

A PARCEL OF BOOKS FOR MORGAN LLWYD

In the spring of 1654 Morgan Llwyd received a parcel of books from London. The man who sent them, Philip Rogers, was an elder in the Congregational church at Wrexham of which Llwyd was the minister, and was well placed to know what sort of books Llwyd wanted.¹

Readers of Fox's *Journal* are familiar with the 'preist att Rexam in Wales one ffloyde' who 'sent two of his preachers Into ye north to try us & see what a manner of people wee was: ... & one of y^m stands a fine minister for Christ to this day: one John appe John.'² Llwyd himself, though he had contacts with Friends,³ did not join them; but that his lively inquiring mind was sympathetic to the Quaker message has appeared from a number of recent studies.⁴ He died prematurely in 1659, aged only 40, and in the history of Quakerism in Wales he stands like a Moses who did not enter the promised land.

It is consequently of considerable interest to know what he was reading, especially at a time when, it would seem, he had not yet made up his mind and was still casting around. The parcel of books he received early in 1654 is also a useful reminder of the *context* of incipient Quakerism: we see the *sort* of writings read by those Friends were hoping to convince, pieces with which they often had to enter into competition.

Two passages in a letter from Rogers⁵ to Llwyd read thus:

The bookes I sent you were these, Divine Essayes, by Is. Pennington, the Discovery of Mans returne, newes coming from the north, light out of darknes, the olive leaffe, the man of peace, & A voyce from heaven.

here be some other bookes, w^{ch} I had thought to send you, namely the tryall of spirits, put forth by Will Dell, & the examination of Accademies treatinge of the nature of things put forth by Mr. Webster, & some bookes put forth by the qua: (so called) but I did not know that you might have them already.

The nine pieces referred to are these:-

Isaac Pennington, *Divine essayes* (1654)

William Dewsbury, *The discovery of mans returne to his first estate* (1654)

(George Fox,) *Newes coming up out of the north* (1654)

(Richard Farnworth,) *Light risen out of darkness* (1654)

William Erbury, *An olive leaf* (1654)

William Erbury, *The man of peace* (1654)

(Arise Evans,) *A voice from heaven* (1652)

William Dell, *The tryal of spirits* (1653)

John Webster, *Academiarum examen, or the examination of academies* (1654)

Most of these tracts were published in 1654, and when despatched to Llwyd were hot from the press.⁶ As many as three of them were written by Friends. The one by Dewsbury has his name on the titlepage, and also states that it was 'written by one, whom the people of the world calls Quaker.' The other two were anonymous; but in *Newes coming up out of the north* Fox's signature occurs twice (pp. 26, 46) and in *Light risen out of darkness* Farnworth's name occurs twice (pp. 5, 59). With Fox Llwyd was already in touch. Even if Farnworth's name was not known to him, the statement on the titlepage of *Light risen* that it was 'written in Reply to a Book⁷ that was set forth by the dry and night Vines in and about Beverley, who scornfully nicknameth the People of God ... Quakers' can have left him in no doubt about its provenance. All three tracts were, in fact, part of a concerted programme of propaganda on behalf of the new movement. At this time, 'Fox, Farnworth and Dewsbury exercised a real leadership,' in writing, with Fox seeing everything before it was printed, as well as in active mission, especially in the East Riding, where Farnworth and Dewsbury followed close on Fox.⁸

For Llwyd, the tracts by Fox and Farnworth were not the happiest choice. *Light risen* was one of a growing number of pieces of Quaker controversy, in which the opponent's charges are taken apart and rebutted, sentence by sentence, leaving an impression of contentious prejudice rather than of coherent argument. This was common practice but not at all in Llwyd's manner. The title *Newes coming up out of the north* may have led him to hope that through it he might get to the bottom of what had taken hold of John ap John; but all he found was Fox at his most abusive.

You may apply the Scriptures and say, you are redeemed by Christ; but he will say, and saith, Go ye workers of iniquity into everlasting punishment, howl and weep, misery is coming upon you ...

all you Priests, you blind guides, dissembling hypocrites, without the Kingdom of God, plagues and woe is comming to be poured upon you. Wo, wo, wo, the third woe is coming, ...⁹

The effect of this may have been only to recall the recent visit of the Quakers to Wrexham, when, as Braithwaite puts it, 'they failed to recognize the open-mindedness, faithfulness to conviction, and freedom from convention which distinguished Morgan Llwyd's own

deeply mystical character.’¹⁰

The piece by Dewsbury, *The discovery of mans returne*, includes the usual attacks on hireling priests, water baptism, human learning, ‘studied sermons’ and hymn-singing, and in places the language is robust;¹¹ but over all the tone is different. Braithwaite characterizes Dewsbury as ‘perhaps the sweetest and wisest of the early Friends,¹² and the tract is positively, forward-looking, hopeful, encouraging.

be faithfull in following the Lamb dayly through the Cross, and none be discouraged; in temptations be content; look up to the Lord to keep you in the hour of temptations; for it is no sin to be tempted, but to yeeld to the tempter; and when the Lord delivers you from the power of the Tempter, watch that your will get not from under the Cross, but sink down into the Love of God.

wait on the Lord for power, and he will give thee power to obey, and in being faithful in a little, more will be communicated from the Lord ... until ... you can no longer live without the loving kindness of your Father in Christ Jesus.

All give up, give up freely to be guided by the counsel of the Lord the light in you, beleeving in his power that is present with the light; he will lead you dayly through the Cross in the streight way of his sufferings and death, where the old man will be put off with his deeds, and so you shal have right to the tree of life, and shal enter with him through the gates into the City New Jerusalem.¹³

Such mingling of appeal and assurance is more what Llwyd was seeking. It will have affected him as, we know, it affected John Lilburne; but it did not make a Quaker of him, as it did of Lilburne.¹⁴

The book by Isaac Penington is different again. Penington was not yet a Quaker. Like Llwyd, he was still seeking, even if he is careful to state of the faith that seeks the Spirit of God, ‘Nor doth it only seek, but so fast as it finds, it fastens upon him ... And so far as it finds and fastens, it hath rest.’

Divine Essays consists of 14 discourses in which, after discussing in turn the nature of knowledge in general, scripture knowledge and radical or original knowledge, and drawing the usual contrasts between law and gospel and between flesh and spirit, Penington distinguishes between natural man and man in Christ, that is to say man brought low and broken as Christ was; for ‘God when he breaketh Christ, breaketh him yet more terribly than he hath yet broken man,’ and man in Christ must go through the same torment; till at last God ‘reneweth both his knocks and his beams of light’ to those who are his, ‘as their condition, need and capacity requireth.’ The style is calm and patient; in language which Penington carried with him into Quaker maturity, ‘For my part I profess I would not (though fairly I might) aspire beyond my present state.’

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Man hath a kind of intercourse with God ... There is yet a touch left, there yet remains a wilde portraict of the glorious work of God upon man.

what a poor imaginary thing is the Christ which many (if not most) apprehend! ... Little do they perceive how they build an imagination upon an imagination.

Do ye know how sweet it is to taste the true nature of the Life of God! to enjoy and live upon the breath of his Spirit! to walk in the light and love of the Lord! If ye truly know these things (the sweetness of them) then ye may be able to give a guess at what it is to have them broken.

happy, happy, thrice happy are they whom God leadeth through a wilderness and the dismal exercises thereof, into his land of rest.¹⁵

The fact that Penington's tract comes first in Rogers' list and is the only one with the writer's name may indicate that Llwyd had requested it. Rogers seems to have known that Llwyd already possessed some things written by Friends, and in sending the Quaker pieces was perhaps drawing a bow at a venture. With the tracts by William Erbury this was not the case.

In Quaker historiography Erbury is a shadowy figure remembered only as the father of the Dorcas Erbury who was one of the women escorting Nayler into Bristol in 1656. He was, however, a man with an original cast of mind and a considerable influence. He had been Vicar of St. Mary's, Cardiff, and was a Puritan of the older generation, who had turned towards a deeply allegorical mysticism; it was probably through Erbury that Llwyd was led to Jacob Boehme, two of whose works he translated into Welsh. Llwyd had long admired and trusted Erbury. *An olive-leaf* and *The man of peace* may not appear to say much of significance, but from Llwyd they were sure of a welcome.

We know this from the correspondence¹⁶ between the two men, in which Llwyd refers to 'the Milk and Honey (ever remembred friend) which formerly I sucked in your Ministration ... It's many years since I looked on you as an Image', and continues:

I do both long and profess to become a little child again, willing to learn my A.B.C. anew, if my once dear Schoolmaster Erbury can teach it me ... I am daily longing to withdraw into the inner world ...

Erbury replied to Llwyd's 'lines ... so ... full of divine elegance, of love and delight,' and Llwyd in turn gratefully acknowledged 'the sweetness of the Fathers love (for so I take it) in you,' adding:

We never write, hear, or speak in the light of the Father, but when our inner man is withdrawn out of the spirit of this world, which is the devils street, in which his coaches trundle ...

Erbury not only wrote back, but now published Llwyd's first letter. To this Llwyd demurred.

I desire to find (not notionally, and after the flesh) a spring in us the hope of glory (the flowers in our own gardens, the hope of Summer) ... but whereas you have printed my Letter, I desire you to let me be a privat seeker, lest I should be spiritually a loser, and seem more than I am ...

Even so genuinely modest a man as Llwyd cannot have relished seeing himself described not only as 'this honest man, acquainted at last with the heavenly nature, walking up to the Angelicall world, and withdrawing himself into the inner world,' but as 'a man in the Clouds, come with me to¹⁷ his A.B.C. after all his teachings; not knowing what God is.' Erbury, however, defended his action:

Your Letter I printed for publick use, because I count you as one of the Angels of God ... I would not be a Hermite cloystered in a Church, but fly through the world that's more than publick preaching, though this I do also ...

This last return from Erbury is dated May 1653, less than 12 months before Rogers despatched his parcel of books. There is one further letter from Llwyd, ending with the words 'When you cry Abba, forget not your poor, tryed, tempted, tyred, and through mercy sustained and renewed Lover and Brother.'¹⁸ In April 1654 Erbury died.

The nature and purpose of *An olive-leaf* and *The Man of peace* are described by J(ohn) W(ebster) in his foreword to Erbury's *Testimony*, 'To the Christian Reader:' 'such Christians who were pure and innocent in all appearances were much owned by this friend: he had a first and a second Olive-leaf for them, wherein he endeavours to heal and reconcile the broken spirits of the scattered Saints.'

This is borne out by the titlepages of the two tracts. *An olive-leaf* continues with the words *or, some peaceable considerations ... Also, the reign of Christ, and the saints with him, on earth ... and the day at hand*. The tone is millenarian, but politically quietist. *The man of peace* continues with the words *or, the glorious appearance of God in his people ... being a second olive-leaf, springing 1. to heal the nation ... 2. to humble the princes ... 3. to heighten the spirits of the English ... and bring them ... to the government of Jesus*. In this tract Erbury draws on Micah v.5-6 ('this man shall be the peace'), and identifies 'the man of peace' as 'the mighty God manifested in flesh,' 'taking mans flesh into Union with God in himself, and manifesting this Union in us by the Spirit.'¹⁹

Perhaps Llwyd took this as Erbury's farewell message to him. He would have found its language intelligible and acceptable: in one of his

own books, published in the previous year, after glossing Immanuel as 'God with us in our flesh,' he asks the question 'What is that? Is he in our flesh?,' and answers 'He is, if we are in his Spirit.'²⁰ The truth is that among radical Puritans, including Friends, the connotation of 'flesh' is deeply ambiguous. On the other hand, "'flesh" is a comprehensive term for those things which obscure man's vision of God;²¹ on the other, 'flesh' can be taken 'into Union with God.' The explanation is that behind the ambiguity there were dynamics. The 'inspiring' of 'flesh' in the personal sphere, like the redemption of power in the political, was part of the larger overcoming of 'the world,' that resulted from the imminent return of Christ.

With *A voice from heaven* we move from the metaphysical to the visionary. Its author, Rhys (or, as he called himself, Arise) Evans, was a dreamer and prophet whose oneiromancy and vivid writing appeal to students of psychology and literary expression²² but have little religious content. Perhaps the fact that Evans was born at Llangelynnin in Merioneth, some 30 miles from his own birthplace at Maentwrog, gave Llwyd an interest in him. Perhaps *A Voice* was only added to the parcel as a makeweight.

The remaining two books in Rogers' list stand somewhat apart from the rest. Each was a work of some substance, by a writer of some note. John Webster became well known as a preacher. Like Erbury, whose *Testimony* he edited and commended, he was an admirer of Boehme. In the *Academiarum examen* he criticised university education. In this he was like William Dell, who nevertheless continued to be Master of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where *The Tryal of Spirits* was first preached by him in Great St. Mary's. Dell, in fact, came to be considered 'so much one with Friends in principle, though not of the Society', which 'adopted and published' some of his writings, including *The Tryal*, that the Quaker bibliographer Joseph Smith included him in *A Catalogue of Friends' Books* (1867).²³

In the event neither *The Tryal* nor *Academiarum examen* was sent to Llwyd. Even without them the variety of the books he received gives support to Dr. Tudur Jones' assessment of him.

He gathered his flour from many mills, but baked his bread in the glowing furnace of his own experience. He learned from Jacob Boehme, from Peter Sterry, from John Saltmarsh, from Erbury and from the Quakers. He leaned on the Cambridge Platonists and on Richard Baxter. He was acquainted with the views of the Fifth Monarchy Men and the Levellers. He knew his Calvin and, like all the Puritans, he was above all steeped in his Bible. But though his interests were catholic, he gave his personal impress to the world. His way was not so much to borrow as to assimilate.²⁴

Through his parcel of books we see the omnivorous reader setting to work.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ For Rogers, see A.N. Palmer, *A history of the older Nonconformity of Wrexham* (Wrexham, [1888]), 48-9; T. Richards, *Religious Developments in Wales (1654-1662)*, (1923), 499-500.
- ² G. Fox, *Journal* (1911), ed. N. Penney, i.141. For John ap John and his convincement, see W.G. Norris, *John ap John, and early records of Friends in Wales* (JFHS Supplement, no. 6, 1907), esp. p. 6; G.F. Nuttall, *The Welsh Saints 1640-1660: Walter Cradock, Vavasor Powell, Morgan Llwyd* (Cardiff, 1957), 55-6, 62-3, 84, 87.
- ³ For the return visit to Wrexham paid by Richard Hubberthorne and John Lawson, when 'Richard had something given him to speak to the priest who was much stricken', for a later visit by Fox, when 'many of Floydes people came to us', and for correspondence between Llwyd and Fox, see G.F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford, 1946), 151-2, with references; *The Welsh Saints*, 56-7.
- ⁴ Cf. W.C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (1912; 2nd. edn., Cambridge, 1955); J.E. Southall, 'Morgan Llwyd and his times', *F.Q.E.*, liii (1919), 23-5; E.L. Evans, 'Morgan Llwyd and the early Friends', *F.Q.* viii (1954), 48-57; E.L. Evans, *Morgan Llwyd* (Lerpwl, 1930); G.F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit*, esp. ch. x; H. Bevan, *Morgan Llwyd y Llenor* (Caerdydd, 1954); G.F. Nuttall, *The Welsh Saints*, esp. ch. iii; R. Tudur Jones, 'The healing herb and the rose of love: the piety of two Welsh Puritans', in *Reformation Conformity and Dissent* (1977), ed. R.B. Knox, esp. sect. ii; M. Wynn Thomas *Morgan Llwyd* (Writers of Wales, 1984).
- ⁵ The letter is MS 11439 D in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; a typewritten transcript is in the library of the University College of North Wales, Bangor. See E.D. Jones, 'The Plas Yolyn collection of Morgan Llwyd's papers', *Merioneth Historical and Record Society Journal*, iii (1955), item 27. An edition of these MSS by Dr. Geraint Gruffydd and Dr. R. Tudur Jones is expected shortly as vol. iii of Llwyd's *Gweithiau*.
- ⁶ Rogers' letter is dated 4.1. (i.e. March) 1654. That the year was 1653/4 (not 1654/5) appears from a reference to reading the proofs of the Bible then being printed, i.e. *Y Bibl Cyssegr-lan* (1654; Wing B2813A), for which see T.H. Darlow and H.F. Moule, *Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of Holy Scripture* (1903-11), item 9590, and a forthcoming history of the Welsh Bible by Dr. R. Tudur Jones; its printer and publisher were the same as those of Llwyd's *Llyfr y Tri Aderyn* in the previous year.
- ⁷ *A faithful discovery of a treacherous design of mystical antichrist ... in a letter to the faithful in and near to Beverley* (1653); a second edition (1655), commended by Christopher Feake, John Simpson, George Cockayn and Laurence Wise, revealed its authors as Joseph Kellet, John Pomroy and Paul Glisson. See Wing F568-9, as by Feake, and P2803, as by Pomroy; *Catalogue of the Congregational Library*, i. (1895).173, as by Kellett (*sic*), and *Baptist Bibliography* (1916), ed. W.T. Whitley, item 31-1653, as by Kellett; *Bibliotheca Anti-Quakeriana* (1873), ed. J. Smith, 184-5, as by Feake. For Pomroy, Lecturer at Beverley Minster, see *Calamy Revised* (Oxford, 1934), ed. A.G. Matthews, s.v. (Smith, following Calamy, erroneously gives Bransby (i.e. Brandsby) in place of

- Beverley); G. Fox *Journal* (Cambridge, 1952), ed. J.L. Nickalls, 74, n.1. For 'the dry and night vines', cf. Joel i, 12-13.
- ⁸ W.C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 134, 71.
- ⁹ Pp. 12-13.
- ¹⁰ W.C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 123.
- ¹¹ E.g. 'you whose wills guide you, are painted Beasts, bewitched with the Mother of Harlots' (p. 20).
- ¹² W.C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 63.
- ¹³ Pp. 13, 32, 30.
- ¹⁴ Cf. G.F. Nuttall, '“Overcoming the World”: the early Quaker programme', in *Sanctity and Secularity* (Oxford, 1973), ed. D. Baker, 157.
- ¹⁵ Pp. 18, 104, 121, 12, 101, 130-1, 115, 121.
- ¹⁶ The bibliography of the correspondence is confusing. The sequence appears to be as follows:-
1. Llwyd to Erbury, Wrexham, 29.4 (June) 1652. *Call to the Churches* (1653), repr. in *Testimony* (1658), 234-5; his 'first letter' (*Testimony*, 217).
 2. Erbury to Llwyd, in reply. *Call*, repr. in *Testimony*, 235-9.
 3. Llwyd to Erbury. *North-Star* (1653), repr. in *Testimony*, 104-5; his 'second letter' (*Testimony*, 105).
 4. Erbury to Llwyd, in reply. *North-Star*, repr. in *Testimony*, 105-110.
 5. Llwyd to Erbury, Wrexham, 3 m. (May) 52 (mispr. for 1653). *North-Star*, repr. in *Testimony*, 111-12.
 6. Erbury to Llwyd, in reply, London, May 1653. *North-Star*, repr. in *Testimony*, 113-16.
 7. Llwyd to Erbury. *The Babe of Glory* (1653), repr. in *Testimony*, 95-6. Letters 1, 3, 5 and 7 are reprinted in M. Llwyd, *Gweithiau*, ed. T.D. Ellis and J.H. Davies (1899-1908), 256-63, 259-60; Letter 5 also in B. Brook, *Lives of the Puritans*, (1813), iii, 329-30, not quite correctly. Letters 4 and 6 are reprinted in *National Library of Wales Journal*, xxvi (1989), 20-3, with many deprivations, mainly omissions of words, phrases and whole paragraphs.
- Like Fox (*Annual Catalogue of George Fox's Papers* (1939), ed. H.J. Cadbury, item 22, 13A), Erbury also wrote 'To the gathered church at Wrexham': *North-Star*, (repr. in *Testimony*, 103-4; repr. in *N.L.W. Journal*, xxvi, 19. This church was a normal Congregational church, neither 'revivalistic' nor 'Baptist', *pace* H. Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven and London, 1964), 49 and 85.
- ¹⁷ Presumably a misprint for 'to me with'.
- ¹⁸ *Testimony*, 234-5, 239, 104, 111-12, 218, 217, 114, 96.
- ¹⁹ P. 203.
- ²⁰ Cf. *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, 153.
- ²¹ R.T. Jones, 'The healing herb', 166.
- ²² Cf. N. Smith, *Perfection proclaimed: language and literature in English radical religion* (Oxford, 1989), 96-8, with reference to C. Hill and M. Shepherd, 'The Case of Arise Evans,' *Psychological Medicine*, vi (1976). 351-8; J. Crofts, *Wordsworth and the seventeenth-century* (Oxford, 1940), 72, quoting 'seeing the sun at its rising skip, play, dance, and turn about like a great wheel, I fell upon my knees.'
- ²³ Vol.i.520; for 'honest Erbury' and 'Divine Webster' as seen by Friends before the end of the seventeenth century, in association with Dell and without him, and on one occasion with Llwyd, as their spiritual forerunners, see *The Holy Spirit*, 13, n.2, with addendum on 184; and for fresh attention to Dell and Webster in the early years of the present century, *ibid.*, App. I, with reference to R.M. Jones and Theodor Sippell;

see also comment by H.J. Cadbury in *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (2nd. edn.), 544.

²⁴ R. Tudur Jones, *Hanes Annibynwyr Cymru* (Abertawe, 1966), 63 (translated).

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