

From the *Transactions* of the
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

**Quakers in Gloucester: the first fifty years, 1655–1705' (pp. 259–
293).**

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2007, Vol. 125, 259-293

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Quakers in Gloucester: the first fifty years, 1655–1705

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The Message of George Fox

In the economic turmoil, political upheaval and religious confusion that characterized the closing years of Charles I's reign, the future looked bleak. For some it seemed that the 'end-time' had come, and many were in despair. They desperately sought the salvation and communion with God which their own sense of sin seemed to deny them.¹ George Fox, a founding father of the Religious Society of Friends or Quaker movement, was one such person who could not find peace in the established Church nor in any of the separatist congregations. He was 'a man of sorrows'² until, in 1647, he experienced his religious enlightenment. He described his experience as follows:

And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do, then, oh then, I heard a voice which said, "There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition", and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy.³

Having experienced the Light, a direct revelation of Christ,⁴ it became Fox's mission to 'turn (all) people from the darkness to the Light'.⁵ Early followers believed that Fox was returning to primitive Christianity and derived all his ideas from the Spirit of Christ. In reality few of these ideas were novel. They had already been expounded by others in the years before Fox began his mission. How much he absorbed consciously or subconsciously during his travels is open to conjecture.

Fox's teaching on the Divine Light and his ideas on those fit 'to be Ministers of Christ'⁶ had been voiced earlier by Baptists, Antimonians and Seekers,⁷ Familists (the Family of Love) and Grindletonians.⁸ The same sects also shared Fox's view that the leading of the Spirit or the Light took precedence over the letter of the Scriptures.⁹ In this they were going beyond those Puritans who emphasized the authority of the Bible rather than that of the institutionalized Church. Fox rejected all outward sacramental rites unless they were of the Spirit and internal. So did Familists and Seekers.¹⁰

1. M. Watts, *The Dissenters* (Oxford, 1978), p. 187.

2. G. Fox, *Journal*, ed. J. Nickalls (London, 1975), p. 10.

3. *Ibid.* p. 11.

4. *Ibid.* p. 143.

5. *Ibid.* p. 33.

6. *Ibid.* p. 7.

7. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 189.

8. C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (Middlesex, 1987), p. 27.

9. Fox, *Journal*, p. 33.

10. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 192.

In refusing to take off their hats to 'so called' social superiors (hat honour), Quakers were adopting a Leveller practice, which the Lollards had kept before that.¹¹ In rejecting pagan names for the days and months they were following Baptists and others.¹² In refusing to pay tithes to 'hireling priests', they were not alone. There was strong resentment among the poor against paying taxes to privileged clergy.¹³

Of the two well known characteristics of modern Quakerism – silent worship and the peace testimony – the former was common practice among the Seekers. When Camm and Audland first reached Bristol in 1654, they were received by Seekers who sought the Lord in silent prayer and fasting one day a week.¹⁴ However, the peace testimony was developed among Quakers after 1660.

Evidently Quakerism was polygenous. As early as 1646, before Quakerism, Thomas Edwards had written that 'there was hardly now to be found in England any sect that is simple and pure and not mixed and compounded'.¹⁵ No wonder that a contemporary saw Quakerism as 'a Trojan Horse of all heresies'.¹⁶

The Message Reaches Gloucester, 1655–1660

Fox began his missionary work in the Midlands and the North, where many Baptists, Seekers and Separatists were receptive to his message. The established Church was less welcoming. By the summer of 1654, when 'the churches were settled in the North',¹⁷ the time had come to move south. Among the seventy preachers sent forth were Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough who went to London, Richard Hubberthorne and George Whitehead who travelled towards Norwich, and John Camm and John Audland who went through the counties to Bristol, where they were greeted by a large group of Seekers, and warmly received by the soldiers at the Royal Fort and the Broadmead Baptists. Of the latter about one quarter became Quakers.¹⁸ From Bristol the word spread northwards to the textile workers of the Cotswolds. Once again there was a ready response. When Humphrey Smith visited Nailsworth in 1655, Seekers who had been meeting for some years were 'mightily affected'. In the same year other Quaker preachers reached Painswick and Tewkesbury.¹⁹

Although there is no date given for the account of the first Friends' meeting in Gloucester, it was almost certainly in 1655. This is a reasonable assumption since the Quakers Margaret Newby and Elizabeth Cowart were in Gloucester on 15 November 1655.²⁰ The missionaries Christopher Holder and Thomas Thurstone held the first recorded meeting in the house of Thomas Ridall.²¹ Some time later Elizabeth Morgan of West Chester addressed a crowded meeting at Ridall's house.

11. A. Davies, *The Quakers in English Society 1655–1725* (Oxford, 2000), p. 133.

12. *Ibid.* p. 192.

13. C. Hill, *The Century of Revolution 1603–1714* (Nelson, London, 1964), p. 86.

14. G. Marshall, *Journal* (London, 1844); W. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (Cambridge, 1955), p. 165.

15. T. Edwards, 'Gangraena', in A. Hughes (ed.), *Seventeenth Century England: A Changing Culture I* (London, 1980), p. 131.

16. T. Price, *The History and Method of His Majesty's Happy Restoration*, p. 31.

17. Fox, *Journal*, p. 108.

18. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, pp. 165, 167, 170.

19. N. Penney (ed.), *The First Publishers of Truth* (Headley Bros., London, 1907), pp. 106–7.

20. G.F. Nuttall (ed.), *Early Quaker Letters from Swarthmore MSS. to 1660* (Friends' House, London, 1952), 1/359.

21. Penney, *First Publishers of Truth*, pp. 109–10.

In the excitable climate of the time rumours began to spread that Thomas Ridall and John Edmunds, another early convert to Quakerism, had been bewitched – a precarious situation in an age when witchcraft was still a capital offence. Alderman Anthony Edwards became so concerned for his great friend Edmunds that he went to warn him of the dangers and persuade him to change his views. In this Edwards was unsuccessful, but Edmunds did admit that ‘the people were generally incensed against us. ‘They...scoff and throw stones’.²²

This inauspicious beginning reflects some of the hostility frequently encountered by the Quakers. Although Gloucester had been a garrison town and the army generally encouraged free thinking in religious matters, there is no record of the soldiers here receiving Quakerism with the enthusiasm shown by those in Bristol.²³ Perhaps more importantly the city had been degarrisoned in 1653 in order to reduce army costs.²⁴ Furthermore, although Gloucester was strongly Puritan, it was primarily Presbyterian,²⁵ and the Presbyterians did not welcome Quakers. Presbyterianism appealed to many clergy because it asserted the equality of the clergy, yet kept a clear distinction between them and the laity.

There is some evidence of radical feeling prior to the Quakers. One incident was in November 1653 when Julian, wife of Abraham Moates, interrupted a service in the College, i.e. the then ‘disestablished’ cathedral church. She called upon the preacher to come down and cried out ‘Believe him not, he is a deluder of the people...’.²⁶ Although a dissenting voice in the city, she does not appear to have joined the Friends.

The parliaments of 1648 and 1649 were relatively tolerant,²⁷ and Cromwell himself was sympathetic to Quakers,²⁸ but Quakers were increasingly seen as a threat to law, order and the established social system. They are first mentioned in the Council of State in 1654 when ways were considered to ‘suppress all tumultuous meetings on pretence of Quakers or otherwise’.²⁹ Previous legislation was then more strictly enforced.³⁰ Thus the Vagrancy Acts of Queen Elizabeth could easily be invoked against the itinerant preachers, who were essential in the spreading of ideas.³¹ Quakers could also be caught under the Blasphemy Act of 1650 for refusing the oath – this time against Papal authority. Their adherence to Christ’s injunction to ‘swear not at all’ was not appreciated by nervous officials of the State or Church. Even when a justice was sympathetic, he could not flout the law. As Justice Overbury of Gloucestershire explained to Quakers, ‘If they believe it evil to swear, they ought not to do it’. Nevertheless, he was sworn to execute the law as it was and must therefore send them to prison.³² Meanwhile, further south, in 1656 James Nayler unwisely allowed himself to make a triumphal entry into Bristol. Although intended as a sign of the second coming of Christ, the gesture was widely seen as blasphemous. Such conduct did nothing to reassure the more conservative parliament.³³

22. Ibid. p. 111.

23. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 167.

24. A. Warmington, *Civil War, Interregnum and Restoration in Gloucestershire 1640–1672* (Boydell Press, Suffolk, 1997), p. 101.

25. J. Washbourn, *Bibliotheca Gloucestrensis* (Gloucester, 1825), p. xx.

26. Gloucester Borough Records (GBR, in Gloucestershire Archives), G 3/Sib 2, f. 24.

27. Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, p. 350.

28. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 483

29. N. Penney (ed.), *Extracts from State Papers* (London, 1913), p. 1.

30. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, pp. 405–51.

31. Ibid. p. 187

32. J Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the people called Quakers I* (London, 1753), p. 212.

33. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, pp. 257–62.

It is not surprising, therefore, to learn that the Quakers claimed that during the Interregnum at least 2,100 Friends were imprisoned. The State Papers reveal that in 1658 Gloucester county gaol held eleven Quakers. At that time only Norwich, with fourteen, housed more, while Bristol had only two. This disparity reflects the attitude of the local authorities. Of the prisoners many were held for 'bidding the priest repent...for not swearing...and others for not doffing their hats to a proud man'.³⁴

An early incident involving a Quaker in 'hat honour' and not swearing occurred in Gloucester in 1655. John Ready, high constable for the hundred of Dudstone and King's Barton under the control of the city of Gloucester, appeared before the mayor with his hat on. When asked if he was a Quaker he replied, 'Look to yourself, it is no matter what I am'. When asked why he did not put off his hat, his answer was 'none but a proud man would require it'. He also refused to give his presentment as high constable upon oath and was therefore imprisoned.³⁵ To avoid confrontation justices and judges were advised in 1658 to have the prisoners' hats removed before they entered court.³⁶

For Gloucestershire Besse³⁷ gives the fullest figures of the suffering at this time and he records that most of the punishments were fines or distraint of goods for non-payment of tithes. No citizens of Gloucester are among those named. This may be because records were not sent or because the number of Quakers in the city was still quite small. When George Whitehead travelled to Gloucester in 1657 he recorded that he visited the 'few friends in that city'.³⁸

As the Interregnum came to a close in 1660 George Fox himself came to Gloucester, where he had a 'peaceable meeting'. He wrote that the city itself was 'rude and divided' with some soldiers for the king and some for parliament. He left for Tewkesbury and the North via Westgate bridge, where the soldiers were for the king. When they learned that Fox had passed unrecognized 'they were in a great rage and said had they known it was me they would have shot me'.³⁹

Quakerism in Gloucester 1660–1689

Persecution and Suffering 1660–1671

In April 1660 Charles II issued the Declaration of Breda in which there was a promised 'liberty to tender consciences'. This was followed in June by the release from prison of seven hundred Quakers.⁴⁰ It seemed there might be a period of tranquility. The Quakers responded in November with their own declaration of loyalty: 'We who are people fearing God (called Quakers) own Charles II to be ruler and will not plot, conspire or imagine hurt to his person or the peace of the Kingdom'.⁴¹

Peace at last and a cause for rejoicing, perhaps, but underneath fear and distrust were causing tension. Dissenters were still seen as a threat to the state and an affront to the Church, and these deep feelings found expression in various ways. For example, John Webly of Brockworth, near

34. Penney, *Extracts from State Papers*, pp. 37, 50.

35. GBR, G 3/SO 6.

36. Penney, *Extracts from State Papers*, p. 34..

37. Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers* (London, 1753).

38. G. Whitehead, *The Christian Progress of that Ancient Servant or Minister of Jesus Christ* (London, 1725), p. 108.

39. Fox, *Journal*, p. 369.

40. *Ibid.* p. 394.

41. Penney, *Extracts from State Papers*, p. 122.

Gloucester, was imprisoned at the age of 87 for refusing to pay a tithe of twenty shillings.⁴² He forbade his wife to pay for him and he died in prison in 1660. In May of that year John Jeyes, Nicholas Wastfield and others had met at the house of John Ready of Maisemore, near Gloucester. On the instructions of the mayor they were ordered to disperse and Nicholas was struck many blows with a sword.⁴³ Four days later John Ready went to visit Friends in Gloucester castle. Here he was seized by two men who tried to force him to drink the king's health. When he refused the beer was thrown in his face.⁴⁴ In the same month Henry Ridall was more unfortunate. He was attacked for being a Quaker by Robert Lovett of Twigworth. He was severely beaten, but was rescued by fellow citizens who came to his aid. When Ridall complained, the mayor would do nothing because Ridall refused to take the oath. However, another justice was more sympathetic and it is of note that five non-Quakers came forward to testify on Ridall's behalf.⁴⁵

It may have been the king's wish to follow a policy of religious toleration. If so, that was not the intention of the Cavalier Parliament, which wanted revenge and the persecution of all who threatened the established Church and its own security.⁴⁶ The opportunity came in January 1661 when a small rising of Fifth Monarchists aroused all the latent fears of anarchy. Within a few days a royal proclamation banned all meetings of Anabaptists and Quakers and commanded all Justices to tender the Oath of Allegiance to everyone found at such meetings.⁴⁷ Three days later, on 13 January, soldiers arrested eight men at the house of John Jeyes of Gloucester and they were imprisoned for refusing the oath.⁴⁸ The next week John Wastfield, Richard Holland and Giles Kendall met at the same house with several women. Once again only the men were arrested and imprisoned for refusing the oath.⁴⁹ Presumably, it was considered that this action would break the spirit of the women.

In May 1662 parliament passed the Quaker Act which banned all meetings of five or more Quakers on pain of fines, imprisonment or transportation for the third offence. As before, enforcement varied according to the disposition of local justices. From Newcastle in the north-east to Exeter in the south-west there were magistrates reluctant to enforce the Law,⁵⁰ and sometimes constables were reluctant to report neighbours who acted through conscience. In Cirencester when warrants were granted against Quakers, the constables, being unwilling to execute them, would send a person to fasten the doors and windows and then report that they had repeatedly found the house secured.⁵¹ Such reactions may help to explain the disparity in prison returns for November 1662. Gloucester's county prison held seventeen Quakers whereas Somerset's had eighty three.⁵²

In Gloucester the persecution was sporadic. The only recorded arrest in 1662 was on Christmas Day. In 1647 parliament had abolished the observance of all feasts or holy days but to Quakers

42. Friends' House, London, 'The Great Book of Sufferings 1659–1856', vol. 3, f. 433.

43. Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 210.

44. The Great Book of Sufferings, vol. 1, f. 423.

45. Ibid. f. 433.

46. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 222.

47. W. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism* (Cambridge, 1961), p. 9.

48. The Great Book of Sufferings, vol.1, f. 426. Those imprisoned were John Ready, Henry Ridall, Richard Webb, John Jeyes, John Watkins, John Edmunds, Nathaniel Holloway and Nicholas Wastfield.

49. Ibid.

50. Watts, *The Dissenters*, pp. 244–5.

51. Daniel Roberts (ed.), *Some Memoirs of the life of John Roberts* (London, 1973), p. 75

52. Penney, *Extracts from State Papers*, pp. 165–6.

all days were equally holy.⁵³ John and Nicholas Wastfield had therefore opened their blacksmith shop and were arrested, and imprisoned for seventeen days for refusing the oath.⁵⁴ There was a similar incident in Bristol in 1665.

The only incident in 1663 was when the Friends met at a hired room in Gloucester. Jasper Lugg, the marshall, arrived to take them before the mayor. Because he had no order, the Friends refused to go. The marshall then returned with constables. After examination the Friends were imprisoned for several weeks.⁵⁵

The Conventicle Act in 1664 extended the restrictions of the Quaker Act to all Dissenters, although once again its enforcement seems to have been haphazard and dependent on local personalities. In Lichfield Bishop Hacket actively persecuted all who were separate from the Church,⁵⁶ and as early as 1661 the Bishop of Exeter had been complaining of Dissent,⁵⁷ whereas in Gloucester Bishop Nicholson gained a reputation for being conciliatory, but eventually he too became concerned about the lack of law enforcement. He wrote to the justices in 1666 urging them to be more diligent in preventing the 'gangrese' of Dissent from spreading.⁵⁸

It was the secular court that enforced the laws and the Church may have been content to avoid the work and be spared the censure that might accompany the punishment of prisoners of conscience. This does not mean that it entertained ideas of toleration. The attitude of many may be illustrated by George Evans, the bishop of Gloucester's secretary. In March 1667 he visited Solomon Eccles, Nicholas Wastfield, William Monington, Nicholas Boulton, Thomas Monington and James Moreton, who had all been imprisoned for attending a meeting at a Friend's house and refusing to swear the oath.⁵⁹ Evans decided to taunt them and mockingly doffed his hat to Eccles. Eccles advised him to behave more soberly. Whereupon Evans struck Eccles on the cheek. When Eccles turned to him the other cheek, Evans struck him again. On turning his cheek he was struck a third time. 'All of which Solomon bore patiently.... obtaining a Christian Conquest over his opposer'.⁶⁰

All in all the laws were not rigidly enforced and for a while, following the fall of Clarendon, Charles's Lord Chancellor, in 1667, this situation continued to prevail. The only Gloucester Quaker imprisoned in 1668 was Charles Harris.⁶¹ In the same year he was fined 2s. 6d. for preaching.⁶² However, if this was a respite for Dissenters it was to be short lived. The first Conventicle Act expired in 1669 and Charles prevented action on a new Bill by proroguing parliament. A shortage of money forced him to recall parliament in 1670 and this time the Cavaliers were not to be denied. A second Conventicle Act was passed. Although the fines for ordinary worshippers were reduced, those for preachers and the owners of meeting houses were increased. More significantly the earlier laxity in enforcement was tackled. A third of the fines collected was to go to informers, and magistrates who neglected the Act were liable to a fine of £100.⁶³

53. British Library, Thomason Tracts !640-1661, vol. 1, f. 11 (18).

54. Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 216.

55. The Great Book of Sufferings, vol. 1, f. 427.

56. J. Hurwich, 'Nonconformists in Warwickshire 1660-1720' (Princeton University Ph.D. thesis, 1970), p. 99.

57. *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1661-2*, p. 155.

58. S. Graveson, 'The Bishop of Gloucester's Letter to the Justices met in Gloucester, 1666', *Friends Quarterly Examiner* 78, pp. 244-5.

59. The Great Book of Sufferings, vol. 1, f. 427.

60. Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 216.

61. The Great Book of Sufferings, vol. 1, f. 427.

62. GBR, G 3/SO 7, f. 64.

63. Watts, *The Dissenters*, pp. 226-7.

In May 1670 the Friends felt the full impact of this legislation. Informers came to be dreaded in Bristol, and unpopular in Welshpool, Derbyshire and Essex.⁶⁴ In Gloucester a groom of the bishop and the son of the chancellor became persistent informers. On 15 May Friends attending a meeting were reported and fined. The informers again reported the meeting on 22 May and a warrant of distress was made for 5s. on each member. The next week the informers notified the justices who came themselves, took the names of those present and violently ejected them. On 5 June the mayor, justices and constables arrived. The Friends were again violently evicted and Justice Hodges said, 'Let their necks be broken if they will not be gone.' Clearly the constancy of the Friends was exasperating the authorities and the next week the Friends were evicted and the meeting house locked up. On 19 June Friends, not to be intimidated, were gathered by the meeting house door when soldiers arrived. Later came the mayor, John Wagstaffe, and a lawyer and they began beating the Friends with canes. Wagstaffe was beside himself. When his cane splintered he used the other end, which had a head on it, and when that broke he obtained another staff until many Friends were bruised, sore and 'of many colours'. Having tired of that, he sent for a sledge hammer and caused several doors to be broken down.⁶⁵ In the accounts of these happenings no numbers of members are given, but a good idea may be gathered from the list of seventeen people who had goods distrained. Full details may be found in Besse's *Book of Sufferings*,⁶⁶ but a few examples may serve to indicate the severity of the punishment. John Cugly was a poor card maker with children. They seized 'almost all his goods leaving not even a bed to lie on or scarce one shilling in the house'. From John Bayly, a poor journeyman tailor, they took the bed on which his wife lay sick. John Wastfield, a smith, suffered the loss of his bellows, anvil, vices and other tools so that neither he nor his brother could work. His bed, bedstead and other things were taken, worth £10 in all. In an age in which brutality was not uncommon, this treatment was still seen by many to be harsh. Linen and goods worth £117 were seized from Godfrey Fownes at a time when the annual wage of a bailiff was £13⁶⁷ and that of a labourer in Gloucestershire was about £17 10s.⁶⁸

Once the goods had been seized they had then to be converted to money. Normally they would be taken to a church and a bell man dispatched into the city to 'cry a sale'. A local report says that 'few would buy them, though they might have had them for little'—a clear expression of sympathy for the victims. And this response was not uncommon. In the south of Gloucestershire butchers and people refused to buy the cattle taken from 'peaceable people, only for the worshipping of God.'⁶⁹ In Coleford in the Forest of Dean neighbours wept at the cruelty shown to Quakers,⁷⁰ while in Bristol sailors refused to transport convicted Friends.⁷¹ Further afield in Essex people also refused to buy distrained goods.⁷²

Why were these Dissenters treated in this way at this time? Undoubtedly the new Conventicle Act was a factor, especially the introduction of fees for informers. In Gloucester there was also an underlying friction in the town council between Anglican royalists and loyal Presbyterians, but

64. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, pp. 78, 80–1.

65. The Great Book of Sufferings, vol.1, ff. 427–8.

66. Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 217.

67. L. Mumby, *How Much Is That Worth?* (Chichester, 1996), p. 29.

68. C. Wilson, *England's Apprenticeship 1603–1763* (London, 1984), pp. 341–2.

69. *A Short Relation of Some Part of the Sufferings and Cruel Havock and Spoil Inflicted on the Persons and Estates of the People of God, in Scorn called Quakers* (1670), pp. 79–80.

70. Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 220.

71. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, p. 46.

72. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, p. 202.

the beating of the Quakers and their subsequent punishment is primarily a reflection of Mayor Wagstaffe's personality and prejudice. He was one of several royalist favourites appointed to aldermanic rank following the purges of 1662–3 without ever holding any of the traditional preliminary offices.⁷³ He was also a staunch supporter of Henry Fowler, who succeeded him as mayor, and 'Fowler was the worst type of self righteous, ostentatious loyalists who flourished in Restoration England'.⁷⁴ Wagstaffe seems to have come from a similar mould. In January, 1670, Wagstaffe wrote to the king about treasonable practices and was thanked for his vigilance.⁷⁵ Later, in May, he reported an anonymously written seditious pamphlet to Lord Arlington, member of the King's Council, and promised to do his utmost 'to suppress all unlawful conventicles in this city and manifest himself a loyal subject of the King'.⁷⁶ These papers reveal his political aims and aspirations. His religious convictions are revealed by his becoming a Roman Catholic, who in 1688 was entrusted by James II with the protection of a Catholic priest and chapel in Gloucester.⁷⁷ It can have been no surprise that, following the exile of James II, he resigned from the city council in October 1689.⁷⁸

The Suffering Continues 1671–1689

Following the Second Conventicle Act of 1670 there had been a spate of persecution, but between 1671 and 1675 Besse includes no record of suffering in Gloucestershire.⁷⁹ This may be due to lack of reports reaching London, although the minutes of the Friends' quarterly meeting for Gloucestershire also contain little reference to suffering at this time. A more likely explanation is that much of the persecution, or lack of it, reflected the political situation in London during this period.

In March 1672, while parliament was prorogued, Charles II issued a Declaration of Indulgence, by which Dissenters were to be able to meet freely for worship provided that they had a licence for their meeting place.⁸⁰ Some Dissenters complied, but others – and especially the Quakers – refused to take out licences, arguing that the state could neither take away nor give the right to worship freely.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the persecution diminished and the king granted a general pardon to 491 Dissenters,⁸² the majority of whom were Quakers.⁸³

This increased freedom alarmed many Anglicans with the result that when a shortage of money forced Charles to recall parliament in 1673 he had to withdraw the Declaration. Anglicans and Tories were becoming concerned that Charles, who was without legitimate children, might be succeeded by his Catholic brother James. To allay these fears and appease parliament, Charles issued an Order in Council (1675) enforcing laws against Catholics and Protestant Dissenters.⁸⁴

73. A. Warmington, '“Madd, Bedlam Madd”: an Incident in Gloucester's Seventeenth-century Municipal History Reconsidered', *Trans. BGAS* 111 (1993), p. 168.

74. *Ibid.* p. 169.

75. *Cal. State Papers Dom. 1670*, p. 35.

76. *Ibid.* p. 230.

77. *Victoria County History of Gloucestershire (VCH Glos.)* IV, ed. N. Herbert (Oxford, 1988), p. 318.

78. P. Ripley, 'The City of Gloucester, 1660–1740' (Bristol University M.Litt. thesis, 1977), p. 325.

79. Besse, *Sufferings*.

80. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 247.

81. *Ibid.* p. 248.

82. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, p. 84.

83. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 249.

84. *Ibid.* p. 250.

Renewed persecution followed in Cirencester, for example,⁸⁵ although no arrests are recorded in Gloucester.

Due to the growing Catholic influence in court a powerful opposition to the king was developing. This was led by a Whig, the earl of Shaftesbury. At the same time Dissenters were beginning to show an increased interest in political persuasion as a means to achieve freedom of worship. In 1675 the Quaker Morning Meeting (in London) advised Friends to use votes in support of men who were for 'a General Liberal Conscience' and the removal of all 'Popish laws'. In a similar vein a Meeting for Sufferings advised Friends to be 'very cautious of giving any just cause of offence' but to seek in the parliamentary election those who, among other things, 'were against persecution and Popery'.⁸⁶ These views naturally inclined Friends towards the Whigs – a move which displeased Charles and for which they (the Friends) would later suffer.

Following attempts to exclude James from the succession, Charles dissolved parliament (1681) and did not recall it again during the rest of his reign. Whereas previously he had tried to protect Dissenters, he now turned against them, and the most severe persecution of the Restoration period was unleashed.⁸⁷

Beaver, in his recent study of the Vale of Gloucester, notes that in the period 1671–86 470 parishioners were presented in church courts for absenting themselves from church or failing to receive communion. However, only 63 of these were presented before 1678 – the year of the Popish Plot.⁸⁸ In the royal backlash Quakers were particularly vulnerable since they were so separated and visible, and in Gloucester one could expect a firm response to the king's wishes. A Presbyterian faction in that city had tried to prevent the election of Henry Fowler, a royalist, as mayor in 1670. As a result the king had withdrawn the city's charter. Under a new charter the Crown had power to dismiss aldermen and councillors and the control of the city passed to the Tories.⁸⁹ County landowners, like Henry Norwood of Leckhampton near Cheltenham, became mayors,⁹⁰ and the king could rely on their loyalty.

The mayors in turn could rely on the help of informers, who were not averse to the use of cunning tricks in order to secure a conviction. Since it was difficult to report a religious meeting when it remained silent, informers enticed Quakers to preach. There was such a case in Gloucester in 1682 when informers asked Quakers what they were doing. One Friend unwisely replied, 'I am here to know the will of God and then to do it.' He was arrested and convicted as a preacher.⁹¹

A letter from the Friends in the city gaol, dated the 11 February 1682, gives a graphic description of their experiences.⁹²

On the 29th. day of the last month, There came to disturb our Meeting two Aldermen, the Sheriffe, the Chancellor and one Constable with others; who after some discourse took our names and threatened to Tender the Oath of Allegiance to us, but then refrained and turned us out, and locked the Door and delivered the Key to the Constable. But we having another key entered our Meeting

85. Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 218.

86. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, pp. 90, 98.

87. Watts, *The Dissenters*. p. 254.

88. D. Beaver, *Parish Communities and Religious Conflict in the Vale of Gloucester* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), p. 280.

89. Cf. the removal of Coventry's charter in 1683 and Warwick's charter in 1684: Hurwich, 'Nonconformists in Warwickshire 1660–1720', pp. 136, 157.

90. *Ibid.*

91. G. Horle, *The Quakers and the English Legal System 1660–1668* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 122–3.

92. *An Account of the Hardships and Violence inflicted upon certain Persons called Quakers* (London, 1682).

house again upon the 5th. day following. Upon the first day after,...., we being again in the fear of God met, there came again four Aldermen, with the Sheriffe, and two Constables and others, and after some Queries about the House, and abusive and threatening words in great Wrath, the Town Clerks took our names.

The men were asked to take the oath. When they refused they were committed to prison. The women were then required to take the oath. They too refused and were committed to the same prison. The windows of the meeting house were then smashed and the forms were taken out and burned in the burial yard. Thirteen men and fourteen women were imprisoned for attending meetings and refusing the oath.⁹³

The meeting house had been established in 1678. At first Quakers met in the homes of members, but gradually the need for separate premises became apparent. In Gloucester adjoining cottages belonging to Henry Cugley in Back House Lane (now Park Street) were purchased. The dividing wall was removed to create a space 40 by 25 feet. Two large oak pillars supported a huge central beam, and a ministers' gallery was erected at one end.⁹⁴ There appear to have been no ground-floor windows onto the street. It was here that Friends met until they sold the property in 1834. Behind the meeting house was a garden. Butler in his volume on 'Quaker Meeting Houses in Britain' says that there is no record of the garden being used for burials,⁹⁵ but there are such records⁹⁶ and when the property was sold there was a stipulation that 'the burying ground shall not be disturbed to a greater depth than twelve inches for the space of sixty years'.⁹⁷ The building became the 'Gloucester Female Mission' in 1842 and in 1880 'The Park Street Mission'.⁹⁸ This type of house conversion was typical of the early Quaker meeting houses in Gloucestershire where there were few purpose-built premises before the Act of Toleration, Cirencester (1673) being an exception.⁹⁹

Besse wrote that in 1682 there was considerable persecution in the surrounding areas of Cirencester, Painswick and Nailsworth and added that throughout the county in 1683 the 'Persecutors wax worse and worse'. Justices were saying, 'Tis not possible for the King to prove you guilty, but you must prove yourselves not guilty...So the Jury found Friends guilty when no evidence came in against them...'.¹⁰⁰ Lord Herbert when reporting on the manner that Gloucestershire justices were applying the law wrote that, 'If we keep steady in our proceedings...in a short time I believe a Dissenter will scarce be heard of'.¹⁰¹

On 11 May 1683 Friends in the county goal in Gloucester castle met for worship and were fined, but 'most of their houses had been so rifled before that the Officers sought in vain to make distress'.¹⁰² Their discomfort was compounded by an outbreak of smallpox in the prison.¹⁰³

93. Ibid. p. 3; Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 221; The Great Book of Sufferings, vol. 3, ff. 523–6, 507.

94. E. Sessions, *A Bit of Old Gloucester Made New* (York, 1933), pp. 3–5

95. D. Butler, *Quaker Meeting Houses in Britain* (London, 1999), p. 217

96. Gloucestershire Archives (GA), D 1340/A 1/R 3.

97. Friends' Meeting House, Greyfriars, Gloucester, abstract of the title deeds of meeting houses, burial yards...1800, ff. 112–13.

98. Sessions, *Bit of Old Gloucester Made New*, p. 4

99. Butler, *Quaker Meeting Houses in Britain*, p. 214.

100. Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 224.

101. *Cal. State Papers Dom. 1682*, pp. 24–5.

102. Ibid. p. 223.

103. The Great Book of Sufferings, vol. 2, p. 221.

To the south the persecutions were the heaviest that had been experienced,¹⁰⁴ and informers seemed to have had a heyday.¹⁰⁵ By 1682 some ¹⁵⁰ Quakers were imprisoned in Bristol and their meeting was continued by the children, but even they had to suffer persecution in the stocks and imprisonment.¹⁰⁶

With the death of Charles II, circumstances changed again in London. The new king, James, wished to enforce a Catholic policy on the Church of England and tried to enable Roman Catholics to hold high office. Anglicans were outraged and James therefore resolved to find allies elsewhere by uniting the cause of Catholics and Dissenters.¹⁰⁷ In March 1686, he issued a Declaration in which he expressed his wish that all his subjects might be Catholics, but for the sake of peace he would maintain the Church of England and suspend the laws against Dissenters.¹⁰⁸ Among those released from prison were 1,200 Quakers.¹⁰⁹

William Penn played an important part in these events. His father had been a friend of James, and although William had previously supported a campaign to exclude James, he now needed royal support to retain his charter for the colony of Pennsylvania. James, for his part, could see that Penn had useful influence among Quakers.¹¹⁰ It was Penn who led a deputation from the Friends' Yearly Meeting to express thanks to James for his clemency.¹¹¹ Similar deputations came from Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians.¹¹²

As a result of the Declaration fifty-six Quakers were released from Gloucester county gaol and fifteen from the city gaol.¹¹³ The six Gloucester men and nine women had been imprisoned in December 1681 and had languished there for four years.¹¹⁴ Of the others imprisoned in 1681/2 one (Henry Riddall) had died in prison in 1685.¹¹⁵ John Elliott and his wife had been bailed out by relations, but at the next Assizes had been returned to prison for refusing to be of good behaviour. After four or five weeks they had again been bailed out.¹¹⁶ John Elliott appears once more in the diocesan records in 1684 for refusing to pay a church rate for communion rails in his parish church.¹¹⁷ He was clearly undaunted by his trials. There is no recorded mention of the remaining seven prisoners.

The issue of the Declaration of 1686 caused a conflict between James and the bishops. The latter developed a greater fear of the tyranny of Rome and simultaneously a greater toleration of Protestant Dissenters! The Church which had supported Charles II against Dissent now courted Dissenters as allies against Rome. Thus, in 1688, the Archbishop of Canterbury urged his clergy 'to have a tender regard to our brethren the Protestant Dissenters...to visit them at their homes and receive them kindly'.¹¹⁸ They were assured that the Church was irreconcilably opposed to Rome. The way was being prepared for the Act of Toleration in 1689.

104. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, p. 104.

105. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 254.

106. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, p. 102.

107. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 258.

108. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, p. 130.

109. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 257.

110. *Ibid.* p. 258.

111. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, p. 133.

112. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 258.

113. *The Great Book of Sufferings*, vol. 3, ff. 535–6.

114. *Ibid.* f. 528: in Oct. 1684 they were said to have been in the North gate prison since 1681.

115. *Ibid.* f. 528.

116. GA, D 1340/A 1/A 2, p. 11.

117. Gloucester Diocesan Records (GDR, in GA), vol. 205.

118. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 259.

The whole Restoration period witnessed regular persecution during which the courage and constancy of the Gloucester Friends was remarkable, albeit similar to the experiences recorded elsewhere. A few Friends may serve as examples of their faithfulness. The first meeting of Friends in Gloucester was held at the house of Henry Riddall in 1655.¹¹⁹ In January 1661 he was arrested for attending a meeting and imprisoned for refusing the Oath of Allegiance. In 1670 he had £20 of goods seized for attending a meeting¹²⁰ and in 1682 he was again arrested for attending a meeting and imprisoned for refusing the oath.¹²¹ Whilst in prison this ‘ancient man of Gloucester’ died in 1685.¹²² John Edmunds was at that first meeting.¹²³ He too was imprisoned in 1661.¹²⁴ In 1664 he was charged with distributing Quaker tracts¹²⁵ and in 1670 he had goods worth £15 confiscated for attending a meeting.¹²⁶ John and his wife Anne were again imprisoned with Riddall in 1682¹²⁷ and were finally released in 1686.¹²⁸

Nicholas Westfield, a blacksmith, was another early Friend. In 1660 he was evicted from a meeting and beaten. A year later he was arrested at a meeting and imprisoned for refusing the oath. In 1662 he was again sent to prison – this time for seventeen weeks – for opening his shop on Christmas Day. He refused the oath yet again in 1667 and was imprisoned. For attending a meeting in 1670 he and his brother John had their tools taken so that they could not work.¹²⁹ From Quaker Quarterly Minutes it appears that he was entrusted with money to care for prisoners in the Gloucester gaols in 1671 (twice), 1677, 1679 and 1681 (twice).¹³⁰ Then in 1682 he was imprisoned for attending a meeting and refusing the oath.¹³¹ The date of his release is not known. For these Friends, and all those not detailed above, their long suffering was seen as a badge of their Quakerism and an indication of their ‘convincement’.

In the 17th century the castle, of which only the keep and main gatehouse remained, was used as the county gaol. Against one of the castle walls a house of correction had been built.¹³² Within the castle itself conditions were poor, although, depending on the gaoler, the situation seems to have been relatively relaxed. In 1660 the custodian was spiteful to Quakers,¹³³ but by the 1680s a new gaoler was more sympathetic. In 1682 the gaoler had to attend the assizes in Oxford and he asked the Quaker prisoner, Daniel Roberts, to superintend the gaol in his absence. After consulting other Friends in the gaol, Daniel agreed, and in the course of his duty he prevented the escape of two notorious robbers. On his return, the delighted gaoler allowed the Friends to have meetings in the gaol to which outsiders might come,¹³⁴ to go out to visit their families, and even to enter the city on business.¹³⁵ These were quite remarkable concessions. Perhaps it is small wonder that

119. Penney, *First Publishers of Truth*, p. 110.

120. Besse, *Sufferings*, pp. 211, 217.

121. *Account of Hardships and Violence inflicted upon Quakers* (1682).

122. Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 226.

123. Penney, *First Publishers of Truth*, p. 110.

124. Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 211.

125. *VCH Glos.* IV, p. 117.

126. Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 217.

127. *An Account of the Hardships and Violence inflicted upon Quakers* (1682).

128. Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 227.

129. *Ibid.* pp. 210, 211, 216, 217.

130. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1.

131. *Account of Hardships and Violence inflicted upon Quakers* (1682).

132. *VCH Glos.* IV, p. 246.

133. Roberts, *Memoirs of the life of John Roberts*, p. 26.

134. *Ibid.* p. 90.

135. J. Stratford, *Good and Honest Men of Gloucestershire* (Cirencester, 1867), pp. 199–200.

the gaoler was given £1 'for his kindness to Friends'.¹³⁶ In 1684 there was a further £1 1s. 6d. for the gaoler and 5s. for the turnkey.¹³⁷

Thomas Baskerville visited the castle in 1683 and said that the gaol 'was the best in England, so that if I was forced to go to prison and make my choice I would come hither'.¹³⁸ Either he never went inside or his comments are a reflection on some other prisons, because the castle was overcrowded. Prisoners of conscience, debtors and felons were housed together,¹³⁹ and gaol fever and smallpox were constant threats.¹⁴⁰ Of course, conditions could be worse elsewhere. In Bristol a small room was so full that prisoners took it in turns to sit up while others lay three in a bed.¹⁴¹

For the citizens of Gloucester there was a prison at the inner north gate and a bridewell or house of correction at the east gate.¹⁴² At the north gate the accommodation was very limited. Like many other town prisons it was not designed for numbers of long-stay prisoners. The internment of whole meetings rather than a few leaders was therefore bound to cause problems.¹⁴³ In the 'Original Record of Sufferings' the gaol was described as 'a little gate house'¹⁴⁴ and Besse said it was out of repair in 1681.¹⁴⁵ By 1683 it held 'twenty four continued prisoners over a year, the greater part women, some with sucking children...first committed for their religious meetings, then the oath of allegiance to them.'¹⁴⁶ The fifteen Gloucester Friends who spent up to four years in that gaol¹⁴⁷ must have had a truly wretched time.

After the Act of Toleration of 1689

After the persecutions of the previous years it is tempting to see the Act of Toleration as an expression of enlightenment, but such an interpretation needs to be carefully qualified. Neither the Anglican clergy nor laity welcomed it, and some who supported the Bill regretted their decision soon after. Toleration was less a tendency to rational behaviour than a fear of Catholicism that temporarily united Anglicans and Dissenters in an attempt to prevent James II reclaiming the English throne. Some of the old legislation remained on the statute book and 'technically non-conformity remained an illegal activity'.¹⁴⁸ Religious liberty had been conceded, but civil equality had not – prison might still await those who refused to pay tithes or take the oath of allegiance, and Quakers were urged to refuse both. The 1675 Yearly Meeting had affirmed 'that our ancient testimony against tithes. . . be carefully and punctually observed'.¹⁴⁹

Tory hostility to the Quakers remained strong and persecution continued, although in a different form. In 1688 there was one prisoner in Gloucester gaol for non-payment of tithes. By 1691 there

136. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1682 12m.

137. Ibid. 1684 9m.

138. *VCH Glos.* IV, p. 246.

139. B. Hawkins, *Taming the Phoenix. Cirencester and the Quakers 1642–1686* (William Sessions, York, 1998), p. 238.

140. *The Great Book of Sufferings*, vol. 2. p. 221.

141. *A Particular Relation of the Hard Usage of the People called Quakers in the City of Bristol 1682*, p. 4.

142. *VCH Glos.* IV, p. 244.

143. *Cal. State Papers Dom. Jan.–June 1683*, p. 133.

144. Friends' House, London, Original Record of Sufferings, no. 137.

145. Besse, *Sufferings*, pp. 221–2.

146. *Cal. State Papers Dom. Jan.–June 1683*, p. 133.

147. Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 227.

148. R. Kroll, R. Ashcroft and P. Zagorin (eds.), *Philosophy, Science and Religion in England 1640–1700* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 152.

149. Friends' House, London, Yearly Meeting minutes.

were six¹⁵⁰ and in 1693 there were eight.¹⁵¹ Between 1690 and 1697 seventeen Gloucestershire Friends were held in the county gaol for non-payment of tithes.¹⁵² In accounts of the sufferings of Gloucestershire Quakers, among records held in Gloucestershire Archives, there are 32 recorded cases of the distraint of goods for non-payment of tithes between 1682 and 1689,¹⁵³ yet between 1690 and 1697 there are 155 such cases.¹⁵⁴ ‘The Great Book of Sufferings’ at Friends’ House, London, also records that between 1690 and 1700 large numbers of Quakers in the south of the county had goods restrained for non-payment of tithes or church rates.¹⁵⁵ Clearly times could still be harsh for nonconforming Quakers.

In Gloucester city there were no recorded cases involving non-payment of tithes in the period following the Act of Toleration and only a few other cases of conflict. On these occasions, as commonly happened, the goods distrained were worth considerably more than the fine. For refusing to pay for arms for the militia in 1691 John Webb was fined 15s. 6d. and had pewter taken to the value of £1 5s. and Joseph Webb was relieved of £1 1s.’ worth of pewter for a fine of 9s. 6d.¹⁵⁶

Equally there is no mention in the extant records of any refusals to take oaths, although the issue was still important. In 1692 the Gloucestershire quarterly meeting wrote to members of parliament urging them to repeal the law requiring Friends to take oaths, and the next year letters of concern were sent to all the knights of the shire. The person entrusted to draft these letters was John Elliott of Gloucester.¹⁵⁷

It has been suggested already that the Quakers suffered in part because they would not meet secretly. Many dissenting groups used stratagems to avoid detection: Quakers would not. Baxter records that ‘Many turned Quakers because they kept their meetings openly, and went to prison for it cheerfully.’ On the other hand the Presbyterian Pocock in London said, ‘We must be as wise as serpents.’ Fox explained how they had ‘candles, tobacco pipes, bread and cheese and cold meat at the table’ so that they could put their Bibles away and start eating their meal if officers appeared. This type of ruse was not uncommon. Watts cites many other examples and notes that the Quakers generally shunned such tactics.

However, there are other reasons for their persecution apart from lack of secrecy. First, their early apocalyptic preaching and their perceived association with Fifth Monarchists, together with their refusal to accept the norms of speech and the traditional hierarchy of 17th-century society meant that they were seen as potential revolutionaries.¹⁵⁸ The gentry and nobility had had enough of instability and felt that the Quakers must be suppressed. In addition the strong language used by the Quakers did little to help their cause. Fox’s admonition ‘O ye great men and rich men of the earth! Weep and howl for the misery that is coming’¹⁵⁹ did not appeal to most gentry. Furthermore Quakers shared with many others an inability to see an alternative point of view. At first they saw themselves as having a unique knowledge of religious truth and thought other groups

150. *Ibid.*

151. *The Great Book of Sufferings*, vol. 7, f. 207.

152. GA, D 1340/A 1/A 2, ff. 22 – 5.

153. *Ibid.* ff. 199–202.

154. *Ibid.* ff. 202–15.

155. *The Great Book of Sufferings*, vols. 7 and 8.

156. *Ibid.* vol. 7, f. 202.

157. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1692 9m., 1693, 3m.

158. Horle, *Quakers and the English Legal System*, p. 155.

159. G. Fox, *Gospel Truth Demonstrated* (1706), p. 6.

as at best misguided.¹⁶⁰ Once again provocative language was not helpful. George Fox wrote that 'The chief Priests were ever the greatest persecutors of truth...and are the same now'.¹⁶¹ Tracts by his disciples Anderton and Salthouse were even more vitriolic.¹⁶²

With diatribes and the interruption of church services¹⁶³ it was small wonder that most clergy were far from happy with Quakers and would gladly have seen them banished. The perceptive observation of one priest revealed this frustration. In reply to an episcopal enquiry about Dissenters in his parish he wrote of Quakers that 'they seem extremely bigoted to their own opinions and hold their Neighbours in great contempt as if for want of their light, everybody else was in darkness'.¹⁶⁴ Whereas Fox could extend God's Light and grace to people before Christ¹⁶⁵ and Barclay could include 'a man of China and India who had not heard of Christ',¹⁶⁶ it is interesting how exclusive they could be with their immediate contemporaries.

The timing and strength of the persecution was dependent on a number of factors. From the study of Gloucester it is clear that central government provided the driving force, but the enforcement was determined by local circumstances and the disposition of local officers. The purge of 1670 had been strongly influenced by the attitude of the royalist mayors, Wagstaffe and Fowler. In the last years of Charles II's reign royalist Tories, who had gained control of the town council after royal intervention in 1672, ensured that the Quakers and other Dissenters had a harsh time. A similar pattern of treatment was to be found in Essex.¹⁶⁷

The persecution itself helped to strengthen the unity of the Friends and when it stopped the memory of it continued to encourage a sense of loyalty. How then would they fare in easier times? Eight days before his death in 1691 Fox could see the dangers and warned Friends that 'Now it is more easy' and many 'embrace the present world and encumber themselves with their own businesses and neglect the Lord's'.¹⁶⁸

Quaker Membership in Gloucester 1655–1705

Formal membership as currently understood was not an issue in the 17th century. Quakers were identified publicly by their plainness of dress and manner, their refusal to attend the parish church, their steadfastness in attending their own open meetings, their readiness to suffer for their convictions and their refusal to pay tithes or swear oaths. Since there was no register of members, the researcher has to rely on registers of births, marriages and deaths, which were frequently incomplete,¹⁶⁹ on minute books and accounts of sufferings and on the records of diocesan and civil courts.

160. E. Isichei, 'From Sect to Denomination among English Quakers', in B. Wilson (ed.), *Patterns of Sectarianism* (London, 1967), p. 173.

161. G. Fox, *Tracts No. 22* (1653), p. 53.

162. J. Anderton, *Against Babylon and her Merchants in England* (London, 1660); T. Salthouse, *A Candle Lighted with a Coal from the Altar* (Kingston-upon-Thames, 1660).

163. B. Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (New York, 1985), p. 44.

164. M. Mullett, *Sources for the History of English Nonconformity 1660–1830* (London, 1991), p. 94.

165. G. Fox, *The Great Mystery* (London, 1659), p. 61.

166. R. Barclay, *An Apology (for the true Christian Divinity)* (1678), p. 191.

167. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, p. 233.

168. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, p. 437.

169. In 1755 Gloucester was joined with Stoke Orchard, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury and many of the names in the transcribed registers (GA, D 1340/A 1/R 1–3) are erroneously ascribed to Gloucester.

Ripley considered that the Quakers in Gloucester were always few and that the seventeen arrested in 1682 probably accounted for the whole group.¹⁷⁰ However, 'The Great Book of Sufferings' mentions 24 Gloucester Friends¹⁷¹ and a letter from the prison in 1682 lists 25.¹⁷² In her study of nonconformists in Warwickshire Hurwich found that in the period from 1660 to 1689 one half of all the Quakers were persecuted.¹⁷³ If the situation was similar in Gloucester, there would have been an estimated 50 members in 1682. Approaching the subject from a different angle, Reay estimated that 40 to 50 per cent of the membership were women.¹⁷⁴ In Gloucester 45 men and 34 women are mentioned in the period 1655–88, i.e. 43 per cent women.¹⁷⁵ If Reay's formula is applied to the 29 males listed in Table 2, there would appear to have been between 48 and 58 Quakers, excluding children, in Gloucester. Certainly the total must have been higher than Ripley's figure.

In calculating figures for Dissent in the Restoration period the returns made to Bishop Compton of London, the so-called Compton Census of 1676, are an important source. According to them there were 110 protestant nonconformists in Gloucester,¹⁷⁶ i.e. slightly over 2 per cent of the population of the city. This is an unreliable figure and the true number is likely to have been nearer 6 per cent.

No county can be called typical, but such a claim might be made for Warwickshire since it was 'ranked halfway down the list of English counties in population, taxable wealth and the proportion of Dissenters, as given in the Compton Census'.¹⁷⁷ As it also borders Gloucestershire, Hurwich's research there may be helpful in trying to interpret the limited information available for Gloucester. She found that, excluding the Quakers, between one third and a quarter of all other nonconformists were persecuted.¹⁷⁸ In Gloucester during the period 1655–84, in which 20 Quakers were prosecuted, 85 non-Quakers were prosecuted for recusancy.¹⁷⁹ Using Hurwich's findings, there would have been at least 255 non-Quaker Dissenters in the city. Add the Quakers and the total would be at least 300 Dissenters compared with Compton's 110. Hurwich also found Compton's figures unreliable; they represented 'an under estimate even of the most visible Dissenters'.¹⁸⁰ There could be several reasons for this. Ministers making returns may have played down the numbers in their parishes,¹⁸¹ and some of the returns are missing – only nine of the eleven Gloucester parishes are listed.¹⁸² There was also confusion as to whether the clergy should count individuals or families.¹⁸³

170. Ripley, 'The City of Gloucester, 1660–1740', p. 160.

171. The Great Book of Sufferings, vol. 3, f. 502.

172. *An Account of the Hardships and Violence inflicted upon Quakers* (1682).

173. Hurwich, 'Nonconformists in Warwickshire 1660–1720', p. 44.

174. Reay, *Quakers and the English Revolution*, p. 26.

175. From the registers of births, deaths and marriages: GA, D 1340/A 1/R 1–3.

176. *VCH Glos.* IV, p. 319.

177. Hurwich, 'Nonconformists in Warwickshire 1660–1720', p. 19.

178. *Ibid.* p. 44.

179. GBR, G 3/S1b 2.

180. Hurwich, 'Nonconformists in Warwickshire 1660–1720', p. 185.

181. A. Jones, 'Protestant Dissent in Gloucestershire', *Trans. BGAS* 101 (1983), p. 132.

182. *The Compton Census of 1676: a critical edition*, ed. A. Whiteman (British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, new series x, Oxford, 1986), p. 538.

183. M. Watt, *The Dissenters*, p. 491.

In 1735 the survey of Bishop Benson recorded 220 Dissenters in Gloucester.¹⁸⁴ Although Dr. Evans's List (1715–29) refers to 650 Dissenters,¹⁸⁵ his figure includes 'hearers' and children.¹⁸⁶ Watts produced a table showing the relationship between Dissenting church membership figures and the Evans List estimates. The membership figures were 34.2 per cent of the estimates. Applying this percentage to the Gloucester estimate produces 222 Dissenters – remarkably close to the Benson figure. Again, a study by Vann and Eversley found that the average urban Quaker family in the period 1700–49 was 5.6 (2 adults and 3.6 children).¹⁸⁷ Since Quaker mortality was not significantly different from that of other Dissenters, it would be reasonable to apply the Quaker family size to the Evans List. This produces a total of 221 adult Dissenters in Gloucester, if 30 on the List are discounted as 'hearers'. Since there was a known decline in Dissenting numbers in the early 18th century,¹⁸⁸ the above figures provide further reason to think that the Compton Census figures are too low.

Returning to Quaker numbers in particular, estimates for the early 18th century are more difficult, not just because Quaker minute books are imperfect and those for the Gloucester meeting are missing, but also because references in the court records are considerably reduced after 1689. The best sources available are the minute books of the quarterly and monthly meetings. From these one can extract the names of 22 Gloucester males in the period from 1688 to 1710. Using Reay's estimate again, a total membership of about 40 would seem reasonable at that time. This is not too dissimilar from Hurwich's findings in Warwickshire in the early eighteenth century,¹⁸⁹ when her figures for Quaker households may indicate a real decline.¹⁹⁰ Davies also found that numbers in Essex started to decline after 1684, albeit not uniformly.¹⁹¹ In Gloucester this decline is more apparent in the next two decades when, using the minute books as the source and Reay's formula as the method, there would appear to have been about thirty members in the 1720s (15 male names) and twenty members in the 1730s (10 male names). Twenty Quakers are mentioned in the survey of Bishop Benson in 1735.¹⁹² This trend is indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Members paying into Gloucester Monthly Meeting collections.¹⁹³

Year	1708	1714	1719	1722	1734	1740	1747
Number of members	18	13	9	10	6	5	3

In Gloucester, as in Essex and Warwickshire,¹⁹⁴ numbers did not fall during the persecution (1660–88), but they did thereafter. Why? Some argue that after the persecutions Quakerism lost

184. *Bishop Benson's Survey of the Diocese of Gloucester, 1735–50*, ed. J. Fendley (Gloucestershire Record Series xiii, BGAS, 2000), p. 90.

185. Dr. Williams Library, London: J. Evans, *Dissenting Congregations in England and Wales, 1715–1729*.

186. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 493.

187. R.T. Vann and D. Eversley, *Friends in Life and Death* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992), p. 240.

188. A. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (Baptist Union, London, 1947), p. 127; R. Tudor Jones, *Congregationalism in England* (Independent Press, London, 1962), p. 145

189. Hurwich, 'Nonconformists in Warwickshire 1660–1720', p. 54.

190. *Ibid.* p. 43.

191. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, p. 158.

192. *Benson's Survey of the Diocese of Gloucester*, p. 90.

193. GA, D 1340/B 2/M 2.

194. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, p. 157; Hurwich, 'Nonconformists in Warwickshire 1660–1720', p. 43.

its identity and ardour, while others claim that the growth of organisation stifled the movement.¹⁹⁵ It is said that for some the Quaker virtues of thrift, integrity and diligence led to increased prosperity and with that a desire for worldly pleasures,¹⁹⁶ although how far the riches of the world corrupted the modest tradesmen of Gloucester is a matter of conjecture.

There may be some truth in all these assertions, but there are other considerations. The excitement surrounding the millennium and the immediate Second Coming was clearly misplaced and missionary zeal diminished. Endogamy limited and reduced growth in the meetings. Emigration deprived meetings of young adult members and whole families.¹⁹⁷ Finally, if Friends were no longer evangelising, they needed to retain their own children to maintain their numbers. In Gloucester this did not always happen. The birth registers record large families, but many of the children are never mentioned again. Child mortality was high, but that does not fully explain the discrepancy. The Riddall family was an outstanding example of the problem. The father, Henry, was a pillar of the Quaker community. The first meeting in Gloucester was held in his house. He was persecuted and died in prison for his convictions, yet his first son, Abraham, did not share his father's faith. Abraham, like his father, became a carpenter and as a young man he is recorded as working in the church of St Mary de Crypt. Presumably he was required to construct bell frames and as a result acquired an interest in bells and bell founding. By 1684 he had started a foundry (using the name Rudhall) and his fame spread quickly. Over one third of all the bells hanging in Gloucestershire churches today were cast by the business he started, as was a ring of eight hanging in Christ Church, Boston, Massachusetts.¹⁹⁸ Memorials to Abraham and his wife are in Gloucester cathedral. This is strangely at odds with his father's dislike of 'steeple houses'.

When William Edmundson visited Gloucester in 1697 he found a large meeting, although he did have to discuss with them 'the things that were amiss'.¹⁹⁹ By 1718 Thomas Story encountered a small meeting that 'was heavy and drowsy'.²⁰⁰ 'A poor small meeting' was all that James Gough could report in 1737.²⁰¹ It is clear that the Quakers in Gloucester were no longer flourishing.

The Occupations of Gloucester's Early Quakers

Early studies of Quaker history, such as that of Braithwaite, showed little concern with the social origin of the Friends, but the topic has received greater attention since the mid 20th century and researchers have come to differing conclusions. Cole (1957) considered that 'early Friends were mainly from the urban and rural petite bourgeoisie'. He found little evidence for the involvement of the 'ruling classes', i.e. the gentry. On the other hand there were few Friends from the poorest classes.²⁰² Vann (1969) in his extensive research of the period 1654–60 laid greater emphasis on the core support of the 'upper bourgeoisie' – the yeomen landowners and wholesale traders.²⁰³

195. J. Punshon, *Portrait in Grey* (London, 1984), p. 102.

196. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, p. 499.

197. See below, marriage; emigration.

198. M. Bliss and F. Sharp, *Church Bells of Gloucestershire* (Gloucester, 1986), pp. 58–9.

199. W. Edmundson, 'Journal of the life of William Edmundson' in *The Friends Library* vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1838), p. 142.

200. *A Journal of the Life of Thomas Story* (Isaac Thompson, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1747), p. 605.

201. *Memoirs of the Life, Religious Experiences and Labours in the Gospel of James Gough*, ed. John Gough (Dublin, 1781), p. 11.

202. A. Cole, 'The Social Origins of Early Friends', *Journal Friends Historical Society* 48 (1957), p. 117.

203. R.T. Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1969), p. 50.

Vann suggested that while Cole's conclusions, based on literary evidence and especially on Quaker registers, were generally valid, he (Vann) had cross checked with wills and court records and his was a truer picture.²⁰⁴ However, Hurwich (1970) thought that Vann's conclusions, based on Buckinghamshire, were not typical, since in Warwickshire the 'upper bourgeoisie' were 'conspicuous by their absence'.²⁰⁵ Reay (1985) came to different conclusions again. He asserted that the picture was more complex than that portrayed by Cole and his material did not support the findings of Vann. For Reay the membership came from the 'middling sort of people' – traders, artisans, yeomen and husbandmen.²⁰⁶ Later study by Davies (2000) found that in Essex the evidence did not fully support the conclusions of any of the above researchers, although the figures for Colchester were closer to the arguments of Cole and Hurwich.²⁰⁷ All of this illustrates the problem of interpretation and the dangers of arguing from the particular to the general.

The statistics for these studies are usually based on statements of occupational background provided by Quaker registers of births, marriages and deaths, civil and diocesan court records and wills. Invaluable though the Quaker records are, they are not uniform. For example, the registers for London are particularly helpful in providing occupational information,²⁰⁸ whereas the early records for Gloucester provide none. In some areas wills give a good indication of wealth and social status, but according to the records of Gloucester's diocesan consistory court, few Gloucester Quakers wrote wills. Presumably they were either too poor to leave wills or the documents have been lost. Consequently there are only three fruitful sources of relevant information for Gloucester – Besse,²⁰⁹ the borough records and the diocesan court records.²¹⁰ 'The Great Book of Sufferings' is generally unhelpful in this respect.²¹¹ Besse recorded the reported sufferings of Friends but only rarely mentioned occupations.²¹² Most information on occupations is therefore to be found in the indictment books of the Gloucester Quarter Sessions among the borough records.²¹³ Dissenters of all persuasions appeared before the city magistrates. Sometimes, as in the case of Quakers, it was for defying the Conventicle Acts²¹⁴ or refusing the Oath of Allegiance, but for all Dissenters it could be for non-attendance at the parish church. The church courts might be expected to deal with such cases, but since their most severe punishment was excommunication – a fate not likely to worry most Dissenters! – the Church frequently preferred to invoke the civil powers. For stubborn offenders the bishop could apply to the civil court for a writ *de excommunicato capiendo*. The culprit could then be arrested and imprisoned. Thus Walter Bishop, a Quaker, was imprisoned until he recanted.²¹⁵

In the absence of census returns it is the 'additions'²¹⁶ to the court records that are so valuable. However, these descriptions can be ambiguous. A trade may be given, but it is impossible to know

204. Idem, 'Quakerism and the Social Structure in the Interregnum', *Past and Present* 43 (1969), pp. 82–6.

205. J. Hurwich, 'The Social Origin of Early Quakers', *Past and Present* 48 (1970), p. 159.

206. Reay, *Quakers and the English Revolution*, pp. 21, 24, 20.

207. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, p. 145.

208. Cole, 'Social Origins of Early Friends', p. 100.

209. Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers* (London, 1753).

210. Held at Gloucestershire Archives (GA).

211. *The Great Book of Sufferings*, vol. 3, part 1.

212. The exceptions are John and Nicholas Wastfield (blacksmiths), James Cugley (cardmaker), Daniel Bailey (journeyman tailor) and Thomas Miles (weaver): Besse, *Sufferings*, pp. 216–17.

213. GBR, G 3/S1b 2.

214. *Ibid.* f. 369.

215. D.L. Wykes, 'The Bishop of Gloucester and Non Conformity', *Southern History* 17 (1995), pp. 26–7.

216. Vann, *Social Development of English Quakerism*, p. 52.

whether the trader was a wholesale or retail merchant, large or small. In Gloucester there were weavers and woolcombers, but there are no details on whether they were wage labourers or men who had the capital to purchase and own machinery and employ workmen. Cole places tanners in the poorer category of mechanics,²¹⁷ whereas Robert Beard, a tanner in Essex, was wealthy enough to employ five servants.²¹⁸ The classification as 'labourer' must also be treated with caution. Godfrey Fownes is recorded as a labourer but also as a cordwainer, Richard Webb as a labourer and a woolcomber, and Jacob Cugley as a labourer and a cardmaker.²¹⁹ It could well have been the practice of clerks to record the accused as labourers when they were uncertain of their occupation. There were similar inconsistencies in Essex,²²⁰ while in Bristol all Quakers presented at the Quarter Sessions were classed as 'labourers'.²²¹

In the Gloucester indictment books the Quaker John Edmunds is recorded as a labourer²²² and this too is arguably false. Edmunds was the friend of Alderman Edwards, a leading figure in the city.²²³ The fact that he had goods taken to the value of £15 hints at a person of some substance.²²⁴ Furthermore a search of the hearth tax returns for 1671–72 reveals only one John Edmunds, living in the parish of St Catherine.²²⁵ He had three hearths, whereas the poorest residents had one or none and were usually exempt from the tax. This John Edmunds certainly had one of the more comfortable houses²²⁶ although not a large one. All the evidence suggests that he was unlikely to have been a labourer.

In this study, where there are conflicting classifications of occupation, the specific record is taken, on balance, to be more accurate. The information in Table 2 came primarily from the borough indictment books, covering the years from 1653 to 1684. A few occupations were found in 'The Great Book of Sufferings' and some in Besse's *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers* (London, 1753).

John Readdy is recorded as a Yeoman/Husbandman. This is conjecture. He lived in Maisemore, a small village one and a half miles to the west of Gloucester. In 1655 he was high constable of Dudstone and King's Barton.²²⁷ An Instruction of 1788 refers to high constables as persons of 'superior consideration and property', and at that time yeomen had the highest representation among the high constables of Gloucestershire.²²⁸ It would therefore be reasonable to think that Readdy was a landowner of some sort. This is strengthened by the fact that in a Maisemore lease of 1706 a John Readdy is described as a gentleman.²²⁹ The high constable John had a son called John,²³⁰ and the person mentioned in the lease is most likely to have been that son.

217. Cole, 'Social Origins of Early Friends', pp. 107–9.

218. Reay, *Quakers and the English Revolution*, p. 21.

219. GBR, G 3/S1b 2, ff. 189, 203, 336, 369.

220. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, appendix II.

221. R. Mortimer, 'Quakerism in Seventeenth-Century Bristol' (Bristol University M.A. thesis, 1946), p. 515.

222. GBR, G 3/S1b 2, f. 200.

223. Penney, *First Publishers of Truth*, p. 110.

224. Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 217.

225. GA, D 383.

226. P. Clark and P. Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500–1700* (Oxford, 1979), p. 113.

227. GBR, G 3/S0 6, f. 55.

228. B. Jerrard, 'Early Policing Methods in Gloucestershire', *Trans. BGAS* 100 (1983), pp. 223–4.

229. GDR, G 2/3/15421.

230. GA, D 1340/A 1/R 1.

Table 2. The occupations of Gloucester Quakers 1655–88.

Baker	(1)	John Mills
Blacksmiths	(2)	John Wastfield
Nicholas Wastfield		
Bricklayer	(1)	Henry Engley
Butcher	(1)	Edward Cripps
Carpenters	(2)	Henry Riddall
John Watkins		
Cardmaker	(1)	Jacob Cugley
Clothmaker	(1)	Thomas White
Cordwainer	(1)	Godfrey Fownes
Dyer	(1)	Roger Renolds
Labourers	(4)	John Cox
John Edmunds		
Richard Green		
George Cother		
Tailors	(3)	Daniel Bailey
Richard Holland		
John Webb		
Tanner	(1)	William Day
Upholsterers	(2)	John Elliott
Nicholas Perry		
Weavers	(2)	Daniel King
Thomas Miles		
Wire Drawers	(2)	Thomas Wymatt
Henry Merry		
Woolcombers	(3)	William Monington
Richard Webb		
William Williamson		
Yeoman/Husbandman	(1)	John Readdy
Total (29)		

The occupational categories used by Cole have been adopted in order to afford comparison between Gloucester, Gloucestershire and part of Wiltshire, Bristol and Colchester (Table 3). Bristol, Colchester and Gloucester were large towns during this period.²³¹ Each was a port situated at a nodal point in the transport network, although Gloucester did not expand at the rate of the other two. Gloucester is therefore at the lower end of this category of towns while Bristol was one of the largest. Another difference between Gloucester and Colchester is that one quarter of all the Quakers in Essex lived in Colchester. Davies' Colchester statistics have been re-arranged to make comparison more meaningful. In the mid 17th century the populations were Bristol 15,000,²³² Colchester 10,400²³³ and Gloucester 5,088.²³⁴

231. Clark and Slack, *English Towns in Transition*, pp. 161–2.

232. Warmington, *Civil War, Interregnum and Restoration in Gloucestershire*, p. 7.

233. *VCH Essex IX* (Oxford, 1994), p. 67.

234. Ripley, 'The City of Gloucester, 1660–1740', p. 7.

Table 3. Comparative survey of occupations.*

Occupations	Gloucester 1655–1685		Gloucestershire and Wiltshire 1656–1688		Bristol 1657–1688		Colchester 1655–1684	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Gentlemen							16	5.2
Surgeons, Teachers					4	2.4	2	0.7
Agriculture	1	3.5	24	25.5	1	0.6	16	5.2
Commerce, Food and Consumption Goods (merchants, bakers, butchers etc.)	2	6.9	8	8.5	45	26.8	75	24.4
Clothing Trades (drapers, clothiers, weavers, woolcombers, cordwainers etc.)	12	41.3	37	39.4	74	44	161	52.4
Mechanic Trades (smiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, cardmakers, masons etc.), Mariners	10	34.5	23	24.5	43	25.6	37	12.1
Servants, Labourers	4	13.8	2	2.1	1	0.6	0	0
Totals	29		94		168		307	

* The information for Gloucester has been obtained from Table 2. A. Cole, 'The Social Origins of Early Friends', *Journal Friends Historical Society* 48 (1957), provided the figures for Gloucestershire and Wiltshire (p.107) and for Bristol (p.112). The figures for Colchester are an aggregate of three tables covering the period 1655–1684 in A. Davies, *The Quakers in English Society 1655–1725* (Oxford, 2000), pp.151–2.

Vann points out that any statistics of this period need to be treated with careful qualification and interpretation.²³⁵ An additional weakness with the numbers in Gloucester is that they are too small for statistical significance. Nevertheless some valuable observations may be made. As an urban community one would expect the agricultural representation to be low.²³⁶ The higher commercial and mercantile representation in Bristol and Colchester is also easily understood, for both were flourishing ports. Each had some sailors or mariners as Friends, whereas Gloucester, a struggling river port, had none. The number of gentlemen in Colchester is significantly different. Lack of a clear definition may account for some of the discrepancy. Davies does not define the style and there was no legal definition. It could be used by a yeoman, clothier, physician, merchant and any who counted himself a gentleman.²³⁷ Perhaps the prosperous merchants of Bristol were more modest in their use of the term.

In each of the areas studied the membership of textile workers is significant. This is an interesting feature for Gloucester where the textile trade had been in decline for some years. In 1626 there

235. Vann, *Social Development of English Quakerism*, p. 61.

236. The one Yeoman/Husbandman came from a nearby village – see p. 00.

237. Vann, *Social Development of English Quakerism*, pp. 54–5.

had been a cry that whereas there used to be near twenty clothiers 'of good estates who had kept great numbers of the poor on work' there are now but two or three such men 'of mean ability'.²³⁸

Although there were no servants or labourers among the Colchester Quakers, Davies found from the hearth tax returns that 23 per cent of them were very poor, being exempt from the tax or having only one hearth.²³⁹ The social distinction between these and the labouring poor must have been limited.

Hurwich's findings for the urban Quakers in Warwickshire have been listed separately (Table 4), because she used different classifications, but the picture is clear. The Quakers in the towns were predominantly tradesmen or artisans. Vann argued that Quakerism followed Max Weber's model that 'religious ideas at first gain adherents from all social classes (vertical cleavage), but later become associated with one class (horizontal cleavage)'.²⁴⁰ From the example of Gloucester it would appear that in some places the movement was horizontal from the beginning.

Table 4. Urban Quakers in Warwickshire.²⁴¹

Occupations	% (to the nearest whole figure)
Merchants (wholesale traders, large-scale manufacturers)	5
Professionals (lawyers, physicians, clerks, schoolmasters)	4
Tradesmen (retailers, clothiers and maltsters—employing several workers)	21
Artisans (other skilled and semi-skilled workers).	69
Labourers, servants and unskilled workers.	0

The Development of Unity and Order

All human associations have to evolve some form of organisation if they are to survive. This was certainly true of the emerging groups of Protestant separatists who gathered around Fox and the other Quaker leaders. Their priority may have been missionary rather than organisational, but there were particular problems to be addressed. The very nature of the movement, in which each individual could experience the leadings of the Spirit, had an awesome potential for anarchy. How could one distinguish between the genuine message and self delusion? Furthermore, in a turbulent age of persecution, there was a clear need for an organised system of mutual help and support. Additionally, a movement which began as a mission to the whole world had to be united if it was to spread its message effectively. As Richard Farnsworth wrote to Friends in 1657, they must 'watch over one another for...the preservation of true unity'.²⁴²

The early structure was loose. In the Civil War period when dissident groups began to leave their parish churches they made their own arrangements for support and worship. This happened among the Baptists of the Midlands and the Seekers of the North of England. Since many participating in these emerging organisations became Quakers, they naturally influenced the development of the new movement.²⁴³ By 1653 local Quaker meetings had been established in Cumbria.

238. Clark and Slack, *English Towns in Transition*, p. 103.

239. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, p. 146.

240. Vann, *Social Development of English Quakerism*, p. 73.

241. Hurwich, 'Nonconformists in Warwickshire 1660–1720', p. 211.

242. R. Farnsworth, *Warmsworth, Oct. 1657*, in A.R. Barclay (ed.), *Letters of Early Friends* (London, 1841), no. 123.

243. R. Moore, 'Foundations of Gospel Order', *Friends Quarterly* (April 2000), pp. 65–6.

The requirement for closer control had become apparent by the mid 1650s. The bizarre behaviour of some individuals was causing concern. Those who went naked through the streets as a sign of the spiritual nakedness of the world, such as 'Adam and Eve' in Yorkshire,²⁴⁴ not only exposed themselves to ridicule but also discredited the Quakers generally. Nayler's entry into Bristol on a donkey in 1656 as a sign of Christ's coming provided even greater embarrassment.²⁴⁵ As a result the Elders of the north, meeting in Balby in Yorkshire, issued an epistle of guidance (November 1656). It was a long document dealing with arrangements for meetings, the discipline of members, the conduct of business meetings, care of the poor and relations within families, between Friends and with the civil authorities.²⁴⁶

The persecution during the Restoration years brought increased pressures on all Dissenters, including Quakers. The latter's problems were compounded by internal disagreements. Although highlighted in the comparatively trivial issue of whether hats might be worn during prayers,²⁴⁷ the principle of the individual leading of the Spirit as opposed to the Truth as understood by the group had deep ramifications which threatened the unity and fellowship of the whole movement. The dispute was resolved in May 1666, when a specially convened meeting of ministers in London proclaimed in a letter, known as *Testimony to the Brethren*, that 'individual guidance is subordinate to the corporate sense of the church'.²⁴⁸

Fox was not a signatory of the letter since he was at that time captive in Scarborough castle. However, he later endorsed the decision and on his release began a tour of the country in which he endeavoured to restore unity. On these travels, beginning in the spring of 1667, he set up monthly and quarterly meetings.²⁴⁹ In the early part of 1668 he 'came to Gloucestershire, where we had a General Men's Meeting at Justice Cripps' house at Tetbury,²⁵⁰ and settled all the monthly meetings'.²⁵¹ The monthly meeting centred on Gloucester included Alvington, Aylburton, Chosen (Churchdown), Taynton and Westbury-on-Severn. The composition of the other monthly meetings in Gloucestershire may be found in the quarterly meeting minutes of December 1670.²⁵²

By the early 1670s a nationwide hierarchy of meetings had been established. At a local level there were preparative (or particular) meetings – Gloucester was one. These meetings were grouped into monthly meetings which were themselves represented at quarterly meetings. Quarterly meetings, which roughly covered a whole county, were later asked to send representatives to the Yearly Meeting (created in 1678) and the Meeting for Sufferings, which had been set up in London in 1676.

The first quarterly meeting in Gloucestershire was held at the home of John Roberts of Siddington, near Cirencester, on 28 March 1670. In broad terms the purpose of the monthly and quarterly meetings was to support local meetings, limit idiosyncratic behaviour among members, maintain discipline, help those suffering persecution and attend to the needs of the poor.²⁵³

Men and women had separate meetings. Fox believed that since the Fall women had been subject to men, but with the coming of Christ all things were made new. Now women were 'again made

244. F. Higginson, *A Brief Revelation of the Irreligion of the Northern Quakers* (London, 1658), p. 30.

245. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, pp. 267–71.

246. *Ibid.* pp. 312–13.

247. Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, p. 82.

248. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, p. 248.

249. Fox, *Journal*, pp. 510–27.

250. *Ibid.* p. 272.

251. *Ibid.* p. 517.

252. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1.

253. *Ibid.* B 2/M 1; A 1/M 1.

helpmates as before the Fall'. He therefore encouraged the establishment of women's meetings. By 1656 there were two women's meetings in London and another in Bristol before 1669. In the counties their introduction was more difficult,²⁵⁴ although women's quarterly meetings were held in Gloucestershire by 1696. Unfortunately, there are no extant records of Gloucester women's monthly meeting until 1777.²⁵⁵

The System at Work

The spiritual and physical well-being of the Friends, as a group and as individuals, was sustained through their meetings for worship and business. It is largely from the records of these meetings that an understanding of their local affairs may be obtained, although this is extremely difficult in the case of Gloucester where there are no preparative meeting minutes and the minutes of the monthly meeting for the period 1668–1708 have been lost.

Settling Differences.

Quakers were anxious to resolve any differences that might occur as amicably as possible, knowing that public disputes could be damaging for their image. They would also have known of Paul's injunction that brother should not go to law with brother – and especially before unbelievers.²⁵⁶ Thus it was that in 1693 advice was sent to all monthly meetings that Friends should not go to law until the meeting had had a chance to resolve the matter.²⁵⁷ Later every preparative meeting was required to appoint two Friends with responsibility for settling any difference that might arise, whether it be over testimonies, property or estates.²⁵⁸

The first recorded dispute involving Friends in Gloucester was in 1700, when Jane Baylis and Sarah Perrin were summoned to the house of Thomas Monington to answer accusations of 'false testimony'. It was resolved that the two women should reconcile themselves to Friends at the meeting before they offered 'their gifts anymore'.²⁵⁹ Despite a plea for love and unity, the women persisted and had to be threatened with 'disownment', i.e. repudiation by the meeting.²⁶⁰ Since the case was not referred to again, one assumes that peace prevailed. There are no other recorded cases during our period and from this one may conclude that any differences that did arise were settled locally and not passed up to the quarterly meeting.

When a preparative meeting was unable to resolve its difficulties it could appeal to the quarterly meeting for assistance. Trouble-shooters might then be sent in. For example, on three occasions Friends from Gloucester were sent to settle differences at Tirley,²⁶¹ and in 1673 Nicholas Kent of Tewkesbury was warned twice to 'forbear making a disturbance' in the meeting. Again, Nicholas Wastfield of Gloucester and others were asked to visit Cheltenham to deal with a member called Davies who 'departs from the truth and follows the imaginations of his own brain'. Great concern was shown for Davies's spiritual welfare, even when after a year disownment seemed to be the

254. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, pp. 272–4.

255. GA, D 1340/B 2/M 7.

256. 1 Corinthians 6: 6.

257. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1693 9m.

258. *Ibid.* 1696 9m.

259. *Ibid.* 1700 12m.

260. *Ibid.* 1701 6m.

261. *Ibid.* 1674.

only answer.²⁶² Such concern for the good of the erring individual was also noted by Adrian Davies in his study of Quakers in Essex.²⁶³

Differences over property also exercised the minds of meetings, and there are a number of such cases in Gloucester in the minutes after 1708.

Marriage

The Bible was the ultimate authority for most Protestants. Paul's injunction 'Do not unite yourselves with unbelievers: they are not fit for you'²⁶⁴ led naturally to endogamy. Baptists and Congregationalists adopted the practice, as did the Quakers.²⁶⁵ Fox prepared a paper on Friends' marriages in 1653, and an epistle in 1675 required all proposed marriages to be placed before meetings so that the proposed marriage could be checked and cleared and parental consent confirmed and so that it could be established that 'all possess the truth...and walk in it'.²⁶⁶ These directives had been anticipated in Gloucestershire in 1672 when the quarterly meeting required all meetings to supervise marriage arrangements and ensure that prescribed certificates of marriage were used.²⁶⁷ All marriages had to take place in public meetings,²⁶⁸ and women's meetings were frequently asked to check the clearance for marriage.²⁶⁹

At first some latitude was allowed, but generally the rules were strictly enforced. In one month alone four members in Bristol were disowned – two for being married by a priest, one for adultery and one for 'unclean practice' (unspecified).²⁷⁰ Although things were less sensational in Gloucester, the same rules applied. Monthly meeting minutes reveal a steady flow of partners declaring an intent to marry. The declaration of intent itself was no empty formality. When Mary Williams (Gloucester) and William Horton (Cirencester) presented themselves William had taken care to bring a Certificate of Clearance from Cirencester. However, the meeting required Mary's parents to appear at the next meeting and William to reappear with a letter of consent from his parents. Not until this had been done were they given written permission to proceed.²⁷¹ Interestingly, as in Essex, there are no records of parents frustrating the wishes of their children.²⁷² Nevertheless, as the 18th century progressed a stronger line was taken and the number of disownments for 'disorderly' marriage increased. This was to have a significant impact on Quaker numbers.²⁷³

The exclusive nature of the sect meant that couples were most likely to meet at one of the various meetings. This limited the choice and there is evidence of the Friends in Gloucester being mobile in their search, as they were in Essex where after 1670 the majority of marriages were between partners from different areas.²⁷⁴

262. Ibid. 1683 and 1684.

263. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, pp. 101–4.

264. 2 Corinthians 6: 14.

265. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 329.

266. Fox, *Journal*, p. 519; idem, *Swarthmore Epistle 12th. Feb. 1675*.

267. GA, D 1340/A 1?M 1, 1672 6m.

268. Ibid. 1672 9m.

269. Ibid. B 2/M 2, 1724 3m.

270. R. Mortimer, *Minute Book of the Men's Meeting of the Society of Friends in Bristol 1686–1704* (Bristol Record Society 30, 1977), pp. 23, 91–2.

271. GA, D 1340/B 2/M 2, 1717 7m.

272. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, p. 93.

273. R.M. Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism* I (London, 1921), p. 143.

274. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, p. 99.

The Suffering

The main period of persecution was during the reign of Charles II and in 1670 the Bristol men's meeting sent £10 for the relief of suffering Friends in Gloucester.²⁷⁵ The next year the newly formed Gloucestershire quarterly meeting required every meeting to prepare an account of those suffering and of those who could not bear the losses and needed assistance. The quarterly meeting then provided £24 to repurchase Walter Humphries's looms and such other necessary goods for the 'supply of his family'²⁷⁶ and gave £10 to Henry Ponten so that he could replace his horse that had been taken.²⁷⁷

The severest persecution came in the period 1680–85. John Elliott and John Edmunds of Gloucester were requested to attend the Assizes in order to assist Friends²⁷⁸ and John Elliott and Nicholas Wastfield were charged to care for the prisoners in Gloucester, with the quarterly meeting paying any costs.²⁷⁹ In 1682 £8 10s. was given for the prisoners in the castle and £4 for those in the city's north gate.²⁸⁰ In 1684 another 20s. was given for the prisoners in the north gate and 20s. for those from the nearby village of Westbury-on-Severn. A year later John Elliott and John Edmunds were allocated 33s. to pay for the 'chamber rent of the poor friends in prison' and £2 14s. for prisoners in the castle and the north gate.

Whilst the Quakers endured the persecution with courage, it was nevertheless their policy to challenge the legal correctness of the charges whenever this was possible. Petitions to judges and the king on behalf of the persecuted were frequent. The suffering of Friends was laid before the judges of Assize in Gloucester in 1677,²⁸¹ and before the bishop of Gloucester in 1680. In the same year all monthly meetings were asked to write regarding the sufferings to the county's members of parliament, and the sufferings were again laid before the judges in February 1684.²⁸² Three months after that a petition was presented (via the yearly meeting) to both king and parliament. Following such efforts one can imagine that the quarterly meeting had considerable pleasure in drawing up an address to the king in August 1686 acknowledging his kindness 'in stopping our persecution'.²⁸³

The Poor and Needy

In the Middle Ages the poor had relied on private charity and the benevolence of the Church, but religious and economic developments during the age of the Tudors and Stuarts rendered that system totally inadequate. The Elizabethan government tried to tackle the problem through legislation, culminating in the Poor Law Act of 1601.²⁸⁴ The poor became increasingly a parish or public responsibility, although the State was more concerned with stability and order than with generosity to the poor. The burden of implementing the legislation fell upon the local communities where local overseers were required to administer the poor rate. A secular solution had been devised, although it was based on a church institution – the parish.

275. Mortimer, 'Quakerism in Seventeenth-Century Bristol', p. 233.

276. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1671 3m.

277. *ibid.* 1671 9m.

278. *Ibid.* 1679 3m.

279. *Ibid.* 1679 12m.

280. *Ibid.* 1682 9m.

281. *Ibid.* 1677 12m.

282. *Ibid.* 1684 12m.

283. *Ibid.* 1685 12m.

284. G. Clark, *The Later Stuarts* (Oxford, 1947), p. 52.

Members of the Church of England were content to accept relief from the parish, but most Dissenting churches attempted to look after their own brethren with those doctrinally nearest to the established church being more likely to fall back on the parish if necessary. Thus the Presbyterians were frequently ready to accept parish relief²⁸⁵ whereas Quakers, the other end of the religious spectrum, would not. In his journal Fox describes how justices in Skipton, Yorkshire, acknowledged that the Friends did the work of the parish officers in providing 'for our poor that none should be chargeable to the parishes'.²⁸⁶ In this context it must be said that Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists would have found this provision more difficult than Quakers, since, unlike Quakers, they had also to finance their ministers.²⁸⁷

Whether the provider was the State or individual churches, the problems were the same and the solutions understandably similar. Local communities set up bridewells or houses of correction, which were types of workhouse. In 1669 Fox also advocated setting up a house for the sick and poor where work could be provided for the unemployed.²⁸⁸ Such institutions were established by Friends in Bristol in 1698²⁸⁹ and in Clerkenwell in 1701,²⁹⁰ the year that John Bellers suggested that Gloucestershire should do likewise.²⁹¹ However, such a project required more finance than the county Friends could raise and the only workhouses in Gloucester remained the bridewells next to the castle prison and at the east gate.

Again, as the parishes helped the poor with apprenticeships for the young and alms and goods for the sick and needy, so the Quakers did likewise. And both parishes and Quakers experienced the same difficulty in identifying precisely the individuals for whom they were responsible. Among Quakers the responsibility for the poor lay primarily with the particular or preparative meeting, but it quickly became a shared responsibility with the monthly meeting²⁹² and, when it could not cope, with the quarterly meeting.²⁹³ The Gloucester monthly meeting received £2 for the poor from the quarterly meeting in 1672. Of this, 10s. went to Thomas White of Chosen,²⁹⁴ who received further sums of 10s., 5s. and 10s. in the years 1675 and 1676.²⁹⁵ In 1680 he was given three sums of 20s. and one of 1s. 4d., and in May 1683 his widow was given 5s.²⁹⁶ Chosen was clearly a struggling Quaker community for other relief had to be given there in 1673 and 1674.²⁹⁷

The quarterly meeting provided £12 7s. 6d. for Zachariah Phillips and his poor, distressed family in 1688,²⁹⁸ The next year it bound his son as an apprentice. References to the creation of apprenticeships occur regularly throughout the minutes – seven were arranged in the year 1681. Usually master, boy and, where appropriate, parent would agree to the arrangement. The Friends would then provide the premium, which was normally £5. Thus, £10 was put up for two apprenticeships in Nailsworth in 1729, although less typically, but not uniquely, 20s. was given

285. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 336.

286. Fox, *Journal*, p. 373.

287. Watts, *The Dissenters*, pp. 344–5.

288. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, p. 571.

289. Mortimer, 'Quakerism in Seventeenth-Century Bristol', p. 241.

290. Clark, *The Later Stuarts*, p. 52.

291. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1701 3m.

292. A. Lloyd, *Quaker Social History 1669–1738* (London, 1950), p. 33.

293. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1670 12m.

294. *Ibid.* 1672 6m and 12m.

295. *Ibid.* 1675, 1676.

296. *Ibid.* 1683 3m.

297. *Ibid.* 1673, 1674.

298. *Ibid.* 1688 3m.

for clothes.²⁹⁹ Occasionally lesser sums were provided as when Nicholas Wastfield of Gloucester received £1 towards the cost of binding an apprentice³⁰⁰ and Thomas Mills of Gloucester received 13s. for taking an apprentice.³⁰¹ Mortimer commented that poor lads were usually apprenticed to the poor trades because the premiums were lower.³⁰² In Gloucester there were no wealthy Quaker traders for that assertion to be tested.

The relief that was given was not restricted to local Friends. In 1672 £50 5*d.* was collected in the county for George Embry of Southampton, who had suffered great loss by fire.³⁰³ A similar tragedy in Northampton evoked a collection of £36 11*s.* 11*d.* in 1675.³⁰⁴ In 1673 £5 was paid to Friends in Monmouthshire.³⁰⁵ and in 1698 £5 to Patricia Walters of Monmouth.³⁰⁶ The sum of £7 7*s.* 9*d.* was raised in 1679 for captives in Turkey³⁰⁷ and even during the persecutions of 1684 preparative meetings were asked to collect for Quaker prisoners in Algiers.³⁰⁸ However, a general appeal from the 1677 Yearly Meeting for Friends overseas was not so well received.³⁰⁹ Gloucester gave 10*s.* towards a county total of £17, but the quarterly meeting expressed its dissatisfaction with centralised collection and informed London that in future it would itself finance members from Gloucestershire who felt moved to go overseas – other areas would be expected to do likewise.

In 1692 a collection was made for Friends in Ireland. The sum raised in Gloucestershire is not recorded, although it is known that Bristol collected £162. This was a handsome response following a donation from Irish Friends to the Yearly Meeting seven years earlier. Of that gift £30 had been distributed to Bristol³¹⁰ and £14 to Gloucestershire, of which John White and Richard Holland of Gloucester had received 10*s.* and £1 respectively.³¹¹

Care of the poor and needy was both time-consuming and expensive. Among Quakers the required money was normally raised in one of three ways. Each preparative meeting and monthly meeting was required to collect and send donations to the quarterly meeting for ‘the use of the poor and the service of Truth.’³¹² Secondly, special collections were called for as necessary, although in Gloucester such appeals were more often for the repair of the meeting house.³¹³ Finally, then as now, legacies were always welcome as they provided a valuable and regular source of income. In 1697 John Webb and John Cox were deputed to look after the Gloucester legacies.³¹⁴ From 1708 onwards there are frequent references to legacies in the Gloucester minutes.

Of necessity, Friends could only afford to support their own members and were advised to take no notice of those who come begging ‘since no honest Friends are ever exposed after that

299. Ibid. 1729 6*m.*

300. Ibid. 1671 9*m.*

301. Ibid. 1674 6*m.*

302. Mortimer, ‘Quakerism in Seventeenth-Century Bristol’, p. 274.

303. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1672 6*m.*

304. Ibid. 1675 12*m.*

305. Ibid. 1673 6*m.*

306. Ibid. 1689 12*m.*

307. Ibid. 1679 12*m.*

308. Ibid. 1684 6*m.*

309. Ibid. 1677 2*m.*

310. Mortimer, ‘Quakerism in Seventeenth-Century Bristol’, p. 76.

311. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1685 12*m.*

312. There are lists of subscribers in Bristol in 1686: Mortimer, ‘Quakerism in Seventeenth-Century Bristol’, p. 261.

313. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1725 4*m.*

314. Ibid. 1697 6*m.*

manner'.³¹⁵ Non-members were advised to seek relief from the parish, even though individual acts of kindness were not prohibited. As the yearly meeting confirmed in 1711, 'no meeting is under any obligation to maintain those who are not true Friends or pretend to profess the truth, although no-one is to be restrained from charity to any necessitous person'.³¹⁶ Even among Friends support was not a simple formality. Relatives were expected to assist whenever possible and all were expected to conduct their lives responsibly. As a result when Walter Humphreys fell into debt and sought relief in 1685 the quarterly meeting thought long and hard but found 'themselves not obliged to answer' since he had neglected the counsel of God and Friends.³¹⁷ Widow Howell of Gloucester did not help her cause either when women sent to advise her had 'no satisfaction'.³¹⁸

In 1692 Widow Phillips of Westbury-on-Severn got into debt and proceedings were started against her. These were aborted and she was ordered to sell her cattle to Friends and let her land for rent.³¹⁹ Security was given for this and Widow Phillips was given £4 in cash. As a further gesture of support one daughter was sent into service in Ross-on-Wye and another daughter was set up with Henry Engly and his wife in Gloucester.³²⁰ Trouble arose in 1699. Widow Phillips accused the Englys of abusing her daughter. Six Friends were appointed to investigate and the conflict rumbled on for months. Eventually the accusations were found to be false and Widow Phillips was reproved.³²¹ In 1701 Henry Engly was granted permission to release the daughter if he saw fit.³²²

Because travel is so much easier in modern times there is a tendency to think that earlier populations were much more static. In some ways they were, but in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries there was considerable migration, frequently in search of work. This could place severe strains on local resources, especially if one parish was more generous in its provision for the poor than another. London and Westminster, for example, were considerably affected by paupers drifting to the capital.³²³ To combat this the Elizabethan laws were modified until in 1662, the Act of Settlement enabled parishes to reject immigrant paupers.³²⁴

In other words, clear rules of entitlement had to be drawn up; and this is precisely the dilemma that faced the Quakers. As early as the 1660s there were claims that some people were using religion for 'sinister ends, some that are poor to get maintenance for it'.³²⁵ But pseudo Friends were not really a widespread problem. The real difficulty rose from the movement of Friends,³²⁶ so that the 1693 Yearly Meeting decreed that poor Friends were only permitted to go to London if they had a certificate from their monthly meeting.³²⁷

This lack of clarity over entitlement and responsibility for the poor persisted, despite rulings in 1710, 1724 and 1729, until the matter was finally settled in 1737. New rules for membership were then drawn and almost by accident birthright membership was created.³²⁸

315. Mortimer, 'Quakerism in Seventeenth-Century Bristol', p. 229.

316. Yearly Meeting minutes; GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1711 3m.

317. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1685 12m.

318. Ibid. B 2/M 2, 1730 9m.

319. Ibid. A 1/M 1, 1692 3m.

320. Ibid. 1696 3m.

321. Ibid. 1700 9m. and 12m.

322. Ibid. 1701 3m.

323. Clark, *The Later Stuarts*, p. 51.

324. Wilson, *England's Apprenticeship*, p. 349.

325. *The Bloody Quaker or The Gloucester Murder Discovered* (London, 1668), p. 2.

326. Vann, *Social Development of English Quakerism*, p. 147.

327. Lloyd, *Quaker Social History*, p. 43.

328. Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, p. 134. See also Vann, *Social Development of English Quakerism*, p. 153.

Mind and Spirit

The Church of England had schools and universities to train ministers in its service, but Dissenters were denied these opportunities. They therefore established and developed their own academies, some of which were outstanding for their liberal attitudes. A future Archbishop, Thomas Seeker, praised the questioning of ideas tolerated in Samuel Jones' academy in Gloucester (1711).³²⁹ This existed despite the fact that any Dissenting teacher could be fined if he dared to practise his profession,³³⁰ and in 1712 the academy was forced to move to Tewkesbury.³³¹

Since George Fox scorned the human learning of university-trained ministers – 'to be bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to make a man fit to be a minister of Christ'³³² – it might be assumed that education was not a priority with Quakers. They did indeed emphasise the leading of the Spirit, but they also appreciated the importance of basic education. Fox himself founded the first Quaker schools at Waltham Abbey and Shacklewell (Hackney) in 1668.³³³ Bristol had a Quaker school by 1674 and Sidcot school, in neighbouring Somerset, was established in 1699.³³⁴ The 1690 Yearly Meeting urged all Friends 'to provide school masters and mistresses who are faithful Friends' and not to send children to schools that taught corrupt manners, fashion and language.³³⁵ Just as a reaction to the extravagance of Restoration clothing resulted in a severe form of Quaker uniform, so a reaction to human learning seems to have created an inward and closed Quaker curriculum. The emphasis was on plainness and simplicity.³³⁶ If there had been more members with Penn's progressive ideas on education,³³⁷ a leadership might have developed that could have averted the inward-looking drift of 18th-century Quakerism.

Perhaps it was in response to the promptings of yearly meeting that Gloucestershire encouraged Andrew Russell to start a school in the county in 1694, and promised to provide for any shortfall if the school did not achieve the expected thirty scholars in the first year.³³⁸ There does not appear to have been a Quaker school in Gloucester city. Here Friends could only follow yearly meeting's advice that in the absence of a Friends' school, children should be taught by their parents.

Parents themselves relied on mutual support, books and, in the absence of a resident preacher, the visits of travelling preachers. These ministers had a key role in reinforcing commitment and ensuring unity in the developing movement. At first they used the spoken word to convert the masses, but from the mid 17th century tracts and books became important missionary aids. Tracts were circulated widely and books were sent to the counties on a quota basis.³³⁹ In 1675 John Westfield received books from London and was asked to distribute them among the Gloucester monthly meeting.³⁴⁰ By 1680 it had been decided that books would only be sent on demand, although the yearly meeting continued to send from time to time. John Elliott was then appointed to sell books in Gloucester.³⁴¹ The range of books was considerable, although the works of Fox

329. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 370.

330. GDR, B 4/1/1056.

331. *VCH Glos.* IV, p. 319.

332. Fox, *Journal*, p. 7.

333. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, p. 525.

334. *Ibid.* pp. 530–1.

335. Yearly Meeting minutes 1668–93, f. 238.

336. See *Extracts from Yearly Meeting Minutes* (1745: copy in Friends' House, London), p. 219.

337. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, pp. 529–30.

338. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1694 12m.

339. Mortimer, 'Quakerism in Seventeenth-Century Bristol', p. 293.

340. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1675 12m.

341. *Ibid.* 1681 3m.

and Barclay were most prominent. Eleven copies of Fox's 'Epistles' were ordered in 1698 and sixty copies of Barclay's *Apology* in 1701.³⁴² This compares with 100 of Barclay's *Apology* ordered by Essex in 1700³⁴³ and 300 taken by Bristol, where some were given to local gentry to 'prove to them Friends' sincerity and orthodoxy'.³⁴⁴ When the Gloucestershire consignment arrived, ten were kept in stock and the rest distributed throughout the county. Of these Gloucester received five, Stoke Orchard eight and Nailsworth fifteen.³⁴⁵

Many meetings, such as Bristol³⁴⁶ and Maldon in Essex,³⁴⁷ established lending libraries. The Gloucester library was on a smaller scale, but some idea of the literature available is contained in the monthly meeting minutes of 1708. The following books were circulated on loan for periods up to two months: G. Fox, *Journal*; G. Fox, *Epistles*; Thomas Taylor, *Epistles and Works*; John Brooke, *Works*; John Whithead, *Works*; [George Bishop], *New England Judged*; Thomas Lawson, *Works*; and John Crook, *Works*.³⁴⁸

The names of those holding these books were carefully recorded. This system continued regularly until July 1714, when all the books were called in and Thomas Monington was appointed as librarian to lend the books on request.³⁴⁹ All seems to have worked well until he moved to Worcestershire and took the books with him!

Emigration

Mention needs to be made of emigration at this time. The number of Friends leaving Gloucester was not large, but the impact would have been significant since they were young and enterprising.

At a time of persecution or hardship the prospect of a fresh start in the New World must have had its attractions, and for those who survived the perils of the sea,³⁵⁰ disease and hostile natives, there really was a land of opportunity. In the 1680s land in Pennsylvania could be purchased for 2s. 6d. per acre, and there were even better deals for larger purchases. The sum of £100 could secure 5,000 acres, and smaller parcels of land were offered at 250 acres for £5 and 500 acres for £10, albeit there was an annual 'quit rent' to pay.³⁵¹ It is therefore no surprise that five hundred Quaker families per year are reported to have emigrated to America between 1676 and 1700.³⁵²

Among them were some from Gloucester. In the sixth month of 1697 Elizabeth Webb, who became a Friend when she was nineteen, was sitting in the meeting in Gloucester when her spirit 'was as if it had been dissolved with the love of God, and it flowed over the great ocean, and I was constrained to kneel down and pray for the seed of God in America, and the concern never went out of my mind day nor night, until I went to travel there'.³⁵³ Having received a certificate to

342. *Ibid.* 1698 12m., 1701 9m.

343. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, p. 112

344. Mortimer, 'Quakerism in Seventeenth-Century Bristol', p. 289.

345. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1703 6m.

346. Mortimer, *Minute Book of the Men's Meeting in Bristol 1686-1704*, p. 181.

347. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, p. 113.

348. GA, D 1340/B 2/M 2, 1708 2m.: the absence of Barclay's 'Apology' was noted.

349. *Ibid.* 1714 5m.

350. In Samuel Bownas had an uncomfortable Atlantic crossing which lasted nearly three months. See *Journal Friends Historical Society* 11 (1914), p. 87

351. R.S. and M.M. Dunn (eds.), *The World of William Penn* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1986), p. 45.

352. J. Rowntree, *Quakerism Past and Present* (London, 1858), p. 74.

353. *Journal Friends Historical Society* 10 (1913), p. 123 n.

minister³⁵⁴ she visited America in 1698. After returning to England, she, her husband Richard and their family emigrated in 1700 and settled in Birmingham township, Pennsylvania, where they seem to have prospered. Richard acquired 415 acres of land and became a provincial governor, Justice of the Peace and a Judge of Common Pleas.³⁵⁵ Not to be overshadowed, Elizabeth helped to organise a new meeting and continued her travelling ministry, for which she was highly regarded.³⁵⁶

With Elizabeth and Richard were two other families, those of John Webb and John Lea. All were related.³⁵⁷ John Webb was the brother of Richard, and Hannah, the wife of John Lea, was the widow of Joseph Webb, a brother of Richard and John. By the time of his death in 1711 John Lea too appears to have been in 'pretty good circumstances'. Later two unmarried sisters, Mary and Rachael Webb, emigrated to Pennsylvania,³⁵⁸ Rachael travelling in 1712.³⁵⁹ Another Gloucester emigrant was William Monington. He was unmarried and, having obtained the consent of his father, was granted a certificate of removal in April 1699.³⁶⁰ The Gloucester links were clearly maintained overseas for William married Susannah, daughter of John Webb, at the Philadelphia meeting house in 1709.³⁶¹

Many of the travellers were of limited means and needed assistance for their journeys. In 1700 John Lea was loaned £20 for his passage.³⁶² Edmund Humphries and Robert Smith offered to pay £10 each and these sums were underwritten by the quarterly meeting. Rachael Webb was given a £5 subsidy³⁶³ and Friends from other parts of Gloucestershire received sums varying between £5 and £15.³⁶⁴

The proximity of Bristol made emigration easier, and it is of note that there were more emigrants to America from Bristol at this time than from any other area in England outside London.³⁶⁵

Conclusion

The 17th-century city of Gloucester was ripe for religious reform. Half the parishes were without clergy and the rest had poorly paid, ill-educated incumbents. It was into such a society that the first Quaker missionaries came. Unlike in Bristol, where the message was warmly received by Seekers, Baptists and the Army, there were few immediate converts in Gloucester. The garrison was not involved and the citizens saw no reason to welcome the Quakers.

It has been shown that the early Gloucester Friends were mainly tradespeople and artisans, with textile workers, as elsewhere, the largest single group.³⁶⁶ There were no wealthy merchants,

354. R.S. and M.M. Dunn (eds), *The Papers of William Penn*, p. 560.

355. G. Cope, 'Elizabeth Webb', *Journal Friends Historical Society* 11 (1914), pp. 133–4.

356. R.S. and M.M. Dunn (eds.), *The Papers of William Penn*, pp. 559–60.

357. A. Cook Myers, *Quaker Arrivals at Philadelphia 1682–1750* (Philadelphia, 1902), pp. 27, 29.

358. Cope, 'Elizabeth Webb', pp. 133–4.

359. GA, D 1340/A /M 1, 1711 12m.

360. Cook Myers, *Quaker Arrivals at Philadelphia*, p. 20.

361. W. Hinshaw, *Encyclopaedia of American Genealogy* II (Michigan, 1938), p. 681.

362. GA, D 1340/A 1/M 1, 1700 6m.

363. Ibid. 1713 12m.

364. Ibid. 1711 and 1720.

365. R.T. Vann, 'Quakerism: Made in America', in R.S. and M.M. Dunn (eds.), *The World of William Penn*, p. 162.

366. Table 3.

professionals or gentry as in Bristol, Colchester³⁶⁷ or the counties of Buckinghamshire, Norfolk³⁶⁸ and Warwickshire.³⁶⁹ Even in the nearby town of Cirencester, where the number of Quakers was similar to that in Gloucester, the social mix was greater.³⁷⁰

In the 17th century Dissenters in Gloucester were never more than a small minority – perhaps five per cent of the population before the Act of Toleration and less in the early 18th century. This was below the national average, which Watts, using parish registers, episcopal returns and the Evans List, calculated as 6.3 per cent in the early 18th century.³⁷¹ Of the Dissenters, the Quakers in Gloucester were never more than one per cent of the citizens – compared with 1.25 per cent in Cirencester³⁷² and nearly seven per cent in Colchester.³⁷³ By the 1730s the Gloucester figure for Quakers had dropped to 0.4 per cent, compared with 4.2 per cent in Colchester and a national average of 0.73 per cent.³⁷⁴ Averages contain so many variables that interpretation is complex.

During the Commonwealth period the city fathers were broadly Presbyterian,³⁷⁵ and the figures confirm that the city was not a centre of extremism. Perhaps the Friends themselves inherited some of the anti-radicalism of their fellow Gloucesterians. Whereas the opposition of Wilkinson and Story to the introduction of corporate control of the movement in the 1670s had no impact on the city, not far away such views found considerable support among the more radical and independent Friends of Bristol.³⁷⁶

From ‘The Great Book of Sufferings’ it is evident that the persecution of the Quakers was most severe in the years 1661, 1670 and 1680–85. This is clearly reflected in the records of Gloucester. The impetus for these purges came from central government, but it has been shown that the implementation of the laws was very dependent on the political/religious aspirations or prejudices of local officials. This was evidenced in Gloucester in the actions of Wagstaffe and Fowler. The punishments inflicted were endured with the same steadfastness and fortitude as was shown by Fox and other Friends throughout the country. In Gloucester, Henry Riddall comes to mind, but he was not alone. That the punishments meted to Friends for ‘conscience sake’ aroused the sympathy of many ordinary citizens was shown from the beginning, as when five non-Quaker witnesses offered to testify on Henry Riddall’s behalf in 1660, and later when people refused to buy goods seized from Quakers.

Although a relatively tiny group in Gloucester, the Quakers were by their dress, speech and repudiation of many of the social conventions, a very visible minority. They were indeed a community within a community. They had their own meeting house (originally two cottages) and, equally important, their own burial ground. They followed the Quaker pattern and conducted their own marriages and funerals. The manner in which they managed their business replicated Quaker meetings throughout the country. For the poor they provided alms, fuel and apprenticeships, but they had little sympathy for those who incurred bankruptcy or debt through reckless behaviour.

367. *Ibid.*

368. Vann, *Social Development of English Quakerism*, p. 74–5.

369. Table 4.

370. Hawkins, *Taming the Phoenix*, pp. 154–5.

371. Watts, *The Dissenters*, pp. 269–70.

372. Hawkins, *Taming the Phoenix*, pp. 12, 152: 50 or more members in a population of c.4,000.

373. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, p. 157.

374. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 270.

375. *VCH Glos.* IV, p. 101.

376. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, pp. 312–16.

On occasions they had to discipline and even disown members, but the concern was not only for the community's public image but also for the spiritual well-being of the offending individual.

During the period of this study the number of Friends in the City grew and then began to decline. From a few in the 1650s, the numbers peaked during the persecution of the 1680s. This also happened in Essex,³⁷⁷ and it contradicts Reay's conclusion that the turning point in Quaker history was 1660,³⁷⁸ and Barbour's view that numbers peaked in 1670 and fell away due to persecution and emigration.³⁷⁹ In Gloucester the decline came after the persecutions; – emigration was later still. Of the explanations for decline given in the text, two need to be emphasised – the failure of Friends to retain the allegiance of their children and emigration. A further cause of decline may have been a growing accommodation with the ways of the world, which Davies saw in Essex,³⁸⁰ and which may be indicated in Gloucestershire by a gradual tendency to accept the payment of tithes. By the early 18th century the Quakers, like other nonconforming churches in Gloucester, were losing their enthusiasm and influence.

Unfortunately, there are no stirring personal accounts to enliven and enrich this story of the Friends in Gloucester. Instead, glimpses of characters and feelings have to be gleaned from minute books, reports of sufferings, the occasional letter and a few journals of travelling Friends. But these are sufficient for us to appreciate the remarkable conviction, compassion and spiritual strength of a small group of citizens who lived through those turbulent times.

377. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, p. 157.

378. Reay, *Quakers and the English Revolution*, pp. 104–5.

379. H. Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (Yale University Press, Newhaven, 1964), pp. 231–2.

380. Davies, *Quakers in English Society*, p. 165.