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Editorial (Quaker Studies Volume 10, Issue 2)

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EDITORIAL

The articles contained in this volume reflect the continued diversity and vitality of the field of Quaker Studies. Five of the seven contributions originated as papers presented at the 2003 QSRA conference on the theme of 'Friends in Town and Country'. This occasion brought together a number of scholars engaged in local studies of Quakerism in England and North America. The remaining two papers, by Carolyn Downs and Tony Adams, neatly complement the conference proceedings, with the latter ensuring that the volume contains contributions dealing with each of the first four centuries of Quakerism.

The volume opens with Erin Bell's wide-ranging and subtle essay on the concept of husbandry in Quaker thought. Bell's analysis sheds light on issues such as the testimony of plainness, the tithing testimony, and the development of Quaker beliefs during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. She highlights the inherent tensions between the idealisation of husbandry as the embodiment of 'the simple life' and the worldly temptations faced by Quakers who, from the late seventeenth century onwards, were largely concentrated in urban areas. From this broad-brush opening, we move to Kay Taylor's examination of early Wiltshire Friends that exemplifies the rich crop of local studies currently being undertaken. This valuable case study demonstrates the complex factors that combined to determine the areas that were most receptive to the early Quaker message, considering such issues as land use, economic activity, communication networks, and social ties. In charting the relationship between the spread of Quakerism and local Civil War allegiances, she reminds us of the central role played by the cataclysmic events of the mid-seventeenth century in the birth of Quakerism.

Eighteenth-century English Quakerism has generally been less well served than the earlier period. Nonetheless, some of the issues faced by Friends throughout what has been styled the 'long' eighteenth century are highlighted in contributions by Simon Dixon, Carolyn Downs, and Helen Plant. Dixon takes as a case study the somewhat obscure London Friend Peter Briggins, the details of whose life survive in his meticulously kept diary of his day-to-day existence. Briggins' diary highlights how he moved effortlessly, and without any apparent contradiction, between trade and commerce and religion. This case study indicates how the study of diaries and correspondence can tell us much about the lived experiences of Friends at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The later eighteenth century is covered in the articles by Plant and Downs. The key to good local history is always to seek to

understand wider developments within the context of a specific case study. Helen Plant's contribution on women's leadership in the Yorkshire Quaker community explores the reasons why women came to dominate the spiritual leadership of the Society during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As prominent Quaker men became increasingly concerned with business activities, Plant demonstrates how it fell upon women to provide spiritual leadership. She argues that 'without women's ministry, there would have been little counterweight to the spiritual deadness which concerned observers identified in many Meetings during this period' (p. 230). In her study of Daniel Eccleston, Carolyn Downs explores the relationship between industrial and scientific advances, religious nonconformity, and calls for political reform. As Downs' engaging account suggests, a full length study of Eccleston's life and achievements would add greatly to our understanding of the provincial experience in the development of the British Enlightenment.

If the case of Daniel Eccleston demonstrates the relationship between Quakerism and movements for advancement and reform in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain, then Christopher Densmore's study of the separations among North American Friends during the mid-nineteenth century highlights similar issues across the Atlantic. The divisions described by Densmore both had their roots in the controversy among Friends over appropriate anti-slavery activities and each challenged the existing structures of the Religious Society of Friends. Here, it is concluded that the events discussed demonstrate how 'the intellectual map for many North American Friends was no longer dominated by London and Philadelphia', and instead the crucial issues concerning the future direction of the Society were being determined in 'rural Quaker strongholds' (p. 254). The chronological scope of the volume is completed by Tony Adams' contribution on William Loftus Hare's formulation of theological universalism. If there is a common theme running through all of the articles presented here, it is the capacity of Quaker belief and practice to adapt in response to the challenges presented by a changing world, from the Society's origins in the English Civil War to the catastrophic global conflicts of the twentieth century and beyond.

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Erratum

In the last issue of *Quaker Studies*, issue 10/1, the word 'Aesthetic' accidentally appeared in a subheading of Jonathan Harlow's 'Preaching for Hire: Public Issues and Private Concerns in a Skirmish of the Lamb's War'.

On p. 31, the subheading should be read '1. Quaker Anti-clericalism'.
Apologies are extended to the author.