

# Early Quaker Uses of History: ‘The Spirit of the Martyrs Revived’

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*Given the centrality of immediate revelation to early Quaker theology, modern historians have often assumed that the first Quakers disregarded tradition. However, this article demonstrates that the early Friends frequently made historical arguments, both to launch and rebut polemical assaults. The Quakers did not, therefore, turn to history as the movement became increasingly conservative or respectable. Instead, they consistently claimed to be the true heirs of John Foxe’s Protestant martyrs. By maintaining that their movement represented the culmination of the tradition celebrated in the Acts and monuments, they were deeply engaged in the historiographical contests which constituted ‘England’s second Reformation’.*

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When the Westmorland Quaker Ambrose Rigge argued, in 1669, that Friends followed ‘the Doctrine and practise of the most Famous and renowned Christians, both testified of in the Scriptures of Truth, and the Books of Martyrs’, he mentioned the Bible and John Foxe’s magisterial Christian history in the same breath.<sup>1</sup> Yet modern historians of early Quakerism have tended to emphasise just one side of this equation. To be sure, scholars have recognised the extent to which a second generation of Quakers was engaged, by the early eighteenth

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<sup>1</sup> Ambrose Rigge, *The good old way and truth*, [London] 1669 (Wing R.1483), title page. Foxe’s *Acts and monuments*, popularly known as the ‘Book of Martyrs’, went through nine editions between 1563 and 1684. See Thomas S. Freeman, ‘Over their dead bodies: concepts of martyrdom in late-medieval and early-modern England’, in Thomas S. Freeman and Thomas F. Mayer (eds), *Martyrs and martyrdom in England, c.1400–1700*, Woodbridge 2007, 2.

century, in efforts to construct an historical tradition for their movement.<sup>2</sup> However, this concern for history and tradition has generally been regarded as a departure from the principles which underpinned early Quakerism. Indeed, even the biblicism of the first Friends was peculiarly ahistorical. Although they emulated the Old Testament prophets and early Apostles,<sup>3</sup> they were distinguishable from other Protestants insofar as they were not attempting to return to the forms and models of primitive practice, but rather believed that ‘they *were* the New Testament church’.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the early Quakers believed that the same spirit which had inspired the authors of Scripture was present within themselves. This emphasis on the ‘immediate inward presence of God’ has seen Richard Vann claim that the ‘beliefs of Quakers [were] almost uniquely hostile to history’, while Erin Bell has more recently argued that the first Friends deemed history ‘detrimental to true appreciation of the inward voice of God’.<sup>5</sup> According to this view, the ‘Light within’ – a divine immanence which ‘consciously distinguished itself from a return to the past’ – precluded a concern for precedent.<sup>6</sup> The early Quakers, in other words, should not have needed history.

Yet George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, was himself more than prepared to appeal to the post-biblical past. When on trial in Lancaster in 1664, Fox turned to history to provide precedent for Quaker beliefs, pointing in particular to those of Foxe’s martyrs who ‘suffered because they could not swear’ oaths.<sup>7</sup> The influence of the Elizabethan Foxe upon his seventeenth-century namesake has been acknowledged,<sup>8</sup> but this has rarely been translated into a more general consideration of the way in which the broader Quaker movement interpreted history in the first decades following its inception in the early 1650s.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, those historians who have appreciated the historical consciousness of the early Friends have nevertheless tended to view it in fundamentally conservative terms, attributing

<sup>2</sup> See Erin Bell, ‘Eighteenth-century Quakerism and the rehabilitation of James Nayler, seventeenth-century radical’, this JOURNAL lix (2008), 426–46.

<sup>3</sup> G. F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan faith and experience*, Oxford 1946, 26; H. J. Cadbury, *Quakerism and early Christianity* (Swarthmore Lecture), London 1957, 6–7; John R. Knott, *Discourses of martyrdom in English literature, 1563–1694*, Cambridge 1993, esp. pp. 234–54.

<sup>4</sup> T. L. Underwood, *Primitivism, radicalism, and the Lamb’s War: the Baptist-Quaker conflict in seventeenth-century England*, Oxford 1997, 33.

<sup>5</sup> Richard T. Vann, *The social development of English Quakerism, 1655–1755*, Cambridge, MA 1969, 1; Bell, ‘Eighteenth-century Quakerism’, 427.

<sup>6</sup> Madeleine Pennington, *Quakers, Christ, and the Enlightenment*, Oxford 2021, 9.

<sup>7</sup> *The journal of George Fox*, ed. J. L. Nickalls, rev. edn, Cambridge 1952, 484.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, N. H. Keeble, *The literary culture of Nonconformity*, Leicester 1987, 5.

<sup>9</sup> More extensive, but far from comprehensive, is Knott, *Discourses of martyrdom*, ch. vii.

an apparent historiographical turn to the broader process whereby the early Quaker movement became increasingly institutionalised after the Restoration of 1660.<sup>10</sup> An important corrective to this account has recently been provided by Susan Royal, who has instead stressed the radical potential of Foxe's *Acts and monuments* for seventeenth-century Quakers. However, her study of the *Lollards in the English Reformation* is necessarily limited to a consideration of the Lollard legacy.<sup>11</sup> More significant is Anthony Milton's magisterial survey of *England's second Reformation*, which examines the way in which the ambiguous history of the sixteenth-century Church of England was contested in the mid-seventeenth century. Milton is absolutely right to recognise that the proposals of religious radicals did not necessarily constitute 'a conscious and dramatic break with the past, an extreme renunciation of the Church of England and its history', and could instead be 'presented as a continuation of the existing, ongoing reformation'.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, he concedes that such 'sectarians', given their self-conscious opposition to 'the very notion of a national church', receive little attention in his study of 'the battle for the Church of England'.<sup>13</sup> There thus remains clear scope for a broader, more systematic, analysis of the early Quakers' involvement in these historiographical debates.

To this end, the first section of this article will survey a range of ways in which Quakers invoked history during both the Interregnum and the reign of Charles II. The second section will then analyse the intellectual framework through which this first generation of Friends interpreted history, before a third and final section will examine the way in which Quakers continued to appeal to the past for polemical purposes in the aftermath of the Restoration. Not only does this possess important implications for our understanding of the development of early Quakerism, but it also holds much broader historiographical significance. By analysing the way in which the *Acts and monuments*, in particular, proved a powerful resource for the Quakers, this study builds upon recent work which has increasingly recognised the radical potential of Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'.<sup>14</sup> Foxe's legacy, and that of the Elizabethan Reformation more generally, were undoubtedly ambiguous, and it was this ambiguity which ensured that the history and identity of the English Church remained such contested issues in the mid-seventeenth century. By tracing

<sup>10</sup> See especially Rosemary Moore, 'Reactions to persecution in primitive Quakerism', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* lvii (1995), 128–9, and *The Light in their consciences*, University Park, PA 2000, 191–2.

<sup>11</sup> Susan Royal, *Lollards in the English Reformation: history, radicalism, and John Foxe*, Manchester 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony Milton, *England's second Reformation: the battle for the Church of England, 1625–1662*, Cambridge 2021, 297, 301–3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 6–7.

<sup>14</sup> Royal, *Lollards*; Thomas S. Freeman, 'A library in three volumes: Foxe's "Book of Martyrs" in the writings of John Bunyan', *Bunyan Studies* v (1994), 47–57.

Quaker involvement in these debates beyond 1662, this article extends Milton's exploration of 'England's second Reformation'. Not content to be confined to a radical fringe, the early Quakers were – and remained – active participants in the battle to represent the true heirs of the English Reformation.

## I

The turn to history constituted a powerful polemical weapon in the seventeenth century. Perhaps most obviously, then, the early Quakers appealed to the past in order to refute the plenitude of polemical charges laid against them. In answer to attempts to associate Quakers with the infamous Münster Anabaptists of 1533–5,<sup>15</sup> Edward Burrough stressed the differences in their '*Judgement and Practice*', while the Scottish Friend Robert Barclay would later claim to 'abhor and detest those wild Practices, which are written, concerning the Anabaptists of *Munster*'.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Quakers were repeatedly accused of crypto-Catholicism. For those with eyes to see, their views on biblical authority and the possibility of spiritual perfection could appear suspiciously Catholic, and their refusal to swear oaths saw them tried according to Elizabethan legislation against recusants and Jesuits.<sup>17</sup> Quakers were particularly vulnerable to the claim that, by assailing other Protestants, they worked with Catholics to undermine, divide and destroy the true religion.<sup>18</sup> In response to such accusations, the controversial Yorkshire Quaker James Nayler made clear that it was 'your Ancestor' and 'father the Pope' that 'got you into your Parsonages, and Masterships, and Ordained you, and your place, and form of Worship'.<sup>19</sup> This retort was widely emulated by other Quakers.<sup>20</sup> When Burrough rejected the claim that 'we did arise *from the Papists*', he did so

<sup>15</sup> See Andrew Crome, 'The Münster Rising, memories of violence, and perceptions of dissent in Restoration England', *HJ* lxxv (2022), 946–68.

<sup>16</sup> Edward Burrough, *A vindication of the people of God, called Quakers*, London 1660 (Wing B.6053), 5–6; Robert Barclay, *An apology for the true Christian divinity*, [Aberdeen] 1678 (Wing B.720), 33.

<sup>17</sup> Moore, *The Light*, 94 n. 16; Craig W. Horle, *The Quakers and the English legal system, 1660–1688*, Philadelphia, PA 1988, 11; Erin Bell, 'The Quakers and the law', in Richard C. Allen and Rosemary Moore (eds), *The Quakers, 1656–1723: the evolution of an alternative community*, University Park, PA 2018, 265–6.

<sup>18</sup> John Miller, *Popery and politics in England, 1660–1688*, Cambridge 1973, 86.

<sup>19</sup> James Nayler, *An answer to a book called the Quakers catechism*, London 1655 (Wing N.258), 19, 22, 26.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Richard Farnworth, *A true testimony against the popes wayes*, London 1656 (Wing F.509), and Thomas Hart, *The foundation and rise of many of the practices, customs, and formallities of the priests, lawyers, and people of England examined*, London 1659 (Wing H.963).

specifically by arguing that ‘if it be an offence *to be risen from the Papists*’, then ‘the *Protestants* (so called) are in the offence, and their Ministry, and the chief part of their Church-Government, Worship and Ordinances are *evil*; for did not the *Protestants* spring from the *Papists*?’<sup>21</sup>

It was often in order to substantiate this claim that Quaker works contained historical discussion.<sup>22</sup> By tracing the introduction of swearing on the Gospel to the Byzantine emperor Justinian in the sixth century, or the wearing of surplices to the pontificate of Adrian I, Quakers could show that such practices – retained in the Restoration Church – represented man-made innovations.<sup>23</sup> Chief among such remnants of popish idolatry was the payment of tithes.<sup>24</sup> Drawing upon John Selden’s *Historie of tithes* (1618), Anthony Pearson asserted that there was no ‘Law, Canon, or Constitution of any general Council as yet found, that purposely commanded the payment of *tythes*, nor any that expressly supposed them a duty of common right, before the Council of *Lateran*, held in the year 1215’.<sup>25</sup> The payment of tithes had been introduced to England in the eighth century by legates of Pope Adrian – and subsequently confirmed by a succession of Saxon, Norman and Plantagenet laws – but they continued to be thought of as discretionary payments intended to support provision for the poor.<sup>26</sup> Only at the height of papal dominion in the thirteenth century did tithes become established on a regular parochial basis.<sup>27</sup> It was then that ‘pope *Innocent* the third sen[t] his Decretal Epistle to the Bishop of *Canterbury*, commanding him to enjoyn every man to pay his temporal Goods to those that ministred spiritual things to them’, and the ‘general Parochial payment of *tythes* in *England*’ was first imposed.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Burrough, *Vindication*, 9–10.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, James Parnell, *The watcher: or, The stone cut out of the mountains without hands*, London [1655] (Wing P.541), 8–10, and Francis Howgill, *The glory of the true Church, discovered, as it was in its purity in the primitive time*, London 1661 (Wing H.3162).

<sup>23</sup> Francis Howgill, *Oaths no gospel ordinance, but prohibited by Christ*, [London] 1666 (Wing H.3174), 45–6; George Fox and Ellis Hookes, *The arraignment of popery*, London 1667 (Wing F.1750A), 17; Rigge, *Good old way*, 22.

<sup>24</sup> T. Foster, *A winding-sheet for England’s ministry*, [London] [1658?] (Wing F.1637), 2. See also John Osborne, *An indictment against tythes*, London 1659 (Wing O.525).

<sup>25</sup> Anthony Pearson, *The great case of tythes truly stated, clearly opened, and fully resolved*, London 1657 (Wing P.989), 7. This claim was repeated in Francis Howgill, *The great case of tythes and forced maintenance [sic] once more revived*, [London] 1665 (Wing H.3165), which was based on Pearson’s earlier work.

<sup>26</sup> John Crook, *Tythes no property to, nor lawful maintenance for a powerful gospel-preaching ministry*, London 1659 (Wing C.7214bA), 1; Pearson, *Great case*, 9–10; Fox and Hookes, *Arraignment*, 51.

<sup>27</sup> See Barry Reay, ‘Quaker opposition to tithes 1652–1660’, *Past & Present* no. 86 (Feb. 1980), 108.

<sup>28</sup> Pearson, *Great case*, 10. See also Thomas Lawson, *A treatise relating to the call, work & wages of the ministers of Christ*, London 1680 (Wing L.728), esp. pp. 60–70.

There was a clear coherence between this historical logic and a biblical mode of argumentation. The Quakers' primary argument against tithes was that there was no evidence of their payment following the abrogation of Mosaic law, and this was complemented by the historical demonstration of their medieval invention.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, such arguments only serve to support Erin Bell's claim that the 'early Quakers aligned history with superfluous tradition'.<sup>30</sup> In fact, Friends were prepared to make much more positive appeals to the past. Alongside his attempt to establish the papal origins of tithes, Pearson also included a litany of proto-Protestant reformers who 'did in their dayes bear their testimony against' them.<sup>31</sup> The same was true of Ambrose Rigge and Thomas Lawson, both of whom drew directly and explicitly upon the 'Book of Martyrs'.<sup>32</sup> From Foxe, they cited the objection made by followers of Jan Hus in fifteenth-century Bohemia: 'although in the Old-Testament it were commanded to give Tythes', this was not applicable to Christians as that 'precept of the Old-Testament had an end in the first year of our Lord Jesus Christ'.<sup>33</sup> Nor were the Hussites alone in having anticipated this argument. Hus had himself been influenced by the Oxford don John Wyclif, and the judgement of both he and his followers was frequently referenced by a wide range of Friends.<sup>34</sup> The Lollards Walter Brute and William Thorpe, for example, had denied the obligation of 'the old law' following 'the coming of Christ', just as the Quakers now did.<sup>35</sup>

Although, as Francis Howgill insisted, '*Antiquity without Truth, proveth nothing*', it was clearly helpful for Quakers to appeal to the precedents provided by these proto-Protestants.<sup>36</sup> Not only did it serve to guard against the generic charge of innovation, but the invocation of Foxe's imprimatur also allowed Friends to assert their unimpeachably Protestant credentials in response to continual accusations of crypto-Catholicism. Indeed, Foxe's authority was so great among Protestants that it might lend a veneer of respectability to even the most controversial of beliefs.<sup>37</sup> Writing in defence

<sup>29</sup> See Nicholas Morgan, *Lancashire Quakers and the establishment, 1660–1730*, Halifax 1993, 172–4.

<sup>30</sup> Bell, 'Eighteenth-century Quakerism', 427.

<sup>31</sup> Pearson, *Great case*, 14.

<sup>32</sup> See also Edward Burrough, *A declaration of the present sufferings*, London 1659 (Wing B.5993), 27.

<sup>33</sup> Rigge, *Good old way*, 32; Lawson, *Treatise*, 107.

<sup>34</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's house divided*, London 2003, 35–6. See, for example, Dennis Hollister, *The harlots veil removed*, London 1658 (Wing H.2507), 81–3; James Peterson, *The pamphlet of the byar discovered*, [London] 1678 (Wing P.1729), 5; and Lawson, *Treatise*, 106, 114–16. See also Royal, *Lollards*, 172–4.

<sup>35</sup> Hollister, *Harlots veil*, 81–2.

<sup>36</sup> Francis Howgill, *The rock of ages exalted above Rome's imagined rock*, London 1662 (Wing H.3178), 60.

<sup>37</sup> On the continued cultural influence of Foxe in the eighteenth century see Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707–1837*, New Haven–London 1992, 25–8, and Eirwen

of the Quaker belief in immediate revelation, the Aberdonian Quaker George Keith appealed to 'Foxes book of *Martyrs*' in an attempt to show that the 'purest Primitive *Protestants*' – including Hus – had 'maintained Immediate Calls, and the Spirit of Prophecy'.<sup>38</sup> The Quaker position on oaths was particularly problematic; given their centrality to common-law procedure, as well as their importance as tests of loyalty, Friends' refusal to swear only served to support accusations of civil disobedience.<sup>39</sup> In their defence, Quakers attempted to demonstrate that 'this Doctrine ... had the Voice of several *Ages* to *confirm it*', and called upon a familiar cast of Foxean forerunners in order to do so.<sup>40</sup> As we have seen, this was a strategy employed by George Fox; he pointed, in particular, to the Marian martyrs, as well as those – such as Basilides and Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna – who had suffered during the ten primitive persecutions.<sup>41</sup> In the eyes of early modern Protestants, a similar level of proximity to the primitive Church could be claimed by the Waldensians, the heretical community of medieval Europe which was widely considered 'to have continued *Uncorrupted* ... ever since the Apostles Times'.<sup>42</sup> Like Fox, the leading Restoration Quakers William Penn and George Whitehead deemed these 'most antient and true *Protestants*' to have '*denyed the taking of any Oath*'.<sup>43</sup> 'To deny swearing in obedience to Christ's commands was', therefore, 'no new thing.'<sup>44</sup>

Most remarkable of all was the Quakers' attempt to legitimate their rejection of hat honour. Friends refused to remove their hats in deference to authority on the grounds that there was no scriptural requirement to do so, and that it therefore represented a worshipping of man that was

Nicholson, 'Eighteenth-century Foxe: evidence for the impact of the Acts and Monuments in the "long" eighteenth century', in D. M. Loades (ed.), *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, Aldershot 1997, 143–77.

<sup>38</sup> Keith also cited the examples of the Scottish evangelicals George Wishart and John Knox, with reference to Knox's *History of the Reformation of Scotland: immediate revelation*, [Aberdeen] 1668 (Wing K.175), 118–19. On Keith see Madeleine Ward (now Pennington), *The Christian Quaker: George Keith and the Keithian Controversy*, Leiden 2019.

<sup>39</sup> Horle, *Quakers and the English legal system*, 11.

<sup>40</sup> John Crook, *The case of swearing (at all) discussed*, London 1660 (Wing C.7197), 16–17; William Penn, *A treatise of oaths*, [London?] 1675 (Wing P.1388), 121–6, quotation at p. 99.

<sup>41</sup> Fox, *Journal*, 484. Basilides and Polycarp were named explicitly in, for example, Crook, *Case of swearing*, 16, and Rigge, *Good old way*, 14.

<sup>42</sup> Penn, *Treatise of oaths*, 100. Crook cited Foxe when he wrote that the Waldensians 'are said by some immediately to succeed the Apostles', and 'to be the most antient and true *Protestants*': Crook, *Case of swearing*, 16. See Stefano Villani, 'The British invention of the Waldenses', in Alexandra Walsham, Brian Cummings, Ceri Law and Karis Riley (eds), *Remembering the Reformation*, Abingdon 2020, 192–205.

<sup>43</sup> Fox and Hookes, *Arraignment*, 61; George Whitehead, *The case of the Quakers concerning oaths*, [London] 1674 (Wing W.1899), 40–2; Penn, *Treatise of oaths*, quotation at p. 100.

<sup>44</sup> Fox, *Journal*, 484.

offensive to God.<sup>45</sup> The result was a form of radical social protest, and, in the face of widespread hostility, Quakers once again turned to find precedents which might vindicate their actions. The Friends' first recording clerk, Ellis Hooke, was particularly inventive in his invocation of Nicholas Ridley, the Edwardian bishop of London who had been put to the stake during the reign of Mary I.<sup>46</sup> Although Ridley could be considered something of a religious radical in the context of Mary's Catholic counter-Reformation, he would, of course, have been horrified by the extremity of Quaker beliefs. Nevertheless, when on trial in 1555, Ridley had ostentatiously replaced his hat on his head at the mention of the pope, and thus refused to honour both the pontiff and his Legate, Cardinal Pole.<sup>47</sup> As far as Hooke was concerned, Ridley's refusal to honour the '*usurped Supremacy*' and '*abused Authority*' of the papacy served as a precedent for the Quakers' own refusal to extend to man the honour that was due to God alone.<sup>48</sup> So, too, did the example set by Thomas Cranmer; the archbishop of Canterbury had similarly refused to doff his cap to James Brooks, the Marian bishop of Gloucester, and thus failed to do 'reverence to him that represented the *Pope's Person*'. Yet Hooke seemingly detected little irony when including Archbishop Cranmer's admission that he would, in fact, have removed his hat in honour of an authority other than that of the pope.<sup>49</sup> While clearly not impossible, claiming Cranmer for the Quaker cause was not a straightforward task.

## II

As the awkwardness of this example suggests, the precedents which Foxe's martyrs might provide for the Quakers were often far from obvious. It is for this reason that Carla Gardina Pestana has argued that scriptural sources were 'less problematic' for Quakers than historical ones: she argues that the early Quakers drew upon the *Acts and monuments* 'in only a limited way', given that Foxe's martyrs, as 'Anglicans', 'offered dubious models for those

<sup>45</sup> Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English society, 1655-1725*, Oxford 2000, 49; John Walter, 'Body politics in the English Revolution', in Stephen Taylor and Grant Tapsell (eds), *The nature of the English Revolution revisited*, Woodbridge 2013, 88. Quakers similarly used the more egalitarian 'thee' and 'thou' instead of 'you'.

<sup>46</sup> Hooke played a central role in the approval of Quaker publications even before the formal establishment of the Second Day Morning Meeting in 1673, and by the time of his death in 1681, he was clerk to the Friends' Morning Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings and Six Weeks Meeting. See Rosemary Moore, 'Gospel order: the development of Quaker organization', in Allen and Moore, *The Quakers, 1656-1723*, 60-2.

<sup>47</sup> See D. M. Loades, *The Oxford martyrs*, London 1970, 205.

<sup>48</sup> Ellis Hooke, *The spirit of Christ, and the spirit of the Apostles, and the spirit of the martyrs is arisen*, London 1661 (Wing H.2662), 28-9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 30.

who opposed the Anglican hierarchy'.<sup>50</sup> In light of the more recent work of Thomas Freeman, this is clearly a mischaracterisation of Foxe's contribution.<sup>51</sup> But the sentiment has been shared by other historians. As far as Christopher Hill was concerned, historically-minded religious radicals of the seventeenth century 'looked back to Wyclif and Hus rather than to Luther and Calvin'.<sup>52</sup> In the same vein, Rosemary Moore has argued that the range of historical examples available to the early Quakers was largely limited to those who provided direct precedents for their positions, such as the Lollards and Hussites 'who had not supported tithes'.<sup>53</sup> More recently, Susan Royal has suggested that, although the Quakers 'recognised that all the Reformation-era martyrs had some truth in their beliefs', they 'assigned more weight to some than others'. Recognising the flaws of more 'conservative' figures such as Cranmer, the Quakers saw themselves, accordingly, as 'descendants of other, more radical witnesses'.<sup>54</sup> In spite, then, of Royal's much greater appreciation of the early Friends' historical consciousness, she nevertheless reinforces the notion that the scope of Quaker appeals to history was necessarily restricted.

It is certainly true that the Quakers drew heavily upon the Waldensians, Lollards and Hussites to provide precedents for their most controversial beliefs. However, we have already seen that Quakers looked favourably upon the bishop-martyrs Cranmer, Ridley and Hugh Latimer, and this merely represented the tip of a much larger iceberg.<sup>55</sup> Hookes, for example, counted the continental reformers Ulrich Zwingli, Johannes Oecolampadius and Philip Melancthon among the 'many eminent men raised up' to father the Protestant Church, and he followed John Foxe in describing Martin Luther as the light that 'shined in the Church as a bright Star after a long Cloudy and Obscure Skie'.<sup>56</sup> Francis Howgill, too, claimed

<sup>50</sup> Carla Gardina Pestana, 'The Quaker executions as myth and history', *Journal of American History* lxxx (1993), 449, and 'Martyred by the saints: Quaker executions in seventeenth-century Massachusetts', in Allan Greer and Jodi Blinkoff (eds), *Colonial saints: discovering the holy in the Americas, 1500–1800*, London 2003, 179.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas S. Freeman, 'Providence and prescription: the account of Elizabeth in Foxe's "Book of Martyrs"', in Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (eds), *The myth of Elizabeth*, Basingstoke 2003, 27–55.

<sup>52</sup> Christopher Hill, *The experience of defeat: Milton and some contemporaries*, London 1984, 303. <sup>53</sup> Moore, 'Reactions to persecution', 129. <sup>54</sup> Royal, *Lollards*, 174.

<sup>55</sup> For references to Latimer see, for example, Ellis Hookes and Thomas Rudyard, *The spirit of the martyrs is risen, and the spirit of the old persecuter is risen and manifest*, London [1665] (Wing H.2663), 12, 24.

<sup>56</sup> Ellis Hookes, *The spirit of the martyrs revived*, [London] n.d. (Wing H.2663A), 33 (all citations of this work refer to its second pagination). See John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online (TAMO)* (1563 edition), at <<http://www.dhi.ac.uk/foxe>>, iii. 455.

to 'honor' Luther, as well as John Calvin, just as 'God did ... in their day'.<sup>57</sup> It is significant, in light of Christopher Hill's comments about the lack of a radical interest in the sixteenth century, that these figures all stood within the more mainstream magisterial tradition that defined the Reformation of that age. Contrary, then, to Hill's claim that seventeenth-century religious radicals looked back purely to 'the persecuted, not the successful', the Quakers sought to claim the full gamut of Foxean forebears as their own.<sup>58</sup>

The co-existence of historical heroes as disparate as Melancthon and the Mennonites on the pages of Quaker pamphlets requires an explanation, and it was readily provided by Isaac Penington.<sup>59</sup> The son of his namesake, who had been Lord Mayor of London and signatory to Charles I's death warrant, Penington the younger was 'convinced' in 1658.<sup>60</sup> Two years later, Penington wrote that 'the blessed Martyrs, who suffered for the Testimony of a pure Conscience towards God, and all the Worthies of the Lord in their several Generations, who fought against that Scarlet Whore ... are not disowned by us, but dearly owned and honoured therein'.<sup>61</sup> This explicitly included Luther and Hus, with whom the Quakers agreed 'in their testimony in several things'. But where they did not, Penington made clear that 'all things were not discovered at once'. Instead, when 'the times were ... dark, and the light small', those that were 'faithfull according to what was discovered' were nevertheless 'precious' in the eyes of the Lord, who was willing to overlook 'what through ignorance they erred in'.<sup>62</sup> As long as they held fast to their 'testimony, in the faith and in the patience which they had learned and received from God, ... they were accepted of him'.<sup>63</sup> This understanding of piecemeal revelation was crucial. By downplaying the significance of doctrinal difference, Quakers could claim that they suffered 'for testifying against the hypocrisies and corruptions of our age', just as the earlier martyrs 'did in their day, from the same Spirit that persecuted them'.<sup>64</sup>

In times of varying ignorance, then, what united these generations of Christians was not any strict doctrinal affinity, but a shared experience of

<sup>57</sup> Howgill, *Rock of ages*, esp. pp. 8, 78–9, 89–90. However, for more critical comments on Luther and Calvin, and particularly their persecution of fellow Protestants, see Barclay, *Apology*, 361–2.

<sup>58</sup> Hill, *Experience of defeat*, 303.  
<sup>59</sup> For reference to the Dutch Mennonites, and particularly their refusal to swear, see Hookes, *Spirit of Christ*, 9, 14–18, and Anon., *The case of the people called Quakers, relating to oaths and swearing*, [London] 1673 (Wing C.1130), 27–9.

<sup>60</sup> Richard L. Greaves, 'Penington, Isaac (1616–1679)', *ODNB*, <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-21841>>.

<sup>61</sup> Isaac Penington, *An answer to that common objection against the Quakers, that they condemn all but themselves*, London 1660 (Wing P.1151), 1.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

<sup>63</sup> *Idem*, *The way of life and death made manifest*, London 1658 (Wing P.1219), 33.

<sup>64</sup> *Idem*, *Answer*, 2.

suffering against the ‘Spirit of Persecution’.<sup>65</sup> There was a clear biblical basis for this worldview, but the influence of the evangelical Tudor historians John Bale and John Foxe cannot be overestimated.<sup>66</sup> In *The image of both Churches* (1545), the former had interpreted Christian history as an apocalyptic contest in which a remnant of God’s faithful struggled against the corruption of the false Church in all ages.<sup>67</sup> Bale drew a parallel between the evangelical martyrs of his day and those who had earlier suffered at the hands of Rome, and this framework was extended by Foxe, Bale’s fellow Marian exile, in successive editions of his magisterial *Acts and monuments*. Here, Foxe propounded a progressive understanding of the Reformation, whereby the light of God was only gradually revealed to his elect. Despite noting, for example, ‘some blemishes’ in the opinions and beliefs of John Wyclif, Foxe nevertheless maintained that he had been an invaluable assailant of Rome, in ‘darke and misty tymes of ignoraūce’.<sup>68</sup> Given, then, that ‘the revelation of God’s will was progressive’,<sup>69</sup> it was the shared experience of popish persecution that identified historic members of the true Church, and which allowed Foxe to trace its continuous existence through the age of apostasy.

Scholars have long appreciated that this progressive interpretation of revelation allowed Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritans to incorporate the prestige of earlier Protestant martyrs within their arguments for further reform,<sup>70</sup> but there has been less appreciation of the extent to which it enabled Quakers to situate themselves within Foxe’s succession of sufferers for the true Church. Friends, however, went to great lengths to record and publicise details of their persecution, and it is clear that they interpreted their experience in fundamentally Foxean terms.<sup>71</sup> When, for example, Edward Burrough published a county-by-county compilation of Quaker

<sup>65</sup> Rigge, *Good old way*, 17.

<sup>66</sup> Friends frequently cited 2 Timothy iii.12, Matthew v.10–12 and Galatians iv.29. See, for example, Isaac Pennington, *Concerning persecution*, London 1661 (Wing P.1156), 6, and George Fox, *Concerning persecution in all ages to this day*, London 1682 (Wing F.1769).

<sup>67</sup> On Bale’s apocalypticism see Katherine R. Firth, *The apocalyptic tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530–1645*, Oxford 1979, 38–68.

<sup>68</sup> Foxe, *TAMO* (1570 edition), v. 544; vii. 966. See Royal, *Lollards*, 29–30.

<sup>69</sup> Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English conformist thought from Whitgift to Hooker*, London 1988, 25. See also Royal, *Lollards*, 25.

<sup>70</sup> B. R. White, *The English separatist tradition: from the Marian martyrs to the pilgrim fathers*, London 1971, 15–19; Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?*, 25–6; Stephen Brachlow, *The communion of saints: radical Puritan and separatist ecclesiology, 1570–1625*, Oxford 1988, esp. pp. 82–3; Karl Gunther, *Reformation unbound: Protestant visions of reform in England, 1525–1590*, Cambridge 2014, esp. pp. 221–4.

<sup>71</sup> Knott, *Discourses of martyrdom*, ch. vii; Robert W. Daniel, ‘“To make a second Book of Martyrs”: re-appropriating Foxe in Nonconformist prison writings in seventeenth-century Britain’, *Bunyan Studies* xxiii (2019), 45–61.

sufferings in 1659, he claimed that Friends had ‘patiently born the greatest sufferings that any people of this Nation ever lay under, since *Queen Maries* dayes’.<sup>72</sup> Nor is it a coincidence that Ellis Hookes, who is best known for collating two manuscript volumes of Quaker tribulations in the ‘Great Book of Sufferings’, also published more explicitly historical works than any other Restoration Quaker.<sup>73</sup> In the largest and the most influential – *The spirit of the martyrs revived* – Hookes both abridged and extended Foxe’s martyrology, explicitly tracing the ‘*Succession of the TRUE CHURCH*’, through the ‘*FAITHFUL MARTYRS In All AGES*’, to those who suffered for their faith in the seventeenth century.<sup>74</sup> Although, as we have seen, plenty of Foxe’s martyrs did share at least some of the Quakers’ beliefs, the majority clearly did not. In fact, many of the martyrs included by Hookes were admitted for clearing the relatively low bar of denying transubstantiation or the papal supremacy. In the struggle between Christ and Antichrist, then, affliction by the ‘persecuting Spirit’ represented the real mark of the true Church, and the vital link between the Quakers and their Foxean forebears.<sup>75</sup>

Nor was the criterion for suffering a narrow one. Here, once again, the influence of Foxe was important, as his own attempts to construct an extensive proto-Protestant lineage of martyrs for the true Church saw him include many sufferers whose experience of harassment, abjuration and penance had not been fatal.<sup>76</sup> So, Hookes’s own litany of martyrs could also include Martin Luther, who, despite dying ‘in peace in his own Country’, was nevertheless ‘oppressed’ by ‘Popish Idolatry’.<sup>77</sup> This capacious understanding of suffering was articulated by another prominent Restoration Quaker, Thomas Ellwood. In *The foundation of tythes shaken* (1678), Ellwood explained that the status of martyr was ‘applicable to them who make *confession* of the Truth, and *bear witness* to it, but more especially ... to them that *suffer* for the Truth’. He made clear that this included ‘Sufferings which extend not unto Death’, but which could nevertheless be ‘as grievous and cruel as death it self’.<sup>78</sup> In the context of Quaker

<sup>72</sup> Burrough, *Declaration*, 23.

<sup>73</sup> Caroline L. Leachman, ‘Hookes, Ellis (*bap.* 1635, *d.* 1681)’, *ODNB*, <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e69087>>.

<sup>74</sup> *Spirit of the martyrs revived*, title page. This work was posthumously reprinted in various forms in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and was drawn upon by the Dutch Friend William Sewel for the English translation of his *History of the rise, increase, and progress of the Christian people called Quakers* (1722).

<sup>75</sup> On the Quakers’ positive theological interpretation of their suffering see Madeleine Ward (now Pennington), ‘Transformative faith and the theological response of the Quakers to the Boston executions’, *Quaker Studies* xxi (2016), 15–32.

<sup>76</sup> Royal, *Lollards*, 99.

<sup>77</sup> Hookes, *Spirit of the martyrs revived*, 1, 33–4.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Ellwood, *The foundation of tythes shaken*, [London] 1678 (Wing E.622), 317–18. See Royal, *Lollards*, 99.

persecution, this was important. Under the penal legislation passed by the Cavalier parliament in 1661–5 – known, somewhat misleadingly, as the Clarendon Code<sup>79</sup> – Friends were regularly subjected to brutal beatings, swingeing fines and widespread imprisonment, and this was particularly the case during the ‘Tory Reaction’ of 1681–5.<sup>80</sup> But although a great many died in insanitary jails, Quakers were not judicially executed, at least outside of New England.<sup>81</sup> A capacious understanding of suffering as the mark of the true Church was, therefore, crucial: it allowed the Quakers – in spite of their more radical convictions – to claim that they were the true heirs of the Reformation begun by Luther.

It was Ellwood who offered perhaps the most articulate expression of this historical perspective. In his 1678 dispute with Thomas Comber, later dean of Durham, Ellwood was faced with the problem posed by the Protestant martyrs whose position on tithes contradicted Quaker belief.<sup>82</sup> Reiterating the notion that ‘*all Truths were not discovered at once*’, Ellwood instead claimed that, in the ‘Day-Break’ or ‘Infancy of Reformation’, ‘it pleased God ... to rend the Vail as it were *by little and little*, and so discover things *gradually* unto’ his witnesses. As a result, ‘many of the blessed Martyrs ... had not so full and clear a sight of *All the Superstitions and Abominations*, which in the dark Night of Ignorance had crept into the Church of *Rome*, as it hath pleased God *since* to give’.<sup>83</sup> This was not, however, intended to ‘detract’ from the ‘honour’ of ‘those worthy men’, all of whom were deemed ‘*good and godly*’ by Foxe, and he explicitly condemned any attempt ‘to *oppose* the Martyrs one to another’.<sup>84</sup> To suggest, with Susan Royal, that Ellwood held more radical reformers ‘in higher regard’ is thus to somewhat misinterpret his approach to his Foxean forerunners.<sup>85</sup> Ellwood was, of course, well aware of the doctrinal differences between Foxe’s martyrs. In fact, it was the Lollards, living ‘in times of *greater Darkness*’, who did ‘not see *so many* of the Corruptions of the Church of *Rome* as *Cranmer* and his Associates did’.<sup>86</sup> Yet that, for Ellwood, was beside the point. It was precisely because he understood the martyrs’ ‘true excellency’ to lie ‘not so much in *knowing much* (though *much* they knew) as in being *faithful* to what they

<sup>79</sup> On Clarendon’s religious views see Paul Seaward, ‘Circumstantial temporary concessions: Clarendon, comprehension, and uniformity’, in N. H. Keeble (ed.), *Settling the peace of the Church: 1662 revisited*, Oxford 2014, 57–84.

<sup>80</sup> The best account of this period is Grant Tapsell, *The personal rule of Charles II*, Woodbridge 2007.

<sup>81</sup> William Robinson, Marmaduke Stephenson, Mary Dyer and William Leddra were executed in Boston between 1659 and 1661. See Carla Gardina Pestana, *Quakers and Baptists in colonial Massachusetts*, Cambridge 1991, 32–6; Ward, ‘Transformative faith’, 15–32.

<sup>82</sup> Royal, *Lollards*, 99.

<sup>83</sup> Ellwood, *Foundation of tythes*, 307–8.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* 310, 313, 315.

<sup>85</sup> Royal, *Lollards*, 174.

<sup>86</sup> Ellwood, *Foundation of tythes*, 313.

knew' that such distinctions were not deemed significant. Regardless of historical differences in doctrine, it was for that faithfulness 'to the Lord in what they did see' that *all* of Foxe's martyrs 'were accepted by him'.<sup>87</sup>

### III

It is clear, then, that the intellectual apparatus inherited from Foxe allowed the early Quakers to appeal to historical exemplars who did not provide direct precedents for their radical beliefs. The point is an important one: not only does it overturn implicit assumptions about the incompatibility of historical inquiry and Quaker theology, it also possesses broader implications for our understanding of the development of early Quakerism. For Rosemary Moore, appeals to the past differed markedly between the Quakers of the Interregnum and Restoration periods: the former were 'too conscious of their new beginning, and too sure that they alone constituted the true church, to be much concerned about what had gone before'. It was not until 1659 that Friends made 'unambiguously favourable references' to 'John Foxe's book and the earlier martyrs'.<sup>88</sup> Even then, 'the main reference was not to the sixteenth century but to an earlier time, to Wyclif and Hus', and it was only during the 1660s that Quakers became 'willing to see themselves as standing in the tradition of earlier British martyrs' such as those persecuted during the reign of Mary.<sup>89</sup>

For Moore, then, this process reflected a broader development in the early Quaker movement, whereby the early enthusiasm of the Interregnum was extinguished after 1660. It is not difficult to detect, here, the prevailing paradigm of 'defeat' which pervades historiography on early Quakerism. Ever since Christopher Hill's influential characterisation of the Restoration experience in those terms, historians of early Quakerism have tended to draw a sharp distinction between Interregnum militancy and Restoration quietism, with the latter encapsulated by the 'Peace Testimony' issued by Friends in 1661. This process of institutionalisation and withdrawal, we are told, represented a necessary act of 'self-defence' in a 'hostile post-restoration world'.<sup>90</sup> Not only were thousands of Quakers imprisoned in the aftermath of Venner's Fifth Monarchist rising of January 1661, but they were also penalised for refusing to take oaths and holding religious meetings under the Quaker Act of 1662.<sup>91</sup> For Barry Reay, it was

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. 307–16.

<sup>88</sup> Moore, 'Reactions to persecution', 128–9.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. 129; Moore, *The Light*, 191–2.

<sup>90</sup> Hill, *Experience of defeat*, 165; Vann, *Social development*, 200–1.

<sup>91</sup> George Southcombe and Grant Tapsell, *Restoration politics, religion and culture*, Basingstoke 2010, 27.

the 'struggle to survive' this 'Restoration persecution' that 'encouraged organization', which in turn 'stimulated conservatism'.<sup>92</sup> The view that Quakerism developed in a necessarily defensive manner thus remains a powerful and persistent one,<sup>93</sup> in spite of several important challenges.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, Moore has herself explicitly aimed to challenge the extent to which 1660 represented a dividing line in the history of Quakerism. Yet she none the less attributes the acceleration of pre-Restoration developments to the necessity of 'mere survival' in the 1660s.<sup>95</sup>

We are left, then, with a familiar – and fundamentally Hillian – account of the Restoration as a period in which the radicalism of the Interregnum was suppressed, and the Quaker movement increasingly institutionalised.<sup>96</sup> For Moore, in particular, the move to claim more mainstream historical heroes was a fundamentally conservative one, borne of this search for Restoration 'respectability'.<sup>97</sup> Yet, in 1659, Edward Burrough was already invoking the examples of both Luther and Calvin, as well as Wyclif.<sup>98</sup> It was 'for their zeal in publishing abroad what then was manifest unto them' that Burrough could not only 'commend' the pair, but also draw a direct parallel between contemporary Quakers' testimonies and those of these magisterial reformers.<sup>99</sup> He proceeded, in 1661, to defend the bishop-martyrs celebrated by Foxe in his *Acts and monuments* – namely Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley. Burrough was adamant that 'God did *awaken* these men, with many more, and stir up their hearts in their day against the *Idolatry* and *Superstitions* of the times they lived in', and it was for that reason that he considered them '*sincere men*, according to their Light and Knowledge in their day'.<sup>100</sup> Although articulated after 1660, this merely represented a fuller expression of the argument which had allowed Burrough to lay claim upon the legacy of Luther and Calvin prior to the Restoration.

<sup>92</sup> Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English revolution*, London 1985, 121.

<sup>93</sup> See, for example, John Miller, "'A suffering people": English Quakers and their neighbours, c.1650–c.1700', *Past & Present* no. 188 (Aug. 2005), 71–103. Erin Bell has stated that 'the changes that had taken place in Quakerism between the 1650s and the eighteenth century' began 'at the Restoration': 'Eighteenth-century Quakerism', 427.

<sup>94</sup> Richard L. Greaves, 'Shattered expectations? George Fox, the Quakers, and the Restoration state, 1660–1685', *Albion* xxiv (1992), 237–59; Morgan, *Lancashire Quakers*, 280–1; George Southcombe, 'The Quakers and politics, 1660–1689', in Allen and Moore, *The Quakers, 1656–1723*, 170–90; Pennington, *Quakers, Christ, and the Enlightenment*, pp. xiv, 4, 42.

<sup>95</sup> Moore, *The Light*, 216–17.  
<sup>96</sup> In the course of the late 1660s and 1670s, George Fox established a hierarchical system of Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly Meetings at local and national level. For an overview see Moore, 'Gospel order', 54–75.

<sup>97</sup> *Idem*, *The Light*, 216.  
<sup>98</sup> Where Moore does concede the existence of such references in the 1650s, she dismisses them as 'grudging': 'Reactions to persecution', 128–9.

<sup>99</sup> Burrough, *Declaration*, 26.

<sup>100</sup> *Idem*, *Persecution impeached as a traitor against God*, London 1661 (Wing B.6016), 26–7.

This is significant: not only was Burrough a leading Interregnum Quaker, but he was also one of a core cast of characters central to Hill's more radical portrait of that period.<sup>101</sup>

Yet Burrough was not the first Friend to make this argument, nor the most radical. James Nayler achieved widespread notoriety when, in October 1656, he rode into Bristol, imitating Christ's entry to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.<sup>102</sup> He was subsequently convicted of blasphemy by the Second Protectorate Parliament, only narrowly avoiding the death penalty.<sup>103</sup> Just a year before this infamous episode, Nayler claimed that the Quakers 'own[ed]' and suffered 'with' all of those 'tortured, martyred and burned, whipt and imprisoned, to this day, who suffered for conscience sake, following the Lamb in their measure'.<sup>104</sup> More remarkably, he, too, invoked Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer by name. Although the bishop-martyrs had preached from pulpits, and had taken tithes for doing so, Nayler none the less maintained that it was for their denial of 'the Popish way of worship, according to their measure of Light, that these men then suffered'. It was for 'being faithful to that measure', 'though the fulness of the Light was not then come', that Nayler claimed them as 'Predecessors': these historic martyrs 'suffered in obedience to that measure of light in their times' just as the Quakers 'suffer in obedience to the light of Christ in these times'.<sup>105</sup> As early as 1655, then, the most notorious of Quaker radicals was clearly articulating the interpretative framework which would continue to underpin Quaker invocations of history throughout the Restoration period.

As we have seen, that essentially Foxean perspective elided doctrinal differences between Quakers and earlier members of the true Church, allowing Friends to claim such esteemed spiritual company for themselves. But crucially, its binary nature also allowed Quakers to associate their adversaries with the forces of Antichrist. For Nayler, in exchange with Richard Baxter, it was precisely because the Presbyterians were 'persecuting and not suffering' that they followed the practice of the 'popish Priests' who had burned Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer at the stake.<sup>106</sup> Also writing in 1655, John Whitehead levelled the same accusation at his judges,<sup>107</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Christopher Hill, *The world turned upside down: radical ideas during the English revolution*, London 1972, esp. pp. 194–99, and *Experience of defeat*, 143–53. Likewise, for Barry Reay, Burrough was one of those leading 'radicals' whose death, in 1663, contributed to the changing character of the Quaker movement: *Quakers and the English Revolution*, 121.

<sup>102</sup> See Leopold Damrosch, *The sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan crackdown on the free spirit*, Cambridge, MA 1996.

<sup>104</sup> Nayler, *Answer*, 12.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* 39–40.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* 213–15.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* 40.

<sup>107</sup> John Whitehead, *The enmitie between the two seeds*, London 1655 (Wing W.1975), 31. See George Southcombe, *The culture of dissent in Restoration England: 'The wonders of the Lord'*, Woodbridge 2019, 114.

while two years earlier, Margaret Fell had similarly likened the Commonwealth's imprisonment of Quakers to the popish persecution of 'the martyrs' in 'Queen Mary dayes'.<sup>108</sup> There was, therefore, a clear polemical purpose to Quaker appeals to the past, and their persistence after the Restoration alerts us to the continually confrontational nature of the Quakers' printed output. When, in 1658, the Bristol Quaker Dennis Hollister compared the treatment of Quakers by the Gloucestershire preacher Richard Fowler to the notorious persecution of Protestants by Edmund Bonner, he anticipated Ambrose Rigge's condemnation, in 1669, of the 'Bonner[-]like' proceedings of Leonard Letchford against his wife for her refusal to pay tithes.<sup>109</sup>

There was, of course, a clear sense in which history – and particularly historical martyrology – could serve as a source of comfort to Quakers in troubled times.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, Hookes expressed hope that the examples of Foxe's faithful martyrs would prove 'strengthening to the Faith of some who are Innocent and Upright to the Lord'.<sup>111</sup> But it would be a mistake to see his repeated exhortations to 'constancy' as straightforward evidence of the patient and quiescent suffering by which the second period of Quakerism is so often characterised. For Hookes, 'the spirit of the martyrs', and that 'of the old persecuter [*sic*]', were two sides of the same apocalyptic coin, and it was because the fates of persecutor and persecuted were providentially intertwined that Quakers paid so much attention to both.<sup>112</sup> Writing in 1661, Francis Howgill recalled how the 'Heathen Emperors' responsible for the ten persecutions were 'rewarded' by God 'according to their deeds'.<sup>113</sup> Ambrose Rigge was less specific, but he explicitly referenced the 'Book of Martyrs' in order to argue that 'God in every Age shewed his severe wrath against the Spirit of Persecution'.<sup>114</sup> The point was not a subtle one. On the basis of these 'Just Judgments of God INFLICTED UPON PERSECUTORS', recorded at length in his abridgement of Foxe, Hookes concluded that 'the Lord was against those persecuting Priests and Bishops'.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>108</sup> *Undaunted zeal: the letters of Margaret Fell*, ed. Elsa F. Glines, Richmond, IN 2003, 28. See also K. Peters, *Print culture and the early Quakers*, Cambridge 2005, 197, 215–16.

<sup>109</sup> Letchford was rector of the parish of Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex. Hollister, *Harlots veil*, 85; Rigge, *Good old way*, 34.

<sup>110</sup> As Freeman notes, 'Foxe's martyrs were especially apposite models for encouraging and sustaining nonconforming readers who had to endure the repressive religious policies of Restoration England': 'A library in three volumes', 48.

<sup>111</sup> Tellingly, *The spirit of the martyrs revived* was twice reprinted during the 'Tory reaction', in 1682 and 1683.

<sup>112</sup> See Ward, 'Transformative faith', esp. pp. 18, 25, and Naomi Pullin, 'Providence, punishment and identity formation in the late-Stuart Quaker community, c.1650–1700', *The Seventeenth Century* xxxi (2016), 471–94.

<sup>113</sup> Howgill, *Glory of the true Church*, 84.

<sup>114</sup> Rigge, *Good old way*, 17.

<sup>115</sup> Hookes, *Spirit of the martyrs revived*, 248, 263.

Comfort and condemnation thus went hand in hand, just as they had for Foxe.<sup>116</sup> It was, therefore, imperative for the Quakers not only to claim membership of the true Church, but simultaneously to deny it to their adversaries. As Hookes extrapolated his historical martyrology beyond the Marian terminus of Foxe, he traced the true Church more specifically to the ‘People called *Brownists*’, after the Elizabethan separatist Robert Browne.<sup>117</sup> Hookes recorded that these Elizabethan and Jacobean separatists, such as Henry Barrow and John Greenwood, suffered ‘for no other cause but seperating themselves’ from a Church of England which they deemed irredeemably tainted by popish ‘corruptions’.<sup>118</sup> There was certainly an irony here – Barrow had himself denounced the bishop-martyrs as ‘pseudo-martyrs’ – but not inconsistency.<sup>119</sup> It was, after all, because the Reformation had merely cast ‘out the name and Persons of the *Pope* and *Papists*’ that Quakers could deem these separatists to have been afflicted by the same persecuting spirit as their episcopalian predecessors had been, and thus to belong on the same side of the apocalyptic divide.<sup>120</sup> Crucially, this provided a clear parallel between the Brownists and Quakers, on the one hand, and their respective Protestant persecutors, on the other. The latter consisted not merely of episcopalian conformists, but also those Independents and Presbyterians who, in spite of their shared experience of Restoration persecution, had nevertheless subjected the Quakers to the same popish treatment during the Interregnum. In case the point was too subtle, Hookes expressly condemned ‘the *Independants* and *Presbyterians*’, who ‘forgot their time of deep Sufferings’ and ‘turn’d as riggid Persecutors, if not worse, then those they had turned out’.<sup>121</sup> It was ultimately because these so-called Protestants had perpetuated the persecutory practices of the papists that they renounced any claim to represent the true spiritual heirs of Wyclif, Luther and Cranmer.<sup>122</sup>

At exactly the time, then, that Friends were supposedly concluding that interdenominational debates were ‘damaging to the Quaker cause’,<sup>123</sup> leading Restoration Quakers were extending and adapting the Foxean succession in order to invalidate the claims of even fellow Nonconformists

<sup>116</sup> See Knott, *Discourses of martyrdom*, 37–8, and Pullin, ‘Providence’, esp. pp. 479–81.

<sup>117</sup> Hookes, *Spirit of the martyrs revived*, 235.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* 247. Barrow and Greenwood were executed in 1593.

<sup>119</sup> Freeman, ‘Over their dead bodies’, 1 n. 1.

<sup>120</sup> Hookes, *Spirit of the martyrs revived*, 235–7, 245–7.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* 247.

<sup>122</sup> George Fox and Ellis Hookes’s *Arraignment of popery* (1667) demonstrated how the spiritual tyranny which originated in the age of popish apostasy was perpetuated by seventeenth-century Protestants, including Presbyterians and Independents. It was reprinted in 1669, and again in expanded editions in 1675 and 1679.

<sup>123</sup> In the view of Raymond Brown and Alan Sell, it was for this reason that Quaker ‘polemical publications dwindled’ from the mid-1670s: ‘Quakers and Dissenters in dispute’, in Allen and Moore, *The Quakers, 1656–1723*, 144–6.

to represent the true Church. Rather than retreating inwards, Friends thus remained 'active agents in the political and religious controversies of Restoration England'.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, Hookes's historical writings seem to have been carefully calculated to influence the direction of religious policy. In 1665, Hookes and his fellow Quaker, Thomas Rudyard, turned to the *Acts and monuments* in order to compile a list of Quaker beliefs for which Foxe's martyrs had also suffered. Most pointedly, given the recent passage of the 1664 Conventicle Act, Hookes and Rudyard provided a number of examples of private religious meetings held by Henrician and Marian martyrs, in order to show that 'assembling in houses is no new thing'.<sup>125</sup> Even more remarkable, in 1661, was Hookes's recollection of the deposition of Richard II in 1399. Given that Richard's untimely end had been preceded by his persecution of Lollardy, Hookes suggested that 'Kings and Princes may take warning by this King *Richard*, not to fulfill the cruel and bloody desires of their Prelats.'<sup>126</sup> Following the Declaration of Breda, issued by Charles II in April 1660, the implication of Hookes's intervention was thinly veiled: it served to remind the king of the divine displeasure which he could expect to incur, should he fail to honour his promise of 'liberty to tender consciences'.<sup>127</sup>

But, having tried the stick, Hookes turned to the carrot. Specifically, he went to great lengths throughout *The spirit of the martyrs revived* to absolve monarchical authority of any responsibility for the persecutions of the past. So, when describing the persecution of Elizabethan separatists, Hookes expressly stressed that 'the chief Instruments of their deaths were the Clergy, and not the Queen'.<sup>128</sup> In the same vein, Hookes claimed that 'the original Cause' of Puritan suffering in the reign of James I 'did not appear to proceed from the King', citing the aversion to religious 'Compulsion' which James had expressed in his opening speech to the parliament of 1621.<sup>129</sup> The point is thrown into sharp relief by comparison with the treatment of the same material by the Presbyterian historian Samuel Clarke, who was more than prepared to attribute the prosecution of Protestant heresy to the initiative of Elizabeth I.<sup>130</sup> Hookes's approach

<sup>124</sup> Southcombe, *Culture of dissent*, 3.

<sup>125</sup> The legislation proscribed meetings of five or more Dissenters. See Hookes and Rudyard, *Spirit of the martyrs is risen*, 12–16. <sup>126</sup> Hookes, *Spirit of Christ*, 10.

<sup>127</sup> 'The Declaration of Breda', in *The constitutional documents of the Puritan revolution, 1625–1660*, ed. Samuel Rawson Gardiner, 3rd edn, Oxford 1906, 466.

<sup>128</sup> Hookes, *Spirit of the martyrs revived*, 236.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* 245. Hookes followed the version of the speech recorded in John Rushworth, *Historical collections of private passages of state*, London 1659 (Wing R.2316), 21–3.

<sup>130</sup> Samuel Clarke, *The second part of the marrow of ecclesiastical history*, London 1650 (Wing C.4556), 194–5. Both parts of the *Marrow* were republished together in 1675. On Clarke see Peter Lake, 'Reading Clarke's *Lives* in political and polemical context', in Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (eds), *Writing lives: biography and textuality, identity*

did not, then, reflect an ‘inevitably adversarial relationship’ between Quakers and the Restoration authorities,<sup>131</sup> but a more deliberate and precise attempt at political engagement, appealing directly to the king himself. Charles was, after all, the Quakers’ best hope of securing toleration. Having met with leading Friends in 1660, he proceeded to provide relief to imprisoned Quakers, before issuing more general – but ultimately abortive – Declarations of Indulgence in 1662 and 1672.<sup>132</sup> Given that these attempts to override penal legislation by royal prerogative were thwarted by parliament, Friends could hope to promote a sense of shared interest between king and Quakers, attributing any apparent shortcomings in religious policy to the influence of evil counsel.<sup>133</sup> This approach was at the heart of Hookes’s history. Repeatedly and consistently attributing the persecutory impulse to clerical – not monarchical – influence, Quakers could hope to persuade Charles by eschewing an obviously antagonistic approach to royal authority. Yet, simultaneously, Hookes could indicate that it was incumbent upon Charles to oppose the persecutory policies of his prelates, just as his predecessors had apparently done.

#### IV

Unsurprisingly, Hookes’s efforts ended in failure. But it is the Quakers’ persistent attempts to intervene in the political landscape of Restoration England, in spite of such repeated failures, which reminds us of just how outward-facing the movement remained after 1660. The appeal to history was at the heart of this activity, and we should thus reject the prevailing historiographical assumption of its essentially conservative nature. It has been all too easy to divorce religious radicals from debates over the ‘identity of the present and the historic Church of England’ which, as Anthony Milton has noted, ‘would continue to be as much a matter of contestation in the later decades of the seventeenth century as it had been in the earlier ones’.<sup>134</sup> This article has thus attempted to remedy that relative neglect. In so doing, it has stressed that the early Quakers were not intellectually

*and representation in early modern England*, Oxford 2008, 293–318. Hookes was familiar with at least some of Clarke’s *Lives*. See Hookes, *Spirit of Christ*, 23, and Hookes and Rudyard, *Spirit of the martyrs is risen*, 10.

<sup>131</sup> N. H. Keeble, review of *The culture of dissent in Restoration England*, by George Southcombe, *The Seventeenth Century* xxxv (2020), 553.

<sup>132</sup> Ronald Hutton, *Restoration: a political and religious history of England and Wales, 1658–1667*, Oxford 1985, 147; Keeble, *Literary culture*, 55–6. Charles II continued to provide specific bouts of relief to convicted Quakers even during the ‘Tory reaction’. See Tapsell, *Personal rule*, 58.

<sup>133</sup> See Southcombe, *Culture of dissent*, 124–5, and ‘Quakers and politics’, 173–4.

<sup>134</sup> Milton, *England’s second Reformation*, 506.

isolated, but instead deeply implicated in the wider issues and debates which convulsed English Protestantism in the seventeenth century.<sup>135</sup>

Perhaps most surprising is the ease with which the first Friends could stake a claim upon the legacy of John Foxe and his *magnum opus*. If the Reformation was progressive, and the experience of persecution the mark of the true Church, then the Quakers – who held more ‘advanced’ beliefs, and were more persistently persecuted than their denominational rivals – could coherently claim to represent the heirs of the true Church delineated in Foxe’s history. There is, of course, an irony in the fact that the *Acts and monuments*, which had proved so instrumental to the foundation of Anglophone Protestantism in the sixteenth century, could subsequently contribute to its disintegration in the seventeenth.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, although beyond the scope of this study, there is a clear sense in which disagreement over a shared historical discourse could contribute to the growth of religious pluralism by the early eighteenth century. Yet, even in the shorter term, it helps to explain the divisive nature of religious politics in Restoration England. Recent historiography has emphasised the power of Tory-Anglican interpretations of the past – and particularly the ‘late troubles’ – but they did not hold a monopoly over the mnemonic landscape of the Restoration period.<sup>137</sup> Contrary to Jonathan Scott’s claim, the Restoration nation did not remain ‘a prisoner of memory’,<sup>138</sup> and it is largely because of the potential for alternative historical perspectives that ‘the story of the late seventeenth century remains one of conflict’.<sup>139</sup> Ultimately, it is because the past was so malleable and multivalent that it proved – even for the Quakers – so important.

<sup>135</sup> Nicholas McDowell, *The English radical imagination: culture, religion, and revolution, 1630–1660*, Oxford 2003, esp. p. 11. See also Pennington, *Quakers, Christ, and the Enlightenment*.  
<sup>136</sup> Royal, *Lollards*, 211.

<sup>137</sup> Andrew Lacey, *The cult of King Charles the martyr*, Woodbridge 2003; Matthew Neufeld, *The civil wars after 1660: public remembering in late Stuart England*, Woodbridge 2013. But see also Edward Legon, *Revolution remembered: seditious memories after the British civil wars*, Manchester 2019.

<sup>138</sup> Jonathan Scott, *England’s troubles: seventeenth-century political instability in European context*, Cambridge 2000, 26.

<sup>139</sup> George Southcombe, review of *The civil wars after 1660: public remembering in late Stuart England*, by Matthew Neufeld, this JOURNAL LXVI (2015), 445.