

Introduction

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Quakerism is fascinating in its enduring ability to adapt to new contexts and yet retain a radical witness that has been inherent to its spirituality from the start. The Quakers (or Friends) today are a global faith composed of different branches, and the recent history has been one of schism, diversification, mission and varying degrees of intra-denominational ecumenism. For all but a few Quakers, there still exists a ‘world family of Friends’, rooted in a historical tradition of faith, practice and witness that transcends doctrinal, liturgical and political diversity. Quakerism begs our attention, not simply because of this dynamic between diversity and congruence but also because it is unique amongst Christian denominations in its theological emphases and practice.

BEGINNINGS

It was in 1647 that George Fox had an experience of God breaking into his life, a transformative experience that was to change his life and lead to the founding of the Quaker movement, even whilst he claimed others had had a similar experience before him. Fox had left his home village of Fenny Drayton in Leicestershire four years earlier and had been searching across England for someone who might help him with his religious quest. He had spent a year with a Baptist uncle in London and had visited the army camps of the English Civil War where the most radical religious ideas were circulating. This was a time of great religious expectation, of the world turned upside down, and yet no one gave Fox any solace. He later wrote that his ‘hopes in all men were gone’ and that he ‘had nothing outwardly to help’ him (Fox 1952, 11). In this bleak place of despair, Fox then hears a voice which claims ‘there is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition.’ Even or no less than Christ is to become Fox’s spiritual guide and in that instant, Fox sees that he has been looking in the wrong places, to humanity and text, rather than to

the living Word, Christ Jesus. He understands that he has been ‘shut up in unbelief’ and ‘concluded under sin’ but that now he ‘may give Him all the glory’ (Fox 1952, 11). He knows this ‘experimentally’ or through his experience.

This experience sets the mould for the formation of the Quaker movement based on a sense of intimacy with God. Quakerism emerges from this moment on, initially faltering and then with great momentum in the north of England from 1652, as a group whose spiritual basis rests in an experience of direct encounter with God. This experience is salvific and also entails an ability to resist sin, a perfectability. Nothing frustrated other Christians more than these claims. Fox does not set himself apart as a particular prophet but understands that ‘convincement’, the conviction of his former faith and the power to live a regenerated life, is available to anyone who did not resist the in-working and indwelling of Christ. Thus a second radical aspect of Quaker spirituality is that of spiritual equality, whereby all are ministers.

Third, Fox understood that he had had nothing outwardly to help him because the location of authentic spirituality was inward. Rather than install a rota of ministers to lead worship, Quakers adopted a liturgy of silence and stillness in which God might use any one of those gathered as a mouthpiece. Worship would typically last three hours, sometimes totally silent, at other times laced with vocal ministry.

And Quakers quaked. The term ‘Quaker’ was originally an insult handed to Fox by a judge who derided the physical shaking that often accompanied this approach to the divine. Quakers have been a group founded on a powerful collective mystical experience. They understood this to be their instalment of the inward second coming of Christ and the beginning of the culmination of the Biblical timeline. They lived their faith as if in the Book of Revelation; Fox justified inward communion (after Revelation 3:20) and the use of silence (Revelation 8:1) using that Scripture. Quakers were the vanguard for God over England and all other nations heralding the coming of the kingdom. Necessarily, as the true church, they were impelled to decry all those who held humanity back from this new dispensation, and they interrupted church services and preached wherever they could. Quakerism would moderate its views towards other Christians within twenty years but only really become ecumenical in the nineteenth century.

Quaker faith was thus straightforward and optimistic, offering the idea of a universal elect. It was egalitarian within its theocratic or pneumocratic paradigm. It offered certainty and clarity about what was right and what, and who, was wrong. ‘The world’ was to be trampled under and a particular lifestyle quickly emerged that was visibly Quaker. Quakers started to adopt

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plain forms of dress and speech, use ‘thee’ and ‘thou’ to everyone instead of the deferential ‘you’ and number the days and months rather than use pagan-derived names. Quakers eschewed outward war that contradicted the gospels and the idea of spiritual equality. Quakers withdrew from the corrupting temptations of the world.

Structure and process would follow in time, Quakers adopting a collective process of discernment to seek God’s will on any matter, based again on a theo-logic of silence and stillness as the way to approach the Divine. Minutes are written and agreed within the meetings to reflect the discernment of the group. Unity implies reliability; disunity may require the matter to be brought back and for Friends to once again set ‘self aside’ in their quest to know God’s leadings. Local ‘Meetings’ were grouped into regional groupings which met quarterly, with substantial constituencies of geographically discrete areas forming a ‘Yearly Meeting’ which met annually. All of these meetings were open to all Friends although ‘meetings for church affairs’ became separated by gender beginning in 1675.

Witness was integrated into the spirituality. Quakers enacted signs, protested and petitioned and sought social justice as well as spiritual victory. This early form of an enacted and embodied spirituality has remained the basis for Quakerism in all its forms since. Whilst different groups have given more or less authority to revelation and to Scripture and whilst, since the 1870s, an increasing number of Friends have adopted a pastoral ‘programmed’ form of worship, the insights of George Fox and the other early Friends remain embedded in the faith, practice and witness of all Yearly Meetings. A pastor has no greater spiritual authority than any other Friend, just those Spirit-given gifts required for the role. Others serve as Elders, nurturing the worship and ministry of the group, still others as Clerks who help manage the meetings for worship for church affairs and who write the minutes reflecting the sense of God’s will discerned by the group. Roles are often rotated, although some are ‘released’ financially to fulfil their ministry.

Quakerism remains a distinctive part of the religious landscape and a compelling subject. We hope this volume brings the nature of Quaker history and development and distinctives of the Quaker faith into clear relief.

CONTENTS

Whilst many introductory volumes have extended histories of the movement, we have compressed the 360 years into three chapters. The book then contains five chapters on expressions of Quaker faith, five on regional overviews and five on emerging spiritualities.

History

Robynne Healey covers the earliest period of Quakerism, how it fared during the persecution of the Restoration, how it managed emigration (notably to the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania) and how it developed in the eighteenth century. This latter period was one of relative stability, many of the earlier state-sponsored threats to the movement removed. Quakerism had become an acceptable part of the religious landscape. However, Quakers themselves were less spiritually confident and were wary of a corrupt and corrupting world. They aspired to the supernatural plane whilst fearing all that was 'natural'. At the same time, they were embedded in the wider society rather than removed from it and were active in commerce and social justice campaigns such as those for penal reform and the abolition of the slave trade.

Thomas Hamm and Isaac May cover the nineteenth century. This was the time when Quakerism started to disassemble, fracturing into two main branches (Hicksite and Orthodox) starting in 1827 and into three (Hicksite, Wilburite and Gurneyite) in the 1840s. Influenced by revival meetings that, for some, revealed the limitations of unprogrammed worship, a pastoral tradition emerged within Gurneyite Quakerism in 1875 with all but one Gurneyite Yearly Meetings maintaining pastoral meetings or Friends Churches by 1900. An uneasy tension between a modernist renewal tendency and Holiness revivalism beset this part of the Quaker tradition. At the same time, Gurneyite Yearly Meetings formed a strong coalition after a conference in Richmond, Indiana, in 1887 and by 1902 had founded an umbrella organisation, Five Years Meeting (FYM).

Timothy Burdick and Pink Dandelion cover the twentieth century. Modernist Quakerism emerged not only within parts of Gurneyite Quakerism but also within Hicksite Quakerism by the start of the twentieth century. Hicksite Friends founded Friends General Conference as an umbrella organisation in 1900. FYM continued to be divided between modernist and Holiness Friends and from the 1920s between modernist and fundamentalist Friends. First, fundamentalist Friends pushed for their Yearly Meetings to disengage from the newly formed American Friends Service Committee for its lack of soteriological goals; later they would leave FYM for its lack of doctrinal specificity. By the 1960s, the Evangelical Friends Alliance had been set up as a third umbrella organisation. Conservative Friends (linked to the earlier Wilburite tradition) created a fourth grouping. Burdick and Dandelion concentrate on majority Quakerism, the programmed tradition and its mission work, which had by the end of the twentieth century come to represent nearly 90 percent of

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global Quakerism. Kenya, following 1902 mission work, is now the most populous country in terms of Quakers. Modernist or Liberal Friends became increasingly detached from their Christian heritage and also increasingly diverse, theologically, as the century wore on.

Expression

Nancy Cho charts Quaker expression through literary and print culture, among British and American Friends. Whilst early Quakers distrusted literature and the arts, Cho shows how Quaker writers have increasingly accepted and utilised a wide variety of literary genres. Initially Quakers worried about how the production and use of fiction fit with the Quaker testimony of integrity. In the early decades, the production of literature among Quakers grew more conservative, as prophetic and ecstatic literature fell out of favour with them. In the nineteenth century, however, John Greenleaf Whittier gained wide recognition as a Quaker poet, but other Friends also adopted the genre, such as abolitionist Elizabeth Margaret Chandler. In the mid-nineteenth century, Quakers were prompted to recognise the presence of beauty in literature and reconsider their objections to that aspect of the human endeavour. Since that time, Quaker literary endeavours have flowered, and Cho looks at the contributions of Quaker writers such as Jessamyn West, Elizabeth Gray Vining, Chuck Fager and Joan Slonczweski.

Katherine Murray continues this theme of action in the world with an overview of Quaker social justice work and how that relates to more recent concerns for sustainability. She points out that seventeenth-century Friends were not dissuaded from Spirit-led actions, such as refusing to doff one's hat to monarchs and nobility, even when such actions were costly, landing them in prison or enduring other kinds of suffering. She briefly reviews the witness of Quakers such as John Woolman and Elizabeth Fry, as well as the contemporary work of organisations such as the American Friends Service Committee, the Friends Committee on National Legislation and the Quaker United Nations Office. She then examines various efforts by Friends in the 2010s on behalf of ecojustice, including the call issued by a worldwide conference in 2012 at Kabarak University in Kenya, asserting that Quakers 'are called to be patterns and examples in a 21st century campaign for peace and ecojustice'.

The section on expressions of Quaker faith continues with a chapter by Elaine Bishop and Jiseok Jung on the Quaker opposition to war. It usefully and deliberately begins, however, with a section on the nature of Quaker

testimony, or faith-based expression, as a precursor for what follows. Bishop and Jung cover the history of the Quaker testimony against war and its evolution into a peace testimony. They introduce new work on five ways in which the Quaker peace witness has shifted in the past century and innovative scholarship on two ways in which that witness is now manifest, as peacemaking and as conflict transforming.

Stephen Angell and Clare Brown offer an overview of the Quaker involvement with education historically and in its global breadth today. They chart the changing attitudes and involvement in education over time as well as outline the scope of current Quaker educational provision. The first Quakers were distrustful of too much 'worldly' learning and focused on a 'practical curriculum'. In the eighteenth century, Quakers maintained a 'guarded' or 'select' education system for their children, keen to inculcate a Quaker curriculum in a purely Quaker environment. By the end of the nineteenth century as most Quakers began to see themselves as only a part of the true church rather than the true church itself, the desire to keep Quaker students away from non-Quakers waned, and the curriculum began to broaden. At this time too, Quaker schools outside of Britain and North America started to appear, for example, in Palestine, Lebanon and Japan. Both of these trends continued into the twentieth century with renewed vigour based on the fruits of full citizenship in Britain (Quakers and other nonconformists could go to Oxford and Cambridge after 1871) and missionary work in general. The past century has been one of a huge expansion of Quaker education, both at school and since the 1830s college levels. Questions of appropriate curriculum have continued and Quaker Bible Institutes opened in the early twentieth century as an alternative to a more worldly liberal arts education offered by some Quaker colleges. The ethics of private education has also been a twentieth-century concern. At the same time, Quakers have become keenly involved in helping with the education of non-Quakers, especially those on the margins. The history of Quaker involvement with education is a complex and fascinating topic as Angell and Brown demonstrate.

Emma Jones Lapsansky looks at Quaker material culture and the paradoxical attention to the outward (e.g. in terms of dress or buildings) from adherents to a group centred on an interiorised spirituality. According to most seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Quakers, 'vanity' and 'ostentation' were to be avoided, and an aesthetic of 'plainness' embraced as godly. Lapsansky enquires closely as to what such terms were taken to mean. For the first generation of Friends, it often meant dressing in 'unadorned, often undyed garb'. Quaker meeting houses were modest structures, very different from the ornate churches that arose in late seventeenth-century England. At

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the same time, wealthy Friends favoured ‘meticulous craftsmanship’, and in so doing they allowed themselves a certain degree of luxury, at least in terms of the quality of the product. Thus, they sought out consumer goods that were ‘of the best sort, but plain’. The more low-cost fabrics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have meant that Quaker tastes in clothes have become ‘less obvious’, but still, like their earlier predecessors, many Friends tend to avoid ‘high-fashion trends’ as well as ‘clothing produced under exploitative conditions’. Quaker architecture went through parallel processes, whereby Quaker plainness, or simplicity, has been reinterpreted over the centuries, but not rejected altogether. Lapsansky concludes with an examination of the ways that simplicity has shaped Quaker liturgy and decision-making processes.

Regional Studies

Our ‘Regional Studies’ section takes each area of the world and offers a present-day overview in the area as well as a specific case study.

Stephen Angell and John Connell cover North America (the United States and Canada). They focus in particular on the three largest groupings of Quakers, Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting and Evangelical Friends Church International, charting numerical gains and losses in the recent past alongside the shifting dynamics between meetings of different branches, particularly reunification and schism. A specific case study covers Western Yearly Meeting, an organisation of Friends that is located in Western Indiana in the Midwest region of the United States, and how its fortunes appear in the short-term future. The chapter provides a useful insight into the way different Quaker traditions operate in parallel and where their differing points of vitality lie, as well as how the shape of global Quakerism is shifting away from the dominance of the global north.

Nancy Thomas and Ramon Longoria chart the mainly evangelical Quaker communities of Central and South America. Cuban Friends form the case study in their chapter. They tell a fascinating story that features many dedicated Friends missionaries hailing from a variety of American yearly meetings imbued with evangelical Christian Holiness fervour, but also sensitive profiles of many of the Latin American leaders themselves. In Bolivia, the nation with the most Friends in this region, most of the converts came from the Aymara people, a group that existed prior to the Incas and has its own language. Many Latin American Friends were not Christians prior to becoming Quakers; often they espoused animism. But the Friends in this region are strongly Christian and Quaker. They generally have a strong

interest in Quaker testimonies and distinctives, but they also have adapted these to their often lively Latin American cultures.

George Busolo, Oscar Malande, Ann Riggs and Theoneste Sentabire focus on Quakerism in East Africa, with a focus on the Chavakali Yearly Meeting in western Kenya. There are more Quakers in Kenya, and in the East African region, than anywhere else in the world. Since the founding of the Kenyan mission in 1903, Quakers have grown markedly and matured under both colonial and post-colonial contexts. The authors note a variety of cultural and economic challenges as necessary background to their analysis. They also give an in-depth portrayal of African Quaker beliefs, providing contrasts with African traditional religions, and also noting variations between ethnic groups in Kenya. They provide a much needed ‘thick’ ethnographic description of faith and practice in Vozoli Village Meeting in Chavakali Yearly Meeting, part of the Luhya people dominant in Kenyan Quakerism. They conclude by pointing out that the maturity of Kenyan Quakerism has resulted in a transition from it being a ‘mission receiving’ to a ‘mission sending’ church. By 2017, Kenyan Quakers had sent missionaries to Congo, Tanzania and South Sudan, and then across the Atlantic Ocean to Belize, a Central American nation.

Hans Eirik Aarek and Julia Ryberg look at Quakerism in Europe with a particular focus on Friends in Norway and other Scandinavian countries. Quakers are to be found in thirty-five of forty-eight European countries, often in small numbers. In most places, modern liberal Quakerism is dominant, but in Hungary, Romania and Albania, there are significant numbers of evangelical Quakers. European Quakers have often been involved in significant humanitarian activities, especially during the two world wars and the intervening period, and in peace and reconciliation work, especially during the Cold War. In many contexts, European Quakers are experiencing growth and feel a special concern to nurture their small worship groups.

Finally, Stephanie Middori Komashin offers an overview of the highly diverse nature of Quakerism in Southeast Asia and Australasia (Asia Pacific) with a case study on Friends in Japan. While not ignoring other sorts of Friends churches and meetings, Komashin provides an important window into the origins and growth of evangelical Friends churches in Bhutan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia and elsewhere in the region. Komashin draws a parallel between Asian Friends churches and those Friends churches in Latin America and Africa, in that Friends churches in each of these regions are primed for rapid growth. She also provides vivid detail about differences between all of these Friends churches, even those within the same branch. Mission is a central theme throughout all of these chapters as well as the continual

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development of new local groups of Quakerism, adapting to new contexts, new challenges and new opportunities.

Emerging Spiritualities

The final section of the book is entitled 'Emerging Spiritualities'. Each of the five chapters considers an aspect of the variety of current Quaker spirituality. Michael Birkel and Deborah Shaw look at Conservative Quaker spirituality, its distinctive practices and its enduring appeal, and then the way some Liberal Friends have chosen dual affiliation, for example, maintaining Buddhist as well as Quaker practice. They uncover a Quaker tradition which is 'not static but rather unfolding'. Friends holding dual traditions have combined them in varying ways, and they seek to bring benefit to their Quaker communities in disparate ways. Often they point to a more direct teaching of these varieties of Quaker spiritualities than what commonly occurred in generations past. William Taber, for example, was mindful of the Conservative tradition of intuitive acquisition of spiritual traits, but, believing that there was insufficient resources for contemporary Friends to gain spiritual depth by such means, he 'departed from Conservative tradition and wrote boldly' about a variety of spiritual concerns and practices.

Dan Christy Randazzo looks at one aspect of the spectrum of Liberal Quaker belief, non-theism, and the debates that have emerged within liberal Quakerism, mostly in Britain and the United States, during recent decades over the use of the term 'God' as necessary or appropriate. He charts a great variety of arguments. Some non-theists, for example, use certain Quaker concepts to argue against others which they see as intrinsically theist. Others attempt to honour the Christian roots of Quakers by working systematically to bridge the original Christian understandings and the non-theism of some contemporary Quakers. Randazzo perceives room for Quaker non-theism to grow but adds that it will need to remain in dialogue with other types of Liberal Quakerism to 'make effective contributions to the development of Liberal Quakerism' going forward.

Jon Kershner gives an overview of present-day evangelical Quaker spirituality. He provides a thorough overview of several types of evangelical Quaker spirituality, focusing especially on differences between North American evangelical Quakerism and the evangelical Quakerism of the Global South. He also points to commonalities and variations in worship forms among evangelical Quakers. He provides helpful summaries of some disputes that were current in the 2010s, especially in the manner that

evangelical regard for biblical authority-oriented evangelical Quakers when confronting issues of homosexuality.

Wess Daniels and Greg Woods build on Daniels's earlier work on 'Convergent Quakerism', a movement of mainly younger Friends from different Quaker traditions keen to conserve Quaker distinctives and yet engage with wider culture as part of the emergent church movement. This chapter typifies the continual dynamic interplay between constancy and change that we find throughout Quaker history and which has so dominated the past century.

Margery Post Abbott reviews the pioneering work of the North Pacific Women's Theological Discussion Group, which has successfully bridged different Quaker traditions in a powerful example of intra-Quaker ecumenism. She then broadens her analysis geographically by looking at ways that women in other parts of the Quaker world – most notably, Indiana (United States) and Kenya – have acted to empower women in the face of their exclusion from decision-making roles, or to preserve and to nurture Quaker unity when divisions have been threatened or actually have occurred. She proposes that this work by women is a concrete manifestation in the contemporary world of the ministry and teachings of Jesus.

Many books outline the history and expression of the Quaker movement, but this volume is distinct in at least three ways. First, it presents a new range of authors, many writing their first book chapters. Each is an accomplished scholar but as editors we have deliberately sought out those with a fresh and innovative edge to their work. This is not a book of 'settled scholarship' but of new ideas and ways of approaching the study of Quakerism. The section on 'Emerging Spiritualities' enables the volume to be timely and relevant.

Second, we trust that this volume redresses the erstwhile bias towards Liberal Quakerism inherent in the way that many earlier histories have been written by Liberal Friends rather than Evangelical ones.

Third, and crucially, we believe this volume is the first that is explicitly global in its authorship and coverage of the different branches of Quakerism. Too often, Quaker studies have been centred on Anglo-American history and experience. We hope this book goes some way to redress this deficit.