

More First Publishers of Truth

STUDENTS of Quaker beginnings have come to recognize the value of the efforts made when the movement was twenty-five to seventy years old to recover local information on the subject. The results existed in part in a packet in the possession, about 1840, of Josiah Foster of Tottenham and consulted then by Abram Rawlinson Barclay (Friends House Library, Portfolio, 31/124), who believed they were solicited about 1717 by London Yearly Meeting in the desire to assist William Sewel in his *History*. At a later date Norman Penney found some ninety papers generally of this type collected in Portfolio 7 which he edited in five parts 1905–1907 under the title *The First Publishers of Truth* (usually abbreviated as *F.P.T.*). Several of these are duplicates and others are really answers to other questionnaires of the period, on, for example, the local sufferings of Friends as No. 46 (London, pp. 153–157), Nos. 55–60 (Norwich, pp. 169–193), or the lives of local Friends who became ministers (No. 75 Westmorland, pp. 241–273), or who suffered as martyrs in the locality as Nos. 47–49 (London, pp. 157–162). On the other hand for London a more likely answer to the *F.P.T.* questionnaire is embedded in the life of Gilbert Latey edited by his nephew Richard Hawkins (see *J.F.H.S.* 36 (1939) pp. 52–58), while for Norwich the replies were recorded in the MS “Book of the Sufferings of the People of God called Quakers in the City of Norwich”, to judge from the quotations from it in A. J. Eddington’s *The First Fifty Years of Quakerism in Norwich*, 1932, pp. 2f, 22.

Additional materials were published by Norman Penney in his text and in issues of *J.F.H.S.*, summarized in *J.F.H.S.* 31 (1934) pp. 3ff, where I added further examples for Lancashire and Warwickshire. Other addenda for Staffordshire and Lancashire (Hawkshead) were published in *J.F.H.S.* 32 (1935) pp. 51f, 53. The present contribution is intended to continue the process of supplementing *F.P.T.*

IRELAND

It has commonly been supposed that the *F.P.T.* questionnaire was limited to England and Wales. Benjamin Bealing’s

lists of counties heard from and not heard from mention none outside.¹ But the evidence for a similar undertaking in Ireland is unmistakable. Its date does not coincide with any of the three periods, 1676, 1704 and 1720, when the London central meetings circulated the requests. It occurred about 1698. Its initiative can be traced back to the National Half Year's Meeting. Whether it was suggested by an English Friend or meeting does not appear. William Penn, who had some hand in it at the time of the first English questionnaire² was a respected visitor in Ireland about that time. And the terms of those early queries are reflected in the Irish formulation. I repeat them here for comparison in substance though not any uniform phrasing

Who first brought the glad tidings of Truth?
 What sufferings did they have to bear?
 What Friends received their message?
 What labourers went forth to preach the Gospel?
 What judgments have fallen upon persecutors?
 What enemies have been converted?³

The minutes of the National Half Year's Meeting held at Dublin the 9th, 10th and 11th days of 3rd Month, 1698, include the following:

It being proposed that Friends in every province take care at their respective monthly meetings to inform themselves of the rise and progress of Truth and Friends in their respective places as,

First Who, came in the beginning with Truth's testimony among them

2dly, Who received Truth first in those parts

3dly, What eminent sufferings followed for their testimony bearing

4thly, What magistrates were moderate and who were persecutors

5thly, What judgments came upon persecutors

6thly, What Friends in the particular meetings the Lord brought forth in a publique testimony, and when

7thly, Likewise what faithful men there were and good examples that had not a publique testimony that served in their generation according to Truth⁴

¹ *F.P.T.* Frontispiece.

² See *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association*, 33, 1944, pp. 67-72.

³ These appear to have been the six questions sent out in 1676. Cf. *F.P.T.* 24, 26 (Cornwall), *J.F.H.S.* 31 (1934) pp. 3-19 (Lancashire).

⁴ Copies in Book A2, Friends Historical Library, 6 Eustace Street, Dublin, p. 147.

Six months later epistles from each of the Province Meetings to the National Half Year's Meeting, show their somewhat reluctant response. Leinster province meeting, held at Mountmellick in 9th month 1698, reported they had "not been unmindful of the request, but not much had been done". They suggested that "if it be found needful work, it may again be recommended".

The Province Meeting for Munster replied on the subject:

So far as could be collected from what hath been remembered by former discourses of ancient Friends deceased and what was found in writing upon other occasion hath been noted and a small narrative thereof drawn and goes herewith. But it hath no further relation than to the county of Cork. As for the other counties of this province, it hath been recommended and lies before them to do what they can of the like nature.

The Province Meeting at Lurgan, 8 mo. 29, 1698, said:

As to that recommended to inform ourselves of the rise and progress of Truth and Friends . . . being matters something difficult to undertake and accomplish to satisfaction with safety, we have omitted doing much therein, but if it must be insisted on then we desire your more particular directions and advice to the performing thereof.¹

What lies behind these reports could doubtless be gleaned from a survey of all the actual minutes of the Provincial Meetings and of the Monthly Meetings that are preserved from this period. I shall quote a few that I was able to find in limited time and travel. The process by which the meetings aimed to secure the information is more disclosed than is the resulting information. Perhaps some of the papers referred to could be found, or are incorporated in other records.

There are the following minutes from Munster Province Meeting:²

10th of 8 mo. 1698

Whereas the last Half Year's Meeting recommended to Friends to draw up something for a record of the first Friends that came into these parts with the message of the Gospel, the progress of Truth, etc., Thomas Wight having drawn up a narrative of it and read to the meeting, it's desired that a copy of it may be

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 169, 170 and 172.

² Minutes of Munster Province Meeting, 1694-1700, Vol. "Cork 7" at 6 Eustace Street, Dublin.

sent to Dublin's Half Year's Meeting with other papers of the sort. And whereas Limerick Friends, County of Tipperary Friends, and Waterford Friends have done nothing therein, it's desired they may be put upon doing [what] they can time enough to be sent to the Half Year's Meeting. Copies whereof to be taken and one copy to be in our own meeting book and other to send to the next Province Meeting—Thos. Pearce and James Slater for Limerick—George Pa[]ker and Jno. Fennell for the County of Tipperary—Samuel Constant, George Wright and David Hutchinson for Waterford.

21 9 mo. 1698

Memorandum: to call on the business in the last meeting's proceeding concerning the rise of Truth, etc. Waterford Friends sent in a small paper which may be produced to next meeting.

13 12 mo. 1698

Friends of the county of Tipperary gave an account that they can give no very particular and distinct account of who published Truth in those part[s] in the beginning, etc. Friends of Limerick having collected something are desired to bring it to the next Province Meeting.

27 1 mo. 1699

A paper being received from Limerick Friends of the rise of Truth in that city and read, it's desired to send to the next Half Year's Meeting.

The Dublin records show merely memoranda of postponing the matter from meeting to meeting, without any conclusion:

6 7 mo. 1698

Mind the next meeting about the rise and progress of Truth, etc. directed from Half Year's Meeting.

20 7 mo. 1698 and later

Similar memoranda.

The Three Weeks Meeting of the City of Cork includes in its minutes the following:¹

20 4 mo. 1698

Desired that Friends may inform themselves by enquiring one of another, in particular Jos. Fenn is desired to enquire of his father to be informed what ministering Friends were the first publishers of Truth in these parts, whether men or women with their names, and who were the first convinced by them, and if may be in what year.

11 5 mo. 1698

Upon enquiry who were the first Friends that publisht the blessed tydings of the Gospel of peace in this latter age, it's

¹ The Book for the Minutes of the Men's Meeting of the Citie of Cork, 1694-1708; marked "Cork 2" at Eustace Street, Dublin.

understood that about the year 1655 Eliz. Fletcher and Eliz. Smyth came into the County of Cork, and soon after Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough; and Thos. Loe and other Friends followed. The first Friends that received Truth in Cork were Eliz. Erberry and family, Phillip Dymond, Susanna Mitchell, Step [Stephen] Harris, with Richard Pike and his wife, after whose convincement and the settlement of meetings divers others came to be convinced.¹

LANCASHIRE—OLDHAM

An illustration of the unexpected presence of *F.P.T.* material is to be found in another common category of Quaker record, the list of visiting public Friends kept locally and unofficially by a member, or succession of members in one locality or family, MS. Vol. 61 at Friends, Library, London "Names of some Friends who have Visited Oldham Meeting". It is described as "copied 10th month 1838 from an old book", and includes under index YZ this entry:

The first Friends who brought the glad tidings of the Gospel of salvation to Oldham, and these parts were James Taylor, Richard Roper, John Braithwaite and Thomas Briggs. These messengers were struck and haled or forced over the wall out of the steeplehouse yard at Oldham into the street by John Tetlow, etc.

The first who entertained them were James Sykes and Joshua Ogden in 1653 or 1654.

This information is not new. It is an abbreviated form of the data on Oldham "copied from a MS book belonging to Marsden Monthly Meeting", by Norman Penney in *F.P.T.* pp. 339f. and found in Lancashire Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, 1669-1711 and published by me in *J.F.H.S.* 31 (1934), p. 17.

SOMERSET—STREET

The following narrative is entered on the first leaf of the register of Street, Somerset, containing marriages 1658-1762, births 1655-1762, burials 1656-1762, one of the registers sent to Somerset House, when such books were called in, and now transferred to the Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, London. Its number now is Non-Parochial Registers RG 6/1176, formerly 1527 (Somerset, Middle Division), or

¹ Compare the list in T. Wight, *History* (ed. J. Ruty, Dublin, 1751), p. 92.

else RG 6/1454 formerly 138, giving Street births, deaths, marriages, each beginning at the same date in the 1650s as those given above. The xerox copy which I have is wrongly(?) numbered RG 6/1545.¹ I came upon it by accident, and it illustrates my apprehension that when the vital records from these more than 1,500 Quaker registers were surrendered over a century ago, though the vital records were carefully transcribed and one copy left with the county meeting and one at Friends Library, London, other information in them was not always removed and is made now almost inaccessible and unrecorded, unless in some cases in a duplicate source. Such items might have seemed of little interest then which modern historians would prize.

This document is not a typical reply to the *F.P.T.* Questionnaire. It is, however, somewhat parallel. It is more perfect than the slightly mutilated parchment copy which was contributed on 10 mo 6, 1889, by Roger Clark, of Street, in the *Friend* (London) N.S., 21 (1889), p. 292, to which Norman Penney referred in a footnote in *F.P.T.* p. 221.

The full text, somewhat faded, may be transcribed with modern punctuation, spelling and capitalization as follows:

After a long night of apostacy wherein many had followed the blind watchmen, and such leaders who had caused them to err by their lies, and their lightness, and darkness had covered the earth, and gross darkness the people, and many who had desired and breathed after the Lord, and had long wandered on barren mountains, from one profession to another, and sought their food in desolate places, the Lord remembered his covenant with the seed of Abraham and caused the everlasting day star to appear in the Northern parts of England. And in the year one thousand six hundred and fifty five, sent several of his faithful servants and ministers from the counties of Westmoreland and Lancashire, or parts thereabout into the county of Somerset and other parts of the nation, who preached the everlasting gospel in the power and demonstration of the Spirit, Christ Jesus the light of the world, the way to the Father, and spake as they were moved of the Lord, and as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And many people in the county of Somerset and other

¹ R.G. 6/1545 = Burliscombe [Burlescombe] Meeting, Devon, registers.—Ed.

parts of the nation, received the Truth in the love of it, and were turned from the darkness to the light, and from Satan's power to the power of God. And in the year one thousand six hundred fifty and six many people in the same county of Somersett began to wait on the Lord in the silence of all flesh, and denied the world's worship, teachers, payments of tythes, maintaining of steeple-houses (the which the world and their teachers call churches), respect of persons, and several other vain customs, and gave one and the same language to high and low, to rich and poor, and refused to bow or put off the hat to any.

And divers were moved of the Lord to go to the steeple-houses and bear witness against the world's teachers and worship, and warned them to repentance, for which cause many were cruelly beaten, haled before rulers and magistrates, suffered the spoiling of their goods, and cruel bonds, and imprisonment even to death, according to what was before prophesied and declared in the scriptures of truth. And in the same year the meeting of the Lord's people whom the world then in reproach called Quakers was settled at Streat, as in several other places, and a general Monthly Meeting was settled at East Lidford in the said county of Somerset.

But the priests stirred up the rulers against them and there was great persecution against them because of the word. And many of the Lord's faithful servants were persecuted and cast into prison for the testimony of Jesus.

And in the beginning of the year one thousand six hundred fifty and nine these men called the Parliament of England, etc., and the then Protector determined (as generally reported) utterly to suppress the said people called Quakers by banishment or otherwise.

And the priests and many rude people rejoiced much in the expectation of the accomplishment thereof, but the Lord remembered the low estate of his servants and beheld the rage of his enemies and laught them to scorn, and caused that Parliament to be broken in pieces, by the army then commanded by Lieutenant General Fleetwood, who deposed Richard Cromwell the Protector, and called the Long-Parliament of England, who had conquered and put Charles Stuart the late king to death, and turned the government of the nation from monarchy to a commonwealth, which

Parliament General Oliver Cromwell through deceit and tyranny had for some years interrupted.

And in the same year one thousand six hundred fifty and nine about the fourth month the same people called Quakers who were many of them imprisoned for not payment of tythes and other matters for conscience sake were by that Long-Parliament set at liberty. This observe, that on the seventeenth day of the first month 1658/9 when the Parliament had determined to suppress, and destroy the aforesaid people called Quakers, the Lord sent one of his servants to the goal at Ivelchester to declare to the Lord's prisoners there that their deliverance was at hand, which was in a short time accomplished by the Long-Parliament as aforesaid.

And these people being redeemed out of world, and wholly separated from the world's worship and vain customs, in the year one thousand six hundred fifty and eight, provided themselves a burying place in the parish of Streat aforesaid, to lay their dead in, and a register, to record marriages, births, and deaths, and so the Truth prospered, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved, who walked in the everlasting light of the Son of God, the light of the World, the way to the Father.

These things are briefly written, and left upon record by us for them that come after, that the children yet unborn may behold the wonderful works of the Lord, and declare his noble acts to their children, that his loving kindness and tender mercies to the children of men may be had in everlasting remembrance, whereof he hath made us partakers commanding his light to shine out of darkness, which hath shined in our hearts, and hath given us the knowledge of God in the face of his son Jesus Christ, of whose coming and glory we are witnesses, to whom be honour and everlasting-praises forevermore, Amen.

MARYLAND

I am indebted to Kenneth L. Carroll and his forthcoming studies of Quakerism in the Southern Colonies of America for bringing to my attention evidence that at least in one of the American colonies information was sought along the *F.P.T.* line. This evidence is found chiefly in the London

Epistles to and from Maryland. The request was made in 1700, "We desire the names and memories of such who have travelled in the word and doctrine among you may not be forgotten but a record be kept by some faithful Friends beginning with these that most early labored in your parts for turning many to righteousness", etc. The request was repeated in 1705.¹

The next year Maryland Friends reported that they were gathering material "on the early publishers and propagators of Truth" in their area and of "the first progress of Truth", and by 1708 they reported to London that they had drawn up "some short memorial of the beginning and progress of Truth and the Friends of it in this province".² Its receipt was acknowledged in London in 1710.³ But the text of the report has so far not been found on either side of the Atlantic.⁴

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¹ Epistles Sent I, 348 (1700), II. 24-25 (1705).

² Epistles Received II. 20 and 57.

³ Epistles Sent II. 148.

⁴ It presumably would be more inclusive than the request for specific information about a single individual like that which London addressed in 1698 to the meetings in the American provinces to collect what they could of "the trials, travels, sufferings and writings of George Rofe, who died in these parts of the world". See my article "George Rofe in These American Parts" *B.F.H.A.* 35, 1946, 17-26.