

# James Nayler

## A Fresh Approach

By

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FRIENDS' HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
FRIENDS HOUSE, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON, N.W.1  
also obtainable at the  
Friends' Book Store, 302 Arch Street, Philadelphia 6, Pa., U.S.A.

1954

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY HEADLEY BROTHERS LTD  
109 KINGSWAY LONDON WC2 AND ASHFORD KENT

## James Nayler: a Fresh Approach

**T**O attempt a reassessment of James Nayler is to enter charmed and dangerous ground, a country from whose bourne no traveller returns. All that I venture here is, first, to recall the unearthly society in which mentally, as well as in body, before his fall, he moved, and thus to rescue him from the unsplendid isolation to which, unfairly, he is condemned; for James Nayler was no "pillar"-saint. I then seek to recover for a central place in our understanding of him the thing which was genuinely unusual, I would almost say unique, about him, namely his repentance for his fall, his admission that he had gone wrong. In the end Nayler proved able to use not only his sufferings but his errors, terrible though these had been, for the expression of a gospel far truer, because saner as well as sweeter, than the gospel of many of his contemporaries.

\* \* \* \*

"What a Quaker told you of G. Fox being acquainted with Rice John<sup>1</sup> [the Familist or 'Proud' Quaker of Nottingham]," wrote Lady Conway of Ragley to her friend Henry More, the Cambridge Platonist, in November 1675, "is true . . . but they certainly affirme, that he never was of his congregation nor agreed in opinion with him, and I hope we may believe the account they give of themselves, that they never were infected with what you call Familisme,<sup>2</sup> though perhaps some simple people amongst them may have expressed themselves in suspected termes out of ignorance." Henry More was not so certain. "Methinkes that your Ladiship is over sure in that point," he wrote, "that the Quakers from the beginning had nothing to do with Familisme. The carriage of

<sup>1</sup> For Rice Jones and the "Proud" Quakers of Nottingham, see Norman Penney's note in his edition of Fox's *Journal* (Cambridge, 1911), i, 396; and my *Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford, 1946), p. 17, with nn. 3 and 4.

<sup>2</sup> On Familism, see R. M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion* (London, 1909), c. xviii; *D.N.B.*, s.v. Henry Nicholas; and an illuminating note by Keble in his edn. of Richard Hooker's *Works* (Oxford, 1845), i, 148, n. 59.

James Naylour, who was then at least equall with Fox, is to me a demonstration how much at least many of them were tinctured with Familisme . . . that they are hardly come of from all points of Familisme, is plaine or that they stick so much at the externall Mediation of our Savior and would have this Mediation of his performed within onely." "But that they have emerged into a greater nearnesse to the true Apostolick Christianity," he generously observed, "all good Christians ought to rejoyce in it." Lady Conway was determined to be clear. "I think you mistook me in what I writt of the Quakers," she replied, "if I rightly remember it, for I never thought that none of the Familists might turne Quakers either at the first rising of them or since, but that G.F. was never listed into that Sect, before his taking up of this forme."<sup>1</sup>

We have here, twenty years afterwards, a true reflection of the struggle which took place in the soul of infant Quakerism: the struggle between Familism and Apostolic Christianity. Though at this time not yet a Friend herself, Lady Conway was already in touch with Fox,<sup>2</sup> who by 1675 was the unquestioned Father of the faithful: and in Fox she had confidence, a confidence which he reciprocated, addressing her as "My esteemed Friend, whose face is set towards Sion from this dunghil world."<sup>3</sup> Lady Conway is right: "G.F. was never listed into that Sect." But More is right too. More could remember Nayler; and "the carriage of James Naylour, who was then at least equall with Fox, is . . . a demonstration how much at least many of them were tinctured with Familisme." In taking this passage as my text, I shall adopt More's word and call Nayler's *milieu* Familist: I may thus, I hope, avoid rousing either hopes by calling it Seeker or alarm by calling it Ranter.

\* \* \* \*

I begin by recalling something of the Familist teaching; to which, as to so much else in the seventeenth century, Richard

<sup>1</sup> *Conway Letters* (London, 1930), ed. M. H. Nicolson, pp. 407 f., 417 f., 421. The originals of both letters from Lady Conway, published earlier in this Journal, vii (not xxii, as *Conway Letters*, p. 420) 49-55, are preserved in the Library at Friends House; I have followed these.

<sup>2</sup> See *Annual Catalogue of George Fox's Papers* (Philadelphia and London, 1939), ed. H. J. Cadbury, no. 25,37F.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 7, 25 G. Fox's phrase has reference to *Jer.* 1. 5, a verse often quoted by those of the Separatist tradition.

Baxter may serve as guide. Richard Baxter, like More, could not forget Nayler. In his account of Friends Baxter says, not without perception, that "Their chief Leader James Nayler acted the part of Christ at Bristol, according to much of the History of the Gospel." He then passes on to "the Behmenists, whose Opinions" he says, "go much toward the way of the" Quakers. "Their Doctrine," he adds caustically, "is to be seen in Jacob Behmen's Books, by him that hath nothing else to do, than to bestow a great deal of time to understand him that was not willing to be easily understood, and to know that his bombasted words do signifie nothing more than before was easily known by common familiar terms."<sup>1</sup> This was written in 1665, but was no recent judgment of Baxter's; for as early as 1654 Baxter had recognized not only Nayler's leading position among Friends but his inclination to Behmenism or Familism and the consequent dangers.

"The chiefest" Behmenists "in England," Baxter says, were "Dr. Pordage and his Family, who live together in Community." Now in 1654 Baxter had come to know "the chief Person of the Doctor's Family-Communion (being a Gentleman and Student of All-Souls in Oxford). . . . His Mother being a sober, pious Woman, being dissatisfied with his way, could prevail with him to suffer her to open it to none but me. . . . Upon discourse with the young man, I found a very good Disposition, aspiring after the highest Spiritual State, and thinking that visible Communion with Angels was it, he much expected it, and profest in some measure to have attained it. . . . He would not dispute, because he thought he knew things by a higher light than Reason, even by Intuition, by the extraordinary Irradiation of the Mind."<sup>2</sup> This young man, Thomas Bromley, and his brother Henry, were Baxter's neighbours at Upton-on-Severn. They were also, like Henry More, correspondents of Lady Conway; and in one of his letters to her Henry Bromley writes that Thomas "left the university when he was to have beene elected fellow of All Soules in Oxford . . . as kinsman

<sup>1</sup> *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), ed. M. Sylvester, i. 77.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 77 f.; cf. R. Baxter, *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits* (1691), p. 176: "His chief Proselyte, Companion and Successor (whose name I mention not for the Sake of his Worthy Kindred). . . ." "The young man" has not previously been identified with Thomas Bromley; Alexander Gordon in *D.N.B.*, s.v. Pordage, erroneously suggests Abiezer Coppe.

to the founder" and "went to Bradfield"<sup>1</sup> in Berkshire, where Pordage was then Rector, to join the community there.

Baxter not only discoursed with Thomas Bromley; on 3 May, 1654, he sent to Henry Bromley a lengthy disquisition for his brother, Baxter's copy of which is preserved among his MSS. at Dr. Williams' Library.<sup>2</sup> In dealing with its "hystory" Baxter here provides for Familism an ancestry of continental *Spiritualisten* which (though not Baxter's comments on them) would have pleased Rufus Jones; for, drawing on Christian Bécman's *Exercitationes Theologicae*, he mentions "Kempis, Taulerus (Papists), and Lautensack, Muntzer, Schwenckfeld, Weigelius, Arndt, Stiefel, Sperber &c."<sup>3</sup> He also mentions, which will please Dr. Sippell, "those in Yorkshire called Grundletonians"<sup>4</sup> and "in New England Mrs. Hutchinson and Mr. Wheeler."<sup>5</sup> Friends he refers to as "in Yorkshire and Lanchashire and nerer, at Stratford uppon Avon and many adjoining villages between Glostershire Oxfordshire & Warwickshire" and elsewhere; and he concludes with a reference to the pamphlet in controversy with himself already "written by the Yorkshire Quakers. . . . And one of those men that wrote it (one James Nayler) is one of

<sup>1</sup> *Conway Letters*, p. 279, where Thomas Bromley's identity and the identification of "the Dr." and "that Family" with Pordage and his community are missed. For Bromley, see Nils Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians* (Uppsala, 1948), pp. 53 ff., drawing on the preface to the 1692 edition of Bromley's *Way*, in which it is stated that Bromley was born at Upton (not Worcester, as Thune). His brother's account, together with the date of Baxter's MS., is sufficient to dismiss the assertion that he left Oxford as a Nonconformist in 1662 (as Thune) or in 1660 (as C. E. Whiting, *Studies in English Puritanism* (London, 1931), p. 302). I cannot follow Professor Nicolson's assertion (*Conway Letters*, p. 278, n. 1) that his brother became a Quaker; there was a Quaker Henry Bromly (*sic*), but he died in 1662 (*For the King and both Houses of Parliament*, brs. [c. 1662]).

<sup>2</sup> Baxter MSS., 59.9.302-309, endorsed by Baxter "To Mr. Henry Bromley, esq., for his brother Mr. Thomas Bromley, in confutation of some opinions and papers of his, communicated to me by his mother." For access to this MS. and permission to publish extracts from it I am indebted to Dr. Williams' Librarian.

<sup>3</sup> "Read Beckmans Exercitat. 21. & 22. at large of the whole," Baxter writes; on pp. 344 f. of which work (Amsterdam, 1644) all these names are to be found. This may explain why (which is most unusual for him) Baxter has deleted the names.

<sup>4</sup> See T. Sippell's works mentioned in my *Holy Spirit*, App. I; Baxter's "godly friend" there mentioned is named "one Dishforth of Calverley" in the MS.

<sup>5</sup> For Anne Hutchinson and her brother-in-law John Wheelwright (not Wheeler), and their part in the development traced by Baxter, see T. Sippell, *Zur Vorgeschichte des Quäkertums* (Giessen, 1920), c. 3.

their leading seducers now in North Wales."<sup>1</sup> In 1654, as in 1665, Baxter thus associated Quakerism with Familism; and in 1654, though not in 1665, he was not wrong.

Bromley reached Bradfield only just in time; for later in 1654 Pordage was ejected from his living, after a trial almost as celebrated as Nayler's was to be two years later. At his trial it was objected against Pordage, with much else, that he taught "That the Fiery Deity of Christ mingles and mixes itself with our flesh"; "That Christ is a Type, and but a Type"; and "That it was a weakness to be troubled for sins."<sup>2</sup> Pordage was ready with disclaimers and explanations which may be genuine; but this was the Familist teaching, which, in effect, Nayler did no more than act on.

Bromley was not convinced by Baxter's disquisition. He remained constant to Pordage after Pordage's ejection and later shared Pordage's losses in the Great Fire.<sup>3</sup> In 1654<sup>4</sup> he published anonymously a tract entitled *The Way to the Sabbath of Rest. Or, The Souls Progress in the Work of Regeneration*.<sup>5</sup> In this work, which confirms Baxter's report of him,<sup>6</sup> Bromley traces the soul's "advance towards perfection", till it arrives "so far, as to enjoy almost a continual apprehension of the presence of God, and Angels". "Jesus of Nazareth (in his glorified humanity) is many times personally present, infusing the tincture of his glorified body into the heart"; for "the spirit of man is totally to be inhabited by Christ: There's not one weed to be left there."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A Brief Discovery Of a threefold estate of Antichrist* (London, 1653), by Thomas Aldam, Benjamin Nicholson and John Harwood, "Prisoners of the Lord at York Castle", which contains "Certain Queries, to the substance of the Worcester-shire Petition" drawn up by Baxter, also contains a letter to Friends by Nayler written from Kellet, Lancs., on 27 Oct., 1652. It does not appear that Nayler was in fact among the Friends in North Wales at the time of Baxter's writing.

<sup>2</sup> *State Trials* (London, 1810), v. 539-631.

<sup>3</sup> cf. *Conway Letters*, p. 279.

<sup>4</sup> Not "about 1672," as Whiting, *loc. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> In its list of later editions of this work entered *s.v.* Bromley, the *Brit. Mus. Cat.* fails to include the anon. first edition, which is entered *s.v.* *Way*. The copy of this first edition at Friends House is bound up with tracts by Isaac Penington but the owner was presumably not a Friend, since "Esq." appears on the spine after Penington's name.

<sup>6</sup> On p. 48 occurs the word "irradiation" which Baxter reported of his discourse.

<sup>7</sup> Pp. 7, 23, 48, and advertisement to reader. I cannot follow A. Malloch, *Finch and Baines* (Cambridge, 1917), p. 64, in including Bromley in "a group of Quakers."

Bromley clearly flies high. He is, however, careful to write of "Jesus of Nazareth" and to allow "the necessity of mediation." In a comparable contemporary tract, *The Saint's Travel to Spiritual Canaan. Wherein Is discover'd several false Rests short of the true Spiritual coming of Christ in his People*, there is a perceptible heightening. In this work the author treats as two of the "false Rests" through which men must pass before coming to the "true Rest" first, "the Knowledge of Christ in the Flesh, Either considered, as he is declared in Types and Figures under the Law, or as he assumed Nature upon him; and so consequently died at Jerusalem" and, secondly, "the Gospel-Faith of Jesus Christ (as Men call it)". The "true Rest" he describes as "a carrying forth of the Creature, out of the Creature, into the Place where he had his first Being" and as "the centring up of a spiritual Place, not made, not created, but a being of himself, stands by himself, having his dependency upon none else."<sup>1</sup>

The author of this work, which was first published in 1648,<sup>2</sup> Robert Wilkinson, had been a captain in the army and in 1651 was "a Preacher . . . about Totnes,"<sup>3</sup> evidently with Familist leanings. In 1655 he was in Ireland among Friends, to whom he appeared to be "a man that had received some Illumination, but too much a stranger to that silent and humble waiting in the divine Light, which would mortify the carnal will." Rutty tells how when Wilkinson was preaching at Limerick a Friend interrupted him with the words "Serpent, be silent!" (much as Fox was to speak to Rice Jones):<sup>4</sup> whereupon Wilkinson "was carried out of the Meeting . . . and from that time ceased Preaching any more, and became foolish in the latter end of his days."<sup>5</sup> This did not prevent the reappearance of his book in 1703 under the

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 56, 111, 150, 154.

<sup>2</sup> According to p. vii of the edition published in 1874 by John Bellers for H.N. (Henry Newton: Joseph Smith's MS. addition to his *Catalogue of Friends' Books* (London, 1867) in the copy at Friends House, s.v. Wilkinson).

<sup>3</sup> Francis Fullwood, *Vindiciae Mediorum & Mediatoris* (London, 1651), title page.

<sup>4</sup> George Fox, *Journal* (Cambridge, 1952), ed. J. L. Nickalls, p. 337.

<sup>5</sup> J. Rutty, *History of the . . . Quakers in Ireland* (Dublin, 1751), pp. 96 f. I cannot follow the inclusion of Wilkinson with other army captains who "turned Quakers" by Sir C. Firth and G. Davies, *The Regimental History of Cromwell's Army* (Oxford, 1940), p. 659 (where the ref. is to the 1800 edn. of Rutty, not the 1751 edn., as stated, and where the page-ref. 35 should be 85).



imprint of the Quaker woman publisher, Tace Sowle;<sup>1</sup> thereby lending strength to the charge made in 1702 that the work of Henry Nicholas "the Father of the Family of Love . . . has quite through the Quaker phyz and mien, that twins are not more alike."<sup>2</sup>

One wonders how much of this Familist theology, without which his "carriage" at Bristol is hardly intelligible, Nayler had read, and how much was simply "in the air". Of course it was not left unanswered. Wilkinson, for instance, was answered by Francis Fullwood,<sup>3</sup> then Rector of Staple Fitzpaine in Somerset, who insisted that "The Person of Christ is not a Form, Type and Shadow onely, or a bare representation of his spirit" but is "the Object and Medium of Faith."<sup>4</sup> The opening words of the title of Fullwood's book are *Vindiciae Mediorum & Mediatoris*. Nayler would have done well had he come upon these words and considered their bearing.<sup>5</sup>

A further group of Familist writers is mentioned both by Baxter<sup>6</sup> and in another correspondence, that between Jeremy Taylor, soon to be Bishop of Down and Connor, and his friend John Evelyn. "I perceive here," Taylor writes in April 1659 from Lisnegarvy (as Lisburn was then called), "that there is a new sect rising in England, the Perfectionists." He then refers to what he calls the "triumvirate" of divines, Thomas Drayton, William Parker and Robert Gell, who, he says, "did starte some very odde things; but especially one, in pursuance of the doctrine of Castellio, that it is possible to give unto God perfect unsinning obedience, & to have perfection of degrees in this life." Two months later he again

<sup>1</sup> The ref. on the titlepage to 1660 as the date of the edition of which this is a reprint is perhaps a slip for 1650, the only edition which appears to be extant. For T. Sowle, see this *Journal*, xl, 48 f. Tace was a 17th-century name which, appropriately, "survived only among the Quakers": E. G. Withycombe, *Oxford Dict. of English Christian Names* (Oxford, 1945), s.v.

<sup>2</sup> C. Leslie, *Works* (London, 1721), ii, 609.

<sup>3</sup> For Fullwood, an author of some importance not included in *D.N.B.*, see J. I. Dredge, *A Few Sheaves of Devon Bibliography*, i (Plymouth, 1889), 22-29.

<sup>4</sup> *op. cit.*, table of contents.

<sup>5</sup> cf. F. Hildebrandt, *From Luther to Wesley* (London, 1951), p. 100: "The denial of mediation must logically lead to the denial of the mediator and his family, must affect the central doctrines of the Atonement and the Church, must result in the 'solitary religion', which is the mark of all mysticism."

<sup>6</sup> *Rel. Baxt.*, i, 78.

mentions "the Perfectionists," dryly commenting: "Indeed you say right that they take in Jacob Behmen, but that is upon another account, & they understand him as nurses doe their children's imperfect language; something by use, & much by fancy."<sup>1</sup> With two of these writers Friends were themselves in dispute; for an early sermon of Dr. Gell's, preached before the Society of Astrologers, fell under Fox's all-seeing eye,<sup>2</sup> while Dr. Drayton, who from 1630 to 1656 was Rector of Abbot's Ripton in Huntingdonshire, the neighbour village to King's Ripton, where in 1660 Nayler was buried in Thomas Parnell's ground, was in controversy with James Parnell.<sup>3</sup> Their "Perfectionist" writing, however, together with a work by another member of Dr. Pordage's community, Robert Everard, was answered not by Friends but by none other than Fox's old disputant, "Priest" Stephens of Fenny Drayton.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Diary of John Evelyn* (London, 1906), ed. H. B. Wheatley, iii, 254, 258. C. J. Stranks, *Life and Writings of Jeremy Taylor* (London, 1952), pp. 196 f., discusses these letters and their subject, but provides little elucidation.

<sup>2</sup> Gell's *Stella Nova* (London, 1649) is the first of several works animadverted on in Fox's *Here Are Several Queries* (London, 1657). For Gell, see *D.N.B.*, s.v.; W. Penn, *Judas and the Jews* ([London], 1673), p. 30, marginal note; and note 4 below.

<sup>3</sup> Drayton's *Answer According to Truth* (1655; not found by J. Smith, *Bibliotheca Anti-Quakeriana* (London, 1873), pp. 9, 156, but located by D. Wing, *Short-Title Catalogue . . . 1641-1700*, i, (New York, 1945), 468, at Bodleian and Trinity College, Cambridge) was answered by James Parnell's *Goliath's Head Cut off* (London, 1655). For Drayton, see A. G. Matthews, *Walker Revised* (Oxford, 1948), p. 206; and next note. C. Fell Smith, *James Parnell* (London, 1906), p. 88, who names him Ray, calls him a Baptist, for which I find no evidence. The cases of fasting discussed later in this paper provide more justification than is allowed by Quaker hagiographers for the coroner's verdict that Parnell died "through his wilful rejecting of his natural food", which the Quakeress "that for the most part brought him his provision" admitted he had done for "ten daies . . . in obedience unto a command"—the more so since Parnell was also charged with Familism: see *A True and Lamentable Relation* (London, 1656). Parnell's disputing with the Rector of Abbot's Ripton suggests that Thomas Parnell may have been a relative of his, though not his father (also a Thomas), unless he married twice for Parnell's mother was Sarah whereas the wife of Thomas Parnell of Ripton was Elizabeth.

<sup>4</sup> Nathaniel Stephens wrote *Vindiciae Fundamenti* (London, 1658) in reply to [William Parker], *The Late Assembly of Divines Confession of Faith Examined* (London, 1651), and Robert Everard, *The Creation and Fall of Adam Reviewed* (London, 1649), and Jeremy Taylor, *Unum Necessarium* (London, 1655). The reply by Drayton and Parker, to which Taylor refers in his correspondence with Evelyn, but which appears to be no longer extant, was entitled *A Revindication of the possibility of a total mortification of sin in this life; and of the Saints perfect obedience to the Law of God, to be the Orthodox*

That Christ was "a Type, and but a Type"; and that it was possible for man "totally to be inhabited by Christ", "out of the Creature", "having dependence upon none," in "perfect unsinning obedience:" such was the Familist teaching which diverted Nayler from Apostolic Christianity and which, with a simplicity divine if also naïve, he sought to put into practice. If Christ could fast forty days, for instance, so (in union with Christ) could he; and he did live "some fifteen or sixteen days," he said, "sustained without any other food except the Word of God".<sup>1</sup> Or again, if Christ could raise from the dead, so (in union with Christ) could he; and did so, if what Dorcas Erbury said was to be believed.<sup>2</sup>

Nor, in attempting such behaviour, to turn now to this, was Nayler either alone or original, any more than in the thought which it expressed. There was Sarah Wight, for instance, who in the spring of 1647 was believed to have

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*Protestant Doctrine* according to Robert Gell, *An Essay towards the Amendment of the last English Translation of the Bible* (London, 1659), p. 797, who in the preface refers to Drayton and Parker among "my friends." In the Congregational Library copy of *The Late Assembly*, the ep. ded. in which is signed W. Parker, a MS. note in a 17th-century hand reads: "Dr. Fran. Lee [D.N.B.] says that the true Author of this book was the famous And Learned Dr. Robt. Gell, D.D." Gell's *Essay* consists of sermons, the first of which is on *Gen. iii, 15*, a text "primary in Fox's thought" (my *Holy Spirit*, p. 158) and the last on *I John i, 8*, entitled "Some Saints not without Sin for a Season." I cannot follow H. J. Cadbury, *George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'* (Cambridge, 1948), p. 2, in calling Gell "orthodox". Robert Everard later became a Roman Catholic and was then controverted by Francis Howgill: see *D.N.B.*; Smith, *op. cit.*; *Rel. Baxt.*, i, 77 f.

For the sake of completeness, the relations of two other Familists with Friends may be noted here. Thomas Tany, another member of Pordage's community at Bradfield, who "was taken for a Quaker" (*D.N.B.*), was written to severely by Fox (see *Ann. Cat.*, 23,201A and 191A). Roger Crab, who "appears to have had some relations with the Philadelphian Society" (*D.N.B.*), wrote *A Tender Salutation: Or, The Substance of a Letter given forth by the Rationals, to the Despised Remnant, and Seed of God, in the People called Quakers* (1659), signed "Rowedger Criop, O."; the Quaker George Salter wrote *An Answer to Roger Crabs Printed paper to the Quakers* (London, 1659); and Crab retorted with *Gentle Correction for The High-flown Backslider . . . being A General Answer . . . to some Queries, and Defamations thrown out by the furious Spirit in some of the People called Quakers against the Rationalls* (1659). The only known copies of these tracts by Crab, which were not known to Smith and "not seen" by Gordon, *D.N.B.*, s.v. Crab, are in the Henry E. Huntington Library; Friends House has photostats. The word "Rationals" in Crab's titles is noteworthy. Gordon's suggested identification of the Crab in Nayler's following at Bristol with Roger Crab is erroneous; this was a Robert Crab known from other Quaker sources (see W. C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (London, 1923), p. 253, n. 1).

<sup>1</sup> [John Deacon], *The Grand Impostor Examined* (London, 1656), p. 18

<sup>2</sup> "After I had been dead two daies": *ibid.*, p. 34.

fasted for fifty-three days with "no outward sustenance at all, but onely two, or three, or four cups of fair water at a time". When asked "Do you take no food?" she replied, "Yes, I feed on Jesus Christ: he is my dayly food, he feeds me with himself, and he is full of satisfaction." "Her Brother spake aloud to her, to take somewhat to refresh her body"; but she said, "I am so full of the Creator, that I now can take in none of the Creature." "I do eat," she told Dr. Coxe, (Baxter's doctor, who was also later to visit Nayler in prison),<sup>1</sup> "but it's meat to eat that the world knows not of, but those that tast of it: his words were found, and I did eat them." "God hath given me Christ to feed upon," she said on another occasion; "and his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. He gives me not cups full: but he hath me into his wine-celler, and fills me with flaggons."<sup>2</sup>

Or there was the similar case of Anna Trapnel, who in January, 1654, lay for twelve days, "the first five days neither eating nor drinking anything more or less, and the rest of the time once in 24 hours, sometimes eat a very little toast in small Bear." Divers friends judged her "to be under a temptation for not eating"; but when she enquired of the Lord "whether I had been so, or had any self end in it to be singular beyond what was meet"—a winningly Nayleresque touch—"it was answered me, no, for thou shalt every way be supplied in body and spirit; and I found a continual fulness in my stomack and the taste of divers sweet meats and delicious foods therein."<sup>3</sup>

For us, no doubt, these are case-histories of hysterical women and lack significance. At the time, however, their condition aroused great interest, bringing a crowd of ministers, doctors of medicine and great ladies to their bedsides, where they may almost be said to have held court. Now unfortunately, though not surprisingly, Nayler found an entrée into this sort of society in London. "Yesterday," he wrote

<sup>1</sup> See *Extracts from State Papers relating to Friends, 1654-1672*, (London, 1913), ed. N. Penney, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Jessey, *The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced By the Spirit of Grace, In an Empty Nothing Creature, (viz.) Mrs. Sarah Wight* (London, 1647), pp. 21, 90, 31, 116, 57, with biblical refs., noting for the last that Sarah used the "Old Trans.," i.e. Genevan Version; A. V. for *Song of Solomon*, ii, 4 f. reads "banqueting house."

<sup>3</sup> [Anna Trapnel], *The Cry of a Stone* (1654), pp. 1 f., 5. For refs. to Anna Trapnel, cf. my *Holy Spirit*, p. 88, n. 6.

to Margaret Fell in November, 1655, "I had a meeting at a house called Lady Darcy's; many were there from the Court, some called lords (as it is said), divers ladies."<sup>1</sup>

One of those present on that occasion was Sir Harry Vane; and "very loving to Friends" he was, Nayler wrote of him, "but drunk with imaginations". When Fox met Vane later, he found him "vaine & high & proude & conceited" and "was moved of ye Lord to sett ye seede Christ Jesus over his heade", a phrase which Fox uses also of his parting with Rice Jones, the "Proud" Quaker, whom likewise Fox found "vain".<sup>2</sup> "There is a mountaine of earth & imaginations uppe in thee", Fox told Vane. *Imaginations*: this too was Fox's word for Rice Jones: it was also his word for Nayler.<sup>3</sup> What it means is suggested by a modern biographer of Vane when he writes that "Vane's theological opinions were largely influenced by the mystical writings of Jacob Boehme."<sup>4</sup> The suggestion is borne out by a letter from Edward Burrough to Vane, a copy of which has survived, in which Burrough endeavours valiantly to set Vane right "concerning restoration & regeneracon whereof wee were speaking."<sup>5</sup>

Sir Harry Vane's wife was a Wray, a cousin of the Sir Richard Wray who, Fox tells us, "runn out", like Nayler;<sup>6</sup> she was also a cousin by marriage of the Hothams who translated Boehme. Vane's mother was a Darcy, so that probably Lady Darcy, at whose house Nayler's meeting was

<sup>1</sup> Swarthmore MSS., 3, 80; pr. in *Letters &c. of Early Friends* (London, 1841), ed. A. R. Barclay, pp. 38 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal*, ed. Penney, i, 314; ed. J. L. Nickalls, pp. 337 f., following edition by Ellwood.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal*, ed. Penney, i, 313, II, 243.

<sup>4</sup> John Willcock, *Life of Sir Henry Vane the Younger* (London, 1913), p. 254; so also Sir Charles Firth in *D.N.B.*, following T. H. Green, *Works*, iii, (1888), 295; Firth remarks that Vane had been influenced by Anne Hutchinson and John Wheelwright, following Baxter, who also places Vane with Nayler, Fordage and Geil (*Rel. Baxt.*, i, 74 ff.).

<sup>5</sup> Copy in Ellwood MSS. (Friends House), ii, 27 ff.; also in Penn-Forbes MSS. (Pennsylvania Hist. Soc.), ii, 112. Burrough insists on the difference between restoration to the first state of perfect innocency, which may die, and regeneration to the birth immortal that is heir of the kingdom of God which shall never die, although both restoration and regeneration are performed by the same, even Christ.

<sup>6</sup> *Journal*, ed. Penney, i, 150, 243. Her grandfather had been a patron of John Smyth, the Se-baptist.

held, was also of Vane's family.<sup>1</sup> What is significant is that, whether related to Vane or not, Lady Darcy turns up again at Anna Trapnel's bedside;<sup>2</sup> and with her were Colonel William West,<sup>3</sup> the friend of Judge Fell who protected Fox at the Lancaster Assizes, Colonel Robert Bennet,<sup>4</sup> who showed himself not unfriendly to Fox at Launceston, and Colonel William Sydenham,<sup>5</sup> who spoke boldly for Nayler at his trial. Further, Lady Vermuyden, the wife of the famous drainer of the fens,<sup>6</sup> who is named next after Lady Darcy among Anna Trapnel's visitors, is also found in attendance on Sarah Wight; while Joshua Sprigg,<sup>7</sup> whom Baxter calls "the chief of" Vane's "more open disciples", and who was to lead a deputation of Friends and others to petition Parliament for leniency towards Nayler, had several conferences with Sarah.<sup>8</sup> It is apparent that we are moving within a single society.

The "lords" who met with Nayler at Lady Darcy's are not named, but it may well be that one of them was Philip Herbert, the fifth Earl of Pembroke, who forms another link between Friends and these Familist groups. A year earlier Pembroke had been a member of Pordage's community at Bradfield and had published a tract entitled *Of the Internal*

<sup>1</sup> There is a bewildering number of Lady Darcys from whom to choose, apart from the family of Darcy of Tolleshunt Darcy, Essex, from which Sir Harry's mother came. There is also Fox's "Lady Dorsett", married to "one Pococke" (*Journal*, ed. Penney, ii, 117), whom Ellwood calls "Abigail Darcy" and who in Penney's index and in Braithwaite's becomes "Lady Abigail Darcy" and in J. L. Nickalls' edn., p. 518, "Lady Darcy" *tout court*. One wonders if Fox, or Lower, misheard Darcy as Darset (still the country pronunciation for Dorset); but we find "the young Countess of Dorset" present at another religious junketing, the baptism of a Turk, as recorded by Thomas Warmstry, *The Baptized Turk* (London, 1658), who dedicates the book to her. She, however, after the death of her husband, the 5th Earl, married Henry Powle, not a Pocock. A sister to a Mr. I. Pocock, incidentally, is mentioned among Sarah Wight's visitors.

<sup>2</sup> [Anna Trapnel], *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> G. Fox, *Journal*, ed. N. Penney, i, 412.

<sup>4</sup> *D.N.B.*; G. Fox, *Journal*, ed. N. Penney, i, 438.

<sup>5</sup> *D.N.B.*

<sup>6</sup> Sir Cornelius Vermuyden: see *D.N.B.* and the recent study by L. E. Harris. Their son Charles married a niece of Mrs. Richard Baxter.

<sup>7</sup> *D.N.B.*, where the ref. to *Rel. Baxt.* should be i, 75 (not 175); for a more sympathetic account of Sprigg and his relation to Friends, see T. Sippell in this *Journal*, xxxviii, 24 foll.

<sup>8</sup> H. Jessey, *op. cit.*, postscript to epistle to reader and pp. 74, 85 foll.

and *Eternal Nature of Man in Christ*.<sup>1</sup> Later, in the letter to John Evelyn about "the Perfectionists", Jeremy Taylor wrote, "I think L. Pembroke & Mrs. Joy, & the Lady Wildgoose, are none of that number."<sup>2</sup> Pembroke was friendly, however, with at least one of Taylor's "triumvirate", Dr. Gell; for Gell (once again) was a correspondent of Lady Conway's and in one of his letters to her reports how Pembroke had told him of a visit to Matthew Coker, an enthusiast who claimed prophetic revelations and healing powers and from whom the Earl said he "had received much good."<sup>3</sup> That the Earl was also in touch with Friends appears from a letter sent him by Fox, in terms with which we are now familiar: "Friend," Fox wrote, "thow art to high [like Vane] grobbling in the things that bee Earthly . . . and art Rash and hasty, and birktle [brittle] . . . and art mixt in the philosiphy, who tells of saturn, wher dost thow Ever Read that Ever Moses the prophetts Christ or the Apostles, Ever spake such a work?"<sup>4</sup> To this the Earl is known to have replied; but unfortunately the letter is lost.<sup>5</sup>

Another case of fasting, and one which may have been known to Nayler from its location not far from his old home, was that of Martha Hatfield of Laughton-en-le-Morthen, in Yorkshire, who for "about 17 dayes" in 1652 "took no food all this time, but onely washt her mouth (as was said) twice a day". She too had her visitors, among them "one of those commonly called Quakers" and also Lady Lambert, whose husband knew Nayler personally and spoke on his behalf at his trial, whose daughter-in-law was "almost quite carried away by the Quakers", and whose son-in-law was later Governor of Pennsylvania.<sup>6</sup> Martha herself, however,

<sup>1</sup> See Thune, *op. cit.*, p. 51, printing a passage from Richard Roach's papers in Rawl. MSS., D 833, in Bodleian; and p. 52, n. 3, plausibly attributing this tract to the 5th Earl instead of to the 3rd Earl, as B.M.C. Pordage's son Samuel became the Earl's chief steward: cf. *D.N.B.*, s.v. Sam. Pordage.

<sup>2</sup> *loc. cit.*; it is tempting to suppose that by "Lady Wildgoose" Taylor meant his new patron's wife, Lady Conway.

<sup>3</sup> *Conway Letters*, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> *Etting Early Quaker Papers* (Pennsylvania Hist. Soc.), 37; pr. by H. J. Cadbury, *Swarthmore Documents in America* (London, 1940), pp. 36 ff., who provides further evidence of Pembroke's association with Friends.

<sup>5</sup> *Ann. Cat.*, 100C.

<sup>6</sup> cf. *D.N.B.*, s.v. John Lambert; *Diary of Thomas Burton* (London, 1828), ed. J. T. Rutt, i, 33; *Note Book of the Rev. Thomas Jolly*, ed. H. Fishwick (Chetham Soc., new series, xxxiii), p. 30.

would have no truck with Friends. When "her Father said, there was a Shoe-maker in the Town, but he was a Quaker, she asked what that was? it was answered, he was one that sleights Ministers, and Gods Ordinances: She replied, she would have no Quakers Shoes then. . . . 'They say I am a Quaker, and to convince them, that I am not, I will have no dealings with them' "<sup>1</sup>—interesting evidence, incidentally, of Quaker penetration, probably from the nearby Tickhill, Richard Farnworth's home, which Fox had recently visited on his way to Pendle Hill.

On one occasion Sarah Wight said, "Now I have been four days in the grave, with Lazarus, and now I am risen to live with Jesus Christ for ever in glory."<sup>2</sup> On this the editor of her story interpolates the gloss "she having been four yeers in deep despair," thus providing an illustration of what Alexander Gordon means when he says<sup>3</sup> of Nayler's alleged raising of Dorcas Erbury that this was "ranter language" for reviving her spirits. Anna Trapnel, however, tells how "my body still grew weaker and weaker, and the Sent of dead souls turned out of the grave was still in my nostrils", till "one Captain Harris prayed by me, and in that prayer I was mightily strengthened in believing and could not but say Lord, why may not I be raised now . . . and no sooner did God say arise, walk, but I was lifted up by the power of the most high God from my bed and I called for my clothes, all pain was ceased, the Fever left me."<sup>4</sup> Here it appears that the language of "raising" could be used for what we should more naturally call "recovery" from an illness physical at least in its manifestations.

"Raising" did not always, however, mean no more than recovery from depression or disease. In February, 1657, an attempt was made literally to raise from the dead a young

<sup>1</sup> James Fisher, *The Wise Virgin* (London, 1653), pp. 1, 8, 54, 149, 157 f.; this work, of which there is no copy at Friends House, seems to have escaped the notice of Quaker historians; the Quaker's visit is dated 7 June, 1652. For Martha Hatfield, see further *D.N.B.*

<sup>2</sup> Henry Jessey, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *D.N.B.*, s.v. Nayler; in the MS. of that article, which is preserved at the Unitarian College, Manchester, and which the Principal has kindly allowed me to examine, Gordon adds, in words not printed in *D.N.B.*, "but the poor woman made no effort to explain this subsequently to the authorities, even had she been capable of doing so."

<sup>4</sup> [Anna Trapnel,] *A Legacy for Saints* (1654), pp. 40 f.



Friend, William Pool, who had committed suicide; and unlike Sarah Wight or Anna Trapnel, the woman who made the attempt, Susannah Pearson, was a Friend and continued to be one.<sup>1</sup> A contemporary account of this case was sent by Thomas Willan of Kendal to George Fox. In this account, which Fox (probably later) endorsed "mad whimsey," using a word he also applies to Rice Jones, Willan writes that Pool's mind "run out"—Fox's phrase for Nayler and Sir Richard Wray. Willan also enables us to see what Susannah Pearson was after; for he says that she "imitated the prophet."<sup>2</sup> The same point is intended in Willan's source, the account in the news-sheet *Mercurius Politicus*, in an issue, we may note, which follows one with a reference to the end of Nayler's story; for it is there recorded that "some say, she laid her face upon his face, and her hands upon his hands."<sup>3</sup> Susannah Pearson, that is to say, was acting the part of Elisha in *II Kings* iv, 34, just as Nayler, in Baxter's words, "acted the part of Christ at Bristol, according to much of the History of the Gospel," or, in the particular of saying "Dorcas, arise," the part of Peter in *Acts* ix, 40. Though the style hardly suggests it, it is conceivable that the account in *Mercurius Politicus* was from Baxter's hand. Claines, near Worcester, the scene of the ghastly fiasco, is not far from Kidderminster, and Baxter was certainly aware of what took place; for he refers to it more than once.<sup>4</sup> In his account of Friends,<sup>5</sup> indeed, Baxter mentions Susannah Pearson immediately before Nayler; and if he saw Nayler's behaviour as but an extension of Susannah's he was not mistaken.

My purpose, so far, has been to set Nayler more fairly in his context. To us his "acting the part of Christ" in fasting, in raising from the dead, in the acceptance of Messianic honours,<sup>6</sup> as also the high-flying Familist Christology and

<sup>1</sup> See G. Fox, *Short Journal* (Cambridge, 1925), ed. N. Penney, p. 375.

<sup>2</sup> Swarthmore MSS., I, 217, pr. by H. J. Cadbury, *George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Mercurius Politicus*, no. 351, p. 7640; repr. *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> R. Baxter, *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* (1667), p. 426; *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits* (1691), p. 175.

<sup>5</sup> *Rel. Baxt.*, i, 77.

<sup>6</sup> As part of the background, James I's frequent comparison of himself with Christ may be recalled. It is also notable that when on 23rd May, 1618, the Stadtholder Maurice entered Amsterdam, "a welcoming placard greeted him as the new Messiah; *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Dei*": A. W. Harrison, *Arminianism* (London, 1937), p. 77.

perfectionism by which such behaviour was prompted, are strange. Then, however, as we have now seen, these things were attractive to not a few sincere (and far from crazed) Christians within as well as without the nascent Society of Friends. In Quaker preaching the doctrine of perfection and infallibility, taught uncritically, was at first well nigh universal. Nayler accepted, and practised, it with a simplicity and consistency so unswerving that he proved it wrong and brought disgrace on himself. In this he is not unlike Mary Tudor a hundred years earlier, who, through a similarly single-minded devotion to the practice, then common form with the religious, of burning heretics, led men to repudiate a different (but not unrelated) doctrine of infallibility, but for herself won nothing better than the sobriquet "Bloody".

But Mary Tudor never confessed her error; and in this almost all the early Friends were like her: practically never in my researches have I come across a Friend who acknowledges a mistake. Nayler does so: which at once puts him in a class by himself. No serious and sympathetic student can fail to observe this; but in an anxiety to redeem Nayler's character it has not, I think, been remarked that he also changed, and enlarged, his theology. Gordon in the *D.N.B.* says that "for depth of thought and beauty of expression" Nayler's writings "deserve a place in the front rank of Quaker literature";<sup>1</sup> he does not, however, distinguish the later from the earlier. Braithwaite, as usual, is more perceptive and draws attention to two pieces written after Nayler's spiritual recovery as "of great force and beauty" and as possessing "the savour of an experience refined in the crucible of shame and suffering."<sup>2</sup> But we can go further than this. For Nayler's theology is changed. It is still a Quaker theology, still a *theologia pectoris*; but it is much nearer to Apostolic Christianity than his Familist "imaginings" had been, nearer to Paul and Augustine and Luther, because his experience was now nearer to theirs. He had now come to grips with something which other Friends tended to overlook: the reality of evil and of sin, the continuing of temptation in the Christian's life, the continuing danger of backsliding. In the words of a recent research student, Nayler is the only one among early Friends "who considered the consequences of any possible dis-

<sup>1</sup> A. Gordon, in *D.N.B.*, s.v. Nayler.

<sup>2</sup> W. C. Braithwaite, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

obedience to the Light after it had once been fully accepted."<sup>1</sup> He thus added a much needed corrective, making the Quaker gospel at once saner and humbler. I conclude with a brief presentation of his message.

In one of the two works commended by Braithwaite, Nayler refers revealingly to "the beginning of the work of a new creature . . . yet was not the work done and finished in me already . . . yet was there a great work to do in me . . . I found by dayly experience that my salvation was not compleat." He had not put on Christ "at once," he writes, "but in the light of Faith I saw I was so to run as to win him before I could put him on. This was not done all at once."<sup>2</sup> Nayler has clearly been reading *Romans* and *Galatians*: for Nayler, as for Paul, temptation still continues, and struggle against temptation. In a tract about temptation which was not reprinted in the volume of his collected works he remarks that "The greatest and best gifts a man or creature may receive from God are accompanied with the chiefest and worst temptations."<sup>3</sup> So in his own experience he had found that "the greatest enemies were yet within me . . . the motions of sin did still work from the old ground and root"; and "that ground was but removed as I grew in Christ and he in me, and as I came to learn him."<sup>4</sup>

Hence the need not only for repentance and confession—and "O!" he cries, "that I may never hide thy Praise by covering my Sin or Shame!"<sup>5</sup>—but for perpetual watching and struggle. For "the Soul is not safe while sin lives"<sup>6</sup> and "wheresoever it enters by consent, it is hardly got out again; and if it be, it is not without much Sorrow; and this I have found in the Depth."<sup>7</sup> Hence "Let none be too confident in selfs work and approbation . . ." he writes, "but let such that think they stand, take heed lest they fall."<sup>8</sup> For "There is the strong man to be bound, before the Babe can reign" and "the strong

<sup>1</sup> O. C. Watkins, *Spiritual Autobiography from 1649 to 1660*, p. 171; I am indebted to Mr. Watkins for permission to quote from this London University M.A. thesis.

<sup>2</sup> *What the Possession of the Living Faith is* (1659), pp. 5, 6, 12, 11.

<sup>3</sup> *How the ground of Temptation is in the heart of the Creature (s.a.)*, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *What the Possession of the Living Faith is*, pp. 12, 6, 24.

<sup>5</sup> *To all the Dearly Beloved People of God (s.a., repr., 1659)*, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> *What the Possession of the Living Faith is*, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> *To all the People of the Lord (1659)*, pp. 3f.

<sup>8</sup> *How the ground of Temptation is in the heart*, p. 7.

man having got a possession within, is not easily bound . . . give yourselves no rest until the strong man bow."<sup>1</sup> This is a man who speaks feelingly of what he knows, a man experienced in the wars: "in which Warfare," he tells us, "I came to see the hardship of him that will be a souldier of Christ Jesus, and the baptisms into his death, the slothful servant, and the faithful. . . . And in this journey, I have seen the slothful servant overtaken with a fault which he had once cast behind him, and never intended to joyn to again."<sup>2</sup>

This brings us to another point. For Nayler sees clearly that backsliding can be, in part at least, unintentional and need not involve the whole man. There is "a great difference," he insists, between "sin lived in, and pleaded for" and "sin condemned in the creature (though not yet wholly dead)."<sup>3</sup> Sin may creep in through a mistaken simplicity, an error of judgment rather than of will, as he believed had happened to himself "in the Day when my Judgment was taken away."<sup>4</sup> "In the misplacing of the mind," he writes, it is possible for the tempter to have "entred, and the temptation prevailed, to the bringing that in him [the Christian], and him (in that) into and under the suffrance of the enemies work, that hath his delight chiefly and alone in God, and never have bent the minds delight after satisfaction to and in the flesh."<sup>5</sup>

Finally Nayler's perception, all too painfully, how the genuinely committed Christian may still, "not willingly,"<sup>6</sup> fall in the struggle with sin, misled and temporarily worsted, prompts him to plead that such backsliders shall receive not condemnation from their fellow-Christians but pity, forgiveness and love. "They are . . . more to be pittied," he writes, "because of the simplicity that is deceived."<sup>7</sup> After all, this is the attitude God adopts towards the sinner, as Nayler had learned in the midst of his own error; for when "that innocent, Just and Holy Life came to suffer in me and be betrayed, and I to lose the light thereof, so far as to be taken

<sup>1</sup> *Milk for Babes* (1661, but written earlier), pp. 8 f., 10, 20.

<sup>2</sup> *What the Possession of the Living Faith is*, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *How Sin is Strengthened, and How it is Overcome* (1657), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *To all the People of the Lord*, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *How the ground of Temptation is in the heart*, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> *A Door Opened to the Imprisoned Seed* (1659), p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> *The Lamb's War Against the Man of Sin* (1657), p. 8.

captive again under the power of darknesse, sin and death,"<sup>1</sup> yet "God . . . did not forsake his Captive in the Night, even when his Spirit was daily provoked and grieved."<sup>2</sup> Further, freedom from a spirit of condemnation of others was something which Nayler himself had never lost, again even in the heart of his sufferings.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, he urges Friends to put away "that which the enemy hath cast long upon the children of light (to wit) want of love," and instead to put on Christ: to put on Christ

so plentifully that you may have [wherewith] to cast over a brothers nakednesse, a garment of the same love, who came from above to lay down his life for his enemies, and of the same power, who can forgive sins, and offences, above seven times a day, beholding each others with that good eye which waits for the soul and not for the sinne, which covers, and overcomes the evil with the good. . . giving more abundant honour to him that lacketh, that in the body be no schisme, nor defile one another, nor keep alive a Brothers iniquity, nor blot out the name, and appearing of the holy seed in the least . . . and the appearance shall be the Lords . . . and . . . at his coming shall he . . . correct every false judgment, and that which ensnares the simple will he cast out.<sup>4</sup>

With this last quotation, its loose syntax effectively conveying, as Paul's Greek sometimes does, its writer's overpowering emotion, we may leave our Friend. For now no one knows better than he, or preaches more passionately, the true "acting the part of Christ"—in the spirit of *I Corinthians* xiii. Had Nayler lived, the corrective to Quaker theology which he was beginning to supply might have led the Society into the "greater nearnesse to the true Apostolick Christianity" which More desired. But he did not live; and the balance between Fox and Nayler, so tragically lost by Nayler's fall, was not retrieved.

To speak of balance where Nayler is concerned sounds paradoxical. Yet theologically Nayler did in his last years

<sup>1</sup> *To the Life of God in All*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Glory to God Almighty (s.a.)*, pp. 2 f.

<sup>3</sup> *cf. To the Life of God in All*, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *A Message from the Spirit of Truth* (1658), pp. 8f.

provide something of the balance needed over against Fox, which psychologically he had always provided. In Fox, even in his earliest strivings, there is, in Neave Brayshaw's words, "no confession of yielding to temptation."<sup>1</sup> Now to Fox's tremendous idealism, to his conviction and triumphant exhibition that "the power of the Lord is over all", we owe a debt that is immeasurable. I have tried elsewhere to give full weight to this.<sup>2</sup> But for less heroic souls a rigorous (not to say rigorist) perfectionism easily becomes a shallow humanism, in which sin is overlooked, not overcome. For a balanced theology Nayler's realistic perception that the struggle with sin continues and Nayler's pity for the bemused, backsliding Christian are indispensable. For *we* do yield to temptation, all too often. When we do, the thing to remember about Nayler is not that he fell but that by God's grace he rose again, that he came *through*. "Though at some times the Clouds may be so thick, and the powers of Darkness so strong in your eye that you see him not, yet love him and believe, and you have him present":<sup>3</sup> that is the message of James Nayler.

<sup>1</sup> A. N. Brayshaw, *The Personality of George Fox* (London, 1933 edn.), p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> cf. my introduction to John Nickalls' edition of Fox's *Journal*.

<sup>3</sup> *Milk for Babes*, p. 3.