EARLY QUAKERS AND THEIR THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT

1647–1723

This book provides the most comprehensive theological analysis to date of the work of early Quaker leaders. Spanning the first seventy years of the Quaker movement to the beginning of its formalization, Early Quakers and Their Theological Thought examines in depth the lives and writings of sixteen prominent figures. These include not only recognized authors such as George Fox, William Penn, Margaret Fell, and Robert Barclay, but also lesser-known ones who nevertheless played equally important roles in the development of Quakerism. Each chapter draws out the key theological emphases of its subject, offering fresh insights into what the early Quakers were really saying and illustrating the variety and constancy of the Quaker message in the seventeenth century. This cutting-edge volume incorporates a wealth of primary sources to fill a significant gap in the existing literature, and it will benefit both students and scholars in Quaker studies.

Stephen W. Angell is Geraldine Leatherock Professor of Quaker Studies at the Earlham School of Religion. He recently coedited The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies (with Pink Dandelion) and Black Fire: African American Quakers on Spirituality and Human Rights (with Harold D. Weaver, Jr., and Paul Kriese).

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1647–1723

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Engaging Scripture: Encountering the Bible with Early Friends (2005), (with Jeff Bach) Genius of the Transcendent: Mystical Writings of Jakob Boehme (2010), and Qur'an in Conversation (2014). Other works include two Pendle Hill Pamphlets, The Messenger that Goes Before: Margaret Fell as Spiritual Nurturer (2008), and The Mind of Christ: Bill Taber on Meeting For Business (2010), and a translation of and introduction to Robert Barclay’s Christianae quaedam animadversiones (Quaker Theology 11/1, 2012).

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as well as articles in such journals as ELH, Literature and History, Quaker Studies and Renaissance and Reformation. She has also produced editions of two of the Baptist Anna Trapnel’s texts: The Cry of a Stone (2000) and Anna Trapnel’s Report and Plea (2015 forthcoming).


Frederick Martin serves as an administrator with New England Yearly Meeting of Friends and Friends Meeting at Cambridge, Massachusetts. He taught history in Quaker schools for twelve years, and following an M.A. at Andover Newton Theological School has presented papers at the Conference of Quaker Historians and Archivists and workshops in Quaker venues including New England Yearly Meeting, the Friends General Conference Gathering and the Sixth World Conference of Friends. His article, “Varieties of Interpretation of Francis Howgill’s Works” appeared in the journal Quaker Theology.

Rosemary Moore is an independent scholar attached to the Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies at Woodbrooke Quaker Centre, Birmingham. Her publications include The Light in Their Consciences: Early Quakers in Britain 1646–1666 (2000), an edition of The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood, Written by Himself (2004), and (with R. Melvin Keiser) Knowing the Mystery of Life Within: Selected Writings of Isaac Penington in their Historical and Theological Context (2005). She was a co-operating editor for Protestant Nonconformist Texts, vol.1 1550–1700 (2007) and contributed to The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies (2013).

Carla Gardina Pestana is Professor and Joyce Appleby Endowed Chair of America and the World at UCLA. From the start of her career, she has published on the Quakers. Her first foray into print was “The City upon a Hill under Siege: The Puritan Perception of the Quaker Threat to Massachusetts Bay, 1656–1661,” New England Quarterly (1983), which earned the Walter Muir Whitehill Prize in Colonial History while she was still a graduate student. Her dissertation also
Considered the Society of Friends, and was published as *Quakers and Baptists in Colonial Massachusetts* (1991). Since that time she has published on various topics, including revolution, empire, and religion more generally, in *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (2009); and *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640–1661* (2004). She is currently interested in the colonial Caribbean (the final home of John Perrot). In summer 2014, she convened the Early Modern Global Caribbean seminar at the Huntington Library. At present she has forthcoming both *The Early English Caribbean, 1570–1700*, 4 volumes, edited with Sharon V. Salinger, and a book on *The English Conquest of Jamaica*.


Carole Dale Spencer is Associate Professor of Christian Spirituality at Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Indiana. Her publications include *Holiness: The Soul of Quakerism: An Historical Analysis of the Theology of Holiness in the Quaker Tradition* (2007) and a number of articles and book chapters on Quaker history, theology, and spirituality. Her research interests include Quakers and holiness, nineteenth-century revivalism and social reform, Quakers and Methodism, Quietism, and Christian mysticism.

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Chronology

“New Style” dating is used throughout.

1643 Nineteen-year-old George Fox left his family home in Leicestershire and traveled throughout England.

1647 Fox’s hearing of a voice that “there is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition” may be said to mark his convincement as a Child of the Light; Fox met Elizabeth Hooton (an older Baptist woman) and she experienced convincement; Hooton would remain part of the movement until her death in Jamaica in 1672.

1649 Charles I was executed.

1650 Fox was imprisoned in Derby on charges of blasphemy; Judge Gervase Bennett derisively labeled Fox and his followers as “Quakers.”

1651 Fox gained release from Derby gaol; he traveled to Yorkshire; there he met Richard Farnworth and James Nayler, both of whom joined the Quaker movement; Fox saw their joining as Farnworth’s and Nayler’s “convincement,” but it is clear that both held principles very similar to Quakers before meeting Fox.

1652 Fox traveled in Yorkshire and Lancashire. In May he had a vision at Pendle Hill of a “great people to be gathered”; he preached to a thousand people at Firbank Fell; he visited Swarthmoor Hall. Francis Howgill, Edward Burrough, George Whitehead, and Margaret Fell were convinced.

1 The term “convincement” has several meanings. It is used here to describe the moment when a person was impelled to join the Quaker movement (or the movement that would become known as “Quaker”) and to embrace the principles of Quakers (also known in their earliest years as “Children of the Light” and more generally as “Friends”). The word “conversion,” as applied to other religious groups, is a rough equivalent, but seventeenth-century Quakers generally did not use “conversion” to describe their own spiritual transformation.
1653  First year of substantial Quaker publication.
1654  Northern English Quakers began a mission to the south of England.
1655  Samuel Fisher and John Perrot were convinced; London men’s meeting came into existence and published pamphlets in defence of Quakerism.
1656  April: James Parnell died at Colchester, first Quaker “sufferer” to die in prison; July: Mary Fisher and Ann Austin brought a Quaker message to Massachusetts and were expelled by Puritan authorities; October: James Nayler was arrested at Bristol re-enacting Jesus’ Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem; November: Gathering of Quaker elders at Balby produced a proto-disciplinary epistle.
1657  John Perrot, Mary Fisher, and others embarked on a trip to Rome and Turkey to convert the pope and the Ottoman sultan; Fox initiated moves to set up a county organization of Quakers with London as the centre; London women’s meeting set up about this time; Ellis Hookes appointed as “clerk to Friends,” also about this time.
1658  May: Mary Fisher had an audience with the Ottoman sultan in Adrianople; June: Perrot was imprisoned in Rome, to be released in 1661; September: Oliver Cromwell died.
1659  Peak year for Quaker publications; Marmaduke Stephenson and William Robinson were executed in Boston for preaching the Quaker message and returning after being sentenced to exile upon pain of death, but Mary Dyer was reprieved; beginning of Dorothy White’s ministry.
1660  May: the monarchy was restored; June: Mary Dyer was executed in Boston; October: James Nayler died.
1661  January: Fifth Monarchist revolt ushered in persecutions of Quakers and other dissenters; Fox and others publish an early and influential statement of the Quakers’ commitment to peace principles; March: William Leddra was executed in Boston, but twenty-seven Quakers were released from Boston prisons when Charles II forbade any further executions of Quakers; John Perrot opposed the Quaker practice of men taking off their hats during prayer, inaugurating extended controversy; first “General Meeting” held in Newport, Rhode Island, by New England Yearly Meeting, the oldest yearly meeting in the world.
1662  Passage of Quaker Act, forbidding Quakers to join in illegal religious worship, and of Act of Uniformity, requiring all Christian worship to be conducted according to the Anglican prayer book; such punitive legislation against Quakers and others ushered in a period of intermittent persecution in England lasting until 1689; October: John Perrot accepted voluntary exile to Barbados.

1663  Edward Burrough died in prison; George Keith was convinced.

1664  The “Northern Plot” against the monarchy possibly involved Quakers; George Fox, Margaret Fell, and others were imprisoned.

1665  Samuel Fisher and John Perrot died.

1666  Robert Barclay and his father David were convinced; Richard Farnworth and other Quaker elders authored “Testimony from the Brethren,” advocating centralized authorization of Quaker publications, as well as tighter organization; June: Farnworth died; October: Fox was released from prison.

1667  Fox organized British Quakerism into Monthly Meetings within counties, or Quarterly Meetings; William Penn was convinced.

1668  Penn authored the anti-trinitarian tract *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, and was imprisoned in Tower of London for eight months.

1669  February: Francis Howgill died in prison; October: George Fox and Margaret Fell married.

1671  June: Fox circularized British meetings, advising them to set up meetings for women.

1671–1673  George Fox embarked on a trip to the West Indies and North America, to settle their Quaker meetings in “gospel order” (proper business procedure).

1673  Second Day Morning Meeting in London assumed responsibility of approving Quaker tracts for publication.

1675  London Yearly Meeting issued a condemnation of Quaker separatists John Wilkinson and John Story, who had opposed women’s involvement in Quaker business and attacked other aspects of Quaker authority and organization.

1676  Robert Barclay published his *Apology* in Latin, and two years later in an English translation.

1677  Quakers began settlement in West (New) Jersey.

1678  Elizabeth Bathurst was convinced.
1679 Isaac Penington died; Elizabeth Bathurst published a theological treatise, *Truth's Vindication*.

1681 William Penn received title to Pennsylvania from Charles II.

1682 Mary Penington died; Penn and other Quaker colonists arrived in Pennsylvania and founded the city of Philadelphia; two years later, Penn returned to England.

1685 Elizabeth Bathurst died; Charles II died, and was succeeded by his brother (and Penn's friend) James II; the rebellion of Duke of Monmouth, possibly involving Quakers, broke out and was suppressed; Penn was in favour at court as a close counsellor of James II; George Keith took up an appointment as Surveyor-general in New Jersey.

1686 Dorothy White died.

1687 James II issued a “Declaration of Indulgence” providing for freedom for worship for Quakers and other dissenters.

1688 In the “Glorious Revolution,” James II was replaced on the throne by William and Mary; Penn, as closely involved with previous regime, was arrested; he was released on bail, but further arrests and suspicion of high treason followed, and he lived in seclusion for years; four Quakers in Germantown monthly meeting protested against slavery, but the Philadelphia yearly meeting tabled their protest.

1689 Parliament passed an Act of Toleration.

1690 Robert Barclay died.

1691 George Fox died.

1692 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting accused George Keith of “denying the sufficiency of the Light”; Keith and his opponents published their sides of the dispute; August: after Philadelphia Yearly Meeting confirmed its condemnation of Keith, he appealed to London Yearly Meeting, and returned to England in the following year.

1693 Keith’s followers published an anti-slavery pamphlet, the first anti-slavery writing to be published.

1694 Thomas Ellwood, under the supervision of the Second Day Morning Meeting, published the first edition of Fox’s *Journal*.

1695 May: After failed attempts at reconciliation, London Yearly Meeting disowned George Keith; Keith held “Christian Quaker” meetings in London.

1696 First Affirmation Act, relieving Quakers from the obligation to swear legal oaths.
Chronology

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<td>1699</td>
<td>December: Penn returned to Pennsylvania for his second and last visit. He returned to England fourteen months later.</td>
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<td>1700</td>
<td>Keith conformed to the Church of England, effectively dissolving his “Christian Quaker” movement.</td>
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<td>1702</td>
<td>Margaret Fell died.</td>
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<td>1718</td>
<td>William Penn died.</td>
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<td>1722</td>
<td>Further Affirmation Act, providing a form of words for affirmation that finally satisfied most Friends.</td>
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<td>1723</td>
<td>George Whitehead died.</td>
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