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Christian Goodwillie
Hamilton College

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A Postscript to Writings of Shaker Apostates and Anti-Shakers, 1782-1850: New Light on Benjamin West, William Scales, Benjamin Green, and Zebulon Huntington

By Christian Goodwillie

The collection, annotation, and editorial writing associated with the set of apostate and anti-Shaker writings I published in 2013 consumed much of my free time for two years prior. With the advantages offered by the internet and the friendly community of Shaker scholars and researchers I felt that I had left very few, if any, stones unturned. The *Writings* set is intended as a gateway to any of the texts/authors therein, and certainly not as a final word. Book length studies of individual apostates such as Elizabeth De Wolfe's *Shaking the Faith*, about Mary Dyer, or Ilyon Woo's *Great Divorce*, about Eunice Chapman, demonstrate the end result of years of research on a given story. In my case, months of intensive research yielded quite a bit of new information about many heretofore obscure ex- or anti-Shakers, but I knew as I concluded my work that much was left to be found. This brief piece will share some of what has since come to light about Benjamin West, William Scales, and Benjamin Green (whose texts were in the collection), as well as the discovery of a previously unknown Shaker apostate work by Zebulon Huntington.

Benjamin West

In 1783 Benjamin West published *Scriptural Cautions against Embracing a Religious Scheme Taught by a Number of Europeans, who came from England to America, in the year 1776, and stile themselves the Church ... by Benjamin West, who has been Deluded by Them*.¹ West was threatened by the social upheaval that Shakerism fomented. He lamented: "Wives disown all natural affection for their husbands and children. Thus women become monsters, and men worse than infidels in this new and strange religion." He also claimed that

Shakerism puts its adherents “under temptations to murder themselves.”² This is a novel accusation that West was the first to level at the sect. He amplified claims made by previous apostate writers Valentine Rathbun and Amos Taylor in charging that those who follow the Shakers “[seek] to witches, wizards, charmers, and those that have familar spirits.”³ West also charged the Shakers with adultery.⁴ At the completion of my previous research on West, I was unable to firmly identify him among the numerous Benjamin West’s of eighteenth-century New England. Thanks to googlebooks we now have firm information as to his identity.

West was a member of the Seventh Day Baptist (SDB) Church at Westerly, Rhode Island. Westerly is in an odd little outcropping at the extreme southwest edge of Rhode Island. It borders Stonington, Connecticut, across the Pawcatuck River. Originating in the religious tumult of 1650s England, the Seventh Day Baptists were active in Rhode Island by 1671. Seventh Day Baptists observe Saturday, the seventh day of the week, as the Sabbath in accordance with their interpretation of biblical tradition. The Westerly SDB Church was founded in 1708, separating itself as a distinct body from the founding SDB Church at Newport, Rhode Island. Today this congregation is known as the First Hopkinton Seventh Day Baptist Church.

In the mid-1740s “New Light” ideas began to divide the congregation. Some New Lights rejected the Lord’s Supper, or communion, reasoning that Jesus only intended its observation during the period of the second coming of his spirit immediately following the resurrection. Other New Lights rejected both outward, or water, baptism and the observation of the Sabbath.⁵ The New Lights gained many adherents and in the mid-1750s a large number of withdrew from the church. On November 7, 1754, the church accepted the withdrawal of “Joseph Davis and said Benjamin West and their said wives, are gone out, or off, and from us and therefore from under our watch and care, and that they have no right to the privileges of this church for the future.” The withdrawing members formed an independent New Light Society that continued to observe the Sabbath. However, the historian of the Westerly Church recorded with delight that “convulsed with internal dissensions, this sect was soon scattered like ‘sheep without a shepherd.’”⁶

Surprisingly, more than twenty-five years later, on February 26, 1776, West returned to the Seventh Day Baptist Lower Meeting House in Hopkinton, Rhode Island (the original site of his Westerly Congregation).

Church minutes record that “after a full hearing from the said West, the reasons which he assigned for withdrawing from the church as he did, for which he confessed he had since received many convictions that he had not done right, and were it to be done again, he would not do as he did do then, and manifesting a real desire to be restored to his place again in the church; and after having answered sundry questions relating to his sentiments and belief in a very serious manner ... it was voted, that brother West be received again into full communion with this church.”⁷

By 1781 Joseph Davis, who had been the leader of the New Lights, had also returned to his former congregation. Having made peace with their former brethren, Davis and Benjamin West were once again adjudged to be doctrinally sound and possibly fit for leadership roles. Elder John Burdick was dispatched to Burlington, Connecticut (a small town about twenty miles west of Hartford), to oversee the establishment of a SBD church there. Elder Burdick saw fit to appoint Davis as elder of the new church, and Benjamin West as deacon. This new church was unstable from the beginning. Davis and West had recently quarreled, and journeyed back to the SBD lower meeting-house in Hopkinton, Rhode Island, to have the matter settled. Shortly thereafter West, along with other members, became sympathetic to the doctrines of the “Shaking Quakers.” It is unknown exactly when or where West was initially exposed to the Shakers. Likely it was either during Mother Ann’s initial visit to Enfield, Connecticut, in June 1781, or her return visit to the area in February and March 1782. Elder Davis was anxious to maintain order in the infant SBD church at Burlington and summoned West to appear before the church to explain his connection with the Shakers. West, however, did not appear but sent word to his former brethren that he had joined the Shakers. Accordingly on April 7, 1782, the church voted, “Whereas, brother Benjamin West has certified to this church that he has joined himself to a people called Shaking Quakers, this church now looks on said West as one that has gone out from us and [does] now not belong to this church.” Significantly, Elder Davis was formally ordained at the same meeting, and a letter was sent to Elder Burdick requesting a formal acknowledgment of the Burlington church as a sister church to the Westerly church.⁸ Perhaps the squabble between Davis and West helped to drive West away from the Seventh Day Baptists and into the arms of the Shakers. We may never know, but it is clear that the mercurial West seriously regretted his dalliance with Shakerism.

Scriptural Cautions, West’s renunciation of the Shakers, was published

at Hartford in 1783. West's name appears in large capital letters in the center of the title page, with this stern subtitle appearing immediately below: "Who has been deluded by them, to the great injury of himself and family." The pamphlet served as a public *mea culpa* wherein West wrote: "With sorrow and grief I must confess I have been much captivated with, and deeply involved in this new and strange scheme, to the admiration of many of my former acquaintances, and was extremely zealous, being persuaded, it was the only way to perfection out of all sin; but alas, the great deception is this, to be ever going on in a way that never comes to the knowledge of the truth."⁹ Perhaps West, like many seekers, never found a truth that suited him. His dissension from established church bodies dated back nearly thirty years by the time *Scriptural Cautions* was published. I have still not been able to determine West's ultimate fate, but he does not seem to appear on the 1790 Federal census. Sadly the Seventh Day Baptist cemetery in Burlington, Connecticut, was terribly vandalized in the 1970s. (It is the locale of one of central Connecticut's greatest ghost stories, the "Green Lady.") I have been unable to determine if West is possibly buried there. It would be interesting to know if his brethren took him back for a third time.

William Scales

David Newell and I were able to uncover quite a bit of heretofore-unknown information about William Scales, who authored the important 1789 anti-Shaker newspaper attack, "Mystery of the People Called Shakers."¹⁰ However, little more was known of his life during the 1790s and in the years leading up to his death in 1807. When I wrote the headnote in the *Writings* for his "Mystery of the People Called Shakers" I was aware that on March 14, 1798, Scales had written George Washington a letter. It was not particularly germane to my discussion of Scales' apostate writing, so I made no mention of it. However, I have subsequently found two more letters written by Scales to Thomas Jefferson. In light of this evidence of Scales' proclivity for writing the chief executive I will insert a brief discussion of these here.

The most intriguing part of Scales' letter to Washington is its opening line: "Kind General, Many times I wrote to thee from the year 89 to the year 96." Unfortunately, no other letter is extant between Scales and

Washington. Scales' letter reveals him to be every bit the self-absorbed enthusiast that his other writings illustrate. Frighteningly, Scales apparently confronted Washington personally at the President's Mansion during a trip he made to Philadelphia in 1796 in protest of the perceived pro-British Jay Treaty. Scales reminded Washington in his letter of 1798: "I visited thee personally and presented thee with a compendium of thy own laws, and when I fronted thee at thy door, thou didst pronounce them all nonsense." Access by members of the public to the President was very lax well into the nineteenth century, and General Washington was no exception. Scales' rambling letter is paranoid in tone, and warns Washington of the designs of the clergy upon the liberties of the citizens of the young United States. Additionally, he admonishes Washington for having been duped by Freemasonry, which Scales also sees as threatening to liberty. Scales unabashedly offered his candid opinion of Washington to the great man: "Thou art a man of substantial fidelity and nobility, but vastly damaged by clerical and masonic deception and villainy." It is unlikely that Washington took any notice. The whole text of the letter can be found on founders.archives.gov.¹¹

Scales' anti-Federalist tendencies also came to light in a scathing piece he co-authored for the *Aurora* newspaper. Founded by Benjamin Franklin Bache (the grandson of Benjamin Franklin), the *Aurora* was the most prominent radical Democratic Republican mouthpiece of the 1790s. Its pages featured scathing criticism of presidents George Washington and John Adams, who were both routinely accused of betraying the hard-won liberties of the country by their monarchist tendencies. The *Aurora* was also a vociferous advocate of the French Revolution, even at the height of its excesses. Scales' article was published on March 22, 1799, and co-authored with one Timothy Theophilus. Addressed "To the Christian Reader," the piece is anti-capitalist, anti-British, and anti-clerical. Scales charges that the "avarice, voraciousness, and deception" of the merchant class, which had led to the Revolutionary War, was now going to lead the young nation to war with France, "which in all probability would cost the country what can never be reckoned up; the utter loss of liberty and lives, and an eternal deluge into misery and desolation, murder, and immorality ... Oh! infinite imposition, deception, oppression, and madness!"¹² It is not surprising, given Scales' paranoid views about government and organized religion (both of which were insidiously combined in his view of Shakerism) that he would embrace the anti-Federalist principles of liberty-loving Thomas Jefferson.

Kind General

Many times I wrote to thee from the year
83 to the year 96 relative to the grievance
in which I was involved by deception upon the
Country and the influence of the Clergy, who
profess Christianity but really live contrary to it
and all the rights and liberties of mankind, and
are State-mongers in disguise. Once I visited Phila
delphia relative to the treaty lately formed and
signed with Great Britain, and in the year 96
relative to the deception and imposition the Country
lay under. Thou didst not appear to regard my
letter, memorials and remonstrances in any one case.
The 16 instant I visited thee personally and pre
sented thee with a compendium of thy own laws,
and when I presented thee at thy door, thou didst
pronounce them all nonsense.

General! This is doing the business for thyself
and all the exploit of thy lifetime by one blow
to all intents and purposes, and after my departure
I drew up my judgment of the whole in writing
and offered to send it thee by some of thy best
friends in Alexandria but a Clergyman told me that
I was mistaken concerning thy real character, and after
some thought I concluded, that it might be true,
but then the whole force of the charge comes
down upon the Clergy and churches of America, and

287-90

Figure 1. First page of William Scales' letter to George Washington.

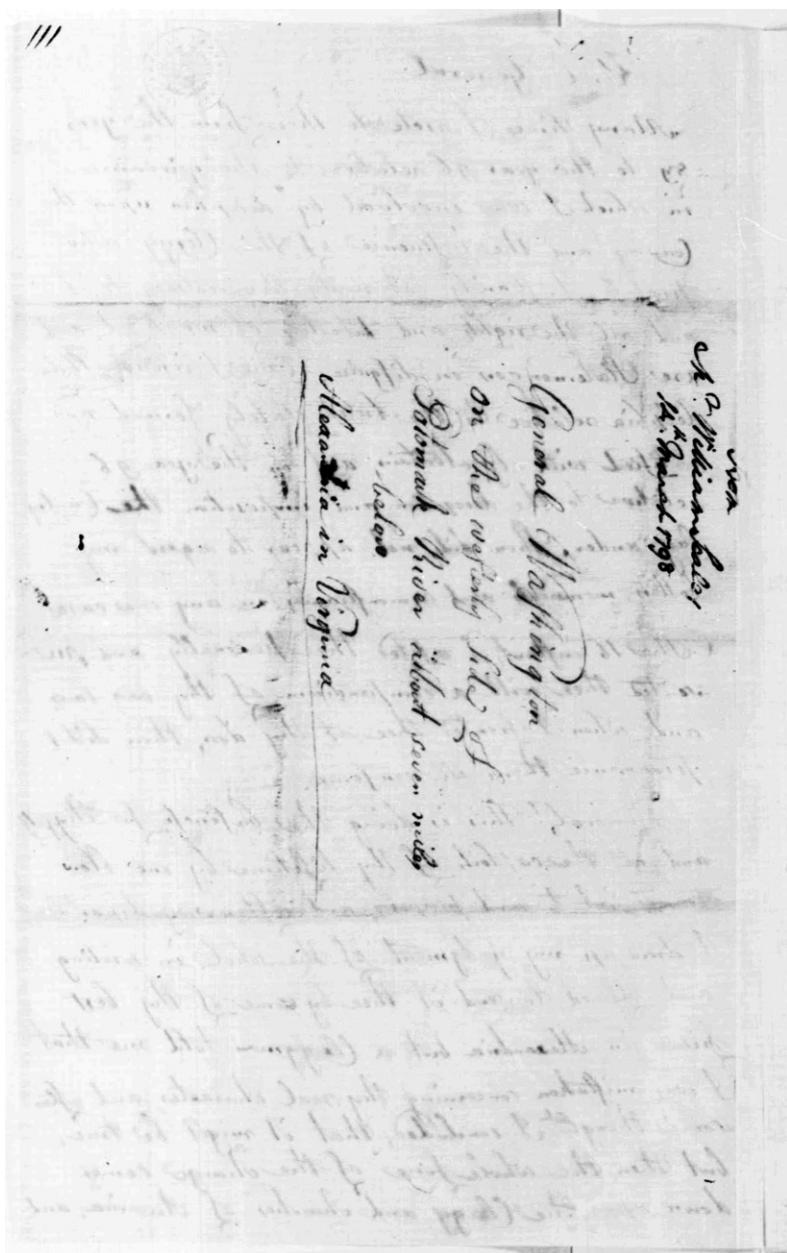


Figure 2. Address information from William Scales' letter to George Washington. The address was on the same sheet as p. 2, and when folded formed the outside of the letter.

They have deceived thee as well as tried to
their utmost to deceive me and all men.
I will proceed in judgment of charity and,
if suitable evidence is exhibited to the contrary,
conclude that thou art a man of substantial
fidelity and nobility, but vastly damaged by clerical
and masonic deception and villainy.

As thou art a Freemason, General, I am sensible
my saying masonic deception and villainy will
grind hard upon thy feelings, but surely thou art
a man of a noble mind and will consider thy own
liability to deception as well as that of others.

Now General if this my charitable judgment
of thee is true, thy noble mind will lead thee
to extricate thyself and thy people from the
clerical and masonic deception and villainy, and
endeavor that Satisfaction be given me for the
boundless labor and damages I have been put
to through that deception and villainy. All
this is infinitely reasonable.

And General I testify that I will not lose
all my labor and damages through the aforesaid
deception and villainy but at great expense, and
if thou disregardst all this also, I cannot, at present
rec upon what grounds I shall be able to judge
charitably of thee Thy special Friend

March 19. 1798 William Scale




Figure 3. Second page of William Scales' letter to George Washington. This page was on the same sheet as the address information.

Jefferson, notably reclusive in his personal life, made a point of personally handling all of his own correspondence, before, during, and after his presidency. The tumultuous election of 1800 has been called by some historians a second American revolution. Thomas Jefferson and his Republicans took power in a nation deeply divided between the wealthy, mostly northeastern, Federalist elite, and Jefferson's demagoging Republicans, many of whom were also elites, but able to sway the urban working and agrarian classes. Scales wrote two letters to Jefferson, the first from Lynn, Massachusetts, on May 5, 1801. Scales comes off as a Democratic Republican in his warm embrace of Jefferson, to whom he wrote: "I am much more pleased with your access to the helm of government over the united States, than I ever was with that of renowned Washington, or celebrated Adams." Even Jefferson's purported atheism did not deter the devout Scales, who opined "I much rather a liberal Atheist should govern the people, than a bigoted Saint, who knows not God." This lengthy letter offers deep insights into Scales' view of man's relationship to God, and of the role of religion in the world. In accordance with radical notions of individual liberty and religious freedom, he opined to Jefferson that religion "is an object that lies between the possessor and God its origin.... No human government can call any man to an account for his religion or religious Sentiments, without invading the throne and authority of the deity." Scales offered a lengthy indictment of organized religion and the numerous sects haggling about "motes and beams," as well as the private hypocrisy of most publicly religious people. Scales argued that if ministers "cannot support their ministries, by the excellency of their doctrines, the purity of their example, the Salubrity of their administration, the independence of their authority on human aid, and the beneficence and glory of their aspirations, let them work as other men do." Never averse to confrontation, Scales closed the lengthy letter by wishing Jefferson success, and calling for his letter to be printed to stir public debate "that calumny may be detected, and I obliged to answer for my own words."¹³

A little more than three years later, on November 11, 1804, Scales wrote a letter jointly to Jefferson and the Congress. By then it seems his embrace of the Republicans' principles, as well as his own sanity, were greatly on the wane. Scales railed against Jefferson's signature achievement, the Louisiana Purchase, writing colorfully: "The purchase of Louisiana is like the dog, glutted with caren, that storming over the lake with a junk of caren in his mouth and seeing his own Shadow lost snapped at it and it and

the Sight of the Shadow too and in diving after the junk was drowned.” Scales’ exact meaning here is unclear to this writer, as I’m sure it was to Jefferson. Continuing, in a clearer statement that has relevance to our own times, Scales asserted that the “government of the congress has no other basis but refinitives of ignorance, absurdity, contradiction and nonsense. The people from whom you profess to receive your authority over them are like the owls, racoons, porcupines and skunks, whose eyes are filled with sand full of plague, whilst their bodies are sunk in the bog to their eyes.” Through the rest of the screed Scales compared the American people to a hunk of beef about to be devoured, and lambasted Locke, Newton, and Paine as perpetrators of violence against the Almighty. Scales proposed to come to Washington and share his warnings with Congress, lest an “awfull deluge” destroy the nation. Scales warned Jefferson that he must become “meek, benevolence, charitable and mercifull otherwise if I come, I shall fight against you as the destroyers of mankind.”¹⁴ No response from Jefferson to either of Scales’ letters exists, and it is likely that Jefferson made none. Scales died three years later at his sister’s house in Dresden, Maine. His second letter to Jefferson may very well have been his last attempt at sharing his unique opinions on religion and national affairs with the public. Scales’ wild career—from his early embrace of Quakerism and then Shakerism, his attacks on organized religion, multiple publications, confused rantings in the Harvard yard, and his late political-religious prophecies—are deserving of a full length study. Now that the existence of these letters is known, Shaker researchers have one more piece of the puzzle that is William Scales.

Benjamin Green

Researching biographical information to write the headnotes for the twenty-five named authors whose texts appear in the *Writings of Shaker Apostates* was a challenging task to say the least. Conducted over the period of about two years, my work drew on both electronic and print resources. For the most part I am pleased with the results, with one major exception. I failed to examine apostate Benjamin Green’s *Intellectual Fireworks! Biographical Account of the Life of Benjamin Green, in which are set forth His Pretensions to the Throne. Written by Himself* (Concord: Published by the Author, 1848). The existence of this work, and one other brief pamphlet by Green, was brought to my

attention by David Newell after *Writings* was at press. The fact that *Intellectual Fireworks!* is autobiographical, and contains additional information on the Shakers makes my omission of the text that much worse. Had I read it, I would have been aware of details of Green's early life far more colorful than those he shared in *The True Believer's Vademecum*—details such as his drinking, whoring, surviving an attempted murder, and witnessing the hanging of two pirates in India. Additionally, his account of his life at Enfield portrays the Shaker sisters as a pack of lascivious harridans trying to entice the brothers to tie up their garters. As sorry as I am to have missed out on these (rather dubious) details for the *Writings* set, the silver lining is that Newell's suggestions have led me to delve more into Green's bizarre life after he left Enfield, and I have uncovered much of interest.

Green was resident at Enfield from December 17, 1817, until December 1824. Following his departure he returned to England and enlisted in the British Army. His service took him back to India. In 1830 he returned “to the land of pumpkin pies, Puritanism, overreaching and Yankee tricks,”¹⁵ settling in Concord, New Hampshire. He returned to Enfield to confront the Shakers, who he claimed had “grossly imposed upon my confidence.” However, the elder he spoke with (probably John Lyon) was “deaf to all reasoning.”¹⁶ Probably as a result of this disappointment, in 1831 Green published his apostate narrative, *The True Believer's Vademecum, or, Shakerism Exposed*. That winter he met the woman he would marry, a Ms. Saunders. The second half of his *Vademecum* (Latin for “handbook”) was a rambling visionary treatise intended for the religious edification of his readers. At its conclusion he assured them that he had “presented the key whereby any man or women in existence, may unlock the gates of heaven and draw from thence, such nourishment, as they may require. The key must not be filed or ground, not rubb'd nor polished, agreeable to man's natural conceptions; but taken and thrust into the key hole, and it will open in an instant.”¹⁷ Green claimed that in 1825, shortly after he left the Shakers, the “sun of righteousness burst thro' the clouds” and God unveiled “his face, and cast the curtains from before him.”¹⁸ Having been the object of God's personal notice, Green maintained these messianic tendencies throughout the rest of his life. Ten years later, in 1835, he placed this newly discovered advertisement in the *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*:

NOTICE.

THE subscriber most respectfully begs leave to announce to the

public, that he will exhibit to all desirous, the way to enter heaven, obtain forgiveness of former sins and receive eternal life, which alone has power to remove those maladies of the mind resulting from a misspent life.

BENJAMIN GREEN.

Concord, June 9, 1835¹⁹

Green's lament of his misspent life is poignant, for it was around this time Green was burned in a business venture manufacturing brooms. This resulted in his defaulting on a large debt he had incurred. By 1836 he was making his living peddling alcoholic beverages on the streets of Concord from a wheelbarrow. Following his business failure, "not knowing what business to engage in, and seeing other people vending refreshments, wines and liquors, as they saw fit, I ventured to do the same."²⁰ This newly discovered photograph of Green, which probably dates from the late 1850s or 1860s, shows him with said wheelbarrow—loaded with ceramic jugs of various kinds of beer.

While struggling to pay his debts Green worked as a job printer. In

the winter of 1837 he was approached by a group of men who told him they "could not eat my cold apples nor drink cold cider; if I felt inclined to bring some more powerful stimulant they would purchase." Accordingly Green purchased a large quantity of strong liquor and wine at auction, enabling him to retire his debts and purchase a modest house.²¹

However, Green's new-found stability was short-lived. In June 1839 he was set upon by a temperance mob lead by the Rev. Mr. Taylor, who said that Green

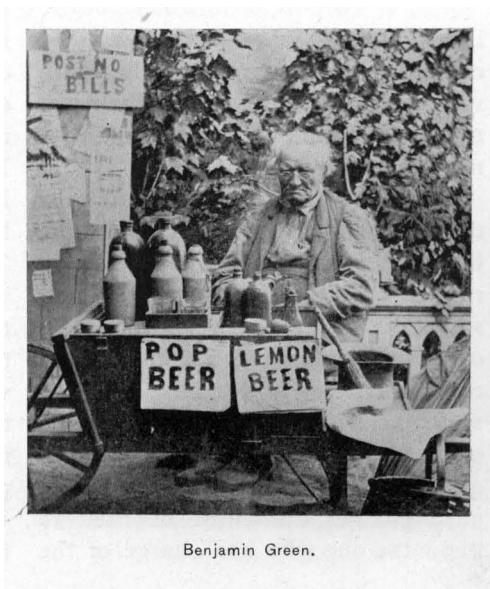


Figure 4. Benjamin Green selling beer on the streets of Concord, N.H.

“carried death and hell about upon a wheelbarrow.” In a small pamphlet he published recounting the event, Green challenged the moral rectitude of the “temperance” crowd, pointing out that he was a temperate user of alcohol, but that they violently advocated total abstinence, rather than temperance.

I have been induced to contest the doctrine of total abstinence upon certain occasions, knowing that its advocates (and I must acknowledge my folly in attempting to contend with them,) are destitute of reason, and as irrational as the hog, as stupid as the ass. I entertained the hope that by talking with them I might prevent their moblike attempts. ... I would ask, are your total abstinence people friends to man? the answer of their conduct says no! are they courteous, kind, gentle, humane, affable, polite, gentlemanly in their deportment—the answer of their conduct is no! ... Your cold water fanatics are paralyzed, they stand aghast, and like all Pollywogs, the moment they are thrown upon dry land they dry up and wither, and find nothing to sustain them—They are overthrown by a simple puff—a mere reference to a common school dictionary overthrows their whole foundation—they turn round and exercise upon the friends of light and liberty, a volley of Billingsgate, vituperation and abuse, slander, villify, jeer, ridicule, and if they dare do it would crucify, rob, burn, murder and destroy the friends of light, life, and liberty.²²

Green’s life seems to have gradually deteriorated from that point on. In *Intellectual Fireworks* he mentions that in 1843 he had “little boys.” His obituary mentions a daughter (unnamed) and a son Timothy. After a brief and desperate last trip to England he returned to Boston, arriving “almost penniless, and literally covered with body lice.”²³ In 1846, according to his own account, he ran into financial difficulties and tried his hand at fishmongering. For an unnamed offense he was sentenced to fifteen days hard labor in the house of correction.²⁴ The *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette* for March 19, 1846, carried the following notice: “Voted, that Joseph Eastman, Jr., Josiah Stevens and Nathan Stickney be authorized to sell and convey the Benjamin Green property on State street.”²⁵ After another brief failed stint at work, this time as a restaurateur, Green departed for Canada in November 1846. He was back in Concord by January 1847, and

published *Intellectual Fireworks* in 1848. It seems that all along Green had been subject to visionary flights of fancy, and possibly seasons of insanity. It was not until 1850 that he more permanently loosed his grip on reality. *The New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette* for April 4, 1850, carried the following item:

State vs. Benjamin Green.—“Old Green,” a man whom thousands of our readers have seen about our streets “peddling” apples, oranges, candy, fish, &c. got into one of his crazy fits two or three months ago, and having an “old grudge” against Stephen C. Badger and Asa Fowler, Esqrs., he proceeded to the house of the former late in the evening and pretty essentially smashed the front windows; and he then very deliberately went to the house of the latter and served that in the same way. For this he was arrested and ordered to jail to await the action of the Grand Jury upon this matter. They found a “true bill” against him; and on Friday afternoon he was brought into Court to answer. The evidence against him was direct, positive, ample and conclusive. He managed his own case, and therefore, according to Lord Mansfield, “had a fool for his client.” He said he was “not guilty—but did the deed,” contending that it was right, proper and legal for him thus to “take his revenge” for past grievances. He made a long, rambling speech, some portions of which highly amused a crowded audience. The Court generously and kindly indulged him, and he had his say; after which, under the very judicious instructions of the Court, the jury rendered a verdict of “not guilty by reason of insanity”—a verdict which greatly amused him. He will probably be sent to the Insane Asylum.

Attorney General Sullivan, for State.²⁶

If Green was sent to the insane asylum in 1850, he remained there in 1856 when Nathaniel Bouton, in his *History of Concord*, wrote the following: “This Benjamin Green is an Englishman by birth, a native of Yorkshire, aged at this time 61 years. He spent several years with the Shakers at Canterbury, left them, married and settled in Concord. He is subject to seasons of mental derangement, fancying himself a monarch, and authorized to put down all usurpation. He is now an inmate of the Insane Hospital.”²⁷ Green was eventually released from the asylum, and seems to

have reversed his financial fortunes (as his obituary makes clear). However, at some point he returned to the asylum, where he died in 1869. His obituary paints a surprisingly flattering and nostalgic picture of the man who had become beloved locally as a harmless and entertaining old crank.

Mr. Benjamin Green, who has been a fixture of this city for some thirty odd years, died at the Insane Asylum, Sunday evening at eleven o'clock. Mr. G. has been failing since July, and has lately suffered from exposure to cold, which probably hastened his death. His age, was about 73 years. He was born in England, and had a good education. During his life he was connected with the British army. He soon became discontented and by doing all manner of odd jobs and manufacturing trinkets, &c. bought his discharge. He was afterwards in the navy, from which he is supposed to have deserted. He taught school in Canada for some time, and then came to Enfield, where he connected himself with the Shakers. He did not like [it] there, and came to Concord about thirty five years ago, and has remained here ever since. He married soon after coming to Concord. His wife came from Northwood, and was named Saunders. By her he has had two children, a son named Timothy, an industrious young man in the employ of the Messrs. Holden of West Concord, and a daughter, who died.

At one part of his life he was very dissipated and from this reason was confined in the Asylum. After his release, his habits underwent a total change and he became extremely frugal. At the time of his decease he was worth about \$2000 in bonds, and had some \$1500 in litigation. Mr. G. was a well known author on the subject of "original truth," and from time to time discoursed on the subject. He issued many political and other essays, all pointing out abuses that needed reformation and how to effect the desired object. The old man and his barrow will be missed from their accustomed place, but he has left a bright example of economy and industry that it will be well to follow.²⁸

Benjamin Green's fondest wish, in his role as God's messenger, was for the people and country of the United States to live up to their potential, and not squander God's providence in allowing humanity this chance to start over. *Intellectual Fireworks* closes with Green's warning to Americans to curb

their hubris and selfishness, and rather embrace Christian principles, his nebulous “Holy City.”

The American people have exalted themselves; hence their fall, in common with all antecedent nations. There is no way of extricating themselves and mankind in general, from the difficulties which now environ society, but to come out and recognize that guide the Holy City exhibits, by placing themselves under its dictates;—it will teach them what to do.

I want to see elevated, here in America, a surrendering of ourselves to the guidance of the Spiritual King, according to the dictates of Jesus Christ and his servants; That we in love should serve one another.... There are many instances of oppression I have encountered, whilst living in this town, that I could have enumerated, as far as concerns myself—the unbecoming manners of certain people—that I pass over without particularizing, but I really hope, if you wish to exhibit yourselves as lights to the world, that you will cultivate the genius of christianity more and self less.²⁹

Zebulon Huntington

Finally, it was with great excitement that David Newell and Cassandra Nawrocki, part of the team working on a new bibliography of works by and about the Shakers, announced their discovery in late 2012 of an entirely unknown apostate work. Zebulon Huntington’s *The Exile of Connecticut; Composed by Himself in the Decline of Life, Being a Concise Narrative of the Life of Zebulon Huntington, Till Almost Four Score Years of Age* (c1845) presents, in part, his experiences as a member of the Enfield, New Hampshire, Shaker community. Only two copies of the pamphlet are known to exist, one at the British Library, and one at the Smithsonian Institution (which was kind enough to share a copy with the bibliographic team). Newell and Nawrocki presented their further, and quite bizarre, findings about Huntington at the Enfield Shaker Museum’s Spring Forum in April 2013. They plan to publish an article fully detailing their findings, as well as lengthy excerpts from Huntington’s pamphlet, in a future issue of the *American Communal Societies Quarterly*.

The fields of Shaker studies—and its shadowy counterpart, Shaker apostate studies—continue to yield amazing and previously unknown stories of long-gone everyday people who either fully dedicated their lives to the “Christ Spirit” as revealed through Mother Ann Lee, or attempted to bring down a religion they viewed as a theocratic despotism bent on sundering the divinely ordained relationship between married couples and families. Having fully surveyed the latter, it is with great pleasure that I can announce the publication in May 2014 of *Shaker Autobiographies, Biographies and Testimonies, 1806–1907*, a three-volume set co-edited by Glendyne Wergland and myself. This set includes more than sixty narratives by faithful Believers, including Calvin Green’s monumental *Biographic Memoir*. The depth and sincerity of these texts stands as a powerful counterweight to the claims of the apostates and anti-Shakers. Together the two sets comprise a broad survey of the lived experience of ordinary men and women whose lives were intertwined with Shakerism.

Notes

1. Benjamin West, *Scriptural Cautions against Embracing a Religious Scheme Taught by a Number of Europeans, who came from England to America, in the year 1776, and stile themselves the Church ... by Benjamin West, who has been Deluded by Them* (Hartford [Conn.]: Babil Webster, 1783).
2. *Ibid.*, 7-8.
3. *Ibid.*, 10.
4. *Ibid.*, 13.
5. “The Westerly Seventh-Day Baptist Church,” *Seventh-day Baptist Memorial* 3, no. 3 (July 1854): 117-18.
6. *Ibid.*, 127-28.
7. *Ibid.*, 135-36.
8. *Ibid.*, 169-70.
9. West, *Scriptural Cautions*, 11.
10. For the most extensive biographical investigation yet published on Scales see D. D. Newell, “William Scales’ 1789 ‘Mystery of the People Called Shakers,’” *American Communal Societies Quarterly*, preview issue (September 2006): 6-20.
11. The full link to this letter is:
[http://founders.archives.gov/?q=William Scales Author%3A”Scales, William”&s=1111311111&sa=Scales&r=1&sr=](http://founders.archives.gov/?q=William+Scales+Author%3A%27Scales,+William%27&s=1111311111&sa=Scales&r=1&sr=)
12. *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, Pa.), March 22, 1799, [3].

13. The full link to this letter is:
<http://founders.archives.gov/?q=William%20Scales%20Author%3A%22Scales%2C%20William%22&s=1111311111&sa=Scales&r=2&sr=>
14. The full link to this letter is: <http://founders.archives.gov/?q=William%20Scales%20Author%3A%22Scales%2C%20William%22&s=1111311111&sa=Scales&r=3&sr=>
15. Benjamin Green, *Intellectual Fireworks! Biographical Account of the Life of Benjamin Green, in which are set forth His Pretensions to the Throne. Written by Himself* (Concord: Published by the Author, 1848).
16. *Ibid.*, 41.
17. Benjamin Green, *The True Believer's Vademecum, or, Shakerism Exposed: Together with an Account of the Life of the Author* (Concord [N.H.]: Printed for the author, 1831), 67.
18. *Ibid.*, 34. Unfortunately, the date "1825" in the original imprint was poorly printed, with the "2" resembling a "3." This fact led to a typesetting error in Green's text in the Pickering and Chatto edition, where the date was presented as "1835" (putting it four years after the printing date of the *Vademecum*). Unfortunately, I failed to notice this error during the proofreading process. Green explains the prophetic mathematics that enabled him to arrive at the year 1825 on page 40 of *Intellectual Fireworks*.
19. *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, June 15, 1835, 3.
20. Green, *Intellectual Fireworks*, 43.
21. *Ibid.*, 44.
22. [Benjamin Green], *A Letter in Reply to Rev. Mr. Taylor's Attack Upon the Man whom he Stated Carried Death and Hell about Upon a Wheelbarrow—Whom he Suddenly Seized Aided by the Combined Forces of the Tetotallers, and Tried to Bury in the Depths of Hell Together with his Vehicle, but Being Happily in Company with the Good Samaritan Jesus Christ, is Able to Make this Reply, Send Him, His Coadjutors and Doctrine to the Shades Below. Concord, June, 20, 1839* (Concord, N.H., 1839), 4, 7.
23. Green, *Intellectual Fireworks*, 45.
24. *Ibid.*, 46.
25. *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, March 19, 1846, [2].
26. *Ibid.*, [3].
27. Nathaniel Bouton, *The History of Concord* (Concord: Published by Benning W. Sanborn, 1856), 430.
28. *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, January 27, 1869, [2].
29. Green, *Intellectual Fireworks*, 47-48.