Early Quakerism in Ireland

Presidential Address to the Friends' Historical Society, 1955

By John M. Douglas

AT intervals of twenty years or so, the Friends' Historical Society casts its mantle over some Irish Friend; now for this generation, the honour is mine.[1] It is my desire, at the year's end, to return the grey garment not merely free from spots of green or orange, but even warmed and stretched a little, by reason of this its third trip across the Irish Sea.

Inevitably my subject must include the land of my birth, preferably in that half century when the Quaker way was hopeful and dangerous, before the good rules and precedents were fixed, hardened, and prickly. In fact wherever my thoughts lead me this evening, I am really considering what inducements I can offer to English or American Friends to study the development of our Religious Society in Ireland, or the adventures of its members, during three centuries.

Is there any apology needed, for turning our attention to such a narrow field as Quakerism in Ireland? In my own case, having read a lot of historical books at school and college, I awoke one day to the interest of the lists in family Bibles. My father took me round to visit the late Thomas H. Webb, who showed me some of his collection of pedigrees. I found we had many ancestors in common, and he gladly let me copy as I wished. Since then as opportunity offered, I have kept adding names. I now have well over 100 direct ancestors docketed; almost all of these were Friends, more or less faithful and orderly, dwelling in the one island.

But as a rule, pedigrees are dull lists, names and dates, and places. My ancestors were cautious undistinguished folk who would have blushed to see their names in print. In order to imagine them as living beings, I had to find out all I could about the changing life of the religious society that calmed their fears, and cherished their hopes of Eternal Life.

Fortunately not many Friends now living have quite so

[1] Previous Irish Presidents of F.H.S. were J. Ernest Grubb (1913) and Isabel Grubb (1934).

many genealogical reasons for studying the past records of Quakerism in Ireland as myself. We do get new blood in sometimes. But apart from pedigrees, fifty years of attendance at meetings, committees and conferences might well give me a lively curiosity about those who sat on similar seats in similar gatherings during the 250 years before me. Although the old minute books give inadequate details of the meetings of long ago, I keep discovering little usages that could be traced back at least to 1700. For the customs and phrases of a religious group have pedigrees as well as the members. I have occasionally wished that our Society could forget its honourable history, and start out again without precedents to find expression for its beliefs and principles. Even then we should need a good history safely locked up somewhere to make comparison later. Since this wish cannot be fulfilled, I can pass happily through the duller parts of our proceedings by using my historical imagination to consider how all things, good and less good, must have grown up.

So long as there remains alive an international Religious Society of Friends, therefore, the history of Friends in Ireland cannot lose its value. But suppose the Society ended, merged in something greater, or just vanished into hot air, what then? Nearly a century ago, Robert Barclay the younger, with some such thought in mind, wrote in his *Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth* (p. 516).

> The lessons of the past, if wisely considered in so important a subject as that of the history of a perfectly free and self-governing religious Society can hardly be without instruction to the visible Church of Christ.

I believe Barclay's dictum has gained in weight, even though it may seem that political man shows less hope in churches. In modern civilized life we tend to be crushed between the powerful, all-embracing state, too enormous to call out our loving service, and the individual citizen who feels insignificant and helpless although his knowledge and vision have been enlarged. Is not the cultivation of particular free religious societies becoming more important for all who appreciate freedom?

Quakers in Ireland are, as they have always been, the minority of a minority, remnant of a remnant. And by no means all of them care to read history. Anything we think of writing must, therefore, be considered in relation to Quaker experience as a whole. Interest in some Irish locality or

custom may be added to the general interest, but is not likely to be valuable taken alone.

Whoever attempts the history of a religious group faces a perennial difficulty. He cannot worship the Lord of Life with all his heart and strength and mind, and at the same time compare, evaluate, and judge the object of his worship. The words and gestures of the human worshippers, their relations with each other and with their neighbours, the expression of their aspirations in books, letters, verses: all these can be studied: also the effects of their worship upon their social and economic culture, and their relations with other religious groups, and with the state. But the essential thing in Quakerism, the group of friends waiting humbly together in silence, in a room bare of adornment, on the presence of the Eternal Living Christ, offers no scope for historical writing. The moment is timeless; the place insignificant; if there is a verdict, God alone can give it. "To his own master, he standeth or falleth."

Among the attitudes of mind which I have remarked among those who essayed to contemplate the Eternal Christ I may mention two that prevent historical study. The first is a kind of contempt, not only for the rituals of the past, but for the details of daily intercourse in society. It was bound up with Quaker simplicity, and Quaker iconoclasm and rationalism, and no doubt a deep respect for the "unseen things that are eternal". But those who despise the visible and temporal will not write much history.

The second is extreme conservatism. Since we worship one "who is without change or shadow of turning," why should a Christian society, once established for two generations, make any change in its usages unless dictated by light, weather, or transport. In this way petty details which can have no importance in the sight of God, become unchangeable, and so acquire a new importance. If indeed "nothing changes here," how can there be any history to write? These two attitudes of mind help to explain much in our old minutes and books of advices, especially the many interesting things that got left out.

The Muse of History does not seem to be the same person in the two islands. In England we have the conception or tradition of "freedom broadening down from precedent to precedent"; rights of the citizen, parliamentary democracy, trades unions, voluntary schools, private development of

useful enterprises. There is a record of long continuing struggle, never without some successes. In all these, individual Quakers took a notable share, generally with some encouragement from their Society. But Irish history seems a succession of failures in a resistance movement against forces coming from without. Each fit of revolutionary enthusiasm leads to violent war, followed by a generation of exhaustion. From this has sprung inspiring poetry and romance. But Quakerism, with its rejection of war and violence as a blasphemy against God the Creator, and its passion for finding a little good on both sides of a question just does not fit into Irish history.

Irish Background

What kind of background must we imagine for the year 1654, when William Edmondson began that first regular meeting for worship in Ireland, which so incredibly still gathers in Lurgan every First-day morning? To give a full answer would involve rewriting the history of Ireland; but a few paragraphs may help us to consider how far the times were ripe for planting a new religious movement in the island.

Politically the situation might seem the same as in Great Britain. The parliamentary armies had defeated and destroyed the King and all who rose to support him, including the Established Church. The only leader who had the general support of the Army, Oliver Cromwell, ruled as Lord Protector over a left-wing protestant republic. He kept searching for a new constitutional position, but died without founding either a republic or a new monarchy. When he called a parliament, there were representatives from both Scotland and Ireland. Probably this policy of unification was intended to appeal to the soldiers, but was later reversed to suit commercial opinion in London. In Ireland the Civil War, dragged out from 1641-53, had been more disastrous than in England or Scotland. Generally it had been fought more desperately; discipline had been poorer, pay less regular. Quarter was seldom granted, and all parties were accused of killing women, children, and clergy. The refugees, escaping fire and sword, encountered hunger, cold, and the plague. It was estimated by Sir William Petty, Surveyor of the confiscated estates, that half the population had perished.

In 1655 Francis Howgill describes a journey westward with Cornet Cooke

into the heart of the nation, about 50 miles from Dublin, through deserts, woods, and bogs, and the desolatest places that ever any did I think behold, without any inhabitant except a few Irish cabins here and there, who are robbers and murderers that lives in holes and bogs where none can pass.

His comrade, Edward Burrough, who travelled southwards, wrote, "Our service lies only in great towns and cities, for generally the country is without inhabitant." In Fuller & Holme's *Compendious View of Sufferings* we read:[1]

Thomas Loe, Thomas Holme, William Blanch, and John Wrenn, being peaceably in their friend's house at Cashel, and their horses at an inn, as travelling men, were apprehended by a guard of soldiers in the year 1657, by order of Colonel Richard Le Hunt, and being brought before him and examined, were violently turned out of the town, and the gates kept against them though it was near night, and a dangerous time for Englishmen to lie out of garrison, because of the tories or robbers.

The Quaker who lived in Cashel was probably George Baker. The tories were generally men of old landed families who had lost their estates, and preferred to live as outlaws rather than settle down to be day-labourers. After the nick-name "tories" had been given to the High Church Party in London about 1678, the outlaws in Ireland were called rapparees. At the National Half Year's Meeting in May 1681, a report was mentioned (presumably a complaint from Dublin Castle) that "Friends in the North countenance, entertain, or connive at the Torrys." This was a serious matter in the days of Redmond O'Hanlon,[2] so four Ulster Friends were appointed to enquire. At the next meeting in November, 1681, we read that the answer about tories had been deposited with Joseph Sleigh (I suppose he was expected to show it to all enquiring). A short minute was made: "It is desired that Friends everywhere be careful to have no correspondence or familiarity with such persons."

As the Civil War wore on, plans were made to remove all papists from every position of influence, and to replace them by Englishmen loyal to London. Landowners, if proved innocent of rebellion, were ordered to transport themselves into far-off Connaught; merchants were expelled from their city houses; priests and teachers were given twenty days to leave the country. Soldiers as they surrendered were either allowed to sail as recruits to European armies, or were trans-

[1] 1731 ed., p. 53.
[2] An Irish outlaw leader, d. 1681.

ported, along with young men and women who had no clear means of support, to become indentured labourers in the West Indies. Those who remained were intended to be tenant farmers and labourers, without education or powers of leadership. It is not hard to imagine how deep must have been the gulf of bitterness that separated Irish and Anglo-Irish from any religious or spiritual movements among their conquerors.

The lands confiscated from rebels had been promised as early as 1642 to "undertakers" who subscribed money for the parliamentary cause. Again in 1649 they were promised to the army that reconquered Ireland, in lieu of pay. By 1655 the change over was in full swing; soldiers disbanded were receiving certificates for pieces of land chosen by lot; a few with capital became the new landed gentry of Ireland, those without capital sold out to their officers or other speculators, and either returned to England or took service with some wealthier comrade. In England the authorities were advertising for folk ready to go to Ireland as "planters"; traders and craftsmen in the half-empty towns, tenants and stewards on the new estates. There were also many lawyers, surveyors, and agents earning their share of profit from the great operation. Our records are far from complete; but among the first generation of Quakers in Ireland we find two or three from the adventurers' lists; rather more ex-soldier landowners; perhaps a score of names found in Ireland before 1641; and a considerable number of planters, for this word continued in use long after the Restoration of 1660. Such were the folk among whom Howgill, Burrough, and their comrades preached, argued, and made convincements in the towns of Leinster and Munster 1655 to 1659.

Quakerism as a General Church Reform

In all three nations men had seen in a dozen years the downfall of all the old authorities in church and state; the ruins of civil war, and the instability of new men and institutions. Reports from the continent, exhausted by the Thirty Years' War, were not reassuring. Their minds were deeply troubled. Some turned back to the good old days and longed for a revival of Church and King. Others prayed for some new pattern more in accordance with the will of God, and sought for plans in Gospels, Epistles, or Apocalypse.

Amongst these latter were groups of Seekers who had ceased attending the national church services, and met

weekly to wait in silence for some message from the Lord as to the true nature of church membership and worship, and their own duty in such matters. To many Seekers George Fox came as an answer to their prayers; they saw in him a prophet sent by God to show their way forward. He gave them the courage to develop and spread their ideas, already in line with his characteristic messages; "Christ Jesus has come to teach his people himself"; "freely ye have received, freely give"; "turn your mind inward, that the light of Christ may show you what is wrong, and lead you into the right path." No doubt there were many individual Seekers also, whom George Fox drew together in the northern half of England. By 1654 they were strong enough to send out fifty missionaries towards London, Bristol and the South.

It would be interesting to know if there were groups of Seekers in Ireland also where the scarcity of clergy must have encouraged religious gatherings in private houses. On page 55 of Edmondson's *Journal*, we read that in Kilmore, Co. Armagh, at the house of Margery Atkinson, a tender honest woman, "we had a meeting there; the tender people thereabouts generally came to meeting, most of them received the truth in the love of it in much tenderness; for they were waiting for it." Were these a Seekers' group, or were they individuals who had heard about new movements in England through travellers, such as Edmondson himself?

Many Roman Catholic priests and friars had been executed or banished. When William Edmondson first saw Carrickfergus Castle, it contained 26 of them, whom the authorities fondly hoped would be the last ever in the island, held ready for deportation. The Anglican clergy had suffered severely in 1641-2; a list drawn up in 1647 contained 87 names of those believed to be alive in Ireland. In 1650 the use of the Book of Common Prayer was forbidden. It will please some of my readers to learn that at least one disobeyed. Cromwell was ahead of most of his contemporaries in advocating some freedom in practising religion; but he did not, and I suppose dared not, offer it to Anglicans and Roman Catholics, regarded by his party as persecutors.

Quakers Disturb the New Clergy

In order to refill this dangerous vacuum, the Commonwealth Commissioners in Dublin gradually organized a supply of "Ministers of the Gospel" appointed to definite

places at salaries up to £100 a year. The newcomers included Independents, Baptists, Presbyterians, and former Anglicans, presumably Low Churchmen. The best known of these last was Edward Worth, Dean of Cork, whose wife caused him much worry by joining the Quakers.[1] This did not prevent his preferment to the see of Killaloe at the Restoration. Most of the salaries came from a central fund, into which all tithes were to be paid; a few were allowed to collect tithe in their own parish. For a detailed account of this improvised church establishment, full of compromises, we are indebted to St. John Seymour's *Puritans in Ireland* (Oxford, 1921). One interesting name on the list is that of George Keith, appointed to Dungannon in 1660. As the meeting at Grange near Charlemont, only three miles away, had been settled in 1657, he must have formed his first impressions of Quakers while there.

It was against these new ministers, who according to the Quaker way of thinking, had obviously been called to the ministry not by God but by a secular government, and attracted by the bait of a fixed salary and a lodging, that the first Quaker preachers in Ireland turned their controversial batteries. It was the custom under the Commonwealth, when the Lecture had replaced the Common Prayer, for the listeners to ask questions and make speeches at the end of the sermon. The audience could stay or go.[2] This was an opportunity for the wandering Quaker preacher to make his point, and start an argument. If he spoke before the minister had finished his sermon, he was liable to punishment. If he irritated the audience, there would be some rough fellows, tired of a long sermon, who would be glad to beat him up in the churchyard. These tactics were transferred from England to Ireland with similar results. At Lurgan

> William Edmondson was moved to go to the public worship-house to declare truth, and was much beaten there by Colonel Stewart; but his testimony reached the hearts of some, particularly Mark Wright and Mark Sawyer who followed him out of the said worship house and joined with Friends.[3]

The most active member of the Commission in Dublin who examined the ministers before appointment was the worthy Samuel Winter, Provost of Trinity College, Dublin.

[1] John Rutty, *History . . . Quakers in Ireland*. 2nd. ed., 1800, p. 86.
[2] See Barclay, *op. cit.*, chapter XII.
[3] Rutty, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

As such he could hardly escape the attention of these anti-clerical preachers. The Swarthmore MSS. contain a paper, which looks like the draft for a broadsheet, headed *An Hue & Cry after a Robbery committed in the Temple being in short the Fruits of the High Priest's Sermon.* It gives Robert Turner's account of his maltreatment by the congregation at Christ Church in Dublin, where he began to speak after Samuel Winter has finished his sermon. The robbery complained of was of Robert Turner's coat, which was torn off his back and not returned to him.[1]

Reading this in 1956 our sympathies run rather with Samuel than with Robert, whose style of humour grates upon us. He was aged 25. Next time he asked a question of a priest in Dublin, he was put in the Bridewell for three months, including a sojourn "in a cell or dungeon, a very noisome place, graves being over his head and under his feet." But although his protests infuriated the governing class, I suspect there were many in Dublin who rejoiced secretly to see the Quakers openly defying an upstart ecclesiastical establishment. There is an account of Robert Turner's career in A. C. Myers' *Immigration of Irish Quakers into Pennsylvania* (Swarthmore, Penna., 1902) pp. 257-62.

Under the Commonwealth, this type of Quaker "witness" at or after services of the state-supported clergy was not uncommon. After the Restoration when it was legally compulsory for all to attend the parish church, the situation had changed. To make any kind of protest was clearly a breach of the law. None the less a few cases are recorded; probably it ceased completely when the Anglican clergy ceased to punish Quakers for holding meetings or for failure to attend the parish church.

In his very readable *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century* (Cork, 1950) E. McLysaght draws attention to the strange story of that strange man, Solomon Eccles.[2] In 1669 he believed himself called to go as a sign, naked, with fire and brimstone burning upon his head, to a papist Mass-meeting, without the gates of Galway, the friar and people being upon their knees, and give them a warning from God to repent. In the account printed by Rutty in 1755, but written by Thomas Wight in 1700, there are alterations; "naked above the waist", "in a chapel," and "praying to their idol" have been

[1] Swarthmore MSS. VI, 29.
[2] Printed in Fuller & Holme, *Compendious view*, 1731, p. 113.

inserted. Wight also omits the names of three other Quakers who accompanied Eccles, and gives it as an example of extraordinary zeal and courage.

This seems to call for some explanation from Quaker historians, which I have not seen given anywhere. All the puritans were strongly anti-Roman, filled with tales of the Inquisition, St. Bartholomew, and the like, and the early Quakers were no exception. But this is the only case I have seen recorded in Ireland of a Quaker interruption of Roman Catholic worship. This is also the only case I have noticed of a direct threat of hell fire to make people repent, used by a "publisher of truth", I should have thought that in the seventeenth century everyone knew about hell, and it was waste of breath to use it in a sermon. There were never many Quakers resident in Galway, and no records have survived of their meeting. But Galway was an important port, used by ships trading with America, and many Quaker travellers passed through it. I am doubtful if Wight is right in using the word chapel; Fuller's phrase suggests to me an open-air gathering.

Of Eccles' companions, Randal Cousins had been in prison in Cork, 1661, and Nicholas Gribble was living at Limerick in 1680, but Henry Bloodworth I cannot place, nor Eliza Barton who visited them in prison. The next year (1670) Solomon was still in Ireland, and spoke at Cork in the Anglican cathedral; for this he was imprisoned ten days, then whipped through the city, receiving 87 lashes.

Howgill's and Burrough's Call to Visit Ireland

Among the score of preachers who travelled in Ireland in Commonwealth times, the best known were Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough. For each of them the Swarthmore MSS. have preserved an account of his first call to go to Ireland. Evidently the fact that each received it independently seemed to them a confirmation of its authority. They had been friends and comrades for five years in "publishing the Truth" in London, Bristol and elsewhere. Howgill was aged 37, Burrough only 22.

Francis Howgill's Command to go into Ireland

The word of the Lord came unto me the 7th day of the 4th month, about the 10th hour of the day, near Islington, a mile off London, as I was waiting upon the Lord, saying, Go to Dublin, Ireland with my servant Edward Burrough. I have opened a door for you, and my

living presence shall go before you. My righteousness shall be your reward, and my everlasting blessing, and my eternal power shall be with you. I will open your mouths in wisdom, in utterance, and in understanding. And behold, all is a plain before you, and my power shall encompass you as a wall of brass. Lo, many shall bless you in the name of the Lord, and shall say "What hath the Lord wrought" Go on, my valiant men of war; I will make your feet as the prancing of horses in battle, to tread upon the heathen. My flaming two edged sword into your hands I will put. Ride on, sound an alarm, make the sound of my words go forth as thunder, that the heathen may fear and tremble; And lo, I will pour upon you my everlasting blessing, and make you honourable among those that are called. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, who is thy salvation and thy sword.

Francis Howgill[1]

Edward Burrough's Commission

On the 10th day of the 4th month late in the evening the movings of the Lord came upon me to go to Dublin City in Ireland. Upon the 30th day of the 4th month I submitted and gave up to go. And as I was in the deep where the wonders of the Lord are to be seen, it came upon me to write as followeth;

Into Ireland thou must go, my word for to declare—
The mountains high, nor the Rocks hard, thy hammer must not spare;
My words shall be thy Sword, my Arm shall be thy Power—
My Arm shall thee uphold, my Strength shall be thy Tower.
To Dublin City I thee move, thy Journey for to take—
to Seek that which is lost. It is for my Seed's sake
which in captivity lies, under th' Oppressing Nature
In which the Devil dwells, professing Righteous matter.

The High do thou not spare, but wound incurable. Let not thy hands have pity. The Just for vengeance cries to me, Saith God, and thee do I prepare to beare my Name with boldness before the Base and Rare; and with thee I will be, thy defence Strong and Sure, and none shall do thee hurt, but what from me they shall have power; Therefore be bold, and give up all, thy life freely lay down and trust me with it. I am God; in power I do abound; fear me with uprightness, Thy Life shall freed be, and in this work to Serve me, I have chosen thee.

This I writt as to me was given, not knowing whether my brother must go or not.

Edward Burrough[2]

The older man wrote in prose; the younger in a kind of free verse, which I surmise went humming through his mind to the tune of some psalm he had sung in the old home in Westmorland from which his parents had expelled him when he joined the Quakers. Clearly to go across to Ireland was a serious adventure, quite different from anywhere in England, or even Scotland.

[1] Swarthmore MSS. vi, 15; Transcr. vii, 483.
[2] Swarthmore MSS. vi, 6; Transcr. vii, 467.

Howgill and Burrough reached Dublin in August, 1655, having first gone to Margaret Fell at Swarthmoor for advice, encouragement, and the needful money for travel. Separately they visited the newly planted towns of the South, Waterford, Youghal, Kilkenny, Limerick, Bandon, Kinsale, and Cork, preaching to soldiers, inviting arguments with Baptists and Independent ministers. In each town they convinced a few whom they persuaded to meet together, waiting in silence in Quaker custom; but in Cork and Kinsale, the military governors, Colonel Phayre and Major Hodden were favourable, and encouraged their soldiers to listen. This roused the Dublin Council to action. Hodden was dismissed, and Phayre compelled to arrest the preachers and send them to Dublin as vagabonds without visible means of support. After a few days in custody of the Sergeant at Arms, who allowed them to write letters and see their friends, they were put on board ship and landed in England six months after their departure.

Having heard his sentence to be banished from Ireland without trial or opportunity to answer any charges against him, Burrough wrote down a prophetic warning and sentence, which will not appeal to modern readers, and yet seems worth quoting, seeing that the "curse of Cromwell" passed into Anglo-Irish literature.

> To thee, Henry Cromwell, & to thy Council, & to thy Teachers, & to all thy train of perverters of the just law of God and of man in this your act of cruelty, thus saith the Lord, the Dreadful God of Vengeance; My plagues remain with you upon earth, till you repent of this your tyrrany. . . . The sword of vengeance from thy house never shall depart, but as thou hast done, so it shall be done to thee. Banished art thou from the presence of the Living God, and sealed shalt thou remain in the pit of indignation of the just wrath of God. . . .[1]

I have seen a similar curse addressed to Sir John Endicott, the repressive ruler of New England, but none against Charles II under whose reign thousands of Quakers were imprisoned in England. The question arises why such indignation was felt against the lenient Henry who banished eight and imprisoned 101. Two explanations may be offered. First, this government professed liberty of conscience. Second, and more important, by deportation to England, Burrough was prevented from obeying God's command to him; if it had been imprisonment, he could still have given his witness in Ireland.

[1] Swarthmore MSS. v, 7; Transcr. vii, 33.

Howgill showed his continued interest in his friends in Ireland by epistles and messages, but the younger man did more. He returned to Ireland after the change of government, and reported in August, 1660, "I perceive in this land Friends are generally well, and Truth grows in victory and dominion . . . and through the rage of men and above it all the little flock is preserved in its beauty."

In Friends House Library, on a scrap of paper is this fragment, attributed to Edward Burrough.

> Oh, Ireland, I bear thee in my mind
> in my soul to thee much love do I find
> in thee I have laboured, not sparing my own life
> the good in thee to gather, which God hath made full ripe
> into his garner to rest for ever more
> all who are thither come do sure rejoice therefor.[1]

One surmises that was written in prison; possibly in Newgate where he died in 1662. If it does not prove him a poet, it points to an unusual interest in Ireland.

One supposes that the warning letter reached Henry Cromwell, but before he had time to consider it, there was blown in to Dublin Barbara Blaugdone, whose adventures may be read in a booklet printed in 1691, *An Account of the Travels . . . of Barbara Blaugdone*. She was a Bristol teacher, whose pupils had mostly left her when she joined the Quakers. She had sailed from Bristol in a ship bound for Cork which had struck so violent a storm that the master thought himself lucky to reach Dublin. Wondering what this escape from death meant for her, Barbara heard of the deportation of the two Friends whom she had known at Bristol. Soon she was on her way to the Commander-in-Chief, with a feeling that God had sent her to give him a lesson.

> Beware that he was not found fighting against God, in opposing the Truth and persecuting the innocent; but like wise Gamaliel to let them alone, for if the work was of God, it would stand, but if of man, it would fail.

She heard later that Henry was so melancholy that he could not go to bowls or any other pass-time. Was she mistaken in thinking she had made some impression? Brought up in a puritan home, he could well believe that the God who had blown away the Spanish Armada might have diverted a ship from Cork to Dublin in order that a prophetess should bring him a warning. He let her go in peace to Cork, but his policies

[1] Spriggs Coll'n. MS., Vol. 156 (11).

remained unchanged. In order to restore religion in a ruined country, it was his duty to persuade as many respectable clergymen as possible to become ministers and teachers of the Gospel; and the Quakers criticized in public those very ministers, for being hirelings without vocation. But he had a more peremptory duty to keep order in an army of occupation, composed of puritans, many of whom he knew to be affected by Fifth Monarchy prophecies. Even if he had heard of the Quaker testimony against wars and fightings, which in truth was not yet clearly developed, he might well fear that some Quaker prophet might give signal for the Saints to take and possess the Kingdom foreseen in Daniel's seventh chapter.

I wish it were possible to indicate the content of the early Quaker message in Ireland by quoting a few contemporary paragraphs. In the 1672 folio volume of E. Burrough's works, he is called "Son of Thunder and Consolation." I take the thunder to be the voice of the prophet calling the professing Christian and the careless alike to repent, and obey the voice of Christ within and without; the consolation to be the loving fellowship of those who risked their liberty, property, and social position by attending the Quaker meetings.

The thought of repentance may be connected in our minds with the fear of punishment or with the hopes of a deliverer. In the terse dramatic phrase of Edmondson's journal, it seems to be the former.

> So the mayor [of Londonderry] asked me where I dwelt; I told him in the Queen's County. He asked what trade I was? I told him a ploughman. He asked my business there, and who sent me? I told him the Lord Jesus Christ sent me to warn them to repent, or he would lash them with his judgements. As I declared this, the Lord's power reached him, and he could not refrain from tears, being a tender spirited man. . . . So I went from the mayor, and beginning near the Watergate, I sounded the Lord's message through the streets; it was dreadful to the people, and several ran as before naked swords. As I came near the main guard, a soldier being at the door mocked, but in the dread of the Lord's power, I looked in at the guardhouse door, and cried,—Soldiers, all repent! The soldiers on the guard were smitten as men afrighted, for the power of the Lord was mighty, in which I performed this service.[1]

But another old ironside phrased it differently. In 1663 Miles Gray, of Cavan,

> for exhorting the people to repentance, and declaring the day of God's Love unto them, through the streets of Carrickfergus, was put into the

[1] *Journal*, 1820, p. 81, 82.

gaol there by Col. Charles Meredith, and the next day expelled the town, being driven thence by Geo. Spring the Gaoler, who beat him as he turned him out.[1]

Messages to Traders and Lawyers

We have, however, notes of some messages delivered to particular groups of people, under a feeling of command by God, and yet moral and social as well as religious. For example, Thomas Loe, to the folk in the market-place, 1657 or 1658:

> This is a warning and a charge to you all, from the presence of the living God of heaven and earth, to cease from cozening and cheating one another and from all deceit and deceitful merchandise. In all your buyings and sellings, come to plainness, to yea and nay in all things; that justice and equity may be set up, and righteousness may have a place in your hearts, and all deceit and fraud may be departed from, lest God's wrath break forth against you.
>
> Thomas Loe[2]

There seems little to catch the ear in this: only those who feared the prophet would remember the message.

One can imagine in the early days, before there were many convinced Quakers in Ireland able to give hospitality, how important must have been the willing service of innkeepers in strange parts to these rather unpopular "publishers of truth". Some of them became Quakers, and suffered imprisonment. Among the records of Cork meeting is the rather pitiful story of one of these who failed to reconcile two difficult callings.

Stephen Harris of Cork was an innholder who from being a great drinker became a zealous Friend, bore witness for the Truth in public, suffered imprisonment, and let his customers have no more drink than was good for them. But through lack of watchfulness and love of company became a backslider, though not so far as to lose his respect and love for Friends and Truth; according to the testimony which also records his sorrow at his end for his unfaithfulness. This testimony of 1680 is a great contrast to the hopeful and confident tones of 1655 and 1662.

In Swarthmore MSS. v, 22 (Transcripts vii, 109) we have "The Lawyers' Fee", 1656, by John Perrott, addressed

> To all you lawyers, attorneys, and clerks in the City of Dublin and Nation of Ireland, . . . the Almighty Searcher of all your hearts, and dark corners in secret, sees and beholds your loathesome abomina-

[1] Besse, *Sufferings*, 1753, II, 464.
[2] Swarthmore MSS. v, 8; Transcr. vii, 347.

tions, and how many of you join oftentimes as one in the destruction of your neighbour, by overthrowing his just cause for your unrighteous gain . . . For which things you cannot escape the judgements . . . for behold, behold, the Mighty Judge and God of Heaven and Earth is arisen . . .

Probably the lawyers of the Commonwealth courts were tough and deserved what he said, but I doubt if any would allow themselves to be influenced by that diatribe.

As a reply to John Perrott I quote from Edmondson what took place at Maryborough Assizes about 1664. The Rev. George Clapham "had drawn up two indictments against me; and when they came into court, four lawyers one after another pleaded for me, though I knew nothing of them or gave them any fee."[1]

Here is a paper from Edward Burrough to the magistrates of Ireland, undated, but referring to the imprisonments of 1661.

Friends, it is in my heart to advise you . . . that you be moderate concerning the breaking up of separated meetings, and be not passionate or rigorous, but wise and meek in your proceedings, lest you vex the Lord against yourselves. . . . For alas, is it not hard heartedness to hinder and prevent your honest neighbours from meeting together in so good an exercise as to wait upon the Lord, when you can justly charge nothing against them as to their conversations in the world and dealings between man and man? . . . For God never made you judges of men's consciences in spiritual matters, but only in outward things. If men transgress by doing that to their neighbours which they would not be done unto, in such cases you ought to judge justly by the law of God, but in spiritual cases, whether they will pray in one manner or another, or whether they will hear this man preach or another, you ought not to judge or prosecute. . . . Remember there is a God to whom you must give an account . . . and if you should pull and hale and imprison your honest neighbours, will not your conscience condemn you? And why should they be forced to your church and common prayer against their consciences? Would you yourselves be forced to go and hear mass? . . . Walk by the law of God, and prosecute not the sectaries (as you call them) for the same things for which you would not be prosecuted by the papists. But now, ye will say, you have good occasion to break the separated meetings, because they will rebel . . . as has happened in London. To which I say, I hope you will not condemn all for some, though some have given occasion . . . Further as for the Quakers, so called, they are not of a principle of rebellion, but of a principle of patient suffering, and though they are now under great reproach, be not too extreme toward them . . . for time and things and all men are in the hands of God to change at his pleasure . . . This is my loving advice and farewell to all you that bear rule in Ireland; be meek, sober, and upright in all your ways. But if

[1] *Journal*, 1820, p. 77.

you be otherwise and deal cruelly; vengeance belongs unto God, he will repay . . . I am a lover of all your souls, and a witness against all oppression.

Edward Burrough[1]

Was this ever printed as a broadside? If not, how did he expect it to reach its destination? Did the writer realize that his plea for freedom of worship for all law-abiding inhabitants would logically cover Catholic as well as Protestant dissenters? I believe that he was aware of its inclusive meaning.

Pastoral Epistles

We do not know exactly what kind of messages were delivered by the Publishers of Truth to their freshly convinced adherents, whom they called Friends if they came frequently to meet and wait in silence. We may guess that they were similar in content to the epistles which they sent back to the meetings after they had returned to England; except that a written message is never the same as the spoken word. We have copies of such epistles by a dozen different preachers; here is an abridgement of one from Francis Howgill to Ireland, dated London, 29.ix.1659.

Friends,—dwell in the life and power of God by which the soul comes to be redeemed out of death. . . . Wait that you may all know the fellowship of the gospel; keep low in the fear of the Lord which cleanseth the heart, and mind . . . that ye may all bring forth the fruits of the spirit which may demonstrate your being born again, and answer the witness of God even in the worst. . . . Every one keep to your proper gift, and therein be faithful. . . . Dwell in love one with another, and know one another in the spirit . . . and provoke one another to love, to humility and obedience, and so his blessing you will feel amongst you all. . . . Farewell

Francis Howgill[2]

Such writing would have little meaning except to those who had heard him and felt the power of devotion to Christ overflowing from him. Almost every word and phrase recalls the Gospels or Epistles. This should not surprise us. Where else could a Christian teacher find his spiritual vocabulary if he had not studied at a university? Some Quakers and other Puritans went so far as to maintain that any systematic theology going beyond the sentences of the New Testament was a human effort, belittling the divine prevision. But the

[1] Swarthmore MSS. v, 5; Transcr. vii, 25.
[2] Swarthmore MSS. vi, 49; Transcr. vii, 597.

Quakers, more than the other Puritans, believed Christ called them to live over again in a changed world the life of the Apostolic Church. Therefore they use the apostolic phrases more freely in daily Christian living, and they dare to put Christ's promises to the test in persecution and tribulation. This free use of the scriptures was their strength, but also their weakness. In England the language of the Authorised Version of James I had been used in every parish for two generations; it was familiar to English planters and soldiers. In Ireland attendance at the Anglican services had been made legally compulsory also; but this had been carried out successfully in very few parishes. For the majority of Irish and Anglo-Irish, the beauties of the English Bible would have little meaning, and no attraction.

Some Notable Converts

The "First Publishers of Truth" in Ireland were not chiefly concerned with laying the foundation of a new institution, connexion, or society. Their vocation as they believed was to witness to the true nature of the mystical church, of Christ, revealed partially in the New Testament, and to seek men and women whom God was calling to join them in witnessing. They had many failures, and some success in this search. One of them wrote about their converts that they came faithfully to meetings, "but did not take up the cross." Another said that they "knew little of the power." In truth the atmosphere of Ireland in 1655 must have been very damping to enthusiasm. None the less, some red-hot enthusiasts were recruited; Robert Malyns, William Ames, John Perrott, John Love, Samuel Buckley, who left Ireland never to return; also others who remained, (Cornet) Edward Cooke, and his wife Lucretia, (Ensign) William Morris, Robert Turner, who were not long in attracting as strong opposition as William Edmondson himself. William Morris had been a Baptist elder, as well as an officer, and we have a farewell letter of his addressed to his old connexion, interesting because it shows how near some of the Baptists were to the Quakers as well as how far. One paragraph describes the scene on Sunday morning in College Green, at a time when Fleetwood as Lord Deputy had attracted worldly folk to join the Baptists in hopes of promotion; neither they nor their wives had puritan notions of dress.

But come now, let us reason together, . . . and in the dread of the Lord God when you are quiet, meditate upon these things. . . . Are you indeed a church of God. Doth not Christ say he hath chosen his out of the world, and therefore the world hateth them. Are ye indeed out of the world? Wherein is the difference more than in baptism and singing? . . . Doth the world hate you? . . . How shall they know you from their own? Wherein do ye witness against the world and its kingdom?

Stand but at the gate of your assembly in Dublin upon a first day of the week, behold and hear. What rattling of coaches, lashing with whips, and prancing of horses (to the annoying and endangering of the passengers) there is before Chichester House, and see, is there more at any idol-temple in the city? And if any of the servants of the Lord be moved to go into your meeting to testify against evil practices . . . are they not immediately thrust out of doors? And is this a good savour before the Lord God, think ye? . . . Do such things commend you in the sight of God? Are they marks of members of Christ? Are these the garments of the bride, the Lamb's wife?

The following final paragraph is of interest because its writer has been dismissed from all his employment for joining the Quakers.

But he that will follow the guide will find a daily cross to take up, a narrow way to walk in, and a strait gate to enter, and this it is which sets the whole world in a wonder, to wit, the cross of Christ; a foolish thing to the world's wisdom, and a mortal weapon to the carnal will and yet the mighty power of salvation. Everyone that will be Christ's disciple must take up his daily cross; a foolish thing, that he who hath been honourable, rich, and accounted wise in the world must now part with all, freed voluntarily for Christ, become a fool, and take the lowest seat. Many chose affliction rather than pleasure, the reproach of Christ rather than riches or honour, a foolish thing to the carnal mind. Yet know ye all that say ye are seeking an eternal inheritance, this is a condition annexed to the Crown; no Crown without a Cross. And so, friends, if I never see your faces more, nor you never hear more of me hereafter, you are forever henceforth without excuse having been faithfully warned and admonished for the Lord by his unworthy servant and a lover of your souls,

W.M.[1]

From the pen of Edward Cooke of Bandon we have a paper which represents Quakerism, not at its best, but at its most anti-clerical.

Here are many young scholars lately come over into Ireland, young priests sent from Oxford or Cambridge . . . and the Committee of Old Priests sitting at Dublin have approved of them. Here they come and challenge the tenth part of our goods, which they say is now their own. And when they can find an old ruinated masshouse, they get an order for reparing of it. And if any do refuse paying for the mending of this old place, (which the land is full of) grant forth their warrants

[1] Swarthmore MSS. v, 34; Transcr. vii, 147-154.

to distrain other peoples goods because they cannot for conscience sake repair the papists' old houses. . .

Now these young priests are not like the first planters of the Gospel, who used to travel from city to city publishing the gospel freely, and from house to house eating what was before them; and they had no certain dwelling place.[1]

Was Gaelic a Barrier?

I have been asked whether the Gaelic language prevented Quakerism from spreading among the Irish. If I put myself in the shoes of a "mere Irishman" about 1654, remembering Tudor wars and Stuart plantations by tradition, and the long Civil War by experience, I should have been in no state of mind to accept any religious ideas from the conquerors. More probably Irish and Anglo-Irish would be hoping for a miraculous return of the good old days, when their religion had been practised with full ceremony, their clergy and nuns respected. They would not quickly see any difference between the various puritan sects, and possibly would not consider Quakerism to be a religion at all. Latin was the language of religion, and the publication of Barclay's *Apology* in Latin in 1676 might seem the first sign of respectability.

There were a minority who accepted the apparent fact that Cromwell's victory had finished off Catholic and Gaelic culture, and were ready to make a new start, for the sake of their families. Such men, seeking land and position, would turn to the religion in favour in Dublin Castle. For them Quakerism offered nothing but trouble in this world.

The one example of propaganda in Gaelic is found in Rutty (page 129), the visit in 1678 of Katharine Norton, who in her tour round the Friends' meetings preached in Irish in Lurgan market, and had several meetings near Coleraine where her relatives lived. Her maiden name had been McLaughlin, daughter of Irish parents of good family who sent her to be educated at Derry. When she was sixteen, there came a ship to Derry to take in passengers for Barbados, in which she embarked and landed in that island, where she was married. Some time after, that island being visited by George Fox and some others, she was convinced by their ministry, and after became an able minister. And that is almost all that is known about her; there are copies of two letters by her preserved at 6 Eustace Street, Dublin, and some references to her in Swarthmore MSS. What a pity she left us no account

[1] Swarthmore MSS. xi, 8; Transcr. vii, 471.

of her adventures. And to think that Quakers in Ireland, having found such a treasure, did not persuade her to settle in her native land.

Quakers Sometimes Considered to be Witches

I have also been asked how the seventeenth-century Quakers escaped being rounded up by their enemies as witches, and dealt with accordingly. I cannot answer that, but here follow a few notes that concern Quakers in Ireland. Needless to say witchcraft has been used to cover a wide variety of practices, bad, indifferent, or harmless. In the Conway Letters[1] we find that for the talented Lady Anne's illness, for which he had consulted the best doctors in England, including the famous discoverer of the circulation of the blood, Viscount Conway and Killultagh was advised as a last resort to try the "moss that grows on slain men's skulls." So he wrote to a brother-in-law at Lisburn to procure it locally, thinking that a dozen years after the end of the Civil War should have grown a good crop. This was white magic, for a healing purpose; but if some poor old woman had been dabbling in it instead of a Privy Councillor, she might have got into trouble. The same Viscount, to please his wife when she joined the Quakers, arranged to free three Quaker tenants imprisoned at Carrick prisons for tithe offences, and paid their fees.

The Quaker message was first preached in Youghal, Kinsale, and probably Cork, by women. This must have seemed a strange novelty in Ireland. Some of the women were put in prison, but we do not hear of physical violence against them. Was this because no one was afraid of them, or because it seemed luckier to keep off them; who could be sure what spirit was in them? When Barbara Blaugdone was in Cork, where she found old Bristol acquaintances, including Governor Phayre and his wife, we are informed by Besse; "Many of her former friends grew afraid of her, speaking in so solemn and awful a manner as made them tremble. Others called her a witch, and kept out of her way till their servants turned her out of doors."[2]

In that century the human mind was struggling fitfully to be rid of its agelong fears of ghosts and evil spirits. In this

[1] *Conway Letters, . . . Anne Viscountess Conway . . .* Ed. Marjorie Nicolson, 1930.

[2] Besse: *Sufferings*, ii, 459.

respect the Quakers were allies of the rationalists and agnostics. Because they were accustomed to wait in silence for the movings of the Spirit of Christ, they were free from the dread of any lesser spirit. Their graveyards, sanctified not by a bishop, but by the meeting for worship at every funeral, must have caused worry to superstitious neighbours. The following extract from an epistle sent by Robert Stepney to Anthony Sharp in 1678 uses a simile from this universal superstition to point his good advice.

> And now being in a weighty sense of God and having his fear before my eyes, it is in my heart to advise thee and the rest of friends to a reconciling of whatever of difference hath been among you. Let it die, and a grave be made for it, that the dead may never come to trouble the living.[1]

From the *Great Book of Sufferings* at 6 Eustace Street, Dublin, comes a strange tale which I do not remember having seen in print:

> 1673 George Gregson being a goldsmith, had in the year 1661 clippings of English coins offered him to buy by a stranger at his shop window. He knowing it to be contrary to the law of the land to buy or conceal the same, therefore informed a magistrate of it who committed the owner of the said clippings to the gaol and bound the said George to prosecute at the next assizes. But when it came to trial before the judge, it being required of George to swear as a witness in the case, which for conscience sake he could not do and break the command of Christ who saith "Swear not at all", he was fined five pounds, put in bar amongst thieves, and committed into custody of a cruel gaoler who put a bolt on his leg at night with many threatening words. And the next day he was brought into the bar again amongst felons and was at night brought from thence along the streets among those who were charged with felony, murder, and witchcraft, who were suffered to have their hats on; and so was put into the worst prison with two women, one of whom was charged with witchcraft and the other of whoredom and murdering of her child; which place was very foul and noisome with excrement, where he was kept close, and the owner of the clippings cleared and set at liberty. But the judge before his departure thence reduced the fine to five shillings, and notwithstanding he could not pay the said fine for conscience sake, the sheriff released him when the judge had gone.
>
> And the next assizes the said George was indicted for being a Quaker, and notwithstanding the judge said that the indictment was insufficient in law, (or words to that purpose) he left him a prisoner for fees.

Now we know that George Gregson kept his shop in Lisburn on the site now occupied by the Northern Bank; therefore the assizes would be at Carrickfergus. This is the

[1] Sharp MSS. (Eustace Street, Dublin), 55, No. 2.

town of which the Rev. Alexander Peden remarked casually that a certain black sheep of his flock "was burnt at Carrickfergus, which is the usual punishment for murderers of children there." Why then did the gaoler put George Gregson into a cell with two women who had a prospect of being burnt? Three ingenious explanations have been suggested. (1) Prison accommodation was scarce, and he thought any old cell good enough for a Quaker. (2) Tampering with the King's coinage was connected with the black art. George Gregson, by refusing to swear had made himself an accomplice with the coiner; he was no better than a witch. (3) As the Quakers were notorious for allowing women to preach, the gaoler, in derision, gave him two hard cases, whom he could try to convert into preachers.

The loss of the hat seems to have annoyed him as much as the foulness of the cell. It may have been taken from him because the Quakers refused to take off their hats except in honour of God. But surely he might have been prepared for that. Can it be that in Co. Antrim in 1661, the English were recognized by their hats, the Scots by their bonnets, and the Irish by their luxuriant growth of hair?

When I lived in Central India, I was informed that at important times such as weddings, timid folk make careful arrangements to avoid one moment of silence, lest it should give a fatal opportunity to witches or evil spirits. It would not be surprising to find similar fears among our ancestors. We are told something like it by Rutty on page 279 about Thomas Wight, the compiler of the early part of his history. About the age of 16, while an apprentice to a clothier at Bandon, he went to a Quaker meeting out of curiosity; but finding that the people sat silent for a long time, he began to be very uneasy, and to think within himself, that as he had heard that the Quakers were witches, he might be bewitched if he should stay longer. However he waited a little, until Francis Howgill got up and said, "Before the eye can see, it must be opened; before the ear can hear, it must be unstopped; and before the heart can understand, it must be illuminated."[1]

In that eighteenth-century thriller, *The Life of the Rev. Alexander Peden*, who took refuge in Co. Antrim for some time after Bothwell Brig in 1670 and again about 1681, is found a very tall story, which yet may reveal some effects of

[1] Rutty, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., 1820, p. 299.

a silent meeting on a Scots minister who had crossed the North Channel as a refugee.

As Mr. Peden was travelling by himself in Ireland, the night came on, and a dark mist which obliged him to go into a house belonging to a Quaker. Mr. Peden said, "I must beg the favour of the roof of your house all night." *Q.* Thou art a stranger. Thou art very welcome, and shalt be kindly entertained, but I cannot wait upon thee, for I am going to the meeting. *Mr. P.* I will go along with you. *Q.* Thou may if thou please, but thou must not trouble us. *Mr. P.* I will be civil.

When they came to the meeting, as their ordinary is, they sat for some time silent, some with their faces to the wall, and others covered. There being a void in the loft above them, there came down the appearance of a raven, and sat upon one man's head, who started up immediately and spoke with such vehemence, that the froth flew from his mouth. It went to a second, and he did the same, and to a third who did as the former two. Mr. P., sitting near to the landlord, said, "Do you see that? you will not deny it afterward." When they dismissed, going home, Mr. P. said to him, "I always thought that there was devilry amongst you, but never thought that he did appear visibly among you until now that I have seen it." The poor man fell a weeping, and said, "I perceive that God hath sent you to my house, and put it into your heart to go along with me, and permitted the devil to appear visibly among us this night. I never saw your like before. Let me have the help of your prayers." After this he became a singular christian.

This yarn is reprinted in Seymour's *Irish Witchcraft & Demonology*, 1913. But when I tracked down an original Life of Peden in the National Library of Ireland, I discovered that the Quaker story had been omitted from the edition printed in Cork, 1794, though good enough for English readers.

Effects of the Restoration of Charles II

The Restoration of Charles II changed the situation and hopes of the Quakers as deeply in Ireland as in England, but neither Edmondson's *Journal* nor Rutty tell us much about what happened. In *Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Ireland*, 1660-1662 (ed. R. P. Mahaffy, 1905), p. 191, we are given the terms of the Proclamation by the Lords Justices & Council, January 22, 1661 "against the holding of unlawful assemblies by Papists, Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, Quakers and other fanatical persons." This was doubtless the result of the Fifth Monarchy rising in London. But according to Fuller's *Sufferings*, page 126, the number of Quakers imprisoned, in Ireland in 1660 was 124, in 1661, 135, and in 1662, 47. He also informs us that Mountrath and Eustace, the Lords Justices of 1660, and also Orrery, who

became Deputy in 1661, were personally favourable. I interpret this to mean that there was a general imprisonment of the leading Friends early in each year, and that Edmondson was successful in getting a general release on two occasions, once through Mountrath, and once through Orrery.

Three documents kept at Friends House, London, refer to Cork, where Burrough and Howgill had been more successful than in Dublin. Swarthmore MSS. vol. v, no. 94, is addressed to Lt. Col. Barrington, governor, and Jonas Morris, mayor of Cork, and shows why the obligations attached to a bond proposed to be signed by the prisoners could not be accepted by the Quakers. This copy is not dated or signed, and is written in the high and confident style of 1655-6; e.g.

> we are bound in a bond which can never be broken unto the Lord of Heaven and Earth . . . to do unto every man as we would be done by.
>
> That spirit by which we are led, and in which we worship the God of our fathers, leads us into tenderness toward all, and not into enmity against any.
>
> Let proof be made against us wherein we have showed disaffections in these turning times more unto you than to those that are turned out by you. . . .
>
> Take heed how you receive the counsel or information of such who would have us turned out of the city for self ends, and to lift or enrich themselves by our destruction.

Swarthmore MSS. vol. v, no. 91 (Transcripts vii, 355) is headed "By the Lord Justices in Council, Max Eustace, canc., Orrery, Mountrath," and subscribed, "Given at the Council Chamber at Dublin, 4 May 1661. Kildare, Jerem. Dunensis, Fran. Aungier, R. Coote, W. Caulfield, Kingston, Hen. Tichborne, Rob. Meredith, Arthur Hill, M. Trevor."

> Considering that at His Majesty's coronation he is graciously pleased to extend acts of clemency to his subjects, we think fit that persons commonly called Quakers may partake . . . and therefore order that Francis Rogers, Jr., Tobias Weare, Alex. Atkins, John Conner, Philip Godfrey, Rich Brocklesby, Wm. Thorne, Geo. Peate, Christopher Pennock, Randall Cuszens, Thos. Chandler, Geo. Smithfield, Ananias Skello, John Edwards, Wm. Steele, Geo. Neno, David Williams, Philip Dimond, Rich. Jordan, Robt. Wheston, Jer. Cary, George White, Tho. Cooke, James Pucteridge, Step. Haris, Tho. Biss, Wm. Driver, Tho. Alley, Rich. Abraham, John Buttler, Robert Sandham, John Clarke, Edward Alby, John Workman, John Gosage, John Davis, Wm. Morris, Richard Pike, Daniel Savory, John Exham, Nicolas Turke, and Leonard Robinson remaining prisoners at Cork, and such persons as are now prisoners at Waterford, Limerick, Youghal, Maryborough, and Cashel, if they stand committed for no other cause than being Quakers, do before the Chief Magistrate

respectively engage themselves and promise hereafter to demeane themselves dutifully and loyally to His Majesty . . . such magistrates do then give order . . . to release them, they paying their due fees . . . And as the petitioners do now receive the favour from His Majesty . . . we do let them know that if any of them, instead of going to their parish churches . . . shall leave their habitations . . . and join with others under the pretence of the worship and service of God, such meetings are unlawful and not to be suffered . . . a warning that they may not presume to offend in that kind and so render themselves liable to those punishments which by the laws of the land are justly to be inflicted.

Jerem. Dunensis somewhat disguises Jeremy Taylor, recently consecrated Bishop of Down and Connor. Those who have appreciated his prose style will regret that his King and his Church could not find him more suitable work than imprisoning Quakers.

Our third document, Swarthmore MSS., vol. v, no. 92 (Transcripts vii, 357), is the most important, because it definitely attempts to set out the "state of our principles, by way of reply."

you were pleased to grant an order for our releasement, yet upon such hard conditions as . . . gives us not one weeks security from future bondage, except we utterly forsake our meetings. For first you enjoin us . . . to engage . . . to behave ourselves dutifully, loyally . . . which terms we cannot subscribe . . . firstly because since the restoration of the King . . . we have behaved ourselves both innocently and peaceably . . . and now after twelve weeks wrong imprisonment, to subscribe . . . would . . . justify those that wrongfully committed us. . . . 2ndly, we do not know how far the words "dutifully and loyally" may be construed and extended to . . . restrain us from God's spiritual worship. The next thing is to pay fees; . . . this, being innocent, we cannot do, lest we make ourselves accessory to our own injuries and other mens' injustices, whom, though we can forgive, we cannot fee for wrong imprisonment.

Lastly, which is our greatest grievance, you seem to hold our meetings but pretence. . . . To which we solemnly . . . affirm that our meetings were instituted according to the will of God, and the doctrine of Christ and his disciples; that they were and are . . . employed in worshipping God in spirit and in truth; in watchfulness and prayer in the Holy Ghost; in working out our own salvation in fear and trembling; in giving all diligence to making our calling and election sure; in edifying one another in the most holy faith. And that these and such-like are the ends . . . of our meetings, we call the living and eternal God to be our witness, by whose almighty power we are preserved in these our lingering sufferings for his living truth; and neither dare dissemble nor deny . . . our meetings, if there were no deliverer on the earth.

Therefore . . . that yourselves, the Parliament and people of this kingdom may be satisfied . . . we hereby, as in the presence of the

Lord, declare . . . that we do own Charles II who was about a year ago proclaimed King of England, Scotland, Ireland to be the chief and supreme Magistrate and Ruler under God . . . 2nd. that . . . saving our duties to Almighty God, we do next under him acknowledge our duty . . . to the King, and unto all his righteous and just commands shall cheerfully . . . yield obedience in the Lord. 3rdly, that if the King require ought of us . . . contrary to our faith, and which for conscience sake we cannot freely do, or leave undone, we shall rather choose patiently to suffer than to sign; and shall not rise up with carnal weapons to resist him or to work our own deliverance, (hereby utterly renouncing the use of all such instruments whereby to draw the blood of any man, or break the public peace) but shall in patience and well-doing commit our cause unto the Lord who judges righteously. 4th. That we do utterly renounce all plotting, conspiring, and attempting violence against the King, his government, or any in subordinate authority under him. . . . it shall be our constant practice, (if we are in health and able) forthwith to appear before any person in lawful authority over us, from the King to the Constable, according to due and lawful summons given us.

These things, in the singleness . . . of our hearts we do publish and make known unto you; and according to the principles thus truly stated, we do engage . . . active or passive obedience to the King. Which we desire may be accepted on his behalf, our bodies released . . . our meetings permitted . . . our liberty restored . . . according to his Declaration from Breda . . . but as we claim the benefit thereof, shall ever keep the condition inviolate on our parts.

Evidently there was at least one of the prisoners trained in writing legal documents; and three months in prison together gave them time to discuss matters. One point strikes me as curious; their desire to be solemn led them rather near using an oath in several places. The phrase, "as in the presence of the Lord" had its special meaning. All their meetings for discussing common affairs began with a short meeting for worship. Relying on one of their favourite sayings of Christ, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst", the phrase was used for any action taken after joint worship. For example, some early marriage certificates are worded "In the presence of the Lord, and before an assembly of his people."

Whether these documents were a help or a hindrance in getting the prisoners released, they give a careful statement of principle and practice of Quakers in Ireland for several centuries. It is strange that they went out of sight as documents, and have not been, so far as I know, published until now.

Quakerism had begun as a movement to reform all churches in the light of Christ. A century later it was a

Christian sect, interested chiefly in guarding the purity of its worship and of its members. It should be possible to illustrate this change, how it occurred, and the speed of the process, from the smaller group in Ireland, for comparison with similar change in England and America.

Fox's Visit and its Effects in Corporate Life

The visit of George Fox to Ireland in 1669 must have been a landmark. In Edmondson's phrase, "he settled men's and women's meetings, that faithful men and women should take care in the government of church affairs amongst our society." But that phrase was written a generation later. Fox's account of his visit is difficult to follow; it would seem that he lost the note of the place names. Apparently the meetings for discipline were already in existence, and he visited everyone of them; he says he had written about forming them a year before from England. But we know that Dublin Friends had had a treasurer as early as 1657, who kept the "stock", and paid ten shillings to Richard Waller in prison.

Apart from the deep interest Friends in Ireland must have felt in meeting face to face the founder of their movement, we may trace the influence of Fox in making the discipline uniform, in encouraging women's meetings, and in persuading the men to start keeping minutes and family records in books. We have sets of minutes with scarcely a gap from 1670 for the National or Yearly Meeting, three Province or Quarterly meetings, and seven local Men's or Monthly meetings. For ten other local meetings, the early minutes are missing. Mostly the scribes are anonymous; all were unpaid, struggling with quill pens and home-made ink, without a spelling dictionary, to note briefly the decisions of a group that had come together "in the name of the Lord." When we consider the fire and brimstone fate that has befallen so many public and church records in Ireland, our own imperfect books must be considered a wonderful tribute to the personality of George Fox.

From the seventeenth century we also have in Dublin the *Book of Sufferings*, mostly to be found printed in Fuller & Holme, Stockdale,[1] or Besse; Anthony Sharp's correspondence from about 1670-1705; and the *Great Book of Tithe*. This last has been neglected by historians because the

[1] William Stockdale, *The Great Cry of Oppression*, 1683.

once burning subject became an annual bore. It was decided in 1680 that refusal to pay tithe would be a distinguishing mark of Quakerism in Ireland. Christ had put an end to the Temple sacrifices and priesthood; the gospel was free to all; therefore to demand or pay compulsory tithe was a kind of blasphemy. All Friends were asked to send in a brief testimony of their conscientious objection to paying tithe, and we have them all copied in this book. After that, any Friend known to have allowed anyone to pay tithe for him was publicly condemned and excluded from the Men's meeting.

So in this book we have a few sentences written individually, no two the same wording, by 780 Quakers living in Ireland in 1680, adult householders liable for tithe or church-rate, or their wives; no apprentices or children. There are 340 from Ulster including 156 women; 295 from Leinster, including 59 women; and 163 from Munster, including 61 women. All of them were literate; there are no "so-and-so his mark" as we occasionally find in marriage certificates. Here we have the only document giving us any idea of the number of Quakers in Ireland while the first generation were still living, and before the ruins of the Jacobite War. For comparison I give for each Men's meeting the total number, with the number of women in brackets, who signed. Some of the women would, however, be widows with separate households.

Ulster Charlemont 40 (19); Ballymoney 12 (3); Grange (near Randalstown) 8 (4); Antrim 23 (11); Carrickfergus 5 (4); Belfast 6 (3); In & about Lisburn 93 (40); Lurgan 60 (31); Ballyhagan 70 (32); Cavan 23 (9).

Leinster Drogheda 5 (1); Dublin 49 (10); Co. Wicklow 54 (21); Co. Wexford, 55 (13); Newgarden (Carlow) 46 (10); Mountmellick 21 (3); Birr 13 (1); Ballynakill 8 (0); Moate 31 (0); Edenderry 13 (0).

Munster Castlesalem 7 (3); Bandon 29 (13); Cork 44 (15); Mallow 10 (4); Charleville 7 (3); Limerick 32 (14); Youghall 17 (6); Co. Tipperary 10 (0); Waterford 7 (3).

The five hundred distinct surnames are predominatly English. A quick glance through the list reveals four that might be Irish, one Anglo-Irish, and two dozen Scots, mainly Lowland names. If Robert Barclay had seen this, he would not have fallen into the temptation of detecting the Celtic mind working in the Dublin National Meeting in 1686.[1] If we had a comparable list for about 1710, we might find

[1] *Inner Life*, p. 491.

the Irish names slightly, and the Scots considerably, risen in numbers.

Another interesting fact emerges from the testimonies. Several Friends declared that they had not paid any tithe for eighteen years, "since we first became a people." Clearly it was their opinion that the year 1662 had seen the transformation of the Quakers from an advanced wing of the reforming puritan movement into an independent Christian body. That was the year when after a sharp attempt to suppress all the "separated meetings" by fines and imprisonment, the local magistrates had mostly left the Quakers to meet in peace without legal sanction.

In the earliest marriage certificates of which copies exist, the words run, "at a meeting of the people of God, in scorn called quakers." But in the oldest book of Mountmellick meeting, believed to be in William Edmondson's handwriting, we find, "The People and Church of God in scorn called Quakers" on the title page. Forty years later or more, he spoke of "our society." Was this a revolution in his thinking, or just a development? And what about the other changes in their thinking; about membership in the Society, and the duties of Ministers, Elders, and Overseers; about the nature of the "world" from which they were to keep themselves "unspotted", and the development of the testimonies on Temperance and Peace; lastly, the slow change in their relations with other Christian groups, and with their clergy? I believe all these can be of great interest in the hands of a competent historian, who will make use of the limited experience in the Yearly Meeting of Ireland for comparison with the more varied life in England and America.