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PREACHING FOR HIRE: PUBLIC ISSUES AND PRIVATE CONCERNS IN A SKIRMISH OF THE LAMB'S WAR[1]

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ABSTRACT

Quakers from the first rejected the idea of the professional minister requiring university education and being paid for his work. This was a principal motif in the Lamb's War they waged in the 1650s; and it naturally aroused the hostility of established ministers, who had good reason to feel insecure. This article examines a brief battle of books which took place in 1656 and 1657: Thomas Speed, a leading Bristol Quaker, fulminated against preaching for hire and three incumbent ministers countered his attacks. It turns out that the participants were known to each other and had personal axes to grind. It also appears that Speed may have been driven into uncharacteristic utterance by concealed conflicts and anxieties in his own mind. The whole episode illustrates the interaction between public issues and private concerns.

KEYWORDS

Quakerism, Lamb's War, maintained ministry, pamphlets, Thomas Speed, tithes controversy

1. QUAKER ANTI-CLERICALISM AESTHETIC

When George Fox looked back on his early life, he recalled how he had gone from one minister to another, and found none to satisfy his needs:

> Now after I had received that opening from the Lord that to be bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not sufficient to fit a man to be a minister of Christ, I regarded the priests less, and looked more after the dissenting people... But as I had forsaken all the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and...then, Oh then, I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition'.[2]

This last line, one of the best-known and most resounding of Quaker testimonies, takes its force from the contrast with all those 'professors' who could not, for all their learning or their experience, speak to any purpose.

From then on it was an important and enduring element of Quaker faith that ministry was not a profession, like medicine, for which men should qualify by study and examination and by which they should earn a living.[3] Theologically, this anti-clericalism went with the resistance to tithes, the rejection of sacraments, and the elevation of the living experience of Christ over the authority even of Scripture.

Anticlerical views were shared with other religious radicals at the time and indeed earlier.[4] They had particular point in the 1650s. Archbishops, bishops, deans and chapters, all the upper echelons of the Church of England, had been abolished. The parish ministry alone remained and even their position seemed precarious. Nearly one fifth of them had been turned out of their livings, no regular system for approving new entrants was instituted till 1654, and in consequence many parishes were not served at all.[5] People were no longer required to attend Sunday worship at their own parish church, provided they attended somewhere. So gathered churches with ministers of various provenance flourished. Tithes, the mainstay of maintenance for the parish incumbent, seemed to survive only by successive stays of execution.[6] The status of ministry was not a matter of abstract theology but a live political issue.[7]

From 1653 when the Quakers first took the field until the Restoration, the conflict with established ministers was a major theatre of the Lamb's War which Quakers waged on behalf of their religious vision.[8] This part of the war was conducted on three fronts. Quaker activists challenged ministers actively in their churches, or steeple-houses, and thereby provoked anything from a brawl to a public debate. Ministers invoked the laws against Quakers, not merely for withholding tithes, but for blasphemy. And Quakers and ministers denounced each other and defended themselves in a spate of books.[9]

Although the campaign in print seemed to be incessant, much of it was composed of shorter engagements between a few antagonists.[10] This article examines one such dog-fight which took place in 1656 and 1657. It was devoted almost exclusively to the issue of the legitimacy of a maintained ministry or 'preaching for hire'. The interest of it lies less in its content than in the experiences and personal motives which might have prompted the contestants to engage in it.

2. THE CONTROVERSY

2.1. The Publications

The campaign consisted of these booklets, in order of publication:

- *Christ's Innocency Pleaded against the Cry of the Chief Priests*, by Thomas Speed, a servant of that Jesus Christ, who was at the request of the bloody Crew of Chief Priests, and Teachers, Crucified at Jerusalem.[11]
- *A Sober Answer to an Angry Epistle Directed to all the Public Teachers in this Nation...called Christs Innocency Pleaded*, by Christopher Fowler & Simon Ford, Ministers of the Gospel in Reading.[12]
- *Rayling Rebuked or a Defence of the Ministers of this Nation by way of answer to...an Epistle*, by Thomas Speed..., by William Thomas, Minister of the Gospel at Ubley.[13]

- *The Guilty-Covered Clergyman Unvailed in a plain and candid Reply unto Two Bundles of Wrath and Confusion*, one written by Christopher Fowler and Simon Ford; ...the other by William Thomas...by Thomas Speed.[14]
- *A Vindication of Scripture and Ministry in a Rejoynder to a Reply*, by Thomas Speed..., by William Thomas.[15]

And there it ended. Though Speed had declared in ringing tones, 'And now that I am engaged I am resolved in the strength of the Lord never to desist (while I have a tongue to speak or a hand to write) from discovering the monstrous wickedness of the Romish Whore',[16] he made no answer to Thomas's *Vindication*, and published no more on this or any other subject till 1690.[17]

The participants reckoned that their controversy was of national importance. Fowler and Ford dedicated their contribution to Colonel Sydenham, a member of the Protectorate Council of State; and Speed dedicated his second salvo to the Parliament of England no less. But there is no sign that the affair attracted much attention[18] and nobody else joined in.[19]

2.2. Content and Tone

After all, there was little that was new in their arguments. Speed argued that tithes were not founded in Scripture and his opponents said they were. He said that it was unchristian to enforce them by law: they said that ministers had as much right as anyone else (such as a merchant like Speed) to some security for their families and to the protection of their rights at law. Speed argued that the Word of God required no learned sophistication or interpretation; and that preaching must proceed from inspiration not salaried duty. His opponents replied that while true inspiration was indeed necessary, untutored trust in their own inspiration could betray preachers into just the sort of ranting nonsense of which Quakers were often guilty. Why should Truth reveal itself only as it were in blinding flashes and not also in the steady light of study and reflection; and be as well communicated by the written as the spoken word?

The institutional argument thus runs along well-worn lines. However, Speed's case goes well beyond the right or reason of a maintained ministry in principle. He insists, again and again, that ministers who accept maintenance for their work are, *ipso facto*, merely hirelings, motivated solely by gain:[20]

> Faithfull ministers you [William Thomas] say do not preach for Tithes but for souls. Then from your own lips I may conclude that they that do preach for tithes are not faithfull ministers; and how few are there...who can escape this sentence. A father putteth his Son to the University for some certain years to learn the Trade of Sermon-making, and when he cometh thence, what is the first thing in the eye of the father and son? Why this, where is the best vacant living, the richest benefice, to be had?[21]
>
> Who is he among you that will in conscience betake himself to a poor Parish to preach for souls, where there are no tithes nor other yearly stipend to be had?[22]

This is tactically misjudged. His opponents may be on sticky ground in demonstrating any New Testament authority for tithes, but it is easy to point out that: 'There's a great difference...between taking hire and being an hireling – John 10.13',[23] and

that while some ministers may be 'sordid', Speed has and can have no factual grounds for condemning them all wholesale.[24]

Seventeenth century controversy was seldom maintained at a general level. The argument was nearly always carried *ad hominem* and few contestants restrained themselves from raking up what they could against the persons of their opponents.[25] In this dispute, Speed accuses Thomas of abandoning his souls at Ubley to preach for more money in the ex-cathedral at Wells and also of extorting a sixth rather than a tenth from his parishioners.[26] Thomas denies both and even prints a testimonial from his parishioners on the second, but he has a few barbs of his own. He chides Speed on lapses in his scholarship – surely a University man should know better?[27] This was a sore point with Speed, who had not completed his degree but insisted on larding his writings with not only Greek and Latin but also Hebrew and Aramaic.

For their part, the Reading ministers claimed that one of Speed's sons had disowned him.[28] Speed jibed that Fowler had dragged twelve poor market gardeners to court for their tithe of parsnips and carrots; while Ford had been expelled from Oxford and had started to give a public weekly sermon in Reading but gave it up because the subscriptions were too few: 'the people of the town of Reading know that you live by another rule than you pretend to (Viz.) no penny no Pater noster'.[29]

Nor was seventeenth-century controversy elevated in tone. Quakers were no more reluctant than others to support, or replace, argument with insult and abuse. In this case, the Quaker Speed far outdid his opponents in personal invective. Fowler and Ford are generally content to deal with the delusions and irrationalities of the Quaker doctrines;[30] and Thomas's attitude, irritating enough in its way of course, is of the older wiser man admonishing the folly and ignorance of youth. None of them accuses Speed of anything worse than intellectual opacity, deception of himself and others – and intemperance of expression. But Speed finds wickedness and malice against himself in their every line, and hurls it back with interest:

> [Fowler and Ford's is] a Pamphlet with a scoffing subscription written upon it...which I...do find it to be a monstrous birth begotten by the Prince of Darkness, conceived in the womb of your own guilt and brought forth by the vigorous assistance of that great Red Dragon which stood before the woman ready to be delivered, to devour her man child as soon as it should appear. Since when I have met with another heap of anger and confusion come forth under the name of William Thomas of Ubley, a piece which is found having on it the same stamp of enmity with yours, only with this difference, that whereas you have subtilly couched and covered your malice under the deceitful paint of smooth words, he has thrown out his scorn and disdain both against the truth and mine own person under a thinner covering in the view of all men.[31]
>
> As to the matter of it [*Rayling Rebuked*] it's principally made up of malice and slander.[32]
>
> [Of Thomas] Can that black spirit of rage and violence, cruelty and blood that ruleth in you extend pity towards me who do appear bearing public testimony against it. Horrible deceit! Palpable hypocrisy![33]

Speed's overreaction was perhaps as ill-judged as it was unjustified. Fowler and Ford pointed out that the virulence with which he denounced Dr Thomas must discredit his whole argument with anyone who knew the man. Speed's tone justified all too well their own deprecatory titles: *A Sober Answer to an Angry Epistle*; *Rayling Rebuked*.

3. THE ANTAGONISTS

As some of the foregoing will have suggested, the principals in this controversy were known to each other; and entered into it by way of personal experiences which had not been happy. Speed, the first to publish, was also the central figure in these inharmonious relationships.

3.1. Thomas Speed

Thomas Speed had nearly become a minister himself. His father was not well-off[34] and when young Thomas went up to Exeter Hall Oxford in 1640, the intention must have been that he should in due course take orders. Well might he write: 'a father putteth his son to the University for some certain years to learn the trade of sermon-making'.[35]

A clerical career was not to be. By the beginning of his third year, the Civil War had broken out, Oxford had become the Royalist capital and headquarters, and Speed did not stay to complete his studies. The next five years are hidden, but we know that he became a preacher in the Army.[36] He was very likely with one of the New Model Army units which stormed Bristol in September 1645. For in Bristol he married Ann Yeamans in 1647.[37]

Ann Yeamans was doubly a member of a family well represented among the elite of Bristol. She was the daughter of the well-respected Bristol lawyer, William Yeamans and the widow of the merchant Robert Yeamans (who had been hung for trying to betray the City to the Royalists in 1643).[38] There was property in trust for her children and she had probably carried on her dead husband's business.[39] In her mid-thirties by 1647, she would have had little difficulty in making a very good second marriage. Speed, not yet twenty-four years old, without fortune, connection or qualifications, must have seemed a very mature and capable character to be reckoned a fit match for her.

Doubtless with the help of his wife and her relations, Thomas Speed was soon well-established as a merchant in his own right.[40] But he remained an occasional preacher. He was chosen by the Mayor and Aldermen to deliver the official sermon of Thanksgiving for Cromwell's victory over Charles II and his Scottish army at the battle of Worcester in 1651.[41] And not long after, but before he became a Quaker, he was invited to preach in the parish church of Ubley by the rector, William Thomas.

3.2. William Thomas

Ubley was a village not ten miles from Bristol on the edge of the Mendip in Somerset. William Thomas, just entering his sixties, had been there for some thirty-five years, with interruptions which were a testimony to his convictions. In 1635 the Bishop of Bath and Wells suspended him for three years for refusing to read out the King's *Book of Sports*. (This licensed and encouraged the amusements which might properly be indulged on a Sunday, to the scandal of strict Sabbatarians like Thomas.)

Then he was prevented from serving his parish for most of the Civil War by the Royalist forces who held Somerset and regarded him as hostile to their cause.[42] In 1654, his staid Presbyterianism was very politically acceptable and he was appointed one of the clerical assistants to the panel of Ejectors for Somerset.[43]

Thomas had invited Speed to preach at the request of some of his own parishioners rather than of his own initiative.[44] But if he was unenthusiastic, it was more from the coolness of the ripe professional to the callow amateur than from any objection to Speed or his doctrine. We can guess, from the specimen one that survives,[45] what sort of sermon the Ubleyites probably got – orthodox for the times, pious and laborious, unlikely to provoke scandal or even wakefulness. The occasion seems to have gone off without incident or ill-will.

But in 1654, Quakerism came to Bristol, and by 1655, not long after his Ubley sermon, Thomas Speed and most of his family had become convinced. Dr Thomas felt that he could presume upon their 'pulpit-acquaintance' as he put it and write to admonish him for 'wafting over to so senseless a sect'. It was a private letter and it was short and perfectly civil.[46] To it he received what he called a rough and Quaker-like reply, which was never printed. Thomas felt called upon to answer in turn and this answer was never printed either. But Speed claimed that in it Thomas 'raised reports touching me which are both untrue and scandalous: for which cause it is principally I have caused this Reply to come to the Press'.[47] So *Christ's Innocency... A Brief and Plain Reply unto certain Papers received from William Thomas.*

3.3. Simon Ford and Christopher Fowler

Simon Ford was the duly presented vicar of St Laurence's parish in Reading (the county town of Berkshire). He had supported the Parliament side in the Civil War but had got into trouble and lost his studentship at Christchurch when he not only refused to take the oath of Engagement to the new Commonwealth in 1650, but also preached against it. In 1654 he caused some offence with a sermon castigating the people of Reading for supporting the wilder sects. No radical then, he survived the Restoration and ended up as a royal chaplain.[48]

Christopher Fowler was vicar of St Mary's parish, also in Reading and just by St Laurence's.[49] He had been intruded there in place of the sequestrated incumbent in 1643. He too had refused to take the Engagement but had not only been confirmed in the living when the sequestered minister died in 1652 but was also made one of the assistants to the Berkshire Ejectors in 1654.[50]

Fowler and Ford were already allied as conservative Presbyterians against political and religious radicalism. They had been prominent in the election of 1654 on behalf of Colonel Hammond who was returned as MP for Reading instead of the more republican Captain Castle. They had then turned on John Pordage, the rector of nearby Bradfield. Pordage was an unorthodox mystic associated with Abiezer Coppe the Ranter, William Everard the Leveller, Christopher Cheeseman the radical pamphleteer, and Elizabeth Poole who had prophesied to the Council of Officers. Fowler, assisted by Ford, engineered Pordage's ejection from Bradfield on charges of blasphemy. Fowler and Ford then worked together to try get their preferred candidate appointed in Pordage's place.[51]

Pordage wrote one book in his own defence and tried to turn the tables in another, accusing Fowler and Ford of having slandered the people of Reading and being enemies to the godly. Fowler wrote three rebuttals on their joint behalf, and the mayor and corporation of Reading put out a formal declaration exonerating both Fowler and Ford.[52]

Opposed to everything Ford and Fowler stood for was Thomas Curtis, a clothier or draper, son of Alderman Curtis of Reading and once a Captain in the New Model Army. In 1654 Curtis had been ready to take a petition against the election of Colonel Hammond to London. By 1655 he was a leader of the Reading Quakers, entertaining George Fox and heading 'mass invasions of churches'.[53] At his side stood his wife Ann, who was later to plead directly, and successfully, with Charles II for the release of Quaker prisoners. And Ann Curtis had been Ann Yeamans, Speed's stepdaughter. The Curtises maintained close links with him.[54] So it was very likely by their suggestion, if not their hand, that copies of *Christ's Innocency* were directed by name to Ford and to Fowler.[55]

At any rate, Fowler and Ford reckoned they knew who was responsible, and replied to Speed, as they said, out of concern to protect the souls in their charge from the infection likely to be spread among them by 'those who may (we feare) call you Father in other respects than the relation of Affinity'.[56] In effect, the copies addressed so invidiously to them were only one part of the challenge posed by the activities of the Curtises in Reading. Fowler and Ford were defending their territory as well as their cloth and their colleague.

3.4. Cudgels on the Mendip?

But Fowler and Ford were concerned for Dr Thomas too. They knew him, they bore eloquent testimony to the qualities which made him so unsuitable a target for Speed's accusations, and they did not pretend to pre-empt the defence he would make in his own name: 'Not that we intend hereby to take the Cudgels out of the hand of that Reverend man who is more nearly concerned and better able to manage them than ourselves'.[57]

It was an unfortunate figure of speech. Speed seized on it: 'Cudgels? An instrument that I never find in the hands of any Minister of Jesus Christ throughout the Scriptures, but a fit weapon for the hand of a foolish Shepherd'.[58] It was too good a remark not to repeat – and add perhaps, 'and I believe if the old man had thought me a Quaker when he met me on Mendip, he would have cudgelled me sooner than let me preach'.

Such surely must be the origin of the story put out by an anonymous Bristol Quaker only a year or so later:

> Sometime after the name of Quaker came forth in this nation, Tho: Speed riding upon the highway overtook a grave priest of Somersetshire; with whom (after much communication between them) he was engaged in a dispute touching the Priest's calling to the Ministry by Bishops, his preaching for a forced maintenance. [And after Speed gave him the lie the priest was] so exceeding enraged that (having in his hand a club much bigger than men of his coat carry about them) he puts spur to his horse (as they were both riding upon Mendip-hill) and most fiercely rode at him.[59]

This physical set-to is hardly credible. Thomas was thirty years the older man and nothing in his life suggests a tendency to rage or violence. Some Friend, hearing Speed remember with advantages the feats he did in print, might well have got hold, as it were, of the wrong end of the stick. But if it was mistaken in fact, the story is nevertheless true to the spirit of personal hostility which had arisen between the parties.

4. SPEED AND ST PHILIP'S

The printed controversy then stems from bad feeling on all sides. Speed, a man of some status in Bristol, resents being dressed down by an interfering member of a spiritually bankrupt order. Thomas feels that his hospitality has been misplaced and his intended kindness abused. Fowler and Ford have their churches invaded and their flocks seduced by Speed's step-daughter and her husband. Yet this does not seem fully to explain Speed's role.[60] As the first one to publish, he risked bringing into the public domain those very imputations which he alleged to have been so damaging to him. The least injured of all the parties, he was the most immoderate and abusive.

This is all the more curious in being at odds with what we can learn of his normal disposition. He was generally taken for a very level-headed and judicious fellow.[61] As a merchant his strong point was caution and minimisation of risk.[62] His ledger shows a man conciliatory rather than harsh or quarrelsome.[63] His other writings and public statements were sanctimonious but not at all choleric: more in sorrow than in anger is the tone he aims at and 'sober' is a favourite term of value.[64] Well might Fowler and Ford express surprise at this outburst from one who had hitherto been regarded as one of the more moderate of the Bristol Quakers.[65]

Was there a connection between Speed's uncharacteristic outburst and a personal experience which his opponents did not seem to know about?[66] Speed had himself nearly become a maintained minister in Bristol, and not so long ago.

4.1. A Gloomy Financial Forecast

Although Speed was quickly established as a merchant, by 1653 he faced a financial problem. His wife had brought him a business, but she had also brought eight surviving children of her first marriage. The family estate belonged to them, not to him. The very house he lived in would fall to the inheritance of a stepson when his wife died.[67] He had had the use of the capital while the stepchildren were minors, but now and for the next decade Speed would have to find the sums payable to each stepchild as he or she reached 21 or got married. And Speed had his own family to think of too, four young children.

Seventeenth-century business was conducted extensively on credit, in two senses.[68] Financially the ratio of credit to liquid assets was very high, and this high gearing meant that releasing money as cash year by year meant a considerable run-down of activity – even, or perhaps especially, for a prudent trader like Speed. In fact, the value of Speed's imports into Bristol was to drift consistently downwards from some £3000 a year in the mid 1650s to less than £500 in the mid-1660s.[69]

And credit then also meant personal credit, credibility, reputation. Failure in meeting either his business or his family commitments could have been fatal. This predicament, it seems, must have prompted him to become in 1653–54 a stipendiary preacher in the Bristol parish of St Philip and St James.

4.2. The Vacancy at St Philip's

The regular incumbent of St Philip's had been deprived of his living by the Parliamentary committee governing the city in 1645–46 .[70] Instead of intruding a more acceptable minister, the committee had turned over the tithe revenues of the parish and the responsibility for procuring a minister to the Vestry.

On paper, St Philip's offered good prospects. Much of the parish lay outside the city walls, and tithes said to be worth £50 a year were payable on this land.[71] In addition, there was supposed to be an augmentation – an extra payment of £50 a year from the ex-Cathedral revenues.[72] £100 a year was a good income at that time, actually earned by few parish ministers, especially in cities.[73] The Vestry had quickly secured an excellent man, Henry Stubbs, in 1646.[74]

But the money was not there. The tithes had been assigned to a farmer who did not, and probably could not, pay up.[75] Hardly a tenth of the nominal value had been received in seven years and that included a bill which was dishonoured – a bounced cheque – which the Vestry had to make up. The Parliamentary augmentation should have helped but all too often the money which was nominally assigned was not there in the chest. When it was there, the payment procedures were slow and needed constant re-activation. Augmentations were perpetually in arrears. Stubbs had quit in 1649, almost certainly because the income was too small and too unreliable.

After Stubbs left, the vestry had tried in vain to secure a successor. Services were taken and sermons were preached at least on some Sundays – mostly by ministers from other Bristol parishes. Speed himself had preached there at least once, and had accepted his fee for it. But although the Vestry was in increasing difficulties, they always spoke confidently to prospective ministers of the £50 of tithe money and the augmentation which the post would attract.

Speed's net income in the mid-50s must have been three or four times as much as the £100 which St Philip's purported to offer. But he probably counted on continuing to trade.[76] As a supplement to the uncertain and dwindling gains from trade, a regular £25 a quarter in cash would have been very handy.

Speed was perhaps not as circumspect as he might have been in checking the assurances of the Vestry, or perhaps he felt that a quarterly contract was not too great a commitment. At any rate, some time in late 1653 he entered into agreement with the Vestry to provide preaching services. The exact terms are not clear, but the Vestry Minutes for 25 November 1653 testify at once to the plan for engaging Speed and to the difficulties in realising it:

> It is this day ordered that the churchwardens bee desired to goe to Judge Haggett to take his advice, to recover the Tithes, with the areres of this parrish towards the maintaynence of Mr Speede and what charges the recovery of it shall cost shall be allowed by the persons heare present and the rest of the parrish.

They paid Judge Haggett ten shillings for his advice. There is no record of what he told them, but it was probably pretty discouraging. A Vestry had nothing like the common law rights in the collection of tithes which a regular incumbent would have had – and a tithe farmer even less. Haggett might also have pointed out that the famous augmentation, unpaid for some four years, would not be automatically reinstated when a minister was in post. Indeed the committee responsible for these disbursements had ceased to exist when Cromwell had summarily terminated the Rump Parliament in 1653.

Now Judge Haggett was Speed's brother-in-law and a close friend. If Speed had previously looked to a regular stipend to stabilise his finances, he must surely have learned the sad truth after this consultation. And the subsequence experience must also have been discouraging. The Churchwardens made a desperate effort and raised £7 13s 5d, all of which they paid over to Speed 'for preaching here' at the end of the financial year. The oddity of the sum and the fact that every penny was paid over as raised suggests that this was not so much what was due as all he was going to get. It must have been clear to Speed that there was never going to be a tidy £25 a quarter in cash. He may have also found it rather degrading to dun a desperate vestry for petty sums. The arrangement had come to an end by Easter 1654.

4.3. Speed Uneasy?

As a man of business, Speed was well out of ministry, out of this ministry at any rate. But as a man of conscience he may have been less happy. In effect he had first taken up and then abandoned a spiritual vocation for pecuniary reasons. Historical psychology is a dodgy game to play. But it is difficult not to suspect that a sense of unease over this episode may have contributed to his ready reception of the Quaker message – which made a virtue out of his rejection of preaching for hire – and to his uncharacteristically violent espousal of this particular part of it. His personal experience could at any rate account for an otherwise curious feature in the sweeping case he made against maintained ministry.

His writings harp on the theme that the hireling minister enters into a straight contract: preaching in return for money:

> Most of us [this is put into the mouths of the 'priests'] are engaged by contract to Preach weekly...we preach by indenture first made with the people for our maintenance.[77]
>
> How few are there of the Teachers of the Nation that will settle themselves in any Parish until they have made firm indentures for their hire? Is not 'What will you assure me of by the year?' the first question that is propounded?[78]

But, as Thomas pointed out,[79] most ministers were not engaged by their congergations to perform fixed duties for an annual stipend. The vast majority, even in these troubled times, had been presented to a living by a patron, or intruded to it by a Parliamentary Committee, with a lifetime property in the revenues attached, whether tithes or, in most towns, church rates in lieu of tithes. And although Speed, like his opponents, assumes that preaching was the essence of ministry, an incumbent as such was not obliged to preach regularly or even at all.[80]

It is true that ministers were sometimes paid additional sums by vestries specifically for preaching. This happened in several Bristol parishes, mostly by way of 'gift sermons' funded by pious *ad hoc* bequests which were usually administered by the Vestry. The minister of All Saints for example, in normal times, received £26 a year for a weekly gift sermon. Nowhere else in Bristol was this source of income anything like so lavish.[81] But All Saints happened to be the parish in which Speed had lived since his marriage; and an indenture, so many sermons at an agreed rate, was just what St Philip's had been offering.

In attacking those who did preach for hire, Speed may have been projecting some suppressed guilt and self-reproach on to others, especially the senior cleric who had dared to remonstrate with him. Even without this, we should note that his financial anxieties had not been set at rest. Yet his very position as a merchant depended on his not betraying any lack of confidence in his own solvency. His status as one of the leaders of Bristol's Quakers also called for a demeanour of steady gravity. It may have been a relief to let himself go in such an apparently godly cause.

5. CONCLUSIONS

> There is always another story, there is more than meets the eye. (Auden)

The five pamphlets considered here may stand for themselves as items in the considerable catalogue of Quaker and anti-Quaker polemic. But when we consider them in the light of personal circumstances, it becomes easier to understand why the commonly sober and reasonable Speed should have launched this outspoken attack, and why Fowler and Ford, of all the clerics nominally attacked, should have come out to support the worthy Dr Thomas. That is not to say that the personal considerations constitute in some sense the real story, and that the reasonings which the contestants advanced in public were mere camouflage. It is rather that the two aspects are complementary.

The interaction of public and private operates both ways. None of these men was unconcerned with the public issues at stake. All of them had reason to know how private lives could be elevated or cast down in the turning wheels of national history and politics. Speed's education had been cut short and his original vocation thwarted by the war which had kept Thomas from his pulpit for three years. In the aftermath Fowler had gained a sequestrated living in Reading while Ford had been deprived of his place at Oxford. Of course they all felt themselves involved in the great question which seemed as yet undetermined: which way next for the Church, or churches, in England.

This was not a question merely of tithes and livings, for all that Speed might attempt so to reduce the motives of his opponents. The Lamb's War, or the Quakers' rude assault on the already enfeebled Church of England, was a struggle for the soul of the nation. Well might these combatants address themselves to the magnates of the Council or to Parliament! Private concerns and personal experience served only to reinforce their engagement with the public issue.

NOTES

1. This article began as a paper for the conference of the Quaker Studies Research Association, 'Friends Print and Preach', 19 October 2002. I must thank the editor and referees of *Quaker Studies*, Madge Dresser and Bill Evans of the University of the West of England, and members of my family, for helpful comments and advice.

2. Nickalls, J., (ed.), *The Journal of George Fox*, Philadelphia: Religious Society of Friends, repr., 1997 (1952), p. 11.

3. Moore, R., *The Light in their Consciences: The Early Quakers in Britain 1646–1666*, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2000, p. 130; Reay, B., *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, London: Temple Smith, 1985, pp. 37-39.

4. Edwards, T., *Gangraena: or a Catalogue and discovery of many of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of this time etc.*, UK: The Rota; University of Exeter, facsimile edn, 1977 (1646), *passim* esp. Part 1, pp. 29-30, 'Catalogue of Errors' etc. common to sectaries, nos. 114, 116-19, 123 and 128. See also Hill, C., *The World Turned Upside Down*, London: Penguin, 1980 (1972), index: 'anticlericalism'.

5. Morrill, J., 'The Church in England, 1642–9', in Morrill, J., (ed.), *Reactions to the English Civil War 1642–1649*, London: Macmillan, 1982, pp. 100-01.

6. Successive ordinances of the late 1640s confirmed the lawfulness of tithes only for a stated period ahead. The Little or Barebones Parliament of 1653 had been considering abolishing them when it was itself abolished, and Clause XXXV of the Instrument of Government which established the Protectorate upheld tithes only pending 'a provision less subject to scruple and contention'.

7. James, M., 'The Political Importance of the Tithes Controversy in the English Revolution , 1640–60', *History* 26 (1941), pp. 1-18.

8. James Nayler may have been the first to coin the phrase. His book *The lambs warre* was published in 1657/58, but probably written earlier: he was in prison throughout 1657 and some pains were taken to deny him the means of writing (Biddle, W., *James Nayler 1618–1660: The Quaker Indicted by Parliament*, York: Sessions, 1986, pp. 168-69). But the concept if not the phrase is immanent in Quaker writing generally: see Loewenstein, D., 'The War of the Lamb: George Fox and the Apocalyptic Discourse of Revolutionary Quakerism', in Corns, T.N., and Lowenstein, D., (eds), *The Emergence of Quaker Writing: Dissenting Literature in Seventeenth-Century England*, London: Frank Cass, 1995, pp. 25-41; and Hill, C., *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries*, New York: Viking, 1984, pp. 148, 158.

9. Braithwaite, W.C., *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, York: Sessions, 2nd edn, 1981, Chapter 12, 'Controversy'. There were over 800 Quaker and 220 anti-Quaker publications between 1652 and 1660, and most of the anti-Quaker ones were by ministers: see Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, Table III, pp. 241-42, p. 88.

10. Braithwaite, *Beginnings*, p. 283. Biddle, *James Nayler*, pp. 45-53, outlines the long rally of exchanges between Nayler and a group of ministers led by Thomas Welde.

11. London: Giles Calvert, 1656. Thomason E865/1 has 1656 crossed out and 1655 written in, so it was probably some time in the first three months of 1656 NS, or last three of 1655 OS. This makes it improbable, though still possible, that Speed's title and treatment owed something to Fox's *Declaration of the Difference of the Ministers of the Word from the Ministers of the World: Who call the Writings the Word*, also of 1656, which gives an extended and pointed account of the role played by the chief priests, doctors and rabbis in the crucifixion of Jesus (*The Works of George Fox*, 8 vols; repr., Pennsylvania: State College, 1990 [1831], IV, pp. 90-98 [95]). This looks as though it was composed or conceived when Fox was in Launceston prison, so not published till later into the year. But Fox's fellow-prisoner was Edward Pyott, a Bristol merchant whose affairs Speed was minding in his absence; and both Fox and Pyott were in constant communication with George Bishop, Speed's nephew, in Bristol (M. Feola, *George Bishop: Seventeenth-Century Soldier turned Quaker* [York: Sessions, 1996], pp. 79-80).

12. London: Samuel Gellibrand, 1656. Thomason E883/1, dated by him 29 June.

13. London: TM for Edward Thomas, 1656. Thomason E883/5, dated 11 July.

14. London: Giles Calvert, 1657? Thomason E893/1. Thomason's date is difficult to read, but could be Xber 18, which would make it end 1656.

15. London: Edward Thomas, 1657. Bristol Central Library B104547.

16. Speed, *Guilty-Covered Clergyman*, p. 8.

17. Speed, T., *Reason against Rage*, London, 1690: a protest at the prejudicial re-publication of the sermon he preached in 1651, see n. 41 below.

18. Apart from Anthony Wood who recorded all these items in his memorials of Ford, Fowler, Speed and Thomas: Wood, A., *Athenae Oxonienses: An Exact History of all the writers and bishops who have been educated in the University of Oxford, etc.*, ed. P. Bliss; 4 vols.; London, 1813–20, IV, p. 756; III, p. 1098; IV, p. 488; III, p. 698.

19. George Fox noticed and rebutted Fowler and Ford (in a paragraph), and both Thomas's books (in some eight pages each) in his 1659 survey of the decade's debates, *The Great Mistery of the Great Whore* (*Works of George Fox*, III, pp. 466, 383, 187). He did not mention Speed's contribution.

20. Some Quakers at least made distinctions, for example Farnsworth in Barclay, J. , (ed.), *Letters of Early Friends*, London, 1841, p. 220.

21. Speed, *Christ's Innocency*, p. 10.

22. Speed, *Christ's Innocency*, p. 12.

23. Thomas, *Rayling Rebuked*, p. 29, 4.

24. Thomas, *Rayling Rebuked*, p. 39.

25. Braithwaite claims that the writings of Friends were 'singularly free...from the filth of private scandal' (*Beginnings*, p. 284); but if this was true generally, nobody had told Thomas Speed.

26. Speed, *Christ's Innocency*, p. 11; Speed, *Guilty-Covered Clergyman*, p. 54.

27. Thomas, *Rayling Rebuked*, p. 45; Thomas, *Vindication*, p. 15.

28. Fowler and Ford, *Sober Answer*, p. 42. Speed's own three sons were all under ten at the time and the men his stepdaughters had married were themselves Quakers, so this must refer to one of his three stepsons, not all of whom became Quakers.

29. Speed, *Guilty-Covered Clergyman*, pp. 51, 63, 29.

30. They repeat some of the standard charges against the Quakers: they are crypto-Papists; their women not only preach but go naked. But they have also followed the Baxter-Nayler debate which took place in 1655, and they cite Fox, Parnell, Howgill and Burroughs.

31. Speed, *Guilty-Covered Clergyman*, pp. 1-2.

32. Speed, *Guilty-Covered Clergyman*, p. 13.

33. Speed, *Guilty-Covered Clergyman*, p. 21.

34. He was a school master, *verb. sap.*

35. Speed, *Christ's Innocency*, p. 10. Fox had said more or less the same at Cambridge: Nickalls (ed.), *Journal of George Fox*, p. 219.

36. As Thomas reminded him (Thomas, *Vindication*, p. 64). I have found no record of the unit or the capacity in which Speed served, nor any evidence for the Captaincy awarded him by Dr Sacks (D. Sacks, *The Widening Gate* [Berkeley: University of California Press, paperback edn, 1993], p. 269).

37. Bristol Record Office, Burgess Book 1607–51, p. 355.

38. Bristol Record Office: parish registers of St Thomas (marriages, 6 September 1609), St Ewen (births, 17 February 1610/11), Christchurch (marriages, 16 March 1628); and property documents 00771(5), 00485(1).

39. She was still importing in her own name when the Wharfage Records of the Society of Merchant Venturers begin in 1654. These records, more continuous than the surviving Bristol Port Books, show the quantities of each commodity imported into Bristol by ship and consignee. I should record my thanks to the Society of Merchant Venturers for permission to study these records and Mrs Denny the then Secretary for making the arrangements.

40. Ann's maternal uncle, ex-Mayor John Tomlinson, had been Master of the Society of Merchant Venturers as her brother William, and her nephew Robert Cann, already members, were to become (Beaven, A., *Bristol Lists: Municipal & Miscellaneous*, Bristol, 1899, pp. 310, 315, 281). Speed was immediately made a member (P. McGrath, *Records relating to the Society of Merchant Venturers* [Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1952], XVII, p. 44); became a Warden in 1651 (Beaven, *Bristol Lists*, p. 124) and was trading in partnership with Cann by that year (*CSPD* 1651, p. 25; also 1651/52, pp. 324, 575).

41. This sermon was printed as *Ton Sesomenon Umnos or The Song of the Delivered*, London: Calvert, 1651.

42. *DNB*; Matthews, A., *Calamy Revised*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934, p. 481.

43. The Ejectors were committees set up by the Protector in each county to examine and eject scandalous ministers – which by this stage mostly meant those reckoned politically unreliable. See Collins, J., 'The Church Settlement of Oliver Cromwell', *History* 285 (January 2002), pp. 18-40.

44. Thomas, *Vindication*, first page (unnumbered) of 'The Epistle' preceding the main text.

45. Note 41 above.

46. Thomas prints this first letter and explains how it came to be written in the first pages of the Epistle to *A Vindication*.

47. Speed, *Christ's Innocency*, Epistle to the Reader.

48. *DNB*; Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, IV, pp. 756-60.

49. The parish churches are 300 metres apart.

50. *DNB*; Walker *Calamy Revised*, p. 208; Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, III, pp. 1098-100.

51. Brod, M., 'A Radical Network in the English Revolution: John Pordage and His Circle', *English Historical Review* cxix (November 2004), pp. 1230-53; for the election, p. 1244; for Pordage's ejection, p. 1249; and *passim* for Pordage and his associates, IV, p. 715.

52. Brod, 'Radical Network'; *DNB* for Pordage; Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, IV, p. 715, and sources for Ford and Fowler cited in nn. 48 and 50 above.

53. Brod, 'Radical Network', pp. 1244, 1247.

54. When the authorities were distraining for an unpaid fine, Ann Curtis tried to stop them on the grounds that much of the furniture was really Speed's. And in 1682, Speed made his fourth marriage, not in the Bristol meeting, but at Reading from the Curtis household (Reading Meeting records at the Berkshire Record Office T/B2 15/6/01, 24th 9th month 1682; Friends Marriage Register #75 p. 177, 19 December 1682)

55. Fowler and Ford, *Sober Answer*, p. 1.

56. Fowler and Ford, *Sober Answer*, p. 2.

57. Fowler and Ford, *Sober Answer*, pp. 2, 4.

58. Speed, *Guilty-Covered Clergyman*, p. 22.

59. Anon., *Rabshakeh's Outrage Reproved etc.*, London: Giles Calvert, 1658, pp. 42-43.

60. 'A printed Book for a few private words', as Thomas says, 'so large a plaster for so narrow a sore' (Thomas, *Vindication*, p. 2).

61. He served as Warden of the Society of Merchant Venturers before the age of 30 (see n. 40 above), and later, despite being a Quaker, served on the S.M.V. committee which bought the manor of Clifton, its largest investment of the century (McGrath [ed.], *Merchant Venturers*, p. 130). In 1680 he was chosen to mediate in a dispute between the City Council and a merchant (Latimer, J., *The Annals of Bristol in the Seventeenth Century*, Bristol: William George's Sons, 1900, p. 397).

62. He seems to have traded at a moderate rate, seldom embarking on new ventures until he had realised the proceeds of the old. In over forty years of trading he was never in financial difficulties.

63. His ledger for 1681–90 survives (Bristol Record Office, 33288/60) and shows him patient and accommodating with tenants; and ready to write off differences in settling up accounts with other businessmen rather than dispute the reckoning.

64. Speed's normal manner can be judged from his sermon of 1651, by his letter to the Mayor and his address to the jury in 1663 (Besse, J., *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers*, 2 vols.; London, 1753, pp. 46-48) and by the pamphlet *Reason against Rage* – significant title (see n. 17 above).

65. Fowler and Ford, *Sober Answer*, p. 4.

66. Even Wood's long nose picked up only a garbled version, in which Speed was minister first and then turned merchant: *Athenae Oxonienses*, IV, p. 488.

67. Bristol Record Office deeds 00771(5), 00485(1).

68. Grassby, R., *The Business Community of Seventeenth-Century England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; Muldrew, C., *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998; Zahediah, N., 'Credit, Risk and Reputation in Late Seventeenth-Century Colonial Trade', in *Merchant Organisation and Maritime Trade in the North Atlantic, 1660–1815*, Research in Maritime History, 15; St John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 1998.

69. These figures are based on his imports by commodity as recorded in the Wharfage Records of the Society of Merchant Venturers (see n. 39 above) at typical retail prices. Obviously they are estimates, but the rate of decline is incontrovertible.

70. The account which follows is based mainly on the Churchwardens Accounts and the Vestry Book of St Philip & St James, Bristol Record Office P/St P & J/Chw/3(a), P/St P& J/V/1.

71. Skeeters, M., *Community & Clergy: Bristol and the Reformation*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, pp. 102-03.

72. MS Bodley 323, p. 265.

73. Cross, C., 'The Incomes of Provincial Urban Clergy, 1520–1645', in O'Day, R., and Heal, F., (eds), *Princes & Paupers in the English Church, 1500–1800*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1981, pp. 65-90.

74. Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, p. 453; also *DNB* on his son, also Henry.

75. It was hard enough to collect tithes anywhere in this period. The people were already heavily taxed to pay for the vast Army, while tithes seemed always on the point of being abolished. It was worse in parishes like St Philip's where the real minister had been ejected, as shown by repeated Ordinances of Parliament re-asserting the rights of intruded ministers.

76. Technically a minister was prohibited from trading by a statute of Henry VIII. But in the event that this should be enforced against him, Speed could expect to operate in the name of his wife – still importing under her own name in 1654 – or later in tacit partnership with his younger brother John, currently his apprentice, and due to attain his freedom in 1657.

77. Speed, *Christ's Innocency*, Epistle 8th page.

78. Speed, *Christ's Innocency*, p. 12.

79. Thomas, *Rayling Rebuked*, p. 29.

80. A minister was certainly expected to preach regularly. Those who did not were denounced as 'dumb dogs' by the godly, and Ejectors were authorised to treat those who did not preach every Lord's Day as negligent, just as the most Laudian of bishops would have regarded them formerly. But there was no legal duty of preaching as there was of holding the prescribed services.

81. See the list of gift sermons drawn up for the Mayor and Aldermen in 1659 Bristol Record Office 4272, p. 85v. Also All Saints Churchwardens Accounts BRO P/AS/Chw/3(a).

AUTHOR DETAILS

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