

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT ASHEVILLE

SOLDIER FOR TRADITION: QUAKER TRADITIONALIST GEORGE KEITH AND THE
CHANGED ENVIRONMENT OF AMERICAN QUAKERISM DURING THE
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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Jesse Patterson

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George Keith was not a well liked man during the middle of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth century. He was a member of a growing population of Quakers, otherwise known as the Society of Friends, in England and America. As a defender of Quakerism, Keith was a personality for other churches to reckon with by his outspoken character, which often resulted in his persecution with famous Quakers like George Fox and William Penn that characterized the early years of the Quaker church. Though antagonistic relations with other churches continued throughout the seventeenth century, Quaker persecution lessened over time in America and England, where the mood of toleration spread and the Quakers grew in influence and in number. In America, the Quakers grew to tolerate the non-Quakers as the Quakers moved away from being a persecuted people to embracing the individualism and materialism of the secular world. This change ushered in an age of persecution from within the Quaker church toward the censorship of any thoughts that criticized the secular direction taken by the Quaker church in America. Quakers in America persecuted George Keith because he refused to tolerate the secularization in American Quakerism when Quaker tradition never compromised with the world. Keith fervently condemned the American Quakers as being un-Christian, and because of this he suffered as a traditionalist in a time when secularization in the American Quaker church came at the cost of tradition.

The historiographical material on the Quakers is abundant, but few resources specifically investigate George Keith's life. There are resources that provide a general history of the Quakers, such as *The Quakers* by Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, but most resources deal with specific issues related to the Quakers such as their social, political, and religious practices. Additional secondary sources examine the cultural aspects of the Quakers, such as *Quaker Social History* by Arnold Lloyd. *Quakers and Politics* by Gary B. Nash deals particularly with the

Quakers' political activity from 1681 to 1726, and how this activity shaped the direction of the Quaker church to that of a more secular and political institution. *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World* by David S. Lovejoy interprets religious movements by examining incidents of extremism throughout history. He includes a section on the Quakers, but largely from the perspective of George Keith's experiences in America.

The secondary sources that examine George Keith are few in number and limited in focus. The only existing biography is *George Keith* by Ethyn Williams Kirby. In Kirby's book, she offers broad insight into Keith's life, looking at his life from his birth in 1638 to his death in 1716. This resource proved useful as it offered a perspective on the areas of George Keith's life that surrounded his break with the Quakers where other secondary sources could not. Aside from Kirby's biography, sources such as journal articles provide information on Keith's experiences in America by examining them in light of his theological message. "'Gospel Order Improved': The Keithian Schism and the Exercise of Quaker Ministerial Authority in Pennsylvania" by Jon Butler examines the life of George Keith by describing Keith's schism as reformative. Keith sought to correct American Quakerism as he preached the true Christian faith as identified in Quaker tradition. In "George Keith: Post-Restoration Quaker Theology and the Experience of Defeat" by Stephen Trowell, Keith's theology is considered as a sign of disillusionment toward the Quakers. Trowell explains how Keith's disenchantment arose from the Quaker tradition that there was a spiritual second coming of Jesus, rather than a physical second coming. Keith's frustration with that belief resulted in him preaching a doctrine that emphasized the importance of a historical Jesus to the Quakers in the 1690s. These sources concentrate on Keith's theology, but fail to relate how his life as a traditionalist affected his relationship with a secularized Quaker church in America.

George Keith's life until his arrival in the New World in 1684 prepared him for the disregard of Quaker tradition in America. His early life in Europe was spent as an apologist for the Quaker faith. His preparation for such a life began with his studies at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, where he received a Master of Arts degree. During his studies at Aberdeen in the early 1660s, Keith, who was raised Presbyterian, grew increasingly disillusioned with the Presbyterian church and became influenced by the writings of Cambridge Platonists like Henry More and John Smith. According to Keith biographer Ethyn Williams Kirby, Keith found interest in the works of More and Smith because of the clarity and simplicity of their beliefs, in contrast with the formal liturgy and doctrinal focus characteristic of Presbyterianism in the seventeenth century. "They did not regard as essentials of religion the obscure doctrinal points upon which Calvinists loved to brood; but wished rather to simplify religion and to emphasize the love of God and the value of the good life."¹ Between 1663 to 1664, Keith joined the Quakers after he read *Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* by More, a book that actually attacked the Quaker church, but spoke of man's free will to come to faith in Jesus, which appealed to Keith in a way that only Quakerism matched the need.²

For the next twenty-seven years, Keith served the Quakers with his publications, public arguments, and persecution. The experiences early in his career with the Quakers subjected him to a variety of imprisonments and beatings, where he joined famous Quakers like George Fox, William Penn, and Robert Barclay in their sufferings throughout Europe. Unlike Quaker founder George Fox, Keith proved himself adept at intellectual arguments with other churches, such as with his former Presbyterian denomination. As noted by historian Rufus M. Jones, Keith was proficient in public arguments in defense of the Quakers, "and vigorously espoused his new

¹ Ethyn Williams Kirby, *George Keith: 1638-1716* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1942), 7.

² *Ibid.*, 8.

convictions before hostile audiences of Presbyterian divines.”³ Keith’s bold arguments with the Presbyterian church and other churches were enhanced by his demeanor and intelligence. An influential defender for the Quakers, his career as an apologist in Europe ended in 1684, when he departed for America as surveyor-general to the colony of East Jersey.⁴

When Keith moved to America in 1685, he ignited conflict in the New World with the non-Quaker churches. Keith’s purpose in America initially dealt with establishing a dividing line that separated East and West Jersey, a task he was equipped to do by virtue of his education at Aberdeen. After his service as surveyor-general, Keith engaged in many apologetic arguments with the other churches there. With the same mettle he exercised in Europe, Keith argued harshly and shrewdly to defend the Quakers against those who criticized them.⁵ During the seventeenth century in America, those who presented the best defense to their listeners won the battle for the souls of humanity. Keith’s confrontational approach in America agitated the Puritans in New England who competed against Keith for the hearts of men and women. Among the opponents to the Quakers in America was Cotton Mather, the famous Puritan preacher, who entered into several theological debates with Keith in the early 1690s. Keith attacked Mather in a series of books that sought to discredit Mather’s spiritual influence in New England. The language Keith used against him was sometimes violent, as Keith compared Mather to the biblical Cain because of the persecutions Keith accused Mather of bearing the guilt of, where he used “*Cain’s Club*, and continuing to justify it, in putting to death so many innocent Servants of the Lord.”⁶ Within Mather’s accusations that Keith served as a champion for the Quakers and

³ Rufus M. Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1962), 445.

⁴ Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1988), 80.

⁵ Jones, 448.

⁶ George Keith, *The pretended antidote proved poyson: or, The true principles of the Christian & Protestant religion defended, and the four counterfit defenders thereof detected and discovered; : the names of which are James Allen, Joshua Moodey, Samuell Willard and Cotton Mather, who call themselves ministers of the Gospel in*

esteemed himself in the same manner he accused Mather of doing, this revealed Keith's growing status among the religious community in America, which the Puritans sought to subdue.⁷

Differing doctrinal views between the Quakers and the Puritans also influenced how Keith and Mather perceived each other. Keith declared that Mather based his arguments against him on superficial assertions gleaned from Keith's books, where "rather than wet your feet ye will go far about, and digress or deviate from that which ye cannot fairly nor justly answer."⁸ According to Keith, Mather's contentions with the Quakers were based on a superficial knowledge of them that invalidated his arguments. Keith even asserted that Mather was the opposite of what a Christian minister should be, where instead of being inclined toward the influence of the truth of God, Mather was more influenced by popular opinion. Additionally, Keith observed that, without sufficient understanding of Quaker doctrinal beliefs, "[Mather's] false malicious Slanders and Reproaches of an innocent People, by him and others in scorn call'd *Quakers*" discredited Mather's personal witness against Quakerism.⁹ In light of the weaknesses of Mather's arguments, Keith paralleled himself to the biblical David and Mather to Goliath, with Mather seen as an opponent destined to fall by Keith's hands due to a pride that operated against the will of God.¹⁰ As much as Keith defended and argued for the Quakers throughout

Boston, in their pretended answer to my book, called, The Presbyterian & independent visible churches in New-England, and else-where, brought to the test, &c. : And G.K. cleared not to be guilty of any calumnies against these called teachers of New-England, &c. / By George Keith. ; With an appendix by John Delavall, by way of animadversion on some passages in a discourse of Cotton Mathers before the General Court of Massachusetts, the 28th of the third moneth, 1690 (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985), microfiche, 7. EVANS 515.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 214.

¹⁰ George Keith, *A refutation of three opposers of truth, by plain evidence of the Holy Scripture. : viz. I. Of Pardon Tillinghast, who pleadeth for water-baptism, its being a Gospel-precept, and opposeth Christ within, as a false Christ. To which is added, something concerning the supper, &c. II. Of B. Keech, in his book called, A tutor for children, where he disputeth against the sufficiency of the light within, in order to salvation; and calleth Christ in the heart, a false Christ in the secret chamber. III. Of Cotton Mather, who in his appendix to his book, called, Memorable providences, relating to witchcraft, &c. doth so weakly defend his father Increase Mather from being justly chargeable with abusing the honest people called Quakers, that he doth the more lay open his father's nakedness; and beside the abuses and injuries that his father had cast upon that people, C. Mather, the son, addeth*

Europe in his tours with George Fox and William Penn, his outspoken support of the Quakers in America likewise exasperated the non-Quaker churches in America.

The Puritans in New England, in the midst of their disagreements with Keith, noticed inconsistency between the arguments Keith presented in support of Quakerism, and how the Quakers in America actually practiced their religion. In a letter written in February 1, 1691, from Puritan Christian Lodowick to Cotton Mather, Lodowick countered and accused Keith of manipulating the facts. “He will use many Evasions, and take advantage where he can : and he will either put some other Meaning upon *George Foxes* words which you have quoted (and which he dares not well deny) for his Brethrens sake, who esteem *George Fox* the greatest Oracle and Prophet that ever was among them.”¹¹ Cotton Mather in his book, *Little flocks guarded against grievous wolves*, published in 1691, viewed Keith’s comments against the Puritans as hypocritical in nature. He observed that while Keith accused the Puritans of one belief, he contradicted himself as he supported the same belief he accused the Puritans of practicing, as exemplified in the Puritan treatment of the Scriptures as the Word of God. “The *Quakers* openly have said, *God has no where commanded us to walk according to the Scriptures* . . . Mr. Cotton of *Plymouth*, with some others, had attested, that they heard *George Keith* affirm, *The Scriptures are the word of God.*”¹² The hypocrisy Mather spoke of in relation to Keith’s view of the role of the Scriptures in American Quakerism identified a shift in Keith’s position

new abuses of his own. : And a few words of a letter to John Cotton, called a minister, at Plymouth in New England. / By George Keith. ; [Two lines from Zephaniah] (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985), microfiche, 47. EVANS 516.

¹¹ Christian Lodowick, *A letter from the most ingenious Mr. Lodowick* (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985), microfiche, 8. EVANS 552.

¹² Cotton Mather, *Little flocks guarded against grievous wolves.: An address unto those parts of New-England which are most exposed unto assaults, from the modern teachers of the misled Quakers. : In a letter, which impartially discovers the manifold haeresies and blasphemies, and the strong delusions of even the most refined Quakerism; and thereupon demonstrates the truth of those principles and assertions, which are most opposite thereunto. : With just reflections upon the extream ignorance and wickedness, of George Keith, who is the seducer that now most ravines upon the churches in this wilderness. / Written by Cotton Mather. ; A character of the ring-leaders among the Quakers. ; [Four lines from Timothy].* (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985), microfiche, 5. EVANS 563.

with respect to Quaker theology in America, which developed years before Mather first identified it. What appeared as a contradiction to Mather was actually a pervasive conflict between Keith and the American Quakers that remained beneath the surface of American Quakerism for years.

In 1688, Keith began to write about the direction he envisioned for Quakers in America. Keith wrote a letter in May of 1688 to George Fox and George Whitehead, prominent Quakers in England, about his concern for American Quakers, particularly their unfamiliarity with the Scriptures. As identified by historian Jon Butler, Quakers in America neglected a study of the Scriptures, and the belief in the historicity of Jesus spoken of in those Scriptures.¹³ This displayed a shift in focus for American Quakers. According to the views by traditionalists like William Penn and Robert Barclay on the Bible, the Bible was necessary for understanding the Inner Light of God.¹⁴ Keith supported this view in *A refutation of three opposers*, published in 1690, in an argument with Cotton Mather where Keith asserted the weight of the Bible alongside Quaker books in response to accusations by Mather that those who read Quaker books were possessed by demons.¹⁵ While Keith accused Mather of a “prejudice of the Quaker Meetings” in denial of Mather’s accusations, Keith’s writings in America revealed there were more than simple doctrinal differences between Keith and the American Quakers.¹⁶

Keith published an article in 1688 entitled “Gospel Order Improved,” also referred to as “Gospel Order and Discipline” in later editions, which spoke of potential reforms to the American Quaker church. Keith’s article emphasized a formal testimony of their experiences of God, and the recital of a creed to solidify their agreement with Quaker beliefs. Keith spoke of

¹³ Jon Butler, “‘Gospel Order Improved’: The Keithian Schism and the Exercise of Quaker Ministerial Authority in Pennsylvania,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, third ser., vol. 31, no. 3 (July 1974): 434.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 435.

¹⁵ Keith, *A refutation of three opposers*, 48.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

how the Quaker church in America seemed infiltrated by false believers, who “crept into ye form & profession of Friends’ way, who are not realy friends of Truth.”¹⁷ Because of undefined doctrinal lines from within the American Quaker church, Keith encouraged the Quakers that an outward profession of faith be made in order to discern the difference between “faithfull friends of Truth and all such hypocrites & empty & formal professors.”¹⁸ On January 1, 1690, Keith formally presented his article to Quaker leaders, “but by reason of the great weight of the Things there treated [in the article],” they decided to evaluate it at a later time on April 9, 1690.¹⁹ After the April Meeting, the review of the material was again postponed to a later date, come the next Meeting of the Quakers. Before that Meeting, nine Quakers were appointed to review Keith’s “Gospel Order Improved.” Among appointees mentioned were Samuel Jenings, John Delavel, Thomas Lloyd, and Keith himself, all renowned Quakers in Pennsylvania society. After further postponed Meetings, the reviewers finally convened to present their findings during the Quakers’ Yearly Meeting on January 5, 1691. All of them, except for Keith, found “Several great abuses, and unChristian Reflections by him cast upon Friends both in Publique and Private.”²⁰ With this pronouncement, the extent of Keith’s disagreements with the American Quakers began to unfold.

Theological disagreements between Keith and the Quaker church in America centered on Keith’s desire to establish traditional Quaker views, as noted in his call for a public confession of faith in Quaker doctrine. Keith’s theological shift that the reviewers criticized circulated months before Keith submitted “Gospel Order Improved.” In the letter sent to Cotton Mather by Christian Lodowick on February 1, 1691, Lodowick commented on an exchange he had with Keith the previous summer that questioned the foundation of Quaker theology: the authority of

¹⁷ *Gospel Order and Discipline*, 25.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Extracts from Minutes of the Meeting of Ministers*, 137.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

the Inner Light as the indwelt spirit of Jesus Christ within all Quakers. “I asked him last Summer, how any such Gentile could be actually justified and saved from wrath, before he be pardoned, and how he could be pardoned of the least imper[fe?]ction of the very best of his moral vertues, without Faith in Jesus of *Nazareth*, and he gave me no direct Answer.”²¹

Lodowick accused Keith of supporting “the Preexistence of Two [De?]grees of the Soul of Christ . . . which he makes of late more degrees than one,” where Keith wrote in the past only of Jesus within them as the Inner Light, but now also supported the view that Jesus dwelt outside the Quakers in heaven.²² Keith’s message in defense of the Quakers began to conflict with the expressed doctrinal views of American Quakers to where neither explanation could be reconciled with the other.

Keith’s position on Quaker theology emphasized the importance of a larger community, as understood in the singularity of focus on the authority of the Bible and the person of Jesus Christ in the lives of every Quaker. In a book written by Keith in 1692 entitled *The Christian faith of the people of God*, a section headed “Our Sincere Christian Belief is plainly asserted in the following Particulars” began the book and stressed important doctrinal positions of the Quakers according to Keith. Two of the eight essential Christian doctrines he listed differed from the tenets and practices of the American Quakers: the belief that Jesus dwelt “without us” and “within us,” and “the great Benefit of the holy Scriptures.”²³ These doctrines, while common to traditionalists, did not comply with American Quakerism. In the rest of the book,

²¹ Lodowick, 7.

²² Ibid.

²³ George Keith, *The Christian faith of the people of God, : called in scorn, Quakers in Rhode-Island (who are in unity with all faithfull brethren of the same profession in all parts of the world) vindicated from the calumnies of Christian Lodowick, that formerly was of that profession, but is lately fallen there-from. And also from the base forgeries, and wicked slanders of Cotton Mather, called a Minister, at Boston ... : To which is added, some testimonies of our antient Friends to the true Christ of God; collected out of their printed books, for the further convincing of our opposers, that it is (and hath been) our constant and firm belief to expect salvation by the man Christ Jesus that was outwardly crucified without the gates of Jerusalem* (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985), microfiche, 2. EVANS 600.

which was a response to Christian Lodowick, Keith defended the Quakers with terms that coincided with the essential tenets of Quaker tradition, but not those of the Quaker church in America. He wrote that the indwelt manifestation of Jesus within all Quakers was the same Jesus that historically existed in Jerusalem, which meant a belief in “Christ’s inward and Outward Coming and Appearance.”²⁴ He declared a unity between the indwelt manifestation of Jesus within the Quakers in the form of the Inner Light, and the outward manifestation of Jesus in physical form. These statements were confronted by protests from the American Quakers, with whom the majority believed that the “Christ within” was separate from the historical Jesus and dwelt only in spirit.²⁵

The Quakers in America justified their arguments about Keith’s belief of two Christs on doctrines founded in Quaker tradition about the irrelevance of an outward manifestation of Jesus. The Quakers believed that the second coming of Jesus was in spiritual form, not in the literal, physical form presumed by most Protestants. According to the perceptions of the majority of American Quakers, a statement of two Christs not only bordered on polytheism, but also contradicted Quaker doctrine as expressed by William Penn. Penn believed that Jesus’ manifestation was wholly spiritual and completed the forgiveness of sins within all Quakers, which for the American Quakers meant that an outward manifestation of Jesus was unnecessary.²⁶ The Quakers in America believed solely in the authority of the Inner Light of Jesus as the only means of salvation. Because of the significance of Jesus’ spiritual second coming, they maintained their position on the exclusivity of Jesus’ spiritual manifestation.

²⁴ Ibid., 5.

²⁵ David S. Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1985), 146.

²⁶ Stephen Trowell, “George Keith: Post-Restoration Quaker Theology and the Experience of Defeat,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, Vol. 76 (1994): 123.

In September of 1692, Keith and several of his supporters were brought before the Quaker's Yearly Meeting with charges of blasphemy against the Quaker church. Accusations arose against George Keith that he had "gone from Friends Doctrine or Practice," and that he was guilty of "*Damnable Heresies and Errors.*"²⁷ As voiced by Quaker leader William Stockdale, the charges against Keith centered on the belief that "*To preach Faith in Christ within, and in Christ without, is to preach Two Christs.*"²⁸ These accusations marked a change in the American Quakers from a doctrinal stance they observed years before when Keith first preached that the "Christ without" Quakers was the same as the "Christ within" Quakers. As observed from 1688 to 1689, in response to Keith's messages concerning the authority of the Bible to American Quakers, English Quakers sent a message to the American Quakers that encouraged "a full acceptance of the biblical account of Christ" alongside the Inner Light of Jesus.²⁹ The American Quakers complied with the English Quakers on their insistence of the Scriptures' accounts of Jesus, though their accusations against Keith in 1692 indicated a clear shift in their doctrinal focus since 1689.

Alongside Keith's theological arguments, there emerged additional accusations by Keith of an emergent hierarchy with the American Quaker church. Quaker tradition encouraged a separation between secular influences and the church, seen in the egalitarian principles that Penn's "holy experiment" sought. The equal treatment of all humanity was believed since everyone possessed the Inner Light of God within. Keith founded his criticisms on the belief

²⁷ George Keith, *A serious appeal to all the more sober, impartial & judicious people in New-England to whose hands this may come, : whether Cotton Mather in his late address, &c. hath not extreamly failed in proving the people call'd Quakers guilty of manifold heresies, blasphemies and strong delusions, and whether he hath not much rather proved himself extreamly ignorant and greatly possessed with a spirit of perversion, error, prejudice and envious zeal against them in general, and G.K. in particular, in his most uncharitable and rash judgment against him. : Together with a vindication of our Christian faith in those things sincerely believed by us, especially respecting the fundamental doctrines and principles of Christian religion. / By George Keith* (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985), microfiche, 4-6. EVANS 605.

²⁸ Ibid., 4.

²⁹ Jones, 447.

that a hierarchy operated against the human equality inherent to all humanity in the Inner Light, and also ignored communal authority as expressed in Quaker tradition. The communal ideology Keith argued for originated from the enthusiasm of Quaker founder George Fox during the 1650s in the northern regions of England. He encouraged his followers to avoid involvement in secular institutions, and to focus more on a relationship with God and a ministry to each other as a community.³⁰ In the vision of the “holy experiment” of William Penn, Pennsylvania was to serve as a model for a Quaker community that reflected the aspirations of George Fox, but Penn’s vision of his “holy experiment” faded once he left the colony in 1684.

Due to legal reasons, Penn was forced to leave his colony and return to England in 1684. Penn received notice from England that the initial surveys of his colony’s charter had over-extended lands already given to another proprietor, Lord Baltimore. Because Penn and Lord Baltimore could not resolve their differences, Penn decided to return to England to deal with the situation.³¹ In order to protect his interests in the colony, Penn appointed people to public and proprietary offices who supported his vision for the colony and served for life, so long as the officials did not abuse their power while in office.³² Penn appointed these government officials hoping to maintain his vision for the colony and to protect Pennsylvania from those who encroached upon his “holy experiment.” Once Penn left the colony, however, the social and political environment of Pennsylvania changed.

The officials Penn appointed were ineffective, if not outright ignored, by the Quaker majority in Pennsylvania. The Quaker response to this change in power was characterized by their attitude towards authority in the past. As a persecuted people with a history of outspokenness against secular authority, the Quakers experienced the freedom of no centralized

³⁰ Frederick B. Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), 42.

³¹ Barbour, 78.

³² Gary B. Nash, *Quakers and Politics: Pennsylvania, 1681-1726* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968), 84.

authority when Penn left and liberated them to act free of the restraints that inhibited them in the past.³³ Without Penn to oversee their actions, the Quakers pursued individual interests instead of a communal emphasis that characterized Penn's "holy experiment," as well as the Quaker traditions stressed by George Fox. Branches of colonial government, like the Assembly and the Council, were divided over issues of who warranted the most power. Individualism emerged in the colony, instead of an emphasis on community, alongside there being only a marginal amount of the population who submitted to the authority of Penn as the proprietor of the colony.³⁴ This eventually led to a move by the American Quakers to disenfranchise Penn by separating him from any influence on political matters in Pennsylvania.

The disenfranchisement of Penn arose out of the need among the landholding majority in Pennsylvania to attain greater control over property rights. They argued that Penn's land policies "emphasized profit rather than their needs or rights."³⁵ In Penn's vision for his "holy experiment," the speculative tendency of the individual took second place to the needs of the community. Penn believed that land speculation resulted in a disjointed community driven by a population of individuals in the pursuit of profit and property. The opposite proved to be the response to Penn's goals when he left. Disillusionment soon arose from the officials Penn appointed, as his strict policies and the increased influence of public opinion eventually led to dissent by the officials.³⁶ Through Keith's arguments against the elitism in Quaker society, he attacked an institution that Quakers in America were beholden to for years and refused to forfeit.

Keith's criticism of church hierarchy placed him in opposition with the elite in the colony where any attack on their positions was seen as undermining their authority. In Keith's "Gospel

³³ Barbour, 78.

³⁴ Nash, 87.

³⁵ Ibid., 90.

³⁶ Ibid., 97.

Order Improved” in 1688, this disregard to the existing church authorities was observed in his insistence on a changed church structure. He proposed the Quaker Meetings adopt positions like elders and deacons who acted under the specific role of servants within the local church, rather than in positions of over-arching authority. Keith felt that the elders needed to see that all Quakers walking “under the profession of Truth” received encouragement, and “allso to have an authority over the younger in ye Spirit and power and Life of Truth not lording it over their consciences,” but that they watched over them as mentors.³⁷ While Keith addressed the necessity of discipline within the church, he focused on the Quaker institution of the Meeting House in terms of its importance to the community and how it should “greatly differ from worldly Governments,” which served as a detriment in his conflict with the elite class in Pennsylvania.³⁸ Since its establishment with the Quakers in the 1660s, the Meetings changed from being community-oriented to being dominated by a hierarchy, a sizable change from their purpose in Quaker tradition.

The Meetings began as a way for the Quakers to avoid the institutions of the secular world. Since 1659, Quaker founder George Fox insisted that the Quakers operate apart from secular influence. The individual differences fostered in the environment of the Meetings were used for the benefit of the community, and if contention arose it was dealt with peaceably and with respect to the atmosphere of the Meeting. According to historian Arnold Lloyd, during tense moments in the Meetings, “a wise Clerk or some other Friend will ask for a period of silence in which the meeting is recalled to a sense of divine dependence” because of the risk that the Meetings become too consumed with trivial differences.³⁹ The expressions of worship during Quaker Meetings were to be unhindered by any physical restraints, as opposed to secular

³⁷ *Gospel Order and Discipline*, 31.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁹ Arnold Lloyd, *Quaker Social History* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1950), 23.

authority that operated according to the will of man and not of God. God gave authority to the community of Quakers present at the Meetings in the form of the Inner Light in everyone, and only Quaker leaders like George Fox held higher status during these Meetings.⁴⁰ For the Quaker Meetings in America, Penn had decreased in influence, George Fox died in 1691, and the social elite among the Quakers came to control the Meetings.

The hierarchy that existed in the Meetings revealed a shift from the traditional view of the role of the Meetings as spiritually-centered and community-based to being secular and individually-based. Emerging from the American Quakers' initial compromise over authority in the Meetings, Keith criticized the influence of the elites against the authority of the Holy Spirit, a protest that changed the nature of the dispute between Keith and the Quaker elite into an attack on their position in society.⁴¹ During a Meeting on May 4, 1692, Keith confronted a board of Quaker ministers and "denyed our Authority, he denyed our judgment, he did not value it a pin, he would trample upon it as dirt under his feet" in a response to their accusations against him of heresies against the American Quaker church.⁴² The reaction of the Quaker authorities towards Keith revealed that the source of the elite's authority resided outside the Meeting House. For the Quaker elite in America, the line that distinguished the political realm from the spiritual realm was blurred. Church and state were unified in colonial Pennsylvania at the expense of individuality of the Quaker community. The undercurrents of Keith's comments against the religious authorities exposed them as the same class of individuals who usurped Penn's political authority after he left Pennsylvania in 1684.

A Quaker aristocracy developed in Pennsylvania from among the leaders Penn appointed to oversee Pennsylvania after he left in 1684, and prospered under the influence of one such

⁴⁰ Barbour, 68.

⁴¹ Butler, 447.

⁴² *Extracts from Minutes of the Meeting of Ministers*, 138-9.

leader, Thomas Lloyd. When Penn left the colony, he appointed Lloyd to help preserve his vision of the “holy experiment.” Lloyd’s heritage identified him with the elite class he later established in Pennsylvania. Coming from an influential Welsh family, when he arrived at Pennsylvania in 1683 he even brought his family coat of arms with him that identified him with his aristocratic lineage. During the years of 1684 to 1688, he served as President of the Council, and also as Deputy-Governor of the colony from 1691 to 1693.⁴³ Alongside his role as a member of the aristocracy in Pennsylvania, Lloyd and other elite also served as traveling ministers, better known as Public Friends.⁴⁴ Emerging from a church tradition whose influence depended on personalities like George Fox and William Penn, the American Quakers soon revered Lloyd and other Public Friends as if Fox and Penn, if not more. Lloyd’s position as at least equal to Quaker founders occurred because his political position outweighed the authority he held as a Quaker minister.

Lloyd’s authority in Pennsylvania carried over into an extensive sphere of influence over the government and various functions of society. A network of power that emerged in Pennsylvania after Penn left in 1684 made this possible. City governments incorporated civil and criminal courts into the functions of Quaker society, as society passed laws, added buildings to the city infrastructure, and even appointed their own local government officials.⁴⁵ This level of involvement in civic government did not go unnoticed by Keith because the effects of such networks of power were widespread and operated contrary to foundational Quaker doctrine. Early Quakers denied the authority of the Magistrates, as observed in a work by non-Quaker John Norton in 1659, where the Quakers held a doctrine “which denyeth obedience unto the

⁴³ Frederick B. Tolles. *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Pennsylvania 1682-1763* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1963), 120.

⁴⁴ Butler, 439.

⁴⁵ Nash, 129.

order of Magistracy in its due subject . . . and in effect denyeth the order of Magistracy, i.e. Civil order.”⁴⁶ Keith similarly criticized Lloyd and the Public Friends in his *An Appeal from the twenty eight judges* in 1692 for their involvement with secular government. “Whether there is any Example or President [sic] for it [in] Scripture, or in all *Christendom*, that Ministers should engross the Worldly Government, as they do here? which hath proved of a very evil Tendency.”⁴⁷ According to Keith, Lloyd contradicted Quaker tradition because he embraced secular government.

George Keith exposed a merger of church and state by individuals who ruled society with the authority of God and government. Keith accused the Quaker elite of stealing the power that the Quaker community rightfully held within the Meetings. The physical structure of the Meeting Houses reflected this shift in that the Public Friends were literally positioned over the people. The pulpit from which the Public Friends spoke was raised above ground level, often to the extent that they talked down to the congregation of Quakers. Behind the pulpit the entire body was concealed, and in larger Meeting Houses the separation between the Public Friends and the lay people was even greater, where balconies were constructed for the Public Friends to speak from far above the lay people.⁴⁸ According to a traditionalist like Keith, this was a complete shift in focus from the original intent of the Quakers, where community was lessened due to the influence of a growing sense of separation between the Public Friends and the lay people. Keith considered these Public Friends as “guilty of evil and scandalous Practices

⁴⁶ John Norton, *The heart of N-England rent at the blasphemies of the present generation. Or a brief tractate concerning the doctrine of the Quakers, : demonstrating the destructive nature thereof, to religion, the churches, and the state, with consideration of the remedy against it. Occasional satisfaction to objections and confirmation of the contrary truth. / By John Norton, teacher of the Church of Christ at Boston. Who was appointed thereunto by the order of the General Court. ; [Four lines from Revelation]* (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985), microfiche, 31. EVANS 56.

⁴⁷ George Keith, *An Appeal from the twenty eight judges: to the spirit of truth & true judgment in all faithful Friends, called Quakers, that meet at this Yearly Meeting at Burlington, the 7 month, 1692* (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985), microfiche, 7. EVANS 597.

⁴⁸ Butler, 441.

repugnant to our holy Profession.”⁴⁹ Rather than incorporate the community into the direction of the Quaker Meetings, the Public Friends limited the people’s authority during “divers Monthly, Quarterly, and other Meetings, without the consent of the said Meetings, or so much as asking it.”⁵⁰ The status of the Public Friends in the Quaker Meetings reflected the fact that the elite Quakers were set apart from the rest of society, and that this distinction held more than simply spiritual influence.

On August 4, 1692, George Keith and his supporters were brought before the Public Friends for their statements against the Quaker church. The course of their discussion exposed the judgments against Keith and his followers, as they confronted claims of heresy, while Keith engaged the Public Friends in arguments on their secularization. Keith spoke of the Public Friends as “a Faction of men, calling themselves the Yearly-Meeting,” where he identified the Quaker elite as the source of the immense errors in American Quakerism.⁵¹ He accused them of being “but only upon a Party or Faction of men that are no true *Quakers*, but degenerated from the true Principles and Practices of the *Quakers*.”⁵² Keith also criticized the Quaker elite for allowing the establishment of a militia in response to Indian raids in the colony, which stood in opposition to the Quaker tradition of pacifism.⁵³

For the Quakers in America, the importance of tradition changed in light of a shift in authority, which meant irreconcilable differences between George Keith and the elite. The

⁴⁹ Keith, *An Appeal from the twenty eight judges*, 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Thomas Budd and George Keith, *False judgments reprehended: : and a just reproof to Tho. Everndon, and his associates and fellow-travellers, for the false and rash judgment T.E. gave against G.K. and his faithful Friends and brethren, at the publick meeting at Philadelphia, the 27. of 10. mon. 1692. And also for their bringing with them their paquet of letters (Saul-like to Damascus) containing the false judgment of a faction of men calling themselves the Yearly-Meeting at Tredaven in Maryland the 4 of 8. mon 92. And another false judgement contained in another letter from William Richardson, all which will return upon their own heads* (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985), microfiche, 1. EVANS 611.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 8.

growing power base within the Quaker elite provided little room for traditionalists like Keith, who were committed to the establishment of a community of believers isolated from secular influence. Since Keith represented a class of Quakers that upheld traditions that operated against the present direction of American Quakerism, the only solution for the Public Friends was to remove Keith from the Quakers altogether. On December 9, 10, and 12, 1692, George Keith and three of his supporters, Peter Boss, Thomas Budd, and William Bradford, were brought to trial before a Meeting of Quakers. Keith pleaded not guilty to the charges against him, declaring that “I am not presentable by the Grand Jury for any thing alledged against me, they being no Offences against the King, Governour nor Country.”⁵⁴ He argued that, because the charges were only against individual persons, the trial itself was unnecessary, and that if his accusers “think themselves wronged by me, may sue me in their own Names, and I am ready to answer them.”⁵⁵ However, the court ignored Keith’s testimony and applied his plea of not guilty to the charges of defamatory comments against civil magistrate Samuel Jenings, who served as a judge and provincial magistrate in Pennsylvania, and also reviewed Keith’s “Gospel Order Improved,” the work submitted to the Quakers in 1690.⁵⁶

Keith’s trial exposed the extent of the merger of church and state in Pennsylvania, where the same people that guided the spiritual direction of the Quakers restrained anyone that spoke against their political authority. The judgments applied against Keith by the Quaker elite were that he spoke politically-motivated comments against Jenings. However, Keith accused Jenings of being “*High and Imperious ; for Piety, whereof Humility is a Branch, is no essential*

⁵⁴ *The Tryals of Peter Boss, George Keith, Thomas Budd, and William Bradford, Quakers For several Great Misdemeanors (As was pretended by their Adversaries) before A Court of Quakers: At the Sessions held at Philadelphia in Pensylvania, the Ninth, Tenth, and Twelfth Days of December, 1692. Giving also an Account of the most Arbitrary Procedure of that Court*, 188.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Butler, 446.

Qualification of a Magistrate, tho' it be of a Christian and Minister of Christ," statements against Jenings' misconduct as a Christian and not on his political performance.⁵⁷ As seen in Keith's experiences, the Public Friends in government offices successfully constructed a defense around their positions in the Quaker community, where although they "judged [Keith] in their Spiritual Court," ultimately they "prosecuted him in their Temporal Court" of defamatory comments against government authority.⁵⁸

After Keith was expelled from the American Quaker church, he still persisted in the hope that he would be vindicated despite the rejection he experienced from the Quaker church in America. In an account of the trial, Keith observed the spirit of dissension from traditional Quaker principles reflected in the trial:

Does not this show the great Declension of these People from their ancient Principle against the use of Carnal Weapons, that for only proposing it to be enquired into, Whether it be not a Transgression of the *Quakers* Principle, for any of that People to hire and commissionate men to fight, that they will cast men into Goal, and prosecute them as Seditious Persons for so doing.⁵⁹

In *A testimony and caution to such as do make a profession of truth*, published by the Quaker elite shortly after the trial on December 28, they quickly reasserted the legitimacy of their authority in response to the events surrounding George Keith's trial. "We really believe, and are perswaded, that Magistracy and Worldly Government is an ordinance of God, and every Magistrate, lawfully called to his Office, is the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute Wrath

⁵⁷ *The Tryals of Peter Boss, George Keith, Thomas Budd, and William Bradford*, 189.

⁵⁸ George Keith, *New-England's spirit of persecution transmitted to Pennsylvania; and the pretended Quaker found persecuting the true Christian-Quaker, in the tryal of Peter Boss, George Keith, Thomas Budd, and William Bradford, at the sessions held at Philadelphia the ninth, tenth and twelfth days of December, 1692. Giving an account of the most arbitrary procedure of that court* (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985), microfiche, 5. EVANS 642.

⁵⁹ *The Tryals of Peter Boss, George Keith, Thomas Budd, and William Bradford*, 198.

upon him that doth evil.”⁶⁰ At the same time, the Quaker elite maintained that “no man is in any degree a *Christian* that doth *Swear* or *pay Tythes*, or contribute to a *Worldly Ministry*,” where they conceded that contributions to secular affairs was not godly practice, yet service in secular government was.⁶¹ They aligned government service alongside ministry for God, a shift which characterized the nature of their separation between the traditional views embodied in George Keith, and the establishment of a Quaker aristocracy.

Keith and his supporters continued to criticize American Quakerism after Keith’s removal in 1692. While many Quakers in America supported the Meetings’ decision to expel Keith from the Quakers, a sizable number of Quakers backed Keith’s doctrinal beliefs. One such Quaker, Elias Burling, wrote a paper in 1694 that decried the “Un-Christian and Un-Quaker-like” behavior of the Quaker elite in America.⁶² He supported Keith’s exposure of the many “Evils and Filthyness” inherent to the Quakers.⁶³ Burling went so far as to even “spy out” the Quakers in America to determine if they were Christians, but physically withdrew from the Meetings when he found that they were not. “But this Lover is now stripping off, and will not longer hide you, but you must now appear as ye are, and that ye are of those that love not the Lord Jesus Christ, as your doings have and do manifestly declare.”⁶⁴ With a population of traditional Quakers secured in America to continue Keith’s arguments against the Quaker

⁶⁰ Society of Friends, *A testimony and caution to such as do make a profession of truth, who are in scorn called Quakers, and more especially such as profess to be Ministers of the Gospel of Peace, that they should not be concerned in worldly government* (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985), microfiche, 5. EVANS 637.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶² Elias Burling, *A call to back-sliding Israel, : and may be as a necessary word of caution and admonition to the inhabitants of East and West-Jersey, Pennsylvania, &c. as a remembrancer to them to call to mind their former state, and whence they are fallen. : With some short account of my leaving a second time that party of them called Quakers, which have condemned G. Keith, and all that own him, of his testimony for the crucified Jesus, our alone advocate in heaven. / By Elias Burling* (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985), microfiche, 8. EVANS 39309.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

aristocracy there, he was able to promote his views against the American Quakers in a visit to England.

When Keith arrived at London in 1693, he proceeded to promote a reformed Quaker church through sermons to the English Quakers. Initially, the English Quakers were disappointed by the degree of persecution Keith received from the Quakers in America, but after an extended period of time in London, Keith's comments soon aroused their ire. After a series of hearings held by the English Quakers on the events that proceeded in America, they accused both Keith and the American Quakers of wrongdoing. However, Keith's refusal to admit error in his behavior toward the Quakers in America resulted in his own removal from the Quaker church in England.⁶⁵ While the English Quakers initially admired his convictions, Keith's poor attitude and conduct resulted in his rejection in London as well.

Keith struggled to find a following in London after his expulsion from the English Quakers in 1695, but that changed when he began preaching at Turner's Hall, owned by former Penn supporter Robert Turner.⁶⁶ According to observers during that time, Keith's time spent in London after his removal from the Quakers caused his departure from Quaker doctrine. Keith's doctrinal focus changed as he accepted practices that Quaker tradition rejected, such as "to pay Tithes," to have "Ministers to Preach for Hire," and to sprinkle infants with water for infant

⁶⁵ Barbour, 81.

⁶⁶ Gabriel Thomas, *An historical and geographical account of the province and country of Pensilvania ; and of West-New-Jersey in America: The richness of the soil, the sweetness of the situation, the wholesomeness of the air, the navigable rivers, and others, the prodigious encrease of corn, the flourishing condition of the city of Philadelphia, with the stately buildings, and other improvements there. The strange creatures, as birds, beasts, fishes, and fowls, with the several sorts of minerals, purging waters, and stones, lately discovered. The natives, aborogmes [sic] their language, religion, laws, and customs; the first planters, the Dutch, Sweeds, and English, with the number of its inhabitants; as also a touch upon George Keith's new religion, in his second change since he left the Quakers. With a map of both countries / by Gabriel Thomas, who resided there about fifteen years* (Chicago : Library Resources, 1970), microfiche, 54. LAC 16790.

baptism.⁶⁷ Instead of representing the doctrine of the Quakers, the tenets of the Church of England guided the direction of Keith's doctrinal beliefs.

In 1699, Keith began to work for the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, an organization which operated out of the Church of England. Keith's arguments against the Quakers continued, but this time they were prompted by his desire to evangelize in the name of the Church of England. Keith's speaking out against the Quakers led to the disillusionment of his followers in Pennsylvania. Some returned to the Quakers, but others followed him and joined the Church of England.⁶⁸ The nature of Keith's arguments remained largely unchanged since he departed from the Quakers, as observed in a documented argument Keith had with an illiterate Quaker in 1700. "[The Quaker] thought the Light within him Taught him all that was needful to his Salvation, without Scripture; as the very Nature and Manner of his Queries and Objections, did plainly make Manifest."⁶⁹ Keith's expulsion from the Quakers affected his encounters with the Quakers in England, as noted in the meeting with Quaker Benjamin Cool. After he met with Cool during the first week of August, 1700, Cool forced Keith to leave his house after a heated conversation about Quaker doctrine, but such rejection represented a marginal failure in the midst of a series of successes in the English Quaker community. "But that *G. Keith* sat down in the Street, or was astonished, or disquieted, are all gross Falshood; as is that other Story, that *G. Keith* had not any in the City of *Bristol* to favour him, or think well of him; the contrary whereof hath sufficiently appear'd, by the general respect of the People of this

⁶⁷ Ibid., 52.

⁶⁸ Jones, 454.

⁶⁹ George Keith, *A narrative of the proceedings of George Keith at Coopers-Hall in the city of Bristol, the 14th day of August 1700, in detecting the errors of Benjamin Cool, and his brethren the Quakers at Bristol: which were read before a great auditory of ministers and other citizens and inhabitants : and divers other memorable passages between him and the Quakers at Bristol, particularly a dialogue at Coopers-Hall between a Quaker cobbler and G. Keith, and another dialogue between some Quakers and G. Keith at B. Cool's house in Bristol : together with some of the chiefest Quotations out of the books of B. Cool and W. Penn, read at the same place, the same day / by George Keith* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1982), microfilm, 15. STC II 1288 K185.

City.”⁷⁰ Although the English Quakers presumed that Keith was unsuccessful in evangelizing to Quakers, Keith defended that his successes proved the opposite to be true. Support for George Keith grew during his work with the Church of England, but the true test came when he returned to America in 1702 with the Church of England’s the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts.

With Keith’s return to America in 1702, nearly a decade after the American Quakers removed him from the church, his opponents in the Quaker community remained in America, while Keith largely ignored his former opponents like the Puritans. His approach to the Quakers in America was similar to the approach the early Quakers used against non-Quakers in the colonies in the 1650s and 60s, as Keith “invaded the meeting of Friends, engaging in dispute wherever he could find an antagonist.”⁷¹ Although Keith was bold in his dealings with the Quakers, even in his brash behavior he often did not experience much success. The Quakers often interrupted him to where he could not present a solid defense for himself. This was exacerbated by the nearly decade-long spread of propaganda material against Keith by the American Quakers, as observed in the example of Thomas Maule. Maule published materials in 1703 that accused Keith as a false teacher influenced by Satan, where Keith was an “apostate like fitted with Wisdom from below,” which deemed Keith’s arguments as unworthy of consideration by the American Quaker community.⁷² Upon Keith’s removal from the Quaker church in America in 1692, he was depicted as an overly intellectual character, where Keith was deceived by Satan and, according to Maule, “*thy learning was thy greatest Enimy.*”⁷³ Regardless of such accusations against him, Keith ministered to the Quakers in anticipation that there would

⁷⁰ Ibid., 30.

⁷¹ Jones, 455.

⁷² Thomas Maule, *For the service of truth, / by Philalethes or lover of truth. T.M. 1703* (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985), microfiche, 2. EVANS 1135.

⁷³ Ibid.

be a spiritual harvest for the Church of England.⁷⁴ Upon Keith's return to England in 1704, he left as the last remnant of Quaker traditionalism in America not only by his lack of physical presence, but also in his doctrinal change of direction as a Quaker traditionalist.

From the time George Keith joined the Quakers from 1663 to 1664 and until his expulsion from the English Quakers in 1695, he upheld the ideology of Quaker tradition as defined by prominent Quakers like George Fox and William Penn. His service with the Quakers was a record of unyielding change despite the influence of the world around him. In the midst of his persecutions in his early years with the Quakers, alongside Fox and Penn he submitted to the imprisonments and beatings delivered to him because of his faith in traditional Quaker doctrine. Even when he landed in America in 1685 and defended the Quaker church against the criticism of prominent Puritans like Cotton Mather, he upheld his convictions as an apologist for the Quakers in America. Only when Keith confronted a changed Quaker church in America, which he had invested so much of his life in service to, was he finally confronted with a battle that intellect and personal convictions failed to win.

The experiences George Keith had over the course of his lifetime reflected a tendency in the American colonies toward the removal of tradition in response to secularization. The Puritans fled from England to find a sanctuary from the persecution they experienced from the Church of England. When they settled in America, their hope as a "city on a hill" that the Church of England would emulate never occurred, and the Puritans changed in the midst of a new religious environment in America. Upon the change within the Puritan church in America, they became like the persecutors they fled from in England, where they persecuted people such as Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson that contradicted the mood of toleration that spread throughout New England, resulting in Williams' and Hutchinson's banishment to Rhode Island.

⁷⁴ Kirby, 143.

The fact that George Keith experienced persecution while he served for the Quakers revealed a tendency in the religious denominations in America to drift away from the traditions that initially produced so many victims of persecution, but soon dissipated in the face of toleration and compromise with the secular world. As evidenced in the toleration and secularization in the Quakers, George Keith and the religious traditionalists in colonial America's past attempted to correct the changed nature of their denominations at the cost of their standing with them.

As exemplified by the traditionalists in colonial America, in the midst of the termination of such traditions, Keith continuously engaged with the community around him in response to personal convictions. Keith served according to his convictions, regardless of changed times that denied his voice. George Keith was a man who lived in obedience to a calling that eventually crossed denominational boundaries like Quaker or Church of England, and became inherent to him. Exemplified by Keith's life, the zeal of traditionalists was an attribute that persisted regardless of the circumstances. Keith strove for what intrinsic qualities of humanity that existed outside of social convention and rested within the hearts of every man, woman, and child. In times when secularization defiled personal purity, the only one to fight for human integrity was a soldier for tradition.

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