The Social Origins of the Early Friends[1]

UNLIKE most other aspects of Quaker history, the social origins of the early Friends have received comparatively little study. It is well-known, of course, that in the eighteenth century members of the Society became steadily more prosperous. As long ago as 1869 a table was published by William Beck and T. Frederick Ball illustrating the increase between 1680 and 1780 of the proportion of London Friends drawn from the professional and commercial strata and the striking decline in the numbers of artisans and labourers.[2] More recently, an attempt was made by Ernest E. Taylor to ascertain the origin of the First Publishers of Truth,[3] while R. S. Mortimer has tabulated the occupational data in the Quaker records relating to seventeenth century Bristol.[4] Finally, Dr. Arthur Raistrick has summarized the conclusions to be drawn from the figures given by Beck and Ball and Taylor, and has added further information, notably the occupations of 56 Westmorland Friends who died between 1686 and 1738.[5]

This material is admittedly more extensive than that existing for other comparable movements, but it represents only a fraction of that available, and, for the purposes of a generalized study, it is subject to certain obvious limitations. Apart from the data for the northern leaders, it relates only to the two great urban centres, London and Bristol; and tells us little about the appeal of Quakerism to men in different trades and classes in the country as a whole. The object of this article, therefore, is to try to present a fuller picture of the social background from which the early Quakers sprang.

[1] This article is a slightly abbreviated version of Appendix A of the author's Ph.D. thesis, *The Quakers and Politics, 1652-1660*, which was submitted at Cambridge in June, 1955, and is now available in typescript in the Library at Friends House.

[2] W. Beck and T. F. Ball, *London Friends' Meetings*, p. 90.

[3] Ernest Taylor, "The First Publishers of Truth", *Jnl. F.H.S.*, vol. xix, 1922, pp. 66-81. In Appendix II of his thesis on *The Early Quaker Outlook upon "the World" and Society* (typescript: Friends House Library) H. S. Barbour covered much the same ground as Taylor, though he also tabulated the data relating to 87 Bristol Friends in Isabel Grubb's *Quakerism and Industry*.

[4] R. S. Mortimer, *Quakerism in Seventeenth Century Bristol* (typescript: Friends House Library), pp. 525-7.

[5] A. Raistrick, *Quakers in Science and Industry*, pp. 27-32.

There is a good deal of evidence relating to this question in the pamphlet literature, monthly meeting minute books, Besse's *Sufferings*, and the Quaker registers of births, marriages and deaths. The task of collating the evidence from these different sources would be formidable, but in any case the information contained in the registers provides the obvious starting-point for a statistical enquiry. These books, which have been described as "the most complete and beautifully kept record of its kind belonging to any religious denomination throughout the world",[1] are now deposited together with other non-parochial registers at Somerset House, but alphabetical abstracts were made of their contents at the time of the transfer in 1837 and are now preserved in duplicate both at Friends House and with the records of the Quarterly Meetings. Although the originals have naturally been consulted where necessary, the existence of these readily accessible transcripts has considerably facilitated the task of research, and it is these which form the basis of the survey which follows.

On the recommendation of George Fox, the registration of births, marriages and deaths was introduced at an early date,[2] but the records are clearly incomplete for the earliest years. After the Restoration, the entries become much more abundant and reflect the steady increase in numbers, although there is some evidence that the decline in Quaker strength may be dated from 1680.[3] The entries also become fuller with the passage of time; but occupational data is only occasionally given in the registers of deaths, and, in the case of births, information relating to the occupation of the child's father is regularly given only from the latter part of the eighteenth century. Fortunately, the information required is given much more frequently in the marriage registers,[4] although even here it is highly irregular in occurrence and is quite inadequate in many districts. We have therefore been obliged to make two initial assumptions. Although our primary interest is in the

[1] Josiah Newman, "The Quaker Records" in *Some Special Studies in Genealogy*, p. 41.

[2] *Cf.* W. C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 144.

[3] In London, the largest number of marriages was recorded during the quinquennium 1675-9. *Cf.* the table opposite p. 90 in Beck and Ball, *op. cit.* Tabulation of the data from the other registers I have examined would probably exhibit a similar trend.

[4] These constitute the source material for all the tables except that relating to Buckinghamshire. For the latter, see below, p. 109.

formative period of Quaker development, it has been necessary to include all the data relating to the period down to 1688 in order to secure information which is at all adequate for generalization. Hence the results can only be regarded as applicable to the Commonwealth period on the assumption that there was no radical change in the social composition of the Quaker groups before the Act of Toleration. Secondly, we have assumed that the data represents a random sample in the sense that it was a matter of chance whether occupational information was recorded or not.

To some extent it will be possible to test the validity of these assumptions in the consideration of particular areas, but it remains true that the figures given in the tables must be treated with caution.[1] Moreover, it must be remembered that many individuals pursued a subsidiary occupation or were of indeterminate social status,[2] facts which are clearly reflected in the numerous cases of duplicate entries in the records,[3] and which further complicate the task of classification. Within these limits, however, the data may suggest the broad occupational groups from which the Quakers were drawn. It is much less reliable as a guide to the class origin of particular individuals, and here our conclusions can only be tentative in character.

It has not been possible to marshal all the evidence available in these registers, but certain key areas have been selected which are of importance in Quaker history, and for which the data happens to be relatively abundant. Friends are believed to have been numerically strongest in the north of England, notably in Westmorland, Lancashire and Yorkshire, in the south-west, and in London, Bristol and Norwich. The sources are remarkably silent concerning the occupations of Quakers in Norwich and Westmorland, and accordingly we have chosen Lancashire, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, Bristol and London and Middlesex. Buckinghamshire has also been included, partly because it, too, is an historic centre

[1] This is especially true since the size of the sample is sometimes small. For a discussion of this point, see below, pp. 116-118.

[2] For example, in Lancashire, we find one man described in different entries as both "yeoman" and "husbandman". In such cases, the first entry has been taken.

[3] Duplicate entries have been ignored, but in the case of re-marriages both items of information have been included.

of Quaker influence,[1] but mainly because it happens to provide us with an abundance of the information we require.[2]

Lancashire

The Lancashire clerks were particularly assiduous in recording occupational information, and the data we need is available for the pre-Revolution period in greater proportions than for any other rural area. The occupations of bridegrooms are given in about 55 per cent. of the entries in the marriage register for the period 1652-1688, although in only four cases does the information relate to the years before the Restoration.[3] A comparison of the distribution of the data by monthly meetings, however, reveals considerable variations. The sample for the area north of the Ribble represents about 40 per cent. of the total number of marriages recorded, while for the southern district the figure is as high as 70 per cent.; and these facts should be borne in mind when considering the evidence in Table I. The differences are unfortunate in that it has been argued that Quakerism was strongest in the Furness district, and relatively weak in the Presbyterian south-east and Catholic south-west of the county.[4] But although Swarthmoor Friends emerge as the largest group, there was a second stronghold in the vicinity of Pendle Hill, and the difference in the actual number of marriages recorded in north and south is not great.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the table is the great strength of Friends in the clothing trades and the small numbers drawn from the landed classes and the professional and commercial groups. The preponderance of the clothing trades is quite as evident in the north as in the south, partly

[1] The date at which Quakerism first established a foothold in Bucks. is hard to determine, as there is no return for the county in *The First Publishers of Truth* (ed. N. Penney, 1907). There were, however, several Quaker groups there by 1655. *Cf. V.C.H. Bucks.*, I, p. 331.

[2] A rough indication of the relative strength of Friends in the different areas may be provided by the following estimate of the numbers of marriages recorded during the period under review: Lancashire, 325; Glos. and Wilts., 470; Bucks., 188; Bristol, 290; London and Middx., 1,200. Yorkshire was also included in the survey from which this article is taken, but has been omitted here for reasons of space. About 1,200 marriages are recorded in that county, but occupational information is given in only 10 per cent. of the entries.

[3] For the later decades, occupational information is given in 39 cases in 1660-9; 58 in 1670-9; and 77 in 1680-8.

[4] Barbour, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100.

TABLE I—LANCASHIRE[1]

Occupation	N.W.	S.E.	Total	Per cent.
GENTLEMAN		1	1	0·6
SCHOOLMASTER; CHIRURGEON ..		3	3	1·7
AGRICULTURE				
Yeoman (15 per cent.); Husbandman	12	47	59	33·1
COMMERCE, FOOD AND CONSUMPTION GOODS				
Grocer; Distiller; Maltster	1	9	10	5·6
CLOTHING TRADES				
Tailor; Mercer; Draper; Dyer; Webster or weaver (18 per cent.); Flaxman or -woman; Stapler; Feltmaker; Glover; Cordwainer or shoemaker (10 per cent.)	30	42	72	40·4
"MECHANIC" TRADES				
Ironmonger; Blacksmith; Potter; Saddler, collar-maker, tanner, currier, skinner (these five 6 per cent.); Glazier; Cooper; Pipemaker; Carpenter, mason, waller (these three 5 per cent.); Coalminer; Seaman	13	18	31	17·4
SERVANT		1	1	0·6
LABOURER		1	1	0·6
	56	122	178	100

no doubt due to the fact that the Furness district fell within the Kendal textile area, and partly to the relative weight of the shoemaking and tailoring element among Friends there. The relative unimportance of the agricultural group may also occasion some surprise, especially in view of the number of yeomen and husbandmen amongst the leaders from the north-west,[2] although this is a phenomenon which we shall find repeated elsewhere. Up to a point, however, these features may do little more than reflect the economic structure of the county. Comparative statistics are scarce, but roughly contemporary evidence for a few of the south-eastern

[1] Fuller details of the numbers in each occupation will be found in the thesis from which this article is taken. In this and the following tables the proportions in individual and closely related trades are given (in brackets) only when they constitute over 5 per cent. of the whole sample.

[2] These constituted 45 per cent. of the 167 men whose occupations are given by Taylor. If labourers and gentlemen are included, it seems that no less than 60 per cent. of the "publishers" gained their livelihood from the land.

textile villages[1] suggests that about 43 per cent. of the population there was mainly engaged in agriculture and about 37 per cent. in the manufacture and marketing of cloth. In view of the uncertain nature of these statistics, it cannot be maintained that the comparative figures for the Quakers of southern Lancashire[2] suggest any very convincing differences.

Of greater importance, perhaps, is the social status of the main occupational groups amongst the early Quakers. In agriculture, it is clear that Friends were almost exclusively drawn from the class of small independent producers, while the specifically proletarian element was insignificant. But it is interesting to note that the poorer husbandmen seem to have been more numerous than the yeomen.[3] An eighteenth century writer held that "A farmer of twenty pounds a year is little better than a day-labourer".[4] and in Lancashire many of the small landholders must have found themselves in this position. The agrarian changes of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had there led to a multiplication of small-holdings rather than to the growth of a landless proletariat.[5] At the same time, the subdivision of holdings which this entailed tended to depress the status of the peasantry; most of them held less than thirty acres and many less than fifteen.[6] It has been said that in the Rossendale area two-thirds of the households occupied lands which were either very small or of inferior fertility; in 1660, only thirty households occupied lands of an annual value of more than £20, while 406 were assessed at less than £5.[7] It is possible that in the wilder and more backward northern area, the process of subdivision was less advanced, and a century later, in 1795,

[1] Occupational data from the parochial registers for Rochdale (Marriages, 1653-7), Middleton (Marriages, 1653-7) and Radcliffe (Baptisms, 1656-9) in A. P. Wadsworth and J. de L. Mann, *The Cotton Trade and Industrial Lancashire, 1600-1780*, p. 52; and for Haslingden (1722) and Newchurch (1705) in G. H. Tupling, *The Economic History of Rossendale*, p. 178.

[2] 38 per cent. and 25 per cent. respectively.

[3] The meaning to be ascribed to these terms has frequently been discussed. It now seems clear, however, that, despite their occupational and legal origins, they were by this time commonly used to denote a broad economic division within the ranks of the agricultural *petite bourgeoisie*. *Cf.* M. Campbell, *The English Yeoman*, pp. 27-32.

[4] Quoted by E. Lipson, *The Economic History of England*, 4th ed., II, p. 382, from *Essays on Several Subjects*, 1769, p. 128.

[5] Tupling, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

[6] Wadsworth and Mann, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

[7] Tupling, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

it was estimated that the average size of holding in the whole county was between twenty and fifty acres.[1] But few even of the "statesmen" or yeomen of these remote districts of the north-west could be described as prosperous, and in Cumberland, for example, they were said to occupy small properties worth as little as £5-£50 per annum.[2]

We are on rather surer ground in considering the position of the other important group which we find among the Lancashire Quakers. The weavers had experienced rapid changes in their status during the half-century or so which preceded the rise of Quakerism. In 1577, the clothiers of the northern counties described themselves, in an oft-quoted passage, as "poore cotagers".[3] But, in subsequent years, the transition to capitalist control,[4] and the rise of the Manchester *bourgeoisie*, typified by men like Chetham and Wrigley, transformed the situation. Under the "putting-out" system, the weaver usually owned his own instruments of production, but was paid wages for working up materials which belonged to his employer. Thus, while still partially independent, "the spinners and weavers employed under these conditions stood obviously in the position of dependent employees".[5]

At the same time, conditions were by no means uniform, and the geographical distribution of Quaker weavers may be of some interest. We hesitate to put much reliance on such scanty evidence, but it is worth noting that few Quakers were found in the industrially advanced Manchester area. There was a Quaker weaver in Oldham and a Dutch-loom weaver in Manchester itself. We also found a Quaker weaver in Rossendale; but there was a much larger group of five in Briercliffe and two more in nearby Marsden in the eastern woollen area. This district, which was an offshoot of the West Riding textile area, though doubtless affected by the acute crisis which had stricken the textile industry since the 1620's, had not yet experienced the growth of the more developed forms of capitalist organization which attended the rise of the

[1] J. Holt, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lancaster*, 1795, p. 19.

[2] Cited by Lipson, *op. cit.*, II, p. 381.

[3] *VCH Lancs.*, II, p. 376; Wadsworth and Mann, *op. cit.*, p. 7; H. Heaton, *The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries*, p. 121.

[4] *Cf.* Wadsworth and Mann, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

[5] Wadsworth and Mann, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

worsted manufacture in the last years of the seventeenth century.[1]

Apart from the scattered group in the north, the remaining and largest group of Quaker weavers was found in the linen areas of the south-west. There were fourteen in Warrington and the surrounding villages, Orford, Great Sankey and Penketh, and in the line of townships to the north-west, Bold, Sutton, Windle and Knowsley; and three more were found at Skelmersdale, Ormskirk and Coppull. Relatively little is known about the developments in the linen weaving area, and one recent writer has even asserted that in south-west Lancashire "the only textile manufacture was the domestic production of linen for home use".[2] The existence of this group of Quakers who were presumably in the main dependent on the trade for their livelihood hardly bears this out. But it seems certain that the industry was less highly organized than its counterparts elsewhere, although many of the cottagers were dependent for their supplies on the middlemen dealers who handled the Irish flax imports from the growing town of Liverpool.[3] The industry was, moreover, gradually suffering eclipse due to its extreme sensitivity to foreign competition; and a contemporary, commenting on the depression, boldly declared that it had collapsed and "is now in a manner expired".[4]

It seems probable, then, that Quakerism in Lancashire was strongest amongst the economically hard-pressed but still independent *petite bourgeoisie*. Well over half its adherents were husbandmen, weavers, tailors, shoemakers or leather-workers, although the group had its supporters, too, among the rather more prosperous sections. The movement had, on the other hand, made little headway amongst the numerically small and socially insignificant rural proletariat, and, although collieries were relatively numerous in Lancashire,[5] we found only one representative of the growing mining industry.[6]

[1] Heaton, *op. cit.*, pp. 296-7.
[2] F. Walker, *Historical Geography of Southwest Lancashire before the Industrial Revolution*, p. 61.
[3] Wadsworth and Mann, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.
[4] Quoted in *VCH Lancs.*, II, p. 379.
[5] *Cf.* J. U. Nef, *The Rise of the British Coal Industry*, I, 61-2.
[6] At Sutton, in the St. Helens' district.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

We are fortunate in possessing an occupational census of Gloucestershire in 1608[1] which it would be interesting to compare with our Quaker sample. It is regrettable, therefore, that the sample given in Table II is so small and that it covers only 20 per cent. of the recorded marriages of Quakers in the area. Moreover, the data for the quarterly meeting is not co-extensive with that in the census, since it includes the greater part of Wiltshire, where, however, Friends were much less numerous than in Gloucestershire. It is probable, too, that the textile trades are over-represented in the table, since

TABLE II—GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND WILTSHIRE

Occupation	1656-1669	1670-1679	1680-1688	Total	Per cent.
AGRICULTURE					
Yeoman (20 per cent.); Husbandman		11	13	24	25·5
COMMERCE, FOOD AND CONSUMPTION GOODS					
Merchant; Baker; Chandler	1	3	4	8	8·5
CLOTHING TRADES					
Mercer; Draper; Clothier; Clothworker; Fuller; Weaver (24 per cent.); Woolcomber; Cordwainer or shoemaker (6 per cent.) ..	3	11	23	37	39·4
"MECHANIC" TRADES					
Smith; Blacksmith; Saddler, Saddle-tree-maker, tanner (these three 7 per cent.); Cardmaker; Cooper; Carpenter, free-mason, mason, thatcher (these four 9 per cent.); Mariner; Carrier ..	1	14	8	23	24·5
SERVANT		2		2	2·1
	5	41	48	94	100·0

70 per cent. of the occupational information comes from Wiltshire and the Gloucestershire textile area round Nailsworth which supply only about half of the marriages recorded. Even with these reservations, it may be worth attempting a rough comparison of the composition of the Quaker group with the rest of the population.

[1] A. J. and R. H. Tawney, "An Occupational Census of the Seventeenth Century" *Economic History Review*, V, pp. 25-64.

With some regrouping of our figures, it appears that commercial and industrial pursuits were well represented among the Quakers. These claim respectively 10·6 per cent. and 61·7 per cent. of the total sample as compared with 6·4 per cent. and 36·1 per cent. in the Gloucestershire census. The preponderance of Quaker yeomen over husbandmen is exceptional and somewhat surprising in that it reverses the proportions for the population at large.

Quaker strength in the manufacturing branches of the textile trades (30·9 per cent. against 15·5 per cent.) is particularly remarkable. Most of the Quaker weavers come from Gloucestershire[1] and the records indicate a clear distinction between the broadcloth workers of the Nailsworth area and the weavers in the growing serge industry across the county boundary. The West Country industry had suffered in common with other areas during the depression which followed Cockayne's project[2] and the contraction of European markets; and the prosperity of the clothiers during the industrial renaissance of the Restoration period apparently brought little improvement for the dependent craftsmen.[3] "Most weavers lived from hand-to-mouth upon the meagre wages of the clothier", and some did not even own their own looms; it is not surprising, therefore, that corn riots and the prevalence of sectarian propaganda gave these men a reputation for "turbulent and riotous behaviour".[4]

Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire evidence for the first generation of Quakerism is no more extensive than that for the other areas we have considered, and, indeed, occupations are recorded in only two cases before 1669. In the later decades, however, the data in the marriage registers becomes progressively more abundant, and we also possess the collateral evidence from the registers of births. Details for the southern part of the county

[1] This is due to a remarkable concentration of 15 broadweavers in the village of Horsley, near Nailsworth.

[2] This was a scheme to prohibit exports of undyed and undressed cloth in order to stimulate exports of the finished product. Backed by a royal proclamation in July, 1614, the project had disastrous effects on the cloth trade, and had to be abandoned three years later.

[3] G. D. Ramsay, *The Wiltshire Woollen Industry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, pp. 128-9.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

TABLE III—BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Occupation	1658-1688	1689-1725	Total	Per cent.	Upperside 1680-1725
LONDON CITIZENS	4	5	9	3·6	5·1
SURGEON		1	1	0·4	0·6
AGRICULTURE					
Yeoman (12 per cent.); Husbandman (21 per cent.); Grazier; Flowerman	34	51	85	33·9	33·3
COMMERCE, FOOD AND CONSUMPTION GOODS					
Merchant; Shopkeeper; Salesman; Dry Salter; Grocer; Butcher; Baker; Mealman, miller, maltster, maltman (these four 10 per cent.); Distiller; Tobacconist; Chandler; Woodmonger	17	37	54	21·5	22·4
CLOTHING TRADES					
Tailor, seamstress (5 per cent.); Mercer; Draper; Clothier; Clothworker; Weaver; Flax-dresser; Hatter; Bodice-maker; Glover; Cordwainer; Shoemaker	19	23	42	16·7	16·1
"MECHANIC" TRADES					
Pewterer; Brazier; Ironmonger; Millwright; Plough-, wheelwright, smith (these three 6 per cent.); Collar-maker; Tanner; Cooper; Hoopshaver; Turner, carpenter, joiner, mason, bricklayer (these five 9 per cent.); Waggoner ..	22	27	49	19·5	17·8
LABOURER	6	5	11	4·4	4·6
	102	149	251	100·0	100·0

are particularly numerous, a fact for which we are indebted to a registering clerk of the Upperside monthly meeting, who apparently took up his duties in or about the year 1686. We accordingly decided to collate the data from both sources, and to include all the information for the period prior to

1726.[1] This gives us a 50 per cent. sample for the whole period, but for Upperside from 1680-1725 the sample of 174 individuals covers 94 per cent. of the men whose names are recorded. The latter data (in percentages) has therefore been given separately in Table III, and provides us with some check on the reliability of the samples we have used. Comparison of this column with the rest of the table does not suggest any undue bias in the scantier records of the earlier years; and, if the economic structure of the county is borne in mind, the proportions in agriculture seem relatively small and remarkably constant.

Buckinghamshire was a county which lived "more by its lands than by its hands".[2] but this fact is reflected less by the preponderance of Quakers in agriculture than by their strength in the crafts and trades ancillary to the art of husbandry. The county helped to supply the growing London food market,[3] a fact which probably accounts for the numbers engaged in the distribution of grain and malt. In Buckinghamshire, as elsewhere, not all the men married were resident within the Quarterly meeting. This partly explains the interesting group of London citizens who appear in the records after 1680. The existence of this group illustrates the close connections between the urban classes and the rural areas from which they were drawn. The subsequent history of these individuals is seldom apparent from the registers, but it is interesting that one of their number, Daniel Wharley, a London linen draper who was married in 1686, apparently sought to establish himself in county society, as he is described as resident in Chalfont St. Giles from the turn of the century.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the table is that relating to agriculture. Buckinghamshire lies within the group of Midland counties which were widely affected by the early enclosure movement, and landless labourers were probably much more numerous there than in the economically backward areas of the North-West. Among Friends, the proportion of husbandmen seems large, and many of these must

[1] In that year there is an abrupt cessation of occupational information in the birth registers.

[2] Fuller's *Worthies of England*, p. 193, quoted in *VCH Bucks.*, II, p. 37.

[3] F. J. Fisher, "The Development of the London Food Market, 1540-1640", *Economic History Review*, V, pp. 46-64.

have found it difficult to earn a livelihood. At least two of them followed auxiliary occupations,[1] and two more are described in other entries as labourers. The group of eleven labourers, though small, is nevertheless much larger than elsewhere. But it is possible to establish the existence of only fifteen wage-earners in the whole Quaker group,[2] so that even here there is no clear evidence of strong Quaker influence in the ranks of the seventeenth century proletariat.[3]

Bristol

When we turn to the urban areas, we enter a field for which we already have valuable evidence. The main interest of Table IV[4] is, therefore, of a comparative nature. Besse[5] gives the occupations of 93 Friends who were cited in 1683 for failure to attend national worship. R. S. Mortimer's table, mentioned earlier, rests upon a detailed study of the literary evidence, covering 200 Bristol Friends before 1702. The comparison of the proportions in these three samples in Table IV*a* may give some idea of the possible margins of error involved in the use of the statistical material we have assembled. It will be observed that the differences in the proportions of the various groups are sometimes considerable, especially if we compare Besse's data with the figures drawn from the registers. These differences might, of course, be due to the unrepresentative character of one or more of the samples. The relative importance of the professional group in Mortimer's table, for example, could easily be explained by the nature of his sources, and the number of "mechanics" in the list given by Besse might be due to a similar cause. Let us, however, confine our attention, for a moment, to columns (1) and (3) of Table IV*a* and to the figures given for the three main occupational groups. In statistical terms, there is a one in four chance of such differences as we find there between the observed and the expected figures occurring in

[1] One as a wheelwright and the other as a mealman. A third man, given first as a miller, also appears elsewhere as a husbandman.

[2] A miller and a maltster are also given in other entries as labourers.

[3] It is possible that some of the husbandmen were really servants in husbandry (*cf.* Tawney, *loc. cit.*, p. 50, n. 1). Clearly, in fact, the group of labourers and servants does not necessarily include all the wage-workers; but its size may give some indication of the importance of wage-workers whose status is largely concealed by the occupational classification.

[4] The sample covers about 75 per cent. of the recorded marriages.

[5] *Sufferings*, I, p. 68.

TABLE IV—BRISTOL

Occupation	1657-1669	1670-1679	1680-1688	Total	Per cent.
APOTHECARY; SURGEON ..	1	1	2	4	2·4
HUSBANDMAN			1	1	0·6
COMMERCE, FOOD AND CONSUMPTION GOODS					
Merchant (10 per cent.); Grocer; Baker; Mealman; Tobacco-cutter; Soap-maker, -boiler (7 per cent.) ..	15	15	15	45	26·8
CLOTHING TRADES					
Merchant Taylor; Tailor (10 per cent.); Mercer; Milliner; Linen draper; Clothworker; Weaver, silk-weaver (15 per cent.); Woolcomber; Stocking-seller, -maker; Glover; Cordwainer, shoemaker, heelmaker (these three 13 per cent.)	18	23	33	74	44·0
"MECHANIC" TRADES					
Pewterer; Millwright; Smiths; Farrier; Wiredrawer; Pinner; Glazier; Cooper, hooper (these two 5 per cent.); Carpenter, joiner, freemason, mason, tiler, plasterer (these six 10 per cent.); Blockmaker; Mariner	17	12	14	43	25·6
SERVANT	1			1	0·6
	52	51	65	168	100·0

TABLE IV*a* (PERCENTAGES)

Occupational Groups	(1) Besse	(2) Mortimer	(3) Registers
Gentry	1	1	—
Professions	5	7	2
Agriculture	—	—	1
Commerce, Food and Consumption Goods	25	29	27
Clothing Trades	32	40	44
"Mechanic" Trades	32	21	26
Labourers and Servants ..	4	2	1

random samples of a similar size. In other words, Besse's sample is too small to give us an accurate picture of even the main economic categories into which Friends fell. This fact alone should indicate that the proportions suggested in our shorter tables must be regarded with due reserve.

On the other hand, the percentages for the main occupational groups in the two larger samples are remarkably similar, and even if we consider individual trades, Mortimer's figures show surprisingly few divergences from the data supplied by the registers.[1] Both tables suggest a higher proportion of Quaker merchants than in any other area[2]; Friends were also strong in the old-established soap industry[3] and among the tailors[4] and shoemakers. The textile trades again assume considerable importance, and here the Quaker weavers[5] fall into two roughly equal groups, some being engaged in the highly capitalized silk industry,[6] and the rest in the manufacture of cloth, which by this time was mainly located outside the city limits at Bedminster and Barton Regis.

London

The amount of evidence for the London area is proportionately far greater than for any other region of Quaker influence. It is therefore possible to apply a limited check to the initial assumption that there was no radical shift in social composition before 1689. Even in London the data for the 1650's is quite inadequate for statistical purposes, so we have included the details for the first decade of Restoration persecution in order to secure a fair sample[7] of the earliest London Friends. In Table V the proportions in this first group may be compared with those of two later, quinquennial

[1] With the exception of the shoemaking trades. For these, the figures given are: Mortimer, 8·3 per cent.; Registers, 13·1 per cent.

[2] Mortimer, 10·2 per cent.; Registers, 9·5 per cent.

[3] Mortimer, 6·6 per cent.; Registers, 7·1 per cent.

[4] Mortimer, 8·4 per cent.; Registers, 9·5 per cent.

[5] Mortimer, 12·4 per cent.; Registers, 14·9 per cent.

[6] Wadsworth and Mann, *op. cit.*, p. 106, describe the industry as "the spoilt child of mercantilism for long centuries from Justinian to Frederick the Great [in which] the influence of capital and machinery was strongly marked".

[7] Of 151 individuals. The two later samples number 258 and 198 respectively. The information is about 75 per cent. complete for the first sample. By 1715-19, we find only one man whose occupation is not recorded.

periods, 1685-9 and 1715-19. The result lends some support to the view that Quaker strength in the different occupational groups changed little during the first thirty years. Even by the second decade of the eighteenth century, the limited evidence collected reveals no clear trend, although the slight increase in the commercial interest at the expense of the artisans[1] coincides with the general trend which became so marked in the course of the eighteenth century.

TABLE V—LONDON AND MIDDLESEX (PERCENTAGES)

Occupation	1657-69	1685-89	1715-19
GENTLEMAN			0·5
PROFESSIONS			
Minister; Apothecary; Physician; Chirurgeon; Barber-Surgeon; Teacher; Lawyer	4·6	0·4	3·0
AGRICULTURE			
Yeoman; Farmer; Husbandman ..	2·6	3·9	5·6
COMMERCE, FOOD AND CONSUMPTION GOODS			
Grocer; Cheesemonger	6·0	5·0	5·6
Merchant; Shopkeeper; Salesman; Salter; Confectioner; Sugar Baker; Fishmonger; Butcher; Poulterer; Baker; Corn-factor, -chandler; Miller; Mealman, -dealer; Vintner; Wine Merchant; Brewer; Distiller; Maltster; Maltman; Tobacconist; Tobacco-cutter; Chandler; Drugster; Perfumer; Innholder; Woodmonger; Coal-seller	13·2	15·1	16·2
	19·2	20·2	21·7
CLOTHING TRADES			
Tailor; Seamstress; Seamster	11·3	7·0	3·5
Drapers; Clothier; Linen-seller, -dealer..	1·3	2·3	7·1
Weavers; Silk Throwster	4·6	7·0	5·1
Cordwainer; Patten maker: Shoemaker	9·3	10·9	3·5
Merchant Taylor; Mercer; Milliner; Clothworker; Dyer; Clothdrawer; Woolcomber; Silkman; Calenderer; Woolman; Woolseller; Stapler; Haberdasher; Hatmaker; Feltmaker; Staymaker; Button maker; Hosier; Framework-knitter; Glover; Glove-seller	8·6	13·2	15·7
	35·1	40·3	34·8

[1] The decline of the tailors and shoemakers and rise of the drapers, clothiers, etc., is particularly marked. The numbers of merchants and merchant taylors rose from 0·7 per cent. of the total in the first period to 6·6 per cent. in 1715-19.

"Mechanic" Trades	1657-69	1685-89	1715-19
Turner; Carver; Carpenter; Joiner; Sawyer; Mason; Plasterer; Bricklayer, -maker; Thatcher	10·6	6·2	8·6
Mariner; Sailsman; Fisherman	7·3	5·0	5·1
Goldsmith; Goldbeater; Pewterer; Tinman; Cutler; Ironmonger; Blacksmith; Farrier; Girdler; Tin-plate worker; Wiredrawer; Needlemaker; Nailer; Spoonmaker; "Medle Maker"; Clockmaker, -worker; Coachmaker, -smith; Upholsterer; Printer; Basket maker; Comb-maker; Colourman; Hempdresser; Saddler; Lorimer; Leatherseller, -dresser, -cutter; Tanner; Currier; Skinner; Fellmonger; Glazier; Glassmaker, -grinder; Cooper; Shipwright; Blockmaker; Sailmaker; Calker; Ship Carpenter; Wharfinger; Lighterman; Waterman; Porter; Carman; Coachman; Packer	18·5	20·9	18·2
	36·4	32·2	31·8
Labourers and Servants			
Cook; Gardener; Servant; Labourer ..	2·0	3·1	2·5

The complex stratification of London society makes it impossible to generalize about the class origins of Friends in the area, and no particular occupation emerges of predominating significance. But it is clear that Quakers in the humbler industrial trades far outnumbered those from the commercial strata.[1] During the earlier years, the grocers emerge as the largest group in the latter category, while in the former most Friends are found amongst the tailors and shoemakers, the weavers, the sailors, and in the woodworking and building trades. The movement evidently commanded little support from the unskilled labourers, the street sellers and casual workers who formed the bulk of the urban proletariat. But it is more difficult to be sure of the status of workers in the classified trades. The mariners form a large group, and in the eighteenth century, sailors were classed along with porters and day labourers amongst the "insolent rabble" of the

[1] Raistrick, *op. cit.*, p. 32, has attempted to group the data given by Beck and Ball. According to this estimate, the numbers of craftsmen and labourers in 1680 outnumbered the professional, commercial and wealthier industrial groups by about 1·73:1.

working population.[1] On the other hand, we find few Friends engaged in the highly capitalized industries such as brewing and distilling, colour-making and tobacco-making, sugar refining and soap boiling, which were the chief employers of wage-labour.[2] Indeed, it is significant that we often find the largest groups of Quakers in precisely those old-established and heavily stratified crafts where class and sectional struggles were sharpest, and where it is most difficult to be sure of the status of any particular individual. The tailors, for example, provide us with one of the earliest examples of the journeymen associations of the eighteenth century, which were the fore-runners of the modern trade union.[3] But in the tailoring trade, as in shoemaking, though we find examples of modern industrial relationships, it was also particularly easy (as it is even today) for the small man to set up as a jobbing tailor or cobbler in the meaner streets of the large towns.[4]

Conclusions

All this may point the way towards the general conclusions to be drawn from our survey. The nature of the material makes it impracticable to summarize in tabular form the data collected. On the other hand, the cumulative impression of the evidence carries more conviction than the individual tables; and if we draw together the main threads certain points may emerge more clearly.

In the first place, it is clear that although a substantial proportion of Friends in the rural areas were engaged in agriculture, they were heavily outnumbered by those in trades and handicrafts. In this respect the main body of Quakers differed from their leaders, at least half of whom were directly connected with the land. But amongst both leaders and rank and file the husbandmen were generally more numerous than the yeomen, while the number of clearly identifiable labourers was insignificant.

Secondly, we find substantial groups engaged in commercial activities in several areas, but in most districts they

[1] Quoted by M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 156.

[2] George, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

[3] See the preface and early documents in F. W. Galton, *The Tailoring Trade*.

[4] G. Unwin, *Industrial Organization in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, pp. 62-4.

were clearly outnumbered by those engaged in industrial occupations.

Thirdly, Friends were particularly strong in the textile trades. In this connection, it is surely significant that the leading centres of the cloth manufacture were generally also regions of strong Quaker influence. The correlation is not complete, since Puritan elements were firmly entrenched in the more prosperous textile areas, such as Manchester and East Anglia. But it is sufficiently striking to suggest that the movement may well have been weighted in favour of these sections of the population. It may seem surprising that the large number of Quaker weavers has not attracted the attention of earlier writers, but this is presumably due to their absence from the ranks of the Quaker leaders.[1]

Fourthly, there were usually strong Quaker groups among the tailors and shoemakers, workers in wood and leather, in the building trades and, in the coastal areas, among the seafaring population.[2]

Finally, and most important, the general consensus of evidence suggests that the early Friends were mainly drawn from the urban and rural *petite bourgeoisie*. Certainly, we have found remarkably few members of the "ruling class" among them. There is only one individual described as a "gentleman" who can be traced in the registers examined during the period prior to 1689, whereas, in the Gloucestershire census, three per cent. of the population fell into this category. At the same time, it is clear that there is very little evidence for the supposed "proletarian character" of Quakerism to which Bernstein refers.[3] This should occasion little surprise. The number of wage-workers in the modern sense was in any case relatively small during the seventeenth century.[4] Moreover, at that time the working class evinced few signs of social cohesion or of independent consciousness. The only independent movement during the Interregnum whose aims might be

[1] According to Taylor's evidence, there was only one among fifty-three of the earliest itinerant preachers. It seems likely, however, that the movement did in fact attract the support of some of the weavers in the Kendal area. Of the 56 wills examined by Raistrick, *op. cit.*, p. 30, seven refer to Quaker weavers.

[2] In the Yorkshire sample, omitted here, over 12 per cent. were mariners or master mariners.

[3] E. Bernstein, *Cromwell and Communism*, pp. 249-50.

[4] Cf. Sir John Clapham in *Cambridge Historical Journal*, I, p. 95; Tawney, *loc. cit.*, pp. 49-53.

supposed to be those of working class elements was that of the Diggers, and numerically speaking, it was insignificant. It is possible that as Quaker propaganda was carried to the south it attracted some of the agricultural labourers in the Home Counties into its ranks; but of this, the records—for Buckinghamshire—give barely a hint.

It remains true, of course, that we cannot be certain of the exact status of the Friends who came from the middle strata of the population. But the preponderance of Quaker husbandmen, weavers, tailors and shoemakers seems to favour the view that it was among the more hard-pressed sections of these classes that Quakerism was most influential. The historical conditions favouring the rise of a religious movement are clearly complex, and it is no part of our argument to attempt to reduce them to a single formula. But if we wish to understand the political standpoint of the early Friends—their courageous social criticism combined with comparative aloofness from practical politics[1]—it is important to recognize that the movement derived its main support from precisely these sections of the population which found their economic position threatened and their political demands frustrated by the political and social upheavals of the seventeenth century.

ALAN COLE

[1] I have discussed this question elsewhere—in the thesis from which this article is taken, and in an article on "The Quakers and the English Revolution" in *Past and Present* for November, 1956.

War and its Aftermath. Letters from Dr. Hilda Clark. pp. 115. Obtainable from Friends Book Centre, London, 1956, 5s.

Most of these letters were written between 1914 and 1924, when Hilda Clark was engaged in relieving suffering in France, Austria, Poland, Greece, Serbia and Turkey. Edith Pye, her lifelong friend, and correspondent when they were not together, has furnished some inter-connecting narrative and explanatory notes. More of the latter would have increased the value of the book to the less-knowing reader. We get a vivid impression of the devotion and the personality of this indomitable Friend, so much of whose life was spent in saving the lives of children from the after-effects of war. "Pity, which softens and weakens most people, hardened her into a flaming sword which cut through difficulties as though they were non-existent."