

## Comment

One of the new additions to Hamilton College Library's Communal Societies Collection noted in the last issue of *ACSQ* was John Evans' *Sequel to the Sketch of the Denominations of the Christian World ...*.<sup>1</sup> In response to my comments about this work, Jerry Grant of the Shaker Museum and Library wrote: "I have in hand a copy of John Evans, *A Sketch of the Denominations of the Christian World ...* Twelfth Edition, 1811, in which Evans clarifies some of the questions you have about the publication of extracts of the Shakers' *Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing ...*. This edition includes an 'Advertisement to the Twelfth Edition' in which Evans notes that 'An American gentleman (into whose hands *the Sketch* was put by a worthy relative of mine) kindly presented me with a volume, whence I have obtained certain interesting particulars respecting *the Shakers*. In the United States it is denominated *the Shaker's Bible*—because it contains a full account of their Faith and Practice. There is reason to believe that it is the only copy that has reached this country.' In the *Sketch*, Evans dedicates over forty pages to the Shakers. Most of this is extracted from the *Testimony*."<sup>2</sup>

Grant further notes that Evans considered the *Sequel* to be a companion to the *Sketch* and intended them to be read together. "In transcribing *extracts* I have exceeded the limits of this work, but should the reader wish for further information—he is referred to my new edition of *the Sequel*, or SECOND volume to the *Sketch*. In its APPENDIX will be found an interesting *account of their internal Church government*, which is a real curiosity."

Grant, near the end of his letter, says, "My only critical comment about your article ... is that it should be the *Sketch* (12th edition, 1811) and not the *Sequel* (4th edition, 1811) that should be considered the first recognition of the publication of the *Testimony*."<sup>3</sup>

I am grateful to Jerry Grant for bringing to light the passages on the Shakers found in the twelfth edition of the *Sketch*. These were not found in earlier editions of the *Sketch* or in the first three editions of the *Sequel*, as the *Testimony* had not yet been published. In addition, when I commented in the last issue of *ACSQ* on how interesting it was that the earliest recognition of the *Testimony* had been published in England,<sup>4</sup> I did not realize that only a single copy had reached those shores.

Since I received Grant's letter, Hamilton College Library has acquired a copy of the twelfth edition of the *Sketch*, and it is indeed an important work for Shaker scholars. After Evans expresses his belief that he possessed

the only copy of the *Testimony* in England, he goes on to say, “The accounts of the Shakers hitherto published on this side of the water are very defective. The statement given in this Edition of *the Sketch*, is the only accurate delineation of this most eccentric class of the Christian world.” In describing the Shakers, Evans remarks that they “practice community of goods, and disclaim every species of intolerance, professing to imitate the primitive Christians in their harmlessness and simplicity. This principle of entire religious liberty having infused itself into the system of these Shakers is like a ray of heaven’s light which penetrates the hardest substances and illumines the darkest regions.”

It may also be worth noting that in addition to the more than forty pages of material on the Shakers—mainly extracts from the *Testimony*—which Evans devotes to the Shakers in this twelfth edition of the *Sketch*, the first seven pages of his nine-page “Advertisement to the Twelfth Edition” (which serves as his Introduction to the volume) discuss the Shakers, and he mentions the Shakers again in his “Postscript.” It seems clear that Evans regarded the Shakers as a significant religious movement of that time.

— Randall Ericson

<sup>1</sup> “Communal Societies Collection: New Acquisitions,” *American Communal Societies Quarterly* 1, no.2: 94-95.

<sup>2</sup> Jerry Grant to Randall Ericson, 16 May 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Grant to Ericson.

<sup>4</sup> “Communal Societies Collection: New Acquisitions” 95.