The Case of the Distracted Maid: Healing and Cursing in Early Quaker History

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Abstract

This article examines a little-known incident connected with the arrest and imprisonment of Quaker preacher Humphry Smith and two companions in Hampshire in 1658. Smith's visit to a sick woman resulted in an accusation of cursing against him, despite the fact that she recovered. The first part of the article examines the circumstances surrounding the case, the significance of the cursing accusation to the imprisonment of the three men, and whether the woman's recovery can be classified as a healing. The second part of the article considers how this case relates to the wider context of healing and cursing in the mid seventeenth century.

Keywords

cursing, Hampshire, healing, Humphry Smith, mental illness, sufferings.

Introduction

In February 1658, the Quaker preacher Humphry (or Humphrey) Smith arrived in the Hampshire market town of Ringwood. On coming to the town he was asked to visit a house nearby where a maidservant lay sick, apparently from some form of mental illness. Although Smith never actually claimed that he had healed her, following his visit the young woman recovered. A hostile witness later claimed that Humphry Smith had, in fact, cursed her. Humphry Smith and two fellow-Quakers, William Bayly and Anthony Melledge (or Mellidge), were imprisoned shortly thereafter, apparently on an unrelated charge, and remained in the county gaol in Winchester for over a year.[1]

1 Smith, H., *The Fruits of Unrighteousnes and Injustice*, London: 1658, pp. 8–11; Smith, H., *The true and everlasting Rule from God discovered… Whereunto is added the unjust proceedings of*

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The first part of this article will discuss how the case of the maidservant relates to the imprisonment of Humphry Smith and his colleagues. The second part will discuss how this case reflects attitudes to healing and cursing in the mid-seventeenth century, especially when related to Quakers.

The Case of Mary Hinton and the Imprisonment of Humphry Smith

The first mention of the case of the maidservant comes from *The True and everlasting Rule,* a collection of Humphry Smith's writings while he was in gaol. Here, he wrote briefly that he was falsely accused by one Jaye, 'a very bad man', of saying 'I curse thee' to a young woman.[2] But that does not appear to have been the reason for his imprisonment, for he also wrote that he had come to Ringwood to hold a meeting, and that officers were already waiting for him with a warrant for his arrest should he do so.[3] The principal concern of the authorities appears to have been the forthcoming meeting, not the allegation of cursing. Smith had stated to Friends with him that there was no expectation of him escaping prison if he went to the meeting.[4] But to absent himself was not an option.

> I [was] not willing to leave any thing as a clog behind me, to follow after me as a burthen, whereby the living truth of my Father (which is more to me by much, then [*sic*] my outward liberty of life) should in any measure suffer; therefore I submitted to the trials, and gave up my body to suffer.[5]

In the event, Humphry Smith was not arrested until the morning following the meeting, and eventually, after being detained for a night in a local inn, taken before a local magistrate, John Bulkley.

As a justice of the peace, Bulkley was responsible for keeping the peace, and the activities of itinerant Quaker preachers were potentially disruptive of it. The previous year, 1657, had seen the beginnings of a crackdown on religious dissent in Hampshire, with Quakers and Roman Catholics bearing the brunt of it.[6] For the Quakers, this may have been at least partly the result of the controversy surrounding the affair of James Nayler in 1656.[7] What affected itinerant Quaker

John Bulkley (Wing S4083A), London: 1658, pp. 35–38; Roberts, S. K., 'Smith, Humphry (bap. 1624, d. 1663)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25818, accessed 27/03/2014.

2 Smith, *True and everlasting Rule*, p. 35. There appear to be two editions of this work, Wing S4083 and Wing S4083A. It is Wing S4083A that includes 'the unjust proceedings of John Bulkley', and it is this edition that has been used throughout this article.

3 Smith, *True and everlasting Rule*, p. 35.

4 Smith, *True and everlasting Rule*, pp. 35–39.

5 Smith, *True and everlasting Rule*, p. 35.

6 Coleby, A. M., *Central Government and the Localities: Hampshire 1649–1689*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 61–63.

7 Moore, R., *The Light in their Consciences: early Quakers in Britain 1646–1666*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, p. 43.

preachers in particular was the strengthening in 1657 of the law against vagrancy, but even local Quakers in Hampshire were arrested and gaoled.[8] The surviving correspondence of the Secretary of State John Thurloe is evidence that the activities of travelling Quakers such as Humphry Smith were a problem for the authorities throughout the country.[9] There were even fears in Hampshire that the Quakers had an insurrectionist agenda. On 29 December 1657, only a few weeks prior to Humphry Smith's arrival in the county, one of Thurloe's Hampshire correspondents had written to him to let him know that a Southampton Quaker had allegedly predicted 'that ere long we should have our bellies full of blood'. Another Southampton Quaker was said to have a substantial store of arms.[10]

Though there seems to have been no suggestion that Humphry Smith and his companions were insurrectionists, John Bulkley could not, as a magistrate, ignore the activities of Smith and other Quakers, particularly as Smith already had an established reputation as a preacher. Originally from Herefordshire, he had travelled extensively since his conversion to Quakerism, and had already been imprisoned for his activities in Worcestershire and in Exeter by the time he arrived in Ringwood.[11]

Bulkley used his authority to get Humphry Smith imprisoned in Winchester gaol along with Smith's companions, Anthony Melledge and William Bayly. Conditions in the gaol were grim, and it seems that shortly before the trial of the three men at the assizes Bulkley was minded to speak to the judge to have them released. But he was persuaded against this by 'one Ellis of Winchester', a priest, and in consequence Bulkley, according to Smith, 'uttered many things against us, much that was false, and not a Word for us'. The three men remained in prison.[12]

The mittimus committing the three men to gaol had mentioned unspecified 'misdemeanors'. No specific charge was made against them, nor was the accusation of cursing mentioned.[13] As Smith later wrote that Melledge and Bayly 'were sent to prison with me as Wanderers', it seems that the charge against them was one of vagrancy.[14] The legality of this where William Bayly was concerned

8 Coleby, *Central Government*, pp. 61–63. For the Isle of Wight, see Hooper, P., *'Our Island' in War and Commonwealth*, Chale: Cross Publishing, 1998, pp. 88–89.

9 Thurloe, J., *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Esq.*, in Birch, T., (ed.), 7 vols., London: 1742. On Quakers and their alleged activities in and around Hampshire, see, for example, vol. iv, pp. 408, 531, 642–43; vol. v, pp. 287, 396–97; vol. vi, pp. 710–11.

10 Thurloe, *State Papers*, vol. vi, pp. 710–11.

11 Roberts, 'Smith, Humphry (bap. 1624, d. 1663)', http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25818, accessed 27/03/2014.

12 Smith, *True and Everlasting Rule*, pp. 37–38. It seems likely that 'Ellis' was Humphrey Ellis, minister of the parish of St Thomas in Winchester; see Matthews, A. G., *Calamy Revised: being a revision of Edmund Calamy's 'Account' of the ministers and others ejected and silenced, 1660–2*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934, p. 182.

13 Smith, *Fruits of Unrighteousnes*, p. 8.

14 Smith, *True and everlasting Rule*, p. 39.

was questionable, since he had been born in the parish where he was arrested, and where his grandmother was still living.[15] Bayly was now living in the town of Poole in Dorset, and claimed he had been passing through Ringwood on his way to Southampton.[16] The charge of vagrancy against Anthony Melledge was also debatable; he had been travelling with goods from Poole, passing through Ringwood on his way to do business in London.[17] The three men could have been released, had they promised to return to their homes, and forbear from any itinerant preaching activities. As a point of principle they refused, and so continued prisoners.[18]

Although Humphry Smith had briefly mentioned that he had been falsely accused of cursing a maidservant in the aforementioned volume, *The True and everlasting Rule*, the details of the incident involving the maidservant are known from a single-sheet tract dated 'the 5th day of the 2nd month 1659' (i.e. 5 April 1659), *The defence of Humphrey Smith, Anthony Melledge, and William Bayley*. By this time the three men had been in prison over a year. The tract is a collection of testimonies from Smith and his supporters, written with the intent of refuting the allegation that Smith had cursed the maidservant. Her name, Mary Hinton, is given under one of the supporting testimonies in the tract, as is that of her father, Thomas Hinton.[19] Little else is known of her, but an entry in the Ringwood parish registers on 8 October 1634 recorded the baptism of Thomas and Mary, children of Thomas Hinton. This may be the same Mary Hinton and a twin brother.[20] What ailed her is not precisely described in the tract, but she is variously described as a 'distracted' or 'distempered' maid, and the implication is that she was suffering from some form of mental illness.[21]

In Humphry Smith's testimony in the tract, he made no claim to have healed her. He only denied having cursed her. Anthony Melledge's evidence also made no comment on any healing. It is only from the joint testimony of four local Quaker

15 Smith, *True and everlasting Rule*, p 39.

16 Smith, *True and everlasting Rule*, p. 39. William Bayly was travelling to Southampton on business, but also to visit Friends in prison in the town, so his arrest may have been occasioned by the fact that he was already a known Quaker.

17 Smith, *True and everlasting Rule*, p. 39.

18 Smith, *True and everlasting Rule*, p. 39; Smith, *Fruits of unrighteousnes*, pp. 8–15.

19 Smith, H., Melledge, A., and Bayley, W., *The defence of Humphery Smith, Anthony Melledge, and William Bayley against several false accusations cast upon them by John Bunkley, for which they yet remain in Prison at Winchester*, [s.l.]: 1659. The name of the witness is given in this account as 'Stephen Jaye', and he is described as the maidservant's employer. In Smith, *True and everlasting Rule*, p. 35, his name is given as 'W. Jaye'.

20 Hampshire Record Office (hereafter HRO) Transcripts of 22M84/PR1 Ringwood parish records: Register of baptisms 1561–1683, marriages 1561–1683 and burials 1561–[1683/4]. The original register is available only on microfiche. The transcripts were checked against the microfiche but the quality of the microfiche made it impossible to confirm the accuracy of the transcript.

21 Smith, Melledge and Bayley, *Defence*.

women that there is evidence of a possible healing. The four women testified that since Humphry Smith's visit Mary Hinton became 'sencible and sober'. But their evidence is ambiguous; it could be read as a claim that Humphry Smith healed her, but equally it could be read as a plain statement of fact that she subsequently got better. The relationship between Smith's visit and Mary Hinton's recovery was not necessarily a causal one. Not even Mary Hinton herself, nor her father, in their testimonies in support of Humphry Smith and his co-defendants printed in the tract, claimed explicitly that Smith healed her, although it is clear that she recovered from her indisposition. It is possible that Smith did not wish to have any attempts made to attribute a healing to him; indeed, it was noted by the four women Quakers that he only came to visit the maid 'after some perswasions'.[22]

John Bulkley, the magistrate, did not accuse Humphrey Smith, or his companions, of any unauthorised activities with regard to healing the young woman. Rather, according to this tract, he seems to have accused Humphry Smith of having cursed her, his evidence based upon the hostile witness of the maid's employer, Stephen Jaye. It was further alleged that to Smith's cursing of the young woman, Anthony Melledge replied 'Amen'. This he refuted. The role of William Bayly remained unspecified, and he denied having been present.[23] Since the maid recovered, the accusation of cursing appears odd, and the reasons behind it remain unexplained. It may have been motivated by unexplained malice. It is also possible that Jaye was trying hastily to distance himself from Quakers after Smith's arrest, having earlier welcomed Friends into his house to visit the maid.[24] A further consideration is that the testimony of the four women noted that the maid had 'a filthy thing then ruling in her'.[25] It is conceivable that Smith did utter the curse that Jaye claimed he did, but that Smith's words were directed at the 'filthy thing', not the maid herself. But to admit this would have left Smith open to a charge of attempted exorcism, which could have been seriously damaging to the reputation of Friends.

However, the cursing accusation is not a feature of the men's prison writings, and this may be because it was fairly marginal to their imprisonment; most of the three men's writings about their situation concern irregularities in the legal proceedings, complaints about the conditions in the gaol and assertions of their right to be at liberty without having to agree to go quietly to their homes and usual occupations. This is made clear in a letter from John Bulkley to William Bayly (undated, early 1658), which the three men published in a volume of their writings later that year. Bulkley wrote:

> William Bayly, I take no delight in your imprisonment, but shall be ready to take… any fit persons security for your abode at home, without wandering abroad

22 Smith, Melledge and Bayley, *Defence*.
23 Smith, Melledge and Bayley, *Defence*.
24 Smith, Melledge and Bayley, *Defence*.
25 Smith, Melledge and Bayley, *Defence*.

> as a Teacher, to which you have no warrantable call, but onely to follow your honest and Lawful occasions, which you have a freedome to do… your refusal to give a ready and free account of your place of abode, accompanied with termes of high disrespect, and contempt to Authority, brought you under commitment… if you belong to God, I trust in due time he will rescue you from the Spirit of error, you lye under, to which shall be contributed my prayers, and Christian endeavours.[26]

The replies of Smith, Melledge and Bayly to the magistrate were also reproduced in the publication, and among the points they made was an accusation that Bulkley had obtained an order to keep them in prison,

> until we promise to go (or stay at) home, thou knowing from us, that we cannot make that promise, and if thou wouldest make mens own houses their Prisons, by confining them thereunto, and not go forth upon their occasions, then should we lose that right and liberty which we long fought for.[27]

The last line, 'we long fought for', was not mere rhetoric; William Bayly had been a soldier for Parliament, and Anthony Melledge had seen action at sea against the Dutch.[28]

Shortly after the publication of the tract about the alleged cursing the three men were released. According to the manuscript book of Quaker sufferings in Hampshire, the men were in gaol for one year and two months, and were released by a Committee of Parliament.[29] As the mittimus committing them to gaol had been issued in February 1658, they would have been released in April or May 1659. William Bayly was certainly at liberty by June 1659, as he was by then preaching in Buckinghamshire.[30]

Healing and Cursing in Early Quaker History

Despite Humphry Smith's reticence in claiming that he in any way healed Mary Hinton, early Quakers did occasionally claim healing miracles. Miracles could be seen as testifying to the coming of the Holy Spirit among them. As the Quaker scholar Henry J. Cadbury wrote:

> They testified to the contemporary coming of the Spirit among them in a manner comparable to New Testament times. Visions, insights and prophecies were vouchsafed to them which the event proved to have been true. They recognized Divine providence in their escapes from danger and Divine vengeance in the

26 Smith, *et al.*, *Fruits of unrighteousnes*, p. 9.
27 Smith, *et al.*, *Fruits of unrighteousnes*, p. 12.
28 Smith, *True and everlasting Rule*, pp. 39–40; Mellidge, A., *A True Relation*, [s.l.]: [1656], p. 3.
29 HRO 24M54/14 Hampshire Quarterly Meeting: Book of Sufferings, 1655–1792, fol. 4r–v.
30 Bayly, W., *A short discovery of the state of man before the fall*, London: 1659.

> disasters of their foes. A power to cure could be accepted as no more supernatural than these other recognized phenomena.[31]

Jane Shaw, in *Miracles in Enlightenment England*, states that the Seekers, from whom Quakers drew many of their early converts, waited in anticipation of a leader who would restore the primitive, apostolic Church. This expectation meant that miraculous healings, rather than being viewed with suspicion, could be seen as visible signs of divine authority and approval on those who performed such acts.[32]

A belief in miracles was not, however, universal in seventeenth-century England. Alexandra Walsham has written that Protestant divines maintained that the age of miracles had passed, as they sought to differentiate their faith from Catholicism and establish their credentials as a movement founded on Scripture rather than superstition. Yet there remained a tension in popular culture between Protestant rationalism and the language of miracles which was still used to describe otherwise inexplicable events.[33]

Though some believed miracles could be a sign of the true Church, they were not necessarily a sign of divine approval. Rosemary Moore notes that they could be seen as evidence of witchcraft or popery.[34] Quakers would have read in their Bibles of the sorcerer Simon, who had acquired a following by his performance of signs and wonders that were not of the Holy Spirit.[35] Fox cautioned that those who 'prayed by the spirit, and spake by the spirit' did not always show miracles 'at the Tempters command'.[36] The young George Whitehead was challenged in Norwich in 1655 to produce a sign or miracle as the apostles had done, or to speak with tongues.

> I answered him, according to the Apostle *Paul*'s Words in that Case, I *Cor.* Xii. Speaking of the *Diversities of Gifts given by one and the same Spirit*, as I told him, all who had the Spirit of Christ, had not all those Gifts, as that *of Tongues and Miracles*, for to one is given *the Word of Wisdom*; *to another the Word of Knowledge*; *to another Faith*; *to another working of Miracles*; *to another Prophesy*; *to another divers kings of Tongues*; *to another Interpretation of Tongues*, &c. yet all by the same Spirit, *i.e.* the Spirit and Power of Christ.[37]

31 Cadbury, H. J. (ed.), *George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'*, Philadelphia, PA: Friends General Conference; London: Quaker Home Service, 2000, pp. 4–5.

32 Shaw, J., *Miracles in Enlightenment England*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 55.

33 Walsham, A., 'Miracles in post-Reformation England', in Cooper, K., and Gregory, J., (eds), *Signs, Wonders, Miracles: representations of divine power in the life of the Church; papers read at the 2003 Summer Meeting and the 2004 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005, pp. 273–306.

34 Moore, R., 'Late Seventeenth-century Quakerism and the Miraculous: a new look at George Fox's "Book of Miracles"', in Cooper and Gregory (eds), *Signs, Wonders, Miracles*, pp. 335–44.

35 Acts 8:9–25.

36 Fox, G., *The Great Mistery of the Great Whore Unfolded*, London: 1659, p. 3.

37 Whitehead, G., *The Christian Progress of that Ancient Servant and Minister of Jesus Christ,*

Early Quakers were advised to consider their 'leadings' carefully, and submit them to the discernment of other Friends.[38] But this did not entirely stop over-enthusiastic Quakers from rash claims, and these could rebound on the movement. As Rosemary Moore has commented, opponents of Quakerism could use any evidence of alleged miracles to discredit the sect.[39] Dorcas Erbury famously claimed at the trial of James Nayler that he raised her from the dead in Exeter prison, even though Nayler himself made no such claim.[40] The detrimental effect on the Quaker movement of that trial for blasphemy, following his ride through Bristol in October 1656, is well known.[41] Susanna Pearson's unsuccessful attempt to bring a dead man to life was used at the time as a charge against Quakers, even though George Fox considered the incident 'mad whimsey'.[42]

This may have led to a reticence in the 1650s in claiming such cures, or even attempting them, and much of what is known about Quaker healings in the 1650s was recorded by Friends some years later. George Fox's unpublished 'Book of Miracles' contains numerous entries of cures attributed to him. But it was probably not completed until 1689, two years before Fox's death, and many of the entries are not known from any other source. Furthermore, although Fox left instructions that it should be published after his death, the manuscript was lost or destroyed, and all that survives is a summary list of the miracles. Henry J. Cadbury suggested that Fox's executors were concerned that the publication of miracle healings by Fox could be ridiculed by his detractors.[43] Furthermore, by the time of Fox's death in 1691 the later, intellectual, Quaker leaders no longer considered miracles to be of great importance.[44] Fox's Journal contains accounts of miracles performed in the 1650s, but Fox did not dictate the main manuscript of his Journal until 1676, following an earlier Short Journal dictated in 1664.[45]

George Fox, although he did not see himself primarily as a healer, did practise both spiritual and physical healing as part of his ministry, and Amanda Lawrence has commented that he showed much empathy in cases of mental distress.[46] His healings of those suffering mental illness were, according to Jane Shaw, not by

George Whitehead, London: 1725, pp. 55–56.

38 Barbour, H., *The Quakers in Puritan England*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1964, pp. 119–20.

39 Moore, 'Late Seventeenth-century Quakerism', p. 337.

40 Cadbury, *George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'*, p. 5.

41 Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, p. 43.

42 Cadbury, *George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'*, p. 12; William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, rev. edn, Sessions: York, 1981, p. 391; Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England*, p. 119, spells the comment 'mad whimesye', and attributes it to 'a Friend' rather than Fox.

43 Cadbury, *George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'*, pp. 34–35. See also Moore, 'Late Seventeenth-century Quakerism'.

44 Moore, 'Late Seventeenth-century Quakerism', p. 340.

45 Moore, 'Late Seventeenth-century Quakerism', p. 341.

46 Lawrence, A., 'Quakerism and Approaches to Mental Affliction: a comparative study of George Fox and William Tuke', *Quaker Studies* 15 (2011), pp. 152–226.

means of dramatic exorcisms, but by quiet words and prayer.[47] Fox recorded several incidents of healing in his *Journal*. For example, he recorded that in 1649 he healed a 'distracted woman' in Nottinghamshire. She was bound, and Fox asked the people with her to unbind her. 'So they did unbind her;' he wrote, 'and I was moved to speak to her in the name of the Lord to bid her be quiet and still, and she was so. The Lord's power settled her mind, and she mended and afterwards received the Truth, and continued in it to her death.'[48] A later healing concerned a woman from Chichester in Sussex who 'went distracted', but who was settled in her mind after Fox prayed for her. As with the Nottinghamshire woman, Fox attributed this success to the power of God, and not to any supernatural abilities of his own.[49] Fox was able to perform acts of healing on himself too; after being attacked with a stick, his hand and arm were badly injured, but, as he wrote in his *Journal*, 'the Lord's power sprang through me, and through my hand and arm' and he was healed.[50]

Although the greatest number of early Quaker healings were attributed to Fox, he did not have, or claim, a monopoly on healing. His disciple Richard Farnworth wrote to him in 1652 claiming to have healed a woman in Chesterfield of a fever.[51] Fox himself recorded the case of a Gloucestershire Quaker, Mary Atkins, who healed a Presbyterian woman after doctors were unable to help her.[52]

Faith healing was not unique to Quakers. The touch of the reigning monarch was reputed to cure scrofula, or the 'King's Evil'. Even during his imprisonment, prior to his execution in 1649, divine powers were still being attributed to Charles I, and people came to seek his healing touch.[53] The burial records of the Hampshire parish of West Worldham recorded in 1657 the death of a woman touched by the king during his detention at Hampton Court in 1647. He gave her a coin which she wore as an amulet, and only when she ceased wearing it did the disease break out again and she died.[54] A pamphlet published in 1648 claimed that while imprisoned on the Isle of Wight in the October of that year he had cured many people, not only for scrofula but also those afflicted with lameness and blindness.[55]

After Charles II was restored to his throne in 1660, he would touch many thousands of people in the course of his reign. These included, in Hampshire, an

47 Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England*, pp. 53–54.

48 Fox, G., *The Journal of George Fox*, Nickalls, J. L. (ed.), Philadelphia, PA: Religious Society of Friends, 1997, pp. 43–44.

49 Fox, *Journal*, p. 230.

50 Quoted in Cadbury, *George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'*, p. ix.

51 Cadbury, *George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'*, p. 9; Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, p. 131; Friends House Library Swarthmore MS 1.372.

52 Cadbury, *George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'*, p. 9.

53 Thomas, K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973, p. 233.

54 HRO 29M79/PR1 West Worldham parish: parish registers 1653–1812, fol. 17v.

55 Taylor, J., *Tailors Travels from London to the Isle of Wight*, [London]: 1648, pp. 10–12.

unnamed Winchester Quaker. The man was so grateful at having been cured of his affliction that he went to Winchester Cathedral to give thanks, and became a loyal member of the Established Church.[56]

Healing by touch was not unique to royalty. Valentine Greatrakes, an Irish landowner, was nicknamed 'the Stroker' for his practice of healing by touch. Such was his reputation that in the 1660s people would travel from England to be healed by him.[57] However, his healing abilities were limited. On a visit to England he was invited to heal the son of the former Parliamentarian Bulstrode Whitelocke. The boy was lame following an accident and an earlier unsuccessful attempt by a bonesetter, but Greatrakes told Whitelocke that he was unable to help his son.[58]

Healers, whether successful or unsuccessful, were not necessarily able to practise with impunity. In May 1660, Elinor Burt was summoned before the Justices of the Peace in Worcester to answer charges that she had laid her hands on people and prayed for them when they were sick; she admitted this, but in her defence argued that people came to her for this, for she had a gift from God for it, and she used no other means but good prayers.[59]

Although the practice of banishing evil spirits by exorcism in the Church of England had been expressly forbidden in 1604, the Established Church could not banish the lay belief that insanity could be caused by evil spirits.[60] This belief was also held by Protestant nonconformist ministers, who practised prayer and fasting to heal psychological disorders. For example, a late seventeenth-century Surrey man was treated by a doctor, a cunning man and two Catholic priests before he was apparently healed by a team of nonconformist divines who cured him by prayer and fasting.[61]

Prayers for healing might be made at a more private and personal level, and did not necessarily involve supplications for release from evil spirits. Goodwin Wharton, landowner and politician, believed he had saved the life of a mortally ill friend through his prayers.[62] Keith Thomas, in his classic text *Religion and the*

56 Browne, J., *Adenochoiradelogia* (London, 1684), bk. III, pp. 172–73, quoted in Cadbury, *George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'*, pp. 67–68.

57 Elmer, P., 'Greatrakes, Valentine (1629–1683)', http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11367, accessed 27/03/2014.

58 Whitelocke, B., *The Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke*, Spalding, R., (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1990, pp. 696, 704.

59 Mendelson, S., and Crawford, P., *Women in Early Modern England, 1550–1720*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, p. 69.

60 Porter, R., *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: a history of madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency*, London: Athlone, 1987, p. 173.

61 Michael MacDonald, 'Religion, Social Change, and Psychological Healing in England, 1600–1800', in Sheils, W. J., (ed.), *The Church and Healing: papers read at the twentieth summer meeting and the twenty-first winter meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, pp. 101–25.

62 Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, pp. 247–49; see also Porter, R., 'Wharton, Goodwin

Decline of Magic, notes that numerous instances of successful prayer are recorded in the journals and biographies of seventeenth-century divines. Thomas' examples from this period include prayers that were credited with saving the lives of a woman dying of jaundice, a woman who nearly died in childbirth and a girl critically ill with intestinal problems.[63] But not all attempted healings were successful. There had been Susanna Pearson's failure to raise a man from the dead. Three years earlier, in 1654, Francis Howgill had written to George Fox after he and Edward Burrough failed to heal a lame boy in London [64]

The earliest printed accounts of Quaker healing miracles come from anti-Quaker sources, and describe failed or pretended healings. In *A Brief Relation of the Irreligion of the Northern Quakers*, published in 1653, Francis Higginson contemptuously described an attempted, but unsuccessful, healing by George Fox of a crippled man.[65] In 1656, a Norfolk minister, Jonathan Clapham, described several Quaker miracles, which he dismissed as 'lying signes and wonders'.[66] Rosemary Moore states in her study *A Light in their Consciences* that there are no published accounts from the 1650s by Quakers claiming to have performed specific healing miracles. Claims of such miracles were published, but later.[67] The case of Mary Hinton does not necessarily contradict this. The published tract is largely about rebutting the accusation of cursing. As discussed above, the only testimony that could be interpreted as a claim of healing is ambiguous, and, furthermore, it is not from the healer, nor from the healed.

The evidence of George Fox's 'Book of Miracles' is also ambiguous, since what survives is not sufficient to enable a confident identification of the case of Mary Hinton among its entries. As the possibility of it being a case of healing is known only from an ambiguously worded testimony in the aforementioned tract, it may not have been among the original entries. Nevertheless, there is one possible entry, referring to 'a maid that was distracted… made her well'.[68] Henry J. Cadbury's work on the entries in the 'Book of Miracles' enabled him to identify a number of the miracles from Fox's *Journal*, and other manuscripts and publications by Fox and other Friends. But there is no information forthcoming about this entry. The healing of this distracted maid may have been another healing by Fox, but the possibility remains that this entry refers to Mary Hinton, since she was described as 'distracted' in *The defence*.

(1653–1704)', rev., http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38118, accessed 27/03/2014.

63 Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 136.

64 Cadbury, *George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'*, p. 11; Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, pp. 27, 131; Friends House Library A. R. Barclay MS 21.

65 Higginson, F., *A Brief Relation of the Irreligion of the Northern Quakers*, London: 1653, p. 29.

66 Clapham, J., *A Full Discovery and Confutation Of the wicked and damnable Doctrines of the Quakers*, London: 1656, pp. 44–48.

67 Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, pp. 131–32.

68 Cadbury, *George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'*, p. 108.

But what of the accusation that Humphry Smith cursed the young woman? A curse is a wish, expressed in words, that evil may befall a person. It could be directed against activities, such as fishing, events, such as a wedding, or objects, such as ships or animals; even places could be cursed, but persons remained the main target of curses. As Keith Thomas noted in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, acts of cursing were a weapon of the poor and oppressed.[69] But it was not limited to them. In the Commonwealth period, radical Protestants did pronounce judgment upon others.[70] The Muggletonian sect became particularly well known for cursing, and in the early 1660s, Lodowicke Muggleton claimed that he and his fellow prophet John Reeve had cursed nearly one thousand people over a period of ten years.[71] Some years later he would declare to a group of Quakers that cursing did him more good 'than if a Man had given him Forty Shillings'.[72]

Perhaps in consequence it was not unknown for radical groups to be accused of evil acts or *maleficia* by their enemies, even though formal indictments for witchcraft were rare. There are many examples of Quakers being accused of such acts, although some allegations may be more indicative of attempts to discredit them rather than of a genuine fear. Robert Dingly, a parish priest on the Isle of Wight, is said to have burnt a letter from two Quakers he had caused to be imprisoned, saying that, 'he would try whether it were bewitched or the Devil in it'.[73] A Suffolk woman was allegedly possessed by an evil spirit after reading Quaker pamphlets.[74] Quakers arrested in Sherborne, Dorset in September 1659 apparently confessed to having bewitched two ministers of the town, one of whom died from the painful disease they inflicted upon him.[75] Tracts denouncing sorcery had been issued by Richard Farnworth in 1655 and by George Fox in 1657.[76] But the evidence would suggest that they do not appear to have been wholly successful in halting such accusations.

It could be said that Quakers ran a risk in attracting charges of cursing, since they recorded with some satisfaction the judgment of God upon their enemies. The manuscript book of Friends' sufferings in Hampshire, recording the persecutions of Quakers in the county, noted the example of the priest of the village of Baughurst who less than a week after distraining the goods of a Quaker

69 Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 29.

70 Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 602.

71 Reay, B., 'The Muggletonians: an introductory survey', in Hill, C., Reay, B., and Lamont, W., *The World of the Muggletonians*, London: Temple Smith, 1983, pp. 23–63.

72 Gratton, J., *A Journal of the Life of that Ancient Servant of Christ, John Gratton*, London: 1720, p. 74.

73 Smith, *Fruits of unrighteousnes*, p. 29.

74 Walsham, A., *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006, pp. 146–47.

75 Blome, R., *The Fanatick History: or An Exact Relation and Account of the Old Anabaptists, and New Quakers*, London: 1660, pp. 117–18; Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, pp. 146–47.

76 Davies, O., *Cunning Folk: popular magic in English history*, London: Hambledon and London, 2003, p. 37.

farmer for non-payment of tithes was thrown from his horse, broke his neck and died.[77] The same source recorded that Robert Wallop, a Hampshire gentleman who spoke against Quakers, suffered a disastrous fire which destroyed four thousand pounds' worth of goods and property. In 1659, Edward Belling printed a number of such 'Examples', some of which had been collected by Humphry Smith.[78] Religious writings could be heavily judgmental and appear to predict misfortune for the wicked. Humphry Smith, while in gaol in Winchester, issued a number of pamphlets, among them *An alarum sounding forth unto all the inhabitants of the earth*, in which he wrote:

> [W]o to the inhabitants of the earth for ever, wo to the proud and lofty ones, wo to all the hard hearted, abominable and unbelieving… the life of the just cryes for vengeance upon your head, the glittering sword of the Most High is drawn to cut you down for ever, the Ax to the very root shall now come, and root and branch shall be cut off for ever.[79]

William Bayly wrote to John Bulkley to tell him that his actions would be 'as a Millstone about thy Neck, and as a fiery Flaming Worm to eat thy Flesh'.[80] It is perhaps not wholly surprising that Quakers were sometimes accused of cursing.

What is curious about this particular case is that while the imprisonment of the three men is mentioned in the Hampshire sufferings book there is no mention of the alleged cursing of Mary Hinton.[81] This article has already discussed how it was marginal to the imprisonment of Smith, Melledge and Bayly; it may also be that, with its faint scent of sorcery, it was embarrassing to the Quakers of the 1670s, when the Hampshire sufferings book was first compiled (the earlier sufferings were entered retrospectively). When a collection of Humphry Smith's writings was issued in 1683, some twenty years after his death, it did not include *The defence*, nor the edition of *The true and everlasting Rule* which included Smith's account of his arrest at Ringwood and Jaye's accusation.[82] Joseph Besse included the imprisonment of the three men in his 1753 collection of Quaker sufferings, but did not mention the case of Mary Hinton.[83] A search of Quaker writings of the period might uncover further mentions of the case, but none has been discovered to date. It remains possible that something was made of it by opponents

77 HRO 24M54/14, fols 16v, 18r.

78 Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, p. 160.

79 Smith, H., *An alarum sounding forth unto all the inhabitants of the earth*, London, 1658, p. 3.

80 Bayly, W., 'A letter to John Bulkley', in Bayly, W., *A Collection of the Several Wrightings of that True Prophet, Faithful Servant of God and Sufferings for the Testimony of Jesus, William Bayly*, [s.l.]: 1676, pp. 50–54.

81 HRO 24M54/14, fol. 4r–v.

82 Smith, H., *A Collection of the Several Writings and Faithful Testimonies of that Suffering Servant of God, and Patient Follower of the Lamb, Humphry Smith*, London: 1683.

83 Besse, J., *A Collection of Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, vol. i, London: 1753, p. 229.

of Quakers, but Joseph Smith's *Bibliotheca Anti-Quakeriana* does not appear to contain any works about the case.[84]

The imprisonment of Humphry Smith, Anthony Melledge and William Bayly in Winchester is mentioned in the secondary literature, if only briefly. Smith's imprisonment is mentioned by Braithwaite, and in more detail by Moore.[85] Furthermore, considerations of Quakers and their supernatural powers—or what their enemies perceived as their supernatural powers—are discussed in a number of scholarly works.[86] But the case of Mary Hinton does not appear in any of them. Little has been published on Quakerism in Hampshire, so that might be a partial explanation, but the career of Humphry Smith has been rather better researched.[87] It seems unlikely that the case of Mary Hinton has been deliberately ignored, but rather, as such an obscure case, it has simply been overlooked.

Conclusion

The ambiguities surrounding the case of the maidservant Mary Hinton mean that its inclusion in a list of Quaker healings would have to be provisional. It is not in doubt that she was ill, and the evidence is that, after Humphry Smith's visit, she recovered, but Smith made no claim to having healed her. There were healings by George Fox and other Quakers where credit was claimed by those involved, if only that God used them to work the miracle, but Smith made no such assertion. If a claim of healing was made, and the evidence is ambiguous, it was by a small group of his supporters, not by Smith himself. It seems likely that, given adverse publicity surrounding alleged cases of healing by Quakers, both Smith and his supporters were concerned not to make too much of any such claims, however convenient it may have been that Mary Hinton recovered. It is also possible that they wished to dissociate themselves from any suggestion that Smith had been attempting an exorcism, which could have had a serious negative impact on Friends. Quaker reticence in claiming miracles, however, should not discount the possibility that Smith and his supporters privately regarded the case as a successful healing, even if they were reluctant to make a public claim.

84 Smith, J., *Bibliotheca Anti-Quakeriana*, London: 1873.

85 Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 399; Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, pp. 162–63. Braithwaite states that Smith was in gaol for twelve months, from February 1658 to February 1659, but this contradicts the evidence from the printed and manuscript primary sources that he was in gaol for a year and two months.

86 See, for example, Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England*; Elmer, P., '"Saints or sorcerers": Quakerism, demonology and the decline of witchcraft in seventeenth-century England', in Barry, J., Hester, M., and Roberts, G., (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: studies in culture and belief*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 145–79; Moore, *Light in their Consciences*; Moore, 'Late Seventeenth-century Quakerism'; Reay, *Quakers and the English Revolution*, London: Temple Smith, 1985; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*.

87 Roberts, 'Smith, Humphry (bap. 1624, d. 1663)', http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25818, accessed 27/03/2014.

The main aim of *The defence* tract was to rebut the accusation of cursing. Nevertheless, *The defence*, with its testimonies refuting the accusation, was not issued until over a year after the events took place, and it is not clear why it was issued, since Jaye's accusation seems to have been somewhat marginal to the imprisonment of Smith, Melledge and Bayly. However, the fact that such an accusation was made illustrates the concerns felt at the time that Quakers could use supernatural powers to wish individuals ill. Jaye's accusation may have been sincere, or it may have been a malicious fabrication, but it seems he expected it to be taken seriously. The fact that the three men, and their supporters, went to the trouble of issuing a printed rebuttal indicates that they, too, took the implications of the accusation seriously. Quakers had already been accused in print of acts of *maleficia*, and it may be that that *The defence* was not printed in an attempt to influence the release of the three men, but rather as part of a wider campaign to deny that Quakers would be involved in any such acts as cursing and malevolence towards their fellows.

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