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Rosemary Moore. *The Light in Their Consciences: The Early Quakers in Britain 1646-1666.* University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000. xiii + 314 pp. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-271-01988-8.

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Historians are sometimes advised to put aside all theories or hypotheses and simply read everything that was written about the subject they are interested in–including both what was written at the time (our familiar "primary sources") and what has been written since, the "secondary sources." I have always doubted whether anybody ever has done this, or even could do it; but this new book by Rosemary Moore must come as close to that ideal as is humanly possible.

Her subject is not exactly an obscure one: the history of Quakerism from 1646–an unusually early date for its beginnings–to 1666. (Although the subtitle uses the word "Britain," the book is in fact entirely about England; Scottish and Welsh Quakerism do not figure in it.) When I began to work on the English Quakers–now almost a half-century ago–my graduate school mentor advised me that there was little new which could be said about them; I would do better to study the Baptists. Moore is only the latest author to show that the subject is far from exhausted.

Her book tries to resolve differences arising from what the author calls "theological and historical approaches to the study of early Quakerism." Suspecting these might have arisen because of sampling biases, she designed what she calls something like a "public opinion poll" of early Quaker writing, free of "any preconceived notions on the material" (p. 236). Her hope was to shed light in particular on two questions: the political activities of early Quakers–including their willingness to bear arms during the Interregnum–and the degree of leadership exercised by George Fox before 1660.

Her "poll," as she acknowledges, differs from any a sociologist might conduct. Not only can there be only limited cross-checking of the answers, but also there can be no randomized sampling. Moore has not sampled the pamphlet literature, since she apparently has read it all; and she is alert to the fact that they were written mostly by prominent men. Indeed, sensitivity to the biases arising from the vagaries of documentary preservation is one of the strong points of the book. She notes, for example, that the Great Fire of 1666 destroyed many of the early letters and records which were probably kept by London Friends, so the extant Quaker manuscripts are "probably heavily biased toward the interests of Swarthmoor" (p. 141).

Moore's answers to the two questions are judicious, but not particularly novel. She makes the case for Fox's early leadership strongly, showing the deference that most of the prominent Friends accorded him, but not downplaying the importance of James Nayler (before his disgrace) and Edward Burrough (before his death in 1662). If one wishes to play counter-factual games, it could be argued that Fox's extraordinary stamina, allowing him to survive his imprisonments, let him play a larger part than would have been possible had Burrough or Richard Farnworth not died so early. Moore however declines such speculations.

She takes into account what such scholars as Barry Reay and Christopher Hill have written about the political role Quakers played in the Interregnum, but adds the argument that the eschatological theme of their earliest writings, that the entire world was being or could be renewed, gave way to a different argument emphasizing the fulfillment of Christian hopes in Friends themselves as the political scene became less favorable.

Moore's computerized treatment allows her to give a year-by-year analysis of the pamphlets' themes and responses to the fast-changing political situation in the later years of the Protectorate. We learn that even though more Quakers were writing in 1655-56, the differences among their writings was much less marked than earlier. She attributes this to the experience which the leading Friends had had in controverting the Ranters and others, as well as to an incipient mechanism for suppress-

ing the wilder variants of Quaker piety. The effects of James Nayler's disgrace show up quickly in a shift "from prophecy to apologetics" between 1656 and 1657-58 (p. 47).

Exhaustive reading in the printed literature pays off most obviously in tracing the development of Quaker thought. Early Friends struggled to make it clear what they meant by "the light"–she tells us they never used the phrase "inner light" and seldom "inward light." Situating themselves with respect to the traditional Christian doctrine of the atonement, and distinguishing the light from conscience, was particularly difficult, and there is evidence of a certain amount of straddling. Burrough wrote in a book that those who came into the Kingdom of God were "washed and cleansed from all unrighteousness by the blood of Jesus"; but in an epistle to other Quakers he made no mention of the blood of Jesus, speaking instead of "the whole salvationÎÅthat God dwells in us" (p. 106).

In 1657 and 1658 of some fifty Quaker authors other than Fox and Burrough who gave accounts of salvation, Moore suggests that only eight gave serious attention to the earthly life and death of Christ: "The others wrote of Christ and the light as though they were precisely equivalent terms, and several rarely mentioned Christ at all, concentrating almost entirely on the light" (p. 110).

The quantitative data are less rich when it comes to tracing the development of the Quaker testimonies and discipline, and the chief innovation in Moore's treatment of them is her claim that as early as 1666 Friends were well on their way to "theological orthodoxy and political respectability" (p. 228). Certainly there were already tendencies in those directions; but the institutions were just beginning in 1666, conversions to Quakerism had not slowed down, and good arguments could be made for dating the most important changes to after the Toleration Act of 1689.

Inevitably, there are a few errors in the book. The four monarchies invoked by the Fifth Monarchists are mentioned in the Book of Daniel, not in Revelation (p. 61). It is odd to call the Levelers a "London group" (p. 7). More seriously, it is a misleading oversimplification to say that in 1646 "the regular parish ministry [of the Church of England] was organized on Reformed, or Presbyterian, principles" (p. 4). In fact a great deal of local diversity had developed, and the Presbyterian system of classes had only been instituted in London and Lancashire. Cromwell's army fought the Scots in part to prevent "Presbyterian principles" from being dominant in England.

Still, these are minor blemishes in a book which has a good deal to offer to the specialist and, because of its comprehensiveness, attractive style, and unusually generous pricing by the publisher, should find many other readers.

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