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## Punshon's "Reasons for Hope: The Faith and Future of the Friends Church" - Book Review

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living discipline as it was a throwing open of the Society's doors in search of new freedoms. Central to John Wilhelm Rowntree's vision was the need for the Society to create opportunities 'for producing a ministry that was informed and inspired as well as free' (p. 168)—an invocation to a greater intellectual and theological rigour that has more than a little resonance for British Quakerism as it enters its 350th year.

Brian D. Phillips  
Oxford

John Punshon, *Reasons for Hope: The Faith and Future of the Friends Church* (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 2001), pp. xvi + 395, Glossary, bibliography and index. £17. ISBN 0-944350-56-9.

John Punshon, British Friend and former Quaker Studies Tutor at Woodbrooke, has recently finished a decade of teaching at the Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Indiana. His probing and provocative lecture style had already made him a popular speaker among American liberal Friends before his move to Indiana. His tenure at ESR was an extended engagement with the evangelical stream, affecting both him and it in important ways. No British Friend has had as strong an impact on the pastoral wing of American Friends since Joseph John Gurney's American travels in 1837. Though he has now retired and returned to England, Punshon continues to be sought after as a speaker and adviser to American Friends, particularly the more centrist sector of Friends United Meeting.

Consequently, *Reasons for Hope* has been eagerly anticipated by FUM Friends (and others) as a summary of his teaching at ESR and as a call to renewal among evangelical Friends. The book is dedicated 'To the Friends of Indiana Yearly Meeting, who gave me a home'. More than spiritual fellowship during his Richmond years may be implied here. His teaching has been more warmly received there than it was in Britain Yearly Meeting, and Punshon now speaks and writes a more overtly evangelical message.

This book may be compared to Joseph John Gurney's *Observations on the Religious Peculiarities of the Society of Friends* (1824) in its emphasis upon Quaker faith and practice as one expression of a vibrant Christian spirituality shared by a variety of other churches, particularly evangelicals. As a writing strategy, it is also comparable to the British Quaker Joseph Bevan Braithwaite's composition of the *Richmond Declaration* on behalf of American Friends gathered at the Richmond Conference of 1887. It is an attempt to define a valid, coherent realm of evangelical Quakerism, and to call Friends drifting into the evangelical mainstream back to Quaker distinctiveness. In his Preface, Punshon himself describes two main features of the book: a *primer* in evangelical Quaker faith; and a *polemic* for a more productive Quaker engagement with the wider evangelical world. Considering these aims, the book may be too long and complexly argued to reach and convince the more assimilated wing of evangelical Quakerism. Such Friends these days are often preoccupied mainly with techniques of church growth and management. I hope I am wrong, because the book deserves a careful reading and could help many rediscover and reaffirm the vitality of a distinctively Quaker evangelical faith.

Punshon remarks at times on the different theological *gestalt* of Quakerism, arising as it did a century before evangelicalism. But generally, he portrays Quaker theology as fundamentally compatible with evangelicalism, albeit with key distinguishing marks that must be

retained. These include some amount of silent, or 'open', worship in a 'programmed' service, an inward sense of the sacraments obviating the use of outward elements, and the traditional Quaker social testimonies.

What Punshon is attempting here is a difficult balancing act. Inevitably, the resulting text veers back and forth between an evangelical agenda and an idiomatically Quaker one. This leads to some meandering in some chapters, though the writing is clear and compelling overall. I sometimes felt that the book was succumbing to the problems of Barclay's *Apology*. Barclay attempted a defence of Quaker faith and practice within a Puritan theological framework, utilizing the structure of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. In either case, the framing sometimes distorts the shape of Quakerism, which is built from different theological foundations. For example, Punshon's chapter on covenant claims that the Quaker covenant of light is the Puritan covenant of grace 'rightly understood' (p. 169). (Earlier, on p. 161, it is suggested that Quakers developed the covenant theology of the Bible 'in a completely new way' from that of the Puritans.) From my own study of early Quaker theology, I would emphasize the structural differences between Quaker and Puritan covenants.

Generally, Punshon does an excellent job of highlighting covenant as the structuring logic of Quaker faith and practice. However, the larger socio-political implications of covenant, which Puritans and Quakers alike understood (although with strong differences), are not addressed. Here, the perspective of evangelicalism, with its later, more individualistic conception of salvation, limits the purview of the covenant of light.

Chapter 8 on 'Righteousness and Holiness' provides the occasion for some historical background on the development of evangelical Quakerism in the nineteenth century, which is sketched well. Punshon makes good cases for both the Quaker and evangelical versions of holiness/perfection, then argues in favour of the Quaker process-oriented approach for today. Chapter 9, 'The Day of Judgment', expresses some ambivalence toward the strongly realizing tendency of early Quaker eschatology. Punshon is uneasy with the way early Friends neglected future fulfilment of God's promises in their writings, although he acknowledges the dangers of eschatological speculation. Perhaps in an attempt to satisfy evangelical concerns in this theological area, he gives extended treatment to the millennium (specifically, the thousand year reign of the saints with Christ envisioned in Revelation) and dispensationalism. Though not satisfied with the early Quaker neglect of the millennium, Punshon seems to end up alongside early Friends by the end of the chapter.

The book's final chapter, a return to the polemical task, offers helpful ruminations on the challenges and opportunities evangelicals have faced, first in modernity and now in postmodernity. Punshon rightly emphasizes the open field of possibility the postmodern shift offers Friends and others—albeit in an increasingly marketplace climate of competing religions and spiritualities. The corrosive aspects of that climate for a covenantal faith are not contemplated. But that would be another book. The Epilogue to the chapter and book issues a call to Friends: as evangelicals they must retain their Quaker distinctiveness and differentiate from a generalized evangelicalism. Evangelicalism itself thrives on its differences with the secular world and the differing emphases of its particular church traditions. Friends have not truly learned from the evangelical tradition if they have not learned to make the most of their own distinctiveness. Amen!

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*On Quakers, Medicine and Property: The Autobiography of Mary Pennington (1624–1682)*. Ed. (Cambridge, MA: Rhwymbooks, 2000), pp. ix + 61. \$14. ISBN 188929814X

This is a new edition, with a new title, of Mary Pennington's autobiographical writings. They are full of lively detail concerning the religious and material life of a well-to-do seventeenth century family, at first Puritan and then Quaker. Mary, the wife of Isaac Pennington, probably wrote the first part some time between 1660 and 1665. She added further notes and in 1680, after Isaac's death, brought it up-to-date and appended a letter to her grandson telling him the story of his grandfather, her first husband Sir William Springett. A copy of the earlier sections, made by her eldest son John, is included in the Pennington manuscripts in the library of Friends House, London. A copy dated 1755 is said to have been taken from 'the original manuscript' of the youngest Pennington son, Edward, and hidden for forty years in a wall in the house of William Penn, who was Mary's son-in-law. This is also in Friends House Library. I am grateful to David Booy for up-to-date information on the texts.

A version of the manuscripts was published in London in 1821, and a slightly different text in Philadelphia in 1848. In 1911 the 1821 text was reissued by Norman Penney under the title *Experiences in the Life of Mary Pennington (written by herself)*, with an historical introduction, explanatory notes and bibliographies of both manuscript and printed sources, as well as an abstract of Mary's will. This edition was reprinted in 1992 by the Friends Historical Society, London, edited by Gill Skidmore with an additional preface and notes, and with the bibliographies updated. The textual variations were noted but not investigated.

The Rhwymbooks edition is poorly researched. It purports to be an unabridged reprint of the 1821 text, but there are errors and omissions, mostly respecting the descriptive details of William Springett's deathbed, and with the Quaker 'thou' replaced by 'you'. The editors imply that the 1821 version corresponds exactly with the 1755 manuscript, which is not the case. They are evidently unaware of the 1992 reprint, stating that the manuscript was last printed in 1911. Their notes are mostly less ample than Penney's and some are inaccurate, failing to identify persons who were known to Penney. Their introduction has some useful background information, but also faults. Firstly, Mary's second husband is incorrectly entitled 'Sir Isaac'. Then, it is stated that the manuscript hidden for forty years was the original, rather than Edward Pennington's copy as indicated. It is implied that the contents of the document were meanwhile unknown, although John Pennington had his own copy of part of it. Finally, it is suggested that the manuscript was hidden for fear of persecution, whereas Quakers rarely had insuperable problems in publishing their books, and by 1680 were employing a regular printer. Why the manuscript was hidden is not known, but Edward was thirteen at the time, and maybe had a private hidey-hole.

Buy the Penney/Skidmore edition, not the inferior offering that is the subject of the present review. But remember that the text is not established.

Rosemary Moore  
Shifnal