

Two German Views on Quakers

Ferdinand Albrecht, Duke of Brunswick, a learned and somewhat eccentric German princeling of the seventeenth century, spent some months in this country in 1664/5, and has left an account of his impressions and experiences in his fantastically written autobiography.¹ During his visit he was sponsored by Prince Rupert of the Rhine, who presented him to Charles II and other members of the Royal Family. He was also made an honorary member of the newly founded Royal Society. Among other matters he has some remarks on the Quakers, which are of interest for the picture they give of the movement at a comparatively early stage of its development and also of the distrust and prejudice it inspired.

THE so-called Quakers in England are descended from the Anabaptists and Visionaries, and under Cromwell they flourished exceedingly. They are called Quakers, because they are accustomed at their prayer meetings to quake and tremble like the heathen prophets. They say themselves that already in this life they attain to perfection. They often fall into such violent ecstasies that their whole body trembles, because, according to their story, they are unable to contain the great splendour of the Divine Light which shines upon them; and then they roar and shout most strangely. When this is past, they boast of their glorious experience, and in this delusion of perfection they carry out everything which has occurred to them in their trance, even if it should run counter to good morals. The only Heaven or Hell they believe in is that of their own hearts. They reject all church discipline, and say that even Christ had his failings, nor did he trust fully in God, since he called out on the Cross, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? They disapprove of preachers who are paid for their services. They reject infant baptism, and refuse to recognize days set apart for divine service. They maintain that the Holy Scripture is not the word of God and that our sermons are nothing but a bewitching of the intellect. Christ has no other body but the Church, and his Second Coming is only a parable. Every man has a light within him sufficient unto salvation, and it is vain to beg for forgiveness of sins, since by our own righteousness must we be justified. They do not believe in the Resurrection

¹ *Wunderliche Begehnüssen und wunderlicher Zustand in dieser wunderlichen verkehrten Welt*, (Bevern, 1678) pp. 230-31.

of the Body. Christ came to abolish all private property, therefore it is right that all things should be shared in common. No one shall be called Lord, nor should one remove one's hat, because we are all equals and brothers; much less should anyone have command over another. Otherwise they seem to be conscientious people in their lives and business dealings. Their clothes are poor and without adornment.¹

Christlob Mylius, friend of Lessing and himself a man of letters on a minor scale, visited this country in 1753 on his way to America. London was his first and, as it proved, his last port of call on this voyage, for he died there in the spring of 1754. Mylius kept a diary of his journey, which was published many years after his death, and this includes a description of a visit he paid to the Quaker Meeting House in Gracechurch Street.² In view of the tone of his remarks it should perhaps be added that Mylius was a free thinker and, it was alleged, something of a free liver too.

Dec. 16 (third Sunday in Advent): I went in the afternoon to the Quaker Meeting House in Gracechurch Street. It is like a church, but without altar or pulpit. As usual they all kept their hats on. The men who were to preach sat, as in Amsterdam, on a raised platform along one side of the room, and immediately in front of them, somewhat lower but also raised, sat the women who were to preach. After complete silence had reigned for a considerable time, except for an occasional sigh, one of the men on the platform, who was a brewer, stood up and preached for some twenty or twenty-five minutes. His nonsensical address dealt with the temptation of the flesh and the world, which we cannot withstand without God's grace. He repeated this about fifty times, almost in the same words. His whole speech and his foolish accent, his frequent pauses and monotonous tone were entirely worthy of a brewer and Quaker. After he sat down there was silence again for five or ten minutes. At length a woman got up and preached in a foolish lachrymose voice about the Holy Ghost and the gracious gift of baptism, in just such insipid tautologies, for nearly a quarter of an hour. She went on repeating that the Holy Ghost was the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit the Holy Baptist and the Holy Baptist the Holy Ghost, etc. When she

¹ More antipathetic is the Duke's account of "another sort of Quakers, called Ranters, who openly confess their abominable errors. They proclaim that God, devil, angels, heaven and hell are mere inventions. . . ." (See my *German Travellers in England*, 1953, p. 101).

² *Archiv zur neuern Geschichte, Geographie, Natur-und Menschenkenntniss* (Leipzig, 1787), vol. vii, pp. 137-9.

had finished, they sat sighing for another quarter of an hour. Finally the men preachers shook hands with each other, and then the play was over. There was also a large dog at the meeting, which must have been a Quaker, too, for it rivalled the other Quakers in sighing. Most Quakers can be recognized by their poor clothes, which have no pockets and few button-holes, and by their floppy hat brims. Many of the women are clad very simply in a sort of sacking, but many, too, dress like other women. Many of the men also go about decently clad like other people, but they never wear cuffs.

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The Bulletin of Friends Historical Association, vol. 42, no. 1 (Spring 1953) includes an article "William Edmundson, 1627-1712. . . . Some new and little-known memorabilia" by the late Frank Edmundson, and a paper by Albert J. Wahl on "The Progressive Friends of Longwood." John E. Pomfret edits Robert Barclay's *Vindication* against the charge that he was a Papist (1689) printed in the rare *Reliquiae Barclaianae*.

The autumn number (vol. 42, no. 2) opens with an article with a detective story flavour by Carroll Frey. It is a study of the Penn-Mead trial book, *The Peoples Ancient and Just Liberties Asserted*. The author proved that the issue accepted as the first by the bibliographer, Joseph Smith, with the title-page spelling ASSRTED, is in fact the third issue—the type having been kept standing and the E borrowed and replaced by an S, which (through the inadvertence of Andrew Sowle the printer) was not put right when the title-page came to be used again. (May this also explain the "typographical error of very high visibility" on the cover of the present number of the *Bulletin*?) Joseph Smith's second issue (with the errata on p. 63, and no Christian name for Edward Bushel the juryman on p. 5) is now to be accepted as the first issue. The second article is also of bibliographical interest—a description by Mildred N. Hirsch and Dorothy G. Harris of a volume of Dutch and German tracts from the library of Daniel Pastorius, recently added to the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College.

Joseph M. Ernest, of Mississippi Southern College, writes on *Whittier and Whitman: uncongenial personalities*, and there are the usual Notes and Documents and book notices and news.

The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, vol. 78, no. 1 (January, 1954), includes excerpts from the diary of Hipólito José da Costa during his visit to Philadelphia in 1798-99. During his visit this Portuguese naturalist saw most of the places of interest. He learned that the least severe Quakers were called "gay Quakers" and the strictest ones "hickory Quakers."