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From Prophets to Martyrs in the First Two Generations of Quakerism, 1650s-1690s

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In January 1691, George Fox, one of the first Quaker leaders, died after a lifetime preaching and proselytising. In Fox's final years, English Quakers experienced legal acceptance as a Protestant denomination, with the 1689 Toleration Act enabling freedom of worship. It became crucial for Fox's *Journal* to be published promptly, to share his insights and –by curating the 3 extant journal manuscripts –shape Quaker history to best fit Quaker needs.

By focussing on prophecy and mysticism, this selectivity is apparent - few Quaker prophets are acknowledged in the 1694 work, other than Fox; all are male other than citations of Acts 2:17, that sons *and* daughters shall prophesy. Second-generation limitations are also apparent in the physical removal, *after* publication, of an account of radical female Friends. One, Ellen Fretwell of Stainsby, died a tithe martyr in prison 8 months before the *Journal*'s publication; the other, Susannah Frith of Chesterfield, had in the early 1660s engaged in epistolary warfare with self-declared prophet Lodowick Muggleton, and several of his responses to letters, including Frith's, were reprinted in Muggletonian works, preserving Friends' prophetic, controversial and combatant past in contrast to their later efforts to represent themselves in print as quiet sufferers for faith.

Keywords

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Short Biography

Erin Bell is an early modern historian based at the Department of History, University of Lincoln, UK. For several years she has researched early Quakerism in England, the Netherlands and Norway, focussing on gender and the significance of non-Quaker depictions of Friends to Quaker self-representation. She previously worked on the AHRC funded 'Televising History 1995-2010' project led by Prof Ann Gray and developed ideas around absent histories in television

documentaries. She continues to research this area, and her early modern research focusses on Quakers in the North-East of England, as well as George Fox's Journal as a keystone early Quaker text.

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