

WITHOUT DOGMA

THE QUAKER APPROACH TO CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS, edited by John Kavenagh, Public Relations Director, American Friends Service Committee, Allen and Unwin, English price 15/-.

THIS book is a symposium of articles by 14 Quakers upon what they feel to be the Quaker approach in their various specialist fields. I say "feel" advisedly; for each contribution, whether about peace and war, business, education, or philosophy, emphasises feeling, or in stricter language, moral intuition. The pattern which emerges from their collaboration is a peculiarly interesting one; it may be called without unfairness an X-ray picture of a religion of social welfare. Two features of the Quaker approach are very apparent—the attention and organised charitable activity which the Society of Friends has brought to bear on many social problems, such as race segregation in America and the destitution of post-war Europe, which are amenable to direct, intelligent social action; and the absence of any creed to which the individual Quaker is required to subscribe. The first feature calls for unqualified admiration. But the second seems to lie at the root of much confused thinking.

The position which the individual member of the Society of Friends is called to occupy in society has never been clearly defined. In general Quakers have accepted the dominion of Caesar all too readily. One is asked to admire an ideal Quaker paternalism in the relation of employer and employee; but one recalls the passages in Logan Pearsall Smith's autobiography where he describes the Quaker employers of his boyhood acquaintance, venerable saints in the family circle, merciless slave-drivers in their factories. Of course, the criticism is unfair; we have all known, or are, bad Catholics, Protestants, Moslems or agnostics; but a denomination which has as its focus an undefined moral intuition and lays great emphasis on practice inevitably invites such criticism.

Without dogma or definition the venerable saints may have found it all too easy to deceive themselves. I recall my own experience of Quaker schools, here and in England. They were both well-equipped places in pleasant surroundings. But I remember on one occasion singing a hymn about the Atonement

(continued on next page)

SPORT, poetry and books for small children are the themes for ZB Book Review on June 13. The books for review are the following:



Sarah Campion

"In Search of Winter Sport," by Monk Gibbon, and "The Victorian Mountaineers," by Ronald Clark (reviewed by R. R. Gibson); "Get to Your Marks," by Ross and Norris McWhirter (J. C. Bellwood); "The N.Z. Poetry Year-book," edited by Louis Johnson, and "Poems: An Anthology of N.Z. Women Writers," edited by A. R. Dunlop (Sarah Campion); and "Books Before Five," by Dorothy White (Patti Page).

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TIME IS THE ART OF THE SWISS

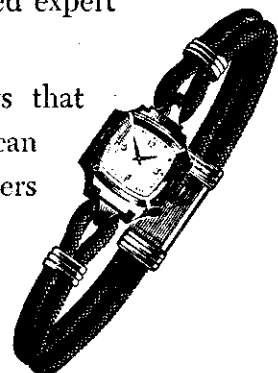


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