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978-1-108-04503-2 - George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'
Edited by Henry Joel Cadbury
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George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'

George Fox (1624–91), founder of The Religious Society of Friends (or Quakers), was well known during his lifetime as a healer and worker of miracles. He wrote prolifically of how he used God's power to effect over one hundred and fifty cures, of both physical disease or injury and mental or psychological problems. This work was critical to spreading the word about Quakerism in its early years. Many of Fox's papers were lost after his death, but from the clues and fragments that remained, and a contemporary index of his works, Henry Cadbury (1883–1974) was able to create this book, published in 1948. The preface makes clear that this was not intended as a work of critical analysis, though the findings are annotated with historical and documentary detail. The editor's devotion to his task is testament to the historical and spiritual significance of Fox's contribution to Quakerism.

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*The true and lively Pourtraicture of Valentine Greatrakes Esq^r.
of Affane in y^e County of Waterford, in y^e Kingdome of Ireland.
famous for curing several Diseases and distempers.*

I. Valentine Greatrakes, the 'Touch Doctor'

(See page 73)

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GEORGE FOX'S 'BOOK OF MIRACLES'

EDITED WITH
AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY
HENRY J. CADBURY

WITH A FOREWORD BY
RUFUS M. JONES



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FOREWORD

By RUFUS M. JONES

During his researches in Friends Library in Friends House, London, in 1932, Henry Cadbury discovered a comprehensive Catalogue of all papers and books written by George Fox, collected shortly after his death. In the Catalogue list of important lost books is a 'Book of Miracles'. Though the 'Book' itself is lost the interesting Catalogue cites the beginning and ending words of the account of each miracle. There are more than 150 entries of cures attributed to Fox, many of them of the seeming miracle type of cure. Many of the cures can be reconstructed, and the 'Book' here produced gives the names of many persons cured, the type of disease or accident, and many of the details of the cures. It is a unique piece of critical reconstruction work of a very high order and makes it possible for us to follow George Fox as he went about his seventeenth-century world, not only preaching his fresh messages of life and power, but as a remarkable healer of diseases with the undoubted reputation of miracle-worker. The early editors of his writings saw fit to tone down this aspect of the great founder of Quakerism and the 'Book of Miracles' was not printed with the *Journal* and the other writings that have come down to us. Now for the first time the general reader will be able to realize to what an extent George Fox had the vogue in his day of being a miracle-worker, and it consequently gives us, in some degree, a *new* George Fox.

It is peculiarly interesting historically for the light it throws on the way in which the spiritual 'father' of the Children of Light in this particular met the needs and the expectations of 'the Seekers' who formed the central nucleus of the early Society of Friends, and of their fore-runners on the Continent. For 100 years there had been

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a succession of spiritual reformers who had proclaimed the inward Light, the inward Word and the Divine seed, but who had felt compelled to content themselves with an invisible Church, composed of unorganized believers scattered over the world, because no one had yet appeared with apostolic authority to set up a visible Church which would restore the pure primitive Church of the apostolic times, and which would, they believed, under the leadership of the invisible Christ as its Head, become the one and universal Church of the ages. This long-hoped-for man with apostolic power would of necessity, they all believed, prove his apostolic power by signs and evidences by which the original apostles established their claims to leadership, namely the performance of miracles.

Sebastian Franck (1499–1542) was one of the first in the period of the Reformation to set forth with clarity and vigour the type of invisible Church with its inward Word which he believed would take the place temporarily of both of the visible churches of his time. But he pointed out in his *Chronica* that 'some desire to allow Baptism and other ceremonies to remain in abeyance *till God gives another command and sends out true labourers into his harvest*. Some have a great desire and longing for this.' Franck does not specifically say that 'the true laborers' with 'the new command' will verify their commission with miracles, but he implies it, and many of his successors positively state that miracles will be the true sanction of the apostolic commission.

Henry Barrowe, in his book, *A Brief Discovery of the False Church* (1590), is one of the earliest writers to make Franck's implication perfectly explicit. He says that there can be no true Church and no authentic ministry or sacraments 'until some second John the Baptist, or new apostles, be sent from heaven, except peradventure they, after their long travail, bring forth some new Evangelist; and surely if they make a new ministrie they must also make a new gospel *and confirm it with miracles*'.

The Dutch scholar, Dirck Coornhert (b. 1522) is the spiritual 'father' of the 'seeker-movement' in Holland,

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known as 'the Collegiants'. Coornhert saw no hope of a true visible Church in his time and he proposed an *interim Church*, while 'waiting' for God to set up the authentic Church. Coornhert's followers, who formed the Dutch Collegiant groups of Seekers, definitely looked for a heaven-sent apostolic founder who would prove his commission by miracles. This expectation is explicitly put in a vivid way by the Collegiant leader of Amsterdam, Galenus Abrahams, who asserted that 'Nobody nowadays can be accepted as a messenger of God unless he confirms his doctrine by miracles'.

This was essentially the position of the English 'Seekers'. William Allen in his book, *A Doubt Resolved or Satisfaction for the Seekers* (1655), says:

They [the Seekers] make a considerable obstacle in their way of coming into Church-communion, Gospel ordinances, viz. *the want of a right administrator*, for they suppose that since that general apostacy from the purity of faith and Gospel Order which befell the Churches, upon the entering of the Papacie into the world, *there hath none appeared sufficiently authorized by God to rally again what has been routed by the hand of the enemy...and that therefore we must be content to wait until God shall raise up some such, whose authority in this behalf He shall attest with visible signs of His presence, by Gifts of the Holy Ghost, and divers miracles as at the first erection of Gospel Churches.*

Further evidences could be produced if it were necessary to indicate that the atmosphere, in George Fox's formative years, was charged with the expectation of the coming of an apostolic founder of the true Church, and that this founder would attest his commission by authentic gifts and miracles. For 100 years there had been 'quiet persons in the land', belonging in heart and spirit to the invisible Church, but waiting and seeking for someone authorized by God and endowed with gifts by Christ to be the beginner of a new apostolic Church with Pentecostal Spirit and Power. George Fox's 'Book of Miracles' must be read in the light of this historical background and the reader will have no difficulty in seeing that Henry Cadbury

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has rendered a notable service in showing how completely George Fox fitted into the historical situation which his spiritual forerunners had prepared for him.

There are two further points that call for brief consideration: (1) the factual aspect in these miracle accounts, and (2) the modern psychological interpretation of these types of healing.

I think the reports of healing, of sudden cures, as George Fox reported them, are substantially trustworthy. There can be no doubt that he was a dedicated lover of truth and intended to report exactly what happened. But it is an unescapable fact that every person, however honest and morally qualified he may be, tends to enhance in the reporting, in the telling, a story that has a large element of the mysterious, the seemingly miraculous, about it, and especially if it carries a strong emotional tone. I have myself found it necessary to stop telling certain striking incidents, for I caught myself *improving* them with the repeated telling. The startling accounts in the chronicles of saints and mystics are usually heightened, but that need not imply fraud. The reporters may have been quite honest, they may very well have been doing only what is quite unavoidable in telling of mysterious happenings, especially if often repeated. We may allow, therefore, for some unconscious heightening of the miraculous in these accounts of George Fox, but I have no doubt that the healings are in the main trustworthy.

We now know through our psychological studies what a very large factor a faith attitude, an expectant state of mind, plays in the preservation and in the recovery of health. There seem to be almost no limits to the curative effects of suggestive faith and emotional expectation. The shrines at Lourdes in France and at Saint Anne's in Quebec have furnished vivid demonstrations of this principle and numerous Protestant faith-healers and prayer-healers have added their impressive testimony.

We have been slowly but effectively discovering what an enormous role the endocrine glands of the body play in

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these sudden curative processes. They are immediately responsive to emotional states of mind and they suddenly pour their internal secretions, especially the adrenals, into the blood, which thereupon carries powerful explosive forces—internal TNT—to all parts of the body, with extraordinary transforming effects. Psychological laboratories, for instance, report cases of persons who in the highly suggestible state of hypnosis, when there are no inhibitions, have raised an actual blister under a postage stamp on their back when it was suggested to them that it was a fly-blister.

Certain persons appear from time to time in history who possess in a high degree this peculiar capacity of awakening faith and of carrying suggestive attitudes irresistibly into action. George Fox was in his day unquestionably a person of that type. He awakened faith in minds that were prepared for his way of life and thought, and they 'believed in his belief'. There are many instances, given in his *Journal*, of the curative power of faith over his own body. Here is a characteristic instance of this power:

There was in the company a mason, a professor, but a rude fellow, who with his walking rulestaff gave me a blow with all his might just over the back of my hand, as it was stretched out; with which blow my hand was so bruised and my arm so benumbed, that I could not draw it to me again. Some of the people cried, 'He hath spoiled his hand for ever having the use of it any more'. But I looked at it in the love of God (for I was in the love of God to all that persecuted me) and after a while the Lord's power sprang through me, and through my hand and arm, so that in a moment I recovered strength in my hand and arm in the sight of them all.¹

This curative power, which surged through his own body when he looked at his arm with complete faith and in the love of God, he set into operation effectively in the lives of persons who came under his unique influence. There are occasional references to a peculiar power in his eyes and there is no mistaking the suggestive sway of his personal

¹ *Cambridge Journal*, Vol. 1, p. 133.

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influence in awakening faith. William Penn testifies that he never saw George Fox when he was 'not a match for every service or occasion'. I think we can take it as settled that the cures and remedial effects actually occurred substantially as reported. Whether they should be classed as 'miracles' is another matter. In any case they throw much light on the dynamic personality of George Fox.

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PREFACE

This book owes its inception to a Fellowship in Quaker Research which I held at Woodbrooke Settlement, Selly Oak, Birmingham, for two terms in 1932–3. Thereby I had opportunity to study in detail the ponderous manuscript Catalogue of George Fox's Papers (of which I published a partial edition in 1939) and to discover in its index an index to the lost 'Book of Miracles'. Part of the cost of preparing the present work for the press was defrayed by a grant from the Milton Fund of Harvard University. Part of the cost of publication has been met by a grant of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting of Friends from the Rebecca White bequest for printing and distributing the writings of George Fox and Robert Barclay. To those responsible for each of these forms of assistance I wish to express my gratitude.

The preparation of the book has extended with interruptions over many years, but I hope no serious inconsistencies have resulted from this long and intermittent process. During all this time I have received the generous help of many libraries and librarians. I mention especially the staffs of the library at Friends House, London, and of the Quaker Collection at Haverford College, Pennsylvania.

At a time when all publication is difficult, the Cambridge University Press has been willing to meet my hope that this book would be undertaken by them to match in outward form and in high-grade publishing skill their earlier production in 1911 and 1925 of the journals of George Fox as edited by Norman Penney in three volumes.

I have not attempted to explain or to evaluate the material here collected, but have tried to set down objectively the text of the records and their historical context. No doubt others will wish to study and to interpret this material in its relation to religion, to psychology, and to medicine in general and to such special fields as Quakerism,

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Preface

Seventeenth Century England, faith healing, folklore, and 'enthusiasm'. I am, however, grateful to Rufus Jones for the illuminating foreword which he has contributed. More than that, he has been for half a century an inspiration toward the practice of Quakerism as well as to the study of its history.

Three English Friends of the older generation have put all students of George Fox in debt to them—William Charles Braithwaite (1862–1922), Norman Penney (1858–1933), and A. Neave Brayshaw (1861–1940). To their memory this volume is dedicated.

HENRY J. CADBURY

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