IN 1785, the Scottish poet Robert Burns wrote, "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men/Gang aft a-gley,/An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain/For promised joy." In terms of their relationship to God, the American colonists proved the truth of this adage over and over again. Historians of the New England tradition have dwelt at length on the unintended consequences arising out of the Puritan attempt to fulfill God's will. To a lesser extent, historians of religious thought in the middle and southern colonies have indicated the existence of similar ironic developments in these areas, but because of the lack of theological homogeneity among the subjects of their studies, the irony emerges with less clarity.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, however, the career of George Keith and the furor surrounding it provide the student of religious thought and church-state relations in Pennsylvania with a clear example of how the Quaker attempt to fulfill God's will led to unwanted and even destructive consequences. A clear example, that is, if the student remembers two central aspects of Quakerism, the "Inner Light" and the community.

1 The ironic qualities in the colonial religious experience are implicit in the work of many historians. Two books which make this characteristic quite clear are: Perry Miller, Errand Into the Wilderness (Cambridge, 1956); and Frederick Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House; the Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia (Williamsburg, 1948). Also see Gene Wise, "Implicit Irony in Perry Miller's New England Mind," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXIX (1968), 579-600.


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When Quakers spoke of the “Inner Light,” they referred to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God, they believed, continued the process of revelation by infusing his Spirit into the hearts of men. Through this direct, mystical experience men learned God’s will, and became bound to fulfill it. That, however, could prove exceedingly difficult, for in the service of the omnipotent only perfection would suffice. So the early Quakers sought perfection in their personal lives and for other men as well. After all, truth was one and any individual possessing it must share it with others. Salvation depended on how ardently a man strove to make himself and the world perfect in God’s sight.

Because truth was one, the Quakers avoided religious anarchy and rampant individualism. There could be no disharmony between truths revealed to sincerely religious men. Hence, the Quakers developed a strong sense of community from the shared experience of the “Inner Light.” They institutionalized this feeling in the monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings for discipline, where the communal consensus transcended individual opinions. Moreover, their difference from other religious sects and the persecution they endured enhanced their unity. In Pennsylvania they worked together in a “Holy Experiment” to create the perfect Christian community.

So, at least, it would have been if all had worked as planned. But, there existed a fatal flaw. The dicotomy between an individual's perception of God’s will as revealed in the “Inner Light” and the communal consensus could explode into implacable controversy and disrupt the “Holy Experiment.” If a man believed God had given him the truth, believed that the community was wrong, and believed that his salvation depended on convincing the others of their error, then he might well refuse to submit to discipline. What would happen then?

What happened then was that in their quest to fulfill God’s will to perfection, the Quakers reaped unintended consequences. Seeking religious peace, they became embroiled in religious controversy. Admiring meekness and charity, they practiced intolerance and persecution. Desiring religious and moral perfection, they opened the floodgates to imperfection. Such was the ironic price of attempting to fulfill God’s will in an imperfect world. Such was the irony of the early Quaker community in Pennsylvania. Most of all, such was the irony of George Keith.
George Keith raised his voice above the crowd, “Ignorant heathens, stray souls, heretics, Roman ranters.” Invective upon invective cascaded from his lips. His Quaker brethren angrily retorted in kind. “Brat of Babylon” spat one; “Pope” taunted another; “Reviler of your brethren” accused a third. Quakers pushed and shoved each other. Keith, livid with rage, shouted all the louder. Impassioned men grabbed him and tried to throw him bodily from the meeting hall, while others pushed him back. Everyone shouted and shoved “so that such great confusion was scarce ever seen.” Such was the shambles of the Quaker yearly meeting at Philadelphia in July of 1691.

George Keith, the cause of this disruption, ranked as a leading Quaker theologian and disputant. Raised in Scotland and trained in Calvinistic theology, he was originally a member of the Presbyterian church. In his twenties he converted to Quakerism. His keen mind, excellent education, zest for controversy, and intellectual conceit drove him to become a prominent apologist for his newly adopted religion. In public debates and in a torrent of pamphlets and tracts he vindicated Quaker principles and attacked those of the established Presbyterian church. Since the Scottish authorities could not help but notice such an outspoken critic, Keith was frequently imprisoned and beaten. Yet, he persisted unflaggingly, and his reputation grew among the Quakers. He ranked with his friends, George Fox, Robert Barclay, and William Penn as a pre-eminent Quaker.

In 1684 an opportunity arose for Keith to come to the New World. Robert Barclay, then governor of East Jersey, invited

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him to become surveyor-general of the province. Keith readily accepted. Having spent the last twenty years in and out of Scottish jails, he welcomed the chance to end that vicious cycle, to practice his religion in peace.

Ironically, opportunities for religious peace always proved ephemeral for George Keith. Religion was his all-consuming passion. His mind seldom wandered from theological topics. God was the center of his world, the object of his love and desire. He truly wanted to please God, to fulfill His will to perfection, to unite himself with God. Knowing that “faithfulness in the work and service of God, is that which doth render a man perfect in the sight of God,” Keith felt compelled to defend God’s religion against any impurities. Alas, impurities abounded and Keith, the perfectionist, found no peace.

A few years after his arrival in East Jersey he engaged in a theological controversy with Cotton Mather and other New England divines. Keith declared that the New England churches, ministry, and religious practices were “things of man’s making and inventing and setting up, a man-made church, a man-made ministry, man-made ordinances, and man-made worship.” New Englanders had “no belief of having the Spirit of God inwardly inspiring them, and revealing in them the things of God, and inwardly teaching them the mysteries of the kingdom.” Without such “inner light” they naturally fell into error. As the faithful servant of God, Keith both reprimanded them and explained to them the true religion of Quakerism.

Keith knew the truth of Quakerism because God had told him of it. Like all Quakers, he believed that “it is the Holy Spirit opening, or expounding the Scripture unto us, in reading, hearing, meditation, prayer, waiting, obedience to what we already know, that is the Judge of all controversy in matter of doctrine.” The Holy Spirit “spoke to the mind and spirit of man” and he had spoken to George Keith. Hence, Keith warned New Englanders to mend their ways lest God punish them for their sins. Like a Prophet of old, he cried that God’s voice “hath not ceased to sound, but still doth, and shall, and the sound of it shall not

—Ibid., 44.
only shake but utterly remove, undo, and destroy all your Babyloneth buildings." Reformation must come quickly, he added, for "the time hasteneth, and blessed shall be he who receiveth warning and harkeneth unto the counsel of the Lord: he who has ears to hear, let him hear."

The New England clergy heard, but they were not impressed, for they were thoroughly convinced of their own righteousness. To them, a belief in the "Inner Light" was "nonsense." They asked, "How shall we judge of the Spirit, but by the Scripture?" From the Bible and the vast and complex federal theology, they had devised the true form of worship and Church organization. They defended their true religion against Quakerism, "that great choakweed of the Christian and Protestant religion, taking root on the borders of a country famous for . . . holy religion."

Needless to say, a controversy between two parties, each intensely concerned with religion, each thoroughly convinced it alone had the truth, and each unquestionably commanded by God to defend that truth, did not end amicably. In a succession of books and pamphlets, Keith and the New Englanders lavished invectives upon one another. Years passed, and the peaceful enjoyment of religion continued to elude George Keith.

In fact, Keith's intense preoccupation with theological questions, and his feverish desire to maintain doctrinal purity led him into an even greater controversy. He moved to Philadelphia in 1689, giving him an opportunity to observe thoroughly the religious beliefs and practices of his fellow Quakers. He spent a good part of his time "in reading, meditation, visiting meetings, and answering the conscientious doubts and questions of many people." What he saw at these meetings and heard from these people disturbed him greatly. As he later explained, he was "deeply afflicted with sorrow to find some so highly pretending to truth, and to the inward and immediate teachings and leadings of the spirit of truth . . . so very ignorant and unfounded in some of the chief and fundamental principles of the Chris-

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3 Cotton Mather, *Little Flocks Guarded Against Grievous Wolves* (Boston, 1691), 2.

tian faith and doctrine, and so resolute and confident in their ignorance and error."11

The most perplexing error, to Keith, was Quaker reliance on the "light" within to the exclusion of the historical Christ. Though a defender of the Quaker "Inner Light" against New Englanders, Keith was certainly aware of its possible over-emphasis. It was conceivable, Keith realized, to rely so heavily on the continuing revelations of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, that one would lose sight of Christ as a man. In 1691 he accused William Stockdale, "an ancient preacher," of doing just that. Stockdale replied that Keith preached "two Christs because he preached faith in Christ within, and faith in Christ without."12 Keith retorted that Stockdale was an ignorant heathen, and asked twelve Quaker ministers to pass judgment on him. They refused, thereby setting the stage for that acrimonious scene at the Philadelphia yearly meeting of July 1691.

The shouting and jostling that ensued and the aroused passions testify to the intensity with which men approached religion in the seventeenth century. The threat of divine wrath impelled them to seek theological truth and having found it, to cling tenaciously to it. Hence, any questioning of the nature of Christ and revelation led to flaring tempers.

Under such emotional conditions, it took the Philadelphia yearly meeting six sessions to reach a conclusion. It finally blamed Stockdale and declared that Keith's doctrine was true. But that did not settle the matter. At subsequent monthly and quarterly meetings, Keith's opponents attacked, accusing him of denying the sufficiency of the "light" within. Keith asserted that "they exclude the man Christ Jesus from having any part in our salvation."13 He demanded that all Quakers subscribe to a confession of faith, a confession framed according to this principle. And so they argued back and forth, calling each other heretics.

As the controversy continued, many leading Quakers, including Samuel Jennings, clerk of the quarterly meeting of ministers as well as a civil judge, and Thomas Lloyd, deputy governor,

12 George Keith and Thomas Budd, Plea of the Innocent, 2.
13 George Keith, A Discovery of the Mystery of Iniquity and Hypocrisie (Philadelphia, 1692), 2.
opposed Keith. They disliked his “passion and bitterness of spirit” and his willingness “to discover the weakness of friends.” They feared that a confession of faith would divide the Holy Commonwealth. Religious zeal could be carried too far, and the holy passion of one man could not be allowed to split a community.\textsuperscript{14}

But, how could they stop it? Keith believed that the Holy Spirit directed him. As an instrument of God, he must correct the errors of his fellow Quakers. He must seek perfect conformity to the will of God, and perfect identification with God. Many Quakers, however, believed that Keith was an instrument of the devil, that he propagated error. Obviously, the two parties could not live together in a Holy Commonwealth.

By March 1692, their “godly zeal” having moved them to “a holy impatience” with the “gross ignorance and unbelief” of their fellow Quakers, Keith and his supporters abandoned the Society of Friends. “We are convinced and persuaded in our consciences,” they announced, “that God calleth us to separate from such unbelievers and not to be yoked together in Church-fellowship and discipline with any that we have not proof of by confession of the mouth, that they are sound in faith.”\textsuperscript{15} Keith and his followers then established their own meeting, thereby reaching the logical but ironic conclusion of the quest for a pure religion in an impure world.

At the next monthly meeting, the main body of Quakers disowned George Keith. Twenty-eight leading Friends signed the judgment against him as “being degenerated from the lowly, meek, and peaceable spirit of Christ Jesus, and grown cool in charity and love towards his brethren.” It deprecated his “spirit of enmity, wrath, and self-exhaltation,” and further reviled him for accusing the Quakers of heresy and for separating from them.\textsuperscript{16} In short, the Quakers were as convinced of their righteousness as was Keith of his.

Keith, of course, was not one to let a good controversy die. So, together with Thomas Budd, he published \textit{The Plea of the}


\textsuperscript{15} George Keith, \textit{Some Reasons and Causes of the Late Separation}, 22.

\textsuperscript{16} George Keith and Thomas Budd, \textit{A True Copy of Three Judgments} (Philadelphia, 1692), 4.
Innocent Against the False Judgment of the Guilty. Along with a restatement of the Keithian theological position and the usual charges of ignorance and heresy against the Quakers, Keith and Budd interjected a new element into the argument. They observed that Samuel Jennings, John Seacock, and Arthur Cooke, as well as other Quakers involved in government “take occasion on that account to exalt themselves, and lord it over G. K. and his friends, and seek to oppress and run him down, because of “their worldly power and greatness.” Since Quakerism enjoined men to remain aloof from “worldly power and greatness,” this was a telling attack.

Keith made a sharper assault in An Appeal from the Twenty-eight Judges, published soon thereafter. He asked, “Whether there is any example or precedent for it in Scripture, or in Christendom, that ministers should engage in worldly government, as they do here.” He noted the “very evil tendency” of such activity and attacked his judges for hiring men to fight, providing Indians with weapons, and passing sentences of death. Keith concluded that his judges had violated the pacifist principles of the Friends and should condemn themselves rather than him.18

The Quaker magistrates reacted quickly and angrily. William Bradford, printer of the Appeal, and John McComb, an innkeeper who had posted it on his tavern door, were arrested on a warrant signed by Samuel Jennings and Arthur Cooke among others. They were charged with “publishing, uttering, and spreading a malicious and seditious paper tending to the disturbance of the peace and the subversion of the present government.”19 The authorities searched Bradford's home and seized his printer's type.

Though Lasse Cock and John Holmes, the only non-Quaker justices, objected that “the matter was a religious difference ... and did not relate to the government,”20 the Quaker justices

17 George Keith and Thomas Budd, Plea of the Innocent, 9.
18 George Keith, An Appeal from the Twenty-eight Judges (Philadelphia, 1692), 7.
19 George Keith, New England's Spirit of Persecution, 4. For another contemporary account of the prosecution of Bradford and McComb see Francis Makemie, An Answer to George Keith's Libel (Boston, 1694), 84-103.
persisted. A proclamation asserted that Keith had publicly vilified Thomas Lloyd by calling him “an impudent man” “unfit to be governor,” that he had “traduced and vilely misrepresented the industry, care, readiness, and vigilance of some magistrates,” and that his pamphlets and speeches tended to “sedition and disturbance of the peace.” The Quaker justices claimed that they acted only against his subversiveness, not his “gross railings of our religious society.” They announced that they would soon take legal action against Keith and Thomas Budd.21

Bradford and McComb, meanwhile, requested a trial at the forthcoming July court session. The Quaker justices refused and held their case for the October session. Furthermore, they revoked John McComb’s tavern license because of his “contentious behavior as also his spreading a seditious paper in his house to the disturbance of the peace.”22

By October, the Philadelphia County grand jury formally indicted Keith and Budd as well as Peter Boss, another Keith supporter. Boss had defended Keith in a letter to Samuel Jennings and accused Jennings of occasionally being drunk and betting on horse races.23 Hence, when the County Court met there were five defendants—Keith, Budd, Boss, Bradford, and McComb—charged with violating a law of 1682 which forbade “Scandelous and malicious” statements against magistrates and provided that those guilty of this crime should be “severely punished.”24

When brought before the court, Keith objected, “I think it very unfair that those who are deeply prejudiced against me and my opposite parties and accusers should be my judges.”25 Therefore, he refused to plead. The Quaker judges fined him five pounds. Budd, who actually stood trial, was found guilty and assessed the same fine. However, no immediate attempt was made to collect the money. Boss did not fare as well. Found guilty and fined six pounds, he was jailed in default of payment. Both Bradford and McComb were acquitted.

21 Ibid., 6.
22 Ibid., 10.
23 Ibid., 19.
It is difficult to determine what happened next. Years later Keith claimed that the Quakers indicted him again in an effort to pass the death sentence against him, but Quaker spokesmen denied that allegation. However, from ensuing events Keith clearly had some reason to fear further prosecution. When a royal decree ended the Quaker government in April of 1693, Keith appealed to the new royal governor, Benjamin Fletcher, for a certificate of his good behavior. In support of this request, he presented to the governor’s council a letter from four of his chief Quaker opponents, Thomas Lloyd, Samuel Jennings, Arthur Cooke, and John Delaval. This letter, written shortly after Keith’s trial, described him as being “crazy, turbulent, a decryer of magistracie, and a notorious evil instrument in church and state.” Such hostile expressions evidently led Keith to believe that further action would be taken against him.

In any event, Governor Fletcher ended the controversy. He issued a certificate of good behavior for Keith, remitted the fines imposed on Keith, Budd, and Boss, released Boss from prison, and returned Bradford’s printer’s type. Keith and his followers could now freely organize and proselytize. They set up meetings in Philadelphia, Burlington, and Bucks counties. Keith became the leader of his new sect, the Christian Quakers.

To Keith, God had validated his religious position through Governor Fletcher. The ever-present God pushed Keith to seek pure religion, always told him what was right, and always delivered him from his enemies. Of course, Keith’s Quaker opponents certainly knew that God detested George Keith for deserting the true faith and understood their duty to defend the Holy Commonwealth against heretical onslaughts. They knew that they must punish Keith lest God punish them for countenancing impurity.

In such circumstances, men forgot that Christian charity demanded toleration of dissenting opinions. Quakers had certainly approved when, in happier days, Keith as their spokesman had lauded their “Christian charitable judgment” and deprecated

27 Minutes of the Provincial Council, 1, 378.
28 Charles Keith, Chronicles of Pennsylvania, 1, 234.
29 Rufus Jones, The Quakers, 452.
“the narrow spirited party in New England . . . who too unchristianly judge all others who differ from them in some matters of doctrine, to be heretics, imposers, etc.”

They certainly agreed when Daniel Gould attacked New Englanders for hiding religious persecution behind the guise of punishing civil sedition, yet they prosecuted George Keith and others for sedition and slander in a religious controversy.

The Quakers could be inconsistent because religion so pervaded their lives and made such conflicting demands that they had real difficulty functionalizing the concept of toleration. In Quaker Pennsylvania, just about everyone said he believed, and just about everyone probably did believe in toleration. There is no reason to doubt, for example, Keith’s honesty when he told New Englanders, “we can and do own your sincerity although we cannot but differ from you in matters both of doctrine and practice, wherein we find you to err from the path of truth, and so far as we have together attained and are agreed in all good things of Christian doctrine and practice, let us walk by the same rule, and live in charity one with another.”

Yet, ironically, Keith did not live in charity with his Quaker brethren, because he believed they erred in doctrine. He felt so impelled by divine command to seek religious purity that he had to separate from the Quakers when he realized they were obstinate heretics. His Quaker brethren were equally impelled to do something about him when, in their view, he became heretical. In the process, Christian charity and toleration were easily lost. Clearly, the conflicting demands of Christian charity and religious purity were not easily reconciled.

How could they be reconciled? The quest for purity of religion by these seventeenth-century colonists subverted their desire to be charitable. They knew that God called for Christian charity and love of neighbor, but His demand to practice pure religion overshadowed all else. When faced with error, New Englanders, Keith, and Quakers all attempted to stamp it out. Each complained of the other’s persecution, but each denied persecuting anyone. In fact they believed that punishing heresy was a

51 Daniel Gould, A Brief Narration of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers (Philadelphia, 1700), 3-4.
52 George Keith, The Pretended Antidote, 201.
charitable act, an attempt to save the heretic from damnation. Their zest for purity of religion blinded them to the possibility of expanding charity beyond the confines of a particular sect. In their view, to be charitable of error was error itself. Purity of religion was their overwhelming preoccupation.

III

Keith's quest for religious purity was not ended with the establishment of Christian Quakers. Truth was not a doctrine to be selfishly concealed; it must be made available to all, even if by force. In 1693 George Keith and Thomas Budd presented their case to the London Yearly Meeting, the most authoritative of Quaker bodies. Evidently, Keith still hoped to force his doctrinal position on American Quakers. However, Samuel Jennings, Keith's chief opponent, and Thomas Ducket, another Quaker spokesman, also presented their case to the London meeting. Hence, the London Yearly Meeting of 1694 became the stage for still another acrimonious harangue. After several days of noisy, passionate debate, the meeting censured both Keith, for publishing the differences among Quakers, and the Pennsylvania authorities, for proceeding against Keith through civil courts. Keith was ordered to call in his books or publish something to clear the Quakers. Naturally, he refused, and the Yearly Meeting of 1695 expelled him, not for his doctrinal differences, but because he had "gone from the blessed unity of the peaceable spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, and hath thereby separated himself from the holy fellowship of the Church of Christ."33

Undaunted, Keith hired a hall in London and preached. Though convinced of his righteousness and of God's directions, he did not know where to turn next. Should he continue in exile from existing churches, preaching and worshipping in his own way, or should he seek intimate communion with God in another church? By now he had found both Presbyterianism and Quakers lacking. Where, he undoubtedly wondered, would God lead him next?

For five years, he drifted theologically. He became convinced

33 Quoted in Rufus Jones, The Quakers, 454; Charles Keith, Chronicles of Pennsylvania, 234-235.
that the Quaker doctrine of "Inner Light" was too loose, since it had led many Quakers to deny some fundamental tenets of Christianity. He decided that the only "proper test and touchstone" for judging truth was "God's holy word contained in the holy Scriptures." There he found the essentials of a true Church. As explained later, he concluded that "whatever church holds the fundamentals of Christian religion, and has the word of God duly preached, and the sacraments of Baptism, and the Lords Supper duly administered, such a Church is a true Church of Christ." Looking for a Church that met these requirements, Keith became impressed by the liturgy, learning, doctrine, reasonableness, history, and order of the Anglican Church. He decided that the Church of England was a "true Church of Christ" and entered it in 1700.

That same year saw the publication of A Letter from Dr. Bray, to Such as Have Contributed towards the Propagating Christian Knowledge in the Plantations. In this pamphlet, the Anglican missionary, Thomas Bray, who had just returned to London from America, noted that the people of Pennsylvania "earnestly desire to be supplied with several ministers or more." He felt that Anglican missionary activity was particularly promising in Pennsylvania and the neighboring provinces because of the seeds sown by "the excellent Mr. Keith." Bray interested Thomas Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury, and several other leading churchmen in his missionary plans, and this led directly to formation of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (S.P.G.) which received a royal charter in June of 1701.

"The excellent Mr. Keith" seems to have been in contact with the S.P.G. from its inception. On September 19, 1701, Keith reported to the society the nature and causes of his controversy with the Quakers. He claimed to have established in the Jerseys

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34 George Keith, A Reply to Mr. Increase Mather's Printed Remarks (New York, 1703), 3.
35 George Keith, The Doctrine of the Holy Apostles and Prophets (Boston, 1702), 12.
36 See: George Keith, A Sermon, Preach'd at Turner-Hall (London, 1700); George Keith, Mr. George Keith's Farewell Sermon (London, 1700); George Keith, Mr. George Keith's Reasons for Renouncing Quakerism (London, 1700).
37 Thomas Bray, A Letter from Dr. Bray (London, 1700), 3.
fifteen meetings of Christian Quakers with a membership of about five hundred souls. He said that he had kept in contact with these people, that many of them had already joined the Church, and that many others were ripe for conversion.

The S.P.G. sent missionaries to three places in New Jersey and planned for missionary activity in ten other colonial locations. Keith, who evidently impressed his hearers, was asked to make a tour of inspection. He readily agreed, having become as zealous for propagating Anglicanism as he once had been for promoting Quakerism. So, on April 28, 1702, the one-time Quaker champion embarked to convert the American Friends.39

During Keith's eight years in England, religious controversies had abated but by no means ceased in the colonies. After Keith's "apostasy," other Quaker champions carried on the argument with New England divines. Thomas Maule, for example, characterized Cotton Mather's continuing attacks on Quakers as a "volume of false doctrines, horrid lies, and railing accusations." He warned New Englanders that God would soon "stretch forth his hand" against them for their persecution of Quakers.40 Daniel Gould also answered the controversial publications of the New England divines. Along with a technical theological defense of Quaker doctrines, he, too, attacked Mather and his associates for persecuting Quakers.41

The Quakers, on the other hand, were attacked as "persecutors" by Daniel Leeds, a former Quaker and supporter of Keith who had likewise become an Anglican. Leeds declared that the magistrates in England were "more noble and more Christian" than the Quakers who persecuted George Keith.42 He specially condemned Samuel Jennings for violating Quaker principles by participating in civil government.43 Then, evidently unsatisfied with that level of attack, in still another pamphlet he described the "spiritual and carnal whoredoms and adulteries of the Quakers in America." He accused just about every leading Quaker

39 Ibid., p. 37.
41 Daniel Gould, A Brief Narration; Thomas Maule, Truth Held Forth (New York, 1695).
42 Daniel Leeds, News of a Trumpet Sounding in the Wilderness (New York, 1697), 83.
of either fornication, adultery, drunkenness, thievery, blasphemy, homosexuality, or a combination of these vices.44

Quaker Caleb Pusey, denounced Leeds for “dishonesty and gross perversions.”45 While defending Quaker actions in the Keithian controversy, Pusey accused Keith of persecuting the Quakers. He asserted that Keith had attempted to get the authorities in England to suppress Quaker books because of their “pretended errors in doctrine.” “And if this does not arise from a spirit of persecution,” Pusey declared, “I know not what does.”46

John Field also spoke for the Quakers. He defended their religious doctrines by showing the inconsistencies in Keith’s publications. In his eyes Keith was simply a hypocrite. Field appealed to Keith’s followers to “renounce him,” telling them “it will be more for your profit and tend more to your inward peace and Christian reputation, to hearken to the voice of Christ in your hearts.”47 That voice would convince them, of course, just as it convinced John Field, that Quakerism was truth.

These religious controversies pervaded the Middle Colonies while Keith was in England. When he landed in Boston in June 1702, he surveyed a familiar intellectual world. The Quakers still preached the doctrine of “Inner Light” fully convinced of their own righteousness. New England clergymen still detested Quakers, and Quakers still attacked New Englanders as persecutors. Men vitally concerned with religion remained convinced that only they knew the truth and demanded that everyone agree or suffer divine wrath. They were all seeking to fulfill God’s will, and reaping the unindented consequences of personal anxiety, communal discord, and mutual persecution.

Keith, in Boston only a few days, renewed his attack on the Quakers. In a sermon preached at Her Majesty’s Chapel, he declared that because of the doctrine of “Inner Light” Quakers “have no other religion, but that justly called natural religion, common to them with more refined heathens and pagans who acknowledge one God, but were wholly ignorant of Christ.

Daniel Leeds, News of a Strumpet Cohabitating in the Wilderness (New York, 1701).
Caleb Pusey, Satans Harbinger Encountered (Philadelphia, 1700), 8.
Ibid., 58.
John Field, The Christianity of the People Called Quakers (Philadelphia, 1700), 8.
A few days later he attacked the New England clergy for their doctrine of predestination which, he asserted, was a "dangerous and hurtful opinion, because it made God the author of sin." George Keith had returned; and once again religious controversy swirled around him.

Much to the annoyance of both New England clergymen and Pennsylvania Quakers, Keith spent the summer trying to convert them. He entered Quaker meetings and attacked their speakers for uttering an "abundance of falsehoods and impertinencies and gross perversions." He later reported that the Quakers often responded with such "noise and clamor against me, that I could not proceed." Keith characterized this treatment as "abusive." The Quakers, no doubt, felt equally abused.

In September, Keith and his fellow missionary, John Talbot, crossed the Sound to Long Island. There they entered Quaker meetings and harangued Friends on Quaker blasphemy and Anglican truth. Persistently and obnoxiously they attacked the Quakers who often shouted Keith and Talbot down or barred them from their meetings. Arriving in New York City, Keith dined with Governor Edward Viscount Cornbury, a staunch Anglican. Keith complained of meeting with "abusive entertainment" from the Quaker meeting at Flushing. Cornbury sympathized and gave Keith a directive to the justices of the peace to permit Keith to speak without interruption at any Quaker meeting. Keith, no doubt, viewed this as his right, but the Quakers saw it as religious persecution.

During the next year and a half, Keith travelled throughout New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania continuing his anti-Quaker crusade. Caleb Pusey, the Quaker spokesman, complained of Keith's "imposing upon us, though in the midst of our worship, his reflecting discourses upon our principles or persons." He accused Keith of being an "apostate from Quaker-

49 George Keith, A Refutation of a Dangerous and Hurtful Opinion (New York, 1702), 5. Also see, C. S. Lewis, "George Keith, the Missionary," Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, XIII (1865), 38-45.
50 George Keith, A Journal, reprinted in Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, XX (1951), 379-380.
52 Caleb Pusey, George Keith Once More Brought to the Test (Philadelphia, 1703), 1.
ism, and he denied that Quakers had ever persecuted Keith. Instead he renewed his earlier charge:

that George Keith is earnest to stir up the Magistrates to persecute us; though the name of persecution is so odious among men to be sure he is not willing to own it; yet since he is so really and openly for the thing, he must not be peevish if I tell him of it.\(^5\)

However, Keith did react peevishly and refused the name of persecutor. In a pamphlet, *The Spirit of Railing Shimel and of Boal's Four Hundred Lying Prophets Entered into Caleb Pusey and His Quaker Brethren in Pennsylvania Who Approved of Him*, Keith accused the Quakers of “gross falsehoods, lies, calumnies, perversions, and abuses,” but he denied any desire to persecute them. He hoped, however, that “their false teachers might be restrained from preaching and printing their vile heresies and blasphemies to the poisoning of men’s souls.”\(^4\) A restraint upon false teachers would not be persecution. After all, Keith knew the truth, and he knew who preached it and who did not. He admitted that to punish the Quakers for their “heresy” would be persecution, but to restrain their blasphemy was proper and necessary.\(^5\)

Nor was it persecution in Keith’s eyes to stop Quakers from “lying” about the Church of England. Their attacks upon the Anglican Church, the true Church, must of necessity be lies. Therefore, when the Quakers persisted in attacking the Anglican Church, Keith declared that they:

\textit{deserve just censure and punishment for these abominable lies and calumnies against the Church of England and all her ministers, so I hope God will put it into the hearts of such Christian Governors and Magistrates in these countries where the Quakers have their meeting to suffer no such things to be said in them.}\(^6\)

Like the Quakers before him, Keith could not reconcile Christian charity and toleration with his zeal for truth.

\(^5\) Caleb Pusey, *Proteus Ecclesiasticus*, 43.

\(^4\) George Keith, *The Spirit of Railing Shimel* (New York, 1703), 42.

\(^6\) *Ibid.*, 47.

\(^6\) George Keith, *The Notes of the True Church* (New York, 1704), vii.
Religious truth, however, was not Keith's private monopoly. He knew the truth, his fellow Anglicans knew the truth, the New England clergy knew the truth, everybody knew the truth, and everybody was ready to defend the truth. Hence, when Keith departed the Colonies for England in 1704, he left behind a religious controversy which would drag on and on, to no avail, under Daniel Leeds, Caleb Pusey, and others. He left behind sectarian hatred, religious intolerance, theological arguments, and only a few converts to the Anglican "truth." Such was the price of perfection.

IV

Though no one realized it at the time, there was a final and ultimate irony. When viewed in the context of the series of sectarian disputes which pervaded the Middle Colonies in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the Keithian controversy emerges as an important factor in the development of separation of church and state. The constant arguments among and within religious groups brought many people to the conclusions that perfection was unattainable, that religious arguments were insoluble, and that everyone should be left to his own choice in religious matters.

Of course, it was many years later that these new ideas were adequately institutionalized and generally accepted, but their origin can be found in the adverse reaction of many people to disputes like the Keithian controversy. Take, for example, the following comments by Titian Leeds, son of the fiery Keith supporter Daniel Leeds:

Indeed since the world is grown so mad as it now is, I cannot see how any man can safely judge of syderial influence. And when I consider that I am dropt into the world in an age wherein there are so many sorts, sects, and sizes of religion—pretenders, and every one judges himself right and all the rest wrong, I do not wonder if the Indians in their exorcisms (for that reason) think themselves right too. And to whatsoever planets astrologers ascribe the religion of the Jews, Turks, and Christians, yet I know not how to assign the multifarious sects among Christians to any planet at all, but only to . . . sattelites of Saturn, those little moons which round
those planets, because they are endowed with such little souls...\textsuperscript{57}

Little souls! Keith and his contemporaries would not have understood, but, in fact, they brought this epithet upon themselves. In their zealous pursuit of religious perfection, they ignored the human tendency to eschew the unattainable and the human need to compromise with the world. In their incessant quarrels they forced others to face these facts of life. They made others aware of the futility of their quest. That was the ultimate price of perfection, the ultimate irony of George Keith.

\textsuperscript{57}Titian Leeds, \textit{The American Almanach} (Philadelphia, 1714).