



CHAPTER THREE

Thomas Reading, Public Printer—The Keith Sermon, Annapolis, 1703—The Collected Laws of 1707—The Beginnings of the Annual Session Laws

DURING the years which followed the publication of that collection of laws which has been described in the foregoing chapter of this narrative as the Bladen-Reading edition of 1700, it is probable that the press which Thomas Reading was operating at Annapolis continued, whether with or without Bladen's participation is not known, to take care of the public business of the Province, and occasionally even to issue a pamphlet of a political or religious character. Only one Annapolis imprint, however, has been recorded between the years 1700 and 1704. The title of this work was *The Power of the Gospel, in the Conversion of Sinners. In a sermon preached at Annapolis, in Maryland, By George Keith . . . July the 4th.* Its imprint read, "Printed and are to be sold by Thomas Reading, at the Sign of the George. Anno Domini MDCCIII."

The place of publication of this sermon is not given in the imprint, but there remains evidence of a conclusive and interesting character to testify to its Annapolis origin. In Keith's *Journal*,¹ under the date of July 4, 1703, the preacher himself writes these words:

"I preached at Annapolis, on I. Thess. 1. 5. and had a large Auditory well affected; my Sermon at the request of a worthy Person who heard it, was printed at Annapolis, mostly at his Charge; and Copies of it sent by him, to many parts of the Country. It is Bound up with other Printed Sermons and Tracts, in the Book abovementioned, which I presented to the Honourable Society, soon after my arrival into England."

The author of these words and of the sermon which they refer to was that George Keith who has been remembered as a factious participant in the religious controversies of the colonies at this period. Formerly a Quaker schoolmaster of Philadelphia, at this time a clergyman of the Church of England, he had been the instigator and center, a decade before, of a con-

¹ Keith, George, *A Journal of Travels from New-Hampshire to Caratuck, on the Continent of North America.* London, 1706; p. 66. See p. 39 in reprint in Collections of Protestant Episcopal Historical Society, New York, 1851.