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BETTER THAN A PLAQUE

PAUL BUCKLEY AND SUSAN JEFFERS

A *festschrift* is a collection of writings by different authors presented as a tribute or a memorial. In most cases, the person being so honored is not involved in the selection, compilation, or editing of the materials. When the person honored has worked in a narrowly defined field of study, the collected works are usually somewhat related. This makes reviewing the resulting *festschrift* a bit like reviewing a journal.

The commemorative volume in honor of Hugh Barbour presents such a unified collection, but three of the other *festschriften* to be reviewed here are in honor of men with more eclectic interests. T. Canby Jones, Edward Milligan, and Arthur O. Roberts have touched deeply the lives of people who have entered a multiplicity of fields and the contributions to the collection are similarly diverse. Reflecting that diversity, each of these *festschriften* is a collection of essays and other writings from various fields. Reviewing these *festschriften* has been consequently more like presenting an overview of a magazine rack.

As mentioned, the first collection of essays to be considered has a unity that may be indicative of the singleness of purpose that the honoree exemplifies. *The Lamb's War: Quaker Essays to Honor Hugh Barbour* (edited by Michael L. Birkel and John W. Newman) is a set of essays on Quaker history, many referring directly to the work of Hugh Barbour. Even Eleanor Ferris Beach's "Meditations on the Flood" approaches the biblical text from a Quaker vantage. A unique aspect is the presence of a piece by Barbour on his own spiritual pilgrimage ("Spilgrimage"), indicating a degree of involvement in the preparation of the book that is unusual. This prior involvement may in fact be responsible for this being a more unified work than the others reviewed below.

In Newman's introduction, he presents the essays as reflecting on "the past life and future goals of Quakerism, with particular attention to themes deriving from the early Quaker concept of the Lamb's War....As the history and future of Quakerism have provided the center for [Barbour's] professional activity, it takes central place

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here.” The articles can be grouped by three questions: (1) What are the two sides in the Lamb’s War? (2) How is the soul transformed by it? and (3) What is the state of the transformed soul? These essays are open to the moderately informed Friend and well worth the effort. Each stands on its own, but the unity of purpose across essays makes the collection a whole greater than its parts.

The next several *festschriften* are broader in content. Arthur O. Roberts and T. Canby Jones served for many years in undergraduate institutions and influenced the lives of students across several disciplines. Edward Milligan filled a similar educative role for a wide spectrum of British Friends in his years as librarian for London Yearly Meeting.

Truth’s Bright Embrace: Essays and Poems in Honor of Arthur O. Roberts, edited by Paul N. Anderson and Howard R. Macy, is not for the casual reader. Anyone who believes that small postsecondary institutions, such as George Fox University, cannot produce first-class, fully footnoted research articles on arcane topics is welcome to sample these.

The 24 contributors to this commemorative volume are former students and colleagues of Arthur Roberts. The scope of this book is remarkable, containing five major sections that reflect Roberts’ interests in biblical studies, Quaker history, the creative use of language, and the public arena. There are various ways that colleagues can show their respect for each other. Here, the esteem is demonstrated in the quality of the individual articles. This is not an emotional tribute, it is a demonstration of the rigor and standards for scholarship that Arthur Roberts has practiced and taught. There is similarly no mistaking the religious foundation from which his work has flowed. There is a view of life and of our proper relationship with God that permeates this volume. Each article in its own way gives us a glimpse of how that viewpoint has been transmitted from one generation to the next. Perhaps of all the contributions, “The Business of Our Lives” by Tom Head best captures this spirit. In five pages, Head presents Woolman’s view of gospel order applied to real world economics, a conception to which Arthur Roberts introduced him at the time he interviewed for a job.

Similar in spirit and content is *Practiced in the Presence*, edited by D. Neil Snarr and Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, in honor of T. Canby Jones. Once again, the major headings reveal the interests of the man:

Quaker history, education, “Matters of the Spirit,” and contemporary concerns.

The Quaker history section is particularly strong with articles by Hugh Barbour (“Early Quakerism as a Perfectionist Movement of Awakening”), Wilmer Cooper (“The Legacy of Rufus Jones”), T. Vail Palmer (“A Revisionist Revised: A New Look at Bernstein’s *Cromwell and Communism*”), and John Punshon (“The Early Writings of Isaac Penington”). Someone seeking to understand how Quakerism got to its present state will want to closely read Cooper’s article.

Of special value is the pair of articles on Thomas Kelly—“Practical Insights from Thomas Kelly for Quaker Educators” by Lon Fendall and “Thomas Kelly’s Philosophy of Seeking” by Ron B. Rembert. Kelly’s influence on Canby Jones, first as a student, but continuing throughout his career, is well represented in these considerations of Kelly the educator and Kelly the philosopher. Also of note is Sterling Olmsted’s contribution, “John Woolman’s Economics: Useful Today?” Olmsted steps out of his field in this article, producing an interesting companion to the Head article noted above.

The most readable book among those reviewed is *A Quaker Miscellany for Edward H. Milligan*, edited by David Blamires, Jeremy Greenwood, and Alex Kerr. This collection draws on a variety of writers and is aimed at a rather broad audience—friends and acquaintances of Ed Milligan. The *Miscellany* is well titled. The breadth of content and the variety of styles makes for an entertaining read, while conveying the diversity of knowledge and interests of the man it is honoring. With the exception of an article by Tom Bodine on a possible basis for *rapprochement* among American Friends, this book is by and about Friends in the British Isles. This in no way diminishes its value to Friends from other parts of the world. For American Friends, the names and places may be different, but the situations and personalities are easily translated.

The book covers nearly every period of Quakerism in Britain and Ireland, encompassing pieces as diverse as memoirs, a cartoon by Lesley Webster, a complete-with-diagrams “Local variations in Quaker meeting houses” by David M. Butler, and more formal historical accounts. It is rich and eclectic, rather than comprehensive, brimming over with affection for its subject.

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This is a book that has a rather optimistic view of the Society of Friends. The tone is set in the first essay, “My! How You’ve Grown!” by Chris Barber, which notes that the growth is not numerical, but spiritual. Elfrida Vipont Foulds notes in “Rather Odd People,” “One of the interesting things about being an octogenarian and a Quaker is that you suddenly find that some of your perfectly ordinary memories have turned into Quaker history.” (p. 67)

Issues current at the turn of the century are woven into a statement of faith in God’s continuing guidance in “God at London Yearly Meeting 1900” by Hope Hewison. More challenging to contemporary readers is Janet Scott’s “Women in the Society of Friends.” Scott concludes with a question for Friends:

Fox grounded the equality of women in the Society on a distinct interpretation of Christian theology based on biblical exegesis, and on a church order and a concept of marriage linked to the demands of the rule of God. Has the Society of Friends in the twentieth century lost this theological understanding? If it has, is our understanding of the equality of women based on the sand of progress or on the rock of the Holy Spirit? (p. 130)

Another notable recent collection of Quaker writings is not properly a *festschrift*. After an unsuccessful start at a commemorative volume by Doug Gwyn, people associated with the New Foundation Fellowship took up *None Were So Clear: Prophetic Quaker Faith and the Ministry of Lewis Benson*. The new editor, T.H.S. Wallace, “concluded that the book’s most appropriate use was to advance the work of declaring and explaining the everlasting gospel—a labor to which Lewis Benson devoted his entire adult life....Declaring the good news of the power of God and the presence of Christ, our teacher and orderer, was what was important to Lewis.” (p. XIII)

Just as Baruch compiled and edited Jeremiah’s life’s work, T.H.S. Wallace has compiled and edited this material into a book about Lewis Benson—his vision of and for Quakerism. The heart of the book is a collection of 13 writings by Benson that have either not previously appeared in print or have received limited circulation. Wrapped around this core are two sections: testimonies to Benson’s faithfulness and persistence by those whose lives he has touched, and a closing four pieces under the title, “Notes Toward a Biography.”

The cumulative effect of these three views is a picture of a man who was clear and whose life spoke that clarity.

A final contemporary *festschrift* (*The Pacifist Impulse in Historical Perspective*, edited by Harvey L. Dyck) honors Peter Brock, who deserves notice by all who are interested in the history of pacifism. Although he never joined the Society of Friends, Brock has had connections to Quakers throughout his career. Most notably, the second volume of his three-volume set on worldwide pacifism and war resistance since the Middle Ages explores the Quaker peace witness. The 23 essays are grouped under four headings: Approaches to Peace History, Christian Traditions of Pacifism and Non-Resistance, Gandhi and the Indian Tradition of Non-Violence, and Pacifism and Peace Movements in the Modern World, 1890-1955. Four essays in the second section focus on Quakers: Hugh Barbour's "The 'Lamb's War' and the Origins of the Quaker Peace Testimony," Jack D. Marietta's "The Things That Make for Peace': The Context of Pacifism in Quaker Pennsylvania," Thomas C. Kennedy's "Quaker Women and the Pacifist Impulse in Britain, 1900-1920," and Irwin Abrams's "The Quaker Peace Testimony and the Nobel Peace Prize."

Three older *festschriften* that are still worth reading were written to honor Rufus Jones (*Children of Light*, edited by Howard Brinton), William I. Hull (*Byways in Quaker History*, edited by Howard Brinton), and Henry Joel Cadbury (*Now and Then*, edited by Anna Brinton). A final commemorative volume of particular value to Quaker theologians is one in honor of Howard Thurman (*God and Human Freedom*, edited by Henry Young).

In summary, while there is merit to many individual contributions in each of these books, overall the contents are uneven. With the exception of the Benson tribute, they should be treated as one would Quaker or academic journals.

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