



*Benjamin Lay,
one of the earliest Advocates of
Negro Emancipation?
1718.*

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Our Quotation—14

“Quakerism helped to bring religion down from the clouds into the field of everyday life. Speculation was idle, co-operation and practical assistance had much greater value than nebulous theories.”

REES, *The Quakers in Wales*, 1925, p. 138.

Friends and the French Prophets

THE *Baptist Quarterly*, of October, 1924, (new series, vol. ii. no. 4) has an article on the French Prophets, written by a Vice-President, Thomas S. Penny, J.P., of Taunton, based on a document lent to the Baptist Historical Society by Major F. Kennedy, C.B., of The Manor, Kingston, Taunton. Here is an extract:

The rise of the French Prophets was due to Louis XIV. In 1685 he expelled all Huguenot ministers from France, so that the Protestants had to depend at best on lay preachers. . . . The prophetic movement spread to England, where there were already people heeding the revelations of Reeve and Muggleton. . . . The impulse passed to James and Ann Wardley, who, at Manchester, headed an offshoot of the Quakers; and from them sprang the community popularly known as the Shakers. These emigrated to America, where the present spiritual descendants of the Cevennes prophets are still to be found from Maine to Kentucky, some 1,700 all told.

We have a full account of the proceedings of this strange body of people in *A Copious Account of the French and English Prophets who infested London during 1707 and the following years . . . and a complete exposure of their infamous Practices*, by D. Hughson, LL.D., London, 1814, included in *Memoirs of Religious Impostors*, by M. Aikin, LL.D., London, 1823. (Among the "impostors" are Joanna Southcott, James Nayler and Lodowick Muggleton.) In this *Account* are included extracts from *A Brand pluck'd from the Burning, Exemplify'd in the Unparallel'd Case of Samuel Keimer*; a very rare pamphlet, London, 1718 (one copy in **D**).

Prominently identified with the French Prophets were Sir Richard Bulkeley (1644-1710), F.R.S. (see *D.N.B.*), a deformed man, of whom it was prophesied that he should become straight, but who died before it resulted; John Lacy (1664- see *D.N.B.*) who "was ordered to leave his lawful wife and take Elizabeth Gray, a prophetess," it being prophesied that a son should be born to prove that the union was of Divine command, but twice in succession daughters arrived (Keimer, *Brand*, p. 57). There is a very rare tract in **D** entitled *The Honest Quaker: or the Forgeries and Impostures of the Pretended French Prophets and their Abettors expos'd, in a Letter from a Quaker to his Friend, giving an account of a Sham-Miracle, performed by John L——y, Esq., on the body of Elizabeth Gray, on the 17th of August last*, London, 1707. Bulkeley, Lacy, Dr. Byfield and John Davis are mentioned. It is said that Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) had some attraction towards the Prophets, also his friend, Nicholas Faccio (1664-1753), mathematician and fanatic.

We have previously quoted a reference in *The Baptist Quarterly* to JAMES and ANN WARDLEY, but we have not found any further reference to this couple, "who, at Manchester, headed an offshoot of the Quakers." Of some others connected with Friends who were led away we have collected information given below:

In the minutes of Westminster M.M. 3 mo. 5. 1708, we read:

A paper being brought in from MARY WILLIS, widow, and read, wherein she condemns herself for going to and joining with those they call the French Prophets, and suffering the agitation spirit to come upon her and to exercise herself thereby in our meetings, she is advised to forbear imposing her preaching upon our public meetings for worship till Friends

are better satisfied (quoted in *London Friends' Meetings*, by Beck & Ball, 1869, p. 253).

There is a curious line in Joseph Smith's *Catalogue* (i. 611): "*Finkley, A. He joined the French Prophets." Keimer notes a person named "ANNA FINKLEY, a widow, in Joyner's Street, who was of good repute, who invited the prophets home to her house to refresh themselves"; and in his "List of the Principal Characters" Keimer includes A. Finkley and another "formerly among the people called Quakers but disowned by them." She was probably the person hinted at by Joseph Smith but of mistaken sex. The * denotes ex-Friend.

In the same list Keimer includes: "GUY NUTT, a Prophet, who goes in plain habit, but not owned by the people called Quakers." This Guy Nutt is referred to by Pickworth, ex-Quaker (*Charge*, 1716, p. 322):

The Holy Spirit spoke through his faithful servant and their once well approved Friend Guy Nutt, on the 12th of November, 1710, to an Assembly of their People in Meath Street in Dublin—they laid Hands on him, pulling, and forcing him out of their Assembly; he, being the while under the Operation of the Spirit, said, "You were turn'd out of the Synagogues your selves and now you turn others out."

Also "ANNE STEED, formerly among the people called Quakers, but disowned by them." We must give some attention to this Anne Steed. Here again, for some unaccountable reason, Smith gives (*Cata.* ii. 622): "*Steed, Ann. She joined the French and English Prophets." After some resistance, she finally came into intimate relationship with Samuel Tomlinson, "who generally went under the Denomination of a Quaker (but disown'd by that People, who have no Unity or Fellowship with any that walk irregular in their Lives, tho' they may wear the plain Habit and frequent their Meetings" (Keimer, *Brand*, p. 71). Tomlinson was a butcher in Newgate Market. Several visions of Anne Steed are reported by Pickworth (*Charge*, pp. 25, 233—"our dear Friend Ann Steed," 328 ff; Keimer, *Brand*, pp. 71 ff.). The following vision is dated "in the sixth month, Anno 1709":

I beheld the Lord Jesus Christ at my Left-Hand, in a Personal Appearance in a large Room, where were a great many of the chief Leaders of the People called Quakers, some of which had Crowns upon their heads, amongst whom were Theodore Egleston, George Whitehead,

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William Bingley, John Feild, William Warren, George Owner [? Oldner], William Pen, John Butcher and Samuel Waldenfeild, all sitting. Francis Moulton ["a believer among the Prophets"] coming in, went directly to Theodore Egleston, laid both his Hands upon his Crown and went away with it; notwithstanding I saw a Chair set for him in Christ's glorious Kingdom upon Earth now near approaching, which he might obtain if he pressed hard for it, but, if there, he might content himself without a Crown." George Whitehead's crown, "more magnificent than the rest," was taken off "with an angry snatch"—William Bingley's "fell from his Head," also John Field's. William Warren's "totter'd exceedingly, as if it also was a going to fall, but I did not see it fall." George Owner's was "different from the rest" but "tottered" as William Warren's. The seer "beheld William Penn, John Butcher and Samuel Waldenfeild with their Crowns on their Heads," and prayed that they might be humble enough to take them off themselves and lay them down at the feet of Christ.

Keimer writes :

On one occasion the believers were commanded each to buy the largest and fairest apple that could be bought for Money, and write our Names thereon; accordingly I being sent of an Errand, bought the best I could light on, at Stocks-Market, for which I gave a Penny. . . . This I kept several Months, as choice as possible under Lock and Key, until it was rotten, and then, to the best of my Remembrance I eat it. Ann Steed, being unwilling to have her Apple spoil'd, made a Dumplin with it, as I was inform'd: But what the rest of the Believers did with theirs, I cannot tell (*Brand*, p. 27).

MARY KEIMER, sister to Samuel, who styles her "a jolly young woman who dwelt in Southwark," came into contact with Friends on several occasions. In November, 1710, Mary Keimer and Mary Beer attended Friends' meeting in Bristol, when

the Spirit through Mary Keimer declared as follows: "The Lord hath sent forth a Voice . . . behold, the great and terrible Day of the Lord is at hand . . ." When Mary Keimer began to speak, one of the Quaker women that had been preaching before, cried out: "A Spirit of Divination!" . . . and another cried: "Pull them down, pull them down." . . . One Paul Moon¹ cried out: "How durst thou pretend to speak here in the Name of God with such a vain Head-Dress on?" (*Pickworth, Charge*, pp. 324-326).

¹ Paul Moone (-1726) was a currier in Bristol. "Was one of the most prominent Friends in Bristol and an ancestor of the families of Barrow, Cadbury, Gibbins & Lloyd (viii. 134). He travelled in Ireland as a Minister in 1693 (x. 162), and was present at the Welsh Y.M. at Abergavenny in 1710 (*Kelsall, Diaries*, i. 109).

Samuel writes of his sister :

I have seen my sister, who is a lusty young Woman, fling another Prophetess upon the Floor, and under agitations tread upon her Breast, Belly, Legs, &c, walking several Times backwards and forwards over her, and stamping upon her with Violence. This was adjudg'd to be a Sign of the Fall of the Whore of Babylon (*Brand*, p. 54).

Pickworth tells us that WILLIAM PENN "could not be easy until he had prevail'd with me to conduct him to one of their assemblies, as privately as possible might be, some Evening, in hopes of finding the Spirit with which they were agitated." He attended meetings at the houses of Joseph Tovey, tallow-chandler, in Lombard Street, and soon after "at the house of one Hodgkin, another profess'd Quaker's house near their meeting-place in the same street; he obtain'd his Goaler's Leave and took Coach with me thither" (*Defence*, 1734, p. 7). The result appears somewhat indefinite.

Pickworth mentions other visits by Prophets or Prophetesses to Quaker meetings—HANNAH WHARTON at Worcester, in 1712; MARY TURNER at Y.M. in London, 1705; JAMES JACKSON, in a general way (see *Camb. Jnl.* ii. 465).

Thomas Story came into contact with some Prophets in 1735, at Chesham, Bucks. He writes :

After the Meeting I had Conversation with a considerable Man in the World, inclinable to the Camisars or French Prophets, by whom I perceived they expect such a Dispensation from God, as that all the Gifts in the primitive Times shall be restored, viz. working Miracles, Prophecy, healing, raising the Dead &c. (*Journal*, p. 717).

SAMUEL KEIMER tells us he was born of sober and honest parents living in the parish of St. Thomas, Southwark. The family consisted of parents, son, and daughter Mary. They had as a neighbour, a good Quaker woman, about whom Samuel was much concerned that she "should everlastingly perish for want of submitting to the Ordinances." Samuel, after being at the Merchant Taylors' School, was apprenticed to Robert Tookey, printer in "Christopher's Court, in Thread-needle-street," a Baptist.

About this time the French and English Prophets began to make a noise : I got leave of my Master for half a Day to go abroad, not acquainting him with my intended Business, and went to a Meeting of the said

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prophets in Southwark. As soon as I entered the Room, I observed a Woman, well drest, on her knees and a Man standing before her with his hands on her head, uttering several sentences, mixt with strange Hiccups and Shakings of his Head forwards and backwards, his Body, as it seem'd to me, jumping while he was speaking. This man's name was John Lacy, Esq. and the Laying on of Hands was *the Gift of Blessing*.

He then describes how his sister was affected, the date of these experiences being "about the beginning of the Sixth Month, call'd August, in the year 1707." His mother soon followed, and not long after, the son, who was "blessed" by Elias Marion.

In 1713, Keimer married "one of the same Opinion in religious matters," and set up for himself as a printer and "quickly had very great Business by printing a great number of private treasonable Libels against the late Queen and her last Ministry." But after being a master-printer about two years, troubles beset him, having "acted very madly and bewitchedly; and went into the prison of Ludgate [a prisoner for debt] and got to be removed by Habeas Corpus to the Fleet." In prison he met with "James Smith, one of the people called Quakers, dwelling near Aldersgate-Bars." He next ran a newspaper and gave such offence in certain matters that he was committed to the Gatehouse in Westminster, "the Fifth Time of my being a State Prisoner and the Seventh from my first dwelling in Blackfryers, most of which owing to the infatuating whimsies I had suck'd in while among the Prophets." Before the close of his autobiography, 6 vi. 1718, he wrote:

I own and esteem the Truth as held forth and witness'd to by many of the People called Quakers. . . . I have no outward Communion with that People, nor know not whether ever I shall.

In 1723 Keimer appeared in Philadelphia (leaving his wife in England) with a press and printing materials. Benjamin Franklin applied to him for work. He wrote in his *Autobiography*:

Keimer's printing-house, I found, consisted of an old shattered press and one small, worn-out font of English. . . . Keimer made verses and his manner was to compose them in the types directly out of his head. (Everyman edition, p. 32, see also pp. 42, 62, 70, 73, 74, 80.)

Keimer did some work for Friends particularly in connection with an edition of Sewel's *History of Friends*,

towards the cost of which Richard Hill of Philadelphia gave him £121 and James Logan £60 (*Antiquarian Researches among Early Printers of Friends' Books*, 1844, p. 55). The account of him in *D.N.B.* states that he joined Friends in England (which is incorrect) and that some printing of his gave such offence to American Friends that "he was disowned by the Monthly Meeting, 29 Sept. 1723"). Franklin writes: "His credit and business declining daily, he was at last forc'd to sell his printing-house to satisfy his creditors. He went to Barbadoes, and there lived some years in very poor circumstances."

HENRY PICKWORTH (?1673-?1738) lived at Sleaford, Lincs., and later at King's Lynn in Norfolk, with rooms in London. At first he supported Friends and he appears to have been in the position of "Elder and Overseer." He married Winifred Whitchurch (c. 1674-1752), who was a Minister, and they had five sons. In 1714 he was disowned "for that he has long been of a contentious mind and has joined those called French Prophets." In 1716 he published his *Charge . . . against the most noted Leaders of the Quakers, in their Church Capacity*. This volume of 408 pages lays bare his Charge under twenty headings (all set out on his title page) and he had thought of adding to this list of "Foxonian iniquities." Later, other anti-quaker writings were published—1734, 1735 and 1736. The cost of printing must have been great, but apparently he could stand it—"the Lord my God hath been graciously pleased to add as many Hundreds of Pounds to my Substance in this world, as there is years since the Death of King William" (*Charge*, p. 299). The rights or wrongs of the controversy cannot here be discussed.

The Friend (Lond.), vol. 18 (1860), p. 224; *D.N.B.*; MSS. in D.

Some of the religious exercises of the Prophets are not unlike those of some of the early Friends fifty years before:

Anna Maria King, a girl of twelve years old, was seized, and under agitations spoke with much assurance: "There is not one tittle of what I have spoken shall pass away," reminding us of Mary Fell's message, when eight years old,

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to Priest Lampitt, and Lady Margaret Hamilton's warning to Oliver Cromwell (Camb. *Jnl.* i. 439, 293), when, perhaps, of tender age.

The uninspired and mistaken prediction of the resurrection of Dr. Thomas Emes (see *D.N.B.*) has a parallel in the case of Susanna Pearson (Camb. *Jnl.* Tercent. Supp., p. 375).

The following statement reminds us of many similar occasions recorded in the history of early Friends :

A Scots prophet came up to London and was commanded to go to St. Paul's Cathedral. . . . No sooner had the priest ended his sermon . . . up starts he, and with a very loud voice utters the following warning : " Repent, repent," with many more words. One of the vergers took him out and he was dismissed to the rage and fury of the mob. . . . The mob cried out, " Pump him, duck him, to the Thames with him." He was taken before the Lord Mayor.

The quakings and movements of the body were repeated by the Prophets and later by the first Methodists. In reference to these manifestations of excitement among Friends, we read in the tract, *The Irreligion of the Northern Quakers*, 1653 : " I heartily believe these quakings to be diabolical raptures " (quoted in Gummere, *Witchcraft and Quakerism*, 1908, p. 18).

Hughson writes : " It unfortunately happened for their predictions that none of these things happened, but quite the contrary," and we know that some Quaker predictions failed of effect ; indeed ex-Quaker Pickworth has taken the trouble to record five hundred false prophecies, taken from the books of early Friends, in his *A True and Faithful Relation*, 1736, with the oft-repeated refrain : " So he is a false Prophet also, like the rest of them."

George Keith, in the Preface to his *Magick of Quakerism*, 1707, " finds that the pretensions of those Camisars do in so many things run parallel with the pretensions of the Quakers, both in Affirmations and Arguments."

Another point of similarity was their objection to ministers. Keimer records that " one if not more of the Prophets had prophecy'd that the Parsons should become such a Derision to the People, by means of that Spirit of Prophecy, that their Canonical Garments should be sold Four for a Shilling ; the Spirit thro' John Lacy calling them Soul-brokers " (*Brand*, p. 42).

By the kindness of Mr. T. S. Penny we have made the acquaintance (by correspondence) of Major F. Kennedy, "a descendant of Francis Moulton, who lived in Hatton Garden, and whose daughter married my Huguenot ancestor, Charles Portalés. Portalés was closely associated with Elias Marion, Nicholas Faccio, John Lacy, and others." Major Kennedy is in possession of many papers and articles of interest connected with his Huguenot ancestors. One, which has been in our hands, is a quarto manuscript of 56 pages, dealing with the "operations" in the Cevennes and in "the Kingdom of England" (begun in June, 1706). Several Friends (or ex-Friends) are named and there are records of visits of bands of Prophets to Quakers' meetings in Colchester, Chichester, and elsewhere in 1708.

A Memento of Margaret Fox?

A recent addition to the collection of objects of Quaker interest in D is a piece of velvet measuring 11 inches by 13 inches, said to have belonged to Margaret Fox, of Swarthmoor Hall. It was presented by Mrs. Vere O'Brien, of Ennis, Co. Clare, Ireland, who received it from her aunt, Mary Forster, a sister of William Forster, of Tottenham. There is a slip of paper attached which reads :

"This piece of velvet is said to be Part of a Cloak or Robe, once belonging to Margaret Fell (afterwards Fox), of truly valuable and respectable Memory, given to me by my cousin Benjamin Birkbeck when I was at Settle in about 10th Mo : 1801."

We find that Benjamin Birkbeck (1757-1819) married Jane, daughter of Nathaniel English, of Leeds, in 1784. They lived in Leeds and then at Settle. Jane Birkbeck was the great-great-great-grand-daughter of Margaret Fell, through the line of her eldest daughter, Margaret Rous.

The velvet was sent for examination to the Keeper of the Textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, who replied on 9th June :

"Dear Madam. Your letter relating to the piece of velvet alleged to be part of a cloak worn by Margaret Fox, has been handed to me for reply.

"We have carefully examined the velvet & hardly think it is probable that its date is earlier than the end of the 18th century. It may quite well be of English manufacture, since the velvet industry had then been established in this country for over a century."