

2000

Book Review of Smith, Feola, and Greaves

Douglas Gwyn

Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and University of Birmingham, England

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/quakerstudies>



Part of the [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), and the [History of Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gwyn, Douglas (2000) "Book Review of Smith, Feola, and Greaves," *Quaker Studies*: Vol. 5: Iss. 2, Article 6.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/quakerstudies/vol5/iss2/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Quaker Studies by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact arolfe@georgefox.edu.

BOOK REVIEWS

Edward Smith, *William Dewsbury, c. 1621-1688: One of the First Valiant Sixty Friends* (York: Sessions, 1997), pp. 333. Paperback. ISBN 1-85072-203-X.

Maryann S. Feola, *George Bishop: Seventeenth-Century Soldier Turned Quaker* (York: Sessions, 1996), pp. 141 + notes, bibliography and index. Paperback. ISBN 1-85072-178-5. £8.00.

Richard L. Greaves, *Dublin's Merchant-Quaker: Anthony Sharp and the Community of Friends, 1643-1707* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 337, including notes, list of manuscripts and index. Hardback. ISBN 0-8047-3452-6.

William Dewsbury, c. 1621-1688: One of the First Valiant Sixty Friends is a facsimile edition of an 1836 devotional biography by Edward Smith. A London Quaker chemist and student of Dewsbury's writings, Smith wrote this biography during the last year of his life, 1834, hoping it would stimulate renewal among Friends. Unfortunately, the prose is often tangled and turgid. An index and notes would have made the book a better source for further study. Still, Smith makes good use of the immediate source material and offers generous quotations of Dewsbury's own words. An Appendix contains nine letters and epistles. Early Friends (whose prose presents its own challenges) still speak best for themselves. There is no figure more central to Quaker beginnings than William Dewsbury, who probably amassed more years in prison than any other early Friend. I hope more work will be done with this serene, humble and long-suffering apostle.

Dewsbury's biography was reissued by Sessions of York as part of its 'series' on Quaker 'greats'. Like Smith's nineteenth-century effort, these books are intended primarily for uplift and renewal among Friends. But they often feature good new scholarship as well. Note, for example, Maryann S. Feola's *George Bishop: Seventeenth-Century Soldier Turned*

Quaker. This is a fine study of a lesser-known but important figure among early Friends, especially in Bristol. An officer in the New Model Army, Bishop went on after the war to gather intelligence for the Commonwealth and help counter royalist insurgencies. But he also upbraided Cromwell and the government for retreating from promises of political and religious reform. He eventually withdrew from government work and returned to Bristol in early 1654, shortly before the Quaker Lamb's War arrived that summer. Feola makes extensive and profitable use of available sources to reconstruct Bishop's Quaker conviction and rapid rise as an organizer and political negotiator for Friends. There are occasional errors with regard to dates and misstatements of early Quaker theology. But as biography and political history, this is an excellent contribution. The book ends with Bishop's move to deeper spiritual reflection following the Restoration of monarchy in 1660. But the author's Preface promises a sequel to cover the last eight years of his life. Though Bishop was an organizational insider among Friends, he became a trenchant critic of new organizational initiatives in 1666. I look forward to Feola's sequel.

Finally, we come to Richard L. Greaves's *Dublin's Merchant-Quaker: Anthony Sharp and the Community of Friends, 1643-1707*. Greaves is a leading scholar of late seventeenth-century British nonconformity, and his biographical study reveals that Sharp was the most influential Irish Quaker of the period, besides William Edmundson. Greaves' masterful biography is packed not only with rich detail of Sharp's life and religious labors but with illuminating social context and early Irish Quaker history as well. Sharp's extraordinary gifts and energies for leadership among Friends offer a panoramic window on the development of Irish Quakerism after his arrival in Dublin in 1669. His combination of business acumen and leadership ability are well accounted by Greaves' mature scholarship and religious sensitivity. After detailing the moral stringency and rigorous accountability of Irish Friends, Greaves briefly notes its later influence on American Quaker reform in the mid-eighteenth century. As Jack Marietta concludes in *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 'Unquestionably, some of the seeds of Quaker reform were transplanted from Ireland' (p. 26). This biography is dense with detail but well written; it will amply reward the serious reader.

Douglas Gwyn
Woodbrooke College, Birmingham, England