

Seventeenth-Century Quaker Marriages in Ireland

CORK Men's Minutes provide an interesting illustration of church co-operation in the year 1683. The following extract is taken from the Minutes of 3rd, 11th month that year.

“It being mentioned to this meeting by some Friends that the Register of the Bishop's Court of Cork did inform them that the present Bishop of Cork observing some favour Extended by the Council Table at Dublin towards the Papists in reference to their Marriages, that though they were not done according to the rules of the English Clergie, yet they should be owned Lawful upon causing a record to be made in the Registers office of the Bishops Court; upon which the said Bishop according as the register have informed John Haman, did say, why might the Quakers Marriages be made Lawfull that way, as well as the Papists? and with all signified to the Register his willingness thereunto. The said register having informed some Friends thereof and that if friends will cause an entry of their marriages after Consumation, to be made in his office, It shall be done and Approved of by them. The most of this Meeting thinking Well of it, have Left it to Francis Rogers and John Haman to go to the said Register and further inform themselves hereof, and unless they saw something in the relation of it that may be inconsistant will treat to close with him in it.”

No further entry occurs on the subject until 24th, 1st month 1687, when the following is recorded:

“The Bishop of Corke having lately spoake to Francis Rogers that his register should record our marriages in his office, paying him his fee and it appearing there was an order in this book the 3. 11.mo. 83. Leaving the further understanding thereof to Francis Rogers and John Hamans enquiry. Its now desired the sd. Francis and Jon Haman may go again and enquire of the sd. Register whether they will record the certificates fully as we see fit to draw it (in our own book) and will indorse on the back of the Certificate that the same was examined and recorded and allowed of by him or them, and also whether they will leave friends to

their liberty that in case anyone might not have freedom to have their marriage so entered they shall not be troubled for it nor summoned by apparator But such as are willing to have the marriage so entered will pay as accustomed for it. That when they have thus informed themselves are to give an account to next mens Meeting."

It will be recalled that the Bishop of Cork at this period was Edward Wetenhall (1636-1713) who was bishop of the diocese of Cork and Ross from 1679 until his translation to Kilmore and Ardagh in 1699. *The Dictionary of National Biography* notices that he was one of the seven bishops who remained in Ireland during the troubles which began in 1688, being exposed to much ill-usage at the hands of the partisans of James II. As early as 1682 he is said to have advocated concessions to the dissenters, and perhaps his approach to Cork Friends falls in with his policy in that respect.

In 1698 Wetenhall entered into controversy with Friends in answer to "Gospel-truths held and briefly declared by the people called Quakers," dated from Dublin, 14.iii.1698, and signed by William Penn, Thomas Story, Anthony Sharp and George Rooke. William Penn wrote a *Defence* (1698, 2 editions, Wing P. 1273, 1274) and Wetenhall answered with *A brief and modest reply to Mr. Penn's tedious, scurrilous and unchristian Defence* (1699, Wing W. 1489), to which Thomas Wight and Nicholas Harris replied (as Penn was in Pennsylvania at the time) with *Truth further defended, and William Penn vindicated* (1700, W. 2108). In 1710 he drew up a memorial to the Lord Lieutenant, urging the need of providing "books of religion" in the Irish language.

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