

1924

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Recommended Citation

Taylor (Edwin), Ernest E., "George Fox's Preston Patrick Friends" (1924). *Historical Quaker Books*. Book 8.
<http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/quakerbooks/8>

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1924
£2

GEORGE FOX'S PRESTON PATRICK FRIENDS

By

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Author of "Comeos from the Life of George Fox."

London :

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS' BOOKSHOP
140, BISHOPSGATE, E.C. 2.

Price Twopence.

GEORGE FOX'S PRESTON PATRICK FRIENDS.

The chief missionary work of Friends was done in the largest cities of Britain, but the Northern dales were the cradle of the Quaker faith. In this paper it is my object to revive the memories of faithful servants of God who lived in and around Preston Patrick, in Westmorland, and to indicate how their devotion and enthusiasm opened the way for George Fox's message and carried it hither and thither through the land.

Let us imagine ourselves back in the year 1651. The office of King, and the House of Lords had been abolished. Cromwell had been in Ireland and Scotland. He had won the Battle of Dunbar, and had just experienced his "crowning mercy" of Worcester. Preston Patrick was in general features very similar to what it is to-day: rural, peaceful, overlooked by rolling fells. The great political movements of the time had affected, but hardly disturbed, the calm of the community. The children had run out to catch glimpses of the shining armour of the men of the new county militia, eager to assist in defending the country against the Scottish invaders. The older folk were debating hotly the increasing strength of Cromwell, now Captain General and Commander-in-Chief of all the forces of the Commonwealth. *He* had his ardent champions, and so had the late King. Cromwell's friends were found chiefly among the people, and Charles's among the aristocracy of the district: Sir Robert Bindloss, of Borwick Hall; Squire Wilson, of Dallom; Sir George Middleton, of Leighton; Squire Duckett, of Grayrigg; Sir

Allan Bellingham, of Levens; Sir Daniel Fleming, of Rydal (who complained that the Quakers were growing bold enough to meet 200 or more at a time); and others.

More people were making a living out of the land then than now. John Camm, of Camsgill, one of the most substantial statesmen farmers in the district, was an illustration of how prosperous agriculture was, and the wages of the labourer were increasing. Every cottage had its one to four acres of land, which provided the first rung of a ladder of comfortable living for even the less enterprising of the farm hands. Camsgill was a favourite house with both men and women servants, and Jane and Dorothy Waugh especially looked upon their master and mistress as parents—they were so kind and so thoughtful of their needs. Indeed, no one could walk up the winding gill without meeting with a warm welcome from the owners of the farmhouse; and on winter evenings there were many large “sittings,” by aid of the rushlights, in which the neighbours joined, all hands being busy the while with the knitting of caps and jerseys for the Kendal trade. The old grey town was the metropolis of the district, but there was less buying of groceries and clothing there than there is to-day. Even Crosslands had its linen draper, young John Audland, ruddy of face, esteemed by most that knew him, an eminent teacher, too, among those separated from the “common national way of worship.” Abundance of people were taken and affected with him, and had he responded to all the invitations received to chapels or parish churches, great multitudes would have flocked after him.* A man “beloved of God and of all good men, of a noble spirit, his company delightful and pleasant . . . always

* *Memory of the Righteous Revived*, pp. 25, 32, 41, 51.

ready to lend a helping hand to the weak and needy."

John made up for his youth by ripeness and quickness of understanding. His friend, John Camm, older by twenty-six summers, benefited from his discernment and his wonderful memory of passages and incidents in the Bible and other books. Audland's marriage, only a year before this time, had everyone's approval, for Ann Newby, of Kendal, was a true Seeker, as well as being comely and executive. Of the homes in the township none was more beautiful in loving fellowship,—and when children came to make them complete, in gentle parental training,—than those at Crosslands and Camsgill, a fact to which many could bear witness, including Richard Hubberthorne, of Yealand, whose ill-health made such friends a double blessing, and Edward Burrough, of Underbarrow, chafing under the opposition of his family to the new religious views he had espoused.

Before John Camm took his bride to his ancestral home, he rebuilt the house, and, together, the first winter of their united life, they carved a panel for the brideswain: J. M. C., 1641. "A wise man in worldly matters," Camm had been so engrossed with "great success and dealings" that he had married later on in life than was usual, and he was "grave in his carriage and deportment." "The world seemed to smile upon him, and riches . . . had exceedingly increased," yet his heart remained very tender to his wife, their children, and their neighbours. He went regularly to the meetings of Seekers held at Preston Patrick Chapel, Firbank, and in Kendal. Sometimes he spoke to the people, having great acceptance with them, for his manner of life adorned the Gospel of Christ. He and his friend, Colonel Gervase Benson, had been leaders among the Presbyterians.

The Camms greatly loved to entertain visitors, especially those who also were looking for the coming of the Day of the Lord, and in this way (and through some trading) they had got to know Francis Howgill, of Grayrigg, endowed with "a meek and gentle spirit," and now one of the leaders in the company of Seekers already referred to. They also owed much to the ministry of Thomas Taylor, of Skipton, who had left them for Richmond that very year (1651), but they still had a vivid remembrance of how "truly he cared for the flock of Jesus Christ" at Preston Patrick, and "laboured in the faith as one wholly given up to spend and be spent in the work the Lord had committed to him."

The spiritual endeavour of these men was real and great—such as to shame us in these later times, but the true dynamic was as yet wanting. Howgill deals with their experiences in one of the finest of his tracts, which was addressed to Seekers, and is called "A Lamentation for the scattered tribes, &c." (1656). The separated fellowships, he says, had a zeal which showed them that the national way of worship under Prelacy and Presbytery was not according to the mind of the Lord. They had sought to conform themselves to the practices of the primitive church, and had there set up their rest, walking according to the most exact pattern that was visible or written. But in so doing they became ministers of the letter, and in their very conformity to the first Apostles were departing from their ministry, for they had been ministers of a living experience which they themselves had tasted. By thus gathering men into a conformity to the letter and to that was visible, they were missing Christ the substance by teaching a religion which was all at a distance, grounded on the report of Christ dying at Jerusalem, and the belief in this report they called faith. They boasted themselves in their

ordinances, the water and the bread and wine, which were but elementary and never anything but a sign, and in the day of appearance of Christ the elements would melt with fervent heat. He goes on to say in words of spiritual beauty, "If you build upon anything or have confidence in anything which stands in time and is on this side eternity and the Being of Beings, your foundation will be swept away, and night will come upon you, and all your gathered-in things and taken-on and imitated will all fail you. . . Why gad you abroad? Why trim you yourselves with the saints' words, when you are ignorant of the life? Return, return to Him that is the first love, and the firstborn of every creature, who is the Light of the world. . . Return home to within: sweep your houses all, the groat is there, the little leaven is there, the grain of mustard-seed you will see which the Kingdom of God is like . . . and here you will see your Teacher not removed into a corner, but present when you are upon your beds and about your labour, convincing, instructing, leading, correcting, judging, and giving peace to all that love and follow Him."*

Such was to be the experience of the group at Preston Patrick.

One night (just before Whitsuntide of 1652), tired in body, greatly wearied in spirit, John Audland said to his wife: "Ah! what have we been doing? What have we been labouring for? or what availeth our great Profession? all our building tumbles down; our Profession is high as the wind; the Day of the Lord is upon it, and His Word as a Fire consumes it as dry Stubble; and puts an end unto all empty Professions, and high Notions without Life

* This paragraph is taken largely from *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 96-97, to which work the writer is indebted in other ways.

or substance to all the Wisdom of fallen man; we must forsake the World, and all its glory; its all but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit; 'tis a Saviour that I long for, 'tis Him that my Soul pants after. Oh! that I may be comprehended into His Life and over-shadowed with His Glory, sanctified throughout by His Word, and raised up by His eternal power.'*"

The answer to this wish was quick in coming. On Whit Sunday of 1652 George Fox, then only twenty-eight years old, in the company of good John Blaikling, climbed Firbank Fell, which he called a mountain, on the summit of which a primitive chapel then stood. Howgill was engaged in preaching as he passed the door, and says that he thought Fox looked into the room, at which his spirit was ready to fail, and the Lord's power did so surprise him that he might have been killed with a crab apple. The service soon ended, and the people—there were about 1,000 there—picnicked upon the open fell.† From a brook near by Fox got a drink, and then mounted a great rock close to the chapel, the people gathering about him so soon as they had finished their dinner. For the space of three hours the young preacher declared God's everlasting Truth, in which the proposition that "the Light of Christ in man was the way to Christ" had a chief place.

All the Teachers of the Seeker community and many others were convinced of the Truth that day,

* *M.R.R.*, p. 48.

† In Fox's testimony to John Audland and John Camm he says (anent the objection of some people to hold meetings anywhere but in a church): "I said unto them that that ground was as holy as any other, and that Christ did meet upon a mountain and by the sea side and in houses, and so did His Apostles and disciples." *M.R.R.*, p. 327.)

among them being Francis Howgill and John Audland, who showed their sincerity by travelling to Colton, in High Furness, in order to call at the scattered farms and return the money they had received for preaching in the old fell church.

From Firbank Fox went to Audland's house at Crosslands, where he stayed two nights. "Whilst there," the *Journal* reads, "there came John Story to me, and lighted his pipe of tobacco, and, said he, 'Will you take a pipe of tobacco,' saying, 'Come, all is ours.' And I looked upon him to be a forward, bold lad, and tobacco I did not take; but it came into my mind that the lad might think I had not unity with the creation, for I saw he had a flashy, empty notion of religion, so I took his pipe and put it to my mouth, and gave it to him again, to stop him, lest his rude tongue should say I had not unity with the creation."

On the fourth day of the week, Audland took Fox to the monthly "General Meeting" of the Seekers at Preston Patrick chapel,—which meeting, with its immediate predecessors, all held within a fortnight, proved to be "the creative moment in the history of Quakerism."

The experience of the individual Seeker can be understood by reading the weighty words in which Thomas Camm (then in prison at Appleby, 1680) describes John Audland's awakening to the Light. "He received George Fox into his house . . . then by the revelation of Jesus Christ, in the light of God's eternal day, he came to see the emptiness of his great profession and high-flown notion and that all his righteousness was but as filthy rags . . . great and mighty was the work of the Lord upon his spirit. . . The Lord revealed His saving health and redeeming arm of eternal power . . . by which he filled him with all wisdom and strength for the

performance of that work and service that the Lord had predestinated him for.”*

The influence upon the company of Seekers made by this visit of Fox (full to overflowing with the fact that the Lord had spoken to his own condition of heart and could speak to that of everyone else) will be grasped by noting that practically the whole company of these spiritually-minded and well-equipped Seekers became Finders. They proved heroic messengers of the new movement, swift to speak, patient to hear, unbreakable in faith and love. The quality of their fellowship is revealed in that touching book *The Memory of the Righteous Revived*, and in the testimony prefixed to Burrough's works by Francis Howgill:—

“The Kingdom of Heaven did gather us, and catch us all, as in a net, and His heavenly power at one time drew many hundreds to land that we came to know a place to stand in and what to wait in, and the Lord appeared daily to us, to our astonishment, amazement and great admiration, in-somuch that we often said one unto another, with great joy of heart, ‘What? is the Kingdom of God come to be with men?’”

From that day, Howgill tells us, their hearts were knit to one another and to the Lord in fervent love, not by any external covenant or form, but in the covenant of life with God, and they met together in the unity of the Spirit, treading down all contentions about religion or its practices. The more they found opportunity for waiting together, the more were they strengthened in their hope and faith, and holy resolutions were kindled to serve the Lord and declare His message by word and life.

* * * * *

After vision and communion there follows service.

* *M.R.R.*, pp. 26-7.

There are in history certain great enterprises which appeal to us with special force as representing the best of human endeavour; for instance, Luther, whose father was only a slate cutter, renewing the face of Europe by his faith and work; and the farmer, Cromwell, who did more to shape the future of the land he governed than did any other English ruler, and showed most clearly in his acts 'the plain, heroic magnitude of mind.'

These are great names and great deeds, but I am equally impressed by the quality of the enterprise spiritual campaign had among its leaders John and Mabel Camm, John and Ann Audland, Thomas Taylor, John Story, Dorothy and Jane Waugh, John Wilkinson (all of Preston Patrick); undertaken by "The Valiant Sixty"* in 1654. This Francis Howgill, Edward Burrough, Richard Hubberthorne, Thomas Holmes, Miles Halhead, John Blaikling, Gervase Benson, the Hubbersties and many others from the surrounding district. Their great commander was the unseen present God. Their object was to discover Christ to men, to build up a new and overcoming life,—not to destroy, or assume outward authority for themselves. They did not go forth to conquer lands: instead they sacrificed land, property and life to the Truth. The records of the work done by these valiant men and women should be studied in detail. Here I can only mention the case of Ann Audland.

When travelling in Oxfordshire (1655) with her friend Mabel Camm, Ann was assaulted by men of Banbury, and for pointing out to the priest that such rough behaviour was the fruit of his ministry (rather a hard saying, surely, since quite possibly

* For detailed account of "The Valiant Sixty" see paper in *Journal of Friends' Historical Society*, Vol. XIX.

the men did not sit under his pulpit!) was haled before the Justices, charged with blasphemy, and committed to prison. Mabel Camm was released almost immediately and travelled to Bristol to her husband. Bail was offered and received for Ann Audland, who used the lull in the storm for holding more meetings, so that several hundreds were convinced of the truth, and turned to the Lord Jesus Christ, whilst many meetings were settled in the country around. Lord Saye and Sele was incensed at this activity, and wrote of that "prating woman Audland, and the quaking and foaming at the mouth which according to him occurred at some of the meetings." Her enemies were angry and threatened that she should be burned. At the Assizes, the judge behaved moderately, drawing Ann's "sober and wise answers," and possibly attracted by her comely personage. She would have been liberated had she not refused to give bond for her good behaviour. Eight months of close imprisonment was the resulting penalty, and we may well shudder as we read of this Preston Patrick wife and mother being fastened into a "close nasty place, below ground, on the side whereof was a sort of common shore, that received much of the mud in the town, that at times did stink sorely; besides frogs and toads did crawl in their room, and no place for fire, yet she was in great content, because it was God's cause."

During the whole of this time the Friends at Preston Patrick would follow eagerly the news from the front, e.g., the visit in 1654 of Howgill and Camm to Oliver Cromwell, now Lord Protector of the Commonwealth. "He speaks fair," wrote Howgill to Margaret Fell afterwards, "but he hardens his heart and acts secretly underneath." Camm's concern was mainly for the great man's "own condition; how thou standest in relation to the Lord

God of Heaven and earth.”* He also pressed Cromwell to make “no law upon religion,” and denied that he and his friends were among those who despised governments, who pulled down others to set up themselves.† The great man was in a rough grey coat “not worth 3s. a yard.” Word came from London of the “great shatter that is among all the forms and gathered churches”; of the increasing opportunities and responsibilities of Friends, so that Howgill began to wonder whether “the North will be able to bear the cost of the work.” Thomas Holmes, the Kendal weaver, had penetrated to Wales, and lit a great light there; Miles Halhead, husbandman of Mountjoy, was left for dead in Skipton market place—having been sorely abused for declaring the word of truth.

In Oxford Camm had made a notable convert in Thomas Loe, a tradesman, who, later, was to convince William Penn, and so a connection is made between Preston Patrick and the Holy Experiment of Pennsylvania, which experiment vindicated Quakerism as a faith able to reshape the whole life. Thomas Camm recounts that about 1699 many of the younger people in his district sailed for Pennsylvania.

All this time Margaret Fell was sending cheer to the Valiant Sixty, supplying Bibles, clothing, and even horses, and looking to the needs of the families left at home. No wonder that Burrough and Howgill, labouring in London, described her as “a fruitful branch in the living vine, and a pleasant plant in the garden of God.”‡

For the most part the Publishers went about in groups of twos and threes: Howgill and Burrough

* *M.R.R.*, p. 2.

† *M.R.R.*, p. 8.

‡ *Letters of Early Friends*, p. 25.

to London, Camm and Audland to Bristol, Hubberthorne and Whitehead to Norwich, but each member of these groups also visited other places than those named. The friendship of Howgill and Burrough might be compared to that existing between Cobden and Bright, in that it was cemented by their joint concern for the great work in London of which fascinating pictures are given in *Letters from Early Friends*. When the younger man (Burrough) died Howgill gave eloquent expression to the power of his friend's personality: "His very strength was bended after God"; whilst Fox wrote: "He never turned his back on the Truth: he never turned his back on those out of the Truth."

John Audland was accompanied by John Camm "as long as he had strength outwardly to travel, their hearts being firmly knit together, as David and Jonathan, by the Bond of unspeakable Love, their very lives being endearedly bound up in each other, in which Bond of Love their Unity was kept inviolate unto the end; whereby their Labours and Travels together were very comfortable and joyous, being perfectly of one heart and spirit, and minding the same things, the glory of God, and the gathering of his Israel, in which Service they spent their daies and strength."

The experiences of Camm, Audland and their friends gain in weight when we read of that unity in the deepest things of life, and that love which cannot be broken, which bound together husband and wife. Thus Audland wrote to his wife in 1654: "I received thy letters, and all my soul desireth is to hear from thee in the life: dear heart, in life dwell, there I am with thee out of all time, out of all words, in the pure power of the Lord. . . Oh, dear heart, go on, conquering and to conquer."*

* M.R.R., p. 20.

Sometimes Audland would write epistles to his friends, and in one of these (to Banbury) he put this P.S. : "My wife and little Thomas dearly salutes you who are faithful in your places.. Farewell."

The staying power of the workers was remarkable. In a brief interval in his Appleby imprisonment, Howgill wrote these words to Margaret Fell : "I am no more weary than the first day the sickle was put into the harvest. When we went out sowing the seed, weeping and in tears, but seeing sheaves brought home and full loaves into the barn . . . it hath made me look beyond fainting." Salthouse (the Swarthmoor bailiff) wrote to the same correspondent in 1668 telling of the results of another proclamation against Nonconformists, and showing how Friends were likely to bear the greatest part of the suffering. Yet he goes on : "We are resolved to meet, preach and pray, in public and private, in season and out of season, in city, town, or country, as if it had never been ; well knowing that the same power by which we have been preserved and delivered out of the den, is with us, and will be with us to the end, if we abide faithful."

The faith of these Friends in their cause was phenomenal, even though obstacles loomed large before them. The whole band would echo these words of a Yorkshireman, William Farnsworth : "Wee have pitcht our Tents, drawn our swords, made Ready for ye Battell : it is begun ; and we have wounded the Amorite : and in time we shall have a large inheritance : Oh sweet labour is our streams : pleasant is ye sounding of ye trumpets, ye day is ye lords : all our enemies fall before us : praises for ever." And Edward Burrough wrote : "Ride on, ride on, my beloved Brethren, and fellow Soldiers ; make all plain before you ; thresh on with

the new threshing Instrument, which hath Teeth ; beat the Mountains to Dust, and let the Breath of the Lord scatter it."

John Camm was the first of this fellowship to pass away to fuller service still. Consumption seized upon him and for several years before his death he could not walk half a mile at one time. He travelled in the work of the ministry when unable unaided to mount his horse, or dismount. Yet was he busy, just before his death, in extolling the goodness and great mercy of God to his son Thomas, and praying for all that they might be valiant and noble for truth. His body was laid to rest at Birkrigg Park (in 1656, aged 52). "My outward man," he said, "daily wastes and moulders down . . . but my inward man revives and mounts upward towards its place and habitation in the Heavens."

Six years later (1662) Edward Burrough and Richard Hubberthorne died in prison, the former aged 28 only, the latter 34.

John Audland in his last illness (in 1663, aged 34) "made as little show of it (for his wife's sake) as ever he might." There was a special reason for his sparing his wife, for a baby boy was born a few days after the father's death. Twenty years later we have a glimpse of him attending a Conventicle at the house of Richard Atkinson, Farleton, and being fined for doing so.

I must omit any mention of Francis Howgill's passing (in Appleby prison), to devote my closing lines to Ann and Thomas Camm,* who died respectively in 1705 and 1708. Ann was one of the nursing mothers of the church in a period which called for much loving assistance. "She helped the weakest and tenderest of the flock of Christ" stands

* After her first husband's death in 1669, Ann Audland married Thomas Camm.

as her monument. As we have seen, she was called to a wide public service, and she ever put the cause above the instrument. Notably was this the case on the day of her death when Friends from many parts had come to Monthly Meeting at Preston Patrick. "My Friends," she said, as she lay prone upon her bed at Camsgill, "go to the meeting; let me not hinder the Lord's business, but let it be chief, and by you all done faithfully." But what most clings to my mind about Ann Camm is the many times when, in health, she would open the door at Camsgill, and, shading her eyes, peer down the beekside for a sight of the prodigal son for whose welfare she prayed unceasingly. Dying she still remembered him, and entreated her husband to labour and pray for his return, adding a message of love to his wife. And thus she went to her Heavenly mansion!

The last to pass away was Thomas Camm himself. Right well had he borne the burden and heat of the day. He had lived to hear of the founding of Philadelphia (1682), to join with others in dealing with the results of the Story and Wilkinson "revolt,"* to benefit by the Toleration Act (1689), to mourn George Fox (1691), to take his part in compiling the narrative of the early breaking forth of truth (1705).

Thirty-three times was Thomas Camm distrained upon for non-payment of tithe and other ecclesiastical demands, between the years 1663 and 1690. He suffered at the hands of John Ormrod, priest of Burton, and, whilst still in prison, was sued before the court baron held in Preston Hall, below his own house (1675). In all, this sufferer paid, during the time named,

* *Second Period of Quakerism*, pp. 290-323. Robert Barrow, of Kendal, wrote to William Penn an alarming account of the effect of this heresy at Preston Patrick.

£62 12s. 8d.; and he was twice imprisoned in Kendal for a total period of about three years. From 1687 Camm's name always heads the list of his meeting's sufferers; and a striking witness is borne to his strict integrity by the fact that in 1681 he was liberated from prison on promising "to return when sent for."

He was an able preacher of the word of life to many, "a man of peace and always laboured for it, both in the church and also amongst all sorts of people."

No stones cover the graves of these worthies at Birkrigg Park and Park End, but the lives of the faithful Friends whose bodies were laid to rest there are full of meaning to us this day. There comes to my mind this message from John Camm:—

"I desire the growth of every plant of my Heavenly Father's planting that they may bring forth fruit to the glory of His grace. . . . Death cannot be able to separate us, for in the never-failing love of God there is union for evermore"; and John Audland's words:—

"All dear Friends, press forward in the straight way."

ERNEST E. TAYLOR.