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Adams' "The Creation was Open to Me: An Anthology of Friends' Writings on that of God in all Creation" - Book Review

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convictions, but who no longer have a common core theological language to express their deepest spiritual experiences to each other.

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Anne Adams (ed.), *The Creation was Open to Me: An Anthology of Friends' Writings on that of God in all Creation* (Wilmslow: Quaker Green Concern, 1996), pp. xiv + 110. Paperback. ISBN 0-9518766-2-7. £4.50.

This is an anthology with a definite purpose. Published in 1996, it was a response by members of Quaker Green Concern to a sense that 'the original Quaker conviction that to be fully in the spirit is to be fully and joyfully aware of oneself as a part of the universe' was not adequately reflected in the new *Quaker Faith and Practice* of 1995. The compilers also express the hope that Friends in Britain will quickly discover a 'corporate testimony on creation'.

The format is similar to that adopted by QFP. After a general introduction, extracts from (mostly British) Friends' writings are grouped under 14 headings. Sections 1-10 deal with individuals' perceptions of nature and of practical ways of living that reflect an awareness of the universe and the natural world, Section 7 specifically with the Earth Summit of 1992, Section 8 with human cultures other than our own, whilst poems are included in Section 10. Section 11 comprises corporate statements from within the Quaker community, Section 12 is about campaigning; Sections 13 and 14 look particularly to the future, and are entitled 'Challenge' and 'Vision' respectively. Extracts, which are limited to about 300 words, are grouped chronologically within each section from the earliest days of the Quaker movement to the present time: the larger part of the material dates from the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Overall, the selection of material is designed to show that, as individuals, many contemporary Friends are re-discovering a strong sense of unity with the natural as well as the human world. This is expressed in different ways, using language that is often inspiring and sometimes very beautiful. A few words of explanation in the Introduction about the use of the term 'creation' would perhaps have been helpful, both to Quaker and non-Quaker readers. Firmly in the liberal Quaker tradition of the late twentieth-century, these extracts reflect inspiration from Christian and non-Christian traditions, and draw substantially on the personal experience of the contributors. They are notably not concerned with theological models of God and the world, or other theological issues, although some evidence for a variety of theological views may be discerned here. This applies also to the extracts from yearly meeting minutes and various editions of British Quakers' book of discipline spanning the period 1889-1995, which make fascinating reading for those interested in the development of ideas within the Society of Friends.

For the researcher, one of the greatest assets of the book is that all extracts are fully referenced in an index of authors. As a starting point for the exploration of early Quakers' views in this area, it would have been improved had it been possible to incorporate more of Anne Adams' own researches at Woodbrooke College, used as the basis for her article 'Early Friends and their witness to creation' (*The Friends Quarterly* 31.4 [1998] pp. 145-52). The omission of any of Edward Burrough's writings is particularly surprising, since, of all the

early Friends, he was one of the most articulate and thoughtful on this subject. The Introduction states that the compilers of this collection became aware of 'a huge gap in Quaker writing about the earth between the 17th and the late 20th centuries (apart from... John Woolman in the 18th)'. With the exception of some of the corporate statements referred to above, and extracts from Woolman's writings (no less than 12 are included: more than any other single author), this long period is, indeed, virtually unrepresented. This is difficult to reconcile with the strong and well-known Quaker tradition for involvement in natural history, and a love of plants and botanical pursuits, for example, that persisted throughout most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Whilst it may be argued that the tightly holistic sense of unity between God, humanity and the rest of 'creation' which has been attributed to early Quakers may have fragmented after the 1660s, there is considerable evidence that a sense of connectedness with the natural world remained. Using the evidence of their own writing, Geoffrey Cantor has shown in his paper 'Aesthetics in Science, as Practised by Quakers in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries' (*Quaker Studies* 4 [1999] pp. 1-20) how an aesthetic appreciation of nature was an important part of some Friends' sense of the divine. He cites as examples the botanist, Peter Collinson, in the eighteenth century, and the meteorologist, Luke Howard, in the nineteenth.

Nevertheless, this anthology is a welcome and stimulating contribution to the subject, which is of spiritual, historical and literary value. It deserves to be widely read by Quakers and non-Quakers alike, and will, it is hoped, not only provide a starting point for further research, but also continue to inspire Friends to clarify and develop their understanding of these important issues, both individually and collectively.

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Christine Trevett, *Quaker Women Prophets in England and Wales 1650-1700* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), pp. xv + 246. Hardback. ISBN 0-7734-7518-4. £49.95.

This new work provides a useful addition to our understanding of Quakerism in its formative period in England and Wales, and the key role women played in the development of Quaker communities. Supplementing the themes from her previous work, *Women and Quakerism in the Seventeenth Century* (York: Sessions, 1990), Christine Trevett offers a historiographical appreciation and eight chapters on the lives and responsibilities of Quaker women in the seventeenth century. The composition of the book suggests that this study will form the basis of research for future generations of scholars, and they will use the 'finely-balanced collection of essays' as a means of exploring both early modern Quakerism and gender-related issues.

The reader is immediately made aware of the reasons for the study, its parameters, and the recent research conducted into Quaker studies. For the Welsh reader there is, as Professor Geraint H. Jenkins observed, a need for an in-depth study of Quakerism which examines the role of the Society of Friends in Wales.¹ It is, therefore, to be applauded that, apart from

1. G.H. Jenkins, *Protestant Dissenters in Wales, 1639-1689* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992).