

## Early Use of the Word "Quaker"

WHILE looking up the references to Quakers in the lately published volume 5 of *Aberdeen Council Letters*, edited by Louise Taylor, I came across in an earlier volume one dated 22 February, 1640. This by its ending, "God Save the King", is evidently a proclamation. It is Letter 135, Vol. 2, 1950, p. 174. In order to give its Scots flavor to the eye, as I cannot to the ear, I shall transcribe its beginning literatim.

Where as the provest baillies and councell of this burghe by their late act groundit upon the acts of Parliament and Lords of his maiesties secret councell did appoynt and ordane that no inhabitant within this Burghe should resett supplie intertane or furnish meat or drink to or keep correspondence or intelligence with or lett hous or chambers to Jesuits preists or traffiqueing strangers papists or Quackers under payne of ffyve hundreth markes scots money by and attour their censure and punishment to be inflictit on them according to their severall qualities and degrees upon the first legall convictione thairanent. And that no papist or quaker residing within this burghe or other inhabitant within the same sould resett in their hosses ludge or intertaine any papist or quaker or any persone suspect of aither of the same . . .

In a note to the word "act" in the second line of this text the editor refers to an act against papists of 8 January, 1640, published in *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen*, i. 1625-1642, 1871, p. 196.

Here apparently is a document well prior to 1650, the year when George Fox says the word Quaker was first used, a document which employs the term no less than five times, bracketed with Papists, Jesuits or the like. Naturally this raises suspicions. Again and again I have traced such early occurrences and have found them due to error.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly I wrote to the editor of the Aberdeen Letters, who promptly admitted that the date was probably wrong, having been misread for the original contemporary 1670 by the person who about 150 years ago sorted the letter from a confused mass. The latter date suits an Aberdeen Act against Papists

<sup>1</sup> An instance in the Quarter Sessions Record of Chester in 1607 was noted and corrected in the *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* in 1949, Vol. xli, pp. 4f., 91. I had already dealt with this, a misprint of the word "cocker," in the *Friends Intelligencer*, 98, 1941, p. 330.

and *Quakers*, dated 16 February, 1670, published in the above named *Extracts*, ii. 1643-1747, p. 261.

Having thus disposed of this instance of a premature use of "Quaker", I naturally turned again to the classic instances in the Clarendon MSS at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, whither I was travelling anyhow a few days later, and could once more examine them directly. There are three of them. The first (No. 1034) is filed and calendared under 1637! But it bears no date and evidently belongs about forty years later. Cf. Besse, *Sufferings*, i, 260, Anno 1677. It is a petition to the King and Privy Council and is entitled "The case of several Protestant Dissenters called Quakers, within the County of Hereford, stated in relation to their late and present sufferings upon old Statutes made against popish Recusants."

The second and third (Nos. 2624, 2639) are definitely dated in 1647. Though calendared in the *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers*, i, 1872, and printed in whole or in part nearly a century earlier in *Clarendon State Papers*, Vol. ii, Appendix and p. 383, they were apparently little noticed until they were quoted in the Oxford English Dictionary, viii, 1910, s.v. Quaker. Since then they have been accepted by Quaker historians as by Rufus M. Jones, *George Fox, an Autobiography*, 1903, p. 125 f., note (The fascicle Q of the dictionary was issued in October 1902); Norman Penney, *Cambridge Journal of George Fox*, 1911, i. 395 note; W. C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 1912, p. 57 note. Cf. my caveat, *ibid.*, 2nd edition, 1955, p. 550.

That in Clarendon MS. 2639 reads:

There are a sect of women lately come from foreign parts and lodged in Southwark, called Quakers, who swell, shiver and shake when come to themselves (for in all the time of their fit Mohamet's holy ghost converses with them) they begin to preach what hath been delivered to them by the Spirit.

This is a letter dated 4th November, 1647 (new Style) signed by John Wilcocks, a pseudonym for Secretary Nicholas, in the latter's handwriting and addressed to Monsieur Edgeman. But this and other parts of the letter are evidently based on No. 2624 in the same collection, the copy of a news letter dated, London, 14th October, 1647 (old Style) and written without address or signature in the hand of Mr. Trethewy.

Thus the occurrences are reduced to an original and a copy. Can the original be nullified or in any way traced? It may be well to quote enough of the text of No. 2624 to show its animus and character. Its mood is Royalist and High Church.

Presbytery was yesterday voted in the Lower House being carried by 25 voices . . .

I hear of a sect of women (they are at Southwark) from beyond sea called Quakers, and these swell, shiver and shake, and when they come to themselves (for in all this fit Mohamet's holy ghost hath been conversing with them) they begin to preach what hath been delivered to them by the Spirit.

There are other new sects coming forth and good reason, for the House of Commons hath, upon a debate of the Fifth Article, given a toleration to all to exercise the liberty of conscience but to Papists and the Common Prayer . . .

Judge Jenkins was sent yesterday to Newgate . . .

The army takes care in all counties to purge the militia of malignants as they call them, and put Anabaptists and other violent sectaries in their places.

The King between Parliament and army is in a sad condition, for they'll agree (like Herod and Pilate) to crucify him.

There can be no doubt of the accuracy of date of this letter. For example, contemporary printed newsbooks report for October 13th: "The Commons likewise insisting upon the business of religion passed several particulars as that Presbytery be established." (*A Perfect Diurnal of Some Passages in Parliament*, Numb. 220); "Judge Jenkins late prisoner in the Tower is removed thence to Newgate" (*The Perfect Weekly Account*), Numb. 4; cf. the French *Le Mercure Anglois*, Num. 5, p. 58.

I have cited the printed newsbooks to confirm the data of the manuscript news letter, not to suggest that they were the source of it. They may have been used and I suppose it is possible that some newsbook that I have not seen, less sober than these quoted, is the real source of the reference to Quakers in the letter of October 14th. But the use of the word Quaker in the Clarendon MSS for 1647 though reduced in effect to a single instance, remains so far unchallenged, untraced to a source, and unparalleled so early.

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