

**‘Propper and safe’ to be published: eighteenth-century Quakerism and the  
rehabilitation of seventeenth-century radicalism.**

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According to the English edition of Willem Sewel’s *History of the rise, increase, and progress of the Christian people called Quakers* (1722 [1717]), the first-generation Quaker preacher James Nayler rode to Bristol in early November 1656, and

passing through the Suburbs of Bristol, one Thomas Woodcock went bare-headed before him; one of the Women led his Horse, Dorcas, Martha and Hannah spread their Scarfs and Handkerchiefs before him, and the Company sung, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God of Hosts...Thus these mad People sung, whilst they were walking through the Mire and Dirt, till they came into Bristol, where they were examin’d by the Magistrates, and committed to Prison....<sup>1</sup>

Condemning his followers as mad for their treatment of Nayler who, in his entrance to Bristol imitated Jesus’ into Jerusalem, this version of Nayler’s ‘fall’ demonstrates the changes which had taken place in Quakerism between the 1650s and the eighteenth century. If, as Richard Bailey suggests, early Quakerism was a ‘thaumaturgical (signs and wonders) movement’<sup>2</sup> then signs such as Nayler’s, whether the result of ‘celestial inhabitation christology’, the ‘flesh and bone’ presence of Christ in the believer<sup>3</sup> or, as Leo Damrosch claims, ‘a single symbolic act condensing a number of competing Quaker beliefs’<sup>4</sup>, were to be expected, if not easily explained. Although, as Richard Vann asserts, ‘beliefs of Quakers are almost uniquely hostile to history’<sup>5</sup> and early Quakers aligned history with superfluous tradition, detrimental to true

appreciation of the inward voice of God, by the early eighteenth century the first Quaker histories had appeared. Analysis of such works, and those barred from republication, demonstrates how eighteenth-century Friends tried to change the identity of Quakerism, including that of individuals, by rewriting history.

Nayler's behaviour and subsequent punishment for blasphemy have been interpreted as evidence of 'the ever-recurring tension between idea and power...liberty and authority'<sup>6</sup> and led to increased persecution of Friends, who gradually renounced much of their enthusiastic behaviour. Scholars of Quakerism have debated the extent, though, to which Friends renounced 'godly radicalism', as Catie Gill describes it, and withdrew from the 'world'.<sup>7</sup> Leo Damrosch and Adrian Davies, for example, have considered the theological and social shift in Quakerism to be one from radical millenarianism in the 1650s to late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century respectability.<sup>8</sup> Bailey has dated their withdrawal as beginning shortly after the Nayler dispute.<sup>9</sup> William C. Braithwaite also described, almost a century earlier, the 'worthy and drab respectability' personified by Friends such as George Whitehead, who was most active and influential in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Michele Lise Tarter too has commented both upon the rejection, from the 1670s, of women's mystical writings, and the expectation that writers be 'still and quiet', in contrast to the earliest years of Quakerism. She concurs with Luella Wright that this led to an eighteenth-century period of literary 'barrenness'.<sup>11</sup> That is not to suggest that all scholars of Quakerism view the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a period of quietism. Referring particularly to the tithe testimony, Nicholas Morgan has asserted that a 'sense of outward mission' continued until the 1730s. He rejects the idea that eighteenth-century Friends resigned from 'the early Quaker wish to convert the world' and suggests that they 'refused the acceptance of standards which compromised the

precepts of their earliest co-religionists.’<sup>12</sup> However, in the case of contentious early works, eighteenth-century Friends were willing to compromise in cases such as Nayler’s to secure their future. Described by Whitehead in 1716 as being amongst those who had ‘crucified to themselves the Lord of Life afresh, and put him to open Shame and Reproach’<sup>13</sup> Nayler was eventually accepted back into the fold, and *A Collection of Sundry Books, Epistles and Papers* was published in the early eighteenth century, although censored by the editor Whitehead, and others. The twenty-three excluded works were not silently left out. Instead, they were listed as ‘His Controversial Books not Reprinted in this Collection, in the Years, 1655 and 1656.’<sup>14</sup>

The silencing of radicalism was in part achieved by the Second Day Morning Meeting, one of several London meetings established in the decades following the Restoration, as well as the regular meetings for worship and business organised in each county. Central meetings were active in shaping the collections of Quaker records and the Second Day Meeting in particular, founded by the Quaker leader George Fox in 1673 to consider works for publication, was believed by critics within the Society to suppress individual inspiration whilst favouring uniformity and avoiding of controversy.<sup>15</sup> Although Thomas O’Malley has considered its role before the Toleration Act, and Sheila Wright has addressed its influence in the later eighteenth century,<sup>16</sup> there has been little consideration of the Meeting’s activities in the intervening period aside from Tarter’s brief comments on the rejection of prophetic writings, often by women, as ‘not mete to print’<sup>17</sup> and Bailey’s comments on its efforts to transform the Quaker Christ into an inward, mystical figure.<sup>18</sup> However, as Kate Peters suggests, much information about the earliest Friends is ‘directly attributable to the efforts of a later generation of Quakers’ keen to prevent ‘the publication of enthusiastic or politically dangerous works’.<sup>19</sup> As the emerging sectarian identity of Quakerism during the 1650s was only ‘in the process of being formed’<sup>20</sup>, later Friends

had to remould this fluid earlier identity, adding to their unwillingness to address the issue. Further, after Nayler's trial several anti-Quaker writers had produced 'histories' of the Friends, emphasising his conviction for blasphemy. These included William Grigge's *The Quaker's Jesus* of 1658 and Richard Blome's *Fanatick History* of 1660.<sup>21</sup> Grigge described Quakers as 'deluded and seduced Souls' led astray by Fox and Nayler.<sup>22</sup> Blome, although claiming to consider all types of 'fanaticism', used the Nayler episode to depict English Quakerism. In response, Nayler blamed 'the many cruel Spirits, who pursued my Soul unto death'.<sup>23</sup> However, despite his protestations, anti-Quaker works from the mid-seventeenth century were still used, and in some cases disseminated overseas, during the later seventeenth and eighteenth century. These included the German version of Blome's work, published in 1701.<sup>24</sup> It is perhaps not surprising, then, that in 1677 the Meeting agreed that the proposed volume of Nayler's collected works 'be suspended till it be taken into further & more generall Consideration by the 2d dayes meeting'.<sup>25</sup> Some historians have suggested that Fox actively blocked the project.<sup>26</sup> It was only mentioned again in 1698, when a letter from Thomas Hammond of York about Nayler's works was acknowledged, and George Bowles was 'desired to get JNs Recantation.'<sup>27</sup> Two months later Bowles brought this, and John Whiting provided a list of Nayler's works. The business relating to Nayler's books continued in a similar fashion until 1700, when the Meeting declared that if the Yearly Meeting insisted on publication, 'something by way of Advertizement should be writt to cleare Fri[en]ds and Truth from the Reproach yt came by him.'<sup>28</sup> The proposal was only renewed in 1710, after pressure from some Friends earnest to print his works 'either with or without this Meet[ing]s Approbation.'<sup>29</sup> It was then agreed that the relevant minutes, spanning more than thirty years, be produced for inspection. Nayler's works were also to be gathered together and considered alongside 'letters and Testimonys of Friends as tend to clear Truth and Friends from ye offence given by him and his followers when Clouded.'<sup>30</sup> The Meeting agreed to include works

considered 'propper and safe', and in one case passages safe to be abstracted.<sup>31</sup> As Tarter suggests, such amendments formed part of a 'wave of censorship and controlled historiography' aiming to 'eradicate all traces of enthusiasm'.<sup>32</sup> By 1712 Thomas Raylton had examined which works had been read and approved, and which were still unread. In 1714 approval was finally given for publication, 'when Opportunity presents'.<sup>33</sup> It did not for another two years.

As part of his attempt to understand what Nayler thought that he was doing<sup>34</sup> Damrosch has identified the need for historians of seventeenth-century Quakerism to be aware of silent alterations to those works included in the eighteenth-century collection of Nayler's works before they were considered fit to be republished. Damrosch is by no means the first scholar to identify such changes; Braithwaite too comments on the amendments made to Robert Barclay's *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1678 [1676]) when it was translated from Latin, describing the English version as 'carefully revised.'<sup>35</sup> David J. Hall has concluded that Friends believed that the first edition of a work was not necessarily the most true, and edited passages accordingly.<sup>36</sup> However, more significantly, Damrosch has not considered the content of works which were not republished; or the extent to which the translation of key Quaker works affected the version of Quaker history available, and the conclusions of modern scholars. Although, as he asserts, amendments were made to the *Collection*, other works were excluded by those seeking to redeem an infamous figure. Their reasons for doing so and the ways in which they represented Nayler are interlinked, and served to rehabilitate a contentious figure from the Quaker past.

Many of the works reprinted had originally been planned to coincide with Nayler's ministry, as polemical tools.<sup>37</sup> As Hilary Hinds has recently asserted, 'the Quaker travelling ministry was also a publishing ministry.'<sup>38</sup> Unsurprisingly, then, some of the alterations made to the included

works bear out Whitehead's claim that Nayler's original language needed to be changed for a later audience. Whitehead appealed to the charity of the eighteenth-century reader, to 'make the best or most favourable Construction...with Respect to the general Import of the Matters and Things in those most clear and evident Truths aym'd at.'<sup>39</sup> Nayler was accepted to have aimed at clear truths; however, it was up to the reader to discern them. Thus, for reasons of clarity, the word 'letter' was replaced by 'the Scriptures' in the 1716 version of *Milk for Babes*.<sup>40</sup> Other changes, though, were more fundamental. Damrosch has identified significant alterations which reflect changes in Quaker theology and in their self-representation.<sup>41</sup> In the same work, first published posthumously in 1661, the concluding 'psalm', 'of James, the servant of Jesus...even how the Lord was with him when he was beset with darkness, and assaulted with strong temptation' is entirely absent.<sup>42</sup> Whitehead's introduction and Nayler's official recantation were to be the only references to his downfall in the volume. Another work originally stated that 'Christ never believed that he could never be perfect', but this was changed to 'it is not the faith of Christ to believe that men could never be perfect'. Damrosch believes that the first version represents Nayler's belief that the divine element in Jesus the man brought him to perfection, as it continued to do in the saints.<sup>43</sup> His identification with Christ, when acted out, formed the crux of blasphemy charges against Friends and is considered shortly. The Meeting also took advantage of the republication of Nayler's works to address issues relevant to the eighteenth-century reader. *Love to the Lost*, first published in 1656, was amended to include a passage condemning fashions, customs, 'Feasting, and Riotings, Sports and vain Pleasures'.<sup>44</sup> The relationship of God and his creation was also inverted to be more acceptable; instead of the creature expecting to be 'wel-pleased with his Maker' the creature became 'well-pleasing to his Maker'.<sup>45</sup> Caution was key to Friends' assertions; editors reading Nayler's 'yet doth the Sons of God know the Incorruptible body that shall never wax old' replaced 'know' with 'believe, and in

measure understand.’<sup>46</sup>

The ‘controversial books’ often included first-generation beliefs unacceptable to eighteenth-century Quakerism. These included Nayler’s opinions on subjects as varied as mendicant preaching, other denominations, honour and witchcraft. For example, *A Dispute between James Nayler and the Parish Teachers of Chesterfield* (1655) called for all Friends to follow the will of God, ‘leave all and follow him as wanderers...deny our selves, and worldly Interest’.<sup>47</sup> This posed obvious logistical problems to the later organisation. Vagrants were condemned under the 1601 vagrancy laws, and by the 1680s Friends had to be reminded that ‘sins of Sodom’ included ‘contempt of the poor’.<sup>48</sup> What might be viewed by non-Quakers as disorderly rambling was now unacceptable to a group individually respected in the community and no longer evangelical but ecumenical in most of their sentiments.<sup>49</sup> Controversy might also have arisen from *Something further in answer to John Jackson’s book* (1655) which claimed that non-Quakers ‘live in pride, oppression and deceit, [and] gets their words once a weeke’. Nayler’s direction that instead they should ‘read Christ...a gazing-stock where ever he comes in flesh...we rejoyce to be counted worthy to suffer with him’<sup>50</sup> is similarly contentious. In one passage alone Nayler condemned non-Quakers, and claimed that Friends were experiencing sufferings comparable to those of Jesus. The following year Nayler again compared Christ’s experience of persecution by ‘Priests and people, that lived in pride and fulnesse’ to that of ‘these who follow him...at this day’.<sup>51</sup> Although Fox frequently represented himself as suffering in a Christlike way, with perhaps more basis in early Quaker Christopresent theology than later orthodoxy admitted,<sup>52</sup> Nayler’s entry into Bristol in imitation of Christ made such comparisons inherently dangerous for later Friends.

Another subject of the ‘controversial’ tracts, Nayler’s criticism of other Interregnum churches,

exhibited the greatest variety of forms. Claiming in one work that the only churchgoers left were ‘prophane persons, swearers, oppressors, drunkards and fighters,’<sup>53</sup> he also attacked the hierarchy of the institution, the falsity, perversity or even diabolic nature of hiring teachers, and their failure to reform themselves satisfactorily. All of these criticisms, especially those claiming that clergy were in league with the Devil, were highly inflammatory from the Restoration onwards, when Friends wanted to maintain their good name in wider society, and not condemn others as Satan’s agents or pagans. Penney similarly concludes that the probable reason for the omission of part of Fox’s *Journal*, including comments on Baptists, was a ‘desire to avoid offence’ although disputations between the groups continued in print and occasionally in public.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the passing of the 1662 Act to prevent printing of seditious literature may have added to Friends’ fears of persecution; those of the following years were often produced underground as ‘sedition’ could be interpreted to include works deviating from mainstream religious belief.<sup>55</sup> Given Nayler’s conviction for blasphemy, such works were perhaps too dangerous to reprint.

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Quakers, both women and men, were also regularly exhorted to be honourable in business and modest in appearance. Honour was central to Friends’ relations with each other and appearance to the outside world. The honour of the world required, for example, ‘hat honour’, a man’s removal of his hat upon meeting a social superior; Quakers including William Penn condemned such behaviour as superfluous and transient, contrasting it with true, permanent honour, which lay in ‘the right ordering of mens Affections and Actions’.<sup>56</sup> Nayler’s comments consider the honour of the world, the ‘Spirit of Pride and Flattery’<sup>57</sup> Friends despised; and that of God which Quakers, as God’s people, sought to maintain through impeccable behaviour. In *The Railer Rebuked* he actively criticised worldly honour, condemning

those practising it as ‘honouring thou knowst not what with the proud cloathing, and the gold ring...this is not in the Lord, but in the earth’. He continued, defining divine honour as ‘that power which is of God, to whom ever he hath placed it without respect of persons’. Friends were to give ‘honour to whom honour is due, But no place for pride, nor the prince of pride.’<sup>58</sup> Elsewhere, Nayler asserted that carnal honour was embodied in the world’s oppression of the Friends, ‘a people, which by thy own words are so contemptible’. He concluded that this was because of ‘something in the bottom of greater price...else why should you gather thus from all quarters?’<sup>59</sup> Nayler’s expression of his views on honour was part of what Peters has described as ‘a peculiar “Quaker style”’ of the 1650s.<sup>60</sup> His use of bitter polemic contrasted with the politeness of conduct books written by non-Quaker authors and dealing with ostensibly similar issues. Although later Quakers discussed similar topics, their arguments were less rancorous. The later seventeenth century saw a move from vindictive doctrinal debate towards ‘polite religion’,<sup>61</sup> although for Friends this change began after the Restoration, when enthusiastic assertions of infallibility needed to be quashed for the Society to survive. In this respect, Nayler’s mode of expression, rather than the content, was contentious, and his ideas reappear in later works. In *No Cross, No Crown* of 1669 Penn reasserted Nayler’s rejection of ‘vain Apparel’ alongside other examples of money and time-wasting, including ‘Rich Furnitures’ and ‘vain and unnecessary Visits’.<sup>62</sup> He extended Nayler’s arguments against pride in clothing with the scripturally-based assertion that pleasure in apparel was ‘impudently shameless’ as the first garments after the Fall were worn with a sense of shame brought on by sin.<sup>63</sup> In some ways Nayler and Penn represent contrasting figures of Quaker manhood. Whilst Nayler’s disorderly behaviour led to his trial for blasphemy, Penn, the son of an admiral, typified respectable post-Restoration Quaker manhood, so his development of these themes arguably made Nayler’s comments superfluous.

Finally, although Fox considered witchcraft in his *Journal*, and Nayler treated it as a known phenomenon, stating that ‘to fore-tell things to come without the Spirit of God is witchery’<sup>64</sup>, by the early eighteenth century it was unlikely that Friends would be accused of witchcraft, rather than schism, heresy or obstinacy. In the 1650s Friends’ own prophecies led to accusations of witchcraft, and in response Nayler asserted that his enemies had conspired to convince people that Friends ‘are wizards, because we wil not bow downe to mens person’.<sup>65</sup> However, by 1716 bewitching was no longer a legitimate explanation for the events in Bristol, although Nayler’s behaviour had been originally attributed to the witchcraft of one of his female followers, Martha Simmonds.<sup>66</sup> Thus Whitehead asserted that ‘Martha fell into a Passion in a kind of Mourning... which so entered and pierced poor James Nayler, that it smote him down in so much Sorrow... Fears and Doubting then entered him, that he came to be clouded in his Understanding, bewildred, and at a loss in his Judgment.’<sup>67</sup> Whitehead’s explanation is complex and to some extent sensitive to the penitent Nayler depicted through the works selected for publication. Although the women around Nayler were still blamed, something which Christine Trevett amongst others has seen as an overemphasis,<sup>68</sup> the element of witchcraft had been erased. The explanation instead refers to a spiritual crisis brought on by Nayler’s sensitivity to the feelings of others and his naivety in allowing himself to be glorified. His struggle was against the Devil, the ‘subtil Adversary’, who was blamed for the division amongst Friends at the time. The Devil, though, did not take the physical form of non-Quakers, or even ‘turbulous’ women, but was an internal state which only Nayler could fight against to reappear, contrite and humbled. The representation of Nayler’s downfall had moved into abstract spiritual and mental realms: rather than as a priest, the Devil appeared as doubt and discord amongst the faithful. Nayler was carefully depicted by Whitehead as being far from Christlike, rather as all too human, an

‘everyman’ figure of the suffering Quaker.<sup>69</sup> Instead of radical manhood, which gave ear to disorderly women, he was reinvented in the mould of eighteenth-century quietism. Through this representation Whitehead could justify, to the Quaker editorial board, and to a readership, that insight and even guidance might be gained from the works of the penitent blasphemer.

Bailey, in his study of the process of silencing early Quaker radicalism, considers how the group which had accepted themselves as a divinised part of God’s nobility later considered this belief to be detrimental to the movement and expunged evidence of it from records within Fox’s lifetime and with his acceptance, if not his blessing.<sup>70</sup> He confirms Penney’s belief that a minority of changes made before the publication of Fox’s *Journal* were substantive, and interprets this as a deliberate attempt to downplay Fox’s earlier ‘avatar’ status.<sup>71</sup> These had included ‘laudatory’ personal references to Fox<sup>72</sup> and his likening of his sufferings at the hands of clergy, when awaiting trial for blasphemy, to those of Christ.<sup>73</sup> A renewed emphasis was also placed on the spirit of the apostles, perhaps as a more cautious way of confirming the continuous experience of Pentecost for the believer.<sup>74</sup> Penn’s character sketch of Fox in the preface to his *Journal* therefore emphasized similarities between Fox’s experiences and those of the early Christians: ‘this man of God had his share of suffering’, yet ‘like his blessed Master, he was a servant to all’.<sup>75</sup> However, although Nayler was re-integrated into the revised Quakerism after similar remoulding, some of his followers remained outcasts because they refused to accept the alterations. Robert Rich, a self-declared disciple, who licked Nayler’s wounds after his branding for blasphemy, continued to blame Fox for divisions amongst Friends, and represented Nayler as a Christlike figure taking on the sins of the world to redeem humanity: ‘J.N. took all the blame on himself, and made himself of no reputation...a true Israelite indeed.’<sup>76</sup> With apostates faithful to the memory of Nayler long after his death it is not surprising that Friends withdrew from the use of exalting language; still less that the controversial books were not reprinted.

As Damrosch has identified, some tracts included in the volume were silently edited, ‘usually for stylistic reasons but sometimes for significant doctrinal ones’<sup>77</sup> whilst for the same reasons others were left out entirely. Indeed, analysis of both the absent works *and* those included in the *Collection* has highlighted changes in theology and social attitudes between the 1650s and 1710s. Friends succeeded in obscuring early forms of Quakerism considered radical, enthusiastic and unsound at the time of editing, confirming that Quaker religious beliefs and social aspirations had changed tremendously in the intervening period. The collection was, then, produced in part because of pressure from the remnants of Nayler’s followers, ‘only after much debate and with many misgivings’<sup>78</sup>, and not only because of the generosity of Whitehead noted by Damrosch, who depicts the *Collection* as a result of his solitary labours.<sup>79</sup> It was also published in response to external pressures, such as popular images of Friends in plays and anti-Quaker histories from the late seventeenth century. In English popular literature Friends had become a ‘cultural stereotype’<sup>80</sup> and Nayler especially was remembered by writers up to the 1720s. Depicted as the captain of ‘that frantick self-afflicting crew of trembling Quakers’<sup>81</sup> by Billingsley in 1658, by the 1670s he was placed alongside notorious figures representing inversions of the social, gender and moral order, including the peasant leaders Watt Tyler and Jack Straw, Pope Joan, and the polygamous Anabaptist prophet and sometime king of Muenster Jan van Leiden.<sup>82</sup> Fifty years after his downfall, Friends were still depicted as ‘Brethren of the Quaking Naylor’.<sup>83</sup>

Perhaps most significantly, Edward Ward’s *History of the Grand Rebellion*, first published three years before the *Sundry Books*, included an account of ‘Naylor the Quaking Saint’, depicted as ‘wearing such a forked Beard/ And Head of Hair, compos’d as might agree/ With those we in the Volto Santo see/ Affecting many Phrases which were us’d/ By Christ, whose Words and

Godhead he abus'd/ So far as to blaspheme his Holy Name/ By preaching up himself to be the same'.<sup>84</sup> Based on the report of a committee of fifty-five M.P.s given in December 1656, in which Nayler was accused of assuming 'the gestures, words, honour, worship and miracles'<sup>85</sup> of Jesus, the durability of this stereotype, 'the least pliable of literary sorts, the one least sensitive to social vibrations'<sup>86</sup> was probably of great concern to Friends who had no control over the content of plays, songs and poetry. They had to weigh up the pros and cons of republishing Nayler's works, including the potential of the volume to direct attention away from stock representations of Nayler, especially those which suggested that he aspired to resemble the *Volto Santo*, a crucifix based on the face of Jesus impressed on Veronica's veil, towards the orthodox Quaker depiction of a misled man who truly repented and was, at times, genuinely inspired.

However, more impartial accounts did not necessarily receive universal acceptance. The Dutch Reformed pastor Gerard Croese's *General History*, written in the early 1690s with the assistance of the Dutch Friend Willem Sewel, and published in Latin in 1695 and in English and German in 1696,<sup>87</sup> was the earliest full-length history of Quakerism, but it fell foul of the Meeting, as it was considered to include 'some things not true in Fact'.<sup>88</sup> Sewel described the published version as 'imperfect and defective', as Croese 'knew better'.<sup>89</sup> Justin Champion has identified the importance of 'truth' to historical writing of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Such claims, he suggests, were 'essential to conveying a political or theological precept in historical form'.<sup>90</sup> Although Croese was asked to allow a postscript and corrections, by 1696 news had reached the Meeting that Dutch Friends 'have Writt Something and intend to print against the s[ai]d History'.<sup>91</sup> This was in part because, as the English manuscript translation revealed, it carried 'Reflections on Fri[en]ds', although the printer, John Dunton, was willing to publish an appendix with the volume, 'to correct any false acco.[un]ts'.<sup>92</sup> In addition, the apostate Francis

Bugg, 'the bitterest and most persistent' of the period had also, by 1697, 'corrected' the work, apparently at the request of the Church of England.<sup>93</sup> Although he claimed Croese's work had not given 'an impartial Account...[of] ways and methods by which Quakerism have grown and increased', he concluded that it was otherwise 'very well done'.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, he only commented on the sections which he wished to amend, such as the negative depiction of English magistrates.<sup>95</sup> Tellingly, however, he made no reference to the Nayler incident.<sup>96</sup> Presumably Croese's version was considered damning enough. Tainted by falsehood and Bugg's efforts, the *General History* had to be superseded by an orthodox account.

Champion's scholarship on denominational history has suggested that rival accounts of ecclesiastical history in the Restoration era, by Anglicans and Freethinkers, represented 'competing human claims' over 'the authoritative interpretation of truth.'<sup>97</sup> In this sense, Sewel's *History*, translated into English and published after considerable amendment in 1722, represents Quaker contribution to historical debate in England in the period. Seeking to represent Friends as respectable, and to distance them from accusations of radicalism, enthusiasm and disorder, Friends sought, like Anglicans of the same period, to provide a way to 'religious and moral rectitude.'<sup>98</sup> As Champion asserts, to claim to be 'good, religious and true' was not enough; 'the ability to present a cogent and credible version of the past could shore up such a claim.'<sup>99</sup> Whilst Anglicans sought to defend themselves from atheism and deism, Friends defended themselves from Anglican criticism, including that of Bugg, whilst being regularly prosecuted. Indeed, by choosing to rework the title of Bugg's anti-Quaker 'history of the rise, growth and progress of Quakerism', Sewel's account of their 'rise, increase and progress' reclaimed control over their history. The English version of the Nayler episode is particularly illustrative, showing eighteenth-century Quaker rejection of extreme behaviour alongside the depiction of a penitent

sinner; explicitly denying White Kennett's claim in *A Complete History of England* (1706) that he died without signs of repentance, it demonstrates the extent to which the English Quaker representation of Nayler had become the only one acceptable.<sup>100</sup>

As Champion notes, the Restoration 'saw many rival claims to be the true religion.'<sup>101</sup> Quakerism was no exception. Whilst Locke, who influenced Anglican writers, believed that humanity had only been afforded 'twilight knowledge', and so had to rely upon probabilities,<sup>102</sup> Sewel considered the 'Time of Twilight' to have ended as the Protestant Reformation had reached its zenith with Quakerism.<sup>103</sup> Providing a spiritual genealogy for Friends he asserted that God only gradually enlightened men, including Calvin and Luther, as 'idolatry had so universally blinded mankind that...it would have been impossible for them to have understood the declaration of an entirely reformed religion'.<sup>104</sup> Using the analogy of a man kept imprisoned in the dark, Sewel suggested that in the twilight, 'he would by Degrees have learned to discern the Objects and come to an Ability of beholding every Thing in a clear Day aright.' For Friends, the clear day had arrived. The Inner Light of God inspiring and guiding the eighteenth-century believer meant Quaker history-writing was shaped with this in mind. In this respect, the *History* may also be seen as a rival account to those of Gilbert Burnet and Edward Stillingfleet, establishing Quakerism within Reformation history, a subject of 'persistent importance'.<sup>105</sup> During an era of religious disunity, such histories provided created assurance for both Anglican and Quaker audiences.<sup>106</sup> Friends' claims that they suffered continued martyrdom for the tithe testimony at the hands of the established church were 'shored up' by the *History*, just as Stillingfleet's history aimed to refute 'anti-episcopalian visions' of the history of the Church of England, in a period when the relationship between Church, priest and civil sovereignty was a source of clerical dissension.<sup>107</sup> For Quakers as well as Anglicans, the Interregnum and

Restoration were important to their accounts and, for Friends especially, were a period which needed to be depicted carefully. If, as Champion suggests, ‘the presentation of the past, became a displaced crucible for ideological dispute’<sup>108</sup> then Sewel’s genealogy may have been intended as a corrective to German and Dutch depictions of Quakerism in works such as *Anabaptisticum et enthusiaticum Pantheon* (1701-2) which borrowed elements from depictions of Muenster Anabaptists ‘imprinted on the Lutheran consciousness in exaggerated and grotesque outlines as veritable monsters, set up by the devil as a rival show to the Reformation.’<sup>109</sup>

However, although Dutch Friends did not write against it, contention has been identified between Dutch and English Friends over the account of the Nayler episode given in the first full-length history of Quakerism written by a Quaker.<sup>110</sup> Sewel’s manuscript was originally considered by English Friends in 1712, when Francis Davis gave an account of Sewel’s ‘great & long Industry’. Objections by eminent Friends in 1716, the year the *Collection* was published, culminated with a request that the Dutch version of Nayler’s trial would not ‘be Exposed to Publick View’. English Friends had been given a manuscript section of the Dutch version, but no comment on its publication in 1717 is registered.<sup>111</sup> This may explain the lack of attention given to the Dutch edition by scholars such as Damrosch, who does not consider the original version, only referring to the English translation.<sup>112</sup> In 1721 the Meeting commented upon sections of the *Histori*, presumably available in English, including a proposition that ‘Robert Barclay’s Theses, may be a Better Summary of our Principles’.<sup>113</sup> The most significant alteration, though, was made to the section on Nayler, and is ‘interesting both for its omissions and additions.’<sup>114</sup> The Meeting prepared a substitute section for the English version, which claimed, upon publication in 1722, to have been ‘revis’d... with some amendments’, and these were certainly carried out to fulfil English ideas of orthodoxy.<sup>115</sup> Appearing only a few years after the *Sundry Books*, it was

imperative that the official *History* depicted Nayler in a similar way to Whitehead's Introduction, and this is evident when the Dutch and English editions are compared.

One of the most significant differences is the lack of footnotes in the Dutch original. These are especially important in the English edition, where they clarify Nayler's status. A description of his 'honest parents' is accompanied by a footnote about his father, a husbandman 'of good Repute'.<sup>116</sup> Husbandry, for eighteenth-century male Friends, represented a spiritual and moral state, even for those who were not husbandmen by occupation. As part of the tithe testimony, 'the imagery and language of husbandry' contrasted an exploitative clergy with productive husbandmen.<sup>117</sup> In Nayler's case this also rooted him firmly in the Quakerism of the eighteenth century. Champion has suggested that the use of footnoting had originated in the late seventeenth century as 'the attempt to accredit a particular text with authority...an image of transparent truth' so those without references became suspected as fictional, or untrue.<sup>118</sup> However, unlike Freethinkers and Anglicans who vied to provide 'the more creditworthy account of the truth'<sup>119</sup>, Sewel's *History* aimed to provide the truth itself, albeit after several attempts. Perhaps also because of this shift in emphasis, the English version of the *History* does not include several letters about Nayler, including a petition by Robert Rich.<sup>120</sup> Although probably used by Sewel as additional proof of his probity as a historian, as a form of testimony, 'anchoring the text in probable reality'<sup>121</sup>, the individuals named were presumably thought unsuitable by the Second Day Meeting: Rich had been expelled from Quakerism partly for his unorthodox view of Nayler's trial and sentence as a form of martyrdom<sup>122</sup> and unofficial pro-Nayler histories of the 'innocent, humble holy meek', and 'Thrice blessed Saint'<sup>123</sup> were still appearing in the early eighteenth century. Orthodox Quakerism needed an official version laced with footnotes to prove

that although Nayler was not holy, he did come from respectable stock and was manipulated into blasphemy. Thus Sewel's original assertion that Nayler resembled 'our Saviour in the letter of Publius Lentulus written to the Senate of Rome'<sup>124</sup> was removed. Although Damrosch asserts that early Friends had 'a fondness' for this description,<sup>125</sup> eighteenth-century English Friends prudently wanted to disassociate themselves from it.<sup>126</sup> Only a few years earlier Ward had alleged that Nayler's blasphemy lay partly in his use of early Christian texts to resemble Christ.

The English version also stresses the role of outside influence in Nayler's downfall. A passage listing Nayler's female followers, including Martha Simmonds, is absent from the Dutch account, whilst in the English it is used to blame them for Nayler becoming 'clouded in his understanding, bewildered, and at a loss in his judgment'.<sup>127</sup> Although Damrosch suggests that Sewel was uneasy about 'rebuking women for doing what men were freely permitted to do', specifically Simmonds' public disputations with male Quakers, the accompanying footnote, added by the Meeting and not, as Damrosch claims, by Sewel, highlights the nature of English Friends' conservative revisions as it limited Quaker women to an involuntary 'impulse or concern to prophesy', rather than 'reasoning or disputing.'<sup>128</sup> As Tarter suggests, such moves effectively silenced them.<sup>129</sup> However, the desire of the Meeting to control the image of English Quakerism is most apparent in the 1742 German edition.<sup>130</sup> English Friends had been particularly keen to prevent the Dutch *Histori* from reaching Germany, 'where we have been greatly misrepresented by some adversaries', and several edicts had been passed to prosecute dissenters.<sup>131</sup> 'Misrepresentations' included Blome's *Historia* and other works in the *Pantheon*, a 'spiritual armoury' against Quakers.<sup>132</sup> Such works borrowed elements from depictions of German Anabaptists, and included illustrations of Nayler's entry into Bristol, with verses highlighting the role of Nayler's female followers, possibly alluding to the polygamist van

Leiden.<sup>133</sup> Having, then, rejected Croese's *Quaker-Historie*, there was no official account in German until Sewel's *Geschichte*, 'newly revised and published with some corrections', a direct translation from the English with little mention of the Dutch original.<sup>134</sup> English Quakerism had, in this respect, become the adjudicator of orthodoxy, with English the language of Quaker belief. Although, as Bailey suggests, written history may 'validate a faith experience', discord between believers led in this case to the suppression of other accounts.<sup>135</sup>

Although by the time Nayler's works were republished, individual Friends were respected figures in the community, it was still relatively easy for enemies to refer to the group of young radicals who in the 1650s had not been pacifist, had openly condemned other denominations, and had been accused of blasphemy for their religious principles, some of which they later rejected. As Peters has concluded, 'Nayler cast a long shadow over the movement'<sup>136</sup>, but it was longer and more influential than she suggests. The content of his works had to justify their publication as those of an eminent early Friend, and reflect eighteenth-century orthodoxy. The *Collection* could then be read by, amongst others, sympathetic outsiders who would find their preconceptions of Nayler refuted by the piety and orthodoxy of his writings, and a historical account which avoided his more contentious affiliations and emphasized his status alongside other early Quakers as a spiritual husbandman. Nayler was still, however, a controversial figure. In 1732 the bishop of Lichfield commended his punishment for blasphemy, almost a century later.<sup>137</sup> Amongst Friends, though, the dying words of the suffering penitent remained a source of inspiration. Cuthbert Wigham, a Northumberland convert, took comfort when persecuted for his tithe testimony in the 1730s from Nayler's deathbed assertion, reproduced in Sewel's *History*, that 'There is a spirit which I feel, that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong; but delights to endure all things'.<sup>138</sup> Although twentieth-century theologians proclaimed Nayler's

writings ‘a sure canon’ of original Quakerism<sup>139</sup> Barclay and Penn came to represent the respectable, peaceable manhood idealised in publications of the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whilst Nayler’s works, unlike his repentance, remained underappreciated. As a former Quaker radical, they had to be scrutinised and edited before they could be viewed by the sympathetic and the critical.

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89. Hull, *Willem Sewel*, 119; Sewel, *History*, 60.

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97. Champion, *Pillars*, 10.

98. Ibid. 34.

99. Ibid. 11.

100. Sewel, *History*, 159.

101. Champion, *Pillars*, 226.

102. Ibid. 225.

103. Sewel, *History*, 2.

104. Ibid. 1-2.

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109. Fogelklou, *James Nayler*, 12.

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113. LSF, Morning Meeting Minutes iv, 30 11mo. [Jan.] 1721.
114. Hull, *Willem Sewel*, 178. He does not go into detail.
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118. Champion, *Pillars*, 30-1.
119. Ibid. 10.
120. Sewel, *Histori*, 183-8.
121. Champion, *Pillars*, 42-3.
122. ‘The Preface to the Reader’, in Rich, *Epistles*, 1-3.
123. ‘The Preface’, in Anon., *Memoirs of the life, ministry, tryal & sufferings of James Nailer*, London 1719, pp. iv, xiii.

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124. Sewel, *Histori*, 173: ‘onzen Zaligmaaker in den brief van Publius Lentelus aan den Raad van Rome, beschreeven’.

125. Damrosch, *Sorrows*, 161.

126. Whitehead too, Damrosch notes, is silent about the events in Bristol: Ibid. 238-9.

127. Ibid. 138.

128. Ibid. 132-3.

129. Tarter, ‘Go North!’, 93.

130. William Sewel, *Die Geschichte von dem Ursprung, Zunehmen und Fortgang des christlichen Volcks so Quacker gennenet werden*, Leipzig 1742.

131. Morning Meeting minutes iv, 30 5mo. [July] 1722. Thomas Story noted that many Germans did not convert because they feared persecution. *A journal of the life of Thomas Story*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 1747, 505.

132. Figken (trans.), *Historia*; J. F. Corvinus (ed.), *Anabaptisticum et enthusiasticum Pantheon und geistliches Ruest-Hauss wider der alten Quacker, und neuen Frey-Geister*, Coethen and Frankfurt 1701-2. See Fogelkou, *James Nayler*, 11-12.

133. See Damrosch, *Sorrows*, 151 for a reproduction.

134. The title page reads: ‘Urspruenglich in hollaendischer Sprache beschrieben von William Sewel und von ihm selbst in englische uebersetzt.’

135. Bailey, ‘Quaker Christology’, 80.

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136. Peters, *Print culture*, 238.

137. Joseph Besse, *A cloud of witnesses*, London 1732, 5, 13.

138. George Richardson, *Some account of the rise of the Society of Friends in Cornwood, in Northumberland*, London 1848, 6; Sewel, *History*, 159.

139. M. A. Creasey, 'Early Quaker Christology with special reference to the teaching of Isaac Penington', unpubl. DPhil diss. Leeds 1956, 232.