

Book Reviews

By H. Larry Ingle. *First Among Friends: George Fox & The Creation of Quakerism.*

(New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. Pp. 407. \$45.00.)

This volume by Professor Ingle is the first full, scholarly biography of George Fox (1624-1691) to be written. While several books have examined various aspects of his life and teachings, none has attempted a comprehensive study of this remarkable founder of the Religious Society of Friends. The author has made wider use of both Quaker and non-Quaker sources than any of his predecessors, and has sought to study and interpret most aspects of Fox's remarkable career.

More than half the volume covers Fox's early life, including the first few years after he began to preach the "Truth" which had been revealed to him, and concluding with 1656, when the new movement went through the traumatic episode where James Nayler entered the city of Bristol on a donkey in apparent imitation of Jesus Christ on Palm Sunday. On the other hand, only one-sixth of the text is dedicated to Fox's last two decades, 1671 to 1691. Ingle devotes nearly 25 pages to the Nayler problem and only half as many to the two years Fox was in America. The volume is fully documented, with 70 pages of notes, plus a comprehensive bibliography which includes an alphabetical list of Fox's writings and those he coauthored with others. Various editions of his writings prepared by others are included, although at least one title is omitted.

Ingle used sources not examined by other writers, and he has sought to fill in gaps in our knowledge of events with intelligent suggestions and surmises about what is missing. While these speculations are often very perceptive, some are less than persuasive. Ingle has not been afraid to ascribe feelings and attitudes to the persons he has quoted, such as "bluntly," "forcefully," "lashed out," and "imperious." In chapter 16, Ingle described the way in which Fox revised the letters and other documents at Swarthmoor Hall to cast the early years of the movement in a better light, before beginning to dictate his *Journal* to Thomas Lower in 1675. Thomas Ellwood smoothed out the manuscript still further in 1694 when he published it. Ingle also describes, as fully as possible, Margaret Fox's mistaken belief in 1670 after her marriage to George Fox, that although she was 55 years old, she was pregnant once more (pp. 227, 228, 342).

It seemed to this reviewer that the book places an inordinate amount of emphasis on controversy in the new Quaker movement. Invariably, when Fox goes to visit Friends and their meetings we are told mainly about the difficulty with dissidents, and little about nurturing the spiritual needs of the meetings. It is apparent that the title of the book, "First Among Friends," carries a double meaning: Fox was the first and most influential Friend, but he was also insistent that his interpretation of Quakerism was correct, and all who differed with him were at best in error, or at worst guided by evil spirits. This was Fox's position regarding the views of others in the Nayler episode in 1656, and it continued to the end.

One cannot help but question Ingle's choice of a portrait of Fox. While there is no generally accepted portrait of the man, the images most often used depict a person of character and good sense; an exception is the Honthorst drawing of him as a young man in ecstasy. Ingle has chosen to use an enlargement of a small figure in a caricature of the Quakers by Heemskerck which may or may not be George Fox. This face, which lacks any indication of intelligence or character, portrays a crafty, even evil-looking person. Most important, the image used by Ingle is entirely at odds with the strong, intelligent, capable, charismatic man portrayed in the pages of his biography.

Ingle has stressed the fact that Fox was impressed with the manner in which persons of quality responded to him in his last two decades, whether in America, on the continent, or in the British Isles. He seemed to regard himself more highly as the years went by, and referred to himself as "gentleman" in his final will (p. 281). While Fox was strongly attracted to the young courtier, William Penn, who joined the Friends in 1667, Ingle shows little understanding or appreciation of Penn. He places the Penn-Mead Trial in 1674 rather than 1670 (p. 279), and claims that both Admiral William Penn and Captain David Barclay, father of Robert Barclay, supported the royalist cause in the Civil War when the opposite was true (p. 245). There are other small errors in the preface, in the notes, and in the text.

The author seems greatly attached to the term "filiopietistic," which he uses to describe many writings about Fox which appeared before his own. While he asserts he has good reason for using chapter titles which often tell the reader nothing about the chapter, this reviewer would prefer titles which describe the contents.

Despite these criticisms I am very glad Ingle wrote this book, for it sheds much new light on the founder of Quakerism, draws upon a prodigious amount of research, and should provoke other scholars to look at Fox and early Quakerism in new ways.

Edwin B. Bronner, *Haverford College*

By J. William Frost. *A Perfect Freedom: Religious Liberty in Pennsylvania.*

(University Park: Penn State Press, 1993, Pp. 221. \$16.95.)

This work by J. William Frost, Professor of Quaker History and Research and Director of the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College, is a paperback edition of a book published in 1990 as part of the Cambridge Studies in Religion and American Public Life. Noting that "there has never been a full study" of the evolution "of Pennsylvania's experience in religious freedom" (p. 3), Frost uses a wide variety of pertinent primary and secondary sources to trace major developments from the time of William Penn and the Quakers to the present.

During Penn's lifetime (he died in 1718), most of the inhabitants of Pennsylvania were Quakers. What Frost describes as an unofficial Quaker establishment prevailed (pp. 23, 27). There was freedom of worship, but religious requirements existed for officeholding and laws were passed to put into practice Quaker understanding of public morality. Even as Pennsylvania became the most heterogeneous province in British North America, and after direct Quaker control of the Assembly ended during the French and Indian war, the Quaker prescription for religious liberty continued. In fact, much of it stood essentially unchanged well into the twentieth century.

During and after the Revolution other groups, led by the Scots-Irish (or Scotch-Irish) Presbyterians and their leaders, created new constitutions and passed new laws. A major measure enacted in 1794 was titled "an Act for the Prevention of Vice and Immorality, and of Unlawful Gaming, and to Restrain Disorderly Sports and Dissipation."

Among the most useful sections of this book are those which explore how, especially in the nineteenth century, Pennsylvanians sought to preserve the long-standing separation of church and state. At the same time these same Pennsylvanians fashioned and refashioned an accommodation by means of which the two institutions supported each other, in the interests of peace, order, and civic moral-

ity. Most Pennsylvanians approved what Frost calls “the positive interaction of republican and Christian virtues in undergirding the society” (p. 105).

In dealing with conflicts within the churches, the state used its own established rules as a guide. In enacting legislation intended to regulate behavior, it relied, not on theological arguments, but on what it took to be sound reason and natural law. As examples, Frost discusses laws and subsequent judicial decisions regulating activities on the Sabbath, punishing blasphemy, granting tax exemptions and other rights for church property, and governing public education.

In an epilogue, Frost discusses what he calls the dismantling of “Pennsylvania’s traditions of religious liberty” (p. 160), especially in the last half century. The United States Supreme Court has struck down laws requiring all students to salute the flag, that Jehovah’s Witnesses obtain licenses before they distribute their literature, and Bible reading and prayers in public schools. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has declared unconstitutional the state’s remaining blue laws, some of which existed on the books for more than two centuries. In part because of increasing pluralism in America, Frost argues, “the consensus linking civic morality and organized religion that worked in the Keystone State in 1789 or 1900 may not be retrievable in the year 2000” (p. viii).

Frost has presented sufficient credible evidence to establish his case. This reviewer has found a few typographical or other errors. The congregation in Philadelphia was not the only “legally functioning” Roman Catholic church in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania; there were others (pp. 4-5). John Philip Boehm, not Martin, was an early Reformed minister (p. 47). It was Henry J. Young, not Arthur, who was the author of a 1955 doctoral dissertation on the treatment of Loyalists in Pennsylvania (p. 69). Michael Leib, not Lieb, was a prominent Republican in the early nineteenth century (p. 94).

Charles H. Glatfelter, *Gettysburg College, Emeritus*

Gary B. Nash. *Quakers and Politics: Pennsylvania, 1681-1726.*

(Northeastern University Press, 1993. Pp. 364. Paper. \$14.95.)

From 1652 to 1681, the radical Society of Friends survived in England without the benefit of political office. Quakers opposed English government. When the Quakers began to develop a North American colony in 1681, they had major

political problems, as Gary Nash ably demonstrates in this reissued book. William Penn gave special powers to large capital investors in his colony, and developed a constitution that gave his Quaker insiders more power than any elite enjoyed in other colonies. But plebeian Pennsylvania Quakers resisted: indeed, for at least the first thirty years, Quaker politics turned out a variety of protests and animosities. Nash recounts these incidents with vigor. William Penn grew ashamed of Pennsylvania Quakers, and in turn Pennsylvania Quakers grew ashamed of their greedy founder and landlord. Yet, while politics were bad, the colony enjoyed unprecedented economic and social success. Philadelphia became a fine city overnight and profitable wheat farms surrounded the city. Locally, Friends had stable communities marked by meeting houses and limestone farm houses. Relations with the Amerindians were peaceful. Quakers established the beginnings of the most successful pluralistic society in British North America and ruled it for almost one hundred years.

Even in his new introduction, Gary Nash never confronts the paradox that his research and analysis seemingly reveal. The colony most admired by the Enlightenment for its social achievement was a rank political disaster. Yet this paradox is probably an illusion. Nash's definition of politics includes only the formal institutions of normal English politics. It discounts the Quakers' remarkable system of meetings informed by their special ethos of the Holy Spirit. The system of men's and women's monthly meetings designed by George Fox and Margaret Fell kept the Friends organized and vital. Nash did not consult the voluminous meeting records at Swarthmore College, and George Fox is barely mentioned. Women and their meetings are overlooked. Nash's focus on governor, council, and assembly (it convened twelve days a year) reveals only half the important politics. An equally important story occurs in the Quaker meeting system that provided this early society with direction and guidance, despite the embarrassments of its formal politics.

Gary Nash has gained a well-earned reputation for excellence by inserting the poor and disinherited into the story of early American society and politics. Yet, in his first book, he focused almost exclusively on the elite. Nash deems true William Penn's self-pitying curses over the resistance of his struggling Quaker tenants to pay his demands. He concludes that the failure of the elite to dominate effortlessly was a sign of anarchistic disruption. Nevertheless, when Nash's book first appeared it was the first to assess the Quakers dispassionately. It opened a new field to inquiry.

When historians write the early politics of Pennsylvania from the bottom up, this careful and insightful version of the story from the top down will continue to guide research. The book's reissue is welcome.

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By John A. Hostetler. *Amish Society*. Fourth edition.

(Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Pp. xi, 435.)

By Donald R. Kraybill (text) and Lucien Niemeyer (photographs), *Old Order Amish: Their Enduring Way of Life*.

(Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Pp. xiv, 190.)

By Donald R. Kraybill, ed. *The Amish and the State*.

(Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Pp. xiv, 333.)

By John D. Roth, trans. and ed., *Letters of the Amish Division: A Sourcebook*.

(Goshen, Indiana: Mennonite Society, 1993. Pp. x, 162.)

By Steven M. Nolt, *A History of the Amish*.

(Intercourse, Penn., Good Books, 1992. Pp. 318.)

The calendar year 1993 marked the three hundredth anniversary of the "Amish Division," the event by which Jacob Amman and his followers separated themselves from their parent ecclesiastical community, the Mennonites. As is true of most events of this type, there was a period prior to it during which the tensions which caused it arose and a period afterwards in which consolidation occurred. If you can trust tourist literature, the Amish have not changed their religion and their culture since their origin. The anniversary, however, provided occasion for serious reflection on the Amish phenomenon. Even if several Amish friends to whom I observed that the year 1993 marked a big anniversary for them responded with "Wos meensch?" (What do you mean?), nearly one hundred scholars participated in a four-day conference at Elizabethtown College in June, entitled "Three Hundred Years of Persistence and Change: Amish Society: 1693-1993."

The five volumes commemorating the anniversary which concern us here constitute a basic library on the Amish. Each volume is marked by a healthy ten-

sion between sympathetic appreciation and critical analysis. With the addition of three books issued earlier, the curious reader may now have carefully crafted academic works available to put to the test the touristy assertion that the Amish are essentially a monolithic, static society.

A second celebration at Elizabethtown's conference recognized the thirtieth anniversary of John Hostetler's classic *Amish Society*. The fourth edition is not a radical departure from the third. It incorporates data which have come to light since the last (1980) and expands the bibliography. The very fact that a fourth edition was considered worthwhile by one of the nation's foremost university publishers indicates sufficiently that change is no less a concomitant of Amish life than it is of everyone else's. Very carefully Hostetler describes that change in each of its aspects—what, how, when—so that readers are clearly apprised that Amish change at their own pace and by their own rules, and at a varying pace depending on the subgroup involved and where it is located. Indeed sometimes change occurs so abruptly that the highly-conservative "white-buggy" Amish of Mifflin County now have five groups, not only the three Hostetler recognizes. The amazing thing about the Amish is not that they change, but the complex and sometimes non-verbalized procedures by which they retain sovereignty over the process.

One cannot go far in studying the Amish without considering Hostetler's work, which will probably be true for a long time to come. Donald Kraybill, in *The Riddle of Amish Culture* presents some of the same material in an equally useful manner, especially his analysis of the rise of small industries as a second, tolerated means of making one's living alongside agriculture and his explanation of the apparent contradictions about Amish life.

As to publication of picture books on the Amish (who consider it an offense against the Mosaic code to permit images of themselves), there seems to be no end. The forbidden is delicious. Sometimes in these books the pictures acclaimed as Amish are of other conservative folk who do not share the proscription. Sometimes the commentary is shaky, at best. In the Niemeyer-Kraybill volume we are treated to a successful union of an authoritative commentary and good photographs. Many, but not all of these, are sensitive to Amish preferences towards not photographing the face; some are sufficiently grainy to betray the telephoto lens necessary to take pictures without the subject's permission. The volume remains, simply put, the best photographic essay on Amish life that we have.

Completing the Hopkins triad of Amish studies issued during the anniversary year is a collection of essays on Amish relationships with government. Editor Kraybill here consolidates material that has been partially discussed before (most especially the chapter "Education and Schooling"; see, for instance, Albert N. Keim, ed., *Compulsory Education and the Amish* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975) and the related *Amish Children* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992) by John A. Hostetler and Gertrude Enders Huntington). But Kraybill offers important new material on health care, slow-moving vehicles, and fresh discussions of military service, conscription, social security, and taxes. Each chapter is a well-written analysis. The book as a whole provides a thoughtful commentary on the tensions between society and nonconformity, freedom and obligation.

Obviously the Amish choose to live at odds with the world around them. Their motivation for this is their interpretation of a series of texts from the New Testament. Surrounding the religious motivation, but supported by it and interwoven with it, is a thick shell of social conservatism. A good bit of this represents deliberate retention of life patterns once common to the remainder of society and now discarded by it. The process of discarding such patterns has not infrequently included legislation which renders the older patterns, once also legal, now illegal. Realizing that these forces are in collision is essential to understanding the Amish conflict with law and government. The stoutly, unyielding, and stubbornly held claim by the Amish that these now-illegal practices are essential to their religious practice is clear; members of the protective "cocoon" around them (a term suggested by Robert L. Kidder) go to court on their behalf to argue that freedom to practice what the law forbids is part of their religious freedom. A sympathetic echo of pity for these poor souls who live under such primitive standards (not unlike the sympathy for monastics, Kidder suggests) often moves public opinion in their favor. In the case, *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, which the United States Supreme Court decided in 1972 for the Amish, they secured legal support in the name of their religion to maintain their own one-room schools taught by their own, eighth-grade educated teachers. Attorney William B. Ball, who represented them, approvingly noted that this case has been termed a high-water mark in decisions on American religious liberty.

We have surely not heard the last of the Amish and governmental programs. Given the Amish approach to health care—first you use herbs and teas, then go to the “chiropractor”, and in desperation seek qualified medical attention—any national health-care system is a site of inevitable clash. Moreover, the assortment of other, less benign claims for extra-legal practices in the name of religion, of which the Branch Davidians are an immediate example, will surely tempt the courts, as William Ball suggests, to ignore their own “superb opinion” and the carefully delineated criteria in it for determining similar cases, to permit enforcement of laws that could erode a religious group to the point of its destruction. The abiding contribution of *The Amish and the State* is not, therefore, to Amish studies, but to the understanding of the First Amendment which guarantees freedom in the *exercise* of religion. Friend and foe of religion, of the Amish, and of government programs should therefore read this book.

The Roth volume is included in this review because it presents a critical edition of the correspondence and other documentary evidence of Amish origins. The original documents do not exist; an assortment of transcriptions and English translations survives. Since this material has not been previously available in an academically attested version, this volume fulfills an important function.

Steven Nolt, a young Mennonite scholar, has offered us a long-overdue history of the Amish. It is a well-balanced, well-researched, and well-written account. Although published by a firm which publicizes various forms of Anabaptist religion to tourists, the book is only mildly filiopietistic. Since it is likely to remain in print for a good time to come, we may hope for future strengthened editions.

Much that is of little consequence has been committed to printer’s ink in the decades since World War II when happily traveling Americans discovered Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and wrote about the people living there who dared to be different in the name of their religion. Tourists—bless them, for we need friends from outside the Commonwealth—come for the quaint and the cute. This quintet of volumes presents a fascinating story on a far higher plane. Of course they are pious, the Amish people, but hardly as the world guesses or would have them be. They may never have their greatest influence in the affairs of men through their theology. Rather they are part of a response to a vision of cultural broadness with which America began. If they are one day crushed by a vicious homogeneity, we shall all be deprived. And if our many guests see only the Amish’s antique ways,

they are cheated and, alas, misinformed. Hats off, broad-brimmed Amish hats—bonnets off, black, ribbon-trimmed Amish ones—to the scholarship in the five books considered here. Read in tandem, they provide excellent insight into these intriguing Americans. Whatever their future brings them, their record until now is a fascinating monument to human “persistence and change.”

Frederick S. Weiser
