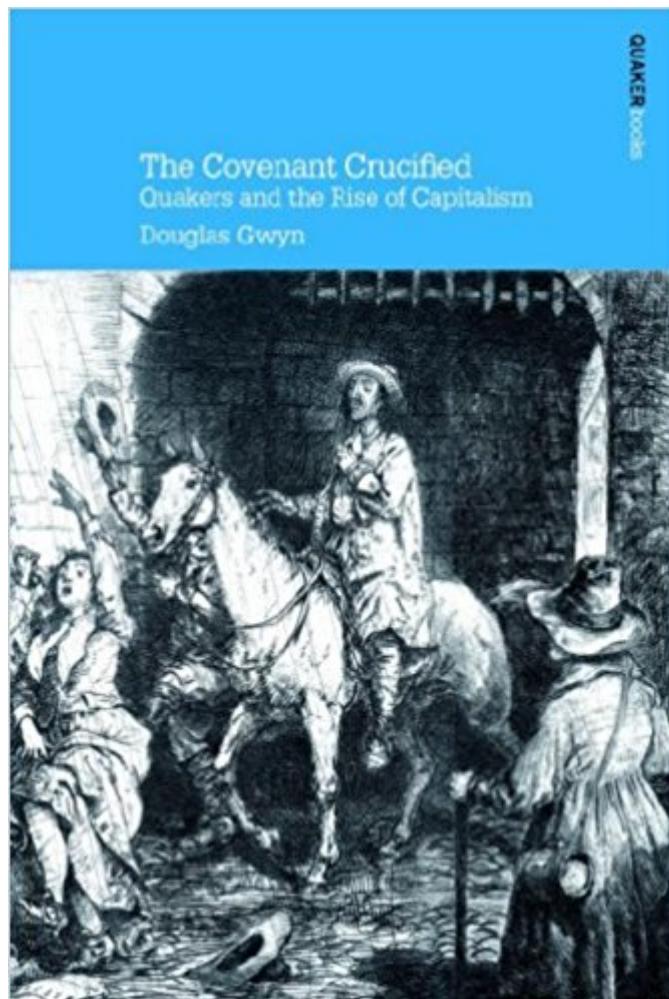


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The Covenant Crucified



Synopsis

Doug Gwyn has researched and written extensively on early Quakers in 17th-century England. His other books include *Apocalypse of the Word*, and *Seekers Found*. He has taught at the Pendle Hill Quaker Study Center near Philadelphia, and at Woodbrooke in Birmingham, England. Doug has also worked with the American Friends Service Committee, and is Pastor of First Friends Church, Richmond, Indiana. *The Covenant Crucified* combines the scholarly and prophetic to compare "covenant", uniting people under the care of a transcendent God, and "contract", uniting them primarily through secular visions of self-interest. "This book, part of Doug Gwyn's trilogy on early Quaker history, is critical to our understanding of early Friends and how the movement changed in the first decades. Gwyn outlines the highly distinctive nature of the Quaker covenant of light, and how that was transformed within a generation into a more worldly contractual understanding. It is also a call to Quakers today to recover a sense of covenant for the journey ahead." - Ben Pink Dandelion, Quaker Studies tutor, University of Birmingham/Woodbrooke

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It is some time since I read this book, but it left a lasting impression on me, reconciling how it is that (we) Quakers have been able to reconcile a utopian spiritual vision with "capitalist" engagement via such right-on, or one-time right-on, companies as Rowntree and Clarks (the shoe people). Gwyn focusses on what "covenant" with God meant to earlier generations of Quakers. He says, "... within the contractual, market culture that shapes our world so strongly today, covenant constitutes the lost

utopian horizon of our existence" (p. x). Such a sense of covenant - of being bound in with a much greater ethical grounding and source of inspiring life than just our own small concerns - remains and requires more to become the basis for a renewed mutualist sense of business ethics. If business can become understood as service, rather than merely self-service, then what it does to provide the wherewithal of daily life becomes sacramental. Gwynn concludes in his penultimate chapter (p. 344 of the Pendle Hill 1st edn, not this edn): "How would a covenantal framework of capitalism have worked out? No realistic scenario can be offered in answer to that hypothetical question. It is debatable whether we can speak of a covenantal form of capitalism at all, since the latter is by definition an alienated form of consciousness, a mentality that can contemplate the Creation only in commodified forms. But in a covenantal society we would expect that the immanent, contractual relations of the market would be contained, sustained, and limited by the overarching, transcendent vision of covenant faith. Compassion, open-ended faithfulness, and a cosmic sense of God's shalom would set different limits for the contracts made among those who control the means of production; it would place the contract's narrow self-interest and limited obligations within a larger frame of reference. The "separate peace" of the isolated contract would be revealed as selfish fiction." For my money, this book sets Gwyn alongside such stalwarts as Timothy Gorrige and Michael Northcott when it comes to providing a Christian theological critique of capitalism, and what I like about the Quaker approach is that it is so grounded - not just the ability to lay out a critique, but also, a grounding in the fact that our 350 year-old heritage gives us considerable (though not unique) applied business experience from which to speak.

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