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HANNAH WHITALL SMITH AND THE EVOLUTION
OF QUAKERISM: AN ORTHODOX HERETIC IN
AN AGE OF CONTROVERSY

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In June of 1888 Hannah Whitall Smith, a Philadelphia Quaker, and one of the most prominent female religious figures in the late Victorian Era, wrote to her American friends after moving to London:

I do not find that I feel myself to be any different as an English subject than as an American. I have not the vote in either place, so I am not a citizen of either, and have no call to be patriotic. In fact, I do not see how *women* can ever feel like any thing but aliens in whatever country they may live, for they have no part or lot in any, except the part and lot of being taxed and legislated for by men (Smith, L.P. 1950, 98).

When I first discovered the irrepressible and fiercely feminist, holiness evangelist, bestselling author, ecumenist, and Quaker mystic, I knew I had found the woman of my dreams. Evangelical in orientation, yet a universalist, and progressive in politics, she defies classification even today. A holiness evangelist beloved of evangelical women the world over, she marched with her daughters for women suffrage. A founding member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, she gave labor union speeches and explored Christian socialism. An Orthodox Quaker, she was baptized by water. An author who wrote her most famous book on the subject of happiness, she experienced deep pain and suffering in her life. And a devout Christian who called religion the 'grand romance of her life', she had to contend with an antagonistic atheist son-in-law, Bertrand Russell, who called religion pure superstition and a thing of the past. (One can only begin to imagine the intense family conversations between those two nemeses.)

In addition to Bertrand Russell, a startling number of celebrated people from the secular, literary, and political world find their way into her story: Susan B. Anthony, Frances Willard, Lady Henry Somerset, Lady Mount Temple, George

MacDonald, Walt Whitman, Henry and William James, Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, George Bernard Shaw, Alfred Lord Tennyson, George Santayana, John Ruskin, John Maynard Keynes, Beatrix Potter & Sidney Webb, John Bright, and Bernard Berenson (another son-in-law). I will examine briefly her relationship with just one of these notables, William James, shortly, but first some biographical background to set the context.

Hannah Whitall Smith was born in Philadelphia on 7 February 1832 and died on 1 May 1911 in England. She was raised in a prominent and well-to-do Quaker family. Her life spanned a period of radical change and intense controversy in the Religious Society of Friends that can best be called the Evolution of American Quakerism, when both traditionalists and innovators split the seamless garment of Quietist Quakerism, each conserving and reinterpreting differing principles and practices of the Quaker tradition.¹ In England, where Hannah lived for the last twenty-three years of her life, she saw the rapid transformation of evangelical Quakerism into modernist Quakerism. Hannah remained in the eye of the Quaker storm in both America and England throughout her lifetime. Her legacy, however, has been largely confined to Evangelical Christians, who read her work selectively, in censored editions, and maintain an idealized, and sentimental, one-sided view of her, with a blind eye to her radicalism. Aware of her religious non-conformity she declared:

I have always rather enjoyed being considered a heretic, and have never wanted to be endorsed by any one. I have felt that to be endorsed was to be bound, and that it was better, for me at least, to be a free lance, with no hindrances to my absolute mental and spiritual freedom (Smith 1903: 220).

In this paper I will examine primarily the sources and nature of her feminism and her mysticism, her impact in the British Holiness Movement, her multiple and contrasting identities, and how she integrated all into her new understanding of Quakerism just as it was opening into the modern world of culture, politics, and the new science of evolution, and modern psychology.

Hannah wrote over fifteen books. One book, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, the most enduring book to come out of the American Holiness Revival, has been described as a 'popular book of Christian mysticism and practical Holiness theology' as well as a nineteenth-century self-help book.² Selling over two million copies on its first printing in 1875, it became one of the best-selling books of the nineteenth century. Now considered a 'spiritual classic', it continues to be reprinted and widely read by spiritual seekers today.

The Smiths were a family of writers, into the third generation. They wrote books, journals, memoirs, and daily letters to each other, each one carefully preserved. Over 20,000 family letters are archived, 6,000 from Hannah (Strachey 1982: 14).³ Hannah, however, is the only one whose books continue to find a wide audience today.

Hannah's early journals reveal an exquisitely loving, happy, but strictly plain Quaker childhood. She was born with a sunny, cheerful nature and had loving, even doting, parents. Happiness and joy gush forth from her early journals, 'the

fate of happiness' she called it, so it seems no surprise that 'the secret of a happy life' becomes a primary theme in later writings (Smith 1903: 20). Marriage at age nineteen to Quaker Robert Pearsall Smith brought her first real-life struggles and the beginnings of her spiritual searching. She and her husband decided Philadelphia Quaker Orthodoxy was far too sectarian and parochial and they left the Society to explore the wider religious world. She tried the Plymouth Brethren at first who were, she writes, 'creating quite a stir in Philadelphia' (Smith 1903: 189). Similar to Quakers in some ways, but not in theology, she credits them with teaching her how to study the Bible (she became well known as a teacher of scripture), but she soon left the Brethren troubled by their narrow Calvinism.

Before long she discovered the Methodists and their teaching on sanctification. By 1870 when American revivalism was seriously impacting the Society of Friends, she became one of the leading female voices in what became known as the 'Holiness Movement', a spiritual renewal movement that swept through America and England in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴

Holiness became Hannah's spiritual path to empowerment, inner freedom, divine union, joy, and happiness. She would have fully agreed with William Penn's statement that Quakers teach that 'men [and women] must be holy, or they cannot be happy' (Cope 1882: 436). But she diverged radically from evangelical teaching in her firm belief in restitutionism or universal salvation, *apocatastasis*, a belief she initially received by 'revelation' through an overwhelming sense of divine compassion which she called the 'the mother-heart of God'. Her description of this powerful illumination, which comprises one whole essential epoch of her spiritual journey, is edited out of all subsequent editions of her autobiography (Smith 1903: 198-208). By restitution she meant that no one would be lost from God's love, everyone one would be reconciled to God, because an infinitely loving God could not abandon any of God's children—nor punish them for eternity—'salvation must be as universal as the fall', she declared (Smith 1903: 204). This belief, which she publically announced, being at variance with much of Christian tradition (though not all), brought accusations of heresy from her strictly orthodox friends, including Orthodox Quakers at that time, as she describes, somewhat tongue-in-cheek:

As was to be expected in those days, my views on Restitution, which of course I had speedily announced, met with a great deal of disapproval from the Plymouth Brethren, and my other orthodox friends, and I had to undergo a good deal of what might be called persecution, but which I myself rather gloried in, because I felt it was a grand thing to know so much more of God than those did who opposed me (Smith 1903: 220).

Surprisingly her 'heresy' was rarely an obstacle in her speaking invitations or her books contracts. As she candidly reveals:

It seemed likely that the holding of what was considered by many to be such a grave heresy, might have proved a hindrance to my Christian work; and I dare say it may have been so in some quarters. But as I always had far more openings for work awaiting me than I could possibly fill, I never experienced any difficulty. I tried to

be courteous enough not to involve people, to whom such views were abhorrent...but the revelation I had had was too glorious for me to withhold it whenever I found an open door; and as I was never willing to sail under false colours, nor speak anywhere without its being perfectly well known beforehand what a heretic I was, I enjoyed for the most part all the freedom I desired (Smith 1903: 221).

Later in life she became an outspoken political radical, supporting labor unions, exploring Christian socialism, and marching with her daughters for women's suffrage. Her work for social justice, and especially the advocacy of women's rights, became the outward fruit of her life. Once she shifted her energies to the Women's Christian Temperance Movement her interests broadened from preaching almost exclusively on sanctification and the inward life to preaching on the outward fruits of a socially aware holiness that addressed issues of social injustice.

By 1876, after speaking at Higher Life conferences in England, she admits to her friends that she has become 'broad, broader, and broadest' (Smith, L.P. 1950: 34). She describes her spiritual evolution in these words:

...[I] feel myself to have gotten out into a limitless ocean of the love of God that overflows all things. My theology is complete, if you but grant me an omnipotent and just creator I need nothing more. 'God is love', comprises my whole system of ethics. There is certainly a very grave defect in any doctrine that universally makes its holders narrow and uncharitable, and this is always the case with strict so-called orthodoxy. I find that every soul that has traveled on this highway of holiness for any length of time, has invariably cut loose from its old moorings (Smith 1905: 120).

When Hannah writes of having 'gotten out into a limitless ocean of the love of God that overflows all things', she is surely echoing George Fox, in his famous journal entry, 'I saw, also, that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness' (Nickalls 1975: 19).

As the Holiness Revival became more polemical, especially within Quakerism, and doctrinally rigid, Smith distanced herself from those who were interpreting holiness in a narrow dogmatic paradigm. She maintained an open, all-embracing, mystical vision of holiness, as the pure love of God, which explains, at least in part, why she came to embrace restitution, or universal hope. While her 'heresy' did not preclude her from being invited to speak at Holiness conferences, it did prevent her from being accepted into Indiana Yearly Meeting when she applied for membership in 1881. It took five more years of trying to rejoin Quakers before she was finally granted membership in Baltimore Yearly Meeting in 1886—the Yearly Meeting where her sister Mary Thomas, a weighty Quaker minister, thankfully, was very influential (Spencer 1991).

As Hannah journeys on her 'highway of holiness' or the maturing of her life of faith, and she goes through different periods or 'epochs of her soul life' as she calls them, she does not discard or repudiate earlier stages but integrates them into her maturing spiritual life, while letting go only of the 'moorings'. If pressed to give a label to the final stage of her soul life, I would say that she discovered a universal wisdom tradition, which allows that each religion will teach the universal truth of

divine union or holiness in its own way. She discovered that universal wisdom initially in the Holiness Movement, but soon realized it was the core of her Quaker tradition all along, but it had not been transmitted to her in a way she could understand in her earlier life. She also discovered that universal Wisdom in the writings of the French Quietists, Jeanne Guyon and Fenelon, and the seventeenth-century Carmelite monk, Brother Lawrence, which I will address shortly.

Deprived of a college education or any theological or philosophical training, she wrote in a plain, simple, and natural narrative style—the popular self-help style of the day—so that her metaphysical, philosophical, and psychological depths tend to be entirely overlooked, with the notable exception of the philosopher and psychologist, William James.

HANNAH WHITALL SMITH AND WILLIAM JAMES

Melvin Dieter, a Methodist historian, has documented the surprising friendship and endorsement Smith received from the famed Harvard philosopher and pioneer psychologist, William James, who said that Hannah Whitall Smith's *Christian's Secret* 'would always be kept among his literary treasures, and, that if he were to become a Christian, he would want to be the kind of Christian the book describes' (Dieter 1999: n.p.). One would expect the pragmatist, and skeptical philosopher, William James, to be a critic of a book which some might call simplistic and sentimental, yet James cites it as an example of his thesis, and quotes from it in his pioneering work in psychology, *Talks to Students on Some of Life's Ideals* (1899). In a chapter called 'The Gospel of Relaxation', he writes:

The best manuals of religious devotion accordingly reiterate the maxim that we must let our feelings go, and pay no regard to them whatever. In an admirable and widely successful little book called 'The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life', by Mrs. Hannah Whitall Smith, I find this lesson on almost every page. Act faithfully, and you really have faith, no matter how cold and even how dubious you may feel. 'It is your purpose God looks at', writes Mrs. Smith, 'not your feelings about that purpose; and your purpose, or will, is therefore the only thing you need attend to... Let your emotions come or let them go, just as God pleases, and make no account of them either way... They really have nothing to do with the matter. They are not the indicators of your spiritual state, but are merely the indicators of your temperament or of your present physical condition.'⁵

When we think of the Holiness Movement and the camp meeting revivals of the nineteenth century, in which Hannah played a major role, we generally think of intense emotions displayed publically, and evangelists' manipulating emotions, and yet ironically the most widely read devotional book to emerge from the Holiness Revival is advocating the very opposite. Pay no attention to your emotions, it's only your will and purpose that matter.

James may call his chapter 'The Gospel of Relaxation' but the intent is to describe 'the gospel of contemplation' for that is what *Christian's Secret* is truly about. James concludes his chapter citing excerpts from another work of contemplation: Brother Lawrence's *Practice of the Presence of God*, a seventeenth-century

monastic guide to living contemplatively in every situation and in every moment. Smith had recently published her own edition of Brother Lawrence's work, so it is likely she may have introduced it to James. James writes, 'The really religious person is accordingly unshakable and full of equanimity, and calmly ready for any duty that the day may bring forth. This is charmingly illustrated by a little work with which I recently became acquainted, "The Practice of the Presence of God..."'⁶ He cites her 1895 version of Brother Lawrence's work.

THE INFLUENCE OF FRENCH QUIETISM

While Hannah Whittall Smith's 1875 *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* is written in the language of the popular Christian spirituality of the time, its underlying theology, I would argue, is the process of divine union that comes principally from the French Quietists, Jeanne Guyon and Fenelon.

The spirituality of Smith's devout and deeply loving Quaker father, who introduced her to these two mystics, was indelibly shaped by them. He gave all his children, when they became young adults, his most beloved book called *Spiritual Progress: or Instructions in the Divine Life of the Soul* (1853), a book of extracts from the writings of Guyon and Fenelon. This book always held a special place for Hannah alongside her Bible because, she writes, 'it seemed to reveal the mystical pathway' (Smith 1903: 234).⁷ She admitted that she initially valued it mainly as a gift from her father, but she did not understand it, and in the zeal of her initial evangelical conversion actually thought it to be doctrinally 'unsound'. But she realized later:

...all unconsciously to myself its teachings had made a profound impression upon me; and, even while I criticized, I still was often conscious of an underlying hunger after the mystical side of religion set forth in this book (Smith 1903: 234).

Smith herself was probably unaware of the strong historical link between Friends' theology, the practice of silence, and the Catholic Quietist movement of seventeenth-century France. The most evident connection between Quakers and seventeenth-century Quietists is another similar book of extracts called *A Guide to True Peace or the Excellency of Inward and Spiritual Prayer Compiled Chiefly from the Writings of Fénelon, Guyon, and Molinos*, compiled anonymously by two Quakers in 1813. Quakers reprinted this guide to contemplative prayer many times throughout the nineteenth century. Quakers were the first to translate the writings of Jeanne Guyon into English in 1727. As early as 1698 a treatise attacking Quietism compared Guyon's teachings to the Quakers, entitled *Quakerism, a-la-mode, or A History of Quietism* (Bossuet 1698).

J. Rendel Harris, first Director of Studies at Woodbrooke and one of the most influential biblical scholars of his time, stated emphatically in a Lecture at Bryn Mawr College in 1900: 'There is no Society that has been so influenced by Guyon as the Quakers have been' (Harris 1900: 5). Harris also added his personal tribute to Guyon, crediting her with being 'the teacher from whom I have received more help and guidance in the things of God than from any other person' (Harris 1900:

3). Harris was a contemporary of Smith, and a lifelong friend. Hannah never penned a statement as explicit as Harris on the influence of Guyon, but based on the pervasiveness of Guyon's teachings that infuses all of her writings, it may be true for her as well. Guyon's theology was also admired and appropriated by the Holiness Movement, thus Guyon represents a concrete link between Quaker Quietist spirituality and the nineteenth-century Holiness Movement that Quaker historians have largely claimed to be antithetical.

Like early Quakers, Guyon (1648–1717) was denounced, demeaned, persecuted, and imprisoned. She challenged the intolerance and totalitarianism of the Catholic hierarchy. The perception of the Catholic hierarchy that Guyon was a dangerous mystic must have appealed to eighteenth-century Quakers, as well as her anti-institutionalism, her egalitarianism, her inclusiveness, her lack of emphasis on the sacraments and theological formulations (unusual for a Catholic mystic), her advocating of pure love attainable by all, and a democratic spirituality not just reserved for the elite—the path to interior stillness and freedom was accessible to all (Bruneau 1998). I would like to think that she also appealed to Quakers because of her unique status as a *female* spiritual teacher, never formally educated or trained in theology, yet called to an apostolic ministry—much like Hannah Whitall Smith. Both women shared an unshakable and surprising boldness, independence of mind and inner freedom. Guyon too, like Smith, was a prolific writer of books, letters, and commentaries on the Bible, as well as a spiritual autobiography. Yet, Guyon, despite her egalitarian views and anti-authoritarian impulses, did not challenge the cultural norms of her time, unlike Smith two centuries later, and so can at best be called a proto-feminist.

SMITH'S FULL-FLEDGED FEMINISM

Smith, however, was a full-fledged feminist, and her feminism was essentially inborn and shaped within her Quaker community. Her role and public ministry came to fruition and to the attention of the broader public in the Holiness Movement, but her Quaker upbringing prepared her to become a public religious figure. She states that the one tangible and clear teaching of Quakers was 'the perceptible guidance of the Holy Spirit' which 'left every individual free to serve God in the way that seemed right'. And she adds 'Nor was this the case in spiritual matters but earthly matters as well, and it gave to each individual the position of independence which has always to me seemed one of the most vital of human needs...and the most priceless of all the gifts that my Quaker inheritance has brought me'. She underscores this point by announcing that 'no male Quaker, not even the most tyrannical, could curtail the liberty of his womankind, if only they could say they "felt a concern" for any course of action' (Smith 1903: 82).

From her childhood she imagined herself as a minister, and dreamed of preaching and traveling all over the world. In the Quaker religious world from its beginnings to be a minister meant an itinerant, missionary life, a life of adventure and spiritual fulfillment. It was the one avenue of public life always open for

women in the Quaker tradition, and women ministers modeled such a life for Hannah. Yet, she still could equivocate and bemoan her lot when she wrote to her cousin at age eighteen:

But I am only a woman, and women are so weak and dependent and never do any good. There is no chance is there? I shall have to be content to plod on in the same humdrum path, making pies and cooking and scrubbing, and mending stockings and makings shirts, and feel proud if I may claim relationship with great and noble men. (Smith, L.P., 1950, 4)

Later she wrote in the margins—‘ridiculous’ (Strachey 1982: 21).

But in her better moments she feels assured that someday she will be called to preach and have a public life, and imagines herself as Madame Guyon, or Elizabeth Evans, a famous Quaker preacher. In 1868 shortly after discovering holiness doctrine through the Methodists, she wrote to her good friend Anna Shipley:

I believe God has made me a pioneer, so that I do not expect much sympathy or understanding as I go along; and the breaking through of hedges, and fences, and stone walls is not a very pleasant path, I can assure thee. But it is my nature, I cannot help it... (Smith 1903: 14).

The one life-long regret she voices on a number of occasions is her lack of a college education. Though a rare opportunity for women at that time, plans had been made for her to be tutored at Haverford College soon after marriage (she could not formally enroll at the all-men’s college). But she became pregnant almost immediately and her dream of a college education was never realized.

In 1852, at age twenty, she writes in her journal:

I am too young to be married. The cares of life have crushed all the joyousness out of my spirits...now are overthrown all my fond hopes of a life of study—of becoming a thoroughly educated woman...Greek and Mathematics I must now lay aside, and for the present most of my reading. Well, I suppose I can do it, and still be a good and useful woman. But it is a great trial (Strachey 1982: 21).

Her personal deprivation led her to become a staunch advocate for women’s higher education. She became a mentor to numerous young women among her family and friends. Her favorite niece to whom she gave the most attention and guidance, and who went on to make the most impact, was M. Carey Thomas, who became a pioneer in women’s higher education, the first female dean of a college (Byrn Mawr) and one of the first American women to get a PhD. Thomas was Hannah’s alter ego.

In another letter to her friend Anna Shipley, dated 14 August 1873, the passion she feels around female education and her own loss is evident: ‘Girls have a *right* to a college education. They ought to be *made* to get it, even if it had to be done at the point of the bayonet’ (Smith, L.P., 1950: 18-19, italics in original).

In 1882 Hannah gave her first official public speech for women’s suffrage. In writing to her daughter about this experience she relates how she came to this conviction.

In my speech I said I had come to the advocacy of this reform by the way of the gospel, that Christ came to break every yoke and set free all that were bound, and that I wanted to follow in his steps and share in his work. I said the gospel did not arbitrarily upset the existing order of things, but it put a mine under all wrong and oppression that finally blew it up. And that therefore women were made free by the working out of the principles of Christ who had declared there is neither male nor female in Him (Smith 1882a).

She adds: 'They make fun of me in these [newspaper] slips but all reformers must expect that' (Smith 1882a). To her sister, she writes this about her first suffrage speech:

Sally, I tell thee it was fun. I *took* my audience too. I could see the women nudging each other all over the room, as I made some home thrusts. Our Temp. ladies said I surpassed myself. I am going to try it again sometime; and I put it on the religion of Christ which I said put gunpowder under all forms of bondage and slavery. How the heads did nod at that! I guess they were glad to have a little Christianity thrown in (Smith Letters 1882b).

Her many experiences of listening to the grievous stories of women's abuse and oppression motivated her to take up the cause of what can only be called a nineteenth-century women's liberation movement, which is how she viewed the mission of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Her radical liberationist rhetoric comes through in her letters to her daughters. She writes to her daughter Mary:

I wish thee could have heard some of our women. Two new [leaders] have been developed during the past year—two grand good women, whose lives had been lived in a little narrow circle with no scope for their gifts, until our WCTU came along and gave them an outlet...Neither of them are married—they were not willing to go into slavery, they declare, let it be ever so gilded (Smith Letters 1882c).

The most profound irony I have discovered in my research into the life of Smith, is her continuous appropriation by conservative evangelical women as a model of women's submission, despite the fact that Hannah vehemently opposed any notion of male headship or female submission.⁸ Hannah's greatest fear for her daughters was that they would marry men who held 'that hateful notion of the authority of husbands' (Strachey 1982: 91). She not only taught her daughters that marriage should be 'a perfect equality between husband and wife as between man and man' but also made her views known to their male suitors.⁹ She believed only in obedience and submission to a loving, compassionate God; never (even in her 'extreme evangelical' days) did she endorse women's subordination to male authority.

Feminist historians have observed that one of the self-presentation strategies Christian women use in writing (even today) is self-deprecation, a strategy Hannah employed to good effect in *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*. She begins her preface with: 'This is not a Theological book... I have not been trained in theological schools'. But she also adds, affirming Quaker spiritual guidance, 'the Lord has taught me experimentally and practically' (Smith 1885: iii). She asks the reader

to ‘forgive the blundering way’ in which her ideas were expressed, suggesting: ‘Say, if you choose, “Well, she is only a woman, and cannot be expected, therefore, to understand Theology”’—but remember that God sometimes reveals, even to babes, secrets that He has hidden from the wise and prudent’ (Smith 1875: 6). In her revised edition of 1885 this last sentence is deleted. As one feminist historian, Kerri Allen, examining Smith’s tactic, notes: ‘Having pre-empted potential criticism, she paved the way to speak exactly as she pleased’ (Allen 1998: 235).

Such disclaimers, by women who nevertheless feel spiritually empowered to write, have a long tradition reaching back to medieval women mystics, who begin with the expected literary convention of self-depreciation then feel they have divine permission to speak. The argument that God uses the weak to confound the wise is found in Margaret Fell’s writing as well. Fortunately as Smith became more confident in her voice (and found a publisher, and an audience), she found no need to include the disclaimer in her later books.

SMITH AND THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND AND EUROPE

The Holiness Movement in England and in Europe that became known as the Keswick Movement or Higher Life Movement was largely created by Hannah and Robert Pearsall Smith. Their teaching on holiness became the Keswick theology, at least in its beginnings. With the Smiths as leaders, preaching to audiences of thousands, made up of Oxford and Cambridge students, Anglican and Free Church ministers, poets, writers, and English aristocrats, it became the religious version of the Romantic Movement in Britain. Progressive (for the time) inclusive and ecumenical, it was heavily flavored with Quaker spirituality, at least in its first three years (1873–75). But after the departure of the Smiths (precipitated by rumors of Robert’s inappropriate relationship with a women disciple—the truth of which will probably never be fully known), Keswick spirituality gradually became more conservative, even fundamentalistic, missions-oriented, and moralistic.

Studies on the relationship between Quakers and the nineteenth-century Holiness Movement by Thomas Hamm, among others, have largely focused attention on the American experience. Much less attention has been given to the relationship between British Quakerism and the Holiness Movement. Most Quaker historians cite a general lack of support for the Holiness Movement by Quakers in Great Britain, though Hannah and Robert’s leadership of the movement seemed to have had the endorsement of some leading British Quakers. The British movement, though heavily impacted by American holiness, reflected a different style and tone from the American movement, more contemplative than the often Pentecostal, frontier revival style. Keswick Holiness (at least initially) had a strong Quaker flavor, and some weighty Quakers supported the movement. J. Rendel Harris, the first Director of Studies at Woodbrooke, was a product of the Keswick Holiness Movement, and both a life-long holiness Quaker and a modernist biblical scholar.

David Bebbington, a non-Quaker historian, sheds some interesting light on the relationship between British Quakers and the Keswick Movement, showing a

much closer affinity than has been assumed. Bebbington makes the surprising claim that 'Quaker spirituality was one of the foundations of the Holiness Movement' (1989: 157). Other scholars corroborate his claim (e.g. Bundy 1993: 120). If they are indeed correct, then Quaker spirituality in reality was a major shaping force in the emerging holiness renewal rather than simply a by-product of the movement. This further supports my thesis that 'holiness' even as it was expressed in the revival movement, is a legitimate cultural adaptation in continuity with historic Quakerism, rather than a radical departure from it (Spencer 2007: 3).

Although Hannah Whitall Smith was initially introduced to holiness by a Methodist factory worker, and at first appropriated the Wesleyan version, she gradually taught her own version, which became the Higher Life or Keswick spirituality. She had her greatest impact within the European movement (by bringing many of the elements of American Holiness to Britain's Keswick Movement). Because of Hannah's Quaker influence, Keswick Holiness, unlike the American Wesleyan-revivalist version, did not find traditional quietist Quaker spirituality to be in opposition to it, but rather incorporated elements of contemplative spirituality into it. Many American revivalist Quakers wanted to eliminate distinctive Quaker elements, such as silence and 'mysticism', causing hostile reactions within many Friends meetings. Like many reformers, they were willing to sacrifice much of the spiritual heritage that formed them, instead of incorporating the best of the tradition to create something better.

Smith, on the other hand, rediscovered the gift of her own Quaker holiness roots through her pilgrimage through the various manifestations of the Holiness Movement, allowing her to see Quakerism from a new perspective. She perceived her own Society of Friends as 'higher life' people all along. The whole Society she claimed formed 'a holiness organization':

The true inner meaning of Quakerism dawned upon me more and more fully day by day. It was the 'way of holiness' in which they were seeking to walk. They preached a deliverance from sin, a victory over the cares and worries of life, a peace that passeth all understanding, a continual being made 'more than conquerors' through Christ. They were in short 'Higher Life' people, and at last I understood them; and the old preaching, which once had been so confusing, became marrow and fatness to my soul. The preaching had not changed, but I had changed. I had discovered the missing link, and had reached that stage in my soul's experience to which such preaching ministered (Smith 1903: 280-81).

Thus she never relinquished her Quaker identity. She continued to wear plain Quaker dress and used the plain language, and many traditional Quaker terms, such as 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' and 'full surrender' and 'victory over sin', were appropriated by the Keswick Holiness Movement (Bebbington 1989: 156).

In addition, the principle organizer and co-founder of the Keswick convention [with Anglican T.D. Harford-Battersby] was a Quaker industrialist named Robert Wilson. Wilson presided at Keswick conferences for some twenty-five years from their inception in 1874 to 1900.¹⁰ He began all of the general meetings with a period of silence and occasionally the general meetings also ended in a 'great silence' (Bebbington 1989: 157).

A chronicle by J.B. Figgis of the early stages of the movement, held at Broadlands, begins with five pages of direct quotes from Smith's autobiography, *The Unselfishness of God*. Figgis then describes the atmosphere and ethos with these words:

We were a people of God's gathering... We wanted the presence and power of His Spirit to be inwardly manifested in our spirits. We had what we could gather from the letter, and endeavoured to practise what we could read in the letter, but we wanted 'power from on high', we wanted life, we wanted the Presence and fellowship of our Beloved, we wanted the knowledge of the Heavenly Seed of the Kingdom and an entrance into it, and the holy dominion and reign of the Lord of Life over the flesh, over sin, and over death in us...And who can utter what the glow of the Light was in its shining and breaking forth in our hearts! Oh! The joy of that day wherein we sensibly felt the pouring down of the Spirit of Life upon us, and our hearts gathered into the bosom of Eternal rest, and our souls and bodies sanctified and set apart for the Lord and His service (Figgis 1914: 18).

That text happens to be a direct quote from the seventeenth-century Quaker, Isaac Pennington, describing the beginnings of the early Quaker movement, but in this context it is being applied to the beginnings of the Keswick movement. The parallels between the two movements are striking and reveal that much of the language of Keswick had its source in Quakerism. Thus, instead of eliminating traditional forms of Quaker practice the Smiths incorporated fresh expressions of it that brought the deep insights and revelations of Quaker experience to a much broader audience of spiritual seekers. Sadly, the Quaker spirituality of Keswick disappeared steadily after the departure of Hannah and Robert Pearsall Smith, and the movement gradually became more doctrinaire and fundamentalist in its approach.

CONCLUSION

Historians of religions have found it difficult to categorize this woman who inhabited so many diverse worlds: the Orthodox quietist Quaker culture and the emerging evangelical culture, the holiness camp meeting of middle class America, the upper class British evangelical culture (strongly marked by Victorian romanticism), the English literary/intellectual world, the WCTU and the British Women's Temperance Movement, the Women's Suffrage Movement, and the Christian Socialist movement. As she grew older, her integrating tendencies of mysticism and social activism took the form of a kind of 'holy worldliness'.

Writing to her friends in 1894, she sets forth her mature view of 'saving souls':

...this coming generation is inspired with very high ideals and is filled with a generous impulse for the uplifting of humanity that is far ahead of what was known when we were young. If I were to express the difference broadly, I think I would say that our great concern in those days was to save our own souls, while the great concern of the coming generation now is to save the souls of others. By 'saving the soul' I do not mean only a saving that is to affect eternity, but the saving that affects life now and here—that makes out of human beings...good citizens, good neighbors, good politicians, good workmen, and good employers of labor; the saving that limits

the hours of labor, and that builds sanitary dwellings for the poor; the saving that gives each man and woman that works, a living wage for their work and that equalizes the laws between rich and poor and puts women on an equal plane of privilege and rights with men. I do not believe the Christianity of Christ meant a selfish absorption in the future salvation of one's own soul, nor an introverted watching of one's internal 'experiences' (Smith, L.P., 1950: 120).

In 1901, on her sixty-ninth birthday, increasingly crippled by arthritis, she circulated a letter to her friends informing them that she was in the process of writing her autobiography. She revealed that her purposes in writing it were to share her discoveries about the nature of God. She announces:

Not to be outdone by the younger generation, I too am preparing something for publication. It is a part of my autobiography, and I call it 'How I discovered God' (her original title). It is the story of my soul life from my early Quaker days, on through all the progressive steps of my experience until I reach that peace which cannot fail to come to the soul who has 'discovered God'!—I am putting all my heresies into my story, and am trying to show the steps that have led to them; and I flatter myself that it is going to be very convincing! So if you feel afraid of becoming heretics, I advise you not to read it (Smith, L.P., 1950: 141).

In 1902 at the age of seventy, Hannah still had no intention of 'becoming a cabbage' (Strachey 1982: 201). Confined to a wheelchair for the last seven years of her life, she gave up public speaking but remained alert and involved in social activism. Her granddaughter Ray Strachey took her in her wheelchair to demonstrate at the Parliament building before a critical vote on women's suffrage. Sadly like all of the pioneers for women's suffrage she did not live to get the vote.

She published her spiritual autobiography in 1903, admitting in a letter to her daughter Mary that 'words seem rather powerless to express spiritual realities' (Smith, L.P., 1950: 144). She adds:

Even in my extreme evangelical days, what I got at was the *fact* of God's forgiveness, although I hung it on a hook that I had afterwards to discard... I fully believe that this bottom fact of a *good* Creator, can be got at through all sorts of religious beliefs and all sorts of religious ceremonies, and that it does not matter what these are, provided the soul is honest in regard to them (Smith, L.P., 1950: 144).

Even in her much earlier work, *The Christian's Secret* of 1875, still strongly evangelical in orientation, her inter-faith sympathies are transparent. She writes in her introduction, 'I have tried to reach the absolute truth which lies at the foundation of all "creeds" and to bring the soul into those personal relations with God which must exist alike in every form of religion, let the expression of them differ as they may' (Smith 1885: iv).

These statements and others echo John Woolman's famous declaration that contemporary Quaker universalists often quote:

There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names: it is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no form of religion nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity (Woolman 1871: 49).

Hannah's mature understanding of holiness came to be expressed in 'practicing the presence of God' in every situation and in every moment, a practice she found beautifully and simply expressed in Brother Lawrence's *Practicing the Presence of God* (a book she cited and recommended to her readers in her much earlier work, *The Christian's Secret*). So significant for her was this mystical work by a Carmelite monk that, as mentioned earlier, she had a new English version published in 1895 and wrote in a preface:

The value of this little book is its extreme simplicity... Brother Lawrence was not troubled with any theological difficulties or doctrinal dilemmas. For him these did not exist. His one single aim was to bring about a conscious personal union between himself and God... (Lawrence 1895: 3).

Quoting Brother Lawrence, she described this state as 'the bosom of God, for the inexpressible sweetness which I taste and experience there' (Lawrence 1895: 3).

At this stage in her life she understood the goal of all religion as divine union and was able to synthesize the contemplative tradition of the Catholic mystics, Brother Lawrence, Guyon, and Fenelon's state of 'pure love' as an uninterrupted state of awareness of God's presence, with the holiness teaching of the Higher Life Movement and with her Quaker tradition. She believes it is all the same truth, though called by different names. She says she realized that while the Friends did actually teach it, 'it was the through the Methodists that she received the clearest light' (Smith 1903: 283). The Methodists called it 'the second blessing', but she adds that she would not now call it that, but at the time it was most helpful. (The 'truths' could be summed up with these words: surrender, detachment, forgiveness, transformation, compassion.)

If pressed to give her a label, I would suggest that in her final 'soul epoch' she fits best in what is often called today 'The Perennial Tradition', a universal wisdom tradition that allows that each religion will teach universal wisdom in its own way. Her summation of her theology at the close of her autobiography echoes her great spiritual mentor Madame Guyon when she testifies:

I had then reached...the real God, behind all the seemings, and my heart had entered into its rest. I had discovered that nothing else really matters—neither creeds, nor ceremonies, nor doctrines, nor dogmas. GOD IS; GOD IS UNSELFISH; AND GOD IS ENOUGH (Smith 1903: 304, capitalization in original).

Hannah Smith's mystical faith sustained her through a life filled with great joy and deep grief, including the deaths of four of her seven children.¹¹ It sustained her through a humiliating scandal and fall from grace of her husband at the pinnacle of their international fame, and through what was surely a difficult marriage. Her radical optimism sustained her into her old age and through physical disability. Her intimate relationship with a mother-hearted God gave her absolutely no fear of death and she concluded her spiritual autobiography by declaring, 'I await the moment with joy' (Smith 1903: 311). And I have no doubt she meant it, for her notion of faith, trust and the infinite love of God was so strong that it even included a joyful death.

NOTES

1. The most thorough study of this period of American Quaker history is Thomas Hamm's *The Transformation of American Quakerism* (1988). However, Hamm does not include Smith in his study, concluding that she played no important role in the Quaker revival. See note p. 201.
2. Online: <http://www.s9.com/Biography/Smith-Hannah> (accessed 13 November 2009).
3. Collections of the Smith family letters are found in the Haverford College Library Special Collections, Haverford, PA; The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN; and the Asbury Seminary Library Special Collections, Wilmore, KY.
4. See Dieter (1996) for a detailed study of this religious movement.
5. Online: <http://www.des.emory.edu/mfp/jgospel.html> (accessed 8 November 2009).
6. Online: <http://www.des.emory.edu/mfp/jgospel.html> (accessed 8 November 2009).
7. Guyon and Fenelon were two mystical writers greatly appreciated and admired by the nineteenth-century Holiness Movement. On Guyon's influence on Quakerism, see Ward 1998.
8. Campbell (1989) presents Smith as an example of both a model female spiritual power and a teacher of female submissiveness, both staples in the spirituality of late nineteenth-century American Protestant women. She interprets Smith's best-seller, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, as a prime example of the 'gospel of submissiveness' and claims that conservative Christian writers like Marabel Morgan (*Total Woman*, 1973) and Catherine Marshall (*Beyond Ourselves*, 1961) both build their gender ideologies on Smith's principles of female submissiveness.
9. In a letter to a Harvard professor whom she thought might be a suitor for her daughter, Mary, Smith explicitly outlined her advanced egalitarian views on marriage: 'I have discovered that husbands...are very jealous of their "rights" and are unwilling to allow any freedom of action or development to their wives... They are masters in short, and wish their wives to be slaves... I believe there ought to be an equal partnership in all property or incomes that accrue to them jointly after marriage... I believe the mode of living and all the details of life, whether large or small, should be the joint arrangement, and that neither should override the other, but each should wait for a mutual conviction. In short I believe in a perfect equality between husband and wife as between man and man...' Strachey 1982: 80).
10. Sloan (1935: 37) writes that 'From the very commencement of the movement no one had stood closer to its very heart than he had. He brought something of the still quietness of a "Friends' Meeting" with him.'
11. A daughter at birth, a daughter at age five, a daughter at age twelve and a son at age eighteen.

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