

The Commendable Life and Noble Death of Humphrey Smith

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Abstract

Humphrey Smith of Herefordshire was one of the most prolific early Quaker authors and a gifted preacher who has been largely overshadowed by his contemporaries. His premature death, at the age of 39, was mourned by the early leaders, including George Fox and George Whitehead. This article will examine Smith's brief life from his difficult upbringing to his untimely death. It also explores the large catalogue of his written work. Smith wrote personal and surprisingly honest tracts condemning his parents and defending his decision to leave his family to become an itinerant preacher. The article concludes with Smith's final days in Winchester gaol and his impact on early Quakerism.

Keywords

Humphrey Smith, testimonies, family, polemics, persecution, missionary

He lay very quiet and still, and not any unsavoury word proceeded out of his Mouth all the time of his Sickness, but he behaved himself like a Lamb, and he was very sensible unto the last Moment; he was faithful unto the Lord in his day, and a Crown Everlasting is upon his head, which shall rest upon him when all his Oppressors shall gnash their Tongues for pain and vexation of Heart yea, and the full Cup of the Lords Indignation is preparing for them who delight in Cruelty.¹

As illustrated above in Nicholas Complin's testimony, Humphrey Smith of Little Cowarne, Herefordshire, died the ideal Quaker death in 1663, at peace

1 Complin, N., 'The Faithfulness of the Upright Made Manifest Being a Testimony concerning the Life, Death, and Sufferings of ... Humphry Smith', in Anon. (ed.), *A Collection of the Several Writings and Faithful Testimonies of ... Humphry Smith*, London: Andrew Sowle, 1683, pp. 6–7.

and in silence but Complin also issued a stern, defiant warning to all those responsible for Smith's imprisonment and subsequent death. Smith is a Friend seldom referenced in academic studies, but the intention here is to highlight his contributions to the early movement. Attention will be drawn to aspects of Smith's career rather than a deeper insight into his theological unpinning, based on his writings. It will also address the questions: what made for a commendable Quaker life in the mid-seventeenth century and what were the qualities of a noble Quaker death? It will begin by examining Smith's early life in Herefordshire; analysing his childhood and upbringing, as well as his early career as a farmer and lay minister. It will look at his role in the Quaker community as an itinerant preacher and prolific writer, particularly the impact of his frequent incarcerations on his writing, followed by a short analysis of the themes found throughout his body of work. It concludes with Smith's death on 4 May 1663, aged 39, and scrutinises the eyewitness accounts of his final days and the subsequent testimonies to his good character.

Smith was born in Stoke Bliss, a small parish that straddled the borders of Herefordshire and Worcestershire² where he was baptised on 21 February 1624.³ Following the recurring theme in the autobiographies of many early Friends,⁴ Smith referred to himself as 'a boy of unusual spiritual discernment, fond of solitude, and early given to serious thought about the great problems of religion'.⁵ Based on his account, he was a learner and deep-thinker from a very early age. His reminiscence immediately informs the reader that he was an educated and literate child. Indeed, Smith was literate at an early age as his parents could afford to meet the costs of basic education. Smith wrote that he would often wander off into the woods to think alone, sometimes for three or four hours.⁶ This 'mournful state' resulted in criticism from his father and ridicule from his mother as she 'laid her hands on him and said that his studying would make him a fool'.⁷ Further condemning his parents' attitude, he added that his father made him 'cry bitterly' at least six days a week.⁸

The Smith family were living in a world that was changing very quickly.

2 In 1897, Stoke Bliss was transferred to the county of Worcestershire.

3 Roberts, S. K., 'Smith, Humphry (bap. 1624–d. 1663)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

4 For example, Richard Farnworth had a similar experience as a teenager and struggled with internal conflict with regard to religion until he received 'divine guidance'. For further analysis of Farnworth's spiritual journey, see Birkel M. and Angell, S. W., 'The Witness of Richard Farnworth: prophet of light, apostle of church order', in Angell, S. W. and Dandelion, P. (eds), *Early Quakers and Their Theological Thought, 1647–1723*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 83–101.

5 Smith, H., *To All Parents of Children Upon the Face of the Whole Earth*, London: Thomas Simmons, 1660, pp. 6–9.

6 Smith, *To All Parents of Children*, p. 9.

7 Smith, *To All Parents of Children*, p. 9.

8 Smith, *To All Parents of Children*, p. 6.

In his study of the early modern English family, Ralph Houlbrooke concluded that religious divisions were the most fundamental threat to the family and noted that children who chose a different religious path could no longer see their parents as God's representatives in the most important area of life.⁹ It is not surprising to find that Smith was later deeply critical of his parents, Humphrey and Elinor Smith, especially his father who was 'more eager than most men in labouring and caring for earthly things'¹⁰ but the public criticism of his upbringing is exceptional. As a young child, Smith wrote that he 'prayed with boldness towards God, and wept'; his parents despised this behaviour and 'strenuous efforts were made to withdraw him from those serious meditations'.¹¹ Smith acquiesced with his parents' wishes but, as a result, later wrote that he grew up 'to nurse the evil earthly thing begotten in him'.¹² His outward acquiescence and deference to his parents would have been expected, as this was the foundation of the early modern parent-child relationship.¹³ Smith added that he was 'forced out' of God's love by his parents and was subsequently provoked to wrath, grief, and discontent, while his quiet nature was replaced with anger directed against his parents.¹⁴ According to Lawrence Stone, this resentful behaviour was not out of the ordinary during this time when the 'ideological underpinnings of repression' were beginning to break down.¹⁵ In his recollections, Smith appeared to be challenging both the core values of his parents and also their apparent lack of religious identity. In his writing, Smith was forced to confront that he needed something more than his family and the prevailing religions of the day could offer. In his assessment, he placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of his parents. Based on his own childhood experiences, Smith later warned parents not to be 'the cause of the hardening of their children's hearts'.¹⁶ He added

I do write to be an Example unto you, and a Warning, that you may not bring your Children into the like Alienation, Torment, and Condemnation as I was, and the more especially, because that few afterwards do return to God with all their Hearts, and enter in at the straight Gate.¹⁷

The Smiths were a yeoman family and likely opposed his pious solitude because they expected Humphrey to conform and become a farmer because children

9 Houlbrooke, R., *The English Family, 1450–1700*, London: Longman, 1984, p. 168.

10 Smith, *To All Parents of Children*, p. 8.

11 LSF, Ms. Vol. S 213, Biographical memoirs by Thomas J Backhouse and Thomas Mounsey, containing biographies of Friends, Vol. 5, S–Y, p. 107.

12 Smith, *To All Parents of Children*, p. 8.

13 Stone, L., *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800*, London: Penguin, 1979, p. 123.

14 Smith, *To All Parents of Children*, pp. 7–8.

15 Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, p. 121.

16 Smith, *To All Parents of Children*, p. 8.

17 Smith, *To All Parents of Children*, p. 7.

were naturally expected to play their part in the household economy.¹⁸ It was the commonly accepted view that hard work was rewarding and, as Keith Thomas has observed, a person could not be content ‘unless engaged in his labours’.¹⁹ This idea of solitude and introverted worship thereby conflicted with his parents’ economic aspirations and they may have felt a duty of care to ensure that Humphrey developed into a hard-working adult. Stone added that the benefit gained by parents from breaking a child’s will at an early stage was that later on he or she would accept with passive resignation their decisions in the two most important choices of his or her life, that of occupation and of a marriage partner.²⁰ Smith complied and began to follow the traditional path laid out for him. In 1640, aged 16, he inherited a farm in Little Cowarne, Herefordshire, located between Stoke Bliss and Hereford.²¹ Smith’s farm was relatively prosperous, and in the Herefordshire Militia Assessment of 1663 his home was recorded as having four hearths, this made it one of the more sizable properties owned by early Friends in the area and provides further evidence that he was raised in a prosperous family and, in turn, became a successful farmer himself.²² In addition to his desire for ‘earthly things’, he also noted that he lived ‘in all manner of sin and iniquity, except actual adultery, fornication and murder’.²³

This decision to forsake the Lord and his ‘spiritual calling’ subsequently had a significant impact on his life. The impact is evident when he reminisced about his upbringing, especially his spiritual regression in 1658:

For when I was but young and void of the knowledge of God, or his Way of Holiness my mind ran much in the Earth with a covetous care, how to gain the Riches thereof ... When I was in the height of the World’s Way and Worship, and expecting riches to increase, even then in an unexpected time, did the dread of the Lord fall upon me, and his wonderful mighty power wrought exceedingly in me, to break me off from all my Wayes, and separate me from all of the Worship of the World.²⁴

Smith was living in difficult times, and his more personal tracts reveal youthful desperation and remorseful, almost miserable regret for his misspent youth. Herefordshire was a critical battleground for the Royalists and Parliamentarians. The events leading up to the Civil Wars, including Charles I’s personal rule and the imposition of the prayer book by Archbishop William Laud may have exposed

18 Wrightson, K., *Earthly Necessities: economic lives in early modern Britain, 1470–1750*, London: Penguin, 2002, p. 49.

19 Thomas, *Ends of Life*, p. 96.

20 Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, p. 127.

21 Roberts, ‘Smith, Humphry (bap. 1624–d. 1663)’, p. 1.

22 HRO, AM 29/1, ‘Hearth Tax for Michaelmas 1665 for Herefordshire and Comparison with Militia Assessments 1663’ (transcript by J. Harnden), p. 133.

23 Smith, H., *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness by the Light, Life, and Mighty Hand of God*, London, 19 August 1658, p. 4.

24 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, p. 6.

Smith to political and religious dissent as a child. Smith's prolific writing output nevertheless does not reveal his influences outside of the Bible, and yet as a young man during the conflict, he would have been exposed to the voluminous amount of literature distributed at the time. This political propaganda encouraged dissent, and while it is unclear if Smith was directly influenced, he was both literate and of an impressionable age. In 1655 he wrote that he was 'a friend to the Parliaments Army, from the first arising of them, and afterwards ventured his naturall life, and suffered much loss by the King's army'.²⁵ While Smith did not expand on the specific losses he experienced, the billeting of Charles I's army, plundering, and deprivation of Herefordshire is well-documented.

After the wars, his desire to preach returned, perhaps influenced and inspired by preachers on the battlefield, Smith became an unpaid public preacher. His refusal to be paid for services is corroborated by his declaration in 1658 that the spirit 'encouraged him to do good and not accept payment' and that he 'refused their unrighteous gain and denied all their gifts and rewards'.²⁶ He also stated that he had 'never profited by any of them, but lived in wickedness' as long as he followed them.²⁷ In the same tract, entitled *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, he wrote that 'hireling priests were worse than publicans or harlots'.²⁸ Smith's vehement opposition to a paid ministry may have been influenced by Hugh Peter(s), the most influential radical independent army preacher of the civil war period. In a sermon to Parliament in 1646 Peter declared: 'If you say that Money answer al things, yet you must heare the Lord say, the gold is mine, your silver is mine: It is not the drug, nor the bread that doth the work, but the spirit of them both'.²⁹

Fellow Herefordshire Quaker preacher Morgan Watkins later echoed Smith's sentiments in 1664 when he wrote *Lamentation over England*. In this he cited the 'wickedness' of the Church and State authorities in England. Watkins observed that these 'Rulers, Priests and People' had 'erred, and strayed from the way of God; and follow too much the devices and desires of their own hearts; offending against his holy Laws ... to ensare the Innocent'.³⁰ While appraising his own career, Smith wrote that he 'walked in darkness and wallowed in unrighteousness, and afterwards stood up as a tall cedar in the height of profession, preaching great and high things daily unto others, whereby then I was admired by many hundreds'.³¹ He added that he 'was a zealous preacher', but he failed to bring 'souls home to God' and much to

25 Smith, H. and Woodrove, T., *The Cruelty of the Magistrates of Evesham, Worcestershire ...*, London: Giles Calvert, 1655, p. 8.

26 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, pp. 10, 12.

27 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, p. 6.

28 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, p. 12.

29 Peters, H., *Gods Doings and Mans Duty, Opened in a Sermon Preached before both Houses of Parliament ... 1645*, London: Giles Calvert, 1646, p. 21.

30 Watkins, M., *Lamentation over England*, London, 1664, frontispiece.

31 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, p. 3.

his disappointment, the people ‘remained in their sins’.³² He felt that clergymen were paid to help the people but did not know how to do so.³³ In contrast, men like Smith were known as ‘mechanick preachers’ and, as Christopher Hill commented, they would labour six days a week and would cost their congregations nothing.³⁴ Smith preached across Herefordshire, but soon grew less confident in his abilities and became increasingly despondent.³⁵ In Stoke Bliss, he announced ‘my mouth was stopped from the present, but if ever the Lord should open my mouth again, I shall preach indeed’.³⁶ He understood that people might have thought that he was a good and honest man, but he stressed that he felt his behaviour was ‘contrary to the righteousness of God’ and that he was a ‘servant of corruption’.³⁷ Despite the admiration his congregation lavished on him, he went through this personal crisis of worthlessness. It is important to note that Seekers often had this deep anxiety that they were not worthy. In his 1652 tract entitled ‘Apocrypha’, William Erbery proclaimed

For my part, I am wholly silent, for though I speak sometimes unto men in the flesh, yet my Spirit is silent unto God; thus I am wholly silent, waiting as one of the *dry bones in the dust*, when the Lord will raise me with all his people out of our Graves, by revealing his glory in us.³⁸

While this should not be construed as evidence that Smith engaged with Seekers in any manner, he may have been indirectly influenced by them and their writing before devoting his life to the ideas of George Fox and James Nayler.

Smith can be identified as a Quaker by early 1655, so he was likely one of the first convinced in the area. There is no extant documentation to show when or where he was convinced. However, it is highly probable that Richard Farnworth convinced him. Farnworth was one of the first missionary Friends to visit the region, and Smith joined him, collaborating on a 90-page tract titled *Antichrist's Man of War* which was a lengthy response to a 65-page book written by Edmund Skipp entitled *The Worlds Wonder or the Quakers Blazing Starr*.³⁹ Skipp was the vicar of Bodenham, Herefordshire, from 1647 to 1657 and Smith had known Skipp well when he was a public preacher.⁴⁰ In *The Worlds Wonder*, the frontispiece stated

32 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, p. 11.

33 Smith, H., *A Sad and Mournful Lamentation for the People of these Nations, but especially for the Priests and Leaders* ..., n.p.: Printed for M.W., 1660, p. 2.

34 Hill, C., *The World Turned Upside Down: radical ideas during the English Revolution*, London: Penguin, 1991, p. 99.

35 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, p. 10.

36 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, p. 10.

37 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness* pp. 11–12.

38 Erbery, W., *Apocrypha* ..., in his *The Bishop of London, The Welsh Curate, and Common Prayers, with Apocrypha In the End*, London: sn, 1652, p. 4.

39 Farnworth, R. and Smith, H., *Antichrist's Man of War, Apprehended and encountered withal, by a Souldier of the Armie of the Lamb*, London: Giles Calvert, 1655.

40 Nuttall, G. F., ‘Another Baptist Vicar? Edmund Skipp of Bodenham’, *The Baptist Quarterly* 33 (1990), pp. 331–34.

that Quakers were ‘deluded by Satan, both in their judgements and walkings: Together with a probable conjecture of the end of the World, and the estate of things in the interval’.⁴¹ Skipp also referred to Quakerism as ‘monster amongst men’, ‘poor beguiled wretches’ and containing ‘malevolent and contagious influences’.⁴² In *Antichrist’s Man of War*, Smith stated that Skipp ‘wandered from the truth’ and, like Farnworth, crafted a point by point response to Skipp’s accusations and claims.⁴³ His first published piece exemplified what would be Smith’s literary style—brimming with scriptural references, and apocalyptic with a confrontational tone. To Skipp, he wrote ‘Oh take heed lest it had been better for thee, than a Millstone had been hanged about thy neck, and thou cast into the Sea’.⁴⁴

Kate Peters referred to Smith as Farnworth’s ‘literary apprentice’.⁴⁵ Farnworth certainly influenced Smith and this is reflected in the rich scriptural nature of his writing and preaching throughout the remainder of his life. Like Smith, Farnworth was described as a man of great conviction who insisted that he follow the course that he believed God had laid out for him.⁴⁶ Despite his initial lack of confidence as a public preacher in Herefordshire, Smith would prove to be a quite gifted minister and in the course of seven years convinced many to join the Friends. It can be argued that this success was partly due to the early literary influence of Farnworth. It is also likely that Smith’s conviction, while undocumented, transformed him from crippling self-doubt to a confident, driven preacher. This change may have been driven by Farnworth’s influence or Smith’s sense of religious duty. Regardless of the true inspiration for his transformation, Smith gave the impression, through his voluminous work, that it was the result of divine intervention.

The earliest converts were zealous and compelled to propagandise their message, but, in doing so, they risked their economic well-being, and the potential displacement of the family from their neighbourhood. Smith endured a £150 loss by leaving his farm in Little Cowarne, while his writing strongly suggests that he saw himself as a prophet.⁴⁷ This reasoning would lead to the conclusion that he did not willfully leave his family and farm—he had no choice.⁴⁸ Smith equated himself with biblical characters whom all left their homes to preach the word of

41 Skipp, E., *The Worlds Wonder or the Quakers Blazing Starr*, London: Henry Hills, 1654, frontispiece.

42 Skipp, *The Worlds Wonder*, pp. A4, 4.

43 Farnworth and Smith, *Antichrist’s Man of War*, p. 69.

44 Farnworth and Smith, *Antichrist’s Man of War*, p. 85.

45 Peters, K., *Print Culture and the Early Quakers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 50.

46 Ingle, H. L., *First Among Friends: George Fox and the creation of Quakerism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 85.

47 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, p. 5.

48 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, p. 10.

God.⁴⁹ When he was contemplating leaving his wife and children behind, he was overwrought with internal conflict. He discussed his missionary calling with his wife, who naturally pleaded with him to stay with them; he acquiesced but then fell into what could undoubtedly be described as a deep depression.⁵⁰ One night, as his family was going to sleep, he noted that he ‘thought they were people he should not be with’, articulated his thoughts the following day when he told his wife ‘surely I should not be here’ and after an unknown period informed her and his family

with heaviness and tears ... I was not able to endure it any longer, and that I had abode with them in the way of the World for so long as possible I could, and that I must give up my life to serve the lord, desiring them (with tears) to be content, and in what I could, I should be careful for their good as ever I was.⁵¹

He added that he trusted in divine providence and that God would take care of his wife and children in his absence, and that if he only convinced one person it would all be worthwhile.⁵² This statement alone is evidence of his zealous and single-minded commitment to Quakerism. Alfred Brown romanticised Smith’s neglect of his family duties and wrote that ‘he had forsaken his wife, children and lands, but he was to receive a hundredfold more’.⁵³ Antiquarian biographies of Smith, like Brown’s, demonstrate the need for modern historians to look closer at the impact a Quaker missionary’s departure had on his or her immediate family. Smith was motivated by a higher power and because of this divine calling, he was able to justify essentially abandoning his family in rural Herefordshire. His family ties were not completely severed when he left them as the evidence suggests that this concern was not completely out of his mind. At the end of *Man Driven Out of Earth and Darkness*, he concluded

Let none think that I did wilfully neglect my outward employment, neither let any one think that I left my family as not regarding them, nor that I stay much out of that Country for any By-end; for the words are true, A prophet is not without Honour, save in his own country, and in his own house, and those that did seek to stop my mouth, did not well.⁵⁴

His writing suggests that he was fully aware that he was being judged by his neighbours for what he had done and added, ‘what a Cross it was for me to leave what I did, let that of God judge’.⁵⁵ After he abandoned his family, Smith dared to later write, without a trace of irony, that men’s wives also ‘shall be left as widdows,

49 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, p. 5.

50 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, pp. 7–8.

51 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, pp. 9–10.

52 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, pp. 7, 9.

53 Brown, A., *Evesham Friends in the Olden Time*, London: West Newman & Co, 1885, p. 32.

54 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, p. 11.

55 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, p. 3.

their children as fatherless' if they did not turn to Quakerism—as he had done to his own family when he himself became convinced.⁵⁶

Smith provided a full account of his struggle to leave his family and how he put all of his faith in God to care for them. *Man Driven Out of Earth and Darkness* is easily Smith's most personal piece of writing, and it was written for wider dissemination. His single-minded devotion was presented on a proverbial platter for his enemies and former neighbours to challenge, particularly as the critical role of an early modern parent was to provide economic security for his/her children. As such, Smith was blatantly disregarding normative social behaviour. Rosemary Moore suggested that it was accepted that duty to God might outweigh all other social obligations.⁵⁷ While his family may have accepted his fervent belief and may have even accepted his decision to leave, they would have faced judgement from their neighbours, a lack of support networks, potential ostracisation, in addition to the fundamental matter of how to avoid economic ruin and starvation in rural Herefordshire. Smith left his family to a precarious future. He chose to be a 'prophet' over his obligations as a husband and father. Thereby, his family's welfare was of limited consequence in comparison to the tasks at hand.

The first prominent court hearing involving Friends in Herefordshire and Worcestershire was the case of Smith and Thomas Cartwright of Bengeworth, Worcestershire, located south-east of Evesham town centre. On Sunday, 19 August 1655, George Hopkins, the vicar of Evesham All Saints, preached a sermon in Bengeworth against Quakerism, equating it with witchcraft and unsurprisingly, a local Quaker meeting in Cartwright's home was interrupted by Hopkin's congregation.⁵⁸ However, the meeting continued and the crowds shortly scattered but later that evening Cartwright and Smith were requested to swear the oath of abjuration which they naturally refused and were arrested.⁵⁹ Smith was further threatened with the Vagrancy Act—a measure often used against itinerant preachers, especially Quakers. Smith and Cartwright were thereafter taken to the house of a prominent magistrate, Samuel Gardiner, examined and imprisoned the next day. Smith was not deterred, as he said 'Repent and serve the Living God' out of the prison windows and, in response, Justice Robert Martin was alleged to have encouraged the people assembled to 'whoop' and begin an 'uproar'—some throwing stones and dirt at the windows, eventually breaking the window.⁶⁰

56 Smith, *A Sad and Mournful Lamentation*, p. 7.

57 Moore, R., *The Light in Their Consciences: early Quakers in Britain*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, p. 120.

58 Smith, H., 'The Sufferings, Tryals and Purgings of the Saints at Evesham', in Anon. (ed.), *A Collection of the Several Writings and Faithful Testimonies of ... Humphry Smith*, London: Andrew Sowle, 1683, pp. 5–6.

59 Roberts, S., 'The Quakers in Evesham 1655–1660: a study in religion, politics and culture', *Midland History* 16 (1991), pp. 63–85.

60 Anon., *A Representation of The Government of the Borough of Evesham in the County*

Martin allegedly tried to pull Smith out from the broken window, likely in order to allow the crowds to physically assault Smith.⁶¹

Throughout the following week, other Quakers were rounded up, including the former Mayor of Evesham, magistrate and soldier Captain Edward Pitway.⁶² Apart from Smith and Cartwright, fourteen other Quakers were brought before the authorities.⁶³ During his imprisonment, Smith still preached to anyone who would listen and found a captive audience outside the 'gaol hole'. Despite this imprisonment, he continued his missionary work. In his tract, *The Sufferings, Tryals and Purgings of the Saints at Evesham* Smith accused the authorities of setting a trap for him and other Quakers.⁶⁴ Magistrates encouraged further maltreatment of these Quakers and Robert Martin, attempted to halt Smith's preaching and

bid the watchmen, if the people would not be gone from the gaol-hole, he then knock them down, and bid the men throw shuffles full of dirt upon them in the dungeon, and set eight men with weapons ... to keep away all friends for coming to or speaking with them they had imprisoned.⁶⁵

Smith, Cartwright and other imprisoned Friends were dismissed from the Autumn Quarter Sessions and returned to the gaol for not removing their hats. At the hearing, the judge advised, 'you might have had your liberty if you had not come in here in this contemptable way, with your hat on, therefore you shall turn back again to the Prison until you do come with your hat off'. There are numerous suggestions that if the prisoners would merely remove their hats, they would be released. Subsequently, Smith and Thomas Woodrove wrote *The Cruelty of the Magistrates of Evesham, Worcestershire*; this tract detailed their experiences and the hostile response they received when they refused to remove their hats. Robert Atkins, the presiding judge, responded

you have come into the Court with your hats on, to fine you, and send you to Prison until you learn better manners, therefore I shall fine you every one and send you to Prison, where you shall lye from one Sessions til another, untill you come with your hats off.⁶⁶

Smith added 'let it first be made manifest whom we have offended, or what we have transgressed, or what errors I hold, if any can be proved, that the people may be convinced with us of any evil we may be accused of'. While being hauled

of Worcester Directed unto the Protector of England, Scotland, and Ireland, London, sn, 1655, frontispiece.

61 Anon., *A Representation of The Government*.

62 Smith and Woodrove, *Cruelty of the Magistrates of Evesham*, p. 9.

63 Smith, H., *Something further laid open of the cruel Persecution of the People Called Quakers by the Magistrates and People of Evesham*, London, sn, 1656, frontispiece.

64 Smith, 'The Sufferings, Tryals and Purgings of the Saints at Evesham', pp. 1–4.

65 Smith and Woodrove, *Cruelty of the Magistrates of Evesham*, p. 1.

66 Smith and Woodrove, *Cruelty of the Magistrates of Evesham*, p. 5.

away by the gaoler, he said ‘they have shamed all profession and all National Government’.⁶⁷

Shortly after their initial imprisonment, a tract detailing the events taking place, partially authored by Smith, was published by Friends in 1655, entitled *A Representation of the Government of the Borough of Evesham*. This paper, although addressed to Oliver Cromwell, was certainly intended for a wider audience, beyond the borders of Worcestershire as it provided a detailed account of their abuse and abusers in Evesham:

[Robert Martin] caused stones to be thrown at our friends, and wished they would drown themselves; besides our friend [Humphry Smith] in the common goale had stones thrown at him, spit at him, threw man’s Dung in at him, some more filthy abuses he had which is a shame to name; one idle Drunken man came in with a Pike in his hand swearing and railing with so much violence, as though he would presently have murdered him, mentioning knocking him on the head in the night, & the Justice were acquainted with him, and no Officer would meddle with him; neither did they at all, for he said the best in the Town sent him.⁶⁸

Cromwell responded to the publication after five months and delegated the investigation to James Berry, Major-General of Herefordshire, Shropshire, and Wales, who issued a warrant for their release from gaol on 1 September 1656.⁶⁹ Shortly after his release, Smith was imprisoned in Exeter gaol, along with nineteen other Friends; at the Assizes, the men, including Smith, were indicted for contempt and fined twenty marks because they refused to remove their hats, similar to the previous year’s occurrence in Evesham.⁷⁰

To the authorities, removing one’s hat was a reasonable and straightforward request. George Fox recorded in his journal ‘Oh the blows, punchings, beatings, and imprisonments that we underwent for not putting off our hats to men ... for that soon tried all men’s patience and sobriety’. In 1661, Smith wrote that ‘it was but only to please the Wills of men of corrupt minds, and until honest sober men were sent for out of their honest Employments, before Rulers, and into Courts, only to ensnare them about their Hats’.⁷¹ Denying social superiors ‘hat honour’ was provocative and certainly challenged social protocols of the time. As with most of their actions, scripture could be used to illuminate and justify their position. Rosemary Moore adds that Quakers suggested that there was

nothing in the Bible requiring one to remove one’s hat in such circumstances. Asked to find a positive example of persons keeping their hats on before their superiors, they obliged: according to Daniel 3, Shadrach, Mehach, and Abednego

67 Smith and Woodrove, *Cruelty of the Magistrates of Evesham*, p. 4.

68 Anon., *A Representation of The Government of the Borough of Evesham*, frontispiece.

69 Besse, *Sufferings of Early Quakers*, vol. I, York: Sessions of York, 1737, p. 56.

70 Besse, *Sufferings of Early Quakers*, vol. I, p. 149. James Nayler was also imprisoned with Smith at this time.

71 Smith, H., *Sound Things Asserted* (n.p.: sn, 1662), p. 4.

were thrown into the burning fiery furnace, in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, with their hats on.⁷²

With his refusal to comply with hat honour, Smith appears to welcome abuse, imprisonment, and financial loss to drive forward his path to martyrdom and his message.

His message was also aided by subtle political subtext. In Evesham, he wrote that most of the Quakers that had been imprisoned, including Thomas Cartwright were ‘Souldiers long in the Service of the Commonwealth, and most of them at Worcester fight for outward liberty, and now they are fined, or imprisoned, or both, without any Law transgressed, and are deprived of outward liberty’.⁷³ William Pitt added that Smith was a ‘friend of Parliament’s Army, from the first firing of them, and afterwards ventured his naturall life, and suffered much loss by the king’s army, and now we have not the least benefit of the liberty nor law of the Nation’.⁷⁴ In *A Representation of the Government of the Borough of Evesham in the County of Worcester ...* written for the attention of Oliver Cromwell, it was noted that one of the justices in Evesham was a former Royalist who took arms against the present government, the implication being that their persecutors were harbouring malicious feelings against them for their involvement in the Civil Wars, as well for their religious beliefs.⁷⁵ Later that year, on 31 August 1656, Smith and Weymouth Friend, Thomas Woodrow and Captain Anthony Melledge visited Dorchester and held a meeting which created a disturbance. Captain Melledge was a veteran of the Anglo-Dutch and the Anglo-Spanish wars, in addition to serving in the parliamentary army.⁷⁶ These men who had served the present government were therefore being unceremoniously treated after a decade of military service.

Following the scandalous spectacle performed by James Nayler in Bristol in October 1656, the authorities were quick to attempt to extinguish the activities of troublesome Quakers. Smith made himself a nuisance to law enforcement for the rest of his life. On 25 October 1657 he travelled to Uphay in Axminster, Devon, for a meeting and was arrested for violating the Vagrancy Act of 1656. David Underdown adds that the public demanded action against ‘idle’ Quakers.⁷⁷ The Vagrancy Act was directed against ‘all wandering persons’ and Christopher Hill noted that Quakers complained that the Act was so outrageous, it would have implicated Christ and the Apostles.⁷⁸ As punishment, Smith and his companion, Samuell Curtis, were sent to Bear Hall in Axminster where they

72 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, p. 58.

73 Smith and Woodrove, *Cruelty of the Magistrates of Evesham*, p. 7.

74 Smith and Woodrove, *Cruelty of the Magistrates of Evesham*, p. 8.

75 Anon., *A Representation of The Government of the Borough of Evesham*, frontispiece.

76 Melledge, A., *A True Relation of the Former Faithful and Long Service ... of Anthony Melledge*, sl: sn, 1656, p. 2.

77 Underdown, D., *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: popular politics and culture in England 1603–1660*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 244.

78 Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 49–50.

were stripped naked and whipped for their vagrancy.⁷⁹ Their books and papers were also burned at the time of their arrest.⁸⁰ Again, the authorities were publicly humiliating these disrupters and, by burning their literature, they attempted to ensure that no one else was influenced by their radical ideas. The fear of these Quakers spread, and is highlighted by Smith's reception in Sherborne, Dorsetshire, where he was met by a 'rude multitude' throwing stones, dirt and excrement at Friends.⁸¹

In February 1658, Smith, William Bayley and Captain Melledge travelled to Ringwood, Hampshire, where Smith was asked to visit Mary Hinton, a sick woman.⁸² Hinton was described as mentally ill and, following Smith's visit, she recovered. Her sudden recovery was enough to raise the suspicions of her employer, Stephen Jaye. Smith was subsequently accused of cursing Hinton rather than healing her—Smith denied both cursing and healing. Rosalind Johnson notes that such accusations illustrate the concerns that Quakers were capable of supernatural powers 'to wish individuals ill'.⁸³ Smith and his companions were nevertheless not imprisoned, but this demonstrates the risk Quakers faced in merely talking to outsiders and the intense distrust of their activities and potential influence.

Smith's persecution and abuse continued yet his zeal remained undiminished. In addition to his gradual acceptance of persecution was an almost willingness to contravene the law, and he wrote that he left his livelihood while he expected to be 'exposed to want, hardships, revilings, imprisonments, whipping, stoning and all manner of cruel torture'.⁸⁴ While imprisoned in Dorchester in 1656 he wrote a short accompaniment to Captain Melledge's tract entitled *A Dreadful Cry Against the Oppressors* that concluded with the following paragraph:

written by the hand of him that hath learned to pray for his Enemies, and desires the good of all your souls, being a Friend to the peace of the people, and all that rule for God who hath made me willing to suffer for his Names sake in outward bonds, by the dark world unto whom I am known by the name of Humphrey Smith.⁸⁵

Smith was standing on shifting sands, but refused to sink, even though the conditions in most mid-seventeenth-century prisons were appalling as Friends were often abused by over-zealous gaolers or fellow inmates.⁸⁶ He was no

79 Penney, N. (ed.), *The First Publishers of Truth*, London: Headley Brothers, 1907, p. 86.

80 Besse, *Sufferings of Early Quakers*, p. 150.

81 Penney (ed.), *First Publishers of Truth*, p. 86.

82 Johnson, R., 'The Case of the Distracted Maid: healing and cursing in early Quaker history', *Quaker Studies* 21.1 (2016), pp. 33–47.

83 Johnson, 'The Case of the Distracted Maid', p. 47.

84 Smith, *Man Driven Out of the Earth and Darkness*, p. 5.

85 Melledge, *A True Relation of the former Faithful and long service*, p. 8.

86 Allen, R. C., 'Restoration Quakerism 1660–1691', in Angell, S. W., and Dandelion, P. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 33.

exception. Friends were often able to write pamphlets and tracts detailing the grim prison conditions while powerfully conveying the Quaker message. Throughout his travels, he endured constant persecution and abuse. Friends' opponents were trying to undermine them, psychologically and physically. It is possible that persecuted Quakers, like Smith, were accustomed to severe hardship and as they had suffered during the Civil Wars, they perhaps accepted that they would also have to endure these privations for God's glory. During his imprisonment in Evesham, Smith wrote that there were

assaults made against us, both of the Heathens and the Rulers, who sought to vex us despitefully as they did ... some threw stones in the prison the weight of five pound, and threw dirt and water on my lodging, and spit on me ... and pist at me several times, and once they pist on my food ... but Friends feared none of these things.⁸⁷

This published 'fearlessness' in the face of adversity was a testament to his strong convictions. Smith's unconditional devotion, during such a dark time in his life, would have served as a powerful testimony as Friends who responded calmly to hostility and brutality were viewed as courageous and heroic by other Quakers. Alexandra Walsham maintains that during this period apocalypticism was often used as an incentive to persecution, as every person sought to save others from 'falling into the abyss of damnation' no matter the cost.⁸⁸ Smith commented that the

most happy shall those be, who are found worthy to suffer, and endure all manner of trials, cruelties, and hardships for him, and his Name's sake ... and finish their course in righteousness, and lay down their lives for his sake, to live with Him for evermore!⁸⁹

In the earliest years of the movement, he wrote three solo pamphlets and contributed to another three by 1656, making him the joint tenth most prolific Quaker writer during the mid-1650s.⁹⁰ In comparison, Betty Hagglund estimates that most Quaker authors wrote fewer than three works.⁹¹ Rosemary Moore concludes that Smith was the most productive writer in 1658, during his imprisonment in Winchester gaol.⁹² Like his contemporaries, Smith often referenced the Bible throughout his written work. In Evesham, Robert Atkin, clearly

87 Smith, H., 'The Sufferings, Tryals and Purgings of the Saints at Evesham', p. 9.

88 Walsham, A., *Charitable Hatred: tolerance and intolerance in England, 1500–1700*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006, p. 46.

89 LSF, MS. vol. S 213, p. 107.

90 Peters, M. K., 'Quaker Pamphleteering and the Development of the Quaker Movement, 1652–1656', PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1996, p. 27.

91 Hagglund, B., 'Quakers and the Printing Press', in Dandelion and Angell (eds), *Early Quakers and Their Theological Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 36.

92 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, p. 162.

exasperated observed that: ‘Smith, you are the Ring-Leader of this Sect, and of this people; I know you have Scripture enough, and you can tell of Pauls Condition, and many such things, but you lead people contrary to the wayes of God’.⁹³ In his collected works, Smith referenced nearly 700 verses of the Bible. John 8:12 was the most cited verse in his work, referenced on six occasions. This verse very concisely summarises the message of early Friends: ‘Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life’.

A result of his prolific writing was the conviction of new members. In Bridport, Dorsetshire, Smith was credited for ‘strengthening and confirming the newly convinced’ in early 1657. By all accounts, Smith was a powerful minister and he believed in his abilities as he wrote: ‘Hear I say, and let my words have entrance in you, and let the sound of my Voice take place in your Hearts, let the opening of my Lips give Astonishment to the Wicked, and the enlargement of my Hart the Confounding of the Heathen’.⁹⁴ While it cannot be determined how many Friends were convinced by Smith, particularly because of his written work, the two passages below, written in 1658 and 1663 demonstrate the gulf that existed amongst those who were convinced and those who did not. As with all religious groups, there were severe penalties for the non-believers. Smith’s passionate words would have inspired the newly convinced and served as a stern warning to the unconvinced. The first excerpt was written while imprisoned in Winchester in 1658 and the second was written five years later in 1663.

And the true desire of my present enlarged Heart for your Eternal Happiness, is, That as the Lord of Heaven and Earth hath counted you worthy of his Call, in the power of his Grace, which bringeth Salvation unto all, you may not judge your selves unworthy of the Kingdom of God, but may cleave unto his Truth in the inward parts, leaving all that which hath hindred you.⁹⁵

The Standard of the Lord is lifted up against you ... he will plague you with the Beast and the Whore together for evermore, and your Seed shall be cut off the Earth, and your Children from among the Living; your Memorial shall Rot for evermore, and your Name blotted out from under Heaven; and all that hear of you shall Hiss at you, and an astonishment and a hissing shall you be unto all People.⁹⁶

Smith created powerful imagery through his words and the bleak depiction of the unconvinced or those who actively opposed Quakers is found throughout his

93 Smith and Woodrove, *Cruelty of the Magistrates of Evesham*, p. 4.

94 Smith, H., *The Sounding Voice of the Dread of Gods Mighty Power To all the Judges and Rulers of the Earth Who Rise Up Against the Lamb*, London: Thomas Simmons, 1658, p. 2.

95 Smith, H., *To the Young and Tender, and to the late Convinced People of God ... in and Near the County of Essex*, London: sn, 1663, p. 2.

96 Smith, H., *An Alarum Sounding Forth Unto All the Inhabitants of the Earth ...*, London: sn, 1658, pp. 21–22.

writing. He was not subtle with his message and there is an urgency to his prose that suggests he felt a day of reckoning was imminent. Thematically, Smith frequently used apocalyptic biblical references and phrases including 'I will fill the Heathen with Horror, and all mine Enemies with the Blackness of Darkness'.⁹⁷ The passage below from *An Alarum Sounding Forth* best illustrates his graphic, apocalyptic style:

In that Day shall the Songs of your Temples be turned into howling forever, the place of your Worship laid desolate, and the Dung of your solemn Feasts spread upon your Faces; your Rottenness shall appear, and you[r] Unfound parts be made manifest; the Skirts of the Whore shall be discovered, and all your Nakedness, that long in secret have committed Fornication with her, shall now appear to your everlasting shame ... Torment shall take hold upon you, and Anguish shall seize upon your inward parts, a Fire shall be kindled in your Bowels forever, which shall burn, and non[e] shall quench it ... The Wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all that forget God.⁹⁸

Smith embraced this vision of a bleak, uncertain future, much like many of his contemporaries at this time, including the aforementioned Morgan Watkins. In 1658 in *The Just Complaint of the Afflicted ... To be delivered to the Judge of the Sessions at Winchester* Smith warned 'A day of Trouble is coming upon you, a day of Darkness, and not Light; yea, the Lord God is coming near to Judgement'.⁹⁹ In 1660, he wrote about a vision he had of a fire destroying London, six years before the 'Great Fire' devastated the city. He wrote

As for the city herself, and her suburbs, and all that belonged to her [I beheld] a fire was kindled therein, but she knew not how, even in her goodly palaces, and the kindling of it was in the foundation of her buildings. There was none could quench it, neither was there any able, and the burning thereof was exceedingly great and burned inward in an hidden manner, which cannot be expressed ... O' City of London, thy sin hath been exceeding grievous, and thy iniquities beyond measure.¹⁰⁰

However, the language used by Smith is non-specific and metaphorical, while the vision itself would have been viewed as a testimony to the vileness and immorality of London. Rebecca Rideal concluded that centuries of religious conditioning led the Christian world 'to see disasters and major events as signs of God's providence'.¹⁰¹ It can be argued that Smith's 'vision' was that of a London cleansed of its sins and rising like a phoenix from the ashes. However, the publication of this vision could have been used by Quaker opponents as a

97 Smith, *An Alarum Sounding Forth*, frontispiece.

98 Smith, *An Alarum Sounding Forth*, pp. 4–5.

99 Smith, H., *The Just Complaint of the Afflicted ... To be Delivered to the Judge of the Sessions at Winchester*, n.p.: sn, 24 October 1658, p. 1.

100 Smith, H., *The Vision of Humphry Smith Which He Saw Concerning London*, London: Thomas Simmons, 1660, p. 2.

101 Rideal, R., *1666: Plague, War, and Hellfire*, London: John Murray, 2016, p. 1.

means to incarcerate them for incitement to arson. Quakers were arrested for much lesser offences.¹⁰² It would only take one overenthusiastic zealot to read Smith's tract and its message of fire and brimstone, and the need to purge 'the city' in order to act upon this statement and turn it into reality.

Apocalyptic visions notwithstanding, a key to his success as a Quaker preacher was his autobiographical writing. They were graphic insights into his beliefs as well as how he viewed seventeenth-century modes of behaviour and his place in this wider community. He wrote 'I have not learned nor received from men (the Lord God knoweth I lie not) but through the operation of the mighty power of God, whose indignation I have born, in whose judgements I rejoyce for ever'.¹⁰³ This personal approach to writing would have resonated with his readers, as his reflections on his life before conviction, combined with the use of apocalyptic passages from the Bible, would have served as a compelling cautionary tale. This apocalyptic style seamlessly merged with the autobiographical elements to produce work that was dynamic and engaging. Christopher Hill observed that these spiritual autobiographies confirmed the 'footlooseness' of Friends and demonstrated the ease with which they uprooted their lives and managed to live while travelling throughout the country.¹⁰⁴

Smith was en-route to visit his son on 14 October 1661, when he was imprisoned in Winchester following his arrest in Alton, Hampshire. The presiding judge, Sir Thomas Terrill, gave Smith opportunities to leave Winchester gaol. Terrill gave him the option to pay bail and be released, while a year later he offered the Quaker his freedom if he would hold no more meetings. Smith found these terms to be disagreeable and consequently remained in prison.¹⁰⁵ Again, this demonstrates Smith's stubborn and resolute determination and particularly his blatant disregard for the interests of his family. His interest was in controlling his narrative, and he seemed determined to die a martyr for the 'Lambs War' rather than return home to his family or carry on preaching throughout England.

Smith's final letter to his son remains extant and demonstrates the implications for the displaced family of Quaker adherents. It is critical to analyse this letter with discernment as the content further highlights the authority of his familial responsibilities and requests, despite his long absence. In this letter, he began:

My Son, The alone & only Son of me after the flesh (for I never had any other). I was called of the Lord from thee when thou wast young, & from all things else that were ever so dear unto me, to publish the Gospel of God, and to call Sinners to Repentance; in the which the Lord hath blessed me.

And if it should be the will of God that I now finish my Testimony in this prison; yet have I so ordered & [taken] care for thee (my child) (and that according

102 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, p. 69.

103 Smith, H., *Hidden Things Made Manifest by the Light* ..., London, 1664, pp. 19–20.

104 Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, p. 50.

105 Complin, 'Faithfulness of the Upright Made Manifest', pp. viii–ix.

to the good will of God), that thou mayst spend thy Days in his Feare & walke uprightly in his Sight; & learne to labour honestly so with thy Hands, as may be of good Report among men & comfortable to thy selfe.¹⁰⁶

Smith had undermined perhaps his family's future by abandoning them in 1654, culminating in his own untimely and entirely preventable death. Quakers, like Smith, were zealots—they saw only one path and not the world that they had created around them. Admittedly they believed that their sacrifice would purify the world but at a tremendous personal cost to themselves, their wives, their families, their neighbours and their communities. Smith was willing to sacrifice himself for his beliefs but potentially unwilling to play his role as a husband, provider, and father. In the opening lines of this letter, Smith openly admits that he was an absent father and acknowledges that, despite his absence, he has tried to care for him. He implores his son to carry on his legacy as a God-fearing, honest man. Smith continues:

And now altho' as I said before, thou art my only Son, yet if thou refuset the Instructions of thy Father, & shalt reject the Counsel of God, and then not be obedient nor faithfull to thy Master, nor walk in God's holy Feare, nor keep in the Way of Truth, then let the Law of Men take hold of thy Body, let the Judgement of Friends pass upon thee, let the law of God seize upon thy Conscience & let Trouble & Feare & Poverty & Wretchedness & Shame overtake thee, inasmuch as thou dishonour thy Father & the Lord and his precious Truth.¹⁰⁷

This warning is quite similar to the economic ultimatums imposed by fathers to their daughters in wills of the sixteenth-century, but Smith uses this tactic to encourage his son to follow God's 'counsel' or face the most severe economic hardship and shame despite the fact that his own reckless attitude did precisely this to his own family.

In many ways, this letter is serving as his last will and testament, while the arrangements Smith has made for an apprenticeship for his son are quite specific:

And as for the Time thou art to be with thy Master from thy first going to him; I did intend & shall appoint some Friend to see the same performed; that thy Master, and the Schoolmaster, be paid and satisfied for one whole Yeares [Diet] & Teaching as likewise what I am to give with thee as an Apprentice & ye like; that thou being young & little, it might be easy to thee.

And thenceforward thou art to be bound by indenture as an apprentice for eight yeares (unless thy Master will in love 'bate 2 or 3 months of it). And I do hereby appoint & desire George Weatherly and Robert Ludgater to see to the Drawing of the Indentures, and to be as Friends on thy Part.¹⁰⁸

106 LSF, Portfolio 36, 101, Smith's letter to his son 1663.

107 LSF, Portfolio 36, 101, Smith's letter to his son 1663.

108 LSF, Portfolio 36, 101, Smith's letter to his son 1663.

It was not mentioned in this final letter that Lucy Wyatt, a Worcestershire Friend, would be left to care for Smith's son and that the child would later become an apprentice to Henry Abbot in Essex.¹⁰⁹ Wyatt was well-known to Smith, and it is likely that Smith was responsible for her convincement in the 1650s. It is unknown why he placed his son in her care, but perhaps he felt secure in the knowledge that she would abide by his teachings and ensure that his son would be raised in the tenets of the Quaker community.

An apprenticeship was not universal practice, but usually dependent on socio-economic factors.¹¹⁰ In this case, it appears almost certain that the apprenticeship was made possible by his father's religious connections. Smith was fortunate that he had the opportunity to rely on the community of Quakers to outsource his role as a parent. In a traditional master-apprentice relationship, the master had the absolute power of a father and, in this case, Henry Abbot is likely to have provided Smith's son with a stable fatherly presence for the first time in his life.¹¹¹

At the close of this letter, Smith warns his son against visiting him in Winchester gaol and in an austere way, which may have been typical of this father-son relationship, he uses this letter as a final goodbye to his son. With this letter, he was preparing his son for his absence without accepting the fact that he should be the person taking responsibility directly and guiding his son into adulthood. He ends the letter with:

And as for coming to see me, think not on that: for many Friends have come severall Scores of Miles, to whom I have been scarce able to speake two Words, though the Lord hath given me so much Strength at present to write this unto thee. The which, if the Lord gather me to the eternal Rest of my Fathers, then mayst thou call this as my last Farewell. And the blessing of God be with thee for ever.¹¹²

Smith did not see his son again. This letter was written on 23 April 1663 and he died nearly two weeks later. On 6 May 1663 he was buried in a Quaker burial ground in Bramshot, Hampshire.¹¹³ Before his death, he wrote *The Cause of the Long Afflicted and Sore Oppressed Sent forth in brief from Winchester Prison Being a Copy of the Mittimus whereby Humphrey Smith was again Committed (into the place of his former long suffering, in the same streight unsavory Prison)*. By the time of its publication in early 1663, he had been imprisoned for 15 months and was allegedly 'never called at Size or Sessions, nor suffered to come to any of the Rulers of the County

109 Wagstaff, T., *Piety Promoted in Brief Memorials and Dying Expressions of some of the People called Quakers: the ninth part*, London: James Phillips & Son, 2nd edn, 1798, p. 14.

110 Will Coster, *Family and Kinship in England 1450–1800*, London: Pearson Education, 2001, p. 54.

111 Coster, *Family and Kinship in England*, p. 55.

112 LSF, Portfolio, 36, 101, Smith's letter to his son 1663.

113 HRO, 24M54/25/3, General Meeting of Dorsetshire and Hampshire, Burials.

to lay before them the true state of his Case.’¹¹⁴ He continued to compare himself to the Apostle Paul and the authorities to killers of Christ. The tract ends with the following bleak biblical verses, predicting his own death and again comparing himself to Christ: ‘The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God Service’¹¹⁵ and ‘If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you’.¹¹⁶

The earliest Friends would have agreed that Smith lived a commendable life, but to outsiders, he was a religious zealot who abandoned his family for his faith; deserted a profitable farm to become an itinerant preacher; intentionally caused disruption with his preaching and his published work, and he was, for all intents and purposes, a lawbreaking vagrant. To Friends, his dedication was inspirational, and his devotion was admirable. He was a martyr for their cause. His life was posthumously honoured in 1683, twenty years after his death when his son compiled a majority of his father’s written work into a large volume. The collected volume of Smith’s work contains forty-eight tracts and spans 346 pages. As he died within the first wave of Quaker activity, this collection of tracts provides a very focussed study of the earliest years of the Friends. This volume also included eyewitness accounts of his final days and testimonies written after his untimely death by Friends, including George Whitehead and George Fox. Fox wrote ‘yet through the eternal power of the Lord, he [Smith] was upholden through his sufferings, and travelled through many hardships for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and did convert and turn many to the Lord Jesus Christ’.¹¹⁷ In *Piety Promoted* it was written that, during his final illness, he spoke ‘many precious words to friends about him, signifying that he was given up to the will of God, either in life or death’.¹¹⁸ He died as he lived: persecuted yet devout, zealous and never wavering from his beliefs.

The sole eyewitness account of Smith’s death comes from Nicholas Complin. He wrote his testimony in 1663, unlike the others which were written years later, thereby providing a more reliable account of Smith’s final days. He commented that Smith

lay very quiet and still, and not any unsavoury word proceeded out of his Mouth all the time of his Sickness, but he behaved himself like a Lamb, and he was very sensible unto the last Moment.¹¹⁹

This quiet departure is often recorded in Quaker testimonies. There was a

114 Smith, H., *The Cause of the Long Afflicted and Sore Oppressed Sent forth in brief from Winchester Prison*, January 1662, p. 7.

115 John 16:2.

116 John 15:18; Smith, *The Cause of the Long Afflicted*, p. 8.

117 Fox, G., ‘George Fox’s Testimony Concerning Humphry Smith’, in Anon. (ed.), *A Collection*, p. 1.

118 Evans, W. and Evans, T. (eds), *Piety Promoted*, Philadelphia: Friends Books Store, 1854, p. 55.

119 Complin, ‘Faithfulness of the Upright Made Manifes’, pp. xii–xiii.

dignity in this kind of death, particularly dying in a rancid prison of a physically debilitating illness. Complin concluded his nine-page memorial with a warning to those responsible for Smith's incarceration and subsequent death. He refers to them as bloodthirsty 'unsatiable, Vigorous, Tyrannical, Idolatrous Men' who should be cast into 'the dreadful Flames of the Burnings of his Vengeance'.¹²⁰ He added that God would 'not spare the best of those that have had a hand in these things (and shall persist therein) but will destroy them utterly, and Curse them from his Presence for evermore; and in this, I shall be clear of all your Blood when it comes upon you'.¹²¹ Complin's account was written as a provocative piece of Quaker literature. This provocation is made clear by the ferocious statements about their gaolers and others who had persecuted them. The intended audience for this would have naturally been Quakers, but his distraught, inflammatory, testimony also would have stirred the interest of a general readership as well. To Complin, and to Quakers, it was a story of Smith's undeserved incarceration while also showing admiration for dignity and grace in which Smith spent his final days. Most importantly, Complin's account provides an insight into his own thoughts about their persecutors, mortality, and the righteousness of their beliefs, which also reflects the views that Friends held more generally.

According to the accounts, Smith died the ideal Quaker death, in peace and silence. The Quaker ideal was to die in a state of holy quietude and composure. Indeed, the recorded deathbed sayings of Friends all have the same theme: inward peace, quietly and calmly expressed.¹²² David Cressy argued that the natural fear of dying was challenged by the idea that 'none should fear death if buoyed by Christian Faith' and added that any fearful sentiments of those final moments were drowned out by 'promises of death as liberation'.¹²³ Smith died a noble death in, by all accounts, grim circumstances. To a lay reader, Smith's suffering was akin to that of Job in the Bible and, like Job, Smith was faithful to the very end. He preferred to perish in prison than bend to Judge Terrill's disagreeable terms for release. The purpose of the Book of Job is to demonstrate why and how the righteous will prevail, despite intense suffering. It also seeks to define the meaning of truly unshakeable faith. Like Job, Smith's suffering and persecution reveal a deeper relationship with God. The words attributed to Job below could have easily been written by Smith himself:

Till I die, I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live. Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous. For

120 Complin, 'Faithfulness of the Upright Made Manifes', p. xii.

121 Complin, 'Faithfulness of the Upright Made Manifes', p. xiii.

122 Houlbrooke, R., *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480–1750*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 179.

123 Cressy, D., *Birth, Marriage and Death: ritual, religion, and the life-cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 381–82.

what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained when God taketh away his soul.¹²⁴

In his testimony of Smith, written in 1683, George Fox referred to Smith as ‘a worthy Souldier and Follower of the Lamb’.¹²⁵ Fox continued ‘yet through the eternal power of the Lord, he was upholden through his sufferings, and travelled through many hardships for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and did convert and turn many to the Lord Jesus Christ’.¹²⁶ George Whitehead’s testimony declared that Smith was ‘a man fearing God and hating Inequity, fervent and zealous against Deceit and Hypocrisie, and endued with a heavenly Gift and Gospel testimony, which he faithfully bore in his day’.¹²⁷ Nicholas Gates wrote that Smith was ‘very powerful to the convincing of many and turning them to the Light of Christ in themselves’ and that he ‘never murmured at the Exercises that he met withal, through Wicked and Unreasonable men’.¹²⁸ James Potter, another inmate at Winchester gaol, observed that Smith was ‘diligent and laborious in his day and time, desiring to spend and be spent for the Gospels sake’.¹²⁹ Again, these testimonies are highlighting the essential qualities of an effective Quaker minister—the ability to convert souls, a good work ethic and the ability to withstand the verbal and physical abuse from their challengers.

Smith’s son, Humphrey, wrote his testimony honouring his father. He addresses the absence of his father in the first line stating, ‘concerning my dear father, who to his unspeakable gain, but to my great sorrow and loss, the Lord took from me to himself, whilst I was young’.¹³⁰ This absence could simply be referring to Smith’s death in Winchester gaol, or it could also be referencing his departure from the family home in the early 1650s. He added that

the great Opposition of Malicious, Cruel, and Ungodly men, by whom he suffered, more especially in Cromwell’s time, Imprisonment, Dungeon, Whipping and much Affliction and Hardships; but being zealous for the glory of God, and the good of Souls, he valiantly endured it all.¹³¹

Humphrey III closes his testimony with the words: ‘we may follow the Lord fully and faithfully, and he may raise up in us the Same Love, Zeal, Diligence,

124 Job 27:5–8

125 Fox, ‘George Fox His Testimony Concerning Humphry Smith’, p. ii.

126 Fox, ‘George Fox His Testimony Concerning Humphry Smith’, pp. i–ii.

127 Whitehead, G., ‘A Testimony Concerning the Servant of Christ, Humphry Smith ...’, in Anon. (ed.), *A Collection*, p. iii.

128 Gates, N., ‘The Testimony of Nicholas Gates concerning Humphry Smith’, in Anon. (ed.), *A Collection*, p. xv.

129 Potter, J., ‘James Potter’s Testimony Concerning Humphry Smith’, in Anon. (ed.), *A Collection*, p. xvi.

130 Smith, H., ‘Humphry Smith’s Testimony concerning his Father’, in Anon. (ed.), *A Collection*, p. xxi.

131 Smith, ‘Humphry Smith’s Testimony concerning his Father’, p. xxi.

and Vallour, as he did our Parents, is the earnest Desire of Humphry Smith'.¹³² The language used by Humphrey III demonstrates that he did follow the advice of his father and matured into a God-fearing adult. This may demonstrate the conditioning he experienced under the care of Lucy Wyatt and Henry Abbot and suggests the narrative of his father's life he has accepted as truth. In the twenty years since his death, the heroic version of Smith the Quaker martyr may have replaced the reality of Smith the zealous deserter of his family.

Smith is a Friend seldom referenced in academic studies and by his peers, but his prolific writing from 1655 to 1663 highlights his contributions to the early movement. His undiminished zeal burned brightly until the very end. While his zealous beliefs and negligent actions undermined the traditional values of the seventeenth-century, Smith lived a commendable life in the eyes of the earliest Friends. In 1658, during his first imprisonment at Winchester gaol, he wrote a passage that could be interpreted as his epitaph.

By me who refused the Glory, Treasure, and Preferment of the world and did choose rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God. I have been often brought before Rulers, haled and beat out of the Synagogues, numbered among Transgressors, tryed at Assizes as an offender, yet there denied the Liberty of a Murderer, being six time imprisoned, twice stript naked and whipt with rods, and since put into Bridewell; once put into and kept long in a Dungeon for Praying; often abused in Prison; sometimes near Death; in tryals often, in Perils often, in Loss of goods, in daily Reproaches, and in that which hath been greater than all these things; and yet have I been preserved unto this day by the Power of him who is the Light.¹³³

Throughout Smith's life, he managed to control his narrative and, even in death, the image portrayed was one that would have satisfied him. His controlled narrative is particularly evident in the testimonies and eyewitness accounts along with Smith's voluminous writing that serves as his legacy. Although his contribution to the early Quaker community is often overlooked, he was a prominent writer and preacher of the early movement and should be remembered as such. However, it is also imperative to view Smith as an individual driven to extreme lengths to realise his religious identity, who deserted his family and died a needlessly premature death in order to satisfy his Quaker beliefs, like many of his contemporaries.

132 Smith, 'Humphry Smith's Testimony concerning his Father', p. xxiii.

133 Smith, H., *The True and Everlasting Rule of God Discovered*, London: Thomas Simmons, 1658, pp. 25–26.

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