

John Bunyan and the Quakers

JOSEPH SMITH'S *Bibliotheca Anti-Quakeriana*, 1873, has few omissions. That remarkable bibliographer was as complete and meticulous in listing "A Catalogue of Books Adverse to the Society of Friends, Alphabetically Arranged" as in his earlier *Descriptive Catalogue of Friends' Books*, 1867.

It may be worth while to note an omission in the *Bibliotheca* of a work by one of early Quakerism's now most famous opponents, John Bunyan of Bedford. As I have noted elsewhere, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, Second Edition, 1955, p. 568, we are indebted to a quite recent biographer of Bunyan, W. Y. Tindall, *John Bunyan, Mechanick Preacher*, 1934, "for recovering a forgotten episode belonging to Cambridge and 1659, in which John Bunyan became involved in an unsavoury charge against two Quakers of bewitching a woman and turning her into a mare".

I now call attention to a publication among the many theological controversies of a later time. In a pluralistic society controversy tends also to be many-sided. One of Bunyan's works was addressed to answering a book called *The Design of Christianity*.¹ The author was Edward Fowler, an Anglican rector, also of Bedfordshire. His book was first published in 1671. It is duly mentioned by Smith, for it also attacked the Quakers, but Bunyan's reply entitled *A Defence of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith in Jesus Christ . . . or Mr. Fowlers Pretended Design of Christianity proved to be nothing more than to trample under Foot the Blood of the Son of God, etc.*,² though not mentioned in Smith's *Bibliotheca*, also shows his animosity to the Quakers by the application of what today is called "guilt by association". He concludes, "But to wind up this unpleasant Scribble [*sic*] I shall have done when I have further shewed how he [Fowler] joyneth with Papist and Quaker against these wholesome and fundamental Articles" [10th, 11th and 13th of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Fowler's own Church of England].

¹ 1671, Wing F1698.

² 1672, Wing B5507.

For the papist agreement with Fowler he quotes from Campion, the Jesuit; for the Quaker he uses Penn's *Sandy Foundation Shaken*,¹ and quotes in eight parallels first a passage from "Pen" (page reference agreeing with its 1668 edition) and then a passage from Fowler to the same effect. Of course the outraged Fowler promptly published a reply (1672). Its characteristic long title begins: *Dirt Wip't Off, or a manifest Discovery of the Gross Ignorance, Erroneousness, and most Unchristian and Wicked Spirit of one John Bunyan*.²

I do not know that William Penn intervened, but the interesting thing is that almost before the *Defence* could have been printed (its Premonition to the Reader is dated "From Prison the 27th of the 12 Month 1671" [i.e. 27th February, 1672]) King Charles II on 15th March issued his Declaration of Indulgence. In accordance with this, Friends, with great effort, provided a list of prisoners to be freed, and among them, at the invitation of George Whitehead, John Bunyan and a few other non-Friends were included in the general pardon of 8th May. On the next day Bunyan's license to preach was granted.³

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¹ 1668, Wing P1356.

² 1672, Wing F1701.

³ Cf. *Journal F.H.S.*, x (1915), pp. 290-91.