

George Fox's Knowledge of Hebrew

AN article bearing this title appeared in *THE JOURNAL*, vi. (1909) 140-5, and it was supplemented by some further notes on p. 162, among them being a reference by William C. Braithwaite to Green's *Short History of the English People*, vol. iii. p. 1339, illustrated edition, where there is an illustration of "The Hebrew Alphabet writ by Geo: Fox the Proto Quaker," from a MS. in the British Museum. The alphabet is written in a circle (with some letters in the middle of it), which, as reproduced in Green, is rather smaller than an ordinary post mark, and on the left hand side shows only the lower part of two or three letters. A reference to the original in the British Museum shows that the reproducer of it for Green's *History* had neglected to turn over a narrow flap or hem of paper which concealed a small part of the penmanship. A photograph of the complete circle has now been taken and is here reproduced, showing not only the missing parts but also the original size, rather larger than is shown in Green. Those who know the Hebrew alphabet will see that it is not here completed, and that the part which is written is not wholly accurate. Two letters are missing from their proper places (though one of them is written inside the circle), the fourth letter is wrongly written though it appears in the middle almost correct, and one stands two places before its proper position. The writing is on a small scrap of paper bound up by itself (as a separate page so to speak) in a volume of larger sheets, Stowe MSS. 746, and the scrap itself is numbered 139.

Next following this is a sheet in the handwriting of George Fox beginning with the words "arones linen breches he put them one when he went in to the tabernakell," which are believed to be from a passage in Fox's *Great Mystery* (1659). The *recto* is photographically reproduced in *Catalogue of a Selection from the Stowe Manuscripts Exhibited in the King's Library in the British Museum*, a copy of which is in D. Of the *verso* a photograph has now been taken and it is in D. Fox's writing is continued to about half-way down this side and then in another hand is the following paragraph: "the twelve tribes amongst the Jewe the twelve apostells amongst the Christians which Christ chose to him selfe by the command of god moses chose seventy elders christ jesus who ends the Jewes may chose seventy elders." Following this, in a third handwriting, we read "Note, all but this last paragraph was writ by the noted George Fox the Founder of the Quakers, the later part by Mrs. Fisher (the greater Scholar), mother to Mrs. Bland of Beeston, who exceeds 'em both being wel skild in the Hebrew tongue w^{ch} she has taught to her Son and dau'ter, May 26th 1709, she gave this to Ralph Thoresby." (*THE JOURNAL*, i. 8) This is doubtless Thoresby the noted antiquary (1658-1725) and the Beeston referred to is therefore likely to be the place of that name near Leeds, where Thoresby was born, not Beeston near Nottingham. Now on the scrap of paper first mentioned, the words "The Hebrew alphabet writ" etc. are in Thoresby's

handwriting. This is additional evidence of the fact that George Fox knew something of Hebrew. On this subject see Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, pp. 301-2.

A. NEAVE BRAYSHAW.

P.S.—William Charles Braithwaite on seeing the proof of this article draws my attention to a letter of George Fox in which Hebrew words occur, Swarth. Coll. vii. 80 in D. Like most of Fox's letters, it is not written with his own hand, not even the signature, but at the top he has written "ffor the poep" [Pope] and he has endorsed it "for the pope g. ff." The letter contains two Hebrew words, the English letters being also given. The two words are a good way apart from one another, not together, and they show several mistakes. A.N.B.

*Letter from a Young Man, a Quaker, in
Pennsylvania, to the late William Cowper,
the Poet*

Philadelphia,

3rd mo. 4th, 1796

MY ESTEEMED FRIEND,

Perhaps thou art surprised by this salutation, written by an unknown hand; and thy curiosity may be cited to know the character of the person, a stranger, who presumes to call thee his friend.

He is a youth, a native of this city, whose name hath never been sounded by the tongue of fame; a few years past fortune shed her smiles upon his commercial employments, and promised him a profusion of her stores; but adversity commissioned by Heaven, was sent to blast his hopes and visit him with the blessings of poverty. In the school of affliction, he has been taught wisdom; he has been compelled to meditate on those things which truly belong to his nature, and he now returns, with sincerity of heart, his gratitude to that greatly good and wise Being, who has over-ruled his designs. He is by birth and principle a Quaker, wilt thou permit such a youth to call thee his friend?

I have been a frequent reader of thy *Task*, and essays in verse; I admire thy poetical talents, but the efforts of thy mind in the cause of true virtue, have gained thee my love, and my veneration.—When my heart has been oppressed by deep sorrow, I have derived sweet consolation from the sublime truths, so beautifully illustrated and elegantly enforced in thy works; my love of thy virtue, and my admiration of thy talents, have led to frequent enquiries after thee.

About a year ago, I heard thou wast afflicted with a painful lingering illness; my heart wept for thee—my concern for thy happiness and health has been continually alive—with the tenderest solicitude for thy