts for uncertainties in emphasis, some confusion of names,¹ and for mis-statements.² Nonetheless the author has well brought out the interplay of Friends' ideals and the English environment, and has illustrated with pertinent examples the main guiding forces in educational development during the first two and a half centuries of the Society's history.

Dorothy Hubbard's study covers the first half of this period. The bibliography and the wealth of quotation show how wide is the field to be covered among Friends' manuscripts alone before any satisfactory picture of an aspect of Friends' activity can be obtained. The author sets out "to trace the part taken by Quaker schools and teachers, from the birth of the Society to the founding of Ackworth, in" the general history of the Society. The first chapter on Friends' educational background is followed by a chronological sequence of studies of the earliest schools, early educational policy, the legal struggle for liberty to teach, and the eighteenth century decline. Two chapters on curricula provide illuminating evidence of Friends' reactions to "heathenish books" as well as their readiness to experiment. The final chapters deal with the education of the poor and apprenticeship, education overseas, and the foundation of

¹ e.g. Keigh for Keith; Anderson for Anderdon on p. 19.

² e.g. The statement that James Logan was an Edinburgh graduate probably arises from a mis-reading of Knight's *History of Sidcot school*, p. 6.

Ackworth. The author attributes the survival of the Society of Friends through the nineteenth century to the revival at the close of the eighteenth which found expression in the foundation of Ackworth and other schools.

The great strength of the third of these dissertations lies in the full treatment Campbell Stewart accords to conditions and development after the foundation of Ackworth, more than 400 pages being devoted to this later period. He commences with a short introduction emphasising the fundamentally independent origin and status of the schools with which he is concerned. The first chapter sets the scene for the first half of the work with an outline of contemporary thought and the political and economic aspects of Puritan belief. This precedes an account of "Quaker beliefs"—perhaps an ill-chosen heading for the passages on the main tenets and characteristics, rounded off by an assessment of Quakerism's political and economic fruits. The two chapters which follow deal with the principles which guided educational enterprise in the first period. Beginning with their suspicion of intellectualism (due, the author thinks, to fear that it might interfere with the direct action of the inner light as much as to the reaction from the emphasis that others placed on it) he shows how the attitude of Friends to the standard curriculum changed—where they did not reject the classical discipline, the variations introduced by their own Latin teachers—the ready acceptance of commercial subjects and the utilitarian outlook which showed most clearly in the education of the poor, as well as the impact of contemporary forces pointing them to experiment. The fourth chapter is concerned with Friends' educational achievement from 1668 to 1779, from the foundation of the Waltham Abbey and Shacklewell schools to that of Ackworth. Next, the chronological account is carried forward into the modern period, and this section serves as prelude to the main contribution to knowledge which this thesis represents. This is embodied in the chapters on "Aspects of the educational provision in Quaker schools during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries," which are based on official reports and personal accounts. The chapters are divided conveniently under the headings of cost, staffing, curriculum, school government, punishment, guarded education and co-education. This section leads on to a similarly-planned

chapter on the schools since 1918, and a general survey in the Conclusion. The arrangement of the bibliography leaves something to be desired, but the chief blemish on the work is a lack of coherent design within the earlier chapters. There is also a certain obscurity of expression which might prevent the general reader from appreciating the true merit of the work. The author has perhaps by the ramifications of his subject been lured into hasty statement¹ which meticulous care alone could have avoided.

These three works show clearly how much farther early Friends went than even the educational reformers of the Commonwealth. The main aim of those men had been limited to the establishment of reading schools for stamping out illiteracy and placing into all men's hands the Bible, the way of salvation. In the grammar no less than in the elementary schools the reformers envisaged great changes, and wished to introduce new subjects into the curriculum, to widen the fields to include the sciences and useful arts. Here progress had been difficult among the established schools, but Friends, sitting loose from tradition, had greater boldness and freedom in planning a curriculum both elementary and secondary, of scope as wide as life itself. The dissenters as a whole probably distrusted education when not related explicitly to religion, and it is all the more noteworthy (however small we may think the result) that Penn should take the desires of children as the starting point in education, and that Fox should declare for teaching "all things useful in creation."

Not all Friends were so broad in opinion; John Bellers, in proposing a school in his college of industry, noted "beyond Reading and Writing, further Learning will not be so useful to most among us as among other people, whilst many of them expect to get their Living by it, as Priests, Lawyers, &c." This utilitarian doctrine, born from economic motives and applied above by Bellers to the poor, was advanced by merchants, manufacturers and the urban middle class generally in a demand for better technical education—a demand which was to grow stronger with the gradual breakdown of the apprenticeship system. This class was one of the seats of the strength of Quakerism from

¹ *e.g.* No evidence is given for the statement on p. 50 that Winstanley became a Quaker.

the beginning, and it is not surprising therefore to trace through Dorothy Hubbard's pages how soon after meeting house premises were obtained, schools were established teaching languages, commerce, technology, navigation and the natural sciences.

Many of the early efforts to found schools were short-lived and spasmodic, but this is attributable to lethargy and insufficient interest rather than to the Ranterism with which Friends were charged more than once. They never believed that God would educate his people without their effort, and the contempt expressed of contemporary academic learning arose because the universities made in the main neither scholars nor good men.

The eighteenth century stagnation of the Society has sometimes been laid at the door of the second generation of schoolmasters—the products of the apprenticeship system, lacking this university training, and content to aim at a sheltered education of modest level. It is interesting to speculate whether, if Friends had had paid ministry, or for some other reason a higher academy had been necessary, the course of the Society's development would have been different, and Friends in that century would have been blessed with a dissenting academy breeding philosophers and scientists alert and ready to mould and direct the inventions of the infant industrial revolution into fruitful and yet happier channels—a labour worthy of the vision of Fox and Penn.

These theses which are before us are in effect surveys of the education of Friends by Friends, and so such a consideration falls outside their scope, yet all point the way for a more interesting and correspondingly difficult assessment of the influence of Friends in the wider sphere of British educational development since the close of the eighteenth century.

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