

RECENT PUBLICATIONS 2015

London Quakers in the Trans-Atlantic World: the Creation of an Early Modern Community. By Jordan Landes. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. viii + 252pp., hardback. £60. ISBN 978-1-137366-68-9.

A panoramic view of the City of London and Stepney by William Morgan in 1682 is provided on the front cover of this important new work by Jordan Landes in the Palgrave Macmillan *Christianities in the Trans-Atlantic World* series. It depicts the city landscape, the merchant vessels on the River Thames, but it is so grey and dismal looking that you are all but put off from venturing inside the book itself. And yet this is a study that is full of colour, offers wonderfully vivid insights into the creation of Quaker networks, and how ideas were shaped and disseminated. It is certainly well-crafted as it is both studious yet accessible to all readers. Moreover, it offers a rich analysis of trans-Atlantic mercantilism and the maintenance of the complex networks that led people to traverse the Atlantic 'to carry ideas, to colonise, and to provide labour'. Chapter 6 on the push and pull factors which underpinned migration to America certainly captures the imagination as Landes explains the levels of assistance (where provided), the journey itself, the settlements established and the land companies that enabled the colonising process, and the experiences of the settlers. Working with the earlier assessments of Richard T. Vann and others, she also reviews the impact of migration on British and Irish Quaker communities.

In this tightly packed and fully referenced work, Landes pinpoints London as an early-modern international centre of commerce, and notes the social, cultural and political dynamism of the growing metropolis. She pays appropriate attention to the burgeoning book trade of the early modern period, the endeavour of missionary Friends in the Atlantic world, and the copious correspondence flowing from London. Landes discusses the challenges they faced and the administrative procedures they adopted, notably in the various London-centred business meetings (London Yearly Meeting (LYM), Morning Meeting, Six Weeks Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings and Box Meeting) and how a code of discipline became an essential part of Quaker practice. Given the enormous distances involved this naturally

took considerable effort, especially as there were periods of intense persecution as well as serious internal divisions and ultimately schism. The personal and professional networks of leading London Friends (male and female) certainly helped their co-religionists to overcome some of these difficulties, while the LYM assisted in the consolidation of the Quaker international community by providing guidance. Indeed, as she points out, the colonial meetings 'felt supported and were informed of beliefs in the presence of Quakers in other colonies and in Europe'.

So, what can you expect apart from all the above? Well, how about a few additional details to whet your appetite. Landes provides examples of intense Quaker lobbying in London, the American colonies and in the Caribbean; specific commercial activities and credit networks, including trade between Native Americans and Pennsylvanian Quakers; slavery; spectacular money-making ventures, but also reputational risk (and even imprisonment) when business deals were badly handled. She also studies how these networks changed the perception of Quakers in the transatlantic world as well as altering Quaker assessments of the process of colonisation and the impact of the coloniser in America and the Caribbean over several decades. The final remarks are well-judged as she brings the book to a fitting conclusion. Overall, Landes has significantly debated the importance of London Quakers not simply as merchants plying their trade and creating economic networks, but rather as an important cog in the creation of a vibrant international community. As such, this book deserves to be read by all who are interested in how Quakers, despite their relative strength, were able to hold together a disparate religious community in the Atlantic world.

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The Journal of Elias Hicks. Edited by Paul Buckley. San Francisco: Inner Light Books, 2009. xxiv+509pp. ISBN 978-0-979711-04-6 [hardback] £24; ISBN 978-0-979711-05-3 [paperback] £24. *Dear Friend: Letters and Essays of Elias Hicks*. Edited by Paul Buckley. San Francisco: Inner Light Books, 2011. xx+296pp. ISBN 978-0-983498-00-1 [hardback] £28; ISBN 978-0-983498-01-8 [paperback] £15. *The Essential Elias Hicks*. By Paul Buckley. San Francisco:

Inner Light Books, 2013. xxv+132pp. ISBN 978-0-983498-08-7 [hardback] £16: ISBN 978-0-983498-09-4 [paperback] £10.

British Friends may remember visiting the Library at Woodbrooke and seeing on the wall of the lobby a large chart illustrating the many strands of American Quakerism and remarking that one of the major strands was labelled 'Hicksite'. This vague recollection of Elias Hicks as possibly the instigator of one of the many schisms that beset Friends in America during the 19th century could well be the sum of our knowledge.

Yet Elias Hicks (1748-1830) was one of the most influential, and detested, Quaker Ministers of his time and, although he did not seek the series of splits which sundered American Quakerism in 1827-8, his faithfulness in supporting what he saw as the true inheritance of early Friends rather than bowing to the tide of evangelicalism certainly meant that it was more difficult for Friends of different persuasions to stay together. Hicks's writing and his preaching were not only important in America for, during those years either side of the American Revolution, the Society of Friends was still a truly trans-Atlantic organisation. And indeed it was Hick's preaching which led Isaac Crewdson to writing *A beacon to the Society of Friends* which in turn led to the Beaconite disputes in London Yearly Meeting of the 1830s and contributed to many British Friends leaving the Society and moving to other Christian churches including notably the Brethren.

Paul Buckley has done a great service to Friends by going back to the original manuscripts and producing first, an edition of Hick's *Journal* free of the amendments imposed by the original editorial committee and second, a selection of his letters and essays which seeks to illuminate his thought and to shed light on his role as a travelling Minister. Finally he has produced what may be most valuable to British Friends - *The Essential Elias Hicks* - both a brief biography and an analysis of Hicks' theology, particularly in those areas of Christology and of engagement with the World, which were so problematic for his 'Orthodox' opponents. Throughout Buckley is concerned to present Hicks as he would have seen himself, as a faithful Friend struggling to apply Friend's fundamental principles to the issues he encountered.

Hick's repeated message to his time, and to ours, is that Friends should need no other than 'the Spirit of Truth, or Light Within, as

our only rule and guide in all things' and that true Christianity is spiritual and inward and therefore in no need of any material assistance, whether it be belief in past events or good works now. He saw himself as standing in the tradition of the early Friends and, perhaps, as Buckley suggests, as a prophet calling his contemporaries back from apostasy to that true way.

Two observations are perhaps worth making to British Friends. One is that it is completely wrong to think of Hicks as a proto-liberal Friend. Despite the fact that the Yearly Meetings in which the Hicksite tradition was dominant are now almost uniformly liberal in theology, Hicks appears to us as thoroughly Bible-based. Indeed Hicks delighted in reading the Bible, as Friends had from the beginning, and described it as 'profitable for our encouragement, comfort, and instruction [...] and [...] rightly understood, as the best of books extant.' Of course that 'rightly understood' is the crux of the matter, for Hicks stood in the line of Pennington and Barclay in maintaining that, though scripture is divinely inspired, it is secondary in importance to the Spirit which inspired it. But Hicks was also a product of his time, of the Enlightenment, in that he would have agreed with Hamlet that:

[...] he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unused.

Both recourse to the Inward Teacher and the application of reason were the tools which Hicks had been given to test the right way to interpret the scriptures. And this led him to state with great clarity a number of things which his evangelical opponents did not want to hear, and caused him to be put down as both a deist and a Unitarian, neither of which were strictly true.

The second observation is a more uncomfortable one. Among the most important Friends calling on Yearly Meetings to oppose Elias Hicks were a number of British travelling Ministers, most notably Thomas Shillitoe and Anna Braithwaite. We have yet, I believe, to acknowledge how enthusiastically evangelical was London Yearly Meeting throughout much of the nineteenth century.

Hicks referred to these Friends in a letter as 'strangers and busybodies' who 'spread darkness and death amongst us, and so interrupt our quiet by hard speeches that we have [...] patiently

to endure[...]’ Anna Braithwaite, who did not, as Buckley seems to think, become ‘a leader among the Beaconites’, particularly attracted Hicks’ animus by publishing an account of a private conversation with him without seeking his permission and, after attempting to make amends, received from him a letter which can only be described as icily civil.

There is much which we can gain by learning more about our Quaker forebears on both sides of the Atlantic. Buckley makes a good case in these books for the importance of Hicks in understanding how Liberal Quakerism came about and in challenging our assumptions about the direction in which we are going. It may be that we can learn from the outcomes of the disputes of the 1820s and 1830s ways in which not to carry on the disputes of our own times? Certainly Hicks, in his unbending manner, made things worse for himself and for those of his party (which he always referred to as ‘the Tolerants’). Yet his utter submission to the leadings of the Light Within and his stern adherence to the discipline must have contributed to his effectiveness as a minister and leader. One cannot help admiring a man who, in his ministry, when young, travelled through the areas of New York between the combatants in the Revolutionary War, and, in his eighties, embarked on a religious journey of 2400 miles lasting seven months over scarcely adequate roads in order to bring the Quaker message to those who had not yet received it.

Chris Skidmore

Amelia Opie: The Quaker Celebrity. By Ann Farrant. Hindringham: JJG Publishing, 2014. 296 pp., hardback. £25. ISBN 978-1-870948-65-4.

Any biography will be written from a particular point of view and this meticulously researched and excellently illustrated book by Ann Farrant is no exception. This life of Amelia Alderson Opie is firmly grounded in Norwich, the town of her birth and of the society which most influenced her.

Born in 1769 Amelia Alderson was the only child of James Alderson, a Unitarian and successful doctor. After her mother died when she was fifteen Amelia took charge of her father’s household and he remained the most important person in her life. The society in which she moved was a progressive one,

promoting good works and good causes such as the abolition of slavery. It was also literary and musical and Amelia found popularity reciting poems and singing ballads of her own composition.

Ann Farrant's research into Amelia's Norwich life is detailed and gives a full picture not only of her family and friends but of the wider background. The whole book is also enlivened by quotations from Amelia's extensive correspondence so that her voice and her enthusiasm for new experiences shine through.

In 1794 Amelia visited London and widened her acquaintance to include Mary Wollstonecraft and her circle. One of those she met was the portrait painter John Opie and in 1798, after some hesitation about leaving her father, she became his second wife. Opie was not always comfortable with Amelia's love of society but he encouraged her writing. Her novel *Father and Daughter* appeared in 1801 and was a great success. Although this is not primarily a book about Amelia as an author Ann Farrant does a good job of describing her literary output.

Unfortunately, in 1807 John Opie died at the early age of forty-six and Amelia, still a comparatively young woman, returned to Norwich to live with her father. She also renewed her early friendship with the Quaker Gurney family, especially Joseph John Gurney, and eventually began attending Quaker meetings. Just before her father's death in 1825 and with his full approval, she was accepted into membership of the Society of Friends.

Although she took her conversion seriously Amelia was in many ways an unconventional Friend, adopting Quaker plain speech and plain dress but never losing her sense of fun and even mischief right up until her death in 1853. Ann Farrant chronicles the Quaker part of Amelia's career as meticulously as all the other aspects of her life but from the outside, much as her contemporary non-Quaker friends, such as Robert Southey, did.

This is a rounded portrait of a fascinating woman and of the place and people who influenced her and should be read by anyone wishing to gain a fuller understanding of the period, not only from a literary or religious viewpoint.

Gil Skidmore

SHORT NOTICES

"He is our cousin, Cousin". By Antony Barlow. York: Quacks Books, 2015. xxvi+284pp., paperback. £15. ISBN 978-1-904446-60-6.

It is rare today to publish family histories, despite the growth in recent years of wider interest in genealogical matters with the advent of the web and TV programmes such as 'Who do you think you are?'. Yet this what Antony Barlow has done, having inherited the family archives on the death of his mother. He chiefly tells the story of his own family - that of Frederick Ralph Barlow (1910-1980) and Joan Mary Barber (1914-2007) - of growing up in Quaker Birmingham, of the influence of The Downs School and Leighton Park, of family holidays, of friends and of the extensive cousinage in which they found themselves - typified by the photograph taken of Dame Elizabeth Cadbury's 90th birthday celebrations in which 140 family members can be identified.

This is a profusely illustrated book - nearly every other page is filled with photographs, some of them perhaps not as well reproduced as they might have been. We catch glimpses of the causes and businesses in which the wider family has been involved - in Woodbrooke, the Bourneville Village Trust, the FAU, with Quakers during the first World War, in the anti-slavery campaign, and the Carr's biscuit company. Antony Barlow has rightly seen to the proper commemoration (in the form of blue plaques) of his grandfather, John Henry Barlow, a notable Yearly Meeting Clerk, and his great-grandfather, Professor John Barlow, veterinary anatomist, and they are also prominent figures in this book.

This is not a historian's book but an enthusiast's book, not full of stylish prose or particularly accurate. However throughout it is the voices of the members of the family, including Antony Barlow himself, which make it worth dipping into.

Respectable Rebels. By Edward H Milligan. York: Quacks Books, 2015. vi + 102pp., paperback. £8. ISBN 978-1-904446-65-1.

This book is a joint biography of William Alexander and his wife Anne (née Tuke), late-eighteenth/early-nineteenth century York Friends. Both were descended from families which could

date their Quaker faith back to the very beginning and both had a more than local reputation amongst Friends. Anne was a recorded minister, William became a stationer and publisher: he and Anne were responsible for the initiation of the series *The Annual Monitor*, which ran until 1919, becoming, without having any official status, the obituary book of deceased British Friends. When William Alexander sold his business it passed eventually into the hands of William Sessions, becoming eventually Sessions of York. So it was that the late William Kaye Sessions persuaded Edward H. Milligan to write this history, to honour the founder of the family firm.

On William Sessions' death, Ted Milligan surrendered the manuscript to his children and this book has been published to celebrate the 150th anniversary of William Sessions taking change of the business in 1865. Unfortunately it shows some signs of haste in its preparation, not least in poor proofreading and an unsuitable and out-of-focus cover design.

Nevertheless the substance of the text is as interesting and informative as one would expect of a book from this author and, despite the absence of a bibliography, the volume boasts no fewer than nine appendices, occupying nearly half the book!

Maidenhead Quakers: three centuries in the life of a small community. By Stanley F. Jones. Maidenhead, 2015. 83pp., paperback. £12 [plus £3.50 p&p through al-donaldson@outlook.com]. ISBN 978-1-944246-79-2.

This well-illustrated meeting history has had a long passage into print. The original typescript was completed by Stanley Jones in 1992, publication was considered as he approached his ninetieth birthday but it was not until after his death in 2006 that the text was edited and prepared for publication by Alasdair Donaldson and Edward H. Milligan.

Maidenhead has never been a large meeting but its history is perhaps typical for a meeting of its size – early foundation, meetings in Friends' Houses until a permanent Meeting House was built, somewhat late in 1743, slow growth through the eighteenth century, a new Meeting House in 1803 followed by decline and a period of closure in the late nineteenth century, revival in 1896 and a rebuilt Meeting House in 1935, much improved at various points in the twentieth century. This book

is however largely about the Friends themselves and particularly about the twentieth century history which Stanley Jones had lived through.

There are also lists of members since 1810, of clerks and brief biographical notes of Friends before 1960 by Ted Milligan. The appendices also include some relevant extracts from *The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood* (1714) and the testimony prepared by the Monthly Meeting for Stanley and Edwina Jones.