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## Dandelion's "The Creation of Quaker Theory: Insider Perspectives" - Book Review

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DANDELION, Pink (ed.), *The Creation of Quaker Theory: insider perspectives*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, pp. xiii + 272. ISBN 0-7546-3158-3. Cloth £50.

Thirteen of the most original and influential of the Quaker scholars who have worked during the past half-century have contributed to this important volume. All of those who have contributed are not only scholars of Quakerism, but also claim to be Quakers in some way. These authors hail from a wide theological spectrum from liberal to evangelical. Some authors are members of Britain Yearly Meeting, while others are connected with the three largest strands of American Quakerism (those loosely associated with the organisations of Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting, and Evangelical Friends International). Unfortunately, Friends from the 'two thirds' world are not represented in these pages, nor are there perspectives from smaller strands of American Quakerism, such as Conservative and Independent. In his introduction, Pink Dandelion appropriately laments his inability to attract someone to comment on Quaker theory from a feminist viewpoint. The diversity and well-roundedness to be found in this volume could have been even greater than it is.

This is an enormously rich and thought-provoking book, but not without perplexities for its readership. Most will probably be clueless as to what 'theory' Quakers possess. This reader certainly was at the outset, and he was not much clearer at the end of the volume. Indeed, there are different approaches to describing Quaker theory. Some are based in part on synthesising very large amounts of content, providing in essence an annotated bibliography to the enormous amount of original scholarship produced in recent decades. Hugh Barbour's chapter on early Quaker history is largely of this sort.

Some seek, in a fashion that threaded itself through much twentieth century Quaker writing, to find the magic key to unlock the multi-faceted Quaker seventeenth century theology that outraged so many of their contemporaries. Richard Bailey's chapter on Quaker Christology and Glen Reynolds' chapter on Quaker faith

as Christian gnosis both follow this well-worn path. Both Bailey and Reynolds are convincing in their demonstrations that early Quakers frequently diverged from Christian orthodoxy. However, the concept of 'celestial inhabitation' that Bailey presents as central to George Fox's thought strikes me as a theological dead end. And while Reynolds correctly points out parallels between early Quakerism and first century gnosticism, more research into the historical roots and contexts of each theology, or family of theologies, is needed to determine whether the similarities are truly essential or merely accidental. My scepticism here is ultimately founded upon my judgment that Quakerism, even in its earliest manifestations, has always been too complex to be explained by a single theological formula.

Some Quaker theorists begin with immersion in the sources, in order to see what the widest range of surviving evidence suggests as the nature of the movement. Rosemary Moore has followed this approach to the first twenty years of Quaker history, and her perceptive work provides a useful complement to the more focused explorations of Bailey and Reynolds. I would place Tom Hamm's work on nineteenth century American Quakers in this camp as well. Hamm sees his work as 'putting Quakerism into the larger context of American society and broader, international intellectual and social movements' (p. 183). If this is what theory entails, there is little place for any specifically Quaker historiographical theory. If Hamm or Moore were working on non-Quaker topics, they likely would proceed in much the same generically historical way.

The editor challenged contributors to discuss how the nature of their spiritual experience as Quakers affected the shape of their scholarship on Quakerism. Each contributor took up this challenge in their own way, so that each chapter is in some measure a spiritual autobiography. Michele Tarter, an attender of Boulder Meeting while a PhD student at the University of Colorado, described her leading during a research trip to British libraries working on her dissertation on Quakers, to 'go North' in order to visit the site of the original mass convincements to Quakerism. Doug Gwyn's spiritual reflections are especially moving and penetrating, and he gives the fullest account of all the contributors how his enlightening scholarship has actually been his response to the moving of the Spirit within him. Call it theory if you like, but some Quakers would present (what might be called) the mystical imperative as being at the very heart of their scholarship.

Some scholarship is strongly oriented toward addressing present day Quaker dilemmas. Here hopes and fears are especially intense. In his Foreword, Arthur Roberts points out a potential implication of formulating Quaker theory: 'the movement is sufficiently moribund to encourage writing its intellectual memoirs' (p. viii). Roberts moves on to more positive formulations of Quaker theory, but then another dilemma crops up. It seems doubtful that there is any single Quaker theory that can play a revitalising or unifying role for all of the now very diverse Religious Society of Friends.

Undaunted, several Quaker scholars offer perspectives on this subject. Carole Spencer, like Roberts from the evangelical Northwest Yearly Meeting, sees 'different interpretations of holiness...as the defining aspect of Quakerism' (p. 150) in all of its manifold varieties. Spencer's admirably comprehensive work comes closer to

providing a viable theory of Quakerism than many. Her chapter is thin on liberal Quakers, but perhaps this is a gap her future work will remedy. Less definitive is John Punshon's plea for a Quaker grand narrative leavened by a dose of postmodernism, since he points to many possible narratives for Quakers to latch onto, and it is not clear which narrative should predominate.

Gay Pilgrim's provocative, insightful essay on Quaker alternative ordering, or heterotopia, defies meaningful summarisation in the little space I have. Whereas earlier generations played out their otherness revolting against society's rulers, in seventeenth century refusal of hat honour and the like, and in twentieth century development of a peace testimony, Pilgrim convincingly argues that modern Quakers are as likely to define their identity vis-à-vis other Quakers as in opposition to the policies or spirituality of a broader society. This bodes ill for recovering a sense of Quaker unity.

There cannot be just one Quaker theory, but the richness and diversity to be found here is more rewarding anyway. If you want an introduction to the illuminating turns Quaker scholarship has been taking in the past generation, this book will be a very helpful resource for you.

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wrote at the time. Nancy Babb (1884–1948) emerges as a determined, energetic and independent-minded woman who did not always find it easy to operate as part of a group. Working on her own at Totskoye, a district adjacent to Buzuluk, she supervised feeding programs for the local population during the great famine of 1921–23 as well as organising child health clinics and facilities for those suffering from malaria. When the famine eased in 1922, she turned her attention to the work of reconstruction until she left Russia to return to the United States in 1927.

Given the material and political constraints which she experienced, her accomplishments during this five year period were truly remarkable. A list which she herself compiled included the construction and equipping of a new hospital which remained in use until the 1970s; the establishment of children's homes and adult literacy schools; and the creation of various cottage industries to assist the development of the rural economy in the area. According to McFadden and Gorfinkel the principles underpinning her projects provided a model for future Quaker relief programmes in that they involved an element of self-help, requiring all adults to do some work for food, thereby avoiding a culture of dependency which robbed recipients of dignity and self-respect. She also worked closely with local officials to ensure that the programmes she initiated matched local plans for reconstruction and development and later could be handed over to local people to run themselves, freeing up Quaker resources for new areas of work.

Equally dedicated, Anna Haines (1886–1969) was the first AFSC representative allowed back into Russia in November 1920 after the temporary withdrawal of all foreign workers during the civil war. Working alongside a British Friend, Arthur Watts, she successfully concluded agreements with the Bolshevik government that allowed the resumption of Quaker relief operations first in Moscow and then in Buzuluk as famine conditions took hold in the summer of 1921. She also oversaw the distribution of food and medical assistance, recounting her experiences in a pamphlet, 'The Story of a Quaker Woman in Russia' – published in New York in 1922 – to raise further funds for famine relief.

Like Nancy Babb, Haines looked beyond the immediate provision of relief to Quaker participation in the immense task of reconstruction and in particular to the role Quakers could play in improving the quality of medical services in Russia. After three years of nursing training in the United States to equip herself for work in the field, she returned to Moscow in 1925, combining her role as American representative at the Quaker Centre with a full-time job in a mother and baby hospital. She did an immense amount in a short time to improve the quality of nursing education although she was unable to secure Quaker funding for the project closest to her heart, a nurses training school run on western lines.

As well as looking at the work of Quaker volunteers in the field, the authors also explore the operations of the AFSC's central committee and in particular its troubled relationship with the American Relief Administration (ARA), a quasi-governmental agency, headed by Herbert Hoover, himself a birthright Friend. During the great famine of 1921–23 the ARA negotiated an agreement with the Bolsheviks to supply and distribute food and medicine to the worst-affected areas of rural Russia. Rufus Jones and Wilbur Thomas, the AFSC's executive secretary, reluctantly agreed to