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A 'lost' Quaker-Baptist pamphlet debate between William Penn and John Plimpton in 1698¹

SUZANNE FORBES

On 6 May 1698, William Penn, the Quaker leader and founder of Pennsylvania, arrived in Dublin. At around the same time, a Baptist named John Plimpton published a pamphlet in the city attacking Penn and denouncing the Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers. Six publications directly connected to the subsequent pamphlet exchange, three written by Penn and Quaker co-authors, and three written by Plimpton, have been identified to date. Other material connected to this debate was also published in Ireland and elsewhere. As very little is known about Ireland's small Baptist community in the 1690s, the pamphlet debate between Penn and Plimpton seems to offer a rare glimpse of Quaker-Baptist conflict in the late seventeenth-century Ireland.² Meanwhile the involvement of representatives of the Church of Ireland in the dispute, most notably the bishop of Cork and Ross, Edward Wetenhall, was indicative of wider tensions between dissenting Protestants in Ireland and the established church at this time.

The recent influx of Scottish immigrants to the north of the kingdom, the introduction of toleration for dissenting Protestants in England, and government efforts to introduce a similar measure to Ireland, had given rise to fears amongst Anglican clergymen that Protestant dissent posed a substantial threat to the status of the established church in Ireland.

¹ I wish to thank the American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies for awarding me the A. C. Elias Jr. Irish American Research Travel Fellowship to carry out research at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania for this article. I would also like to thank John Bergin and Charles Ivar McGrath for assisting me with this research.

² Kevin Herlihy, 'The Faithful Remnant: Irish Baptists, 1650-1750', in *The Irish Dissenting Tradition*, ed. by Kevin Herlihy (Four Courts Press, 1995), pp. 65-80 (p. 71).

Representatives of the Church of Ireland had made their concerns in this regard abundantly clear in the Irish parliament, from the pulpit, and in a variety of printed publications.³ Meanwhile, the improving status of Protestant dissenters in the wake of the Glorious Revolution of 1688-9, increases in the numbers of printers and booksellers operating in Ireland, as well as increasing competition for business amongst them, meant that those involved in the Irish print industry were more willing to publish material on behalf of dissenting Protestants.⁴ With unprecedented access to the press, dissenting Protestants in Ireland were better able to defend themselves in print than ever before. As a result, inter-denominational pamphlet debate was becoming a more frequent occurrence in Ireland at this time, evident in a number of high-profile pamphlet exchanges between representatives of different Protestant denominations, such as William King's clashes with various Presbyterian ministers over his pamphlet *A discourse concerning the inventions of men in the worship of God* (1694), and subsequent debate about the sacramental test and toleration, sparked off by the Presbyterian minister Joseph Boyse's pamphlet *The case of the dissenting Protestants of Ireland* (1695).

The Quakers were no strangers to inter-denominational pamphlet wars. As one of the more radical religious groups that had emerged in Britain in the wake of the civil wars of the 1640s, Quaker theology, outward manifestations of faith, and the more provocative behaviour of some of the early Quakers, had been vehemently attacked in English printed publications

³ John Bergin, 'The Quaker Lobby and Its Influence on Irish Legislation, 1692-1705', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 19 (2004), 9-36 (pp. 13-14).

⁴ Mary Pollard, *Dublin's Trade in Books: 1550-1800* (Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 6-11; Raymond Gillespie, *Reading Ireland: Print, Reading and Social Change in Early Modern Ireland* (Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 75-97; Raymond Gillespie, 'Irish Print and Protestant Identity: William King's Pamphlet Wars, 1687-1697', in *Taking Sides? Colonial and Confessional Mentalités in Early Modern Ireland: Essays in Honour of Karl S. Bottigheimer*, ed. by V. P. Carey and U. Lotz-Heumann (Four Courts Press, 2003), pp. 231-51 (p. 235); Herlihy, 'Faithful Remnant', p. 56; R. S. Harrison, 'As a Garden Enclosed: The Emergence of Irish Quakers, 1650-1750', in *The Irish Dissenting Tradition*, ed. by Herlihy, pp. 81-95 (p. 87).

from the earliest days of the movement.⁵ The Irish Quaker community was also subject to printed attacks, albeit on a smaller scale.⁶ Acting as individuals, rather than a coordinated group, Quaker authors in Britain and Ireland had responded in kind. However, Quaker publications had become more constrained in their language and tone over time, and by the latter decades of the seventeenth century, Quaker publishing efforts had come to be strictly regulated and coordinated.⁷ From the 1670s, the Irish national meeting, which convened in Dublin twice a year, began to review material prior to publication, and in the early 1690s had advised Friends to consult with their local meetings before engaging in written or oral disputes concerning matters of religion.⁸ Furthermore, Quakers who expressed controversial views, or brought the Society of Friends into disrepute, could be refuted or disowned.⁹ In addition to regulating Quaker publishing efforts, the national meeting also coordinated the funding and circulation of a wide range of printed material, including histories of the movement; dying statements or ‘testimonies’; and material related to Quaker lobbying efforts.¹⁰ All of this work to regulate and circulate print was intended to maintain cohesion amongst adherents of the Religious Society of Friends and to ensure that a united front was presented to the wider public.

By the 1690s, Irish Quakers generally avoided involvement in public pamphlet debates with either the Church of Ireland clergy, or representatives of other Protestant

⁵ Betty Hagglund, ‘Quakers and Print Culture’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, ed. by S. W. Angell and Pink Dandelion (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 477-92 (pp. 477-486); Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 235; W. I. Hull, *William Penn: A Topical Biography* (Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 136.

⁶ Phil Kilroy, *Protestant Dissent and Controversy in Ireland, 1660-1714* (Cork University Press, 1994), pp. 139-70, 203-8.

⁷ For the British context, see Rosemary Moore, ‘Seventeenth-Century Context and Quaker Beginnings’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, ed. by Angell and Dandelion, pp. 13-29 (pp. 24-25).

⁸ R. L. Greaves, *God’s Other Children: Protestant Nonconformists and the Emergence of Denominational Churches in Ireland, 1660-1700* (Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 374-75.

⁹ Kilroy, pp. 97-98.

¹⁰ Greaves, *God’s Other Children*, p. 299; Bergin, ‘The Quaker Lobby and Its Influence on Irish Legislation, 1692-1705’, pp. 10-11. Minutes of the half-yearly national meeting (1689-1707), II, 127, 129 (Historical Library of the Society of Friends in Ireland, Dublin).

denominations.¹¹ Rather than turning to print to express their opposition to recent efforts in parliament to improve the system for collecting tithes and to prohibit marriages conducted by dissenting ministers, the national half-yearly meeting had intensified efforts to secure relief from existing legal disabilities, and to prevent the imposition of new ones, by lobbying MPs.¹² Engaging in heated pamphlet exchanges with representatives of other Protestant denominations at this sensitive time had the potential to detract attention from, or altogether undermine, such efforts. Similarly, although very little is known about Ireland's small Baptist community in the 1690s, it has been observed that Irish Baptists did not feature in pamphlet exchanges of the period. This was something entirely in keeping with their status as a small and generally 'fragile' group in the late seventeenth century, eager to strengthen their links with the wider Irish Protestant community.¹³ On this basis then, the occurrence of a Quaker-Baptist pamphlet exchange in Ireland in 1698 was somewhat unusual.

Due primarily to Penn's involvement, the episode has received some attention in existing secondary literature. There are numerous biographical works on Penn and many of them make reference to his visit to Ireland in 1698. Some also make reference to the corresponding pamphlet debate with Plimpton.¹⁴ A number of studies of dissenting Protestantism in Ireland have also addressed these matters.¹⁵ However, while Penn's visit to Ireland in 1698 and his dispute with Plimpton have been mentioned many times in the

¹¹ Kilroy, p. 178.

¹² Bergin, 'The Quaker Lobby and Its Influence on Irish Legislation, 1692-1705', pp. 29-30.

¹³ See Kevin Herlihy, "'A Gay and Flattering World": Irish Baptist Piety and Perspective, 1650-1780', in *The Religion of Irish Dissent, 1650-1800*, ed. by Kevin Herlihy (Four Courts Press, 1996), pp. 48-67 (pp. 58-61, 66-67); Herlihy, 'Faithful Remnant', pp. 71-74.

¹⁴ *A Collection of the Works of William Penn*, ed. by Joseph Besse, 2 vols (London, 1726), I; John Gough, *A History of the People Called Quakers, from Their First Rise to the Present Time*, 4 vols (Dublin, 1789), III; Thomas Clarkson, *Memoirs of the Private and Public Life of William Penn* (Philadelphia, 1814); S. M. Janney, *The Life of William Penn: with selections from his correspondence and bibliography* (Hogan, Perkins & Co., 1852); R. J. Burdette, *William Penn (1644-1718)* (Henry Holt & Co., 1882); J. W. Graham, *William Penn* (Wentworth Press, 1916); Hull; C. O. Peare, *William Penn: A Biography* (J. B. Lippincott, 1957).

¹⁵ Kilroy, pp. 208-12; Greaves, *God's Other Children*, pp. 374-75; R. L. Greaves, *Dublin's Merchant-Quaker: Anthony Sharp and the Community of Friends, 1643-1707* (Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 117-18, 254.

existing literature, these matters have not been considered in any great depth to date. This is not really surprising as all of the secondary publications in question have a very broad purview and the 1698 debate is of minor significance to their overall aims. Furthermore, this debate took place during a poorly documented period in Penn's life and many of the relevant printed publications are difficult to date, or no longer extant. These issues notwithstanding, a range of inconsistencies and errors have become evident in the extant secondary literature.

This article sets out to clarify the origins, chronology, and geographical scope of the pamphlet debate between Penn and Plimpton in 1698. Consideration of new evidence and close attention to the text of surviving contemporary and near-contemporary printed material provides insight into the origins of the dispute that has been overlooked in more recent scholarly accounts. Furthermore, new evidence makes it possible to recover details of some of the printed contributions to this debate that have been presumed 'lost' to date. As Penn had strong connections to Ireland, and Plimpton's attacks on the Quakers in 1698 drew heavily on material produced during pamphlet wars of the 1670s in which Penn had played a prominent role, it is useful to begin by taking a brief look at Penn's early career.¹⁶ Thereafter, the immediate circumstances surrounding Penn's 1698 visit to Ireland and the course of the pamphlet dispute between Penn and Plimpton will be examined in detail, making it possible to contextualise the dispute and understand why a Quaker-Baptist pamphlet exchange occurred in Ireland at this time.

I

In 1649, Penn's father, Sir William Penn, was granted lands in Cork for his service as rear-

¹⁶ Hull, p. 147; See also T. L. Underwood, *Primitivism, Radicalism, and the Lamb's War: The Baptist-Quaker Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford University Press, 1997); David Manning, 'Accusations of Blasphemy in English Anti-Quaker Polemic, c. 1660-1701', *Quaker Studies*, 14.1 (2009), 27–56 (pp. 34–36).

admiral of parliament's Irish fleet. The Penn family took up residence at Macroom Castle in Cork for the first time in 1656. The following year, Sir William, a Presbyterian who would conform to the Church of England later in life, invited Thomas Loe, the prominent English Quaker missionary, to hold a meeting at Macroom Castle.¹⁷ Travelling missionaries, or 'Public Friends', like Loe, played an important role in the early expansion of the Quaker movement in Ireland and overseas.¹⁸ Although the introduction of Quakerism to Ireland is often attributed to William Edmundson, an English immigrant who settled in Lurgan in late 1653 or early 1654, many other English Quaker missionaries were active in Ireland in the early 1650s, amongst them Elizabeth Fletcher, Barbara Blagdon, Francis Howgill, Edward Burrough, Miles Batman, James Lancaster, and Miles Halstead.¹⁹ Loe had first visited Ireland in 1655 and had visited Macroom Castle as part of a more extensive missionary tour of the country in 1657.²⁰ Although William Penn was only twelve or thirteen years old when he first encountered Loe at his family home in Cork, the Quaker preacher is thought to have made a deep impression.

By the time of Penn's second visit to Ireland in 1666-7, his unorthodox religious views had already become apparent. In 1661, he had been expelled from Christ Church College, Oxford, for non-conformity and completed his studies at Saumur in France under the instruction of the Protestant theologian Moise or Moses Amyraut.²¹ In 1664, he had returned to London and commenced legal training at Lincoln's Inn.²² His studies were discontinued in early 1665 whereupon he became involved in Buckinghamshire local politics as a

¹⁷ Kilroy, p. 83; Peare, p. 23.

¹⁸ Moore, pp. 15–20; R. S. Harrison, 'Spiritual Perception and the Evolution of the Irish Quakers', in *The Religion of Irish Dissent, 1650-1800*, ed. by Herlihy, pp. 68-82 (pp. 69, 73).

¹⁹ Kilroy, pp. 83–85; R. S. Harrison, *Merchants, Mystics and Philantropists: 350 Years of Cork Quakers* (Cork Monthly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends, 2006), pp. 12–13.

²⁰ Kilroy, p. 83; C. L. Leachman, 'Loe, Thomas (D. 1668)', *ODNB*.

²¹ See M. M. Dunn, *William Penn: Politics and Conscience* (Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 4; Peare, pp. 35–37.

²² M. K. Geiter, 'Penn, William (1644-1718)', *ODNB*. For Penn's education see Hugh Barbour, 'William Penn, Model of Protestant Liberalism', *Church History*, 48.2 (1979), pp. 156-173 (pp. 158–60).

commissioner for charitable uses.²³ However, family obligations soon made it necessary for Penn to visit Ireland. The 1662 Act of Settlement had seen the castle and lands of Macroom returned to the MacCarthy family. Although Sir William was to be compensated with Shanagarry Castle and other lands in Cork, due to ill-health he needed his son to go to Ireland to secure his title and make other necessary arrangements on his behalf.²⁴ To this end, Penn arrived in Ireland in February 1666. Some months later, he heard Loe preach in Cork once more. Not long thereafter, in November 1667, Penn was arrested at another Quaker meeting in Cork.²⁵

Laws against non-conformity introduced in the aftermath of the restoration of Charles II in 1660 had a significant impact on the Irish Quaker community. In 1660, 124 Friends had been incarcerated and a further 135 were imprisoned the following year. Intensive petitioning and lobbying on the part of Irish Quakers appears to have had some impact and, although the laws remained unchanged, the number of Quaker arrests dropped significantly after 1661.²⁶ Nonetheless, overzealous officials could sometimes put the laws against non-conformity into practice. In the late 1660s, one such official, Christopher Rye, the mayor of Cork, initiated ‘a new wave of persecution’ against Quakers within his jurisdiction.²⁷ It was Rye who was responsible for ordering the arrests of Penn and eighteen others for meeting illegally in Cork on 3 November 1667.²⁸ Following his arrest, Penn petitioned Roger Boyle, earl of Orrery, lord president of Munster, for his release. Orrery informed Penn’s father of developments in Cork and Sir William summoned his son to England to account for his actions.²⁹ Penn

²³ Geiter, ‘Penn, William (1644-1718)’.

²⁴ *The Papers of William Penn*, ed. by M. M. Dunn and R. S. Dunn, 5 vols (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981-1987), I, 39; Nicholas Canny, ‘The Irish Background to Penn’s Experiment’, in *The World of William Penn*, ed. by M. M. Dunn and R. S. Dunn (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), pp. 139-156 (pp. 141-42, 148).

²⁵ John Bergin, ‘William Penn’, *DIB*.

²⁶ Greaves, *God’s Other Children*, pp. 271-76.

²⁷ Greaves, *God’s Other Children*, p. 276.

²⁸ Greaves, *God’s Other Children*, p. 276; *Papers of William Penn*, I, 52, n. 1.

²⁹ Sir William to Penn, 12 Oct 1667, 22 Oct 1667 (*Papers of William Penn*, I, 50).

appears to have reached London by early December 1667 and later the same month Samuel Pepys noted in his diary that he had heard talk that Penn was ‘a Quaker again, or some very melancholy thing’.³⁰

With Penn’s conversion now a matter of public knowledge, he quickly became more involved with the Religious Society of Friends.³¹ In 1668 he achieved a degree of notoriety as a Quaker writer when he was imprisoned in the Tower of London on charges of promulgating blasphemous and heretical views with his pamphlet *The sandy foundation shaken* (1668).³² Yet another printed publication, *Innocency with her open face* (1669), helped him to clear his name.³³ Not long after his release, Penn visited Ireland again. Whilst there, he attended Quaker meetings, lobbied the privy council on behalf of imprisoned Quakers, and spent time in Shanagarry, writing and attending to estate business.³⁴ Shortly after his return to England, he was arrested with another Quaker minister, William Mead, for holding an unlawful assembly at Gracechurch Street, London.³⁵ The ensuing trial garnered a great deal of public attention when the judge ordered the imprisonment of Penn, Mead and the jurors for contempt following the return of a not guilty verdict.³⁶ Penn’s subsequent involvement in pamphlet wars and public disputes with representatives of other Protestant groups in the early 1670s further enhanced his growing profile as a Quaker leader.³⁷

³⁰ Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys, VIII: 1667*, ed. by Robert Latham and William Matthews (Bell & Hyman, 1975), p. 595.

³¹ Hull, p. 139.

³² Manning, p. 39; Vincent Buranelli, ‘William Penn and the Socinians’, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 83.4 (1959), 369-381 (pp. 372–73).

³³ Manning, p. 39.

³⁴ *Papers of William Penn*, I, 101, 147; Canny, p. 140; See also, William Penn, ‘William Penn’s Journal of His Second Visit to Ireland’, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 40.1 (1916), 46–84 (pp. 46–84).

³⁵ See Dunn, pp. 13–18.

³⁶ These developments ultimately led to a landmark ruling establishing the independence of juries. See Dunn, p. 18.

³⁷ *Papers of William Penn*, I, 3.

In the early 1670s, Penn clashed with John Faldo, a non-conformist minister from Hertfordshire, and Thomas Hicks, a Baptist elder.³⁸ These pamphlet wars are particularly noteworthy as the publications involved featured prominently in the 1698 pamphlet debates in Ireland. In 1672, when Faldo had accused the Quakers of blasphemy in a lengthy pamphlet entitled *Quakerism no Christianity: or a thorow-quaker no Christian*, Penn had responded with *Quakerism a New Nickname for Old Christianity*.³⁹ Following further exchanges in print, Faldo challenged Penn to meet face to face to debate the issues at hand. Of course, it was not unusual for pamphlet disputes of this kind to be attended, or even sparked off, by *viva voce* encounters.⁴⁰ Sometimes these events involved two disputants addressing one another, and at other times they took the form of a ‘panel-debate’ with several representatives from either side speaking in turn.⁴¹ These public debates were often long drawn-out affairs, taking place in front of large crowds of spectators who actively participated through heckling and cheering.⁴² Penn had already been involved in many oral disputes on matters of religion in England, Europe and Ireland.⁴³ On this particular occasion, he declined Faldo’s challenge and thereafter printed exchanges between the two men came to a halt for a time.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, more charges of blasphemy were levied against the Quakers by the Baptist elder, Thomas Hicks, in his *Dialogue between a Christian and a Quaker* (1673) and *A continuation of the dialogue* (1673).⁴⁵ Once again, Penn attempted to clarify and defend the Quaker position in print, this time with a pamphlet entitled *Reason against railing* (1673).⁴⁶ When

³⁸ Underwood, pp. 17–18, 20–21.

³⁹ Hugh Barbour, ‘Faldo, John (1633/4-1691)’, *ODNB*; Manning, p. 35.

⁴⁰ See Manning, pp. 36–37.

⁴¹ Hull, pp. 133–34.

⁴² Hull, pp. 133–34; Manning, pp. 36–37.

⁴³ Kilroy, p. 154; Hull, pp. 131–36.

⁴⁴ Barbour, ‘Faldo, John (1633/4-1691)’; Peare, p. 156.

⁴⁵ Thomas Hicks, *A Dialogue between a Christian and a Quaker* (London, 1673); Thomas Hicks, *A Continuation of the Dialogue* (London, 1673).

⁴⁶ William Penn, *Reason against Railing, and Truth against Fiction* (London, 1673).

Hicks replied with *The Quaker condemned out of his own mouth* (1674), Penn responded with *The counterfeit Christian detected* (1674).⁴⁷ Thereafter, the pamphlet dispute escalated as numerous contributions were produced by representatives of both sides.⁴⁸ Alongside this pamphlet war, a series of four oral disputes between representatives of the Baptists and Quakers took place in London, drawing crowds of up to 3,000 people.⁴⁹

Although Penn continued to speak and write on behalf of the Quakers, by this time his focus had already begun to shift away from religious controversy. Instead, he began to concentrate his efforts on political activism with a view to securing toleration for dissenting Protestants.⁵⁰ Penn's efforts in this regard were bolstered in September 1670 when he had inherited his father's estates, a development that enhanced his social standing and political influence. Thereafter, he developed a number of important contacts in the court of Charles II, and by the late 1670s had become a court politician himself. The granting of a charter in 1680 to establish a new colony in America, probably in lieu of a substantial debt Charles II owed to Sir William, was an indication of his success in this regard.⁵¹ After spending the years 1682-4 in America planning and overseeing the settlement of the new colony of Pennsylvania, Penn returned to England in October 1684.⁵² He came to exercise a significant degree of influence at court following the accession of James II in February 1685, evident in his appointments as unofficial envoy to The Hague in 1686, and as deputy lieutenant in Buckinghamshire thereafter.⁵³ He also played an important role in securing a suspension of legal proceedings against all Quakers on 15 March 1686 and was involved in writing James

⁴⁷ Thomas Hicks, *The Quaker Condemned out of His Own Mouth* (London, 1674); William Penn, *The Counterfeit Christian Detected: And the Real Quaker Justified* (London, 1674).

⁴⁸ Hull, pp. 146-47.

⁴⁹ Underwood, pp. 21-22.

⁵⁰ *Papers of William Penn*, II, p. 21; Hull, p. 150.

⁵¹ See *Papers of William Penn*, II, pp. 22-23.

⁵² *Papers of William Penn*, II, pp. 3-6.

⁵³ Geiter, 'Penn, William (1644-1718)'.

II's first Declaration of Indulgence (1687).⁵⁴ Of course, Penn's close relationship with the king in the months that followed came to be viewed with intense suspicion in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution of 1688-9.⁵⁵ Between 1689 and 1690, he was arrested several times on charges of treason.⁵⁶ While he was not convicted on those occasions, in January 1691, Richard Graham, Viscount Preston, testified that Penn had been in Ireland, and had provided assistance to the former king.⁵⁷ This testimony was supported by accusations made under oath by one William Fuller.⁵⁸ Penn retreated from public life once a proclamation ordering his arrest for high treason was issued in February 1691.

For significant periods of time between April 1691 and November 1693 Penn's whereabouts are unknown.⁵⁹ He appears to have destroyed personal correspondence from this time. It was not until the winter of 1693, following Fuller's prosecution for making false accusations against several persons, and the submission of a number of petitions to establish his innocence, that Penn was acquitted of the charges of treason.⁶⁰ He remained in England for some years to put his affairs in order and restore his damaged reputation. During this time he was based at Bristol and frequently travelled to Quaker meetings in the south west of the country.⁶¹

II

⁵⁴ *Papers of William Penn*, III, 73–74.

⁵⁵ See *Papers of William Penn*, III, 663–64; Vincent Buranelli, 'William Penn and James II', *Proc. American Philosophical Society*, 104.1 (1960), 35–53 (pp. 35–53).

⁵⁶ Geiter, 'Penn, William (1644-1718)'; *Papers of William Penn*, III, 275.

⁵⁷ J. E. Illick, *William Penn the Politician* (Cornell University Press, 1965), pp. 107–8; M. K. Geiter, 'William Penn and Jacobitism: A Smoking Gun?', *Historical Research*, 73.181 (2000), 213–218 (p. 216); *Papers of William Penn*, III, 332.

⁵⁸ Geiter, 'William Penn and Jacobitism: A Smoking Gun?', p. 214.

⁵⁹ *Papers of William Penn*, II, p. 5.

⁶⁰ *Papers of William Penn*, III, pp. 348, 384, n. 5; Penn to Friends in Pennsylvania, 11 Dec. 1693 (*Papers of William Penn*, III, pp. 382–83).

⁶¹ *Minute Book of the Men's Meeting of the Society of Friends in Bristol, 1686-1704*, ed. by Russell Mortimer (Gateshead, 1977), pp. xxii–xxiii.

During this extended stay in England, Penn began to plan a third visit to Ireland. In January 1698, he procured letters of communion from the Men's Monthly Meeting at Horsham permitting him to travel to Ireland.⁶² He was accompanied on this trip by his son William, Thomas Story, and John Everott, an obscure travelling minister and member of the Norfolk Quarterly Meeting.⁶³ Penn's surviving letters elucidate some of the reasons for the visit to Ireland in 1698. As early as 1695, Penn had expressed an eagerness to get to Ireland as he had not visited his estate there since he had inherited it.⁶⁴ In 1698, he noted that he had 'not seen Sixpence' from Ireland over the previous twelve years and the war in Ireland had resulted in a significant loss of rental income.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Penn had been indicted for treason by a Dublin grand jury in 1691.⁶⁶ Although he had been acquitted in England, in 1698 it was still necessary for him to deal with the outstanding charge against him in Ireland. Shortly after his arrival in the country on 6 May 1698, Penn requested letters which would assist in clearing his name from James Douglas, earl of Arran, and Charles Gerard, 2nd earl of Macclesfield.⁶⁷ These letters proved to be unnecessary. A week later, on 14 May, Penn wrote to Arran again reporting that he had 'gott as well off my ugly business, as was possible: with acceptance & respect, of most If not all present, Bench, Barr & Auditory'.⁶⁸ Indeed, Penn's surviving correspondence indicates that he was generally well received by the Irish authorities at this time. For instance, the two lords justices Charles Paulet, marquis of Winchester, and Henri de Massue de Ruvigny, earl of Galway, were quick to intervene when the horses of Penn and his Quaker travelling companions were confiscated by a group of army officers in Waterford on

⁶² 'Horsham Monthly Meeting Minute', 12 Jan. 1698 (H.S.P., MF XR576 7:636).

⁶³ Kilroy, p. 223, n. 184.

⁶⁴ Penn to Robert Turner & Thomas Holme, 20 June 1695 (*Papers of William Penn*, III, p. 408).

⁶⁵ Penn to Hugh Roberts, 17 February 1698 (*Papers of William Penn*, III, pp. 538–39).

⁶⁶ *Papers of William Penn*, III, p. 353 n. 4.

⁶⁷ Penn to James Douglas, earl of Arran, 7 May 1692 (*Papers of William Penn*, III, pp. 543–44).

⁶⁸ Penn to Arran, 14 May 1698 (*Papers of William Penn*, III, p. 545).

the basis of the 1695 act for disarming papists.⁶⁹ By and large, however, Penn's correspondence provides very limited insight into his 1698 visit. To gain a fuller picture of his movements around the country, it is necessary to rely on Thomas Story's *Journal*.⁷⁰

Story was from an Anglican family but had embraced the teachings of the Society of Friends in 1691. He first met Penn whilst travelling to the London yearly meeting in 1693. According to Story, on that occasion he and Penn 'contracted so near a Friendship, in the Life of Truth, and tendering Love thereof in many Tears, as never wore out till his Dying-day'.⁷¹ In 1698 when Penn was preparing for his visit to Ireland, he had sent word to Story to join him. Story's journal gives an account of his ensuing journey to Ireland with Penn and Everott, and notes that the group attended the national half-yearly meeting in Dublin on 8 May 1698, two days after their arrival in the country. Story also noted Penn's impact on that event, remarking that: 'Great was the resort of people of all ranks, qualities, and professions, to our meetings chiefly on account of our Friend William Penn'.⁷² Leaving Dublin on 27 May, Penn, Everott and Story travelled to Wexford. Whilst there the three men collaborated on an epistle for the London Yearly Meeting, reporting that the Lord had given them 'many large and Blessed Opportunities in several Parts, Meetings being crowded by People of all Ranks and Persuasions, especially at Dublin'.⁷³ Thereafter, the three men travelled together through Waterford and Tipperary, arriving at Penn's estate at Shanagarry on 7 June. They set out for Cork three days later and attended meetings in the city and surrounding area for much of the next month. The three men sometimes parted ways for brief periods, sometimes to

⁶⁹ H. May [Secretary to the Lords Justices] to Penn, 7 June 1698, (H.S.P., MF XR576 7:693); Galway to Penn, 11 June 1698 (H.S.P., MF XR576 7:696); Winchester and Galway to Penn, 11 June 1698 (H.S.P., MF XR576 7:698). For context see, Bergin, 'The Quaker Lobby and Its Influence on Irish Legislation, 1692-1705', pp. 13, 16-17.

⁷⁰ *Papers of William Penn*, II, p. 5; See also Caroline Robbins and William Penn, 'The Papers of William Penn', *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 93.1 (1969), 3-12.

⁷¹ Thomas Story, *A Journal of the Life of Thomas Story* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1747), p. 77.

⁷² Story, p. 128; John Dunton, *The Dublin Scuffle*, ed. by Andrew Carpenter (Four Courts Press, 2000), p. 176.

⁷³ 'Epistle to London Yearly Meeting', 2 June 1698 (H.S.P., MF XR576 7:692).

attend meetings in different places, and sometimes to tend to personal matters. For instance, Story went to Clonmel alone to visit his brother, George, in Limerick.⁷⁴ George Story had arrived in Ireland in 1689 as a chaplain in the army of the duke of Schomberg, and is best known for publishing a widely read narrative of the Williamite-Jacobite wars. At the time of his brother's visit in 1708, he was dean of Limerick.⁷⁵ In early August, Penn, Story and Everott regrouped and set out together from Cork in order to attend meetings in Limerick, Offaly, Laois, Armagh, Louth, Dublin and Kildare. All three concluded their travels in the Cork area and departed for England on 19 August.⁷⁶

All of the Quaker publications relevant to the pamphlet debate with John Plimpton were produced between 6 May and 27 May when Penn, Story and Everott were in Dublin at the beginning of their visit.⁷⁷ The first of these was a broadsheet entitled *Gospel-truths held and briefly declared by the people called Quakers*.⁷⁸ This publication was the fruit of collaboration between Penn, Story and two Irish Quakers, Anthony Sharp and George Rooke. It contained eleven statements setting out the Quaker stance on matters such as the Trinity, Christ's propitiation, justification, worship, baptism, and the Eucharist.⁷⁹ Story's journal is the only known account of the chain of events that led to the publication of *Gospel-truths*. In it he explained that 'one John Plympton, a Journeyman Woolcomber, and Teacher among a few General Baptists' had published an 'abusive Paper against Friends in general, and William Penn in particular' which had been circulated shortly before Story and his companions had arrived in Dublin.⁸⁰ Frustratingly, Story does not identify the publication by

⁷⁴ Story, p. 138.

⁷⁵ John Bergin, 'Story, George Walter', *DIB*.

⁷⁶ Story, p. 146.

⁷⁷ Story, pp. 128–29.

⁷⁸ *Gospel-Truths Held and Briefly Declared by the People Called Quakers, for Satisfaction of Moderate Enquirers* (Dublin, 1698). The copy in the Library of the Religious Society of Friends (London, 1698) is signed and dated '14th day of the 3^r month' or 14 May 1698 but the reprinted copy of *Gospel-truths* in Penn, *Defence*, is dated 4 May.

⁷⁹ *Gospel-Truths*, p. 1.

⁸⁰ Story, p. 128. Although the distinction remained vague in the seventeenth century, General Baptists had an

name but he does offer other pertinent details. For example, he explained that this publication had prompted several of the Quakers to consult with the ‘Chief Elders’ of the Baptists in Dublin.⁸¹ Having established that Plimpton was acting without the endorsement of his co-religionists, it was concluded that he was ‘an impertinent Wrangler, of little consequence’ so Penn, Story and Everott decided to take ‘no further Notice of him at that Time, but afterwards published a Sheet, call’d Gospel Truths; drawn up chiefly by William Penn, and sign’d by himself, and several others’.⁸² Although the authors of *Gospel-truths* did make one reference to ‘Ill-minded and Prejudic’d Persons’ who had attempted to misrepresent the Quakers and their ‘Christian Profession’, the broadsheet did not contain any explicit references to Plimpton or his publications.⁸³

Meanwhile, Plimpton published a second pamphlet by the title *A Quaker no Christian* (1698?). This pamphlet does not appear to be extant but a number of copies of Penn, Story and Everott’s co-authored response to it, *A Quaker a Christian: being a Christian answer to John Plimpton’s unchristian charge*, dated 18 May 1698, do survive.⁸⁴ In addition to identifying Plimpton in the title of the publication, the authors explained in its opening sentences that they were responding to a ‘Scandalous Paper being come Abroad, Subscribed by J. Plimpton, (a Wooll-Comber in Dublin), Intituled, *A Quaker no Christian*’.⁸⁵ Having firmly identified Plimpton as their target, the authors set out the Quaker stance on the Trinity, Christ’s satisfaction, justification by Christ, the sacraments, the authority of the scriptures, and Christ’s divinity, providing extracts from several sources that Plimpton had cited, for the

Arminian theology, whereas Particular Baptists were Calvinist in theology. For more see Herlihy, ‘Faithful Remnant’, pp. 66–67; Underwood, pp. 21–22.

⁸¹ Story, p. 128.

⁸² Story, p. 128.

⁸³ *Gospel-Truths*, p. 1.

⁸⁴ William Penn, Thomas Story and John Everott, *The Quaker a Christian, Being an Answer to John Plimpton’s Dis-Ingenuous Paper, Entituled, A Quaker No Christian* (Dublin, 1698), p. 6.

⁸⁵ Penn, Story and Everott, p. 3.

most part earlier Quaker works relevant to Penn's pamphlet wars with Faldo and Hicks in the 1670s. By providing extracts from those publications, the authors sought to demonstrate that Plimpton had misrepresented the Quakers by quoting out of context and picking 'a Sentence here and there, which are Explained either before or after'.⁸⁶ The postscript that followed this response to *A Quaker no Christian* is particularly noteworthy. It offered ten very brief numbered points attacking 'J.P.'s First Paper', the unnamed 'abusive Paper' that Story had referred to in his *Journal*.⁸⁷

It is important to emphasise this sequence of events here because the order in which Plimpton's 'First Paper', *Gospel-truths*, *A Quaker no Christian*, and *A Quaker a Christian* were all published is not entirely clear in existing secondary accounts of the pamphlet dispute. Penn's earliest biographer, Joseph Besse, in his *Collection of the Works of William Penn* (1726) overlooked Plimpton's first publication altogether and appears to suggest that *Gospel-truths* was a response to Plimpton's *A Quaker no Christian*.⁸⁸ Other secondary accounts of the dispute echo this interpretation.⁸⁹ Of course, some accounts do take notice of Plimpton's 'First Paper' and the subsequent publication of *Gospel-truths*.⁹⁰

Efforts to identify Plimpton's 'First Paper' have added another layer of confusion. In volume 5 of *The Papers of William Penn*, another publication written by Plimpton, entitled *Ten charges against the people called Quakers* ([n.p, n. pub., n.d]), is identified as one that circulated shortly before Penn's arrival in Dublin, and *Gospel-truths* was identified as a response to it.⁹¹ Phil Kilroy also identified a publication entitled *Ten charges* as Plimpton's 'First Paper' and went on to assert that *Gospel-truths* was a direct response to it.⁹² R. L.

⁸⁶ Penn, Story and Everott, p. 6.

⁸⁷ Penn, Story and Everott, pp. 12–15.

⁸⁸ Besse, I, p. 144.

⁸⁹ See Clarkson, pp. 189–90; Graham, p. 241.

⁹⁰ See Janney, pp. 394–95; Gough, III, pp. 464–65; Peare, p. 356.

⁹¹ *Papers of William Penn*, V, 451–52.

⁹² Kilroy, p. 208, 223, n. 185, 275.

Greaves subsequently described *Gospel-truths* as a ‘refutation of *Ten Charges*’.⁹³ While it is hard to say exactly how *Ten charges* came to be identified as Plimpton’s first Dublin-printed paper of 1698, a publication by that name is listed in at least one catalogue, Joseph Smith’s *Bibliotheca anti-Quakeriana* (1873). However Smith suggested that *Ten charges* was printed in 1696.⁹⁴ Of course, in the absence of evidence to suggest otherwise, it might well be argued that *Ten charges* was one and the same publication as ‘J.P.’s First Paper’. After all, the postscript to *A Quaker a Christian* had set out ten brief numbered points refuting Plimpton’s first paper, and even if *Ten charges* was first printed in 1696, it may have been reprinted in Dublin in 1698. However, an extant publication of Plimpton’s, *A charge drawn up by John Plimpton, against William Pen and Geo. Whitehead ... formerly exhibited in England; now set forth for publick view in Dublin* (1698) has not been taken into account by scholars considering the dispute to date.⁹⁵

In this publication, Plimpton focussed on refuting some of Penn’s earlier works. For instance, Plimpton’s first and second charges against the Quakers in *A charge drawn up* related to the wording of certain passages in Penn’s 1668 pamphlet, *The sandy foundation shaken*. The third, fourth and sixth charges related to passages in Penn’s 1673 publication, *Reason against Railing* with regard to the ‘Light within’. The seventh and eighth charges defended Thomas Hicks’s claims that the Quakers denied Christ’s divinity and propitiation, with extracts from Penn’s *Reason against Railing* and another Quaker publication, George Whitehead’s *The dipper plung’d* (1672), offered as evidence in this regard. More importantly, each one of the charges made in Plimpton’s *A charge drawn up* corresponds exactly with the

⁹³ Greaves, *Merchant-Quaker*, p. 117, 294, n. 48.

⁹⁴ Joseph Smith, *Bibliotheca Anti-Quakeriana: Or, a Catalogue of Books Adverse to the Society of Friends* (London, 1873), p. 363.

⁹⁵ John Plimpton, *A Charge Drawn up by John Plimpton, against William Pen and Geo. Whitehead; Where They Are Charged as Notorious and Wilfull Lyars, Formerly Exhibited in England; Now Set Forth for Publick View in Dublin* ([Dublin], 1698). This title is not listed in the ESTC but a copy can be located in John Rylands Library, Manchester University.

responses to ‘J.P.’s First Paper’ evident in the postscript to *A Quaker a Christian*.⁹⁶ Even the concluding sections of each pamphlet correspond with one another. In the final comments of *A charge drawn up*, Plimpton informed his readers that he would only respond to Penn again if they met ‘Face to Face’, a challenge that Plimpton was confident Penn would decline.⁹⁷ In the postscript to *A Quaker a Christian*, the Quakers answered this by confirming that Penn would not meet with Plimpton because the Quaker community ‘should not like it’ if Penn paid so much regard to ‘such a Disorderly Person, who hath acted contrary to the Mind of his own Society, as well as Clamorously and Abusively against Us’.⁹⁸

A charge drawn up also offers some clues as to why Plimpton was attempting to goad Penn into a public dispute in Dublin. In his fifth charge, Plimpton described how Hicks had once accused the Quakers of appointing ministers in advance to speak in particular places, at particular times. Penn and Whitehead had responded at the time by accusing Hicks of lying.⁹⁹ Plimpton sought to demonstrate that Hicks’s accusation in this regard was correct by offering his own evidence in the form of a copy of a letter he had received from John Yeo, an ‘approved Quaker’, on 31 October 1695 notifying him of Penn’s plans to attend a meeting in Melksham on 1 November 1695.¹⁰⁰ The Quakers had dismissed this evidence in the postscript to *A Quaker a Christian* as follows:

He [Plimpton] says W[illiam] P[enn] and G[eorge] W[hitehead] are Lyars, in charging T[homas] H[icks] with Untruth, for saying that the Quakers appoint their Ministers aforehand to speak [...] And his proof is, that one John Yeo writ to him [Plimpton] that W[illiam] P[enn] intended to be the day following at a Meeting at

⁹⁶ Penn, Story and Everott, pp. 12–16.

⁹⁷ Plimpton, *Charge Drawn Up*, p. 2.

⁹⁸ Penn, Story and Everott, p. 15.

⁹⁹ Plimpton, *Charge Drawn Up*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Plimpton, *Charge Drawn Up*, p. 1.

Melkesham, the Place of J[ohn] P[limpton]'s last aboad: Now let all reasonable People judge of the Weight and Importance of this Troublesome Man, in this very Instance: Does the Letter say that the Quakers Appointed W.P. to Preach there? or does W.P.'s appointing himself to be there, (which was the case) prove T.H.'s and J. Plimpton's Charge upon our Friends.¹⁰¹

These references to Melksham are significant because it was the first time during the 1698 pamphlet debate that an earlier encounter between Penn and Plimpton was referred to. So what had happened in Melksham in 1695? And what, if anything, did all of this have to do with the Irish Quaker community in 1698? To answer these questions it is necessary to pay closer attention to Penn's activities in 1695-6.

III

Melksham is a town located in the county of Wiltshire in the south west of England. A Quaker meeting had been established there by 1669 and it had become one of the largest in the county.¹⁰² A congregation of Baptists had also been established in Melksham by 1669 and this congregation was recognised as a member of the Western Association of Baptist Churches by 1694.¹⁰³ If Plimpton had lived in Melksham, as had been suggested in the postscript to *A Quaker a Christian*, it was likely that he had some ties to the Baptist congregation there. As for Penn's connection to the town, his extant correspondence shows

¹⁰¹ Penn, Story and Everott, p. 13.

¹⁰² H. F. Chettle and others, 'Parishes: Melksham', in *A History of the County of Wiltshire*, ed. by R. B. Pugh and Elizabeth Crittall (London, 1953), pp. 91-121.

¹⁰³ Chettle and others, pp. 91-121; Adam Taylor, *The History of the English General Baptists*, 2 vols (London, 1818), I, 355; W. T. Whitley, *Minutes of the General Assembly of the General Baptist Churches in England*, 2 vols (London, 1909), I, xxviii-xxx.

that it was one of a number of places that he had visited in the south west of England in the winter of 1695.¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately his correspondence provides no indication of any encounter with Plimpton. Other obvious sources are also silent on the matter: surviving records of the Melksham particular Quaker meeting, a local meeting for worship, do not cover the period of time under consideration here.¹⁰⁵ Representatives from that meeting were sent to the Lavington monthly meeting and the Wiltshire quarterly meeting.¹⁰⁶ Surviving records of the Lavington monthly meeting do not cover this period of time either, and while the Wiltshire quarterly meeting minutes do, they shed no light on any encounter between Penn and Plimpton.¹⁰⁷ As such, it is necessary to turn to yet another printed source, *Persecution Expos'd* (1715), written by John Whiting, a Quaker from the village of Wrington in Somerset, to gain more insight into events at Melksham in 1695.

In late October of that year, Whiting had set off from his home 'to a Dispute, at Melksham'.¹⁰⁸ Explaining the background to this dispute in his pamphlet, he wrote that 'one Jo. Plimpton, a Baptist', had charged the Quakers 'with several things as Errors, particularly their holding, that A Manifestation of the Spirit of God, is given to every Man to profit withal which the Apostle Expressly asserted, 1 Cor 12. 7. and other things according to plain Scripture, which he opposed (so dark was he)'.¹⁰⁹ Whiting went on to explain that John Clark of Bradford had represented the Quakers during the dispute with Plimpton and although Clark had cited scripture to support his case, 'the Baptist wrangled on to oppose it' and raised other points of contention including 'Water-Baptism, Bread and Wine, Perfection, or free

¹⁰⁴ Penn to Aaron Atkinson, 22 Nov. 1695 (*Papers of William Penn*, III, 420).

¹⁰⁵ 'Melksham Preparative Meeting, minutes and accounts' (Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, MSS 854).

¹⁰⁶ K. S. Taylor, 'Chalk, Cheese, and Cloth: The Settling of Quaker Communities in Seventeenth-Century Wiltshire', *Quaker Studies*, 10.2 (2006), 175–77.

¹⁰⁷ 'Lavington monthly meeting minute book', Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, MS 854/76; 'Wiltshire quarterly meeting minute book' (Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, MS 1699/38).

¹⁰⁸ John Whiting, *Persecution Expos'd* (London, 1715), p. 239.

¹⁰⁹ Whiting, *Persecution Expos'd*, p. 239.

from Sin, and the Resurrection of the same Body'.¹¹⁰ Indeed, Plimpton had continued to 'oppose the plainest Scriptures' until the late evening when William Penn, who had been present throughout the dispute, 'broke out over his Head in Testimony to the People, which were many, in Thomas Beavon's Court, and so ended the Dispute, concluding in Prayer to God'.¹¹¹

Besse and many of Penn's subsequent biographers were aware of Whiting's pamphlet and, when discussing later developments in Dublin, highlighted the fact that Plimpton and Penn had previously met one another in 1695.¹¹² However, other secondary accounts of Penn's 1698 visit to Ireland, including some of the most recent accounts, overlook this earlier connection between Penn and Plimpton.¹¹³ Although it is not new information, it is important to take the English dimension of this dispute into account in order to understand developments in Ireland in 1698. Indeed, further investigation of this aspect of the dispute reveals another relevant pamphlet which has not been considered to date.

Thomas Beaven, the person Whiting identifies as hosting the dispute in Melksham on 1 November 1695, published an account of his dealings with Plimpton in the months after that event. Beaven was a clothier by trade and during the period under consideration here, frequently attended the Wiltshire quarterly Quaker meeting as a representative of Melksham.¹¹⁴ His pamphlet, entitled *John Plimpton's ten charges against the people, call'd Quakers, briefly answer'd*, was printed in Bristol and dated 19 September 1696.¹¹⁵ A number

¹¹⁰ Whiting, *Persecution Expos'd*, p. 239; Mortimer, p. 237.

¹¹¹ Whiting, *Persecution Expos'd*, p. 240.

¹¹² Besse, I, 144; Clarkson, pp. 189–90; Graham, pp. 231, 241; Hull, pp. 136, 147; Gough, III, 464; Peare, pp. 339, 356.

¹¹³ *Papers of William Penn*, IV; Kilroy; Greaves, *Merchant-Quaker*.

¹¹⁴ 'Wiltshire quarterly meeting minute book' (Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, MS 1699/38, ff 114-147); Chettle and others, pp. 91–121.

¹¹⁵ Thomas Beaven, *John Plimpton's Ten Charges against the People, Call'd Quakers, Briefly Answer'd* (Bristol, 1696).

of cataloguers of Quaker print, including Smith, were aware of Beaven's pamphlet.¹¹⁶ This probably explains why Smith offered a speculative date of 1696 for Plimpton's *Ten charges* when he listed it in his *Bibliotheca Anti-Quakeriana*.¹¹⁷ Beaven's pamphlet sheds further light on this missing contribution to the dispute.

To offer his readers wider insight into the circumstances in which *Ten charges* was published, Beaven explained in his pamphlet that he had sent a letter to Plimpton and 'some of his Brethren' on 5 December 1695.¹¹⁸ The purpose of this letter was to arrange a meeting between Beaven and the Baptists, probably with regard to the dispute on 1 November. The Baptists had refused this request but instead called for 'an Agreement' or 'truce'.¹¹⁹ Apparently Plimpton had broken that agreement on 24 February 1696 by arriving at Beaven's house uninvited, an incident witnessed by John Yeo, William Holloway, and John Ruddle.¹²⁰ By naming those present, Beaven was consciously providing his readers, very likely focussed in the immediate area considering the limited appeal of the subject matter discussed, with the information necessary to verify his account of events. He even pointed out that Ruddle was a Baptist, or in other words a hostile witness, who would be obliged to confirm his account of events if called upon to do so.¹²¹

Beaven's pamphlet also explained that some months after that meeting, in the summer or autumn of 1696, Plimpton had challenged the Quakers to a public dispute. To gain more widespread support for this challenge, Plimpton had published a tract entitled *Ten charges*.¹²² The primary purpose of Beaven's pamphlet was to decline this challenge to a public dispute:

¹¹⁶ John Whiting, *A Catalogue of Friends Books* (London, 1708), p. 10; W. T. Whitley, *A Baptist Bibliography*, 2 vols (London, 1916), I, 130.

¹¹⁷ It is possible Smith never inspected a copy of *Ten charges* and based the entry on the title of Beaven's pamphlet. See Smith, p. 363.

¹¹⁸ Beaven, p. 3.

¹¹⁹ Beaven, p. 2.

¹²⁰ Beaven, p. 2. Yeo's letter to Plimpton was reproduced in Plimpton, *Charge Drawn Up*, p. 1.

¹²¹ Beaven, p. 3.

¹²² It is not clear from Beaven's pamphlet whether *Ten charges* was circulated in print or manuscript.

he claimed that the date proposed for it clashed with that of the county quarterly meeting; and, more importantly, Plimpton had ‘not perform’d the Conditions of William Penn’s offer, (viz.) get the Heads of the Baptists to Imbarque in him’.¹²³ Presumably Penn had made this offer at, or in the aftermath of, his encounter with Plimpton at Melksham on 1 November 1695. Either way, Beaven sought to confirm that Plimpton had failed to gain the support of his co-religionists in this regard by providing details of a conference that took place in Melksham on 17 August 1696 attended by Plimpton, John Amory, a ‘messenger’ or representative of the Western Association of General Baptist Churches, and several others who were identified by name.¹²⁴ At that conference Amory had refused to sign Plimpton’s *Ten Charges* ‘either for the freewill Baptists, in general, or himself in particular; and also said he knew no body that would’.¹²⁵ He then accused Plimpton of ‘an Indiscreet Conduct therein’ and advised him ‘to be quiet’.¹²⁶ Fearing that Plimpton would not keep quiet as advised, Beaven ‘thought mete to Print his [Plimpton’s] Charges’ with a view to dispersing them ‘at his [Plimpton’s] Meeting; that all may see how extreamly he hath abused us’.¹²⁷ What appears to be a complete copy of Plimpton’s ‘lost’ publication, *Ten charges*, was included in Beaven’s pamphlet alongside a series of animadversions.

Examination of this copy of *Ten charges* confirms that it was a distinct publication to Plimpton’s first Dublin-printed publication of 1698, *A charge drawn up*. The introductory paragraph accused the Quakers of forgery with regard to an unidentified publication. Thereafter Plimpton put forward ten points attacking Quaker doctrine, asserting that they denied Christ’s humanity, they denied the doctrine of Christ’s satisfaction, that they believed

¹²³ Beaven, pp. 1–2.

¹²⁴ Beaven, p. 2; Thomas Crosby, *A History of the English Baptists from the Reformation to the Beginning of the Reign of King George I*, 4 vols (London, 1740), III, 126.

¹²⁵ Beaven, p. 2.

¹²⁶ Beaven, p. 2.

¹²⁷ Beaven, p. 2.

in justification by good works, that they denied the authority of the Scriptures, and that they were ultimately ‘no Christians’.¹²⁸ In contrast to *A charge drawn up*, none of those points were supported by any references to, or citations from, other publications. It was in the concluding paragraph of *Ten charges* that Plimpton had attempted to provoke Penn into meeting with him and claimed that he had the support of the Baptists for his actions:

forasmuch as the Baptists do own me in my Proceedings against them [the Quakers], I do expect that W. Penn be as good as his Word, to give me a Meeting, if not, I shal expose him according to his just Demerits; and we shall look upon the Quakers, as Persons not only Guilty of, but persisting on in the Notorious Wickedness as can be expressed.¹²⁹

Beaven had responded by refuting each one of Plimpton’s charges, drawing exclusively on scripture to support his points. Having already declined the challenge to a public dispute, he responded to Plimpton’s closing comments by expressing his confidence in the arguments he had put forward, and pointing out, quite correctly, that Plimpton’s charges were ‘the same that many of our inveterate Adversaries among the Baptists and others have falsly objected against us formerly’, and that answers to those charges could be found in ‘many of our Books extant, in Answer to T. Hicks, J. Faldo, &c’.¹³⁰

What happened after the publication of Beaven’s pamphlet in September 1696 remains unclear. Given Plimpton’s repeated efforts to engage Penn and the Quakers in Melksham in an oral dispute, it seems quite possible that he had travelled to Dublin in 1698 with this specific goal in mind. There is even some evidence to suggest that Plimpton stayed

¹²⁸ Beaven, pp. 3, 4, 7.

¹²⁹ Beaven, p. 7.

¹³⁰ Beaven, p. 7.

in temporary accommodation whilst in Dublin: a notice at the end of one of his 1698 publications, advised his readers that they might inspect books he had cited at his ‘Lodging at Mrs. Bruntons in Great Thomas Court’.¹³¹ Whether Plimpton was living in Dublin permanently or not, he certainly seems to have been prepared for Penn, Story and Everott’s arrival in the city on 6 May 1698, publishing *A charge drawn up* shortly before, or certainly within days of their arrival. After the Quakers had responded to Plimpton’s second Dublin publication, *A Quaker no Christian*, they published one more tract, *Truth further clear’d from mistakes*. It was concluded by 26 May, the day before Penn, Story and Everott departed Dublin for Wexford.¹³² Like *Gospel-truths*, this publication was not a direct contribution to the pamphlet debate, consisting as it did of a reprint of the eighth and ninth chapters of Penn’s *Primitive Christianity revived* (1696).¹³³ The second part of the publication, subscribed by Penn, saw Quaker thought on fifteen articles of their faith outlined on the left hand page with corresponding opinion of their ‘adversaries’ printed on the facing page.¹³⁴

Plimpton had responded to both *The Quaker a Christian* and *Truth further clear’d* with his final extant contribution to the debate, *Quakerism: The mystery of Iniquity discover’d* (1698). In the preface, he expressed his willingness to engage the Quakers in an oral debate once again, asking his readers why it was that that the Quakers felt that they were not obliged to meet him in public, yet ‘so much concern themselves in Printing, one Pamphlet after another, and to exhibit the same up and down privately’.¹³⁵ The main body of the pamphlet took the form of a dialogue between a Christian and a Quaker which provided a means for Plimpton to argue that the Quakers denied the ‘true Christ’.¹³⁶ Penn was revealed

¹³¹ John Plimpton, *Quakerism the Mystery of Iniquity Discovered* (Dublin, 1698), p. 32.

¹³² William Penn, *Truth Further Clear’d from Mistakes* (Dublin, 1698), p. 47; Story, p. 129.

¹³³ Penn, *Truth Further Clear’d from Mistakes*, pp. 5–28.

¹³⁴ Penn, *Truth Further Clear’d from Mistakes*, pp. 29–45.

¹³⁵ Plimpton, *Quakerism*, p. [3-4].

¹³⁶ Plimpton, *Quakerism*, p. 12.

as the Quaker in question as the dialogue progressed.¹³⁷ Given the dating of the Quaker publications, it seems improbable that Plimpton could have published this pamphlet before Penn, Story and Everott had left Dublin on 27 May. Even if the three Quakers obtained copies of the publication during the remainder of their stay in Ireland, they do not appear to have responded.

By this stage other writers had taken notice of the debate between Plimpton and the Quakers. *A vindication of the Quakers innocency occationed by John Plimpton's late papers crying about the city*, dated 29 May 1698, was ostensibly written by a member of the established church.¹³⁸ In it, the Quakers were described as a 'peaceable quiet people' and Plimpton was condemned for trying to defame them at a time 'when it hath pleased our Gracious King to give them liberty, to exercise in their publick Worship of Christians'.¹³⁹ The author went on to suggest that Plimpton ought not to 'Unchristian a Multitude at once' but rather 'labour in Love' to convince them of their errors.¹⁴⁰ Another publication critical of Plimpton was written by the Irish Quaker merchant Anthony Sharp but it does not appear to be extant.¹⁴¹ Although it is possible that further contributions to the debate may yet come to light, based on evidence identified to date, it certainly seems as though the pamphlet exchanges between the Quakers and Plimpton ended very quickly after Penn, Story and Everott left Dublin in late May. Thereafter, *Gospel-Truths* became the focus of what should be regarded as a discrete pamphlet debate.

Edward Wetenhall, bishop of Cork and Ross, responded to *Gospel Truths*, with a

¹³⁷ Plimpton, *Quakerism*, pp. 12–13.

¹³⁸ *A Vindication of the Quakers Innocency Occationed by John Plimpton's Late Papers, Crying about the City, a Quaker, and No Christian, and Quakerism Exploded* (Dublin, 1698). It is possible that 'Quakerism exploded' is another lost contribution to the debate.

¹³⁹ *Vindication of the Quakers Innocency*, pp. 4–6.

¹⁴⁰ *Vindication of the Quakers Innocency*, pp. 4–6.

¹⁴¹ Anthony Sharp, *Dirt Wipe'd Off, Being a Return to J. Plimpton's False and Dirty Charge against W. Penn*, 1698; Greaves, *Merchant-Quaker*, p. 118; Whiting, *Catalogue*, p. 149.

printed pamphlet entitled *The Testimony of the Bishop of Cork* (1698), dated at Cork, 2 July 1698, and published with the approval of ‘some in Dublin’, presumably other Church of Ireland clergymen.¹⁴² In it, Wetenhall had called on the Quakers to ‘Embrace and Profess the intire Christian Faith’, or to stop claiming ‘the Name of Christians’ altogether.¹⁴³ Penn responded with *A defence of a paper, entituled, Gospel-truths* which was dated at Bristol, where Penn lived, 23 September 1698. In the pamphlet, Penn set out to correct what he described as Wetenhall’s attempts to portray the Quakers ‘as bad as bad can be’.¹⁴⁴ A number of other writers also entered the debate either on behalf of Penn or the Bishop of Cork and Ross. For instance, Wetenhall was defended by an anonymous author; by Peter Hewit, Rector of Rinroan and chancellor of St Fin Barre’s in Cork; and by George Keith, a former Quaker theologian who had been recently expelled from the Society of Friends.¹⁴⁵ Meanwhile two Cork-based Quakers, Nicholas Harris and Thomas Wight defended Penn in print.¹⁴⁶ In contrast to the debate between Penn and Plimpton, these publications explicitly addressed the issue of Quaker loyalty to the state. For instance, Harris and Wight found themselves rebutting allegations that the Quakers were ‘great at Court’, and defending both Quaker non-payment of ‘Tythes and other forced maintenance’ and the representation of Quakers in corporations.¹⁴⁷ As the debate about *Gospel-truths* touched on such sensitive issues, it was particularly undesirable in terms of its content and timing for the Irish Society of Friends, who attempted to counter-act its impact by funding the production and circulation

¹⁴² Wetenhall to Penn, 26 Aug. 1698 (*Papers of William Penn*, III, 555).

¹⁴³ *Papers of William Penn*, III, 18.; Edward Wetenhall, ‘The Testimony of the Bishop of Cork’, in Penn, *Defence of a paper* (Bristol, 1698), pp 6-10.

¹⁴⁴ Penn, *Defence of a paper*, pp. 20-1, 117.

¹⁴⁵ *Brief and modest reply*, pp. 26-7; Peter Hewit, *A plain answer to that part of William Penn’s book against the late Bishop of Cork, wherein he attempts to justify the Quakers disuse of water-baptism and the Lord’s supper* (Dublin, 1701) (T173681), vi; George Keith, *Some of the many fallacies of William Penn detected: in a paper, called, Gospel truths* (London, 1699) (R2685), pp. 12, 21.

¹⁴⁶ Thomas Wight and Nicholas Harris, *Truth Further Defended* ([London], 1700), [n. p.].

¹⁴⁷ Wight and Harris, pp. 163-77. See also Harrison, ‘Spiritual Perception’, p. 69; Bergin, ‘Quaker lobby’, pp. 9-36.

of at least 2,500 copies of Penn's printed response to Wetenhall.¹⁴⁸

IV

The new evidence presented here, by filling in some of the gaps in what we knew about this pamphlet debate already, confirms that the episode had very little to do with its Irish context. While Plimpton's pamphlets addressed issues central to the Quaker-Baptist pamphlet wars of the 1670s, his primary motivation for raising those issues in 1698 was a personal grudge against Penn. Seemingly irritated that Penn had intervened in his public dispute with John Clark at Melksham in November 1695, and thereafter increasingly frustrated that Penn and the Quakers of Melksham had repeatedly refused to meet with him for another public dispute, Plimpton had travelled to Dublin for the specific purpose of goading Penn into participating in an oral dispute with him there. In all of this, Plimpton was acting alone. As Beaven's pamphlet asserts, Plimpton was not supported by the General Baptists in England in 1695-6, and as Story's *Journal* asserts, he did not have the support of Ireland's Baptist community in 1698. Nonetheless, rather than continuing to rail against the Quakers in rural Wiltshire, launching an attack on Penn at the time of the Quaker half-yearly meeting in Dublin, a large city and relatively important centre of print, was far more likely to gain Plimpton the publicity, and in turn the support, that he sought after for his position.

Of course, it is difficult to gauge the success of this strategy. No information on the numbers of these publications produced or sold is evident. Indeed, none of the printers and publishers involved in Plimpton and Penn's pamphlets, or the Quaker publications pertinent to the debate about *Gospel-Truths*, had been willing to put their names to that material. That

¹⁴⁸ Minutes of the half-yearly national meeting (1689-1707), II, 184-5 (Historical Library of the Society of Friends in Ireland, Dublin).

said, some printers and publishers did reveal their names, or places of business, on contributions written by Church of Ireland clerics. While this shows that Irish publishers were still somewhat uneasy about publishing material on behalf of dissenting Protestants, it also suggests that they were confident that Penn and Plimpton's publications would be of enough interest to the reading public to ensure that the potential financial rewards to be gained by publishing them outweighed any risk of post-publication censorship. Perhaps the best indication that Plimpton's publications had caused something of a stir in Dublin, however, was the fact that they had warranted several responses at a time when the Quakers were generally eager to avoid participation in such controversies.

In terms of understanding why the Quakers had responded to Plimpton at all, it is notable that all of Plimpton's 'charges' against them had focussed on matters of religion, rather than matters of state. As a result, responding to Plimpton was unlikely to raise sensitive issues such as toleration, tithes, or the validity of dissenter marriages, or to interfere with the wider efforts of the Irish Society of Friends to secure a greater degree of toleration for their adherents. Furthermore, all of the Quaker responses to Plimpton were carefully planned and coordinated, designed to shut down rather than to exacerbate the dispute. For instance, Penn, Story and Everott had consulted with representatives of the Irish Society of Friends and the Irish Baptists before first responding to Plimpton, an indication that they were eager to avoid sparking off a more significant dispute between the two communities. Confirming that Plimpton was acting alone had also allowed the Quakers to argue convincingly that Plimpton was dragging up old debates that were no longer of concern to either community. So while the pamphlet exchange was unusual in terms of its timing, by dismissing Plimpton as an 'impertinent wrangler' acting alone, the Quakers sought to avoid bringing negative attention to either themselves or the Irish Baptist community. This approach was very much in keeping with the wider aims of the Irish Society of Friends and their publishing strategies at this time.

Of course, the involvement of representatives of the Church of Ireland in the related pamphlet debate about *Gospel-truths*, led to public debate about Quaker beliefs and the loyalty of Protestant dissenters to the state regardless of the measures that Penn and his colleagues had taken to avoid just such an outcome.