

# Joshua Sprigge on the Continent

By HENRY J. CADBURY

AS soon as communication was possible after World War II, Dr. Theodor Sippell of Marburg reported to his friends in England and America what was for him a thrilling discovery. For many years he had shared with Rufus Jones and Geoffrey Nuttall an interest in the antecedents of Quakerism, but when in 1945 after his house was bombed and later much of his library destroyed, he was forced to spend four months in rural loneliness, he had with him only a single book, a volume of rare tracts of the year 1649, which he had put aside for further study. They were written by the English chaplain, Joshua Sprigge (1618-84) and published that year. Dr. Sippell prepared the manuscript of an English book (still unpublished) entitled *Joshua Sprigge: A help to a better understanding of early Quakerism*. Some brief comments and some quotations from Sprigge himself were supplied by him and published in the *Journal of Friends' Historical Society*, vol. 38, 1946, pp. 24-8, where is reported also Dr. Sippell's gift of the rare volume of Sprigge's tracts to the Library at Friends House. While further thought convinced Dr. Sippell of the contrasts as well as the likenesses between Sprigge and Fox, the contrasts between a speculative theologian and a practical layman, he brought to attention a significant pre-Quaker English radical thinker.<sup>1</sup>

Now appreciation on the Continent for Sprigge can be traced back into his own time. Sippell was anticipated in his interest by a certain Pierre Serrurier, more often known by his Latin name, Petrus Serrarius or Serarius. Born in Flanders he came to Holland perhaps near the middle of the seventeenth century, living at Amsterdam until he died in 1669. He had varied religious and philosophical interests as his writings show, but at one stage evidently Joshua Sprigge interested him; for he translated seventeen of his sermons into Dutch, using the title of Sprigge's *A Testimony to an approaching Glory*, thus

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Rufus M. Jones, 21.iii.1947, referring to one two years earlier (probably lost) and letter to Elizabeth B. Jones, 22.xii.1948.

*De getuygenisse eener aanstaande heerlykheid voorgedragen in xvii geestryke sermoenen door Josua Sprigge, overgeset door P. Serarius. Amsterdam, 1654.*

The first seven sermons agree with those in *A Testimony to an approaching Glory* (London, G. Calvert, 1648; second edition, 1649). The rest of the Dutch collection includes, though not in quite the same order, the nine sermons in *A Further Testimony to the Glory that is near* (London, G. Calvert, 1649) and one sermon on the hiddenness of Christ of which I do not find an English original. I have consulted by microfilm the copy at Leyden of the second edition in Dutch, dated 1716.

“The Translator to the Christian Reader” is an eight page preface (also in Dutch) signed “12 Sept. 1654 P. Serarius”. It states that the translator had previously presented six of the sermons of this author and was now increasing them to seventeen. This earlier collection, if published, is not mentioned in the available Dutch bibliographies, nor is the reprinting of 1668. Serarius gives among the reasons why he was concerned to publish these pieces that their author (1) distinguishes clearly between Christ according to the flesh and Christ according to the spirit, (2) distinguishes between a dying and a living Christian, (3) describes the dispensations of God to us, and (4) speaks of the revelation of God’s glory as in men’s hearts and not in the Church.

Two years later, in 1656, another English pamphlet, also from the press of Giles Calvert, was translated into Dutch and published (without name of place or printer). It was by William Dewsbury and was I think the first of the many translations of Quaker pamphlets into Dutch. In English it was first printed in 1654 and had several reprintings. I have noted no Quaker translation into Dutch that bears as early a date as 1654 for the English or as 1656 for the Dutch. Its English title begins:

*The Discovery of Man’s Returne to his first Estate by the Operation of the Power of God in the great Work of Regeneration.*

This is translated on the Dutch title page with the author’s name spelled William Deusbury and followed by the statement: “Uyt het Engels, tot Londen voor Giles Calvert gedruckt; in’t Neerlandtsch getrouwelijck overgeset ende allen Godt-soeckende Herten tot een proeve voorgesteld door P.S.”

I think it probable that this was the work of Petrus Serarius, though the bibliographies do not identify the translator.<sup>1</sup>

Serarius was not destined to throw in his lot with Friends. The dozen other works that he published show him in controversy with William Ames and John Higgins, English Friends living in Holland,<sup>2</sup> and also with the better known non-Friends, Descartes, Comenius and Amyraut.<sup>3</sup> He was something of a millennialist and astrologer, and one of his books got published in England, *Awakening Warning to the Wofull World*, 1662.

As was to be expected Benjamin Furly, the Quaker bibliophile of Rotterdam, was acquainted with the books of both Sprigge and Serarius, as the catalogue of his library shows. Indeed both writers are associated there with Friends. One book contained, bound together, various tracts of W. Ames, W. Caton, J. Higgins and P. Serarius.<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere in the catalogue under the heading of Quaker Books occur three entries:

J. Sprigge's Works. Lond., 1647.

——— News of a New World. Lond. 1676.

——— Invitation of a Seeker to all that desire to find the Lord. Lond. 1670.<sup>5</sup>

The last item does not belong to Sprigge at all. The author is indicated by I.S., but this is explained as "Indefatigable Seeker". The full list and some locations of Sprigge's English works are to be found in Wing's *Short Title Catalogue*, vol. 3, 1952. But the *Anglia Rediviva* was denied his authorship by Clement Walker.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand the anonymous plea for freedom of conscience, *The Ancient Bounds*, 1645, is said to be his work.

Benjamin Furly died in 1714. Two years later the second edition of Serarius's Dutch translation of Joshua Sprigge was issued. Thus for one half a century we can trace his influence in the receptive religious atmosphere in Holland.

<sup>1</sup> See Joseph Smith, *Descriptive Catalogue of Friends Books*, 1869, i, 523. W. I. Hull, *The Rise of Quakerism in Amsterdam, 1655-65*, 1938, p. 214 and note 438. A copy of this pamphlet is the first of sixty-five such pieces in Dutch bound in one volume, now at Haverford College, but for many years before 1929 in the Friends Library in Philadelphia.

<sup>2</sup> W. I. Hull, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek*, 1937, x, col. 911-13.

<sup>4</sup> *Bibliotheca Furliana*, Rotterdam, 1714, p. 46, no. 1099.

<sup>5</sup> *Bibliotheca Furliana*, Rotterdam, 1714, p. 162, nos. 1067, 1068, 1069.

<sup>6</sup> See edition of 1854, Oxford, and D.N.B. s.v. Sprigg.

Meanwhile for England itself we have almost no evidence of any contact between Sprigge and Quakerism. There is one exception, and that to his credit; for in a petition to the Protector for clemency on behalf of James Naylor the name of Joshua Sprigge appears among some 87 subscribers from London and Westminster, and he is said to have led a delegation to Parliament to the same end. A few years earlier six Presbyterian booksellers in their pamphlets, *A Beacon Set on Fire*, 1652, and *A Second Beacon Fired*, 1654, had bracketed as among "divers popish and blasphemous books, printed and published in England", Joshua Sprigge's *Testimony*, and books by Richard Farnsworth and other Friends.

The congeniality of Joshua Sprigge's writings to early English Friends is indicated by the quotations from his *A Testimony to an Approaching Glory*, Preface and pp. 55, 79, 80, 81, 83-89, 96, 107, 142-4, 147 and 148, in William Penn's *Invalidity of John Faldo's Vindication*, 1673, Part 1, Chap. VIII, and Part 2, Chap. I, VIII, IX and X (*Works*, 1726, ii, 357f., 382f., 413f., 420f., 429). Linking Sprigge with Christopher Goad, Penn calls them "University-Men, and such as were reputed famous thirty years ago." He notes that "Joseph Caryl, that famous and ancient Independent pastor licensed J. Sprigg's book, Anno 1647", and that for Goad "J. Sprigg performed the friendly office of publisher after his decease".

It is true that one reason Penn cites these Independents in this treatise is that he is answering Faldo, of that sect. He associates Sprigge not only with Goad in his quotations, but also with Dr. Everard and T. Collier, while in a footnote he lists as supporters of Quaker doctrine, "J. Sprig, C. Goad, W. Dell, J. Saltmarsh", and others. This list reminds us of the list (*Works*, ii, 371) of "books fore-running Friends appearance" which Penn recommended twenty years later to Sir John Rodes. Though the latter does not mention Sprigge it has much the same kind of company, including Saltmarsh, Dell and Goad (*Bulletin F.H.A.*, iv, 1911, p. 35, and S. F. Locker-Lampson, *A Quaker Post-Bag*, p. 4). For other lists by Friends putting Sprigge in similar company, see Robert Rich, *Love without Dissimulation*, pp. 6f., and A. R., *A Tender Exhortation to Friends at Bristol*, 1700, p. 13, as noted by G. F. Nuttall in *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, 1946, pp. 13, 184.

## Quaker Education in Northeast England

IN J. G. A. Pocock's *Survey of the materials available on the history of education in the north east of England, 1500-1800* (University of Durham. Typescript. 1952. 85 pp.) are the following items concerning Friends.

Schedule of information in the archives of the Society