

# Defoe, Bugg and the Quakers

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ACCESS to a complete file (in reprint, with modern index) of the rare periodical *A Review of the State of the British Nation*, published thrice a week for several years by Daniel Defoe,<sup>1</sup> enables me to add what seems a kind of echo of early Quaker controversy on miracles.

In 1708 some of the Camisards came to England and under the title of French Prophets secured a considerable following. The movement passed its zenith about 29th May of that year on which day they prophesied that one Dr. Thomas Emes would rise from the dead in St. Paul's Churchyard. Defoe in his *Review* contributed to the discussion both before and after the disillusionment of the event.<sup>2</sup> He says that efforts have been made to lay the delusion "all at the door of the Quakers, whom they would fain have be reckoned the broachers of these novelties. And this they have especially spread over the Nation in the most remote parts of it, where I have frequently met with it, as entirely thrown upon the Quakers, that it was wholly of kin to the former extravagancies, as they called them, of those people, and was only the same game of enthusiasm acting over again."

Defoe in reply stoutly affirms "that there were fewer of the Quakers among them, than of any sort or sect of people in this nation." He continues to speak, as elsewhere in defence of the Quakers, without espousing their principles, and repeats, "These prophets and their delusions have not their rise among the Quakers, nor have they any Quakers, worth naming as to number, among them."<sup>3</sup>

It may well be asked what led Defoe's contemporaries as late as 1708 to associate the Quakers with such miracle mongering and what made Defoe himself react against the

<sup>1</sup> Published for the Facsimile Text Society, 1938, in 22 facsimile books, and *Index to Defoe's Review*, by William L. Payne, 1948 (both Columbia University Press).

<sup>2</sup> March, 2, April 24, June 10, June 12, July 17, 1708.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. V, pp. 132 (should be 131) -132 (June 12, 1708).

charge. I think the answer to both questions is Francis Bugg. It will be recalled that although George Fox described as a "mad whimsey" an effort of a Friend at Worcester to raise a corpse fifty years before, and though his followers never made public his own book of miracles, their claim to miracles was kept before the public year after year by the ex-Quaker Francis Bugg<sup>1</sup> for a quarter century after 1694 when Fox's *Journal* was published.

And precisely against this same Bugg Defoe had a strong dislike which made him discount his attacks on the Quakers. In the passage just cited the *Review* refers to him as "the learned Mr B— who has done more by raving at them to make any man turn Quaker, than all the authors I have met with."

Some years later he refers to "some late Books written by Mr B— against the Quakers. Those they were wrote for would not read them ; those they were wrote against did not value them ; those that read them did not understand them ; those that understand them did not like them ; those that liked them would not buy them ; his friends would not vindicate them, his enemies would not trouble themselves to answer them, and he that wrote them did not believe them ; and all this but the last was from the character of the author."<sup>2</sup>

A literary altercation about the Quakers took place between Bugg and Defoe in 1705-6. In his *Review* Defoe had occasion to answer a suggestion that Dissenters were not Christians by the statement that he hoped they were all Christians and that he was not so narrow in his charity as not to think the Quakers to be Christians, and many of them better Christians too than those that pretend to condemn them.

In reply "a certain man of many volumes . . . whose name it seems is Mr Bugg" wrote "a penny book entitled, *The Quakers Catechism*, to which as a shoeing horn to draw in the people to buy it, is added in the title, *The Shortest Way with Daniel De Foe*." Defoe reiterates his defence of the Quakers, even twice quoting from Barclay's *Apology*, and more extensively from a later Quaker publication *The Christianity of the Quakers Asserted*, etc. 1689. But, what is

<sup>1</sup> See my *George Fox's Book of Miracles*, 1948 (Cambridge University Press), pp. 13, 85-91.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. VII, p. 30 (April 13, 1710).

more to our present point, he speaks slightly of " Mr. Bugg, who, I am informed may be much sooner confuted than silenced." He refers also to Bugg's " large folio which he says he is printing. I dare say nobody will give themselves the trouble to reply to him, and not many to read him, who will find it very difficult, as I am told, to print anything he has not printed before, and been answered and answered till he is given over as a lunatick."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vol. III, pp. 62-64 (February 5, 1706).

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## Researches in Progress

G. F. A. Baer, M.A., M.Ed., 173 Hampstead Way, London, N.W.11, of Kimberley, South Africa, is writing an account of William Edward Forster's work for the establishment of a national system of education in England. Special attention will be paid to the formative influence of Quakerism on W. E. Forster. The thesis is to be presented in 1952 for the University of London Ph.D. in the Institute of Education. The author will welcome any information as to documents relating to W. E. Forster, and especially his educational work.

Elizabeth Brewster, a Canadian student and author of " Life in a Quaker Auburn " (*University of Toronto quarterly*, xviii, 124-130), is preparing to submit for the degree of Ph.D. at Indiana University a thesis on *The Irish Peasantry in some minor Anglo-Irish Writers of the early 19th Century*. This will include a study of the writings of Mary Leadbeater.

Alan M. Rees, B.A., of Keble College, Oxford, is preparing for the D.Phil. degree a study on the origins of the Anti-slavery movement in England and the abolition of the slave trade.

Juliet Reeve, of Friends University, Wichita, Kansas, is preparing a study of Daniel Defoe and the Quakers, and seeks any information concerning Defoe's relations with Friends.

Dr. Marek Waysblum, 81 Elgin Crescent, London, W.11, is collecting material for a study of the relations between early Friends and Poland until the end of the 17th century.