

Allegations against George Fox by ministers in North Lancashire

“AND Justice Sawrey & Justice Thompson of Lancaster graunted foorth a warrant for mee : but Judge fell comeinge home they did not serve it upon mee : hee was out of ye country all this time y^t I was thus abused & cruelly used.”¹ The document printed below² is the ground on which the warrant was based. This should be read in the light of the position in October 1652. Fox had stirred the country around Furness and, shaken and bruised after severe handling at Ulverston and Walney Island, had just returned to Swarthmoor. The homecoming of Thomas Fell prevented the serving of the warrant, but nonetheless George Fox went to Lancaster sessions with the Judge, and appeared at a meeting of the justices on the hearing of the warrant. “And there appeared against mee 40 preists : & they chused one preist Marshall of Lancaster to bee there orator : for two preists sonns & a preist had sworne against mee y^t I had spoaken Blasphemy.”³ Eight pages in the *Cambridge Journal*⁴ are devoted to the examination, Fox’s parting address and Judge Fell’s demonstration of errors in the warrant, which was accordingly withdrawn.

To the Justicees of Peace for the Hundred of
Loynsedall with in the Countie of Lancaster.

Wee thought good to signifie to your worshipps that one George Foxe hath beene lately in these parts and hath uttered severall blasphemies which are unfitting

¹ *Journal of George Fox* (Camb.), I, 61.

² Lancashire County Record Office. Document QSB-1; dated 5th October, 1652. The charges against Fox based on this sheet of allegations should be compared with those in the Lancashire petition to the Council of State, printed on p. 2 of *Saul’s Errand to Damascus*, and Fox’s detailed answers in the same pamphlet; See also *Short Journal*, 283-4.

³ *Journal of George Fox* (Camb.), I, 62. With the incomplete evidence to hand it is premature to pronounce between the reading given here and the “two priests and a schoolmaster” of the *Short Journal* (*The Short Journal and Itinerary Journals of George Fox*, ed. Norman Penney, 1925, p. 26). It will be seen that one mentioned, Michael Altham, was a schoolmaster.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 63-71.

to bee mentioned and therefore our desire is that you would bee pleased to heare what severall witnesses can attest against him and so proceede with this offender as the Law in such case hath provided, and wee shall bee perpetually oblidge to you.

William Marshall¹

Tho. Whitehead²

Will. Moore

James Schoolecrofte³

John Jaques⁴

Wee thought good to give you a narrative of such things as will bee made out against him.

1. He did affirme that he had the divinitie essentially in him.
2. That both Baptisme and the lords supper were unlawfull.
3. He did dissuade men from readinge the Scripture tellinge them that it was carnall.

Michaell Altham⁵

Sworne

¹ William Marshall, M.D., vicar of Lancaster. *Journal of George Fox* (Camb.), I, 412; *Short Journal*, 283; A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised* (1934), 341.

² Thomas Whitehead, M.A., rector of Halton, d. 1679 (correct *Journal of George Fox* (Camb.), I, 409). B.A. from St. John's College, Cambridge, 1631-2; M.A. 1635; rector of Hatlon from c. 1644 until 1660? Ejected from Halton or Dalton. Licensed teacher (Presbyterian) at Kendal and Nether Kellet, 1672. Died at Kellet, buried at Bolton-le-Sands, 10 Feb. 1679. Matthews, *op. cit.*, 526; Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, pt. 1, vol. 4, p. 392.

³ James Schoolcrofte, of Caton. This document provides his forename. Schoolcrofte's sons Augustine (baptized 1633, Lancaster) and Richard (bapt. 1636) were admitted at Cambridge (1654); the former alone passed B.A., perhaps Richard left Cambridge on his father's early death. *Journal of George Fox* (Camb.), I, 412; Venn, *op. cit.*, pt. 1, vol. 4, p. 30.

⁴ John Jaques, vicar of Bolton-le-Sands, 1644-1660. d. 1683. A Presbyterian, but conformed. *Journal of George Fox* (Camb.), I, 412; *Short Journal*, 283; Matthews, *op. cit.*, 295.

⁵ Michael Altham. Schoolmaster at Lancaster, 1652 (Weld, *The Perfect Pharise*, 1653, p. 3). Perhaps of Christ's College, Cambridge; b. Settle; educated at Giggleswick school; matriculated 1649; vicar of Over Kellet, 1655; rector of Eastwick, Herts., 1664, and Latton, Essex, 1681; d. 1705. Venn, *op. cit.*, pt. 1, vol. 1, p. 26.

1. That he was equall with god.
2. That god taught deceit.
3. That Scriptures were Antichrist.
4. That he was the Judge of the world.
5. That he was as upright as Christ.

William Smyth, Jur¹

Nathanael Atkinson² Sworne

Taken in open Sessions at
Lancaster 5 Oct. 1652 before
us

Geo. Toulson³

Make 2 warrants against him

John Sawrey⁴

The transcript of the document was kindly furnished by Mr. R. Sharpe France the archivist of the Lancashire County Record Office at Preston. A photo-facsimile of the original is in the Library at Friends House.

RUSSELL S. MORTIMER

¹ William Smyth junior. Probably the "Smithe" of Cambridge *Journal*, I, 63, 64.

² Nathanael Atkinson. Probably the "Atkinson" of Cambridge *Journal*, I, 64.

³ George Toulson. d. 1655. *Journal of George Fox* (Camb.), I, 411-2.

⁴ John Sawrey. *Ibid.*, p. 408; *Short Journal*, 282.