

# The Peace Testimony in 1659

## More Light on John Hodgson<sup>1</sup>

SOME years ago Henry J. Cadbury presented to Friends House Library a copy of a rare Commonwealth tract entitled *A Letter from a Member of the Army, to the Committee of Safety, and Councill of Officers of the Army*, which was written on November 8, 1659. In the course of the description of the gift in this *Journal*<sup>2</sup> the question was asked whether the author, a certain John Hodgson, could be identified with the Quaker of that name who published *Love, Kindness, and due Respect* in the same year. The discussion then left open three possibilities:

- (1) that the tracts were by two different authors, despite similarities of argument and style ;
- (2) that the Quaker John Hodgson was a civilian in the summer of 1659 when he addressed his paper, *Love, Kindness, and due Respect*, to the restored Rump of the Long Parliament which was sitting at the time, and that he subsequently enlisted or re-enlisted in the Army;
- (3) that Hodgson was a member of the Army until the publication of the *Letter*, but was later cashiered, before the publication of *Love, Kindness, and due Respect*, which would then have been addressed to the Long Parliament after its second restoration, i.e., between December 26, 1659, and March 16, 1659/60.

It seems likely that the second possibility is the correct one, that John Hodgson the Quaker was the author of both tracts. The third of the possibilities may at once be eliminated: there is a copy of *Love, Kindness, and due Respect* among the Thomason tracts at the British Museum, and the printed catalogue of the collection gives the date of publication as June 23, 1659. Moreover, there is evidence to support the view that Hodgson the Quaker was a civilian at this time, and also to suggest that he had been connected with Friends for some years. Thomas Aldam sent his greetings to a John

<sup>1</sup> This article has a bearing on "Relations with the State," the subject of Chap. xiv in W. C. Braithwaite : *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, especially pp. 453-467.

<sup>2</sup> *Jnl. F.H.S.*, Vol. xlii, pp. 8off.

Hodgson in a letter written from York Castle to Captain Amor Stoddart in London as far back as June 21, 1653.<sup>1</sup> We know, too, that Hodgson was in London again in June, 1659, since he was mentioned by Alexander Parker as one of a number of Friends "out of the Countries" who were there to present the petition against tithes.<sup>2</sup> His association with Friends during the reaction under the Protectorate (1653-8), and his apparent freedom to move about as he pleased, make it very doubtful whether the Friend in question could have been under military discipline during this period.

If the two tracts had one author, the conclusion seems inescapable that John Hodgson joined the Army between June and November, 1659. But had they?

It would certainly be a rather striking coincidence if two writers of the same name had published tracts with such marked similarities of argument and style as we find in these two pamphlets; but it may also seem unlikely that a Quaker would have felt free to join the Army. On the other hand, we know that Friends generally were much concerned at this time about the question of bearing arms, and it is this fact which lends added interest to the case of John Hodgson. At periods of political crisis there have usually been a few Friends who have felt unable to adhere fully to the Peace Testimony. On this occasion, however, Friends were confronted with just such a crisis before the Peace Testimony had taken definite shape. Furthermore, they were in a stronger position to influence the course of events than at any other time in the seventeenth century; and they were more actively interested in the outcome of the crisis than has hitherto been generally recognised.<sup>3</sup> The reasons for this are too complicated to admit of a full discussion here, but a few comments may not be out of place.

On the title page of *Love, Kindness, and due Respect*, Hodgson signs himself as "a Servant of the Lord, who hath born his Testimonie for the Lord in the day of Apostacy, and hath been a Sufferer for the Testimonie of a good Conscience,

<sup>1</sup> A. R. Barclay MSS No. 17. See the *précis* in *Journal F.H.S.*, xxviii, p. 53, where the name is rendered as "Hodgson."

<sup>2</sup> Swarth. MSS., i, 84. The names of Hodgson and Captain Watkinson are omitted from the copy of the letter printed in Barclay's *Letters, etc., of Early Friends*, pp. 69ff.

<sup>3</sup> See James Maclear, "Quakerism and the end of the Interregnum," in *Church History*, December, 1950.

by Oppressors, under the name of a Quaker." In this particular context the reference to the "day of Apostacy" probably signifies the period of the Protectorate. Friends had consistently testified against Cromwell's departure from his early principles, and some, like Fox and Burrough, had warned him that compromise on the question of liberty of conscience was alienating the affections of his most faithful friends.<sup>1</sup> In the spring of 1659, however, an alliance between the republicans, the Army and many of the sectaries led to the fall of the Protectorate and the recall of the Rump of the Long Parliament, which had been expelled by Cromwell six years before. A number of Friends welcomed this development and the revival of interest in the "Good Old Cause" of civil and religious liberty which it seemed to imply. Edward Burrough and George Bishop both spoke of the preceding years as the late "Interruption," and others, such as Richard Hubberthorne, Isaac Penington and George Fox the younger, echoed Burrough's hope that

the Lord our *deliverer* hath begun to appear for the freedom of the Nations. . . . and we are in good expectations, that the Lord will suddenly so appear, as to free us from future oppressions in this respect, for we look for a *New Earth*, as well as for a New Heaven, according to the Lord's promise to us, which is to be fulfilled in these latter dayes.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, however, the optimism of Quaker writers was tempered by sober recognition of the fact that Army and Parliament were by no means consistent in their efforts to call a halt to persecution. The ruling minority was bound both by principle and self-interest to oppose pressure for a royalist restoration, but its desire to propitiate Presbyterian and Royalist sentiment made it only too liable to compromise on matters of civil and religious liberty at the expense of its radical supporters. Torn between these conflicting pressures, the leaders in Army and Parliament vacillated between opposing policies, fell out among themselves, and opened the way to a bloodless restoration of Charles II. It was this situation which ultimately made political action impossible for Friends. Profoundly concerned about the cause of religious liberty, they seem to have been

<sup>1</sup> See, in particular, the collection of letters by Fox and Burrough entitled *Good Counsel and Advice Rejected by Disobedient men*, 1659.

<sup>2</sup> E. Burrough, *To the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England*, 6 viii mo. 1659, p. 3.

more disturbed by the Army and Parliament's weakness on this score than by the fact that, whatever faction was in power, it represented a minority dictatorship. But so long as supporters of religious liberty like Sir Henry Vane maintained their influence, some Friends felt moved to co-operate with the civil authorities.

It is well known, of course, that a number of Quakers did in fact agree to act as commissioners for the militia during this year of anarchy. And it is possible that a Friend who was ready to do so might have been able to return to the ranks of the Army. It seems that Friends in Yorkshire, like their fellows elsewhere, were troubled about participation in military activities. There is a letter extant in which Samuel Watson of Great Stainforth replied to a paper by a certain J.H. "concerning takeing up Arms or ye like."<sup>1</sup> There is no evidence that this J.H. can be identified with John Hodgson, but we do know that Hodgson himself was concerned to vindicate the right of Quakers to bear office under the Commonwealth. The names of several of the Friends who were in London in June, 1659, over the petition against tithes appear again as signatories of *A Declaration of the people of God in scorn called Quakers, to all Magistrates and People,*<sup>2</sup> and among them is the name of "John Hodson." This declaration protests against the expulsion of Friends from civil and military offices and, to the charge that the Quakers had "unchristian'd" and "unman'd" themselves, replies with an assertion that they are neither incapable nor unwilling to serve their country and countrymen "in the lowest employments and places that are any ways tending to the thing that is just, and to the suppression of that which is evil."<sup>3</sup>

Although the argument of both the *Letter* and *Love, Kindness, and due Respect* is remarkably similar to that of numerous contemporary Quaker tracts, it may be significant that in one respect the writer of the *Letter* was evidently prepared to go further than other Friends in siding with the

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Watson MSS., p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> In Joseph Smith's *Catalogue* under John Crook, and under Quakers.

<sup>3</sup> *A Declaration, etc.*, p. 5. Cf. *Love, Kindness, and due Respect*, p. 4, where Hodgson himself protests against the view that "men were altogether incapable for the service of their Country, that cannot bow, swear, and give respect to persons, although in all things else duly qualified."

military junta which was in power during the autumn. Despite his misgivings, he could write:

Your adversaries in *Scotland*, and elsewhere, have learnt faire words, and glorious pretences: your words without fruits are vain; yet is our hearts more enclined to hearken to you, because we know theirs many among you have a great love to Gods people, and true desires begot in some to do well, if you would not hearken to your home-councillors that stifles before brought forth.<sup>1</sup>

Considerations such as these may well have led this Friend to take a step which was certainly uncommon, and perhaps unique. If the case of John Hodgson could be cleared up, it would cast a little further light on the evolution of the Peace Testimony at a critical moment in its history.

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*The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 78, No. 2 (April, 1954), pp. 143-176), opens with an article, "James Logan, proprietary agent," by Albright G. Zimmerman of Temple University. It deals with Logan's operations in the West India trade, which served to provide the basis of his own family fortune and to provide the Penns with the money which they had long awaited from the developing colony of Pennsylvania.

A paper on "Religious Beliefs of the Levellers," by D. Mervyn Himbury, of Cardiff Baptist College, appears in the April, 1954, issue *The Baptist Quarterly* (vol. 15, No. 6, pp. 269-276).

*The Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society of England*, vol. 10, No. 3 (May, 1954), includes at pp. 102-117, the Society's annual lecture delivered in October, 1953, by Dr. S. W. Carruthers, the Society's president. It is entitled "Conventicles and Conventiclors" and gives a picture of Presbyterian life in the South-west of England during the persecution which came in the wake of the Restoration of 1660. There are various references to the activities of Friends.

*Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, vol. 29, part 5, March, 1954, pp. 103-111, contains an article by the Editor, the Rev. Wesley F. Swift, entitled "How to write a local history of Methodism." The sources and types of documents enumerated in this useful guide would serve as a reminder of classes of records easily overlooked by the local historian in his search for material dealing with any religious denomination.

<sup>1</sup> *A Letter, etc.*, p. 4. Again on p. 5: "and loath are we to see you, whom the Lord hath so often tryed, and visited by his love, to be made as a thing of nought, even as others before you, through their own fearfulness."