

Recent Publications

The Dissenters. Vol. 1: From the Reformation to the French Revolution, by Michael R. Watts. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1978. £15.

It is over sixty years since the publication of the last comprehensive history of English and Welsh nonconformity, and this book is the first half of an intended two-volume work which sets out to make good the deficiency. It is sufficiently detailed and documented to be of value to the specialist; yet the flowing tide of the argument is strong enough to carry the general reader along, even if (like the present reviewer) he must sometimes look back and refresh his memory about the meaning of Arminianism or Antinomianism. The index is good and helpful in this quest; only one definition was sought in vain—that of “a gathered church”.

The author summarises the first two centuries in a “flow chart”, which plainly illustrates the intricacy of the interconnected groupings of Christians who were obliged, for one reason or another, to seek their spiritual home outside the Church of England. The greater part originated from the Puritan movement; but severance from the Church of England was not an immediate consequence of Puritan convictions. To many Puritans it seemed wrong that there should be more than one Christian church in the country, and they hoped to reform the Church of England according to the model described in the New Testament. Others saw a church as a body of believers who “covenanted together to walk in all God’s ways”; for them, separation from the state church became a matter of conscience. The author vividly brings out the clashes of principle and personality in this period, leaving at least one reader deeply impressed by the high seriousness with which questions of faith and conduct were discussed, and the patience displayed by many in the face of persecution or exile.

Thus we are shown how a number of bodies—Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Quakers, Particular and General Baptists—came into being in separation from the Church of England, each with its cherished idiosyncrasies. In 1689, through the Act of Toleration, most of these groups gained religious, though not civil liberty. The period of peace—in some cases, of torpor—which followed, prepared the ground for the Evangelical revival, associated above all with the name of the Wesleys. Here our author is at his most vivid, partly because more is known about the outer and inner lives of the *dramatis personae*, partly because of the intrinsic interest of the conflict of ideas between Calvinist and Arminian Methodism. This first volume ends with the death of John Wesley in 1791.

To Friends, many of whom have a strong interest in the historical origins of their Society, the book is likely to have a particular appeal. The author sees them as descended, not directly from Puritanism, but from a parallel stream of radical Christianity represented in an

earlier century by the Lollards. Their ideas were not original in themselves—in several very interesting pages the author shows how Quaker beliefs and testimonies, from seeking the guidance of the Spirit in business meetings to rejecting the pagan names of days and months, are to be found in the practice of other Dissenters of the of the period. “What was distinctive about Fox”, he says, “was not his opinions but the sense of spiritual power . . . which he conveyed to other men”; and this enabled him to bring into being “one of the most remarkable missionary movements in English history”,

It is this reviewer’s conviction, after reading the book, that many Friends would benefit from contact with the mind of this well-informed and sympathetic observer of their origins. A secondary result of such study is to do justice to the Dissenters of George Fox’s own day. Owing to his own unhappy experiences, he tended to regard the “priests and professors” as tarred all with the same black brush. This book reveals many of them as men of great sincerity and an uncompromising faith, for which, like Fox, they were prepared to suffer.

GEOFFREY W. CARTER

Whispers of Truth. (Quaker Encounters, vol. 3.)* By John Ormerod Greenwood. York, Willaim Sessions Ltd., 1978. pp. viii, 400; illus. £4.95.

This last volume of Ormerod Greenwood’s account of Quaker work abroad from the earliest days until 1945 cannot be considered altogether in isolation. Volumes 2 and 3 together are divided into three parts, and the present volume takes over from volume 2 after the establishment of the F. F. M. A. in 1868, in the middle of Part II, with accounts of six mission fields; their story is however carried back to their inception, which in some cases predates the F. F. M. A.

In Part III the author first examines the changing attitudes in the Society brought about largely by the impact of the first world war and leading, with the inspiration of Carl Heath and under the influence of a ferment of ideas in Europe after the war, to the establishment of the Council for International Service; this had the primary object of establishing “Quaker Embassies” throughout the continent, to assist in the imminently expected birth of a “New Europe”. The scope of this chapter, however, extends beyond the activities of the C. I. S., with its disappointments, mistakes and achievements; it is essentially the wider story of Quakerism in Europe in the post-war years.

The last two chapters first deal with the eventual union of the C. I. S. and the F. F. M. A. to form the F. S. C., and continue with accounts of work in various countries; in particular, in India, with Friends’ involvement in the Indian nationalist movement, and in Germany. Last but not least, attention is given to the emergence in the 30’s of the concept of World Quakerism and the setting up of the F. W. C. C.

**Friends and Relief* (Quaker Encounters, vol. 1) was reviewed by Elfrida Vipont Foulds in our 1976 issue, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 37–39.

In giving a full account of work in many fields and of organisational changes, the author does not gloss over the not infrequent conflicts of aims and of personality, but more important, the story is always placed in a wider setting: of currents of thought both within and without the Society; of culture and politics in the various countries; of the background and lives of workers and of proponents of new ventures. This, as well as the intricate nature of the pattern it sets out to describe, with its many interwoven strands, makes the book rewarding to read and to digest; to ease the path, it is well organised, with useful cross-references and documentation.

WILLIAM BARRETT

Leeds Friends' Minute Book 1692 to 1712. Edited by Jean and Russell Mortimer. li and 269 pp. Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society; Record Series Vol. CXXXIX (for 1977 and 1978), 1980. £14.90.

This edition of the oldest surviving minute book of the Preparative Meeting of the Society of Friends in Leeds is an apt addition to a distinguished record series. Obviously of major interest to present-day "people called"—"in scorn" says one entry here—"Quakers", it is also a social document of value to a variety of historical tastes and inclinations, religious, social and economic. Its impact is enhanced by meticulous editing and by additional material—poor relief accounts and a substantial biographical index which identifies and supplies from a range of sources details about many Friends, some men and women of substance, others of little account in "this evil world".

Friends had appeared in Leeds in the early 1650s and it is clear that a system of meetings was well set up long before this minute book was opened in 1692. The preparative meeting reported through its representatives to the monthly meeting, which made major decisions while leaving much responsibility lower down, particularly in disciplinary matters. Oversight of members was essential for the maintenance of internal unity which, together with an attitude towards "the corrupt practices" outside, made a Friend among Friends. Friends did not get drunk in public or private, go racing or bull-baiting, observe Christmas, neglect their families, make lace, take up vain fashions to the waste of their precious time and substance, sport unnecessary and extravagant wigs, smoke or chew tobacco. They did not pay tithes or steeplehouse taxes, keep company outside the Society, marry "with the world's people" before priests, nor, indeed, commit "the act of uncleanness" anywhere. They did not gossip, bear tales, backbite nor meddle in other men's matters, giving way to fury and passion. But unfortunately some of them did—as these minutes shew. Elders and advisers and the meeting generally, lacking means of external discipline, had only moral suasion and communal disapproval to keep control. Disorder could break out even in the meeting itself, not only among "the lads

and lassies". In the end, disowning was the only course left. What is interesting is how often the weak and the refractory, unwilling to accept reprimands, still wanted to stay within the warmth of the Society.

Among more positive activities was advice on economic activity (starting up a trade,—distilling was frowned upon—changing jobs, offering apprenticeships). The poor generally and their own in particular were a pre-occupation. Friends should look after their own elderly and infirm relations. A lapsed member in whom the meeting could see "little of the image of the Truth born again" was relieved "as a poor man and not one properly of our own society, till we see him more weighty in his life and conversation". But generosity was not lacking.

Even without the help—though that will be welcomed—of the Editors' comprehensive Introduction, it is possible to observe clearly the attitudes and concerns of Friends and the combination of organisation, commonsense and "sweet fellowship of the Gospel of Peace" that kept them together and kept them going in and yet not quite in a world certainly not as hostile as during the days of Fox and Nayler but still beset with snares and torments.

IVAN ROOTS

Quaker History (Friends Historical Association) includes in recent issues the following papers:

(Spring 1979) "The English Quakers and prison reform, 1809–23", by Robert Alan Cooper; "Barclay's Reply to Arnoldus", by Dean Freiday; "The social origins of the early Quakers" [with Lancashire evidence], by Alan Anderson;

(Autumn 1979) "Joseph Whitwell Pease and the Quaker role in the campaign to suppress the opium trade in the British empire", by John V. Crangle; "The impact of the Discipline: Ireland, New England, and New York", by Arthur J. Worrall;

(Spring 1980) "Fighting about peace: the No-Conscription Fellowship, and the British Friends' Service Committee, 1915–1919", by Thomas C. Kennedy; "Quaker women and the charge of Separatism", by Margaret H. Bacon.

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Attention is drawn to the following:

Friends in York: the Quaker story in the life of a meeting, by Stephen Allott. (York: Sessions, 1978. xii, 127 pp. £3.50)

Hammersmith Quakers' tercentenary, 1677–1977, by H. William Cundy. With a preface by Ormerod Greenwood. (London, Hammersmith Preparative Meeting, 1978. xviii, 87 pp. £1)

The Quakers of Tottenham, 1775–1825, by R. Collie. (Enfield, Edmonton Hundred Historical Society, Occasional papers. New series, no. 37, 1978. 29 pp. tables. 50p)

The Somersetshire Quarterly Meeting of the Society of Friends, 1668–1699. Edited by Stephen C. Morland. (Newton Surmaville, Yeovil, Somerset Record Society, Volume 75, 1978. ix, 303 pp. £7.50)

The religion of Gerrard Winstanley, by Christopher Hill. (*Past & Present* supplement no. 5, 1978. iii, 57 pp.)