

Anthony Pearson (1626-1666)

An Early Friend in Bishoprick

TWO small pamphlets in the Library at Friends House, not reprinted since their issue in 1653¹ and 1654,² are the introduction to this study of Anthony Pearson.

The first paper is addressed:

“To the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England”
[the so-called Nominated, or Barebone’s Parliament of July to December, 1653]

Christian Friends,

I am moved of the Lord to present this Paper to you, it requires your speedy consideration; and therefore as you love your own souls defer it not: the crying sin of persecuting the righteous seed of God, is now brought to your door, and you must account for every day’s delay; arise, stand up and execute Justice and Judgment, that you may be hid in the day of the Lord’s fierce wrath, which is at hand.

I come not to you to clamour or complain, nor to petition any thing from you, but to discharge my duty in obedience to the command of the Lord, in laying before you the afflictions and sufferings of the innocent by the hands of your Ministers and Servants, that so you may acquit yourselves, lest the guilt fall upon your own heads.

In the northern parts of this nation, God hath raised and is raising up his own Seed in many people, according to his promises; which hath layen in bondage in a strange Land for many generations, and is daily encreasing their number to the praise of his name which gathers their hearts out of all the world’s ways, Worships, Customs, Riches and Pleasures, to live with the Lord in Spirit, and to be taught of him alone; Whereat the formal Professors of the World, and the carnal-religious of these dayes are so much enraged, that in every place, to the utmost of their power, they beat, wound, stone, imprison and persecute them; as it was in all Generations, as the Scriptures witness, ‘He that is born after the Flesh, will persecute him that is born after the Spirit’.

¹ *To the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England*. 3rd October, 1653. No imprint.

² *A few words to all Judges, Justices and Ministers of the Law in England*. From Anthony Pearson. London, Printed for Giles Calvert at the Black Spread Eagle at the West end of Paul’s, 1654. This contact, as Giles Calvert was in touch with the Levellers, may mean that Anthony Pearson showed his interest in their agrarian aims by dealing with the subject of tithes, as well as the question as it affected Friends.

And the reason why these People above all others are hated by all sorts of men, is, because the righteous Spirit of God that rules in them, as it will not comply or have fellowship with the wicked in their Pride, lusts, pleasures, customs, Worships, fashions and unfruitful works of darkness, so will it not wink at them, but reprove them where and in whomsoever they are; it spares not a man because he hath a flattering Title, nor passeth by him that is rich or decked with gay clothes, but reproves all, yea, in the gate, without respect of persons; and therefore is it that snares are laid for them in every place to make them offenders for a word: And as the wicked are thereby provoked, so are their cruel minds encouraged by the Lamb-like dispositions of these people; for having the same Spirit that was in Christ Jesus, they are like-minded, they do not resist the evil; but like Sheep are led to the slaughter and open not their mouths: being cursed they bless, he that takes their cloak, may take their coat too, to him that smites one cheek they offer also the other; And as they save not themselves, but cast their care on the Lord, so they seek not for relief to any man, but patiently wait on the Lord for his deliverance, bearing stripes, wounds, Prisons, reproach and shame with joy, knowing that through many tribulations they must enter the Kingdom; praying even for their persecutors, that their sin may not be laid to their charge. And being raised up with Christ and made partakers of the Life which is eternal, their hearts burn with love to all Creatures: and therefore in the Spirit and Power of the Lord they are carried into the public meetings of the world, to declare his word, and to reason and dispute against their outside profession, to bring them to repentance, that they may know the true God, whom they ignorantly worship, which dwels not in Temples made with hands, but in the humble and contrite hearts, that tremble at his word, as the manner and practise of Jesus Christ and his Apostles was.

And for these things did about 30 of them lie in Prison when I came lately from thence, and I hear six more are since committed: those that are set to do justice, being of the same nature and spirit with the rude world, take part with them in their wickedness, encouraging their hands, and laying the blame on the innocent, calling them disturbers of the Peace, movers of Sedition, turbulent persons, when it's only the man of sin they disquiet; and all the uproars of the brutish people that live in wrath, anger and quarrels are laid to their charge; as it was in all Generations.

Anthony Pearson's paper, with the list of sufferers, is dated 3rd October, 1653, although the information contained in it is of an earlier date, because he speaks of George Fox as being in custody at Carlisle charged under the Blasphemy Act, whereas Fox was released about the end of September.

Pearson continued his argument:

Oh ye Heads and Rulers of the people raised up to do Righteousness and Justice! Look upon these poor despised

Creatures, what evil is found in them? What wickedness have they committed? not one of six and thirty committed for a vice; is it not time to appear for the innocent and to save him from the seed of evil-doers? What are the offences laid to their charge? They will not put off their hats, no not to a Magistrate; are not men ashamed to call themselves Christian and pretend liberty for tender consciences, and yet stand upon such trifles, and to fine and imprison for it? is not obedience to the Magistrate, and a chearful, ready performance of his just commands, his greatest honour? that he may say to this man go, and he goeth; and to another do this and he doeth it; but now the life of all Religion is placed in outside shadows and formalities . . .

Let the Magistrate look to his duty to punish him that breaks the Peace, or offers violence to any, and that will soon be prevented; are they Churches? then may all prophesie, and if anything be revealed to him that sits by, let the first hold his peace: Are they assemblies of the world? then why doth the Magistrate interpose his Authority to hold up their false worship, and not suffer the Messengers of the Lord to call people to the Truth, and leave all men to manifest the power of the spirit they speak from . . . Doth not the Minister of God speak the word of the Lord from his own mouth? When, where, and how the Lord please, for it is not he that speaks but the Holy Ghost that dwells in him. He that hath his words from his own wit and memory may speak and be silent when he will: he that hath them from the Holy Ghost must speak as he is moved and as they are brought to his remembrance by the Spirit of Truth: be careful how ye meddle in these things! Oh ye powers of the Earth; men have long been taught one by another but now the Lord is come to teach his people himself.

In conclusion an appeal was made to the Parliament:

Oh ye members of the Parliament that fear the Lord! . . . The great work of the Lord is not to throw down one man, to set up another. But to throw down the unrighteous seed, that the holy Seed may be raised up and have dominion. If you restrain the Lord in his work, all the Armies in the World shall not save you: all these witnesses are raised up to shew you where the way is stopped and the Lord hath herein made it known to you: its not the release of the Prisoners alone that the Lord requires but to make a free way for the sons of Zion . . . It's not long till a light will shine in this Nation to shew the deceits of this and many other like things. Consider scruples of conscience are not obvious to every man's reason, if they were, no liberty need to be pleaded for tender consciences.

The moneth called Oct.

3. 1653

A servant of the Truth

Anthony Pearson

In 1654 another paper from the same hand appeared, addressed:

"A few Words
To all Judges, Justices and Ministers of the law in England
From Anthony Pearson"

This dealt with judicial oaths, and was concerned with tithes, with law of the conscience rather than man-made rules, and against executing the law for gifts and rewards. The paper ends:

He that makes a law against that in the conscience which is pure and holy, makes a law against God: and he that executeth that law for gifts and rewards, his heart is in the earth for selfish ends, and in the same carnal nature with the Priests who preach for hire: and with the light which is free, which is the gift of God not to be bought or sold for money, he is to be condemned, and with the life of all the Judges and Holy men of God he is eternally judged.

Anthony Pearson's home at this time was at Ramshaw Hall,¹ near West Auckland, and we are told by George Fox that he was a "Justice in three counties", only two (West-

¹ Ramshaw Hall still stands, though used as a farmhouse for many years and in need of repair. It is five miles from Bishop Auckland and close on two miles due west of West Auckland—this name of "Auckland" signifying "Oak-land" and forest. The house stands on the north of the river Gaunless, on rising ground and is a typical manor house of the period, with garden plot in the front, walled, and with steps down to an orchard below, where a large company could meet and listen to George Fox and others speak from above. The gateway has roundels either side, and the mounting block is near which Anthony Pearson must have used often as he started on horseback for Durham and Newcastle to the north, Barnard Castle and Appleby, Kendal or Carlisle to the west, or took the "London road" by Darlington and York to the south. There are many outbuildings near the house and in the fields, bearing traces of a large establishment. Inside, the broad staircase rises from the panelled hall, the parlour still has shell-shaped topped alcoves either side of the fireplace with shelves. Beyond the hall is a small room, possibly Anthony Pearson's study or business chamber, also with panelled walls and cupboards. On one side is a stone wall with pointed arch which would have led to the large room now the kitchen, possibly the dining hall in earlier days.

The bedroom over the parlour has a wall-cupboard but the remaining rooms have evidently been partitioned off later. As I was shown over it, the then occupier told me she had heard of John Wesley staying there but knew nothing of Fox's visits. For here Anthony Pearson and his wife, formerly Grace Lamplugh, of an old family, with branches in Cumberland, Westmorland and East Yorkshire—and his children, kept open house for visiting Friends, and here George Fox came, James Nayler time and again, Edward Burrough and Audland, Howgill and others, to conduct a systematic campaign in "Bishopricke", and Ramshaw Hall was the base of operations. In all, thirteen "First Publishers of Truth" came.

morland and Cumberland), however, have been established.¹ Later "for conscience sake" he was put "out of the commission" as was his friend Gervase Benson. Both had been opponents of Friends. But in 1652 the account by James Nayler of his spiritual experience given in his trial at Appleby before them, brought about the conviction of Pearson later (Benson being already convinced).² It was to Pearson's home that James Nayler came after his release in summer 1653—walking over the fells from Westmorland and Cumberland and by Swaledale and into Durham—and a great meeting was held there.

But before this Pearson had come into touch with the family at Swarthmoor. His letter to his fellow justice, Gervase Benson, written in May, 1653, follows their work in January at Appleby, and after a visit he had paid to Judge Fell. Fox's *Journal* states that when at Swarthmoor he had gone to see Colonel West (who had aided him in his trial at Lancaster)—the same who on a previous visit when Fox and Richard Hubberthorne crossed the sands from Ulverston swimming their horses over the channels of the rivers, exclaimed as coroner he would soon have the clothes of two travellers he had seen as they must be drowned crossing where they did, and was astonished to hear instead they were his guests! While on this second visit, a message came from Swarthmoor asking Fox to come, as Anthony Pearson was there, and Colonel West said, "Goe, George, for it may be of great service to the man", and "going, the Lord's power reached him", adds Fox.³

A comment by G. M. Trevelyan in his *England under the Stuarts*⁴ is interesting. "To hear Fox preach once in the churchyard as he passed through the town, or to spend an evening with him by the fireside often was enough to change a persecutor into an enthusiast, to emancipate a man from the intellectual and social customs of a life-time." This last was true for Pearson.

¹ George Fox, *Journal* (Cambridge), 1911, i, 108; W. C. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 1955, p. 121; J. W. Steel, *Early Friends in the North*, 1905, 5-11; *Journal F.H.S.*, xlviii (1957), p. 122; *Extracts from State Papers* (ed. Penney), 2nd series, 1911, pp. 111, 112, see also pp. 137-141.

² J. Nayler, *Works*, pp. 1-16; Besse, *Sufferings*, ii, 3-6; *First Publishers of Truth* (ed. Penney), 1907, p. 248, see also p. 88.

³ *Cambridge Journal* (1911), i, 104, 108.

⁴ G. M. Trevelyan, *England under the Stuarts*, pp. 9-10, 312.

Writing afterwards therefore from Ramshaw, he describes his spiritual condition, finding his former positions much in the outward—uncertain:¹

All my religion was but the hearing of the ear, the believing and talking of a God and Christ in heaven or a place at a distance, I knew not where. Oh how gracious was the Lord to me in carrying me to Judge Fell's to see the wonders of His power and wisdom, a family walking in the fear of the Lord, conversing daily with Him, crucified to Him and living only to God. I was so confounded all my knowledge and wisdom became folly: my mouth was stopped, my conscience convinced and the secrets of my heart were made manifest and that Lord was discovered to be near whom I ignorantly worshipped.

He continues:—

What thou told me of George Fox I found true: when thou seest him or James Nayler (they both know my condition better than myself) move them (if neither of them be drawn this way) to help me with their counsel by letter: they are full of pity and compassion, and though I was their enemy, they are my friends, and so is Francis Howgill from whom I received a letter full of tenderness and wholesome advice. Oh! how welcome would the faces of any of them be to me: truly I think I could scorn the world to have fellowship with them.

Dear friend, there is a carrier comes from Kendal within a mile of my house every fortnight and he shall call at Peter Huggin's to bring any letter that shall be there left for me: it will much refresh me to receive any lines from thee but be thou faithful . . . I am afraid lest the orders we made at Appleby cause some to suffer who speak from the mouth of the Lord: I heartily wish they were suppressed or recalled. I have been at Judge Fell's and have been informed from that precious soul his consort in some measure what these things mean which before I counted the overflowings of giddy brains. Dear heart, pity and pray for me: and let all obligations of former friendship be discharged in well wishes to the soul of the old familiar friend that he may partake with them of your heavenly possessions.

Anthony Pearson

Ramshaw neare West Auckland

May 9 1653

In these early years very few cases of persecution of Friends in Durham, compared with other areas, are known, Anthony Pearson's influence no doubt shielded Friends, for he was now a person of great influence. At twenty he had

¹ Friends House Library, Swarthmore MSS. I. 87; A. R. Barclay, *Letters &c. of early Friends*, 1841, p. 10 note; M. Webb, *Fells of Swarthmoor Hall*, 1867, p. 71.

become secretary to Sir Arthur Hesilrige in 1648 going down with him from London (having no doubt had legal training there) to Newcastle where Hesilrige was in control as Governor for the North.¹ Pearson was Judge Advocate at a court martial there in 1649 and also in that year appointed Clerk and Registrar to the Compounding Commissioners and other posts. When Hesilrige in 1650 went back to Parliamentary work in London, Pearson came into Bishoprick, looked after the estates of Hesilrige, who had purchased the manor of Bishop Auckland amongst others² and was steward of the Bishop's lands, some of which he had bought himself—one being Aspatria in Cumberland. The conveyance, by information from the Public Record Office,³ is to Anthony Pearson of *Cartmell* in May, 1650, which gives us his birthplace as this is in North Lancashire (or Furness) his "native country". It is strange that only William Charles Braithwaite has noticed this phrase in Pearson's detailed statement, though he did not follow it up apparently. Most have thought Pearson was born in or near Ramshaw. A baptismal entry has been found very recently in Cartmel parish register for Anthony Pearson, son of Edward Pearson of Cartmell Fell, 7th January, 1627.⁴ This sheds a flood of light on why Judge Fell, Colonel West and others knew him, Anthony Pearson, being of their neighbourhood, and his acquaintance with Lancashire.

But in spite of this protection by Pearson the "Publishers of Truth" met with opposition from Presbyterian "professors", especially in Newcastle where *The Perfect Pharisee*

¹ W. C. Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p. 116; *Extracts from State Papers*, p. 138.

² By information from the Public Record Office, the conveyance of Bishop Auckland to Sir Arthur Hesilrige, 1647, is enrolled on Close Roll C.54/3363 No. 9.

³ By information from the Public Record Office, conveyances enrolled on Close Roll C.54/33522 Nos. 24 and 25 of the manor of Aspatria, and of further manors, including Allerthwaite, Cumberland, 21st and 28th May, 1650, name him as Anthony Pearson of Cartmell, co. Lancs. Cf. *Extracts from State Papers*, pp. 137, 141; the Public Record Office confirms that the documents S.P. 29/49 to 27 gives *twenty* unmistakably as Anthony Pearson's statement of his age in 1648.

⁴ 7 Jan. 1626 [Old Style]; by kind research of Giles Howson, Lancaster. The date of Anthony Pearson's birth is not known, but it may well have taken place towards the end of December, 1626; the birthdate 1626 in the title of this article may thus be true as well for New Style as it is for Old Style.

*under Monkish Holiness*¹ was published by five ministers, one of whom had been in New England, and a second was chaplain to Hesilrige, Samuel Hammond, in 1653. James Nayler wrote an answer to be followed by yet another pamphlet, *A further Discovery of that generation of men called Quakers*, in 1654.

Anthony Pearson, together with his wife, had gone in the late summer of 1653 to join George Fox at Bootle, and when Fox was imprisoned at Carlisle during the sessions Pearson took active steps to secure his release. Anthony Pearson was in London where his first paper was published in October. In the following February he wrote to Edward Burrough² from Ramshaw hoping to have gone to the meeting at Arnside but is prevented by "business in pursuance of an ordnance of the protector so called" and hopes for George Fox to come and others. "Those towards the East side would fain see James once. When he comes it were well if he could pass through them and take a circuit by Darnton and so to Norton, Shotton and round by Medomsley and Wolsingham to my house."³

George Fox's visit to Ramshaw was in March, 1654. One of those also visiting the area in Bishop Auckland was Ann Audland⁴ who though put in the gaol for preaching, continued her ministry through a window or grating to those in the market-place. John Longstaff, a prominent local man hearing her was convinced, going into her prison, and on her discharge later in the day, took her to his home. His wife objected, so Anne left to seek a place to sleep in a wood outside the town. George Fox had told Pearson of her being in Auckland and he came on horseback to take her, on the pillion, to Ramshaw—one of the incidents which take us into the actual conditions of the work.

A large meeting gathered at Ramshaw Hall while George Fox was there, convincing many and confirming those

¹ See Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, 115.

² Swarthmore MSS. III. 70.

³ The circuit from Darnton (Darlington) runs eastwards to Norton (NE. of Stockton), northwards (on A19) to Shotton a couple of miles south of Easington, then westwards across the county to Medomsley (NE. of Consett) and south to Wolsingham and Ramshaw. This is of interest especially to present Durham Friends, as it is very similar to any "round" we should suggest today.

⁴ See *Piety Promoted*, pt. 2, pp. 51-52 (vol. 1, p. 356 in the 1812 edition). MS. John Bigland, Bp. Auckland.

already influenced, from a wide area. Possibly the "setting up the men's meeting in Bishoprick" may have been at this time—the paper relative to it is docketed by Fox himself thus, with the date 1653.¹

In the early summer of 1654 Pearson joined Gervase Benson (the first worker), in London and, together with Edward Burrough and Howgill, John Camm and Richard Hubberthorne, led in the attack on the city—a band of young men finding great response as well as opportunity but also opposition. On his return home, Pearson wrote to Fox at the end of July:²

All cry out what do these men say more than others have said, but to bring them to silence confounds their wisdom. [And goes on] Very many societies we have visited, and are now able to stand. Many honest hearts are among the Waiters—And some that are joined to the Ranters are pretty people. The living power of God was made manifest to the confounding of all and we were carried above ourselves to the astonishment both of ourselves and others: we were made to speak tremblingly among them in dread and much fear.

But he also pleaded that only seasoned Friends should go to London "for there are so many mighty in wisdom to oppose and gainsay, that weak ones will suffer the Truth to be trampled on; and there are so many rude, savage apprentices and young people and Ranters that nothing but the power of the Lord can chain them". He closed with a personal note. "The bearer hastens me and I can now write no more—only my wife's and family's love to all Friends.

Anthony Pearson''³

When in London in July, 1654, Pearson had visited Oliver Cromwell, as had others, who, as William Charles

¹ 1653 (Old Style) [March, 1654]. See my "Establishment of a Monthly Meeting in Durham (1654) and a Note on Anthony Pearson (d. 1666)" (*Jnl. F.H.S.*, xlviii (1957), pp. 119-22) and references there given. The paper is in Swarthmore MSS. II.17. See also *Jnl. F.H.S.*, xlviii (1957), p. 69.

² A. R. Barclay, *Letters &c. of early Friends*, pp. 11-14, Anthony Pearson to George Fox.

³ In August, 1654, Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill write to Margaret Fell from London: "We receive letters every week from the prisoners at Chester: the work goes on gloriously in that county, there is precious seed and Anthony Pearson writes to us of the like in the county of Bishoprick. It is even our reward to hear that the Lord is raising that up in power which was sown in weakness, to the Lord of glory, be glory for evermore." (Barclay, *Letters*, 1841, p. 17.)

Braithwaite says,¹ "considering his press of anxieties, we feel that he treated these self-invited guests with a consideration which showed that he recognized their sincerity, and the value of the truth for which they stood, even when he did not find himself willing to obey their exhortations".

After many delays Pearson won entrance and found Oliver Cromwell walking on the leads of the roof of his house. He came into a gallery, and when he came to Pearson "put off his hat and very kindly asked how I did", recounts Pearson in a letter to George Fox, 18th July. Pearson "waited a pretty while, my eyes being fixed on his which put him in a maze—then the Lord opened my mouth and I declared to him that I was moved of the Lord to come to him", and then gave an impassioned statement "of the great things ye Lord had done in the north" and "to sett up righteousness in the earth, to throw down all oppressors, and I showed him that now the controversies should be no more between man and man in wars and fightings without ye seed was redeemed out of all earthly things and that nature whence wars arise". Eventually Cromwell's wife and twenty ladies joined Cromwell and at least thirty young fellows—his sons and attendants—and Pearson was dismissed after Cromwell had insisted that the "inner light" was a natural light and when followed led astray like the Ranters.²

Again in London in November, however, in a second interview, Pearson had success in winning a discharge for Thomas Aldam who was in prison in York, Cromwell signing the orders with his own hand, "very ready to do it and standing with his hat off and it was much noised abroad", Pearson told Margaret Fell.³ He mentioned that he hoped to join his wife, after delivering the discharge in York for Aldam, and together go to see Fox at Balby the following week.

In the following spring Benson, Pearson and Aldam saw Cromwell on behalf of imprisoned Friends and spoke to him on many things; they found him "very moderate" and he promised to read the papers which they had prepared.⁴

¹ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p. 435.

² Anthony Pearson to George Fox, 18th July, 1654; Swarthmore MSS. III. 34.

³ Letter 28th Nov., 1654; Swarthmore MSS. I. 216; Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p. 436.

⁴ Barclay, *Letters*, 1841, p. 34.

Friends had found Cromwell often sympathetic and mourned his decline in not fulfilling the promise they had first seen in him.

In 1656 came a crisis that tried the band of workers sorely.¹ Nayler had held the ear of great assemblies in London, with influential persons there, Lady D'Arcy and her friends among them,² but allowed a group around him to indulge in adulation apparently and a rift grew between the warning voice of Fox and himself till the entry into Bristol in imitation of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. For Nayler it was done as a sign and not as impersonation, but it was completely misunderstood. A sentence in a letter written by Nayler to George Fox hoping to see him at Ramshaw a year or two earlier, at an Easter General Meeting there, seems a forecast: "Dear brother, let me heare from thee—if I may not see thee then—and cease not to pray ye Father for me that I may be found in His will and not my own."³

Parliament had him brought before a Committee of the House. Major-General Lambert, who had known Nayler as a trustworthy quartermaster in the army, among several, spoke in favour of him and of the individual experience, known among Friends, of the light of Christ in the heart, but others were shocked and not to be convinced.

Pearson wrote on 18th November, 1656,⁴ on the trial, which he attended daily, and said the whole assembly, except some violent men of the Committee, was strangely astonished and satisfied with Nayler's answers, summed up in these words by Pearson:

For any worship or honour he denies that any was due to James Nayler. But if any was moved to give such things to the appearance of God in him, as to a sign of Christ's second coming and being revealed in his Saints, the great mystery that hath been hid from ages, he did not judge them for it,

and Pearson added that the testimony given by Nayler "was the highest that had been made since the days of Christ".

¹ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, pp. 241 ff.

² Barclay, *Letters*, 1841, p. 38; Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p. 242, note 5.

³ Swarthmore MSS. III. 70; G. F. Nuttall, *Early Quaker Letters*, 1952, letter 56 refers to the Easter meeting.

⁴ Swarthmore MSS. III. 78; Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, pp. 256 ff. Earlier in 1656 Anthony Pearson had been one of those who took part in a great meeting at Preston, Lancashire, where ministers accused Friends, but were "vanquished", and the Major-General presiding was kind to them. (Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p. 448.)

We can imagine Pearson's feelings, having so often worked with him, after his conviction through his witness, though, with other Friends, Pearson disapproved of the outward things which had been acted by Nayler, but was tender towards him himself. The effect of Nayler's conduct, however, spread not only over England, but over Europe. Accounts were published in several languages, and from Pearson's own words later it is clear that his withdrawal and disillusion began at this time. Others in the north were affected, and the damage to Quakerism generally was too great to be calculated.

At this time, together with Thomas Aldam, Anthony Pearson visited many of the prisons to gather details of the causes of Friends' imprisonment, often for non-payment of tithe, and his *Great Case of Tythes* was published in 1657 and went through three editions quickly in two years.¹

The question of tithes was not merely a Quaker "concern"—it had troubled many generations as an unjust imposition, being applied for the maintenance of Church and clergy where originally it was for the support of the poor, and to many represented a remnant of the power of Rome. In his introduction Pearson addressed "the Countrymen, Farmers and Husbandmen of England".

It is for your sakes that this small Treatise is sent abroad that in a matter where you are concerned, you might be truly informed and for more than two years last past I have made much enquiry into it.

The title-page to the first edition has, "By a Countryman, A.P.", the second edition "By Anthony Pearson". In the eighteenth century the title appeared (1730) as "The Great Case of Tithes/Truly stated clearly open'd and fully Resolved/By Anthony Pearson formerly a Justice of the Peace in Westmorland."

The 1730 edition has an appendix which quotes from a paper by Thomas Ellwood, including the latter's use of Milton's essay on the subject, and also some account of Pearson's conviction at "a Quaker's trial" before him at the assizes at Appleby. The volume closes with a description of Friends' testimonies and principles. The clear presentation and orderly development of the theme in this work, supported

¹ These and subsequent editions are listed in Joseph Smith, *Descriptive catalogue of Friends' books* (1867), II, 275-6.

by legal knowledge, made Anthony Pearson's work the standard book on tithes for Friends for two hundred years. The last edition appeared in 1850. Anthony Pearson gave Friends a lasting benefit.

Parliament had debated the question and even proposed abolition of tithes, but could not find a suitable method of maintenance for ministers. In the last year of the "Interregnum" again it came up. Friends at once seized the opportunity and organized a petition. Between the 29th May and 27th June in 1659, 15,000 signatures were collected—not all Friends—when it was presented by Gervase Benson, Anthony Pearson, Thomas Aldam and others who had come up to London, and read in Parliament.¹ A supplemental paper presented from women Friends on the 20th July bore 7,000 additional names.

Anthony Pearson succeeded in arranging the visits of George Fox to Sir Henry Vane at Raby Castle (about five miles from Ramshaw Hall; *Cambridge Journal*, I, 312-14) and to Alderman Ledgard in Newcastle. During the rising of Sir George Booth in 1659 Anthony Pearson was commissioner for the militia in County Durham, and was prepared to aid in keeping the peace, even laying in weapons to that end before Lambert's troops overcame the rebels.

By the death of Judge Thomas Fell in 1658 there was loss of protection at Ulverston and Swarthmoor and to the Society. Judge Fell's service in sheltering the movement, in allowing meetings at the Hall, and his family's support, with constant guests, cannot be measured. In his work as Judge of Assize of the Chester and North Wales circuit, Vice-Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Attorney for the County Palatine of Lancaster, and member of Parliament, he took an independent line. He allowed Fox to defend himself in his trial at Lancaster in the face of his prejudiced accusers. The closeness of Anthony Pearson's contacts with the household at Swarthmoor is revealed by the testamentary dispositions made by Thomas Fell before his death in 1658. In his will two executors, non-Friends, are appointed who could take the required oaths for probate, but as trustees to see the will was properly administered he says,

Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, pp. 458 ff.

I desire my very true friends, Anthony Pearson of Ramshaw in the county of Durham gentleman, and Jarvis Benson of Heaygarth in the county of York gentleman to endeavour what in them lies to see this my last will and Testament truly performed by my executors.¹

One of the gifts of Anthony Pearson clearly lay in organization and he took a leading part in framing that of the Society from the first Monthly Meeting in 1654 to arrange for maintenance of those in need or in prison by subscriptions to a treasurer. His paper proposing this, signed by Durham Friends, is well expressed as always.² General meetings for the northern counties held at Scalehouse and Skipton arranged for funds for a larger area and the care of travelling ministers, often overseas, from 1656 onwards following the Meeting of Elders at Balby when the first set of advices was framed with the postscript we know so well:

These things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all with the measure of light which is pure and holy may be guided, and so in the light walking and abiding these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life.³

In 1657 Fox's Journal has the entry:

Also this year there was established and ordered for general collections to be for the service of Truth and Friends that travelled beyond seas, *through all the nation*, which charge had lain mostly upon the northern counties before this time, which was established about the third month [May] 1657.⁴

The plan had been discussed at Swarthmoor with Margaret Fell, Anthony Pearson, Gervase Benson, Robert Widders and some others, and at a meeting at Drawell, of Francis Howgill and John Blaykling, the two Kendal treasurers Taylor and Willan and three Friends from Durham, Pearson, John Longstaff and Anthony Hodgson, a letter was prepared to go to every county in the nation signed by Aldam, Widders, Benson and Pearson. It asked for a general collection for the expenses of service beyond seas to be sent up to London. Howgill helped Pearson to nominate Friends for the several counties of England and Wales, and

¹ I. Ross, *Margaret Fell*, 1949, pp. 121, 398-400; M. Webb, *The Fells of Swarthmoor Hall*, 1867, pp. 141-144.

² Swarthmore MSS. II. 17; see p. xx, note xx.

³ The Balby Advices; see Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p. 311.

⁴ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p. 321; *Cambridge Journal*, ii, 337.

Pearson undertook to send ten copies of the letter, with an accompanying note of directions to the ten Friends nominated for the southern counties.¹

Durham Friends prepared the business for the autumn meeting also in October, 1659, and sent a paper, presumably drawn up by Pearson, who acted as clerk, a document of great importance.² It suggests particular meetings, county meetings, and general meetings two or three times a year and "we wish the like may be settled in all parts, and *one General Meeting of England*". Each particular meeting to care for its own poor, to help parents in the education of their children "that there may not be a beggar amongst us", monthly meetings to supply needs of Friends in the ministry among them and relieve Friends in prison, making collections. As in the case of monthly meeting treasurers, two persons at least in all trusts about money to be appointed and render full accounts. The letter concludes that if an agreement can be reached on these matters—which have taken up time at previous General Meetings—"Friends will see greater things before" them "which more chiefly concern the state of the Church and will be greater service to the Truth."³

When the General Meeting met at Skipton four days later (5th October) the letter was "by all Friends owned approved and agreed, to be observed, and copies therof to be sent to all Monthly Meetings". Several Friends sign the endorsement of approval and add:

As to the particular which concerns a meeting of some Friends from all the General Meetings of England, it is desired that Anthony Pearson do forthwith write up to George Fox, Edward Burrough, and other Friends at London, and lay it before them, and if they see it fit, and appoint time and place for it, we do in our names, and as from the body of Friends of the Northern parts desire that Gervase Benson, Anthony Pearson, Thomas Aldam [and five other Friends named] attend.⁴

This shows a General Meeting for the whole country was now being proposed for the first time. Fox, Burrough and Friends of London must have fallen in with this proposal,

¹ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p. 322, note 1.

² A. R. Barclay, *Letters*, 1841, pp. 288-292; Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, pp. 328 ff.

³ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p. 331.

⁴ Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, pp. 331-332.

for the representative meeting was held at Skipton, 25th April, 1660.

William Charles Braithwaite, whose skill has given us this résumé of the formation of our business meetings as we know them, speaks of this as a fine piece of service to the Quaker community on the part of Anthony Pearson,¹ and that the organization of Friends in other places was naturally guided largely by the example of the strong churches in the north.²

Friends had also sent up lists of those they thought suitable for Justices in 1659, describing those already acting as "Friends that are in a capacitie to be in Commission for the Peace" or "Moderate" men or "Persecutors", and George Taylor of Kendal writes to Gerrard Roberts in London:³

In answer to yours of the 17th instant which was considered of by several Friends in these two counties and the north part of Lancashire, they have ordered me to returne you the names of those hereunder written:—

In the countie of Westmorland

Friends—John Fallowfield, John Morland, Edward Burrowe, Henery Warde besides two that was put out of Commission for the Peace for Conscience sake which we desire may be in Commission for our countie again viz Gervase Benson and Anthony Pearson.

Pearson's name appears again in the Cumberland list of Friends, and amongst the "moderate" men here is Thomas Lamplugh of Ribton Hall, Cumberland, father-in-law of Anthony Pearson. It is interesting that in *First Publishers of Truth* under Broughton, Cumberland (near Cockermouth), James Lancaster and Robert Widders came in 1653, "and they went to Ribton Hall".⁴

But it was noted by Friends that Pearson was becoming "politically minded", and Margaret Fell wrote to him.⁵ He had kept contact with Hesilrige's affairs in Durham county and knew Sir William Darcy, living quite near him at Witton Castle, who was usually severe against Quakers. A letter (printed in Swarthmore papers in America) from George Fox to Anthony Pearson similarly asks him to remember early days.⁶

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 463.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 339.

³ *Extracts from State Papers*, p. 111.

⁴ *First Publishers of Truth*, p. 45.

⁵ Friends House Library, Spence MSS. III. 52-53.

⁶ *Swarthmore documents in America* (ed. H. J. Cadbury), 1940, No. xv, p. 41.

The other side of this letter is one from James Nayler to G. Fox.¹

Anthony Pearson is reported as attending a meeting in Cumberland in January, 1660, by Stephen Hubbersty writing to Margaret Fell.² He says,

I was glad to see him and friends is glad to see him come amongst them. And this I know is the desire of thy heart that Friends be kept in good order and in ye wisdom of God which they are generally in these parts, and all these things which is without doth not move, but they are kept well and quiet.

This may have been on Pearson's return from accompanying Justices and Judges from the Carlisle Assizes to Lancaster Assizes, following on Booth's rebellion, as they asked his protection and he went on to make preparations in Lancaster.³

In the disturbed months of 1660 he seems to have withdrawn finally from Quaker affairs. After the Restoration in May, 1660, Hesilrige and Vane were imprisoned, and Anthony Pearson, having worked with them under the Commonwealth, was also under suspicion. He was examined by Sir Edward Nicholas, principal Secretary of State, at Whitehall, December, 1661, and it is his account there of his life which gives us the details, otherwise lacking, and to be seen in *Extracts from State Papers*, of his official life.⁴ He cleared himself of any enmity towards the king, spoke of kindness shown to ejected ministers and their families, and pleaded 'Being ignorant of ye doctrine and decency of Ecclesiastical Government when young' [which may mean that in Lancashire he was under Presbyterian influence, strong there], he 'joined with zeal into opinions of religion which I then took to be ye most honest and harmless'. He proceeded to disassociate himself strongly from these, however, and gave assurance of his allegiance. He received a certificate from Sir E. Nicholas (16th January, 1662) and returned north.

This must have been a period of melancholy for him, with the loss of his patron and friend and the sudden reversal of events. With the appointment of John Cosin as Bishop in 1660, County Durham had again become rightly known as Bishoprick. In March, 1663/4, Pearson was made Under

¹ *Ibid.*, No. xiv, p. 41.

² Swarthmore MSS. I. 146; 23rd Jan., 1660.

³ *Extracts from State Papers*, p. 141.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 137-141.

Sheriff by Bishop Cosin, to continue the official life he was accustomed to. There is an interesting tradition, originally given by James Wilson,¹ a minister of the early part of the eighteenth century, that on a case of persecution arising in the diocese of Durham a deputation of Friends waited on the Bishop to lay it before him. On retiring Anthony Pearson accompanied them to the Palace Gate and parted from them in tears. "It is evident he was no morose, vituperating Seceder" says the recorder of this incident; and there is no accusation against Pearson in Friends' letters or papers, and his *Great Case of Tithes* continued to be reprinted.

It is clear that Pearson's ready pen and influence were missed, as was his genius in promoting progress in the affairs of the Society. His early death at under 40 in 1666 was reported in the *London Gazette* and in Cosin's correspondence,² on 23rd January. He was buried by the Register of St. Mary the Less, Durham, on 24th January, 1666, the entry of which I have seen—the cause not given, but plague had been in the county that year and such speedy interment suggests this.³

Though his family as well as himself were said to have received "Episcopal confirmation" his widow evidently retained contact with Friends and was married as second wife to James Hall of Monk Hesleden near Durham in 1673.⁴

In leaving Anthony Pearson may we remember his work for the Society, his hospitality, time and money given freely in much travelling, and evidently with much affection for Fox and others, even though, probably due to sorrow and anxiety, he finally returned to the Church of his childhood and its work.

As we look through the changing pattern of these early

¹ James Wilson (1677-1769) lived near Brigflatts and it was in his home that Dr. John Fothergill and his brother Samuel lived while going daily to Sedbergh School. He could have had this account from Grace (Pearson) Hall's daughter, Grace Chambers of Kendal. See *The Friend*, i.xi.1860.

² See the note by Norman Penney in *Cambridge Journal*, i. 470, with reference to the Surtees Society, volmue lv.

³ *Journal F.H.S.*, xlvi (1957), 122.

⁴ The entry in our registers names her as "Grace Pearson, widow of Anthony, late of Ramshaw". Their daughter, Grace Hall, married Robert Chambers of Kendal. She travelled in the ministry both here and in the colonies. The Testimony of Kendal Friends also says she had "considerable skill in surgery" and in "administering relief in many disorders", an unusual attribute. She lived well into the eighteenth century, dying in 1762 aged 85, after a full life of Quaker service. See *Jnl. F.H.S.*, vii (1910), 182-3; xlvi (1957), 122.

years three hundred years later, the ebb and flow of personalities and circumstance, we may echo some words of the historian, Dr. Thomas Hodgkin, in his still longer view:¹

“Lord of the ages! Thine
Is the far-traced design
That blends Earth’s mighty Past with her To-Be.
Slowly the web unrolls,
And only wisest souls
Some curves of Thine enwoven cipher see;
Power fades and glory wanes
But the Unseen remains—
Thither draw Thou our hearts
And let them rest in Thee.”

AMY E. WALLIS

¹ Louise Creighton, *Life and letters of Thomas Hodgkin*, 1917, p. 432, Appendix III—Ode 1887.