

Quakerism in Seventeenth Century Bristol

UNDER this title Russell S. Mortimer has written a dissertation for the degree of M.A., University of Bristol, 1946 (pp. x, 585, typescript). His study of the development of the Quaker group in Bristol from the coming of Audland in 1654 to the close of the seventeenth century is based on the minute books and parallel records preserved at the Friars Meeting House, Bristol. The bibliography shows the additional debt due to the Bristol Corporation Archives (particularly for the Sessions records, which give authoritative basis for discussion of Friends' sufferings) and to the Reference Library at Friends House for both manuscripts and the large number of contemporary tracts enumerated. The subject brings to mind the activity of the late Alfred Neave Brayshaw nearly forty years ago, among Bristol Friends records, and it is valuable that the material he worked upon is here made more available to students.¹

The Thesis is divided into two parts, of which the second consists of notes (footnote material and additional illustration of points mentioned in the text), a series of short biographical notes on persons mentioned, with an analysis of their occupations, and a bibliography. Following the short preface which gives a summary of previous work on the subject, a chronological account of the main points of development is given, thereafter the subject is treated by topics. First comes a survey of the meetings for worship and the ministry, a short account of the evidence concerning meeting houses, notices of the business meetings in turn with their respective fields of activity. A long chapter on the discipline illustrates the working of these meetings in dealing with removals, marriages, and "disorderly walking". Next follow accounts of the oversight of the poor, the early years of Friends' Workhouse, meeting trusts and finance, education and apprenticeship, and a short chapter on the preparation and diffusion of Friends' books. Two final chapters deal with Friends' part in the commercial and public life of the city.

The evidence brought to light brings home with great force the large range in social and economic status existing

in Bristol meeting in the 1690's. On the one hand an opulence that made Friends there the talk of the Society and the envy of an impecunious municipality (witness the fines on wealthy Friends after Sedgmoor), on the other the dire poverty that prompted the foundation of Friends' own Workhouse to set the industrious to work and serve as a haven for the aged and feeble.

In this work detailed illustration is given to relate the general surveys of Quaker development to the local scene and to support with local instances the path along which the movement progressed. More studies along these lines are required before a new synthesis and history of early Friends can well be written.

¹ Copies are available in Bristol at the University Library, at Friars Meeting House, Rosemary Street, and in London at The Library, Friends House.

Periodicals Exchanged

Receipt of the following periodicals is gratefully acknowledged:—

Bulletin of the Friends' Historical Association (Philadelphia).

Quakeriana Notes.

Wesley Historical Society, Proceedings.

Presbyterian Historical Society, Proceedings.

Presbyterian Historical Journal (U.S.A.).

Unitarian Historical Society, Transactions.

Mennonite Quarterly Review.

Institute of Historical Research, Bulletin.