

# Documents Relating to James Nayler

FROM several different sources manuscripts connected with James Nayler have recently reached the Devonshire House Reference Library. We propose to print some of these in full and others in part, with such annotation as shall place them in their historical setting.<sup>1</sup>

I  
JOHN SPOONER AND AGNES VAYERA TO JAMES NAYLER  
[circa 1653]<sup>2</sup>

James Nayler my deare Brother my deare loue salutes y<sup>e</sup> in y<sup>e</sup> lord truely deare Brother J find y<sup>e</sup> goodnes of god great to me in bringeing me into these outward bondes & y<sup>e</sup> marcies of y<sup>e</sup> lord is large & free towards me . . . y<sup>e</sup> words w<sup>ch</sup> y<sup>u</sup> wrott to me they were excetinge saruisable to me, biding me mind y<sup>e</sup> foundation they were like Arowes in my harte & yet like oyntment. . . . J should be glad to se more of thy writting to me if it were but tow lines J am thine in y<sup>t</sup> w<sup>ch</sup> Jnduers for euer as J abid faythfull to y<sup>e</sup> lord.

JOHN SPONER.

my deare Brother Myles Bateman Desiers to be rememb<sup>ed</sup> to y<sup>e</sup>. Deare hart if y<sup>u</sup> se our dere Brother George ffox rememb<sup>re</sup> vs to hime y<sup>r</sup> pray<sup>rs</sup> to god for vs.

Deare Brother my deare & tender loue sallutes the, y<sup>e</sup> words w<sup>ch</sup> y<sup>u</sup> wroat to me was y<sup>e</sup> words of y<sup>e</sup> Lord. they sanke depe into me. . . . Deare harte, pray for me y<sup>t</sup> J may prise his loue for y<sup>e</sup> prayers of y<sup>e</sup> faithfull auailleth much w<sup>th</sup> god J am thy sister in my mesuer  
AGNUS VAYERA.

Both letters are written in one contemporary hand upon a small piece of paper.

John Spooner was probably a North-countryman. In the Tenth Month of 1654 he was in Appleby Jail with

<sup>1</sup> In the notes we have had the valued assistance of William C. Braithwaite.

<sup>2</sup> From a MS. belonging to Mary Jane Fox, of London, deposited in D.

Christopher Taylor, Miles Bateman, Agnes Ayrey, and others (Swarth. MSS. i. 14, see *Quakeriana*, iii. 25). Later in the year he married Agnes Ayrey, respecting which marriage George Taylor wrote to M. Fell,

Agnes Ayray and Jo: Sponer are (as wee are informed) Married, it were well if it had beene done in the light, our Spirrits Cannot releish it only wee leaue it in silence for feare of giueing offence; but it were well if less of that were pratished amongst friends (Swarth. MSS. i. 214, dated 26 xii. 1654).

The Westmorland Registers record the marriage of "*Anne* ——" with John Spooner, 9 xii. 1654; Besse states that *Anne* Ayrey was in prison with John Spooner in 1656 (? should be 1654) and in 1669 "John Spooner and *Anne* his wife" were "presented" at Windermere for not receiving the Communion (THE JOURNAL, iv. 29).

The only other reference known to us respecting Agnes Vayera is contained in a letter from Richard Hubberthorne to George Fox, from Frandley in Cheshire, 29 iii. 1654, in which he writes,

it lay vpon mee to tell thee that Agnes vairey is not seruisable to goe forth for lust and filth and darknes rules in her and there is A filthy scandall raysed Concerninge her goinge to Eatean<sup>3</sup>: y<sup>t</sup> they not sufferinge them to goe into y<sup>e</sup> towne wheare he preached they lay wayt for him in y<sup>e</sup> way and soe charged Another man and said it was he: and was not, and soe y<sup>e</sup> truth Comes to bee scandalised by such who run in there wills (Swarth. MSS. iv. 1).

Were *Agnes (Anne) Vayera (Ayrey)* one and the same?

## II

### JAMES NAYLER TO THE TOWN OF BRADFORD<sup>2</sup>

This is a long autograph address, undated, entitled "To y<sup>e</sup> towne of Bradforth, priests Officers & people," and referring by name to Alexander Robinson, John Leake and Jonas Waterhouse,<sup>4</sup> "who profese your selues to be ministers of Xt," to behold the fruits of their ministry. The hearers had stoned, mocked and beaten Friends and

<sup>3</sup> The meaning is not clear. Is the reference to Samuel Eaton (c. 1596-1664), minister of Stockport and opponent of Quakerism? "Some of the people here [Stockport] ran things to a great height, and grew wiser than their minister, so that they occasioned him much difficulty" (*Noncon. Mem.* ii. 361).

<sup>4</sup> Jonas Waterhouse, M.A., ejected from Bradford, 1662. "A learned man, a lover of peace and greatly esteemed for his works-sake" (*Noncon. Mem.* iii. 426).

uncivilly treated the women, and threatened Friends in their meeting-place. Moreover, under pretence of law, they had been haled out of meeting when at prayer, and their blood shed by drunken men.

The subscription reads : " Written from your soules freind who in loue thereto : to your towne came ; who to y<sup>e</sup> world is knowne by the name of James Nayler.

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### III

#### JOHN BILLINGSLEY TO JAMES NAYLER, 1654<sup>2</sup>

This letter, perhaps the original, dated " Chesterfield, Dec. 23, 1654," is headed " ffor James Nayler Wandring Quaker and his fellow-seducers, persecutors of the faithfull ministers of y<sup>e</sup> Gospel of Christ," and invites Nayler " to meete in a way of christian conference." The writer propounds six questions for discussion, of which the fifth runs, " whether you Quakers haue any lawfull call from God to leaue your particular callings or families to wander vp & downe the Nation publishing doctrines contrary to the Doctrine of Christ ? I deny it, proue it if you can."

The conference took place as arranged on the 3rd of Eleventh Month (Jan.), 1654/5, and a record of it from the Quaker side was printed in 1655—*Dispute between James Nayler and the Parish Teachers of Chesterfield, by a Challenge against him.*<sup>5</sup> In reply to Question 5, Nayler states, " Our call from God we witness, to leave all and follow him as wanderers, who had not whereon to lay his head, and in love to soul, to deny our selves, and worldly interest, to publish the acceptable year of the Lord . . . and this is not contrary to the doctrine of Christ, but the same which he practised and those that he called."

Other MSS. in D. refer to this Conference as, e.g. Boswell Middleton, p. 15, and Samuel Watson, p. 147.

John Billingsley (1625-1684) was appointed Vicar of Chesterfield in 1653. He is mentioned in *An Exact History of James Naylor*, 1657, p. 19, and in Fox's *Great Mistry*, 1659, p. 123.

<sup>5</sup> One copy in D., the date " 3<sup>d</sup> of 11 mo 1654 " being given by an early owner in writing on the title page.

## IV

JAMES NAYLER IN BRIDEWELL PRISON<sup>6</sup>28<sup>th</sup> January 1656, 57.

By warrant from the hand of the hon<sup>ble</sup> Sir Thomas Widdington, Knt. Speaker of the Ho: of Parliament, dated 16<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1656, directing the Governors to receive & keep James Naylor at hard labour & to deny him all Society: This warrant was read to J. Naylor who had been brought from Bristol: he was searched to find if he had ink or paper about him: he is to be put to hard labour in the room of the west side of the common prison to be lodged there, bedding, coverlid, two blankets & sheets provided to keep him from the cold, no fyer nor candle allowed. The inner door carefully locked & the out with 2 good locks & keys: the steward to keep the key of the new lock to the outer door & the Porter that of the old lock & the Steward & Porter & Thomas Carpenter an Art M<sup>r</sup><sup>7</sup> to go to deliver to Naylor his work & to search his hemp: & he is to have relief as much as his labour will earn for every cwt. of hemp 8<sup>d</sup> & 9<sup>d</sup> for work further advanced in heating etc. and to be allowed such diet as is usual. The Steward & Porter to be with him at Meals, but hold no conference with him: if he be ill the Surgeon to attend him: the windows to be glazed & partly boarded & no one but the President or Tres<sup>r</sup> & 4 Governors to see him on any pretence whatever, except the Steward & Porter as already ordered.

31<sup>st</sup> Jany. 1656, 57:—Permitted to J. Naylor that his wife may visit him in the presence of 4 of the Governors & to see that no ink pen or paper be given to him & his room to be searched & J.N. to be transferred to the Stewards House for one day whilst the Carpenter is turning and furnishing the boards &c.

21<sup>st</sup> Feby 1656, 57:—Dr Higgs for Dr Nurse visits J. Naylor & discovers a wound in his leg, pulse low & water out of sorts, so prescribed sugar of roses

<sup>6</sup> Printed by permission of the Treasurer of the Bridewell Royal Hospital, from a copy supplied *per* Rev. E. G. O'Donoghue, Chaplain of the Bethlem Royal Hospital.

<sup>7</sup> Art M<sup>r</sup>=Arts Master, the man who taught the apprentices at Bridewell their trades.

& Milke as good for him : when visited by some of the Governors J.N. is found to be well & he only complaining of indisposition but fearing consumption. It is found that he is unwilling to eat meat but prefers boiled Milk & bread & water gruel & barley broth : ordered that he has what diet he pleases commensurate with his earnings.

25<sup>th</sup> Feby 1656, 57 :—A report on the 23<sup>rd</sup> inst : Dr. Nurse & others examined J Naylor who alleged that he was sick : but found his pulse good & viewed his water & descoursed with him concerning the temper of his body & concluded that he was not sicke at all but in good health : the com<sup>er</sup> desire that Parliament be acquainted therewith if occasion so be required.

25<sup>th</sup> March 1656, 57 :—J Naylor to be permitted to have his wife in his rooms with him. Dr Nurse made a certificate that he may attend the Court without danger to his life—tho weak he is fairly healthy & complains of a cough which he suffered from when in the Army & a pain in the stomach after eating pudding : & that if he worked a bit harder he would degest his food better. When brought before the court J.N. pronounced to be in fair health so was returned to his prison room.

15<sup>th</sup> May 1657 :—J Naylor being removed to Pollard's House is to be kept in most strict conformity as he was originally & in accordance with the Parliament orders & those of the Doctor.

28<sup>th</sup> May 1657 :—J. Naylor to be taken care of by an ancient widow Pollard by name, as his nurse, to be tended by her for Soup &c.

24<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1657 :—Pollard to have 20/- for looking after J. Naylor, but no one to come near him.

20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1657 :—Mrs Pollard to have 20/- for attending J. Naylor and Dr. Nurse £20 for general attendance on all inmates of the Hospital.

25<sup>th</sup> June 1658 :—James Naylor being in good health to be put to labour to be allowed what he can earn, or what his friends send him but there is to be a strict watch kept that he have conference with no one other than widow Pollard to do necessities in his room.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO JAMES NAYLER 23

26<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1658 :—Mr Moore J.P. solicits delivery of J. Naylor, but not granted.

8<sup>th</sup> June 1659 :—The President reported as to what had been done with regard to J. Naylor: it is not considered safe that he should be set at liberty till he be discharged by Parliament according to the exegences of the Warrant whereby he was committed.

V

JOHN NAYLER'S ACCOUNT AS EXECUTOR TO HIS FATHER,  
JAMES NAYLER, 17<sup>TH</sup> OF MARCH, 1663<sup>2</sup>

The reall estate by the Jnventorye over & above good debts	}	64 <sup>li</sup>	10 <sup>s</sup>	4 <sup>d</sup>
Will <sup>m</sup> Naylor owed		2 <sup>li</sup>	0	0
Anthonye Casson		2	6	8 <sup>d</sup>
Robert Graveley		2	15 <sup>s</sup>	0
John Scott		15 <sup>li</sup>	0	0
Total of the reall estate		86 <sup>li</sup>	12 <sup>s</sup>	0 <sup>d</sup>

These debts accounted desperate.

John Hodgson	1 <sup>li</sup>	0	0 <sup>d</sup>
Will <sup>m</sup> Swinden	20 <sup>li</sup>	0	0
John Naylor	11 <sup>li</sup>	0	0 <sup>d</sup>

Total 32<sup>li</sup>: not to be accounted for.

Debts oweing by the deceased & to be deducted out  
of the reall estate.

To Doctor Brownlowe	3 <sup>li</sup>	0	0
To John Roper	1	10	0
To John Lee	11	0	0
To Stephen Oxley	0	5	0
To Mary Simpson	0	4	0
þveing of the will	1	5	0
the mortuarye <sup>8</sup>	0	10	0
The wiues thirds of the goods <sup>9</sup>	28 <sup>li</sup>	17 <sup>s</sup>	4 <sup>d</sup>
Total to be defalked <sup>10</sup>	46 <sup>li</sup>	11 <sup>s</sup>	4 <sup>d</sup>

<sup>8</sup> A *mortuary* was a customary gift claimed by the incumbent of a parish from the estate of a deceased parishioner.

<sup>9</sup> A "third of the goods" was the extent to which a widow could claim in the case of no will being left.

<sup>10</sup> *Defalk* is to deduct from an account. The word is still locally in legal use in U.S.A.

charged vpon him	86 <sup>li</sup>	12 <sup>s</sup>	0
defalke	46 <sup>li</sup>	11 <sup>s</sup>	4 <sup>d</sup>
Remaines	40 <sup>li</sup>	0	8 <sup>d</sup>

ffortye pounds being devised to Sarah a daughter as a legacy & her child's p<sup>te</sup> & portion<sup>11</sup> Soe there is eight pence to be devided amongst the mother & fve children—according to the devise of the will, & nothing for the Executor but his labour for his paines.<sup>12</sup>

As James Nayler died in October, 1660, it seems strange that the account should not be made till March, 1663/4. But the names Oxley and Roper, and also William Nayler, occur in close association with Nayler in a letter written to him by R. Farnsworth in 1652 (Swarth. MSS. i. 372), and the paper here printed is one of a series that undoubtedly concerns James Nayler.

Although we have no proof that Nayler's wife, Anne, was in sympathy with his religious principles, it is evident from the petition she addressed to the King in February, 1656/7<sup>13</sup> that she was anxious to be with her husband in Bridewell, and to relieve his sufferings.

No entries occur in the Friends' Registers for Yorkshire of the births of children of James Nayler, but the Wakefield Parish Registers record the baptisms of Mary (1640), Jane (1641), and Sarah (1643), the name of the wife not given (*D.N.B.*).

<sup>11</sup> As only three children appear on the Wakefield Parish Registers, Sarah, born 1643, the youngest, it seems possible that the *five* children mentioned in 1663 were of a second marriage; which might account for Sarah's legacy.

<sup>12</sup> This seems rather unnecessary self-pity on the part of the "Executor," as, according to the list of "desperate" debts, he owed £11.

<sup>13</sup> *Extracts from State Papers*, p. 24.

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The past is never irrelevant; it is a guiding series of lights, and it has to be prolonged. To-day no study of origins is considered waste of time that is pursued in earnest; and we may fairly claim that to test our own ideas and instincts and experiences by those of other ages is, at the very least, what we call scientific; while in the practical conduct of life it may save us from false starts innumerable and help to set us on some sure path.

Preface to Glover's *Nature and Purpose of a Christian Society*, 1912.