

## New Berkeley Correspondence: A Note

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In the course of conducting research for a volume that will eventually include as much of the available correspondence of Berkeley as possible, I have come across a number of previously unpublished Berkeley letters. I here reproduce several (but by no means all) of them with a few brief notes. I have modernized and standardized the English for ease of reading, but have otherwise left the texts unmodified. Although none of the letters reproduced here are of any pointed philosophical interest, they do help complete our understanding of Berkeley and provide a context for his reasoning about the world.

The first of these letters is from John Percival to Berkeley in the summer of 1717. Benjamin Rand overlooked the letter in his 1914 edition of the correspondence between the two men<sup>1</sup> and A. A. Luce did not publish *any* letters addressed to Berkeley in the *Works* (with the exception of some from Samuel Johnson). This letter finds Berkeley in Italy for the second time, seeing the sights and serving as tutor to George Ashe, the son of the senior George Ashe, Bishop of Clogher. A copy of the letter appears in one of Percival's letterbooks (not in Percival's hand) in the British Library Additional Manuscripts 47028, folios 195 *verso* and 196.

Kew, 25 July 1717

Dear Sir

I am always extremely pleased to hear from you, and know by your own hand how you so, and where you are. This satisfaction I lately received from Naples dated 18 June whether you was [*sic*] lately returned from a tour through the most remote and unknown parts of Italy. The account you give me of that expedition is so delightful that I wonder our travelers into Italy have generally omitted to see those parts; and though I cannot accuse myself of wanting so much curiosity when I was at Rome, because I could not obtain leave even to see Naples which was then in French hands, yet I blame the tribe of governors who decline carrying young gentlemen into so fine a country as you have described.

Whatever design I might have formed of visiting you in Italy, I am now obliged by the expectation of another child to lay it aside, and I must rest satisfied for the present with the entertaining accounts you give me and I hope will continue to do of your own travels. But I often please myself with the resolution of going abroad again when it shall please God to give me a convenient opportunity.

We pass our time at Kew as we did the summer before, Miss Minshull and Daniel Dering, is with us, but Charles Dering left us some time ago and is now returned to Ireland. I don't design to go there this summer, I hear from thence that all our friends are well, but Mr. Savage is dead which I write you that you may tell Mr. Ashe, his brother-in-law Sir Ralph Gore succeeds him in the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. Pray present my service to him and let him know I am very glad to find he is able to take tours of

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Rand, *Berkeley and Percival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914).

pleasure. I hope and don't doubt he will be perfectly established in his health when he returns.

My family are all well and much your humble servants, as is

Dear Sir,

&c

Percival

I writ you a day or two before the Bishop of Derry went to Ireland and sent it to his house to be conveyed to you.

The second letter is from Berkeley to Robert Nelson, whom Berkeley elsewhere refers to as “Brother Nelson.”<sup>2</sup> Fraser speculates—not unreasonably—that Nelson might be a relative of the Robert Nelson who authored *Festivals and Fasts* and the *Life of Bishop Bull*. We have, however, no additional evidence to my knowledge to confirm this speculation. The letter is located in the library of the Royal Irish Academy, catalogued 3D8/2 no. 3195.

From the Castle of Dublin, 15 Jan 1721

I return you many thanks for the kindness and obliging freedom of your letter. What will be my fate here I can't tell. His Grace<sup>3</sup> was pleased not long since to show me some countenance at table and send me some Florence wine, being in a good humour, and another time he asked for a plate and sent me a plouver which meat [he - *sic*] himself liked best, a favour (as I am told) he never imparted to any chaplain before. And were not this (think you) worth coming into Ireland for, or enough to countervail the trouble of a voyage out of England, and the extraordinary charge attending it? Besides, the Archbishop of Dublin hath been very kind to me and often invited me to dinner in consideration of the rank that I [sustained?] as chaplain to the great Lord Lieutenant; and my friendship with Dr. Needham<sup>4</sup> his old fellow collegiate. My Lord of Tuam carried me 5 or 6 weeks ago to the Lord Primate of Ireland, who made me this dry compliment, that I came over with my Lord Lieutenant and therefore it was in vain for him to promise me anything. But the greatest honour of all was a personable visit from the Archbishop of Tuam (as his Grace assured me that he did once in my absence) and I have the charity to believe so great a prelate, because he used me with a great deal of ceremony when I went to see him. These would be fine things to talk of in the vain world, if I were a mere novice and unacquainted with the impertinence of mankind. I wish the Duke or Ormond doth not show himself a courtier in the worst<sup>5</sup> sense of all, that after he hath leveled me with common clergymen he doth not leave me how he found me; and so much worse for coming into Ireland to seek a bill and departing the same country pastor as I came. But as I have no strong hopes of making my fortune here, so neither do I despair: who am  
your affectionate humble servant

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<sup>2</sup> Letter to Nelson, 6 October 1721, published by Alexander Fraser in *Life and Letters of George Berkeley, D.D.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871), 93.

<sup>3</sup> The reference is not perfectly clear, but most probably is to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the Duke of Grafton, for whom Berkeley served as chaplain.

<sup>4</sup> The name is partially obscured and difficult to make out in the original. ‘Needham’ is my best guess.

<sup>5</sup> Correcting the original, which says ‘worse.’

George Berkeley

My service and kind love to your good wife.

The third letter is from Berkeley to William Wake, then Archbishop of Canterbury. Wake was known for his commitment to corresponding with the churches under his care, and the letter provides some evidence that Berkeley's Bermuda scheme was well thought of in at least some circles and had some support in the Anglican Church. I am indebted to David Raynor, who first informed me of the existence of the letter and to the excellent staff at the library at Christ Church College in Oxford, where the original is held. The letter is catalogued in the Wake correspondence as volume 24, item 86.

10 August 1725

May it please your Grace,

In obedience to your Grace's commands I take the liberty to inform you that Sir Robert Walpole is of opinion the petition relating to the lands formerly belonging to popish clergy in Saint Christopher's should be presented to the Lord Justices at their next meeting. Those lands contain somewhat more than seven hundred acres whereof five hundred and twenty or thereabouts are fit for sugar canes, the remainder are coarse and of small value. Three hundred pounds per annum is all that the Public can propose to make of the abovementioned lands but they would be a great matter in the endowment of our College. Your Grace's known concern for every thing that may promote the interests of Religion and Learning leaves me no room to doubt of your favor herein. I shall therefore add only that I am — with most profound respect My Lord

Your Grace's  
most dutiful  
& most obedient  
servant  
Geor: Berkeley

August the 10<sup>th</sup>, 1725

The next letter is from Berkeley to Isaac Gervais. Like his other letters to Gervais, this one suggests that the two men were reasonably good friends. Gervais would within a year of the date of this letter be named the Dean of Tuam. He was an occasional visitor to Berkeley's residence in Cloyne. I discovered the letter by a fortuitous accident while doing research on the Samuel Johnson papers at the Butler Library at Columbia University. The letter is held at Columbia University in the Smith Manuscript collection, catalogued only by the names of the correspondents.

19 February 1741/2

Revd Sir:

We are glad to find the spring is likely to bring you to us with other good things. My wife with her thanks and service desires me to send you word that she is resolved not to suffer that choice instrument (which you will tell is the history of all Cloyne to escape her hands leaving you to make as good a purchase as you can, be it ten pounds, or rather than [fail] ten guinea. She is likewise much obliged for the four-stringed bass violin, of which you say you have three or four in view, and depends on your choosing that which has the best tone. I told you before that Mr. Prior in Bolton Street will pay for both instruments and take care to convey them to Corke. For want of other news I send you a scrap of a private letter I received this day from a man of quality in London.

There will be many [removes], but what and to give place to whom, we shall not know nor have the opposition agreed it, for you may be assured there are many expectants. When that is done the prince will come to court and not till then. The country party have plainly got a majority which will daily increase, and the Lords are falling off.

So far the words of my letter I leave you to make your own reflexions on this changeable scene of things, and at the same time assure that I am with unalterable regard

Revd sir  
 your most  
 faithful humble servant  
 G. Cloyne

The final two letters are interesting in that they shed some light on Berkeley in the twilight of his career and life. Now well known for his espousal of tar-water and other causes in the service of the people of Ireland, it should not be unexpected to find people appealing to him for aid and assistance—of all sorts. I here reproduce two letters, one addressed to Bishop Berkeley followed by his reply. Apparently Dorothy Dubois (nee Annesley) was having difficulty with a local nobleman who pledged his love to her and wed her in secret (without witnesses), but then subsequently refused to recognize their state of matrimony. Berkeley supplies cautious but sage advice to the woman appropriate to the reigning ecclesiastical authority in the area and otherwise refuses to become embroiled in the delicate affair. The letters are copies in another hand and appear in the Annesley Papers located in the National Library of Ireland, Dublin, catalogued as Manuscript 987. Both letters are undated, but an unknown hand plausibly places the letter to Berkeley in 1752.

[1752]

My Lord

My mean abilities are very incapable of writing in a style proportioned to the great veneration I have for that exalted understanding and unparalleled goodness so conspicuous in your lordship. The first awes me into a silence, and bids me tremble at the bold attempt of exposing my demerits before so excellent a judge. But the latter encourages me to endeavour to express some part of that gratitude which actuates my soul. The sense I have of my own imperfections shall not prevent my paying a tribute of those acknowledgements so justly due from me to your lordship.

Mr. Dubois tells me he has acquainted your lordship with the sacred engagements we are under; and I hope my conduct will show I am no stranger to the duties I am really entered into.

The stability of my resolution can brave the frowns of fortune, and view the [text obscured] fortunes here but as preparations to more durable blessings than any to be found in this world. My notions would be ridiculed by the polite part of it, who for the generality make a little paltry wealth and grandeur the ultimate end of their wishes; but I am in search of happiness of a different nature and build my hopes on a more solid basis.

Now my lord I must enter on a subject that has given me more joy than I am well able to express: my husband is a Protestant! Wheres! wheres should I find words suitable to my obligations? And how thanks the kind author (under God) of his conversion? It is to you my lord I owe this happy change and to you great part of my acknowledgements are due. Some blessing more than ordinary attends it. Or why are my spirits so elated? And why my soul filled with more transport than that even you experienced. Indeed my lord it is not in my power to account for the surprising alteration I find in my breast. I readily accept of the pleasing task of perusing the Bible, as your lordship directs, nor shall my poor labor's want an interpreter (as far as my little judgment reaches) while heaven spares me to him; but I must entreat your lordship to give the dear convert a true light into that faith, whose greatest ornament is yourself. The obligations we are under to the best of men shall be stored in our breasts, and as your lordship was the means of uniting our prayers, you and yours shall be gratefully remembered in them.

I wish it were practicable that we might be married pursuant to the laws of the land. My interest requires that it should be kept secret from my father (the Earl of Anglesy), but notwithstanding this considerations I will gladly do what even your lordship pleases. I should esteem it the highest honor would you favour me with your advice, which I will carefully follow in every particular, and am with the profoundest respect,

My lord,  
Your lordship's most obliged  
dutiful, and obedient servant  
Dorothy Dubois

[1752, no date]

Madam

The letter your ladyship hath been pleased to honour me with engages me in a difficult task, that of writing to a lady of so much taste as must make her a critic in spite of good nature. For my part I have just wit enough to know I am no match for your ladyship. This should make me decline writing; but I recollect that if I cannot say polite and witty things yet I may say some things that are true and agreeable.

The person on whom you have placed your affection is in my opinion much above the common level of those amongst whom fortunes had placed him. Had I known your ladyship I should never have advised the taking this step; but since it is taken, I advise by all means to make the best of it.

A lady of your quality and pretensions hath done the greatest honour and at the same time laid the greatest obligation possible on Mr. Dubois, who is fortunate enough to

know his happiness, and while I doubt not endeavour to become it. He hath lived on a familiar foot in my family for some years, which gave me an opportunity of knowing him to be a sober, civil, well bred, and well natured man, and free from those gross vices that are too common amongst persons of his age and character. Whatever was done in relation to the sacred engagements you mention, was done in a private illegal manner. The next step must be to satisfy the law by a public legal marriage: the omission of this necessary step would be (as I apprehend) attended with far greater inconveniences than seemed for a good while to sit loose towards popery. He attended our family prayers, went sometimes to church, and heard the Scriptures, and other useful books often read in the family; by these means his prejudices have gradually worn away, and he is become a professed Protestant. I have given him the best reasons I could, and your ladyship gave him [what?] I take him at present to be a sincere [commitment?]. It is attachment to our holy religion and all things laudable will grow with his interest in your ladyship, and in proportion to the opportunity of knowing your merit and accomplishments, which will be to him a school of virtue and a guide to happiness. And that it may prove so I recommend you both to the good providence of Almighty God and remain,

Madam

your most obedient and most humble servant

G: Cloyne

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