

# The Quaker Moons of Lancashire

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## Introduction

In April 1658, while imprisoned in the gaol at Lancaster Castle, a currier named John Moon (1620–1689) claimed to receive a divine revelation from Jesus Christ after joining the Religious Society of Friends in 1653.<sup>1</sup> John was born at Tan House Farm in the hamlet of Eaves north of Preston on the Fylde but by the time he received his revelation, he resided at Carr House near Garstang. John and his father Edward (c.1600–1663), mother Isabel (1593–1671), younger brothers Thomas (1631–c.1688) and Edward (1637–unknown), and uncle William (c.1600–c.1670), all converted to Quakerism about a year after George Fox's famous vision on Pendle Hill.<sup>2</sup> Out of all his relatives, John was the most outspoken and expressed his Quaker beliefs by publishing several broadsides that secured him a leading position in the early Quaker movement and catapulted him into Fox's orbit.

The Moon family were active members of The Church of England but this series of religious conversions in the early 1650s bore a new, dissenting branch of the family that would suffer a series of fines, seizures of property, and imprisonments at Lancaster Castle, leading some family members to emigrate south to Bristol, or overseas to Ireland or the New World.<sup>3</sup> This article traces the history of the Quaker dissenters in the Moon family with special attention given to the writings of John Moon—the family's most ardent Friend—whose forgotten revelation of 1658, when analyzed, might see greater prominence in the history of early Quakerism and put Moon forward for recognition as a member of the Valiant Sixty.<sup>4</sup>

However, the works attributed to John Moon remain embroiled in a dispute among scholars after certain details about his life were overlapped with another John Moon who was a resident of Bristol around the same period. The root of this discrepancy needs to be identified to clarify which publications and facts are rightly attributed to John Moon of

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Garstang. The impetus for this article arose out of family history research on the Moon clan of which the author is a descendant. Combining ancestral knowledge with the academic works already produced about the Moon family as well as surviving writings from the Quaker Moons, the research delineates a clearer understanding of which Moon family members converted to Quakerism, when and how they were persecuted, what they wrote about their beliefs, and the fate of each family member. To begin, some historical context will be provided on the Moons of the Fylde and where the family might have originated.

### **Brief outline of the Moon family**

The Moons were a large and well-established family on the Fylde plains north of Preston by the mid-sixteenth century. Their nucleus could be found in the villages of Woodplumpton and Newsham although the family likely originated from Heversham, a village near Milnthorpe in Cumbria. At Heversham, there was a family who went by the surname Mohun which was possibly the spelling of Moon during the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup> From Mohun developed the spelling Moone which was in universal use among the family as seen in their early baptism, marriage, and death records at St. Anne's in Woodplumpton throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>6</sup> However, from the turn of the eighteenth century, the spelling Moon came to dominate which has since become the standard and will be used in this article. The Moons were also a family of varied occupation ranging from merchants to craftsmen like woodworkers and shoemakers to laborers including curriers, skinners, and farmers.<sup>7</sup>

As such, the Moons were likely not so different from any other family at the time in Lancashire, a county viewed by the monarchy as lawless and untamable due to it being inhabited by witches and unruly Catholics.<sup>8</sup> Besides their later penchant for religious dissidence, the Moons seem to have been of fairly high standing which is reflected by the apparent fact that even during times of persecution they never seemed to be without financial means which they used to fund their dissident activities.

The family's progenitor on the Fylde was Henry Moon who was resident at Moon's Farm in the hamlet of Hollowforth near Newsham, dying at that farm sometime in 1580 at the age of fifty-three.<sup>9</sup> Henry had at least two children: a son Robert and a daughter Isabel. Robert was born in 1555 and is sometimes referred to in the records as Sir Robert and was possibly a clockmaker. Robert married Alice Dilworth in April 1584 at St. Anne's in Woodplumpton and together bore perhaps as many as four-

teen children.<sup>10</sup> It was among these offspring that changes began to take place in religious affiliation, namely a shift away from the Anglicanism that had become the standard since Henry VIII's break with Rome in 1534 to other emergent Protestant movements, especially by the time of the Second English Civil War (1648) which saw key battles take place at nearby Preston.<sup>11</sup>

From their homeland on the Fylde, a separate portion of the Moons who retained their Anglicanism spread south of the Ribble in 1727 to settle in and around the village of Eccleston near Chorley. Again, the Moons prospered here, showing their entrepreneurial prowess by coming to own ample property and land, in turn becoming instrumental to the development of the village and the surrounding hamlets.<sup>12</sup> From this example, it seems that wherever members of the Moon family settled, they put their mark on the place both financially and religiously.

Although direct descendants of the Quaker Moons seem not to have survived into the contemporary era, the same Moon family from the Fylde underwent further religious dissent in the nineteenth century. For example, one portion broke off from the Anglican core at Eccleston to become Methodists while a second branch revealed themselves to be Catholics following the 1829 Catholic Relief Act<sup>13</sup>, and yet another branch converted to Mormonism in 1837 and emigrated to the American Midwest, eventually settling in Utah.<sup>14</sup> This second phase of dissent from Anglicanism in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century highlights a common theme in Moon family history, one of great religious fervor no matter the personal or material cost, yet it was the Quaker Moons who were the pioneers of such religious dissidence.<sup>15</sup>

### **Quaker conversion and persecution**

In 1653, a major shift took place in the Moon family of the Fylde. At least two of Robert Moon's sons converted to what was then a new religious movement and advocated publicly for their new faith. The movement known as the Religious Society of Friends had been started not a year earlier, in 1652, when a young man who was dissatisfied with the current dominion of the Church of England as well as with nonconformists for their doctrinal errors rose to establish a new Dissenter group.<sup>16</sup> The two Moon brothers, Edward and William, then both middle-aged, or perhaps one of Edward's sons John or Thomas, must have at some point heard of the young travelling preacher named George Fox.

The main trigger for the Moons to join the Religious Society of Friends

in 1653 remains unknown as is the identity of who first introduced the family to the movement. However, their conversion was indeed a family affair with Edward bringing with him his wife Isabel and three of his sons John (aged thirty-four), Thomas (aged twenty-two), and Edward (aged sixteen). Edward and Isabel had other offspring, including Ellen (b. 1621), Richard (b. 1622), Robert (b. 1623), and Alice (b. 1634), but it is unclear whether they joined in the Quaker conversion.<sup>17</sup> Edward's brother William had at least one son called Robert who possibly converted but it was Edward's branch of the family—especially his son John—who would make their mark in the early Quaker movement as preachers, proselytizers, and writers.

The members of the Moon family who followed Fox's teachings were on the receiving end of retributions from authorities from the outset of their conversion. These retributions began in 1654 and continued for the next two decades with punishments including various combinations of imprisonments, fines, and distraintments which involved authorities seizing property and possessions to obtain payment for unpaid tithes. Between 1654 and 1656, Edward and his son John were committed to prison "several times" for speaking to "priests and people" in public assemblies.<sup>18</sup> Although this was part of the broader persecution of the Quaker movement at the time<sup>19</sup>, the Moons were evidently more outspoken than most from the beginning of their tenure as Friends and in turn, were harshly punished for their preaching, especially as their sermons were likely viewed as not only heretical but politically subversive.<sup>20</sup> John Moon's internment at Lancaster Castle during the period 1655–1656 likely explains the reason for the gap in his published writings in that year.

Quickly following his release sometime in 1656, Moon family historian Ronald Cunliffe Shaw asserts that John Moon accompanied Fox on his travels across Norfolk and Wales proselytizing their Quaker beliefs and debating with prominent nonconformists.<sup>21</sup> Quaker historian Dilworth Abbatt maintains that in 1657, Fox held a general meeting at the dwelling of John Moon at Carr House near the market town of Garstang on the basis that in his journal, Fox writes that on his way to Cheshire, he held a meeting "betwixt Preston and Lancaster."<sup>22</sup> This corroborates that Moon was not only in close association with Fox but was himself an important Quaker leader and preacher particularly in Lancashire by the second half of the 1650s.<sup>23</sup>

Moon resumed the publication of his writings in 1657 but in April

1658, a new significant development occurred with his claim that he received a revelation from Jesus Christ through a series of visions from his prison cell in Lancaster Castle. He published an elaborate description of his experiences in what was by this time his third broadsheet titled *The Revelation of Jesus Christ unto John Moon*. Moon also wrote and published *The True Light Which Shines in the Heart*, his second work of the year and his fourth overall.<sup>24</sup> By 1659, John's brother Thomas is first mentioned as receiving retribution who, along with their father Edward, were both distrained of 10 pence for failing to pay church tithes. The year after, John was again arrested and committed to prison at Lancaster Castle. Moon was arrested while attending a Quaker meeting but the publication of his fourth work around this time in support of the Friends and its revelatory nature might also have triggered the attention of the authorities.

In 1662, along with his brother Thomas, John was again distrained of £15 19 shillings for refusing to pay church tithes.<sup>25</sup> A year later, on March 26, John and Thomas' father Edward died and was apparently loyal to the Quaker faith up to the end of his life. Three years later, in 1665, Thomas was distrained of goods valuing £14 for the same reason as before. It was also John's brother Thomas who was involved in a transaction to establish a burial place for the first generation of Quakers in Great Eccleston on the Fylde in May 1669.<sup>26</sup> About this time, John Moon had become a close enough confidant of George Fox to testify his approbation in a signed document at Fox's wedding to Margaret Fell of Swarthmoor Hall.<sup>27</sup>

Swarthmoor Hall<sup>28</sup> had been built in about 1568 by a lawyer named George Fell but upon his passing, the Hall was inherited by his son Thomas.<sup>29</sup> Also a lawyer and later a Member of Parliament, Thomas Fell married Margaret Askew (1614–1702) in 1634. After Fox visited the Hall in 1652, Fell's wife became interested in Fox's teachings and supported him by convincing her husband to allow him to use Swarthmoor Hall as a meeting place for early Friends.<sup>30</sup> Thomas Fell died in 1658 and left the Hall to his widow who continued to lend it to the Quaker movement.<sup>31</sup> So strong was Margaret Fell and George Fox's connection that they married in 1669 with some of Fox's closest Quaker associates in attendance as witnesses, including William Penn and John Moon.<sup>32</sup> The identity of this John Moon remains in dispute, however, because although Moon family historian Ronald Cunliffe Shaw attests that the man was John Moon of Garstang, it could have been John Moon of Bristol as that is where the wedding was held.<sup>33</sup> After the wedding, Margaret returned to Lancashire

where she was arrested but later released. She spent the rest of her life at Swarthmoor while Fox went travelling and preaching but returned to live at Swarthmoor with his wife from time to time.<sup>34</sup>

There are few verifiable facts about John Moon's life in the twelve-year period between his distraintment in 1662 and the publication of his sixth and final work titled *A Jesuitical Designe Discovered* in 1674. That is, except when Moon, then aged forty-five, married a widow named Margaret Harrison (née Townson) in 1665. Margaret was the sister of Jennet Cragg, known as "the Quakeress," whose story of travelling on horseback in 1687 from Quernmore to London to rescue her two orphaned grandsons was immortalized in an 1877 book.<sup>35</sup> Shaw speculates that Moon may have been made a widower before his marriage to Margaret Harrison although there is no evidence to substantiate this nor any record of Moon producing offspring from an earlier marriage.<sup>36</sup>

The two years following 1674 must have seen Moon actively preaching again as he received his harshest punishment yet in 1676 for advocating Quakerism. That year at the age of fifty-six, Moon was imprisoned at Lancaster Castle for an entire year and had goods distrained worth a significant £20.<sup>37</sup> Reflecting on his imprisonment, Moon wrote in his diary:

The Lord was with me in the prison and made me more to rejoice than those that have abundance of riches of corn, of wine, and oil.<sup>38</sup>

Again, little is known of Moon's activities after his release in 1677-78 but it seems that neither his year-long internment nor the distraintment of his property and possessions discouraged him from continuing to challenge the authorities because in 1683, despite an order by Thomas Butler of Kirkland, Moon refused again to pay church tithes. A verdict to pay £4 and 7 shillings was tripled which led to the seizure of all of John Moon's household goods including the corn in his barn, amounting to £35 in total and "leaving him not a bed to lie on" when he was sixty-three years old.<sup>39</sup> This largest seizure of goods demonstrates the height of the authority's retributions against Moon's Quaker affiliation which was by this time two decades old.

John Moon died sometime in late November 1689 at his dwelling Carr House and was buried on November 27 in the Quaker burial ground established some twenty years prior at Great Eccleston.<sup>40</sup> Moon left his wife Margaret a widow again before her own death four years later in 1693. While John's mother died in Cabus near Garstang in 1671, his

brother Thomas is also thought to have remained in Lancashire and may have died at Lancaster in about 1688. According to Shaw, Thomas had at least two sons, John and Paul. They both migrated south to Bristol at an early age and were both Quakers.<sup>41</sup>

There is no mention of John's uncle William facing persecution in Lancashire because, according to Shaw's theory<sup>42</sup>, William Moon, along with other Quaker families, had left the county, emigrated to County Cavan in Ireland in 1656 and later, due to "their landlords not performing covenant with them," resettled in Mountmellick in what is today Laois County by 1659.<sup>43</sup> Uncle William Moon escaped the persecution faced by his brother Edward and his nephews in Lancashire, but nonetheless continued to receive hostility from non-Quakers for the remainder of his life in Ireland. Little else is known of William's life except that he died in Mountmellick sometime in 1670.

### **Discrepancy over the identity of John Moon**

From this account of conversions and retributions, it can be said for certain that at least five members of the Moon family of the Fylde converted very early in the Quaker movement but one member stands out. John Moon, son of Edward, is a curious figure for the literary works he produced and his status as a bold preacher but most of all for his claim to divine revelation in 1658. However, he has never been included by historians in the Valiant Sixty<sup>44</sup> despite the evidence of his conversion early in the movement, missionary work, and elaborate treatises that make several contributions to Quaker theology.

John Moon wrote at least six works conveying his Quaker beliefs, with those surviving listed as follows in order of publication covering a twenty-year period with their titles abridged: *The Ranter's Last Sermon* (1654), *The True Light Hath Made Manifest Darknesse* (1657)<sup>45</sup>, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ unto John Moone* (1658), *The True Light Which Shines in the Heart* (1658), *The Great Trumpet of the Lord God Almighty of Heaven and Earth Blown* (1660), and *A Jesuitical Designe Discovered* (1674).

However, there remains a dispute among scholars over attributing all these texts to John Moon of Garstang. For this section, it will be helpful to make a nominal distinction between John Moon of Garstang (who remained in Lancashire and died there) and John Moon of Bristol (who was also a Quaker but emigrated to Pennsylvania where he became a Justice of the Peace and died in Dedford Township, Gloucester County, New Jersey in 1715). As described at the outset, one of the aims of this



research has been to deconstruct the discrepancy over the correct attribution of John Moon's published works and to come to some conclusive remarks.

Core to the discrepancy is that in 1867 historian Joseph Smith attributed several works to John Moon of Garstang; yet, Smith confused matters by stating that this same John Moon died in America.<sup>46</sup> Thus, Smith confused the fate of John Moon of Bristol with that of John Moon of Garstang.<sup>47</sup> This overlap led two scholars in the twentieth century to produce contradictory accounts about which literary works are attributable to John Moon of Garstang: Ronald Cunliffe Shaw, author of *Yeomen, Craftsmen, Merchants: The Moons of Amounderness and Leylandshire* published in 1963, and Kenneth L. Carroll, author of "George Fox's 1662 Appeal for Money" published in the *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* in 1966.

Shaw attributed to John Moon of Garstang a total of five works including *The Ranter's Last Sermon* (1654), *The True Light Hath Made Manifest Darknesse* (1657), *The True Light Which Shines in the Heart* (1658),<sup>48</sup> *The Great Trumpet of the Lord God Almighty of Heaven and Earth Blown* (1660), and *A Jesuitical Designe Discovered* (1674) with the notable exception of Moon's 1658 work regarding his divine revelation. However, Shaw also attributed to John Moon of Garstang facts about accompanying George Fox on his travels across Norfolk and Wales, accompanying Quaker preacher and author Alexander Parker, and engaging in a controversial disputation with John Toombes in 1656.<sup>49</sup>

Three years later, Kenneth Carroll attributed no literary works to John Moon of Garstang, refuting Shaw arguing that *The True Light Hath Made Manifest Darknesse* (1657) was instead a production of John Moon of Bristol as was also, and most significantly, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ unto John Moone* (1658).<sup>50</sup> In a footnote, Carroll argues that earlier scholars had incorrectly overlapped the life facts and works of John Moon of Bristol with those of John Moon of Garstang. However, my research shows that Carroll's observation is itself incorrect as he mistakenly attributed the works of John Moon of Garstang to John Moon of Bristol. Time will now be spent justifying this conclusion.

In 1879, a publication from the Chetham Society attributed *The Revelation of Jesus Christ unto John Moone* (1658) to John Moon of Garstang.<sup>51</sup> The Chetham Society publication references the 1876 work, *A List of Lancashire Authors*, where a conflation of John Moon of Garstang and John Moon of Bristol took place because John Moon of Garstang—still



attributed with the 1654 and 1658 works—is recorded as having died in Pennsylvania. Shaw later identifies this fate as incorrect as John Moon of Garstang instead died in Garstang and was buried nearby at Great Eccleston on the Fylde.<sup>52</sup>

To return to the discrepancy between Carroll and Shaw's works, Carroll states that John Moon of Bristol married Sarah Snead in 1666<sup>53</sup> which would necessitate him to be at least in his twenties by this time, having then been born in the early 1640s. Hence, it seems unlikely that John Moon of Bristol would have written the 1657 and 1658 works that Carroll attributed to him as he would have only been an adolescent at this time. For John Moon of Bristol to have achieved enough education and awareness in the Quaker movement to have been writing these tracts by 1657 necessitates that he would have been born in the 1630s which puts his marrying age at mid-thirties by 1666.

It is partly on this basis that this article contends that at least the first five works mentioned are rightly attributed to John Moon of Garstang with the last—due to its later publication in 1674—possibly written by John Moon of Bristol as he would have been old enough by this time to have written such a work. However, with the same language and style used in the 1674 work as in the earlier works, it seems unlikely that even this was written by John Moon of Bristol.

The large difference, and likely the root cause of the controversy between Carroll and Shaw's accounts, is that Shaw asserts that John Moon of Bristol who emigrated to America is the nephew of John Moon of Garstang, a notion noticeably absent from prior scholarly works surveyed during this research. However, Shaw maintains that after being born in his native land of the Fylde, John Moon junior migrated to Bristol with his brother Paul establishing themselves there as leatherworkers. Carroll makes no explicit reference to this migration from Lancashire in his work, saying only that "John Moon was in Bristol early, married Sarah Snead there in 1666."<sup>54</sup> By "early," Carroll may indicate that John was brought to Bristol as a child or adolescent before marrying Sarah Snead which correlates somewhat with Shaw's account. John Moon of Bristol had been imprisoned in 1682 and accepted liberty on the condition that he emigrate to America, which he accepted. He later settled in Pennsylvania due in part to his close friendship with William Penn.<sup>55</sup>

On the basis that all six works mentioned in this article are rightly attributed to John Moon of Garstang and that his life facts are clarified, the focus may now turn to explore some of the major themes of his liter-

ary works, especially the analysis of his 1658 divine revelation. Digital copies of each of the original texts may be obtained from the researcher upon request.

### **The writings and revelation of John Moon**

Beginning in 1654 with his first publication, Moon launched a scathing attack against a pantheistic group known as the Ranters who had been spreading across England during the period of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms (1639–1653).<sup>56</sup> Moon's work *The Ranter's Last Sermon* described his disdain for the beliefs of the Ranters.<sup>57</sup> In the piece, Moon revealed that he had recently left the Ranter group<sup>58</sup> which taught the common ownership of all goods.<sup>59</sup> Moon described himself in this text as a "deluded brother"<sup>60</sup> while also seemingly blurring the Ranters, Quakers and Seekers together.<sup>61</sup>

Here, there may be some reasonable doubt over whether the author "J.M." is John Moon despite Ronald Cunliffe Shaw's attribution of this text to him. Doubt has arisen because the author of *The Ranter's Last Sermon* refers to Quakers as part of an "atheistical crew" which would contradict the account of John Moon's conversion unless this interpretation of the text is inaccurate.<sup>62</sup> Some scholars have described this 1654 work by Moon as salacious towards the Ranters and in poor taste perhaps as a demonstration of the infancy of his developing style which becomes noticeably more refined by his second and third publications.<sup>63</sup>

John Moon's second work *The True Light Hath Made Manifest Darknesse* was published on April 24, 1657, and focuses primarily on criticizing several Welsh Baptists. In the work, Moon moved through a list of preachers of his day including Hugh Evans, John Price, Daniel Penry, Reese Davies, John Prosser, Evans Oliver, and Vavasor Powel. Moon wrote of his own discourses with these ministers and dedicated each section of this nearly seven-thousand-word text to the criticism of each preacher and the identification of errors in their responses to him. For example, in the work, Moon describes Baptist Hugh Evans as "the blind priest of Wales."<sup>64</sup> Moon quite masterfully deconstructed the answers of his rivals in discourse, in turn attempting to reveal their doctrinal errors which would necessitate some level of education in theology.

In understanding Moon's background as a currier from the Fylde coast, how he received his education remains unknown, but the breadth of his written works nonetheless proves a great literary capability. However, this work of Moon did not go without critical response, namely in

the form of Baptist John Price's 1658 work *The Sun Outshining the Moon* in which Price called Moon's writings "rotten, dishonest and scandalous." Of note is Price's use of the metaphor of the Sun and Moon in the title as a retort to his Quaker critic surnamed Moon.

Moon identified what he saw as three glaring theological errors in Welsh Puritan and Fifth Monarchist Vavasor Powel's preachings: the first was that Powel said Christ called his disciples an unbelieving and faithless generation; the second was that Powel said the sanctified, purified, and cleansed did commit and fall into sin; and in the third error Moon accused Powel of saying that God saw sins being committed and did not reprove the committers. In a response to Powel, during a discourse on the first error he identified, Moon stated the following:

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith; and all them who knows the faith which is given of God, they know by that faith to overcome sin; and so they come to witness the Scriptures; and to know the everlasting Gospel.

Later, Moon provided another response to Powel's apparent errors that gives further insight into his beliefs as well as his dedication to convey Quaker doctrines in his work:

If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleneth us from all sin; now here all that readeth may see that he who is sanctified is one with God.

The metaphor of Christ the light is reiterated earlier in the text when Moon is conversing with Reese Davies:

I declared and said that Christ is the light of the world, and lighteth every man that comes into the world, and it is that which shews man sin, and shews the drunkards, he should not be drunk, and the lyer he should not lye; and the proud he reproves; then one of the Baptists hearing me, cried out and said, prove, prove thy doctrine, for I deny it; then I said unto him, if thou canst disprove me do, and if thou canst not believe me; and I said dost thou cry out against me, because I declare against pride, and thou being an upholder of it?

Moon ended his piece with a series of twenty-two queries covering many aspects of Christian theology from questions regarding the nature

of the soul, Christ as the light of the world, disputes over some biblical narratives, and how Christ became the mediator between God and humanity. Moon signed off with the following self-description:

These [queries] are given forth by a Servant of the Lord, who is a lover of the Truth, and known to the world by this name, John Moon.

Moon's first two publications are works of contradistinction in that he criticized the views of others and used this variance to embolden his beliefs to convey with greater clarity his point of view. However, most curious is Moon's claim to a divine revelation from Jesus Christ which set him apart from other English Quaker leaders of his time.<sup>65</sup> Moon claimed to receive this divine revelation in April 1658, which he wrote down and published in June 1658. The published work described Moon's experience in a vision of being taken by God on a journey to oversee the natural world and beyond to various ethereal locations including the place of divine judgement and the throne of God. According to current records, there are only sixteen registered original editions of Moon's revelatory work still in existence.<sup>66</sup>

Moon began the piece with a signed section called "The Epistle" in which he directed the reader to follow Christ Jesus the light. Moon established the revelation as distinctly Quaker by emphasizing the inward light or Light of Christ, literally describing Christ as the light:

Obedience unto whatever Christ Jesus the light maketh known unto you, and so will the secrets of the Lord be with you, and revealed unto you. For truly the Lord God is greatly making his large love and mercies known unto them who are begotten by him, and revealing himself to his own children. The Lord is now arising in his power and majesty to crown his own children with strength and dominion over the world.

This sentence within the revelation seems to affirm the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers but through a framework characteristic of Quaker beliefs, namely that the light of Christ can communicate directly with individuals rather than having to first pass through a priestly mediator.

So all you who are obedient unto the truth, you are God's friends, and with you is my life bid in Christ Jesus the light, and in this fare you all well.

Moon's initial writings here show considerable influence from the lan-

guage and style of Fox as having faith in and reliance on the inward light of Christ. However, Moon also noticeably interjected himself into the narrative which is curious as this perhaps reveals how he saw his own significance in the movement. This self-ascribed central role escalates as the revelation continues and constitutes one of the key distinctions between Moon's work and that of other early Quaker preachers.

After "The Epistle" section, Moon defined the role of God as creator, "Lord of Lords and King of Saints," and "made manifest by Christ Jesus the Light." Afterwards, Moon switched into first person, beginning with a description of a metaphor of a river and the life of human beings as a "pure precious pearl" in that river:

The Lord made known unto me, that I was to bring many to be washed in that River, that they might be made clean, that the Lord might receive them.

The mode of the writing changes here into storytelling rather than religious instruction and provides insight into Moon's communications with God, establishing himself as someone specially chosen to spread the message of Christ. Moon recalled the vision by describing a landscape featuring a river beside which stood a hill and beyond this, a great wood with a mighty house in the middle in which a fire was lit. This fire is used as a metaphor for Christ's arrival and subsequent suffering on the cross:

And moreover, I saw a people that had no habitation in the earth and was naked and so they were to remain until the appearance & coming of our Lord Jesus. All of that house were of an uproar and gathered their forces and their strength together. Moreover, I saw the place where the Lord God would come and appear to judge his people, and there I was commanded of the Lord, to counsel the faithful people of God.

This divine instruction indicates why Moon dedicated himself to proselytizing and reaffirms his chosen status to evangelize Christ's message. The vision in which God shows Moon the place where human beings are to undergo judgement is a major claim that elevates Moon as someone who possesses superior foresight about humanity's fate. How the other Quaker leaders reacted to Moon's claims in his divine revelation remains unknown but the fact that no reactions to the revelations were published is telling in that they did not receive traction in the movement. This would also explain the lack of attention given by historians to John Moon's story overall. Moon then goes on to retell his journey during the vision:

The Lord God of power gave unto me the book of life, and I was glad and did receive it, and did look thereon, and all my enemies was brought down under my feet, and I was in a quiet habitation, and the glory of the Lord did shine round about me.

Yet another significant claim here from Moon, asserting that as part of his vision, God handed him the book in which the names of all those destined for heaven are written. The theme of the light within appears again as an important Quaker concept that creates some beautiful imagery. This touches on an important point, namely that the imagery intrinsic to Moon's vision is highly distinctive, powerful, and evocative. Whether one is a Quaker or not, the themes the revelation conveys are closely integrated with fundamental Christian ideas which gives the revelation much broader appeal. Having said this, it remains a revelation that is distinctly Quaker with the references to the light within acting as an example. Moon's vision then takes an interesting turn:

And the Lord God of heaven and earth took me up in the spirit unto a holy mountain and showed me all the whole world, and spoke to me, and said, that he had warned all men to repent, and to come to judgement, and some obeyed, and were saved, and they were brought into the holy mountain.

Notice here that Moon propositioned the journey as a spiritual one and that God was in essence taking Moon on a tour of the world, giving him a perspective otherwise reserved for God alone and then taking Moon to a holy mountain. Moon reported having conversed with God and that the holy mountain to which God had taken him is the gateway between the sinful material world below and the perfect Kingdom of God above.

The Lord God by his mighty hand and power lifted me up on high and let me on that which stood sure and was durable, and gave unto me a weapon in my hand like unto a spear, and when it was lifted up, a glorious light did shine about it, that many could not behold and endure, and so they would strive to make war and rise up against it, but the Lord God spoke to me and said, go on and make war with the nations which rise up against thee, with that weapon which I have given thee in thy hand, and hold it fast, and thy enemies shall not overcome thee, though they be many against thee, neither them nor their weapons shall never prevail against thee.

Moon introduced here the unique metaphor of Christ as a shining spear. This reaffirms the ongoing theme of light or the light of glory emanating from Christ. Moon once more gave himself a central role, having been chosen by God to handle this shining weapon and to use it against all God's enemies. This indeed relates to the notion that the message of Christ is to withstand and combat evil and that steadfast faith in Christ means that evil will not prevail. Although the shining spear metaphor is unique to John Moon's revelation, the notion that remaining steadfast to Christ's message to combat evil is obviously a common Christian idea. Nonetheless, the central role Moon plays in the narrative has the implication that he has been chosen to lead the message of Christ on Earth after being chosen to wield the shining spear. Again, the imagery conveyed in this description is very powerful, but questions remain as to whether anyone could wield this shining spear or whether this role exclusively belongs to Moon.

And the Lord God showed me a narrow and a straight way, and he led me therein, and some others with me, and I saw a city before me, and the Lord brought me through great tribulations to that City, and in that City there was a child which had a throne above the earth and walked in it; and there was a lion with that child, but he was made subject, and the child had power and dominion over the lion, and some few was brought to that city and saw it, but it was through great tribulations; but there was none could come to that child which was in the throne but through death, be that readeth let him understand.

Moon's upward journey continues in this passage as God apparently allows him to visit heaven for a time, showing him the "straight yet narrow path" one must follow and the tribulations one must overcome to get to paradise. Moon is brought to a city in which there resides an enthroned child watching over Earth. The child is Christ who wields power and dominion over humankind and whom one must endure death to reach while the lion the Christ Child has tamed is likely a metaphor for humanity. In any regard, the imagery Moon described is again compelling and emotive but also highlights once more the privilege of Moon to be able to view such a sight. To end, the revelation transitioned back into a signed epistle in which Moon addressed his fellow brethren and sisters and asserted that his revelation bookended by two epistles ought to be read amongst the "church of the first-born," notably an early use of this phrase.



In the invisible life of our Lord Jesus Christ do I salute you all in that which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest in the light by the Revelation and appearance of the Son of God, and in this life and light am I one with you, and as you abide in the light you will grow in the life of Righteousness, and also in the knowledge of the pure God of life and wisdom, and so the Lord will establish you in his own house on top of all mountains, and you shall be the glory of all the whole Earth, and you shall be called Zion the holy city of the living God.

From this analysis arise a sequence of four stages of Moon's vision, each of which are accompanied with metaphors for Christ. In the first stage of the vision, God shows Moon a flowing river in which the water is "as clear as crystal" which is presented as a metaphor for Christ's ability to cleanse and purify humanity. The second stage described features of the natural world and an accompanying metaphor of Christ as a fire to symbolize his Passion. The third stage described a holy mountain where God shows Moon the place of divine judgement with an accompanying metaphor of Christ as a shining spear which is given to Moon by God and is stylized as the greatest of all weapons to combat the enemies of the light of Christ. The fourth and final stage described God lifting Moon up to a higher existence to heaven itself, manifesting as a city where Moon is shown the Christ Child seated on God's throne and taming a lion as a demonstration of Christ's gentle majesty.

In essence, the vision of John Moon described God taking him on a journey through the familiar terrestrial world, then on to an intermediary realm as the place of God's judgement, and then on further to a glorious heavenly city where the enthroned Christ Child resides. The four metaphors of Christ revealed to Moon during this extended revelatory journey each possess an underlying function. First is the Christ the river who cleanses and purifies the life of human beings; second is Christ the fire whose salvific function was made manifest in his life of suffering and subsequent deliverance which was "kept in bondage for the truth of God, which is Jesus Christ"; third is the metaphor of Christ the shining spear used to defend the faith; and fourth is the metaphor of Christ the child seated on a heavenly throne to confirm Christ's dominion and triumph over Satan.

In the same year as his revelation, John Moon wrote and published his fourth work *The True Light Which Shines in the Heart*.<sup>67</sup> This clearly addressed those who were already members of the Religious Society of Friends with its underlying message warning members against seek-

ing knowledge, but to instead seek a life basking in the light of Christ. Moon's fifth work *The Great Trumpet of the Lord God Almighty of Heaven and Earth Blown* was published in 1660 and saw him combine the styles of his two earliest works, namely in this instance criticizing Anglicans but in the same style of his 1658 revelation in writing with a great passion and imploring his readers not to go down a wrongful path. There are clear political undertones in this piece. The essence of Moon's message is to call for a return to Christ in the midst of burgeoning false prophets:

Those can cry, Lord, Lord, but they are found workers of iniquity, & so doing the will of another; and the teachers of this people never brings them to know God's salvation; but teacheth the people to speak against it, & so the people & themselves remains in their sins, & ignorant of God's salvation, which he hath prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, & the glory of thy people Israel; so all to mark & consider the false prophets, they cry up the letter, & saith that is the way unto God, & to bring man unto Christ; and I say, the letter brings no man unto God, nor to the knowledge of Christ; for the Scribes and Pharisees they had the letter & Scriptures of truth, & neither knew God nor Christ; for Christ said, if ye had known me, ye would not have crucified me.

The last work attributed in this research to John Moon comes fourteen years after his fifth work and with the abridged title *A Jesuitical Designe Discovered*, published in 1674. In this piece, Moon returned to his signature style of criticizing in dialogue leaders of other Christian denominations. Having already outlined critical dialogues with nonconformists and Anglicans in prior works, Moon focused his attention on the Catholics, specifically reacting to a conversation he had with a Jesuit.

Finally, John was not the only member of the Moon family to contribute literature to the Quaker religion. According to Shaw, John Moon's nephew Paul, a resident of Bristol for most of his life, was the author of at least two works with the abridged titles *A Visitation of Love to All People* (1681) and *God's Controversy* (1693). Shaw claimed that Paul Moon's father Thomas originated from Lancashire and was the son of Edward Moon, making him John's brother. In these works by John's nephew, the religious fervency felt among the Moon family for Quakerism is reiterated and again indicates a high degree of education for certain members of the Moon family than most commoners received at the time.

## Conclusion

The story of the members of the Moon family from the Fylde who converted to the Quaker religion is significant not solely because of their faithful dedication in times of persecution but because of the literary works their steadfast beliefs produced. There is much that remains unknown about the life of John Moon of Garstang but his publication of at least six literary works in support of Quakerism elevate him as an early leader within the movement perhaps deserving of more recognition for his contributions.

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ unto John Moone* presents many key themes and metaphors that assimilate to George Fox's own style as well as draw from older Christian ideas. If this revelation is viewed seriously, its central message is that John Moon was chosen by God to receive this vision and to spread its content; that he was specially chosen to receive these communications from Christ, be shown visions of the place of divine judgement and heaven and handed a divine spear to ward off enemies of the faith. This revelation places an emphasis on the person of John Moon and his character to convey these truths to the Quaker movement. Propagation was clearly his intention by his instruction to have his epistle and revelation read aloud during future meetings of the brethren.

However Moon's 1658 revelation is interpreted, the fact he would claim divine revelation at all sets him apart from the rest of his family of converts.<sup>68</sup> This also raises the question of how his revelation was received by other Quakers at the time, including Fox, but considering how Moon accompanied Fox and other Quakers on preaching tours after his revelation, this might indicate that his work was positively received in the movement. Whatever the case, John Moon remains a notable early English Quaker leader and a talented writer whose revelation presents elaborate and powerful Christian imagery. The thought of Moon conversing with Christ while awaiting his release from the prison cells in Lancaster Castle is emblematic of the struggle faced by early Quakers trying to establish their faith in a time of civil war and in a county rife with political and religious dissent.

## Notes

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- <sup>2</sup> Hilary Hinds, "Unity and Universality in the Theology of George Fox," in *Early Quakers and Their Theological Thought 1647–1723*, edited by Pink Dandelion and Stephen Ward Angell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 48.
- <sup>3</sup> Ronald Cunliffe Shaw, *Yeomen, Craftsmen, Merchants, The Moons of Amounderness and Leylandshire* (Preston, UK: W. Watson & Co., 1963), 10.
- <sup>4</sup> Rosemary Moore, "The Early Development of Quakerism," in *The Quakers, 1656–1723: The Evolution of an Alternative Community*, edited by Richard C. Allen and Rosemary Moore (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2018), 8-28.
- <sup>5</sup> Shaw, *Yeomen, Craftsmen, Merchants*, 3.
- <sup>6</sup> Shaw, *Yeomen, Craftsmen, Merchants*, 10.
- <sup>7</sup> Shaw, *Yeomen, Craftsmen, Merchants*, 2.
- <sup>8</sup> Philip C. Almond, *The Lancashire Witches: A Chronicle of Sorcery and Death on Pendle Hill* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2012), 1-11.
- <sup>9</sup> Shaw, *Yeomen, Craftsmen, Merchants*, 7-9.
- <sup>10</sup> Shaw, *Yeomen, Craftsmen, Merchants*, 9-11.
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- <sup>12</sup> Shaw, *Yeomen, Craftsmen, Merchants*, 36-54.
- <sup>13</sup> Cometan, *The Curious History of the Ancestors of Cometan* (Preston, UK: Astronist Institution, 2022), 10.
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- <sup>16</sup> H. Larry Ingle, *First Among Friends: George Fox and the Creation of Quakerism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3-17.
- <sup>17</sup> Shaw, *Yeomen, Craftsmen, Merchants*, 14.
- <sup>18</sup> Benjamin Nightingale, *Early Stages of the Quaker Movement in Lancashire* (London: Congregational Union, 1921), 35.
- <sup>19</sup> Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers* (Lon-

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- <sup>21</sup> Shaw, *Yeomen, Craftsmen, Merchants*, 16.
- <sup>22</sup> Dilworth Abbatt, *Quaker Annals of Preston and the Fylde 1653–1900* (Ashford, UK: Headley Brothers, 1931), 1-168.
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- <sup>26</sup> Shaw, *Yeomen, Craftsmen, Merchants*, 17-18.
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- <sup>34</sup> Barbara Ritter Dailey, “The Husbands of Margaret Fell: An Essay on Religious Metaphor and Social Change,” *The Seventeenth Century*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1987), 55-71.
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- <sup>38</sup> Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers*, 321.
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- <sup>43</sup> Thomas Wright, *History of the Rise and Progress of the People Called Quakers in Ireland from 1653–1700*, edited by John Rutty (London: William Philipps, 1751), 99, 107.
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