

Notes on Richard Farnworth

ONE of the curiosities of early Quakerism is the paucity of record concerning Richard Farnworth, or Farnsworth as his name is commonly spelt by modern writers. "Farnsworth became, next to Fox, the chief leader in the North of the new movement,"¹ writes William Charles Braithwaite; and in the index to Braithwaite's *Beginnings of Quakerism* the references to Farnworth occupy eighteen lines, more than is taken by any other of the First Publishers save Burrough, Howgill, Nayler and Fox himself. He was the author, in whole or in part, of over forty pieces, several of which were reprinted; yet, as Joseph Smith remarks, "his Works have never been collected."² After his death in 1666 the only testimony borne to him seems to be the "brief Testimony" by Josiah Coale prefixed to Farnworth's posthumous *Last Testimony* (1667) and reprinted soon afterwards in Coale's own posthumous collected *Works* (1671). For Farnworth's "early spiritual experiences"³ Braithwaite refers to his tract, *The Heart Opened by Christ* (1654), and in a few lines gives an excellent summary of the relevant pages; but of his antecedents we learn no more than that "he came from Tickhill, and was a man of good education."⁴ Norman Penney is no more informative in his note on Farnworth in his edition of Fox's *Journal*⁵; nor is A. C. Bickley in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, where Josiah Coale's name is printed Wale. Nor, apart from a few pages in my own *Studies in Christian Enthusiasm* (Pendle Hill, 1948) does Farnworth appear to be the subject of any recent research. It may thus be useful to bring together a few notes concerning his background and marriage.

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Among those with whom Farnworth entered into controversy was John Stalham, the vicar of Terling, Essex, and pastor of the Congregational church there.⁶ While absent on

¹ W. C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 59.

² Joseph Smith, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Friends' Books*, I, 593.

³ *B.Q.*, p. 60, n.2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁵ George Fox, *Journal* (Cambridge edition, ed. Penney), I, 398.

⁶ For Stalham, see *Dictionary of National Biography; Calamy Revised*, ed. A. G. Matthews (1934); my forthcoming *Visible Saints*.

service in Scotland, Stalham published at Edinburgh a piece entitled *Contradictions of the Quakers (so called) to the Scriptures* (1655); and to Farnworth's reply, *The Scriptures Vindication* (1655), Stalham retorted with *The Reviler Rebuked* (1657). In the epistle "To all Honest . . . Readers" prefixed to this last work, Stalham printed the following "Certificate," as received by him "by the hands of two worthy Gentlemen, from a Minister in Yorkshire of note and esteem for piety, and pains in his place":

These may certifie, That Richard Farnworth was born at Tickhil in Yorkshire, where he hath Lands of five pounds *per annum* after his mothers decease. He lived about seven years with Mr. Lord of Bramton, carrying very fairly, till at length reading some parts of Mr. Saltmarsh he turned Antinomian and Perfectionist, pretended to internal Teachings, and immediate Revelations, renouncing all outward publique Gospel-administrations, and refusing to joyn in Family-worship; whereupon his Master cashiered him; since that I do not hear he hath had any place of settled abode, save onely one year, that he served Coronet Heathcoat in husbandry: The last five years he ha's gone about deceiving and being deceived, leavening all that possibly he could with Familism and Quakerism: He hath committed to the Press some books of higher account, then the Sacred Scriptures amongst those deluded wretches; two of them I have seen, wherein he expresth malice more then humane against al Christs Institutions and Ambassadors; they are indeed full fraught with nothing else but prodigious railings, asperst with abhorred blasphemies. About two years since he attempted the seduction of Mr. Lord himself; he told him he was sent to him of God, and he would not receive him: upon his inquiry what he was? he said, He was more then a prophet; what art thou then? said he, Art thou Christ? he replied, I am. Hereupon with holy indignation he expelled him; and where he hath been since I hear not, nor that he ever resided at Balby, though he much frequented and impoisoned those silly souls. This I declare this November 26.-55. S.K.

The writer of this "certificate" may be identified with some assurance as Samuel Kendall, the vicar of Warmsworth with Edlington (a parish close to Farnworth's birthplace and the home of Thomas Aldam),¹ who had been present at a dispute held by Farnworth at Twycross, Leicestershire, in October, 1654.² His allegations do no more than bear out, from the point of view of an opponent and in the language usual at the time, the religious development described in *The*

¹ For Kendall, see *Calamy Revised; Northants. and Rutland Clergy*, ed. H. I. Longden.

² For an account of this dispute, see R. Farnworth (mispr. Hornworth), *A Character* (1654).

Heart Opened by Farnworth himself, who there omits mention of Saltmarsh¹ (as he does also of Fox). "Coronet Heathcoat" I have not identified; but "Mr. Lord of Bramton," with whom Farnworth "lived about seven years," was Thomas Lord (1593-1660), of Brampton-en-le-Morthen, in the parish of Treeton, a few miles south-west of Tickhill. The interest of this is that Thomas Lord's sister Margaret was Thomas Aldam's mother, and that Aldam was a legatee in Lord's will; as appears from a genealogical source which appears to have been overlooked by Quaker historians despite its many references to Friends, the work edited in 1894-6 by Joseph Hunter for the Harleian Society and entitled *Familiae Minorum Gentium*.²

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This work also provides the name and parentage of Farnworth's wife; for it records his wedding on 13th July, 1658, at "Hansworth," to Mary Stacey.³ "The Staceys," writes Norman Penney, "were an influential and ancient family of Ballifield Hall and Cinder Hill (now Handsworth Grange), on the border of Yorkshire and Derbyshire"⁴; and "Thomas Stacey, of Cinderhill Green," William Charles Braithwaite plausibly infers, "was probably convinced," along with Nayler and William Dewsbury, at the meeting in about November 1651 at "Lieutenant Roper's house, at Stanley, a few miles North of Wakefield," to which Fox had gone on, directly after the conviction at Balby of Farnworth, the Aldams and the Killams, and "no doubt at the instance of this Balby group."⁵ Farnworth's marriage in 1658 to Mary Stacey thus linked still more closely the important pair of groups convinced at this time. The Aldams and Killams were already intermarried, the brothers John and Thomas Killam having married, respectively, two sisters of Thomas Aldam,

¹ For John Saltmarsh as a precursor of Quakerism, see T. Sippell, *Werdendes Quäkertum; my Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*.

² pp. 1089f., 1094. There were also Heathcotes at Brampton: cf. p. 473. Many, but not all, of the statements in this paper based on *F.M.G.* might be based, equally, on Henry Ecroyd Smith, *Annals of Smith of Cantley* (1878).

³ p. 1209.

⁴ *Cambridge Journal*, I, 423.

⁵ *B.Q.*, p. 60, with n.2. This Thomas Stacey, who became one of the "First Publishers", was Mary Stacey's brother. See *Familiae Minorum Gentium*, pp. 1209f., for other brothers and sisters; some of them also joined Friends.

and Thomas Aldam in turn having married a sister of theirs. Later both families intermarried with the Staceys; for in 1671 Thomas Aldam's son Thomas married Ann Stacey, and in 1672 John Killam's son John married Mary Stacey. These sisters, Ann and Mary Stacey, were nieces of Farnworth's widow.¹ She, before her marriage to Farnworth, was herself a traveller in truth's service: in 1656 she is mentioned in a MS. letter as at St. Austell in Cornwall.² After Farnworth's death she appears to have returned to the Stacey family home; for her will, dated 3 November 1679, in which she mentions "Thomas, John and Mary, children of Thomas Aldam of Warmsworth," together with some of the Killam family, was made at Ballifield.³ She died on 20.8.(Oct.).1680 and was buried at Balby two days later.⁴

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A lengthy passage in Fox's *Journal* left largely unannotated by Norman Penney describes Fox's return "to Dreyton in Leistersheere" "to visitt my relations" and the disputes which followed, first with Nathaniel Stephens, the Vicar of Fenny Drayton, and "another preist," and later with Stephens and "7 or 8 preists."⁵ "Wee went Into a great hall," Fox writes, "& there was Rich: ffarnsworth with mee." In Farnworth's tract, *The Spirituall Man Iudgeth All Things* (1655), there is a contemporary description of the proceedings, in the main by Farnworth but in part by Fox, which confirms, corrects and supplements the account provided by Fox's memory when he dictated his *Journal* twenty years later.

According to Farnworth's share in this piece, the first dispute was "On the twelf day of the eleventh Month by the world called Ianuary, and according to their accompt 1654" (*i.e.*, 1655, new style); and the second was "on the 17. day of

¹ *Familiae Minorum Gentium*, pp. 1089f.; Yorks Q.M. Marriage Register.

² Swarthmore MSS., I. 360: in my *Early Quaker Letters*, no. 258.

³ *Familiae Minorum Gentium*, p. 1209. Both Ballowfield, as it is spelt in Fox's *Short Journal*, p. 228, and Synderhill, as it is sometimes spelt, are in the parish of Handsworth, in which Farnworth and Mary Stacey were married: this is the next parish to Treeton, in which Farnworth had worked for "Mr. Lord". According to the *British Friend* (1897), p. 43, "Ballyfield Hall" was the family residence, and "Cinder Hill", where it is thought meetings for worship were held, was on the estate, three hundred yards away. The meeting became known as Handsworth Woodhouse and is now Sheffield: Woodhouse.

⁴ Yorks. Q.M. Burial Register.

⁵ *Cambridge Journal*, I, 152-159.

the same Month," which in his *Journal* Fox inexactly terms "yt day sevensight." On the first occasion they went "into a great house like a Hall,¹ and the dwellers thereof came and said they should be welcome and have the command of the house, and none should barre them, &c."; and the second priest is named as "Iohn Chester," "Priest at Witherley," a parish close to Fenny Drayton.² Among those who took part on the second occasion were "Priest Hill," "Priest Mousall," "Priest Whetstone" and "Priest Swayne." Of these the first was almost certainly Thomas Hill, the vicar of Orton-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire, the next parish to Twycross, with whom Farnworth held the dispute there mentioned above³; and the last was probably William Swaine, the vicar of Withybrook, Warwickshire, since in 1651 he had contributed to Nathaniel Stephens' *Precept for Baptisme of Infants* and was thus evidently acquainted with him.⁴ "Priest Mousall" may have been Richard Mansell, the vicar of Burton Dassett, Warwickshire, but I know of no evidence to support the conjecture;⁵ "Priest Whetstone" I have not identified.⁶

In Fox's contribution to Farnworth's tract, in which Fox writes of himself in the third person, he mentions his father Christopher Fox by name and calls him "the old man." To the complaint that Nathaniel Stephens "could not endure the cold" out of doors, where Fox wished the dispute to be held, Fox says that he retorted that "a Minister of Christ could endure hardship, hunger, nakedness or cold." This sounds less egotistical, if not less exasperating, than his retort as he remembered it twenty years later, that "hee might beare it as well as mee." Stephens' striking remark, as found in the *Journal*, that "George ffox Is come to ye light of ye sun: & now hee thinkes to putt out my starr light," with Fox's reply that "I woulde not Quench ye least measure of God in any much lesse putt out his starr light," is recorded thus at the time: "the priest said, George being come to the light of the

¹ Thomas Hodgkin, *George Fox*, p. 103, identifies this (from Fox's mention of it in his *Journal*) as "doubtless the old manor-house of the Purefoys".

² For Chester, the rector of Witherley, see *Calamy Revised*, with a quotation from a letter by him in which he mentions Nathaniel Stephens.

³ For Hill, see *D.N.B.*; *Calamy Revised*; and Farnworth's *Character*.

⁴ For Swaine, see *Calamy Revised*.

⁵ For Mansell, see *Calamy Revised*.

⁶ "Whetstone" is referred to in Farnworth's *Character* as Hill's "partner" in the dispute at Twycross.

Sun, sought to destroy and tread upon his Star light, but that was false for the least measure of light he doth not destroy, but the Darkness that he calls light, George doth deny." This version has a twofold interest. It suggests that the words "much lesse putt out his starr light" were a little harmless embroidery provided by Fox's memory twenty years later, fully in character but an addition to what he actually said. It also confirms, what might perhaps be guessed *a priori*, that the still more elaborate phrase which appears in Ellwood's edition of the *Journal* (whence it duly reappears in the 1952 edition), "much less put out his star-light, if it were true star-light—light from the morning star," consists of Fox's own embroidery with a further gloss which has no authority beyond Ellwood's piety. The extent to which contemporary accounts, such as this tract by Farnworth, whether or not they include a contribution by Fox as this piece does, may be used to date, confirm, correct or supplement Fox's narrative of events, as this is found in his *Journal*, is perhaps greater than has yet been realized. A critical presentation of such accounts would make a lively subject for a research student; and John Nickalls' careful collation of the various versions of the *Journal* in the 1952 edition positively invites someone to undertake it.

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