

“Gospel Order Improved”:
The Keithian Schism and the
Exercise of Quaker Ministerial Authority
in Pennsylvania

Jon Butler*

THE schism that disturbed Pennsylvania's Quakers in the 1690s appears in recent treatments of it as a most peculiar kind of affair. In his study of early Pennsylvania society Gary Nash has emphasized economic and political causes, finding the schism part of the broad secular divisions that undermined harmony in the colony between 1680 and 1720 and one of the many manifestations of the resentments that small farmers and merchants held toward the colony's wealthy, domineering Quaker elite. In another analysis George Keith's only biographer, Ethyn Kirby, has argued that the schism was led by a man whose Quakerism always was flawed. Keith was too intellectual. His commitment was a “product of conscious effort, of deliberate rationalization and introspection,” and never reflected the simpler understandings of Friends who waited quietly on the Inner Light. Failing ever to accept the central thrust of Quakerism, Keith finally and noisily broke his ties with the Friends in the 1690s by leading the schism in Pennsylvania.¹

These interpretations obscure and sometimes distort fascinating aspects of the schism by explaining it in unnecessarily oblique terms. For example, why was it that Keith, who Kirby asserts was never really comfortable as a Quaker, waited thirty years to declare his true self? How are we to comprehend the specifically religious aspects of the dis-

* Mr. Butler is a member of the Department of History, California State College, Bakersfield, Calif. He wishes to thank the California State College, Bakersfield, Foundation for research support.

¹ Gary B. Nash, *Quakers and Politics: Pennsylvania, 1681-1726* (Princeton, N. J., 1968), 144-160; Ethyn Williams Kirby, *George Keith (1636-1716)* (New York, 1942), 47-105. Other recent works dealing with the schism include John E. Pomfret, *The Province of West New Jersey, 1609-1702 . . .* (Princeton, N. J., 1956), 242-258; Edwin B. Bronner, *William Penn's Holy Experiment: The Founding of Pennsylvania, 1681-1701* (New York, 1962), 147-153; and Edward J. Cody, “The Price of Perfection: The Irony of George Keith,” *Pennsylvania History*, XXXIX (1972), 1-19.

pute if we accept Nash's analysis of it? Why, for example, was this allegedly political battle fought with such a peculiar language, the participants talking about “two Christs” and ecclesiastical authority? In fact, the schism was neither an inevitable climax to long years of strain between Keith and the orthodox Friends nor the result of a battle among settlers scrambling for wealth and power in the New World. Rather, it occurred after Keith detected and moved to correct disturbing beliefs held by the most prestigious Quakers in Pennsylvania, the Public Friends or traveling ministers, who used their private meetings to guide and dominate the Quaker movement. Thus, to reverse the current view, it was precisely because the schism was rooted in religious issues that it disrupted Pennsylvania's politics and ended Keith's career as a valued and respected Quaker leader.

The first step in reexamining the schism involves a brief look at Keith's Quakerism. In questioning the substance of Keith's faith, Kirby tapped an old theme in Quaker historiography. Nearly every Quaker writer since 1695 has suggested that he was too intellectual, too speculative, “very willing to show from Philosophy the reasons and causes of many things in the creation,” as William Sewel wrote in 1718.² Worse, Keith knew the wrong people. He was too much acquainted with non-Quakers like Henry More, the Cambridge Platonist, and Francis Mercury van Helmont, the peculiar German philosopher-mystic; such friendships are said to have weakened Keith's already feeble Quaker commitments.

These observations are but suspicions planted, for they confirm little, especially when Keith's activities are compared with those of other Friends. He was no more intellectual or theologically inclined than any number of Quakers, including his fellow Scot, Robert Barclay. His publications complemented the thousands of tracts written by seventeenth-century Quaker leaders.³ Although he was interested in Jewish mystical writings, he was not the only Quaker who flirted with such esoteric materials. Numerous Friends, loyal and dedicated ones, studied “lost” sec-

² William Sewel, *The History of the rise, increase, and progress of the Christian people called Quakers* (London, 1722), II, 345-346; Kirby, *George Keith*, 7-10, 20-22, 28-29, 39-43; Marjorie Hope Nicolson, “George Keith and the Cambridge Platonists,” *Philosophical Review*, XXXIX (1930), 36-55. At one point Keith even contemplated a trip to the Middle East. See the letter from Henry More to Lady Anne Conway, Sept. 15, 1670, in Marjorie Hope Nicolson, ed., *Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and their Friends, 1642-1684* (New Haven, Conn., 1930), 305-308.

³ Keith's bibliography is in Kirby, *George Keith*, 160-163. For Quaker literary activity see Luella M. Wright, *The Literary Life of the Early Friends, 1650-1725* (New York, 1932), and William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (London, 1912), 279-305.

tions of the Scriptures or read deeply in the works of the continental mystics without compromising their Quakerism. As for van Helmont, the German also talked with William Penn and George Fox, not just with Keith. Indeed, for a time he attended Quaker meetings and contributed to Quaker relief funds in London.⁴ We must keep in mind that we are dealing here with seventeenth-, not eighteenth-century Friends and that Keith fitted well into their sometimes heterodox ranks. Certainly he worked hard for them. Between his conviction in 1664 and his final disownment in 1695 he traveled throughout England, Scotland, even Europe, to bring others to Quakerism and like many Quakers was imprisoned for the effort. This labor was a solid measure of his commitment to the Friends, and even after the Pennsylvania schism not everyone forgot it. John Whiting, a late seventeenth-century Quaker leader, wrote that he could “not say (as some are apt) when any fall away, that they were never right.”⁵ The Pennsylvania schism and Keith’s disownment did not result from an imperfection of his Quakerism. Rather, they stemmed from his efforts to correct conditions that he believed were a threat to the movement in America.

Keith arrived in the colonies in 1685 with a commission to survey the boundary between East and West Jersey; that task completed, he moved to Pennsylvania sometime in 1689 to become head of the Philadelphia Latin School. There his work with the Friends increased. He was named to the committee that supervised publication of Quaker books and, with the approval of Philadelphia’s most important Friends, toured New England in 1689 to visit Quaker meetings and debate Congregational ministers, including Cotton Mather.⁶ After returning to Philadelphia he published a treatise designed for family education called *A Plain Short Catechism for Children & Youth* and began work on a book attacking

⁴ Grace B. Sherrer, “New Evidence of Francis Mercury Van Helmont’s Relations with the Quakers,” *Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society*, XLVIII (1956-1957), 157-162; Henry J. Cadbury, “Hebraica and the Jews in Early Quaker Interest,” in Howard H. Brinton, ed., *Children of Light: In Honor of Rufus M. Jones* (New York, 1948), 135-163; Henry J. Cadbury, “Early Quakerism and Uncanonical Lore,” *Harvard Theological Review*, XL (1947), 177-205.

⁵ John Whiting, *Persecution expos’d, in some memoirs relating to the sufferings of J. W.* . . . (London, 1715), 232. For Keith’s work among the Friends see Kirby, *George Keith*, 12-46.

⁶ The biographical details are in Kirby, *George Keith*, 45-55. The reference to Keith’s inspection of Quaker books is in Minutes, Yearly Meeting and General Spring Meeting of Ministers, 9/1mo./1690, Department of Records, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Philadelphia (microfilm copy at Friends’ Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa.), hereafter cited as Minutes, Philadelphia Meeting of Ministers.

Mather and the New England Calvinists.⁷

As he worked in the Jerseys and even before moving to Philadelphia, Keith began to worry that all was not well with the American Friends. In a letter of May 1688 he told Fox and George Whitehead that some American Quakers were drifting from their Christian moorings. As a result, while he had experienced many “precious Openings” in America, often he had been forced to emphasize the most rudimentary principles in his preaching: “My Great Work and Care hath been chiefly, and mainly, to declare and hold forth the alone Foundation, . . . Jesus Christ.” This was necessary because Quakers in surprising numbers slighted the Bible and ignored the historical Christ described in the New Testament. “They are but too little acquainted and known in the Holy Scriptures,” he told Fox and Whitehead. As a solution Keith recommended that Quakers read the Scriptures regularly, “especially Friends Children and young People,” and he tried to demonstrate the uses that Friends could make of the Scriptures by stressing them in his own work: “I find it most safe or sure in all Preaching or Writing to hold to Scripture Words; for the Scriptures are full enough and sufficient to furnish every Man of God and true Minister of Christ, with suitable Words in the hand of the Holy Spirit.”⁸

In the letter of 1688 Keith also complained about those who twisted and disfigured the Christian tradition—“Ranters and airy Notionists, who teach and profess Faith in Christ within, as the Light and Word; but either deny or slight his outward Coming, and what he did and suffered for us in the Flesh.”⁹ Clearly these people were in error, and just as clearly their error stemmed from their ignorance of the Scriptures. Keith stressed the same point in the *Plain Short Catechism* that he wrote for Quaker families in 1690, a work addressed to the problem on which he had written privately in 1688. He told the young Quakers that notions, or doctrines, never supplanted the spirit, that “*Doctrine and Words, without the Spirit of Christ, is as Milk or Wine that is dead, and hath not the nourishing Virtue in it.*” But ignorance of the Scriptures led to false doctrine and then to unsure, wavering convictions. And, Keith warned, “*where the Doctrine is not sound nor true, that pure and holy Spirit*

⁷ (Philadelphia, 1690); *The Presbyterian and Independent Visible Churches in New-England and Else-where, Brought to the Test . . .* (Philadelphia, 1689).

⁸ George Keith to George Whitehead and George Fox, 23/3mo./1688, in George Whitehead, *The Power of Christ Vindicated Against the Magick of Apostacy* (London, 1708), 225-232.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 228.

*doth not joyn with it, to feed and nourish the Soul.*¹⁰

Keith's views easily remained within the boundaries of orthodox Quaker opinion. Despite assertions to the contrary, Quakers valued the Scriptures and the historical Christ as models through which they could understand the contemporary work of the Holy Spirit. Isaac Pennington, usually viewed as the most mystical of the early Friends, wrote that "we own Christ to be a Saviour; but we lay the main stress upon the life which took upon it the manhood."¹¹ There was a strong Christological emphasis in the writings of seventeenth-century Quakers. Penn, for example, rejected the notion that the Inner Light supplanted the Scriptures or Christ: "It is not our Way of Speaking to say the Light within is the Rule of the Christian Religion; but that the Light of Christ within us is the Rule of True Christians."¹² To Quakers the Scriptures were, as Barclay put it, God's "looking glass." Without them Friends would drift toward an unchristian mysticism. But in them Friends could "see the conditions and experiences of the saints of old; that finding our experience answer to theirs, we might thereby be the more confirmed and comforted."¹³

Unfortunately, in neither the letter to Fox and Whitehead nor the *Plain Short Catechism* did Keith identify the individuals who appeared to be slipping off Quakerism's Christian foundations. But that his concern about them remained strong is revealed in yet a third document, a manuscript entitled "Gospel Order Improved," that he circulated among selected Pennsylvania Friends in March 1690. Although this brief document is best known for its suggestion that Friends appoint elders and deacons to manage discipline in the Quaker monthly meetings, this proposal was not Keith's main point.¹⁴ Instead, "Gospel Order Improved"

¹⁰ Keith, *Plain Short Catechism*, preface, 2.

¹¹ Quoted in William C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (London, 1919), 385.

¹² Quoted in Geoffrey T. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (New York, 1947), 44. However, Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven, Conn., 1964), 145-146, notes that Quaker ideas about Christ were often poorly formulated.

¹³ Quoted in D. Elton Trueblood, *Robert Barclay* (New York, 1968), 136.

¹⁴ "Gospel Order Improved" was first published as "Gospel Order and Discipline" in *Jour. Friends' Hist. Soc.*, X (1913), 70-76. Two manuscript copies of the document are in Papers Relating to the Keithian Controversy, Box 572, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. While the document is sometimes interpreted as having been written for Keith's followers after the beginning of the schism in 1692, its style, together with a notable absence of the viciousness that marked the schism itself, makes it likely that this is the same "Gospel Order Improved" that Keith offered to the Public Friends in March 1690. See Minutes, Philadelphia Meeting of Ministers, 1/1mo./1690. Quotations in the next several paragraphs are from the printed version. That Keith was not the only Pennsylvania Friend thinking about Quaker

offered the Friends a rare critique that measured them by what Keith took to be incontestable standards—the goals and aims of the earliest Quakers, those whom Keith and his contemporaries had long called "the First Publishers of Truth."

"Gospel Order Improved" began with a simple assertion. The early Friends sought to develop a pure spiritual life, one that Keith likened to a "garden enclosed where no weeds nor tares should grow." To accomplish this end they separated from other men, "not only because of bad doctrine . . . but allso, and that especially, because of the vicious life and evill conversation and practices which were to be found among many of them." Yet this separation was imperfect. According to Keith, persons had "crept into the form and profession of friends' way, who are not really friends of Truth." How could Quakers rectify this fault? They could look to the first Christians, to the early followers of Christ who sustained their purity "by feeling an inward knitting and uniting of th[ei]r hearts" and with "some open declaration and profession of their faith in the most principal and necessary Doctrines of Christian religion."

Confronted by weak, even hypocritical members, Keith asked the Quakers to emulate the discipline of the early church. The movement should be reorganized. Friends who possessed a "good knowledge and discerning one of another" should declare themselves "one people and Societye, in the Truth" and outline their doctrinal views in a creed. Gathered as Christ's church they would then be ready to accept new members. But contrary to contemporary or even early Quaker practice, prospective members would be required to pass two tests. First they would be asked to assent to the newly drawn creed. Then they would be asked to give a more imposing demonstration of their commitment and orthodoxy by describing their experiences with God. They would have to relate their "convincement and what God hath wrought in them," a requirement that would raise even higher the wall between Quaker and non-Quaker.

Keith's proposed reforms carried as many implications for church government as for purity. In fact, the two were intimately connected. In apostolic times Christians used their discipline to build a dynamic co-

discipline is evident from the epistle written in 1691 by John Willsford, who was also concerned about Quaker purity and like Keith encouraged Friends to "be a Separate People from every Unclean thing." He was especially disturbed about problems dealing with marriage and with participation in wedding feasts and Christmas, a holiday he believed had been established by "false Christians." However, unlike Keith, he did not use these concerns to advance a new disciplinary system. John Willsford, *A Brief Exhortation to all who profess the Truth . . . Philadelphia, 1691*, 1.

hesion among their members. As a result, government in the early church was exercised through the whole membership, not by elders or selected representatives. As Keith described it, all the members were expected to “consult and resolve in the Wisdom and Spirit of God what was fitt to be done.” Friends could do the same. They could make sure that new members would not drift into indifference and indolence simply because there was no place for them in church affairs. By absorbing well-examined members in all church business the Friends could enhance their commitment to the Christian life. It was in this context that government by representatives was anachronistic, even dangerous. The church was not civil society, and, Keith wrote, “as the Church of God in other respects doth greatly differ from worldly Governments, so in this.” True Christians should govern themselves. What was accomplished for the whole church “should have the consent of the whole church” and the best way to obtain that consent was through a government of and by the whole membership.

Still, Keith intended no revolt against the wise. He acknowledged complaints that older Quakers took “too much upon them and assume a rule over us without our consent.” But he believed that maturity aided faith and readily asserted that older Quakers gave valuable help with discipline. Yet theirs was a capacity to advise, not to determine or order, and it was to preserve this distinction that Keith proposed that Friends appoint elders and deacons, the elders to oversee the “orderly walking of all under the profession of Truth,” the deacons “partly to assist the Elders and partly to gather the collections of the Church.” These officers were to serve, not govern, so that Keith stressed their duties rather than their powers. Elders would guide young Quakers “not by lording it over their consciences but watching over them,” and deacons would distribute the church funds under the supervision of the membership.¹⁵

Keith’s suggestions flew in the face of Quaker practice. Never had the Friends adopted a creed, required a relation of spiritual experience, or so clearly formalized the handling of discipline and finances in local meet-

¹⁵ Arnold Lloyd notes that some local meetings named the same individuals to collect funds for the monthly meetings year after year. Nowhere, however, were they called “deacons.” In fact, by giving these local persons a title and formal duties Keith may have increased their independence, since the Quaker financial practices were highly centralized and controlled largely by the quarterly meetings or by bodies like the Meeting for Sufferings in London. See Lloyd, *Quaker Social History, 1669-1738* (London, 1950), 157-165. Similarly, while Friends did use the term “elder,” only slowly was its meaning transformed from a designation of age or experience to the title for an office almost exactly like the one Keith proposed. *Ibid.*, 128, 133n, 137; Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 542-544.

ings as Keith proposed. Yet if Quakers hoped to end the “fair outward show” that disfigured their long-sought purity, Keith believed they needed “first to prove Men before they own them as fellow members of Christ’s body.” Would this effort presume too much? Not to Quakers who still aimed at the old Quaker goals. God Himself would help these Friends. He would “more and more endue the faithfull among us with a spirit of discerning . . . whereby to put a difference betwixt the faithful and the unfaithful.” Assured of this help, Keith asked if Quakers were not required to reform their discipline: “Ought we not therefore to do o[u]r utmost diligence to be a separate people still, and to purge out all the old leaven that we may be a wholly new lump?”

Keith’s “Gospel Order Improved” was a peculiar document. It looked to the past, reflecting the early Quaker emphasis on spirituality and fellowship. Yet it advocated tests for membership that the first Friends had never approved or adopted.¹⁶ More important, while calling for a tightened discipline, Keith ignored institutions Friends had been using for disciplinary purposes since the 1660s—the monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings—a slight that prefigured his open rejection of them in the later schism. The omission was serious because the structure of the meetings thoroughly contradicted the tenor of Keith’s critique. The meetings were hierarchical and selective. Power in them flowed down from the top, not up from the bottom, and their membership was composed of only a few Quakers, not many. Thus Fox described the monthly meetings as places where certain Friends were “nursed up . . . and there fitted for the Lord’s service” in the quarterly and yearly meetings, while the 1673 London Yearly Meeting observed that “a general care be not laid upon every member, touching the good order and government in the Church’s affairs . . . the Lord hath laid it more upon some in whom He hath opened counsel for that end.”¹⁷ By contrast, in “Gospel Order Improved” Keith emphasized a religious egalitarianism that was grounded in strict testing and in the members’ spiritual cohesion; he talked about monthly meetings as though they involved every member, and he did not even mention

¹⁶ Although his case may be overstated, Richard T. Vann argues that the 17th-century Quakers eschewed the usual Protestant conceptions of membership. *The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655-1755* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), 122-143.

¹⁷ Quoted in Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 294; Fox to Friends [1669], in Samuel Tuke, comp., *Selections from the Epistles of George Fox* (Cambridge, Mass., 1879 [orig. publ. New York, 1825]), 130. For an example of the centralizing tendency in the financial affairs of the English monthly meetings see Harold W. Bracc, ed., “The First Minute Book of the Gainsborough Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, 1669-1719,” Lincoln Record Society, *Publications*, XXXVIII (1948), 7, 58, entries for 8/4mo./1670 and 13/4mo./1677, and Lloyd, *Quaker Social History*, 1-31, 134-146.

the more restricted quarterly and yearly gatherings.

By ignoring the Quaker meeting system, Keith implicitly criticized the Friends who held power in that system, an important consideration, since these were the Quakers who, in response to this and later provocations on Keith's part, would lead the opposition to him in the next few years. Nash has described Keith's opponents primarily in secular terms, as the wealthy landowners and merchants who dominated Pennsylvania's politics in the 1690s and formed the antiproproprietary faction led by Thomas Lloyd.¹⁸ Although Nash is correct in naming the leaders of this group and in assessing their affluence and power, he rests their opposition to Keith too strictly on economic and political grounds.

It is true that Keith's opponents were rich and powerful politicians, but they were something else as well. Most of them were also traveling Quaker ministers or, as they were sometimes called, Public Friends, a fact that explains their basic motivations in opposing Keith as well as the techniques used to defeat him. They included almost everyone in Nash's list: Deputy Governor Lloyd; his six principal supporters—Arthur Cooke, Samuel Jennings, John Delavall, Samuel Richardson, Anthony Morris, and Robert Ewer—and his major supporters in Bucks and Chester counties—John Blunston, John Simcock, George Maris, Nicholas Waln, William Yardley, and Phineas Pemberton.¹⁹ Only in the case of the five merchants whom Nash also lists as prominent opponents of Keith does the ministerial association weaken. Three of them—Humphrey Morrey, John Day, and John Jones—probably were not Public Friends in this period, while two—Samuel Carpenter and James Fox—were.²⁰

The Public Friends were ministers not in the usual Protestant fashion, for Friends thoroughly decried ordination and clerical ceremonies, but in a special Quaker way.²¹ The Friends held that the Inner Light could be

¹⁸ Nash, *Quakers and Politics*, 147-153, 155-156.

¹⁹ Nash argues that the political character of the schism is further revealed by the fact that all nine Quakers on the Pennsylvania Council who backed Lloyd's political maneuvers between 1690 and 1692 opposed Keith as well. *Ibid.*, 156. It should be observed that with the possible exception of Griffith Jones, all of these nine, including Lloyd himself, were Public Friends.

²⁰ Although the Philadelphia Meeting of Ministers did not maintain a list of active Public Friends in these years, their identities and numbers can be partially reconstructed by analyzing the proceedings of the Philadelphia Meeting of Ministers between 1685/6 and 1695; the ministerial epistle condemning Keith of 20/4mo./1692, in James Bowden, *The History of the Society of Friends in America* (London, 1854), II, 86-90; and the ministerial letter to London of 9/4mo./1693, in Papers Relating to the Keithian Controversy, Box 572.

²¹ Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, *passim*. See also Lloyd, *Quaker Social History*, 121-132; Vann, *Social Development of English Quakerism*, 96-101; and Frederick B. Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* (New York, 1960), Chap. 2, "The Transatlantic Quaker Community in the Seventeenth Century: Its Structure

fully received and understood by everyone, a tenet that might have relieved them of the need for a ministerial group. But Fox noted that there were "diversities of gifts" within the Light, an idea that played an important role in the development of Quaker organization.²² There was a role for everyone in the church, "some threshing, some ploughing, and some to keep the sheep."²³ One role was in the explication of the Inner Light by which Quakers discovered and used a "gift" to speak about the Holy Spirit and bring others to Quakerism. This was the "talent" possessed by the earliest Public Friends, the "First Publishers of Truth," who brought the movement into being in the 1650s and 1660s. Their success helped lead Quakers to emphasize the verb "to minister" rather than the noun when discussing their service. To Fox they were preachers and "prophets of the Lord" whom God had "made to be his mouth,"²⁴ and in the forty years after 1650 they became better known for their labor, especially their arduous travels and stays in the English jails, than for the office they occupied.²⁵

Very early Public Friends began to exercise an authority in church discipline that paralleled their power in preaching. As they won converts and gathered knots of worshippers across England, especially in the north, the ministers began to advise those meetings. At first this happened incidentally, but in 1656 and again in 1659 some of the Public Friends issued formal recommendations to strengthen discipline and order in local proceedings. Friends should adopt uniform practices for worship, business matters, marriages, recordkeeping, and the collection of funds. In 1656 the ministers denied that their advice was a demand or was laid down "as a rule or form to walk by." It was given "so in the light walking and abiding, these things may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not in the letter; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." In 1659, however, the ministers' advice carried no such apology, not even as a postscript.²⁶

and Functioning." For later years see Lucia K. Beamish, *Quaker Ministry, 1691 to 1834* (Oxford, 1967).

²² Fox to Friends in Cumberland, Bishoprick and Northumberland, 1653, in Tuke, comp., *Epistles of Fox*, 29.

²³ Fox to [Friends], 1652, *ibid.*, 13.

²⁴ Fox to Friends in the Ministry, 1653, *ibid.*, 19; Fox to Friends in the Ministry, 1654, *ibid.*, 34-35.

²⁵ See Ernest E. Taylor, *The Valiant Sixty* (London, 1947); Norman E. Penny, ed., "The First Publishers of Truth, being Early Records of the Introduction of Quakerism into England and Wales," Supplement I to *Jour. Friends' Hist. Soc.* (1907); and Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England*, 33-71.

²⁶ These epistles are printed in A. R. Barclay, ed., "Letters, etc., of Early Friends," *The Friends' Library* . . . (Philadelphia, 1847), XI, 409-411, where the first is misdated 1657. Braithwaite summarized their contents in *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 311-316, but was not especially concerned with their authorship.

The authority of the Public Friends increased in the next decades as it was incorporated into the Quaker meeting system. For its first fifteen years, for example, the London Yearly Meeting was wholly a ministerial gathering and remained so until so-called "weighty Friends," usually wealthy or politically influential Quakers outside the ministry, were admitted to it in 1678.²⁷ Yet even then the ministers retained their own separate gathering. They met privately prior to the London Yearly Meeting and forwarded recommendations to that body. They also kept up smaller meetings, the most important being in London where the Second Day Morning Meeting assigned ministers to preach in meetings for worship and controlled the publication of nearly all Quaker books printed in England, a formidable power among a people as given to writing as were the seventeenth-century Friends.²⁸

The authority of the Public Friends appeared even in the design of Quaker meetinghouses. In the country meetinghouses Friends built pulpits that were raised above the floor and faced by a panel that hid the lower portions of the minister's body as he spoke. In larger meetinghouses the ministers sat in galleries that contained several rows of seats, also raised above the floor and usually placed along the side of the room. In the largest meetings the galleries were, in fact, balconies, from which the ministers could gaze down on their audience. Such structures allowed the Public Friends to dominate Quaker worship. They delivered their "openings" from them and waited there for what Fox once called the "gathering of the simple-hearted ones."²⁹

In all of this a single theme persisted: Quaker ministerial authority was corporate in character. One hears little about individual ministers asserting "right" against other ministers or setting one meeting for worship against another, problems that often plagued other Protestant groups. Rather, a Quaker remained "in the ministry" only as long as he was associated with one of the separate ministerial meetings such as London's Second Day Morning Meeting. The Public Friends returned ceaselessly to these meetings for directions and sustenance. There they consulted on

²⁷ This arrangement was based on an agreement of 1672 that was carried out in 1673 but dropped until 1678. The agreement is printed in Barclay, ed., "Letters, etc.," *Friends' Library*, XI, 424-425, and is discussed in Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 267-277.

²⁸ Wright, *Literary Life of the Early Friends*, 97-109; Lloyd, *Quaker Social History*, 10-11, 147-156.

²⁹ Fox to [Friends], 1651, in Tuke, comp., *Epistles of Fox*, 8. Fox obviously did not intend his statement to carry this implication in 1651. See also Hubert Lidbetter, *The Friends Meeting House* (York, Eng., 1961), 26-28, and Vann, *Social Development of English Quakerism*, 100.

all the matters that concerned them—tactics, discipline, effectiveness, financing—and this cooperation made theirs a peculiarly joint ministry.³⁰ Seldom did a Quaker minister act alone. Rather, he (or she) traveled and spoke in the company of other Public Friends. Moving across England in pairs and on itineraries approved by their ministerial meeting, they were living examples of what the Quakers called the "unity of the Light."³¹

This ministerial cohesion was especially valuable in times of crisis. For example, when John Perrot threatened to divide the Quakers in the 1660s he centered many of his attacks on the ministers. He called them self-serving and vain and suggested that they were more interested in increasing the number of their followers than in the work of the Holy Spirit. As an antidote to their pretensions he urged that Friends stop proselytizing and observe a "time of keeping at home . . . every one to sit down under his own vine, and quietly to enjoy the fruit of his labour."³² Not surprisingly, the ministers led the resistance to Perrot. He was first condemned by eleven of them, meeting in London, in a verdict that contained a strong defense of their own ministerial prerogatives. Quakers were told that the ministers were persons "whom God hath called to labour and watch for the eternal good of your souls." Perrot's egalitarianism was rejected as an "abominable pride that goes before destruction." Authority and judgment were needed in a sinful world, and the ministers asserted their right to exercise both. "When we testify in the name of the Lord," they wrote, their opponents were to be "rejected, as having erred from the Truth."³³ However extreme this last claim, it reflected the widely held view that the Quaker ministers stood at the center of the movement and held it together with their prophecy, travel, and authority.

For a time the emigration to Pennsylvania altered some of the ways in which the Public Friends customarily exercised their ministerial gifts. Although as many as twenty-five or thirty such Friends settled in Pennsylvania or the Jerseys between 1682 and 1685, they formed no separate ministerial meeting until 1686. Although from the outset they dominated

³⁰ For an example see the "Journal of the Travels, etc. of John Burnyeat," *Friends' Library*, XI, 121-134, and the discussion in Jon H. Butler, "The Christian Experience in the Delaware Valley: The English Churches on the Eve of the Great Awakening" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1972), 14-25.

³¹ The phrase ran through much Quaker literature. See George Fox, "To all who Love the Lord Jesus Christ . . ." [1654], in *Gospel-truth demonstrated, in a collection of Doctrinal Books . . .* (London, 1706), 23-28; "The Fifth General Epistle" [1661], in *The Memorable Works of a Son of Thunder and Consolation . . . Edward Burroughs [sic]* (London, 1672), 844; and Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 45-46.

³² Quoted in Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 237.

³³ Barclay, ed., "Letters, etc.," *Friends' Library*, XI, 422-424; Lloyd, *Quaker Social History*, 24-25; Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 247-248.

proceedings in the monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings so thoroughly that the gatherings looked like little else than ministerial meetings, this simple accommodation soon proved unsatisfactory.³⁴ In April 1685 someone in the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting accused two ministers of public drunkenness. The meeting appointed a committee to investigate the charge but never placed the committee's findings in its minutes, probably because monthly meetings, whatever their membership, did not customarily discipline Friends in the ministry.³⁵ Then in May 1685 the Public Friends received a bitter letter from Fox.

Fox addressed those Quakers who, he said, "use to minister." He had heard nothing about their activity. "I know that some of you, are but lately settled in your plantations," he wrote. But where was their labor, their effort? Friends in Carolina, Virginia, and New England pleaded for ministers but none came, at least not from Pennsylvania. "They want visiting and many would come in, as I understand, if they had some to visit them." Instead, the Pennsylvania ministers stayed in Philadelphia where Fox believed their presence might even be harmful: "you being so many ministers there together at some meetings, is rather a stoppage to some of the tender springs in others." Fox urged them to organize a ministerial meeting, "and then you might divide yourselves to other meetings and two and two to visit friends."³⁶ In another letter two months later Fox again complained about ministerial lethargy. "Though you have, in all those countries, liberty to serve and worship God," he had still received no word about their travel. He called upon the Public Friends to "improve your gifts and talents, and not hide them in a napkin, lest they be taken from you; . . . be [not] like the foolish virgins, which kept their name of virgins, but neglected having oil in their lamps."³⁷

Fox's criticisms stung and, together with a request from the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for a ministerial gathering, resulted in the organi-

³⁴ See their proceedings between 1682 and 1684 in Minutes, Philadelphia Meeting of Ministers.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7/2mo./1685. This accusation was deleted from the version of the minutes published in Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, *Publications*, I (1895-1898), 280-281.

³⁶ Fox to Christopher Taylor *et al.*, 20/3mo./1685, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XXIX (1905), 105-106. A manuscript copy is in the Etting Papers, XXXVII, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. James Claypoole, who apparently was to circulate Fox's letter among the Public Friends, let it remain among his business papers for three months before doing so, having "had not an opportunity of seeing many together." Claypoole to James Harrison *et al.*, 6/11mo./1685, *PMHB*, XXIX (1905), 106-107.

³⁷ Fox to Friends in the Ministry in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, 30/5mo./1685, in Tuke, comp., *Epistles of Fox*, 297-298.

zation of the Philadelphia Meeting of Ministers during the winter of 1685-1686. The Public Friends resumed their customary ministerial duties quickly.³⁸ They met four times a year, including a meeting in September that forwarded recommendations to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. By 1687 they had sent Friends on ministerial tours of Virginia, Maryland, and Carolina, and had ordered one minister to stop preaching until they resolved doubts about his life and faith. They also began to censor and edit Quaker publications in the fashion of the Second Day Morning Meeting in London and decreed that "nothing be allowed to be printed . . . till first Examined and approved of by this Meeting."³⁹

When Keith moved to Philadelphia in 1689 he joined the Public Friends in the work of the Philadelphia Meeting of Ministers, and it was before this meeting of the colony's most prestigious Quakers that he read his "Gospel Order Improved" in March 1690. Considering their history, both in England and in Pennsylvania, the Public Friends could not be expected to welcome Keith's proposals, and not surprisingly they hesitated to discuss the work. "By reason of the great weight of the Things there treated on" they decided to read his manuscript and discuss it in one week.⁴⁰ When the week elapsed, however, the ministers postponed the discussion for six months, moving it to September 1690. But in the fall they still were apprehensive and with Keith's consent decided to study the manuscript for yet another year, this time to consider it at their meeting in September 1691.⁴¹

While the ministers read and reread, their relationship with Keith appeared generally harmonious. They approved the publication of an attack on Cotton Mather, and he engaged in much preaching. Although still in charge of the Philadelphia Latin School, he wrote later that he "kept an Usher and spent a great part of his time in Reading, Meditation, Visiting Meetings, and answering the Conscientious Doubts and Questions of many People."⁴² The ministers aided him in this work and during the winter of 1690-1691 sent him on a ministerial tour of Maryland and

³⁸ See their activities for the years between 1686 and 1690 in Minutes, Philadelphia Meeting of Ministers.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 5/1mo./1686-7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1/1mo./1689-90.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 9/1mo./1689-90; 6/7mo./1690.

⁴² George Keith, *New-England's Spirit of Persecution, Transmitted to Pennsylvania . . .* ([Philadelphia] 1693), 1. However, the approval of Keith's book, probably *A Serious Appeal to all the more Sober, Impartial and Judicious People in New England* (Philadelphia, 1692), was accomplished in the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, not in the ministerial meeting as was customary. See Minutes, Philadelphia Monthly and Quarterly Meeting, 26/12mo./1691-2, Dept. of Recs., Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (microfilm copy at Friends' Hist. Library).

Virginia. Upon his return Keith elaborated on his successes and reported that Public Friends would “be of good Service” in the southern colonies.⁴³

It was Keith’s preaching that brought about the first public breach between him and any of the ministers. His emphasis on the Scriptures and the historical Christ produced what Keith himself later described as “much whispering and back-biting,” and in one of the Philadelphia meetings for worship (the exact date is not clear, but it was sometime during the spring or summer of 1691) another minister, William Stockdale, disputed Keith’s views.⁴⁴ Stockdale first argued that the Inner Light alone brought salvation and that a belief in the body or historical existence of Christ was unnecessary, then accused Keith of preaching two Christs, one of the body, the other of the spirit.⁴⁵

The accusation incensed Keith. Just as he had feared in 1688, Pennsylvania Quakers appeared to be slighting Christ and the Scriptures. Worse, this behavior now was coming from a disturbing source, Stockdale, a Public Friend and a member of the Philadelphia Meeting of Ministers. Faced with the appearance of heresy among the ministers themselves, Keith moved beyond his “Gospel Order Improved,” which still had not been discussed by them, to demand Stockdale’s condemnation as a heretic.⁴⁶

In the summer and fall of 1691 Keith kept up the pressure on Stockdale, who in turn rejected Keith’s criticisms, and during the yearly meeting in September some half-dozen sessions were held in a fruitless effort to resolve their differences.⁴⁷ As the Friends discussed the charges against Keith and Stockdale, Keith became even more concerned about orthodoxy. Where in 1688 he had written only generally about “rangers and airy Notionists,” now he found them throughout the highest levels of Pennsylvania Quakerism. In the September yearly meeting and at meetings held during the winter of 1691-1692 several Public Friends allegedly expressed views which Keith had long feared might be common in Pennsylvania and which he later recounted in a manuscript written in April 1692. Thomas Fitzwater, he said, argued that Christ was “onely a Spirit in

⁴³ Minutes, Philadelphia Meeting of Ministers, 7/1mo./1690-1.

⁴⁴ Keith, *New-England’s Spirit of Persecution*, 1. The first disagreement with Stockdale is mentioned vaguely in several pamphlets. See Keith, *An Appeal from the Twenty-eight Judges* . . . ([Philadelphia, 1692]), and Keith and Thomas Budd, *The Plea of the Innocent Against the False Judgment of the Guilty* . . . ([Philadelphia, 1692]), 2, 19.

⁴⁵ Keith, *New-England’s Spirit of Persecution*, 1; Kirby, *George Keith*, 60-63.

⁴⁶ John Gough, *A History of the People Called Quakers* (Dublin, 1789), III, 325

⁴⁷ Kirby, *George Keith*, 62-63.

Heaven.” Jacob Tillner, a minister who had emigrated from Holland, told listeners that “Christ mends Soules perfectly at once so as to have no Sin and that when we are Kings we are not to begg or pray to God.” One William Brought confirmed the worst of Keith’s fears by asking “what good or profit can the name of Christ do us?” Finally, Keith quoted Jennings, one of the most prominent of the Public Friends, as saying that spiritual values contributed little to the common work of men—that “to do God’s business we need God’s wisdom and power, But to do business as Men we needed not a supernatural power.”⁴⁸ Keith was appalled. Clearly heresy abounded in Pennsylvania.

In February 1692 the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting drew such a large crowd that it was moved to Keith’s school, where, taking advantage of the location, Keith’s supporters won a condemnation of Stockdale. Their victory was short lived. In March the Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting overturned the judgment and rebuked its sponsors. Keith and his followers then opened a separate meeting for worship in Philadelphia, or, as they later claimed, closed the regular meeting to heretics.⁴⁹

Now the battle turned from questions of doctrine to issues relating to the locus and exercise of authority. No one resented Keith’s behavior more than Philadelphia’s Public Friends, and when Keith and his followers began their separate meetings the ministers reacted quickly. In an effort to contain the dispute several ministers visited Keith privately and urged him to discontinue the meetings. Keith rejected the advice, bluntly asserting that the ministers came only “to cloak Error and Heresie.”⁵⁰ Startled by this rejection, the ministerial meeting named a formal committee to visit him again. This committee reported that Keith’s mood had not changed: “He denyed our Authority He denyed [our] Judgment he did not value it a pin he would trample upon it as dirt under his feet . . . there was not any one of us all that did Preach Christ rightly.” And when the ministers argued with him, Keith even ridiculed their anger: “See what Excessive passion thou art in look thy face in a glass see what a face thou hast.”⁵¹

Keith’s behavior tore at the heart of Quaker decorum. By his constant arguments and his support for the separate meetings he had made

⁴⁸ These charges are found in a document entitled Some Propositions in Order to Heale the Breach that is Amongst us, Directed to Tho. Lloyd and Others Concerned with Him, 18/2mo./1692, Papers Relating to the Keithian Controversy, Box 572.

⁴⁹ Kirby, *George Keith*, 65.

⁵⁰ Minutes, Philadelphia Meeting of Ministers, 5/1mo./1691-2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 7/1mo./1691-2.

the dispute with Stockdale public and unseemly. But not until he insulted the ministers did Keith clearly assume the role of a schismatic. In visiting him the Public Friends had indicated their willingness to settle matters despite the harsh words about Stockdale or even the existence of the separate meetings. But when Keith rejected their authority as “rank popery” and demanded that the dispute be left to the “judgment of the Spirit of God,” the ministers moved to protect Quaker order, a development that gave all the arguments a new and ominous character.⁵²

Before dealing with Keith, however, the ministers first had to establish order in their own ranks. This was necessary because Keith had earlier received support from some Public Friends who also were distressed by Stockdale’s views. But when the separate meetings for worship began, and especially after Keith had ridiculed the ministerial committee, only a few of those Friends continued to support him, namely John Hart, George Hutcheson, and Thomas Budd. Other earlier supporters, including William and Jane Biles, Hugh Derborough, and Delavall, a son-in-law of Deputy Governor Lloyd, deserted him.⁵³

In June 1692 twenty-eight Public Friends sitting as the Philadelphia Meeting of Ministers condemned Keith’s behavior. They also censured Stockdale, finding some of his notions “an Offence to many sound and tender Friends.” Yet where Stockdale merely erred, Keith had been impudent, especially in his ridicule of the ministers. Keith, they said, had called them “fools, ignorant heathens, infidels, silly souls, lyars, hereticks, rotten ranters, m[u]ggletonians . . . thereby to our grief, foaming out his own shame.” The Public Friends condemned this language and withdrew Keith’s thirty-year standing in the ministry. They would, they said, “have him cease to offer his gift, as such among us, or elsewhere among Friends, till he be reconciled to his offended brethren.”⁵⁴

The condemnation caused Keith to renew his charge of ministerial “popery.” He called the ministers’ action an “encroachment upon our Christian Liberty [that] savours too much of the Church of Rome.”⁵⁵ Later he tried to split the orthodox ranks by pointing at the arrogance of the ministers. They claimed authority over other Friends merely, Keith said, “upon a pretence of their being ministers,” and Keith quoted

⁵² *Ibid.*, 17/4mo./1692.

⁵³ These divisions are best described in Keith and Budd, *Plea of the Innocent*, 2-10.

⁵⁴ Quoted from the printed version in Samuel Smith, “History of the Province of Pennsylvania,” in Samuel Hazard, ed., *Register of Pennsylvania*, VI (1830), 279-280. See also Kirby, *George Keith*, 68.

⁵⁵ George Keith, *Some Reasons and Causes of the Late Separation That Hath come to pass at Philadelphia* . . . ([Philadelphia, 1692]), 12.

one Public Friend as saying that the ministerial meeting itself was infallible simply because it was “made up of such a Body of the Ministry.”⁵⁶

The ministers were not put off by Keith. Their condemnation never was withdrawn. Instead, it led directly to his disownment. It was communicated to monthly and quarterly meetings in Pennsylvania and the Jerseys wherever Keithian defectors might be found. As it passed through these meetings, ministerial authority passed with it. In Bucks County the quarterly meeting accepted and approved the condemnation, then added its own, calling Keith “Diotrepe-like, loving to have preeminence, [who] receiveth not them approved amongst us,” meaning the ministers, “and yet doth publish to the world that he is in unity with the faithful brethren everywhere.”⁵⁷ At the Frankfort monthly meeting where Keith reputedly had obtained much support, four ministers showed up to read the condemnation in person. They were rebuffed, the meeting having fallen into Keith’s hands, but they read their judgment anyway and then departed, leaving behind dire warnings about the consequences of following Keith.⁵⁸

The episode at Frankfort revealed the seriousness of Keith’s challenge, and in preparation for the yearly meeting in September 1692 the Public Friends decided to leave nothing to chance. In customary fashion they gathered a day prior to the yearly meeting itself. This time they drew up a second judgment of Keith. It listed more of his insults, reminded the yearly meeting of the ministers’ own patient conduct—that the Public Friends had, for example, refrained from publishing the June condemnation until Keith had had an opportunity to answer the charges against him—and asked the yearly meeting to condemn Keith.⁵⁹

The September meeting confirmed the ministers’ judgment. About three-fourths of the representatives from the quarterly and monthly meetings condemned Keith, the others following him into yet another separa-

⁵⁶ George Keith, *An Expostulation with Thomas Lloyd* . . . ([Philadelphia, 1692]), 5.

⁵⁷ Quoted from the copy of the Bucks County Quarterly Meeting Judgment inserted in the Minutes, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1692, 32. See also *The Friend*, XXVII (1853-1854), 340. The judgment refers to 3 John 9-10, where the refusal of Diotrephes to hear the apostles is reported. The same text was used against William Rogers of Bristol, who supported John Wilkinson and John Story in their dispute with Fox during the late 1670s and early 1680s. See Richard Snead *et al.*, *An Exalted Diotrephes Reprehended, or, the Spirit of Error and Envy in William Rogers against the Truth* . . . ([London], 1681); Russell Mortimer, ed., “Minute Book of the Men’s Meeting of the Society of Friends in Bristol, 1667-1686,” Bristol Record Society, *Publications*, XXVI (1971), xvii-xix; and Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 314, 318-323.

⁵⁸ Keith and Budd, *Plea of the Innocent*, 16.

⁵⁹ The minutes for these ministerial meetings are missing, but the ministers’ advice to the yearly meeting is in Smith, “History of Pa.,” in Hazard, ed., *Register of Pa.*, VI (1830), 300.

tion, this time a new Keithian yearly meeting. Appropriately enough, the majority at the orthodox meeting not only disowned Keith but upheld the action of the Public Friends, specifically supporting their "dear and well esteemed Friends and labourers in the gospel" and denouncing the "spirit of reviling, railing, lying, slandering, and falsely accusing, which hath risen and acted notoriously in George Keith and his adherents."⁶⁰

The ministers used their victory in the yearly meeting to press even harder on the loyalties of the Pennsylvania Quakers. The judgment was circulated to meetings in Maryland, Virginia, and New England, and these gatherings in turn expressed their agreement with the yearly meeting verdict in Pennsylvania.⁶¹ The consequence was inescapable. Modest as well as prestigious Friends disavowed Keith, some in Pennsylvania and the Jerseys sending apologetic papers to Philadelphia in an effort to escape even the slightest association with the schismatic.⁶²

To this point the Public Friends had opposed Keith through the familiar instruments of ministerial authority. In one instance, however, they abandoned their principles to haul Keith to court on a charge of libel, hoping thereby to silence him with force. Despite its blatantly political character even this action reflected the fundamentally religious character of the schism. Ostensibly Keith was brought into court because he had insulted Pennsylvania's leading politicians. The indictment cited his abuse of Lloyd, for example, who Keith said "was not fit to be a Governor, and that his Name would stink."⁶³ More serious were Keith's attacks on the union of religion and politics in Pennsylvania. After Keith was condemned by the ministers in June 1692 he accused them of acting more as magistrates than as ministers and hinted that civil power had corrupted their ministerial integrity. Keith laid responsibility for this corruption especially on Lloyd, Jennings, Simcock, and Cooke, four ministers "concerned in Government and Magistracy . . . [who] exalt themselves, and lord it over G.K. and his Friends, and seek to oppress and

⁶⁰ Quoted *ibid.*, 301-302; Kirby, *George Keith*, 75-77.

⁶¹ Kirby, *George Keith*, 77. See also [George Keith], *The False Judgment of a Yearly Meeting of Quakers in Maryland* ([Philadelphia], 1693). Some of the judgments issued by Friends in other colonies were read in the Pennsylvania and Jersey meetings. See Minutes, Abington Monthly Meeting, 30/11mo./1692, and Minutes, Burlington Monthly Meeting, 2/11mo./1692, 6/1mo./1692-3, Dept. of Recs., Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (microfilm copies at Friends' Hist. Library).

⁶² See the Testimony of Robert Owen, and James and Esther Cooper, Acknowledgement for Having Followed George Keith, 9/11mo./1695, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Friends' Hist. Soc. Four months earlier, in Sept. 1695, James Cooper offered the Philadelphia yearly meeting a more elaborate recantation of his alliance with Keith. *The Friend*, XXVIII (1854-1855), 51.

⁶³ Quoted in Kirby, *George Keith*, 78.

run him down, because of their worldly Power and Greatness."⁶⁴ This charge soon became general. By mid-summer 1692 Keith argued that no Quaker minister had a right to sit as a civil magistrate. The challenge was not merely academic because at least five of the six Quaker magistrates in Philadelphia were Public Friends and members of the Philadelphia ministerial meeting.⁶⁵

Keith's new charges came in the critical time between the Public Friends' June condemnation of Keith and the September yearly meeting, and at this point the ministers panicked. Having already split the Quaker meetings, he now seemed intent on destroying the Quakers' government. The magistrates feared that Keith's demand for their resignations would "Prostitute the Validity of every act of Government," a clear intimation of the political importance of the Public Friends. Hence the magistrates ordered Keith and the printer William Bradford to cease publishing such criticisms because of their "tendency to Sedition, and Disturbance of the Peace."⁶⁶ By this, of course, they meant Keith to publish nothing, since everything he now wrote undermined orthodox Quaker conceptions of order and tranquility. More immediately, the order would stop some of Keith's activities during the two-week period that would elapse before the beginning of the September yearly meeting.

As it turned out the ministers did not need the court order since, as we have seen, they won an easy victory at the September yearly meeting. Their subsequent pursuit of Keith in the courts can only be regarded as an exercise in personal retribution. When Keith continued to talk and Bradford to print, the Philadelphia grand jury indicted them on charges of libel in October 1692. Keith saw the indictment as a ministerial maneuver and accused the magistrates of holding an inquisition. Nonetheless, the jury convicted him on the charge of libel. But when it refused to find a verdict against Bradford the magistrates became furious and, according to Keith, kept the jurors "without Meat, drink, fire or tobacco," behavior Keith gleefully found reminiscent of the crown's threats during the famous trial of Penn and William Meade in 1670.⁶⁷

The lapse in ministerial judgment came too late for Keith, who soon fell into desperate acts of his own. After the 1692 yearly meeting he attacked the orthodox Quakers from anywhere and without warning. He would stop them on the streets, or he and his supporters would run into

⁶⁴ Keith and Budd, *Plea of the Innocent*, 9.

⁶⁵ The five were Samuel Jennings, Arthur Cooke, Robert Ewer, Samuel Richardson, and Anthony Morris.

⁶⁶ The order is printed in Kirby, *George Keith*, 78-79.

⁶⁷ Quoted *ibid.*, 84.

a meeting for worship, harangue the congregation, and run out.⁶⁸ Finally, condemned by the ministers and the yearly meeting, tried in the courts, and slowly losing ground in the countryside, Keith and his frustrated followers marched into Philadelphia's orthodox meetinghouse where they first built a gallery for their own leaders and then, in the midst of a scuffle, ripped down the ministerial gallery of their opponents.⁶⁹ The episode signaled defeat, not victory. Throughout 1693 Keith continued to tour Pennsylvania, kept up the separate meetings for worship (now called those of Christian Quakers), and issued a confession of faith. But his following dwindled, apparently never rising above the level of support he had received in the 1692 yearly meeting, and in February 1694 Keith sailed home to take his case before the Quakers in London.

The reaction of the English Friends confirms, although in a peculiar way, the view that the Keithian dispute was essentially a contest over ministerial authority. As early as September 1691 several London ministers had tried to settle the Stockdale affair by letter, but their words excited everyone and solved nothing.⁷⁰ Later some of the London Quakers perceived too much ministerial conniving in Philadelphia and accused the Pennsylvania ministers of an overzealous prosecution of Keith. This charge angered the American Friends. "Did yu: there but see One Halfe of the trash he hath published: the notion of his former Services would never stay yu: from nauseating his disservice," Lloyd wrote.⁷¹ Hugh Roberts, another minister, complained to Penn that while the Public Friends in Philadelphia had expected help from London, all they heard were complaints that they had been "too hasty in judging G. K." Roberts was dismayed. Indeed, it was their bold condemnation of Keith that had saved orthodox Quakerism in Pennsylvania, and Roberts knew it. "If we did miss at all we did it becaus we had not pas it the sooner." The English Friends should not be fooled by Keith. "I shall tell thee plaenly that the sp[i]rit that G:K: is of is not oneley a tering devouring sp[i]rit but a cursed leing sp[i]rit also . . . thinke of him w[ha]t you will but at Last you will find it so."⁷²

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 90-94.

⁶⁹ The act also betrayed Keith's acceptance of a legitimate ministry. *Ibid.*, 87; Nash, *Quakers and Politics*, 152-153.

⁷⁰ George Whitehead *et al.* to Thomas Lloyd and Arthur Cooke, 28/7mo./1691, in Smith, "History of Pa.," in Hazard, ed., *Register of Pa.*, VI (1830), 242-245.

⁷¹ Lloyd to Philip Ford, [?]/2mo./[16]93, *Bulletin of the Friends' Historical Association*, II (1908), 19.

⁷² Hugh Roberts to William Penn, n.d., *PMHB*, XVIII (1894), 205-210. The ministers also were disgusted by Penn's failure to condemn Keith while the latter still remained in Pennsylvania. For Penn's vacillation see his letter to Robert Turner, 27/12mo./1693, *ibid.*, XXXIX (1915), 216-217.

In the end London's Quakers discovered that the Pennsylvania ministers had not been so wrong about Keith. In June 1694 the London Second Day Morning Meeting reprimanded him for printing material on the Pennsylvania schism without its approval. But it also used the occasion to slap hands in Philadelphia as well. The Pennsylvania ministers should have been more patient. The legal action against Keith had been as embarrassing as it was wrong, and the London ministers wrote that "those Proceedings in Sessions against G. K. . . . we could not stand by . . . you may Remember that King David Patiently bore a greater affront from Shimei than some Justices had from G. K."⁷³

The London ministers set out to handle Keith in a model way and thereby lay responsibility for any disownment directly on Keith himself. Despite a crabbed, defensive speech from him at the 1694 London Yearly Meeting, they lauded his professed desire for peace and unity and asked him to contain his bitterness toward the Public Friends. In turn the ministers were ordered to forego assaults on Keith.⁷⁴ But Keith soon resumed his attacks, accepting support from older separatists who had been condemned long before during the bitter Wilkinson-Story dispute of the 1670s. Thus in September 1695 the London Yearly Meeting recorded what to its mind had become an inescapable judgment: "That the said George Keith is Gone from the blessed Unity of the peaceable spirit of our Lord . . . and hath separated himself from the holy fellowship of the Church of Christ."⁷⁵

What then was the Keithian schism all about? Once one has sorted out its elements, making due allowance for conflicts of ideas and personalities, it appears that the central issue was that of ministerial authority. Although the early troubles were concerned with doctrinal issues and Keith's treatment of Stockdale, the schism began when Keith ridiculed and rejected the ministers' authority. And it was the ministers who first condemned Keith, then crushed his movement. Indeed, the political implications of the schism were tied directly to these issues, for in a society already shaken by bitter secular division, Keith threatened harmony and order in the last remaining sanctuary for peace—the Quaker meetings. Keith knew that. So did the Quaker ministers. Therein lay the key to the schism.

⁷³ George Whitehead *et al.* to Thomas Lloyd *et al.*, 21/4mo./1694, Papers Relating to the Keithian Controversy, Box 572; Kirby, *George Keith*, 95-100.

⁷⁴ These procedures are best described in Francis E. Pollard *et al.*, *Democracy and the Quaker Method* (London, 1949), 102-117, although the democratic character of the yearly meetings is overestimated.

⁷⁵ Quoted *ibid.*, 110.

UNLIKELY CONTROVERSIALISTS: CALEB PUSEY AND GEORGE KEITH

By J. WILLIAM FROST*

Before his migration to Pennsylvania there was little in the life of Caleb Pusey which would make it appear likely that he would be commemorated three hundred years later. Born in Berkshire, England, sometime before 1650, he became a Baptist in 1659 and in 1672 claimed to have known the congregation at Allhallows for twenty years. In the turmoil surrounding the Restoration, Pusey became dissatisfied with the Baptists. Experiencing disillusion over the course of events in England, the Baptists practiced fasts and other methods to implore the Lord to again manifest his presence but even one of the leaders commented on the lack of success.¹ Pusey contrasted the timidity with which the Baptists faced persecution with the fervor of Friends who openly defied the Conventicle Acts. Shortly after 1660, Pusey became a Quaker.

In 1672 Pusey became outraged when his former Baptist teacher endorsed a pamphlet written against William Penn. At first he sought a conference to educate his former brethren but was rebuffed. Frustrated, Pusey composed *A Serious and Seasonable Warning unto all People*, directed primarily at the Baptist church in Berkshire. The pamphlet shows no particular grace in style or originality in contents, but some of the issues Pusey debated in 1672 were still being discussed thirty years later. Pusey included a long confession of faith and insisted that Quakers endorsed all the "Fundamental Principles of the Christian Religion."

We believe in one Almighty Omnipotent God, and that he is to be loved, worshipped, feared and obeyed: that he created and upholdeth all things by the word of his power . . . that man by sin became deprived of the knowledge, and enjoyment of God . . . that the restoration of this lost man

*Associate Professor of Religion and Director of the Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa.

1. Josephine F. Albrecht, "Caleb Pusey 1: Penn's Mill and Its 'Keeper' at Landing Ford Plantation in Upland, Pennsylvania," *Bulletin of Archeological Society of Delaware* (Fall, 1969), pp. 1-15; Caleb Pusey, *Serious and Seasonable Warning unto all People* (London, 1675) p. 1; *A Collection of Memorials Concerning the People called Quakers in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1783) pp. 68-70.

to happiness again . . . is only through the Lord Jesus Christ who . . . was born of the Virgin.²

He denied that Friends worshipped the natural light of conscience, ignored the life of Jesus Christ, were either Roman Catholics or Socinians, and that they were growing rich and sensual. While no more libelous than other early Quaker writers or their opponents, Pusey proved that he could trade scurrility with ease, terming the Baptists "Houlers," "hypocrites," and "evil doers" who retained "your scum of Pride, Fleshly-ease and Sensuality, Formality in Religion, and Conformity to the World."³ Whether or not he was pleased with the fruits of his labor, Pusey abstained from additional religious pamphleteering for the next twenty-five years.

About Pusey's life before emigrating we know only that he married Ann Stone Worley, a widow, in 1681 and that his trade was lastmaking. He gained enough prosperity to migrate to Pennsylvania as a freeman, to purchase 250 acres, and to buy or be given a 1/32 share in a gristmill which he would manage for a group of prominent English Friends including William Penn, John Bellers, Philip Ford, and Daniel Worley. Ann Worley Pusey was formerly a sister-in-law of Daniel Worley, which may explain why the associates picked Caleb to operate the mill.⁴ We do not know of any experience of Pusey which caused the associates to assume that he was capable of running what was a heavily capitalized venture for the seventeenth-century. Around 1682 Pusey sailed to America and settled in Upland, built, with the aid of Richard Townsend, the house which is still standing, and began assembling near Chester Creek the prefabricated gristmill sent over from England.

Although by no means the most wealthy or prominent Friend in the community, Pusey became prominent because he was manager of a mill valued in 1692 at £550. He also prospered personally. The County Court laid out roads running to the creek over his land. In addition to his original 250 acres and the 100 acres on which the grist- and a sawmill stood, Pusey acquired 250 acres of land in 1691 and an additional 250 acres in 1694. Chester Court Records show him buying and selling small parcels of land; probably like

2. Caleb Pusey, *Serious and Seasonable Warning*, pp. 13-14.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 6, 11, 14-16.

4. Josephine F. Albrecht, "Caleb Pusey," p. 3. Mary Sullivan Patterson, "Saving a Seventeenth Century Pennsylvania House," reprinted from the *Germantowne Crier* (Sept. 1962); George Smith, *History of Delaware County* (Philadelphia, 1862), pp. 146-147.

many other Pennsylvania residents he engaged in land speculation.⁵ In 1695 Pusey's worth was evaluated at £100 for his estate and calling and the mill was assessed an additional £100. In the provincial tax levied in 1693, Pusey paid 10s; only two other individuals in Chester County paid equal amounts and the only person who paid more was a member of the Council.⁶

The mill did not make a profit in early years. Pusey was probably not a bad business manager but he, with the concurrence of the partners, located the mill on a stream subject to flooding and the dam washed away twice and in 1687 the mill received extensive water damage and had to be rebuilt. In 1685 William Fenton called Pusey into court for a debt of £208 on the mill; it was paid in 1687. In 1688 Pusey again came into court and confessed indebtedness to Robert Turner for 22/32 parts of the mill. After the associates in England (with the exception of Penn) refused to honor bills of exchange, Turner brought an action of trespass against Pusey for £289.⁷ With the default of the associates Turner became owner of 2/3 of the enterprise but Samuel Carpenter bought him out in 1693. The partnership of Pusey, Penn, and Carpenter is commemorated by the famous weather vane at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Pusey remained manager of the mill until 1708. It is not known whether the action of Robert Turner in foreclosing the mill influenced Pusey's actions in the Keithian controversy which was developing, but Turner became a leading backer of George Keith and was one of the Quakers who chopped down the minister's gallery in the Philadelphia meeting-house when the "orthodox" destroyed the platform where Keith spoke.

Soon after his arrival in Pennsylvania, Pusey began playing an active role in the political and religious life of the colony. In 1684 the court appointed him appraiser; he sat on many juries and by 1690 began serving as an attorney. He worked as a tax collector, surveyed land, and took an active role in arbitrating disputes between Friends who were not allowed to sue each other in court. Beginning in 1686 his countrymen elected him to serve several terms in the Assembly and he was appointed a member of the Council

5. *Records of the Courts of Chester County, Pennsylvania 1681-1697* (Philadelphia, 1910), pp. 234, 235, 267, 337, 358.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 359; J. Smith Futhy and Gilbert Cope, *History of Chester County* (Philadelphia, 1881), p. 35.

7. *Records of the Courts of Chester County*, pp. 56, 94-95, 130, 188, 267.

in 1695.⁸ Pusey's success in politics does not mean that his fellows found him without fault. In 1691 he engaged in a dispute over the shooting of a horse; in 1687 the grand jury presented him for not laying planks on the bridge over the creek; in 1691 he was indicted for selling beer without a license (he was sheriff at the time), and in 1693 the court compelled him to release an indentured servant who had worked for eight years.⁹

Friends valued Pusey primarily for his business acumen. His first appearance in the Chester Monthly Meeting Records occurred five years after his arrival when, in 1687, he was one of four men delegated to contract to build a meetinghouse 24 ft. square and 10 ft. high. Friends did not rush to decisions any more quickly in the seventeenth century than today, for four years later the building had not been started and the meeting delegated Pusey and another man to employ workmen to erect the building. The cost was not to exceed £100 and Friends wanted one chimney but all other details of the structure were left to the discretion of the two men.¹⁰ For the monthly meeting Pusey investigated couples to make sure they were clear of impediments to marriage and collected and disbursed funds, but he was more frequently occupied in the affairs of Concord Quarterly Meeting. In 1684, three years before he was even mentioned in the monthly meeting records, Pusey arbitrated a difference between a master and an indentured servant. Caleb Pusey and his wife Ann worked with Margery Gibbons to persuade her to be quiet in meeting. At first Margery only agreed to "consider" being quiet; after the meeting disowned her, she submitted. Still no satisfaction resulted and finally Friends proposed to give her "Christian liberty" to have a meeting in private.¹¹ Caleb Pusey's religious status seemed assured when he became a representative to the 1692 yearly meeting. Still, one should not make Pusey more important than he was. One of his closest neighbors was John Simcock, a minister, a member of the Provincial Council since 1683, and the owner of at least 2300 acres of land in Upland. Pusey obtained recognition as a leading figure in Chester County, but he had little prominence in the colony as a whole. He was not a minister and in 1692 the positions of elders and overseers had not yet been officially rec-

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 149, 182, 214.

9. Chester Monthly Meeting, Minutes, p. 25; *Chester Court Records*, pp. 118, 244, 301.

10. Chester Monthly Meeting, Minutes, pp. 12, 24.

11. Concord Quarterly Meeting, Minutes, pp. 1, 4-6.

ognized. Prominent ministers who were politicians like Simcock, Samuel Jennings, and Thomas Lloyd were far more important in the political and religious life of the colony. In 1692 Pusey would join these men in deciding what to do about George Keith.

Pusey could scarcely have predicted that he would be called upon to defend the Society of Friends against George Keith. Since his conversion in 1664 Keith had emerged as a leading Quaker apologist.¹² University educated, an excellent linguist and mathematician, and well trained in theology, Keith joined with his Scotch compatriot Robert Barclay in several disputes with Puritan and Anglican opponents. Keith composed a series of important books of which the most famous is *Immediate Revelation not Ceased* and traveled with George Fox, William Penn, and Robert Barclay on a missionary expedition on the Continent. In my opinion, George Keith was the most brilliant theologian the Quakers produced in the seventeenth century, for he alone dealt with the ramifications of the distinctive tenets of the faith. In 1685 Keith became surveyor-general of New Jersey and drew the boundary line between East and West Jersey. In 1689 he settled in Philadelphia where he taught in the Latin school, engaged in religious controversies with New England Puritans, and made missionary journeys to Rhode Island, Long Island, and Maryland. Three years later he was engaged in a polemical dispute with Philadelphia Quakers and became the leader of a schismatic meeting.

Why should this man who had devoted over twenty-five years to the service of Quakerism launch a major attack upon Friends? Some historians echoing the views of his Quaker contemporaries have found the key in Keith's personality. Vain of his learning, arrogant toward ministers with less acuteness in doctrine, petulant over not receiving the respect he thought was his due, and ambitious to become the leader of Friends after the deaths of Barclay and Fox, Keith could not contain himself within the structure of Quakerism. The schism occurred because of Keith's personal attacks upon other ministers.¹³ The difficulty with this interpretation

12. The standard biography is Ethyn Williams Kirby, *George Keith* (New York, 1942). Kirby found the keys to the controversy in Keith's too intellectual and Calvinistic form of Quakerism and his personality.

13. Samuel Jennings, *State of the Case* (London, 1693), p. 13; Thomas Budd, *A True Copy of the Judgments* (Philadelphia, 1962), p. 3; Gary Nash, *Quakers and Politics: Pennsylvania 1681-1726* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1968), p. 145; Rufus M. Jones, *Quakers in the American Colonies* (London, 1911), pp. 448-449.

is that there is no evidence that Keith's personality changed suddenly around 1690 or that he was more contentious than his opponents Thomas Lloyd and Samuel Jennings. Friends had been able to work with Keith for many years and made no objection to his stridency in dealing with Cotton Mather or Francis Bugg. Personality differences may have been a minor factor in the schism, but Keith's ability to attract a large number of followers from his local meeting does not argue an embittered or unduly ambitious man. Self-righteous he was, but that was a trait he shared with many others.

A second interpretation finds the key to the split in the political and economic controversies in Pennsylvania. Gary Nash has described the amount of acrimony in the colony and argues that the schism followed lines of conflict established in earlier disputes between the supporters and opponents of William Penn. In Nash's view obscure theological issues began the dispute but were soon subordinated to political matters.¹⁴ The difficulty here is that the participants thought the theological issues primary. Although the Antinomian controversy in New England in 1637 shows merchant resentment of the rule of the magistrates, historians have not ventured to assert that social conflict was the essence of that dispute. Neither was political and economic turmoil the cause of the Keithian controversy.

Very recently two historians have brought new insights into dealing with George Keith. According to Edward Cody, George Keith was a Christian perfectionist who had never learned to compromise with human institutions. Believing that the Inward Light gave him an infallible interpretation of the truth, he could not tolerate disagreement in others.¹⁵ The result was Keith's attacks on other Friends. The only weakness in this view is that Cody did not isolate what Keith disliked in early Pennsylvania. Jon Butler asserts that the schism was caused by George Keith's attempt to reconstruct Philadelphia Quakerism in the 1690s. It has long been known that Keith proposed to Philadelphia Monthly Meeting and eventually to the Yearly Meeting of Ministers in 1690 a document entitled "Gospel Order and Discipline Improved." There is also a document with nearly the same title in a group of manuscripts in the Department of Records. This document is undated, but historians have generally assumed that it refers to the system

14. Gary Nash, *Quakers and Politics: Pennsylvania 1681-1726*, pp. 144-160.

15. Edward J. Cody, "The Price of Perfection: The Irony of George Keith," *Pennsylvania History*, XXXIX (Jan., 1972), pp. 1-19.

of church government instituted by Keith for his separate meeting. Butler argues that this document may be a draft of the 1690 proposal and, even if it is not, it shows what Keith wanted in 1690. Keith desired to reconstitute Quakerism by requiring a written testimonial to faith before membership, the ending of birthright membership, the creation of a new order of deacons, and the restoration of the equality of all Friends. Fearing the power of the ministers, Keith became convinced that the primitive testimony of Friends was being compromised in early Pennsylvania and wanted to reinstitute the faith in its pure and earlier form. Recognizing the revolutionary implications of Keith's proposal, the Yearly Meeting of Ministers procrastinated and eventually referred the matter to London. Butler believes the essence of the dispute was over the power of the ministry, and Keith's eventual disownment was brought about through the power of the ministers.¹⁶

There are several problems with Butler's view. First, neither Keith nor the Yearly Meeting of Ministers believed that the matters in "Gospel Order and Discipline Improved" were the essence of the dispute, though some Friends later dated Keith's disaffection from the reception given his proposals.¹⁷ Next, forwarding the proposals to London was a logical step which Friends often followed on weighty subjects. In the meantime ministers could make copies to study the reforms. The minutes make clear that Keith approved of this course.¹⁸ The issue of ministerial power did not loom large in the earliest documents, and it makes far more sense to see Keith becoming hostile to the ministers *after* the ministers turned against him. If the conflict witnessed a vindication of ministerial power over Keith, that is no reason to assume that an attack upon ministers caused the split. There was, after all, no other group besides the ministers competent to judge a theological issue. Keith's proposal to establish elders and deacons was not revolutionary, because esteemed members, like Caleb Pusey, were already carrying out the functions prescribed for these offices. It was not whether to have a confession of faith which was disputed, but what the contents of that confession should be. Only the issue of the oral testimony of

16. Jon Butler, "'Gospel Order Improved: The Keithian Schism and the Exercise of Quaker Ministerial Authority in Pennsylvania,'" *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, XXXI (July, 1974), pp. 431-452.

17. George Keith and Thomas Budd, *Plea of the Innocent Against the False Judgment of the Guilty* (Philadelphia, 1692), pp. 15-16.

18. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Ministers, Minutes, pp. 9-10.

all who desired to become members departed widely from normal Quaker practice.

What then is left as a cause of the Keithian controversy? Simply, what Keith, Pusey, and Pennsylvania Friends saw as the issue, the doctrine of the outward body of Christ. Keith advanced the 1690 proposal to reform Philadelphia Yearly Meeting because he became convinced that many members as well as ministers were neglecting what he held to be a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, a belief so basic that a person who believed wrongly could not be called a Christian.¹⁹ We have long been aware that Keith complained that the Quakers ignored the historic Jesus and emphasized the Light Within while the ministers accused Keith of separating two Christs. Since both Keith and his opponents asserted the link between the historic Jesus and the Light Within, historians have been unable to comprehend what the hassle was all about. The error is that we have not understood that the debate about the body of Jesus refers to the time after the resurrection.

Keith's view was that the unity between the Godhead and the physical body born of the Virgin was complete both before and after the resurrection. After the resurrection the body of Christ was spiritualized, but it was still a body and even after his ascension Christ remained a unity of spirit and body. In heaven there is Christ who is part of the Godhead but there is also Christ who has a spiritual body. History will end when Christ returns in his outward body to judge the good and the bad. When a Christian dies, said Keith, there is a separation between his body and soul. The body of a saint lies in the ground and assumes a purified state (that of sinners remains dross), but the soul goes to heaven to glorify God. The final perfection promised by Jesus will happen only at the second coming. At that time the body will rise and be joined with the soul in a spiritualized—but still physical—body and be judged. The saints will ascend to heaven and the sinners drop into hell and eternal torment. In order for Christ to fulfill his promise for the

19. George Keith, *A Testimony against that False and Absurd Opinion* (Philadelphia, 1692), pp. 2, 10-12; *Some Reasons and Causes of the Late Separation* (Philadelphia, 1692), pp. 2-3.

perfecting of the body, he must appear again in body as well as in spirit.²⁰

Any doctrine which denied the physical element in the risen Lord stood in opposition to a central tenet of the Christian faith which was the bodily resurrection of the saints. Any attempt to spiritualize the physical existence of Jesus, his death, resurrection, ascension, and bodily existence in heaven should be opposed at all cost. Perhaps the best summary of what Keith believed is contained in an undated document written during the controversy and entitled "Some of our Principles to which if you agree we are likely to agree with you on other things."

1. That bodily sickness and death came in by the fall.
2. That Christ hath now in Heaven a Soul and body, that is not the Godhead but the Temple of it, and most Gloriously united therewith.
3. That Christ's body that was Crucified and buried without us rose again without us and is now in Heaven without us.
4. That the man Christ Jesus will come again in that body without us to Judge the Quick and the Dead.
5. That there shall be a Generall day of Judgment that all the deceased Saints are in expectation of.
6. That we gett not the Resurrection of the Body either in this Life or Immediately after Death.
7. That faith in the man Christ without us as he dyed for us rose again, and is gone into Heaven wrought in us by the Spirit of Christ is universally necessary to make men true Christians and Children of God born of the free woman who have the Spirit of adoption Crying abba father.
8. That Christs obedience and Righteousness which he performed in himselfe without us is Imputed to us by faith for the remission of sinns.
9. That Christ the seed in us is not only Gods Elect but all that shall be saved from the beginning of the World, are Gods Elect not only before they believe and repent but from the foundation of the World.
10. That all and Every one of the members of the Church of Christ ought to Confess with their mouths in the hearing of their fellow members the Principles of their Christian faith, before they can be owned to be members of the Church.²¹

20. These doctrines appear in nearly every pamphlet published by Keith during the initial stages of the controversy. The most complete statement is in George Keith, *A Testimony Against that False and Absurd Opinion*, pp. 2-6. See also George Keith, *Christian Faith of the . . . Quakers . . . Vindicated* (Philadelphia, 1692), Preface and pp. 4-5; *Some Reasons and Causes*, (pp. 5-7; George Keith *et. al.*, *An Appeal from the Twenty-Eight Judges* (Philadelphia, 1692), pp. 5-6.

21. Undated Ms., Documents relating to Keithian Controversy, Box 572, Dept. of Records.

Why had Keith become so concerned about the doctrine of the physical body of Christ, an idea that predates the middle ages? He believed it was because the scriptural references were so clear that to deny them was tantamount to atheism.²² Also, the rise of rationalistic philosophy with its de-emphasis upon the history of Jesus and concern for the truths of God which could be discovered by studying creation worried Keith. He had great respect for "heathen philosophy" but feared that too great an emphasis upon reason would lead to a denigration of the truths of religion which could be known only through Revelation. The Greeks had believed in a spiritual life after death but only the Bible proved a physical resurrection.²³

In the seventeenth century, many intellectuals began to re-examine the doctrines of bodily resurrection, eternal life, and damnation. How did the doctrine of hell fire for eternity fit into the concept of a just and merciful God? Purgatory solved the issue for Roman Catholics, but Protestants repudiated that belief and were left only with heaven for the small number of the elect and everlasting punishment for the overwhelming mass of humanity.²⁴ Keith wondered about how to preserve God's justice and mercy in dealing with peoples who had either lived before Jesus or had never heard of him, but he also distinguished between hypotheses based upon reason and postulates of faith. Along with Penn and Barclay, Keith had associated in England with the Countess Conway and Francis Mercurius van Helmont (1618-1699) who had toyed with the prospect of joining Friends. The Countess and van Helmont were interested in transmigration of souls. For if afterlife were determined by actions on earth, then one way for God's justice to operate would be to allow a good heathen to come back to life in a Christian country where he would have the chance to espouse the true faith. Keith had joined in these speculations and read in manuscript and made suggestions for a treatise by van Helmont entitled *Two Hundred Queries moderately propounded concerning the Doc-*

22. The primary Scripture references for Keith were: John 2:6, I Peter 2:21, John 4:23, Ephesians 6:18, Romans 8:26, Matthew 6:32-33, Luke 11:1-13, Acts 7:59, Phil. 1:23, Rev. 14:13, Luke 16:22, I Cor. 15:13, 38, 44, 53, Acts 24:15, Isa. 66:24, Mark 9:44.

23. George Keith, *The Arraignment of Worldly Philosophy* (London, 1694), pp. 10-11.

24. D. P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (Chicago, 1964), pp. 30, 59-60. See also Norman T. Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), p. 40.

trine of the Revolution of Humane Souls and its Conformity to the Truth of Christianity (1684).²⁵ This book was published anonymously but many in Pennsylvania thought Keith was the author, probably because he discussed transmigration. Keith did not espouse transmigration of souls as an article of faith, but he did consider it as a postulate of reason and worthy of discussion.²⁶ When Keith raised the problem of the body of Christ after the ascension and the two resurrections as articles of faith, Friends accused him of preaching reincarnation or the revolution of souls.

Where did Keith learn his doctrines of the outward Christ in heaven and the dual resurrection? Certainly he did not invent them, for the same beliefs are found in Calvin, Bullinger, and the Second Helvetic Confession.²⁷ Many Congregationalists and Presbyterians agreed with Keith; Lutherans and Anabaptists did not. What about early Friends? Samuel Fisher spiritualized the heavenly existence of Christ and the saints, but Robert Barclay agreed with Keith about the bodily resurrection of Christ and may have also believed in a dual resurrection of the saints.²⁸ For George Fox the issue is complicated, partially because of his vagueness but also because of his frequent citations of Scripture. Keith could have agreed with everything Fox stated in a treatise entitled "Concerning Christ, the resurrection of the just and unjust," but whether Fox would have accepted Keith's formulation is more problematic. Fox asserted that Christ had a "heavenly" flesh before, during, and after his stay on earth, but his extreme spirit-body dualism and linkage of flesh with sin and corruption seems to require a denial of Christ's human nature.²⁹ Before 1690 Quakers had not empha-

25. D. P. Walker, *Decline of Hell*, pp. 137-145; George Keith, *Truth and Innocency Defended Against Calumny and Defamation* (Philadelphia, 1692), pp. 2, 9. This book is traditionally dated 1692. The copy in the Friends Historical Library has written on the cover "Samuel Miles his book 12-5-1691." This would make the pamphlet the earliest to appear after the controversy began.

26. George Keith, *Truth and Innocency Defended*, pp. 3-4.

27. Norman T. Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton*, pp. 24-25, 30-31.

28. Samuel Fisher, *Apokrypta Apokalypta* in *Early Quaker Writings*, ed. Hugh Barbour and Arthur O. Roberts (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1973), pp. 304-314; Robert Barclay believed that Christ was in heaven "in soul and body, by whom God shall judge the world, in the great and general day of judgment." *Apology*, Prop. V-VI, Par. xiii.

29. George Fox, *Gospel Truth Demonstrated in a Collection of Doctrinal Books*. III, *Works*, VI (Philadelphia, 1831), pp. 295-301. The best discussion of the Nestorian tendencies in early Quaker Christology and William Penn's position is in Melvin B. Endy, Jr., *William Penn and Early Quakerism* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1973), pp. 274-281, 287-288.

sized any beliefs about the status of Christ after his death or the form of final judgment.

When did Keith first become convinced of the doctrine of the dual resurrection? Certainly there had long been a more orthodox cast in his writings, and also in Barclay's, compared with those of William Penn. Keith claimed that he had defended the bodily resurrection in England and had been vindicated in this belief in a controversy brought before a monthly meeting, but the belief had not been prominent in his tracts.³⁰ In a catechism published in England in 1688 entitled the *Fundamental Truths of Christianity*, the doctrine does not appear. The first concrete signs of difference appear in a visit to Rhode Island in 1688. Samuel Jennings, who accompanied him on this journey, wrote during the schism that Keith's disunity first appeared here.³¹ One would be tempted to dismiss Jennings as a biased observer were it not for another witness who found substantial disagreements among Friends and Keith. Christian Lodowick who had been a Friend for a brief period wrote to Cotton Mather describing several long conversations with Keith. Lodowick distinguished between two kinds of Quakers; one type were semi-Foxonians like Barclay and Keith who recognized the Inward Light not as Christ revealed in his fullness but as an intermediary substance. The other group, the overwhelming majority of Friends, were Foxonians who believed that the Inward Light was the "Essence of God," and that all that was necessary for salvation was God or Christ within. "And hence they deny wholly, that ever Christ as Man shall come down from Heaven to Raise and Judge the Dead."³² This was the very issue over which the Keithian controversy erupted. When Keith returned from Rhode Island, he drew up and published in 1690 a catechism describing the bodily resurrection, ascension, and return of Christ as fundamental tenets of the faith.³³ The tract was issued with the approbation of the meeting.

Upon his return from Rhode Island, Keith seems to have decided to return to England for he began selling his property in West

30. George Keith, *A Further Discovery of the Spirit of Falshood (sic) and Persecution of Sam. Jennings* (London, 1693), p. 6.

31. George Keith, *The Fundamental Truths of Christianity* (London, 1688); Samuel Jennings, *State of the Case* (London, 1694), p. 13.

32. Christian Lodowick, *A Letter from the Most Ingenious Mr. Lodowick* (Boston?, 1692), pp. 2-3.

33. George Keith, *A Plain Short Catechism for Children and Youth* (Philadelphia, 1690), pp. 11, 22.

Jersey. He continued to zealously disseminate his views and to insist upon the necessity for preaching the existence of the body of Christ before and after the resurrection. Undoubtedly this irritated some Friends, because the whole thrust of Quakerism was to spiritualize Christ. Hugh Barbour found in the early history of the movement a de-emphasis upon the historic Jesus and stress upon the inward Christ.³⁴ A religion which dropped all physical sacraments and insisted that all outward forms were in vain was not likely to insist upon a physical Saviour. The comments that Keith encountered in the early stages of the schism make clear that many Friends saw life after death as a spiritual state and Christ in heaven as a purely spiritual being.

The issue became joined when William Stockdale, an elderly minister and early settler of Pennsylvania, charged Keith with preaching two Christs. Keith, convinced that his accuser held unsound ideas about Jesus, demanded vindication of his faith and condemnation of Stockdale for advocating heresy. In September, 1691 nearly fifty ministers met in six long sessions to ease the controversy, but could come to no agreement. The Yearly Meeting of Ministers refused to judge Stockdale a heretic; it also declined to vindicate Keith and to endorse his doctrine of the outward presence of Christ in heaven and his physical return at the second coming. Instead, some ministers insisted that Keith's beliefs were not fundamental to the faith. Others upbraided Keith for his too belligerent defense of the doctrine and insisted that he confess error.³⁵

In January, 1692 Thomas Fitzwater, another Philadelphia Friend, accused George Keith of denying the sufficiency of the Light Within. He produced as witness to this charge William Stockdale. Philadelphia Monthly Meeting split over this charge with some of the prominent merchants supporting Keith but most of the ministers supporting Fitzwater. After several prolonged sessions of the monthly meeting, a group reconvened and, after several Friends withdrew and in the absence of the clerk, proceeded

34. Hugh Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven, 1964), pp. 145-149.

35. George Keith and Thomas Budd, *Plea of the Innocent*, pp. 2-6; Samuel Jennings, *The State of the Case* gives the perspective of the main body. The minutes of Philadelphia Monthly and Quarterly Meetings and the Yearly Meeting of Ministers are not specific enough to be much help in discovering what happened in their deliberations.

to denounce Fitzwater.³⁶ At the Quarterly Meeting the traditional Friends prevailed and canceled the judgment and referred the matter to the Yearly Meeting of Ministers.

During the winter months Philadelphia Friends had First Day meetings in the Bank meetinghouse, but in the summer held morning meeting at the Center meeting and in the afternoon at the Bank. In the spring, 1692, Keith's adherents refused to move to the Center and held their meeting in the Bank. In spite of the fact that a substantial number of individuals wished to continue holding meetings at two locations, the monthly meeting, clerked by Samuel Jennings, voted (the term is the correct one) to terminate the Keithian meeting. Believing that his decision did not represent the sense of the meeting, the followers of Keith continued to meet separately and to term themselves Christian Quakers. Keith also published the reasons for the dispute in a pamphlet which stressed the doctrine of the physical presence but also discussed church order.³⁷ Since the Yearly Meeting of Ministers had previously refused to endorse the bodily presence, Keith suspecting widespread heresy insisted that all ministers subscribe to a confession of faith. On June 4, 1692 Friends in the ministry censured Stockdale for his charge against Keith and rebuked Keith for his manner of proceeding. In a series of publications Keith and his followers denounced the Yearly Meeting of Ministers.

The 1692 sessions of the Yearly Meeting itself and the Yearly Meeting of Ministers were filled with acrimony. Keith and his supporters demanded complete vindication of their theology and denounced Philadelphia ministers as espousing more "damnable heresies" than any other Protestant church. The ministers offered to draw up a confession of faith either using phrases from the Bible or from the writings of early Friends. They did not object to confessions of faith *per se*, believing the Friends had drawn up several on previous occasions, but refused to accept Keith's articles of religion as necessities of belief.³⁸ Keith refused to accept the earlier confessions insisting that formerly Quakers had not needed to stress what all believed about the physical resurrection. Although

36. Ethyn Kirby, *George Keith*, pp. 64-65; George Keith and Thomas Budd, *Plea of the Innocent*, p. 6.

37. *Some Reasons and Causes*, p. 12; "Some Propositions to heale the breach" 2-8-1692, Box 572, Dept. of Records.

38. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Ministers, Minutes, p. 20. The documents are printed in Thomas Budd, *A True Copy of Three Judgments Given Forth by a Party of Men*.

about one-fourth of Friends in attendance supported Keith, both the ministers and the regular yearly meeting drew up strong condemnations of Keith but made the ground of the dispute not theology but Keith's causing a schism and publishing news of the difference. They insisted that ministers could not be compelled to preach Keith's doctrines, because the Holy Spirit determined what was said in a Quaker meeting.³⁹ Friends did not take a position on whether the physical presence of Christ or the dual resurrection of men were true beliefs.

Unable to persuade a majority of Friends to support him, Keith and his followers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania broadened their attack on American Quakers. They accused Friends of compromising the peace testimony by accepting positions of power in government and found instances where Quaker magistrates had authorized the use of armed force against pirates. Those Quaker ministers who were magistrates had surrendered the purity of the faith for worldly gain. Comparing the authority of the ministers to determine doctrine to the spiritual primacy of the popes, Keith inveighed against the power of a corrupt group. Finally, resurrecting the Germantown protest against holding of slaves, the Keithians condemned slavery in any form.⁴⁰ From the beginning the controversy involved personalities, but until the yearly meeting had reached a decision the pamphlets mentioned no names. Afterwards the Keithians named individuals and seem to have found every hint of a scandal involving Friends in New Jersey and Pennsylvania since immigration. What began as a purely theological controversy, became by late 1693 a devastating critique of the emerging pattern of Pennsylvania society.

The Quaker authorities in Pennsylvania found themselves in an embarrassing situation. English Friends had just received the benefits of a newly enacted Act of Toleration, renewed annually by Parliament, which allowed religious freedom to all orthodox Protestants. Now here was one of the most respected Quaker theologians accusing Friends of vile heresies. He also seemed to be supporting the charges made by Anglicans and Puritans since the 1650's about the denial of the historic Jesus. Equally troubling was the situation in regard to the dissemination of information. The informal Qua-

39. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Ministers, Minutes, p. 20.

40. George Keith and Thomas Budd, *Plea of the Innocent*, pp. 9, 14; George Keith, *Exhortation and Caution to Friends Concerning the Buying or Keeping of Negroes* (Philadelphia, 1693).

ker network of traveling ministers and consultation between meetings worked extraordinarily well in procuring condemnations from Maryland and Barbadoes against Keith and limiting the spread of the self-named Christian Quakers. But the debate on the essence of Quakerism was being observed from London and New England and in this struggle Keith had an advantage. The only publisher in Pennsylvania was William Bradford, brought over from England and guaranteed a salary of £40 per year by Friends. (Caleb Pusey had helped collect funds to bring Bradford over.) Bradford supported George Keith, but offered to print pamphlets for both sides. Friends declined. Keith was now spreading his case abroad and Friends had no way to answer. So the magistrates arrested Bradford and McComb, his associate, for printing books without first obtaining a license for these publications. Keith had employed derogatory language against ministers who were also magistrates, terming them unfit and prideful. Keith, Thomas Budd, and Peter Boss were charged with seditious libel. Since all followed Quaker precedents and refused to post bonds for good behavior, they went to jail. Just to make certain that Bradford printed no more, the authorities seized part of his type. Several of the justices who carried out these acts were prominent ministers, but they asserted that their actions were for the maintenance of public order and not because of the religious dispute. Keith's followers charged Friends with religious persecution and quoted passages proving that early Quakers had used strong language against English authorities.⁴¹ All the individuals were convicted and fined, but further proceedings ended when Benjamin Fletcher, the new royal governor, replaced the Quaker magistrates. Keith stayed in Pennsylvania only a short time longer to organize his several hundred followers, and then sailed to London in 1693 seeking vindication from Friends in England.

Anxious to have their side of the controversy published in England, American Friends sent pamphlets to England for printing. One was by Caleb Pusey. Pusey knew Keith personally and was one of six Friends reputed to have heard Keith charge that not six ministers in Pennsylvania preached Christ right.⁴² Pusey did not become involved in the schism because of Chester Meeting; there were no supporters of Keith there. Pusey was one of 132 Friends

41. Ethyn Kirby, *George Keith*, 80-84; George Keith, *A Further Discovery of the Spirit of Falshood*, pp. 3-5.

42. Samuel Jennings, *State of the Case*, p. 31.

who condemned Keith in Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting in 1692. He attended the 1692 Yearly Meeting which repudiated Keith and was one of twenty-three Friends signing a letter to London Quakers describing how all attempts at reconciliation had failed.⁴³ Perhaps the meeting asked Pusey to reply because he was one of the few prominent Quakers whom Keith had not charged with some scandal. More likely, Keith had irritated Pusey with his charge that Friends were not orthodox Christians. In 1672 Pusey had defended the nature of Quakerism and now in 1696 he did so again.

A Modest Account from Pennsylvania is Pusey's most appealing work, partially because there is little of the vituperation which appears in his earlier and later writings. Although published in England, the tract was an attempt to isolate Keith from his followers and to persuade them to rejoin meetings in Pennsylvania. Condemning Keith for a railing spirit, Pusey insisted that he had intended to lead Friends to new doctrine for a long time and to break away from the faith professed by Fox, Barclay, Penn, and even the early Keith. Agreeing with Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting, the pamphlet saw the "main matter" of the dispute as whether the knowledge of and faith in Christ's death were absolutely necessary for salvation. For the Christian such knowledge was available, but not to the heathen. The heathen could be saved by the Inward Light without any "express knowledge" because the Light was Christ. If the Light were not sufficient, then Christ was not sufficient.⁴⁴ From the beginnings of the dispute Friends had shifted the issue from the resurrection to the state of the Inward Light. Keith did not deny that the Light was sufficient for salvation, though he could have been clearer on this point. What he insisted was that the Light took its efficacy from the crucifixion of Jesus. A heathen experiencing the Light gained knowledge of a God-man redeemer who died to save mankind, though he would have no historical knowledge about Jesus.⁴⁵ By changing the terms of the debate,

43. Letter to London Friends, 4-7-1693, Box 572, Dept. of Records; Friends Concerned in Testimony given forth at Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting ye — of 1692, against George Keith, Box 572, Dept. of Records.

44. Caleb Pusey, *A Modest Account from Pennsylvania of the Principal Differences in Point of Doctrine, between George Keith and those of the People called Quakers* (London, 1696), pp. 4-6.

45. George Keith, *Truth and Innocency*, pp. 12-13, 18. Keith found evidence that the Light conveyed knowledge of a man-redeemer in Eve's statement in Gen. 4:1 on bearing Cain that "I have got the Man of the Lord." Eve thought her child would restore man to his state before the fall.

Pusey could show George Keith contradicting himself and other early Friends.

A Modest Account also showed considerable dexterity in dealing with the issue of the physical body of Christ after the resurrection and the dual resurrection of men. First, Pusey accused Keith of preaching the revolution of the souls, being the author of the treatise on transmigration, and beginning the schism over this doctrine.⁴⁶ Then, he derided Keith's description of two resurrections as making no sense and involving matters of speculation rather than essentials of the faith. The Bible gives us hope of a resurrection and final judgment, said Pusey, and all other speculation was immaterial.⁴⁷ Pusey sidestepped the issue of Christ's physical body in heaven.

There was no persecution of Keith and his followers. Rather, Keith and his adherents termed Governor Lloyd an "Impudent Man," "Unfit to be a Governor" and stated to his face that "his Name would Stink." In print Keith had termed Samuel Jennings an "Ignorant, Presumptuous, and Insolvent Man" and falsely accused another magistrate "of putting his hand under Womens Petticoats." No state allowed such abuse of magistrates. Even if Keith's claim that he discussed only religious qualifications were true, he could not justify an attack upon duly constituted authority. Under the pretext of religion any hypocrite could libel a governor.⁴⁸ A Friend reading Pusey's pamphlet would conclude that George Keith was ill tempered, libelous, and attempting to destroy the beliefs of the Quakers.

Keith immediately published an opposing tract in which he termed Pusey a "miller-philosopher" whose ignorance stood exposed by his misunderstanding of all the charges. Where Pusey was not stupid, he had either deliberately falsified the record or misread the Bible.⁴⁹ Even after London Yearly Meeting disowned him, Keith carried on his battles against Friends. In America the Christian Quaker standard was maintained by Daniel Leeds from New Jersey whom Pusey contemptuously dismissed as an "almanack-maker" meddling with "idle tales."⁵⁰ Actually, Leeds re-

46. Caleb Pusey, *A Modest Account*, p. 24.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-38.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

49. George Keith, *The Anti-Christ and Sadducees Detected among a Sort of Quakers* (London, 1696), pp. 5-7, 15.

50. Caleb Pusey, *A Modest Account*, p. 39.

sembled Pusey in many respects. Leeds was a prominent man in West Jersey serving as a merchant, surveyor, writer of almanacs, and eventually a member of the Council. Even before the Keithian controversy, Philadelphia Friends disciplined Leeds for putting frivolous expressions into his almanacs. The meeting confiscated all copies, but compensated Bradford for his expenses in publishing. Leeds was an early follower of Keith and eventually followed the leader into the Anglican Church. Using his almanacs to continue the controversy, Leeds continued to deny that the Friends were orthodox Christians.

In 1697 Leeds published the *News of a Trumpet in the Wilderness*, a 151 page tract, where he spelled out all the contradictions and ambiguities he could find in Quaker writings and practices from the origins of the movement until the 1690's. He accused Friends of worshiping conscience, being deists, varying their doctrines with circumstances, supporting the Jacobites, and persecuting those who differed with them on doctrine.⁵¹ Leeds took most of his evidence from anti-Quaker authors in England. For those not devoted to religious disputes, Leeds provided in his *Strumpet Co-habiting in the Wilderness* twenty-six pages of scandals accusing ministers of unethical business practices, fraudulent land schemes, cheating the Indians, and fornication.⁵²

Caleb Pusey countered with a series of pamphlets answering each of Leeds' charges. Each did a line by line exegesis of the other's writings showing misquotations and charging deliberate lying. Pusey defended as absolutely consistent all Quaker writings since the 1650's. Any difficulties in the writings of Friends were caused by the same problem in the Scriptures or by an infelicitous expression taken out of context.⁵³ Neither Leeds' attack or Pusey's defenses added anything new to the issues. Even Friends grew tired of the endless bickering, but Pusey defended carrying on the battle against misrepresentation and asserted that he thereby found inward

51. Daniel Leeds, *News of a Trumpet Sounding in the Wilderness* (New York, 1697), pp. 40, 66, 70, 83, 86, 92, 145.

52. [Daniel Leeds?], *News of a Strumpet Co-habiting in the Wilderness* (1701).

53. Caleb Pusey, *Satan's Harbinger Encountered* (Philadelphia, 1701); Caleb Pusey, *The Bomb Searched and found Stuff'd with False Ingredients* (Philadelphia, 1705), pp. 4-5, 12; Caleb Pusey, *Daniel Leeds Justly Rebuked* (1702).

peace.⁵⁴

George Keith became an Anglican in 1700 and the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge sent him in 1702 to proselytize Puritans and Quakers. Pusey and Keith again exchanged pamphlets. Pusey reiterated that Keith was unsound on the doctrine of the resurrection and preached the transmigration of souls. Since Keith asserted to the Christian Quakers that he had not varied from his former faith, Pusey attempted to delineate the Quaker and Anglican position on tithes, sacraments, and formal prayers. Since Keith insisted upon interrupting Quaker meetings, Pusey accused him of disturbing the peace.⁵⁵ Keith founded several Anglican Churches in New Jersey and converted a few of his former followers. After Keith returned to London, Daniel Leeds published more attacks on Friends and Pusey wrote more answers. The issues remained but the debaters were exhausted. Keith died in 1716 as an obscure Anglican rector. (Friends asserted that he repented on his deathbed.) Pusey moved to New Garden in 1717, but his last volley against Keith came in an account of the history of Pennsylvania which he drew up shortly before his death in 1725. In this document, recently discovered in the vault at Arch Street, Pusey again berated George Keith for preaching the revolution of souls.

The Society of Friends has been marked by schism from its earliest history. Perhaps in reaction to controversies of the past which seem so barren, we have become less discriminating in our judgment of what constitutes a Quaker. George Fox, John Perrot, James Nayler, Elias Hicks, and Jonathan Evans have been reassimilated into our heritage. We should do the same with George Keith. The issues that he raised have often surfaced in the history of Friends. In 1755 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting endorsed Keith's position requiring Friends to free themselves from holding slaves; in the Revolution Friends endorsed his position requiring members to refrain from serving as justices or governmental officials. He charted the danger to the peace testimony from too strong an identification with visible authority. His concern for the orthodoxy of

54. Caleb Pusey, *Some Brief Observations Made on Daniel Leeds His Book Entitled Second Part of the Mystery of Fox-Craft* (Philadelphia, 1706), Preface.

55. Caleb Pusey, *Proteus Ecclesiasticus or George Keith Varied in Fundamentals* (Philadelphia, 1703), pp. 3-6; George Keith, *The Spirit of Railing Shimei . . . entered into Caleb Pusey and his Quaker-Brethren in Pennsylvania* (New York, 1703).

Friends and his fear of powerful weighty members became central issues in the Hicksite schism. His fear of rational religion ultimately depriving Christianity of the need for Jesus of Nazareth came true in eighteenth-century deism. His concern for theological purity, for not hiding all differences under vague euphemisms, has periodically surfaced among Friends. Even apprehension about the effects of birthright membership is still here. If Keith had his faults so also did his opponents. Neither exercised charity or forbearance and both permitted passion to cloud their judgments. Caleb Pusey is today firmly established in Quaker history. After all, he defended the winning side in 1694 and remained a close associate of William Penn. So those zealous for the preservation of our heritage have restored the Pusey house. Keith has no Quaker monument. Friends have reprinted the works of Barclay, Fox, Pennington, and Penn in recent years. Why not finally end a long separation and give George Keith his due by reprinting some of his formulations of Quaker doctrine?

Jon Butler
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*Into Pennsylvania's Spiritual Abyss:
 The Rise and Fall of the
 Later Keithians, 1693-1703*

RELIGIOUS diversity always was a hallmark of society in colonial Pennsylvania. English Presbyterians, Baptists, and Anglicans quickly settled alongside the colony's first Quakers and the wilderness soon teemed with new and strange religious groups. Thus the German immigrant Justus Falckner observed in 1700 that settlements there were not only divided along familiar Protestant lines, but were overrun with "sects and hordes . . . Naturalists, Rationalists, Independents, Sabbatarians, and many others, especially secret insinuating sects, whom one does not know what to make of."¹

Unfortunately, few groups have been as hard to describe as those over which Falckner puzzled. Some were obscure even to contemporaries, such as the German mystics associated with Johannes Kelpius who settled in Pennsylvania in the 1690s.² Others came to

¹ "The Missive of Justus Falckner, of Germantown, Concerning the Religious Condition of Pennsylvania in the Year 1701," trans. by Julius F. Sachse, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (PMHB), XXI (1898), 218.

² See Julius F. Sachse, *The German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania, 1694-1708* (Philadelphia, 1895), and *The German Sectarians of Pennsylvania, 1708-1742* (Philadelphia, 1899).

prominence briefly, such as the Keithians studied here, and simply died out, leaving no one to sustain their historical memory or preserve their records. Yet in recent years many historians have found that these groups tell us much about the evolution of modern society. To take just one example, in *The World Turned Upside Down* the English historian Christopher Hill has made a strong case for the significance of popular radicalism in the Commonwealth period, and in an essay in the *New York Review of Books* has argued that even studies of witchcraft, magic, and alchemy—what he termed “movements of the past that went nowhere”—reveal crucial phases in the development of seventeenth-century English religious and intellectual life.³ Similar trends are evident in American history as well, although they usually concern less esoteric subjects. Historians probing daily life among common citizens have added immeasurably to our understanding of the social processes that shaped American society, and some of the most important works in this field have centered on colonial Pennsylvania—James Lemon’s analysis of mobility in Chester County and several recent studies of poverty and wealth in pre-Revolutionary Philadelphia.⁴

The essay that follows examines one of the earliest examples in Pennsylvania of religious activity in which common and poor people came to play a dominant role, the so-called Keithian movement, first led by the Scottish Friend, George Keith, that originated in a schism among Quakers between 1691 and 1693. Our principal interest is in the later stages of the movement that cover the period from 1693, the eve of George Keith’s departure from Pennsylvania for London to defend himself before London Friends, to the movement’s demise sometime around 1701 and 1702. The study does not claim any long-lasting effects for the affair. As Hill might put it, the Keithians indeed “went nowhere,” and we are fortunate to

³ *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (New York, 1972); review of Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (Boston, 1973), *New York Review of Books*, Oct. 4, 1973.

⁴ James T. Lemon, *The Best Poor Man’s Country: A Geographical Study of Early South-eastern Pennsylvania* (Baltimore, Md., 1972); Gary B. Nash, “Poverty and Poor Relief in Pre-Revolutionary Pennsylvania,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XII (1976), 3–30; Nash, “Urban Wealth and Poverty in Pre-Revolutionary America,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, VI (1975–1976), 545–584; William A. Williams, “The ‘Industrious Poor’ and the Founding of the Pennsylvania Hospital,” *PMHB*, XCVII (1973), 431–443.

possess even one set of their records, these covering some of their activity in Chester County. Yet contemporaries viewed the movement nervously. Over the course of a decade it probably had been supported by more than 400 adults in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. It irritated Quakers and Baptists. It launched the career of William Davis, an intriguing if eccentric religious “leader” of early Pennsylvania. And it attracted the interest of Anglicans, who by 1700 could take communion from the very man who had first organized it, George Keith, who had been ordained by the Bishop of London in 1699. Its history reveals how thoroughly common people could shape their own spiritual doctrines, how they extended their movement beyond its original base among disaffected Friends, how they crossed ethnic barriers to associate with German millennialist Lutherans and the directions in which they scattered and contributed to the development of the Anglican and two Baptist groups after 1702.

To begin with, the Keithian schism of 1691–1693 emerged from a critique of Quaker practices which George Keith developed in America between 1685 and 1691 and which he pursued past his disownment by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1692. In it he alleged that Friends neglected elemental Christian doctrine in a way that stimulated heresy and claimed that the Quakers’ hierarchical system of church government placed so much power in the hands of the Public Friends who acted as ministers that it repressed the spiritual vitality of lesser Friends.⁵

While Keith undoubtedly shaped the schism, three considerations suggest that the turmoil from which it emerged was neither unique to America nor dependent on his presence. First, the Quaker movement had itself been born of flux. Seventeenth-century Friends stressed discipline because their membership was heterodox and argumentative, not merely because they feared persecution from

⁵ Most work on the schism centers on Keith or on its effect among the orthodox Friends, rather than on the Keithians. These include Ethyn Kirby, *George Keith (1636–1716)* (New York, 1942); Edward J. Cody, “The Price of Perfection: The Irony of George Keith,” *Pennsylvania History*, XXXIV (1972), 1–19; John E. Pomfret, *The Province of West Jersey, 1609–1702* (Princeton, N. J., 1956), 242–258; J. William Frost, “Unlikely Controversialists: Caleb Pusey and George Keith,” *Quaker History*, LXIV (1975–1976), 16–36; and Jon Butler, “‘Gospel Order Improved’: The Keithian Schism and the Exercise of Quaker Ministerial Authority in Pennsylvania,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XXXI (1974), 431–452.

the state. Dissidents like John Perrot, John Story, and John Wilkinson—as well as Keith—were important participants in processes that shaped a Quaker order from diverse sources; they were not exceptions to some “normative” pattern of Quaker homogeneity. This flux and the fears it engendered were not lost on the voyage to America either. Pennsylvania’s first Quaker leaders worked hard to re-establish discipline through the Quaker system of meetings because they knew from experience in England that chaos often churned beneath the surface of apparent peaceableness.⁶

In addition, Gary Nash has described how the schism emerged from a milieu of political disruption and economic discontent so serious that Pennsylvania’s first decades are a model of disequilibrium in early colonial societies. Not only did Keith’s religious criticisms intersect fortuitously with disputes about political rights and tax policies, but they reflected important distances between Pennsylvania’s early social classes. Even Keith’s best known early adherents came from the ranks of those already experienced at protesting the privileges granted to the colony’s wealthiest Quaker merchants and farmers. As Nash puts it, Keith’s original protest was supported by “a whole spectrum of lesser merchants, shopkeepers and master artisans,” and farmers, of course, who tired of being taxed and ruled by a sometimes arrogant elite.⁷

A search of Quaker meeting records reveals that protests against Quaker leaders already had emerged independently of Keith in the infant settlement before 1692. In 1685 unknown persons in Philadelphia complained about drunkenness among also unnamed Public Friends, while from England George Fox criticized the ministers as a group for their domineering behavior in Quaker worship.⁸ This

⁶ The heterogeneity of early Quakerism is demonstrated in part in Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, and also in Kenneth L. Carroll, *John Perrot, Early Quaker Schismatic*, Supplement No. 33 to the *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* (1972).

⁷ Gary B. Nash, *Quakers and Politics, Pennsylvania, 1681–1726* (Princeton, N. J., 1968), esp. 153–161.

⁸ Minutes, Philadelphia Monthly and Quarterly Meeting, Apr. 7, 1685, Department of Records, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (microfilm copy at Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore, Pa.); George Fox to Christopher Taylor, *et al.*, May 10, 1685, *PMHB*, XXIX (1905), 105–106. The accusation about the drunkenness of the Public Friends was silently omitted from the Monthly Meeting minutes printed in Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, *Publications*, I (1895–1898), 280–281. Dates have here been modernized by using the names of the months, rather than by numbering the months.

trend increased after 1685, although by exactly how much is difficult to determine since Quaker meeting clerks tended to ignore a good many disputes when writing their minutes. Fortunately, this was not true in Chester County where the Keithian movement later proved especially strong. Between 1685 and 1691 the clerks of the Concord Monthly and Quarterly Meetings recorded several dangerous challenges to local Quaker leaders there. In 1686 the Quarterly Meeting removed a worship meeting from the house of John and Margery Gibbons because of their unruly “behavior and carriage.” Two years later, in 1688, Margery Gibbons disrupted meetings with long and argumentative sermons, demanded the right to preach, and publicly circulated slanderous attacks on the Friends. Then in 1690 Frances Harrison tacked a paper to the door of the Chichester meeting house that charged Robert Pile, one of the meeting’s most prominent members, “with the destruction of Thomas Usher’s soul”—this by the manner in which Pile had carried out the meeting’s orders to discipline Usher. The meeting minutes also suggest that Harrison challenged the hierarchical exercise of power at Chichester, since they note Harrison’s complaint that Pile “doth sway the meeting” improperly. And in another two years Thomas More interrupted a sermon by Jacob Chandler to say that “his soul was grieved to hear such abominable doctrine” from a Public Friend, a protest that was by then connected to the Keithian schism.⁹ Not only did all the complaints except More’s precede the Keithian schism, but they also came from poor and modest settlers in Chester County. According to the rent roll drawn up for Governor William Blackwell in 1689, John Gibbons then owned 100 acres in Chester County and Frances Harrison owned 250, the latter being the average amount of land held in the county at the time.¹⁰

⁹ Minutes, Concord Quarterly Meeting, Aug. 3, 1685, Aug. 2, 1686, Feb. 7, 1687, Aug. 6, 1688, May 6, 1689; Minutes, Concord Monthly Meeting, Aug. 11, 1690, Aug. 8, 1692, Department of Records, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (microfilm copy at Friends Historical Library). Margery Gibbons supported George Keith during the schism of 1692–1693. See Minutes, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Sept. 23, 1702, Department of Records, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (microfilm copy at Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore).

¹⁰ Blackwell Rent Roll, Logan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP). The figure on average size of landholding is from James T. Lemon and Gary B. Nash, “The Distribution of Wealth in Eighteenth-Century America: A Century of Change in Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1693–1802,” *Journal of Social History*, II (1968–1969), 1–24.

The first of several altercations that turned the Keithian affair from a Quaker protest toward a more independent movement occurred in the winter of 1691–1692 when Keith and his followers began to worship apart from the Quakers they were criticizing. Then in July 1692 the Public Friends bitterly denounced Keith, while in September he was disowned by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. These events forced a crisis on his followers. The few prestigious Friends who first supported him now remained loyal to orthodox Quakerism. Other followers had to decide whether to become sustaining members of a new religious group. The result was a leadership vacuum which especially obscure persons now stepped forward to fill. These included William Davis, a “turner” and small landowner in Chester County, Thomas Martin, also a Chester County farmer, James Chick, Thomas Builder and William Bradley, the latter all but impossible to trace in early Pennsylvania records. They probably were residents of Philadelphia but figure in no important way in the city’s known history; certainly they left behind no signs of wealth or political power, only their name attached to a few surviving Keithian documents.¹¹

Together with Keith, the movement’s new leaders created an extraordinarily muscular, almost physical Christianity which they developed out of their criticism of orthodox Quakerism. During arguments held in the previous year, some Friends seemed to reveal religious sentiments that reflected little more than an ignorant commitment to mysticism. Thus one Friend so hinged his Quakerism upon the Inward Light that he reputedly wondered just “what good or profit can the name of Christ do us?” In reaction, Keith and his followers emphasized the historical reality of Jesus’ existence and the effects of salvation, especially the resurrection of the body. In a statement signed by Keith, Davis, Chick, Builder and Bradley in April 1692, the Keithians insisted that a belief in the historical Jesus was essential to true Quakerism, and reminded Friends that “the outward name of Christ was given by God to him as well as

¹¹ Shifts in the Keithian leadership can be detected by comparing the names associated with Keith in several documents, including *Some Reasons and Causes of the Late Separation* (Philadelphia, 1692); *An Exhortation with Thomas Lloyd . . .* [Philadelphia, 1692]; *An Appeal from the Twenty-Eight Judges . . .* (Philadelphia, 1692); and *An Epistle from the Yearly Meeting at Burlington, the 4th 5th 6th and 7th days of the Seventh Month, Anno 1692* [Philadelphia, 1692].

the names Jesus and the Name Light,”¹² This declaration rang with references to Christ and to Christ’s body that would continue to characterize Keithian interests throughout the next decade: “Christ both within us and without us,” “the man Christ Jesus,” the Christ who existed “forever in his Soul and Spirit and glorious Body.” Similarly, another list of Keithian principles, circulated in manuscript somewhat later, perhaps between 1693 and 1695, described the first principle of religion as one also concerned with the human body—that “bodily sickness and death came in by the fall,” and continued in this vein to note that “Christ now hath in Heaven a Soule and Body” and that the “man Christ Jesus will come again in that body without us to Judge the Quick and the Dead.”¹³

How did such ideas fare and the composition of the movement’s leaders change after Keith’s disownment in 1692, and especially after his departure for England in January 1694? Until now we have known simply that the movement died out, with Charles P. Keith’s *Chronicles of Pennsylvania* offering the only description of its fragmentation.¹⁴ The Keithian movement did die, but from a process of extravagant and instructive motion. Between 1694 and 1702 different members espoused new versions of reformed Quakerism, adopted quasi-Baptist principles, joined hands with a German Lutheran millenarian, secured membership in a Particular Baptist congregation and destroyed a “Keithian Baptist” congregation in Chester County, in a way that opens up new views on the dynamics of religious disputes and mobility in late seventeenth-century Pennsylvania.

Within months of Keith’s departure for London his followers

¹² “Some Propositions to heale the Breach that is amongst us,” Apr. 18, 1692, in Box 572, Papers Relating to the Keithian Controversy, Department of Records, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

¹³ This document, untitled, is also in Box 572, *ibid.*, and has been printed in Frost, “Unlikely Controversialists,” 24. Frost treats the document as having been written by Keith. But it is unsigned and clearly sent from one group to another since it is headed “Some of our Principles to which if you agree we are likely to agree with you on other things.”

¹⁴ Charles P. Keith, *Chronicles of Pennsylvania From the English Revolution to the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle 1688–1748* (Philadelphia, 1917), I, 222–242. Some of Charles Keith’s statements are inaccurate. See also Edwin B. Bronner, *William Penn’s “Holy Experiment”* (New York, 1962), 152–153. In *Quakers and Politics* Nash limits his discussion of Keithian religious activity to the schism of 1692–1693.

already had divided into at least two groups. One was led by John Hart and contained Keithians from Pennepek, north of Philadelphia where Hart's farm was located, as well as others from Philadelphia and Chester County to the south. This branch promoted a radical egalitarian Quakerism that emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit in all members. According to a description written in 1700 by the Keithian William Davis, Hart appeared before a meeting of Keith's followers in May 1694 with a list of queries to reaffirm the group's claim as reformed "Christian Quakers." To the question "whether the Quakers were wrong from the beginning" and whether baptism was a legitimate Christian rite, Hart's answer was, firmly, "no." But to the questions "whether we have the Spirit of Discerning, that we can know a man without words and works," and whether the preaching of women, alleged to be declining among orthodox Friends, was legitimate, Hart answered "yes." Davis claimed in retrospect that Hart's followers believed "that the Light within, or Word in the heart was to be preferred before the written Word," and that Christian Quakers "did pretend to know men's hearts without words or works" through the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

The second group followed the aforementioned William Davis, whose peculiar 1700 treatise, *Jesus Christ the Crucified Man, the Eternal Son of God*, provides crucial information about the later Keithians. Raised in England, he grew up as an Anglican and underwent a Quaker conversion at age eighteen. After some fourteen years as a Friend he left the movement briefly when he reputedly discovered that some Quakers accepted only as allegories the doctrines of the "Eternal Judgment and the Resurrection of the Dead," although he rejoined the Friends before emigrating to Pennsylvania in 1681. Then in 1692, after listening to George Keith, he "left them again," never to return.¹⁶

In May 1694 Davis and another Keithian, Thomas Rutter, owner of a small iron furnace in Chester County and a former

¹⁵ These developments are described in William Davis, *Jesus the Crucified Man, the Eternal Son of God* . . . [Philadelphia, 1700], unpaginated introduction. The demand for a "Spirit of Discerning" echoed Keith's vocabulary of 1691 when Keith was attempting to reform orthodox Quakerism. See Butler, "'Gospel Order Improved,'" 438.

¹⁶ Davis, *Jesus the Crucified Man*, unpaginated introduction.

German Mennonite turned Quaker who supported Keith's schism, rebuked Hart and began to "Preach and assert, that the Scriptures were the Word of God," meaning that they denied Hart's claim to possess a "Spirit of Discerning" that superseded the Gospels. They accepted the rite of baptism and charged that Hart and his followers were still "one with the Quakers" on the "person of Christ, and the Resurrection." In 1695 Davis and Rutter invaded the Yearly Meeting of Hart's Keithians to argue these views. According to Davis, Hart's followers called Rutter a "blasphemer" and compared Davis "to Simon Magus the witch, because I continued to preach Christ (in imitation of G[eorge] K[Keith] as they rendered it) as Simon Magus did in imitation of the Apostles."¹⁷

Davis' religious principles continued to prove fleet of foot. Having already split with John Hart, he now associated himself with Henry Bernard Koster, a German millenarian. Koster arrived in Pennsylvania with other Germans led by Johannes Kelpius in 1694. Although the group's background and principles remain mysterious and need systematic study, Koster may have been one of its more orthodox members, a Lutheran who later authored a millenarian work, *De Resurrectione Imperii Aeternitatus*, published in Europe in 1702 after his permanent return there.¹⁸ These Germans soon contributed to Pennsylvania's religious turmoil through their own discord. Soon after arriving, Koster fell out with Kelpius and began to preach at the home of Isaac Jacob Van Bebber, a former Mennonite turned Quaker, then Keithian. There he met William Davis, Thomas Rutter, and other unnamed Keithians. Their interest in Koster is revealed in a work by Ernest Ludwig Rathlef on German religious eccentrics published in 1743. Working from an interview Rathlef held with Koster in the 1730s, Rathlef described Koster's sermons as extraordinarily Christocentric. Certainly they were superbly suited to the Keithians' theological concerns, since Koster spoke often on the "human nature of Christ, His death, His merits, His ascension, His second coming, the use of Scriptures," and, to

¹⁷ *Ibid.* According to the book of the *Acts of the Apostles*, Simon Magus substituted magic for miracles to trick Christ's followers in Samaria.

¹⁸ Sachse, *German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania*, 86-92; Theodore E. Schmauk, "The Lutheran Church in Pennsylvania (1638-1880)," in *Proceedings and Addresses*, Pennsylvania-German Society, XI (1902), 75-86.

please the Keithians' new interests, on "the Lord's Supper and of Baptism."¹⁹

For the next three years Koster, Davis, and Rutter pursued a new ecclesiastical discipline. They worshipped together at Germantown and appeared at the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of 1696 in an attempt to debate the Delaware Valley's leading Quakers.²⁰ However, substantial information about their union comes only from hostile sources. A pamphlet by Francis Daniel Pastorius, a converted Mennonite who remained loyal to orthodox Quakerism, asserted that Koster, Davis, Rutter and their followers settled near Germantown at a place they named "Irenia, that is to say, The House of Peace." But the group soon engaged in so many disputes that according to Pastorius the settlement "not long after became Erinia, The House of Raging Contention."²¹ Evidence drawn from the minutes of the Pennepek Baptist Church, a Particular Baptist congregation north of Philadelphia, suggests that the Germantown congregation briefly attempted a commutarian experiment. The Pennepek clerk described the congregation as one in which "William Davis, with one Henry Bernard Koster a Germane, and some more made up a kinde of Society, did Break bread, Lay on hands, washed one anothers feet, and were about having A Community of Goods. But in a little time they disagreed, and broke to pieces."²² Yet in his interview with Rathlef, Koster insisted that he only agreed to exorcise the spirit of Quakerism from Davis, Rutter, and their followers using Lutheran liturgy and to baptize them in the Delaware River, which he did in 1697 or 1698, but never became their minister.²³

¹⁹ Schmauk, "Lutheran Church in Pennsylvania," 82-85; Harold S. Bender, "The Founding of the Mennonite Church in America at Germantown, 1693-1708," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, VII (1933), 247-248; William I. Hull, *William Penn and the Dutch Quaker Migration to Pennsylvania* [Swarthmore, Pa., 1935], 187. Portions of Rathlef's biography of Davis are translated and printed in Schmauk, *Lutheran Church in Pennsylvania*, 93-101.

²⁰ Minutes, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Sept. 27, 1696. George Hutcheson, then apparently associated with John Hart's Keithians, also appeared at the Burlington meeting, but the reference to him does not indicate that he and Davis had joined forces.

²¹ Quoted in Marion Dexter Learned, *The Life of Francis Daniel Pastorius, the Founder of Germantown* (Philadelphia, 1908), 213.

²² Minutes, Pennepek Baptist Church, 25-26, American Baptist Historical Society, Colgate-Rochester Theological Seminary, Rochester, N. Y.

²³ Schmauk, "Lutheran Church in Pennsylvania," 100; Sachse, *German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania*, 276-277.

Whatever its exact nature, the association with Koster probably solidified these Keithians' belief in the rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Not surprisingly then, sometime in 1697 Davis and several unnamed followers applied for admission to the Particular Baptist congregation at Pennepek. Although their request was first denied, Davis pursued it insistently and the congregation sought advice from its former minister Elias Keach, then in London. Keach returned an answer after consulting with other Baptist ministers that demonstrated how widely the Keithian reputation for contention had spread overseas. "It is all our Judgments," Keach wrote, "that you by no means Baptize them, much less Admitt them to your Communion: seeing we are assured of the Ill Consequences of such an Act, Especially they holding against the authority of the Civil Magistrate." This warning probably referred to a 1693 complaint by George Keith that the Quakers had misused the authority of the civil government to silence him. Yet despite it the Pennepek Baptists admitted Davis and some followers to the congregation.²⁴

Davis' membership there proved brief. By January 1698 he took up a familiar Keithian obsession to begin a theological dispute centering on the person of Christ. According to the church minutes, Davis told the congregation that it was impossible to separate human and divine natures in Christ. Christ was "godman, and not humane and Divine; but human[-]divine, or divine-human." Christ "was Inferious to his father . . . and in no other ways Equal with God the father, than Joseph was to pharoah, or as a man's son can be to his father." Indeed, according to Davis, there were "two gods in heaven, A greater, and an Inferious god, and that the greater sent the Inferious or Lesser god to die, and the Inferious god did." After making unsuccessful efforts to secure his recantation, the Pennepek Baptists excommunicated Davis.²⁵

Davis then turned his attention south to a Keithian congregation in Chester County, and it is at this point that we need to examine Keithian activity there. Fortunately, some records from this congregation have survived; they reveal a congregation also edging toward Baptist principles. The congregation met at the house of Thomas Powell in Providence and originally formed part of the Keithian

²⁴ Minutes, Pennepek Baptist Church, 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 12-16.

group led by John Hart. Two marriage certificates of 1694 bear signatures of persons associated with all three Keithian congregations in Pennsylvania—at Philadelphia, Pennepek, and Chester County—and testify to the close connections which first prevailed among them. They also confirm their status as reformed or “Christian Quaker” congregations, since the marriage ceremony described in them virtually duplicated that used by orthodox Friends and carried the salutation, “Dear Friends.”²⁶

By 1697, however, these Keithians too had altered their beliefs. In a three-page narrative one of the members described how, after coming from England and Wales “under [the] denomination of Quakers,” they joined in the Keithian schism. Then, sometime in 1696 “it pleased the lord to incline our hearts to be moore like those of Bethlehem [*sic*] or them of Thesolonica to Search the Scripture” further for true Christian principles. As a result, by 1697 another new religious configuration had appeared in Chester County, part Quaker, part Keithian, part Baptist. Retaining the strict standards for admission to membership Keith had demanded for Quakers, the congregation decided that as “belief in the heart is the door unto the Church in the Sight of God[,] So the Belief in the heart and Confession with mouth and Being Baptized is the door unto the Church in the Sight of men.” The congregation also rejected oaths, reaffirmed the Quaker refusal to bear arms, and agreed to follow Quaker customs “of good repast . . . as modest Apparel, proper Language, the days of the Week and names of the months as first Second So forth According as it is used in the Scripture.”²⁷

In addition to paralleling the spiritual migration of Davis, Rutter, and their associates (Davis himself a sometime Chester County landowner), the alterations in Chester County probably gained impetus from changes apparently being made among Philadelphia Keithians. It is in the Pennsylvania capital that Keithian affairs are most difficult to follow. But an ambiguous reference in the Chester

²⁶ These documents, one dated Mar. 28, 1694, the other dated June 25, 1694, are in the records of the Brandywine Baptist Church, Chadds Ford, Pa. (microfilm copy from the Southern Baptist Historical Society, Nashville, Tenn.).

²⁷ “Things transacted by a Congregation usually met at Powell’s house in upper Providence,” undated, in *ibid.* For a general discussion of Quaker marriage ceremonies, see J. William Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America* (New York, 1973), 172–174.

County narrative suggests that the adoption of adult baptism there followed the acceptance of infant baptism among Philadelphia Keithians; and certainly some changes were occurring there since two persons connected with the latter group in 1692–1693, Richard Dungworth and Thomas Budd, were baptized in the Chester County congregation after its reorganization in 1697.

The concern about the problem of baptism, whether infant or adult, in fact hung over Chester County Keithians for some time but without deleterious results. The man who first administered baptism among them in 1697, Abel Noble, had in fact been baptized by Thomas Killingsworth, a Baptist minister in Cohansey, New Jersey, as early as 1694 or 1695. Yet Noble worshipped with the Chester County Keithians for at least three years before they adopted the rite themselves, at which time his presence proved fortuitous. When the Chester County Keithians did decide to adopt baptism they asked for help from Philadelphia’s Particular Baptists, a branch of the Pennepek congregation. “But they no way being Assistant to us only left us to our Liberty to Chuse an Administrator,” so the Chester County Keithians selected Noble to perform the rite because “he was Baptised and Kept Among us all along.”²⁸

The Chester County records also make clear how after 1693 the Keithian movement remained one of common and poor persons. The 1694 marriage certificates and the register of baptisms performed between 1697 and 1700 yield a list of about sixty adherents who probably lived in the county during the decade, excluding those like Thomas Budd or Richard Dungworth who likely journeyed there for special occasions. When these sixty names are checked with the principal sources of information on wealth in the county in these years, the 1689 Blackwell rent roll and the 1693 Chester County tax list, Keithians on either list emerge as plain or poor persons. Of the ten males on the 1693 tax list, eight paid less than that year’s average of 4.20 shillings in taxes, and only two paid more, while only two of the sixty appear on the 1689 rent roll at all, Thomas Powell, who held 300 acres, and John Palmer who

²⁸ “Things transacted by a Congregation usually met at Powell’s house in upper Providence”; “Some Names of them that are baptized” [1697–1700], in Records, Brandywine Baptist Church. This baptismal list has been printed in George Smith, *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania . . .* (Philadelphia, 1862), 544, but with some errors.

owned 100. The rest were either landless or new residents who had settled there after 1689, an important fact we will look at shortly. Similarly, a check of colony officeholders reveals that not a single person associated with the congregation held any elected or appointed post in either county or provincial government between 1690 and 1720. In short, available records indicate that common and poor persons still were the persons most likely to attach themselves to a Keithian congregation in the later 1690s.²⁹

The congregation's membership also was extraordinarily fluid. Of thirty-six persons connected with it in 1694, only twelve continued their association after 1697. Conversely, some thirty-one persons not associated with the congregation before 1697 were baptized there between 1697 and 1700. In short, only a fifth of the total number of persons associated with the congregation at any point in its history remained with it steadily between 1694 and 1700, and nearly half of the total membership joined after 1697. This information helps make sense of the large number of adherents who appear on neither the 1689 Blackwell rent roll or the 1693 Chester County tax list. They could, of course, have been landless or extremely poor. But given the alterations of congregational membership it seems likely that most probably were new arrivals in the county and part of the immigration that rapidly expanded Pennsylvania's population in the 1690s.³⁰

This information gives us an expanded view of the people we term "Keith's followers." Rather than comprising a dwindling number of his earliest supporters, they were instead a shifting body of individuals whose changes in congregational membership matched alterations in congregational belief. Certainly the movement did not quietly die out after 1693. Instead, it moved beyond its old base,

²⁹ Lemon and Nash, "Distribution of Wealth in Eighteenth-Century America," 1-24; 1693 Chester County Tax List, Chester County Miscellaneous Papers, 1684-1847, HSP.

³⁰ These results were achieved by comparing names on the 1694 Keithian marriage certificates cited above in note 26 with the names in the baptismal register of 1697-1700 cited in note 28. Since the congregation used the rite of adult baptism as the principal sign of membership after 1697, those who continued their association with it after 1697 should have had their names listed in the new register. At the same time it is possible that not everyone active in the congregation in both periods would have signed the two certificates of 1694, although their numbers should have been small since the number of persons attending the ceremonies from Philadelphia suggests that most local members were present.

losing some early adherents, holding others, but most importantly winning new members whose connection with the original schism among Quakers was nonexistent, remote, or even distinguished by opposition to it. Thus the same Jacob Chandler who was attacked for his "abominable doctrine" by one of Keith's early supporters in 1692 left the orthodox Quaker meeting in Chester County as late as 1696 to join what Friends called the "Separatists," while William Beckingham left the Particular Baptist congregation at Cohansey, New Jersey, in the same year to join the Keithian congregation in Chester County.³¹

In the end all this mobility and the work of William Davis finally undid the Chester County Keithian congregation and what remained of the Keithian movement, although between 1697 and 1699 membership increased steadily in the reorganized congregation. This growth ended with William Davis' appearance. Just ejected from Pennepek and accompanied by his old associate Thomas Rutter, he asked to join the Chester County congregation. Some members, including, apparently, the former Baptist William Beckingham, approved. But according to the clerk of the Baptist congregation at Pennepek, many others opposed Davis' request, including one of the congregation's administrators of baptism, Thomas Martin. During the ensuing argument Davis and Thomas Rutter apparently obtained the congregation's record book and began recording baptisms in it themselves. Now not only did Davis replace Thomas Martin as administrator of baptism, but Rutter joined him in this role, and the two held services as far away as Pennepek. The turmoil shattered the group. After September 1700 no further baptisms were entered in its records and an unknown writer summarized the effect of the disputing: "our Congregational Estate was dissolved . . . we could no longer Bear up our Church polity: Being dispersed [we] continued without the face of a Church for many years."³²

It is especially appropriate that the final denominational destina-

³¹ Chandler remained a member of Concord Monthly Meeting at least through 1695. But in 1698 he recanted recent work with Keithians, although the faction he had joined was not specified. Information about Beckingham is found in Minutes, Pennepek Baptist Church, 25-26.

³² "Some Names of them that are Baptized" [1697-1700], Records, Brandywine Baptist Church, Records, Pennepek Baptist Church, 25-26.

tions of some of the later Keithians are often best revealed through the *Journal* George Keith published to describe his final visit to Pennsylvania between 1702 and 1704. A former Scot Presbyterian turned Quaker, then schismatic, he now came as a missionary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, the Anglican body chartered by the Crown in 1701. His major goal was to convert orthodox Friends, though he accomplished little in this regard. They refused to hear him. When he demanded to speak at the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in September 1703 they pushed him into the street.³³

Sealed off from the main body of Quakers, Keith spent more time in Pennsylvania with the group that still bore his name but which he no longer led. In March 1703 he debated William Davis in the old Keithian meeting house in Philadelphia. Allies a decade earlier, Keith now rebuked Davis as a "Sect-Master," a label Keith's enemies must have viewed with some amusement, and ridiculed Davis' newly published book, *Jesus the Crucified Man, the Eternal Son of God*.³⁴ Certainly no volume better exemplified the centrifugal intellectual and ecclesiastical tendencies of the Keithian movement. It not only expanded on Davis' ideas about there being two Gods in heaven, which he had espoused earlier at Pennepek, but backed them with a generously ecumenical collection of citations from a diverse range of authorities, from the classical Puritan, William Perkins, to Anglicans like Bishop Usher and the obscure Edward Leigh, and the Baptist Benjamin Keach, a major figure among London Dissenters and father of the first Particular Baptist minister at Pennepek, Elias Keach.³⁵

³³ Kirby, *George Keith*, 111–124; George Keith, *A Journal of Travels from New-Hampshire to Caratuck, On the Continent of North-America* (London, 1706), printed in *Collections of the Protestant Episcopal Historical Society, for the Year 1851* (New York, 1851), 43–44.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 37. One contemporary reported that Davis won the debate with Keith. See the letter from William Hudson to Jonathan and Mary Dickinson, Apr. 19, 1703, Maria Dickinson Logan Papers, HSP. Keith, however, claimed victory for himself in *Some of the Many False, Scandalous, Blasphemous and Selfcontradictory Assertions of William Davis . . .* [Philadelphia, 1703], 7–12.

³⁵ Davis, *Jesus the Crucified Man*, 3–4, 50, 53, 118–126. Much of Davis' theological problems may have stemmed from the fact that Quakers themselves had never resolved certain problems in their view of Christ's body and person. See Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven, 1964), 145–146, and Melvin B. Endy, *William Penn and Early Quakerism* (Princeton, 1973), 83–84, 274–292.

Indeed, between the publication of Davis' book and his debate with Keith, Davis had even made yet another change of allegiance and, of course, started a new dispute. Information about these developments comes from the minutes of the Mill Yard Church, a Seventh Day Baptist congregation in London founded in the Commonwealth period. In 1701 it received notice that Davis and Thomas Rutter had formed a Seventh Day Baptist congregation near Pennepek of eight families and two single adults. But the London minutes also noted that the congregation was already engaged in a dispute over what the Londoners termed "a Peculiar Notion they have of the Person of Christ and the blessed Trinity," a sure sign of Davis' presence, and later references in the London minutes reveal that by 1703 Davis and Rutter had fallen into a dispute themselves that ultimately led to Davis' expulsion from the congregation and his departure for Rhode Island.³⁶

Keith's mission also put him into contact with other Keithians who were changing denominations. In February 1703 he debated John Hart, one of the earliest leaders of the movement, whom he termed an "antinomian" on the ground that Hart allegedly believed that even persons who committed outrageous sins could not fall from grace. Whatever the truth of the charge, by the time Keith made it, Hart and his followers were about to unite with the Particular Baptist congregation at Pennepek. This occurred after Hart and John Swift, the most prominent remaining Keithians at Pennepek, sent "propositions" to the Particular Baptists there in the summer of 1702. Sometime within the next year the Baptists "agreed that we and they would Join in the publick worship of god and so make one meeting." The merger quickly proved momentous for everyone concerned in it because the Baptist minister at Pennepek, John Watts, died of smallpox shortly after it was accomplished. Watts had been enormously important to the congregation. In the

³⁶ Minutes, Mill Yard Church, London, 120, 146, 147, at the Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society, Plainfield, N. J. Davis' later career in this denomination can be traced through references in "The Seventh Day Baptist Church in Newport, R. I.," *Seventh Day Baptist Memorial*, I (1851–1852), 172–180; in an article, "William Davis," in *ibid.*, II (1853), 101–116; and in Corliss F. Randolph, *A History of Seventh Day Baptists in West Virginia* (Plainfield, N. J., 1905), 1–8. Randolph argues that Davis attended Oxford but no evidence for this is found in *Alumni Oxonienses, Being the Matriculation Register of the University, 1500–1714*, J. Foster, ed. (Oxford, 1891–1892).

early 1690s he filled the vacancy created when its first minister, Elias Keach, left for London, and in 1697–1698 he defended the congregation from William Davis' onslaught. To replace him the congregation now turned in part to its newest members. John Hart was named to administer baptism and John Swift became one of three members authorized to "exercise their gifts in publick," that is, to preach. Similarly, but much later, at least five of the original thirteen members of the Particular Baptist congregation organized in Chester County in 1715—John and Elizabeth Powell, Richard Buffington, Margery Martin and John Beckingham—had belonged to the Keithian congregation there between 1697 and 1700.³⁷

Anglicans also gained converts among Keithians. In his *Journal* Keith named the Quakers he and his fellow Anglican minister John Talbot claimed to have converted while on their mission in the Delaware Valley. But Keith failed to reveal that at least half of these converts had not been Friends since 1692 and were among the oldest Keithians in those parts. They included Thomas Bowels and John Read of Shrewsbury and Robert Wheeler and Thomas Budd of Burlington. Other Anglican converts included Keithians involved in the later stages of the movement. Thus, in Chester County John Hannum and Thomas Powell allowed Keith to preach in their homes, after which both men "became zealous members of the Church, with diverse others of their neighbours," although Keith unfortunately did not name them.³⁸

Finally, in eloquent testimony to the chaos produced by the later Keithian movement, one Chester County resident drew up his own doctrinal positions in hopes that perhaps some existing denomination might claim them, and him too. In the late 1690s Walter Martin executed a will providing that one acre of his estate be used as the site for a church building. Rather peculiarly, he did not specify which sect or denomination it should be. It was not to be used by "Quakers or reputed Quakers." But it could be claimed by any other group that believed in several thoroughly orthodox points, among them baptism, the Lord's Supper, and "the resurrection of the

³⁷ Keith, *A Journal of Travels*, 36; Keith to Thomas Bray, Feb. 24, 1703/4, in *ibid.*, xxiv; Records, Pennepek Baptist Church, 38–39.

³⁸ Keith, *A Journal of Travels*, 30–31, 34, 35; Charles P. Keith, *Chronicles of Pennsylvania* 240–241. Several other old Keithians also joined Philadelphia's Christ Church.

bodies of the dead." Although Martin's name does not appear on any list of Keithians (others with his surname do), the effect of the county's spiritual turmoil seems especially evident in the terms of his gift. Confused by the decade of religious upheaval, doctrine here literally waited for an ecclesiastical home. It soon found one, of course, since by 1702 a voracious Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was already supporting an Anglican congregation there, one that it named simply St. Martin's Church.³⁹

With Davis' turn to Sabbatarian principles, Hart's association with the Pennepek Baptists and Keith's conversion of old and new Keithians to Anglicanism, all the distinguishable Keithian movements had finally died out. Where then have they taken us? Their history suggests first that Pennsylvania is rich with sources revealing the activity of common men and women in religion. In this case, they stretch from the unusually detailed minutes of the Pennepek Baptist congregation to luckily surviving Chester County Keithian materials and Sabbatarian Baptist records from London. It also suggests that this remained a religious movement of common and poorer persons. If it is impossible to demonstrate that many of them came from the ranks of the abject poor, in part because tax collectors seldom list those who pay nothing, we should note that few Keithians who remained in the movement belonged to the emerging Pennsylvania aristocracy either. Moreover, their activity was no mask for more "real" economic or political concern. After 1693 they used the movement to reshape their inherited spiritual world. They transcended their original protests against Pennsylvania Quakerism and drew adherents from among people who never had been Friends and had not supported the movement in its early stages.

The story of the Keithians also helps show how in the broad flux of early Pennsylvania social development, with its quick growth in population, sudden mix of ethnic groups, and considerable economic instability, denominational and sectarian allegiances proved as fluid as did political alliances or residence. We should not, of course, be surprised by this. Historians now are well aware that considerable geographic mobility characterized seventeenth-century populations in both western Europe and America—one powerful demonstration

³⁹ Quoted in Smith, *History of Delaware County*, 207–208.

of it coming in Chester County, where the geographic mobility now seems to have been reinforced by a striking mobility of spiritual commitment there too. Quakers became Keithians, Keithians became Baptists, Baptists became Keithians, Keithians of several stripes became Anglicans, and some waited for denominations to claim them. Indeed, if this denominational and sectarian mobility was even reasonably common in other times and places—the examples of mid-eighteenth-century Connecticut or New York's Burned Over District spring quickly to mind—perhaps the churning of America's nineteenth-century urban population, to take just one example, was but an industrial manifestation of broader and older processes of spiritual as well as physical movement which stemmed from many sources, including religious ones.⁴⁰

Also important is the fact that the mobility manifested by the Keithians failed to destroy the colony's still infant mainstream Protestant denominations. Rather, here the evidence suggests that they all benefitted from what in the end might have been a "churching" process in the later Keithian movement, in which settlers moved to mainstream denominations by moving through others. True, Keithians sometimes destroyed congregations. Yet their activity slowly fed at least three denominations despite particular casualties along the way. Thus, the distance between sect and denomination—between Justus Falckner's "sects and hordes" and Pennsylvania's better-known Protestant groups—proved slight here, as movements that "went nowhere" played vital roles in the complex process that created Pennsylvania's colonial religious heritage.

University of Illinois at Chicago Circle

JON BUTLER

⁴⁰ Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967); Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (New York, 1950). A useful discussion of theoretical approaches to mobility in religion is contained in Robert W. Doherty, "Sociology, Religion, and Historians," *Historical Methods Newsletter*, VI (September, 1973), 161-169, and in the response by Harry S. Stout and Robert Taylor, "Sociology, Religion, and Historians Revisited: Towards an Historical Sociology of Religion," *ibid.*, VIII (December, 1974), 29-38.