

EARLY STAGES OF THE QUAKER MOVEMENT IN LANCASHIRE

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Early stages of the Quaker movement in Lancashire by B. Nightingale

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B. NIGHTINGALE

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EARLY STAGES OF THE
QUAKER MOVEMENT
IN LANCASHIRE

BY THE
REV. B. NIGHTINGALE, M.A., LITT.D.

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PREFACE

A FEW years ago while engaged in some historical research work in Cumberland and Westmorland, relating mainly to the 17th century, I came much into contact with the Quaker movement of that period. Not that that was the first time that my interest in it had been aroused. George Fox has long had for me special fascination, as one of those great religious mystics, who appear occasionally in religious history, and who are rarely understood at the time, but whose service to the cause of religion is incalculable. I say this the more readily because in the pages which follow, I have ventured to be somewhat critical of the doings of him and his immediate followers; and it seems to me that it is better to say frankly that the movement suffered considerably because of the extravagances of some of its early leaders. Of course, those days were quite different from these. Things were then done that we should never dream of doing to-day, and language was plain and blunt almost to coarseness. In this respect Quakerism was simply like every other movement in its first stages; it required time to sober, chasten, and purify it.

How largely the movement captured Cumberland and Westmorland is common knowledge; but it has been somewhat of a revelation to myself to find that it was so widespread in Lancashire; and it is to make this clear that the following pages have been written.

My indebtedness to those whose works I have used, is acknowledged in the body of the book; but special mention should be made of much kindly help from Dr Farrer of Whitbarrow Lodge, Mr W. C. Braithwaite of Banbury, Mr Dilworth Abbatt of Preston, Mr Norman

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Penney of the Friends' Library, London, and the Custodians of the Sessions Records in Preston.

What has specially impressed me in the study of 17th century religious history is the wealth of Quaker literature relating thereto and its value to the student, not merely because of the light which it throws upon the Quaker movement, but not less so upon Nonconformist religious history in general. No student of that history can neglect it without the most serious loss. He will often find there the information of which he is in quest when it cannot be found elsewhere.

One word is necessary in reference to the Index. My first intention was that it should contain the names of all the places and persons that appear in the book; indeed, I had prepared one such for it, when it was found that the book had already far exceeded the number of pages originally designed. The Index had, therefore, to be considerably curtailed. Principal names of persons and places have been retained, and, under different districts, will be found lists of Quakers, etc. The reader will, therefore, experience no serious difficulty in finding the name of any person in whom he may be interested. It is stated repeatedly in the body of the work that names frequently assume different forms, but in the Index one only is given, and it is not certain that the references under the name are always to the same person.

I cannot hope to carry all with me to the conclusions to which I have been led; but if the book helps us to realize afresh the steady and unwavering fidelity to religious principle, in spite of the fiercest and most persistent persecution, of the people whose story it tells, it will serve a very useful purpose in these days.

B. NIGHTINGALE

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August 1921

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