

## An Unpublished Defence of the Quakers, 1655

**A**MONG the many pamphlets and broadsheets attacking and defending the Quakers which George Thomason, the London book-seller, added to his collection in 1655, few can have been less notable than a tract of twenty pages which he acquired on 24 May: *The Quacking / Mountebanck / or / The Jesuite turn'd / Quaker. / In a witty and full Discovery of their Production / and Rise, their Language, Doctrine, Discipline, / Policy, Presumption, Ignorance, Prophanenes, Dissimulation, / Envy, Uncharitablenes, with their Behaviours, Gestures, / Aimes and Ends.*<sup>1</sup>

“Printed for E.B.<sup>2</sup> at the Angell in Pauls-Church-Yard”, the work is anonymous, its author being described on the title-page only as “One who was an Eye and Eare Witness of their Words and Gestures in their new hired great Tavern Chappell, Or the Great Mouth within Aldersgate”. The best bibliographical authorities attribute the tract to Donald Lupton who, between 1632 and 1658, produced a number of works on subjects as various as devotion, ecclesiastical history, warfare by sea and land, topography and geography. In 1652 he had published two pamphlets against tithes and one advancing the proposition that “all men endowed with Gifts and Abilities may Teach and Preach the Word of God”.<sup>3</sup> *The Quacking Mountebanck*, which attacks the Quakers for seeking to deprive the churches of “all their means” and for presuming to teach without benefit of education, represents a change of opinion striking even in one whose biographer describes him as a “hack writer”.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Title from British Library copy (E.840 (4)). Donald Wing, *Short-title Catalogue . . . 1641-1700* (1948), L3493.

<sup>2</sup> E.B. is identified as Edward Blackmore, a bookseller dealing mainly in “popular literature” who died in 1658 (Henry R. Plomer, *A Dictionary of Booksellers and Printers . . . 1641-1667*, London, 1907, 25).

<sup>3</sup> Wing, Fortescue (*Catalogue of the Thomason Tracts*) and Gordon Goodwin, author of the article on Lupton in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, agree that he was the author of *The Quacking Mountebanck*. George Fox apparently did not know who the author was (Fox, *The great mystery of the Great Whore unfolded*, 31).

<sup>4</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, under Lupton, Donald, by Gordon Goodwin.

*The Quacking Mountebanck* is an abusive work of a type familiar to students of early anti-Quaker literature. Its author's method was to heap on the Quakers layer upon layer of accusations and odious comparisons, larded with scriptural and classical allusions. Thus

. . . they are like to Froth Cork, and black soape, strive to be uppermost, they as those wicked ones in Psal. 12. say, Our tongues are our own, who is Lord over Us, . . . they are much like Icarus, will be flying though it be with waxen wings, and be drowned; or like Phaeton, will be in the Chariot of State, . . . these are the true preists of Baal, for they do Baul to the purpose . . .<sup>5</sup>

So much for the wit promised on the title-page. As for "Discovery", there is very little in the work to suggest that the author had observed Quaker practice at first hand.

In the pamphlet's torrent of accusations it is difficult to distinguish central from peripheral objections to the Quakers, but a few themes recur with tedious persistence. One is the charge that Quakers sought to subvert magistracy and ministry; another that they were hostile to learning; and a third that they allowed a disgraceful licence to their women, notably "Martha Symmonds, Alias in truth, . . . wife to Mr. Bourn the Astronomer in Morefeilds, a special Light Saint".<sup>6</sup> At the end the author tells with approval the story of an honest country carter who had whipped a naked Quaker. "If more of them met with such Discipline and such rough Tutors", comments the author, "it would be a sure means to force them to a Reformation, and to leave off their simple Pilgrimage and uncivill Perambulations".<sup>7</sup>

Unlike many other anti-Quaker tracts of 1655, *The Quacking Mountebanck* does not appear to have evoked any immediate response from the Quakers themselves: it was not until 1659 that George Fox included a single page of comments on the work in *The great mystery of the*

<sup>5</sup> *The Quacking Mountebanck*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> *The Quacking Mountebanck*, 19. Unless intended as an indelicate insinuation, the description of Martha as wife to Mr. Bourn is puzzling. Presumably she was the wife of Thomas Simmonds and sister of Giles Calvert (both prolific publishers of Quaker works) whose somewhat sinister role in the life of James Nayler is discussed by Kenneth L. Carroll, "Martha Simmonds, a Quaker Enigma", *Jnl. F.H.S.*, 53 (1972), 37-52. I have not been able to trace Mr. Bourn.

<sup>7</sup> *The Quacking Mountebanck*, 20.

*Great Whore unfolded*.<sup>8</sup> But the attack brought to the Quakers' defence the pen of a rather unlikely champion. He was Henry Marten, once Knight of the Shire for Berkshire in the Long Parliament, a precocious and ardent republican and a regicide, notorious in respectable circles for his sexual immorality, his radical sympathy with the Levellers and his contempt for conventional religion.

King Charles I and Oliver Cromwell both called Marten a whore-master. John Pym, ever the moderate, simply accused him of "lewdnesse". He was widely believed to be, if not an outright atheist, at best indifferent to religion. In post-Restoration London John Aubrey was told that Marten was "of the natural religion". To judge by his few surviving writings, including those composed during crises that might have evoked some expression of religious faith in a more conventional man, that meant a rejection of religious dogma and discipline, a deep respect for stoic philosophy and a strong desire to persuade his countrymen to divert the energy they spent on religious quarrels into seeking solutions to their urgent political problems.<sup>9</sup>

Marten's defence of the Quakers was not the act of a man convinced that they were right and their detractors wrong. It was the protest of a good-natured observer against the persecution of what he described, in a passage deleted from his title-page, as a "company of harmles people". At other times he showed himself just as ready to speak up for Brownists, Anabaptists, Antinomians, Levellers and the oppressed Irish; and was reputed to have promoted toleration for English Catholics and the readmission of the Jews. As John Aubrey noted, he was "a great cultor of Justice, and did always . . . take the part of the oppressed".<sup>10</sup> He was fond of reproaching the Presbyterians and the more conservative Independents not only for their intolerance of other sorts of Christians but for their destructive bickering with one another. His friends—and

<sup>8</sup> George Fox, *The great mystery of the Great Whore unfolded*, collects Fox's response to a number of critics. *The Quacking Mountebanck* is dealt with on p. 31.

<sup>9</sup> For brief accounts of Marten's life and character, C. M. Williams, "The Anatomy of a Radical Gentleman: Henry Marten" in *Puritans and Revolutionaries* (ed. D. Pennington and K. Thomas), Oxford 1978; and Sir Charles Firth in the *Dictionary of National Biography* under Marten, Henry or Harry.

<sup>10</sup> *Aubrey's Brief Lives* (ed. O. L. Dick), 194.

enemies—including men of almost every religious persuasion. His chief aversion was what he saw as the tendency of his contemporaries to “domineer”; his life-long ideal an England governed by a single House of Parliament chosen by “popular election”.

The motto Marten affixed to his defence of the Quakers sums up pretty well his attitude to religion. His adversary had used the motto “*Simulata Sanctitas Duplicata Iniquitas*”, to which Marten replied with “*Felicia tempora quae te moribus opponunt!*” He thought it absurd for any church, sect or individual to claim an exclusive understanding of the nature and will of God: everything ever said about God was “but opinion”.<sup>11</sup>

Henry Marten was himself no stranger to persecution and unpopularity. He once wrote that, having publicly discharged his conscience against almost every powerful institution and person in the land, he expected to be “reproched and inveighed against”. In parliament he was usually in a minority, often a very small one. In August 1643 he had been expelled from the House of Commons and imprisoned in the Tower after having suggested, in the course of a speech in defence of the radical minister, John Saltmarsh, that it would be better for the royal family to be destroyed than for the whole kingdom to perish.<sup>12</sup> After his restoration to parliament early in 1646 he espoused the highly unpopular cause of John Lilburne, Richard Overton and the Leveller movement and made enemies of the Presbyterians and their Scots allies by his resistance to their attempts to establish a coercive, national church and to restore Charles I to his throne. Even as a member of Councils of State under the Rump Republic he seems seldom to have sided with majority opinion on any major question. When Oliver Cromwell overthrew the Republic, Marten never forgave him that betrayal.

In May or June, 1655, when he wrote his defence of the Quakers, Marten was again a prisoner, confined to Southwark, within the Rules of the King’s Bench prison, at the behest of his many creditors. Though politically

<sup>11</sup> Brotherton Collection (University of Leeds), Marten-Loder MSS., box ML 78, fol. 10.

<sup>12</sup> For the background to Marten’s expulsion, C. M. Williams, “Extremist Tactics in the Long Parliament, 1642–1643” in *Historical Studies*, No. 57, October 1971.

and financially ruined he was still capable of a generous indignation on behalf of honest and humble people worse off than himself. Why he did not publish his short reply to *The Quacking Mountebanck* we can only guess. Perhaps, as the reply suggests, he found that his adversary was indeed no more than a poor hack writing for money. But perhaps he judged that his own reply was unworthy of a man famous for the sharpness and quickness of his wit. Given his record of public support for unpopular causes it is unlikely that his courage deserted him.

Though it lacks the wit and force of his best writing, Marten's little work is typical in other respects of his style of controversy. His usual method was to follow an opponent's argument section by section, exposing contradictions and absurdities, ridiculing inflated pretensions, finding fault with weak logic and making fun of vulnerable mannerisms. In publishing the work for the first time I have restored some of the common contractions and mended a little of the punctuation to make the sense more immediately comprehensible, though there are still passages whose sense is obscure. The notes are intended to explain allusions to the text of *The Quacking Mountebanck*.

C. M. WILLIAMS

Justice Would-bee / that made himself / a Ranter last week in  
opposition to / those hee calls / QUAKERS / Aunswered / by one  
who knowes as litle of them as / hee doth.<sup>13</sup>

.....Felicia tempora quae te  
Moribus opponunt!

To the Intelligencer himself who carryed his eyes & his eares  
for that purpose to the great Mouth within Aldersgate.

Friend,

My civility putts that title upon you, wherein if I do you  
wrong (as is shrewdly suspected) my following discourse will I  
hope do you right enough; besides you are either my friend, or  
so much in my debt, for I am yours what ever you bee.

First I should be glad to understand the drift of your pen, for  
if any pittifull printer, or under-laden pamphlet-porter have hired  
you to come out at a venture, I should not finde in my heart to

<sup>13</sup> Brotherton Collection (University of Leeds), Marten-Loder MSS., box ML 78, fols. 6-9. The manuscript is printed by kind permission of the Librarian of the University of Leeds from the original draft in Marten's hand. I am indebted to R. S. Mortimer for his help in checking my transcript and in drawing my attention to George Fox's later response to *The Quacking Mountebanck*.

interrupt you; for I doubt you will finde few customers, you can do litle els for your living. But if you think your self too good for any of that, & pretend to a reformership, I must beg your pardon to tell you wherein I conceive you mightily mistaken.

You beginne like a Predicant with a regiment of texts but forget quickly the prophanenes you mentioned in your title-page, when you mingle your Scripture language with gibing & skurrility; & that quality goes through the wholl arraignment, that it may appear not to have dropped from you by chance.

A man would have expected some relation concerning matter of fact from so close a witness & to have known what particular passages happened amongst those you inform against, either in word or deed, gesture, or countenance; then the courteous reader could have given a name to what hee found said or done, whether of politique or ignorant, presumptuous, prophane, envious, or uncharitable. But your manner of talk leaving quite behinde you the undertakings of your title-page makes an ordinary reader very iealous that either you never saw Aldersgate in your life, or els you were there when no body els was.

To your Method beginning with their beginning  
Which may be where it will for you. But your deriving them from the Jesuites<sup>14</sup> is a guesse I cannot tell whether more thread-bare or ridiculous; this I am confident of, were you of capacity to be a Jesuit your self, you would be more their enemy then you are.

Their language & discipline  
Are very learnedly iumbled together by you for of the latter you say nothing at all but that it is litle or none at all & the former is so significantly expressed by you, if it bee so frothy & orderles as you would have us beleve, that no looking-glasse can better represent a fool that stands before it.<sup>15</sup>

Their doctrine  
Is none of the worst if they teach the value of Light & Liberty, neither do I know any man that hath an ey in his head & a heart in his body but is a Quaker, if his prizeing those 2 things make him one. Whether their practise be suitable or no is nothing to your present text honest Mountebank-finder. Liberty indeed may be abused; so may grace. But it will be hard for you to prove that there can be too much of either; & prethee, what cares the magistrate whether he be allowed or no? The lawes are made to punish such as disobey them, not such as dis-allow them.<sup>16</sup>

Their Policy  
Must needes be deep which makes them embrace proverty, humility (so you mean when you say outward humility, for I scarce beleve you ever saw any other), mean habit, short & course fare, hard lodging, which makes them refrain their acquaintance, quitt their

<sup>14</sup> *The Quacking Mountebanck*, 4: "'tis thought and not improbably, that these were whelped in the Kennell of *Ignatius Loyola* the Jesuite . . .".

<sup>15</sup> Fair comment on the turbid prose of *The Quacking Mountebanck*, 5.

<sup>16</sup> *The Quacking Mountebanck*, 6: "They allow no Magistrates, not because they are not allowable, but because they are not of their Brother-hood".

trades & decline all things of proffit or pleasure, which the rest of the world runnes madding after.

The religious orders you talk of in the Roman church, whereunto you would fain annex these people, may more safely play those trickes for they know themselves provided for while they live; even the Capuchins finde Charity enough to supply the want of Cookes & Caterers. Should the Quaker turn Jesuit you might call him a crafty knave; but with every Jesuite that turnes Quaker I think you might compare in cunning. As for clayming immediately from God, which you make so strange of, doth not every priest of every religion, & every prince of every region do the same? Why it is so commonly done now that it ceaseth to be policy, it cousens nobody.

#### Their Presumption

If it be no more then thinking themselves in the right, & all other opinions in the wrong, it is common to them with the professors of every Religion in the world.

#### Their Prophanenes & Uncleannes

Sirreverence of your story, I did not think you could have coupled these 2 charges so well together in one case. What they hold concerning honour to Parents, the Sabbath & the Sacraments, marriage and the Scriptures, respect of persons, times & places, you should have told us in your late head of Doctrine. But how comes it to passe that these Emissaryes of Rome should pull down Churches because Papists have prayed in them? Their uncleannes it seemes consists in esteeming themselves cleaner then you.<sup>17</sup>

#### Their Dissimulation, Envy, & Uncharitableness

Will make one head you imagine, because you finde a deal of such stuffe linked together in one of the clauses of our old Letany. You tell us now they dissemble to get their living, & even now that they quitted livings ready gotten; do you dissemble with us now, or did you then? You tell us now they envy such as see more then they, & even now that in their opinion none see ought but they. You would perswade us heer that they would send every body to Hell, & in another place that they use all possible industry for the gaining of soules to their belief, the onely way as they think to salvation.<sup>18</sup>

#### Their ignorance

Comes in very properly for the next head to that chapter wherein you call them foxes 5 times, besides a former head of policy that you father upon them.<sup>19</sup> Nay you fox them twice in this very chapt.

<sup>17</sup> *The Quacking Mountebanck*, 9–10, charges the Quakers with “uncleanes” only in that they despise the clergy, the sacraments and the churches, and hold themselves “holyer then Thou”.

<sup>18</sup> A typical Marten device, exploiting inconsistencies in his opponent’s arguments.

<sup>19</sup> *The Quacking Mountebanck*, like many other anti-Quaker pamphlets, makes free with the name of Fox throughout and attributes vulpine characteristics to Quakers generally.

which should rather have putt you in minde of the goose. You that heard them speak can tell whether they used in their discourse to quibble it like you. For if they do, they shall go for coxcombes with mee too, as well as you.

Their behaviours, gestures, aimes & ends

Or rather their behaviours onely, for their gestures wee shall have in a head by it self though gesture be very Jesuitically distinguished from behaviour. & their aimes & ends (which I beleeve you would have parted too, if you had sped well with this) have gotten another head to themselves. Heer again this same sent of the Fox is so strong in your nose, you cannot forbear likening them to that creature in their behaviour, but to evince their behaviour to be indeed a mis-behaviour. Besides the want of breeding you want not 7 reasons whereof [ ]<sup>20</sup> are grounded upon their wants 1 of Learning, 2 of calling, 3 of meanes, 4 of regularity, 5 of Religion, 6 of Grace. You might if you had pleased have called the 7th. want of Despair; viz: Hope of gain, & credit. By the same token I thank you for explaining what kinde of credit you mean; it is not inward credit among horses, but outward among men, with a small dash of Envy again. & these are your Pullyes—Bridles sure you would say—& your Spurres to draw them in & sett them forward all in a breath.<sup>21</sup> Some more belike of their uncomely actions you would sett down, but that your pen is too modest, so as wee may think our worst.

Their gestures

What they were at the Mouth within Aldersgate wee would have knowen from you, & not be sent into Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, & elsewhere. But if so publique any where, what need of an Intelligencer? In short, they use variety in their gestures, & go over all postures, kneeling excepted. Foxes they are here again 3 times.<sup>22</sup>

Their aymes & ends

Cannot but be grosse if you have found them out; and found you have 2 pair of Buttes of theirs.

The first is a dangerous one, & therefore not safe to dwell too long upon it.

The second is a double one, yet incident to the greatest part of mankinde.

The third I should have taken for a bow or an arrow rather than a butt.

And so I should the fowerth.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> One word indecipherable in MS.

<sup>21</sup> *The Quacking Mountebanck*, 14, suggests that Quakers "Envy . . . the Preachers by Law established", because they act as "pulleyes" and as spurs, capable of imposing discipline on the Quakers.

<sup>22</sup> *The Quacking Mountebanck*, 16–17, makes great play with the postures adopted and the sounds uttered by Quakers "in the time of their publick tumultous Meetings".

<sup>23</sup> *The Quacking Mountebanck*, 17, accuses the Quakers of (1) "Sedition in State; and so consequently subversion of Government"; (2) "Enriching themselves to gain Credit"; (3) seeking to "Delude poor simple people"; and (4) seeking to "sow Division in Religion".

Your fox is 5 times on the stage in this chapter, & recommended by you to a fresh dogg.

But let us hear what you say after you have done speaking. Wee must understand you have no more to say concerning men, but [of] women you [pay],<sup>24</sup> first in generall, as any woman may do, & then in particular; onely you transplant the scene (which indeed you never thought of keeping) from the Mouth to Shorditch. Enough being said of her for meddling with other folkes matters,<sup>25</sup> (which you have not bene guilty of all this while) you return to the generall & tell us their proselytes are bewitched, though you do not believe it, for it is believed, you say, by understanding people. Then you carry us to Smithfield & commend a carter for making himself a magistrate in the execution of a law made onely by himself & you.<sup>26</sup> So you make as if you concluded, when you did nothing els all along, leaving the premisses to be admitted which should enforce your conclusions.

Therefore I am glad I have done with you at last.

<sup>24</sup> In MS. "of" may be deleted. "Say" would make better sense than the "pay" in MS.

<sup>25</sup> Amongst the crimes imputed to Martha Symmonds in *The Quacking Mountebanck*, 19, are her busy endeavours "to gain Disciples" and her interrupting a service in Shoreditch church.

<sup>26</sup> Marten's indignation at the presumption of the carter who whipped a naked Quaker seems genuine, though he himself had defied and redefined the law on many occasions.