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## SECOND REVIEW

RUTH PITMAN

These two books, mostly from the pen of Pink Dandelion, will be of interest especially to Friends who care about the state of the Society. But in both works the subject is cut larger, aiming to appeal to a wider audience as well.

Published in hardback, *Towards Tragedy/Reclaiming Hope: Literature, Theology and Sociology in Conversation* is intended to be read by Englishmen in general. The Quaker material is offered as an illustration of the thesis: that hope can—with reflection on providence—arise from tragedy. The other application of this thesis is the decline of the British upper class. Although the Quaker material is, understandably, heavily British and consequently about Liberal Friends, the authors make an effort to cover the diversity of American Quakerism.

Originating in a Woodbrooke seminar, the work is a conversation between Dandelion, who is the editor, and several others: Richard E. Sturm, writing on the origin and nature of Tragedy and how the Gospel fits the tragic model; Douglas Gwyn, writing on how secularization influenced the early Quaker “Lamb’s War;” Bryan Phillips, writing on the hubris of wealthy Quaker coziness with government during the late Victorian/Edwardian period; Dandelion, offering two chapters on English society and how it lost a sense of both Hope and Providence; and Rachel Muers, voicing the hope that something good can arise from the current British crisis of identity. Gwyn, Muers and Phillips conclude the conversation with three brief essays: Gwyn looks at the hollowness of non-Christian, liberal Quakerism; Muers interprets the Book of Ruth as the story of a woman who triumphs after personal loss; and Phillips offers the story of a Bosnian Muslim, who rose to virtue out of great suffering. The book’s foreword is by Richard K. Fenn, who meditates on Greek tragedies, the role of time, and the sense of guilt as one generation succeeds another.

As a conversation, the book hangs together better than most works by multiple authors. Each author makes an effort to build on what the previous ones have written. At the same time, the diversity of Greek tragedy, the Christian gospel, and three and a half centuries of Quaker and British history, works against unity in the work. The

authors' own diverse interests and fields of study make interesting reading and at the same time strain the unity of the work. Of course, I bring my own prejudices to the reading. I am impressed with Sturm's account of the Gospel as tragedy and triumph, can sympathize with Gwyn's pessimism about non-Christian Quakerism, can almost pass over Dandelion's account of the decline of the British upper class—Americans do not worry much about that, though perhaps we should—find Phillip's concentration on Quakerism at the end of the Victorian period narrow, and am repelled by Muers' variety of modern feminism. Still this is good conversation.

If, like most conversations, this book fails to reach a firm, clear conclusion, it still stimulates the mind in many directions. Perhaps, as a concerned Friend, my one question would be this: If we apply the classic theory of tragedy to the topic of contemporary Quakerism, with whom and what are the various elements of tragedy to be identified—the noble hero, the divine principle, the tragic flaw, the observing community that experiences catharsis in sympathy and fear, the opportunity for reflection and atonement? I find no sense of guilt among those who have come to power as the liberal and evangelical extremes of Quakerdom have moved farther and farther from their roots. Richard Fenn's foreword about the passing of the generations is pertinent here. Is the Quaker situation tragedy? Is it progress? Or are we looking at the triumph of the barbarians? Similar questions could be asked among Conservative Friends.

I know that strength can come from martyr stories; I grew up with stories of Quaker heroes and martyrs, and Anabaptists have used the Martyrs' Mirror this way for centuries, but to be effective there must be, for one thing, a sense of community. Individualism destroys community; what has been the mantra of Quaker education for decades now? The development of the individual!

*The Liturgies of Quakerism* is a fascinating book on the Quaker ritual of silence, fascinating especially because the common assumption is that Quakers have no liturgies, rituals, or symbols. The subject is narrow. The author concentrates on worship forms (hence the choice of "liturgies") and specifically on the subject of silent or unprogrammed worship, as practiced among British Friends. Yet, as with *Tragedy/Hope*, he tries to broaden the audience by covering the varieties of American Quakerism. Consequently, this book will be of interest to any sort of Friend, especially for the historical material it contains.

Dandelion traces the roots of silent worship in Quaker history, in theology, and in the personal experiences of the earliest Friends. Many of these Friends emerged from their personal suffering and isolation to a sense of joy and fellowship with the Lord and one another. The author follows the themes of time and intimacy [with God] through succeeding generations. Silence for the earliest Friends was the natural way to celebrate the Supper of the Lamb, the great silence in heaven, the end time following their [inner] Armageddon. Well chosen quotations from early Quaker writings support this thesis. At the same time, I wonder how much we know about early Quaker vocal ministry and wonder if silence was really that consciously significant to all Friends? Was it a full-fledged ritual yet? By the time of Barclay's *Apology*, however, it was necessary to explain and defend this liturgy. Friends had moved into seeing themselves as living in the "meantime," *not* the "end time," but silence still meant intimacy with God. Dandelion thus shows how the sacraments, regarded as superfluous at first, were explained consciously by internalizing them, thus solidifying and defending Quaker form. In these first three chapters, Dandelion relies heavily on the fine research of Bauman and Gwyn and, of course, on Barclay.

In the fourth chapter, Dandelion discusses the influence of the evangelical movement in both England and America. This is the period of the American separations and the beginning of the disappearance of the peculiarities. The sense of "the world" shifts from anything not Quaker to anything not Christian. Many Gurneyites may be surprised to learn that Gurney himself was, nevertheless, a defender of silent worship and internalized sacraments. This is a meaty chapter, and it is well summarized at the end. In the following chapter, the author turns to present-day practice. Here he discusses the major branches, Liberal, Conservative and Gurneyite, although he barely distinguishes FUM from EFI. For Conservatives, he relies mostly on Bill Taber and for Gurneyites on John Punshon and his own experience on a visit in Oregon. In general, one might observe that Dandelion's sources are well chosen, usually modern, secondary sources, but not impressively numerous.

For Liberal Friends, however, Dandelion the sociologist can bring the tools of his discipline to bear—questionnaires, impartial observers, etc.—and can report with diagrams and statistics. What he finds among British Friends would apply to FGC Friends, as well. In the sixth chapter this is laid out in great and, in the case of the vocal ministry, almost embarrassing, detail. With personal experience paramount and silence as the chief means to experience, it is necessary to preserve the *form* of wor-

ship *at all costs*. He discusses the rules for acceptable speaking, which, in my lifetime, have become more rigid as the faith has become more diffuse and individualized: non-controversiality of subject, no second message, brevity, and space between messages, to name a few. He notes that theology and faith expressions outside of worship are suppressed. All this plus the physical arrangements of the room is seen as a way of preventing dissension. At the same time, silence is both a coverer for, and a facilitator of, change. An analysis of the business meeting is outside the scope of the book. There is also no comparable analysis of Evangelical Quaker behavior and speech. If this text can be used to fake it in a Liberal Quaker meeting, a chapter on faking it in an Evangelical Friends' church would be equally easy for the sociologist.

In the last chapter, the author returns to the themes of time and intimacy among Liberal Friends. The time in which Liberal Friends live is outside of the Christian framework, and the intimacy experienced in worship is with one's self or with others. He credits Evangelical Friends with having preserved most of the Quaker theology and Liberal Friends with having preserved the empty shell of Quaker form. I find this delicious in view of the Liberal Quaker sense of superiority, but the truth is that Evangelical Friends, too, derive a sense of superiority by saying things about liberals. What is happening among Evangelical Friends is worthy of a comparable study.

Although the effect of the evangelical movement upon Friends is well discussed, neither book makes even passing mention of the effect of the sexual revolution. Perhaps this is because little effect of it—beyond feminist language—is seen in worship. Yet in the late twentieth century, the sexual revolution did more than anything else to divide and scatter American Friends and to cement British Friends into the liberal mold. The real questions as we watch Quaker developments are: *Who are our next of kin?* and, *How are we going to answer the major challenges of the time?* Dandelion does discuss this when he talks about the change in what constituted “the world” in the nineteenth century, but he does not do a comparable job with the twentieth century.

Finally, Quaker symbolism needs another book. When I at last discovered that Friends did indeed deal in symbols and rituals—why else would we care so much about such little things as seating arrangements?—I shared my belated discovery with Lewis Benson. Lewis squirmed. “Well,” he said, “but only the ones that arose of themselves, out of what happened to be the custom.” There are special problems with this undefined approach to symbolism.

First, the meaning and a shared understanding of it arise well before the verbal definition. Second, the meaning shifts easily and can be glibly denied or twisted. Third, it is frequently, if not always, multi-dimensional. Fourth, it sometimes derives some of its meaning from outside.

Take the example of the facing benches, which Dandelion places in the quietist period. This is a natural arrangement for hearing those who speak often and for seating those best able to keep order in a Society that sometimes got out of control. In America, I remember the “hollow square” pattern being encouraged as “more democratic.” It was reinforced by political talk about the wonders of democracy and by politically correct talk about equality. From within, it was reinforced by the (rural) Hicksite resentment of the (city) elders and, in Philadelphia, by optimism about the coming union of the yearly meetings into a new yearly meeting (with ministers and elders replaced by a committee—eventually with term limits!). At the same time, the Quaker custom of using the second person singular was explained as an example of the Quaker belief in equality, a little twist of history, but one that fit nicely with the new seating arrangement.

It is remarkable that Dandelion has found as many written sources as he has to explain the meaning of silence. He does find related symbols, too, but his explanation is too thin. Handshaking and the practice in intoning, to name two customs Dandelion does discuss, should be explored in greater historic and symbolic details. They had far more variety of meaning and history in them than we read here. It is unlikely that any of this has been explained or explored, and his Quaker memory is probably not long enough to give them a full treatment. Besides, to do so would carry him far beyond the scope of the present book. We shall watch for the sequel. In the meantime, these books offer a nice tour of Quaker history and a thoughtful analysis of the present state of the Society.