

## “Present State of the Nonconformists” (1672).<sup>1</sup>

“The Protestant Nonconformists make up a considerable part of the nation. They are divided into four parts:—*The Presbaterians, The Independants, The Anabaptists, The Quakers & 5th Monarchy Men.*”

The “motif” of the Report is pretty clearly shown in the next sentence, “The Danger the Monarchy of England may be in is not alike from all of these.” Then follow accounts of (1) The Presbyterians, (2) The Independents and (3) The Anabaptists—none of them complimentary—but all shrewd and significant. The fourth and last section concerns the Quakers; and reads as follows:—

“4. The *Quakers* most truly deserve the character of rude, saucie, unmannerly, with all the ugly names that belong to an illbred person; it is no wrong to them to say they are mad, & fitter for Bedlam than sober companie. 'Tis impossible to give account of their Teachers, they being all so; both men and women. Their places of meeting were lately these: one at *Ratcliffe*, one at *Wheeler Street*, these by the industry of S<sup>r</sup> John Robinson<sup>2</sup> were broaken to pieces. One at *Devonshire house* without Bishopsgate; one in *St. John's Street*; one in *Westminster*; one in *Southwark*; two within the Walls of London, viz<sup>t</sup>., one in *Gracechurch Street*, & one at *the Bull and Mouth* within *Aldersgate*.

“There are among them many rich men that drive very considerable trades, and are as to the affairs of the world as wise in their generation as any person whatever; in their Traffick they will tell you they will make but one word, but 'tis great odds if at that word they do not Cheat you. Though they seem mortified, yet they are intollerable Lovers of the flesh, &c.

“Their greate deluding Maxime, which flatters many people into a good opinion of their innocency, is, they cannot fight—that they are peaceable to suffer

<sup>1</sup> Stowe MSS. Vol. 186.

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Robinson was Lieutenant of the Tower, and these were therefore in his jurisdiction as within the “Liberties” of the Tower—or “Tower Hamlets.”

wrongs, & to revenge nothing; but at the same time, they will curse you from the beginning of the bible to the End of the Revelations, even from making Caen a vagabond to the binding of the Red Dragon and casting him into the Bottomless pitt. And there's no question, if the Spirit (*that is*, Advantage or Opportunity) did but move, they themselves would be the inflictors of all the punishments and plagues mentioned in that Sacred Book, and that with all imaginable Cruelty. But notwithstanding the pretence of not fighting, they have in the time of warr fought, and that desperately. They tell you Likewise, as they will not fight against you, neither can they pay any taxes, or find any Armes for fighting, no, not against the Great Turk or the Pope, if they should come to fight us. But there is a good cure for this very ill principle in the Law, *viz'*, Distraining, which severity makes them very angry. But they restrain it, for fear it should be discovered that the Old Man is stirring in them.

“They are but *Fifth Monarchy* men *disguised*; and they would be found such, but that at present they consult their own interest. They are very carefull of their poor, & very diligent in encreasing their party, ready to assist one another upon all occasions.

“They hate all other Nonconformists as much, if not more than they hate a Church man.

“Captain Meade, now a Quaker, a person of great Estate & great Trade, he hath been a Presbaterian & Independant, & what not. If he may be believed, the Presbaterians & Independants are knaves, dangerous persons, ready to do any mischief; when he was one of them, he professes he was ready to do so, and he is confident his Majesty cannot be safe from any of the Dissenters but the Quakers. They are no very great party; but they are stout, and able to endure hardshipp. While the Laws were executed upon them, and their Meetings broke up by force, they had many spectators, and some compassionate ones, & this made the world believe they were numerous; but since they have handsome Liberty, nobody concerns themselves about them.”

The writer adds:—

“If there be any sharp or severe reflections in the

foregoing papers, they are not to Exasperate his Majesty, or to discourage him in his begun indulgence, for very many understanding persons, conformists and nonconformists, do highly applaud his Majesty's prudence & Clemency, and there is none displeas'd but a few waspish Churchmen; but they are only to excite the King for his own safety, nor to trust these people with any Civil or Military employment, and to have continually such a force in pay, beside of his trained bands, as may be able to suppress any tumults that may arise."

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### A Vision seen by George Fox when he set up Men and Women's Meetings.

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At the setting up of the Men and Women's Meetings, which was set up by the power of God, the dark power appeared in opposition, and great strife against it. And then there was a fierce bull did chase me sore, and would have devoured me, and there was a Shepherd by and I bid him keep off the bull with his staff. And the bull was mad at me, and made at me in many places, as I passed by him and escaped him. And I had many with me and little children, and I was loath they should be tired or hurt with the bull, and I did set the children upon my horse that they should not tire, because of the bull's chasing them, I was so tender towards them. And the bull met me in a place where he thought he had me sure as his prey, and would destroy me at his pleasure, and he was not hasty to destroy me, so I got a great hedge stake and chopped it down his throat to his heart and laid him still.

G. F.

G. F. found this vision lately amongst his papers.

[From *Extracts from Register Books*, p. 321. MS. in D.]