

Seekers become Quakers

In Besse's *Sufferings* (i. 237) we find the following description of the world of Seekers at the opening of the Quaker propaganda :

AMONG the Records of this County [Hampshire] we find a Paper supposed to be writ by Richard Hubberthorn [1628-1662], which, containing a lively Description of this religious People, at their first Appearance in England, we think worthy the Reader's Perusal, viz. :

“ A short and true Relation of the People called Quakers in their first arising to bear Testimony in England.

“ They were a People that from their Infancy or Childhood (many of them) had earnest breathing Desires after the Living God, and to know him, sparing no Labour, neither omitting any Opportunity, in which they expected their Desires might be answered, being very tender in their Way, and also zealous for Religion, but still according to the Gift of their Knowledge: Never of a bitter Spirit, nor desirous to persecute any for Matters of Religion, but of a gentle, teachable Qualification and Disposition, being willing to learn any Thing of the Knowledge of God, from any that had learned it of the Father, and also willing to teach others any Thing which they had received, their Minds being wholly devoted to God's Service, and the Knowledge of his Ways; they having passed through many Professions of Religion, following that Rule of the Apostle to *try all Things, and hold fast that which is good*, and being not willing to deny any Ordinance or Worship, till they had a certain Evidence from the Spirit of God, that his Spirit, Power, Life and Presence was not in it. They thus walking in the Sincerity of their Hearts, in their honest Conversation before the Lord, he answered their Desires, and did reveal the Mysteries of his Kingdom to them, and did cause his Light to shine in their Hearts, whereby they saw the Darkness that had covered the Earth, and the gross Darkness that

had covered the People, and by his Light they were led through Darkness, as the Prophet *Joel* witnessed.

“ The first Time that the Name *Quakers* was given them, was in the Year 1650, by one that was envious against them, and in Derision gave them that Name.”

“ Concerned in ye Late Warre ”

The following is taken from the Somersetshire Q.M. Books :

JT is desired by friends of this meeting yt ye testimony folowing agt Tho Plaice in p̄ticular, & any others p̄fessing truth, yt have bin concerned, in ye late warre, contrary to o^r Christian p̄fession, be recorded : And Jasp Batt Christopher Holder, Thos Powell, W^m Liddon & John Hipsley, are desired to draw some copies thereof, & to make it publike as in ye wisdom of God they see meete, ye testimony following :

Whereas Thomas Plaice of Edington in ye County of Som^rst haveing formly p̄fest yt principle, & walkt in ye way w^{ch} ye people called Quakers p̄fesse, & walke in, w^{ch} is to love god above all & o^r Neighbour as o^r selves ; & to do unto all men as we would they should do unto us : And to be subject to yt Gov^rmt & those Gov^rners w^{ch} God hath set ou^r us, And where we cannot conscientiously actively obey ; patiently & passively to suffer, Accord- ing to ye antient doctrine of Christ Jesus & his Apostles, as we have alwayes declared since ye lord called us to this principle, & way wthout resistance.

And whereas ye^sd Tho : Plaice did appeare very active & conv^rsant in ye late Duke of Monmouths Army (as we are Credibly informed altho not in Armes) And in comeing to ye house of Capt Durstan in Catcot wth a p̄ty of ye s^d Army in a treacherous way, as if they had bin of ye Kings p̄ty, & he their prisoner, w^{ch} s^d p̄ty tooke away Armes, & other things from ye s^d Capt (as is testified under his hand) ; By w^{ch} he hath manifested his back-slideing from ye s^d peacable principle ; & turning out of ye way