

“Late Recruits for Britain”: Anti-Shaker Propaganda During the American Revolution

A Reprinting of the 1782 *Dialogue*

Introduction by David D. Newell

In the summer of 1781, Mother Ann Lee and an entourage of English and American Shakers arrived at the Square House in Harvard, Massachusetts—the spiritual and temporal headquarters of the radical perfectionist society that had been gathered by the immortalist Shadrach Ireland. The Shakers intended to “gather souls” and hoped to recruit the remnants of Ireland’s society, many of whom still lived at the Square House after Ireland’s unexpected death about 1778. While the Shakers met with considerable success, they also encountered violent opposition from enraged mobs and were driven from the town on several occasions.

Why were the Shakers so violently persecuted in Harvard? One reason was that they were the victims of malevolent attacks in the press. Several pamphlets published in Boston and Worcester in 1782 and 1783 (when the Shaker leadership was often in Harvard) were exceptionally inflammatory, charging not only that the Shakers were “strange” and guilty of innumerable heresies, but also that they were agents of Great Britain and intent on subverting the American cause during the Revolution.

The most remarkable of these early anti-Shaker diatribes was *A Dialogue Between George the Third of Great-Britain and his Ministers* (hereafter referred to as *Dialogue*), published in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1782 and appended to only one of the ten known or presumed editions of Valentine Rathbun’s famous *Some Brief Hints on a Religious Scheme*, a bitter attack of Shakerism that was first published in 1781. An original copy of this rare Worcester edition is held by the Hamilton College Library as a part of its Communal Societies Collection. It is an obscure work, rarely cited, and never before made available to the academic community. It is reproduced here in its entirety.

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The first four years following the “opening of the gospel testimony” by Mother Ann Lee and her English associates were marked by episodes of persecution, arrests, mob violence and physical assaults directed against

her and the first Believers. The first wave of Shaker converts had visited Mother Ann “and the elders with her” at Niskayuna, New York during the spring of 1780. It was a time of terrible social and economic distress. The war with England had been raging for five years, with no end in sight. The spiraling depreciation of continental currency (the “sink of money”), the disruption of trade, and the burden of high taxes to support the war had resulted in considerable discontent and unrest in the New England and New York hill country. Poor harvests in 1779, and the particularly severe winter that followed, led to near-starvation conditions in some locales. Not surprisingly, the minds of many turned to things spiritual, and a religious stir commencing in 1779 grew into a powerful revival the year following—augmented, perhaps, by strange atmospheric phenomena, brilliant northern lights, and the remarkable “dark day” of May 19, 1780.

While these first Shaker converts rejoiced that “the great and mighty work which they had long been waiting to see” was unfolding, others were suspicious of the leaders of this “new and strange religion,” and soon “the whole neighboring country [was filled] with anxiety and alarm.”¹ News of the English enthusiasts and their adherents spread rapidly. One early account urged the curious to visit them “and see the ravings of the poor woman, that calls herself the *Elect Lady* [Mother Ann Lee], and those of her apostles, and hear what they say of the mighty power of God impelling them to all manner of wantonness; hear their prayers for the dead; and attend to all the frenzy and distraction among them, and their doctrine of spiritual marriage in particular.”²

That the leading Shakers were recent immigrants from England might have been of concern to some, but their embrace of pacifism and opposition to wars and fighting led others to suspect them of treasonous conduct and opposition to the American cause. Shaker historians, writing thirty-six years later, denied these charges:

As the testimony of the gospel was a testimony of peace, it gave occasion to the enemies of the cross of Christ to take advantage of the state of war in which the country was then involved, and to represent the Believers as enemies to the country.... As their accusers well knew it to be contrary to the faith of the Believers to bear arms and shed human blood, they flattered themselves with the hope of confirming the charge of treason.³

By early July, the Commissioners for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies in the State of New York were receiving reports and letters charging the Shakers with seditious conduct. After interrogating Ann Lee and a number of the English and American Shakers, the Commissioners decided to imprison them in Albany. Mother Ann and her companion Mary Partington were transported to Poughkeepsie because of her "Influence in bringing over Persons to the Persuasion professed by the People called Shaking Quakers." From there, it was the Commissioners' intent to have the two women "removed behind the Enemies Lines."⁴

While many of the leading Shakers were languishing in the Albany and Poughkeepsie prisons, the sect continued to grow; hundreds "opened their minds and confessed their sins" during the summer and fall of 1780. Most of the imprisoned male Shakers were released that November when it became evident to the New York Commissioners that, while the Shakers might be deluded, they did not pose a threat to the American government. Ann Lee was later freed on or about December 20. Two weeks prior to her return to Niskayuna, a prominent Baptist elder who had joined the Shakers the previous June (only to apostatize three months later) was putting the final touches on a document that would prove to be far more problematic to Shakerism, and lead to far more serious persecution, than anything attributable to the Commissioners. After signing his name to it, and adding the date December 5, 1780, Elder Valentine Rathbun planned to have the document printed.

Valentine Rathbun was born in December of 1723 in Stonington, Connecticut, the son of Joshua Rathbun. The Rathbuns of southeastern Connecticut were prominent Separate Baptists, some serving as exhorters, preachers and elders. While living in Stonington, he learned the trade of a clothier, or fuller of cloth. In 1769, when he was forty-six years of age, Valentine, with his wife Tabitha and their children, settled in what was then the frontier town of Pittsfield, Massachusetts. In 1772, a Baptist Church was organized on the west side of town, and Valentine was ordained as its first elder. The church grew rapidly, as many were drawn to it by Rathbun's fiery preaching. By 1780, following a period of powerful revival, it had a membership of several hundred and a reputation as a vigorous New Light church.⁵

In June of 1780, Rathbun and other church members heard of the Niskayuna Shakers and visited them. By that July, he and the vast majority of his church members had converted and formed a large Shaker

worshipping body, with members from Pittsfield, Richmond and Hancock. For a while, he was a zealous believer, fully convinced that Ann Lee and her associates were the “people of God.” But by September, Rathbun began to have doubts about his faith and shortly thereafter left the Shaker Church. The authors of the Shaker *Testimonies* describe Rathbun as “a bitter enemy” of Shakerism and a “great preacher” among the Baptists — “a man of considerable talents, and of a very violent spirit.”⁶

During late 1780, Baptist elders and church members from the newly-settled districts in western Massachusetts, southern Vermont and adjacent parts of New York agreed to form a new Baptist Association. Two major events had significantly affected these frontier churches over the course of the previous two years. The powerful wave of revivalism during 1779 and 1780 had led to significant increases in church membership and resulted in the establishment of many new Baptist churches. At the same time, many of these churches had suffered from the “Shaker delusion,” losing many of their members, and three churches had been entirely “broken up” by the Shakers.⁷ The date of the Association’s organizational meeting in 1780 is not known, but the newly established Shaftsbury Baptist Association held its first anniversary meeting on June 12, 1781 in Shaftsbury, Vermont. There can be little doubt that the topic of the “Shaker delusion” was discussed at these initial meetings, and it is very likely that Elder Valentine Rathbun was present.⁸

It is quite likely that Rathbun was encouraged by his Baptist associates to prepare a publication condemning the Shakers and exposing their theological errors. Elder Peter Worden of the Baptist Church at Cheshire, Massachusetts (a short distance north of Pittsfield) was one of the primary founders of the new Baptist Association and a close associate of Rathbun. His church had lost a large number of its members to the Shakers and he may have urged Rathbun to write against them. In any case, it is clear that Rathbun was already sufficiently embittered and angry with the Shakers and despondent about the fate of his brothers and children, most of whom remained in the community despite his own apostasy.

Rathbun completed a manuscript draft of his “account of the matter, form, and manner of a new and strange religion” on December 5, 1780.⁹ A copy was sent to Hartford, Connecticut and the first edition was printed at the offices of *The Connecticut Current* in February of 1781. It was advertised in the February 13 issue of the *Current* as “just published and now selling by the printers hereof.” It was a twenty-seven-page pamphlet and bore the

title:

*Some Brief Hints of a Religious Scheme, Taught and Propagated by a Number of Europeans, Living in a Place Called Nisqueunia, in the State of New York. Written by Valentine Rathbun, Minister of the Gospel.*¹⁰

Rathbun's pamphlet proved highly popular for it was both controversial and entertaining, and was reprinted at least nine times between 1781 and 1783. Following the Hartford edition, the next published edition was completed several weeks later at Norwich, Connecticut by John Trumbull.¹¹ It was obviously pirated from the Hartford edition and bore the same title. A third edition was published at Providence, Rhode Island by printer Bennett Wheeler and advertised for sale on May 12, 1781.¹² It bore a completely different title page even though the contents were identical to the two earlier Connecticut editions:

*An Account of the Matter, Form and Manner of a New and Strange Religion, Taught and Propagated by a Number of Europeans, Living in a Place called Nisqueunia, in the State of New York. Written by Valentine Rathbun, Minister of the Gospel.*¹³

The Providence edition, with its different title, was pirated and printed by Anthony Henry in Halifax, Nova Scotia the same year. Other editions with the *Brief Hints* title were published at Boston and Salem, Massachusetts, Hartford, Connecticut, and New York between 1781 and 1783.¹⁴

Amos Taylor, another Shaker apostate who wrote and published a work about the Shakers in 1782, declared, "There are few people in this land no doubt but what have heard of the contents of Valentine Rathbun's Narrative."¹⁵ There can be little doubt that Rathbun's attack on the Shakers seriously impeded their missionary efforts and must have been in some degree responsible for the violence directed against them during the 1781-1783 period. By the time Mother Ann Lee and her associates had left Niskayuna in the middle of May, 1781 to tour through Massachusetts and Connecticut, three editions of Rathbun's narrative had already been published. By the end of that year six editions were circulating and, not surprisingly, the first physical assaults and mob violence directed against the Shakers had taken place.

While Rathbun was highly critical of the Shakers in virtually all ways, it is curious that he did not charge them with seditious conduct or allege that they were enemies of America on account of their refusal to bear

arms. He was certainly aware of the rumors and charges, and knew of the findings of the New York Commissioners. Indeed, Rathbun had finished his monograph while Ann Lee was still in prison. It is possible that Rathbun did not charge the Shakers with treasonous conduct simply because he knew the charges were untrue.

One avowed enemy of the Shakers—quite possibly a resident who lived in or near Harvard, Massachusetts—decided to remedy that omission by publishing a remarkable and expanded edition of Rathbun’s work. It was published in 1782 at Worcester, Massachusetts; however, the publisher and printer are not identified. This new edition included the whole of Rathbun’s *Brief Hints*, but with a substantially revised title page indicating that the Shakers were “now Residing in Harvard.” Of greater significance was the addition of a second work (bound in, with its own title page) which purported to show that the Shakers were British agents and enemies of the American cause.

Rathbun, Valentine. *A Brief Account of a Religious Scheme, Taught and Propagated by a Number of Europeans, who lately lived in a Place called Nisqueunia, in the State of New-York, but now residing in Harvard, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, commonly called, Shaking Quakers. To Which is Added, A Dialogue Between George the Third of Great-Britain, and his Ministers; giving an account of the late London Mob, and the original of the Sect called Shakers. The whole being a Discovery of the wicked machinations of the Principal Enemies of America.* Worcester, [Mass.]: [s.n.], 36 p. Signatures: [A]⁴ B-D⁴ E².¹⁶

Page [27]-36, with separate title page: *A Dialogue, Between George the Third of Great-Britain, and his Ministers; giving an Account of the Late Mob in London, And the original of the Sect called Shakers. Who lately went from England to North-America.* London, Printed: Worcester, Re-printed, 1782.

J. P. MacLean, in his 1905 bibliography of Shaker literature reported a Boston edition from 1781 with this same title held by the New York Historical Society. No copy of this edition has been located. It is likely that MacLean’s entry is erroneous and that no such edition was published.¹⁷

It is the second and appended work (*Dialogue*) which is reprinted below in its entirety. The separate title page for *Dialogue* intimates that the work was (supposedly) first printed in London, and on page twenty-eight the contents are preceded by “London 1781.” While *Dialogue* is obviously a

work of fiction, it was written in such an authoritative manner and style that anyone who read this in 1782 would have presumed it to be factual. By adding *Dialogue* to Rathbun's *Brief Hints*, the reader could first read Rathbun's attack on the Shakers with its emphasis on their bizarre conduct, theological errors and heresies, and then move on to the anonymously authored *Dialogue* and discover that the Shakers were also agents of the Crown, sent by the King's ministers to America to "cut the sinews of the rebellion, as the numerous converts [to Shakerism] will refuse to bear arms against the forces sent to subdue the Americans."¹⁸ This cleverly prepared two-part publication was an inflammatory piece of propaganda, obviously intended to stir the public to vilify and oppose the Shakers. It helps explain why the Shakers were the recipients of such unmerciful abuse and violence while they were in Harvard, and why they were repeatedly driven from that town by large and unruly mobs.

Dialogue not only argued that the Shakers were seditious enemies of America, it also furnished a "secret history" of the 1780 Gordon Riots (viz. "the Late Mob in London"). The Gordon Riots occurred in London in early June of 1780, following the formation of a number of "Protestant Associations" by Lord George Gordon (1751-1793), a colorful personality and member of parliament. Gordon opposed the 1778 Papists Act which was intended to mitigate some of the more extreme provisions of official discrimination against Roman Catholics in Great Britain at the time, particularly absolving Catholics from taking the religious oath when joining the British military. One reason the act had been passed was obvious: England was finding it difficult to recruit enough soldiers for their conflicts in America and Europe. Many Protestants, however, opposed granting toleration to Catholics because they feared "Papist soldiers" might revolt and, doing the Pope's bidding, rise up in opposition to Great Britain.

On 29 May 1780 Gordon called a meeting of the London Protestant Association to prepare a petition demanding the repeal of laws granting relief to Catholics and to organize a march to the House of Commons the following week. Several days later, a huge crowd (estimated to be as large as 60,000) descended on the Houses of Parliament with Lord Gordon at the lead, ready to present his petition to Parliament that the 1778 legislation be repealed. The situation became chaotic, matters quickly got out of hand, and a riot erupted.

Large mobs carrying "No Popery" banners roamed the streets of London for several days, burning prisons, banks, and Catholic churches

and chapels. Finally on June 7 the army was called out and given orders to fire upon groups of four or more who refused to disperse. About 285 persons were shot dead, and hundreds more were wounded. Of those arrested, about twenty or thirty were executed. Gordon was arrested and charged with high treason, but was found not guilty.¹⁹

Why the author of *Dialogue* included the account of the Gordon Riots in his anti-Shaker work is unclear but suggestive. The author would have you believe that Lord Gordon was, like the Shakers, a tool of King George's ministers, i.e., that he was commissioned to raise the mobs only to create a situation where the King's troops could rightfully intercede and put down the anti-Papist insurrection, thereby reestablishing control of English society. A common thread, then, might be the pro-Catholic villainy of the King and Lord Gordon (as argued by the author of *Dialogue*) and the seemingly Catholic polity of the Shakers (as argued by Rathbun). Conversely, it could be argued that the author of *Dialogue* would have the reader see the anti-Catholic London mobs as heroic though hapless victims and, by extension, view any who would oppose American Papists (including the Shakers) as similarly heroic. Perhaps then, mobs could be seen as justified, whether in London or America, if their object was to oppose an unjust King, Papists and other unsavory churches, and abominable heresies.

Dialogue brings the reader into the King's chambers at Whitehall on the outskirts of London where six men were gathered to discuss some very serious business. Present at this clandestine meeting, in addition to His Majesty George III, were Lord North,²⁰ the Prime Minister; Lord Bute,²¹ a former Prime Minister; Lord Mansfield,²² a leading British justice; and Lord Germaine,²³ who was responsible for "American Affairs." Joining the King and these four ministers was "a well known toryistical Bishop" who is not identified. Plots were laid, mobs and riots formulated, and agents dispatched to America to "work on the foolish and superstitious passions of the most ignorant of the Americans."²⁴

Dialogue is not the only example of inflammatory propaganda directed against the Shakers while they were centered in Harvard. Another heretofore unknown publication also made its appearance in 1782, having been printed in Boston. It was a satirical work, intended to amuse, but it was full of cutting and biting assaults on many of the smaller New England sects and denominations, the Shakers included. Its author was probably aware of the 1782 Worcester pamphlet. The pamphlet bore the

odd title of *Three Curious Pieces* and it had much to say about the Shakers. Like *Dialogue*, it is an inflammatory work and contains the first (and only?) suggestion in print that Mother Ann Lee might be a fitting candidate for execution. An excerpt follows:

If you are so fortunate as to meet with a Shaker, when he is not running after his own finger;²⁵ I advise you to reason with him first, and if that should fail, remind him of the idolatrous Israelites in the days of Elijah, who leaped upon the altar, cried aloud and cut themselves with knives ... tell him that religion is first pure, then peaceable, not clamorous. St. Paul advises to let your moderation be known to all men; tell him that their prohibition of marriage, &c. is not the doctrine of truth but of satan, which is emphatically expressed by Paul to Timothy.... Tell him that the Elect Lady is a political tool sent from Europe to propagate the doctrine of non-resistance and passive-obedience [!], urging the people to withhold their taxes, to effect the destruction of civil government, and if the Americans were not very lenitive they would either execute or transport her for a sower of sedition; but whatever may be her pretensions she does not intend to leave her bones in this country, but after she has fleeced her proselites as the Israelites did the Egyptians, viz. collected all the jewels of gold and silver they are possessed of, she will find the way across the atlantic, and then set down and laugh at all the fools she has left in America.²⁶

What we can conclude is that *Dialogue* and *Three Curious Pieces* represent the most aggressive forms of anti-Shaker propaganda published during the 1780s. They were written in reaction to the Shaker presence in Harvard, Massachusetts, and were obviously intended to stir up opposition to the Shakers. Their publication was, in part, a cause of the mob violence the Shakers suffered while their leaders remained in and near Harvard. What is also evident is that the discussion between the King and his ministers, as reported in *Dialogue*, could not have occurred given the known sequence of events. The dialogue had to have occurred prior to Lord Gordon's formation of the "Protestant Associations," which would mean that the discussion between George III and his ministers would have to have occurred in April 1780 or earlier. However, *Dialogue* also reported that hundreds of converts were flocking to the Shaker standard—something that Londoners could not have known about until June or July 1780 at the earliest.

Dialogue has been reproduced here without correction. It is recorded within OCLC WorldCat as accession number 31991121. Five holding libraries are identified: Hamilton College, the Library of Congress, the American Antiquarian Society, University of New Hampshire and Allegheny College. Richmond's *Shaker Literature, a Bibliography* located complete additional copies at Princeton Theological Seminary, Massachusetts Historical Society and the New York State Library.

Notes

1. Rufus Bishop and Seth Young Wells, *Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations and Doctrines of Our Ever Blessed Mother Ann Lee, and the Elders with Her; through whom the Word of Eternal Life was Opened in this Day of Christ's Second Appearing* (Albany, N.Y.: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1888), 12.
2. [Joseph Huntington], *Letters of Friendship To those Clergymen who have Lately Renounced Communion with the Ministers and Churches of Christ in General, with Illustrations from Recent Examples* (Hartford, [Connecticut]: Hudson and Goodwin, 1780), 130-1. *Letters of Friendship* contains the earliest known printed mention of the American Shakers.
3. Bishop and Wells, 55-56.
4. New York Commission for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies, *Minutes of the Commissioners for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies in the State of New York, Albany County Sessions, 1780-81*, ed. Victor Hugo Paltsits (Albany: State of New York, 1910), 2:452-53.
5. William G. McLoughlin, ed., *The Diary of Isaac Backus* (Providence, [R.I.]: Brown University Press, 1979), 2:1094.
6. Bishop and Wells, 127.
7. Elder Valentine Rathbun's church at Pittsfield lost almost all of its members to the Shakers. Elder Joseph Meacham's church at New Lebanon converted to Shakerism en masse. Samuel Johnson's church at West Stockbridge likewise "went over" to the Shakers, although it is unclear whether this church was a Separate Church, a Separate-Baptist Church or some other independent or New Light body. Johnson had formerly been the pastor of the Presbyterian Church at New Lebanon.
8. Stephen Wright, *History of the Shaftsbury Association, from 1781 to 1853; with Some Account of the Associations Formed from it, and a Tabular View of their Annual Meetings* (Troy, N.Y.: A. G. Johnson, 1853), 13.
9. It is likely that Rathbun, while clearly intending to publish his manuscript, did not prepare a title for it. Consequently, it was published with three different titles, but the contents of all titles are identical, save for insignificant differences in spelling and punctuation. Rathbun introduces his work, on the first page of text: "At the earnest request of many enquiring minds, I have undertaken to present to the public the matter, form and manner, of a new and strange Religion."
10. Mary L. Richmond, comp., *Shaker Literature, a Bibliography* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1977), entry 1221. This is the rare "black orchid" of Shaker

- imprints—the first printing of the first edition of the first work about the American Shakers. It is extremely rare. OCLC WorldCat records only three holdings: Hamilton College Library, New York University Library and the Western Reserve Historical Society Library.
11. From the Norwich (Connecticut) *Packet and the Weekly Advertiser*, March 1, 1781, page [3]: “On Monday next will be published by the printer hereof...” (meaning Monday March 5). Richmond, entry 1220.
 12. This Providence, Rhode Island edition includes an advertisement (seeking to buy cotton rags) dated May 1, 1781. It was advertised in the May 12, 1781 issue of *The American Journal and General Advertiser*.
 13. Richmond, entry 1216. Why this edition was issued with a different title page cannot be definitely deduced. I am persuaded that this Providence edition probably was printed from a manuscript copy of Rathbun’s original holographic document, and as the printer was unaware of the other printed editions with the *Brief Hints* title, he prepared his own title from Rathbun’s opening text. See note 9, above.
 14. Richmond, entries 1216 through 1225. Richmond furnishes detailed descriptions of all ten known or presumed editions. Entry 1222 describes a “second edition” printed at Hartford in 1781, but no copy has been located. Mary Richmond reported that “the only recorded copy of this edition was sold at the Brinley sale” according to Shipton and Mooney (*National Index of American Imprints through 1800* (Worcester, Mass., 1969)). All of the nine located editions are very rare. The Hamilton College Library holds three editions in its American Communal Societies collection: Hartford, 1781 (Richmond, entry 1221); Worcester, 1782 (Richmond, entry 1218); and Salem, 1782 (Richmond, entry 1224).
 15. Amos Taylor, *A Narrative of the Strange Principles, Conduct and Character of the People Known by the Name of Shakers: Whose Errors Have Spread in Several Parts of North-America, but are Beginning to Diminish, and Ought to be Guarded Against* (Worcester, [Mass.]: Printed for the Author [by Isaiah Thomas], 1782), 4.
 16. Richmond, entry 1218.
 17. John P. MacLean, *A Bibliography of Shaker Literature with An Introductory Study of the Writings and Publications Pertaining to Ohio Believers* (Columbus, Ohio: Fred J. Heer, 1905), 65, 69. This is MacLean entry 505. MacLean does not record or cite the Worcester, 1782 edition.
 18. Valentine Rathbun, *A Brief Account of a Religious Scheme, Taught and Propagated by a Number of Europeans, who Lately Lived in a Place called Nisquenunia, in the State of New-York, but now Residing in Harvard, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Commonly Called Shaking Quakers. To which is added A Dialogue between George the Third of Great-Britain, and his Ministers; Giving an Account of the Late London Mob, and the Original of the Sect Called Shakers. The Whole Being a Discovery of the Wicked Machinations of the Principal Enemies of America* (Worcester, [Mass.]: [s.n.], 1782), 34.
 19. George Rude, “The Gordon Riots: A Study of the Rioters and their Victims,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, no. 6 (1956), 93-114. See also, Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 152-75.
 20. Frederick North, 2nd Earl of Guilford (1732-1792). He was the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer until March 22, 1782 and best remembered as the Prime Minister “who lost America.”

21. John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute (1713-1792). He had served as the first Prime Minister under George III (1762-63) and was considered by some as a “father figure” to George, and remained, says one account, “the last important favourite in British politics.”
22. William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield (1705-1793). A judge and politician and member of the House of Lords. At this time, he served as the Lord Chief Justice on the King’s Bench.
23. George Germain, 1st Viscount Sackville (1716-1785). At this time he was Secretary of State for the American Department.
24. Rathbun, 32.
25. See Rathbun, 12. Rathbun reported that “Sometimes their hand will stretch out, and after it they run,- through woods-cross lots-over fences, swamps, or whatever, until they come to a house” where they would find another believer, or contend with an unbeliever. The author of *Three Curious Pieces*, when describing the Shaker who was “running after his own finger,” must have recollected Rathbun’s report.
26. “By P. A. in Boston,” *Three Curious Pieces. Being a Ready Way to Unpopularity: or, Truth a General Enemy. Together with a Treatise on Orthodoxy; and Another on the Ambiguity of Nothing* (Boston: E. Russell, 1782), 7-8.