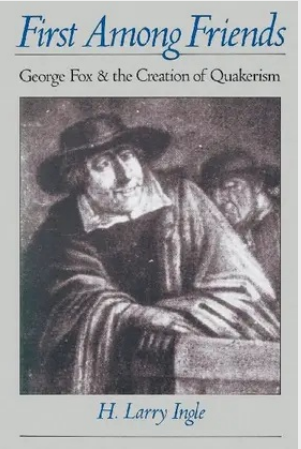
Ingle

First Among Friends

George Fox and the Creation of Quakerism



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In First Among Friends, the first scholarly biography of George Fox (1624-91), H. Larry Ingle examines the fascinating life of the reformation leader and founding organizer of the Religious Society of Friends, more popularly known today as the Quakers. Ingle places Fox within the upheavals of the English Civil Wars, Revolution, and Restoration, showing him and his band of "rude" disciples challenging the status quo, particularly during the Cromwellian Interregnum. Unlike leaders of similar groups, Fox responded to the conservatism of the Stuart restoration by facing down challenges from internal dissidents, and leading his followers to persevere until the 1689 Act of Toleration. It was this same sense of perseverance that helped the Quakers survive - the only religious sect of the era still existing today. This insightful study uses broad research in contemporary manuscripts and pamphlets, many never examined systematically before. It chronicles Fox's extensive travels within England itself, in Europe and to the New World colonies. It does not, however, concentrate solely on public matters. It also depicts Fox as a determined man tortured by periodic depressions and at odds with his society. The book presents a more complete picture of Fox's character than has ever been portrayed before and includes an assessment of his relations with his wife and coworker, Margaret Fell. Firmly grounded in primary sources and enriched with gripping detail, this well-written and original study reveals hitherto unknown sides of one who was clearly "First Among Friends".

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