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On 2 November 1654, in a funeral sermon on Psalm 73 ('Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory'), the ailing Presbyterian pastor Ralph Robinson reflected on the present 'great prosperity of the wicked' in Protectorate England.<sup>1</sup> As scribe to the first London Provincial assembly, and a member on its ruling council, Robinson had watched in despair as attempts to cement a Presbyterian church structure failed in the early 1650s. Also involved in a 1651 plot attempt to restore Charles II to the throne, Robinson clearly thought that England had lost its way both politically and spiritually. The metaphysical 'wandering away from God' he witnessed was epitomized for Robinson by the rise of radical sectarian religion. 'We have many *Spiritual Vagrants*', Robinson said, 'but we want a *Spiritual House of Correction* for the punishing of these *Vagrants*. There are many *wandring stars* in the Firmament of our Church at this time... there is a generation of *Ranters, Seekers, Quakers*, risen up among us. Prophaneness is now stamp'd with the name of Religion, and this religion hath many Professors.'<sup>2</sup> The attitudes of traditionally godly men like Ralph Robinson reflected, in David Underdown's words, 'the familiar ambiguities of Puritanism'. Such men believed in liberty of conscience 'up to a point', and simultaneously believed 'just as strongly in their duty to enforce on those beneath them the standards of personal and public conduct held by people "of credit and reputation"'.<sup>3</sup> In the minds of men like Robinson, that revolutionary 'overturning, questioning, revaluing, of everything in England' had limits beyond which anarchy, vice, and both spiritual and political disaster awaited the realm.<sup>4</sup>

In 1656, Oliver Cromwell—in some respects a powerful individual embodiment of puritan ambivalence over the limits of religious toleration—received an angry letter from the Quaker Edward Burrough.<sup>5</sup> At age twenty-three, Burrough was one of the youngest and most vocal 'First Publishers of Truth' and since his conversion to Quakerism in 1652 he had proselytized over much of England, as well as parts of Ireland and Scotland.<sup>6</sup> Burrough was

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<sup>1</sup> See: E. C. Vernon, 'Robinson, Ralph (1614–1655)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, Jan 2008, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/23864.

<sup>2</sup> Ralph Robinson, *Safe Conduct, or The Saint's Guidance to Glory* (London, 1655), STC R203376, 66-67. For the first abbreviated use of this quote, and further reading on Ralph Robinson, see: Bernard Capp, *England's Culture Wars: Puritan Reformation and its Enemies in the Interregnum, 1649-1660* (Oxford, 2012), 88.

<sup>3</sup> David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford: OUP, 1985), 239.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1991), 14.

<sup>5</sup> The limits of Cromwellian religious liberty are discussed in Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner (eds), *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation* (Cambridge, 1996), 216, but it should be noted that he was publicly and strongly for religious toleration: 'Liberty of Conscience is a natural Right, and he that would have it, ought to give it'; from a parliamentary speech quoted in Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, Vol. 1 (London, 1753), STC T143288, vii.

<sup>6</sup> Consult Burrough's Oxford Dictionary of National Biography entry for further information. See: Catie Gill, 'Burrough, Edward (1633-1663)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed online.

angry with the Lord Protector for one principal reason – the consistent persecution and punishment of Quakers as vagrants and troublemakers throughout the 1650s, and he castigated Cromwell for allowing such miscarriages of justice. ‘Cruelties abound upon the innocent’, Burrough wrote, ‘and not for evill doinge, but for the exercise of their pure conscience towards God many hath been taken, some on the highway, and some out of peaceable meetings [...]’.<sup>7</sup> Once Burrough’s co-religionists were apprehended, they experienced the punitive force of English law, and felt the sting of summary powers of punishment granted to constables and magistrates: ‘innocent men [have] been whipped and stocked and imprisoned and other cruelties done unto them... and yet the transgressions of noe Just Law truly Charged against them, [and] neither have [they] been convicted of any evil’, he wrote.<sup>8</sup> For a brief period in the 1650s, Edward Burrough and his fellow Quakers were both legally and discursively ‘vagrants’ because the English state, alongside its ministers and magistrates, found it convenient to define Quakers as such, and both proscribed and punished early Friends in a spectacular fashion in line with the perceived threat that Quakerism posed to social and religious stability.

This article examines the representation of early Quakerism as a form of vagrancy by unpacking the assumed connections between mendicancy and mendicity, by exploring the tensions between individual liberties of conscience and the spatial norms of parish religion—primarily as these tensions manifested in print—and by charting the rhetorical conflation of radical religious morality with wandering away from God in Interregnum England. The principal source material for this investigation is comprised of approximately forty printed tracts from between 1653 and 1660 that explicitly either attack Quakerism by equating it with vagrancy, or which rebutted these contentions and defended travelling Friends against those same charges. A further thirty texts muse more generally on the troubling implications of Quaker mobility, often in the context of wider observations about the religious and political climate of the Interregnum. What we will find is that there was a heated polemical battle over the growth and spread of early Quakerism, a battle which centred on competing definitions of who should be legitimately labelled as ‘vagrant’, a label which had an immediate and obvious effect on the lived experiences of itinerant early Friends, and which also left a powerful cultural afterimage in popular representations of both Quakers *and* vagrants in the latter seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Early Friends like Edward Burrough devoted much time and ink to

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Burrough’s letter, in facsimile manuscript, is held at the Friends Library and Archives in London. See: ‘Burrough to Cromwell, 1656’, Swarthmore MSS, Vol. 1, ff. 299-300.

refuting these charges of vagrancy, and the second half of this article considers these refutations in detail.

Edward Burrough died unmarried in Newgate prison, aged 29, after his arrest at a Quaker meeting in London in 1661. His story was different from the common experiences of early Quakers generally, but only because he was imprisoned less frequently than many of his peers. Naomi Pullin aptly summarizes the status of early Friends: they were ‘extreme social and political outcasts who refused to conform to codes of social deference’, their belief in ‘Inner Light’ and ‘direct divine inspiration’ led to challenging and generally public disruptions, such as walking ‘naked’ through the streets and interrupting church services, and they were widely ‘accused of fanaticism and sedition’ by contemporaries.<sup>9</sup> Early Quakers hailed from diverse social backgrounds; George Fox was famously an apprentice shoemaker in his youth, James Nayler was the son of a prosperous Yorkshire farmer, a parliamentary army quartermaster, and was reasonably well educated. Many prominent women in the movement like Margaret Fell and Elizabeth Hooton came from prosperous families, and on occasion used their social status to their advantage.<sup>10</sup> We thus find an essential (and likely deliberate) irony inherent in accusations of Quaker vagrancy, since as Quakers themselves often protested, they were in fact men and women of some means.<sup>11</sup> Early Quakers were also extraordinarily mobile individuals, and their habit of preaching publicly and of directly confronting local secular and religious authorities during their travels tended to exacerbate their socially threatening status. Early Quaker mobility could be frenetic; for instance William Caton wrote letters, principally to Margaret Fell, from Edinburgh (‘in olivers days’), from Warrington in 1654, Sunderland in 1655, Bristol in 1656, Amsterdam in 1657, and Olveston in 1660.<sup>12</sup> In 1654 John Audland travelled about thirty miles a day, ‘backwards and forwards through more than twenty counties’ over several months.<sup>13</sup>

This consistent and challenging Quaker itinerancy was seen by many contemporaries as socially and morally dangerous, and both law and existing powers of summary justice were quickly deployed to control it, including Elizabethan vagrancy laws. In his 1907 edited

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<sup>9</sup> Naomi Pullin, ‘Providence, Punishment and identity formation in the late-Stuart Quaker Community, c.1650-1700’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 31:4 (December, 2016); 472.

<sup>10</sup> See for instance recent scholarship on Hooton’s journey to the Massachusetts colony in the early 1660s: Adrian Chastain Weimer, ‘Elizabeth Hooton and the Lived Politics of Toleration in Massachusetts Bay’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 74 (2017); 43-76.

<sup>11</sup> On the social origins of Quakers, see: Barry Reay, ‘The Social Origins of early Quakerism’, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 11:1 (Summer 1980); 55-72; and Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English Society 1655-1725* (Oxford: OUP, 2000); 35-42 & Appendix II: ‘Social Origins’.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Manuscript index of letters’, Swarthmore MSS, f. 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> Barry Reay, ‘Popular Hostility Towards Quakers’, *Social History*, 5:3 (October 1980), 394.

collection of early Quaker documents entitled *The First Publishers of Truth*, Norman Penny suggested that of the penal laws that were applied to early Quakers, vagrancy law was ‘the readiest means of punishing travelling Friends’, and noted that in 1657 the existing law was extended to cover ‘all persons wandering without sufficient cause’.<sup>14</sup> We also have scattered evidence of Quakers being treated as legally vagrant, for instance William Caton and John Stubbs were apprehended and stocked by the constables of Maidstone in May of 1655. Stubbs and then Caton were subjected to lengthy settlement examinations and then jailed, both were publicly whipped, sent to the house of correction after refusing to be bound in service to a master (and so confirming that they were ‘masterless men’), and finally discharged with vagrant passes ‘to convoy [sic] Them from Constable to Constable to their owne country as Vagabons (as they said).’<sup>15</sup> John Braithwaite wrote to Margaret Fell in 1657, informing her that ‘severall have been whipt pretty badly but thus far I have ’scaped and in the Lord is my hope that if the time of suffering come hee will give mee strength to beare it.’<sup>16</sup> Barbara Blaugdone, whose travelogue narrative of her own experiences remains a remarkable resource for interrogating female spirituality and subjectivity, wrote that she was thrown into jail in Exeter with a group of gypsies, and that the Beadle ‘whipt me till Blood ran down my back, and I never startled at a blow.’<sup>17</sup> When local magistrates and particularly religious authorities found themselves challenged by Quaker mobility, they thus reacted by jailing and often whipping Quakers, in the process making use of their powers of summary justice, powers which were granted primarily to punish vagrants and other undeserving poor. To justify sentencing Quakers as vagrants, officials frequently seized upon their humble or middling origins, and particularly on their lengthy and varied accounts of travel and of subsistence on the charity of others.

Early Quakers were not only punished as vagrants, they were also represented as vagabonds in pamphlets and polemic. In the earliest explicitly anti-Quaker tract we know of, the Westmorland vicar Francis Higginson describes the ‘execrable Irreligion’ of Quakerism as fundamentally vagrant in character, and he ends with a quote about the ‘sort of persons termed in Scripture disorderly, vagabond, wandring’:

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<sup>14</sup> Norman Penny (ed.), *“The First Publishers of Truth”: Being Early Records (now first printed) of the Introduction of Quakerism into England and Wales* (London: Headley Brothers, 1907), p 346-47.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p 138-140; and a 17<sup>th</sup> century sufferings account of Stubbs’ and Caton’s experience exists in manuscript in the Kent History and Library Centre, ‘East Kent (Canterbury) Monthly Meeting ‘Annuall Record to Posterity’, prepared by Thomas Marche (1689/90)’, N/FQz/2, ff. 1-15.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Braithwaite to Fell, 1657’, Swarthmore MSS, f. 249.

<sup>17</sup> Barbara Blaugdone, ‘An Account of the Travels, 1691’, in Mary Garman, et al (eds), *Hidden in Plain Sight: Quaker Women’s Writings, 1650-1700* (Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill, 1996), p 277-278; John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in early modern England, 1558-1689* (Harlow, 2000), 153.

the Lawes of most Nations have provided that their people shall not be wanderers, and whosoever hath not a place of abode, and imployment, is by them a punishable vagabond. And in this by experience of the wayes, walking, and converse of such persons, I am exceedingly confirmed I did as yet never observe any other issue upon such undertakers, but scandal to Religion, and trouble to men in their Civil relations, when men by the practise of any vice or sin, draw others to a pretended Religion, or by pretence of Religion draw men to any vice or sinne, let them be twice punished, for their reall vices, and pretended Religion.<sup>18</sup>

In the view of Higginson and other pamphleteers, Quakers were a threat to ‘True Religion’ in a fashion identical to the dangers posed by vagrants to the social order of the realm. Christopher Hill wrote that ‘when Quakers assembled on the moors in their thousands, oblivious of any prohibition by magistrates, it was not altogether surprising that M.P.s thought they would physically “overrun us all, both ministers and magistrates”’.<sup>19</sup> Quaker mobility—like vagrant mobility—was seen as a vehicle for moral contagion; Quakers were also capable, *pace* Higginson, of deceiving settled English subjects into ‘pretended Religion’ and ‘any vice or sinne’. In *Masterless Men* A.L. Beier noted that ‘ironically enough’ the swift growth of itinerant preaching during the 1640s and 50s ‘gave the genuinely uprooted a bad name.’<sup>20</sup> Indeed our counterparts sometimes crossed paths on England’s roads, as in June of 1652, when George Fox encountered ‘several *poore People, Travellers*, asking *Relief*, who I saw were in *Necessity*’, and became outraged when the local minister of Underbarrow ‘gave them nothing; but said, they were *Cheats*.’<sup>21</sup> Fox would soon be defending himself and his faith from similar accusations. The polemical battle over the representation of Quakerism as vagrancy reveals to historians an aspect of contemporaries’ anxieties concerning radical religious movement(s); anxieties which foregrounded the spatial policing of settled religion and the maintenance of community and tradition in a world ‘turned upside down’, a world where each of these pillars of stability seemed to be crumbling away.

It is safe to say that Quakerism, spiritual itinerancy, and radical religion during the 1640s and 50s have attracted sustained historical attention. Historians have also noted the profusion of anti-Quaker pamphlets which describe early Friends as rogues and vagabonds. In

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<sup>18</sup> Francis Higginson, *A Brief Relation of the Irreligion of the Northern Quakers* (London, 1653), STC R34465, 35.

<sup>19</sup> Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 245.

<sup>20</sup> A.L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560-1640* (London: Methuen, 1987), p 140-1.

<sup>21</sup> Fox, *Journal*, 76.

*Revel, Riot and Rebellion* David Underdown notes that ‘allegations that the Quakers were the “dregs of the common people”, vagrants “living often in idleness”, have been shown to be figments of hostile propaganda.’<sup>22</sup> What has received rather less coverage is just how closely the attacks on Quaker itinerant movements mirrored the early modern discourse on vagrancy; right down to the similarly deceptive reasons suggested for why Quakers were so mobile, and conversely just how much effort early Quaker writers put into refuting the charges of vagrancy levelled at them. Contemporaries from Richard Baxter to Francis Higginson to William Prynne worked explicitly to include early Quakers in the ‘rogue’s gallery’, alongside mendicant friars and popish priests, travelling actors, and con-artists. And numerous Quaker ‘First Publishers’, from Edward Burrough to Richard Farnsworth to James Nayler and even George Fox, all spent a great deal of time and ink explaining that no, it was deluded magistrates and suspicious clergy who were the true vagabonds, and who, like Cain, endeavoured to slander and even to slay their spiritual brothers.

### **Quakerism, Print, and Mobility:**

Early Quaker publications defending themselves from accusation, or documenting the sufferings of Friends, have long played a crucial role in the larger historiographies of both early modern dissenting religion, and in social, political and religious histories of the English revolutionary period.<sup>23</sup> Kate Peters notes that a great deal of what we know about Quakerism in the 1650s was ‘directly attributable to the efforts of a later generation of Quakers, intent on preserving the memory of earlier Quaker ministers’, particularly their trials, sufferings, and premature deaths.<sup>24</sup> The overall volume of early Quaker publishing was significant; Peters calculates that over three-hundred separate titles had been produced by Quaker writers by 1656, ‘an average of more than one new Quaker book each week’, or in Francis Higginson’s memorable words: ‘Manuscripts that flye as thick as Moths’.<sup>25</sup> More than half of these early tracts were produced by just eight men, each of whom were members of a larger group of early itinerant preachers and leaders—both male and female—known denominationally as the ‘First Publishers of Truth’, a group which included Edward Burrough, Richard Farnsworth, James

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<sup>22</sup> David Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford: OUP, 1985), 250.

<sup>23</sup> Most famously in the work of Christopher Hill, see: Hill, *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984); p 129-170, and *The World Turned Upside Down*. Regarding print culture and Quakerism see Kate Peters, *Print Culture and the early Quakers* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005) and Thomas N. Corns and David Lowenstein (eds), *The Emergence of Quaker Writing: Dissenting Literature in Seventeenth Century England* (New York: Frank Cass, 1995).

<sup>24</sup> Peters, *Print Culture and the early Quakers*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1; and Higginson, *Brief Relation*, Sig. A5r.

Nayler, Elizabeth Hooton, and of course George Fox.<sup>26</sup> Early Quaker writers kept in close contact, and produced a rich vein of tracts that Peters identifies as possessing a ‘remarkable homogeneity of expression and presentation’.<sup>27</sup> These authors also quickly took hold of the pejorative term ‘Quaker’ and made use of it to ‘present a cohesive body of ideas and people’, and in effect to signal that their persecution at the hands of wider society and its legal authorities was an outcome ensured by their status as prophetic heralds of divinely received truth.<sup>28</sup>

To preach this truth, the First Publishers had to move around. Physical mobility was utterly central to early Quaker spirituality and to the confrontational style of disputation and public preaching that quickly came to characterise the movement’s efforts at conversion. Andrew McRae has written that for Quakers, ‘freedom of conscience was inseparable from freedom of movement’.<sup>29</sup> Hilary Hinds argues that mobility was so important to Quakerism that ‘Quakers really cannot be considered separate from their itinerant constitution and self-maintenance; it made them who they were, and was a major factor in what constituted them as a threat to their opponents.’<sup>30</sup> Quaker itinerant preaching was particularly crucial to the growth of the movement from its first beginnings in the East Midlands, particularly in Leicestershire and in the ‘Shattered’ Baptist community near Nottingham, and historical scholarship from W.C. Braithwaite and Norman Penny onwards has duly recognized its importance in early Quaker organization and the growth of the faith.<sup>31</sup> Itinerancy and mobility also powerfully infuse the language and metaphor of Quaker writing both private and public; for instance when Edward Pyot writes to Major General John Desborough to ask for the release of imprisoned Quakers in 1655, he justifies Quaker movements as directions from divinity: ‘Should we stay, if the Lord commands us to go; or should we go, if the Lord command us to stay’, he asks.<sup>32</sup> Variations on the phrase ‘I was moved by the Lord’ occur more than two-hundred and twenty times in George Fox’s 1694 *Journal*, and his account is laden with terms denoting purposeful

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<sup>26</sup> See Peters, *Print Culture*, 21-24, and for a short precis of the connections between the ‘First Publishers’, see W.C. Braithwaite’s ‘People in White Raiment’ chapter in his *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 78-95. See also: Sylvia Stevens ‘Travelling Ministry’ in Steven W. Angell and Pink Dandelion (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies* (Oxford: OUP, 2013); 292-295. For a robust quantitative breakdown of Quaker writings over a slightly longer period, see M. G. F. Bitterman, ‘The early Quaker Literature of Defence’, *Church History* 42:2 (June, 1973); 203-228, particularly 204-207.

<sup>27</sup> Peters, *Print Culture*, 123.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Andrew McRae, *Literature and Domestic Travel in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), 117.

<sup>30</sup> Hilary Hinds, *George Fox and early Quaker Culture* (Manchester: MUP, 2011), 108.

<sup>31</sup> Rosemary Moore, *Light in their Consciences: The Early Quakers in Britain, 1646-1666* (PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); pp 1-15; and see Chapters III and XIV of W.C. Braithwaite’s seminal book *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (London: Macmillan and co, 1912) which document the centrality of itinerant preachers to the faith.

<sup>32</sup> George Fox, *Journal* (London, 1694), STC R3344, p 215.



mobility, such as: ‘travelled’ (106 uses), ‘walked’ (75), ‘journey’ (38), and ‘follow’ (85).<sup>33</sup> Conversely, movement without direction or guidance is derided by Fox, its descriptors reserved for those who have refused to see the inner light of Christ: the word ‘wander’ appears only five times, and each use denotes a fallen or sinful spiritual state. In the preface Fox recounts how man is driven from Eden, ‘his proper Dwelling and Residence’, to become a ‘poor *Vagabond*’, ‘to wander in the Earth’.<sup>34</sup> It was this fallen state of spiritual vagabondage that Quakers saw themselves as chosen by God to rectify. It was therefore particularly galling for early Quakers to be labelled as vagrant. The dense corpus of early Quaker pamphlets by authors such as Edward Burrough, James Nayler, and Francis Howgill all relied on a shared language of purposeful spiritual journeying, and as published attacks on Quakerism intensified throughout the later 1650s, these men and others responded often and at length to refute the charge that the consistent mobility of Friends marked them as ‘Vagrant Quakers’, and ‘False Apostles’.<sup>35</sup>

We have seen already how itinerancy frequently got early Quakers into trouble in local contexts, but these ‘sufferings’ in their varied forms also served as ready fuel for Quaker polemics decrying their persecution and situating the ‘Children of the Light’ as apostolic martyrs in the cause of revealing true religion. One of the primary topics of early Quaker writing from 1654 onwards was their persecution at the hands of local authorities, along with rough treatment meted out by crowds, often with the tacit encouragement of local officials, who ‘excited the Mob to do what the Magistrates could not’.<sup>36</sup> George Fox’s journal recounts how on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 1652 the parishioners of Staveley, led by a churchwarden, beat him soundly and threw him ‘Headlong over a *Stone-wall*’.<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Levens was arrested as a vagrant in Chester in 1657, jailed for five weeks, and passed from constable to constable back to Westmorland.<sup>38</sup> In a seminal article in *Social History*, Barry Reay argued that popular hostility towards the early Quakers was based on ‘a mixture of xenophobia, class hatred,

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<sup>33</sup> The search methodology for ‘I was moved’ variations simply combines Boolean search positive hits on both ‘was moved’ and/or ‘Lord’, ‘light’, ‘spirit’ as well as no further value. Total hits in the 1694 edition of the *Journal* amount to 224. Single word searches were simple ‘ctrl-f’ counts, and the facsimile version was the full text of two volumes in EEBO-TCP, at the following durable URL: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:11951541](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:11951541)

<sup>34</sup> Fox, *Journal*, sig. A12r.

<sup>35</sup> William Prynne’s use of the term ‘Vagrant Quakers’ is the only time I have seen those two words combined so explicitly, despite the large amount of anti-Quaker literature which renders a connection between vagrancy and Quakerism fairly explicit, cf: *The Quakers unmasked, and clearly detected to be but the spawn of Romish frogs, Jesuites, and Franciscan fryers* (London, 1655), STC P4046, 29.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, Volume 1: 1650-1689 (London: Luke Hinde, 1753), STC T143288, 39.

<sup>37</sup> Fox, *Journal*, 77.

<sup>38</sup> Anthony Hutchins, *Caines bloody race known by their fruits, or, A true declaration of the innocent sufferings of the servants of the living God, by the magistrates, priests and people in the city of Westchester* (London, 1657), 4-5.

ignorance and a superstition that merged with the world of witchcraft. It was stimulated and encouraged by indoctrinating anti-Quaker propaganda and by the behaviour of Friends themselves.’ Reacting physically and communally against Quakers—driving them out of the parish bounds—served, in Reay’s view, as ‘a catalyst for popular traditionalism’.<sup>39</sup> We might view parochial reactions against vagrants in much the same light.

### ‘Spiritual Vagrants’: Representing Vagrancy in Anti-Quaker Writing

Three principal ideas allowed contemporary anti-Quaker authors to connect radical religion generally, and Quakerism specifically, with vagrancy. Firstly, writers labelled Quakers as idle, as shirkers of appropriate labour who had abandoned family and kin to live a life of ease enabled by the unknowing charity of others. Secondly, Quakers themselves and particularly their preaching activities were represented as ‘counterfeit’, as roguish, as fundamentally inauthentic: ‘what are all their Formall shoves’, asked Donald Lupton, ‘but meer Hypocrisie?’<sup>40</sup> Thirdly, Quaker mobility was itself explicitly figured as mendacious, as misled and misleading, and therefore as a form of movement akin to the ‘wandering’ of sturdy beggars. These three discursive formulations of Quakers-as-vagrant allowed writers to tap into a deep reservoir of proscriptive attitudes towards one of human societies’ oldest scapegoats (the vagrant or beggar) and to rhetorically strengthen their case against sectarian heterodoxy by representing its practitioners as an urgent social and spatial danger to settled parochial order.<sup>41</sup> Above all, anti-Quaker writers depicted the movements of Friends as fundamentally secular, based on worldly emotions, needs, and political considerations. They did so partly to strip away any aura of sacred purpose from Quaker mobility, and to instead represent that mobility as selfish, deceptive, and essentially roguish. To quote Richard Baxter, ‘What good do they where they come?’ Quaker wisdom and revelation was lies, he wrote, it was ‘earthly, sensual, devilish’, it broke the people into ‘Divisions’, and set them ‘reviling’ each other, with one main outcome: ‘to shew themselves humble’, Quakers and those they converted ‘cast off some points or lace, and wander about the Country, and at last many of them fall into distraction.’<sup>42</sup>

Godly men like Richard Baxter, Francis Higginson and Ralph Robinson were far from alone in depicting Quakers as ‘spiritual vagrants’ worthy of being ‘twice punished’. Hostile

<sup>39</sup> Barry Reay, ‘Popular Hostility Towards Quakers’, *Social History*, 5:3 (October 1980), 407.

<sup>40</sup> Donald Lupton, *The Quacking Mountebanck or the Jesuite Turn’d Quaker* (London, 1655), 10.

<sup>41</sup> For reference see the introduction to A.L. Beier and Paul Ocock (eds.), *Cast Out: Vagrancy and Homelessness in Global and Historical Perspective* (Athens, O.H., 2008), 1-27; Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Western World* (London: Routledge, 2006); & chapter one of David Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society, 1650-1750* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

<sup>42</sup> Richard Baxter, *One Sheet Against the Quakers* (London, 1657), 10.

contemporary commentators generally identified a form of idleness in Quakers, who in their view, to quote Linda Woodbridge, were ‘rushing about doing the wrong things’.<sup>43</sup> This idleness could be easily discovered if one interrogated the class, behaviour, and origins of itinerant Friends. John Page, the Mayor of Plymouth, wrote to Major-General John Desborough in 1655 characterizing the ‘carriage’ of recently imprisoned Quakers Thomas Salthouse and Miles Halhead as ‘not becoming men, much less Christians’, and explicitly described the two men’s activities as idle. He wrote that they might by ‘profession’ be Quakers, but in actuality they were:

Husbandmen by their calling; one of them is a Lancashire man, the other of Westmorland, and they left their Families, Relations, and Callings about three Months since, as they say, and doe not work, nor employ themselves in their Callings, to procure themselves a livelihood: but wander up and down in all parts, to vent their wicked Opinions, & discover their irregular practises in the breach of Peace, & disturbance of good People.<sup>44</sup>

Page’s pivot from the false ‘profession’ of the two men (Quaker preachers), to their appropriate-but-abandoned ‘calling’ (Husbandmen), adroitly frames his subsequent exposition of their idleness by demonstrating that Salthouse and Halhead *could* work to earn their keep should they have chosen to do so. In choosing to become shirking ‘professors’ the two men further unmoored themselves and, by extension, burdened their parishes of origin, by leaving any family and kin to the reluctant mercy of parish poor rates. Nicholas Claggett considered these breakdowns in the traditional structures of provision and family as a form of madness; he wrote that ‘brainsick besotted Quakers’ were ‘leaving their dearest Relations, in tedious journeyes, where Satan called the spirit is pleased to send them’. This social violation was also clearly a grievous sin; Quakers were clearly ‘worse than Infidells for undoing their families’.<sup>45</sup> These accounts comfortably align themselves with classic early modern descriptions of ‘masterless men’, and while the pretence for their mobility might be new (their ‘wicked Opinions’ and ‘irregular practises’), itinerant Quakers were seen as a new variation on the familiar theme of ‘caterpillars in the commonwealth’, and for some contemporaries their behaviour thus invoked a much older social problem.

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<sup>43</sup> Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Chicago: Urbana, 2001), 254.

<sup>44</sup> As recounted in Halhead’s 1656 *Wounds of an Enemy in the House of a Friend*, (London, 1656), 54; For context on Desborough, cf: Christopher Durston, *Cromwell’s Major-Generals: Godly Government During the English Revolution* (Manchester: MUP, 2001), 39-43.

<sup>45</sup> Nicholas Claggett, *The Abuse of Gods Grace* (London, 1659), 122; see also: Charles L. Cherry, ‘Enthusiasm and Madness: Anti-Quakerism in the Seventeenth Century’, *Quaker History*, 73:2 (Fall 1984), 14.

The second and perhaps the most popular method used to label Quakers as vagrant was to describe them as counterfeiters and false preachers, who professed religion for the sake of material rewards in the here-and-now. Continental rogue literature such as Mateo Alemán's popular *Life of Guzman de Alfarache* (translated from Spanish in 1623), and canonical English rogue pamphlets such as Thomas Harman's 1566 *Caveat for Common Cursetors*, may each have provided some inspiration: in the 1623 edition of the *Life*, after false-facing stints in numerous professions that end in comical disaster, the rogue Guzman lights upon the idea of taking 'Sacred orders', since by 'being able to say Masse, and to preach a Sermon, I shall be sure to have wherewithall to eat; and if all should fayle, I would turne Fryar at the last'.<sup>46</sup> This larger literature describing the rogueries of counterfeiting godliness lurked in the cultural background of more specific accusations like those levelled against Quakers. The conflation of Quakers with false beggars could be stark and deliberate; for instance in 1655 Joshua Miller wrote that he had 'seen Counterfeit beggars in London, that would artificially shake their whole body for mony, [and] without doubt, if they came among the Quakers, they might pass for good converts.'<sup>47</sup> Quaker motivations for itinerant preaching were consequently both socially and sexually suspect. The physician and minister Giles Firmin's scepticism was typical when he wrote in 1656 that Quakers had specific scriptural passages they would deploy in order to justify living off of the hospitality of sympathetic listeners: 'observe how they have provided for themselves, when they wander up and down, to mislead souls, and trouble the Churches; yet you must entertain them: they have two Scriptures for it.'<sup>48</sup> Donald Lupton thought that the Quaker habit of lengthy gatherings—or 'long Teachings of six to eight houres Babling' as he put it—were designed solely for 'devouring Houses and leading about simple women', and just as Quakers were 'Counterfeit', so too were they 'Envious', they 'grieve that any man hath Light truer than theirs'.<sup>49</sup> This undercurrent of sexual suspicion certainly erupted in late 1656 after James Nayler's infamous Bristol re-creation of Christ's entry into Jerusalem on 24 October.<sup>50</sup> Nayler was found to possess letters referring to him in messianic terms and as 'thou fairest of ten thousand', and was ushered into Bristol to cries of 'holy, holy, holy' from his

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<sup>46</sup> Mateo Alemán, *The Rogue: Or The Life of Guzman de Alfarache* (London, 1623), STC S106804, 268.

<sup>47</sup> Joshua Miller, *Antichrist in man the Quakers Idol; Or a faithfull discovery of their ways and opinions by an eye and ear-witness thereof* (London, 1655), STC R207650, 34.

<sup>48</sup> Giles Firmin, *Stablishing against shaking: or, A discovery of the Prince of Darknesse (scarcely) transformed into an angel of light, powerfully now working in the deluded people called Quakers* (London, 1656), STC R202074, 5.

<sup>49</sup> Lupton, *The Quacking Mountebanck*, 10.

<sup>50</sup> For reference see Leo Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

assembled followers, many of them female.<sup>51</sup> Contemporaries needed to look no further for compromising evidence of Quaker misbehaviour.

The themes of Quaker preaching as both counterfeited and ignorant were popular enough that they migrated into balladry too, as verses from the ballad ‘The Quaker’s Fear’ show when they joke about the preaching of James Parnell:

‘He went about from place to place,  
And undertook to teach and preach,  
And matters he oft meddle with  
That were to[o] high above his reach.’<sup>52</sup>

Some authors also made an explicit connection between itinerant preaching and the deceptive practices of vagrants, in *The Quaker Disarm’d* Thomas Smith argued that ‘If any man among you (though he be a wandring, preaching Tinker, for you must give me leave to call him so, till I know what other name he hath) seem to be religious and bridle not his tongue, that mans religion is vain.’<sup>53</sup> In a 1658 printed sermon the minister Nehemiah Rogers wrote that ‘newly sprung up’ Quakers ‘scorn the Scriptures, and seek in the dark corners of *Enthusiasms* and Revelations.’<sup>54</sup> Earlier in the tract Rogers commented sharply on the perceived relationship between false prayers and mobility:

Not a Canting Rogue, nor Vagrant, that goes from door to door, but will tell you that they will pray for you; albeit, if you give them nought, they will curse you to your face as they do by their prayers, as Beggars do by their Rags, they hang them upon every hedge they come at; and you may judge by that what they are. How can those pray for others, that are not able to pray for themselves?<sup>55</sup>

Anti-Quaker writers also connected Quakerism with a much older and well-established theological enemy. The variety of Protectorate toleration espoused by Milton and Cromwell had very distinct limits, the most obvious of which was practicing Catholicism.<sup>56</sup> Aspects of Quaker proselytizing, worship and religious practice that seemed ‘popish’, such as the form of

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<sup>51</sup> Peters, *Print Culture*, 236-7; and for a dedicated treatment of the event’s sexual connotations, see: Christine Trevett, ‘The Women Around James Nayler, Quaker: A Matter of Emphasis’, *Religion*, 20:3 (1990), 249-273.

<sup>52</sup> Laurence Price, *The Quakers fear. Or, Wonderfull strange and true news from the famous town of Colchester*, Tune of ‘Summer time, or Bleeding Heart’ (London, 1655-58), STC R182079, Accessed online: Wood 401(165), Bodleian Broadside Ballads Online, <http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/view/edition/18700>.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Smith, *The Quaker Disarm’d, or, A true relation of a late publick dispute held at Cambridge* (London, 1659), Sig. B1v.

<sup>54</sup> Nehemiah Rogers, *The Fast Friend: or a friend and mid-night* (London, 1658), STC R203374, 423.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 373

<sup>56</sup> Noah Carlin, ‘Toleration for Catholics in the Puritan Revolution’, in Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner (eds), *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation* (Cambridge, 1996), 216-17.

essentially apostolic mendicancy practiced by many of the first Publishers of Truth, therefore became immediately suspect, and comparisons between itinerant Quaker preachers and Jesuits or friars were often made. Elkanah Wales thought of Quakers as a ‘strange generation of hereticks’, who had ‘borrowed their abominable opinions, and wilde practises from other sects, and patched them up unhandsomely like a beggars coat.’<sup>57</sup> Thomas Weld wrote that the outward ‘pretenses’ of Quakers followed a ‘Romish way’; both faiths argued that ‘Immediate revelations’ delivered spiritual legitimacy, and opined on ‘pretended miracles’ to establish the ‘truth of their way’.<sup>58</sup> Like ‘Papists’, gullible Quaker followers were thus deceived by physical signs (Weld was particularly repulsed by the physicality of ‘quaking’ or of being ‘seized by the Lord’), and he equated such practices with the Catholic doctrines on miracles and divine signs. But Weld also had harsh words about mendicancy, another clearly popish practice: ‘the Papists doe place much of their Holinesse in... beggarly apparel, and forsaking the World as they call it’ and in ‘their wandring up and downe as Hermits’, he wrote, and Quakers should be dissuaded from the same.<sup>59</sup>

By the later 1650s many writers seemed almost weary of refuting the legitimacy of Quaker religious practices in print. In his 1656 *Rayling Rebuked* William Thomas lamented the formation of isolated, militant sects that brooked no dissent, because in these tight-knit groups dangerous or sinful religious opinions were consistently reinforced, and reasoned questioning proved ineffectual: ‘it ariseth’, he wrote, that ‘people wander in un-approved wayes without any returne, to wit, because they keep company and correspondence with those only that are of their own minde and by whom therefore they are confirmed’; followers of sects like Quakerism were misled, thought Thomas, because they ‘have no intimate and communicative society with others that are of other principles, by whom they might be resolv’d, inform’d, and (through grace) rectifi’d and reduc’d.’<sup>60</sup> The Baptist minister John Tombes (later ejected after the Restoration) thought it a ‘far easier matter’ to ‘make a man a Quaker’ than to ‘make him an honest godly man’ just as it was easier ‘to make a man an uncharitable railer, then a meek and charitable Christian.’<sup>61</sup> Tombes addressed ten questions principally about the belief in inner light to Quaker writers that he ‘would fain be resolved’ of, including one asking why ‘the

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<sup>57</sup> Elkanah Wales, *Mount Ebal levell’d or redemption from the curse* (London, 1658), STC R209971, 141-42.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Weld, *A further discovery of that generation of men called Quakers by way of reply to an answer of James Nayler to The perfect Pharisee* (London, 1654), STC R27879, 11.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> William Thomas, *Rayling rebuked: or, A defence of the ministers of this nation* (London, 1656), STC R184983, Sig. B1v – B2r.

<sup>61</sup> John Tombes, *True old light exalted above pretended new light, or, Treatise of Jesus Christ* (London, 1660), STC R21431, Sig. A8r – A8v.

Quakers go up and down teaching men their doctrines, if all men have sufficient Light already?' It is interesting that Thomas, Tombes, and other anti-Quaker writers often mentioned the physical mobility of Quakers while lamenting their spiritual movements away from true religion. If discourse and polemic failed to persuade Quakers to give up their 'erring and otherwise minded' religious views, then in the view of men like Thomas Quaker movements about the realm should be legally circumscribed to prevent the spread of their dangerous views among the innocent and the susceptible.<sup>62</sup>

### **True Apostles lately come: Quaker rebuttals to accusations of vagrancy**

If the central aim of anti-Quaker polemic during the 1650s was to strip away any vestiges of legitimate spirituality from the actions and movements of early Friends, and if a primary method of attack was to depict Quakers as inauthentic, worldly, deceptive rogues instead, then it would make sense if the published work of early Friends rejected this description wholesale and at length. This they certainly did, and not only did early Quaker writers devote long publications to the cataloguing and refutation of charges of vagrancy, they also simultaneously offered a definition of their own movements as apostolic, as in effect a resurgence of the spiritual proselytizing energy of the earliest Christian church. Quaker writers also turned the charge of vagabondage back directly onto their hostile interlocutors, by equating their persecutions in practice and in print with the jealous treacheries of Cain, the first and archetypal vagabond of the Bible.<sup>63</sup>

Charges of vagrancy are a visible and common complaint in writing on Quaker sufferings. Most of the First Publishers mention being treated as a vagrant themselves on at least one occasion, and George Fox, Edward Burrough, and James Nayler each authored multiple pamphlets aimed in part at refuting the label of vagrancy. Fox, in characteristically pithy form, described charges of vagrancy against Quakers as the product of malicious rumours about 'venting' and 'blasphemy'. 'How dark our Gospel is' he wrote, that 'wicked men hath sown such tales as these... that all should be done by a people wandering up and down the Countrey', a people that 'we, and the World' scorned, taunted with the name of Quaker, and 'do account and number them (as Christ Jesus their example in sufferings) with Transgressours, sturdy Rogues, Beggars, and wandring idle persons.'<sup>64</sup> When confronted by local authorities early Quakers were often at pains to stress their independent means in order to head off charges

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<sup>62</sup> John Stalham, *The reviler rebuked: or, A re-inforcement of the charge against the Quakers, (so called) for their contradictions to the Scriptures of God, and to their own scribblings* (London, 1657), STC R203642, Sig. A3r.

<sup>63</sup> Hubberthorne, *A True testimony*, 5.

<sup>64</sup> George Fox, *The West Answering the North in the fierce and cruel persecution of the manifestation of the Son of God* (London, 1657), STC R202187, 73.

of vagrancy or petty thievery; before they were whipped as ‘whores’ in Cambridge in 1553, Elizabeth Williams and Mary Fisher protested to a constable (about to apprehend them) that: ‘they were strangers, and knew not the name of the place, but paid for what they had...’<sup>65</sup> Quaker writers also commonly noted that one clear biblical analogue for the treatment of itinerant Friends was Christ being driven out of the synagogue on account of his teachings (Luke 4:29).<sup>66</sup> General references to apostolic mendicancy were also commonly deployed. James Nayler enjoined opponents to recall the wandering life of both Jesus and his disciples: ‘search your Gospel’, he wrote, ‘did not he come in Christ, and in his Apostles as a wanderer to and fro, without a certain dwelling place, to Preach Repentance and amendment of life, and the light of the world, from City to Village, from place to place, which way you now call Vagabonds?’<sup>67</sup> Edward Burrough highlighted the injustice of labelling Quaker mobility as vagrancy by invoking both the mobility of Christ and the Apostles and the ‘gadding’ culture of English puritanism. Like Nayler, he too addressed his appeal directly to an imaginary and unsympathetic reader:

Do you commend Christ Jesus, his Apostles and Saints, who were sent to preach the Gospel, and travelled from City to City, from Nation to Nation, from Countrey to Countrey, that the ends of the Earth might hear the glad tidings of Salvation? and do you commend those they called Puritans, for going many miles to worship the Lord? and do you now condemn those that practise the same thing? would not your Law against Vagabonds have taken hold on Christ and his Ministers, and hindred their work? by it have many honest and good people suffered most shameful whippings and imprisonments, who were travelling in their own Countrey, about their outward and lawful occasions, that were of considerable Estates and could not be counted, Vagabonds; and what use is made of this Law, throughout the Nation, you cannot but hear.<sup>68</sup>

Burrough knew the chapter and verse of vagrancy law that was deployed against early Quakers. He and other First Publishers quote it at length and *verbatim* in a range of publications.<sup>69</sup> But for Burrough and numerous other early Quaker writers the most appropriate defence lay

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<sup>65</sup> Besse, *Sufferings* (London, 1753), STC T143288, 84.

<sup>66</sup> Examples of the use of this metaphor abound, see for instance: Hubberthone, *A True Testimony*, 6; Ambrose Rigge, *The Banner of Gods love* (London, 1657), STC R22061, 32.

<sup>67</sup> James Nayler, *What the possession of the living faith is, and the fruits thereof* (London, 1659), STC R205424, 47.

<sup>68</sup> Edward Burrough, *A Declaration of the present sufferings of above 140 persons of the people of God* (London, 1659), STC R229340, 29.

<sup>69</sup> For instance: Edward Burrough, *The Case of the people called Quakers (once more) stated* (London, 1662[?]), STC R21112, 12-13.



principally in refutation based on scripture. Other Quaker writers were willing to place words directly into the mouths of the Apostles to counter the definition of Quakerism as vagrancy. In 1659 the Quaker Richard Farnsworth wrote a pamphlet dedicated to a detailed scriptural refutation of the secular definition of Quakers and other mobile religious figures as vagrants. As his title put it, the Quakers were ‘no Vagabonds, nor idle, dissolute persons, nor Jesuites, though they wander up and down [...] as they are moved of the Lord in his service.’<sup>70</sup> In this pamphlet Christ tells his disciples just before his ascension to go forth and spread the word, and Farnsworth has them asking whether it will not ‘go harder because they think us Idle Vagabonds and Jesuits?’ in a remarkable adaptation of gospel.<sup>71</sup>

Close study of scripture offered Quaker writers rich metaphors for both their own persecution and for the behaviours of their persecutors. If the Biblical analogues for Quaker sufferings were the tribulations of Christ and his Apostles, then the biblical figure most representative of men like Prynne, Baxter, or repressive JPs was Cain. The young Quaker activist and former Cromwellian soldier Richard Hubberthorne castigated ‘all you Priests, Magistrates and People’ as following in ‘Cains way, and murther, and not in Abels’.<sup>72</sup> Under the heading of ‘who Vagabonds are discovered’, he wrote that ‘Cain was the vagabond and the fugitive who turned from the commands of God and slew his brother’. Cain, and all those like him, ‘had no habitation in the Lord’, and the unjust actions of ‘all you that do not well’ therefore exposed the true ‘vagabonds and fugitives’ in all senses that really mattered. Hubberthorne separated physical mobility from spiritual mendicancy in a manner much the same as his co-religionists: the prophets of Israel and Christ himself ‘passed up and down’, and often ‘the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head’, in effect valorising mobility tied directly to proper Christian spirituality and particularly the movements necessary to preach God’s word. By contrast, Hubberthorne’s vagabonds ‘lived in envy and wrath’ and this definition of vagrancy as wandering away from God in a moral sense, rather than as a form of physical mobility, serves to reinforce Patricia Fumerton’s assertion that a godly definition of self was not ‘unsettled’ and was instead securely ‘anchored in God’.<sup>73</sup> To a man like Hubberthorne: ‘He is the Vagabond [...] that hath no habitation in the Lord’, even though he and his compatriots routinely had no physical habitation and no firm destination themselves.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Richard Farnsworth, *A confession and profession of faith in God: by his people who are inscorn called Quakers...* (London, 1659), STC R202127, Sig. 1Ar.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>72</sup> Hubberthorne, *A True testimony*, 6

<sup>73</sup> Patricia Fumerton, *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the working poor in early modern England*, (Chicago, 2006), 48.

<sup>74</sup> Hubberthorne, *A True testimony*, 6.

However scripturally inflected their printed refutations usually were, early Quaker writers were also at pains to refute the label of vagrancy using much more earthly reasoning: they argued as consistently that it was a legal injustice to use vagrancy law against itinerant Friends. In this they were likely influenced by the advice of Judge Thomas Fell, among others.<sup>75</sup> Richard Hubberthorne was no stranger to indictment under vagrancy law, and his 1654 *Zeal of Oxford-Professors* castigated the principal men of Oxford and Cambridge at length for jailing and punishing Quakers as vagrants.<sup>76</sup> No stranger to Cambridge jails himself, Hubberthorne related an account of the punishment of Elizabeth Levens and Elizabeth Fletcher.<sup>77</sup> Hubberthorne's pamphlet provides some context for their treatment: the two Elizabeths, both from the north, entered Oxford together on 20 April 1654, and by 'declaring the word of the Lord freely' as they 'passed through the streets', they attacked Oxford's conservative religious establishment and were summarily thrown in jail as vagrants.<sup>78</sup> He explicitly notes that 'they did neither beg nor steal', but nevertheless papers were drawn up to have both women whipped out of Oxford regardless after they had each undergone a settlement examination. 'Whipped' out of Oxford seems like an understatement; Fletcher and Levens were dragged through a muddy pool, had their mouths forcibly held to a well pump and filled with water, and then Fletcher was dashed against a gravestone, which 'bruised her so sore that she never recovered it, but Complained thereof to her lives end'.<sup>79</sup>

It seems that other potential violations of the common peace could have been levelled at both women—they had for instance loudly disrupted a church service to dispute items of faith point by point with the local clergyman. This was a common tactic and Quaker writers often wrote derisively about the resulting reactions of parish ministers; an unassuming younger Friend needed only to 'come and but look this Priest in the face, as he is in his pulpit... [and] he falls before them, him or her the said Quaker, and cries take them away, they disturb me, to the house of correction with them, to the Prison'.<sup>80</sup> But vagrant was the label that the two Elizabeths were given and this label determined how the punishments that they suffered were legally justified after the fact. In a similar vein Robert Wastfield wrote a long tract in 1657 which reconstructed the vagrancy or settlement examinations of Quakers before JPs in

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<sup>75</sup> Peters, *Print Culture*, 200.

<sup>76</sup> On Hubberthorne's run-in with vagrancy law, *ibid.*, 203.

<sup>77</sup> See: Catie Gill, 'Hubberthorne, Richard (bap. 1628, d. 1662)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004.

<sup>78</sup> Richard Hubberthorne, *A True testimony of Oxford-professors...* (London, 1654), STC R207175, 2-3. Multiple annotated copies consulted at the Friends Library: 'Early Sufferings Pamphlets' Vol. 67/7, or Box 41/2.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, and see Penny (ed.), *First Publishers*, 259.

<sup>80</sup> E.M., *A Brief Answer unto the Cambridge Model* (London, 1658), STC R22561, 5-6.

Somerset.<sup>81</sup> In one account a dialogue ensues between the Quakers Thomas Salthouse and Thomas Budd, and two JPs; Budd's home had been the scene of a violent break-up of a Quaker meeting on 23 February 1657 and the two men had been subsequently arrested. The justices compared Salthouse to a 'highwayman' after he related how sympathetic listeners gave him food, clothing and lodging after listening to him preach. When Budd was examined in this telling, the dialogue became tightly interwoven with the procedural elements of a vagrancy examination.<sup>82</sup> The justices asked him for his parish of birth, age, and occupation, and according to Wastfield they then 'perverted his words' and charged Budd as a vagrant. Wastfield even included a copy of the removal order which the two justices issued, dating it on the 24 April 1657, which implies that the two men had been in jail awaiting their examination for about twenty-nine days.<sup>83</sup> In a rejoinder to a pamphlet by Christopher Fowler and Simon Ford, the Quaker Thomas Speed asked them 'Did ever any man or woman, whom you in scorn call Quakers, beg relief of either of you? Can you quote one of their families that is thus ruined?'<sup>84</sup> Sometimes it was the simple accusation of vagrancy alone which stung the most.

### **Conclusions: The Devil's Herds**

'No Christ but within, no Scripture to be a rule, no ordinances, no law but their lusts, no heaven nor glory but here, no sin but what men fancied be so'; so runs a hostile 1657 summary of the principles of early Quakerism.<sup>85</sup> The devil had such power over Quakers, sermonised William Dillingham, that 'he drives them about in herds and droves', and they 'are become mere vagrants'.<sup>86</sup> As a range of media in the 1650s suggests, his reading of Quakers as vagrant and roving 'devil's herds' was one widely shared. Across a much larger range of cultural outputs than I have considered here, we conversely also know that vagrancy itself was broadly represented as much as a spiritual error—a 'path of mistake'—as much as it was physical rootlessness; vagrancy came as much from 'ignorance' as from 'idleness', and for ministers, magistrates, and often parishioners during the 1650s, it was therefore a natural fit to see the unapologetically itinerant, socially radical, religiously 'seduced' early Quakers as cut from the same cloth as vagabonds.<sup>87</sup> In the eyes of many contemporaries early Quakers forsook

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<sup>81</sup> Robert Wastfield, *A True testimony of faithful witnesses recorded...* (London, 1657), STC R204823.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Speed, *The Guilty-Covered clergy-man unveiled* (London, 1657), STC R203614, 30.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Collier, *A Looking-Glasse for the Quakers* (London, 1657), STC R206687, as quoted in Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat*, 141.

<sup>86</sup> William Dillingham, *Prove all things, hold fast that which is good* (London, 1656), STC R19188, Sig. 4Av.

<sup>87</sup> See Chapter one: 'The Assumption of Idleness' in David Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society, 1650-1750* (London, 2016), particularly 21-26, and the sermon of Josiah Woodward in 1700.

property and propriety in a manner similar to vagrants and rogues both imagined and real, and these assumptions and associations had unsettling echoes across English culture and society in the seventeenth century, and beyond. Sometimes these echoes proved humorous: Bampfylde Moore Carew, confidence trickster and erstwhile ‘King of the Beggars’, ostensibly disguises himself as a Quaker to blend in at a sermon given by George Whitefield in eighteenth-century New England.<sup>88</sup> But sometimes the common suspicions aroused by vagrancy or Quakerism were tragic: in 1688-89 it was Cotton Mather who wrote chillingly that Quakers were ‘undoubtedly possessed with evil spirits’, and that ‘Diabolical Possession was the thing... which did Dispose men unto *Quakerism*’.<sup>89</sup> And in 1692 it was Sarah Good, a beggar woman, who became one of the first victims of the Salem witch hunt.<sup>90</sup>

In this article I have attempted to demonstrate how closely and how quickly the representation of Quakerism was interwoven with stereotypes of vagrancy in 1650s, and how vociferously Quakers responded to their depiction as wandering, deceptive rogues, and to their treatment as vagrants in law. That hostile contemporaries immediately deployed metaphors of idleness, mendicity, and vagrancy against Quakerism says as much about the power of these tropes as it does about the socially threatening potential of Quakerism itself. The image of the Quaker as deceptive vagrant speaks to the harsh outer limits of any early modern religious ‘culture of co-existence’, and the way that those limits could be policed, not just during the fractious spiritual climate of the Interregnum, but beyond it in Restoration and Eighteenth-century society too.<sup>91</sup> Quakers remained one of the principal groups of dissenters targeted by Restoration legislation, and were famously rounded up and jailed *en masse* in response to the Fifth Monarchist uprising in January 1661.<sup>92</sup> The form of state and judicial repression changed during the Restoration—from the use of vagrancy laws and accusations to injunctions against outdoor assembly and fines for refusal to take oaths of loyalty—but its function did not. Perhaps the fundamental terror of both vagrancy and Quakerism lay for contemporaries in the capacity of the radical forms of mobility that animated them both to reconfigure, efface, or to replace existing settled and spiritual identities. In this view, when one ‘became’ a Quaker or a

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<sup>88</sup> Robert Goadby, *An Apology for the Life of Bampfylde Moore-Carew* (London, 1750[?]), STC T144517, 115.

<sup>89</sup> Cotton Mather, *Memorable providences, relating to witchcrafts and possessions* (Boston, 1689), Appendix 7. Consulted in *Early American Imprints*, Series 1, no. 486.

<sup>90</sup> For reference: Clive Holmes, ‘The Opinion of the Cambridge Association, 1 August 1692: A Neglected Text of the Salem Witch Trials’, *The New England Quarterly*, vol. LXXXIX, no. 4 (December 2016); 643; and Richard Godbeer, *The Salem Witch hunt: a brief history with documents* (Boston, 2011).

<sup>91</sup> See Alexandra Walsham, ‘Cultures of Co-Existence in early modern England: History, Literature, and Religious Toleration’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 28:2 (June 2013); 115-137.

<sup>92</sup> On the Fifth Monarchy movement and last uprising, see: Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-century English Millenarianism* (London: Faber, 1972).

vagrant, one ceased to be some other and less threatening category of subject, and instead became a living, moving symbol of all the ills, social and religious, that beset seventeenth-century society. It was thus Quakers, those ‘spiritual vagrants’, whose every movement represented a threat to the fragile stability of the realm during the 1650s.

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