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REVIEW OF *THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF QUAKER STUDIES*

PAUL ANDERSON

In this magisterial collection, Pink Dandelion and Stephen Angell have gathered perhaps the finest and most far-reaching collection of essays on the history, beliefs, and contributions of the people called Quakers in recent years, thereby largely fulfilling their stated aspiration at the outset: “This book offers *the* reference guide to the history and theology of Quakerism worldwide in all its traditions as well as pertinent overviews of how Quakers have responded, for example, in the fields of politics, business, science, education, art, and aesthetics.” (9)

In so doing, the book is clearly laid out in four parts, featuring incisive treatments of thirty-seven important subjects, written by noted experts in the field. Worth the price of the book, in and of itself, is section on “Quaker Historiography” in the editors’ introduction (3-7), which outlines seven or eight leading interpretations of Quaker history as well as mentioning several dozen leading treatments of important historical and theological subjects within the movement. While a brief review cannot even mention the many ways in which particular essays are commendable, some of the particular points worth noting in this reviewer’s judgment include some of the following.

PART I: “HISTORY OF QUAKERISM”

- Rosemary Moore’s first essay treats admirably the context out of which the Friends movement developed as well as formative issues within its first decade and a half. Building on her familiarity with the primary literature, her insights are especially interesting on the Fox-Nayler relationship and its unresolved tensions.
- Richard Allen’s essay on “Restoration Quakerism, 1660-1691” lends valuable insight into how the first and second generation of Friends dealt with persecution and schism, showing also the development of organizational models.

- In the essays on the next two periods of Quakerism, Robynne Rogers Healey and Thomas Hamm chart the rise of the movement through 18th-century Quietism and the 19th-century divisions within Quakerism leading up to the Richmond Conference of 1887. Especially helpful are the treatments of sectarianism in the former, and the dialectical history of the divisions in the latter, whereby the addressing of one issue created other problems in converse directions.
- These essays set the stage extremely well for developments within American Quakerism between Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting, Evangelical, and Conservative Friends, as addressed by Jerry Frost, Gregory Hinshaw, Arthur Roberts, and Lloyd Lee Wilson. Especially helpful among these essays is Frost's treatment of modern liberalism and its impact among General Conference and other Friends, followed by Roberts' treatment of Evangelical Friends and the international growth of that movement. From these fine treatments, the origins and developments of the unity and diversity among Friends become understandable for readers of Quaker history—expert or novice.

The only change I would make in this section is to request as many as three additional essays: one on British/Irish/European/Australian Quakerism within the last century or more would do justice to developments among unprogrammed Friends beyond the American scene; a treatment of African Friends (probably the most needed additional essay) would cover the largest group of Quakers in the world (as many as 200,000); a treatment of Latin American Friends would cover developments especially in Guatemala and Bolivia, showing the character of the larger family of Friends. The editors have asked authors to include Friends of the global south in their essays where appropriate, and Jaci Welling's essay on Mission covers much of this ground, but separate essays would do justice to these groups as real entities more effectively. I understand, though, that length constraints might have made this impossible.

PART II: QUAKER THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY

- Carole Spencer's treatment of "Revivalism" in her essay does a great deal to help the reader understand how Evangelical Friends developed as they did, and her identification of three overall

commonalities of Friends worldwide—mystical, consensual, peaceable—works fairly well.

- Steve Angell’s essay on “God, Christ, and the Light” covers some of the central theological issues faced by Friends, although I disagree with Barbour’s view that early Quakers were more Sabellian than Trinitarian; I would say that they sought to be closer to the New Testament presentations of the ministering functions of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rather than embracing metaphysical and ontic approaches to these realities as devised by the Church Fathers. I don’t think I would fault Gurney for wanting to keep Jesus connected to Christ as “closer to seventeenth-century Puritan critics of Quakerism than to the Quaker Founders” (p. 165); Barclay and Fox reference “Jesus Christ” together numerous times, and George Keith’s critique of Friends was as a Friend before he left the movement.
- Nikki Coffey Tousley’s essay lends valuable insights on how Friends understand sin, purification, and perfection—noting the transforming power of Christ through the Holy Spirit to change the lives of persons.
- Howard Macy’s article on Quakers and Scripture is one of the finest essays ever written on the subject. In it he shows the diverse ways Friends have read the Bible, while also yielding valuable insights as to how God might yet speak through the Scriptures in life-changing ways.
- The essays on eschatology and the Kingdom by Gwynn and Guiton show the tension between resting in God’s breaking into human history—bringing about change and our partnering role in furthering the Kingdom with compassion.
- One of the most important essays in the collection is by Mary Van Vleck Garman on Quaker Women’s Lives and Spiritualities. She prefers the word “helpmeet” to “equality” and calls for noting how women’s faithful lives are an overlooked source of inspiration for future generations.
- Michael Birkel’s treatment of Leadings and Discernment poses vivid examples of how Friends have approached the issue, including a helpful treatment of its development in Latin America and Africa.
- The essay by David Johns on Worship and Sacraments addresses one of the most important themes in this section, and he notes both

the differences in form between programmed and unprogrammed Friends. He raises pressing questions on the Friends Testimony on the Sacraments, including disagreement over the years regarding the use of outward forms. If the living Christ is come, his work need not be symbolized, simply embraced; the question is how to do so and how to witness to the power and presence of Christ most effectively. Here, I might like to see a bit more direct reference to Alan Kolp's 1984 *QRT* essay on sacramental living (listed in Johns' bibliography), which emphasizes that the most potent physical means of communicating the spiritual reality of Christ is the transformed lives of Jesus' followers—an important ecumenical witness to essential sacramental reality. I might call that an incarnational sacramentality: a testimony the world still deserves to consider.

I don't know that I'd change much in this section; perhaps a chapter on evangelism and witness would be worthy, but they are developed in the next section. An important feature of this section is that it traces out some of the development of issues and theological understandings comprising the development of groups of Friends, as well as divisions. Given the rise of modernism and its challenging of traditionalist Christianity, leading to fundamentalist reactions against perceived threats to biblical authority and understandings of core values, it is easier to understand some aspects of both developments and divisions among Friends. In that sense, Friends are not unlike other Christian groups, which underwent similar ordeals.

PART III: QUAKER WITNESS

- In one of the finest essays I know on the history of preaching within the Quaker movement, Michael Graves traces the development of preaching and traveling ministries among Friends, through the Quietist era, into revivalist meetings resulting in the development of the pastoral system among Friends. In seeking to be spontaneous in minding the Spirit's leadership in vocal ministry, earlier Friends often quoted Scripture from memory, weaving it seamlessly into a fitting message for those gathered; lack of preparation at times also yielded somewhat modest results.
- Sylvia Stevens' treatment of travelling ministry among Friends presents a fuller picture of Friends' preaching, and Jacci Welling

develops a most helpful overview of Friends missions. Especially significant is the history of Friends Missions work being set up in East Africa and also in Latin America, although more detailed histories of the fruit of Friends missions deserves to be done. Stevens and Welling nonetheless note the furthering of social concerns among traveling ministries and missions of Friends, showing that evangelism and social concern have been dual concerns of ministering Friends.

- Janet Scott's essay on Friends and ecumenism and interfaith dialogue shows how Friends have contributed to the larger Christian movement as well as working between faith traditions to build harmony and good will between religious groups. Because of an openness to connecting with God's truth within the other, Friends have had a special place in being bridges between otherwise divided religious groups.
- Emma Lapsansky provides an overview of Quaker concerns for plainness and simplicity, while showing also the difficulties with discerning particular expressions of timeless values.
- Elizabeth Cazden's essay on slavery, antislavery, and race is extremely helpful in showing the movement from early days, when a few individual Friends spoke against slavery, to a growing abolitionist movement with a decisive turn against slavery in the mid-to-late 18th century. Followed by the movement to abolish slavery and radical abolitionism, she also traces the uneven history of freed African-American slaves' being able to connect with Friends on personal and social levels. The Underground Railroad and the endeavors to educate freed slaves after the Civil War were followed by Friends' devout support of integration and civil rights. While Friends in North America remain challenged by the fact that few African Americans are attenders of meetings, more could have been done to record the interracial outreach of Evangelical Friends. In Northwest Yearly Meeting, Piedmont Friends Church was supported for three decades as an inner-city and inter-racial meeting, pastored by Aaron Hamlin, who was also the president of the National Black Evangelical Association. Within Eastern Region George Primes served as a co-pastor of Canton Friends Church in the 1970s; several Hispanic ministries have been developed among EFI churches.

- Lonnie Valentine’s essay on war and peacemaking, of course, has a lot to work with, and the challenge is covering the subject within the length allowed. Helpful is the treatment of the Friends Peace Testimony, including Friends witnessing to governments and individuals to find alternatives to violence. Given the apocalyptic basis for the Friends Testimony, popular wars have tended to test Quakers’ commitment to peace, leading at times to assimilation. Nonetheless Friends continue to witness for peace, and this is also happening among Friends of the global south.
- Outstanding essays on Quakers and penal reform, by Mike Nellis and Maureen Waugh, and on Quakers and Asylum Reform, by Charles Cherry, trace Quaker contributions in these fields; and the essays on Quakers and Education by Elizabeth O’Donnell, and the essay on Quakers, Business and Philanthropy by Mark Freeman, trace the disproportionate influence Friends have had upon educational and business ventures around the world. All I can say is “read these chapters!”
- The essays on Quakers and the Family, by Edwina Newman, and on Quakers and Sexuality, by Petra Doan and Elizabeth Kampenhausen, however, pose a tense combination. On one hand, Friends have been seen to support the family unit—for the care of children and the betterment of the community. A mutually supportive understanding of marriage was earlier described as a “helpmeet” relationship, and this model might prove of some use as Friends consider the value of committed, loving relationships. On the other hand, more liberal views of sex and sexuality have caused many Friends to wonder if such innovations are destructive to the family unit and biblical understandings of marriage, so these tensions remain.
- In Max Carter’s and Simon Best’s essay on youth and young adults, the history of Friends’ being a young-people’s movement comes through in clear ways. From youth ministries to Quaker leadership programs, the noting of these endeavors among Friends, including Friends of developing nations is an encouraging consideration.

Again, this section possesses many fine essays, all of which deserve to be read. I might like to see Jacqui Welling’s chapter on missions go further in charting particular histories of development among groups showing the fruit of Quaker missions over the years; that, of course, would take more space. Most problematic in this section, though,

from this reviewer's perspective, is the rather one-sided treatment of sexuality. This essay covers faithfully many of the movements toward liberalizing sexual standards among Friends—especially more liberal Friends, but it fails to note the loving motivation behind the concerns of Friends, who feel that full sexual expression should be reserved for marriage—reserved for a loving commitment between one man and one woman. Here, a commitment to celibacy outside of marriage is seen by many Friends as rooted in love for the individual and respect for the community of faith and its values. Most Friends with concerns to be biblically faithful would thus be welcoming of all persons, regardless of orientation, but would not affirm actions deemed to be harmful to the individual or out of step with Scripture. Barnett's essay is terribly flawed exegetically, and my recently deceased friend, Walter Wink (whose essay I published in *Evangelical Friend* two decades ago), has at time bordered on dominating intimidation in labeling any who disagree with his position as haters. Our discourse can do better than that, and it should. Given that this is an encyclopedia, and that sexuality is a profoundly complex and divisive subject, this essay deserved to be more balanced than it is if it seeks to speak for the world community of Friends, especially Evangelical Friends in America and the global south.

PART IV: QUAKER EXPRESSION

- The essays on print culture by Betty Hagglund and visual culture by Roger Homan bring into focus the exceptional contributions of Friends as publishers of truth, while also highlighting an overlooked subject: Quakers and art. Again, wonderful examples of Friends' contributions in these fields are worth noting, and Friends continue to contribute, as well.
- On Quakers, philosophy, and truth, Jeffrey Dudiak, and Laura Rediehs do an exceptional job of showing how Quakers' commitment to the truth has played many a role in the advancement of philosophy. And, Geoffrey Cantor's essay on Quakers and science shows many examples of how Friends have been forerunners in fields of science, and disproportionately according to their numbers. Quaker scientists have also tended to consider humanitarian and environmental concerns related to science—calling it to be used for the good.

- The essay on Quakers and ethics by Jackie Leach Scully not only informs the reader as to how friends have thought about what is ethical, but she also develops an understanding of how Friends have approached leadings and discernment procedurally. As such, this essay makes a fine complement to Michael Birkel's essay on discernment, in that it describes how the character of the good life is conceived and discerned.
- The final essay, on Global Quakerism and the Future of Friends, by Margery Post Abbott, actually goes some distance toward remedying my main criticism of the first section. It sketches the history of Friends around the world—especially including Friends in developing nations. It also covers Nontheist Friends and Convergent Friends, as well as noting the impact of blogging and the uses of social media as a means of extending Quaker fellowship and outreach. As I wrote in an earlier issue of *QRT* (#118) that nontheist Quakerism is a contradiction of terms, this is not to say that critiques of theology are not without their merits. Most poignant is the treatment of Friends in developing nations struggling to be peacemakers and agents of redemption in difficult situations. More could be done on the histories of Friends in these regions, but that will be covered, I hope, in a future double issue of *Quaker Religious Thought*.

Again, the essays in this section are very strong; my only recommendation is to the reader: READ THEM, and do so thoroughly.