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Shaker Brothers in the Spirit: The Exchange of Ideas and Spiritual Gifts between Seth Youngs Wells and Calvin Green¹

Jane F. Crosthwaite

Hidden in plain sight among the multitude of manuscripts documenting the Era of Manifestations are two notices that reveal not only a publishing partnership between two Shaker men but the dramatic byplay of spiritual activity which fueled a lengthy revival period. For at least twenty years in the mid-nineteenth century, spiritual revelations enlivened and expanded Shaker theological and institutional life; moreover, within the solemn messages, the enthusiastic music, and the arresting gift drawings one finds a number of personal exchanges which suggest that the intimate notices strengthened, if they did not create, the web on which larger issues grew. Embedded in a collection of prophetic revelations which Calvin Green received in the early 1840s is a dramatic spiritual gift for his colleague, Seth Youngs Wells.² In turn, five years later, in 1847, Calvin Green received a booklet of messages and emblems from the recently deceased Seth Youngs Wells. This exchange of spiritual gifts celebrated over fifty years of literary collaboration and honored the intimacy of their common spiritual journey.³

These two Shaker brothers—Seth Youngs Wells and Calvin Green—played central roles in the development of Shaker intellectual and spiritual life for *almost* all of its first century, especially if one measures by Calvin Green's life—his eighty-nine years as a Shaker.⁴ It is not, of course, the length of his life but the quality of his contributions and of his forty-year collaboration with Seth Youngs Wells which enhances their mutual significance. Individually each man made notable contributions to Shaker life; between them, they either compiled, wrote, edited, or revised every major Shaker publication through the middle of the nineteenth century. In addition, Calvin Green's "Biographic Memoir," although unpublished until 2014, has been treasured by Shaker Believers and scholars alike for the breadth of its historical, social, and personal observations.⁵

In this essay I do not tell the complete story of the lives and works of these fascinating Shakers; such an undertaking would require (and, no doubt, reward) extended time and commitment fueled by a robust stamina. My project is more precisely narrowed by a slant of light that highlights the visionary gifts shared by the men—and their spiritual attendants. The pleasure of examining their gifts is complicated by the fact that they were bestowed on two of the most intellectually accomplished Shakers. Calvin Green and Seth Youngs Wells were part of the brain trust who molded the building blocks of Shaker theology and social organization. They viewed themselves as logical thinkers, rational theologians with deep knowledge of the Bible, historians of the Christian tradition, and, as they liked to present themselves, careful grammarians.⁶

At the same time, they were fully on board when the Era of Manifestations broke out in the late 1830s, bringing with it hundreds of spiritual messages, visitations by heavenly personages, new rituals, new writings, and daily disruptions of music, art, and messages in unknown tongues. When he wrote to a colleague in the West, Matthew Houston, to report on the new manifestations, SYW included his own response to an outburst of unknown tongues, “‘It is the language of heaven,’ said I.”⁷ With such enthusiastic accounting, the historian is offered a clear glimpse of the grammarians of good writing as they began to parse the “language of heaven,” and we can see how the Shaker brain trust was adding momentum to the riches of the spiritual trust they also supported.

SYW was just over thirty when he first met and came to join the Shakers. Born in 1767, he had been working as a school teacher, but as he wrote in 1846 very near the end of his life, all the forms of happiness he had sought in the world were accompanied by countervailing effects. Finally, he reports, he found “happiness in [the] gospel of the holy Savior & blessed Mother Ann.” Reflecting on his search, SYW lamented that at the time there had been no books to aid his search, and he noted his appreciation of two books that were written years later, one by himself and CG.⁸

CG had the rare distinction of being born a Shaker, his Mother having united with the celibate community when she was pregnant. CG was always proud of this distinction (about as close to a virgin birth in a celibate community as one could come) and about the fact that Mother Ann Lee herself reportedly held him in her arms.⁹ With his unique birth also came a continuing sense of responsibility; furthermore, CG was born

just as the Shakers themselves were coming into organized communities. Although Ann Lee had traveled from England with several comrades in 1774, Shaker historians usually cite 1780 (the year of CG's birth) as the more public opening of the Shaker message in America. During the following twenty years, the early Shakers organized their first communities and developed into what they saw as order and union, devising ways to live in celibate, communal families—the same system SYW characterized as a gospel union of the Savior and Mother Ann. When SYW joined the Shakers in 1799, CG was then nineteen years old. Just over twenty years later the two men would write one of the books SYW had long envisioned.

Summary View and Early Work

In 1823, under the initial guidance of Mother Lucy Wright, the two brothers published *A Summary View of the Millennial Church*. Just before her death in 1821, Mother Lucy had brought SYW from Watervliet to New Lebanon and made him responsible for Shaker publications and for their schools. Of this move, CG wrote:

Brother Seth Wells being a learned capable man, had been for many years by general union inspector of the public writings of the society ... Therefore one of the last acts of Mother Lucy was to ... appoint him as official superintendent of all such writing ... He desired my assistance which was given in the general union ... According he was moved from Watervliet to New Lebanon and had a room appropriate to his use in the third loft of the office where he lived to his death.¹⁰

Although the cooperative work between the two men may have begun even earlier, SYW's move to the Church Family at New Lebanon certainly made their collaboration easier. Even so, CG continued to shoulder many other responsibilities, including several periods of missionary travel to western New York, to Boston, and in Pennsylvania, as well. Their work on the *Summary View*, however, must have consolidated both their literary and their personal bonds. When CG wrote about the book years later, he could not, in the end, distinguish who had written what:

Accordingly I drew up an account containing the outlines of what finally [sic] was extended to the book entitled the Millennial [sic] Church. It was at first but a succinct Summary view ... But Br. Seth having a copy suggested the propriety of recalling it & enlarging & printing with a sanction of the society ... We enlarged the Book & labored unitedly to make as perfect as we were able—I wrote most of the additions & all was done according to the / original Plan—Br. S—did considerable enlarging the work but we acted in perfect agreement.¹¹

The *Summary View* is a generally accessible overview of the theological principles which came to define Shaker belief. With topics ranging from dancing to attributes of the divine, and from the biblical legitimacy of women leaders to the proper view of the resurrection, this relatively small book is, as CG originally intended, succinct and, as SYW hoped, comprehensive. In his notable history of the Shakers, Stephen Stein goes even further in his assessment of this text, calling it a marker for the consolidation of the Millennial Church. He writes:

The appearance of the *Summary View* in 1823 signaled the completion of the establishment of the Shakers as a society, now formally called the United Society of Believers. In their publication Green and Wells provided not only carefully crafted historical and theological statements, but also information on the “progress and practical order” of the society.¹²

Stein also notes the ways in which, among other sources, the authors drew heavily on the original 1808 historical and theological work by Benjamin Seth Youngs, *The Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing*. This book, written by a cousin of SYW, was, in fact, the second book SYW had named as essential to introducing the Shakers to seekers of the truth; it was also a book whose later revisions required various levels of attention by both SYW and CG.¹³

Continuing Revelation: “The work of God has not been stationary.”

While the importance of the *Summary View* cannot be overstated, it appeared at least fourteen years before the outbreak of the Era of Manifestations in 1837. It was not out of date then (or, perhaps, even now), but there were elements of Shaker history and practice, and even their own publications, which SYW and CG had not included in their book. The *Summary View* did, however, anticipate an unfolding future; indeed, nothing about the Shakers would have been possible without a belief in unfolding revelations. Not only had the Bible, in both Testaments, promised messianic fulfillment and a renewed creation, but now the teachings of Mother Ann Lee had revealed crucial terms of that new world and ways to live in the new human family. The scandal of a woman as the Mother of the new creation made perfect sense as the female joined the male in spiritual regeneration, and its logic was as simple as its demand of celibacy was difficult.

Within these terms, the *Summary View* could assert—in its third paragraph—an optimistic vision of the new creation:

The events relating to Christ’s second appearance of which we are more particularly to treat in this volume, are rapidly progressing towards their accomplishment ... none appear more evident than those which lead to the formation of associations in which all the members can enjoy equal rights and privileges, physical and moral, both of a spiritual and temporal capacity.... but the united capacity must be built on the true foundation, which is nothing less than divine revelation, or it cannot stand.¹⁴

The book continues to develop the terms of confession, community, and celibacy by which the teachings in this second appearing of the Christ had become possible. Everything rests on being open to the continuing revelation. As SYW and CG said in the Preface: “But as the light of Divine truth is progressive in the Church ... so the solemn and important truths of the gospel will continue, from time to time, to be more clearly manifested to mankind.” Furthermore, as the light increases, so does the joy and hope for those who believe; similarly the greater the light, the greater the condemnation of those who see, but reject it.¹⁵

Openness to the progressive revelations of Mother Ann Lee, now understood as crucial to the theological foundation on which Shakers in general—and SYW and CG in particular—built helps to explain their eager acceptance of the spiritual elements of the Era of Manifestations. There was no leap from a logical mind to a visionary mind; the very logic of their faith rested on and required such openness. While many discussions about the strength of the Era of Manifestations stress the sociological search by the second or third generation for direct contact with the first generation of religious parents and teachers and are well-considered and useful, it is equally clear that many of the remaining older generation members were equally thrilled to see their faith come alive in new and dramatic ways as they reached the end of their days.¹⁶

On several occasions, SYW rejected the common distinction between the young and the old, saying we are neither young nor old, we are all members of the new creation. At the same time, he reveled in the participation of the younger generation, both apologizing for and exulting in its innocent openness. In one of his few extant personal statements, the testimony he wrote for the 1843 new sacred text, the *Sacred Roll*, SYW penned an extended *apologia* for the revelations of the Era of Manifestations, its inspired participants, and for the book itself.¹⁷

SYW's extensive testimony speaks most directly to his authoritative support of the book. SYW establishes his bona fides by stating his age as seventy-six years, having spent forty-five of those years as a Shaker and having served as "Secretary and Clerk" for many years. He stakes out his theological ground by observing that "the work of God has not been stationary, but has been constantly increasing." He is proud of the young people who represent the Children of God and who are pure and uncorrupted. Going against his earlier disclaimer of such distinctions and, further, speaking somewhat disingenuously about their lack of education, the director of Shaker schools writes: "Many of the youth, both male and female, in all of the societies of this communion, have been blessed with gifts of divine inspiration, as were the prophets of old," and he concludes by observing that they "have had nothing more than a common school education."

Drunk on the wine of spiritual enthusiasm and with hope for the the future and the missionary reach of this sacred book, SYW ends on a high note: "I will merely add, but I have not the least shadow of a doubt that this word is in reality what it purports to be '*A Holy, Divine and Sacred Roll*'

and Book' emanating from the **ALMIGHTY CREATOR OF ALL.**""¹⁸

Although this statement may not sound at first like the analytical mind of a scholar and historian, it rings true to a biblical scholar who has viewed history through the lens of continuing revelation and experienced the practical approaches offered by the teachings of Mother Ann Lee in a living community. Indeed SYW and his colleague CG had just completed a spiritual and literary journey of their own; they produced a three-volume collection of messages (almost three hundred manuscript pages) which was not officially published, but was carefully collected and copied for circulation within the Shaker society.

Prophetic Visitations Received and "Drawn Off"

Throughout his long "Biographic Memoir," CG tells of his dreams, visions, and premonitions about events which would come about.¹⁹ Thus, when the Era of Manifestations began in earnest, CG was determined that he, too, should enjoy such visitations, as he wrote in 1840: "Therefore I fervently desired to be a full partaker of elements & powers which might be brot forth by all its operations & Divine Gifts."²⁰ His prayers were answered by both an auditory and a visual response, one which also determined the focus of messages which were to follow. He recorded a precise and meaningful response:

In the forepart of November, I heard the words "the prophet Elisha" in our meeting. I looked & near the center there appeared the form [of] a man like a pillar of fire—soon after in another meeting I saw the prophet he appear[ed] like a bright active man with comely but plain clothing & exercised with us in a lively & powerful manner. I was then initiated into a familiar knowledge of the influence & Inspiration of this powerful & prophetic spirit.²¹

As events unfolded, CG had summoned a spiritual power that was to last at least a year and a half. He received messages from many biblical prophets and patriarchs of such perceived importance that they deserved the separate booklets which would be dedicated to their messages.²² CG considered these messages to be a signal manifestation of heavenly union with the Shaker vision and practice. To introduce the booklets, further, CG

inserted a ten-page biographical account of his life, especially detailing his unusual birth story and early notice by Mother Ann. The assumption must have been that important biblical personages had responded in kind to a singular Shaker figure.²³

When the project was called to a halt because of other waiting tasks, CG recorded the prophets' own appreciation for the common effort they had shown. First, he noted that he "felt sensible that there were others who would have been glad to have me write for them had the way been open." But, as it turned out:

The prophets now released me from further writing for them at this time and informed me that what I had written would stand as the untied [united] testimony of all the ancient prophets to the Gospel of the Second Appearing of Christ which was now progressing and would never cease the increase thereof to Eternal Ages.²⁴

The conviction that the messages were genuine and depended on the mutual cooperation of the Old Testament patriarchs and the Shaker community, and especially these two leaders, rests on a positive self-authenticating loop. It would have been simultaneously rewarding and difficult to discount.

Further, as important as his inspired openness to the ancient prophets had been, its success was dependent on the equal commitment of SYW who, as the record shows, had in fact recorded—"drawn off"—the messages which had come to CG.²⁵ The "Memoir" and the text of "Prophetic Revelations" indicate that for eighteen months the seventy-three-year-old SYW had transcribed the words received by the sixty-year-old CG. Even as the dictation was winding down, CG was visited by an enabling angel who further blessed and praised his receptivity. CG's comment at this point makes the three-way work between the two Shaker brothers and the heavenly messengers even clearer: "My colaborer understanding [sic] Brother Seth who drew it off observed that this exceeded all the prophets & this Angel must certainly be the prince of prophecy."²⁶

A Spiritual Gift for Seth

In the midst of the prophetic transcriptions and the spiritual appreciation for the common work, the historian discovers a rewarding personal gift for SYW. This carefully crafted gift marks the collaboration between CG and SYW as both heavenly and deeply personal; their cooperative work is highlighted by the Prophet Elisha himself. In a spiritually triangulated maneuver, on January 30, 1842, the Prophet Elisha dictated to CG the following message which, in turn, SYW was to record:

The holy Prophetic Elisha further adds—To the greatly beloved brother who has taken so much pains to prepare & record these prophetic communications, I send the united love, blessing, & hearty thanks of all the ancient Patriarchs & Prophets, who are the witnesses thereof for his faithful labors & patient perseverance in this work. Tell him that all this & much more is recorded in the eternal Book of Records in the Heavens, & he shall receive a rich reward for the same, I send with my own hand a Jewel of holy blessing set with seven diamonds of the seven bright colors of the Rainbow, upon which are written the names of the forty two Patriarchs & Prophets, the primary witnesses of the Old Testament, who have signed & sealed these writings and names being written on each diamond.

This Jewel I request him to wear on his breast, as a Memorial of his Witness, thro time. And by this he shall be known when he comes to Heaven, as our special friend in this work which we so greatly desired to be accomplished.

Elisha, New Lebanon Jan. 30th 1842 ²⁷

Elisha, the Prophet, has witnessed the support SYW has given CG over the course of the message-gathering, and he is generous in the rewards for such service to the heavenly messengers and to his friend and colleague.

Psychologists, sociologists, historians—scholars of all stripes—would be eager to explain away the permutations involved in this elaborate construction of spiritual activity and simple gratitude. Distant from the specific messages and from the arduous work the gathering and recording must have entailed, a twenty-first-century researcher must exercise both careful analysis and restraint. Contrary to the expectations of the Shakers,

careful reading of the prophetic messages does not reveal particularly new or insightful information. Believers are offered some historical interpretation, instructed to stand firm in their faith, to buckle down to their daily tasks, and to await an even more complete flowering of ever-new revelations.

But if the content of the many messages comes across the pages—and the years—as prosaic, the joint pursuit by the two men of valuable religious understanding shines brightly in the warmth and rainbow hues of the gift. The gift is multifaceted with seven diamonds, seven colors, and forty-two signatures—on each diamond—from the ancient biblical personages.²⁸ In the case of “Prophetic Revelations,” the content of the work lingers as far less valuable than the skeleton of brotherhood and friendship which supports the messages. These bones, developed and sustained by Believers of mature age and experience, are strong.

More even than friendship, however, is at stake here because the friendship itself was fed by a shared vision of salvation, by the intellectual and emotional commitment to a world view. SYW’s bright jewel will allow him to be recognized in heaven; similarly, the gifts of a crown and a trumpet, among other items which CG will soon receive from SYW, will also serve as his admission tickets. The gifts are personal and intimate—and cosmic—and no matter what desires may have been unspoken or even unthought, they speak to a spiritual companionship capable of subsuming all other elements. When she wrote about the intense friendships between Shaker brothers, Glendyne Wergland recognized the temptations and the opportunities which might have fed men living closely together—and which certainly raise questions for later scholars—but she concluded, as have I, that, “To Shakers, the love beyond natural love was gospel love, a sentiment on a higher plane.”²⁹ Friendship was more likely a benefit of serious joint endeavors than a covert impetus to the initial work.

CG’s respect for SYW shines through his “Memoir,” beginning with their early work together, the perceived success of the 1823 *Summary View*, the long transcription of the prophetic messages, the later joint (if limited) work editing the *Divine Book*. At times, in fact, CG appears to be bragging about his association with SYW, even as their common work may have become more equally shared. When SYW died in October of 1847, CG was left to work alone—and, certainly, he felt more alone. He wrote of that death and of his loss:

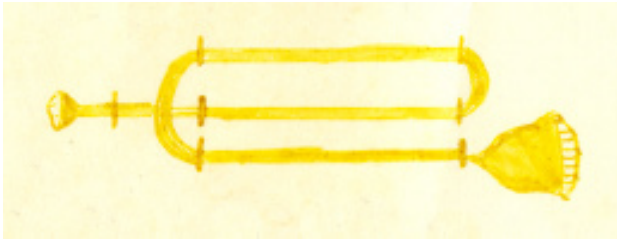
My good Brother & fellow laborer Seth Y. Wells was taken from his arduous [sic] labors & scenes of this troubled world and without all doubt [sic] found a glorious mansion prepared for him in Heavenly realms of peace. He deceased at the age of 80 years 2m and ii [11] days—October 30 AD 1847.

CG continued his assessment of SYW's contributions and of his own reluctant acceptance of his friend's death:

He had spent at least 50 years fervently devoted of [sic] cause of the Gospel and by his useful labors, produced a new & much improved Era in the literary line among Believers. He was a good companion & was much help to me in his line & I ever bless his memory. But after about 40 years in correspondence & united labors in our public writings & Books of the society: My Beloved companion was taken with a gradual decline which after a considerable time carried [him] off from our visible sight.³⁰

A Spiritual Gift for Calvin

Barely a month after SYW's death, CG received a spiritual gift from his "beloved companion," one that sealed their friendship with extraordinary notices from heaven. It must have been an attentive Shaker sister—the usual source of such gifts—and someone from either Watervliet or New Lebanon, who presented CG with a box and booklet; certainly it was someone who knew just how deeply CG would have lamented the loss of his friend.³¹ One can even guess that she heard CG wonder how he could continue to work without SYW. The spiritual gift booklet which accompanies this essay represents an effort to respond to this question, offering the surviving friend several forms of encouragement. The images depict heavenly gifts of a bright crown and a trumpet, and they also offer pink roses rather than a rainbow of colors and a writing table rather than diamonds. The sensitivity of the gift is remarkable—remarkable because it remarks on the friendship, the common gospel work, and the intellectual and editorial tools which the two men deployed for so many years. CG is given not only a table—and an ink well—but a spiritually scented vine to inspire him. The furniture of inspiration, of writing, and of friendship



Crown, trumpet, table, and ink well (detail taken from table image).

A Beautiful Box of Gifts and Emblems of Presence Given to Calvin Green as a Token of Eternal Blessings....Copied November 25th 1847.”
Canterbury Shaker Village Archives, #788.



blend together; all elements are recognized by the Heavenly Parents—and by the thoughtfully inspired artist.

The gift received by CG is as dramatic as the one he had transmitted to SYW, but it is much longer, requiring fourteen pages and including two more pages of drawings. There is no question that the messages and images are designed to comfort CG. It would appear further that SYW has been well received in heaven—partially recognized no doubt by the elaborate jewel given him by Elisha—and that he has in turn collected messages from the Heavenly Parents to send back to CG—and done so under the auspices of Holy Mother Wisdom. It would not matter in this case that the notices did not come from the ancient prophets because the Heavenly Parents who sent messages had all—at least tangentially—known about CG as a child born into the early Shaker community.³²

Wisdom observes that CG himself also now has a robe, a breastplate, and a crown. A bright crown is the first image in the booklet; it is adorned with shining stars, flowing blue ribbons, and mounted by a golden orb encircled by more stars. Perhaps, even more importantly, the crown is further described as special recognition from Mother Ann whose message in the booklet recounts her early blessing of CG: “When you was a babe of innocence [sic] in youre natural Mothers arms I put forth my hand and blessed you.” Mother Ann’s message continues to affirm CG’s worthiness: “Then did I see My blessing become a Crown of fortitude upon youre head.”³³ The heavenly Mother Ann is confirming the initial work of the earthly Mother Ann. Very few Shakers could have enjoyed such a blessing.

The message from Father William utilizes the distinctive imagery of a sword. Other Shaker gift drawings are occasionally embellished with swords, and such a drawing would have been fitting in this case, as well. Lacking an artistic rendering, however, it remains fitting to remember that biographical sketches of Father William often included his early military service where, most likely, he would have carried a sword.³⁴ While, in one extended memory of Father William, he was quoted as saying that wars among nations would continue, he was also viewed as a man “remarkable for tenderness of heart, [who] would often weep, like a child, for the afflictions and distresses of God’s people.”³⁵ An early account of Father William also tells of his struggles to follow his sister’s teachings, such that sometimes when “he felt his mind released,” she would “spoil his comfort, overthrow his false hopes, and again plunge him deeper into tribulation than before.”³⁶ This story is repeated in Father William’s message to CG

using the metaphor of the sword when he states: “When first I knew my mother’s voice ... Deep in my soul she thrust her sword / Which made me bow before the Lord / When I again releasment felt / She thrust her sword up to the hilt ... Which made me tremble at His Word.” The sword of the spirit and of truth and of cleansing purity has been transformed into the sword/word of God. Such transformation is, further, the very material process undertaken by a blacksmith, the secular trade for which William Lee had trained.

In these messages from the Heavenly Parents, the visionary instrument has mined a rich mixture of Shaker historical lore and biblical imagery. Father James Whittaker sends CG a “Swift Winged Comforter,” a wonderfully imaginative gift to a man mourning the loss of his friend and co-worker—“swift winged” because the loss is recent and sharply felt. Furthermore, the gift of comfort responds to a private need even as a Comforter personifies the promise made by Jesus to his disciples in John 14 and 15.³⁷

There is another, slightly more complex image in the message from Father James when he offers CG “My golden cup / A precious mortifying drop.” Suffering from SYW’s recent death, CG needs a drink of the soothing deep water described in the text; at the same time, “mortification” carries many levels of meaning in the Shaker lexicon. Shaker religious exercises—that is, mostly their dances—were called “mortification” not because they were embarrassing, but because they sought to mortify/humiliate the natural passions of the carnal life.³⁸ Believers took to heart the instructions of Colossians 3:5-6: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.”³⁹ To drink of this cup is to become God’s new man, even in the image of the Creator (Colossians 3:10). For the Shakers, therefore, the “precious mortifying drop” is the elixir of salvation, and CG can thus be comforted for the rest of his mortal life.

Father Joseph Meacham’s message is a direct clarion call as it, too, seems to claim an early anointing of CG to proclaim the Shaker message to the world. “When you was yet young / In the prime of your youth / I gave you this Trumpet / A Trumpet of truth,” and the important trumpet is carefully drawn on the first page of the booklet. The trumpet is thus given in memory of the past calling, in anticipation of CG’s heavenly work, and in hope for a future generations of young believers.⁴⁰

Mother Lucy Wright, whom CG knew well enough to write a biographical sketch of, sends only a truncated message. She sends a vine

intended to symbolize his missionary work, as he ventured beyond “Zions border” to spread Shaker teachings. Mother Lucy signs her message with affection, somewhat more personal than the other parents, but although the “holy Savior” also joins in her blessing, the brief message lacks both depth and breadth.⁴¹

None of the Heavenly Parents, even with their personal touches and gracious emblems of encouragement, reach the depth of the final message from SYW. For all their metaphorical flourishes and biblical references, SYW writes to affirm the close association where “I in sweet love with youre feeling [did] blend.” He thanks CG for tending him in his declining days, and then he recounts a visit to bless his old haunts—a visit which he has made in the spirit. SYW went from house to house, finally returning to his “writing room in the Office.” The room seems to have been a wonderful place, with flowers, and vines and pleasant scents—filled, that is, with images and memories of productive and flourishing work. SYW settles his sights on a square table with a rose bush, a lamp, and an ink well. And SYW determines that this table shall be his final gift to his “kind Bro Calvin.” The instrument who has recorded this spiritual offering, hears a confirming amen: “Even so said Father Joseph.”

The generous drawing of the small table with the great blooming rose bush captures the largesse of the spirit of the gift. Great work has—and will—bloom, even on this small table. Most certainly, with its shaped legs and scalloped top, this is not a Shaker table; it is more ornate and, perhaps, heavenly. Many simple Shaker images seem to grow elaborate and expansive in heaven; just so, the crown and golden trumpet given to CG would be more at home with the sparkling diamonds in the breastplate given to SYW some five years earlier. Still, the heart of the gifts exchanged between the two men (and between the sisters and brethren across the communities) was meant to express the vastness of their spiritual commitment. Simple gifts carry divine import. As SYW’s penultimate words say, “And now it is yours you may place it where you have the most time to sit and Smell its Sweet flavors.”

Then this final message is repeated as if to underscore the truth that the full benefit of a Shaker life (or any life, for that matter) would be fully discovered in the afterlife. Tribulation suffered here, especially for those who prepared carefully by bearing the cross of celibacy, would lead to the cool waters, the rainbow diamonds, and the golden crowns of Heaven. Studying the past could only be completed by openness to the future. The

final drawing of the great rose bush on the square table promises both some comfort now and a full flourishing in the future. For now CG is given a place to work, to rest, to remember, and to gather wafting hints of the treasures to come:

A Table of Faith and Sweet Scented Rose Bush from Bro Seth y. Wells ... Good Brother Calvin you see this bears heavy marks of tribulation ... Often times when My soul has been under deep tribulation concerning spiritual writings The will of God has been wafted to me on the Sweet Odours from this Rose Bush.

CG lived another twenty-two years, dying in October 1869. He completed the editing of the *Divine Book* which was published in 1849 and of *The Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing* in 1856. He continued to work and tend to community business; he undertook a number of biographical sketches, embedding observations about Rufus Bishop and Benjamin Seth Youngs, among others, in his "Memoir." It was only in 1864 when he turned to write the "Memoir of Mother Lucy," that he paused to write about SYW. Here he inserted stories of the Wells family from Long Island who had followed SYW to the Shakers; he praised the literary acuity which SYW brought to the society, and CG proudly added that "I was intimately associated" with this faithful Shaker. In addition to being cheerful and kind, CG said, SYW was a man of principle who was "inflexibly upright."⁴² The intervening years had not dampened CG's admiration or affection for his friend.

Nor had the years lessened his appreciation of exuberant spiritual activity. As late as 1866, or thereabout, he comments on how pleased he was with the continuing (or renewed) practices of shaking, bowing, testifying, tumbling on the floor, and speaking in tongues⁴³ The careful editor and rational debater never lost his equal commitment to the infusion of spiritual, mortifying manifestations. In the last pages of his "Memoir," CG creates a phrase which summarizes for him—as it would have for SYW and other Believers—the complex faith that had claimed them. He calls on the "Eternal Shaking power" which animates Shaker belief. Here is a divine power which, as the full statement reveals, constitutes a community of relations, informs its beliefs, shakes out the useless and impure, and gives life to the new millennial creation. Only this shaking power would be found in the scent of roses, the glitter of a diamond breastplate, or

the careful documentation of a sacred text. Only in this power would the Shaker Brothers devoted to minute literary details and to spiritual dances find both order and joy.

Describing himself, in the end, as a “real Shaker,” CG winds down his writing with wry self-deprecation, all the while holding high the faith of a young Believer:

Such is the best that I could attain to—I dedicate to the children of the new creation of God which are nowhere exhibited but in the genuine Lovers & followers of the Holy Lamb & Heavenly Bride—the Lord Jesus & Blessed Mother Ann—to all such I give fervently My Everlasting Love and Blessing—for they are my only relation—they build & support the sublime, the glorious system of Shakerism—the highest the Holiest ever given to Men or Angels; for it proceeds from that Eternal Shaking power which shakes out all things that are not according to the Divine nature—O may all who have the privilege of this holy work walk truly with God!⁴⁴

Notes

1. I am grateful to Eugenia Herbert for her careful reading and editorial suggestions.
2. “‘Prophetic Revelations from the Ancient Prophets’ given by inspiration at different times in the First Order of the Church at New Lebanon,” 3 volumes (copied by Seth Y. Wells), ca. 1840-1843. Western Reserve Historical Society (hereinafter cited as OCIWHi) reel 78 VIII:B-147-149. Alonzo Hollister’s copy can be found at OCIWHi 81 VIII:B-195. Hereinafter referred to as “Prophetic Revelations.”
3. “A Beautiful Box of Gifts and Emblems Of Presence Given to Calvin Green As a token Of eternal blessings from all the Eternal and heavenly Parents Revealed to a Mortal Instrument by Our Lately deceased Bro. Seth y Wells Copied November 25th 1847” (NhCanS). I am grateful to Renee Fox, collection manager at Canterbury Shaker Village, for making this booklet available and for her ready response to various questions. The booklet is described by Daniel W. Patterson in *Gift Drawing and Gift Song: A Study of Two Forms of Shaker Inspiration* (Sabbathday Lake, ME: The United Society of Shakers, 1982), 87-88.
4. Calvin Green: October 10, 1780 – October 4, 1869; Seth Youngs Wells August 19, 1767 – October 30, 1847. Diane Sasson makes a similar observation about CG, noting that “his life story to a great extent parallels that of an entire generation of Believers who had individually experienced the shaking power of Mother Ann’s personality and had built the United Society in America.” See her Chapter IX, “Fishers of Men: The ‘Biographic Memoir’ of Calvin Green,” in *The Shaker Spiritual Narrative* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 189-209. Sasson also makes the interesting comment that CG was writing his memoirs between 1861 and 1866, in part during the Civil War, although he does not make reference to this contemporary event.
5. “Biographic Memoir of the Life and Experience of Calvin Green,” (1861). OCIWHi 51 VI:B-28. An initial transcription of this document was undertaken by Margaret (Molly) Gower, a 2009 honors student at Mount Holyoke College. It was published with careful annotation by Glendyne Wergland in *Shaker Autobiographies, Biographies and Testimonies, 1806-1907*, edited by Glendyne R. Wergland and Christian Goodwillie (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), 2-3:150. Hereinafter cited as “Memoir,” with CG’s original page number followed by that of Wergland and Goodwillie.
6. See, for instance, the “Preface by the Editors” in *The Divine Book of Holy and Eternal Wisdom* written by Paulina Bates where they carefully explained their editorial principles (Canterbury, N.H.: 1849), iii-vi. See, as well, my essay “*The Divine Book of Holy and Eternal Wisdom*: Sacred Scripture

from Holy Mother Wisdom, Pauline Bates—and Calvin Green” in the forthcoming *Shaker Visions of the Divine: Essays on Their Sacred Art and Scripture* to be published by the Richard W. Couper Press. In an account of his commitment to detail and careful thinking, SYW wrote of an early experience studying bookkeeping where he commented, “Order is heaven’s first law and Disorder is hell’s broadway.” Taken from a compilation of papers copied by Alonzo Hollister. OCIWHI 53 VI:A-14.

7. Letter to Matthew Houston, January 5, 1838. Taken from copies of letters and other papers made by Alonzo Hollister. OCIWHI 78 VII:B-151, p. 133.
8. Portion of an introduction to instruction for the youth (c.1840) and apparently repeated by SYW in 1846, copied by Alonzo Hollister. OCIWHI 52 VI:B-43 and now found in Wergland and Goodwillie, 1:433-37.
9. One statement from the account of his birth in “Memoir” is often quoted: “I was born A Shaker – Have lived A Shaker – and am sure I shall die A Shaker and live an immortal Shaker.” “Memoir,” 3-4/2:10-12 and 18/2:25-26. The account of being held by Mother Ann Lee appears in his introductory remarks to his collection of prophetic pronouncements, “A Prefatory Introduction to the Communications of the Ancient Prophets by the Inspired Writer, “ written and signed by Calvin Green, November 13, 1843. OCIWHI 78 VIII:B-147 and copied by Alonzo Hollister on August 24, 1873. OCIWHI 81 VIII:B-195, paragraphs 3-4.
10. “Memoir,” 353/3:4. *A Summary View of the Millennial Church, or United Society of Believers, Commonly Called Shakers* (Albany: Packard & Van Benthuyssen, 1823). I have used the second and revised edition, completed in 1848 by CG following the death of SYW. Hereinafter referred to as *Summary View*.
11. “Memoir,” 128/2:131. CG also reports that he had helped SYW collect and edit the testimonies that appeared in the 1816 *Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations and Doctrines of Mother Ann Lee*, (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1816). “Memoir,” 153/2:158-59. His work could also have been utilized for the later book, *Testimonies Character and Ministry of Mother Ann Lee*, ed. Seth Y. Wells (Albany: Packard & Van Benthuyssen, 1827), as well.
12. Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 87.
13. Benjamin Seth Youngs, *The Testimony of Christ’s Second Appearing ...* (Lebanon, OH: John M’Clean, 1808). CG included a brief appreciative biography of BSY in the “Memoir” where he also detailed some of the work he did on both the second and, particularly, on the fourth editions of *The Testimony of Christ’s Second Appearing*. “Memoir,” 374-87/3:83-95. For further details, see Mary Richmond, *Shaker Literature: A Bibliography*, 2 vols. (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, Published by Shaker community, Inc., Hancock, Mass., 1977), 1:212-13.

14. *Summary View*, 2. It is useful to observe that in his introductory remarks to the first printed collection of Shaker hymns in 1813-14, SYW had already cautioned against limiting the unfolding revelations of the Millennial Church. *Millennial Praises* (Hancock, Mass.: Josiah Tallcott, 1813). The hymnal included at least two historically and theologically important hymns attributed to SYW, "The Day of Redemption" (Pt. II, V) and "The precious Way of God" (Pt. II, XX). See, further *Millennial Praises: A Shaker Hymnal*, eds., Christian Goodwillie and Jane F. Crosthwaite (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 125-26; 149-51.
15. *Summary View*, iv.
16. See especially the introductory analysis by Sally M. Promey in *Spiritual Spectacles: Vision and Image in Mid-Nineteenth Century Shakerism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 1-11. It is also clear that the so-called younger generation could not have sustained a lengthy revival experience without the support and authentication of the older generation. See, for instance, Glendyne R. Wergland, "Validation in the Era of Manifestations: A Process Analysis," *Communal Societies* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 121-40.
17. Although CG has little to say in the "Memoir" about this ambitious publishing venture, there can be little doubt that he and, certainly, SYW were involved in verifying and approving its publication.
18. "Testimony of Seth Y. Wells," in Philemon Stewart, *A Holy, Sacred and Divine Book from the Lord God of Heaven to the Inhabitants of Earth* (Canterbury, N.H.: United Society, 1843), 371-74.
19. Sasson does a neat analysis of CG's dreams involving the color green and his own sense of being chosen, *The Shaker Spiritual Narrative*, 203-6. See, as well, "Memoir," 312-14/3:29-31.
20. "Memoir," 332/3:46.
21. "Memoir," 335/3:49.
22. In his overview of this process, CG wrote in "Memoir" that he had received messages from at least seventeen Ancients. "Memoir," 335-92/3:48-55. See "Prophetic Revelations."
23. This early section of the three volumes was introduced by its own title: "A Prefatory Introduction to the Communications of the Ancient Prophets by the Inspired Writer." It was signed and dated November 13, 1843. In "Prophetic Revelations."
24. "Memoir," 341/3:54.
25. Many messages received during the Era of Manifestations were the products of cooperative work among instruments—some receiving, some recording, some copying, some verifying. Furthermore, there were often as many levels of transmission in the spirit world as the mortal world. Spiritual hierarchies offered layers of verification and authentication, but they also cemented the personal and social commitments to a common cause.

26. "Memoir," 342/3:55.
27. "Prophetic Revelations," vol. 3, 109.
28. As close as one can come to a Shaker artistic rendition of such a sparkling gift are the multi-colored rainbows which decorate the top section of the "Emblem of Heavenly Spheres" created by Polly Collins.
29. *One Shaker Life: Isaac Newton Youngs, 1793-1865* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 104. See her chapter, "Intimacy between Men in Shaker Society," 95-108.
30. "Memoir," 362/3:72.
31. Daniel Patterson suggests that the booklet most likely belongs in the repertory of the artists living in the Church Family at New Lebanon. *Gift Drawing*, 87-88. Between November 1847 (the date of the booklet) and January 1848, however, CG was in Watervliet overseeing publication of the revisions of the *Summary View*. CG and SYW had also been busy editing the *Divine Book* at this time. To complicate matters further, CG wrote at a much later date that in January 1848, he had received a spiritual box from a Watervliet Sister, Maria Gillet, which they later interpreted as instructions to complete the editing of Benjamin Seth Youngs' book, *The Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing*, which he did in 1856. "Memoir," 379-82/3:87-91. CG was clearly occupied with many tasks and must have missed his collaborator. That he may have confused even this impressive spiritual gift with one or another of his projects would be understandable. Similarly, sympathetic colleagues from either or both communities would have worked to support CG with spiritual and human comforts.
32. Five Heavenly Parents are cited in the booklet: Mother Ann Lee (1736-1784) was the charismatic early leader of the Shakers; Father William Lee (1740-1784), Mother Ann's brother came with her to America; Father James Whittaker (1751-1787) also came over with Mother Ann, and he led the Shakers briefly following her death; Father Joseph Meacham (1742-1796) was the American-born leader of the Shakers from 1787 to 1796; Mother Lucy Wright (1760-1821), who had worked with Father Joseph, led the Shakers for over a quarter of a century.
33. Fortitude is an important Shaker theological component; for the Shakers salvation is not merely a matter of recognizing the grace of God; rather once the grace is perceived, salvation then requires taking up the cross of celibacy. Daily work—persistence, what the Shakers called "travel"—is required. The crown of fortitude is thus a recognition of that long, determined journey.
34. [Calvin Green and Seth Youngs Wells], eds, *Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations and Doctrines of Our Ever Blessed Mother Ann Lee*, 333-42. See as well, Christian Goodwillie, "Believers in Two worlds: Lives of the English Shakers in England and America" in *Protestant Communalism in the Trans-*

Atlantic World, 1650-1850, ed. Philip Lockley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 67-103.

35. [Green and Wells], *Testimonies*, 338, para. 18.
36. *Ibid.*, 335, para. 8. In this case “release” would suggest “to slacken” or to relax one’s disciplined thought or behavior.
37. “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things.” John 14:26; “I am the true vine and My Father is the Husbandman.” John 15:1; “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me; / And ye shall also bear witness because ye have been with me from the beginning.” John 15:26-27.
38. Reference to a nineteenth-century dictionary is especially useful for a full understanding of Shaker theology. The first entry for “mortify” refers to parts of a living body which may be dying and may soon mortify the rest of the body. The second entry refers to the scripture and thus to the practice of dying to carnal passions, that is, self-denial. These entries are reversed in a twentieth-century dictionary and, indeed, follow a first definition of a “feeling of shame.” Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (Springfield, Mass.: George and Charles Merriam, 1849). See, as well, the 1978 edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary*.
39. The full text of Colossians 3:5-6 reads: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry; For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.”
40. For a more comprehensive discussion of the imagery of the trumpet in Shaker music and art, see the presentation by Mary Ann Haagen and Jane Crosthwaite, “The Gospel Sound,” given at the Enfield Shaker Museum Spring Forum, April 21, 2018.
41. “Biographical Memoir of Mother Lucy Wright, “ copied by Alonzo Hollister. OCIWHI 51 VI:B-27. CG tells of delaying completion of his “Memoir” in order to write about Mother Lucy. “Memoir,” 437/3:140. In a neat inserted commentary on CG’s study of Mother Lucy, Alonzo Hollister, pauses in his transcription to praise this important work (23).
42. “Biographical Memoir of Mother Lucy Wright,” 29-34.
43. “Memoir,” 438/3:141.
44. “Memoir,” 440/3:142-43.