

The Prophethood of All Believers:
George Fox, Prophecy, and the Quaker Quest for Respectability, 1647-1691

by:

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
August 2017

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Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Acknowledgments.....	vi
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
I.I: Christian Context.....	2
I.II: Historiography.....	11
I.III: Sources and Methodology.....	19
I.IV: Project.....	23
Chapter II: Origins and Interpretations of Prophecy: The First Years of George Fox's Prophethood, 1647-1656.....	30
II.I: Quakers and Prophecy.....	31
II.II: Non-Quaker Prophecy.....	50
II.III : Comparison.....	55
II.IV : Conclusion.....	60
Chapter III: Prophecy, Respectability, and the Nayler Affair, 1655-1659.....	62
III.I: James Nayler.....	64
III.II: George Fox.....	68
III.III: Before the Affair.....	73
III.IV: The Nayler Affair.....	75
III.V: The Aftermath.....	77
III.VI: Conclusion.....	88

Chapter IV: The Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy and the Final Push for Respectability and Order, 1660-1691.....	90
IV:I: The Resotration Period.....	93
IV:II: 1660's: Authority and Organization.....	95
IV:III: Controversy.....	108
IV:IV: 1670s: Peace and Suffering.....	112
IV:V: 1680s: The Last Push for Organization.....	122
IV:VI: Conclusion.....	126
Chapter V: Conclusion.....	128
Bibliography.....	139

List of Figures

Figure 1. Cover page of George Fox's *Warning From the Lord to All Such as Hang Down the Head for a Day* (1654) from *Early English Books Online*. 42

Figure 2. Nayler's entry into Bristol, from *Anabaptisticum et enthusiasticum Pantheon*, 1702. 76

Figure 3. James Nayler, branded as Blasphemer from Ephraim Pagitt's *Heresiography*, 1661. 78

Early modern abbreviations have been modified to a modern spelling. The spelling of quotes from primary documents is as found in the source or edition used. Rufus Jones modernized all the spelling in his edition of *The Journal of George Fox* while Norman Penney has not in both his two-volume edition of *The Journal of George Fox* and in his edition of Fox's *The Short Journal and Itinerary Journal*. Penney used square brackets to indicate additions new to his edition of the *Journal*.

Abstract

The early years of the Society of Friends, also known as Quakers, were synonymous with erratic behaviour and ecstatic prophecy. Individual Friends let themselves be guided by the inward light (God's spirit) to prophesy which led many to 'go naked' or interrupt church services to share Quaker doctrines. During the Interregnum Quakers were viewed as a threat by English society as their number surpassed those of all other Protestant non-conformists. This thesis studies the efforts by Quakerism's founder, George Fox, to stop ecstatic prophecy and thus gain the respect of English society. It argues that Quaker prophecy was distinctive in allowing all members of the sect to connect directly with God. Fox, however, could not reconcile the practice of ecstatic prophecy with the new respectable image of Quakerism and abandoned the practice for a quiet, individual experience of prophecy that was no longer radical and not disturbing to English society.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank Professor Krista Kesselring for her support, guidance, and patience. Her knowledge and encouragements were crucial to the success of this project. I am forever indebted to her. I would also like to thank Professor Cynthia Neville who helped improve my writing skills and who devoted much of her time to improve this project. I would also like to thank Professor Justin Roberts for his time and encouragements throughout the year. I would like to acknowledge all the staff and faculty at Dalhousie who helped make my year enjoyable and rewarding, especially Valerie Peck, and her unconditional support.

I would also like to thank Alex, Mercedes, Ben, and Heather-Ann without whom I would have never been able to get through this project and who made the time in Halifax one that I will forever cherish.

Finalement, j'aimerais remercier mes parents pour leur support et amour inconditionnel. Je leur suis infiniment reconnaissante pour les efforts et sacrifices qu'ils ont fait afin que je puisse terminer ce projet, je leur dois tout.

Chapter I: Introduction

George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, later known as the Quaker movement, placed a great deal of importance on the practice of prophecy as a way for individuals to connect with God. Prophecy is understood here as both the direct, individual reception of God's Word, and what is described as 'ecstatic' prophecy, which is the public performance and re-enactment of what God has demanded, for public admonition and guidance. Friends developed a reputation for exhibiting such ecstatic behaviour in the 1640s and 1650s, the earliest years of the Quaker movement. Yet, while the actions, practices, and beliefs of seventeenth-century Quakers have been widely studied, few historians have emphasized the centrality of prophecy to Quaker life, especially in the context of broader narratives of Christian prophecy.

Looking at Fox's many published works is the most efficient way to explore the practice and theology of Quaker prophecy. It is possible to identify such behaviour in Quaker writing through phrases such as 'moved of the Lord' or 'the spirit's calling'. These phrases became staples of Quaker writings and help scholars today pinpoint prophetic episodes in the writing of Friends. The ecstatic prophecy that was a staple of Quaker belief and practice in the early years came to be replaced by private and individualistic revelations of God's Word as the persecution of Friends intensified in the late 1650s and onward. This thesis argues that through Fox's quest for respectability prophecy became an internalised ritual instead of an outward performance. It also argues that Fox used his personal revelations from God's Spirit, known in Quakerism as the 'inward light,' to solidify his authority over this group of people who called themselves Friends, to create by his death in 1691 what he and many Friends recognized as a distinct religious denomination.

Christian Context

Historians have failed to fully incorporate Quaker prophecy into their studies of the broader tradition of Christian prophecy. The historiography of Christian prophecy has very rarely delved into Quakerism and its prophetic practices, or attempted to situate the Society of Friends within the broader context of Christian history. Many biographies have been written on George Fox from the perspective of historians of Quakerism, including most notably H. Larry Ingles's *First Among Friends*; none, however, offers a focused examination of Fox's prophetic practices and doctrines.¹ Ingles's book and other works briefly discuss the prophetic episodes that Fox experienced, and almost all pay heed to the centrality of the 'inner light' to his teaching, but fail to emphasize the importance of the shifts in Fox's doctrine that occurred over his lifetime and their influence on the development of the Society of Friends as a distinct Christian denomination. Studying prophecy through Fox's lens allows this thesis to provide an in-depth analysis of prophecy and its influence on the organization and conversion processes of the early and later periods of the sect. Prophecy was a critical component in the early Quaker experience; this project aims to understand how ecstatic prophecy, which had been critical for the rapid growth of the Society of Friends, could be reconciled with the quest for respectability that marked Quaker history in the later seventeenth century. Using Fox's writings and related secondary sources to trace the development of his understanding of prophecy, we can draw conclusions that nuance our understanding of seventeenth-century English Protestantism and Christian prophecy more generally.

¹ Larry H. Ingle, *First Among Friends: George Fox and the Creation of Quakerism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

To understand the singularities of Quaker prophecy, one must have a firm grasp on the broader Christian tradition of the practice. What made Fox and the Quakers so controversial is that their behaviour (including ecstatic prophecy) made them stand out from their contemporaries and from other movements in Christian history? What Fox proposed, as founder of the Society of Friends, contrasted with most Christian traditions of prophecy. For instance, Old Testament prophets, according to Kirilka Stareva, had a harshness in tone and placed a divine hierarchical distance between themselves and their addressees.² This was not the case for Quaker prophets, who sought a close connection with the subjects of their prophecies. Early Quaker prophecies aimed to convince members of society to join the sect, so establishing a close connection with their audience was important. According to G. Sujin Pak, ancient and Old Testament prophecies created a tradition for later periods, “one that defined prophecy as foretelling, in which visions often played a central role,” as well as one that included personalized interpretation of scripture.³ Early Quaker prophecy followed some of these ancient traditions, mostly as it approved of and encouraged the concept of spontaneous visions. Gradually, however, Quakers turned to interpretations of scripture to legitimize their prophetic inspiration as a means to conform to the wider contemporary Christian tradition.

Christian prophecy took shape in the apostolic period. An essential component of this tradition, clearly demonstrated in the *Book of Acts*, was the direct communication between the apostles and God. The Holy Spirit had touched these men; as such, they were

² Kirilka Stareva, “Prophetic Cries at Whitehall: The Gender Dynamics of Early Quaker Women’s Injurious Speech,” in *Women, Gender and Radical Religion in Early Modern Europe*, Sylvia Brown ed. (Brill Press, Boston, 2007), 18-19.

³ G. Sujin Pak, “Three Early Female Protestants Reformers’ Appropriation of Prophecy as Interpretation of Scripture” *Church History* 84 (2015), 91.

granted the opportunity to hear, speak, and write divinely inspired prophecies.⁴ Like Quakers, the ability of the apostles to demonstrate their direct connection to God through prophecies, miracles, and supernatural cures was a key to their success in obtaining conversions to Christianity.⁵ When their prophecies proved to be true and their claims to cure proved effective, it was difficult for their contemporaries to deny them. During the apostolic period, it remained unclear if the ability to receive divine prophecies was common, or limited to a few select Christians. Theologians such as Augustine of Hippo normalized an understanding that divine prophecies were a rarity few could experience.⁶ Augustine described prophecies as visions and categorized them into three groups, only one of which offers the possibility of communicating with God.⁷ Once individuals believed they communicated with the divine, they had to prove to their community their state of saintliness to legitimize their divine prophecies. Distinguishing between legitimate visions and dreams sent from God, and those the Antichrist made to resemble legitimate messages became the biggest challenge for medieval prophets and theologians.⁸

Two types of prophecy developed in the medieval period: secular and religious. Religious medieval prophets tended to follow the tradition of the early Church. According to Robert E. Lerner, it was thought that God continued to reveal His will for the present day, as well as knowledge of future events “to saints such as Hildegard and Bridget and

⁴ Acts 2 1:13.

⁵ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 27-28.

⁶ Veerle Fraeters, “Vision” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, Amy Hollywood ed., Patricia Z. Beckman ed., (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2012), 178.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁸ Bronwen Neil, “Studying Dream Interpretation from Early Christianity to the Rise of Islam,” *Journal of Religious History* 40 (2016) 52-53.

[to] specially chosen monks, hermits, and even laymen.”⁹ Not only did the Catholic Church canonize prophets such as Catherine of Sienna and Hildegard of Bingen, also deemed them credible and trustworthy during their lifetime. Other, self-proclaimed prophets like Jeanne d’Arc, and later Elizabeth Barton, the Maid of Kent, were put to death because their prophecies challenged authorities, and their credibility could be easily questioned and doubted because of their low social status.¹⁰ Julian of Norwich, a fourteenth-century mystic, explained the difference between legitimate and illegitimate prophecies. Influenced by depression, she claimed that her early visions had been nothing more than evil hallucinations.¹¹ In order to confirm the divinity of a prophecy, discipline and a lack of self-centeredness had to be observed in the prophet.¹² Mystics such as Julian of Norwich gathered large followings and could influence the English people with their prophecies. Quakers found themselves in a similar situation, where their reliability was questioned, and they were easily punished and imprisoned for their ecstatic behaviour.

According to Lerner, “no one [in the medieval period] could put himself forward as a prophet merely on the grounds that he had some rare gift of clairvoyance.”¹³ The prophecies, in order to be considered legitimate, had to be proven true, which was more easily done with vague prophecies that could easily be applied to a variety of circumstances. Prophecies made in antiquity were normally received and shared orally.

⁹ Robert E. Lerner, “Medieval Prophecy and Religious Dissent” *Past and Present* 72 (1976), 9.

¹⁰ Ethan H. Shagan, “Print, Orality, and Communications in the Maid of Kent Affair” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52 (2001), 21. Genelle C. Gertz, “Quaker Mysticism as the Return of the Medieval Repressed,” in *Mysticism and Reform 1400-1750*, Sara S. Poor ed. Nigel Smith ed. (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, 2015), 180-181.

¹¹ Cheryl Riggs, “Julian of Norwich and the Ecstatic Experience” in *Tradition and Ecstasy: The Agony of the Fourteenth Century* edited by Nancy Van Deusen (Ottawa: The Institute of Medieval Music, 1997), 119.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Lerner, “Medieval Prophecy,” 8.

Prophets of the medieval period experienced prophecies through visions and dreams and often propagated their experiences in written media.¹⁴ They experienced dreams and visions that were at times eschatological in nature; that is, they predicted the coming of the end times and how this would happen.¹⁵ For example, a debate in the twelfth century centered around a few prophecies that disagreed on the order in which the end times would unfold. Some prophets argued that the happy and amazing times would come before the reign of the Antichrist, and others claimed that joy and happiness would reign only after the Antichrist had been defeated.¹⁶ Imagery and symbolism were important; these devices illustrated the feelings of awe prophecies were expected to provoke in their audiences. Symbolism, adaptability of the predictions, and the use of prophecy from antiquity and the Bible were all fundamental components of the medieval religious prophetic tradition.

The importance of symbolism and eschatology was also true for secular prophecies of the middle ages. Such symbols, usually dragons or eagles representing monarchs and leaders, such as in Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century work, *History of the Kings of Britain*, were common in medieval England.¹⁷ This prophecy traced the lives of English monarchs throughout history. Pablo García Loaezca argued that the "prophetic and providential spirit of the narrative vindicates the unavoidable transfer of power from the degenerate Britons."¹⁸ In this case prophecy was used to legitimize one

¹⁴ Neil "Studying Dream Interpretation from Early Christianity," 46.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Lerner, "Medieval Prophecy," 15-16.

¹⁷ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 462.

¹⁸ Pablo García Loaezca, "Deeds to be Praised for All Time: Alva Ixtilxochitl's *Historia de la Nación Chichimeca* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*," *Colonial Latin American Review* 23 (2014), 64.

nation's conquest of another. Geoffrey's narrative remained relevant for several centuries, thanks to the multiple ways it could be interpreted.¹⁹ Thus, the prophecies contained within the *History of the Kings of Britain* remained influential in both the religious and secular contexts of the medieval period because of their strong symbolism and the room they left for endless interpretations. The use of animal figures provided "obscurity and ambiguity" which kept these prophecies relevant even as time passed.²⁰ Many secular prophecies from antiquity, such as the Tripoli prophecies or Theodosius's prophecies, were still relevant and being rewritten in the middle ages, and even during the Reformation because of the wide applicability of their predictions.²¹ As will be demonstrated, Quaker prophecy evolved from this tradition of ambiguity and Quakers used specific references to people and places in their prophecies. Symbolism, in its various forms, however, remained a feature of their ecstatic prophecies.

Secular prophecies were often used to predict and celebrate the outcome of political conflicts and wars, which raised issues with medieval governments. Indeed, in the fourteenth century, an English poet praised Edward III's victory against the French by using Merlin's prophecy.²² According to Karen Moranski, lessons that were found in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Kings of Britain* were mirrored in other contemporary texts and used "animal symbolism to comment on political, social, and moral problems of contemporary society."²³ Prophecies that denounced contemporary issues are considered

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 59.

²¹ Lerner, "Medieval Prophecy," 5, 15. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 635.

²² Karen R. Moranski, "The 'Prophetie Merlini', Animal Symbolism, and the Development of Political Prophecy in Medieval England," *Arthuriana* 8 (1998): 58.

²³ Ibid.

by Moranski as a form of propaganda used to influence their medieval readers.²⁴ Quaker prophecies actively challenged political leaders and had many similarities with the later medieval tradition. Quakers, however, were more open in their attempts to influence their readers and listeners, and suffered greater punishments than mystics and prophets normally experienced in the medieval period.

High medieval religious eschatology began to offer more precise predictions of imminent church and clerical reforms and the collapse of lay and ecclesiastical corruption by the late middle ages. The Maid of Kent gathered a following that, for a time, included Cardinal Wolsey and Thomas More, both close partners of Henry VIII. As Henry worked to obtain an annulment from his first marriage, “Barton used her spiritual authority to challenge the incipient English schism.”²⁵ She predicted that if Henry chose to separate from the Catholic Church and remarry his reign would end.²⁶ Barton was eventually executed for her prophecies, which came to be seen as acts of treason. Both lay and clerical prophecies during Henry VIII’s reign became more frequent and more detailed. The break with Rome was traumatizing for many English subjects and increased the popularity of prophecy during this time.²⁷ According to Jonathan K. van Patten, authorities in the first years of the English Reformation were busy trying to undermine the influence of prophecies and prophets that were working against them.²⁸ To legitimize their claims, early modern prophets rooted their methods of prophesying in the same

²⁴ Ibid., 65.

²⁵ Shagan, “Print, Orality, and Communications in the Maid of Kent Affair,” 21.

²⁶ Jonathan K. Van Patten, “Magic, Prophecy, and the Law of Treason in Reformation England.” *The American Journal of Legal History* 27 (1983), 9.

²⁷ Ibid., 23.

²⁸ Ibid.

prophecies that had shaped previous centuries, including religious and secular prophecies, such as the Tripoli prophecy and Merlin's prophecy.²⁹

With the state using the full range of its powers to eradicate prophets who appealed to the medieval prophecies, and with Reformation theology hostile toward divinely inspired prophets, many orthodox members of the Church of England assumed that Christian prophecy was no longer possible.³⁰ The focus on *sola scriptura* from Luther's Ninety-Five Theses took individual inspirations away from Protestant theology.³¹ This does not mean, however, that the practice of prophecy disappeared from Protestant Europe altogether. A few mystics, such as Jacob Boehme, were able to gather a following based on their prophecies. Boehme was a German mystic of the early seventeenth century who would become known as the prophet of the Thirty Years War.³² There are many similarities between Boehme's divine light theology and what came to be known in Quakerism as the doctrine of the inward light. Although Boehme gathered a following during his lifetime, it could never compare to his rise in popularity following his death. A Christian sect known as the Behmenists, created in Germany, held his writings in the highest esteem and translated and disseminated his works across Britain and Europe where the sect continued to grow.³³ Many of Boehme's published manuscripts were influential during the seventeenth century.³⁴ Boehme questioned the Eucharistic

²⁹ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 462.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

³¹ Gertz, "Quaker Mysticism as the Return of the Medieval Repressed," 186.

³² Ariel Hessayon, "Jacob Boehme and the Early Quakers," *The Journal of the Friends Historical Society* 60 (2003), 192.

³³ Charles Andrew Weeks, "Jacob Boehme and the Thirty Years War," *Central European History* 24 (1991), 214.

³⁴ Andrew Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 2.

doctrine of the Calvinists, alleged corruption among both secular and religious authorities, and boasted of many prophetic episodes, which he shared through his writing.³⁵ Many contemporaries questioned the authenticity of his prophecies, but through both his prophetic and philosophical writings he was able to gather large numbers of followers, including some in England that, according Ariel Hessayon, influenced Fox and other early Quakers in their beliefs and practices.³⁶

In England, the Civil War triggered an outburst of revelatory dreams and visions among lay people, to a level last experienced in “days of the early Christian saints.”³⁷ Fox’s Society of Friends was by all accounts the most successful sect of this period, rising to numbers that rivaled Catholics in England. Quakers contributed to making the Interregnum a fervent and diverse period of Christian prophecy. This thesis illustrates how Fox created a large and influential religious movement that embraced a doctrine of prophecy to an extent hardly seen before. His interpretation of the Bible led to an understanding among his followers that the days of divine revelation were far from over and perhaps, most important, were not and never had been limited to a select few saintly beings. By contrasting Quaker prophecy with the Christian tradition of divine revelation and emphasizing the distinctiveness of George Fox’s interpretation of scripture, this thesis contributes to the historiographies of Quakerism, seventeenth-century English religious dissent, and Christian prophecy more generally.

³⁵ Ibid., 5, 23.

³⁶ Hessayon, “Jacob Boeme and the Early Quakers,” 192-193.

³⁷ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 763.

Historiography

For decades, debates in the field of Quaker history centered on the origins and influences of Fox's first revelation. Historians debated whether continental mysticism—of which Jacob Boehme had been a recent exemplar—or radical Puritanical ideas had been the marked factor in Fox's development of early Quaker theology. This debate originated in the early twentieth century, but historians continue to engage in the discussion. According to Hessayon, Fox did not mention Boehme in his writing, nor do we know whether or not Fox owned any of Boehme's work, yet it is almost certain that Boehme's prophecies stimulated Fox's work and that he was aware of Boehme's influence on the continent.³⁸ Historians such as Henry J. Cadbury and Geoffrey H. Nuttall, in contrast, claimed that continental mystics were too far removed to have had any direct influence on the creation and development of the Society of Friends.³⁹ Rather, the Quaker doctrine was an extreme escalation of the English Puritan movement.⁴⁰ Historians of a new generation moved away from the debate on the origins of Quakerism to create new branches in Quaker history that broadened and deepened our understanding of the early years of the Society of Friends.

This thesis seeks to engage with and contribute to the new fields of historiography that highlight the importance of Quakers in English history. The recent historiography on early Quakerism includes the work of Naomi Pullin on Quaker providential writings, Ingle's work on Fox, Phyllis Mack's work on female prophets and others who traced the lives of early Quakers such as Edward Burrough, James Nayler, Margaret Fell, and

³⁸ Hessayon, "Jacob Boeme and the Early Quakers," 206.

³⁹ Larry H. Ingle. "From Mysticism to Radicalism: Recent Historiography of Quaker Beginnings." *Quaker History* 76 (1987), 81.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

William Penn among others. Historians have also followed the paths of Quaker travels around the world and their influence, with a recent interest in transnational ministries.

The field of women's and gender studies has been prominent within Quaker history for the past several years. Historians such as Phyllis Mack, Krista Kesselring, and many others have contributed to our understanding of gender in Quakerism and the lives of female Quakers, creating a broad and thorough historiography on the topic.⁴¹ The liberty that female Quakers experienced during the early years of the sect is perhaps one of the most famous traits of the Society of Friends. Women were permitted to travel alone to prophesy and share the Word of God, making their way to continental Europe and the American colonies.⁴² This particular historiography focuses on the discourse of femininity surrounding Quaker prophecy and the feminine attributes used to describe prophets. Some, like Mack, argue that Quakers believed that women were able to prophesy because of their supposedly weaker mental and physical state, which made it easier for them to receive the message from the inward light. Male prophets adopted this rhetoric of weakness in order to legitimize their prophecies.⁴³ Others, such as Genelle Gertz, argued that it was a return to the medieval authenticity of prophecy, which encouraged more female prophets than Protestantism had, that allowed women the liberty and authority to prophesy.⁴⁴ It is nevertheless evident that as the sect moved to gain respectability in the 1660s, the behaviour of women became a point of contention among Friends. As will be discussed in chapter three, George Fox, William Penn, and leaders of

⁴¹ Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). Krista J. Kesselring, "Gender, the Hat, and Quaker Universalism in the Wake of the English Revolution," *The Seventeenth Century* (26) 2011.

⁴² Mack, *Visionary Women*, 1.

⁴³ Phyllis Mack, "Women as Prophets During the English Civil War," *Feminist Studies* 8 (1982): 32.

⁴⁴ Gertz, "Quaker Mysticism as the Return of the Medieval Repressed," 179.

the dominant Quaker faction worked to diminish the influence of women within the sect and limit their travels and freedoms.⁴⁵ The changes implemented by Fox outraged some Friends, such as John Pennyman, who continued to align with the original Quaker doctrines of equality and liberty.⁴⁶ It is thus not surprising that modern historians are unable to agree on the role of women in the movement, as Friends themselves continued to debate and alter what they believed to be orthodox doctrine concerning the role of women.

This gendered approach has not only shaped histories of Quaker prophecy, it has also been used to discuss the creation of Quaker meetings in the 1670s, Quaker publications and censorship, and traveling ministries, among many other topics. Because Quaker history of the past decades has been studied through a gendered lens with a focus on women, this thesis takes a different approach to the topic of prophecy. Indeed, the development and eventual change of the doctrine and practice of Quaker prophecy generally in the 1660s and onwards have been understudied. Mack and others note the slow decline of ecstatic prophecy throughout the 1600s, and its rarity by the end of the century, but a general study of how and, more important, why public ecstatic prophecy ceased to exist within the Society of Friends, has yet to be written.⁴⁷

This thesis engages with discussions of radicalism in the decades of the Civil War and the Interregnum and the Protestant attempts to quell this radicalism, also referred to as enthusiasm, in the Restoration period.⁴⁸ Recent works on English radicalism in the

⁴⁵ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 408.

⁴⁶ ⁴⁶ “John Pennyman,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed May 15th, 2017. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/21886>.

⁴⁷ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 194.

⁴⁸ Jordan Penney, “‘The quiet of mankind’: Authority, Spirit, and Enthusiasm in England, 1660-1714,” (PhD diss., University of York, 2010).

seventeenth century present an interesting, yet controversial idea concerning the language used to describe the Civil War sects. The use of the term ‘radicalism’ has been questioned because of its modern etymology; the sects themselves, who usually sought out greater purposes such as reform or purification, some historians argue, did not have radical intent and would not have described themselves with this term.⁴⁹ This thesis contends that a wide spectrum of radicalism existed in the seventeenth century.⁵⁰ Quakers were radical in the sense that they did not conform to the norms of seventeenth-century society and sought to transform this society using divine intervention through human action. This eagerness to change society lasted for the first few decades of the Quakers’ existence. They sought change by engaging their communities and inciting religious reforms in dramatic ways that shocked society. Quakers were aware of the disturbances they were causing and persisted in their actions regardless of the incessant fear and antagonism they provoked in English society. This thesis contends that radical behaviour requires an individual and group willingness to provoke change and transform society. Quakers were sharing their religious message from the inward light not to cause fear, but rather to bring salvation and transform the world into God’s kingdom. Quakers knew that by drawing attention to themselves by going naked, for example, and disturbing church services, they were developing a negative reputation for their movement. They persisted in these types of behaviour because of their utter confidence that they held God’s ultimate Truth and would eventually convince the world to join Quakerism. Quakers were aware that they

⁴⁹ Glenn Burgess, “Radicalism and the English Revolution,” in *English Radicalism 1550-1850*, edited by Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 63.

⁵⁰ This argument was strongly inspired by Richard L. Greaves, “‘That Kind of People’: Late Stuart Radicals and their Manifesto, a Functional Approach,” in *English Radicalism 1550-1850*, edited by Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 91, 95.

were causing trouble but persisted with their behaviour.⁵¹ This thesis contends that such religious behaviour as exemplified in Quakerism in the 1640s and 1650s, is sufficient to be described as radical contrary to what Glenn Burgess argues. For Burgess, in order to be deemed radical, a sect needed a coherent and recognizable political philosophy that focused on human rather than divine agency, which Quakers evidently lacked in their early years.⁵² However, once the quest for respectability succeeded and Quakers no longer actively sought to convert the world to Quakerism and did not behave in such provocative manners, the term radical stops being relevant. Non-Quakers would long remember the movement as radical, but Quakers themselves behaved in a way that could no longer be considered a threat to the underpinnings of social and political order.

H. Larry Ingle's book, *First Among Friends*, thoroughly discusses Fox's quest to gain authority within the ranks of the Society of Friends. In the early years of Quakerism, although Fox was the founder of the movement, the lack of hierarchical organization allowed many members to gain notoriety and influence.⁵³ Fox, as founder, had no more influence or authority than any other member.⁵⁴ Some Quakers, such as James Nayler, gained a following because of their charisma and good public speaking skills.⁵⁵ Fox struggled in the 1660s to attract attention away from these unofficial leaders, towards his small group of sanctioned Friends who supported his quest for respectability. Ingle's extensive research was crucial to framing the question and research for this thesis.

⁵¹ George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox volume 2*, edited by Norman Penney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 58.

⁵² Burgess, "Radicalism and the English Revolution," 79.

⁵³ Ingle, *First Among Friends*, 130.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 4, 59.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

However, unlike to the argument of this thesis, Ingle does not recognize the importance of prophecy in Fox's quest for respectability. The attention of most scholars is limited to the period of ecstatic prophecy in the 1640s and 1650s; they have yet to recognize the importance of prophecy in Fox's larger plan to gain authority as well as control the behaviour of his fellow Quakers after the 1660s, as this thesis demonstrates. Nevertheless, secondary literature concerning Fox provides context and a foundation for the arguments within this thesis.

Other critically important sources include books and articles on Quakerism and other leading Quaker figures of the seventeenth century. Leo Damrosch's book on the life of James Nayler, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus*, is a fundamental component of Chapter Two's analysis of the Nayler affair. Nayler was a Quaker leader who disagreed with Fox's quest for respectability and continued to perform ecstatic prophecies in the 1650s.⁵⁶ Damrosch's piece provides insight on Fox's relation with Nayler prior to Nayler's arrest in Bristol, during his imprisonment, and following his release; it highlights the changes in opinion and behaviour that Fox experienced during this affair. Damrosch's narrative on the response to Nayler's entry into Bristol within the movement contextualizes Fox's reaction and allows for a careful analysis of the event in the second chapter of this thesis.

Because Quakers were part of the larger trend of religious dissent and radicalism of the Civil War period, broad surveys of seventeenth-century England and religion in the country were fundamental to the argument of this project. The specific framework of this thesis could only be established once Fox and Quakers could be placed within their

⁵⁶ Ingle, *First Among Friends*, 131.

broader contemporary setting. Christopher Hill's book, *The World Turned Upside Down*, presents Quakers and the unusual reaction they engendered in English society.⁵⁷ Quakers were not the only radical group, but no other Civil War sect was able to cause as much anger and chaos as Quakers in that time period.⁵⁸ John Coffey's book *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689* emphasises the repercussions of religious intolerance on the Civil War sects, including Quakers.⁵⁹ This book provides greater context on the persecution of Friends during the seventeenth century, using a large quantity of sources on religious radicalism in England and tracing the roots of Quakers and other religious dissenters of the Civil War period.

More recently, Rosemary Moore's book, *The Light in Their Consciences*, traces the evolution of Quaker leadership from the first years of the sect to the end of Fox's lifetime, demonstrating that Fox successfully organized Quakerism into meetings with a universal doctrine and agenda.⁶⁰ She identifies the changes in Fox's rhetoric while discussing his attempts to gain toleration and notes a growing mildness in his tone towards English society.⁶¹ Furthermore, Fox denounced more adamantly radical Quakers who refused to conform to the new rules of the sect.⁶² Moore's book was central to laying out the basis of Fox's quest for respectability as well as identifying a change in his tone in his letters and pamphlets. However, her approach minimizes the importance of prophecy

⁵⁷ Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (London: Temple Smith Publishers, 1972).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁵⁹ John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

⁶⁰ Rosemary Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences: The Early Quakers in Britain 1646-1666* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 195.

in both the early years of the sect and in the later decades when Fox was working to establish his authority. Adrian Davies' book, *The Quakers in English Society*, identifies two condensed periods of change in Quaker behaviour: the 1670s and the 1690s.⁶³ This thesis establishes a more fluid and continuous timeline for the change in leadership and behaviour; rather than short periods of change, Quaker prophecy evolved continually from the 1660s to the 1690s, but agrees with Davies's argument that the temper of Quakers changed over time.⁶⁴ Ultimately, changing Quaker experience towards persecution created the conditions for an organized and coherent movement by the early 1690s.

Jordan Penney in his dissertation, *'The quiet of mankind': Authority, Spirit, and Enthusiasm in England, 1660-1714*, describes enthusiasm as God's divine inspiration into individual spirits.⁶⁵ The belief that God could inhabit one's spirit and guide one's actions heavily inspired the Puritan belief system and their behaviour.⁶⁶ The Restoration had indicated to leading members of England's national Church that enthusiasm and radicalism led to instability; this, they believed, had ultimately cost Charles I his life.⁶⁷ There was thus an attempt in the 1660s to eradicate Puritanical enthusiasm. Penney discussed the similarities between this Church of England movement and the Quaker quest for respectability; however, he focused mainly on William Penn. The research conducted for this thesis concludes that the origins of the respectability initiative within

⁶³ Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English Society, 1655-1725* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁵ Jordan Penney, "'The quiet of mankind': Authority, Spirit, and Enthusiasm in England, 1660-1714," (PhD diss., University of York, 2010), 5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

the Society of Friends had roots years before Penn became a leading figure in the sect. Fox initiated the pursuit of respectability in the mid-1650s which predated the Church of England's gradual elimination of enthusiasm. One cannot grasp the importance and complete significance of the Quaker quest for respectability without the sect's founder. Thus, this thesis offers exhaustive and thorough research on Fox's reconciliation of prophecy, spontaneous behaviour, and respectability.

Sources and Methodology

The first version of *The Journal of George Fox* was published in 1694, three years after Fox's death. Fox's *Journal* was this project's entry point into the mind of the Quaker founder. This journal contains some flaws in the reprise of events, especially from the early period, as Fox dictated most of its content from memory beginning in 1675; he did not write it regularly throughout his life. It was, furthermore, edited and censored after Fox's death in 1691 to remove content from previous decades deemed too radical or controversial for the contemporary norms of respectability.⁶⁸ Many editions of this journal have been published over the centuries, many attempting to assemble the content of Fox's original dictation. The research for this thesis compared many editions.

The first reading of the *Journal* was conducted from the 1906 edition edited by Rufus M. Jones, one of the leading American Quakers of the early twentieth century, and Professor of Philosophy at Haverford College in Pennsylvania.⁶⁹ Jones's edition is an abridged version of the original 1694 publication, adding Jones's own annotations and

⁶⁸ Naomi Pullin, "Providence, Punishment and Identity Formation," *The Seventeenth Century* 31 (2016), 477.

⁶⁹ "Rufus Matthew Jones" *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed June 5th, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rufus-Matthew-Jones>. George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, edited by Rufus M. Jones (Philadelphia: Friends United Press, 1906, reprinted in 2006).

including an essay by Henry J. Cadbury, a prominent Quaker historian at the time. Jones published his own edition of the *Journal* as a spiritual guide, and does not seek to provide a full historical narrative of Fox's life or a scholarly edition of the complete journal. The second edition used for this thesis was the *verbatim*, two-volume edition of the manuscript that Fox dictated in the 1670s, prepared by Norman Penney and published in 1911.⁷⁰ This version offers the original text of the so-called Spence Manuscript which was assembled in 1698 by Thomas Ellwood and presented to Quaker publishers.⁷¹ This manuscript includes Fox's dictation to his son-in-law and an addition of his writings during his trip to the North American colonies.⁷² Penney's edition reproduces Fox's exact phrasing and allows historians almost direct access to the primary source. Quotes in this thesis are from Penney's edition, unless indicated otherwise. Penney also published a one-volume, abridged, modernized version of the Spence Manuscript in 1924.⁷³ This version was read early on in the research process, and does not feature in this thesis. The third edition used was John Nickall's edition, published in 1952.⁷⁴ This edition offers modern spelling, modern terminology, and is deemed more readable for a non-specialist audience.⁷⁵ Nickall's additions, however, are more heavy-handed than the two others and feature more prominently in the text. He incorporated in the main text more of Fox's

⁷⁰ Hillary Hinds, *George Fox and the Early Quaker Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), xi. George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, 2 volumes, edited by Norman Penney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911).

⁷¹ The Spence Manuscript is the original version of Fox's *Journal*, as dictated to his son-in-law.

⁷² Henry J. Cadbury, "The Editio Princeps of Fox's Journal," *The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* 53 (1974), 198.

⁷³ George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, edited by Norman Penney (New York: Cosimo Classic, 2007. First published 1924)

⁷⁴ George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, edited by John L. Nickalls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁷⁵ Cadbury, "The Editio Princeps," 198.

writing to provide context and fluidity to the original manuscript. These heavy edits, however, can easily cause confusion between what content is and is not from the original *Journal*.⁷⁶ The fourth edition was Nigel Smith's edition published in 1998.⁷⁷ Despite its recent publication, this version is already out of print and not widely available in university libraries and book stores. Furthermore, as Hilary Hinds explains, Smith's edition is heavily edited and not the full version of the Spence Manuscript.⁷⁸ Therefore, only the introduction was consulted during the research for this thesis.

A comparison of the material from the Jones, Penney, and Nickalls versions allows for a more thorough understanding of Fox's *Journal*, and at the same time ensures that the content cited in this thesis is as accurate as possible. Quotes beginning in 1653 onward are all taken from Penney's full version in order to be as faithful to Fox's original meaning and intent as possible. However, Rufus Jones's version includes an early narrative of Fox's life from 1624-1649 which is not included in Penney's edition of the Spence Manuscript, as well as a later narrative from the late 1670s until his death. Quotes and citations from these very early and later periods are from Jones's edition of the *Journal*.

A separate document, *The Short Journal and Itinerary Journals of George Fox*, was also edited by Penney and published in 1924. This text was written during Fox's imprisonment in the Lancaster jail in 1663-1664.⁷⁹ Fox paid little attention to chronology during his dictation of the document, and this source is meant to be a record of the

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ George Fox, *The Journal*, edited by Nigel Smith (New York: Penguin Books, 1998).

⁷⁸ Hinds, *George Fox and Early Quaker Culture*, xi.

⁷⁹ T Edmund Harvey, "Introduction" in George Fox, *The Short Journal and Itinerary Journals of George Fox*, edited by Norman Penney (Cambridge, Cambridge University, 1924), IX.

persecution he suffered during his early years as a Quaker.⁸⁰ The format of the *Short Journal* is very similar to Fox's full *Journal*. Fox dictated his narrative to someone who wrote it down in a copybook.⁸¹ The writing style is less polished and includes more radical examples of prophecy and divine revelation.⁸² Evident from its name, the *Short Journal* is shorter than the full *Journal* but nonetheless a crucial resource for examples for this thesis. Although the years of the two documents overlap, the *Short Journal* provides a separate narrative and is used here as its own resource. This document had never been published in its entirety prior to Penney's 1924 edition.

Fox's *Journals* were indispensable not only for their evidence, but also to establish a timeline and provide context for Fox's other publications. In periods of strong internal sectarian dissent, Fox intensified his writing on specific topics, such as writing on ecstatic prophecy during the Nayler affair, and hat honour during his debates with John Pennyman.⁸³ Furthermore, the *Journal* allows the historian to witness and understand Quaker history through George Fox's eyes.

Most of Fox's contemporary publications, including speeches, pamphlets, and epistles have been digitized, and many of Fox's most poignant and specific mentions of prophecy appear in these publications. Thus, the primary research for this thesis was conducted using a wide variety of Fox's publications. These include pamphlets, personal correspondence, and public letters to Quaker meetings around the world. The research method for this thesis included an in-depth reading of all sources pertaining to prophecy,

⁸⁰ Ibid., X.

⁸¹ Ibid., IX.

⁸² Ibid., IX-XI

⁸³ Hat honour is the raising or removing of one's hat as a sign of respect, especially towards a person of higher social standing.

visions, the inward light, public behaviour, organization, and the history or defence of the Society of Friends. All of Fox's work digitally available on *Early English Books Online* was surveyed and a word-search was performed to find any relevant material. Sources that were identified as relevant or important from secondary readings were read thoroughly to identify any relevance to Quaker prophecy, respectability, and organization. Many of Fox's publications published later in the century were reeditions and were not reread. The publications of Fox and other Friends were searched from beginning to end to understand the greater purpose of the document and contextualize the content of Fox's pamphlets. Because Cromwell's, Charles II's, and James II's governments all targeted Quakers, it was important to obtain copies of the full original legislation concerning them. *British History Online* was used to obtain relevant legislation and proclamations relating to Quakers and religious dissent. Primary sources written by other Quakers were also used to contextualize internal debates, such as those James Nayler wrote, or to understand the importance of Fox's influence, including documents by the London Monthly Meeting.⁸⁴

Project

Remaining consistent with the recent Quaker historiography, this thesis does not engage with the debates concerning the origins of the sectarian movement. Unlike much recent writing, though, it does not address specifically the role of female prophets. Rather, this project is concerned with the development of, and changes to, Quaker prophecy, and more specifically, Fox's attempt to gain authority within the movement through prophetic experiences. This thesis has a narrow focus on George Fox as the founder of the sect, and

⁸⁴ The London Monthly Meeting is the largest Quaker meeting in England.

his personal writings and experiences with prophecy. Prophecy was an integral part of Quaker doctrine in the early years of the sect. The inward light spoke to members and urged them to speak and act publicly, in ecstatic ways. Quaker self-identity was built on the notion that God could speak through each of them and guide their actions wherever He needed to. Early Quakers prophesied in their own private meetings, and traveled across English villages prophesying to English subjects what their inward light urged them to, trying to save them from an impending calamity from which only the chosen people of God would be saved. Because prophecy was a widespread and relatively common practice in Quakerism, the spotlight on George Fox provides this project with a focus and room for an in-depth study of both the doctrine of prophecy as well as its changing role in Quakerism.

By identifying early on what Fox's opinions and instructions were on prophecy, this project is able to trace the role he intended it to play in the wider practice of Quakerism from its creation in the 1640s. In the aftermath of the Restoration, as Quakers became a more inward focused movement seeking respect from English society and the monarch, they moved away from active conversions, one of the prime goals of prophesying; from this shift, this thesis identifies patterns and answers questions on the role of prophecy. What types of rhetoric were used to explain and justify the changing role of prophecy? How did prophecy remain relevant in a time when conversions were no longer important and ecstatic behaviour contradicted the respectable image Fox was building for Quakers? As a leader of the movement, what influence did George Fox have on these discussions? Was his vision of the changing Quaker movement exactly what came to be, or by the last decades of the seventeenth century, had his influence

diminished? Could Quakers remain authentic to their origins without prophetic experiences?

In answering these questions, this thesis contributes to the broader historiography of Christian prophecy by demonstrating the distinctiveness of Quaker prophecy, unusual in its urging of prophetic experience amongst all believers not just the select few. First, this project will continue to clarify who George Fox was as a person and as a leader of the largest sectarian group in England at this time. There have been and continue to be several biographical works written about Fox and with each new one, we deepen our understanding of his personal beliefs and the personal internal debates that shaped these beliefs but also deepen our knowledge of the sect that Fox created.⁸⁵ This thesis will shed light on how Fox's personal beliefs translated into actual practices in Quakerism, and furthermore, how Quakers used prophecy more generally as a tool of self-identification in comparison to other Christian sects of the time. Second, it will help establish what Fox and other leaders identified as the changing role of Quakers in England. One contemporary observer claimed that Quakers would have needed only a few more years of religious toleration to turn the whole of England Quaker.⁸⁶ There have been many studies completed on how Quakers shifted to an inward focused theology and practice, but by focusing on the specific experience of prophecy, which was one of Quakerism's most controversial and public aspects, this thesis sheds brighter light on the changing Quaker self-identity.

⁸⁵ H. Larry Ingle, *First Among Friends: George Fox and the Creation of Quakerism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Hillary Hinds, *George Fox and the Early Quaker Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011). David Loewenstein, "The War of the Lamb: George Fox and the Apocalyptic Discourse of Revolutionary Quakerism." *Prose Studies* 17, no.3 (1994): 25-41.

⁸⁶ Andrew Bradstock, *Radical Religion in Cromwell's England* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 95.

By making Quakers more respectable in English society, Fox changed many of the traditions that had been distinctive to Quakers, including ecstatic and public prophecy. These changes influenced the English society's opinion of Quakers, but also how Quakers identified with this society. Quakers took pride in remaining obedient to the guidance of the inward light. Yet, ecstatic prophecy was no longer a possibility in a sect that wished for a respectable public image. Fox, armed with inspiration from the inward light, worked to control where prophecy took place and how it was shared within the Society of Friends. Spontaneous inspiration from the inward light had always led Quaker behaviour and their meetings became a safe place to display their prophetic episodes. Guidance from the inward light never disappeared, and Fox himself recognized the importance of following its callings, even as its presence in public diminished.⁸⁷ His goal became, however, to control where and how Quakers performed their prophetic callings. Fox wanted to assure Friends' security and the persistence of his movement in times of strong persecution. Other Quakers who became prominent figures by the 1650s, including James Nayler and John Perrot, rivaled Fox's authority. He thus used personal experiences of prophecy to reiterate his divine nomination as leader of the movement to assure support for his changes concerning ecstatic prophecy among other things.

Chapter One will focus on the period from the foundation of Quakerism up to the 1650s. This chapter addresses the development of Quaker prophecy, prophecy more broadly in England, and the religious and political climates influencing Quakers in this period. How Quakers became the fastest growing sect of the decade will be addressed as well as how the practice of Quaker prophecy conflicted with more widely accepted

⁸⁷ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 173.

methods of prophesying from other more common and established Protestant groups in England at the time. These topics will be studied using an analysis of George Fox's accounts of his own personal experiences. Events will be presented chronologically, beginning with the foundation of Quakerism in the late 1640s to the end of 1656, when turmoil within the sect erupted and a shift in its theology can be clearly observed. It will be noted that Fox's attempts at respectability began well before the Restoration, and before James Nayler presented Fox with the first challenge to his authority.

Chapter Two will focus on the "Nayler affair," which divided Quakers into two factions. In October 1656, the radical Quaker James Nayler rode into Bristol on the back of a donkey with other Quakers singing hosannas and proclaiming Nayler as the reincarnation of a modern-day messiah, based on a prophecy he had received from the inward light. Fox, who had by now started his campaign to alter the public perception of Quakerism, was worried about the negative consequences of Nayler's public spectacle on his recent efforts.⁸⁸ Indeed, because of this event, the government and the English people continued to demonize Quakers, which escalated tensions between Fox and radical Quakers who disagreed with the changes he attempted to implement within the sect. This chapter will address the escalating tensions within the movement, as well as the different efforts put forth by Fox in his written work to reconcile prophecy, such as Nayler had performed, and what he was coming to define as acceptable behaviour. This chapter will focus on the period from October 1656, when Nayler rode into Bristol, to the end of the 1650s when Nayler was released from prison. It will highlight the significant changes Fox

⁸⁸ Ingle, *First Among Friends*, 131.

implemented as well as the decreasing number of ecstatic prophecies that marked the first decade of Quakerism.

Chapter Three will focus on the period from 1660 to the end of Fox's life in 1691, and the publication of his journal in 1694. Fox's constant efforts worked to establish and maintain his authority over the increasingly united group. He surrounded himself with men like Thomas Elwood and William Penn who were able to carry on his legacy once he no longer could sustain the extreme traveling, preaching, and writing that his calling required. Fox was also imprisoned for several years over the course of these decades, which limited his writing ability. There was, nevertheless, a clear shift in how Quakerism was practiced and propagated, and this chapter reconciles the manner in which prophecy and inspiration from the inward light fit in this new respectable image.

Prophecy began as an intricate part of Quaker self-affirmation and was a significant element of what successfully converted so many people to the sect. Friends were free to declare the Word of God as they received it from the inward light and were encouraged to travel far and wide to share the light's message. The original purpose of this thesis was to understand how Quakers could be authentic to prophecy and yet gain the respect of their fellow Englishmen. The answer is that they could not. The time for ecstatic prophecy passed with the Restoration and the increased persecution it produced. However, prophecy and inspiration from the inward light remained fundamental to the Quaker theology. Quakers continued to prophesy by sharing messages from the light amongst themselves in their weekly, monthly, and yearly meetings. This follows the pattern and extends the work of many historians who contend that Quakers experienced a shift from an outward focused sect to a centralized, inward looking religion, and

demonstrates that the roots of the modern Quaker style of worship were present in its first few decades of existence.

Chapter II: Origins and Interpretations of Prophecy: The First Years of George Fox's Prophethood, 1647-1656.

The first decade of the Society of Friends was a time of prolific writing and public testimony from its members, resulting in high numbers of conversions and convincements, especially across northern England.¹ In the early months of the Society of Friends, prophecy already guided Quaker meetings and George Fox's personal behaviour. Fox described himself as "commanded [by God] to turn people to that inward light, spirit, and grace, by which all might know their salvation, and their way to God."² This resulted in controversial and disturbing behaviour that created an unfavorable reputation for Quakers. Fox was on a mission to convince as many people as possible to join what was quickly becoming a distinct religious movement of the Civil War period. He followed the calling of the inward light that guided his daily life and set examples for new converts.

This chapter introduces Quaker prophecy from George Fox's revelation of the inward light in 1647 up to October 1656, when the Nayler affair in Bristol shook the Quaker identity to its core. This chapter will demonstrate how Quakers used prophecies as a tool for conversion as well as a means to verbally attack other sects and authorities, such as Oliver Cromwell's government and local magistrates and church leaders. It will also contrast Quaker prophecy to prophetic traditions of other sects from the seventeenth century, such as Baptists, Independents, and Fifth Monarchists, to demonstrate the unusual characteristics of the former and its repercussions on the rest of the English population. Standing out from the crowds of Protestant dissenters allowed Quakers to

¹ Fox did not use the term conversion. He believed that people became Quakers by being convinced of the presence of the inward light within them. This is why he used the term 'convinced' rather than 'converted'.

² George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, edited by Norman Penney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 21.

capture the attention of communities and convert masses from the late 1640s to the mid-1650s. This work highlights the importance of prophecy in the process of convincing new members to join, and positions prophecy as one of the more significant causes of the intense persecution of the Society of Friends in the 1650s. Prophecy was unquestionably one of many reasons why Quakers became the target of authorities and a focused study on prophecy as a fundamental practice of the Society of Friends is long overdue.

Acknowledging the importance of prophecy to Quakerism at this time will help broaden our understanding of the sect during the period.

Using examples from George Fox's *Journal* and pamphlets that document Fox's personal experience with prophesying, this chapter will deconstruct how Fox prophesied, as well as his approach to prophecy during his early days as a Quaker leader. At the same time, this chapter makes use of a variety of secondary sources to establish the distinctiveness of Quaker prophecy within the dynamic religious context of the mid-seventeenth century. Finally, it provides a short but detailed analyses of prophecy within the Puritanical and Protestant traditions of the seventeenth century. Protestants had deep connections with prophecy even though contemporaries and modern scholars do not always acknowledge this. The comparison between Quaker and Protestant prophecy confirms that the practices of the Society of Friends stood out from the rest and were controversial in their own right.

Quakers and Prophecy

George Fox grew up in a typical mid seventeenth-century Anglican family in Leicestershire, in central England. He was born in 1624, and came of age in a time of great political turmoil. He described himself in his journal as a youth who was never

satisfied with the religion his local church and priests presented to him.³ In his early twenties, he claimed to have felt a great darkness come over him.⁴ He left the family home and began to travel across the country to find a solution to his feeling of desperation.⁵ In his *Journal* Fox recounts his encounters with priests and learned pious men from the universities on topics of sin, salvation, and Christ's work on Earth and his realization that "to be bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to make a man fit to be a minister of Christ."⁶ The answers Fox was looking for would not come from these men; instead, he writes, one day as he travelled alone, he found himself in a field where a revelation came to him. He describes how Christ suddenly "enlightened me, gave me his light to believe in; He gave me hope, which He himself revealed in me, and He gave me His spirit and grace, which I found sufficient in the deeps and in weakness."⁷ Fox's sorrows were cured; he immediately felt he received the awakening from God to cure all the ills of the world.⁸ Fox founded a religious movement based on this revelation, which he called the inward light.⁹ Fox traveled consistently throughout his life, spreading the word of his religious movement. As he went, he shared through ecstatic prophecy and speeches his message of salvation for all, leaving his mark on English history.

George Fox brought people the news of the inward light through his writing, and more commonly by traveling across England, preaching in towns and in private houses

³ George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, edited by Rufus M. Jones (Philadelphia: Friends United Press, 1908, reprinted in 2006), 75-78.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

⁵ H. Larry Ingle, George Fox" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed May 16th, 2017. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/10031?docPos=2>

⁶ Fox, *The Journal*, ed. Jones, 75.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 80-85.

⁹ *Ibid.*

when he felt God's calling to do so. Once Fox was freed from the feeling of gloom he experienced in his younger years, he noted "The Lord's power broke forth, and I had great openings and prophecies; and spoke unto them [the English people] of the things of God, which they heard with attention and silence, and went away, and spread the fame thereof."¹⁰ The inward light was God's spirit living in humans, guiding their every thought and action. Early Quakers believed it their duty to follow its every calling. In the first years of Fox's ministry, his travels had no set pattern or itinerary; he appears to have been guided only by callings of the inward light.¹¹ In most places he went, the inward light moved him to prophesy publicly. Episodes of ecstatic prophecy moved Fox to interrupt markets or church services by crying insults and warnings to communities who refused to listen to his prophecies.¹² In Nottingham, in 1649, Fox wrote that he was ordered by God to go to a church "go cry against yonder great idol, and against the worshippers therein."¹³ Fox wrote that once in the building, "the Lord's power was so mighty upon me, and so strong in me, that I could not hold, but was made to cry out."¹⁴ Fox disturbed ceremonies without concern for repercussions to his public image or reputation. His only concern laid with following God's commands and sharing God's True faith.

¹⁰ Ibid., 89.

¹¹ Hilary Hinds, *George Fox and Early Quaker Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 103.

¹² This will be addressed further in this chapter but as a quick note: Quakers did not believe that physical church buildings could hold God, and so Fox refused to acknowledge them as powerful places. Quakers believed that the spirit of God was everywhere and in everyone at all times, thus, gathering in one building because the spirit of God resided in this particular place was absurd to them. Fox refers to churches as steeple houses throughout his *Journal*, challenging the power they were said to hold, and this became universal practice of Quakerism.

¹³ George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox volume 1*, edited by Norman Penney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 24.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Fox rarely entered a town or village without causing some sort of public scene, which disturbed and enraged many people. After entering the village of Mansfield, Fox “was moved to go to the steeple-house there and declare the Truth to the priest and people; but the people fell upon me in great rage, struck me down, and almost stifled and smothered me.”¹⁵ He preached publicly about the Society of Friends, which understandably scared and confused many people. Quakerism was a new sect with radical doctrine and practices. Members of radical Protestant sects, such as Baptists, Fifth Monarchists, and Separatists, had already made their way around the country, but Quakerism was distinct from all other sects and new to most.¹⁶ Ecstatic prophecy was a distinctive practice of Quakerism in this period, and the movements growing numbers allowed the English people to single Quakers out rapidly. It would have been difficult for contemporaries not to notice Fox’s episode of ecstatic prophecy in Westmorland in 1652 when Fox

spoke to the People at the Markett time [I had silver in my pocket and I was moved throw it out amongst the People as I was going up the street before I spoke, and my life was offerd upp amongst them and the mighty power of the lord was seen in preserving] and the power of the lord was so mighty and so strong, that people flew before [and runne into the shoppes for fear and terror took hold upon them, I was moved to open my mouth and lift upp my voyce aloud in this mighty power of the lord, and to tell them the mighty day of the lord was coming].¹⁷

In the precarious first years of the sect, Fox’s relentless travels and prophesying allowed Quakerism to survive and become infamous.¹⁸ A mix of Fox’s determination and his

¹⁵ Fox, *The Journal*, ed. Jones, 113-114.

¹⁶ Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (London: Temple Smith Publishers, 1972), 233.

¹⁷ George Fox, *The Short Journal and Itinerary Journals of George Fox*, edited by Norman Penney (Cambridge, Cambridge University, 1924), 21.

¹⁸ Hinds, *Early Quaker Culture*, 93-94.

presumption that he held the Truth to salvation motivated him to continue his frequent travels.

According to Fox, his prophetic episodes came to him without warning. In his *Journal*, Fox describes the process of being “moved to pray; and the Lord’s power was so great that the house seemed to be shaken.”¹⁹ Early Quakers were known to shake and quake from prophetic experiences, and Fox claimed in this moment that all those gathered could feel the power of God responding to Quaker prayers. One evening in 1650, on his way to his chambers for the night, he heard the bells of a steeple-house “and itt struck at my life at the very hearing of itt.”²⁰ Fox was then moved by the Lord to go down to the church to speak to the congregation as the Lord commanded him. He wrote: “I was mooved of the Lord to goe up to them; & when they had done, I spake to them what the Lord commanded mee.”²¹ He prophesied in an ecstatic manner that “All their Preaching, Baptisme, & sacrifices would never sanctifie them.”²² He described his actions by saying that “the power of God was thundred Among them & they flew like Chaff.”²³ He urged them to look at the Christ within and not at man without, because true sanctification came directly from Christ and not from a priest.²⁴ Just as Quakers did not believe that Christ’s spirit resided in one specific building more than another, they did not believe that a single group of men was more capable of speaking to God and professing His Word more than another.

¹⁹ Fox, *The Journal*, ed. Jones, 90.

²⁰ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 2.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

Many times in his *Journal* Fox mentions having to spend the night in a field or on the side of the road because no one would allow him to stay in their inns. In 1652, Fox echoes the biblical account of Christ's birth when he writes about how one night upon his arrival in Patrington, he "went to an Inn: & desired them to lett mee have lodgeinge: & they woulde not: & desired them to let mee have a litle meate & milke, & I woulde pay them for it but they woulde not."²⁵ Fox went to two more inns that night; neither gave him food or lodging. He later found a ditch with water from which he quenched his thirst before sleeping in the bushes until the next morning.²⁶ As time passed, Fox formed a network of supporters, forging a community in which he felt welcome, and one that gave him safe, comfortable places to stay during his travels, but it took him several years to do so. Even in the very early days of the Society of Friends, Fox gathered a popular reputation as a disturber in northern England and English people were prudent around him.

Quakers did not have a selected group of priests or ministers who were charged with delivering the Word of God to their communities. Protestants had built the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, in which the word of God and the ability to preach was no longer reserved to a small group of Latin-speaking men under the authority of the Bishop of Rome. Rather, all males had the opportunity to become ministers in the Protestant churches, as long as they were learned in Christian scripture. Yet, Quakers believed that the Protestant ideal of this universal priesthood was not, in fact, a priesthood of all believers. Women were completely excluded from the position, and so were men

²⁵ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 30.

²⁶ Ibid.

who could not receive a church sanctioned education. Moreover, the interpretation of scripture and the ability to speak the Word of God remained in the hands of a few, university-educated men.

As referred to in title of this thesis, “The Prophethood of All Believers,” Quakers not only believed in a truly universal priesthood, where men and women and even children from all ranks, educated or not, could preach to their communities, they also believed in a prophethood of all believers, where everyone could be in direct contact with the spirit of God and could be used as His tool to speak His true and candid Word through the power of the inward light. Thus, Fox spent a lot of his time prophesying in churches against the communities’ beliefs that they could receive sanctification through interactions with human ministers, rather than looking inwards to their light within. In his pamphlet, *The Trumpet of the Lord Sounded*, Fox prophesied of ministers:

And so with his books, and Learning which he got at Oxford and Cambridge, he trades with others, and natural Languages, and tell people it is the Original and saith he is sent of Christ; which is the Whore and the Beast upon the waters, that is the people; and so all this is Witchcraft, Whoredome, Sorcery, Divining, and Conjuring, Hypocrysie and Dissembling, and was never sent of Christ.²⁷

In the first decade of the Quaker movement, Fox’s prophecies were blunt and direct; he spoke passionately and only (he insisted) with the inspiration of his inward light. In this quote, Fox was not simply refuting the role of Protestant clergymen in communities but the inherent belief that these men were God’s representatives on earth.²⁸ He opposed the popular conviction that only clergymen spoke the true word of God and held the ultimate interpretation of God’s scriptures. As explained above, Quakers denied that any one

²⁷ George Fox, *The Trumpet of the Lord Sounded, and His Sword Drawn, and the Separation Made Between the Precious and Vile* (London, Giles Calvert, 1654), 14.

²⁸ Ibid.

person was more important in the salvation of mankind or more capable of propagating God's word than another. Thus, Fox and other Quaker prophets spoke and wrote extensively to bring this realization to the English people.

Not only did Fox spend much of time prophesying in public, he also wrote many pamphlets discussing his rejection of common societal norms. In *To All the Ignorant People the Word of the Lord, Who Are Under the Blind Guides of the Priests*, Fox compared contemporary churches to the second Jewish temple, which the gospels condemned repeatedly.²⁹ Jesus opposed the buying and selling of goods and services that took place in this supposed place of worship, and Fox observed that many English ministers and priests were selling goods in their churches and holding market days on church grounds, slowly turning their ostensibly holy grounds into places of the sort Jesus had denounced. Furthermore, Fox argued that there was no biblical evidence that churches were necessary to worship God or that one piece of ground was holier than any other.³⁰ To a priest, he argued "dost thou call the steeple-house the church? The church is the people, whom God hath purchased with His blood, and not the house."³¹ God's spirit lived everywhere and in everyone, thus churches, or steeple-houses, were unnecessary to properly worship Him.

According to his *Journal*, Fox prophesied everywhere: from taverns to markets, churches to private homes, and even in jails and fields, to name a few. Fox wrote that he "travelled on in the Lord's service, as the Lord led me."³² Fox spoke wherever and

²⁹ George Fox, *To All the Ignorant People, the Word of the Lord, Who Are Under the Blind Guides of the Priests* (London, 1655), 1.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 55.

³² Ibid., 17.

whenever he felt that God ordered him to do so. Once communities of Quakers started forming, they gathered in the private homes of members to hold weekly or monthly meetings. In places where meetings attracted more people than could fit in a private home, meeting houses were later built, some as early as the mid-seventeenth century, to accommodate the growing popularity of Quaker meetings.³³ It was only an issue of space, however, that led to construction of these houses. Fox did not believe that these new meeting houses had a more direct connection to God or to salvation, nor did any other Quaker leader. Contrary to what Fox denounced from Protestant and Catholic churches, Quaker meeting houses were built for convenience and were not used to hold markets or raise funds of any kind.

Fox's doctrines challenged both mainstream Protestant and Catholic traditions. Although Fox did not have much opportunity to engage directly with English Catholics, he wrote several prophecies concerning them in his pamphlets. Catholics had been persecuted on and off since Henry VIII's reign and the beginning of the Reformation in 1532. Catholics represented a distinctive corruptness in the mind of the English government and people, including Fox. Catholics owed allegiance to the Pope who was commonly known to Protestants as the Antichrist. George Fox believed that the Pope was the ultimate perversion of God's Word on earth. In his pamphlet, *The Trumpet of Lord Sounded*, he warned "Wo unto Rome, and her popish ways. Wo unto all the priests in England who made the popish law. ... The hand of the Lord is stretched out against all the adulterers and idolaters and the sword of the Lord lies upon the pope's neck."³⁴ The

³³ Ifield Society of Friends meeting house was built in West Sussex in 1676 and there is evidence of Quaker meetings, including some led by George Fox, taking place in the same area since 1655. <http://www.surreyandsussexquakers.org/quaker-meeting-house-in-ifield.php>

³⁴ Fox, *The Trumpet of Lord Sounded*, 16.

pope and his priests were actively enticing Catholics into sinful thoughts and actions by performing masses and claiming moral superiority over their parishioners. Although Catholics, like Quakers, believed in the role of human agency for salvation, their approach to this doctrine was significantly different.

Catholic human agency was measured in ‘good works’ and typically required the consistent intervention of priests, who were to monitor and guide Catholic lives. Human agency in Quakerism involved only the simple action of accepting the inward light within one’s self. Once the inward light served as a guide, it was believed that humans no longer exercised agency but selflessly followed their divine calling. Fox addressed the doctrine of good works in his pamphlet *A Declaration against all Poperie and Popish points*. He positioned Quakers “against the papist and them which say salvation is to be merited by works: for then it not of faith, in him who was not borne by the will of man, which light condemnes mans comings and willings, and that which he calls merits.”³⁵ Fox argued that Jesus never taught salvation through the accumulation of good works; Christ never said that God would judge human salvation based on the amount of tithes one gave to the Church or how much time one dedicated to working for the Church to help build, maintain or restore its material manifestation. Human agency, according to Quakers, included nothing more than recognizing that all were prophets of God through the presence of Jesus’s light within. The ultimate doctrine of Quakers was to follow the guidance of the inward light and no one else. It was important for Quakers to remember

³⁵ George Fox, *A Declaration Against all Poperie and Popish Points is Renounced From Them and by Them Whom the Scorners in Scorn Call Quakers* (London, 1655), A1.

that “if you doe love the light which comes from Christ and receive Christ ye shall receive the light of life.”³⁶

Prophecy in this first decade of Quakerism served as a means to propagate Quaker beliefs, especially in comparison with more common Christian practices in England, and to urge those who did not uphold Quaker beliefs to see the inward light and convert. Fox argued that

our Religion lyes in that which bringes to visitt the poore & fatherlesse {& widdows} & keepes from the spotts of the worlde which religion is pure & undefiled before God & this is the religion which wee owne which the Apostles was in above 1600 yeeres since & doe deny all vaine religions got uppe since which are not onely spotted with the worlde but pleads for a body of sin & death.³⁷

The salvation of all peoples relied on Fox spreading his message of Truth quickly and efficiently. Traveling, prophesying, and encouraging other Friends to do the same and to convince other members of society that they were living in sin and in vain, Fox increased his chances of reaching every corner of the Earth and saving all of its peoples.

Fox had a deep knowledge of the Old and the New Testaments. Because Fox does not write about any formal biblical training in his *Journal*, it may be inferred that he gained this immense biblical understanding through close, repetitive reading of scripture. He made use of his knowledge of scripture in his prophetic pamphlets, which all follow a similar pattern. This pattern grew to be more consistent as years passed. He became more comfortable with scripture and was able to use it more regularly in his writing. As demonstrated in his writings, Fox grew increasingly aware of what was expected of

³⁶ Ibid., A2.

³⁷ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 286.

published religious texts, as well as what modes of persuasion appeared to be the most effective as the number of converts rose.

Fox's pamphlets pattern typically began by identifying the issue(s) addressed in the pamphlet on the cover page. Following a set model, Fox's title pages were usually used to state his main argument as it contrasted to his opponent's argument, together with biblical quotes that supported his claims. This was usually supplemented by a note to the reader (see Figure 1). Depending on the length of the pamphlet, the first three to five pages expanded the information he presented on his title page in great detail. Fox described the doctrine he was opposing—one usually from Protestant or Catholic theology—and why the inward light led him to believe his opponents were wrong. Then, using Quaker doctrine, he challenged the opponents' theology. Fox usually listed the correct ways in which Quakers worshipped or practised their faith, and why the inward light was correct in guiding them to behave this way, making use of his knowledge of the Bible to give weight to his claims. Normally, over half of a pamphlet's

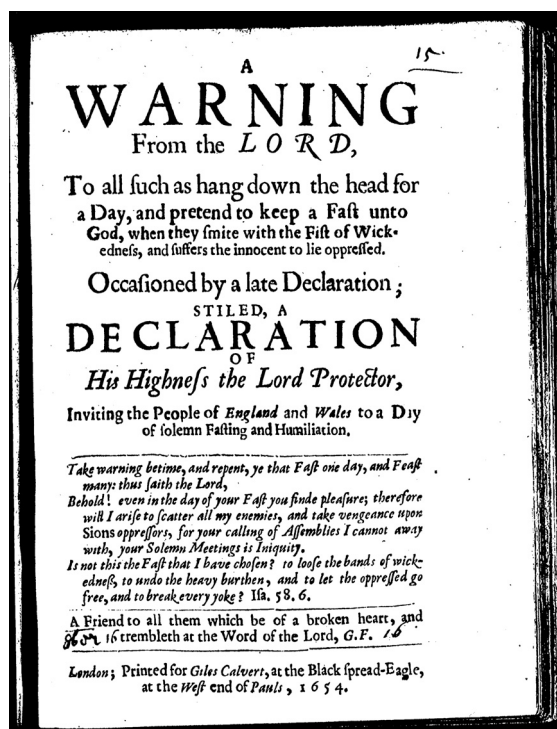


Figure 1: Cover page of one of Fox's pamphlets published in 1654 following the pattern noted above. Source is available from eebo.chadwyck.com

content was dedicated to biblical support of the Quaker doctrine. Since most of Fox's pamphlets were attacks on sinful doctrines, little was more convincing for Quakers themselves, and potential converts, than being able to point to supporting evidence from the Bible.

Quakers were commonly accused of denying the Christian scriptures.³⁸ According to Quaker beliefs, however, "the scriptures do we not deny: the holy men of God spake them forth as they were moved by the holy Ghost: and they were given forth by inspiration of the Spirit; and they are of no private interpretation."³⁹ Fox believed that the men who wrote the scriptures had been inspired by the inward light just as Quakers were. Fox argued that the touchstone of the Christian faith was not the scriptures, but the "Holy Ghost that gave them forth."⁴⁰ For early Quakers, the authority of the inward light (Holy Ghost) superseded the scriptures. Thus, scriptures played an undeniable role in Quaker doctrine, although it was never the only source of inspiration and guidance. The Society of Friends believed the word of God was continually revealed to them through the inward light and their prophetic episodes. The same light that inspired the apostles inspired Quakers: "in thou is revealed & soe thou shalt witness the scriptures fulfilled."⁴¹ Quakers were fulfilling the scripture by being open to the messages of the inward light, and continuing the revelation of God's Word in contemporary times. It is notable that Fox consistently used quotes and references to the Bible and continued to be accused of

³⁸ Fox, *The Trumpet of the Lord*, 10.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Fox, *The Short Journal*, ed. Penney, 1-2.

⁴¹ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 95.

denying scripture. But it is also noteworthy that Fox and Quakers did not attribute the definite and ultimate importance that Cromwell, Puritans and most other Protestant denominations did to the Christian scriptures. To Quakers, the divine word of God might also be found in the new revelations, which most other Christian denominations categorically denied. For the latter, the revelation of God's Word had ended with the death of the apostles; to them Quakers were imagining or fabricating false revelations. This created further misunderstandings between Quakers and other Christian denominations.

Fox's prophecies convinced many people of the validity of Quaker doctrine, but most others were angered or frightened by his speeches and sought to stop him. His episodes of being "moved of the Lord" led Fox to be "taken up in raptures."⁴² In one instance, Fox was moved to interrupt a minister's sermon to prophesy the word of God as his inward light had guided him. The congregation did not take his interference lightly. Fox claimed that "when they had mee out [of the steeple-house] they exceedingly beate mee & threw mee doune & threw mee over a hedge : & after dragged mee through a house Into the street stoneinge & beatinge mee."⁴³ Fox had experienced much worse beatings than this and was indifferent to the show of force.⁴⁴ Religion was seen as a matter of life or death in the early modern period; the salvation of the soul rested on the beliefs to which one adhered. Conforming to what they believed to be the 'right' theology was a constant struggle for people of this time period. Perhaps as an accidental symbolism of 'true' religion, Fox was assaulted with a Bible after interrupting a sermon

⁴² Ibid., 2.

⁴³ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

until his “face gusht out with bloode.”⁴⁵ In the eyes of church goers, Fox risked their salvation by interrupting sermons and subjecting them to his prophecies. Furthermore, one may assume that people despised being exposed and forced to listen to the prophecies of someone they did not deem a true prophet and being subjected to his insults. Fox became accustomed to beatings and riots erupting wherever he preached.

Fox also fell victim to government authorities, who arrested and imprisoned him during this period for a variety of offences. From 1647 to 1656 Fox spent a total of two years in prison as a consequence of several sentences. His time in jail did not hinder his pursuit to convert all of England to Quakerism. His *Journal* provided a detailed narrative of his imprisonment. He relied on people of the town to bring him food, personal letters, and company. Luckily for him, many people sympathized with him, including prison guards who let him enjoy walks off the prison grounds during his one-year sentence in Carlisle.⁴⁶ After receiving a providential message from the inward light, Fox claimed that the men who had put him in jail were to be plagued with illness for imprisoning him. Justice Bennet reported to Fox a few months later that the judge and jurymen who had condemned him had been indeed been struck by illness, but the accuracy of this claim can hardly be proven.⁴⁷ Fox eventually lost his privilege to wander out of prison grounds when he continued to disturb the public peace with prophetic episodes.⁴⁸ By the mid-1650s members of many sects shared prison cells in jails all over England; Fox had to share his cell with “bitter Scotch preists & presbyterians made uppe of envy {& malice

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 117.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 10-12.

whoe were not fit to speake of the thinges of God: they were soe fowle mouthed.”⁴⁹ Fox confronted a cellmate who threatened him after being “moved of the Lord to go in His power, and thresh him in it, and say unto him, ‘Come, let's see what thou canst do; do thy worst’; and I told him the Devil was raised high enough in him already; but the power of God chained him down so he slunk away and went from me.”⁵⁰ Since the inward light and prophecy did not leave George Fox during his stays in prison, he kept the ability to prophesize and used every opportunity he had to convert more people.

The gentry was a popular target of Fox’s prophecies in the early years, especially during his time in jail. Indeed, Fox warned against many of the evils that were personified by members of the gentry, including pride, profit, peevishness, perverseness, and idle talk amongst other evils.⁵¹ Fox argued that one group of people should not be oppressed by another, which is how he interpreted the contemporary situation in England. Fox was “moved to write unto you [the gentry], to take heed of oppressing the poor in your Courts, or laying burthens upon poor people.”⁵² People of the lower ranks were dependent upon and oppressed by the people of the upper ranks who benefited from their exploitation. God created all people as equals and this should be reflected on Earth. As a sign of their repentance, Fox urged members of the upper ranks to “unstrip thee of thy cloathes that thy nakednesse may appeare, and how thou sittest deceiving the nation: thy abomination and thy falsenesse is now made manifest to they who are of god who in his power

⁴⁹ Ibid., 125.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁵¹ Fox, *The Trumpet of Lord Sounded*, 1.

⁵² George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, edited by Norman Penney (New York: Cosimo, 2007. Reprinted from the 1924), 125.

triumphs over you.”⁵³ Ending the hierarchical structure of society, according to Fox, was the only way to rid the world of corruption and oppression. Fox even argued for an equal division of wealth within the country that would benefit subjects of lower ranks.⁵⁴ Within the sect, the inward light assured Fox that all Quakers could preach and prophesy and lead meetings as the Apostles had done; no one member was more qualified or capable of leading meetings or closer to the Word of God.⁵⁵ Quakers were egalitarian minded which made the gentry and hierarchical structure of English society a constant struggle for Fox and Quakerism. English society was not heading in the same direction as Fox’s ideological visions; thus, he believed “the Lord sent his prophets to distinguish and judge, to put a difference betwixt the holy and the profane, betwixt the precious and the vile.”⁵⁶ Quakers were the prophets of God through the divine connection of the inward light. Quakers were there to share the Truth and the continually expanding Gospel. Those who were not convinced would then to be judged by the righteous who individually represented God’s presence on Earth.

The content of Fox’s prophecies was noticeably similar throughout the decade and revolved around a certain set of points that he alternated between, both in his *Journal* and in his pamphlets. From a modern point of view there definitely appears to be a purpose to the structure and methodology behind Fox’s actions and prophecies. Barry Reay argued that Quakers did not establish any concrete theology until the late 1660s and 1670s, but it is clear that George Fox himself had a profound understanding of God’s nature and

⁵³ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 173.

⁵⁴ Fox, *The Trumpet of Lord Sounded*, 10-16.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁵⁶ Fox, *The Judgment, or the Spiritual-Man Judging All Things, But He Himself Judged of No Man* (London: Giles Calvert, 1654), 2.

relationship with man. The Christian definition of the Trinity defined what Fox understood as the essence of God as well as the fact that the nature of God's relationship with man was continuous and developing.⁵⁷ God and humans worked together, through the spirit of Christ, to establish his kingdom on Earth. Fox's challenge was to spread this doctrine throughout the sect. He used his prophecies to propagate his beliefs vis-à-vis what he considered other flawed Protestant beliefs.⁵⁸ Quakers, more broadly, did not have a fixed theology, but from the early days of the movement, Fox certainly did have a set of beliefs that he slowly turned into a concrete theology by the end of his life.

Fox was convinced that the prophetic communication he experienced was to be interpreted as divine directions from God, who was instructing him and His people on proper behaviour. Christopher Hill has argued that Fox and other Quaker leaders were not concerned with possible disparity in practice and doctrine within the sect because all members were inspired by the one inward light sent from God.⁵⁹ Prophecies were sent directly by God and it was impossible for God to contradict himself. All Quakers were receiving the same divine message from the same source; thus, there could be no contradiction. What did take place was the propagation of several doctrines that helped create and solidify a Quaker identity. There is no doubt that in later decades, Quakerism experienced a far more substantial indoctrination of a sense of right and wrong on an internal and external level, but the basic fundamentals of the Quaker identity were created during this period, and prophecy had a significant role to play in this. An English person's

⁵⁷ Harvey, "Introduction," Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, XXVIII.

⁵⁸ Barry Reay, "Quakerism and Society" in Barry Reay (ed), J. G. McGregor (ed) *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 145.

⁵⁹ Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 256.

first encounter with Quakerism was usually the public prophesying of a Friend, and this was also the way Quakers shared with each other God's will for the sect.

Scholars such as Hill and Barbour have argued that Quaker doctrine can only be defined through negatives. They claimed that Quakers could only lay claim to what they stood against, but never for.⁶⁰ Hill argues that “neither this doctrine [inward light], his [Fox's] claim to be the son of God, nor his belief that Christ died for all men were new.”⁶¹ Yet, Quakers were aware of other churches' doctrines and were aware that some had laid claims to very similar theology as they had. Fox's argument throughout his mission work was that no one was being faithful to the teachings of the Bible and that corruption had made its way into the practices and traditions of the churches, which had turned them into sinful institutions. Fox laid claim to the proper and righteous faith. Quakers could prophesy because of their connection to the divine and the inward light, and it was possible for all people who chose to join them. Fox urged the English people “to repent & come to the light that Christ had enlightened [them] withall that with it [they] might see all [their] evill words & actions: ... and soe returne to Christ Jesus.”⁶² Fox's faith was enlightened through the reception of prophetic messages and evolved as he and other members of the sect continually experienced revelations of the divine purpose of the Society of Friends. Fox propagated his beliefs throughout the country in written form which helped solidify both Quaker doctrine and Fox's role as a Quaker leader. Quakers were indeed continually developing and crystalizing their theology, both positive and negative, through their use of prophecy.

⁶⁰ Reay, “Quakerism and Society,” 145.

⁶¹ Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 233.

⁶² Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 31.

Non-Quaker prophecy

Scholars of a previous generation misconstrued the evolution of prophecy and divine mediation after the Reformation. They argued that a clear majority of Protestants rejected saints, charms, and relics as divine tools which consequently led to a complete eradication of supernatural and para-religious beliefs by the seventeenth century.

Christopher Hill, however, argues that although “in the long run protestantism worked against all magic, black or white, against charms, spells, incantations, and love potions,” popular belief in these practices and objects remained relevant for the greater part of the seventeenth century.⁶³ Much early modern, post-Reformation prophecy in England was intricately associated with broader notions of magic, such as charms, spells, and witchcraft. The government tried to control and dissociate religion from these para-religious practices. Even with the efforts to discredit and remove them from England, the tenacity of these magical beliefs amongst the populace allowed prophets to exist as rarities even in mid seventeenth-century England.

The credibility of Protestant prophets relied heavily on their social rank and the type of prophecies they claimed to receive. Monarchs from Elizabeth I to Charles II enlisted the knowledge of astrologers who claimed ability to foretell events by reading astrological maps.⁶⁴ Monarchs used the prophesying powers of astrologers as early as the medieval period, and continued to do so until the end of the seventeenth century.⁶⁵ The astrologers employed by monarchs and other English leaders attempted to foresee the outcome of battles and wars and predict disasters that could influence their hold to power.

⁶³ Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 89.

⁶⁴ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 343-344.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 344.

In the 1640s and 1650s there arose a direct connection between astrology and apocalyptic literature.⁶⁶ Writing on millenarian thought in Civil-War literature with a focus on the Fifth Monarchists, Bernard Capp argued that the shock of Charles I's execution and the disappearance of the English monarchy led many to believe that the stage had finally been set for God's kingdom on Earth and the return of Jesus Christ.⁶⁷ People used both ancient and biblical prophecies in their preparation for Jesus's second coming, with astrology as the most important source of non-biblical prophecies.⁶⁸ The pamphlets that were published in the 1640s commonly used the ancient prophecies of Merlin, the Sibyls and Mother Shipton as foundations for their modern prophecies.⁶⁹ These short pamphlets sold for two pence each, and their regular publication and popularity created a significant increase in the publication of prophetic pamphlets. They normally incorporated prophecies of both Protestant and Catholic traditions, as well as ancient pagan pieces.⁷⁰ Readers of these cheap pamphlets were not concerned with the origins of prophecies but had a known "taste for sensational material with a supernatural element."⁷¹ Cheap print of a prophetic and apocalyptic nature from a non-denominational origin was undoubtedly the way most English people came into contact with prophecy in the 1640s. The authors of these pamphlets were not important, nor did they need to prove their ability to prophesy. Rather, the mix and match of prophecies that were made

⁶⁶ Bernard Capp, "The Fifth Monarchists and Popular Millenarianism" in *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, 176.

⁶⁷ Millenarian thought suggested that Jesus was on the verge of returning to earth to establish his thousand-year rule as hinted upon in the Book of Revelations.

⁶⁸ Capp, "Popular Millenarianism," 176.

⁶⁹ Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 90. Capp "Popular Millenarianism," 178.

⁷⁰ Capp, "Popular Millenariansim," 178.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 178-179.

relevant with contemporary context was enough to attract readers and satisfy their urge for sensationalism.

English people of all ranks were also exposed to prophetic rhetoric through male and female prophets who claimed authentic divine inspiration. Dreams were the most common type of prophecy in the early modern period. Although in contemporary literature these episodes are referred to as 'visions,' Keith Thomas argues that they should be understood today as dreams.⁷² Modern studies, according to Thomas, have failed to highlight the existence and importance of the prophet's power to the early English Protestant religious experience.⁷³ Indeed, as mentioned above, prophecy, saints, and even relics remained relatively commonplace in the lives of early modern English subjects. Although these customs were mostly associated with Catholicism, Thomas is adamant that many Protestant martyrs were treated like legitimate saints and included in works such as John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* because of their ability to prophesy.⁷⁴ As these self-proclaimed prophets experienced prophetic dreams, they had the responsibility of proving the authenticity of their visions and of legitimizing them as God's Word. According to seventeenth-century belief, the devil was always lurking and waited to trick people away from God; this caused communities to be very sceptical of people claiming to be divine prophets.⁷⁵ Social rank and social behaviour was very important when considering the legitimacy of a possible prophet. Someone's public behaviour could indicate whether they were likely to be possessed by the devil rather than receive the

⁷² Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 153.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 154-156.

word of God. Some men had holier reputations than most of their contemporaries, and society was more likely to believe their prophecies and to consider them legitimate.⁷⁶

The prophecies of these men and women of respectable and honest behaviour and reputation belonged to a different category of prophet than the “ecstatic claims to immediate revelation made by obscure persons who thrust[ed] themselves in the limelight to enjoy a brief moment of glory.”⁷⁷ The latter did not receive the approval of their communities and were perceived as threats to communities rather than in direct communication with God. Society accused these false prophets of trying to make a quick profit. Alternatively, they were suspected of being mentally ill.⁷⁸ Many of them fasted for days and fell into trances in order to receive God’s prophecies. The need to engage in such radical behaviour indicated to many that their prophecies were false and possibly the work of the devil.

Prophets became increasingly common throughout the Civil War period.⁷⁹ In fact, it was reported that Oliver Cromwell’s, protectorate was interrupted over half a dozen times by the intrusion of such prophets seeking to warn him of his impending death or the doom of the country.⁸⁰ The Civil War and the Interregnum gave these aspiring prophets the liberty to travel and to speak publicly. Authorities in these periods lacked the influence and power to control the population and its dissenting behaviour. It is important to note, however, that these men and women were few in number, even during the 1640s and 1650s. Prophecy remained a marginalized practice even in a period of

⁷⁶ Ibid., 156.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 156-158.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 158-164.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 164.

relative religious toleration. Most Protestant denominations remembered prophecy as a practice of ancient biblical tradition. They believed that the time for divine revelation had passed, and the Bible was the only source of revelation necessary for human salvation. Those prophets who never achieved public recognition were usually arrested and imprisoned. Ultimately, it was fear that limited society's toleration for the erratic behaviour of these prophets; generally, people were dismissive of those who claimed to be God, Jesus, or the Virgin Mary, especially if these claimants were women; many times they thought them mad.

Until the eruption of radical sects in the 1640s, women were not given many opportunities to speak publicly on religious matters.⁸¹ The Church of England and even its Puritan congregations limited their ability to express themselves in religious settings and forbade women to speak during and after church services. Phyllis Mack has argued that women turned to Quakerism and prophecy to forgo these rules and express their own religiosity. A great number of Civil War and Interregnum prophetesses were Quakers, but there was a rise in female prophets across all denominations in this period.⁸² Many prophetesses exhibited their prophecies too extravagantly and were arrested and imprisoned for disturbing the public peace. Women were deemed true prophets when they “reinforced challenges to authority which had already been made by others, and dismissed as insane or accused of witchcraft when their statements went too far according to political preconceptions.”⁸³ When their narrative was socially acceptable, female prophets were more likely to be taken seriously; when their message challenged societal

⁸¹ Phyllis Mack, “Women as Prophets During the English Civil War,” *Feminist Studies* 8 (1982): 24.

⁸² Mack, “Women as Prophets,” 23-24.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 32.

mores, they were no longer seen as legitimate and punished for their acts.⁸⁴ Being a Protestant prophet in England in the first half of the seventeenth century was complicated. Many social and political norms dictated who was a true prophet and who was not. Prophecy walked a fine line between the divine and evil; society was quick to judge all those who it deemed inspired by the devil. Prophets were unpredictable and difficult to control for both secular and religious leaders. Thus, both government and religious authorities worked together to make this para-religious belief something of the past.

Comparison

The situation for Quaker and non-Quaker prophets was fundamentally distinct. Quaker doctrine favoured prophecy and led its people to believe that they all could be legitimate prophets. All they needed to prophesy the Word of God was to act upon the presence of the inward light. Once people acknowledged the presence of God's spirit within them, they could communicate with the divine and share God's message of hope and salvation. The second coming of Christ would only be complete once the inward light manifested itself in all individuals. Indeed, Fox himself "warned them [English people] of the day of the Lord that was comeinge upon all sin and wickedness & how that Christ was come to teach his people himselfe by his power & by his spiritt."⁸⁵ According to Quakers, Jesus's return, promised in the Bible, was through His spirit and not His body. The creation of God's Earthly kingdom would be complete once all humans accepted the inward light. Quakers never expected the return of Jesus in flesh as other sects did.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 283.

Sects like the Fifth Monarchists were convinced that the fall of the English monarchy signified Jesus's return to His Earthly dwelling. Their prophecies warned of Christ's second coming and prepared the world for the apocalypse.⁸⁶ Fox's prophecies were never focused on the negative repercussions of the end of the world. Rather, they were focused on preparing the world to receive Christ's spirit. Once they accepted the inward light, they were assured to live beyond all other religions and sects. His prophecies were to convince people to join the Quaker movement and be amongst the saved people. Fox's work was complete only when all humans recognized the presence of the inward light and allowed God's spirit to speak through them. The inward light brought salvation along with the ability for all to prophesy. Fox was convinced that those who denied the light denied Christ and those "that hates it [light] hates Christ."⁸⁷ Unlike other Protestant denominations, prophecy in early Quakerism was never limited to a select few, nor was its authenticity widely or routinely questioned among members of the group. As he spread Quaker doctrine, George Fox encouraged those inspired by the inward light to speak publicly and to let God's message work through them. Quakers were the first organized movement of the Civil War period to support and encourage prophecy in all of its members on such a broad scope.

Sects like Baptists, Fifth Monarchists, Separatists and others recognized the possibility of prophets, but never encouraged or expected their members to speak from a direct connection with God. In fact, it was people from the Civil War sects and of the mainstream denominations who arrested, imprisoned and punished both Quaker and non-

⁸⁶ Capp, "Popular Millenarianism," 165.

⁸⁷ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 95.

Quaker prophets. Even though Calvinists and Catholics laid claim to long histories of prophecy, they found their roots in the stories of the biblical prophets and argued that the time of prophetic revelation had passed with the time of the apostles. Thus, Quakers and others who continued the revelation of God's word were threatening the authenticity of their religion and needed to be punished accordingly.

In contrast to the Protestant tradition, George Fox positioned women and men on an equal standing and argued that they should be granted the same opportunities and liberties. He claimed that Jesus had died for all mankind and that there was no distinction between the souls of men and women when it came to salvation. In the very early years of the sect, Fox wrote that "there was a people that did owne the teachings of God: & that men & women shoulde come to declare the Gospell."⁸⁸ Thus, when women accepted the inward light, Fox argued that they could prophesy as freely and as fully as any male Friend. He argued that "For Christ is but one in all his Saints male and female, and they are all one, he makes them all one, head, body, and members, one seed of ten thousand, and this seed speaks in one, and is one in all."⁸⁹ This equality also encouraged women to travel in England and later across the world to share their message and gift of prophecy. The first two Quaker prophets to travel to New England were Mary Fisher and Ann Austin, two women who had traveled across the Atlantic to share the message of the inward light with the colony. Mary Dyer, another Quaker prophetess, was one of only three Quakers ever executed for her allegiance to the sect. She was executed by New England authorities after she returned to the colony following her banishment. She

⁸⁸ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 22.

⁸⁹ George Fox, *The Unmasking and Discovering of the Anti-Christ, With All the Prophets, By the True Light Which Comes from Christ Jesus, Written Forth to Convince the Seducers, and For the Undeceiving of the Seduced* (London, 1653), 3.

claimed that God spoke to her and guided her back to Boston because the people of the colony needed to hear her message. She disregarded the banishment order and returned, only to be arrested and executed only a few days later.⁹⁰

Fox actively sought female conviction, and many early Quaker leaders were female. Margaret Fell, who eventually became Fox's wife, was a wealthy woman from Lancashire who Fox convinced in his first years of prophesying. Her children and many members of her household were also convinced, and she quickly rose to a leadership role within the sect, and hosting Fox and other members when they were in town. Her house also became a meeting place for Quakers, and remained so until her death. It is possible that women jumped at the opportunity of more freedom, but also possible that more women were visible within the sect because Quakers offered them the opportunity to speak, travel and be heard. This display of female agency shocked many English people, especially when associated with divine communications. Quakers provided women with the opportunity to communicate directly with God and prophesy His message publicly.

Perhaps the most noticeable difference between Quaker and non-Quaker prophecy was its presentation. Quakers did not shy away from recreating biblical prophecies. According to Fox, "the Lord mad one [Quaker] to goe naked amongst you [English subjects] a figure of thy nakednese & your nakednese before your destruction cometh as amongst you that you might see that your naked from truth."⁹¹ Men and women were frequently 'moved' to go naked as a sign of the nakedness of non-Quaker souls. Others walked in villages and towns covered in sackcloth or ashes, recreating the behaviour of

⁹⁰ "Mary Dyer" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed June 28th, 2017. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/69098?docPos=2>

⁹¹ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 89.

biblical prophets.⁹² Quakers cried and quaked in public from the powerful presence of the inward light.⁹³ Moreover, Fox claimed that following one of his prophecies “& thee Lorde power did soe shatter them [his audience] & shake them that they wondered though they did not live in it.”⁹⁴ For Fox, shaking and trembling were manifestations of God’s full power and glory. This behaviour shocked members of English society who feared Quaker spontaneity and unpredictability. Protestant prophecy until then had been limited to scattered individuals who claimed a connection to the divine. Quakers were, on the contrary, a growing group of thousands of individuals, all claiming contact with God and all on a mission to convert others through prophecy. The scattered Protestant prophets in England had been very few and had not attempted to convert the country to a new sect. The active convincements that Quakers sought made them more confrontational. Other prophets of the seventeenth century did not have thousands of fellow sectarians and prophets urging them on in their endeavour. By 1656, Quakers were recognizable within England, and their meetings served as motivation to pursue even more conversions. Non-Quaker prophets never had the same level and enthusiastic support for their prophecies. Thus, Quaker and non-Quaker prophecy had very little in common, and Quakers represented a very different type of threat to both religious and secular order than other prophets did.

⁹² Rosemary More, *The Light in their Conscience: The Early Quakers in Britain, 1646-1666* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2010), 126.

⁹³ John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 151.

⁹⁴ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 168.

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, Quakers developed a practice of prophecy distinct from what had been the norm in England at the time. Indeed, George Fox believed that anyone could be prophets of Jesus's word as long as one accepted the presence of the Holy Spirit and the inward light within. He believed that true prophecy was not limited to the few and holy, it was available to all. Fox himself used several methods of prophecy as a tool of conviction. He interrupted services in Protestant churches, he spoke in public markets, he organized meetings in private homes, he even spoke to fellow prisoners and guards when he was imprisoned. These methods of prophecy successfully gathered followers; estimates suggest up to 50 000 people by 1660.⁹⁵ Prophecy also attracted the attention of authorities who were wary of Quaker prophets.⁹⁶ Fox's converts followed their inward light and in some cases acted even more extravagantly than he did. In the early years, Fox felt no need to control their behaviour and was confident because accepting the inward light took all agency away from Friends. They became embodiments of God's spirit and allowed themselves to be guided by His orders and decisions.⁹⁷

Although Fox's prophecies had helped establish a set of doctrines and a proto-theology to which all Quakers subscribed, he still had little control over the behaviour of Quakers who followed the inward light. Without a central and organized leadership, Quaker leaders had a difficult time managing them. This led to the arrest and imprisonment of hundreds of Quakers by the mid-1650s, including Fox himself. As will

⁹⁵ John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689* (Harlow: Pearson Education Press, 2000), 151.

⁹⁶ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 173.

⁹⁷ Hinds, *George Fox and the Early Quaker Culture*, 4-6.

be demonstrated in the next chapter, the imprisonment and punishment of Quakers based on their prophetic behaviour became a real concern for Fox. Although prophecy remained a fundamental practice in the sect, Fox attempted to find ways to make the Quakers more respectable to society in the light of these arrests, which included establishing a semi-central leadership around himself and a few others. Again, Fox used prophecy to bring about these changes, especially when he dealt with extreme members, such as James Nayler.

Chapter III: Prophecy Respectability, and the Nayler Affair, 1655-1659

Quaker persecution intensified as membership increased. With a lack of centralized authority, the sect's informal leadership struggled to exercise control and stamp out behaviour it deemed harmful to its reputation and image. James Nayler, a member of the Quaker leadership, caused the most infamous controversy in Quaker history. He separated from Fox's quest for respectability to lead his own radical faction that left a mark on the English people's collective memory for decades with his re-enactment of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. For Nayler this event symbolized his total submission to the inward light's guidance to show that Christ was within him, and moreover, that he was within Christ. This event intensified the already forceful persecution experienced by Quakers across England. The popularity of Quakerism was matched by attempts from English authorities to stop its growth; the English people feared the rapid conversion rates to the Society of Friends. Vagrancy acts were reinstated aimed directly at the vagrant behaviour of Quakers who traveled thousands of miles to spread their doctrine.

The number of imprisoned Quakers multiplied rapidly and the Quaker leadership responded to this new threat in different ways. Fox and his followers decided that seeking the respect of English society, by changing their radical behaviour, was the most efficient way to maintain the safety of Friends. Others, such as James Nayler, disagreed with Fox and believed that remaining faithful to the behaviour that was at the root of Quaker belief was the only way to remain faithful to God. Nayler recognized that Quakers suffered, but he argued that Quakers should continue to do so in the name of the Truth. How Quakers were treated should not influence how they behaved. The disagreement between the two Quaker leaders and their respective factions was focused on ecstatic prophecy and

the tensions and discussions leading up to Nayler's entry into Bristol and its aftermath will be unpacked and explored.

This chapter demonstrates that Nayler's behaviour exacerbated tensions within and beyond the sect. Within the sect, James Nayler was an early leading figure of Quakerism together with Fox, Margaret Fell, and Edward Burrough. Because of debates within Quakerism, leading members, such as Nayler, created separate factions and radical groups within the sect. These debates centered on prophecy and the inward light which were inseparable from the quest for respectability. While Fox believed in resolving conflicts between Quakers and English society to protect converts from the devastating persecution he and other Friends had experienced, Nayler argued that the inward light, which had always guided them, should remain the focal point of their beliefs. In his mind, societal pressures and persecution should not steer Quakers away from where the inward light directed them. Fox was of the mind that Quakers could experience their faith fully in a manner that did not disturb English people. Nayler, on the other hand, as indicated by his actions leading up to October 1656 and during the affair, believed that societal pressures and persecution should not force Quakers to change anything about the way they behaved.

The scope of this chapter is limited to Nayler's preparations to enter Bristol in October 1656 to his death in 1660. During this period, a substantial yet implicit shift in Fox's rhetoric surrounding prophecy is apparent. There is, furthermore, a notable change in Fox's tone and style of writing during this period. Focused on George Fox, this chapter will use excerpts from his *Journal* as well as pamphlets to demonstrate the growing recognition of his leadership within Quakerism and his ability to influence both the beliefs and practices of Quakers.

Fox's changing rhetoric targeted ecstatic prophecy because it was one of Quakerism's most controversial practices, which made the behaviour of members less predictable and manageable for both the government and Quaker leaders. The inward light could guide Friends to ecstatic behaviour without warning, causing confusion and outrage in English society; Quakers could suddenly start prophesying in a crowded market, or re-enact a biblical prophecy in a town square, frightening everyone around them. Friends had to be educated on how to act upon receiving a message from the inward light. However, changing the Quakers' personal reactions to the inward light was not an easy task. Fox responded to the intensifying persecution by establishing himself as the leader of the movement and, working from this position, to try to change and improve English society's perception of Quakers. The Nayler affair had distinct consequences on Fox's opinion of prophecy and its role in the overall Quaker theology. Fox could no longer reconcile the freedom of every Friend to prophesy publicly with the control needed in the pursuit of a more respectable image within English society. Although this period does not mark the end of Quaker ecstatic prophecy, it highlights changes in Fox's personal opinion of the practice and denotes his first attempts to alter the behaviour of Friends and exclude those who did not agree and conform to his changes.

James Nayler

James Nayler was an early leader of Quakerism. He began to identify with the early Quaker movement in 1652; his influence increased as he traveled across the country preaching and publishing pro- Quaker pamphlets.¹ Nayler and Fox were partners in the early years of the sect; they traveled and preached with one another. According to

¹ "James Nayler" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biographies*. Accessed April 26th, 2017. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/19814?docPos=1>

Rosemary Moore, Fox was the general organizer, Fell was in charge of the finances, and Nayler was in charge of theology and public relations.² Fox was Quakerism's founder, but Moore argues that he relied on Nayler's charisma and approachability as the leading public figure of the sect.³ Although Quakerism was founded on the principle that there was no official leadership hierarchy, Coffey, Moore, and others argue that Nayler became the most visible leader of Quakerism, especially in London.⁴ According to Moore, "[d]uring 1655 and 1656 Nayler's public reputation rose compared with that of Fox; he was in London, much in the public eye and publishing a great deal."⁵ Many non-Quakers assumed Nayler was the informal Quaker leader because of his prolific writings, and his constant presence in public settings.

Nayler was a steadfast believer in the doctrine of the inward light and of the responsibility of Quakers to hear its divine message and follow its guidance. As a prolific writer, he published many tracts in response to anti-Quaker publications, but also for Quakers to read and use as a model for proper behaviour. In his pamphlet, *An Ansvver to Some Queries Put Out By One John Pendarves, in a Book, Called, Arrowes Against Babylon, &c. For the People Called, Quakers to Answer* he argued that "the testimonie of Jesus is the spirit of Prophecie, and it is the spirit of truth that guideth into all truth."⁶ Quaker doctrine put the inward light above all other resources, including scripture. To a Quaker, the Bible was only a human interpretation of God's work, whereas the inward

² Rosemary Moore, *The Light in their Consciences: The Early Quakers in Britain 1646-1666* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 35.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 36.

⁵ Ibid., 41.

⁶ James Nayler, *An Ansvver to Some Queries Put Out by One John Pendarves, in a Book, Called, Arrowes Against Babylon, &c. For the People Called, Quakers to Answer* (London, 1656), 6.

light provided a direct link to God's Word, straight from the source.⁷ There was no reason for anybody to question the light's power, nor try to influence someone who was guided by it.

Yet Nayler did not shy away from using the Bible to defend and encourage actions like stripping naked: "have not the Prophets of the Lord been caused to strip themselves naked, as signes to the wicked generations."⁸ Nakedness was not used by Quakers for its shock factor. The prophecy and symbolism of the naked body was meant to represent the emptiness of non-Quaker souls.⁹ Nayler also cited instances of prophets in the scripture stripping naked as they preached; questioning critics' connection to the faith, he argued that if those who criticized these prophets were true Christians, then they would not question Quakers for acting as the prophets had.¹⁰ Moreover, true Christians would welcome their conversion rather than question and shame Quaker belief; by Nayler's logic, those who shamed Quakerism were not Christians.¹¹ Nayler also defended the Quakers for their more controversial actions: quaking, shaking, and crying, he argued, were acts of divine inspiration, things over which individual Quakers had no control.¹² He compared these actions to what biblical saints experienced when God inspired them.¹³ For

⁷ James Nayler, *An Answer to Twenty Eight Queries, Sent out By Francis Harris to Those People He Calls Quakers: Wherein his Spirit is Tryed, to be Contrary to That Spirit that Was in all the Children of Light, by his Own Words and Infallible Proof: his Slanders Being Removed, his Queries are Groundless: and so the Truth Cleared, in the Sight of the Least of the Lords People. / Written in Defence of the Truth: and for the Freeing the Israelite out of the Hand of the AEgyptian* (London: Gilles Calver, 1655), 9.

⁸ Nayler, *An Answer to Some Queries Put out by One John Pendarves*, 9.

⁹ Naomi Pullin, "Providence, Punishment and Identity Formation," *The Seventeenth Century* 31 (2016), 472.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Nayler, *An Answer to Twenty Eight Queries*, 1.

¹² *Ibid.*, 14-15.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 15.

Nayler, what Quakers did under the influence of the inward light was completely justified and natural for real Christians.

Prophecy became an integral part of the Quaker theology and practice as Nayler and Fox expanded their ministry across the country; Nayler maintained that their persecution should not force Quakers to change their fundamental practices. Critics of Quakerism often questioned claims from the sect that could move forward united with each member following personal guidance from the inward light. For example, Puritans accused Quakers of “worship[ping] the mental idols of their own imaginations” on a regular basis.¹⁴ Nayler, however, was quick to point out that “one Christ is in all his Saintes,” and that this one universal spirit erased any fragment of imagination and replaced it with divine guidance.¹⁵ He argued that the same light entered all the Quakers, erasing their personal biases and giving them each the same guidance. When Quakers prophesied, they did so from this godly inspiration; it was thus impossible for Nayler, or anyone else in his opinion, to question the prophecies of fellow Friends.

At the end of 1655, a radical group of female Quakers, headed by Martha Simmonds, emerged in London.¹⁶ Fox denounced the group, stating that it did not represent what Fox considered to be the true Quaker message.¹⁷ Members of Simmonds’s group disagreed with the practices of other Quakers and interrupted Quaker meetings by chanting and screaming ‘innocency’.¹⁸ Supporting Nayler in his efforts to remain loyal to

¹⁴ Leo Damrosch, *Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit* (Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1996), 70.

¹⁵ Ibid. Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 67.

¹⁶ Damrosch, *Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus* 128-129.

¹⁷ Maryann Feola-Castelucci, “‘Warring With Ye Worlde’: Fox’s Relationship with Nayler.” *Quaker History* 81, no.2 (1992), 69-70.

¹⁸ “James Nayler,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

original Quaker practices of ecstatic prophecy, these women denounced Fox's quest for respectability. Simmonds was a prolific Quaker writer of the mid-1650s and produced several pamphlets about spirituality and apocalyptic hopes, popular among certain groups within the Society of Friends.¹⁹ Nayler's friends tried to distance him from this radical group and forced him to travel from London to Bristol, but Simmonds followed Nayler.²⁰ Simmonds even visited Fox at Launceston jail and asked him to bow down to the Christ inside her. Simmonds had hoped to convince Fox to recognize the legitimacy her group, but this episode only strengthened the opinion of Fox and others that this group was radical and dangerous.

George Fox

Fox's *Journal* provides an interesting insight into his relationship with Nayler. Nayler is present in his recounting of the early Quaker movement as a colleague, but Fox's hindsight bias is clear; it is not likely that Fox was wary of Nayler as the events he describes took place. As mentioned in the previous chapters, Fox dictated his *Journal* in the later 1670s which gave his writing a retrospective quality that allows Fox to superimpose his recent opinions and experiences on past events when such opinions had not been formed. Fox recounts the time when he left Nayler in charge of the London faction in 1654 and comments that "I cast my eyes upon him [Nayler] & a feare strucke in mee concerninge him."²¹ It is impossible to know if Fox actually felt fear in leaving Nayler in charge at this moment, but this is not a sentiment that is reflected anywhere else in Fox's writing during the period. Fox's ability to add sentiments that were not there at

¹⁹ Damrosch, *Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus*, 126-130.

²⁰ "James Nayler," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

²¹ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 200.

the time of the events makes his *Journal* a more difficult source to navigate than other pamphlets that were not dictated or edited several decades after the events. Nevertheless, it indicates that even twenty years after the Nayler affair, Fox was still bitter and resentful about the events.

George Fox was imprisoned in Launceston jail in Cornwall in 1655 for refusing to take the Oath of Abjuration.²² He did not let this period of incarceration limit his writing, nor did he let it disturb his effort to establish a leadership role within the movement. He wrote daily letters to magistrates, members of Parliament (MPs), and other Quakers. Nearly four hundred Quakers were imprisoned in 1655 for interrupting church services and riots of more than 1500 people erupted in Bristol when authorities went to arrest suspected Quakers.²³ Cromwell's government issued "A Proclamation Prohibiting the Disturbing of Ministers" which was aimed directly at the Quaker practice of interrupting church services with prophesies.²⁴ The persecution of Quakers grew as Cromwell's government and English people more generally grew aware of their presence and became afraid of their practices. There is evidence from his writings in this period that Fox was looking for ways to achieve peaceful negotiations with Cromwell and his ministers for the release of many Quakers, including himself, from jails across the country.²⁵

²² Feola-Castelucci, "Warring With Ye Worlde," 66-67. The Oath of Abjuration was used on suspected Catholics in the period. Catholics refused to swear oaths that denied transubstantiation and the pope's authority. Puritans hoped to identify Catholics with this oath, but Quakers also refused to swear oaths, and fell victim to the application of the oath.

²³ John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 200), 153.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 153.

²⁵ George Fox, *The West Answering to the North in the Fierce and Cruell Persecution of the Manifestation of the Son of God* (London: Gilles Calvert, 1657), 5, 8, 22.

In the pamphlet, *The West Answering to the North*, an imprisoned Fox reassures authorities that Quakers do not intend to harm the English people but work only on God's command.²⁶ Fox writes that "this persecution which now many in this nation suffer under, a people harmlesse and innocent walking in obedience towards god & man."²⁷ Claiming that Quakers dwelled in the light, guided by God's harmless intentions, allowed Fox to reassure English authorities that they were a gentle group, as he perceived most of them.²⁸ Fox's use of reassurance marks a shift in his opinion of both the practice of prophecy and of English society. As demonstrated in chapter one, Fox believed ardently in Quaker prophecy and not only encouraged Friends to follow the message from the inward light, but also warned opponents of Quakerism who dared question or oppose the faith. *The West Answering to the North* was one of the only book-length works that Fox ever published. Fox, Edward Pyott, and William Sale wrote most of its content during their stay at Launceston jail in 1655-56.²⁹ It included many of their letters to government and jail officials as well as letters to other Quakers. They constantly petitioned authorities for their release and in personal letters, they guided Friends to remain loyal to the quest for respectability. As we study the importance of prophecy to Quaker theology, this pamphlet becomes crucial for its references to prophecy, and the notable shift we can detect in Fox's tone and vocabulary when he addresses non-Quakers. His tone, once accusatory

²⁶ According to Feola-Castelucci, "Warringe with ye World," 68-69, this pamphlet was printed in 1657, but was written and compiled by Fox and others during their stay in Launceston jail in 1655-1656 and sent to print between March and July 1656. The content of this pamphlet was written before the Nayler affair, demonstrating clearly that Fox's quest for respectability had begun prior to Nayler's October 1656 entrance into Bristol.

²⁷ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 337.

²⁸ Fox, *The West Answering to the North*, A1

²⁹ Feola-Castelucci, "Warringe with ye World," 67-68.

and impatient, became controlled and respectful, demonstrating Fox's changing view of non-Quakers.

The Cornwall magistrate offered Fox a release from jail if he agreed to return home and not be arrested for vagrancy again. In a letter to his jailor dated 1656, Fox explains that it was impossible for him or any other Quaker to agree to such terms.³⁰ He explains that "[we] who are moved of the Lord to go to any other place which stands in his will, who are moved by the power of the Lord, which comprehends all things, which is not to be limited, we shall do his will, which we are commanded to do."³¹ Fox's tone in this letter is less aggressive and confrontational than in letters and pamphlets he had written in the past. There appears to be a genuine search for comprehension on the part of the jailor and the magistrates. Fox explains the purpose of Quaker travels in an approachable and non-menacing way. Through the letter written in 1656, we see that Fox sought understanding from the jailor as well as freedom.

Quakers were increasingly imprisoned for vagrancy in this period. In his pamphlet, Fox clearly attempts to limit the vagrancy charge by comparing Quakers' travelling ministry to the work of the Apostles.³² After Jesus's resurrection, they travelled across the world spreading His message; Fox argues that Quakers were simply doing the same. In another segment of the pamphlet, Fox attacks Major Peter Ceely, a justice of the peace in Cornwall, who he called a blasphemous and profane person.³³ Fox targeted Ceely because, according to him, the Cornwall official took pleasure in persecuting Quakers.

³⁰ Fox, *The West Answering to the North*, 123-124.

³¹ Ibid. 124.

³² Ibid., 125.

³³ Ibid., 129.

Fox accuses Ceely of attacking Quaker doctrine and of propagating the false notion that salvation can be obtained by scriptures alone.³⁴ He also accuses Ceely of harming Quakers, writing about his hope that those who read his words would realize the evil nature of the man.³⁵ These sections demonstrating Fox's ability to defend Quaker doctrine and explain its purpose to non-Quakers in *The West Answering to the North* show that despite shifts in his attitude, Fox remained convinced of Quaker theology, particularly the ability of the inward light to guide Friends to act and speak. Fox made it clear that limiting the persecution of Friends was his priority. Since Oliver Cromwell had recently started to suppress Quakers and other Christian dissenters, Quaker safety was paramount: securing converts became second to Fox's pursuit of respectability and credibility for Quakerism as a faith, something that he would seek with greater intensity in later years.

As we can see in these letters and pamphlets, the main goal of Fox's shift in tone was to try to get English society and government to understand that Friends' prophecies came from God; this was the primary reason why Quakers could not adhere to the social norms of England at the time. Fox and other Quakers had hoped that the people of England would tolerate them if they were to understand the principle that God guided their actions. The logic behind this, expressed in Fox's pamphlet, is that as Christian people themselves, the English should not be afraid of Quaker actions as the same Christian God guided them all.³⁶ By the time Fox was released in 1656, we can see from his *Journal* that he had taken on a more enthusiastic quest for understanding and respectability for his Quaker family. This is not to say that Fox had given up on the idea

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 100.

of converting all of England to Quakerism.³⁷ What we see at this point, is Fox settling for Quaker acceptance more than conversion; the safety of Friends was paramount.

Before the Affair

Fox had been trying to establish himself as the leader of the sect to organize and protect its members. Despite many publications and negotiations with public figures, Fox found it impossible to secure leadership due to the scattered and spontaneous nature of the Society of Friends. Nayler, Simmonds, and many others disagreed with the quest for respectability which was also one of Quaker organization and sect coordination. Quakers who followed the original trends of the early movement, and accepted only the inward light as authority, felt they were the only ones who did not betray Quaker beliefs and doctrine. Rather, Fox was the one betraying the authenticity of the sect by trying to control the manifestations of the inward light.

It was precisely because Fox had begun his quest for respectability that he took Nayler's behaviour in Bristol in 1656 so personally and why it took him over four years to reconcile with his former friend. No full Quaker account of the Nayler affair exists. Their histories only briefly gloss over the episode as one of misguidance and provide little to no detail of the events.³⁸ Quakers wanted to erase James Nayler and the entire episode from their history, but both held too much importance in English history more generally to realistically be erased from public memory.³⁹ Quaker leaders had successfully erased the stories of several controversial members from their historical narratives, but Nayler's

³⁷ George Fox, *The Great Mystery of the Great Whore Unfolded* (London: n.p., 1659), 98.

³⁸ Damrosch, *Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus*, 148.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 245.

legacy as an influential leader did not allow for the same treatment.⁴⁰ Historians have relied on the accounts of non-Quaker observers, especially those of Bristol minister John Deacon, to piece together the events of that day.⁴¹ Because the details of the actual events are not fundamental to this paper's argument, they will only be discussed briefly. What is important from this event are Nayler's motives for his behaviour, and the repercussions on the Quaker community in the aftermath of the affair.

James Nayler was imprisoned in 1656, in Exeter, on his way to visit George Fox who was in the Launceston jail. Nayler was imprisoned "under the terms of an act for the suppression of rogues and vagabonds."⁴² According to Leo Damrosch, Nayler appreciated his time in jail as there was no better way to demonstrate his rejection of the world than being physically excluded from it.⁴³ Fox was released from jail shortly after Nayler's imprisonment; upon hearing that his colleague was in Exeter, Fox visited him where the bubbling conflict between them grew to larger proportions. In his *Journal*, Fox recounted entering Exeter jail, where he spoke to Nayler and realized that "he was out ... and I saw hee & his company was wronge butt I did admonish them."⁴⁴ It is unclear what Fox meant by 'out'; he could have meant that Nayler was no longer listening to the inward light, and thus 'out' of its scope and inspiration, that Nayler was out of the Quaker movement and did not represent their beliefs while he associated with Martha Simmonds and the other radical Quakers, or possibly both. Other accounts of Fox's visit to Exeter jail show that Nayler refused to remove his hat while Fox preached and led prayer, which

⁴⁰ Ibid., 244-245.

⁴¹ Ibid., 148.

⁴² "James Nayler" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁴³ Damrosch, *Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus*, 134-135.

⁴⁴ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 244.

insulted not only Fox himself, but in line with his beliefs, insulted God directly.⁴⁵ During his second visit to Exeter jail, Fox claimed that Nayler tried to reconcile with him and apologized for his prior transgressions. Yet, Fox wrote that “after I had beene warring with the worlde now there was a wicked spiritt risen uppe amongst freindes to warr against.”⁴⁶ Nayler’s faction was probably the first large public resistance to Fox’s quest for respectability, and Nayler’s refusal to follow instructions evidently caused Fox much trouble and worry. For Fox, the inward light guided his quest for respectability; why someone resisted this guidance and change probably confused him a great deal. Fox’s early attempts to organize the sect were unprecedented. Conflicts arose due to the lack of hierarchy and organization manifest in the early Quaker movement. Nayler and others had never been told to act in a certain way, and many did not appreciate Fox’s new initiative, regardless of the benefits such changes could bring. Fox would be faced with many other episodes of internal sectarian conflicts, but Nayler’s would remain the most disturbing for both Quakers and non-Quakers. The bond between the two longtime friends was forever broken. Nayler and Fox now represented very different factions of Quakerism.

The Nayler Affair

Bristol was not chosen at random for Nayler’s recreation of Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem. The Quaker community by 1660 made up five percent of Bristol’s population, one of the heaviest concentration of Quakers in all of England, and already in 1656 the Quaker population was sizable.⁴⁷ Tensions between the Quakers and the rest of the

⁴⁵ Damrosch, *Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus*, 141.

⁴⁶ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 244.

⁴⁷ Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 151.

population escalated in 1656 and led to mob attacks on Quakers all around this large seaport city.⁴⁸ On the rainy 24th October 1656, Nayler, Simmonds, and their followers entered the city of Bristol. Nayler was on horseback and his supporters laid down cloaks in front of him reciting hosannas.⁴⁹ Nayler claimed he was moved of the Lord to recreate this scene and share with the population of Bristol the news of Christ's return (see Figure 2).⁵⁰



Figure 2: *Nayler's entry into Bristol*, in *Alte un neue Schwarm-Geister-Bruth, und Quäker-Greuel, part 6 of Anabaptisticum et enthusiasticum Pantheon (Köthen and Frankfurt a.M., 1702)*

The small group was promptly arrested after their entry and caused much unease and uproar in both Quaker and broader English society.⁵¹ Authorities believed that Nayler and his followers understood him to be a reincarnation of Jesus. That this radical faction declared Nayler to be the second coming of the messiah shocked people of England to

⁴⁸ Damrosch, *Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus*, 147-148.

⁴⁹ Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 153-154.

⁵⁰ Moore, *The Light in their Consciences*, 39.

⁵¹ Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 154.

their core. Many saw Nayler's claim to be Christ, the Son of God, as intolerable blasphemy.⁵²

Local authorities could not agree on how to prosecute and punish Nayler for his crime and referred his case to Parliament. From December 5th to 17th 1656, members of Parliament debated Nayler's fate.⁵³ Many members of Parliament had hoped for a chance to prosecute a Quaker, especially with tensions as high as they were, and with Nayler's prominent role in the London wing of the sect, he had become well-known to authorities. They decided to make the most of this chance to prosecute one of the leaders of Quakerism.⁵⁴ Although the Presbyterian Members of Parliament had called for the death penalty in Nayler's case, Parliament as a whole decided that Nayler was to be "whipped through the streets of Westminster, placed in the pillory, have his tongue 'bored through with a hot iron', be branded on the forehead with the letter 'B', and then taken to Bristol where he could be whipped once more before being thrown in prison."⁵⁵ Nayler was sentenced to prison in early 1657 and was released in 1659. For the first months of his imprisonment, authorities did not allow visitors to see Nayler. However, after complaints from Nayler's supporters, this condition was relaxed.⁵⁶

The Aftermath

The Nayler affair drew unprecedented attention to the Society of Friends, and Fox found himself pushing to put more emphasis on educating England about Quakerism to promote the sect's respectability. Following the Nayler affair, Fox's two priorities were to

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Moore, *The Light in their Consciences*, 40.

⁵⁵ Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 154

⁵⁶ Moore, *The Light in their Consciences*, 42.

promote a positive and peaceful image for Quakerism and convince Quakers to act in a respectable manner that would convince the English people to stop Quaker persecution.



Figure 3: James Nayler, branded as Blasphemer from Ephraim Pagitt's *Heresiography*, 1661.

One of the papers included in Fox's *Journal* is entitled "A Paper of G: ffs to O: P Concerninge Doffinge hats."⁵⁷ This paper explains thoroughly, with support from the Christian scriptures, the reasons behind the Quaker decision not to respect hat honour. This letter explains in greater detail and with more examples than anywhere else prior in the *Journal*, why Quakers kept their hats on at all times, except in prayer. Fox explained that Quakers followed God's law by keeping their hats, which allowed them to remain in the light and love of Christ.⁵⁸ Fox condemned but also invited those who had not joined the sect to do so and experience the benefits of being part of God's chosen people.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Fox also explains that all who "love the light" agree to a "bond of peace"

⁵⁷ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 217.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

and are made humble by its inward presence.⁶⁰ Thus, this short letter to Oliver Cromwell both attempts to explain Quaker traditions in a comprehensible manner and demonstrate that Quakers did not represent a threat to English society.

Although Fox grew wary of English actions against Quakers, he showed continued support for traveling Quakers and their insistence on prophesying the message of the inward light. Fox continued his verbal attacks on false prophets and the Quaker persecutors who he describes as the Antichrist, and invited non-Quakers to join Quakerism rather than threaten it. In his *Journal* Fox wrote: “I was moved to open this through the nation howe that they which saide wee were thee false prophets antichrists & deceivers which shoulde come in thee the last time that it was them selves. For as Christ saide to his disciples in ye 7th & 24th of Math: false prophets & antichrists shoulde come In the last times: & if it was possible they shoulde deceive the very elect.”⁶¹ Fox always believed that Quakers were the chosen people who would spread God’s Truth across the world.⁶² Even if he propagated a more respectful image, he did not cease to believe in the Quaker cause. Fox had to find a middle ground between defending Quakers and gaining the respect of English people and rarely supported public prophesying after this time. He never stopped defending the lives of his fellow Quakers, and as violence increased around the members of his sect, his tone grew more frustrated and pleading with authorities to protect them. Yet, Fox did not recount public episodes of prophesying as liberally and openly as he had done prior to the Nayler affair.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 219.

⁶¹ Ibid., 246.

⁶² Ibid.

Fox also sought to control the prophesying of other Friends with his authority of the time. The *Journal* retells a story of his meeting with a woman soon before king Charles II (r. 1660-1685) returned to the English throne.⁶³ The woman claimed several years before the death of Oliver Cromwell that the inward light had announced to her the return of an English monarch and the failed rule of Richard Cromwell. The woman, who remains nameless in Fox's account, was determined to make her prophecy public, but Fox attempted to dissuade her: "Soe I tolde her shee shoulde waite upon the Lord & keepe it {to} her selfe for if it shoulde bee knowne that shee went they woulde looke upon it to bee treason."⁶⁴ Fox wrote that the woman rejected his advice and prophesied publicly about Charles' return to England. Her denial of Fox's recommendation speaks both to the importance Quakers put on honouring the Word of God by prophesying it aloud, and to the difficulty that Fox faced trying to protect Friends from authorities and from themselves. In the late 1650s Fox was far from having total control over the behaviour of Friends and a few lines after describing his interaction with the woman, he writes in his *Journal* that a Friend "was moved to goe to the parlament that was envious against friendes: & to take a pitcher in her hande & breake it to pieces & to tell that soe shoulde they bee broaken to pieces which came to passe presently after."⁶⁵ Perhaps by combining these two episodes of prophesying, Fox hoped to mirror his disagreement to both. Yet, he was also aware that he did not have the authority or the organizational structure to prevent all Friends from performing ecstatic prophecies, even to members of Parliament. Because these episodes still took place, however, it does not mean that Fox encouraged, or even

⁶³ Ibid., 342.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

sanctioned them. Ecstatic prophecy had been part of the Quaker tradition from the first days of its creation, and Fox had a lot more work to do if he planned to erase the practice from the habits and tradition of Quakerism.

The Society of Friends had always been against any sort of official hierarchy, yet some contemporaries believed that although Friends were united as brothers and sisters in the light, the measure of members was not equal; some Friends were considered to be “‘elders’ or ministers to the flock,” with Fox as leader of this group.⁶⁶ The Nayler Affair offered Fox the opportunity he had been fighting for: to establish himself as the sect’s leader. The outcome of Nayler’s trial could now quell the power struggle that existed between different factions of Quakerism. Fox now had the leverage to prove the importance of his quest for respectability. Nayler and Fox had gone head-to-head in trying to impose what they believed the true path for Quakers on Friends themselves. Nayler did not see the need for societal respectability, and he regarded punishment and imprisonment worthy prices to pay for being a holder of Truth. Nayler, Simmonds, and their followers did not want the structural organization that came with English respect. If following the inward light and being aware of the ultimate divine Truth led them to persecution, this was a sacrifice worth making. Fox, by contrast, wanted to avoid persecution but also find a way to continue to follow God’s callings. With Nayler in prison, and many of his radical followers either imprisoned or in hiding, Fox had the opportunity he needed. The recognition of Fox’s authority did not come overnight, but

⁶⁶ Moore, *The Light in their Consciences*, 44.

through many efforts, Fox was able to establish himself ‘first among Friends’ in the later decades of his life.⁶⁷

To build the organizational structure he needed, Fox appointed leaders in key English communities, such as London, and held several meetings across the country to solidify his position with members of the Society of Friends.⁶⁸ His actions and writings undoubtedly rose in popularity based on his new commitment to strengthening his position as leader of the Quakers. Scholars have noted that the number of Fox’s publications at this time increased in quantity, but also in quality.⁶⁹ Many of the pamphlets that Fox published in the early years of Quakerism’s development were written with haste and urgency and lacked the polishing of an editor. But now, as one of the leaders of the movement, Fox, or a possible editor, appeared to put more work into polishing the writing before it was sent to print.⁷⁰ This certainly demonstrates Fox’s attempt to improve Quakerism’s public image, and to solidify his position as leader of the movement in eyes of both Quakers and non-Quakers.

The *Journal of George Fox* marks a subtle but implicit change in Fox’s behaviour from the 1640s to the years immediately after the Nayler affair. The several chapters of the *Journal* that cover the period between 1656 and 1660 show that Fox was not actively prophesying in the manner he had done and encouraged others to do so in his early years as a prophet. Fox unmistakably demonstrates that he was still ‘moved by the Lord’ to prophesy the word of God, but principally, in organized Quaker meetings rather than in

⁶⁷ Ibid., 44-46.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 45.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 45-46.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

uncontrolled public settings. He “was moved by the Lord” to travel across England, Wales, and Cornwall during this period and establish Quaker communities. Of meetings in Wales in late 1656 Fox wrote: “And in this yeere ye Lords truth was finally planted over this nation: & many thousands were turned to ye Lord.”⁷¹ The Quaker meetings were open to all and Fox reported that many non-Quakers were curious and attended them. Fox continued to convert people to Quakerism through prophecy, but rarely did Fox cry out in the streets anymore; increasingly, Fox was moving his teaching into set meeting places. Thus, Fox found ways to maintain a practice that was an inherent component of the Society of Friends in a less controversial manner.

Despite the shift in Fox’s practices, following the inward light remained a crucial component of his imagined Quaker lifestyle. This connection was essential in the doctrine of early Quakers and it remained so for later Society members. Fox, however, seemed to believe that the nature of this connection no longer required Quakers to engage in behaviour that threatened their safety. Although Fox no longer engaged in public ecstatic prophecy on a regular basis, his *Journal* did recount moments where Quakers went to town markets and churches to prophesy. While traveling with John ap-John the latter was twice moved of the Lord to go speak to the people of Pembrokeshire. The first time, John was able to return to his home unharmed, but the second time “the town was all in an uproar and they cast him into prison.”⁷² Fox could not prevent Quakers from following the guidance of the inward light but he could provide examples of the harm they could bring to themselves and their communities by performing ecstatic prophecies. John ap-

⁷¹ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 342.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 287.

John's experience of punishment was the same as thousands of other Quakers in the same period. The difference with this excerpt is Fox's decision to detail why this man was imprisoned. Owing to the large number of Quakers imprisoned at this time, Fox tends to generalize episodes of persecution and imprisonment. Following the institution of the Oath of Abjuration Fox wrote "and now many are cast in prison & are made aprey upon, because they cannot take ye oath of abjuraçon."⁷³ In 1656, Fox wrote that many Quakers were fined 40 marks for refusing to take off their hats in front of a judge.⁷⁴ Although the punishment in John ap-John's case was not special, the circumstances surrounding his arrest were. This is probably why Fox took the time to describe the circumstances in detail. By the late 1650s it was more than possible for Quakers to avoid ecstatic prophecy, but still impossible for them to swear an oath or remove their hats. Fox did not take the time to describe the arrests of unavoidable circumstances because they were common and he put his full support behind the behaviour that led to them. Because of the lack of official hierarchy and the freedom that came from personal inspirations of the inward light, Quakers could not be punished for not following Fox's call to stop ecstatic prophecy. Fox could, however, provide constant reminders that such behaviour was avoidable and led to harsh and painful punishments.

In the mid 1650s, Cromwell's government implemented new policies that targeted Quakers for key prophetic practices.⁷⁵ "The Proclamation Prohibiting the Disturbing of Ministers" of 1655 gave authorities the power to arrest Quakers who interrupted non-Quaker sermons and church services, common targets for their prophetic speeches. The

⁷³ Ibid., 193.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 216.

⁷⁵ Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 153. Reay, *Radical Religion*, 159.

Blasphemy Act of 1650 and the Elizabethan Vagrancy Acts reinstated in mid-1657s made any person traveling outside their parish a possible target of these laws.⁷⁶ Because Quakers refused to comply with the Cromwellian regime's demands and often left their parishes, these new laws gave authorities an excuse to apprehend Quakers traveling across England. Hundreds of Quakers found themselves imprisoned by the end of the decade.⁷⁷ It is evident then, that Fox's efforts to portray a tamer image of prophecy coincided with government attempts to suppress Quakers whose prophetic episodes and other practices (e.g., refusal to take oaths, observe hat honour, and pay tithes) disturbed English society.

Fox wrote letters to Oliver Cromwell in which he invoked his own prophetic powers in order to urge the English leader to give up the prosecution of Quakers and guide him into the inward light of Quakerism.⁷⁸ During an unplanned encounter with Cromwell, Fox wrote in his *Journal*: "And the power of the Lord God risse in mee : & I was moved to bidd him lay doune his crowne att the feete of Jesus severall times I spoake to him to the same effect."⁷⁹ As Fox continued to be wary of hierarchical systems of authority, he felt at ease challenging the English leader through prophecy. Shortly after this 1657 encounter, Cromwell issued a call for a nationwide fast in the hopes to resolve the prolonged drought the country had been experiencing.⁸⁰ Fox was "moved to give forth an aunswer to O: P: proclamation that if hee did come to owne Gods truth hee shoulde have raine & that drought was a signe unto them of there barrenesse of the water

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Reay, *Radical Religion*, 145.

⁷⁸ Fox, *The Journal volume I*, ed. Penney, 263.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 260.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 273.

of life.”⁸¹ Fox argued that the drought came as a punishment to those who denied the Quaker Truth. In the north, where there were large communities of Quakers, there was no drought.⁸² Fox used this as evidence that he embraced God’s path for Quakers, and that he continued to honour the messages of the inward light himself. He found ways of worship that were more socially acceptable, however, and for which there were fewer chances of arrest and imprisonment.

In the same vein, it appeared to be socially acceptable for radical sects to target one another. Fox also described frequent disturbances at Quaker meetings where “rude Baptists” stormed in and interrupt whoever was speaking.⁸³ At a Quaker meeting in 1656, Fox wrote of a Baptist who interrupted the speakers that there was a “lyinge envyoys malitious spiritt that spake in him: & it was of the Devill & not of God: & therefore I charged him in the dreade & power of the Lord to be silent: & the mighty power of God came over him & all his company.”⁸⁴ It is possible that as the two largest Protestant radical sects in England, Baptists and Quakers felt that they were competing with each other for members and for public visibility. Fox claimed that Baptists admonished him and Quaker meetings more generally, but that as they heard him speak the word of God, many Baptists were convinced and left their old ways to join the Friends. In his writings about his experiences with Baptists, it is evident that Fox still believed in the power of prophecy as well as the connection between Friends and the inward light. Following Fox’s intervention with the ‘rude Baptist’, Fox claims “a glorious peaceable meetinge

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 255.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 256.

wee had : & the worde of life was devided amongst that & they [Baptists] was turned from the darknesse to the light : ... & they turned to the spirit of God in them selves that would leade them into all truth.”⁸⁵ Because the conflict between the marginalized Baptists and Quakers had little repercussion on the rest of English society, authorities on all levels were rarely compelled to intervene in their battles.

Fox’s core beliefs remained the same from the pre- and post- Nayler periods. His quest for respectability, however, forced him to alter his approaches to certain practices. This is nowhere more evident than in Fox’s *Journal* entry where he recounts a time when he was moved to speak at a steeple-house in Scotland in late 1657.⁸⁶ Rather than going into the church as he had done on many previous occasions, Fox and his traveling Friends spoke to the minister in charge of the church and requested permission to speak at a service the following day. Surprisingly, the minister did not dismiss the idea entirely. He did, however, negotiate a time that was more convenient to him. It was thus agreed that Fox and other Quakers would come to the steeple-house at 8:00 n.m. to speak the Truth; Fox claimed that people from all over attended their meeting.⁸⁷ Here, we see the shift in Fox’s practice from the early years of the Quaker movement; when he began to preach, Fox was highly spontaneous, especially during his prophetic episodes. He went as the inward light guided him and never asked permission nor questioned what he felt the light was telling him. However, as demonstrated in the above example, Fox altered his approach to the practice of prophecy to minimize negative repercussions while continuing to let the inward light speak through him. Fox wanted to show the Society of Friends that

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 309

⁸⁷ Ibid.

prophecy did not have to disappear as the Quaker quest for respectability took precedence, but rather that the approach to prophecy could be civilized and respectful in the eyes of the rest of the society.

Conclusion

Quakers experienced changes in their practices as well as in their treatment by society between 1655 and 1660. The government's persecution of Quakers led George Fox and some other Quaker leaders to look for changes that could be applied to the general behaviour of the sect; they sought acceptable behaviour for English society. It was with this mentality that Fox began writing from Launceston jail in 1655 to a variety of authorities, trying to explain the logic behind Quaker theology, in the hopes that people would understand the origins and see them less as a threat.

James Nayler's entry into Bristol and the legal debacle that followed were true public relations nightmares for those - including Fox - who had begun the quest for a respectable image. Nayler claimed that the inward light had ordered him to enter the city in imitation of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem. With this recreation Nayler wanted to show that Jesus was inside of him, and that he was inside Jesus's spirit. The people of Bristol were horrified by this action and the quest for respectability was hindered a great deal. The friendship between Fox and Nayler was broken as Fox worked to correct the public image that Nayler had tarnished and to protect Quakers from the fear and persecution brought on by actions such as Nayler's.

Prophecy remained a fundamental part of Quaker practices, but was also the most controversial and volatile practice of the sect. Thus, as this chapter has demonstrated, Fox utilized his position as leader of Quakerism to influence the way in which people prophesied and approached messages from the inward light. By setting examples and

encouraging people to limit their controversial behaviour, Fox hoped to set Quakers on a new path to respectability, a path that included room for a tamer, more private practice of prophecy. In this respect, Fox softened his tone, yet, this shift is only implicit within the aggressive pamphlets and letters that Fox wrote to defend imprisoned and persecuted Quakers across the British Isles and the colonies. Fox's behaviour generally did not tone down as he worked to defend and obtain the release of hundreds of imprisoned Quakers. As this subtle yet marked shift is only quietly observed in the years immediately following the Nayler affair, Fox's attitude towards prophecy continued to change as hundreds of Quakers died while imprisoned in Charles II's reign.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 167.

Chapter IV – The Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy and the Final Push for Respectability and Order 1660-1691

By 1660, the increasing persecution of Quakers moved George Fox to establish his strict authority over the Society of Friends. From the authority he gathered in the previous decade Fox was able to elect himself and a few others, including Margaret Fell and later William Penn, as leaders and structure the sect and its doctrine in line with what English society deemed a respectable movement.¹ Given their non-conformity, Quakers could never be entirely respectable. Yet, Fox could try to ensure that the public behaviour of the sect did not disturb society, that gender norms were generally respected, and that Quaker controversy receded as a distant memory along with the Interregnum. This new structure included changing the role prophecy played in Quaker practice and the way it was performed due to its negative consequences on the quest for respectability and stability. From 1660 and the Restoration of the English monarchy all the way to his death, Fox remained an active leader of the Society of Friends, and his experiences with English society in the 1650s influenced how he led Friends thereafter. Fox had developed a hostility to public acts of ecstatic prophesying in the aftermath of Cromwell's suppression of Quakerism. Fox's personal behaviour indicates his belief that the spontaneous and erratic behaviour that defined ecstatic prophecy was no longer an acceptable method of interacting with communities. This is not to say that Fox wanted to do away with prophecy for good; he maintained that prophecy could not be separated from the fundamental belief in the inward light.² Fox was not trying to stop Quakers from

¹ Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 183.

² George Fox, *The Arraignment of Popery Being a Short Collection, Taken Out of the Chronicles, and Other Books, of the State of the Church in the Primitive Times* (London: n.p., 1667), 111.

prophesying; after all, the line of communication between God and individual Quakers was an unchangeable element of the Quaker doctrine. Rather, Fox and other leaders tried to change how Quakers reacted to these divine messages and attempted to structure the specific time and place where these prophecies could be shared, so that they could prevent spontaneous episodes of ecstatic prophecy.

In the last decades of his life, Fox found that non-Quakers, and even some Quakers themselves, continuously challenged his authority. His efforts to organize the structure of the sect and to oversee the content and censorship of Friends' spoken and written words caused disagreements and schisms within the movement. Friends such as John Perrot and John Pennyman spoke out against Fox and his followers and persisted in performing ecstatic prophecies. Fox did not shy away from these challenges and addressed them directly. Indeed, debates that emerged within the sect during periods of internal sectarian upheaval shaped the topics of Fox's pamphlets. Between 1660 and his death, Fox's written content became less about ecstatic prophecy and more about defending the Quaker positions on hat honour, separate male and female meetings, and the refusal to pay tithes. Fox was so successful in steering the dominant conversations within the movement away from ecstatic prophecy and spontaneous public performances that by his death in 1691, the practice had become a distant memory. It was not that Quakers were not prophesying; in fact, prophecy as a method of simple, private communication between God and the individual, remained crucial to what Fox felt was the Quaker experience. His *Journal* and his pamphlets as early as 1660, though they do speak of the Quaker connection with the inward light and their chosen position as God's people, include fewer and fewer personal episodes of outward and ecstatic prophecy. We also see fewer accounts of other Quakers prophesying publicly. The decline of ecstatic

prophecy in these sources demonstrates that the majority of Quakers accepted the transition away from ecstatic behaviour and embraced new virtues: silence and privacy.

Fox used his experiences with personal prophetic revelations from God to establish himself as a leading figure within the movement. He did not want to be the sole leader of the Society of Friends, but would have most likely accepted Larry Ingle's title of 'first among Friends'. As founder of the sect, Fox wanted the authority to implement changes he believed would benefit Quakers. He used the authority of prophetic guidance and revelation to legitimize the changes he introduced in the movement.³ This demonstrates clearly that Fox never denied the importance and credibility of prophecy; divine communication remained central to Fox's religious practice, and as such, it remained important for Quakers everywhere. Fox's concern was with ecstatic prophecy in public settings that interrupted and disturbed English society, never with direct, individual revelation. Fox led by example; as he himself no longer engaged in such prophetic episodes, and wrote frequently through the lens of peace and unity, so too did other Quakers who followed his lead. Biblical excerpts conveyed a legitimacy to the general public that personal revelation could not. The increased Quaker persecution after 1660 moved Fox to change the way he wrote. He wanted to be an example for his fellow Quakers; at the same time, he wanted to demonstrate to the government that the Society of Friends no longer menaced the public peace as they once did. Despite his attempts to reconcile ecstatic prophecy with his quest for respectability, organization, and peace, Fox eventually realized that the task was not possible. Messages from the inward light

³ This will be discussed throughout the chapter, but some examples include Fox using prophetic revelation to defend his decision of separate male and female meetings, as well as to defend the addition of monthly and quarterly meetings.

continued to be a fundamental component of Quaker theology, but the ecstatic behaviour that they once inspired was replaced with a milder practice of written prophecy and a physical manifestation visible only in Quaker meetings.

The Restoration Period

Oliver Cromwell died in September 1658 and was succeeded by his son, Richard Cromwell, a few days after his death.⁴ Richard held on to power for only a few months before he was forced to resign and flee London.⁵ A power struggle between different factions eventually led to the restoration of the English monarchy. Charles I's eldest son, also named Charles, succeeded to the throne. Shortly before his return to England, Charles II published the *Declaration of Breda*. This document promised "liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question, for difference of opinion in matters of religion which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom."⁶ Such declarations of liberty of conscience were never detailed but did work to gain the support of religious minorities, including Quakers, who helped solidify Charles's hold on power.⁷ Historian John Miller argued that Charles was sincere in his plans to allow some religious toleration after the Restoration, but the king's plans were overpowered by members of his entourage and Parliament, who were in favor of a strong national church.⁸

⁴ "Oliver Cromwell" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed May 12th, 2017. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/6765?docPos=1>

⁵ "Richard Cromwell" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed May 12th, 2017. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/5144?docPos=1>

⁶ Charles II, *Declaration of Breda*, "House of Lords Journal Volume 11: 1 May 1660," in *Journal of the House of Lords: Volume 11, 1660-1666*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1767-1830), 6-9. *British History Online*, accessed May 12, 2017, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lords-jrnl/vol11/pp6-9>.

⁷ "Charles II" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed May 24th, 2017. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/5144?docPos=1>

⁸ Ibid.

The return of the English monarchy signified more than a change in political systems. The return of the king and the national church indicated to many religious dissenters that the apocalypse, which had seemed imminent with Charles I's regicide, was no longer on the near horizon. For many religious minorities the dissolution of public order during the 1640s and 1650s aligned the necessary elements for Jesus's return and the creation of God's heavenly kingdom on Earth. Sects like the Fifth Monarchists, Independents, Baptists, and Quakers had constructed their doctrine based on the impression of Jesus's looming return. The Restoration, however, brought back England's old political and religious order and halted any hope for a forthcoming apocalypse. Fox never expected Christ's physical return but believed nonetheless in establishing God's Earthly kingdom with Jesus's spirit and the inward light. Heaven on Earth would be created once all humans accepted the inward light and let themselves be guided by its message. The Restoration influenced Fox's opinion of ecstatic prophecy because the king and his Church intensified the oppression of Quakers as well as shattered Fox's goal of recreating God's kingdom on Earth and his chances of converting the world to Quakerism.⁹

The Society of Friends experienced the harshest persecution of its existence under the reign of Charles II. The Corporation Act of 1661 banned Quakers from holding municipal office; the Act of Uniformity of 1662 established what the state considered to be proper religious worship, which essentially forced all English subjects to comply with doctrines of the Church of England, and punished those who did not conform; the Quaker Act of 1662 allowed government officials to levy fines, imprison, and even banish

⁹ Richard George Bailey, "The Making and Unmaking of God: New Light on George Fox and Early Quakerism," (PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 1991), 167.

Quakers who refused to take the Oath of Allegiance to the king; the Conventicle Act of 1664 authorized fines and prison sentences if a group of five or more dissenters gathered to worship illegally; and a revision of the Conventicle Act in 1670 allowed fines to be levied from the owners of properties in which the groups gathered, and offered a reward to the informants.¹⁰ Authorities targeted Quakers because of their refusal to swear oaths, to pay tithes, and to stop holding their meetings. In January 1661, four thousand Quakers and Baptists were imprisoned in the span of one week.¹¹ Imprisonment became the reality of many Quakers, including Fox and his future wife Margaret Fell, both of whom spent several years in prison. These intense rounds of persecution and imprisonment influenced Fox and others to seek a peaceful public image and launched a complete overhaul of the structure and organization of the sect.

1660s: Authority and Organization

The early 1660s marked a time of adaptation for Quakers. They had been promised in the *Declaration of Breda* some toleration in England but soon realized that the king's promise was an empty one.¹² In the early 1660s, a hopeful Fox wrote, "Butt when the Kinge came in they was {most of them} & that which they had turned out off there place both magistrates & priests {but them that conformed} & that which they had persecuted us for not confirming unto... Soe thee Lord God brought his Judgments upon all our olde persecutors."¹³ But soon he realized that Friends were still dying in prisons and that persecution did not cease with the return of the English king.¹⁴ Fox's writing

¹⁰ Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English Society 1655-1725* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 171.

¹¹ John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration* (Harlow: Pearson Education Press, 2000), 167.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 1.

¹⁴ Ibid., 3.

took on an encouraging and inspiring tone during this period, at least when he was writing to Quakers. In an attempt to encourage Friends in their mission to spread the Truth, Fox wrote “many [Quaker persecutors of the 1650s] then did confesse wee had beene true prophetts to the nation.”¹⁵ Fox’s writings always remained encouraging, yet, as time passed and Fox himself was imprisoned, his *Journal* provides the narrative of a challenging period in Quaker history, and of his daily personal experiences guided by the inspiration of the inward light.

Notably missing from both the *Journal* and pamphlets of the early 1660s are Fox’s personal experiences of ecstatic prophecy. There is no lack of divine intervention and inspiration from the inward light in what he writes but Fox never described being moved to interrupt a church service or to disturb town markets or behave in ecstatic ways. The only public examples of prophecy in Fox’s *Journal* describe times when he “was moved in ye power of ye Lord to speake” to individuals who inquired upon him.¹⁶ This change in attitude, however, should not be understood as a shift in convictions. For instance, in 1660 in northern England, Fox confronted armed guards who denied Quakers the right to hold a meeting. Fox wrote that as the guard lifted his weapon, “soe off a sudden I saw his sworde was putt uppe & gone. And the Lords power came over all & chained {him &} them & wee had a blessed meetinge & the Lords everlastinge power & presence was felt amongst us.”¹⁷ Fox never expressed any doubts in God’s desire to work in favour of Quakers. Furthermore, such episodes proved to Friends that God approved of Fox’s decisions for Quakerism and continued to intervene to protect Quakers. Fox was

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 4.

¹⁷ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 350.

also more at ease to confront Friends who did not act according to the new rules. After the death of Edward Burrough, a prominent Quaker and close friend of Fox's, a woman came to Fox and explained her vision "that wee shoulde bee all taken away."¹⁸ Fox clearly disagreed with her vision, and told her that according to his own vision "her motion was false & that shee was deceived."¹⁹ Fox was slowly establishing a hierarchy among the people who followed his quest for respectability; those who did not were denounced publicly for being incorrect, and were expected to fall in line with the new policies established by the new leadership.

Another obvious attempt by Fox to establish his authority across the movement was to record his travels and travails in his *Short Journal* dictated in 1663-64. Not only did Fox think his memoir should be recorded and shared amongst Quakers, the simple act of writing his own experiences down as opposed to a communal document of all Quaker sufferings demonstrates both his intent to be the leader and his attempts to have himself recognized as such throughout the sect. Furthermore, sending copies of this document to be shared and read aloud during meetings shows that Fox believed his life and experiences to be worthy of people's time and possible imitation.

Fox wanted to demonstrate to Friends that they remained the bearers of the Truth in a time of heavy persecution from the king's authorities. Fox reminded Quakers to remain steadfast in their convictions and their efforts to propagate God's Word. Because Fox was trying to change the fundamentals of Quaker behaviour, there undoubtedly were internal Quaker debates and questions on whether the Society of Friends remained the

¹⁸ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 9.

¹⁹ Ibid.

chosen people of God.²⁰ Fox used prophecy and divine mediation to legitimize the changes he was implementing as well as to prove divine support for the sect and its people. Fox's changes within the sect only confirmed the preferred position of the Society of Friends in God's eyes, and did not hinder it, as some, like John Perrot, John Pennyman, and even James Nayler implied.

Fox also acknowledged and condemned the persecution that he and other Quakers experienced. In his pamphlet, *A Clear Discovery Wherein all People May See Who Hath Been True Ministers, and Sent of Christ, and Who Hath Been False Teachers, and Hath Run, and the Lord Never Sent Them, These Hundred of Years Past*, written in 1662, Fox encouraged Friends to suffer in peace for God's Truth.²¹ According to Fox, Quakers were targeted because they held the Truth that other members of English society did not, and Friends should remain steadfast in their convictions as well as in their willingness to suffer for God.²² They were not suffering in vain; God witnessed their pain and would reward them for it. According to Fox, God would ensure that England and the world know that Quakers were His chosen people.²³ Indeed, he wrote, "hee did heare his & did brinke an overflowinge scourge over all the heads of our persecutors that brought a quaking & a dreade & a feare amongst & on that all."²⁴ Fox was confident that the tables would turn and their persecutors would be punished for targeting the Children of the

²⁰ James Nayler in the previous chapter. John Perrot and John Pennyman will be discussed further in this chapter.

²¹ George Fox, *A Clear Discovery Wherein All People May See Who Hath Been True Ministers* (London: n.p., 1662), 4.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 91.

²⁴ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 389.

Light.²⁵ The lack of confrontation marked a change in Fox's response to persecution. In the 1650s, Fox did not shy away from active confrontation. Ecstatic prophecy was undoubtedly a form of active confrontation that forced the English people, from the Quaker perspective, to face their sins and dishonest life. Erratic Quaker behaviour was what put the movement at the forefront of religious conflict in England with other English subjects who usually defend themselves against Quaker accusations. Personal confrontation and its repercussions, such as imprisonment or branding, had brought terrible suffering to Quakers. The growing persecution made confrontations even more dangerous, and Fox worked to promote his interpretation of God's will, which was peace and respect for all people.

During his imprisonment in the early 1660s, Fox attempted repeatedly to explain his decision not to swear the Oath of Allegiance. On the second day of being brought to court to enter a plea, Fox wrote: "and the next day I brought before him [the magistrate] againe ... then hee askt mee what I had to say that hee might not passe sentence against mee. And I tolde him I much to say if hee woulde but have patiens to heare mee. And then hee laughed {& set others a laughinge}."²⁶ Fox proceeded in any case to explain his decision not to swear to the oath, using biblical examples to substantiate his arguments, but the magistrate remained indifferent and sentenced Fox to prison.²⁷ In this example, Fox's ability to quietly explain and defend his case marks a difference in his attitude from previous decades, where he made a show from his appearance in court. Most likely, he

²⁵ Professor H. Larry Ingle argued in this book *First Among Friends* (see page 190) that Fox seldom used the term Children of the Light after the 1660s, but research for this thesis has indicated otherwise. Thus, the term will continue to be used in this chapter in times where Fox used it himself, or when the context is favorable.

²⁶ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 79.

²⁷ Ibid.

was also making a statement by respectfully explaining his point and not causing a scene. This marks a significant change in Fox's behaviour towards English authority figures.

Not only did Fox want to acknowledge Quaker suffering, but he wanted his writings to provide encouragement and confidence for his fellow Friends. There was fear amongst Quaker leaders that persecution and suffering could have scared away less convinced members of the sect. Some of Fox's pamphlets sought to convince Quakers to "look not at the temptations, but look at Christ, and there thou wilt receive power."²⁸ Quakers held the ultimate Truth and would be rewarded for remaining steadfast in their beliefs. Fox was proud that even in the "sad time it was of persecution [...] freindes stoode nobley in the truth & valiant for the Lords name."²⁹ With the increasingly large number of Quaker deaths in prison and a low conversion rate by the mid-1660s, recognizing the loyalty of Friends, and keeping every member loyal and alive became Fox's ultimate goal.³⁰

One of Fox's worst fears came true when three Quakers were executed in New England in 1659 and 1660. The Puritan government of the Massachusetts Bay colony had a particular distaste for Quakers and their controversial behaviour and enacted a law to banish or imprison all members of the Society of Friends who came into the colony.³¹ Quakers in the colonies were less influenced by Fox's quest for respectability and continued to act in erratic and spontaneous ways. In October 1659, Mary Dyer, William

²⁸ George Fox, *Christ's Light the Only Antidote to Overcome and Expel the Poison of Satans Greatest Temptations* (London: n.p., 1662), 4.

²⁹ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 8.

³⁰ Ingle, *First Among Friends*, 274. Volume 2 of Penney's edition contains less episodes of convincements than volume 1, indicating that such episodes were less frequent.

³¹ Carla Gardina Pestana, "The City upon a Hill under Siege: The Puritan Perception of the Quaker Threat to Massachusetts Bay, 1656-1661," *The New England Quarterly* 56 (1983), 344.

Robinson, and Marmaduke Stevenson were imprisoned for returning to Boston after having been banished.³² Robinson and Stevenson were executed shortly after their arrest, but Dyer was reprieved on her way to the gallows. She was banished once again and went to Rhode Island for the winter, until she felt moved of the Lord to return to Boston to prophesy to the colony.³³ She was, once again, arrested and this time executed in May 1660. Quakers had certainly died in prison in the 1650s, but no one had ever been executed for simply being Quaker. It was the act of ecstatic prophecy that had brought these three Quakers to execution. They could have served as examples for Fox's warning against episodes of public ecstatic prophecy, but the shock of the execution of fellow Friends overcame any growing dislike for the practice. Fox wrote that he "had a perfect sense of it [their suffering] : as though it had beene my selfe & as though the halter had beene putt around my necke" even though Fox was not aware at the time that Friends were being executed in Boston.³⁴ From a distance, Fox explained that his spirit had suffered together with theirs.

The outcome of the trials stunned Fox as well as Friends around the world. Fox continued to commemorate the execution of the three Quakers well into the 1670s in his writings and speeches. He urged people to remember the three Quaker martyrs who died innocently for their faith. Right after news of their execution reached England, Fox and Edward Burrough "went to the King and told him that there was a vein of innocent blood opened in his dominions which, if it were not stopped, would overrun all."³⁵ Quakers

³² "Mary Dyer" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed May 17th, 2017.
<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/69098?docPos=2>

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 5.

³⁵ Fox, *The Journal*, ed. Jones, 374.

requested a royal deputation with a proclamation to outlaw the execution of subjects on the grounds of being Quaker. Burrough and Fox succeeded, and a royally sanctioned group of Quakers traveled to New England with the proclamation in hand. Rather than blame the execution of the three Friends on their own ecstatic behaviour and on their dismissal of their banishment from Boston, Fox blamed the Puritan authorities for targeting the innocent group of Friends. Fox later rejoiced in the uprising of Indigenous communities against the Massachusetts Bay authorities, and saw it as a vindication for their treatment of Quakers in the past.³⁶ Fox worked to preserve Quaker lives and the existence of the movement, and New English authorities were on the path of exterminating them. Fox wanted to stop but also recognize the suffering Friends from around the world; he sympathized with them, as well as worked to defend their rights.

Fox also wanted to intimidate those who were persecuting Quakers. In 1661-1662 Fox sent out a general call to gather stories of sufferings. In his *Journal*, Fox contrasted the episodes of sufferings with prophetic warnings, that he also gathered from Quakers, against the persecutors of Friends. Friends who received messages from the inward light foretold and showed Quakers that they were not suffering in vain, and that their pain would be avenged.³⁷ Although Fox was not personally moved by the Lord to prophesy publicly at this time, other Quakers were. Fox does not shy away from including accounts from other Friends in his *Journal*; such was the case with William Sympson in the late 1650s. Fox's *Journal* recounted Sympson going "naked & barefoote both to marketts courts toundes & cittyes priests houses & great houses & tell them so shoulde they bee

³⁶ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

all stript naked as hee was stript naked.”³⁸ Fox reported that Sympson had experienced great sufferings with “whippings with horse whippes & coach whippes stoneinges & imprisonments.”³⁹ Yet, God rewarded Sympson’s sufferings, when the king punished these men soon after he was beaten.⁴⁰ This *Journal* entry described two other Quaker men who experienced ecstatic prophetic episodes in the years immediately preceding the Restoration, and whose tormenters then suffered in turn. Robert Huntingdon “whoe was moved of the Lord to goe Into Carlisle steeplehouse with a white sheet about him amongst the great presbyterians and Independents to shew unto them how the surplus was comeinge uppe againe & he putt a halter upon his necke to shew unto them that {a halter} was comeinge upon them which was fulfilled upon some of our persecutors.”⁴¹ According to Ingle, Fox included these examples in his *Journal* to justify and recognize Friends’ suffering.⁴² More than that, however, Fox included episodes of ecstatic prophecy that had been substantiated by divine retribution shortly after. These episodes did not serve as examples of acceptable behaviour for other Quakers, they were included to demonstrate the connection between the Society of Friends and God. They served as a warning and as an intimidation tactic against the English population who dared persecute God’s chosen people.

Although Fox’s *Journal* no longer recounted times when the inward light moved him to prophesy publicly, the inward light moved him to write pamphlets that used

³⁸ Ibid., 1-2.

³⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Larry H. Ingle, *First Among Friends, George Fox and the Creation of Quakerism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 196.

prophetic language to target the integrity of their persecutors. In his pamphlet, *For All Those Ministers Whose Mouths Are Open at the Command of Men; and to All Those Whose Mouth are Shut at the Commands of Men, and Give Over Preaching*, Fox wrote, “there you lye fattening of your selves like nasty swine,” attacking ministers who preached and encouraged the persecution of Quakers.⁴³ In an attempt to warn others to repent and either join the Society of Friends or at least stop tormenting them before it was too late, Fox wrote: “and now the Whore is stripped of her gaudy attire, and her skirts are uncovered, and her nakedness is seen, and a bed of torment she is cast upon, and the Lamb and his followers shall have the victory over her for evermore.”⁴⁴ Fox referred to the Church of England as ‘the Whore’, insulting at the same time its members, who Fox argued would recognize the error of their ways when God would justify the Society of Friends’ beliefs, and reward those who had remained faithful and steadfast, despite their suffering.⁴⁵

Fox was imprisoned in Lancaster in 1663 for refusing to swear the Oath of Allegiance. According to his *Journal*, Fox was imprisoned in miserable conditions with nothing to shield him from the cold or the rain.⁴⁶ Fox became ill during this time in jail and did not produce many written works. He petitioned the king and many other officials for his release, but his repeated refusals to swear the oath worked against him. During his almost three years in jail, Fox had to rely on other leaders to continue to help defend the sect and perpetuate the changes he had initiated. According to Ingle, the other leaders

⁴³ George Fox, *For All Those Ministers Whose Mouths Are Open at the Command of Men; and to All Those Whose Mouth Are Shut at the Commands of Men, and Give Over Preaching* (London: n.p., 1662), 6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Fox, *Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 89-100.

“knew how to implement their leader’s [Fox’s] vision, and he lent his approval.”⁴⁷

Although he did maintain correspondence with leading Quakers, he was not able to personally enforce and encourage his quest for respectability.

With the difficult conditions of his imprisonment, Fox became weak. Although he did not publish much during this time, his *Journal* provides a very detailed account of his few years in prison. He received multiple prophetic revelations including one on the faith of Christendom that came under attack from Turks. He saw “the Lords power turne against him [Christendom]” and had foretold the Turkish victory.⁴⁸ Fox also had a revelation concerning the growing tensions between England and ‘Holland’. He saw “the angell of the Lord: with a glitteringe drawe sworde southwarde : & as though the Courte had beene all of fire : & not longe after : the wars begann with Holland & the sicknesse begann : & the Lords sworde was drawne.”⁴⁹ According to Fox, personal connection with God allowed him to see forthcoming sufferings in the world, most likely to save as many lives, Quaker and non-Quaker, as possible. It is also no coincidence that every time Fox experienced a new episode of suffering in prison he received a new revelation of an impending calamity. Fox was clearly implying that God was punishing England and the entirety of Christendom for his time and poor treatment in prison.

The inward light warned Fox that Quaker persecutors would suffer as the Quakers themselves had, a message he relayed years later in his *Journal*. A few days before the fire, Fox’s *Journal* described a Quaker man who was moved of the Lord

{to} scatter his money uppe & doune the streets & to turne his horse loose in streets & to untye his briches knees & lett his stockens fall: & to unbotton his

⁴⁷ Ingle, *First Among Friends*, 252.

⁴⁸ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 89

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

dublett & to tell the people soe should they runn uppe & doune scatteringe there money & there goods halfe undressed like mad people as hee gave them a signe & soe they did when the fire broake out & the City was burneing.⁵⁰

Again, Fox recounted with frustration that his warning was ignored.⁵¹ In late 1664, Fox looked back at all the ecstatic prophecies performed during Cromwell's protectorate and found that Quakers "many men & women had beene moved to go {naked} & in sackcloth in the other powers days & since as signes of there nakednesse from the image of God & righteousnesse & holynesse & how that God would strippe them & make them bare and naked as they was : but insteade of considering of it they have many times whipt them & imprisoned them or abused them."⁵² The purpose of prophecy could no longer be to convert new members and assure the salvation of all humans. This marks an important shift towards an introspective focus of Quaker doctrine. The purpose of the Quaker faith was possibly to remain steadfast in their beliefs while awaiting a new opportunity to convert masses to Quakerism. Until then, Fox argued that sharing their prophecies amongst themselves and organizing their movement in a way that gained the respect of their peers and resist persecution was their best alternative.

In an effort to conform to broader societal norms of the period, in 1661, Fox published the pamphlet, *Concerning Sons and Daughters, and prophetesses speaking and prophecying, in the Law and the Gospel*, which explained why, according to scripture, God allowed female Friends to prophesy. The pamphlet does, however, introduce new limits to the gender equality that Quakers were famous for preaching. Female Quaker prophets not only challenged gender roles, they upset power relations more generally,

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

which was no longer as broadly acceptable for Fox, who hoped to conform to broader societal norms.⁵³ This pamphlet also explains the place women should hold in their households and in society more generally, beyond their role as prophetesses. Fox argued that women should learn in silence within the home, and answer to the authority of their husbands, as the many Pauline letters urged Christians to do.⁵⁴ Yet, using the example of biblical prophets, such as Hannah, he recognized that God spoke through both men and women, and that men should listen to the prophecies of the true spirit who enlightened women.⁵⁵ According to Phyllis Mack, this pamphlet illustrated how female “authority as political prophets had little to do with their conception of the rights of women.”⁵⁶ As Fox and others argued, female prophets sacrificed their femininity and their dutiful role within society to prophesy.⁵⁷ They played the role of mother in Israel, leading Friends to the True and righteous kingdom. Quakers reconciled the gender, prophesying and femininity of female prophets in this way.⁵⁸ The limitations were eventually taken a step further; as the practice of ecstatic prophecy became obsolete in Quaker ranks, it was harder for Fox and others to reconcile the fervent and particular role of women within a respectable sect of the seventeenth century.⁵⁹

⁵³ Kirilka Stareva, “Prophetic Cries at Whitehall: The Gender Dynamics of Early Quaker Women’s Injurious Speech,” In *Women, Gender and Radical Religion in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Sylvia Monica Brown, 17-38 (Boston: Brill Press, 2007), 19.

⁵⁴ George Fox, *Concerning Sons and Daughters, and Prophetesses Speaking and Prophecying, in the Law and the Gospel* (London: Printed for M.W., 1661), 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁶ Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 174.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 260.

Controversy

The 1660s were also a time of internal sectarian challenges for Quakers. Fox, who had established himself as ‘first among Friends,’ worked to unify Quaker belief and had begun removing any Friend who actively challenged him. John Perrot was an active Quaker missionary who spent several years of his life imprisoned in continental Europe.⁶⁰ Over the course of his travels, Perrot developed a devout following. As a consequence of being away from the centre of Quaker activity, Perrot’s doctrines also diverged a great deal from what Fox was attempting to establish as orthodoxy. After his return to England, Perrot argued in favour of a Quaker universalism that included a perfect equality between the sexes and a continued commitment to following the callings of the inward light.⁶¹ At the same time, Quaker leaders also accused him of being financially irresponsible and spending larger sums of money than had been authorized while he was on his mission in Europe. By the mid 1660s, his long beard and growing female following were reminiscent of Naylor and his faction before his entry into Bristol, which worried Fox.⁶² Yet, what continued to cause the biggest issue for Fox was Perrot’s argument that Friends should be permitted to decide on their hat attire during prayer. Perrot was against setting rules to control the conduct of Friends, especially rules that distinguished between male and female Friends. Fox met several times with him in London and tried to convince him to change his rhetoric, but Perrot refused.⁶³ Rather, he continued to lead a radical

⁶⁰ “John Perrot” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed May 13th.
<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/21987?docPos=2>

⁶¹ Krista J. Kesselring, “Gender, the Hat, and Quaker Universalism in the Wake of the English Revolution,” *The Seventeenth Century* (26) 2011, 308-309.

⁶² “John Perrot” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

faction of Quakers until he was imprisoned in 1663.⁶⁴ Once released, he asked the Quaker leadership to fund his trip to the American colonies, which they denied. He nevertheless found a way to make it to the colonies, where he spent the rest of his life.⁶⁵ His move to the colonies prevented the growth of an internal sectarian schism within the Society of Friends, but other dissenting factions of Quakerism persisted for many decades.

Fox constantly reacted to challenges to his authority and continually finding new ways to solidify his position as a leader of the movement. According to Adrian Davies, the Perrot affair and persistent dissent within the sect urged Fox to implement further organizational methods, including sect-wide quarterly and monthly meetings, and to develop a committee to review all publications made in the name of Quakers. This was to assure the consistency and respectability of items discussed and published following the guidelines set out by Fox and others.⁶⁶ It was in early 1667 that Fox was “moved of the Lord to sett uppe & establish five monthly meetinges of men : & women : in the Citty {of London} to admonish & exhort & to take care of Gods glory.”⁶⁷ Beyond being a place to worship God, meetings were a way for the conservative leadership to assure uniformity and a minimum of dissent within the Society of Friends. The Perrot episode a few months earlier had demonstrated that closer attention was needed in each individual Quaker meeting to assure that factions were not breaking off from the mainstream. According to Hilary Hinds, dissent within the sect often manifested itself in challenges to Fox’s leadership.⁶⁸ Supervising the sect by establishing meetings and traveling the country,

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Kesselring, “Gender, the Hat, and Quaker Universalism,” 310.

⁶⁶ Davies, *The Quakers in English Society*, 102.

⁶⁷ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 111.

⁶⁸ Hillary Hinds, *George Fox and the Early Quaker* (Manchester: Manchester

claiming to be guided by messages from the inward light, allowed Fox to control internal challenges to his leadership and doctrines. At this point in his career, as one of few leaders of the Quaker movement, Fox no longer relied on ecstatic prophecy to convince members. Rather, personal prophetic messages served as a method to demonstrate his chosen position as leader and cease disputes that arose within the sect. This is different from the behaviour he had exhibited earlier on in his work.

Fox established the legitimacy of the changes he was implementing by claiming the “the Lord opned to me & lett mee see that I must doe : & howe I must order {& establish the men & womens monthly & quarterly meetinges} in all the nation & other nations to doe the same : or write to them {where I came not}.”⁶⁹ Establishing God’s authority behind his decisions made it difficult for other Friends to challenge his decision. If they disagreed with Fox, it was noted that they disagreed with God’s instructions, which was a strong burden for many to bear. Thus, by claiming divine revelation for his leadership decision, Fox sought to reduce disagreement and schism.

Fox’s changing understanding of gender roles is also notable in his manner of establishing meetings. His creation of separate male and female groups indicated to Quakers that the two groups were different, and as such, should be made to deal with distinct issues within the sect. According to Mack, “charity, marital problems, discipline of women, and healing were viewed as women’s work,” while organization, publication, and censorship were issues for male Friends.⁷⁰ The fact that women were granted their meetings, given the freedom to organize, and have authority over some aspects of the

University Press, 2011), 9.

⁶⁹ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 111.

⁷⁰ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 286.

Society of Friends is in itself unusual for the seventeenth century. Yet, pushing for a separation between the two sexes and clearly marking the limits to female authority and what women could and could not do was most certainly part of Fox's search for respectability within English society. It was no longer acceptable for women to act in the same way as men, including traveling unaccompanied to prophesy the Word of God. In limiting the tasks available to women, Fox and others sought to ensure that female Quakers understood their new role in the sect, one that was far from the ecstatic behaviour they had been encouraged to exhibit in previous decades. Fox began to censor the women who were part of his entourage, and made sure they were 'none but sober women'.⁷¹ This was probably to avoid an episode of ecstatic prophecy from a woman who could be connected to him. The Protestant tradition did not allow for women to speak during church services, let alone walk around naked, prophesying God's Word to non-believers. Societal norms of the period mostly excluded women from the public sphere and forced them to remain within the home to take care of issues there. Separating women from men in their meetings and limiting their authority within the sect allowed the Society of Friends to meet some norms of seventeenth-century society.

To establish these meetings, Fox traveled first to London, then across England, Ireland, and North America. When Fox could not reach a place physically, the inward light told him to send letters to local leaders instructing them to set up regular meetings.⁷² Episodes of prophetic speeches were frequent during his trips and Fox was regularly moved to speak and declare the truth amongst them.⁷³ During his stay in the colonies, he

⁷¹ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 166.

⁷² Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 126.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 137.

wrote that he was even given the power to save the life of a man whom everyone believed to be dead from a broken neck. Fox claimed that as he walked towards the man and touched his neck he saw that it was not broken. He was “moved of the Lord” to move the head and neck in a certain way which allowed the man to recover and continue his journey with them.⁷⁴ This healing episode allowed Fox to show that God was working through him and allowed him to perform healing miracles that other Quakers, even in his immediate traveling party, could not. Thus, both in his life and in his writing, Fox used prophecy as tool to confirm his status of leader within the sect. Although ecstatic prophecy disappeared from Fox’s personal experiences and from Quaker doctrines after the mid-1660s, prophecy did not disappear entirely. It came to play a different role for Fox, one that allowed him to be in contact with the guidance of the inward light and establish a Quaker Church in the image of God, and demonstrate his position as first among Friends. Fox’s rhetoric continued to change into the 1670s and 1680s as he further attempted to solidify his leadership.

1670s: Peace and Suffering

The *Journal* entries of the 1660s, and particularly in the 1670s, were focused on demonstrating peaceful action and interaction with members of English society. The ecstatic prophecies of the 1650s had left their mark on the nation’s memory and acceptance of Quakers. Fox came to emphasize a rhetoric of peace within his writings to prevent the justification of the persecution he and his fellow Quakers were experiencing. Authorities argued that Quakers had a negative influence on English society, while Fox argued that the Society of Friends was peaceful and improved the general state of English

⁷⁴ Ibid., 227.

society. Fox wrote in his *Journal* that he denied the charges of being a disturber of the country's peace and that he encouraged people not to take up arms in any circumstances.⁷⁵ The public relations campaigns that had begun in the mid-1650s were increased in this period and Fox's publications changed to emphasize the favorable contributions of Quakers to the English community.

Fox's call for peace began as a call for disarmament. The pacifism of Quakers that later played a famous role in the anti-slavery campaigns of the nineteenth century in England and the United States took root in Fox's call to disarm the Society of Friends in the 1660s and 1670s. Fox argued that all Quakers needed to defend themselves was the "Heavenly Armour and Arms."⁷⁶ Challenging authorities with weapons, or rising in armed rebellion was never God's way. The *Journal* showed many examples of Fox "moved of the Lord" to turn the other cheek and await blows from officials who sought to engage him in physical conflict.⁷⁷ Fox always had peaceful motivations, but many of the early Quakers had been recruited from Cromwell's parliamentary army, and as such less peace oriented. Peace was not always a universal doctrine in the Society of Friends, but as Fox established his authority he was able to enforce this on a broader level. Fox hoped that his peace rhetoric would translate into a shift in the daily behaviour of Quakers and in their response to possible physical altercations. Fox argued that Jesus's chosen people were "invested with everlasting rest & peace."⁷⁸ He believed that Quakers would choose

⁷⁵ Fox, *The Journal volume 1*, ed. Penney, 375.

⁷⁶ George Fox, *A General Epistle to Friends* (London: n.p., 1670), 4.

⁷⁷ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 4, 54.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 175.

peaceful action in every circumstance, as he had done, because of Jesus's light who guided them.

Since the establishment of their movement, Quakers had been “moved of the Lord God (the Spirit having constrained them, as his Power) to cry against Drunkards, Swearers, Curses, Fighters, Cheaters, Couzeners, Bawdy-houses, Whore-houses, and your Pleasures, Games, and Sports, which you keep on your Idle Dayes to dishonor God, which are more like the Families of *Sodom*, *Babylon*, and *Egypt* than Christians.”⁷⁹ This not only presented Quakers as righteous and holy, it also proved that they did not act in ways that hindered the peace of society.⁸⁰ Fox maintained until his death that Quakers were a peaceful group and that English society would benefit from imitating and joining them, rather than persecuting them.

By the early 1670s, Fox's rhetoric of respectable and peaceful behaviour had penetrated all ranks of the Quaker movement. The London Meeting, then the largest Quaker meeting, declared publicly that Friends should avoid “all imagined, unseasonable, and untimely prophesyings; which tend not only to stir up persecution, but also to the begetting airy and uncertain expectations.”⁸¹ This statement, important because it came from the most influential gathering of the movement, was intended to remove all ambiguity about the expected behaviour of its members. By describing some prophecies as ‘imagined’, the London Meeting demonstrated that a proper and definite pattern

⁷⁹ George Fox, *A Few Words to All Such (Whether Papists or Protestants) as Observe Dayes Contrary to Christ and His Apostles and Several Weighty Things Concerning the Cross of Christ and the Headship of the Church, Wherein the Pope is Proved to be a False and a Counterfeit Head, and a Robber of the Honour Due to Christ the True Head of the true Church ; Also The Quakers Challenge to the Papists, and the Quakers Testimony Concerning Magistracy* (London: n.p., 1669), 13.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸¹ Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few: Symbolism of Speaking and Silence Among Seventeenth-Century Quakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 94.

existed to judge the legitimacy of one's revelations. The legitimacy of a prophecy was not necessarily assessed from its content, but rather on the behaviour of its prophet, similar to the medieval tradition of prophecy. Legitimacy was no longer assumed from contact with the inward light. It was now possible for Friends to follow the wrong path and receive prophecies that were imagined and false. The guidelines of Quaker authorities urged people to remain on the true path and watchful of prophets who had strayed off course.

The inward light legitimately inspired the 'Unseasonable and untimely prophecies', but these were performed in a disturbing way that incited the persecution of Quakers. Although Fox warned against false prophecies, he was mostly concerned with the inappropriate performance of legitimate prophecies. Fox remained committed to the doctrine of prophecy until his death, but he wanted to create a separate and controlled environment where Friends could share their prophecies safely. No matter what the inward light called for, it was no longer acceptable, according to Fox and the London Meeting, to exhibit erratic and spontaneous behaviour in public. It was this type of behaviour, precisely, that had attracted unwanted attention to the Society of Friends and perpetrated their distorted public image. This statement from the London Meeting reinforced and supported Fox's quest for respectability. The private Quaker meetings became a safe place for Friends to share their prophecies and act in ways that were not publicly acceptable. The allegiance and approval of the London Meeting was undoubtedly a great success for Fox and solidified the legitimacy of his authority amongst Friends.

In an effort to explain controversial practices of the Society of Friends and demonstrate that Quaker behaviour, such as prophesying privately and receiving revelations, was not a threat to English society, Fox published the 1676 pamphlet,

*Concerning revelation, prophecy, measure, and rule.*⁸² Clearly not aimed at Quakers, Fox identifies his audience with his opening line: “Now unto all you that cry so much against *Revelation*, that go under the Name of *Christians*, hear what Christ Jesus saith.”⁸³ This pamphlet explains in detail why Quakers believed they could communicate with God through the inward light based on scriptural evidence. This pamphlet had two distinct implications. First, it was a clear continuation of the public relations campaign that began decades earlier and meant to inspire peaceful communications between Quakers and the rest of English society. Fox described Quakers as coming from “an abundance of Peace and Truth” that had been revealed by God.⁸⁴ If Quakers were peaceful and divinely guided, English society should not fear them.

Second, Fox hoped that by using biblical evidence to defend Quaker beliefs, he might clarify and legitimize their sect in the eyes of the English people. To defend revelation and prophecy, he used information and examples from Christian scripture to make Quaker beliefs comprehensible to other denominations, which was a significant departure from his usual argumentative pattern. For example, Fox provided the quote from Isaiah 40:5 in which it is argued “The Glory of the Lord shall be Revealed, and all Flesh shall see it together, the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”⁸⁵ This quote is followed by Fox’s interpretation that justifies the Quaker practice of divine revelation and prophecy.⁸⁶ Fox attempted to explain himself with examples that other Christian

⁸² George Fox, *Concerning Revelation, Prophecy, Measure, and Rule and the Inspiration and Sufficiency of the Spirit*, (n.p.: n.p., 1676).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

denominations understood. He hoped these explanations would lead to comprehension and peace amongst these Christian denominations. Yet, in typically Fox fashion, he defended Quaker doctrine by demonstrating why others were wrong. The importance here, however, is the method he used to defend Quakerism. Instead of attacking non-Quaker doctrine using arguments he received from divine revelation, Fox used scripture to justify and explain Quaker behaviour.

Among many examples, Luke 10:22 justified the doctrine of divine revelation to individuals.⁸⁷ As Fox argued, “Is not the Revelation of the Son hidden from the Wise, and the Learned, and Men of Understanding? And do not many of them make a Mock at it? But Jesus rejoiced in Spirit and thanks God for this Revelation, as you may see in *Luke*.”⁸⁸ Fox attacked the notion that only learned men could correctly preach and profess the word of God. From their interpretation of the Gospel of Luke, Quakers believed that any regular person inspired by the spirit of Christ could profess His Truth. Fox emphasized that “people should speak or preach, or prophesie one after another what was revealed unto them” as the apostles had done.⁸⁹ Quakers interpreted literally the warning from the apostle that God’s Truth would only be revealed once people worked within His spirit. According to Fox, prophecy was as inherent to Christian theology as prayer. Fox wondered why all Christians agreed that prayer was a fundamental way to connect with God and His spirit, but not prophecy.⁹⁰ In *The Book of Acts* the apostles received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The spirit allowed them to hear direct messages from God

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 8.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 12.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 28.

and speak His direct word. For Fox, the same spirit continued to exist in humans and remained a key feature of Christianity. Fox questioned the mainstream Christian argument that the time of revelation had ceased with the death of the apostles. Quakers believed that they shared the same experiences with God's spirit as had the apostles, and thus rooted their belief in divine revelation and in the prophetic writings of the apostles.⁹¹ In this pamphlet, Fox also compared the persecution Quakers experienced at the hand of English officials to the suffering of the first Christians at the hands of the Jews and gentiles.⁹² He recognized that a main reason why Quakers were persecuted was their belief in prophecy and revelations, but argued that those persecuting them would come to realize the error of their ways as had the authorities in the apostolic times. This pamphlet was thus written both as a warning to those who persecuted Quakers as well as an explanation for Quaker beliefs. The content of this pamphlet serves to reinforce the central argument of this chapter: that prophecy continued to play a fundamental role in Quaker theology even though its leaders and members believed the time of ecstatic prophecy had passed.

Because the king and his national church never agreed with Quaker beliefs, Friends continued to suffer on a regular basis. Fox experienced at first hand the persecution of Charles's government, and suffered a great deal himself in prison. During the times that he was free, he experienced sympathetic episodes of suffering as the intensity of persecution and arrests fluctuated throughout the years. Fox experienced an episode of debilitating illness prior to his departure to the Americas in 1672.⁹³ In his

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 31.

⁹³ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 165-166.

Journal, he describes becoming blind and deaf for several months and feeling “exceedinge weak.”⁹⁴ He experienced vivid visions of cannibal priests and became even more convinced that the Society of Friends was the only righteous Christian group in existence.⁹⁵ During these difficult times, Fox wrote that “though I could not see their persons, I felt and discerned their spirits, who were honest-hearted, and who were not.”⁹⁶ Fox and others noted that as the travails and sufferings of Friends subsided throughout the nation, his symptoms slowly disappeared and he was able to take up travelling once more. Although the meaning of such sufferings remained implicit in his writings, it is evident that Fox experienced his symptoms through interventions of the inward light. As a leader of the sect, Fox needed to demonstrate that he understood the experience of his fellow Friends; he was not a disconnected leader as some dissenting Quakers had argued, but one who was subjected to the same sufferings as all other Friends.⁹⁷ According to Barbour, by the mid-1670s, Fox, Margaret Fell and William Penn had established a “de facto spiritual hierarchy in the emerging church.”⁹⁸ As one of the leaders of the movement, Fox demonstrated with this episode that he was connected to the inward light and remained one of God’s true followers.

The 1670s brought another internal conflict in the Society of Friends with John Pennyman, once a follower of John Perrot, leading a resistance movement. He persistently promoted behaviour that Fox deemed radical throughout the decade. Perhaps

⁹⁴ Ibid., 165.

⁹⁵ Fox, *Journal*, 167.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 165-166.

⁹⁷ Hugh Barbour, “The Lambs War and the Origins of the Quaker Peace Testimony,” In *The Pacifist Impulse in Historical Perspective*, edited by Harvey L. Dyck (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1996), 175.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 183.

his most controversial endeavour was his attempt to set fire to Quaker books in the London Royal Exchange, a burning rumoured to have included a copy of the Bible as well.⁹⁹ Pennyman never provided a thorough explanation for this event. Contemporaries and scholars speculated that Pennyman wanted to prove to fellow Quakers that they were on the wrong path and burned several of their books in protest.¹⁰⁰ Some also speculated that he burned books to protest what he defined as the worshipping of books or the written word. Yet, even in his autobiography Pennyman failed to provide a satisfactory explanation for his behaviour.¹⁰¹ The leading Quaker faction published a broadside publicly disapproving of Pennyman's actions, trying as much as possible to distance themselves from him. For several years Pennyman had been denouncing the changes in doctrine and practices that the Quakers leadership imposed. Pennyman claimed that the Society of Friends had lost their way when they stopped following the inward light to follow George Fox instead.¹⁰² He was banished from official meetings and disavowed as a true Friend, demonstrating the importance of a prophet's behaviour in his claim to legitimacy.¹⁰³ His controversial behaviour did not stop, however, with his disownment. Pennyman targeted Quaker meetings and interrupted them with ecstatic prophetic episodes, similar to what Quakers had done to other denominations in the 1650s.¹⁰⁴ Eventually Pennyman and his wife moved to Northern England and disappear from the records. This type of internal dissent was difficult to control, yet Fox and other leaders

⁹⁹ Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women*, 272.

¹⁰⁰ Avner Shamir, *The English Bibles on Trial: Bible Burning and the Desecration of Bibles 1640-1800* (London, Routledge, 2017), 93.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² "John Pennyman," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed May 15th, 2017. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/21886>

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

could not accept behaviour that interfered with their decade-long efforts to revamp the Quaker image.

Beyond internal dissent, the 1670s also brought Fox hope of a strong, reliable, and influential successor. William Penn was rising through the political ranks and through the ranks of the sect by the late 1670s. Penn was the perfect representation of a respectable, higher ranking man of English society. He was educated at Oxford and on the continent by renowned theologians, and became a successful businessman.¹⁰⁵ A continental mystic introduced Penn to the inward light and he decided to officially join the Society of Friends during a trip to Ireland in 1669.¹⁰⁶ After his return to England he met with Fox a number of times and their partnership was almost immediate. As Hugh Barbour notes, “Penn regarded Fox as a great religious leader who initially may have played to some degree the role of father confessor to Penn,” but they became partners and Fox trusted Penn with the leadership of the sect when he was no longer so active.¹⁰⁷ Penn’s political connections made him an indispensable asset to Quakers. His influence obtained Quakers hearings in the king’s court and meetings with leading men of parliament. Penn’s influence helped improve the Quaker public image in ways Fox could never have done.

Upon his return from the Americas, Fox received the calling from God to wed Margaret Fell. According to Fox, he knew years prior that he would marry Fell, but was waiting on God’s official calling to do so.¹⁰⁸ At this time, Fox was also “moved of the Lord” to provide guidance on several ceremonial proceedings, including marriages and

¹⁰⁵ “William Penn,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed May 17th, 2017. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/21857?docPos=3>

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Barbour, “The Lambs War and the Origins of the Quaker Peace Testimony,” 179.

¹⁰⁸ Fox, *The Journal*, ed. Jones, 468-69.

burials. It was crucial that Quaker practices of such ceremonies be uniform to properly represent the faith and make sure that no “wickednes” and “uncleanes & abominations” eased their way into the sect.¹⁰⁹ By this time, it is evident that Fox had the authority and organizational ability to make sure the standardization was implemented. Quaker meetings were common across the country, and challenges to Fox’s authority were uncommon.

Although by the end of the 1670s Fox had grown weak from old age, he continued his prolific writing career and remained a leader in the increasingly organized Society of Friends. He took up semi-permanent residence in London where he knew he could be in the middle of important religious debates and where he could reach as many Friends as possible.¹¹⁰

1680s: The Last Push for Organization

The 1680s, although it was a period of harsh persecution, saw Fox predominantly focused on internal sectarian issues. His writings defended separate male and female meetings and the Second Day Morning censor group.¹¹¹ This group was set up by the London meeting to assure a uniformity in Quaker publications. Fox’s original *Journal*, based on the Spence Manuscript he dictated to his son-in-law, ends in the 1670s. Thus remaining evidence relies on additions made in Jones’s edition and pamphlets written in this period. The pamphlets made no reference to ecstatic prophecy. Fox continued to let the inward light guide him, but he and other leaders had successfully eradicated the controversial practice of ecstatic prophecy. Fox definitely worked for this success, but

¹⁰⁹ Fox, *The Journal volume 2*, ed. Penney, 195.

¹¹⁰ Fox. *The Journal*, ed. Jones, 576.

¹¹¹ This was the name given to the censor group created in the 1670s.

also owed many to new members of the sect. William Penn's leadership represented Quakerism's new image, everything new and different from the days of ecstatic prophecy. According to Mack, Penn's "social stature enhanced his capacity to serve as a source of moral and practical authority within the movement and improved Friends' credibility with outsiders."¹¹² He believed in the peace testimony, he had connections in the government, and as the son of an admiral and Member of Parliament, had a very respectable public image.¹¹³ He was imprisoned himself a few times for attending Quaker meetings, but spent much of his time petitioning the king and government officials for the release of imprisoned Friends and to obtain a fairer treatment for his fellow Quakers.¹¹⁴

The success of Fox's respectability campaign in the 1680s allowed him to focus on more specific and internal topics for the period. Fox was no longer concerned with defending his management decisions to other Quakers, he was concerned with encouraging fellow Friends to remain steadfast in their beliefs against the persecution they were experiencing. Fox trusted that true Friends were "the Image of God; and in it you know your Services, that the Lord God Almighty commands you."¹¹⁵ Friends that followed Fox's guidance were assured to remain within the True Spirit. Fox believed that he followed God's every calling and encouraged fellow Quakers to do the same. He urged them to be aware of "the false Prophets, which are inwardly ravened from the Spirit of God, and we become *Wolves*, though they have got the *sheeps-cloathing*, and the words of the Truth, of Christ, and his Apostles, but whose Fruits are *Thornes* and *Thistles*."¹¹⁶

¹¹² Mack, *Visionary Women*, 222.

¹¹³ "William Penn" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed May 17th.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ George Fox, *All Friends Everywhere This is the Word of the Lord Unto You All* (n.p.: n.p., 1683), 2.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

This was predominantly a warning against non-Quakers, but it also served as a warning against false Quaker prophets, working against Friends.

Fox's pamphlet, *A Declaration From the Harmless & Innocent People of God Called Quakers*, continued to portray Quakers as a peaceful group and enticed Friends to remain this way.¹¹⁷ He wrote: "Oh Friends! offend not the Lord and his *Little Ones*; neither afflict his People; but consider, and be moderate, and not run hastily into things, but mind and consider *mercy, justice, and judgment*: that is the way for you to prosper, and get the Favour of the Lord."¹¹⁸ For Fox, behaving peacefully was the best way to gain favour from English society, and the best way to assure that Quakers remained in God's favour. Pennyman, who set fire to books and interrupted meetings, was not a peaceful man and was clearly not a man of Truth in connection with God's spirit. The Quaker dissenters instigated uproar and conflict, and Fox's publications and speeches targeted internal dissent to assure a peaceful conformity that supported his arguments to the English people.

An addition to *Journal*, published in 1694 by Thomas Elwood, shows that Fox "was moved of the Lord" to go to the Netherlands to visit the members of the growing Quaker movement in the country. Many Friends advised against this trip owing to his poor health, but Fox insisted he had received the calling from the inward light and was determined to make the trip himself.¹¹⁹ After several weeks of traveling, Fox made it to Holland where he declared that "The Lord's power and presence was beyond words; for I

¹¹⁷ George Fox, *A Declaration From the Harmless & Innocent People of God Called Quakers Against All Seditious, Plotters & Fighters in the World, For the Removing of the Ground of Jealousie and Suspition From Both Magistrates and People in the Kingdome Concerning Wars and Fightings* (London: n.p., 1684).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹⁹ Fox, *The Journal*, ed. Jones, 571.

was but weak to go into a meeting and my face (by reason of a cold I had taken) was sore but God manifested His strength in us and with us and all was well.”¹²⁰ According to Fox, divine intervention made sure that he could fulfill his mission. Once more, this proved Fox’s close relationship to God and his commitment to fulfill His divine work on Earth.

One of his last pamphlets, *Concerning the Antiquity of the People of God, Called Quakers*, written in 1689, recounted the history of the Society of Friends from antiquity.¹²¹ Based on biblical references, Fox laid the foundations of the Quaker movement in the Old Testament prophets, the Gospels, and the stories of the apostles. It is possible that Fox saw his health rapidly declining and decided that this was his last opportunity to retell the story of the movement he had created. Fox was unyielding in his belief that Quakers continued to receive messages from God through the Spirit and the inward light, as the biblical tradition indicated in ancient times.¹²² He contended that Jesus, as the heavenly prophet, was the leader of all earthly prophets who “Redeems and Purchases them with his own Life, his Blood: and so Christ the Prophet, is to be heard in all things by his Children, who enlightens every one that cometh into the World; that in the Light they might see him, and hear him.”¹²³ Prophecy remained a fundamental practice of the Society of Friends and was featured in one of Fox’s last pamphlets to demonstrate its sustained importance in the Quaker faith. Even without ecstatic prophecy and internal dissent that questioned the new principles of the Quaker faith, Quakers remained God’s chosen people.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 572.

¹²¹ George Fox, *Concerning the Antiquity of the People of God, Called Quakers Their Worship, Their Mother, New and Heavenly Jerusalem, Their Faith, and Who is the Author and Finisher of it ... the Church of Christ's Prayer, and in What, Their Cross, and Their Baptism* (London: n.p., 1689).

¹²² Ibid., 7.

¹²³ Ibid., 22.

Conclusion

Fox passed away in January 1691 after suffering for years of what would be known today as congestive heart failure.¹²⁴ The last decades of Fox's life had been a whirlwind of travelling, imprisonments, prophecies, sufferings, and successes. The Restoration of the English monarchy and the return of the national church had reinstated harsh laws against religious dissenters which caused both Fox and his followers indescribable pain. Fox spent most of the 1660s imprisoned for refusing to swear the Oath of Allegiance. During the times he spent in jail he experienced many prophetic episodes that helped him solidify his leadership position within the sect and enlighten the next steps for the Society of Friends in terms of organization. Ecstatic prophecy, such as going naked and interrupting church services remained a reality for some, but Friends began to realize that the time of large conversions had passed with the return of an English king, and that the practice was causing them more suffering rather than bringing the world closer to salvation.

Fox led a peace-driven movement of people who accepted earthly suffering in the name of Truth. Fox was "moved of the Lord" to establish quarterly and monthly meetings of both men and women which helped monitor the behaviour of Quakers, and solidified the unity and uniformity of the sect. Fox traveled to Ireland, continental Europe, and the Americas to share his prophetic calling and establish meetings that allowed the sect to organize into a proto-church. He spoke of ecstatic prophecy as a distant memory that had helped propagate the movement in the early years, but that was no longer appropriate nor viable in the political and social climate of the 1670s.

¹²⁴ Ingle, *First Among Friends*, 281.

Fox became increasingly weak and immobilized because of illness and accepted that delegating work to members of the sect who honoured and followed his divine callings was the best thing for movement. A censorship committee was established and with weekly, monthly, and yearly meetings, the behaviour of Quakers was finally monitored on a regular basis; internal dissent remained at its lowest point since the beginning of the sect in the 1640s.¹²⁵ In *Concerning the Antiquity of the People of God, Called Quakers*, Fox referred to the Society of Friends as a church in its own right. Such definite and meaningful vocabulary could not have been used to describe the movement just a decade earlier.¹²⁶ From 1660 to 1691, Quaker prophecy shifted to resemble something different, but its importance remained at the core of the theology of the Society of Friends. Fox continued to rely on messages from the inward light to guide his travels, his speeches, and his actions, as was the case in the early 1660s. He reined in ecstatic prophecy to keep Friends safe from the external threats, but continued to claim the authority of a prophet to strengthen his position within the movement as it solidified into a distinct sect. Fox, as leader of the movement, was able to mold Quakerism into a church that belonged in English society, one that English people could accept.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 274.

¹²⁶ Fox, *Concerning the Antiquity of the People of God, Called Quakers*, 19.

Chapter V: Conclusion

A change in Quaker prophecy took place in the late 1600s, which influenced how and where prophesying took place and its role within the overall Quaker experience. Ecstatic prophecy, which was a distinctive feature of early Quaker behaviour, allowed all Friends to share God's message and urge a transformation of the English religious community that helped accomplish God's kingdom on Earth. The inward light inspired Friends to prophesy God's Truth in ecstatic and provocative ways, such as going naked or re-enacting biblical scenes. Ecstatic behaviour and prophecy were at the origin of the colloquial name 'Quaker' given to members of the Society of Friends by contemporary observers who saw them 'quake' from divine inspiration. The intense persecution of Cromwell's government forced Quakers, and its preeminent leader George Fox, to change their behaviour to help protect and preserve the Society of Friends. Fox's strategies included organizing Friends into a coherent sect with devout and recognizable members. Quakers had been a scattered and decentralized group of people who all believed in one aspect or another of the inward light. Fox came to believe that these scattered individuals had to be brought into one solid and structured movement, and made to follow a strict set of guidelines in order to survive the afflictions of the later seventeenth century. Fox targeted ecstatic prophecy as one of the leading causes for persecution and very early reforms sought to limit such exhibitions of spontaneity and dissent.

Fox as founder and early leader of Quakerism urged new converts to listen to their inward light and follow its guidance. It was necessary to follow every command of the inward light in order to become a Friend and a prophet of the Truth. Fox wrote pamphlets and letters to Friends to support their episodes of ecstatic prophecy and encourage them to

persevere in light of their arrests and imprisonment. Fox was convinced that only once all humans realized the presence of God in them, the world would be saved and God could establish His Kingdom on Earth. Women, children, and men were encouraged to travel and spread the word of the inward light, which allowed Quakers to become the most popular sect of the Civil War and Interregnum period.

As the number of Quakers increased by the mid 1650s, so too did the persecution against them. Although Fox did not argue for a complete overhaul of Quaker behaviour, he attempted to increase organization and to shift the scene of ecstatic prophecies to a more private setting. Quaker prophecy stood out from other contemporary practices and beliefs of divine inspiration and became an easy target for officials who were threatened by Quaker behaviour. Fox was afraid that the movement he founded in 1647 would disappear amidst these intense raids and chose to step up and become the leading Friend and organize the sect in a way that preserved his efforts.

James Nayler's attempt to recreate Jesus's Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem puzzled non-Quakers and some Quakers, too. For Quakers who continued to believe in the traditions of the early years, Nayler's behaviour was familiar. In fact, if Nayler had acted this way only a few years prior, Fox would have most likely supported him. Nayler's behaviour contrasted with Fox's new quest for respectability, not with original Quaker doctrine. The changes in what was considered acceptable behaviour for Quakers caused internal conflicts and the creation of opposing factions. Nayler represented, then, a radical faction, while Fox led the mainstream, popular faction of Quakers who agreed with his quest for respectability.

With Nayler imprisoned for three years, Fox worked to expand his authority, increased his traveling schedule, and worked to centralize power. It was in this period that

Fox insisted on stopping ecstatic behaviour and questioning its necessity in the overall Quaker experience. Fox questioned whether the mistreatment of Friends that usually followed ecstatic behaviour was necessary in the overall quest for God's Earthly Kingdom. Fox and Nayler reconnected before the latter's death in 1660, but Nayler's defiance during the fall of 1656 forever strained the relationship. Fox's goals and opinions had drastically changed from the period when the two men were partners, and Fox could never entirely forgive Nayler for damaging the Quakers' public reputation. Focusing on the Nayler affair, this chapter demonstrated the central role of prophecy within Fox's quest for respectability. Fox wanted to prevent behaviour such as Nayler's to further damage the public image of Quakerism. This chapter offered original insight into Fox's quest for respectability, his hostility towards ecstatic prophecy, and the importance of both in his reaction to Nayler's biblical re-enactment.

For over a decade Fox worked to establish himself as the leader of the movement he founded, and he was finally successful by the 1660s. The leadership position gave him control over the practices and theology of the movement, and allowed him to make changes as he saw fit. It was during these last decades of his life that Fox changed what prophecy represented in the broader Quaker doctrine. Prophecy no longer needed to be the demonstration of ecstatic and erratic behaviour in public settings. Rather, Fox received a prophetic revelation that led him to create the safe space of weekly meetings, where Friends gathered to share prophecies and to discuss issues concerning the Society of Friends. Fox's pamphlets and letters were read aloud during these meetings to remind Friends of the changing directives in the movement.

The changing role of prophecy altered the relationship between Friends and the rest of English society. Fox's quest for respectability sought to ameliorate the relationship

between Quakers and non-Quakers and stop the intense persecution Quakers had been suffering for years. Fox implemented rules that changed Quaker behaviour to conform to societal norms of the period, including denying women the freedom to travel and prophesy. Women were segregated into separate meetings and charged with managing a specific set of issues such as domestic and marital rules. Women retained a great deal more freedom in the Society of Friends than in any other denomination of the period, but by 1691 Fox nonetheless limited the possibilities of public and controversial exposure of Quaker women. Even with these attempts at respectability and conformity, Quakers remained the target of English authorities. Charles II and James II both promised Quakers religious toleration, but the Anglican authorities who wanted to eradicate any and all types of religious enthusiasm in England overpowered them. Even with their tamed and controlled prophecies, the Quaker claim to divine connection was too much for most contemporaries to understand and accept. England had suffered through Puritanical enthusiasm and refused to allow it to happen again.

George Fox successfully changed the unorganized, erratic, and decentralized group he founded in the 1640s and transformed it into a cohesive and stable movement that reached its goal of toleration a few years after the Glorious Revolution of 1689. Although Fox would not live to see this, he died as the unquestionable leader of the movement, who successfully changed the practice of prophecy from an erratic behaviour, to a practice of internal and external silence and private communication with God, all the while never denying or changing the importance of universal prophecy nor questioning the importance of the inward light in achieving salvation and communicating with the divine. Never has a study on early Quakerism followed prophecy from its beginnings to the end of Fox's life, mapping out its importance to both Fox and to our comprehension

of the Quaker quest for respectability. Ecstatic prophecy was a fundamental practice of early Quakerism and the goal of the quest for respectability was to eliminate this behaviour and any memory of it from English society. Revamping the Quaker public image meant changing what English people expected from Friends. In the 1650s, the English people expected Quakers to interrupt their church services, go naked in town markets, and prophesy ecstatically at any time. This thesis demonstrates that by 1691, the English people no longer expected this from Quakers, nor was ecstatic prophecy a topic of contention within Quaker ranks, or with English society more generally. The quest for respectability was largely successful in eliminating ecstatic prophecy from Quaker habits and in eliminating the memories from the minds of English subjects.

George Fox not only succeed in removing ecstatic behaviour from Quaker doctrine, he successfully changed entirely how Quakers understood prophecy. For Quakers in the 1650s the term ‘prophecy’ was synonymous with going naked, walking in a sackcloth, and a number of other controversial, erratic behaviours. But with the indoctrination pushed forward by Fox and others, Quakers came to understand and envision ‘prophecy’ in an entirely new and private way. This explains why Quakers continued to use the term prophecy to describe their private communication with the inward light although their public display of such communication had changed. Thus, this thesis contextualized Quaker prophecy as a physical, public practice as well as in the changing contemporary definition of the term itself.

This thesis contributes to and complicates not only the historiography of Quakerism but also the long and rich historiography of Christian prophecy. The Christian tradition of prophecy, reaching as far back as the Old Testament, has seen several different variations of the prophetic gift as well as an evolution in the practice throughout

the centuries. Dreams, visions, imagery, and symbolism have all left their mark on the Christian interpretations and understanding of prophecy. Quakers, a Christian denomination in their own right, were founded through a prophetic revelation, and continued to assign prophecy as a foundation within their theology. Yet Quaker prophecy is distinct from other types of Christian prophecy and deserves to be studied as such. It was a universal belief that all Quakers (male and female of all ages) were in direct connection with the divine, and could prophesy God's Word authentically and credibly. Quakers, furthermore, believed that all humans could connect with the divine. The ability was not limited to a select few as was the case in the Old Testament, New Testament, and patristic traditions, as well as in the Puritanical tradition; Quakerism was a tradition that deserves its own category and study within the broader Christian historiography.

Prophecy in other Christian traditions was mostly thought to be a special gift granted to very few members of society with special connections with the divine. Individuals who claimed to have received divine communication were scrutinized to prove the authenticity of their prophecies. Those who could not demonstrate the legitimacy of their prophecies were declared false prophets or even prophets of the Antichrist working to spread evil. Quakers, however, believed that God's spirit resided in all humans and that all could communicate with the divine by listening to their inward light. Prophecy was a universal possibility. Thus, this thesis offered not to rethink Christian or Quaker prophecy, but as suggested in the introduction, it sought to provide the Quaker prophetic tradition with its own position within the wider Christian historiography. The universal ability of Quakers to connect with the divine and their urgency to prophesy was an extremely rare occurrence in the history of Christian prophecy and deserves to be highlighted as such.

Rarely had such a popular and populous sect believed all its members capable of communicating directly with God and able to prophesy His authentic Word.

Apocalyptic thought, which shaped the prophetic messages of most Christian sects, was notably absent from Quaker prophecy, setting them even further apart from Christian tradition and contemporary non-conformists. Indeed, the prophetic abilities of Quakers were never connected to the imminent coming of the end times as generally understood, nor was the content of their prophecies. This is a major difference from the widespread millenarian anticipation that associated Charles I's regicide with the approaching arrival of the Antichrist and the return of Jesus. Millenarianism was the anticipation of the return of the Antichrist, based on Luther's interpretation of verse 20 from the *Book of Revelation*.¹ Fifth Monarchists believed that the "millennial kingdom could be hastened by their direct labour ... and radical activism."² Other sects also believed in the imminent return of Antichrist and their prophecies centered on the topic. Quaker prophecy, on the other hand, was positive and concerned with both daily and awesome events. The inward light guided Quakers in their ordinary, daily behaviour, as demonstrated throughout Fox's life. For Friends, prophecy was not about foretelling the coming apocalypse, it was also a daily ritual focused on their personal connection to God. Thus, the Quaker prophetic experience was significantly different than that of any other Civil War and Interregnum sect and deserved to be studied as such.

Still on a broader level, this thesis helps deepen our understanding of seventeenth-century religious radicalism. Radicalism in the seventeenth century became a visible

¹ Jeffrey K. Jue, "Puritan Millenarianism in old and New England." In *Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, edited by John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 261.

² *Ibid.*, 267.

action of dissent. Personal thoughts and beliefs were no longer the target of authorities. Quakerism by the 1690s was gaining in respectability and acceptance in English society. Yet, the Quakers' theology surrounding prophecy never changed. Their manifestation of prophecy changed from ecstatic to private, but the belief in its universality remained steadfast throughout the century, demonstrating perhaps that English society did not have issues with religious dissent per se, but with dissent that challenged their societal norms and power structures. In the 1680s, Quakers were persecuted for other visible signs of dissent, such as refusing to obey hat honour and refusing to swear oaths. Again, this persecution aligned with visible challenges to the normative traditions of society. Quaker prophesying was no longer the target of authorities once it was performed in closed, private meetings where only other Quakers were exposed to it. Radicalism was not necessarily a question of thought and belief, it was quickly becoming a question of what actions disturbed society, which demonstrates a step towards a more modern form of society. Radicalism was something visible and disturbing to others. The disappearance of ecstatic prophecy and the growing toleration of Quakers demonstrates and supports this claim.

In late seventeenth-century England, religious toleration was possible if religious dissenters outwardly conformed to societal norms of behaviour. The situation was very different from what it had been in the Reformation period, for example, when the beliefs of one individual were thought to influence the salvation of the entire community. It was thought that the heretical beliefs of one person could lead all members of society to be punished. With the Civil War period came an outpouring of religious dissent, and the idea that salvation was a private and individualistic matter. Indeed, Scott Sowerby's book *Making Toleration: The Repealers and the Glorious Revolution* reveals James II's efforts

to implement religious toleration in the late 1680s. Although he did not succeed, religious toleration for Protestants was introduced soon after England's Glorious Revolution of 1689. Both Sowerby's book and this project find that policies of the late seventeenth century sought to control behaviour and not beliefs. It was no longer realistic for authorities to seek control of their subjects' personal faith and religious opinions due to the sheer number of different beliefs and denominations by the end of the seventeenth century. Hence, Quaker prophecy stopped being a target of English authorities because it disappeared from the public setting, not because Quakers stopped prophesying. Fox understood this as early as the mid-1650s and worked, from then on, to protect Friends from their own ecstatic behaviour. Fox sought religious toleration once he realized he could never convert the masses to Quakerism but also wanted Quakerism to survive the Restoration period. Ecstatic prophecy was early Quakerism's most public and controversial practice, and by eliminating it Fox hoped Quakers would conform enough to English society to stop its persecution.

The quest for respectability had unintentional repercussions on Quaker prophecy. Perhaps accidentally, Quakers adopted the tradition of other Christian denominations, going back to the medieval period. By the 1670s and 1680s Quakers came to judge the legitimacy of prophecies on the behaviour and the attitude of the prophet. Prophesying remained a fundamental belief in Quakerism, and was still universal among its members, but prophets who did not comply with the new Quaker guidelines could be disavowed by authorities who declared them ill guided spirits. Authorities in the Society of Friends realized that it was indeed difficult to supervise and control members who were all individually inspired to follow the inward light. Quaker leaders finally agreed with English authorities who had expressed exactly this concern in the 1650s when ecstatic

prophecy was prevalent. Fox's success in establishing authority allowed him to set guidelines for the proper behaviour of those he considered true Quakers and to discipline those who did not conform. The meetings and censorship group were organized to implement and enforce new doctrines. Fox disavowed Friends who did not believe in his rules and guidelines and branded them as illegitimate Friends. This quest for respectability made the Society of Friends more proper in the eyes of English society but changed the sect's radical nature. Quakers no longer engaged in ecstatic prophecy that shocked and offended members of English society; women were no longer encouraged to travel alone or speak publicly on religious matters; meetings were organized, ritualized in a familiar manner to English authorities, all of which allowed Quakers to gain the respect or at least toleration of English society. It also brought a conformity to Christian traditions that was probably unanticipated by Fox in the 1660s.

When considering Quaker historiography more specifically, this thesis helped explain the origins of the modern Quaker meeting. The transition from ecstatic prophecy to divinely guided and organized meetings mapped the way for the modern Society of Friends' weekly worship gatherings. Fox worked to centralize and restrict the exhibition of Quaker prophecies to their Sunday meetings, where it was safe for Friends to demonstrate such behaviour. Today, Quakers gather in silent meetings and wait for the inspiration of the inward light to guide their addresses to other members of the community. The Society of Friends has no trained preachers or ministers, and no one to lead their worship; all members attend on equal grounds and all are welcome to speak when the inward light urges them to. This model of organization of the Society of Friends has its roots in Fox's quest for respectability and his shifting attitude towards the display of prophecy, as demonstrated throughout this thesis. Indeed, early Quakers who had a

tendency to quake during meetings, saw a complete overhaul in their experience as Quakers. Quakers gradually let go of their habit of quaking to make room for organized, peaceful, and silent meetings, where the inward light took center stage and allowed Friends to share their prophecies amongst themselves.

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