Contributors -- Quaker Religious Thoughts, no. 50

Vail Palmer

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interpretation. Each of the thinkers chosen by the author made major theological contributions to this period, and the inclusion of the little-known Richard Simon is especially welcome. The writers are treated sympathetically, and for the most part are allowed to speak in their own words.

Only John Owen fails to win the author's admiration. It is true that Owen strongly emphasizes the Spirit's use of means, especially the letter of Scripture, but the charge of bibliolatry misses the subtleties of his Scripture/Spirit/human capacity theory. Rather than attempt a comprehensive survey, Dean Freiday has selected an appropriate "broadly cross-sectional approach" to the period, but the six important writers chosen to represent the middle and late seventeenth century are not, taken together, indicative of the period's theological spectrum. It could be argued that the ideas put forward then by Socinian rationalists and Cambridge Platonists touched only the educated elite. But neither a "spiritual Puritan" such as Rous or Saltmarsh, nor a Latitudinarian writer like Stillingfleet or Tillotson can be excluded on this basis. Over all, the book lacks the "middle ground" important for connecting the general information about the period and the words by and about individual writers. Further research is needed to draw lines of comparison between the Quaker and Catholic modes of biblical interpretation, and to relate them to other seventeenth-century approaches.

Dean Freiday has previously given us a readable edition of Barclay's *Apology*, and now he has made an important contribution to the field of interpretation history. The awareness that hermeneutics, like the Bible itself, has a history brings with it a sense of humility, for the obviously conditional character of earlier efforts to interpret Scripture faithfully is a reminder that today's understandings, as important as they are for this generation of Christians, are not final. Historical awareness brings a sense of gratitude as well, an appreciation for those who have labored, and are laboring, to establish the biblical texts and to interpret them in such a way that their power to counsel and inspire is continually renewed.

 contributors

William P. Taber, a graduate of William Penn College and the Earlham School of Religion, has spent over twenty years as teacher or administrator in Friends secondary schools, mostly at Olney Friends School, where he now teaches English, social studies, and religion. He is the author of several articles on Conservative Friends and of a book, *Be Gentle, Be Plain: A History of Olney*. "The Theology of the Inward Imperative" was written while he was Friend in Residence and teacher of Quakerism at Pendle Hill in 1978.

Ruth M. Pitman is a birthright member of the Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia (Arch Street). She is a graduate of Friends' Select School (Philadelphia), Earlham College, and the University of Nebraska, and holds a Ph. D. in German literature from the University of Toronto. She studied for a year, under a Fulbright grant, at the Technische Hochschule, Stuttgart, Germany. She has taught German and other subjects at Gustavus Adolphus College, Friends Boarding School (Barnesville, Ohio), and elsewhere. Ruth Pitman is the author of articles on ministry, sacraments, and marriage in the *Canadian Friend* and in other publications. She has been active in the life of Friends in Ohio, Canada, Nebraska, and Germany.

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