

The Quakers and 1659: two newly discovered broadsides by Edward Burrough

THE last year of the Interregnum was a time of great upheaval and radical excitement.¹ In April 1659 republican and sectarian agitation in the Army finally brought down the Protectorate, and in the following month the Rump of the Long Parliament was restored. Dorothy White, a Quaker, proclaimed that God had “come to turne the World upside down”; “now shall the Lamb and Saints have victorie”, wrote George Fox.² Optimistically Quakers sent in lists of suitable justices. They petitioned against tithes. They declared a willingness to serve the Commonwealth.

Radical exhilaration was matched only by the trepidation of conservative and moderate alike. “Sir such persons as are now at the head of affaires will blast religion if God prevent not”, a correspondent of Richard Baxter’s wrote apprehensively after the change of government.³ This remained the prevailing image of the governments of that year.

In reality fears were exaggerated: the majority of Rumpers were no religious revolutionaries—they followed a policy of conciliation of all, satisfying none. Some Quakers were freed by a Rump committee; others served in the militia, army, and probably in the volunteer regiments raised at the time of the Booth rising. But this merely served to terrify Presbyterians and to whet radical appetites. Sectarian disappointment was all the more bitter when

¹ For 1659 see Godfrey Davies, *The Restoration of Charles II* (Oxford, 1969); A. H. Woolrych, “The Good Old Cause and the Fall of the Protectorate”, *Cambridge Historical Journal*, xiii, 2 (1957), 133–161; A. H. Woolrych, “Last Quests for a Settlement 1657–1660”, in G. E. Aylmer (ed.), *The Interregnum* (London, 1972), pp. 183–204. For the Quakers see A. Cole, “The Quakers and Politics 1652–1660” (University of Cambridge Ph.D thesis, 1955), chs. 3–8; and his “The Quakers and the English Revolution”, in T. Aston (ed.), *Crisis in Europe 1560–1660* (London, 1970 edn.), pp. 341–56.

² Dorothy White, *A Diligent Search* (n.p., 1659), p. 4; G. F. [George Fox], *The Lambs Officer* (London, 1659), p. 13.

³ Dr. Williams’s Library, MS. 59: Baxter’s Letters, vol. 6, fo. 235.

Parliament voted for tithes and issued a religious declaration which fell far short of the expected toleration.

Clearly radical demands would not be met. "Alas, alas, the Glorious work of Reformation hath been interrupted before our eye", Edward Burrough bewailed in September. Feelings of betrayal led many Quakers into open acceptance of the Committee of Safety which replaced the Rump in October, though not without reservations. "Be less in words, and more in action", Francis Howgill warned them. The doubts were justified, for tithes were not abolished, toleration was not established, much-craved social and legal reforms were never enacted. In December the Rump returned for a second time. By early 1660 little hope remained: "Where is the Good Old Cause now?", asked Burrough, "and what is become of it?"⁴

Meanwhile Presbyterians had been speculating on the possibilities of a "second Deluge of Antichristianisme over the Protestant Churches"; the gentry had fumed over the "upstart Militia". Now they drew together against the sectarian threat. General George Monck entered London as "England's St. George", a saviour of religion—his remodelled army "beinge as they said bound in oath to Leive never a sectarian in England."⁵ In January and early February petitions from the gentry and ministers pressed for the readmission of secluded members to the reresetored Rump and for the suppression of the sects. Presbyterians "began openly to desire the king", wrote Lucy Hutchinson, "not for good will to him, but only for destruction to all the fanatics". "Who ever heard of Ranters, Quakers &c under the King?" someone asked Baxter. And so a year after the fall of the Protectorate the King came back: the nation had been rescued from subversion at the hands of the sects.⁶

⁴ E. Burrough, *To the Parliament of the Common-Wealth of England* (London, 1659) [12 Sept.]; Francis Howgill, *An Information and also Advice* (London, 1659), p. 5; E. Burrough, *To the Whole English Army* (London, 1659) [dated: London, 4 xi 59] (i.e. Jan. 1659/60).

⁵ E. Reynolds *et al.*, *A Seasonable Exhortation* (London, 1660), p. 4; *The Parliamentary Intelligencer*, 3 (2–9 Jan. 1659/60), p. 18; George Willington, *The Thrice Welcome and Happy Inauguration* (London, 1660), pp. 4–5; Friends House Library, Swarthmore MS. V. 93.

⁶ Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* (London, 1968 edn.), p. 317; White Kennet, *A Register and Chronicle* (London, 1728), i. 92.

The Rawlinson manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, contain two interesting Quaker tracts from that year: unprinted broadsides by a leading Friend Edward Burrough, "To the Parliament of the Comonwealth of England Sitting in Westminster", and "To the Parliament and Army (in generall) of the Commonwealth of England".⁷ Both are among early Quaker manuscripts collected at the beginning of the eighteenth century by the Library's Assistant Keeper, Thomas Hearne. Some items in the collection are in the original hand of the authors, others are copies.⁸ Although the Burrough pieces are undated and not in his own hand, their authenticity cannot be doubted.

Precise dating is difficult. *To the Parliament of the Comonwealth* was directed at the Rump in 1659; but was it the restored or reresetored Rump? I would say the former. It is of course possible that Burrough wrote it in late December or early January 1660. However the tract lacks that mixture of disillusionment and urgency characterizing Quaker writings of those months. And it is unlikely that Burrough would advocate the inclusion of Presbyterians in his proposed committee in the light of their role in the risings of August 1659.

The restored Rump, then, was probably the recipient of the proposals, which would narrow the range from 7 May–13 October. Can we narrow it further? There is really very little to go on in the contents of the pamphlet. Burrough's proposals for a Quaker role in a political settlement were suggested by others in 1659: by the Independent Samuel Duncon in July, and in October by

⁷ Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Rawlinson D. 397 fos. 13, 17. (*To the Parliament of the Comonwealth* should not be confused with two other tracts of that title by Burrough—one written 12 Sept., the other 6 Oct. 1659.) The broadsides do not appear in G. K. Fortescue (ed.), *Catalogue of the Pamphlets . . . collected by George Thomason, 1640–1661* (London, 1908); or in D. G. Wing, *Short-Title Catalogue* (New York, 1945); *A Gallery of Ghosts* (Baltimore, 1967). Friends House Library has no reference to them.

⁸ The collection includes the printer's copy of an interesting tract by John Stubbs called "A Primmer for children to Read"—it is in his own hand and appears never to have been printed. There are some pieces by Myles Gray (also in his own writing and also unpublished), and some copies of tracts by Burrough which appeared in his *Works*. See Rawlinson D. 379 fos. 2–5, 25–38, 39–44, 45–129.

the Quaker Edward Billing and Sir Henry Vane's man Henry Stubbe.⁹ Stubbe did not anticipate a role for Presbyterians; Duncon, whose tract was written before the Booth rising, did. Indeed Duncon's proposed solution was very similar to Burrough's, so the latter's may have been written before August too. Moreover, the tract lacks the pessimism of other Quaker pamphlets written after the Rump's declaration for tithes on 27 June. So I would place it sometime between 7 May and 27 June.

To the Parliament and the Army (in generall) was also written for the Rump. The tract's urgency towards the end—talk of “yett an inch of time”, “Blood is like to runn downe”—might point to early 1660 when it was clear that the “Good Old Cause” was doomed. That Burrough needed to refer to the “Army (in generall)” also suggests a period when it was not enough to talk in terms of “the Army” (until the split with Monck this had been possible). Burrough's qualified offer of support would make sense too in the light of the rumours of sectaries, Rumpers, and sections of the Army combining against the secluded members in the early months of 1660.

Yet all this is hard to reconcile with the beginning of the tract. Here Burrough seems to be looking back, in conventional Quaker form, on the errors of the Protectorate: the degeneration from the “Good Old Cause”, and the purge of Friends from office. In fact the sort of survey that would be expected when the Rump was restored for the first time, not the second. So I would plump for this earlier period. Dissatisfaction over the Rump's “vote for Tythes” comes through strongly, suggesting a date after the end of June. References to rebelling priests—Burrough's “how cann you expect any help from us to defend you”—seem to point to the period after 7 July when the Militia Act named Quakers as commissioners, Presbyterian-Royalist plotting increased, and volunteer regiments were raised to combat the unrest. Indeed some passages sound as though Booth's rebellion was actually in progress. The broadsides, then, could have been written any time during

⁹ Samuel Duncon, *Several Proposals* (London, 1659), postscript; E.B. [E. Billing], *A Mite of Affection* (London, 1659), pp. 9–10 (proposal 27); Henry Stubbe, *A Letter to An Officer of the Army concerning a Select Senate* (London, 1659), pp. 59–63.

July and early August—though I think a date in August the more likely. Parliament had to look increasingly to the sects for support; Burrough obviously felt it opportune to press his demands.

Why did the pamphlets never appear in print? Perhaps they did and no copies have survived, though one would expect Friends House Library to have a copy. Alternatively Burrough may have written the pieces for circulation in manuscript or solely for delivery to Parliament. Events moved rapidly in 1659, so it is also feasible that Burrough found his pamphlets out of date before he had a chance to publish them and therefore had to lay them aside. Or maybe Burrough encountered opposition from other Friends in the way that Billing had with his *Mite of Affection*.¹⁰

Regardless of those problems, the tracts are important. They were written by a leading Quaker—one of the main political spokesmen of the sect. They are excellent summaries of the Quaker position during the final year of the Interregnum. Also interesting are the Leveller echoes: “Birthright Priviledge”, “free born of the nation”, “just rightes and libertyes”, “the agreement of the people”. But of course their main significance lies in what they tell us of the Quakers’ attitude to the government in 1659.

If, after the work of Professor Cole,¹¹ anyone still believes in Quaker pacifism prior to 1660, Burrough’s declaration should put an end to it. If Parliament and army would “establish Righteousnesse”, Burrough told them, “Oh then we would rejoyce, and our lives would not bee Deare to lay downe”. The Quakers expected to play a role in the events of 1659; they were, as John Crook and other former justices and officers explained elsewhere, neither

¹⁰ For J. L. Nickalls’s argument that Billing’s tract was not endorsed by the movement see his “The Problem of Edward Byllynge” in H. H. Brinton (ed.), *Children of Light* (New York, 1938), pp. 122–3.

¹¹ Apart from individuals like William Dewsbury, the earliest Quakers were no pacifists. As Professor Cole has persuasively argued in his thesis, the sect “projected their pacifism backwards”, motivated partly by disillusionment with political action, partly by a fear that Quakerism as a movement faced extinction with the return of Charles II in 1660. (Cole, “Quakers and Politics”, p. 284.) For the argument see chs. 1, 2, 9 of his thesis, and also his “Quakers and the English Revolution”, *op. cit.* I examine the Quaker role in 1659 in an article which touches also upon the problem of Quaker pacifism: “The Quakers, 1659, and the restoration of the monarchy”, *History*, lxxiii (1978), 193–213.

“uncapable nor unwilling” to serve their nation.¹² We know that the sect demanded the restoration of all Quakers purged from civil and military office because of their beliefs.¹³ Burrough reiterated this. But he went further, and called for the setting up of a council composed of the various religious interests, a council in which he advocated Quaker representatives should play an equal part in the drawing up of a solution for the government of the country. (The fact that non-Quakers—Duncon and Stubbe—made similar propositions shows that Burrough was not so isolated as some might anticipate.)

We must let Edward Burrough speak for himself.¹⁴

*To the Parliament of the Comonwealth of England Sitting in Westminster*¹⁵

A servant of the lord a lover of peace and a friend to just government doth present unto you in the name of the liveing god and by the moveings of his eternall spirrit on the behalfe of this distracted and opressed nation and in bowells of Compassion to all sortes of people in it in order to the restoring of peace and righteousnes amongst all men, and that the judgements of the lord depending may be turned away from this people. For these causes it lies upon mee to propound this unto you which would be a way to worke reconciliation and to bring the nations under your charge into unity peace and rest.

Whereas the hands of the lord hath been stretched forth in divers maners in this nation and great hath been the overturnings and breakings down among the mountaines of the earth and he hath pulled downe and sett up according to his pleasure, yett nevertheless great oppression and injustice remaineth upon us, and great discord and unhappie Contention lodgeth among the people, breaking forth into evill and Jelousies and falce feares one of another and into much hatred and envy one against another and the effect herof may prove misery and destruction to the nation except the hand of the lord prevent and come between to work

¹² John Crook *et al.*, *A Declaration of the people of God* (London, 1659), p. 5.

¹³ Crook, *op. cit.*, p. 5; Francis Howgil, *To all Commanders and Officers* (n.p., 1657), p. 3; Edward Burrough, *Good Counsel and Advice Rejected* (London, 1659), p. 15; Anonymous, *To the Generals, and Captains* (n.p., [1657?]), pp. 2, 4 (written by those “who have been turned out of your Army . . . under the name of Quakers”).

¹⁴ In transcribing the manuscripts abbreviations have been extended (thus “agt” becomes “against”), “ye” and “yt” have become “the” and “that”; but I have not interfered with punctuation, capitalization, or spelling.

¹⁵ MS Rawlinson D. 397, fo. 17.

through you a reconsiliation. And for as much as this people over whom you are Set to rule are divers in their judgments concerning government and alsoe in their profession of religion and seeing that this nation consisteth of men of divers kindes of speritts being at a great strife among themselves, some crying for such a way of government and others for another maner of government, and yet all these are free born of the nation, and ought all to bee preserved and defended in their just rightes and libertyes by you and ought not to be destroyed one of another; neither ought some of them to be made slaves, and others be made free by you but by the law of god all ought to live in Freedome and to possesse in peace (and without oppresstion from you and one from another) their priviledg in the nation both as [men?]¹⁶ and as Christians, which your selves have promised to us and which we looke to enjoy.

And therefore in order to the peaceable and welbeing of all sortes of people and that they may seeke out a way to live in peace, and love one by another in civill government this I propounde to you even in the name and by the Authority aforesaid, that you speedily doe order the choosing of a Comittee, and Councell of men Consisting of six or eight or more of the ablest and soberest men of each sort of profession in the nation (that is to say) soe many of them called presbiterians soe many of them called Independents and likewise soe many of them called Anabaptists; and soe many of them called Quakers; and likewise of the rest of all sortes of men, as you in wisdome shall thinke fitt.

And that such a Comittee chosen by you as aforesaid doe first cleerly lay downe the grievances and oppressions wherwith any of them are oppressed and vexed one by another. For the generall part of vexations at this day are from some sort of people to others and the cry of both reall and supposed oppression is by one sort against another, each one saying they are vexed one through another. And alsoe that all these sortes of men in Councell together by sober debate in the feare and wisdome of god doe seeke out a way and propound it among them selves how to remove the oppressions and grievances which lies upon them one by another in relation to a civill State. And alsoe that they may seeke out the way of an equall and just government, wherin all them for time to come may be defended and preserved in peace in Civill government with out oppressing one another. And that the way and maner of a government may be Stated among them selves, which may (if possible) bee the agreement of all, and consented to by them all, that they may come to live in unity and peace in a Civill State, and may be in freedome from all false feares of murderous plotts and deceitfull contriveing one against another, and may not any longer be oppressed one sort through another, nor make lawes, nor desire them of you to inbondage the Consciencs nor to oppresse the bodyes and estates one of another.

But if such a Councell of men should not agree, or concurr, in

¹⁶ The manuscript has an arrow indicating an insertion, yet nothing has been added: "men" is my suggestion.

one way or maner of Civill government, according to what each ones desires are, then let each sort propound and state before you and the nation their own particuler desires, what maner of government they would have. And let all these causes be brought before your house, as the supreame, that your vote may passe according as you shall be guided, to establish the agreement of the people; and by such proceedings would many good issues spring. First each one sort of people should know another and what way and maner of government each one of them would have; and you shall know what the mindes and desires of them all are, and then you might the better Judg of all, and whose desires are most equall, and most according to the law of god, for this I am assured is none of the least causes of the present jealousies false feares and heart burnings, and envyings that are in peoples hearts one against another, because people are much in ignorance one sort of another, and knowes not one anothers judgment, neither doe you know what each sort of people would have, and what they desire, as in matter of civill government, therefore many are distracted in their thoughts with exclamations one against another, and for as much as through the burthens and oppressions that lyes upon one sort of people by another, and through the evill jealousies and heart burnings that one sort have against another, there is at this day a fire kindled of great distractions, and the ends therof may prove bad to many even to your selves and the whole nation. Wherefore I say againe that the wrath of the lord may be turned away and that you and this people under your chardg may be happie under a Civill government, and for the generall good of all people: I doe demand of you in the name of the Lord, that you Consider of this my desire, and fulfill the good will of god herin even for your owne sakes that you may be blessed and made honorable as nursing fathers to a sickly and broken people and for the nations sake that they may be reconsiled and live in peace and unity, and for the name of the Lords sake, that it may be renowned for ever more through peace and unity among people through truth and righteousnes in the earth and that Justice mercy and truth may sit in the throne and this is the desire of him who desires good unto all men, and hath laid this before you and comes not unto you in his owne name but in the name of the lord.

Whose servant he is that am Called amonge men by name
Edw: Burrough.

To the Parliament and Army (in generall) of the Commonwealth of England &c¹⁷

Friends

The Lord hath gathered us, and redeemed us out of the world, and our Kingdome is not of this World, but from above, and our Weapons which have defended us are not carnall but spirituall,

¹⁷ MS Rawlinson D. 397, fo. 13.

and mighty through god, and our Warfare hath been against the Powers of Darknesse, and against the spirit of wickednesse, which leadeth in Captivity to sin, and death, and not against Persons, nor Creatures, and we have been a suffering People ever since we were first Raised up and borne all things in Patience, even the cruelties of the Wicked have we suffered, and the Ploughers have Ploughed Furroughs upon us; and wee have been cast out, and Rejected, cast out of places of all trust in the Nation, as if we deserved noe Place of fidellity amongst you, noe Not to have any office, nor hardly hath been allowed us our Birthright Priviledge; for Wee have been cast out of the place of justice, and out of the Army in which we would have been of service to you and our country; and have been exposed to all wrong and injustice that could bee, even through some of you. And our sufferings, our false Imprisonment, and the spoylling of our goods, and our blood shed, and all the violence that hath been acted upon us, Wee lay upon some of you that hath been in power, as being guilty thereof in a great meassure, partly through your own actings; and partly through your Forbearance of others; yea some of us att this very day hath our Bodies cast into Prissons, and our goods spoylled for Tythes, and such thinges even in the very Name of the Keepers of the Liberty of England;¹⁸ and Those of our friends which you found in Prissons att your restoreing, you have not freed them but leaves them in bonds, and to the will of their Enemies, and noe releife made for the preventing of their Sufferings for the time to come. But rather a new foundation of sufferings laid by you through your establishing of Tythes, and cryeing up the maintenance of your Ministers. And this we doe declare to you that there is already a great deall of innocent Blood, and injustice lyeing upon this Nation, and upon many that are in trust under you; that god will Revenge one way or another, for had the army stood in the power as once itt was in, and had not the Rulers of this Nation lost Sincerrity, and turned after this worlds honnour, and become degenerated from their Principles, and turned many faithfull men out of the Army, and their places of trust, which hath sorely weakned you, these things had never come to passe in the Nation had you kept in the power of the Lord, and in the meeke and lowly spirit; this spirit that now is rissen up against you had been subdued and Chained. But you goeing from the meek and just Principle in your selves, this spirit of arrogancy, and Crueltye, and murder is lett up over you, to warr against you, and may dash some of you to peeces till you have learned gods judgements, and the justnesse thereof; And we have truely weighed all these things with Lamentation for you; Wherefore We say unto you how cann you expect any help from us to defend you, or that we should Joyne with you to withstand the Executors of Justice, and to save the guilty from deserved Wrath; What shall we prevent, or come betwixt the avenging of the innocent Blood, or shall we take parte even

¹⁸ The reference to Keepers of the Liberty of England means that the tract was written after 11 May 1659; see Davies, *Restoration*, p. 97. (I owe this observation to Christopher Hill.)

against our selves, and helpe you, and sett you up, and expose our selves to sufferrings under you by your vote for Tythes which we are like to suffer by; Iff this Nation be againe restored to Peace; And shall we Joyne with you in the maintainning of that wicked opressing Priesthood, which you cry up, and Compells maintenance from us by your power against our consciences. Wee cannott owne you in any of these things, But must give our witnesse against you herein, even as against them that are rissen to oppose you; And Wee know the foundation on which you both stand will bee overturned, and you must act by another spiritt before wee cann owne you, and we must see Justice done by you, and the Prisson doores sett open for our friends to have their Liberty, and Tythes voted down againe, and all forced maintenance to the ministry to be utterly renounced by you, before we can lift up a hand for you, or say the Lord prosper you; And all our Friends that have been turned out of the Commission of peace, and out of thier Places of trust, And all the officers and Souldiers, all . . .¹⁹ turned out, and you keep them out and rejects them as much as hee; had you at your restoreing putt all these in againe into their Places, which they were turned out of and are kept out, onely for their good conscience sake; And if you had done this then we shold have cause to owne that you intend to establish Righteousnesse, which if we saw that spirit amongst you that would advance Righteousnesse, and not seeke your selves But the good of the Nations; Oh then we should rejoyce, and our lives would not bee Deare to lay downe; But till then how can we come between you and your Enemies to defend you and establish you in power to opresse us and our Bretheren, which we see you goe in the very way thereof while you establish Tythes, and crye up a forced compelled Maintenance to your godly ministers as you call them. Noe we must suffer till the wickednesse of the wicked bee Finished, and the Lord have avenged our cause; and we are in the faith that the lord will rebuke the mighty, and the destroyers for our sake, and for his Names sake; and this spirit that now is rissen, is a rodd for such who hath sett up Wickednesse in themselves; And Now the lord hath suffered the wicked to rise against you, for you have been flatterring, and makeing a false peace with your enemies, and these Priests have flattered you, and you have fed them soe fatt, and soe full that they Now rebell against you, and you have been cryeing up maintenance for them, and opressed poore People to maintaine them with tythes, and money till they kicke against you, and one potsheard must breake another, that the seed of god may spring up over all; and wee know there is a hand in all these things, and our eye is to the hand of the lord that sees before these things were, and yett we wish well to the seed of god that is in you, and to the good that is amongst you; But itt hath a great deale to arise through in your selves, and in the Nation, there is the spirit of ambition, and oppression to beate downe in your selves, and there is the spirit of murder and crueltie rissen up in the nation the seed

¹⁹ The broadside is torn here, obscuring one (at the most two) words.

of god must arise through all this, and over itt, before these Nations can bee happy. Soe look into your selves, and consider, and learne the Lords judgements by these things, and if we perish itt is for witesbearing to the name of the Lord, and for Righteousness sake, and our Reward is with us but if you be smitten itt is because of the apostacy of some of your owne selves, who once had the power but lost itt; you had the power over this spirit once, but now itt is rissen against you, and you had power to have releived the opressed, and to have made the Nations free from Tythes and all other burthens, and opressions, and you might have setled the Nations in good order, but you neglected your day, and there is now a mountain raised in your way; And you might have made the spirit which is now rissen against you, as weake as water, had you been faithfull to the Lord. And the Nations had been in peace and rest before this day, when as now Blood is like to runn downe, and the innocent like to be devoured, and this is because of your transgression, who hath abused many pretious mercyes, and Deliverances which the lord gave you.

Wherefore wee your Friends as pittiers of you, and Lamenters for you, and not as upbraidders of you for your Apostacy; Wee doe say unto you, you have yett an inch of time to doe good, and to escape this evill, if every one of you Come to the just Principle of god in your owne hearts, that will bring you to cast of the burthens of your owne sinns, that lyes upon your consciences, and that will purge out the drossy spirit that is amongst you; For there is a spirit in some of you will fainte before your Enemies, while the burthen of Innocent blood, and of the unjust sufferrings of gods People lyes upon you; Therefore putt of that spirit and lett not the servants of the lord suffer unjustly as they have donne but proclaime Liberty, and freedome to the opressed, and suffer not honest, and faithfull men to be a prey to their, and your Enemies, but seeke the perfect freedome of the Nations; and that is the way for you to prosper, and to defeatt your Enemies that would destroy Righteousnesse from off the Earth. Wherefore Consider, and be awakened, and the feare of the Lord bee amongst you.

Wee are lovers of your soules and Friends to the seed of god amongst you and shall be asisters, and helpers with you in all righteous Things till Righteousnesse, and truth and true Judgement be established.

Edward Burrough.

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