

The knowledge may seem enriching to us, for the Westminster Assembly comprised some of the most stalwart Puritan personalities of the day. In few ways could Quakers have followed them in their State-religion, based upon the Catechism and the Westminster Confession of Faith which they produced soon after the Directory. But their marriage declaration proved so akin to the manner of Friends in its direct simplicity that we have never needed to seek further, and besides ourselves it has long satisfied many others. We are reminded of Henry Cadbury's suggestion in his "Revised Views of Quaker Origins,"¹ that when Quakerism can be viewed in the light of its first setting, the early Friends may be found to overlap their contemporaries more than we have guessed.

RUTH G. BURTT

George Keith to Henry More

THE original letter published herewith by permission is at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.² Not many letters of George Keith appear to be extant.³ Their absence from Quaker collections is easily explained by his later apostasy. This letter fits, however, into a large correspondence which is preserved, centering around the lifelong friendship of Henry More and Anne, Viscountess Conway.⁴

¹ Article in *The Friend* (Lond.), 1954, p. 5.

² Colonial Clergy, Case 8, Box 23. That this is an original is confirmed by comparing another letter of Keith owned by the same Society and printed in the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, 41, 1917, p. 381.

³ Ethyn W. Kirby, *George Keith, 1638-1716*, p. 165, refers to a few copies, but original letters are scarce.

⁴ Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Conway Letters*, 1930, has edited much of this material in admirable fashion. Though largely repeated in this book, her earlier essays are worth reading: "George Keith and the Cambridge Platonists," *Philosophical Review*, 39, 1930, 36-55, and (on Van Helmont) "The Real Scholar Gipsy," *Yale Review*, N.S., 18, 1929, 347-363. This correspondence must have been known to Dr. Richard Ward who in his *Life of More* (1710) cited from it, including passages showing the more favourable opinion which More came to entertain concerning the Quakers. These were thus available to the anonymous writer of *A Vindication of the Quakers, or an Answer to the B[isho]p of L[ichfield]'s Charge against them*, 1732, where they are repeated, pp. 23-28. More's fullest discussion of Quakerism published by himself is in the *Scholia*, added in the Latin collection of his works, in 1679 and later, to his *Divine Dialogues* published in 1669. See on Dialogue V, Section XV.

Henry More was from an early date intrigued by some features of Quakerism. By the time the Countess became an acknowledged Friend (about 1670) as well as her learned continental physician in residence, Francis Mercurius van Helmont, More was on terms of friendly debate with other Friends, especially Keith and Barclay and also William Penn and George Fox. The situation reflected in this letter belongs to this general background, and in particular it results from the formal debate in August, 1675, between four non-Quaker students at Aberdeen and George Keith and others. At least four books were published about this occasion. Each side claimed the victory. The Quakers claimed that as a result some of the students were converted to Quakerism. In the other account it was stated that the Quakers claimed that Henry More accepted the Quaker position.

The Quakers led off with *A True and Faithful Accompt of the most material Passages of a Dispute betwixt some Students of Divinity (so called) of the University of Aberdeen, and the People called Quakers, &c.* (1675). The students answered at length with *Quakerism Canvassed . . . Or a Most True and Faithful Account*, etc., where on page 66 they say, "it shall suffice us to give a specimen [of Quaker pranks] out of D. Henry Moir, as being both eminent and credible, and likewise esteemed so by our Antagonists [the Quakers], who have as we conceive, without any just ground, often reported through the City of Aberdene, that H. Moir is a Quaker and owns their chiefest principles in a Letter lately written to G.K." The students proceed to quote a passage from More's *Mystery of Godliness*, p. 111f., ending with the phrase, "Such wild tricks are those deluded souls made to play, to make sport of these Aerial Goblins that drive and actuate them." The Quakers answered in two pamphlets both entitled *Quakerism Confirmed* (1676). The second, written by Keith and Barclay, replied to the second part of *Quakerism Canvassed*, and on page 18 referred to the above quoted passage thus: "They place at large a citation out of H. Moir, whom they say the Q. have reported to be a Quaker." To a certain extent that was true. Keith and More had extensively compared notes in writing about their beliefs and had determined their areas of agreement and disagreement. On the Inner Light More's views very closely approached those that Keith expressed in his *Immediate Revelation* (1668).

More had indicated his criticisms of this early volume in writing. Keith printed answers to five of these in a later edition without mentioning More's name, and apparently prepared a fuller answer in manuscript, but this the Second Day's Morning Meeting did not approve for publication.¹ Meanwhile the limited agreement of More and Keith which their correspondence had indicated, and which had become known to some other Friends, led the students to say at the debate that Friends claimed More had become a Friend. Keith naturally felt that he would be blamed for this report, and his sensitiveness about the matter led him to send the following letter to More.

His anxiety in this regard was perhaps unnecessary, for More, referring evidently to this very letter, writes to Lady Conway:—²

He [Keith] sends me word that the Students of Aberdeen have writt a great book against the Quakers, wherein they tell the world that the Quakers give out that I am a Quaker. In which George concernes himself to be troubled at it. But no body that knowes me can take me to be a Quaker, and they that know me not, it is some body els they mean is a Quaker, or the image of their own brains not me.

Such misreports were numerous. On an earlier occasion More says he heard from a "sober person, a Bishop's son in Scotland, that G. Keith says that the reading of my *Mystery of Godliness* first turned him Quaker."³ This is very probably Henry Scougal, the son of Patrick Scougal, bishop of Aberdeen, mentioned in the letter below. The son was the author of the religious classic, first published in 1677, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*. It was a favourite among Friends, which is only another evidence that the author would be a congenial confidant of Keith. The two stories may be allowed to cancel each other out.

Though Keith's letter⁴ is brief and adds nothing to what

¹ Cf. Morning Meeting Minutes, 28 Feb. 1675/6.

² Corpus Christi College, 26 Febr., 1676, published in *Conway Letters*, 425. He had received the present letter from Keith "yesterday" and his account of it agrees with this text.

³ To Lady Conway, 14 July, 1671, *ibid.* 341. More's *Mystery of Godliness* had been published in 1660.

⁴ The history of this letter is not known. Other letters to More passed from Dr. Ward to James Crossley and were then sold at auction. Some obtained by J. Armitage Robinson were given to Christ's College, Cambridge; three came to J. J. Green. See *Jnl. F.H.S.*, vii, 1910, p 7ff., where two from Lady Conway are published, now in the possession of Friends House Library, London.

we have known from other sources, its text reminds us that within the circle of discussion and correspondence here under review a tone of controversy much more urbane than usual at that period marked the attitudes of the Cambridge Platonists on the one hand and the Quakers and especially George Keith on the other. His vitriolic spirit showed later when he came into opposition to the Quakers themselves.

Aberden 12 of 12th mo: 1675
6

Dearly Beloved friend

Whom I often remember in true love, and thy love and kindness unto me, for which thou art like in some manner to suffer, although I can and doe assure thee in the sincerity of my heart, I have given no cause therefor. The matter is this. Some Schollars here in the University of Aberden have printed a great book against the Quakers, full of lyes and pittifull stuffe, wher among other lyes, they tell the world, that the Quakers have reported, that Doctor Henry More is turned Quaker. when I did read this lying expression in their book, it troubled me more then anything else in it, for thy cause or least thou should have any occasion to repent of thy love and friendship towards me. I can assure thee neither I nor any Quaker that I know of ever said such a thing of thee but after that I received thy papers the last summer, before I saw thee at London, I did lett one man, called Doctor Keith, who was a sober man and had a kindness for thee see thy papers, and by him it seems the report passed, not that thou was a Quaker, but that thou agreed with the Quakers in owning immediate objective revelation, and that regeneration is substantiall (the said Doctor Keith so called is now out of this life) and to some freinds in this place I did show thy papers, who were discreet persons, and it is like they did say to some, that in some principles thou did agree with the Quakers, the which to be a truth I know thou art not ashamed of. Since I read and heard this lying report of thy being a Quaker (glad should I be that thou were indeed a Quaker) I have spoke with diverse of the preachers and University telling them the report was a lye, raised only by the students (no doubt to offend thee, and irritate thee if they could) without any ground given by the Quakers themselves, and particularly I have spoken with the bishop of Aberdeen his

son, Henry Skugall, who hath seen thee and have offered to let him see thy paper, wherin thou art so fare from being a Quaker, that thou finds great fault with them, for making a skisme from the church, and for diverse other things. I hope thou will take in good part this suffering for the poor Quakers, and for thy love towards some of them. and indeed it seemeth unto me to be a fitt occasion wherein a call is given unto thee, to publish to the world something concerning the Quakers and the Lord direct thee in it, and give thee a perfect understanding of his voice, and counsell. The occasion seemeth unto me to be fitt (I say) because the students book will passe through England and be at London er long, and in their book they cite a very sadde passage out of some of thy books in print, as if the Quakers were generally bodily possessed by divells and very (?) hobgoblins, a thing I hope thou art not persuaded of but rather, that many at least of the Quakers are possessed with the fear of the Lord. I shall not trouble thee further at present but recommend thee unto the Lord, earnestly desiring thee (if it stand with thy freedome) to write a few lynes to me how thou art (also I desire to hear how the lady Coneway is, & how Van Helmont is to whom is my dear love) and how thou doest resent this injury not proceeding from us, but indeed we suffer in it, and intend God willing to clear ourselves of that and many other lyes in the students book in our answer therunto. If thou writt to me direct it to me in Aberden in Scotland, and send it by post, and it will come safe. farewell.

I am thy reall freind in the truth
George Keith

[Written in margin]

The papers I promised to thee to cause cobby over, which were an answer unto thy papers, are near ready & will be shortly sent unto thee, and I have heard lately from London, my book of Immediate revelation is near reprinted to which I have added a postscript or appendix containing an answer to five of the greatest of thy objections, but concealing thy name. I have desired to send the paper unto thee, before it be printed, if conveniently it may be done, I hope it shall pretty well satisfie thee.

HENRY J. CADBURY