

THE ROWNTREE HISTORY SERIES
AND THE GROWTH OF LIBERAL QUAKERISM:
1895-1925

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how some leading Quakers in the period 1895-1925 promoted liberal views within the Religious Society of Friends in Britain and the U.S.A. It focuses on the use of denominational history as a medium through which to transmit these ideas, in particular on the Rowntree History Series. I argue that the Rowntree History Series played a vitally important role in the construction of Liberal Quaker identity throughout this period: I focus on the attitudes of influential Quakers John Wilhelm Rowntree, Rufus Jones and William Charles Braithwaite in order to demonstrate that the Rowntree History Series was presented to enable Liberal Quakers to affirm Quaker tradition whilst at the same time justifying fundamental theological changes. I therefore conclude that the Rowntree History Series can be understood primarily as an intended resource for education and preparation for ministry.

For John and Joan

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Bibliography

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I explore how some leading Quakers promoted liberal views within the Religious Society of Friends in Britain and the U.S.A.¹ In particular, I focus on the use of denominational history as a medium through which to strengthen and redefine Quaker identity according to a liberal theology. The Quakers involved in this project held pivotal roles in the envisioning, initiating and establishing of educational initiatives, such as summer schools,² Woodbrooke³ and the Friends' Historical Society⁴ thereby influencing significant

¹ When considering the American context I may refer to one of several yearly meetings. In the British Context I will be referring to London Yearly Meeting (now Britain Yearly Meeting). The term London Yearly Meeting refers to an annual business meeting (which as the name suggests usually takes place in London) wherein proposals were considered which affected the corporate life of all Quakers in Britain. However, it is also used to refer to all Quakers resident within its geographic boundaries because all Quakers were eligible to attend the annual meeting and participate in its decisions. The Religious Society of Friends worldwide is divided into several yearly meetings. These frequently correspond to the borders of countries, although in the U.S.A. there are several yearly meetings. London Yearly Meeting includes England, Scotland and Wales but not Northern Ireland which is a part of Ireland Yearly Meeting.

² Summer Schools were ventures organised by liberal Quakers in order to encourage religious education within the Religious Society of Friends. Quaker history was one of the prominent topics studied at such events. The first Summer School was held at Scarborough in August 1897: over 600 Friends attended and it was so successful that Summer Schools soon became a regular feature of British Quakerism for the decade following: Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism 1860-1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.p. 171-7; H.G. Wood 'Origins' p.p. 13-18 in Robert Davis (ed), *Woodbrooke: 1903-1953* (London: The Bannisdale Press, 1953)

³ The success of the Summer Schools led to a desire to establish a 'permanent summer school' to foster the gifts of those called to ministry. This vision was held by several Friends but most notably by John Wilhelm Rowntree. In 1903 George Cadbury decided to donate Woodbrooke, his property in Birmingham, for this purpose. Although he was rather more evangelical than J.W. Rowntree they were able to work together for this common cause. The vision for a permanent place for Quakers to study religious and social questions was successful and Woodbrooke continues to this day: J.W. Rowntree, 'A plea for a Quaker settlement.' p.p. 135-150 in Joshua Rowntree (ed.), *John Wilhelm Rowntree: Essays and Addresses* (London: Headley Bros, 1905); H.G. Wood 'Origins' p.p. 13-18 in Robert Davis (ed), *Woodbrooke: 1903-1953*; Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, , p.p. 177-96

⁴ Throughout this dissertation I demonstrate that liberal Quakers wanted to use history as a way of demonstrating the relevance and modernity of the Quaker message. That this was a defining characteristic of Liberal Quakerism is evident in the fact that nearly every important member of the

continued on next page

changes in the theological identity of the Religious Society of Friends during the period 1895-1925. Crucial for the success of these initiatives was the identification of speakers and study materials that spoke to the religious questions of the day. A series of books, entitled the Rowntree History Series, were published between the years 1909-1921.⁵ I focus on the Rowntree History Series as the primary study material used in these educational initiatives and argue that it:

- Can be understood primarily as a resource for education and a preparation for ministry.
- Was presented so as to make it easier for the authors to affirm Quaker tradition while adapting the theology of their immediate predecessors.
- Demonstrates that those liberal Quakers interested in history genuinely believed that a truly accurate historical study was the only way to clear away the ‘distortions’ of quietism and evangelical revival and ‘recapture’ what was unique to Quakerism.
- Was used to justify fundamental theological changes.
- Demonstrates the liberal optimism of its authors that the facts which would emerge from this historical study would be beneficial to the Religious Society of Friends.

liberal movement was also a member of the Friends’ Historical Society when it was established in 1903.: Thomas Kennedy, ‘History and Quaker Renaissance: The Vision of John Wilhelm Rowntree’ p.p. 35-56 in *The Journal of the Friends Historical Society* (Vol. 55, No 2, 1984), p.38; Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p.p. 200-201

⁵ Rufus Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1909); Rufus Jones, Isaac Sharpless, Amelia Gummere, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (London: Macmillan, 1911); W.C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (London: Macmillan, 1912); Rufus Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Macmillan, 1914); W.C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (London: Macmillan, 1919); Rufus Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism* (London: Macmillan, 1921)

Although the Rowntree History Series comprises three additional books, in this dissertation I focus on *The Beginnings of Quakerism* and *The Second Period of Quakerism* by William Charles Braithwaite (1862 - 1922) and volumes one and two of the *Later Periods of Quakerism* by Rufus Jones (1863 - 1948). These four books are the most significant in the Rowntree History Series and are representative of the authors' attitudes towards Quaker history.

The chronological parameters of this study are 1895-1925. Although some Liberal Quaker theology is evident with the publication of *A Reasonable Faith* in 1885⁶ and *The Gospel of Divine Help* in 1886,⁷ the Manchester Conference⁸ in 1895 was the first major event of liberal Quakerism. The Rowntree History Series was subsequently researched, written and then published between 1912 and 1921.

⁶ 'Three Friends', *A Reasonable Faith: Short Religious Essays for the Times* (London: Macmillan, 1885)

⁷ Edward Wordsell, *The Gospel of Divine Help* (London: Samuel Harris & co, 1886)

⁸ The Manchester Conference took place 11-15 November, 1895. It is frequently referred to as the turning point in the transformation London Yearly Meeting which resulted in the dominance of liberal Quakerism. It attracted between 1000 to 1300 people out of a total membership of 16,500 in London Yearly Meeting. Most of the presenters were Quakers who were involved in their local meeting and in the intellectual world, but not necessarily at the Yearly Meeting level. Wilson estimates that roughly a third of the presenters were of an evangelical leaning. In total there were thirty papers covering the following topics: Early Quakerism – Its Spirit and Power; Has Quakerism a Message to the World Today; The Relation Between Adult Schools and Mission Meetings and the Organisation of the Society of Friends; The Attitude of the Society of Friends Towards Social Questions; The Attitude of the Society of Friends Towards Modern Thought; The More Effectual Presentation of Spiritual Truth; The Vitalising of our Meetings for Worship; The Message of Christianity to the World.: *Report of the Proceedings of the Conference of Members of the Society of Friends, Held, By direction of the Yearly Meeting, in Manchester from Eleventh to the Fifteenth of the Eleventh Month 1895* (London: Headley Bros, 1896); Roger Wilson, 'Friends in the Nineteenth Century' p.p. 353-363 in *The Friends Quarterly* (Vol. 23, No. 8, October 1984), p.363; Roger Wilson, *Manchester, Manchester and Manchester Again: From 'Sound Doctrine' to 'A Free Ministry' – the theological travail of London Yearly Meeting throughout the Nineteenth Century* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1990)

My study extends until 1925 in order to include the initial response to volume two of Rufus Jones' *Later Periods of Quakerism*.

I refer to the process by which liberal Quakerism emerged as a 'transformation' because this implies the least value judgement. However, words such as 'renewal' and 'renaissance' are used when referring to the arguments of particular historians for whom these are their preferred terms.

I refer to the type of Quakerism which emerged at the end of the Nineteenth century as 'liberal Quakerism'. Another possible term would be 'modernist Quakerism'⁹ which would perhaps better describe leading Quakers' rationalist perspective and their attempt to deal with the intellectual questions of their day. Indeed, Aubrey claimed that modernism represented an approach to theology, rather than a set of conclusions.¹⁰ This approach is one which recognises the formative influence of scientific method on the modern mind¹¹ and which therefore uses all the academic methods available, such as historical criticism.¹² Aubrey identifies four characteristics of modernist Christianity in the early twentieth century: firstly, a respect for the worth of the individual;¹³ secondly, a belief in democracy;¹⁴ thirdly, a humanism or anthropocentrism which led to a

⁹ This is the term used by Pink Dandelion, he distinguishes the various facets of modernism exhibited by different branches of Quakerism.: Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

¹⁰ Edwin Ewart Aubrey, 'What is Modernism?' p.p.426-447 in *The Journal of Religion*, Vol.15, No.4 (October 1935), 'What is Modernism?', p.430

¹¹ Aubrey, 'What is Modernism?', p.434

¹² Aubrey, 'What is Modernism?', p.435

¹³ Aubrey, 'What is Modernism?', p.435

¹⁴ Aubrey, 'What is Modernism?', p.436

focus on the immanence of God;¹⁵ and finally, an optimistic world view, which lasted until the First World War.¹⁶ These final two characteristics are particularly relevant to the Quaker context and are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs. However, I use the term ‘liberal’ partially because it tends to indicate an optimistic outlook on life and theology and this was certainly true of Quakers at the time, but mainly because it was the term proponents most often used to describe themselves.

On one level, there is, as Mason recognises, no ‘absolute’ liberalism.¹⁷ Liberalism changes according to the intellectual fashions of the time and Christian liberalism believes that it is desirable for Christianity to restate itself in each age.¹⁸ Christian liberalism became a significant religious movement in the 1880s,¹⁹ in response to the increasing use of biblical criticism and call for all religious claims to be based on reason or experience. Dorrien defines Christian liberalism in the following way:

Liberal theology is defined by its openness to the verdicts of modern intellectual inquiry, especially historical criticism and the natural sciences; its commitment to the authority of individual reason and experience; its conception of Christianity as an ethical way of life; its favouring of moral concepts of atonement; and its commitment to make Christianity credible and socially relevant to contemporary people.²⁰

¹⁵ Aubrey, ‘What is Modernism?’, p.436-9

¹⁶ Aubrey, ‘What is Modernism?’, p.439

¹⁷ Alastair Mason, ‘Liberal Protestantism’, p.p.385-387 in Hastings, Mason, Pyper, Lawrie and Bennett (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.385

¹⁸ Mason, ‘Liberal Protestantism’, p.386

¹⁹ Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism and Modernity, 1900-1950* (Louisville; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), p.1

²⁰ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.3

Mason emphasises the optimism of Christian liberalism. He describes it as ‘basically cheerful’ and believing that ‘God’s goodness is all around us, and he can speak to us through anything.’²¹ This optimism was certainly a key feature of Quaker liberalism in the early twentieth century and is a theme to which reference will be made repeatedly throughout this dissertation. Mason also writes that ‘liberal optimism about human nature lays itself open to mockery.’²² The First World War²³ caused many liberals to revise their opinions on human nature, although this was less apparent for Quaker liberals than other Christians.²⁴

Mason also describes an interest in the historic Jesus and the ‘social gospel’²⁵ as being important features of Christian liberalism.²⁶ However, Dorrien points out that the relationship between liberalism and the social gospel was not that simple. He recognises that there was frequently an overlap between the two movements, but writes that ‘there were liberal theologians who were not social gospellers and social gospellers who were not theologically liberal.’²⁷

²¹ Mason, ‘Liberal Protestantism’, p.386

²² Mason, ‘Liberal Protestantism’, p.385

²³ The effects of the First World War, although falling within the chronological parameters of this study, are not a major focus of this dissertation since the formative years of the Quaker history movement occurred before the war when such optimism was unhindered.

²⁴ John Punshon makes this point with reference to Quakers ignoring the critique of liberal Christianity by Barth.: John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey* (Quaker Books, 1984), p.p. 279-282

²⁵ ‘Social gospel’ was a movement which developed at the end of the nineteenth century when many Christians became convinced of the need to apply Christian principles to social problems, they developed a theory of social as well as individual salvation.

²⁶ Mason, ‘Liberal Protestantism’, p.387

²⁷ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.5

I have therefore identified five key tendencies within Christian liberalism: firstly, valuing biblical criticism; secondly, appealing to reason and/or experience; thirdly, being optimistic about human nature; fourthly, being interested in the historic Jesus; fifthly, emphasising the social gospel. Although it took a little longer for liberalism to become influential within the Religious Society of Friends, when it did it tended to follow broadly the same patterns as general Christian liberalism.

I would, however, like to say a little more about the role of optimism in liberal Quakerism. There were three interlinked strands to Quaker optimism: firstly, the underlying belief that there was something fundamentally good and divine in every human, represented by the doctrine of the Inner Light; secondly, the belief in the inevitability of progress, which led them to have confidence in the glorious future of this new type of Quakerism;²⁸ thirdly, the glorification of early Quakerism as a Prophetic society, combined with the other two forms of optimism, led liberal Quakers to believe that the Religious Society of Friends might be able to lead ‘in the struggle to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth.’²⁹ All this combined to cause what Phillips has described as ‘a growing call for the Society of Friends to take its place as *the* Christian community which alone could reconcile faith with modernity.’³⁰

²⁸ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p.163

²⁹ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p.p.9-10

³⁰ Brian Phillips, *Friendly Patriotism: British Quakerism and the Imperial Nation, 1890-1910* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge University), p.28

However, there were also several characteristics of Quaker liberalism which were distinctive to the Religious Society of Friends. Kennedy identifies two main distinctive characteristics of liberal Quakerism additional to normative Liberal Christianity: firstly, a renewed emphasis on the Inward Light; secondly, the use of modern Biblical criticism; thirdly, a call for the renewal of unprogrammed ministry.³¹ Of these, the first and third characteristics are clearly unique to the Religious Society of Friends and even the second was interpreted and enacted in a way which was distinctively Quaker as the following quote demonstrates:

During the nineteenth century, [liberal Quakers] said, the Society of Friends had acquired the ponderous baggage of protestant Evangelicalism which, together with the revelations of modern science and biblical criticism, had become a millstone threatening to drag Quakerism down into a welter of undistinguished, indistinguishable nonconformist sects. But they were convinced that the strangling bonds of Biblical literalism could be loosened through the recovery and repossession of the early and unique sources of Quaker inspiration, especially the doctrine of the Inward Light which emphasised the indwelling spirit of God in each human soul.³²

The Inward Light is the central distinctive doctrine of the Religious Society of Friends: Thomas Hamm has demonstrated that every faction in nineteenth-century Quakerism in some way defined itself in relation to it.³³ It has been known by various different names: the original full form was the ‘Inward Light of Christ’, around the start of the [twentieth] century it became more usual to speak of the ‘Inner Light’ or, rarely, the even more modern formulation, ‘that of God’ in every

³¹ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p.p.164-5

³² Kennedy, ‘History and Quaker Renaissance: The Vision of John Wilhelm Rowntree’, p.p. 35-56 in *The Journal of the Friends Historical Society* (Vol.55, No.2, 1984), p.p.40-41

³³ Thomas D. Hamm, ‘The Problem of the Inner Light in Nineteenth-Century Quakerism’, p.p. 101-117 in Michael Birke and John W. Newman (eds.), *The Lamb's War: Quaker Essays to Honour Hugh Barbour* (Richmond, IN: Earlham College Press, 1992)

person. These different names reflect different theological viewpoints.³⁴ For conservatives, salvation would have been dependent on obedience to God as revealed through the Inward Light. For Liberal Quakers of this period, the Inner Light was frequently equated with the conscience, although earlier Quakers would have insisted that these referents differed.³⁵

The emphasis on a renewal of unprogrammed ministry was also a distinctively Quaker aspect of liberal Quakerism. With only a few exceptions,³⁶ liberal Quakers believed that ‘the future of Quakerism depended on maintaining its tradition of eschewing hireling ministers while developing a ministry that was dynamic and modern as well as ‘free’.’³⁷ Many Quakers were drawn to Quakerism out of a sense of frustration with the condition of ministry in their local meetings. Kennedy characterises their frustration thus:

Why did the Quaker ideal of a free, open, and spontaneous meeting for worship so often result in empty silence or in spoken words so narrowly conceived as to leave most of the audience wishing that silence had prevailed.³⁸

From the liberal perspective, meetings which wished to remain unprogrammed needed to do more than simply reject the programmed option, they needed to positively commit to the education of ministers in order to improve the quality of

³⁴ Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p.p.132-133

³⁵ Hamm, ‘The Problem of the Inner Light’

³⁶ For example, Elbert Russell was an American Friend, affiliated with the liberal movement, who served Quakers as a pastor: Thomas D. Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), p.39

³⁷ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p.165

³⁸ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p.175

the ministry.³⁹ Liberal Quakers therefore advocated several educational initiatives in order to improve the quality of unprogrammed worship.

The stereotype of this period of Quaker history is that the liberal Quakers were in opposition to the evangelical Quakers and that the liberals eclipsed evangelicals swiftly and completely.⁴⁰ However, the historical picture is actually far more complicated. Dorrien describes liberal theology as being the child of two heritages:

From its Enlightenment-modernist heritage it has upheld the authority of modern knowledge, emphasised the continuity between reason and revelation, championed the values of tolerance, humanistic individualism, and democracy, and, for the most part, distrusted metaphysical claims. From its evangelical heritage it has affirmed the authority of Christian experience, upheld the divinity and sovereignty of Christ, preached the need for personal salvation, and emphasised the importance of Christian missions.⁴¹

This tendency is equally observable within the Religious Society of Friends: any given individual may include elements of liberal, evangelical or modernist in ways that can defy categorization. Davie emphasized that liberal Quakerism has never been theologically uniform⁴² and that liberal Quakerism in the early twentieth century was in fact acceptable to many evangelical Quakers.⁴³ Davie explains this by drawing attention to the fact that, in this period, liberal Quakerism placed Christ firmly in the centre of its theology. Liberal Quakers were attempting to find

³⁹ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p.166

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Isichei, *Victorian Quakers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970) p.39

⁴¹ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.p.10-11

⁴² Martin Davie, *British Quaker Theology Since 1895* (Lewiston; Queenston; Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), p.137

⁴³ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, p.92

new ways to understand and relate to Christ and the Bible, but devotion to Christ remained at the heart of liberal Quakerism just as it had been for evangelical Quakerism.⁴⁴

Nevertheless Liberal Quakerism can be seen as a discrete theology and one that became dominant in several yearly meetings due to the work of those such as Jones and Braithwaite. In some ways liberal Quakerism during this period can be characterised as a movement into wider society as Quakerism attempted to embrace modern thought such as Darwinian science and biblical criticism. In other ways, such as its rejection of militarism, liberal Quakerism was profoundly counter-cultural.⁴⁵ It tended to favour mystical experience over doctrinal obedience and reaffirmed Quaker principles such as the belief in the Inward Light and the rejection of a formal, paid ministry.

Outline of Dissertation

In the remainder of this chapter I consider the wider significance of the research undertaken in this dissertation, the methodology used and conduct a review of the existing literature relevant to this study

⁴⁴ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, p.92

⁴⁵ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p.424

Chapter Two considers the original vision held by Rowntree for writing and publishing Quaker history. I argue that Rowntree's historical study can be understood primarily through the lens of his concern for the revitalisation of Quaker worship. It is obvious that he saw his research not simply as a scholarly endeavour, but as a means to achieve this vision and as study material integral to concurrent educational initiatives.

Chapter Three describes the prevalent debate about the Rowntree History Series and argues that this debate ignores one of its most interesting aspects, the one on which I focus: namely, its role in the Quaker history movement and its significance in the formation of liberal Quaker identity.

Chapter Four considers the emphases of the two volumes written by Braithwaite for the Rowntree History Series. Although he has generally been treated in a more kindly way by later reviewers than has Jones, I argue that there are still several ways in which Braithwaite's liberal Quaker bias is observable.

Chapter Five focuses on the emphases of two of Jones' volumes for the Rowntree History Series. In this I argue that there are several more interesting evidences of bias than have usually been mentioned by reviewers, such as his emphasis on the importance of education or the value of denominational unity.

Chapter Six argues that since the emphases described in the previous two chapters were closely linked to the fundamental tenets of liberal Quaker faith, the Rowntree History Series is inextricably linked with the liberal Quaker identity emerging during the period. I compare my findings with the Ritschlian School of History during the early twentieth century as well as with Methodist use of history later in the twentieth century in order to demonstrate the ways in which the Rowntree History Series' role in identity formation was unique to the liberal Quakerism of the period.

Chapter Seven, the Conclusion, draws together all the threads presented in this dissertation in order to present my arguments that the Rowntree History Series:

- Can be primarily understood as a resource for education and a preparation for ministry.
- Was presented so as to make it easier for the authors to affirm Quaker tradition while adapting the theology of their immediate predecessors.
- Demonstrates that those liberal Quakers interested in history genuinely believed that a truly accurate historical study was the only way to clear away the 'distortions' of quietism and evangelical revival and 'recapture' what was unique to Quakerism.
- Was used to provide a link between contemporary liberal theology and the beliefs and practices of early Friends.
- Demonstrates the liberal optimism of its authors that the emergence of historical facts would be beneficial to the Religious Society of Friends.

Significance of this Research

At the same time that the Rowntree History Series was being produced, there was also an impressive increase in the number of historical books and articles published, as well as a noticeable shift in content from Quaker hagiography to Quaker history. Yet, study of the way in which this Quaker history was conducted has been noticeably lacking. *The Creation of Quaker Theory*⁴⁶, a compilation of contemporary research, addresses this issue somewhat by recognising that most scholarship in Quaker Studies is completed by Quakers. The issue of ‘insider’ scholarship is especially relevant in a non-creedal denomination such as the Religious Society of Friends, as it potentially has even greater influence on theological identity.⁴⁷

The early twentieth century was a significant period in Quaker history due to the substantial theological developments which occurred at that time. Despite this, it is a remarkably under-researched period, as we see in the literature review below. The study of the growth of interest in Quaker history is particularly significant for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the scholarship which addresses Quakerism in the early twentieth century frequently overlooks this interest in denominational history. Secondly, subsequent study of Quaker history developed

⁴⁶ Pink Dandelion (ed), *The Creation of Quaker Theory* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004)

⁴⁷ This is considered in greater detail in Chapter Six

from the Rowntree Historical Series. Thirdly, although it is generally recognised that Braithwaite and Jones did allow their liberal theology to influence their scholarship,⁴⁸ there has been remarkably little research into the precise form of this influence.

Methodology

I focus on the role of the Rowntree History Series in the transformation of Quakerism during the period 1895-1925. My primary method is the careful reading of the writings of John Wilhelm Rowntree⁴⁹, William Charles Braithwaite and Rufus Jones⁵⁰ in order to demonstrate the view of Quaker history which they held. These three Quakers are most relevant to this study because they were the most obviously involved with writing Quaker history during this period. Rowntree envisioned and initiated the Quaker history movement and, after his death, Jones and Braithwaite wrote and published their historical studies as a series dedicated to Rowntree.⁵¹ This dissertation considers either their published works, in particular the Rowntree History Series itself, or personal correspondence.⁵² Opinions or

⁴⁸ Pink Dandelion, 'Introduction' p.p.1-8 in Dandelion (ed), *The Creation of Quaker Theory*, p.3; Kennedy, 'History and Quaker Renaissance' in *JFHS*, p.51

⁴⁹ Hereafter John Wilhelm Rowntree will simply be referred to as Rowntree. There will also be several other Rowntrees referred to in this dissertation; to avoid confusion, when any other Rowntree is mentioned either a first name or initials will be included.

⁵⁰ These three individuals will be introduced in greater detail in Chapter Two.

⁵¹ Dedications to Rowntree are printed in the introduction or preface of all volumes in the Rowntree History Series.

⁵² Personal correspondence and primary evidence comes from the Rufus Jones Collection (RMJP) at Haverford College, Pennsylvania and relevant archives in Library of the Society of Friends (LSF) in London. I spent one month (May 2008) in Philadelphia using the Quaker Archives at Haverford College and have made several trips to London to use the materials at Friends House.

interpretations about early Quakers expressed by these writers are analysed in relation to liberal Quaker theology. I have found a clear link between these historians' theology and their interpretation of Quaker history.

However, my methodology changes when I assess the impact of the Rowntree History Series in Quaker identity formation. In Chapter Three I contrast my approach with that of other academics and in Chapter Six I present a detailed study of the role of history in the process of Quaker identity formation. In these chapters, I analyse primary evidence in the light of theories of denominational identity formation.

Literature Review

There are several important challenges when researching the Quakerism of 1895-1925. Firstly, the books about Christianity during that period say little that is directly relevant to Quaker history.⁵³ Although it is useful to understand the cultural influences which affected Quakerism, it is often difficult to make the connection between cultural trends and changes in Quaker thought.

⁵³ Some books I have consulted for information on the relevant period include: Hastings, Mason, Pyper, Lawrie and Bennett (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*; Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology*; Aubrey, 'What is Modernism?'; C. Delisle Burns, 'The Mysticism of a Modernist' pp.316-325 in *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol.6, No.3 (July 1913)

Secondly, there are few scholars who have written specifically about that period of Quaker history. Thomas Kennedy, Thomas Hamm, Elizabeth Isichei, Roger Wilson, Martin Davie and Brian Phillips all conducted historical research into approximately that period, but even Kennedy, who researches furthest into the twentieth century, ends with the First World War. There is virtually nothing written about Quakers in the last few years of my study or about Quaker attitudes towards history during this time.

Of the historians named above, Kennedy is the most useful because he covers the most relevant period, writes the most extensively and acknowledges the importance of Quaker history to liberal Quakerism. Kennedy's book, *British Quakerism*, is probably the most authoritative work on this period. He has also written several articles, the most relevant of which to my research is 'History and the Quaker Renaissance'.⁵⁴

Regarding the relevance of history to liberal Quakerism, Kennedy writes that Rowntree and Jones were convinced that Quakers' lack of knowledge about their own history represented one of the most serious threats to the survival of the Religious Society of Friends as a vital religious community.⁵⁵ Rowntree and Jones wanted to use history to demonstrate to both insiders and outsiders the relevance

⁵⁴ Kennedy, 'History and Quaker Renaissance' in *JFHS*

⁵⁵ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p.198; Kennedy, 'History and Quaker Renaissance' in *JFHS*, p.p.43-44

and modernity of the Quaker message.⁵⁶ This vision spread and nearly every influential participant in the liberal Quaker movement was also a member of the Friends' Historical Society when it was established in 1903. Kennedy argues that this emphasis on denominational history became one of the defining characteristics of liberal Quakerism.⁵⁷ This is obviously directly relevant to my study; however, Kennedy never adequately explains the theological reason why history took on such importance for liberal Quakers⁵⁸ and this is where my work differs from his. Even in 'History and the Quaker Renaissance' Kennedy is primarily interested in considering the influence of Rowntree himself rather than focussing on history *per se*.

Thomas Hamm's work, *The Transformation of American Quakerism*, is helpful for the information it provides about Jones and his American context.⁵⁹ In particular, Hamm provides information about developments in the U.S.A. which occurred at the Quaker colleges which are comparable to the developments in Britain described by Kennedy. Elsewhere, Hamm looks at the nineteenth century evangelical Quaker historian, Robert Barclay of Reigate.⁶⁰ Hamm claims that later liberal Quaker historians used Barclay as a foundation for their studies. My

⁵⁶ Kennedy, 'History and Quaker Renaissance' in *JFHS*, p.38

⁵⁷ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p.200

⁵⁸ Although Kennedy does recognize that figures such as the liberal J.W. Rowntree and the evangelical J.B. Braithwaite did have very different theological understandings of human nature (Kennedy, 'History and Quaker Renaissance' in *JFHS*, p.45), he never adequately develops this idea.

⁵⁹ Hamm, *Transformation of American Quakerism*, esp. p.p.147-150

⁶⁰ Thomas D. Hamm, 'George Fox and the Politics of Late Nineteenth-century Quaker Historiography' p.p.11-18 in Pink Dandelion (ed), *The Creation of Quaker Theory*

research tends to agree with Hamm's interpretation, but it is not an area of emphasis for this dissertation.

Isichei's book is a detailed consideration of Victorian Quakerism; however, it is less helpful than either Kennedy's or Hamm's work because it covers a period of history preceding my parameters. There are also two key aspects of her evaluation of Quakerism in the latter part of the nineteenth century with which I disagree. For example, in terms of her attitudes towards the emergence of liberal Quakerism, Isichei claims that liberal Quaker theology spread rapidly and completely.⁶¹ I disagree with Isichei in this respect since I conclude that there were still a number of Quaker evangelicals when the Rowntree History Series was being published.⁶² I also disagree with Isichei's claim that there were many similarities between Quaker liberals and earlier Quaker quietists.⁶³ Isichei misinterprets the fundamental difference between these two groups which centres on their differing understandings of the 'self'.⁶⁴

Isichei's work enhances my understanding of the changes that Quakers experienced at the turn of the century and this is relevant to my exploration of denominational identity formation. Whereas Quaker quietists in the nineteenth century tended to disparage education as 'worldly' and unhelpful to salvation,

⁶¹ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p.39

⁶² See especially, Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p.163, footnote 18

⁶³ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p.32

⁶⁴ The optimism of liberal Quakers about the essentials of human nature was a fundamental aspect of their theology and is a theme which will reoccur in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

Quaker liberals saw education as vital to an intelligent evaluation of faith.⁶⁵ This dramatic shift is directly relevant to Quaker attitudes towards history.

In 'Friendly Patriotism' Brian Phillips' parameters are 1890-1910, slightly later than Isichei, and slightly earlier than mine. Phillips considers Quaker attitudes towards and interactions with the British state, which is helpful to my understanding of the social and political context. He is specifically interested in the way in which Quakers straddled multiple identities;⁶⁶ this is therefore, relevant to my study of the construction of liberal Quaker identity. Phillips' work makes clear that liberal Quakerism, with its confidence bordering on smugness, did represent a substantial shift in ideas of the 'self'.⁶⁷ One of the few points of theological agreement between quietist and evangelical Quakers had been their emphasis on the fallen and sinful nature of humanity. In contrast, liberals emphasised that there was something divine within humanity and that this could be relied on to provide guidance on how to live one's life. This sometimes led to a certainty about their religious mission which, with hindsight, reads as hubris. Understanding this theological change in ideas of human nature is essential because I argue that without this understanding the historical studies themselves cannot be adequately analysed.

⁶⁵ Kennedy, 'History and Quaker Renaissance' in *JFHS*, p. 41

⁶⁶ Phillips, *Friendly Patriotism*, p.6

⁶⁷ Phillips, *Friendly Patriotism*, p.p.43-4

See also Brian Phillips, 'Apocalypse Without Tears: Hubris and Folly Among late Victorian and Edwardian British Friends' p.p.57-76 in *Pink Dandelion*, Douglas Gwyn, Rachel Muers, Brian Phillips and Richard E. Sturm (eds), *Towards Tragedy/Reclaiming Hope: Literature, Theology and Sociology in Conversation* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004)

The first half of Martin Davie's book, *British Quaker Theology Since 1895*, is helpful in understanding the theological changes represented by liberal Quakerism.⁶⁸ His delineation of the links between liberal Quakers and liberal theologians of other denominations elucidates the links between Quakers and the wider religious culture.⁶⁹ He also writes about the connection between history and liberal Quaker theology:

The 'Rowntree' history operates on two levels. ... In the first part it was argued that Quakerism was not part of Protestant orthodoxy, but part of an alternative 'mystical' and 'spiritual' form of religion. In the second part it was argued that the early Quaker experience of God still carried conviction, but it needed to be reinterpreted in contemporary terms.⁷⁰

Davie's analysis clearly recognizes that theology affected the content of the Rowntree History Series. However, he overlooks both the shift in understanding of human nature which made an intellectual approach to religion important to liberal Quakers, as well as the reasons why history in particular was chosen as important to identity formation.

⁶⁸ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, especially p.p.67-73

⁶⁹ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, p.p.58-9

⁷⁰ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, p.p.91-2

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I outlined key arguments, discussed methodology and sources, and demonstrated the originality of my research by conducting a review of literature relevant to this study.

CHAPTER TWO – THE BENEFIT OF HISTORY

That day ... saw a ‘beginning’ of love that was to be ‘of perpetual worth’ and that was to have its goal on ‘the happy hill,’ the birth of an unending friendship between John Wilhelm Rowntree and myself. We spent most of that Sunday finding our intellectual and spiritual contacts, reviewing to one another our past lives and forecasting possible plans for the future. ... It was a day of continual thrills – my first experience on a high snow mountain – but greater than the joy of climbing or of seeing sunrise on the Jungfrau or of plunging down a mountain top into space, was my highborn joy as I went on discovering the remarkable character and quality of the new friend who was walking by my side. We both knew before the day was over that we were to be comrades for the rest of life.¹

This momentous meeting between Jones and Rowntree occurred in 1897; it was an event which changed the future of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain and the U.S.A.² In this chapter I introduce Rowntree and Jones, then describe and analyse the vision of history as held initially by Rowntree and later by various influential Quakers as the writing of the Rowntree History Series progressed.

An Influential Friendship

At the time of his meeting with Jones, Rowntree had already emerged as a leading proponent of liberal Quakerism within London Yearly Meeting. Born in

¹ Rufus Jones, *The Trail of Life in College* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p.p.191-2

² Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p.159

1868, he was not initially a promising prophetic figure.³ From childhood he had grown increasingly deaf and in young adulthood he contracted an eye disease which led to the gradual deterioration of his sight. Rowntree had gone through a period of spiritual doubt and despondency when he was young in which he was close to resigning his membership from the Religious Society of Friends.⁴ Although he gradually resolved his own spiritual disquiet, he did not make peace with the existing conditions of Quakerism⁵ and it was from this that his motivation developed to bring about change within the Religious Society of Friends. It was only after he left school and began work in his father's factory that he began to show any aptitude in leadership, a transformation which neither biographer accounts for.⁶ In 1892, Rowntree gave a very powerful ministry at London Yearly Meeting in which he pleaded for greater understanding of the spiritual struggles of young Friends who were attempting to reconcile their Quakerism with modern life. This ministry propelled him into the public arena of Quakerism and he became increasingly active within the Religious Society of Friends. In 1895, he was invited as a key speaker at the Manchester Conference on the subject of 'Has Quakerism a Message to the World Today?'⁷ After the Conference, Rowntree was involved with almost all of the important developments which mark the transformation of Quakerism during that period. Bronner describes him as the

³ Kennedy, 'History and the Quaker Renaissance' in *JFHS*, p.39

⁴ Joshua Rowntree (ed), *Essays and Addresses*, p.p. xii-xiii

⁵ Kennedy, 'History and the Quaker Renaissance' in *JFHS*, p.p.39-40

⁶ Kennedy, 'History and the Quaker Renaissance' in *JFHS*, p.39

⁷ Report of the Proceedings of the Conference of Members of the Society of Friends, Held, By Direction of the Yearly Meeting, in Manchester from the Eleventh to the Fifteenth of the Eleventh Month, 1895, p.p.75-82

catalyst of the transformation itself⁸ and Kennedy describes him as the ‘prophet and champion’ of Seekers among late-Victorian Quakers, just as George Fox had been for the Seekers of the seventeenth century.⁹

Jones has been described by Hugh Doncaster as making ‘the greatest contribution to the life and thought of Friends this [the twentieth] century.’¹⁰ At the end of the nineteenth century Jones was already reasonably well known among American Quakers. Jones was born in 1863 in the small town of South China, Maine.¹¹ Hungry for an education beyond the level of most of his Quaker family, Jones was educated first at Providence Friends School in Rhode Island¹² and then at Haverford College in Pennsylvania.¹³ Majoring in philosophy, it was at Haverford that he discovered what would become a life-long interest in the study of mysticism.¹⁴ After graduation, Jones taught at Oakwood Seminary, a Quaker boarding school in New York State¹⁵ until 1893 when he was offered a combined position editing *Friends Review* and teaching philosophy at Haverford.¹⁶ In 1894 the *Friends Review* was combined with *The Christian Worker* to form the *American Friend* under the general editorship of Jones.¹⁷ This meant that, by the

⁸ Edwin B. Bronner, *‘The Other Branch’: London Yearly Meeting and the Hicksites, 1827-1912* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1975), p.39

⁹ Kennedy, ‘History and the Quaker Renaissance’ in *JFHS*, p.38

¹⁰ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, p.103

¹¹ Elizabeth Gray Vining, *Friend of Life: The Biography of Rufus M. Jones*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1959), p.15

¹² Vining, *Friend of Life*, p.30

¹³ Vining, *Friend of Life*, p.33

¹⁴ Vining, *Friend of Life*, p.37; Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.365

¹⁵ Vining, *Friend of Life*, p.41

¹⁶ Vining, *Friend of Life*, p.62

¹⁷ Hamm, *Transformation of American Quakerism*, p.p.147-148

time of his meeting with Rowntree, Jones held authoritative positions as well as an accepted platform for the transmission of his increasingly liberal ideas. Although many now disagree with his theories, Jones was an incredibly influential figure in the first half of the twentieth century.

After the initial meeting between Jones and Rowntree, they kept in close contact and saw each other on average twice a year, mostly in the course of Rowntree's visits to America to visit an eye-specialist. From the beginning, Jones and Rowntree discussed the potential writing of a history of Quakerism. They believed that Rowntree's interest in Quaker history and Jones' interest in mysticism were a providential combination and it was early on agreed that Jones would write an introductory volume on the origins of Quakerism in continental medieval mysticism.¹⁸

A Vision of a Quaker History

Rowntree held the initial vision of the history and so in this chapter it is his vision of history that is analysed. Rowntree's vision was closely connected with his first and central concern about the condition of the free ministry¹⁹ among

¹⁸ Jones, *Trail of Life in College*, p.p.195-196

¹⁹ Free ministry was Rowntree's term for non-pastoral Quaker ministry and referred to the general quality of unprogrammed Quaker worship.

Quakers. In analysing the legacy of Rowntree, Harold Morland²⁰ wrote, ‘We have over and over again the plea for more definite and systematic religious study, so that from a better equipped membership may spring up a more searching ministry.’²¹ In 1899 Rowntree wrote to Jones of a forthcoming visit to the U.S.A. in which he hoped to visit Quaker colleges and both programmed and unprogrammed²² meetings in order to assess the condition of ministry among American Quakers:

The position of our Quaker Ministry in England is very serious. Friends have less and less leisure as time goes on. The demands on

²⁰ Harold Morland (1869-1939) was a school friend of Rowntree’s and an active Quaker, he was clerk of London Yearly Meeting between 1928 and 1933.: ‘Harold J. Morland’ p.p.849-851 in *The Friend* (October 20, 1939)

²¹ Harold J. Morland, *After seven years: An Appreciation of the Work of John Wilhelm Rowntree*, (no publication details, pamphlet, reprinted from *Friends Quarterly Enquirer*, Oct 1912) p.2

²² At the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a single unified, transatlantic Quaker community, but the nineteenth century witnessed the fragmentation of this unity. The first major separation was the Hicksite/Orthodox separation of 1827 which began in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. The Hicksites were characterised as giving the authority of the Inward Light precedence over Scripture while the Orthodox held to the authority of Scripture; although there is a debate about the extent to which the separation was truly theological. London Yearly Meeting refused correspondence with Hicksite Meetings, first in Philadelphia and then in other American Yearly Meetings which separated in the following years. Although Quakers had generally believed that true inspiration could not contradict itself, and that the Bible should therefore be used to test the promptings of the Inward Light, Orthodox fear of being identified with Hicksism led them to increasingly stress the value of the Bible. The decades after the various regional Hicksite Separations brought with them further schisms within some American Yearly Meetings which split into Wilburite and Gurneyite factions; with the Gurneyites representing the more evangelical division. New England Yearly Meeting, in 1845, was the first Yearly Meeting to experience this particular schism. When London Yearly Meeting was faced with the decision of which faction to acknowledge, they chose the Gurneyite. Although London Yearly Meeting had remained undivided it was now only in communication with Gurneyite Meetings and was therefore increasingly open to evangelical influences from the U.S.A.: Dandelion, *Introduction*, p.p.80-88; Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p.22

As a result of these separations, by the end of the nineteenth century there were both unprogrammed and programmed meetings. Historically, Quakers had worshipped in an unprogrammed style, gathering together to wait in silence until someone was led to minister. However, in America in the 1870s a revival movement brought with it two changes which were of especial importance. Firstly, there were changes in the mode of worship. For the revivalists, silent waiting was increasingly seen as unnecessary since the Holy Spirit was always present among the sanctified. This led to a profound change in the nature of meetings for worship. Equally important was a shift in power from elders to ministers which occurred throughout the decade. The combination of these two changes led to the gradual emergence of the idea of a Quaker clergy with distinctive offices and privileges: Hamm, *Transformation of American Quakerism*, p.p.85-92

the ministry as education increases become more exacting, and, speaking broadly, it is not too much to say that our Quaker Ministry fails to address itself to modern needs and conditions. The study of the problem in England shows that is not wholly a spiritual problem, but largely a practical question to be solved by the application of common sense. In saying this, I recognise of course that the first condition is spiritual power, I merely mean that, granted live steam, you want the most economical and powerful engine for the steam to work.²³

The results of his American visit combined with observations of British Quakers led Rowntree to conclude that the poor condition of ministry among Quakers would greatly benefit from a deeper religious training among its members. As Joseph Rowntree²⁴ reminded Jones, the study of history was only one of many ways in which Rowntree hoped to enliven Quaker ministry.²⁵ Although I focus on Rowntree's vision for the Quaker history, it remains essential to keep in mind the context of Rowntree's dedication to Quaker ministry in general as well as to concurrent related educational initiatives.

The importance of this dual nature of Rowntree's vision can be seen clearly in the quotation below in which Rowntree discusses his idea for an educational settlement for the training of ministers, a project which eventually became manifest as Woodbrooke.

²³ J. W. Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 11 January 1899, box 3, Rufus M. Jones Papers (hereafter RMJP), Haverford, PA.

²⁴ J. W. Rowntree's father

²⁵ He wrote: 'You say that John 'dedicated his life to the task of writing the History of Quakerism.' Was it not rather that he dedicated his life to the widening and building up of the Quaker fellowship, and was not the writing of the history one of the agencies he had in view for this end?': Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 1 January 1909, microfilm 80, Library of the Society of Friends, London (hereafter LSF)

Ordinarily such a Settlement would be the outcome of a religious movement, just as for instance (though please don't press the analogy!!) the monasteries were. In a sense that is true in this case. I believe the settlement is a deep religious concern laid upon those who are concerned in it - - a real call. But in the general sense, it is true that we are seeking to provoke a spiritual revival by means of a settlement rather than that the settlement is founded as a result of a religious revival.

This obviously involves two things:

1. If we are not to be artificial it means we must not move too fast; we must not hang the settlement in the air. We must begin quietly and let it grow with the growing sentiment of the Society.
2. But it also means that we must take all the steps we can to develop that sentiment.

We are really asking Friends to take a deeper view of their responsibility for the Ministry, using that term in its widest sense. We have therefore to provoke a spirit of self-sacrifice. It is however important that the movement for deepening the sense of responsibility should coincide with the provision of a practical outlet for its expression. Hence settlement and revival must go together - - and this is the consummation that we seek to effect.²⁶

Since Quaker history was one of the subjects which Rowntree envisioned would be taught in this settlement, this quotation is pertinent to an understanding of Rowntree's vision of history. He hoped that denominational history would also operate in this dual fashion to encourage a Quaker 'revival' or, in other words, a renewed sense of Quaker identity.

It is, therefore, clear that Rowntree believed that knowledge of history could provoke a stronger sense of Quaker identity, but it is not yet clear precisely how he believed this would happen. Kennedy describes Rowntree's concern for the study of denominational history in the following way:

²⁶ J. W. Rowntree to Rufus Jones, May 1902, box 3, RMJP

Rowntree was convinced that the prevailing lack of solid historical knowledge, especially among young Friends, represented one of the gravest dangers to survival of the Society. He perceived that the rising generation of Quakers had, under the influence of modern thought, broken more completely with the ideas and attitudes of their fathers and grandfathers than any previous body of Friends. But if they rejected the evangelical tradition, the only one they had been taught, what was there left in Quakerism, seemingly sunk into ‘a torpor of undeveloped intellectual power’ to hold their allegiance? There was, Rowntree said, the glorious past – history – which he once described as the voice of God, many tongued.²⁷

Therefore, the study of Quaker history was largely to serve as a means of fostering denominational allegiance. Yet, the specific content to be studied was equally important. Morland wrote, ‘Principles may be usefully studied in the abstract, but they make their strongest appeal to enthusiasm when their concrete results are observed in the lives of those who allowed them full play.’²⁸ In addition to making essential Quaker principles and ideals appealing and accessible, Rowntree was clear that the object of his study was ‘mainly to present (as far as the teaching of history affords material) a guide to the true path of advance for the Quaker church.’²⁹

The aim of conveying the message of the past so that it might become accessible and relevant to the present is clearly visible when one examines

²⁷ Kennedy, ‘History and the Quaker Renaissance’ in *JFHS*, p.44

²⁸ Morland, *After Seven Years*, p.5

²⁹ J. W. Rowntree to Rufus Jones etc, form letter request for assistance, 15 October 1903, box 7, RMJP

See also: ‘if possible to throw light by inference from the historical facts upon the unsolved problem of the free Ministry.’: J. W. Rowntree to Norman Penney, July 3, 1903, box 7, RMJP; ‘These three lines of study are bent towards one common object, namely to focus clearly and to set forth the meaning and message of Quakerism for the present day.’: J. W. Rowntree to Fielden Thorp, 20 January 1904, box 8, RMJP

Rowntree's earliest plans for the historical content. Correspondence with Norman Penney³⁰ in 1903 demonstrates that initially Rowntree intended his study to include only American Quakerism beginning with the Hicksite separation, the reason for this being that 'it is in America that movements and tendencies incipient ... in England have found full expression.'³¹ Rowntree appears to have originally believed that the details of the separations were those it was most important to understand in order for Quakerism to move forward.

However, Rowntree was equally clear that the message which was to be conveyed to the present still needed to be grounded in accurate historical fact.³² The strength of the commitment to historical accuracy differentiated the Rowntree History Series from preceding 'historical' material.³³ I suggest that this emphasis, in addition to being grounded in the intellectual atmosphere of the time, also had a theological significance. Historical accuracy was highly important to Quaker

³⁰ Norman Penney was librarian at Friends House at that time.

³¹ J. W. Rowntree to Norman Penney, 3 July 1903, TEMP MSS 10/33, LSF

³² J. W. Rowntree to William Tallack, 28 October, 1903, box 7, RMJP

J. W. Rowntree to Fielden Thorp, 20 January, 1904, box 8, RMJP

³³ In his preface Braithwaite mentioned the following precursors to his history: William Sewel, *History of the Rise, Increase, and Progress of the Christian People called Quakers* (in Dutch 1717, in English 1722); Gerard Croese, *Historia Quakeriana* (in Latin 1695, in English 1696); John Gough, *History*, (1789-90); T. Edmund Harvey, *The Rise of the Quakers* (1905); and Elizabeth Braithwaite Emmot, *The Story of Quakerism* (1908). Braithwaite claimed, with some justification, that his history was qualitatively different from the earliest histories and much wider in scope than the more recently published ones. It is also worth noting that both Harvey and Emmot were involved with the research for the Rowntree History Series and that their histories were begun after the idea of the Rowntree History Series had been conceived: Braithwaite, Preface, pp.v-vii in Braithwaite, *Beginnings*

A noticeable absence from Braithwaite's list of previous histories is Barclay's *The Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth* (1876). This was the most significant history prior to the Liberal period of Quakerism and tended to recast early Quakerism in a very evangelical light. For further information see: Hamm, 'George Fox and the Politics of Late Nineteenth-Century Quaker Historiography' p.p. 11-18 in Dandelion (ed), *The Creation of Quaker Theory*.

liberals, such as Rowntree, because they interpreted scientific methodology as a search for Truth that was guided by God. Of course, they wanted to be respected in the wider academic establishment, but even more important to them was their belief that it was only by examining the past in a way that was free from prejudice that they would find an inspired way forward.

This attitude can be contrasted with the fears of J. Bevan Braithwaite.³⁴ Isichei describes how J. Bevan Braithwaite viewed the formation of the Friends' Historical Society with great anxiety for the trouble it might cause.³⁵ Kennedy observes that, 'This incident reflects not just differing views about the value of historical investigations but a radically different way of looking at the world and the Divine Plan for it.'³⁶ J.B. Braithwaite appears to have feared that the historical research would detract from an emphasis on the Bible and that it was too self-centred rather than God-centred. For him, mankind was lost and helpless without strict adherence to the authority of the Bible. However, for the members of the Friends Historical Society each individual was an agent of God who could be guided by the authority of the Inner Light. They believed that this would be demonstrated in their historical research as much as in any other aspect of their life.

³⁴ W.C. Braithwaite's father. Joseph Bevan Braithwaite came from an evangelical Quaker family. Most of his siblings left the Society because they found it insufficiently evangelical. Braithwaite himself came close to doing so in the 1830s. However, he chose to remain and became one of the most important figures in the growth of evangelicalism in London Yearly Meeting during the nineteenth century.

³⁵ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p.14.

³⁶ Kennedy, 'History and the Quaker Renaissance' in *JFHS*, p.45

The Unfolding Reality of the Rowntree History Series

In 1905, on one of his journeys across the Atlantic, Rowntree contracted pneumonia and died within a few days of his arrival in the U.S.A. Jones was with his friend at the time and wrote that he felt Rowntree's vision of a Quaker history pass into him.³⁷ On 4 and 5 September that year there was a gathering in Rowntree's home in York of individuals concerned about the future of the Quaker history which included Rufus Jones, Joseph Rowntree,³⁸ B. Seebohm Rowntree,³⁹ Arnold S. Rowntree,⁴⁰ Joshua Rowntree,⁴¹ W.C. Braithwaite, T. Edmund Harvey,⁴² and A. Neave Brayshaw.⁴³ They met to discuss how best to continue Rowntree's history project.⁴⁴ Jones and Rowntree had been corresponding for years about the project and so British Friends were predisposed to look to Jones for guidance.⁴⁵

³⁷ Jones, *Trail of Life in College*, p.198

³⁸ J.W. Rowntree's father. Founder of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. Author of *Pauperism in England and Wales* (1865) and *The Temperance problem and Social Reform* (1900).

³⁹ J.W. Rowntree's brother. A well-known researcher of various aspects of poverty and author of several books, most notably *Poverty, A Study of Town Life* (1901).

⁴⁰ J.W. Rowntree's cousin, son of J.S. Rowntree. Elected Liberal MP for York in 1910.

⁴¹ J.W. Rowntree's cousin. Elected Liberal MP for Scarborough in 1886. Editor of *The Friend* 1872-1875. Author of *Social Service: its place in the Society of Friends* (1913).

⁴² Prominent Liberal Quaker. Author of *The rise of the Quakers* (1905), *Along the road of Prayer* (1929) and *Authority and Freedom in the Experience of the Quakers* (1935)

⁴³ Prominent Liberal Quaker. Particularly involved with the development of the Young Friends movement throughout the liberal period and supporter of conscientious objectors during the First World War. Author of *Friends and the Inner Light* (1915), *The Quakers – their story and message* (1921) and *The Personality of George Fox* (1933)

⁴⁴ A History of the Development of Quakerism, Microfilm 80, LSF; Rufus Jones to Elizabeth Jones (wife), 3 September 1905, box 52, RMJP

⁴⁵ Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 29 March 1905, box 9, RMJP

The Rowntree History Series developed from such discussions and was a major feat of organisation. I have found records of subsequent meetings in 1907⁴⁶, 1910⁴⁷ and 1913⁴⁸ and it is likely that there were others. Although Jones and Braithwaite became the primary authors, an impressive number of individuals contributed to the research and in all likelihood at least some of the writing. The many who helped included: Isaac Sharpless, Amelia Gummere,⁴⁹ B. Seebohm Rowntree, Arnold Rowntree, Joshua Rowntree, T. Edmund Harvey⁵⁰, A. Neave Brayshaw,⁵¹ John Rowntree,⁵² Joan Fry,⁵³ Emily Hart,⁵⁴ Herbert⁵⁵ and Anna Littleboy⁵⁶.

Collaboration was difficult given the transatlantic locations of the primary authors. Several letters include reminders to Jones of the helpfulness of his

⁴⁶ Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 30 July 1907 Box 10, RMJP

⁴⁷ Minutes on the Conference on the Preparation of the Quaker History, 14 September 1910, Microfilm 80, LSF

⁴⁸ Rufus Jones to Elizabeth Jones, 25 August 1913 box 53, RMJP

⁴⁹ Rufus Jones, Isaac Sharpless, Amelia Gummere, *Quakers in the American Colonies* (London: Macmillan, 1911)

⁵⁰ Vining, *Friend of Life*, p.p.116-7

⁵¹ Brayshaw in particular seems to have done a great deal of largely unacknowledged work: Vining, *Friend of Life*, p.116-7; Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 19 June 1906, box 10, RMJP; W.C. Braithwaite to Rufus Jones, 16 April 1907, box 10, RMJP; for the same also see Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 8 April 1907, box 10, RMJP; W.C. Braithwaite to Rufus Jones, 16 April 1907, box 10, RMJP; for the same also see Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 8 April 1907, box 10, RMJP

⁵² Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 29 March 1905, box 9, RMJP.

It is not entirely clear which John Rowntree is being referred to here. However, it may be J.W. Rowntree's uncle, John Stephenson Rowntree since he lived from 1834-1907.

⁵³ Joan Mary Fry to Rufus Jones, 5.10.06, Box 10, RMJP

Joan Fry, 1862-1955, was very active in the Summer Schools Movement was a member of the Summer School Continuation Committee.

⁵⁴ A Quaker about whom I have been unable to find any further information.

Emily S Hart to Rufus Jones, 9 January 1906 and 9 February 1906 Box 10, RMJP

⁵⁵ Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 30 July 1907, box 10, RMJP

⁵⁶ The Littleboys were a well-known Quaker family; however, I have been able to find little information about this couple specifically.

Rufus Jones to Anna Littleboy, 14 January 1913, box 53, RMJP

sharing copies of his work with Braithwaite.⁵⁷ The outbreak of the First World War whilst the books were being written both added to the difficulty of communication between the authors⁵⁸ and reduced the time available for the project since the authors were involved in much charitable work.⁵⁹ Eventually, between 1909 and 1921, all of the Rowntree History Series volumes were published.

The Evolving Vision

The intention was that, whenever questions arose as to how a particular topic should be handled, Rowntree's notes and outlines would be consulted.⁶⁰ However, there were of course occasions when Rowntree's notes were insufficiently detailed. In the rest of this chapter, I shall analyse the non-Rowntree History Series writings of those involved in producing the Rowntree History Series in order to ascertain their vision for Quaker history and examine how some elements evolved over time under the care of various personalities.

Other than looking at the content of the Rowntree History Series, which I do in Chapter Four, one of the most valuable ways of discovering how Rowntree's

⁵⁷ Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 19 June 1906, box 10, RMJP
W.C. Braithwaite to Rufus Jones, 16 April 1907, box 10, RMJP
for the same also see Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 8 April 1907, box 10, RMJP
Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 30 July 1907, box 10, RMJP
Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 29 Aug 1907, box 10, RMJP

⁵⁸ W.C. Braithwaite to Rufus Jones, 14 March 1918, box 17, RMJP.

⁵⁹ W.C. Braithwaite to Rufus Jones, 13 Dec 1916, box 15, RMJP

⁶⁰ Kennedy, 'History and the Quaker Renaissance' in *JFHS*, p.49

vision may have evolved after having been taken on by others is by examining the correspondence of Rowntree's father, Joseph Rowntree. Although he had no part in the historical writing, Joseph Rowntree was responsible for the funding of the research and kept in close contact with the authors, corresponding particularly frequently with Jones in the absence of face-to-face contact.

Early on in the research process Joseph Rowntree wrote to Jones, 'There will need to be some common understanding among the writers so that, as the chapters go on, there may be a concentration of thought in certain directions, and the final chapter in which the threads are gathered together will, I think, be one of very special importance.'⁶¹ One gets the impression from his correspondence that Joseph Rowntree perceived himself as responsible for facilitating this common understanding. His letters are valuable sources of information since we must presume some level of agreement between Braithwaite, Jones and the opinions presented by Joseph Rowntree.⁶²

From examining these letters it is obvious that the Rowntree History Series was regarded as more than simply a scholarly text.⁶³ Joseph Rowntree wrote, on several occasions, of his confidence that the authors would not be 'satisfied to

⁶¹ Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 29 March 1905, box 9, RMJP

⁶² For example see Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 19 June 1906, Box 10, RMJP

In this letter Joseph Rowntree spent considerable time discussing practical arrangement and informing Rufus Jones of how everyone else was doing with his or her work. At the same time, he emphasised the importance of a shared vision and the importance of sharing drafts.

⁶³ In particular: Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 29 March 1905, Box 9, RMJP; Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 15 June 1908, Box 11, RMJP

write mere histories unless they carry a distinct teaching with them.’⁶⁴ Although the desire to invigorate Quaker ministry is still observable,⁶⁵ the explicit emphasis is more frequently placed on learning from the lessons of the past.⁶⁶ These lessons can be seen most clearly in the various emphases I describe in Chapters Four and Five. The letters also record discussion of ‘how much care will be needed to present early Quakerism as to commend it to the modern mind.’⁶⁷ This is particularly obvious in the example of Joseph Rowntree’s and Braithwaite’s objections to the title, ‘The Religion of the Peculiar Peoples’ at one stage proposed by Jones. Joseph Rowntree wrote that this title suggested to him, ‘the religion of cranks’ rather than the view of mysticism as authentic religion that the book was intended to convey.⁶⁸

Chapter Summary

I have now outlined the development of the Rowntree History Series; considering Rowntree’s vision for his history project and how it evolved under the subsequent care of the people committed to its completion. I have also demonstrated that historical accuracy and knowledge had an almost theological significance for them. This lays the foundation for all of the main arguments of this dissertation inasmuch as it demonstrates that: the idea for the Rowntree

⁶⁴ Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 15 June 1908, box 11, RMJP

⁶⁵ ‘A History of the Development of Quakerism, microfilm 80, LSF

⁶⁶ Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 29 March 1905, box 9, RMJP

Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 25 February 1916, box 15, RMJP

⁶⁷ Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 29 August 1907, box 10, RMJP

⁶⁸ Joseph Rowntree to Rufus Jones, 29 August 1907, box 10, RMJP

History Series was conceived against a backdrop of other initiatives for the revitalisation of the Religious Society of Friends and that the authors were equally committed to demonstrating the lessons of history as to maintaining historical accuracy.

CHAPTER THREE – PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROWNTREE HISTORY

SERIES

Larry Ingle describes the ‘discussion of the role of mysticism in the early movement’ as being the ‘longest running discussion in the history of the interpretation of Quakerism.’¹ Although Ingle dismisses the value of continuing this discussion, it cannot be ignored completely. This chapter describes the debate and attempts to reframe it by considering one aspect in particular of Jones’ and Braithwaite’s attitude towards the Rowntree History Series.

Academic Argument

The debate revolves around Jones’ argument that there was a developmental link between early Quakers and continental medieval mystics. This theory about the origins of Quakerism was so important to Jones that two of his volumes in the Rowntree History Series were entirely dedicated to these ‘forerunners’ of Quakerism.² In the materials studied for this dissertation, Jones’ argument is presented most clearly in his introduction to Braithwaite’s *Beginnings*.

In the following quotation Jones states his belief that he had found the precursors of Quakerism:

¹ H. Larry Ingle, ‘On the Folly of Seeking the Quaker Holy Grail’, p.p. 17-29 in *Quaker Religious Thought* #75 (May 1991), p.p.21-22

² *Studies in Mystical Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1909) and *Spiritual Reformers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Macmillan, 1914)

The researches of recent years conclusively show that the movement, known in History as Quakerism, was part of a very much wider religious movement which had for many years been gathering volume and intensity, and which prepared the way, especially in England, for this particular type of lay-religion.³

However, despite the claim that this had been ‘conclusively’ proven, Jones elsewhere admitted that the evidence is rather shaky.

It is not yet and probably will not ever be, possible to prove that George Fox and the other leaders of this special movement *consciously* adopted their ideas and methods, their peculiar testimonies and form of organisation, from the Separatist sects which swarmed about them, and which were the product of many centuries of striving after an inward way to God.⁴

Jones’ theory was highly influential at the time of publication; however it has since become largely discredited. In 1925, H.G. Wood re-evaluated the extent to which George Fox had been influenced by the Puritanism around him.⁵ The idea that Fox was more puritan than mystic was later developed more fully by Geoffrey Nuttall⁶ and Hugh Barbour.⁷ When Braithwaite’s books were republished in the 1950s under the general editorship of Henry J Cadbury, Jones’s introductions were dropped.⁸ In a replacement introduction, Hugh Doncaster wrote:

³ Rufus M. Jones, ‘Introduction’, pp. xxv-xliv in Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, (1912) p.xxv

⁴ Rufus M. Jones, ‘Introduction’ in Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, (1912) p.xxv

⁵ H.G. Wood, ‘George Fox and his Religious Background’ in J. Rendel Harris (ed), *New Appreciations of George Fox A Tercentenary Collection of Studies* (London: The Swarthmore Press, 1925)

⁶ Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), first published in 1946

⁷ Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1964)

⁸ William Charles Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955)

We see more clearly ... the content and the relevance of the Puritan background to the early Friends, and we know much more of contemporary movements and their influence on Friends.⁹

Ingle asserts that this debate, which has continued for decades, has now effectively ended since ‘all modern students agree that Jones ... at least overstated his case.’¹⁰ However, Durnbaugh writes that although evidence for Jones’s theory is ‘quite thin,’¹¹ he is ‘equally critical of the Puritan argument.’¹² Similarly, Endy pointed out that both sides of the argument have tended to simplify both puritans and early Quakers¹³ and concluded:

If Jones tended ... to minimise the distinctions between Spiritualism and later forms of theological liberalism, he remains less misleading than those recent critics who would have us believe that the Quakers out-Calvinised even the Puritans and were simply adding some existential fervour to the Protestant formulas.¹⁴

And he argues that:

It may be time to stop beating the Rufus Jones horse – not because it is dead, and not even out of kindness, but because it has many years of productive work left in it for those who are more interested in historical truth than in providing a first generation pedigree for their own corner of a complex religious movement.¹⁵

Three issues are now considered in turn. Firstly, what was Jones’ actual attitude towards the influence of puritanism and mysticism on early Quakerism?

⁹ Hugh Doncaster, ‘Foreward’, in Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.vi

¹⁰ Ingle, ‘Quaker Holy Grail’, in *QRT*, p.p.21-22

¹¹ Donald F. Durnbaugh, ‘Baptists and Quakers – Left Wing Puritans?’ p.p.67-82 in *Quaker History* # 62 (Autumn 1973), p.p.69-70

¹² Durnbaugh, ‘Baptists and Quakers’ in *Quaker History*, p.70

¹³ Melvin B. Endy, ‘The Interpretation of Quakerism: Rufus Jones and his Critics’ p.p.3-21 in *Quaker History* #70 (1981), p.p.11-12

¹⁴ Endy, ‘Interpretation of Quakerism’ in *Quaker History*, p.p.20-21

¹⁵ Endy, ‘Interpretation of Quakerism’ in *Quaker History*, p.p.20-21

Secondly, what was Braithwaite's attitude towards Jones' theories about the influence of puritanism and mysticism on early Quakerism? Thirdly, what is the overall significance of this debate?

Rufus Jones

In order to obtain a clearer understanding of the development of Jones's theory of the origins of Quakerism in continental medieval mysticism, I rely on his 1910s correspondence with Theodor Sippell. Sippell was a German academic who conducted most of the research into medieval mysticism for Jones.¹⁶ They maintained a close correspondence for several years until after the publication of the research when Sippell was offended by the lack of recognition he received for his research.¹⁷

When reading their early correspondence, one is struck by the enthusiasm Jones and Sippell had for the work they were doing as they discussed the influence on early Quakerism of Boehme,¹⁸ and the Seekers, Levellers and Collegiants.¹⁹ At that stage they both seem to have been totally convinced of the link between Quakerism and those they identified as its predecessors. They noted some

¹⁶ One letter even describes the plan that Sippell would do 'all original research on mystics.'

Theodor Sippell to Rufus Jones (trans), 17 November 1910, RMJP

¹⁷ Theodor Sippell to Rufus Jones (trans), 28 March 1914, box 13, RMJP

¹⁸ Theodor Sippell to Rufus Jones (trans), 29 April 1911, box 12, RMJP

¹⁹ Theodor Sippell to Rufus Jones (trans), 31 March, 1910, box 11, RMJP

concerns about hard evidence, but believed that what they had found was sufficient proof.²⁰

However, in later 1940s correspondence with Henry Cadbury, Jones demonstrated that whilst remaining convinced of his theory of Quakerism's antecedents, he was now more aware of its flaws. In a letter Jones directly responded to the criticisms which Nuttall raised against him:

In reference to the first point of thy 'Student', it is, of course, impossible to prove with any certainty the continuity of Quakerism with Medieval Mysticism. There is a striking difference of type especially with Eckhart and the mystics who took the negative attitude. I have always pointed out that Protestant mysticism is quite characteristically different from mediaeval mysticism. There does not seem to me any question whatever of the direct and positive influence of the so-called 'Spiritual Reformers' on the Quaker movement. The Collegiants on the continent and the Seekers in England express many of the central ideas of Quakerism and worked out more or less the basic conception of the Quaker Meeting, and every one of George Fox's openings can be found in the writings of the period just before, or contemporary with, his period of preparation.

There has no doubt been a tendency to overlook the Calvinistic element because they are often quite inconsistent with the positive aspects of the Quaker leaders, and yet they had come out again and again in their writings. That would be what one would expect because all the Quaker leaders of importance were nurtured in Calvinistic thought in their youth, and, in spite of his reaction against it, Jacob Boehme reveals quite strikingly Calvinistic traits.²¹

²⁰ Theodor Sippell to Rufus Jones (trans), 13 June, 1910, box 11, RMJP

²¹ Rufus Jones to Henry J. Cadbury, 27 February, 1945, box 58, RMJP

Two years later, Rufus Jones also wrote, 'What our friend Nuttall fails to explain is how these so-called Puritans came to be so very much unlike the Calvinistic Puritans of their time. I feel pretty sure that when you try to explain them you will find they had come under the influence of the spiritual reformers whose tracts had by that time been translated for the most part into English. It is very doubtful whether it is proper to go on still calling such persons Puritans.': Rufus Jones to Henry Cadbury, 28 January 1947, box 59, RMJP

In these letters we see Jones being aware of the inadequacies of his theory, but still believing it to be the most satisfactory explanation currently available.

William Braithwaite

In contrast to some representations of Jones, Braithwaite is treated with far more respect. Ingle describes Braithwaite as being ‘The Quaker historian who best exemplified broad use of sources and avoided the most obvious partisan stances.’²² Phillips describes Braithwaite’s books in the Rowntree History Series as ‘the crowning achievement of the [Quaker] Renaissance historiography.’²³ Braithwaite was an excellent historian, but, as I demonstrate in Chapter Four, there are ways in which he reveals his liberal Quaker bias. In this section, however, we discuss Braithwaite's relationship to Jones’ theory.

It is important to acknowledge that the theory of the origins of Quakerism belonged to Jones: it was conceived when Jones started collaborating with Rowntree and thus before Braithwaite became involved with the project. However, there is equally no doubt that Braithwaite subscribed to Jones’s theory and that although it did not dramatically affect his work, Braithwaite did believe the theory to be the lens through which to interpret his work. In 1911, after reading Jones’s draft introduction, Braithwaite wrote,

²² Ingle, ‘Holy Grail’ in *QRT*, p.26, footnote 4

²³ Phillips, *Friendly Patriotism*, p.61

I think the introduction quite admirable, one of the best things you have done in its luminous summary of the central features of the history. It will be of great service in giving coherence to the study of the rest of the book and contains implicit in it the main lessons that our Quakerism of today needs to learn.²⁴

I suspect that Braithwaite would have been surprised to learn that his work would later be re-published with an introduction which emphasised a very different interpretation of early Quakerism.

Significance

It is now necessary to elucidate further the significance of this academic debate. It is not my intention to discuss the evidence for or against these theories of the origins of Quakerism. I argue that focussing on this aspect of the debate has led historians to overlook the role the Rowntree History Series played in the formation of liberal Quaker identity. I suggest that this is in fact one of the most interesting aspects of the Rowntree History Series. In order to consider this aspect, in this chapter I ask the question ‘what is the exact nature of the

²⁴ W.C. Braithwaite to Rufus Jones, 26 March 1911, box 12, RMJP

Then, later in the same year, Braithwaite added that he thought Jones’ introduction would ‘give the necessary link between my volume and the rest of the series, and will cause the reader to study the rest of the volume from a fresh point of view in the light of the wider religious tendencies of the age. These tendencies are very elusive to investigate and it will be most interesting to see how far they can be ascertained in the course of your further research. I think you will find that they came to the surface sooner in Holland, owing to the earlier establishment in that country of substantial religious liberty, and that as soon as this took place in England (with the coming of the Long Parliament) the same spirit quickly showed itself in England. To a large extent however the parallel movements in the two countries may have been due to like causes, rather than to direct communication, and I should say you are quite right in treating the various growths as fostered by the special religious atmosphere of the age, without expecting to determine precisely how they interacted between themselves.’: W.C. Braithwaite to Rufus Jones, 26 April 1911, box 12, RMJP

relationship between Jones' theory and his theology and how did this influence liberal Quakerism between 1895 and 1925?'

For example, the above consideration of the views of Jones and Braithwaite is an initial demonstration of the information that this change of emphasis can provide. Rather than discussing the factual truth of Jones's theory, I have instead endeavoured to discover the extent to which Jones and Braithwaite believed this theory to be true. My assessment of their commitment to the theory of Quakerism's origins in medieval mysticism prepares the way for the more detailed consideration in subsequent chapters of related emphases present in their work.

Chapter Summary

I have now demonstrated that focussing on the Rowntree History Series' role in identity formation is a fundamentally novel approach to this subject. It was necessary to consider the usual academic critique about historical accuracy in order to demonstrate how different my approach is. Similarly, the analysis of Jones' and Braithwaite's attitudes towards the theory that Quakerism emerged out of medieval mysticism paves the way for more detailed consideration of their work in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR – IMPLEMENTING THE VISION: WILLIAM

CHARLES BRAITHWAITE

In previous chapters I have conveyed my view that the authors of the Rowntree History Series had a clear ideological agenda in publishing their research and that for that reason many later academics have criticised them for being insufficiently thorough in their presentation of facts to support their theories. This criticism usually cites their negative treatment of seventeenth century puritanism as well as their lack of evidence for recasting Quakerism as a later manifestation of continental medieval mysticism. In this chapter, I present the results of my close reading of Braithwaite's volumes. I identify several areas in which it is possible to distinguish that this historical content was written by a Quaker of the early liberal period. My results frequently correspond, but not always, with those which have previously received attention. In Chapter Five I consider Jones' research in the same way.

I have identified the following emphases in Braithwaite's work:

- Misrepresentation of puritanism
- Positive understanding of human nature
- Excusing Quaker extravagances
- Leadership and travelling ministers
- The development of organisational structures
- Ambivalence towards quietism

- The importance of education to rational religion
- Emphasising the superiority of Quakerism
- Comparisons with early Christianity
- Emphasising the universal message of Quakerism
- Presenting early Quakers as social activists

Misrepresentation of Puritanism

I have already demonstrated that criticism of the Rowntree History Series by later historians has frequently focussed on its unfair treatment of puritanism. Certainly, both Braithwaite and Jones were keen to distinguish Quakerism from ‘rigid Calvinism’ and to that effect tend to define puritanism as somewhat doctrinal and stale. This tendency is particularly obvious in Braithwaite’s consideration of the treatment of Quakers in Boston, Massachusetts.¹ However, in general, Braithwaite was actually quite balanced in his treatment of the puritan influence on early Quakerism. He admitted that the whole atmosphere of religious life in Britain in the seventeenth century was influenced by puritanism² and that ‘to a large extent the Quakers belonged to the Puritan party that was in the seat of power.’³

¹ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.405

² Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.2

³ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.464

He also wrote: ‘The Inward Light was itself the artificer of the Society of Friends, but of necessity was coloured by the Puritan medium through which it was transmitted, for its children, like the prophets of other days, remained in many things the children of their age.’: Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.137

I suggest that this duality of interpretation reflected a tension between Braithwaite's attention to historical detail and his desire to present Quakerism in a way that was fundamentally different from the evangelicalism which many of his contemporaries and predecessors advocated.

Positive Understanding of Human Nature

One of the most important criticisms of the Rowntree History Series is that the authors underestimated the dualism inherent in early Quaker thought. Braithwaite was actually quite honest about the fact that, when contrasted with the very different understanding of human nature held by liberal Quakers, the early Quakers seem to have held an understanding very much in line with post-Reformation Calvinist views of the inherent depravity of humanity. However, Braithwaite also made it clear that he disagreed with the understanding held by early Quakers and attempted to excuse them for holding an 'imperfect' doctrine.

We may admit that the first Friends held a very imperfect doctrine of human nature. Even here, however, their faith that every man was given a measure of Divine Light of Christ gave them a point of view greatly superior to the current doctrine of man's depravity. But their imperfect conception of human nature is no valid ground for denying the reality of the spiritual experience which possessed them. This great experience is the commanding fact of Quaker history, and we need not to be surprised to find that its adjustment to other facts of life was a work of time.⁴

⁴ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.277

Braithwaite devoted a fair amount of effort to investigating whether George Fox held these ‘imperfect’ doctrines of human nature. He acknowledged that Fox would not have recognised any human origin for the inspiration he received⁵ and explained that Fox:

shared the preconceptions of his age as to the undivine order to which the natural life belongs. The Divine teaching and the Divine perfecting within him conflicted with these preconceptions, but he avoids having to surrender them by regarding his new experience as an altered human nature, renewed up into its condition before the Fall, and in that renewed state once again possessing the capacity for Divine fellowship and the innocency which fallen man had lost.⁶

However, Braithwaite remained keen to demonstrate that there were occasions when George Fox did use his reason to assess his spiritual revelations.⁷

Braithwaite also devoted significant attention to Robert Barclay⁸ and in particular to the doctrine of human nature presented in his *Apology*. Braithwaite was not as negative towards Barclay as was Jones, who tended to present Barclay as fundamentally misguided. In contrast, Braithwaite assumed that reason was an important aspect of faith and then tried to find redeeming characteristics in Barclay’s writings. Braithwaite argued, for example, that Barclay, in his

⁵ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.41

⁶ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.39

⁷ ‘In speaking of his openings, [George Fox] says that he found ‘they answered one another, and answered the scriptures’ – a significant statement, which shows that his own faculties of judgement were actively at work, co-ordinating the revelations that came to him into a harmony of truth, and comparing them with the experiences that had come to prophets and apostles. The Quaker scheme of thought, though imperfect, was essentially sane because the Light Within was continually being tested by the witness of the prophets and of primitive Christianity.’: Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.250

⁸ Robert Barclay was a second generation Scottish Quaker who converted in 1666. He was from a privileged, educated and Calvinist background. He wrote a theological defence of Quakerism, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, which was published in Latin in 1670 and in English in 1678. This work was regarded until the nineteenth century as the definitive guide to Quakerism.

comparison of reason to the moon, was according some role to reason in the explanation and verification of spiritual perceptions.⁹ Braithwaite also described Barclay's *Apology* as having lasting value not because of the 'imperfect success which attended Barclay's efforts to press the Quaker experience into these moulds of thought, and thus vindicate it to his own age' but because of the 'sureness of emphasis with which, in spite of them, he is continually asserting that religion is an inward spiritual life received from God and transforming human nature.'¹⁰ However, Braithwaite remained deeply critical of the anthropological dualism of Barclay's *Apology*.

Although Barclay was not the only early Quaker who presented a dualistic interpretation of the Quaker experience, Barclay's prominence allowed Braithwaite to assign to him a large portion of the responsibility. Braithwaite believed that this dualism was an important factor in Quakerism's 'descent' into quietism.¹¹ The main significance of Braithwaite's comments about the

⁹ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.391

¹⁰ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.388

¹¹ Quietist Quakerism was the form which had developed after the first generations of Quakers had moved away from initial evangelising activities and instead established an idiosyncratic social exclusivity. Some of their characteristic features were plain speech, plain dress and the rejection of music, dancing and several other forms of public amusement. They held in high regard the writings of early Friends, particularly Barclay's *Apology*, which they often quoted in the way that evangelical Protestants would quote the Bible. Quietists believed in absolute submission to the Inward Light of Christ and were pessimistic about the natural human condition, leading to distrust of the intellectual faculty and of higher education. Meetings for worship became increasingly silent as there were very few ministers who were sufficiently confident that they had emptied their minds of all worldly distractions before speaking.

An example of Braithwaite's attitude towards quietists can be seen in the following: 'There can be little doubt that the failure, however inevitable under the conditions of the age, to reach a Christology and a conception of human personality which covered all the facts was a serious weakness to Quakerism and in its Quietist period led to a disastrous vagueness of experience which

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inadequacies of the early Quaker conception of human nature is that it demonstrates his willingness to make editorial comments about Quaker theology in order to demonstrate his belief in the superiority of the 'positive' liberal outlook.

Excusing Quaker 'Extravagances'

When discussing the 'extravagances' of early Friends, Phillips argues that 'Quakerism's strenuous efforts towards respectability from the eighteenth century onwards stem chiefly from an insecurity about the central role that such extremists had played in the origins of the Society: As much distance as possible was to be placed between James Nayler¹² and the Religious Society of Friends, never more so than in the era of the 'Christian Citizen'.¹³ My focus in this section is to assess the extent to which this is a valid criticism of Braithwaite's work.

tended to reduce Christianity to obedience to an indefinite principle of life in the soul': Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.394

¹² James Nayler was one of the most prominent early Quakers, indeed he was perceived by many to be the co-leader along with George Fox. In 1656 a rivalry seems to have developed between James Nayler and George Fox. On 24 October of that year James Nayler rode into Bristol on horseback, accompanied by several other people singing 'Holy, Holy, Holy' in re-enactment of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. Nayler was arrested and tried for blasphemy for believing that he was Christ. The trial was taken before Parliament and Nayler's punishment was harsh. Nayler was subsequently ostracised by his fellow Quakers. For further information see: Dandelion, *Introduction*, p.p.38-41; L. Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1996); Maryann S. Feola, 'Fox's relationship with Nayler' p.p. 101-109 in Michael Mullett (ed), *New Light on George Fox: 1624-1691* (York: William Sessions Ltd, 1992)

¹³ Phillips describes his use of the term 'Friendly Patriot' to mean someone who 'struggled to be true to sometimes wildly divergent traditions and impulses in his desire to embody an ideal of 'Christian Citizenship': Phillips, *Friendly Patriotism*, p.p.50-1

The term Christian Citizen indicates the belief of Quakers of the early twentieth century that it was possible to enact a 'hallowing' of politics: that it was the duty of all Quakers to become involved with the political process in order to ensure that Christ's will would be enacted in the world. It

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Braithwaite was clearly aware of the challenges he faced in deciding how to portray the ‘extravagances’ of early Friends. In a letter to Jones, written whilst Braithwaite was doing research for the Rowntree History Series, it is clear that Braithwaite intended to face these issues historically.¹⁴ My reading finds that for the most part Braithwaite succeeded in doing so. He did not shy away from mentioning the more objectionable aspects of early Quakerism, such as going naked as a sign, but there are times when he could not refrain from adding a comment in his own voice. Nowhere is his editorialising more evident than in his description of Margaret Fell’s first letter to George Fox.

It is in substance an earnest plea for the return to Swarthmore of the young prophet, but contains passages of perilous rhapsody. ... In several other letters of this kind received by Fox, the offensive phrases have been struck through, but here there is no note of dissent, although the paper bears endorsements in his own handwriting, probably made at some later date when he was arranging his papers. It is charitable to suppose that the letter was the first he received from Margaret Fell and was kept as a precious memento rather than for its contents. Perhaps it is not possible for us to put ourselves in the writer’s place. The new spiritual experience had exalted her life, and had caused her to rest herself in the young prophet’s larger personality, which she felt to be possessed by the living spirit of Christ. In giving expression to this feeling in an intimate letter, she inevitably made use of the Biblical phraseology alone familiar to her, and in her gush of feeling and poverty of vocabulary seems to have lost a due sense of the value of the words used.¹⁵

These comments reveal the difficulties Braithwaite faced when deciding how to portray this letter. Fox and Fell were such important figures in the beginnings of

involved a tension between the desire for respectability and involvement in the political process and the requirement to advocate decisions which would be unpopular with the majority: Phillips, *Friendly Patriotism*, p.6

¹⁴ W.C. Braithwaite to Rufus Jones, 12 November 1905, box 9, RMJP

¹⁵ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.p.105-6

Quakerism that their words could not be ignored and yet Braithwaite obviously felt that much distance had to be placed between them and the Quakerism of his own day in order for him to advocate a liberal, rational Quakerism.

Braithwaite's commentary on Fell's later demonstrates how acutely aware he is of the way in which his readers might react to the accurate portrayal of disturbing historical events. Braithwaite's agenda is also observable in two other sections which are therefore worth mentioning: the practice of going naked as a sign and the fall of James Nayler.

Despite the difficulty inherent in presenting the practice of going naked as a sign to his twentieth century readers, Braithwaite admitted that George Fox approved of the practice¹⁶ and attempted to explain the seventeenth century attitude:

Wild prophecies and notions ... [were] condemned by Fox because they were prompted by the earthly nature: here, on the other hand, there was a real crucifixion of the will on the part of the honest-hearted men and women concerned. They only undertook the service under a strong sense of religious duty. ... Saturated with Biblical knowledge, they there found examples for their own conduct. ... While, then, we may deplore the crude literalism of Quaker practice on this question as on some others, we should recognise the devoted spirit of obedience which lay behind it.¹⁷

Braithwaite was similarly balanced in his portrayal of Nayler. Braithwaite admitted that the entry into Bristol was similar to other re-enactments carried out

¹⁶ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.148

¹⁷ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.p.150-1

by Quakers at the time¹⁸ and that Nayler's careful theological answers during his trial for blasphemy were in line with other early Quaker statements.¹⁹ Braithwaite even suggested that readers should still feel able to appreciate the literature Nayler produced without allowing their opinion of Nayler to be clouded by the controversy surrounding his entry to Bristol.²⁰ However, Braithwaite's approach is to blame Nayler's action on an unbalanced mental condition and thereby lay most of the blame on the women followers who surrounded him at the time.²¹ Braithwaite also uses the opportunity of discussing Nayler's action to explain how the lasting effect of this event on Quakerism was for the good because it warned Quakers against the dangers of their doctrine of perfection.²²

Elsewhere, Braithwaite addressed the theological problems which spiritual 'extravagances' may present:

It may be well to ask ourselves how far the extravagances of language and conduct which are part of the picture of early Quakerism throw doubt on the validity of the experience of the Inner Light. ... We shall not approve ... the disturbance of ministers, the virulence of controversy, the high language in which the new way of

¹⁸ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.254

¹⁹ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.p.150-1

²⁰ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.275

²¹ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.254

For an alternative view point see: Bernadette Smith, *Martha Simmonds 1624-1665: Her Life and Quaker Writings and the fall of James Nayler* (Sessions Book Trust, York, 2009)

²² Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.271

'Fox, and others of the early Friends, had a vivid sense of personal union with their living Lord, but they coupled this experience of the indwelling Christ with a doctrine of perfection that betrayed them, during the first exhilaration of the experience, into extremes of identification with the Divine. They believed that inspiration gave infallibility, a belief that men have often held with respect to the writers of scripture, and they had to learn, with the help of some painful lessons, what we are learning to-day about the writers of scripture, that the inspired servant of God remains a man, liable to much of human error and weakness. ... It was this inadequate recognition of the earthly character of the vessel that was responsible for most of the excesses of early Quakerism.':
Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.p.109-10

life was often described, and some of the conduct connected with the testifying by signs. ... But they were ... in part a product of the faulty mental environment which belonged to the seventeenth century. ... This explains much of their high language and extreme positiveness of conduct, and also justifies, from their point of view, the literalness with which they followed the prophetic precedents in the matter of Signs.²³

Braithwaite thus explained these faults as springing from the problems of the age in which they lived. He was keen to emphasise the purity of intent of those individuals who were involved in such signs and wrote, 'the verbal violence of Friends was singularly free both from the spirit of persecution and from the filth of private scandal. Its excesses sprang not from bigotry or malice, but from the honest-hearted conviction of half-educated men who were the champions of a great truth.'²⁴ Braithwaite also suggested that the same characteristic which produced Quaker excesses was also responsible for the tenacity with which Quakers clung to their beliefs despite persecution. He argued that this equation made the extravagances worthwhile.²⁵

However, by focussing on an inadequate doctrine of human nature as the underlying cause of extreme or irrational behaviour, Braithwaite argued that it was possible in his own day to have the advantages without the disadvantages of such extravagances.

²³ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.267

²⁴ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.284

²⁵ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.225

Leadership and Travelling Ministers

Throughout both of his books Braithwaite emphasised the importance of inspired leadership, and especially of travelling ministers, to the vitality of early Quakerism. He dedicated a whole chapter to the description of that itinerant work.²⁶ Partially this emphasis derives from the liberal emphasis on individual experience: for example, Braithwaite wrote, ‘Religious movements develop with the help of a favouring environment, but they spring out of great personal experiences.’²⁷ Largely however, Braithwaite chose to emphasise the value of itinerant leadership as an alternative to the strong organisational structure which had built up in Quakerism over the centuries and which Braithwaite felt hindered its spiritual progress. He also believed that inspiring travelling ministers had the power to revitalise Quaker ministry through more effective transmission of the Quaker message than was possible within the local congregation.

When describing the condition of early Quakerism prior to the development of organisational structure and Church discipline, Braithwaite wrote that ‘the personal leadership of strong local Friends and of the itinerating Publishers of Truth²⁸ was the main dominating and regulating influence.’²⁹ He praised the work of these ministers: ‘The dynamic lives of these men, who counted nothing too hard in the service of Christ, corrected disorder more surely

²⁶ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, Chapter 14

²⁷ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.28

²⁸ by which Braithwaite means travelling Quaker ministers

²⁹ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.508

than any system of Church government, and declared Truth more vitally than any creed.³⁰ When the persecution became particularly intense after 1660, many of these ministers were imprisoned or lost their lives and Braithwaite claimed that the subsequent lessening of ministers available for travel had a negative effect on Quaker meetings.³¹

I suggest that Braithwaite placed so much emphasis on the importance of charismatic leaders and itinerant ministry in hopes of legitimising similar efforts by proponents of liberal Quakerism. In Braithwaite's day, liberal Quakers wanted to downplay the influence of elders³² and the importance of organisational structures. They also sought to bring a more educational emphasis to the travelling ministry through initiatives such as the Summer Schools. The transformation of Quakerism at this time was largely the work of charismatic individuals who wanted to build on this aspect of Quakerism outside the official structures of their yearly meetings.

The emphasis on leadership presented Braithwaite with the opportunity to articulate his opinions about the true nature of Quaker leadership. He writes, 'Leadership, in the Quaker conception, is amongst the most important functions to

³⁰ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.268

³¹ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.225

³² Elders are appointed by Quakers to help nurture the spiritual life of the Meeting. They fulfil an aspect of the function of a paid ministry but are voluntary. Liberal Friends believed that elders had gained too much control over who was allowed to minister and that this was having a negative effect on the quality of Quaker worship. They believed that the role of elder should be altered so that they were less controlling and so that the responsibility for worship and ministry could be shared more widely among the members of a Meeting.

be discharged in the Church, but it should be a leadership of inspiration and illumination, and not of outward power.’³³

The Development of Organisational Structures

Braithwaite described one of the objects of his history as being ‘to examine the changes ... which slowly turned the aggressive Quaker movement of 1654 into the hermit-like Society of Friends of the eighteenth century’.³⁴ Many of the changes he considered were organisational developments. Liberal Quakers tended to be critical of the controlling structures which had developed within the Religious Society of Friends. They also tended to operate outside of the official denominational structures; a good example of this is the founding of Woodbrooke which was undertaken by individuals rather than London Yearly Meeting.³⁵

Braithwaite saw positive reasons for the development of the early organisational structures.³⁶ he was clear that when Fox was released from prison

³³ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.350

See also: ‘It is not easy to define the position of the Quaker minister: his authority was great, but it was not derived from human appointment; it depended from meeting to meeting upon the call of the Lord and upon the message which He might give raising up the witness to its truth in the hearts of Friends. Such illuminated leadership could not be restricted to one kind of meeting, nor to the particular district to which the minister belonged.’: Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.278

³⁴ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.309

³⁵ Rufus Jones writes of the founding of Woodbrooke that: ‘Woodbrooke was necessarily a private venture. ... the Society of Friends as a whole was not convinced of the necessity or the wisdom of such a venture.’: Rufus Jones, *Trail of Life in College*, p.18

³⁶ In a rather artistic metaphor, he writes: The Toleration Act began a new era for Friends and other Nonconformists. [They] had passed from persecution into peace. [Their] weather-beaten Ark, which had stoutly ridden out the storm, found itself, as by a miracle, in calm waters. It

in 1666 and decided to set up the organisational structures it was for the benefit of the spiritual lives of Quakers.³⁷ However, Braithwaite remained unclear whether these actions had the intended result.³⁸ He also argued that there is no way that those involved could have known the lengths to which the disciplinary powers would reach in later years.³⁹

Braithwaite's overall attitude towards the development of organisational structures can be summarised by the following quotation:

Fox's action in strengthening Church government had reanimated Friends, but involved to some extent the subordination of individual guidance to the spiritual leading which came to the meeting. ... And just in so far as the corporate life exercised disciplinary authority there was inevitably some repression of individual freedom and the beginnings of an imposed uniformity.⁴⁰

As far as Braithwaite was concerned, one of the most negative effects of the development of organisational structures was 'its discouragement of strong leadership.'⁴¹ Braithwaite attached the utmost importance to inspired leadership and consequently did not alter his opinion that organisational structures would have a detrimental effect on the Religious Society of Friends unless subordinated to spiritual experience.⁴²

seemed a time for refitting the ship; not for the fresh heroic adventure of launching forth into the deep: Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.160

³⁷ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.p.251-252

³⁸ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.259

³⁹ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.291

⁴⁰ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.324

⁴¹ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.494

⁴² Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.343

Ambivalence Towards Quietism

Braithwaite described the quietist period as Quakerism's 'resting on its past, accommodating itself to the ease of the present and losing its vision.'⁴³ In general, Braithwaite was not as negative about quietism as was Jones.⁴⁴ However, Braithwaite remained clear that the quietist period was one to be regretted. He suggested that 'historians cannot too carefully examine the causes of these declensions' since such changes have often 'blighted the early promise' of religious movements.⁴⁵ He therefore dedicated substantial space to identifying the following key reasons for the development of quietism:

- 1) The failure of early Quakers to relate the experience of the Inward Light to the historic Life of Christ, in a way which gave each its true value.⁴⁶
- 2) Migration to the colonies' stripping London Yearly Meeting of its most active and eager personalities.⁴⁷
- 3) The gradual growth in power of elders, leading to the relegation of ministers to a secondary place.⁴⁸

⁴³ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.631

⁴⁴ For example, Braithwaite admits that although 'the stream became retracted and tepid its glad springs of life never wholly ceased. The inward strength known in the gathered power of Quaker worship had preserved fellowship through the heat of persecution, and would carry it through the days when it seemed to the world a spent force.': Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.637
See also: 'It must not of course be inferred that there was no continuance of spiritual life. The over-emphasis on the outward could not, so long as the Friends' meeting was maintained, altogether supersede the inward way of direct access to God.': Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.540

⁴⁵ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.631

⁴⁶ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.635

⁴⁷ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.408

⁴⁸ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.544

4) The growth of worldly prosperity producing spiritual lethargy.⁴⁹

I now focus more closely on Braithwaite's portrayal of the influence of worldly prosperity as a representative and interesting example of the above. Braithwaite believed that 'prosperity was clogging the spiritual life of many Friends' and that Fox and other leaders were aware of this.⁵⁰ Braithwaite agreed that early Quakers should have fought this development as vehemently as they could,⁵¹ but claimed that they were misguided in their methods of doing so.⁵² His main criticism of the methods of combating worldliness is that he perceives them to be attempts to combat inward problems through outward rules.⁵³ He writes,

The over-assertion of corporate authority ... betrayed Friends into the fallacy of thinking that walking in the footsteps of men who walked with God was the same thing as walking with God.⁵⁴

The Importance of Education to a Rational Religion

One of the most important messages of liberal Quakerism was the need to ensure that religion was intellectually acceptable and this was why so much value

⁴⁹ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.636

⁵⁰ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.499

⁵¹ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.p.516-517

⁵² 'The crusade against worldliness should have devoted itself, not to the multiplication of rules of outward conduct, but to the fostering of this inward discipline by vital methods. Living ministry and leadership, the maintenance of warm and open-hearted fellowship, and a generous method of education were all needed, and could they have been secured would have kept the tradition of the fathers and the authority of the elders from narrowing the outlook and service of the Church. A Quaker way of life would have been assured by the power of first-hand conviction renewed in each generation and continually drawing into the Society others of all ranks who were reached by the Quaker message – a way of life growing out of the rich inheritance of the past but not limited by it.' Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.p.522-523

⁵³ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.524

⁵⁴ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.537

was placed on the role of education in preparation for the ministry. These emphases are clearly visible in Braithwaite's writings.

Braithwaite portrayed early Quaker leaders as understanding the value and importance of education. For example, he claimed that 'Fox cherished some large educational views'⁵⁵ and that 'Penn held enlightened opinions on education.'⁵⁶ Braithwaite suggested that it would have been possible for early Quakers to have developed an enlightened approach to education and that then current Quaker educational trends were following in the footsteps of these possibilities.⁵⁷

However, Braithwaite concurrently acknowledges that there were many ways in which the early Quaker attitude towards education differed substantially from the liberal Quaker view. The Quaker message that higher education was not sufficient for being a minister frequently led to the undermining of the importance of higher education in general. Braithwaite admitted that most Quakers were unaware of the extent to which they had benefited from prior religious education⁵⁸ and that many tended to under-value human learning.⁵⁹ Braithwaite also blamed this attitude towards education for the subsequent 'decline' of Quakerism.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.528

⁵⁶ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.529

⁵⁷ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.530

⁵⁸ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.534

⁵⁹ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.293

⁶⁰ For example, he wrote, 'They were perhaps hardly conscious of the extent to which many of their own leaders had already received a wide training in religious things before they joined Friends. These men preached out of a rich past and from well-furnished minds, but the succeeding generation, born and bred in the Society, had little of this adequate equipment. There was an

This contrast could be explained in terms of a strong level of support for primary education but not for the higher level of training in critical thought and scientific methods which Braithwaite supported. However, Braithwaite never made any attempt to harmonise, or explain the contrast between, his positive and negative portrayals of early Quaker attitudes towards education. Instead, he used both positive and negative attitudes towards education in different ways to support the liberal Quaker thinking about education. The educational methods of early Quakers and the philosophy at their foundations were, in Braithwaite's view, clearly wrong and misguided.⁶¹ Therefore, some change was necessary and this justified Liberal Quakerism's change in emphasis. However, Braithwaite did not portray this change as a wholly new phenomenon. He argued that the liberal emphasis on the importance of education could be claimed to have a precedent in the original thinking of early Quakerism. This then gave him the opportunity to voice his own opinions about contemporaneous education.

We are able, in the present day, to work out a fuller conception of spiritual guidance than our forefathers possessed, especially through recognising that the intellect is rather a province of man's spiritual nature than something which stands apart from it, and that our own faculties have their important part to play in developing the eye which can make use of the spiritual light.⁶²

urgent need for the Church to promote Bible study and a teaching ministry.': Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.534

⁶¹ 'The guarded education meant protection from evil influences, which during the period of immaturity is as salutary for young human life as for plants. But it meant also the careful inculcation of prescribed ideas and an approved way of life; and this training, however excellent, confined the mental and moral outlook and pruned luxuriance and vigorous growth to its own trim patterns. It was not education at all, in the higher sense of the word.': Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.536

⁶² Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.278

Emphasising the Superiority of Quakerism

Extreme confidence in the value of Quakerism was an important aspect of liberal Quakerism: Quakers of the early twentieth century appear to have been completely convinced of the innate value of Quakerism and of its unique message to the world. As a symptom of this, they not only published in their periodicals a great deal of self-congratulation, they also frequently re-published any praise given to them by non-Friends. It is therefore hardly surprising that some of this attitude tended to slip into Braithwaite's writing.⁶³

Although Braithwaite was generally honest in admitting the faults of early Quakerism, the liberal confidence in the value of Quakerism remains evident in good measure. This is obvious in his treatment of the sufferings of Quakers during their persecution after the Restoration. He was keen to show the spirit in which Quakers suffered and tended to throw in editorial comments about the value of their suffering.⁶⁴ I suggest that he was attempting to make links between this situation and the struggles of Quakers during the First World War. As part of this he was also keen to demonstrate that the Quakers who emigrated to the Colonies in

⁶³ For example, Braithwaite quoted William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*: 'The Quaker religion which [Fox] founded is something which it is impossible to overpraise. In a day of shams, it was a religion of veracity, rooted in spiritual inwardness, and a return to something more like the original gospel-truth than men had ever known in England. So far as our Christian sects to-day are evolving into liberality, they are simply reverting in essence to the position which Fox and the early Quakers so long ago assumed.': Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.51

⁶⁴ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.29 and several others

the seventeenth century were not attempting to flee persecution.⁶⁵ I suggest that there is more than just Liberal self-confidence at play in Braithwaite's writing. He is attempting to make it more likely that his readers will identify with the early Quakers being described and be drawn into allegiance with them.

Comparisons with early Christianity

Throughout the liberal period, Quakers reclaimed the statement that Quakerism was 'primitive Christianity revived'. Much of this attitude is observable in Braithwaite's writings. He wrote of Fox that, 'He ... penetrated beyond Protestantism to the Spirit-filled life of the early Church.'⁶⁶ Braithwaite admitted that many had accused early Quakers of being unchristian but wrote that this criticism vanishes with even a cursory examination of their theology. He further claimed that the denunciations Quakers received for subverting religion clearly echoed the charges made against early Christians.⁶⁷ Braithwaite admitted that 'The world was right in regarding them as very real enemies to much in the existing order of things' because for 'both early Christians and Quakers ... their first allegiance was given to an Inward Sovereign whom the world did not

⁶⁵ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.400

⁶⁶ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.443

⁶⁷ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.108

know.’⁶⁸ He described the early growth of Quakerism as Pentecostal⁶⁹ and likened the sufferings of early Quakers to those of early Christians.⁷⁰

At the time of Braithwaite’s writing, Christianity was undergoing massive changes as it reinterpreted itself in response to cultural and scientific developments. Braithwaite’s emphasis on similarities between early Christianity and early Quakerism was therefore a form of reassurance. Despite the fact that it appeared as if everything was changing, Quakers could rest assured that they were in fact in line with early Christians and that modern developments were actually removing distortions which had accrued over the years.

Emphasising the Universal Message of Quakerism

One way in which liberal Quaker self-confidence showed itself in Braithwaite’s writing was through his emphasis on the universal message of Quakerism. He was keen to demonstrate that Fox *et al* did not in any way intend to found a new sect: as far as they were concerned it was a gospel for all.⁷¹ Braithwaite suggests that the very fact of the popularity of the nickname Quaker demonstrated how carefully early Friends had avoided describing themselves in denominational ways.⁷² He described the effort devoted to the carrying of the

⁶⁸ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.16

⁶⁹ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.165

⁷⁰ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.49

⁷¹ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.131

⁷² Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.132

Quaker message overseas and to other faiths as being the most emphatic illustration of the universal mission of the early Friends.⁷³ He even justifies the elsewhere condemned hostility towards other forms of Christianity as being ‘another evidence of the large claims and wide ambitions of early Quakerism’.⁷⁴

One of the key areas of discussion among Quakers of the liberal period was that of the uniformity of social class among Quakers. Although the Religious Society of Friends remained a substantially middle class denomination, many important liberal Quaker figures agreed that there should be more evangelism to the working classes. Therefore, a large aspect of Braithwaite’s emphasis on the universal message of Quakerism was an attempt to demonstrate that Quakerism could appeal to all types of people and need not remain fundamentally middle class. He wrote,

The results show that the Quaker movement was at this time in far more vital touch with the people than at some later periods. Its despised meetings did not suffer from an oppressive respectability, and resembled in composition one of our modern Quaker Adult Schools.⁷⁵

⁷³ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.401

⁷⁴ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.305

⁷⁵ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.p.461-462

The Adult School Movement was an evangelical Quaker outreach to the poor. The first classes began in Birmingham as a mixture of literacy and biblical instruction. The movement spread very quickly and by the 1860s there were 5,000 members of these schools. These schools also developed worship meetings which rarely involved silent, unprogrammed worship: this caused some controversy within the Yearly Meeting. By the time of the Manchester Conference, 1895, there were 40,000 members of the Adult Schools, more than double the membership of London Yearly Meeting itself. One of the key issues at the Manchester Conference was why so few of the scholars were joining the Religious Society of Friends.: Roger Wilson, ‘Friends in the Nineteenth Century,’ in *FQ*, p.357

Grubb goes so far as to say that Adult Schools were one of the most important reasons for the survival of London Yearly Meeting at the end of the nineteenth century, not because they brought in substantial numbers of converts, but because they kept the younger members involved with

continued on next page

In this example, Braithwaite was using Quaker history to provide a challenge to his readers: he was effectively asking them what could be done to encourage a return to the, in this respect, preferable environment of early Quakers.

Presenting Early Quakers as Social Activists

I have chosen to consider Braithwaite's presentations of the early Quaker attitude towards social questions since Phillips has identified this as one of the key biases present in the Rowntree History Series. He argues that the liberal boom in historiography was closely related to the Society's emerging sense of public culture and civic responsibility and that they 'sought to style their seventeenth-century forebears in the nature of the 'Christian Citizenship' then in vogue.'⁷⁶ He writes,

As a historian, Braithwaite chose to meet that responsibility with a final emphasis in his work that would soften the reputation of the early Friends. He stresses, for example, that during the Restoration period Quakers became ever more amenable to the idea of integration into the greater society. ... Braithwaite's suggestion that Friends had lost all of their antipathy to 'civil government' glosses over what was in fact a rather more complex tradition. ... Braithwaite not only polishes up the face of the seventeenth-century Quakers in his own time, but projects the notion of the Society as indispensable to British political and cultural development back three hundred years'⁷⁷

Quakerism.: Edward Grubb, *Quakerism in England: Its Present Position* (Headley Brothers: London, 1901), p.13

⁷⁶ Phillips, *Friendly Patriotism*, p.p.59-60

⁷⁷ Phillips, *Friendly Patriotism*, p.p.62-63

Braithwaite dedicated a whole chapter of *The Second Period of Quakerism* to the subject of ‘the Church and Social Questions’ and it was clearly an area of importance to him. He considered several specific examples such as Quakers’ honest pricing of goods⁷⁸ and the measures taken to relieve poverty within Quaker communities.⁷⁹ Braithwaite was also eager to present Fox as advocating ‘far-reaching social reforms’⁸⁰ and attempted to justify the increasing Quaker political involvement⁸¹ in his own day.⁸²

However, rather than merely describing the activities of early Friends, Braithwaite frequently uses the historical facts as a basis for conveying his personal opinions on the value of social activism. It is in these writings that the truth of Phillips’ criticism of Braithwaite’s ‘re-styling’ of early Quakers becomes most apparent. The following paragraph clearly demonstrates this tendency and is also particularly interesting because it explicitly mentions ‘Christian citizenship’:

The Christian has his paramount duty as a servant of the Kingdom of God, and has also his position as a member of the State. The first binds him to the threefold aspiration of the Lord’s Prayer, the hallowing of the Divine nature, the advancing of the Kingdom, and the doing of the will of God. The second has also its rightful duties which are as sacred in their place as those flowing from other forms

⁷⁸ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.561

⁷⁹ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.565

⁸⁰ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.558

⁸¹ This increasing involvement can be seen simply by the growth in discussion of political issues in the Quaker periodicals of the early twentieth century. However, it can also be seen in the increasing number of Quaker elected as Members of Parliament. After the 1906 election nine Quaker MPs sat in Parliament, including John Edward Ellis, Joseph Albert Pease, J. Allen Baker and Alfred J. King. After the 1910 election there were seven Quaker MPs, including Arnold Rowntree and T. Edmund Harvey. At this time most Quaker MPs belonged to the Liberal Party but there was among Quakers an increasing interest in socialist political theory.: Phillips, *Friendly Patriotism*, p.p.35-36

⁸² Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.605

of *status*, such as that of husband and wife of parent and child. A spiritual Church, under the headship of Christ, cannot leave it to any outward authority to determine these duties; it must itself seek to see in the light of the Spirit, what are the provinces and functions of the Church and the State in the Divine order. ... Friends, during the period comprised in the present volume, developed not so much a theory of Church and State as an interpretation in practice of Christian citizenship. ... Its character is as notable as its constancy. When the law could not be obeyed, the Quakers suffered its consequences without evasion or resistance. He stood clear of all plots against the constituted authorities and could be no party to revolution by violence.⁸³

It would therefore appear that Braithwaite's emphasis on social questions was another area where his liberal bias can be clearly demonstrated.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have considered the emphases present in Braithwaite's work which most clearly demonstrate his liberal Quaker bias. We have seen that, in different ways, these emphases all represented attempts to make early Quakerism appealing and relevant to Braithwaite's readers. Sometimes this was in the form of pointing out the inadequacies of early Quakerism, for example, early Quaker beliefs about human nature. More often, it took the form of praising Quakerism. Frequently, it also took the form of emphasising aspects of early Quakerism which were most compatible with Liberal Quakerism. I argued that these emphases demonstrate that Braithwaite was conscious of the use and desired

⁸³ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, p.p.598-599

influence his book was likely to have and to some extent choose his topics accordingly.

CHAPTER FIVE – IMPLEMENTING THE VISION: RUFUS JONES

Having considered the various emphases present in Braithwaite's work and the ways in which these related to his liberal Quaker theology, it is now necessary to do the same for Jones. This chapter focuses on the following emphases present in the two volumes of Jones' *Later Periods of Quakerism*:

- Quakerism's origins in medieval mysticism
- Positive understanding of human nature
- Verification by inward authority
- Ambivalence towards quietism
- The value of denominational unity
- Re-interpreting evangelicalism
- Valuing of personal experience above dogma
- Transforming energy of an outward looking faith
- Presenting Quakers as social activists
- Importance of education to rational religion
- Biblical criticism
- Revitalisation of unprogrammed ministry
- Leadership and travelling ministers

Quakerism's Origins in Medieval Mysticism

The emphasis for which Jones' work is most widely known is his claim that medieval mysticism, rather than Puritanism, is the primary forerunner of Quakerism. I limit my treatment of this subject in this chapter and refer the reader instead to my discussion of it in Chapter Three and the extensive discussion by other scholars.¹

For this chapter it is essential to know that Jones believed that Quakerism was at its core a mystical religion. He wrote, 'No other large, organised, historically continuous body of Christians has yet existed which has been so fundamentally mystical, both in theory and practice, as the Society of Friends.'² He was also keen to emphasise that this mysticism is not incompatible with 'work for the relief of human suffering' and that indeed these two features 'quite properly belong together.'

Jones' belief in Quakerism's origins in mysticism influenced even his presentation of the later periods of Quakerism. Jones' belief undergirded all of his emphases, particularly the ones on a positive understanding of human nature, verifiable authority, anti-dogmatism and ambivalence towards quietism. Jones identified historical lessons that not only demonstrated, but also advocated for, a mystical interpretation of Quakerism, believing this essence to be crucial for transforming the Quakerism of his day.

¹ Some of the many people who have written on this topic include Donald Durnbaugh, Melvin Endy, Larry Ingle, and Geoffrey Nuttall

² Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.xiii

Positive Understanding of Human Nature

Jones' definition of mysticism stressed 'the immediate connection of the human soul with God.'³ Jones then differentiated mysticism's positive and negative strands: 'One springs out of a rich and exalted conception of the immeasurable depth and worth of man, the other is built on a pervading sense of the wreck and ruin of fallen man.'⁴ This division between positive and negative mysticism is central to understanding Jones' thought. In the following quotation, Jones is clearly emphasising positive mysticism as he wrote that the mystics,

know as much as any theologians do about sin and its dark trail over all our lives, but they nevertheless insist that the black blotches are on a white background, that man is made for divine companionship, that eternity has been put within our hearts, that evil is only one side of the human account, and that there is something – a homing instinct – in man which takes him back to God as naturally as the child turns in its joys and sorrows to its mother.⁵

Jones attributed the vitality of the early Quakers to this positive Mysticism. Jones contended that the Religious Society of Friends' return in his day to this positive mysticism was both possible and necessary.⁶

In his volumes, Jones identified negative and non-mystical aspects of the Religious Society of Friends. For example, he described the second generation of Quakers and

³ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.33

⁴ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.33

⁵ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.xvi

⁶ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.554; Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.p.545-546

subsequent quietist Quakers as practising a type of negative mysticism, by which he meant a mysticism which emphasised humanity's fallen nature.⁷ Jones was most critical of Barclay's theology. In correspondence to Rowntree, he admitted, 'I have been at work on Barclay's Exposition of the Light, Seed etc. He has, I think, presented it in a wholly untenable way.'⁸ Later that year, Jones added, 'If Barclay's idea of the 'seed'⁹ is correct Quakerism has no message for modern thinkers. It rests in the last resort on something supernatural in the same way as the Bible does for the old time Evangelical teacher.'¹⁰ Of all the emphases described in this chapter, this was one where Jones allowed his theological opinions to influence most strongly his description of history.

Verification by Inward Authority

Jones believed that George Fox was a mystic whose connection with God depended on no external authorities, but was 'verified and verifiable in terms of personal or social life.'¹¹ Jones contrasted Fox's theology with religions which Jones described as reliant on

⁷ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.33

⁸ Rufus Jones to J.W. Rowntree, 2.9.1904, box 48, RMJP

⁹ Barclay writes: 'All Adam's posterity, or mankind, both Jew and Gentiles, as to the first Adam, or earthly man, is fallen, degenerated, and dead; deprived of the sensation or feeling of this inward testimony or seed of God; and is subject unto the power, nature, and seed of the serpent, which he soweth in men's hearts, while they abide in this natural and corrupted estate; from whence it comes, that not only their words and deeds, but all their imaginations are evil perpetually in the sight of God, as proceeding from this depraved and wicked seed. Man, therefore, as he is in this state, can know nothing aright; yea, his thoughts and conceptions concerning God and things spiritual, until he be disjoined from this evil seed, and united to the Divine Light, are unprofitable both to himself and others.': Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (Glasgow: J Menzies & Co., 1886), p.66.

We can see from this that Barclay's theology contains a seed of righteousness and a seed of sin. Jones is here objecting to Barclay's idea of the seed of sin since it opposes Jones' view that there is something innate in all humans which enables them to know God.

¹⁰ Rufus Jones to J.W. Rowntree, 26 December 1904, box 48, RMJP

¹¹ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.xiv

traditions and creeds in order to argue that religion must be ‘internally’ known and that for those who had such internal knowledge there would be no doubt about its veracity.¹²

Jones’ views about verification and his preference for inward or individual authority are representative of the Quaker liberalism emerging in his day. Not only did Jones describe verifiable authority as a traditional tenet of Quakerism, but he also advocated its use in his day: ‘Dedication to this mission will be the surest test of the Quakerism of the future. We cannot take over the Quaker faith; we cannot ‘inherit’ it ready-made from any of its earlier periods, not even from its earliest primitive period.’¹³

Ambivalence Towards Quietism

Jones’ portrayal of quietist Quakerism is important to this dissertation because it demonstrates the extent to which Jones judged and editorialised about aspects of Quakerism he disliked or did not comprehend. I have already described how Jones dislikes the negative mysticism which he believed was held by Quakers from the second generation

¹² Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.988

See also: ‘It is as rational to respond to the Divine Life as it is to respond to beauty or to appreciate love. Man has within himself an organ of revelation as necessary to the complete fullness of his life as is moral conscience or self-consciousness. Religion is thus not something severed from the rest of life and to be thought of as a superaddition; it is rather life itself with its true dimensions discovered and opened out. It is something which can be verified as any other reality can be verified by the testimony of Reason itself. ... We test every pillar of our faith as we test the truth of mathematics, by the highest light of Reason within our souls. We cannot properly talk about ‘sin’ if there is not something in us which judges and condemns our acts. We cannot mean anything by ‘righteousness’ unless we can *see the difference* between that which is right and that which is eternally wrong. We talk in vain of ‘salvation’ if salvation be not a state and condition of spiritual life and health which can be known and appreciated in the awakened self-consciousness.’: Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.p.545-546

¹³ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.988

onwards. In addition to this Jones also disliked their doctrine of perfection. Jones accused Quietist Quakers of exhibiting ‘a fear of intellect and tend[ing] to narrow the sphere of reason.’¹⁴ He also warned of the dangers of an over-emphasis on discernment which Jones saw as a distortion in quietist Quakerism.¹⁵ Quietists placed a great deal of importance on the process of discerning whether a particular action was truly God’s will for them. This process would sometimes last for months or years. Jones believed that this was excessive and accused quietists of an over emphasis on discernment which bordered on a fear of decisive action.

However, this does not mean that Jones had only critical things to say about quietism.

He correctly interpreted quietist beliefs in the following way:

It must be understood at the outset that Quietism does not spell lethargy and inaction. ... The quietist may, and often did, swing out into a course of action that would make the rationally centred Christian quail with fear and slink to cover. It is not a question of action or of non-action; it is a question of *the right way to initiate action*.¹⁶

However, it is by no means clear that Jones agreed with the quietist idea about the right way to initiate action.

Jones’ thinking can be summed up by something he wrote in a private letter: ‘There are two ways to look at Quietism. The fundamental theory of it seems to me a false one but

¹⁴ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.93

¹⁵ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.871

¹⁶ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.35 (The use of capitals for ‘Quietism’ and ‘quietist’ is as was used in the original)

the actual fact of it on individual lives was often very wonderful, and in many cases produced a very high type of saint.¹⁷ It is clear from his description that Jones did not understand how such an inadequate theory could produce such ‘saints’.¹⁸ Jones’ descriptions of quietism are of interest to us because they demonstrate the extent to which he was willing to pass judgement on those aspects of Quakerism he disliked.

The Value of Denominational Unity

Given Jones’ efforts in the 1950s to reunite Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, it is hardly surprising that he judged the American separations which occurred in the 19th century and affirmed the value of denominational unity. With characteristic melodrama, he described the 1827 separation as being ‘the greatest tragedy of Quaker history.’¹⁹ When describing this first separation, Jones highlighted two points which he considered to be the most tragic and his choice is revealing. Firstly, he emphasised the need for co-operation and the value of seeking Truth from more than one perspective.²⁰ However, he also bemoaned the fact

¹⁷ Rufus Jones to Emma Cadbury, 30 January 1945, box 58, RMJP

¹⁸ Jones’ attitude towards quietism can be seen in his consideration of the Quaker leaders of the eighteenth century. He describes them in the following way: ‘They were not heroic fighters with spiritual weapons like the Quakers of the first generation, nor, with the exception of Woolman, impressive workers for great social and humanitarian reforms, like their successors in the nineteenth century. They will interest our age, if at all, because they were sure of God and lived in a world of rather sordid aims and increasing scepticism, with their sensitive souls open inward toward eternal realities.’: Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.30

Jones’ incomprehension can also be clearly seen in his description of the effect on John Greenleaf Whittier of attending a profoundly quietistic meeting in his youth: ‘it did for a serious minded boy what no theological preaching of that period could perhaps have done. It sent him on his own search for God and trained him to expect awe-inspiring revelations within his own breast.’ This is Jones at his most positive about quietism and yet it is obvious that he is describing something he does not understand.: Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.p.648-649

¹⁹ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.435

²⁰ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.439

that, in his perception, the separation was an entirely negative experience with no positive outcome to justify it.

Neither party succeeded in getting down through the cooled crust of inherited Quakerism to any fresh springs of water. Both sides in the controversy remained throughout the struggle in the dry area of tradition and theology. Sometimes the tragedy of separated churches and divided families is relieved by the discovery which one side or the other makes of a new line of march for the race, or by the incursion of fresh light upon the central issues of the soul. Nothing of this sort occurred to relieve the tragedy of 1827-1828.²¹

Interestingly, Jones apportioned a large part of the blame for the separation on the lack of historical knowledge on both sides.

Neither party was possessed of the historical spirit or equipped with any clear knowledge of historical development. Each group, as the issue grew intense, stoutly contended that it represented primitive Quakerism, each quoted the Quaker 'fathers' *ad nauseum* and each honestly believed that its ideas were the ideas which had come as an inspiration to the builders of the Society in the 17th century. Neither group showed, however, any real historical grasp of early Quakerism, and still less any comprehension of the transformations which the years between had wrought.²²

This suggests the possibility that Jones believed that the Rowntree History Series, as an accurate historical study, might help to heal the wounds still evident from these schisms.

Jones conveyed his disapproval of subsequent schisms by describing 1835-1855 as being 'the darkest and saddest in the history of Quakerism.'²³ He justified his opinion as follows:

They could not again speak to the world or to the churches with the same compelling message. They could not talk with the same assurance as before

²¹ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.484

²² Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.436

²³ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.488

of the authority of the Light, and they could not appeal with the same conviction to the conquering force of love. Each branch claimed to be 'the child of promise' and to be the purveyor of light, but the persistent hostility to one another ate the heart out of the fine old name 'Friend' and weakened the quality of spiritual leadership.²⁴

Furthermore, he criticised the isolation of yearly meetings from different branches of Quakerism. He particularly mentioned Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's choice not to recognize and correspond with other yearly meetings.²⁵ Jones claimed that this tendency towards isolationism 'produced weakness and barrenness within, and at the same time the opportunity to influence the other bodies which were undergoing profound transformation was missed. Each section needed the others.'²⁶

Characteristically, Jones not only described what happened, but also proclaimed that,

What was wanted was a new method, a fresh and vital way, evolved out of the old, and preserving the essential principles of the Quaker faith. There was wisdom enough in the corporate group of American Friends to have solved this difficult problem, but the divided state of the Society and the autonomous character of the several Yearly Meetings made it impossible to mass the intelligence and sound judgement of the bodies whose very life and mission were at stake on the issue.²⁷

Jones, however, did not provide any evidence to support his opinion on the negative outcomes of separation. Consequently, Jones may be criticised for advocating his theological agenda more than adhering to scientific historical method in his pursuit of the Truth.

²⁴ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.488

²⁵ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.913

²⁶ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.914

²⁷ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.917

Re-interpreting Evangelicalism

Liberal Quakerism from this period is frequently depicted as being in opposition to evangelical Quakerism.²⁸ However, the relationship between the two forces within Quakerism was in fact far more complicated as is clear from Jones' writings.

Jones is strongly opposed to the emphasis on doctrine that was frequently found within evangelicalism. Even more than this, he was opposed to what he believed to be their fundamental misinterpretation of human nature.²⁹ However, in other ways Jones' portrayal of evangelicalism is surprisingly positive. He wrote, 'All great preaching – preaching, that is, which in our day or in any day convicts and transforms men – owes its kindling power to its evangelical note,'³⁰ and 'All that is true and great at the heart of the evangelical movement must be conserved. The overwhelming sense of God, the staggering consciousness of sin, the transforming discovery of divine grace, the joyous assurance of forgiveness which characterise the great evangelicals are essential features of any profound spiritual experience.'³¹

Jones explained the tension inherent in his bias in favour of mysticism and his acknowledgement of evangelicalism's positive features by writing, 'A complete religion, a full rounded Christianity will be both evangelical and mystical, provided of course, that the

²⁸ Evangelical here refers to Quakers with more Gurneyite tendencies.

²⁹ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.xxxi

³⁰ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.xv

³¹ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.xxxii

term evangelical is used in its deeper and truer sense.’³² It is therefore necessary to explore what Jones means by evangelicalism in its ‘truer sense.’ This can be seen most clearly in his historical treatment of evangelical Quakerism.

When discussing J.J. Gurney’s³³ influence on evangelical Quakerism, Jones accorded him the best of motivations and wrote that Gurney clearly believed himself to be consistent ‘with the central Quaker position.’³⁴ However, Jones argued that Gurney did not ‘understand historically’ the Quaker faith.³⁵ Jones criticised Gurney’s shift from ‘an essentially mystical religion’ to faith in ‘an elaborated plan of salvation, built out of Scripture passages and solidly buttressed by texts.’³⁶ Secondly, Jones objected to Gurney’s ‘negative’ understanding of human nature and supernatural default for salvation.³⁷

³² Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.xxxiv

³³ Joseph John Gurney (1788-1847) was an English Friend and in many ways very much a traditional Friend of the time: he accepted all the outward regulations of the plain life and held to a traditional view of Quaker ministry and the importance of silent worship. However, he revolutionised certain Quaker doctrines such as the role of the Bible and the nature of the Inner Light. According to Hamm, the heart of the change in Quaker doctrines was to do with the relationship between justification and sanctification. Whereas previously they had been inseparable to the Quaker, Gurney held to the more traditional Christian interpretation that anyone could attain justification through a simple act of faith, whereas sanctification was a later stage in the spiritual journey. When Gurney requested permission from London Yearly Meeting to travel as an officially endorsed minister among American Friends, his request occasioned a discussion which continued for most of the day. The most significant objection was his perceived worldliness. The meeting did not achieve full unity but a certificate was nevertheless granted. Whilst those present were asked not to disclose the disunity of the Meeting, a full account of the debate was sent to America ahead of Gurney’s arrival. Upon Gurney’s arrival in America, the most determined resistance to Gurney’s ministry came from John Wilbur of Hopkinton, Rhode Island: this is why the two sides of the separation became known as Gurneyite and Wilburite. Gurney travelled widely in the ministry throughout the U.S.A., but so did Wilbur and wherever he went he warned against Gurney’s ministry.: Hamm, *Transformation of American Quakerism*, p.p.20-22; Dandelion, *Introduction*, p.100

³⁴ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.p.499-500

³⁵ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.503

³⁶ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.p.499-500

³⁷ For example, Jones wrote that Gurney believed that ‘man was a ‘total ruin’ and spiritually speaking, nothing could be done to help him except what was done ‘for him without him.’ Until ‘justification’ was accomplished for him and he was restored to favour through the merits of Another than himself, he could

When portraying the subsequent revival³⁸ movement in the U.S.A., Jones wrote that its first effects ‘were undoubtedly good’,³⁹ especially its initiation of missionary work. He wrote, ‘missionary effort has contributed at least as much toward the recovery of spiritual power and leadership as has any one influence at work within the Society.’⁴⁰ However, Jones’ criticism of the later stages of the revival movement⁴¹ nullified his affirmation of the first effects of renewal. He wrote, ‘There appeared signs of regression, and reversion to types of methods and of thought which were quite out of harmony with the inner spirit of fundamental Quakerism. This became manifest in two marked ways: (1) in methods of

have no assistance of any kind from above and no gift of light or of communion.’: Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.503

³⁸ Substantial change in the form of a ‘renewal’ movement came to Gurneyite Friends in the 1860s. This was a decade of transition for Friends: the rules of plain speech and dress were relaxed and, beginning with New York Yearly Meeting in 1859, marriage regulations were changed to allow marriage with non-Friends. The disciplinary system was altered in ways which brought Quakers more into line with other evangelical Christian denominations. That decade also saw the beginning of worldwide Quaker missions and the increase in the number ‘received into membership at their own request.’ These changes were encouraged by ‘renewal’ Friends who strove for the breakdown of sectarian barriers whilst preserving Quaker distinctiveness. Even more significantly, they desired a modification of worship that emphasised individual initiative and freedom. They remained committed to silent, unprogrammed worship but also encouraged cautious experimentation and urged more members to speak when led to do so: Hamm, *Transformation of American Quakerism*, p.p.36-59

³⁹ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.904

⁴⁰ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.983

⁴¹ Even more dramatic changes occurred in American Quakerism during the 1870s. Since the late 1850s there had been among Quakers an increasing emphasis on a definite conversion experience, but, in the 1870s there arose a ‘revival’ movement among Quakers which emphasised religious experience over Quaker distinctiveness and found inspiration in the interdenominational Holiness movement. Hamm has identified five key characteristics of this Quaker revival: ‘(1) services focussing on a small group of preachers; (2) an emphasis on instantaneous experience, whether it be conversion or sanctification; (3) the employment of altar calls and mourners’ benches; (4) the use of congregational singing; and (5) the toleration and even encouragement of extreme emotionalism.’ The revival spread throughout the Orthodox yearly meetings quickly and by 1875 was dominant in several yearly meetings. The revival movement of the 1870s brought with it two changes which were of especial importance. Firstly, there were changes in the mode of worship. For the revivalists silent waiting was increasingly seen as unnecessary since the Holy Spirit was always present among the sanctified. This led to a profound change in the nature of meeting for worship. Equally important was a shift in power from elders to ministers which occurred throughout the decade. The combination of these two changes led to the gradual emergence of the idea of a Quaker clergy with distinctive offices and privileges: Hamm, *Transformation of American Quakerism*, p.p.63-92; Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, p.p.105-106

organisation and practice, and (2) in its religious conceptions and interpretations.⁴² Jones is here referring to the development of a paid pastorate as well as doctrinal issues. Jones judged Quaker participation in the revival movement to have been a significant distortion of true Quakerism, without considering the extent to which his own liberal Quakerism might also have been a departure.

Valuing of Personal Experience Above Dogma

Tied up with Jones' desire to distance Quakerism from puritanism as well as from 'false' interpretations of evangelicalism, was his interpretation of Quakerism as a protest against dogma. Jones' dismissal of dogmatic doctrinal adherence is particularly obvious in his description of evangelicalism in the Religious Society of Friends:

The attempt to graft the evangelical system on to the Quaker interpretation of Christianity as the remedy for lethargy and doubt was not an easy thing to do. The Quaker movement had been born as a mighty protest of the soul against the habit of turning religion into the adoption of theological doctrines. The Friends were, in the period of their origin, as much opposed to doctrine as they were to priests and sacraments.⁴³

Jones revealed his opinion frequently, either by claiming that doctrinal adherence would have been anathema to early Quakers, or by making generalisations about the

⁴² Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.915

⁴³ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.437

See also: 'When confronted by theological problems [Quakers] have generally revealed considerable confusion of thought, and they have often drifted about like a ship in the fog; but given a clear moral issue to settle, or a human cause to lead, and they have usually girded themselves up like men and steered straight, even though slowly, through the mists toward the regions of light. Their fine sense of right and their spirit of service, joined with genuine bravery and uncompromising leadership, have given them an influence out of all proportion to their numbers. ... It was just this burden of moral responsibility, and this feeling of kinship with those who suffered and struggled that saved Friends from complete disaster during the tragic period of decline and separations.': Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.559

Religious Society of Friends and its history. An example of the former came when he remarked that George Fox ‘broke with the theological systems of Protestantism as completely as Luther and Calvin had done with Catholicism’.⁴⁴ The following call to a personal experience is an example of his generalisations:

The vital task and mission of mysticism in all ages, whether exhibited in individuals or in a group movement, like that of the Society of Friends, has been to call men away from ‘theological systems,’ however sacred, to the fresh and living water to be found in a personal experience of God.⁴⁵

Jones further revealed his opinion by praising the alternative to dogmatic religion. The following quotation, describing the work of John Greenleaf Whittier,⁴⁶ is representative of this tendency:

He shows throughout his entire writings, both in prose and verse, the persistent Quaker dislike of rigid creeds. This did not in the least indicate weakness of faith or any blurring of truth in his mind. It only meant that he looked upon religious truth, as all mystics do, primarily as personal experience and not as dogma, and as therefore being too rich, complex, and many-sided to be forced into inelastic phrases.⁴⁷

Transforming Energy of an Outward Looking Faith

One of the key messages which Jones attempts to portray is that ‘Religion cannot be saved if it tries to save itself.’ Instead, ‘It must fearlessly venture, go forth, beyond its safe frontiers, and carry its spiritual insights, as a transforming energy, into the world, otherwise

⁴⁴ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.xiv

⁴⁵ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.xv

⁴⁶ John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) was a well-known Quaker poet and campaigner for the abolition of slavery. For further information see: Elizabeth Gray Vining, *Mr. Whittier: A Biography* (New York: The Viking Press, 1974)

⁴⁷ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.p.654-655

it will grow artificial itself and become a dry, dead thing.⁴⁸ Jones conveyed this message in three ways: Firstly, he criticised quietist Quakers for being too inward-looking at the expense of a vibrant outward-looking faith;⁴⁹ Secondly, he gave partial credit to missionary zeal for the increased energy in Quakerism which led to its renewal;⁵⁰ Thirdly, he emphasised his belief in the importance of a social service spirit.

In the context of this discussion, Jones also took the opportunity to delineate the ways in which an outward-looking emphasis could be made relevant in his day,

If Friends could have risen to the divinely given opportunity, and could have delivered to the age the full legitimate meaning of their own religious Principle, they could have ministered to the 19th century with even greater effectiveness than that which marked the ministry of Fox and the 'First Publishers of Truth' in the period of the Commonwealth. Even now the message of immediate intercourse with God, of continuous revelation, of first-hand evidence and of religion as a way of life is everywhere needed and speaks with convicting power to all conditions of men.⁵¹

Jones made several vague comments of this kind about the importance of an outward-looking faith. In the next section, I consider one particular form of this emphasis.

Presenting Quakers as Social Activists

Jones primarily emphasised his belief in the importance of an outward-looking faith through the extent of information he provided about practical actions Quakers have taken for humanitarian causes. For example, Jones dedicated a whole chapter to Quaker work on

⁴⁸ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.179

⁴⁹ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.100

⁵⁰ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.547

⁵¹ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.p.557-558

behalf of Native Americans, slaves and freed slaves.⁵² Elsewhere, he discussed the relationship between Quakers and the political process.⁵³ The work described in these chapters mostly took place during the nineteenth century. At times, Jones emphasised that there was a growth in interest in these activities during the nineteenth century. At other times, he emphasised that these types of concern had always been of the utmost importance to Quakers. It is the tension between these different interpretations which is examined in this section.

We can see that, on the one hand, Jones was keen to emphasise that Quakers had always possessed this humanitarian spirit. He wrote,

The Quakers have always been intensely humanitarian. It has been a central note of their message, from the Commonwealth days to the present, that man is a being of infinite value and of divine possibilities and that every effort should be made that can lead to the liberation of men from their burdens and limitations. Friends have never taken refuge in theology. It has never seemed to them a solution of the problem to substitute eschatology for an actually transformed world here.⁵⁴

Yet this statement contradicts what Jones wrote elsewhere about Quakers and theology. Jones criticised Quaker interests in theology, but that did not mean that they have never ‘taken refuge’ in it. Jones wrote,

They [Quakers] have claimed not to be interested in theology, and it must be said that when they have taken it up they have floundered about in it pretty badly, and most of all to their own harm. But they take naturally to tasks of the social order and they reveal here a native aptitude, as they do also for inward communion.⁵⁵

⁵² Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, Chapter 15

⁵³ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.790

⁵⁴ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.636

⁵⁵ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.814

Similarly contradictorily, Jones noted that this growth in social service happened at the same time as a growth in interest in theology:

At the very period when the interest in theology was becoming dominant and disturbing, a new interest appeared that was destined in the ripening of time to bring the Society once more to an era of real spiritual life and power. This new interest was a rediscovery of the beckoning social tasks of humanity.⁵⁶

I suggest that this is largely an unconscious contradiction on Jones' part. He seems to have allowed his zeal for Quaker social service to detract from providing a coherent chronological narrative.

Importance of Education to Rational Religion

Describing historical Quaker attitudes towards the intellect and education was a matter of great importance to Jones: he devoted a whole chapter⁵⁷ to this topic and repeatedly mentioned it elsewhere. However, Jones' attitude was rather paradoxical as he both criticised and praised Quaker education.

Jones frequently generalised the Religious Society of Friends as always being interested in education. For example,

From their earliest origin as a people, Friends have been wisely devoted to the advancement of education, and they have done much toward its development in England and America. George Fox took part in instituting schools for boys and girls when only an incipient form of organisation for the Society had been

⁵⁶ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.314

⁵⁷ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, Chapter 17

put into operation, and all the far-sighted leaders of the Quaker movement in the early period were interested in liberal education.⁵⁸

Similarly, when discussing the westward migration of Quakers across the USA, Jones commented that education was always ‘one of their first concerns.’⁵⁹

However, when educational systems are examined in more detail, it becomes obvious that Jones was far more critical.

Friends saw clearly from the beginning of their history that if they were to have no trained clergy, but were to try seriously the great experiment of a priesthood of believers, they must educate the entire membership of the Society. What they did not see clearly was the type of education which was necessary for the success of their bold experiment. ... Friends, being of necessity isolated by their theory of life, and being apart from the main currents of thought, were especially in need of intensive, if not extensive intellectual training for their membership. Their basic religious conception, however, as time went on, tended to make Friends timid and cautious in reference to learning. Their quietistic temper and their limitless faith in the immediate assistance of inward Light made education appear more or less as a ‘creaturely’ achievement and an unnecessary effort ... and, because of it, the Society suffered privation and incalculable loss.⁶⁰

Correspondence with Norman Penney⁶¹ suggests that Jones originally wanted to claim that there were no learned Friends at all during the first half of the eighteenth century: a letter to Jones from Penney advised him that this portrayal was not actually historically accurate,⁶² and Jones’ extreme opinion did not actually appear in the Rowntree History Series.

⁵⁸ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.666

⁵⁹ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.862

⁶⁰ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.p.669-670

⁶¹ The first full time paid librarian for London Yearly Meeting.

⁶² Norman Penney to Rufus Jones, 24 October 1920, box 19, RMJP

Jones' paradoxical presentation of Quaker education served the same function as Braithwaite's consideration of the same subject. It allowed the authors to express their opinions on both what is and is not effective in Quaker education and how this should effect its future development.

Biblical Criticism

One of the overarching concerns of liberal Quakerism was for a greater understanding of the Bible through knowledge of academic Biblical criticism. It is therefore hardly surprising that Jones presented the growth in Bible study within the Religious Society of Friends as a universally positive development.

Jones' sympathetic treatment of Quakers who valued systematic study of the Bible begins with those who first questioned the inerrancy of Scripture. Jones initially described the plight of those outside the Religious Society of Friends⁶³ and then how these questions gradually emerged within the Religious Society of Friends. A representative example of this is the sympathy with which he treated John Hancock⁶⁴ Jones described him as having 'none of the critical insight which has come with modern historical scholarship, but he was profoundly convinced that there were passages in the Old Testament which could not be

⁶³ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.p.255-256

⁶⁴ Hancock was a recorded minister of Ireland Yearly Meeting who later discontinued attendance at meeting for worship because (according to Jones) he came to feel that the Religious Society of Friends 'had become, or was fast becoming, a stereotyped and stagnant body, over-busy with rules and disciplinary regulations and devoid of living vision for the supreme issues of the times: Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.296

squared with the soul's highest conception of God.'⁶⁵ Jones then appealed to the reader to understand the difficulties men like Hancock faced and wrote,

His series of tracts enable the present-day reader to see very clearly how difficult it was a hundred years ago for an honest, sincere person to face the issues, which were forced upon him under the assumption that every statement of the Old Testament was an infallible word of God for all time, without going further in the direction of scepticism than he intended to go ... The present-day reader ... can see that with growing knowledge nothing could have saved our reverence and appreciation of the Bible if it had not been for the intellectual relief which came with the new insight of historical criticism.⁶⁶

After considering the beginnings of biblical criticism, Jones' consideration took a different turn and he next described how Quakers in the nineteenth century increasingly read the Bible devotionally. He described how both the Hicksite and the Gurneyite separations caused Friends to read the Bible 'with awakened zeal, though even still there was widespread fear of study.'⁶⁷ Again, he was clear in expressing his opinion that this was a positive development.⁶⁸

Jones then described the growth of 'modern, scientific' study of the Bible. He does not attempt to diminish the frightening effect that this originally had for Christianity.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.296

⁶⁶ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.297-298

⁶⁷ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.886

⁶⁸ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.871

⁶⁹ 'Its conclusions brought reconstruction of thought wherever it carried its investigations. No field was too sacred for its probing, no territory was fenced off from scrutiny. The old and new testaments received a most seeking and unrestrained examination. No facts, no faiths, no dogma remained apart unsifted, untested, uncriticised. The entire basis and structure of religious faith were affected. The authority of tradition vanished. The habit of constructing theological doctrines out of selected proof-texts became as antiquated in educated circles as the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. The universe which had already been discovered to be infinite in space was now seen to be extended into infinite time, and the old ideas about human origins and man's relation to other forms of life were completely changed. In fact, nothing was left unshaken. At first the

continued on next page

However, in a clear message to his contemporaries, Jones emphasised that this growth has in fact been a blessing to Quakerism.

The Society of Friends held a position which made its leaders peculiarly able to meet this intellectual crisis successfully ... Man, they insisted, was religious primarily, not because extraordinary events had happened in a remote past, but because his deepest inner life is unsundered from God, and therefore he is essentially more than a finite being. While old systems, built on tradition, were being shaken and all doctrines resting on scribal or scholastic authority were being threatened, Friends could rest with confidence upon a religious basis that was always open to verification and demonstration. They did not need to alter their fundamental point of view in order to accept the implications of the modern method of scientific research.⁷⁰

Through his descriptions and interpretations of the history of Quaker usage of the Bible, Jones was throughout giving a message to his readers that the Bible is an important gift and that the best way to use it is through studying it in a modern, scholarly way.

Revitalisation of Unprogrammed Ministry

Considering that the main aim of the Rowntree History Series when it was first discussed by Rowntree and Jones was improvement in the quality of Quakerism's worship, it is hardly surprising that this emphasis should also figure prominently in Jones' work.

Jones was critical of the quietist idea that vocal ministry was so solemn that it should be engaged in only if there were no alternative. This is obvious in the following description

irresistible sweep of scientific reconstruction seemed to threaten all inherited faiths with bankruptcy.': Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.962

⁷⁰ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.963

of how vocal ministry in the nineteenth century renewal movement differed from quietist ministry.

Instead of long periods of solemn silence the meeting became 'lively.' The long agony and travail of spirit which preceded vocal utterance and breaking of silence became a thing of the past. The habit and aptitude of speech were cultivated. It became natural and easy to communicate. Vocal prayer had always been a weighty matter with Friends. One prayed, or 'appeared in supplication,' as they called it, only when the 'moving' was so powerful that it could no longer be resisted. When the worshipper knelt, the entire congregation uncovered, for the men usually wore their hats until prayer was offered, and solemnly rose and stood while the kneeling suppliant voiced the needs of the whole group. It was no light and easy exercise to engage in. One postponed it if he could, 'tried the fleece wet and dry,' and refrained from breaking the silence, if he thought he could escape 'the woe' that belonged to those who disobeyed. Now all this was altered. In the livelier meetings it was no unusual thing to have a dozen short prayers. The custom of congregational rising was quickly annulled. Everything was done that could be done to make it easy for the young and old to pray.⁷¹

Despite the fact that Jones approved of these changes, he made equally clear his disapproval of the subsequent developments of a paid pastorate.

Attempts which Friends have made in America to transform the historical type of free meeting by introducing a directing pastor and a set form of service have not brought a satisfying solution of the problem of ministry and worship. The natural drift of these experiments has been in the direction of system, routine, fixity and, incipient ritual, and a loss of the sense of personal responsibility on the part of the congregation. The innovation has not produced the expected results in growth and in increase of membership, while it has been attended almost certainly by a waning of individual responsibility, an alteration of ideals in worship and a surrender of faith in the priesthood of the entire membership. ... The real difficulty is the fundamental one that a directed meeting, systematised under a programme, alters the entire conception of the Society of Friends and puts its central ideas in peril. It would mean, if the pastoral system were to be accepted as the final basis for the Society of Friends, that the main experiment of historical Quakerism had proved a failure.⁷²

⁷¹ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.910

⁷² Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.990

The essence of his critique of this development is that, in his opinion, ‘revivalists’⁷³ have renounced the most important aspect of what it means to be Quakers. He wrote, with sorrow, that ‘Multitudes of Friends, and whole meetings, became oblivious of the earlier Quaker ideals and manners, and gloried in the fact that Friends were indistinguishable from other Christians, as though they had no special mission.’⁷⁴ It is therefore hardly surprising that Jones was consistently keen to emphasise that there were viable alternatives to the development of a paid pastorate. He mentioned the amount of work done by liberal Quaker leaders to improve ministry after the 1895 Manchester Conference.⁷⁵ However, he also admitted that,

Our historical review, however, makes it very clear that the Quaker experiment in lay-religion cannot be pronounced at any period a complete success, and will obviously not win the approval of those who have adopted the pastoral alternative unless some adequate methods are found for raising the general level of ministry in Friends’ meetings and for maintaining the necessary pastoral care and community service of the neighbourhoods around the meetings.⁷⁶

As a result of his dislike of programmed ministry, Jones felt justified in giving his opinion on the change in attitude required to improve unprogrammed ministry:

Friends have been too apt in the past to assume that inspiration and illumination must come, if at all, during the meeting hour. They have too often conceived of the work of the Spirit as limited to the occasion of the gathering. The result of this narrow theory of inspiration has been to discount preparation and to glorify impromptu and spontaneous speaking. That way of interpreting the influence of the Spirit has encouraged passivity, not to say mental laziness and emptiness. It has tended to reduce ministry to a single type and to predetermine that only persons who possessed certain psychical traits would be likely to speak. There is no sound basis for this position, and it

⁷³ See earlier definitions of ‘renewal’ and ‘revival’ Friends on page 82.

⁷⁴ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.920

⁷⁵ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.977

⁷⁶ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.991

may be said with considerable confidence that some form of preparation is essential for effective ministry and that the Spirit of God is not limited and confined to seasons or to localities, but is at all times as near the seeking soul as electrical energy is near to the wire that conveys it.⁷⁷

Leadership and Travelling Ministers

Another area in which Jones' perspective bore great similarity to that of Braithwaite was in his emphasis on the importance of inspired leadership and the itinerant ministry. Despite supposedly considering the later periods of Quakerism, Jones had a surprising amount to say about the early leaders. When doing so, he praised the first generation Quaker itinerant ministers⁷⁸ and claimed that 'In the primitive stage the persons of paramount influence and leadership were, with some notable exceptions, persons who possessed large gifts for public ministry and apostolic preaching service.'⁷⁹ Similarly to Braithwaite, Jones claimed that the waning of this system was a great loss to Quakerism,

While the founders of Quakerism themselves lived, personalities counted for more than systems and creative leadership prevented rigid crystallisation, but this later stage, of smaller personalities and of waning enthusiasm, was naturally designed to be an era that would perfect the inherited system of organisation and discipline and expand and magnify the accumulated customs of the fathers.⁸⁰

The importance which Jones attached to individuals can even be seen in the structure of his books. As his history unfolded, Jones tended more and more towards telling the story through the biography of specific individuals. This is especially obvious in *Volume 2*

⁷⁷ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.993

⁷⁸ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.195

⁷⁹ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.120

⁸⁰ Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 1)*, p.106

in which he devoted, for example, Chapter 16 to John Bright⁸¹ and Whittier and Chapter 19 to 'notable Friends' of the nineteenth century. One of Jones's complaints was of the difficulty for the Religious Society Of Friends during the nineteenth century to produce distinguished leaders. He wrote:

It was unfortunately often difficult for a distinguished person to remain a Friend during the dull, arid and contentious period of early 19th century Quakerism. If his talents and distinction brought him into wide relation with men and women who did not belong to the Society of Friends, and if he conformed to the manners and habits of others than Friends, he was soon subject to criticism and disapproval. He quickly found his intellectual views and sentiments diverging, too from those of the more contracted and insular fellowship, and in a short time felt that he no longer fitted comfortably into the restrained way of life in which he had been brought up.⁸²

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have shown that there are many ways in which Jones freely allowed his liberal theology to influence his retelling of history. His belief in the mystical nature of Quakerism is a theme undergirding several of the emphases considered, in particular, positive understanding of humanity, verifiable inward authority, ambivalence towards quietism and anti-dogmatism. Many of Jones' emphases were the same as Braithwaite's, in particular, the emphasis on the value of education and of itinerant ministry. When considering the role of education, Jones uses the same technique as Braithwaite did of describing the aspects of Quaker practice with which he both agreed and

⁸¹ John Bright (1811-1889) was a well-known Quaker M.P with the Liberal party. He was a member of the Anti-Corn-Law League when it was founded in 1839. He became MP for Durham in 1843 and Manchester in 1847. He denounced the Crimean War (1854-56) and his anti-war views contributed towards his losing his Manchester seat. In 1857 he was elected MP for Birmingham, a seat which he retained for the rest of his life.

⁸² Jones, *Later Periods (Volume 2)*, p.770

disagreed. They both then argued that it was possible in their time to use this hindsight to move towards a more perfect model of Quaker education. However, Jones typically conveys his bias more explicitly than Braithwaite.

CHAPTER SIX – DENOMINATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION

In this chapter, I consider the ways in which the Rowntree History Series was linked with the formation of liberal Quaker identity during the period of its emergence. I first demonstrate that identity formation¹ was an explicit aim of the writers of the Rowntree History Series. In order to explore the extent to which this identity formation is specific to the context of The Religious Society of Friends during the early twentieth century, I next consider other contexts in which history has played a significant role in the development of religious identity. The other contexts which I have chosen are twentieth century Methodism and the search for the historical Jesus at Chicago Divinity School in the early twentieth century. After considering these other contexts and the importance of history to evangelical Quakers, I argue that the importance of history to identity formation is in many ways specific to the context of liberal Quakerism.

Non-Creedal Identity

Most Christian denominations have a creed which plays a pivotal role in defining their beliefs. However, Quakerism's status as a non-creedal church raises the question of whether an alternative to a creed is necessary to the denominational identity of a make and makes theories of identity formation within the Religious

¹ In this dissertation 'identity formation' is the term used to convey the process in which liberal Quakerism learnt to define itself and in which individuals learnt to express they allegiance to the idea of liberal Quakerism.

Society of Friends particularly interesting. Plüss is the only previous scholar to have studied in any detail identity formation in light of Quakerism's non-creedal nature. She presents some compelling arguments about the role of cognition in socialisation and social cohesion. Cognition refers to the mental processes involved in gaining knowledge and comprehension; these processes include thinking, knowing, judging, remembering and problem solving. Much previous research tends to assume that these cognitive processes are centred around the acceptance or non-acceptance of doctrinal statements. They therefore assume that non-doctrinal religious communities are likely to have weaker corporate identity or social cohesion.² In contrast to this, Plüss uses the example of the Religious Society of Friends to argue that this is not necessarily the case. Instead she argues that a strong sense of corporate identity can be created just as effectively through friendship and positive affective sanctions, such as rewarding acceptable behaviour.³

Potentially Plüss' findings could undermine my conclusions in this dissertation, since my argument that the Rowntree History Series was influential in the formation of liberal Quaker identity relies heavily on the role of cognition in identity formation. However, I argue that this is not in fact the case, for two reasons: namely because Plüss is researching, firstly, a different period of

² Caroline Plüss, 'Analysing non-doctrinal socialization: re-assessing the role of cognition to account for social cohesion in the Religious Society of Friends' p.p. 253-275 in *The British Journal of Sociology* (Volume 85, 2007), p.255

³ Plüss, 'Analysing non-doctrinal socialization' in *TBJS*, p.266

Quakerism than is being considered in this dissertation, and, secondly, a different stage of identity formation.

The difference in period being studied is important because there is a significant distinction between a non-creedal church and a non-doctrinal one. Plüss tends to assume that because Quakerism is non-creedal it is also non-doctrinal.⁴ The early twenty-first century Quakerism studied by Plüss may arguably be non-doctrinal; however, this was not the case for the Quakerism studied within my parameters. The period of the growth of liberal Quakerism included several substantial changes in Quaker doctrine and therefore it is arguable that cognition plays a greater role in this specific context.

Secondly, Plüss' article focuses on the integration of new members into a Quaker meeting. However, in the liberal period, the focus was far more on the education of those who were already members and had probably grown up in Quaker meetings. The gradual changing of corporate beliefs is a process that can less easily be explained by social factors than can the welcoming of an individual into a meeting. Therefore, I argue that it is logical for cognition to play a greater role in the assimilation process.

⁴ Plüss, 'Analysing non-doctrinal socialization' in *TBJS*, p.255

Liberal Quaker Identity

Phillips' study conveys much about the development of liberal Quaker identity during the period, 1890-1910, in which he argues that there was an emergence of 'Friendly Patriotism,' which he defines as 'a complex set of attitudes by which publicly spirited Quakers attempted to straddle multiple identities.'⁵ Phillips is primarily interested in the development of Quaker identity in a political sense. For example, he notes that prior to 1890 Quakers in Parliament never voted as a bloc and were more concerned with 'the extension of newly acquired Quaker respectability into Westminster than with securing a place for Quaker principles in national government.'⁶ However, Phillips then charts the development of the idea of Christian citizenship which transformed this understanding of the role of the Quaker in public life. Phillips observes that one of the most impassioned advocates of Christian citizenship was John Stephenson Rowntree⁷ and notes that 'central to [J.S.] Rowntree's reading of Quaker history and its relationship to the State is his granting to Friends an authoritative role in the nation's moral and political development.'⁸ Furthermore, Phillips observes that histories such as the Rowntree History Series tended to emphasise those aspects of early Quaker history which corresponded to their ideas of Christian citizenship.⁹ This is an example of

⁵ Phillips, Friendly Patriotism, p.6

⁶ Phillips, Friendly Patriotism, p.21

⁷ John Stephenson Rowntree (1834-1907). Author of 'Quakerism, Past and Present', the winning essay of a competition held in 1859 on the theme 'The Causes of the Decline in the Society of Friends'. This essay proved to be highly influential in the later transformation of British Friends.

⁸ Phillips, Friendly Patriotism, p.p.31-2

⁹ Phillips, Friendly Patriotism, p.60

the practical effect the Rowntree History Series may have had on liberal Quaker identity.

Several other scholars¹⁰ have recognised in passing that there is a correlation between the study of history and the development of liberal Quaker identity. Isichei notes that Rowntree was particularly worried about the potential loss of Quaker identity after the loss of the peculiarities and sought to find other distinctives to define Quaker identity.¹¹ Similarly, Kennedy observes that Rowntree believed that the lack of solid historical knowledge was one of the gravest dangers to the Religious Society of Friends at that time.¹²

The attempt to find historical information around which to build liberal Quaker identity can be seen very clearly in Jones' introduction to *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, in which Jones admitted that all of the principal ideas of the early Quakers had already been proclaimed by some other individual or group. However, he argued that what Quakerism initiated was the unique way in which these ideas were fused together.¹³ In particular, Jones argued that the strength of Quakerism was the way in which mysticism and action were woven together and

¹⁰ 'The ultimate tragedy of this myopic course for Quakerism, however, is even more profound. Having no theologians, the Society of Friends depends on historians to keep the only human key to its repository of past traditions and experiences. For this reason, if for no other, Quaker practitioners of history have an important added inducement for accuracy and completeness.' H. Larry Ingle, 'From Mysticism to Radicalism', p.p. 79-94 in *Quaker History* #76 (1987), p.94

¹¹ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p.165

¹² Kennedy, 'History and Quaker Renaissance' in *JFHS*, p.44

¹³ Jones, 'Introduction' in Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.xliii

that this was why it is worth studying.¹⁴ Elsewhere, Jones wrote, ‘as far as I can judge the tendencies today, the people of college and university age are profoundly interested in mystical religion and in the type of religion that has to do with problems of life rather than with problems of theology.’¹⁵ This demonstrates that Jones believed that the fusion of action and mysticism was both an inherent and essential aspect of Quakerism and was likely to appeal to the intended readers of the Rowntree History Series. The previous chapter of this dissertation made it clear that a social service spirit and mysticism were key emphases in Jones’ work.

In his study of liberal Quakerism, Davie argues strongly that there were close links between liberal Quakers and liberal theologians of other denominations at the end of the nineteenth century and that the reasons for the acceptance of liberal theology were the same in the Religious Society of Friends as they were in other denominations.¹⁶ In particular, he mentions that one of the seven main beliefs which united all liberal theologians was the belief ‘that the historical investigation of the Gospels that had taken place in the nineteenth century had resulted in a greater knowledge and understanding of Jesus as a historical figure than had ever been achieved before.’¹⁷ I have therefore selected as my first comparison of contexts the theological study of the historical Jesus at Chicago Divinity School in approximately the period from 1890 to 1930. It is hoped that this comparison will elucidate the theological relevance of historical study.

¹⁴ Jones, ‘Introduction’ in Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p.xliv

¹⁵ Rufus Jones to D. Willard Lyon, 9 May 1933, box 56, RMJP

¹⁶ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, p.p.58-9

¹⁷ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, p.71

Chicago Divinity School

The Chicago Divinity School during this period was strongly linked to the Ritschlian school of thought.¹⁸ In the late nineteenth century, Albrecht Ritschl¹⁹ (1822-1889), the German Protestant theologian, had blended the approaches of Kant and Schleiermacher and judged that liberal Christianity ought to be paying more attention to Jesus' kingdom of God which Ritschl interpreted as having a social gospel meaning. He claimed that this could be understood only by historical critical research of the collective Christian experience of value inspired by Jesus.²⁰

By the start of the twentieth century, there was a separation among Ritschlian theologians between those who favoured historicist versus dogmatic approaches to theology. Most American liberal theologians in this debate favoured the dogmatic side which focused on the believer's experience of the 'inner life of Jesus'. However, the Chicago School argued in this debate for the historicist approach in which no dogma, religious principle or experience deserved to be privileged over history. All beliefs had to be interrogated for their historical credibility before they could be accepted.²¹

¹⁸ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.p.156-167

¹⁹ Ritschl taught at Bonn, 1846-1864, and then at Göttingen for 25 years.: Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.24

²⁰ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.25

²¹ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.187-8

The most prominent Chicago School scholar during this period was Shailer Mathews (1863-1941),²² who became the dean of the Chicago School in 1908 and in the same year welcomed Shirley Jackson Case²³ to the department.²⁴ Together they developed the Chicago School's distinctive socio-historical method. Mathews and Case extended the Ritschlian attempt to recover the social and historical character of Christianity and argued the more radical thesis that Christianity has no independent existence; it is merely the name for a particular phase of social existence.²⁵

Despite Mathews' being clearly on the historicist side of the Ritschlian debate, there were still tensions of emphasis which are worthy of our consideration. Mathews' first book, *The Social Teaching of Jesus*, outlined his definition of 'Christian sociology' as the use of modern social science to explain

²² Mathews grew up in Maine as a Baptist. He attended Newton Theological Institute because his parents expected him to be a minister. During his time at Newton, higher criticism of the Bible was mentioned only as something to be avoided. In the summer before his final year, Mathews served a small congregation in Maine and discovered that the pastorate was not for him. After graduation, he was offered a position teaching Rhetoric and Elocution at Colby College, the college he had attended prior to Newton. After two years of teaching, Colby sent Mathews to Berlin to train him to teach sociology, history and political economy. There Mathews learned the methods of Ranke's objectivistic historiography which claimed to recover the past 'as it was.' Mathews returned to Colby as a convinced historicist and social reformist. He continued at Colby for three years until 1892, when he was offered a position as professor of New Testament History at Chicago Divinity School. Although at the time he hesitated in accepting the offer because of his lack of experience in the area, Mathews later judged that his training in secular historical criticism was the ideal preparation for the kind of theology which he developed.: Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.p.181-5

²³ When he joined the Chicago Divinity School in 1908, Case had recently completed his doctorate in New Testament Studies at Yale. Case had a strong belief in the relevance of historical scholarship for modern Christianity and an aversion to theology, philosophy and displays of piety. In 1933, he succeeded Mathews as dean of the Divinity School.: Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.p.190-192

²⁴ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.190

²⁵ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.196

the objective contemporaneous meaning of Christianity²⁶ and argued that Jesus' emphasis was primarily on the social rather than eschatological meaning of the Kingdom of God. However, almost from the book's publication, Mathews was uncomfortable with this conclusion. The best modern scholars, such as Albert Schweitzer, seemed to be moving in the direction of arguing that Jesus' primary emphasis was eschatological and if the only worthy basis for theology was scientific historical research then he was uncomfortable with holding out against their conclusions.²⁷ Eventually, therefore, Mathews gave up his initial argument. In 1903, he claimed that the eschatological and social meanings of the Kingdom of God were equally valued by Jesus. Then in 1905, he admitted that the Kingdom of God was most likely intended by Jesus in the eschatological sense.²⁸

This book was a turning point for Mathews because it required him to develop a new theological basis for the liberal social gospel. The problem as far as Mathews saw it was that, although modern theologians had to admit that the gospel idea of the kingdom was primarily eschatological, there remained the problem that apocalyptic thinking was contrary to the thinking of the early twentieth century. The strategy which Mathews eventually settled on for reinterpreting primitive Christianity in modern terms was the concept of 'social process' as a socio-historical bridge between the ancient and modern worlds. He,

²⁶ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.p.185-6

²⁷ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.187

²⁸ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.188

therefore, interpreted Christianity as a social movement inspired by its loyalty to Jesus.²⁹

The theological problems which Mathews experienced in accepting this research into the historical Jesus is in many ways parallel to the difficulties which Quaker historians faced in accepting some of the more bizarre aspects of early Quakerism. My earlier chapters demonstrated the fact that, although Braithwaite and Jones included evidence of early Quaker behaviour of which they disapproved in their published work, this evidence was also frequently accompanied by an editorial comment about the behaviour or dogma. This demonstrates two things: firstly, liberal Quakers were only able to use history as an articulation of ideal identity because inappropriate past behaviour of early Quakers could be undermined by liberal Quakers' primary emphasis on the importance of contemporaneous personal experience; secondly, although tied to a specific academic-theological movement, Mathews was not concerned primarily with denominational identity and this gave him far greater freedom to emphasise historical accuracy than was the case with Quaker historians.

Methodism

It is also valuable to compare the Religious Society of Friends with another particular denomination, and in this context I have chosen to consider the United

²⁹ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p.p.190-2

Methodist Church from the mid-twentieth century onwards. Richey has written that, ‘Methodists have consistently turned to history when called upon to say who they were, to state purposes, to define themselves. History looms first in the Discipline. And these secular versions of the Methodist propositions now render United Methodism’s understanding of itself and its beliefs.’³⁰ In order to understand Methodism’s self-understanding of its history, I will consider both Richey’s work on historical studies of Methodism and Tweed’s work on Methodist shrines.

Tweed observes that, contrary to popular belief, Methodists frequently undertake ‘pilgrimages’ to ‘shrines’, although this practice is understood very differently from traditional Catholic interpretations. The shrines which have been identified by American Methodists are commemorative ones, sites which, although not strictly sacred, recall key historical events.³¹ Tweed takes a sociological view of this phenomenon and concludes that it reflects a broader social process such as the construction of collective identity.³² He argues that commemorative shrines function as identity shrines since collective identity, for many Methodists, emerges from historical consciousness.³³

³⁰ Russell E. Richey, ‘History as a Bearer of Denominational Identity: Methodism as a Case Study’, p.p.480-497, in Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, Jean Miller Schmidt (eds), *Perspectives on American Methodism: Interpretive Essays* (Nashville, Tennessee: Kingswood books, 1993), p.p.496-7

³¹ Thomas A. Tweed, ‘John Wesley slept here: American shrines and American Methodists’, p.p.41-68 in *Numen* (2000), p.46

³² Tweed, ‘John Wesley slept here’, p.44

³³ Tweed, ‘John Wesley slept here’, p.54

Richey's article focuses on the reinterpretation of Methodism by various historians over time. In this study, I focus on those historians who were working in the twentieth century when the tension within Methodism between secular and theological interpretations of history became most apparent. It is Richey who argues the most strongly for the importance of history to Methodist identity. As an example of this he cites the 1988 General Conference of the United Methodist Church when it was decided to rewrite the 'doctrinal history' in the Discipline 'so as to accent those aspects of Methodism which, if reemphasised, would rejuvenate the church.'³⁴ Richey claims that this was by then a 'tried and tested' method for this church. The clear parallels between this decision and the methods of liberal Quakerism make this worthy of study.

Although Richey studies various earlier Methodist historians, it was Sweet (who taught at the University of Chicago, 1927-1946) who transformed Methodist belief about itself into historical axioms. Sweet's intention was to make church history into a respectable university discipline and he played a major role in secularising and professionalising it.³⁵ However, it was Norwood who achieved what Sweet intended by publishing a Methodist history not only fully respectful of historical canons, but which was also the historical text of choice for United Methodist seminarians.³⁶

³⁴ Richey, 'History as a Bearer of Denominational Identity', p.p.981-982

³⁵ Richey, 'History as a Bearer of Denominational Identity', p.495

³⁶ Richey, 'History as a Bearer of Denominational Identity', p.495

Richey also writes, 'In this sense the making of church history into a historical rather than theological science has interesting consequences for the church. First it means that theological claims that once came readily to Methodist lips now simply are not heard.'³⁷ It would be an interesting area of future research to analyse the possible theological implications of a focus on the importance of history for Quaker identity formation. Certainly, it is clear that there is considerable overlap between the Methodist and Quaker contexts. However, I suspect that the more mainstream Christian identity of Methodism and its status as a creedal church mean that history is a less important aspect of identity for Methodists than for Quakers.

Evangelical Quakers

I have established that there are significant differences in the ways in which Quakers approach their own history from those of other denominations. The final question to be considered now is whether there are variations between liberal and evangelical Quakers in their treatment of history.

At the time of the Wilburite-Gurneyite separation Gurneyite Quakers moved in a direction which could potentially have raised the importance of education within their branch of Quakerism. They were convinced that 'a want of proper scriptural knowledge' had been one of the primary causes of the

³⁷ Richey, 'History as a Bearer of Denominational Identity', p.p.496-7

separations.³⁸ They argued that members urgently needed a better understanding of both ‘the vital principles of Christianity’ and of how Quakerism was based on these principles.³⁹ There was therefore an increasingly strong emphasis on Bible study, but this did not necessarily translate into other forms of learning.

Hamm has examined the influence on revivalist Quakers of the historian Robert Barclay, whom he describes as an evangelical forerunner of the later liberal Quaker historians. Hamm does not want to claim too much influence for Robert Barclay since proponents of the revival movement were clearly not over-dependent on Quaker history to justify their practices. However, Hamm notes that ‘there is evidence that some who had qualms about the direction of orthodox Gurneyite Friends in the 1870s found Barclay’s work reassuring.’⁴⁰ Similarly, Hamm observes that although Updegraff⁴¹ did not primarily use historical examples when publicly arguing for his ‘Waterite’ position, whenever he did do so his references were always to the same early Friends who Barclay had cited.

³⁸ Hamm, *Transformation of American Quakerism*, p.25

³⁹ Hamm, *Transformation of American Quakerism*, p.25

⁴⁰ Hamm, ‘George Fox and Politics’ in Dandelion (ed), *Creation of Quaker Theory*, p.p.17-18

⁴¹ For those Gurneyite Yearly Meetings which had experienced the revival movement, the ordinances were the main remaining difference between them and other Christians. It was therefore perhaps inevitable that they would become an issue. In the 1880s a group arose known as the ‘water party’ or ‘Waterites’ who were led by David Updegraff. Although the water party claimed no saving efficacy for baptism, they saw it as a symbol of entry into the Christian life and as clearly commanded by Christ and the apostles. This group was not advocating making baptism compulsory, but they did argue that those ministers who chose to be baptised should be allowed to remain in the Religious Society of Friends. : Hamm, *Transformation of American Quakerism*, p.p.130-136; Dandelion, *Introduction*, p.115

In 1895 a review in *The Friend* of the then recently published *The History of Friends in America* by Richard and Allen Thomas noted that in the preface to the book one of the authors had observed that ‘it has been a pleasure to the authors, in including the various branches of Friends in America, to note that the three representative periodicals of American Quakerism, the *American Friend* (Orthodox), the *Friends’ Intelligencer and Journal* (Hicksite), and the *Philadelphia Friend* (Conservative), while not refraining from criticising the sketch in regard to matters of secondary importance, have all recognised and commended its spirit, and the historical care with which it has been written.’⁴² This all indicates that there may well have been interest in Quaker history among evangelical Quakers, but that history was not perceived as being significant to Quaker identity formation in the same way as it was for liberal Quakers.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate that the way in which liberal Quakers used the Rowntree History Series for identity formation was fundamentally different from other forms of denominational identity formation. This was demonstrated through considering the ways in which other organisations have made use of history, enabling me to reach the following conclusions:

1. The Rowntree History Series was written and used as study materials to justify and build social cohesion around fundamental theological changes.

⁴² Anon, ‘Friends in America’, p.p.35-3 in *The Friend*, p.35

This may be similar to the Methodist situation, but is made far more acute by the Religious Society of Friends' status as a non-creedal church.

2. The absolute faith, even before writing, that the facts which would emerge from historical study would be beneficial to the Religious Society of Friends was unique to the optimism of the liberal period which believed all progress to be inspired by God.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Throughout this dissertation, I have shown that the most important way of understanding the Rowntree History Series is through the lens of the formation of liberal Quaker identity.

In Chapter Two, I outlined the influential argument over the origins of Quakerism as first presented by Jones. I demonstrated that, in contrast to the traditional debate over the extent to which Quakerism has origins in earlier mystical traditions, a more interesting way to view Jones's thesis is to examine the correlation between liberal theology and the content of the Rowntree History Series. My areas of emphasis include, but are not limited to, those usually highlighted in connection with the Rowntree History Series.

In different ways, Chapters Three, Four and Five all considered the correlation between theology and the content of the Rowntree History Series. In Chapter Three I considered the original vision of Rowntree. It is clear from letters and published works not only that Rowntree was originally motivated to undertake the history project because of his concern about the quality of Quaker ministry and his belief that education of members of the Religious Society of Friends would nurture the spiritual life, but also that the eventual writers of the Rowntree History Series intended to fulfil Rowntree's vision as completely as possible. I therefore argued that the only way to understand the Rowntree History Series is by understanding that it was intended to be a tool for the enhancement of knowledge

in the Religious Society of Friends and therefore for the raising of the quality of ministry.

Chapters Three and Four considered in detail the arguments presented by Braithwaite and Jones in the Rowntree History Series. I argued that it is no coincidence that there is considerable overlap between their emphases and the main concerns of liberal Quakerism. I argued that this overlap was at least partially conscious on the part of the authors since they so clearly intended the books to have a practical significance to the spiritual environment of the Religious Society of Friends.

Thus far, I have therefore argued the following main points:

- That the Rowntree History Series can be primarily understood as a resource for education and a preparation for ministry.
- That the history was presented in such a way as to make it easier for the authors to affirm Quaker tradition while adapting the theology of their immediate predecessors.
- That those liberal Quakers interested in history genuinely believed that a truly accurate historical study was the only way to clear away the ‘distortions’ of quietism and evangelical revival and ‘recapture’ what was unique to Quakerism.

After considering these main points, it was then necessary to explore further the extent to which this attempt to use history as a focal point for corporate

identity formation was unique to the liberal Quakerism of the early twentieth century. In order to do this, I compared this Quaker case to two other similar, but different contexts: namely, the use of history by the Chicago Divinity School and the United Methodist Church. After looking at these different ways of using history, I argued that there are certainly some ways in which the use of the Rowntree History Series was unique to the Quakerism of that period and they are as follows:

- The Rowntree History Series was used to justify fundamental theological changes. This may be similar to the use of history by the United Methodist Church, but is made far more acute by the Religious Society of Friends' status as a non-creedal church.
- The absolute faith, even before writing began, that the facts which would emerge from historical study would be beneficial to the Religious Society of Friends, was unique to the optimism of the liberal Period.

Consequences for Scholarship

My research both complements and challenges several of the existing studies in this area. My research is particularly challenging to Isichei because it demonstrates the way in which intellectualism was cornerstone in the manifestation of liberal Quakerism. Isichei writes, 'It is a seeming paradox that men who rejected much traditional theology and emphasised the importance of religious experience and intuition should have laid such stress on the intellectual

study of religion.’¹ Rather than being a paradox, I demonstrate that this intellectualism was in fact the natural result of the context of a scientific world-view and the liberal desire for a rational basis for religion.

Kennedy acknowledges the importance of history to liberal Quakers and so my research develops the ideas which he proposed: whereas he tends to describe the importance of history to liberal Quakers, I have analysed why history took on such a theological importance to liberal Quakers. Similarly, my research complements the work done by Phillips when he considers the role of history in liberal Quakerism.² Phillips both describes the liberal Quaker emphasis on history and the tensions between liberal Quakers’ multiple identities. I link these two areas of Phillips’ work and argue that the interest in history was one way in which liberal Quakers managed these tensions.

My analysis of the ways in which Liberal theology influenced the context of the Rowntree History Series also demonstrates that there is a continuing need for scholars in religious history to re-assess the ways in which we both write and use history. *The Creation of Quaker Theory* demonstrates that there is currently a healthy awareness among Quaker scholars of the need to be aware of one’s own biases while writing Quaker history.³ However, I suggest that there is a need to go further than this and give further consideration to the ways in which previously written history influences the way in which we currently write history. The

¹ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p.42

² Phillips. *Friendly Patriotism*, p.p. 59-64 (especially)

³ Dandelion (ed), *Creation of Quaker Theory*

Rowntree History Series is a foundational text in the study of Quaker history and we need to be aware of the continuing influence that it may be exerting over us.

This has particular relevance to Elaine Pryce's work.⁴ Her article focuses on Jones' consideration of continental Catholic quietists and the effect that Jones' work has had on how we view them. However, she also mentions the influence that Jones' work may have had on how Quakers view the quietist period of their own history. My research suggests that far more work needs to be done not only in this area but also in the way in which Quaker attitudes to all of the emphases outlined in this dissertation may have been influenced by Braithwaite and Jones.

Future Research

The significance of this dissertation can be demonstrated not only by the novelty of the topic and the approach, but also by the areas of new research which are opened up by its findings. This significance can be seen both in Quaker Studies and in the wider context of church and religious studies.

Another area of future research could be the analysis of other historians in the way I have done for Braithwaite and Jones. The most obvious example is Robert Barclay of Reigate: Hamm has opened up this field but more work still

⁴ Elaine Pryce, 'Negative to a marked degree' or 'An intense and glowing faith' – Rufus Jones and Quietism Re-appraised, forthcoming article (copyright Duke University Press)

needs to be done.⁵ However, this method could be used for any Quaker historian either earlier or later than Braithwaite and Jones. It could also apply to the recent trend of ‘translating’ early Quaker writings into contemporary English.⁶

In recent years there has been talk about the possibility of writing a new historical series to rival the scope of the Rowntree History Series.⁷ This could potentially be a beneficial exercise since, as demonstrated, the Rowntree History Series is very much of its time. However, I would also advise caution and the careful examination of motives before beginning this project. A comprehensive commentary on the Rowntree History Series may be a more advisable starting point.

Similarly, it would be beneficial to conduct further research into the way in which Quaker history was used both before and after the publication of the Rowntree History Series. My research indicates that there was an increase in study circles etc. throughout the period 1895-1925 and that the findings of the Rowntree History Series were frequently used as study material. However, this practical element of the influence of the Rowntree History Series has not been the focus of this dissertation and further investigations would be beneficial.

⁵ Hamm, ‘George Fox and Politics’

⁶ For example: Rex Ambler, *Truth of the Heart* (Quaker Books, 2007); Paul Buckley, *Twenty-First Century Penn* (Earlham Press, 2003); Dean Freiday, *Barclay’s Apology in Modern English* (Barclay Press, 1991)

⁷ Sylvia Stevens, ‘Bringing Together the Results of our Research: Reflections and Suggestions Arising from the 50th Anniversary in 2006 of Henry Cadbury’s Revision of William Charles Braithwaite’s *The Beginnings of Quakerism in the “Rowntree” Quaker Histories Series.*’ Paper presented at the conference of Quaker Historians and Archivists, Birmingham, June 2008.

My research also has repercussions beyond the sphere of Quaker Studies. In particular, Methodist use of history in identity formation would be an area of potential interest. There are likely to be more parallels with and differences from the Quaker context than I was able to explore in this dissertation.

Furthermore, my research has raised some interesting questions for the study of identity formation. I have primarily approached this subject using a historical methodology. However, this area could benefit from further study using sociological methods. Areas of possible further research include the different ways in which adults and youth, newcomers or long-standing members and academic or non-academic members react to these methods of changing doctrinal denominational identity. Similarly this study is relevant to any research into the role of education in religious identity: what methods are most effective at building a sense of religious identity? Are these methods specific to certain periods or more effective with certain personality types? It is possible that this research may have significant repercussions for the study of the process of theological change within religious communities.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the arguments presented in this dissertation and re-iterated the process by which these conclusions were reached. I then summarised the significance of these conclusions to existing and future Quaker and other scholarship, suggesting areas of possible further research which have been raised by this dissertation.

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