

Wilkinson—Storyism in Wiltshire c. 1680¹

WHARAS the peopell of the lord in the county of Wilts, Jn particular the quartarly meeting tharof, haue bene beyond expression exarsised With A sad & Lammenttabell sizem & deuision ; first fomented & stirred vp, By John Storry & John Wilkenson of wesmorland, And aftarwards carried on by seuerall in this County ; The cheef wharof wase Arthar Esmead Nathaniall Coulman John Genings & John Matreuis² ; Whoe Apeared for meny months with all thaire indeuors to scattar, deuid, And to lay wast our quartarly monthly & weomens meettings, w^{ch} thay where in tims past verry zealous for ; constituted & set vp by the moueings & giuidings of the wisdome of the most high god ; A particular acount of which deuision & sapparasion is intended to be recorded in a wrightten Book intitiled A particular Acount of the rise begining carriing on & progrese of the deuision & sepparasion which is the work of belliall & his Jnstruments in this county of wilts^e, &c.

And Now for as much as we did labor throw great suffarings heuy burthens & vnexpresabell sorrow for A long time with thease men & those Joyned with them wilst with vs in our quartarly & monthly meettings Being often bowed before the lord for them, With indevors to reclaim them ; yet after all thay in a very vncristian mannar Separated from vs taking away at one of our quartarly meettings our quartarly book³ ; & retains it with our publik stock vntell this day ; And for as much as we finde that thay will not heare but grows high heddy stobborn & moore & moore Rebellious & oppon in the oposision of the truth, its Leadings guidings & saruiceses ; And the saruents of it, setting vp publikly & that before the world thair standard of sepparasion, &c.

We are stirred vp in spirrit (in the dreed fear & aue of the lord god of heauen & earth & in true zeall for his

honnour & the glory of his name, And loue of his presious & indeared truth; And as A warning to all the simpell harted in this age & to sucseedng ages) to record A Judgment; And we doe hearby in the name powar & Athorrity of the Almighty god Record A Judgment, Against thease men, And all Joyned with them in the Aforesaied work of sepparasion & deusion & all thaire euill ways & indeuors of deuiding Amongst gods herritage; Which thay haue bene exarsised in to the dishonour of the deare worthy renowned name of our god. And our faith is that the liueing god in whose loue we haue boren longe with them & sought them will deall with them, And justly reward them whoe haue hard our crys seene our sufferings considared our moornings botteld our tears, Whoe haue gloriously apeared for our presaruesion And for the delliueranc of many out of this snare,

And Now to the lord we leaue them, as branches withered & withering, before the lord god of the whool Earth, Throw thaire forsaking the deuine sap & vertue of Crist Jeesus our lord & head, And it would be our exceeding joy Might thay be reuiued & recouerred Againe which we leue to thee o lord before whome we are bowed this day in doeing this thy will & answaring thy counsill,

William Smyth	Edward Edwards	John Gibbens
Jsreall Noys	Jsack Silf	William Jsack
John harris	John Clark	Thomas Smith
John Stokham	Danniall Yung	Marmeduk Robbens
Roggor Cook	Edward luff	Nathaniall Baylly
Robbart Cox	Waltar Edwards	Ralph Gell
John gardnar	Josiph Bushall	Samuell Noys
William Bury	John gay	William Smith
William Geding	Thomas Smith	Jonetheen Scott
Thomas hinly	William laws	Thomas Lawranc
Addam Goldny	John Gingell	Edward Broune
William Savidg	John Neat	Thomas Barrat
William Playar		John Parradis
William Tyllar		

[Wiltshire Quarterly Meeting, 4th of 8th mo. 1680.]

The following letter⁴ from Robert Barrow to Friends in Bristol recounts some of the movements of these Separatists outside Wiltshire :

Swarthmore thee 15 daye of the
1st month 1678/9

Richard Snead
Charles Joanes & the
rest of our Faithfull Bretheren
& welbeloved ffriends in and
about Bristoll.

. . . Well deare ffriends tis like you know of the comeinge of some of Jo : Storyes agents comed out of wiltshire to make Broyles & tumults in our counrye about the 15th of the last month came to Kendall. J : W : Arthur Ishmead & Nat : Coaleman & after they had had too generall meetings with the seperates they came amongst vs they must needs have there meetings generall for there whole company when they are all together men women & children they are for quantitye but like an ordanary meeting but when they had visited them as the said then Arthur & Robert Pocock [of Reading] came to Kendall meeting where Arthur had his full time without any Interruption, but after him a freind stood vp in the name of the Lord & Ript vp the nature & pedegree of that well favoured harlott & of that spirit of darkenesse which is gone from the crosse & out of the power & life of Righteousnesse, though death can take of the fame thereof & the said freind concluded the meeting in prayer but Arthur & some of his partye that was with him was greatly disqueted yett being much chained could not gett vp to Jangle & the same day being the 4th daye of the weeke nathaniell was att grayrigg meeting And as J heare was verry Large in his words though freinds could not beare him nor sitt vnder his Ayrie talke but Reproved him but he said he would speake except they pulled him downe & Tho : Robertson spoake to him & when he would not heare him Thomas Becke^d of him softly with the back of his hand to have him to give eare to him & the said nathaniell Reported that he laid violent hands of him but there was many freinds that heard & saw all & T. Robertson was farr from any such thing—Soe the next

first day following they came all 3 viz^t the wiltshire men to Sedbridge meeting where there was a considerable bodye of friends & severall in the ministry & and after one of our ffreinds had declared then Nathaniell stod vpp & spoake awhile & ffreinds was generally vnder an exercise because of the wrongness of his spirit & Antipithye of his minde against the faithfull Bretheren & heavenly discipline of truth & because that he is knowne to be such a greate propagator of the seperation & feeleing the weight of that hipocriticall spirit that acted him & them that came with him ; one freind who is not in the ministry haveing an exceeding concern in his mind in the opperation of the heavenly power cryed out silence thou Ayrey man the burthen of the word of the lord is vpon me ; but Nathaniell would not cease but Rather Lifted vp his voyce & they both spoke att once & neither could well be heard and after awhile Nathaniell ceased & another ffreind stod vpp & spoke & then Natt : & Arthur both Jnterrupted him & soe caused a greate Jumble & much disorder & then Arthur & John Blaikling fell into dis-course & there was several that did belong to Sedbridge meeting that did Joyne with Arthur & Nathaniell but they are such persons as never adorned the truth but hath allwayes beene fickle & vnstable & wee Reckon noe lesse in wanteing of them for they have beene out of vnitye with ffreinds many years & this being a time of Trying & winnowing doth onely blow away the chaffe but the wheate is gathered & the Gould purified & the faithfull confirmed & liveingly established vpon the antient Rock & sure foundation against which the gates of hell & death can never prevaile glory to our god for ever but your country men is now posting home againe J : S : is weakely 'tis like durst not adventure to goe with them & J : W : comes not to any of our meetings neither with them nor att other times he knows he hath Lost his credett his [? secret] is discovered & his spirit manifested as well as his leading man J : S : there snare is now seene & they can catch noe more nor J hope hould all they have however thanks be unto god. ffreinds is generally well & through & over all these things the Lord is bringing his people & servants to triumph in his heavenly dominion & therein to stand wittnesses for god

& his pretious truth. Soe ffriends J haveing this opertunitye was willing to give you this hint suposeing you may have a further account from some other hand & soe rest your friend

ROBERT BARROW.

Those that seemed to owne Nathaniell & Arthur is like would not have owned J : S : nor J : W :

NOTES

¹ Wiltshire was one of the strongholds of the Wilkinson-Story "sizem," and "the two Johns" were frequently in this county and neighbouring Bristol. The four chief agents in Wiltshire are mentioned here in order of their notoriety.

² The defection of Arthur Ismeade (Ismay, Esmead) must have taken place between the years 1673 and 1677, for in the former year Ismeade signed, among Friends of good standing, an epistle from London, and in the latter year he is among the Separatists in Wiltshire, addressed by a meeting held in London (see *A Testimony against the 66 Judges*, with preface by Jeffery Bullock, 1677).

Of Arthur Ismead, Thomas Story wrote in his *Journal*, about 1696 :

"One First-Day about this time, came . . . Arthur Ismay, a separate Preacher out of the Country to our Meeting in Whitehart-Court . . . and, being of a large Body, and a bold and unmortified Soul, with a loud strong Voice, began early, before the Meeting was half-gathered ; and went on with Abundance of ranting Matter, such as he used to vent and held it till near the Time to break up the Meeting."

For Nathaniel Coleman, see *Cambridge Journal*.

The Matravers family of Wiltshire has been Quaker down to modern times.

The four are mentioned together in the Bullock pamphlet referred to. See also THE JOURNAL, ix. 190, 194, and *Second Period of Quakerism* reading *Matravers* for *Maltravers*.

³ Evidence of this is to be found in the Minute books which survive and are in D. See THE JOURNAL, x. 182, and *Second Period of Quakerism*.

⁴ The letter is among Bristol MSS. (vol. v. no. 17.) See THE JOURNAL, ix. 190. There is a copy, by Emily Jermyn, in D. (Swarth. Trans. v. 21.)