

REDISCOVERING THE TEACHING OF GEORGE FOX

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN TEXT:

Aa MSS = Unpublished manuscripts bound with *Annual Catalogue of George Fox's Papers, Case 32*, Friend's House, London

AC = George Fox unpublished manuscripts (1669) bound with *Annual Catalogue of George Fox's Papers*, Ed., Henry J. Cadbury, Philadelphia & London: 1939

BI and BII = vols. 1 & 2 respectively of the 1902 "Bicentenary edition" of *Fox's Journal*.

BN = Lewis Benson, *Notes on George Fox*, Philadelphia, PA: The George Fox Fund, Inc. 1981

CI and CII = vols. 1 & 2 respectively of the 1952 Cambridge edition of *Fox's Journal*

MF = Margaret Fell, *A Brief Collection...* (London, J. Sowle, 1710)
A Brief Collection of Remarkable Passages and Occurrences Relating to the Birth, Education, Life, Conversion, Travels, Services, and Deep Sufferings of That Ancient, Eminent, and Faithful Servant of the Lord, Margaret Fell; But by her Second Marriage, Margaret Fox. Together With Sundry of Her Epistles, Books, and Christian Testimonies to Friends and Others; and also to those in Supreme Authority, in the several late Revolutions of Government

Ni = the 1952 John Nickalls edition of *Fox's Journal*

SJ = George Fox, *Short Journal*. 2 Volumes. Ed. Norman Penney, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926

R = the Richardson MSS. containing nine of Fox's unpublished sermons. Published as: *That Thy Candles May Always Be Burning*, Eds, Max Skinner and Gardiner Stillwell, New Foundation Publications, 2001

Works = *George Fox, The Works of*, 8 Volumes, (Philadelphia and New York: William Sessions, 1831). [Republished 1991, State College, PA: New Foundation Fellowship]

Arabic figures before the colon represent the appropriate volume of the eight volume 1831 edition of *Fox's Works*

Preface

In reading over the following material, two things seem to me to need mentioning. First is the timeless relevance of what George Fox had to say concerning the Everlasting Gospel or who Christ is and how he saves mankind. Lewis does a good job of summarizing many key points of Fox's teaching. But it is far beyond the scope of 10 lectures to exhaust all that Fox had to say! There are copies of the eight volume set of *The Works of George Fox* available which will provide the reader with an incomparable, in-print source of Fox's teaching.

The second thing that needs mentioning is how closed my ears have been and how closed modern ears are to the material that Lewis presents in the following lectures. I cannot speak to all points of view as to why we, of this age, are unwilling or unable to hear this message; but I can speak to those whose ears are closed to this message due to religion. Those who are immersed in Christianity, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic or Orthodox, have a view of the overarching problem faced by humanity as something that can be fixed by an absentee Christ whose function is to offer salvation by pardoning us from our sin in this life and fixing the root problems in the next. Thus when Fox mentions the offices of Christ, such as Heavenly Prophet and Teacher, Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, Counsellor, King, Orderer, etc., we can look at this and say, "how quaint, how interesting!" but we do not see these things as any more than that. We see no functional significance whatsoever in these "offices of Christ" that Fox talks about. We know we are saved because we have received forgiveness. We rest in the admonition that we "aren't perfect, just forgiven."

However, when Fox speaks of these offices of Christ, he is dealing with the CURE of THE PROBLEM that touches all mankind. This is the problem. We are no longer in that pure and perfect state we were created to inhabit. Before mankind fell from that state:

- ▶ we dwelt in the image of God.
- ▶ we were taught and directed in all things by the wisdom and daily counsel of God.
- ▶ He was our head, orderer, governor, and overseer; and it was this continual contact and relationship with our Creator that was the rock, the immovable foundation, of our lives.

In the fall, all this was lost and it is utterly beyond human power to repair the breach. In the fall:

- ▶ we have taken on the image of the serpent.

- ▶ we are directed in all things by our own wisdom and the counsel of our own understanding.
- ▶ we have set up the serpent, the teacher of unrighteousness, as our head.
- ▶ we are like sheep without a shepherd, each going his own way, each doing what is right in his own eyes.
- ▶ we are ordered, governed, and overseen by a multitude of conflicting interests and powers. Thus our lives are built upon the sand. In and of ourselves we have no immovable foundation for establishing our lives.

We have need of a savior who will bring us again into the image of God, who will repair the destruction wrought by the serpent, and who will return us to our rightful habitation. But if we do not understand the problem, we will not be able to hear the cure.

Now, this is what Fox has to say about whom Christ is and how he delivers mankind from our predicament in the fall:

- ▶ Christ is his people's living, infallible, heavenly prophet, counsellor, leader, king, shepherd, bishop, priest, and head.
- ▶ Christ is the light, life, way, and truth.
- ▶ He is the gatherer of God's people by his light, power, spirit, grace, and faith in his name.
- ▶ He is God's speaker to God's people—the first and last speaker, the everlasting speaker.
- ▶ He is the teacher of God's people.
- ▶ He is the substance of all the types, figures, and shadows.
- ▶ He is the husband, redeemer, purchaser, savior, sanctifier, reconciler, mediator, and captain of salvation.
- ▶ He is the one who bruises the serpent's head and destroys the devil and his works.
- ▶ He is the everlasting preacher, everlasting minister, and deliverer.
- ▶ He is the rock and foundation that stands sure.
- ▶ He is the prophet that God has raised up, whom we must hear.¹

It is as Christ fulfills these roles in us and in the midst of his people that he is savior, for these things bear directly on the problem we face in the fall.

¹ compiled from an appendix entitled *THE OFFICES OF CHRIST AS HE IS PRESENT IN THE MIDST* included in Lewis Benson's *Notes on George Fox*, pp B 1-15.

Also note that Fox lays special emphasis on Jesus fulfilling these functions or “offices” as he is present in the midst of his people:

And so gather in the name of Jesus where salvation is and life and redemption and mediatorship and peace with God is, so gather, I say in his name, he is in the midst of them for as Christ saith where two or three are gathered in my name there I am in the midst of them. Then there is righteousness in the midst, there is light and truth in the midst, and a savior and redeemer in the midst to comfort them that are gathered into his name, and to refresh them. And so he is the head and they are the church, and there the head is in the midst of the Church, ordering the body, ordering the church, ordering the sanctified ones and saints, his spouse, his bride, his wife.²

It is as important to know these offices of Christ at a corporate level as on an individual level. Fox also states quite unequivocally that the true Church consists only of those who are gathered to hear and experience Christ Jesus in the midst in all his offices.

... so in his name keep your meetings, in whom you have salvation; and these are the true meetings and true gatherings who feel Jesus Christ in the midst of them, their prophet, their counsellor, their leader, their light and life, their way and their truth, their shepherd that laid down his life for them, that has bought you, his sheep, who feeds you in his pastures of life; and your heavenly bishop to oversee you, that you do not go astray again from God. And so it is that through him you overcome, and he that overcomes shall go no more forth out of his fold, out of his pastures, who shall sit down in heavenly places in Christ Jesus who is your priest that offered up himself for you, and sacrifices for you and makes you holy and clean, that he may present you blameless up to the holy and pure God and here you come to witness him and to know him in his offices, by his light, sprit, and power;...³ [*NOTE: The light is not distinct from Christ in his many offices but is here included as one of his offices. The light that saves is not distinct from the presence in the midst for they are one and the same ...*]⁴

² Aa MSS. p. 21 Taken from the appendices entitled *THE OFFICES OF CHRIST AS HE IS PRESENT IN THE MIDST* included with Lewis Benson’s *Notes on George Fox*, p B-3.

³ *Fox, Works* , vol. 8, *Epistles II*, p. 77.

⁴ Lewis Benson’s comment on this passage is found in appendices entitled *THE OFFICES OF CHRIST AS HE IS PRESENT IN THE MIDST*, included with Lewis Benson’s *Notes on George Fox*.

Friends, all that be gathered in the name of Jesus whose name is above every other name, you know that there is not any salvation by another name under the whole heaven but by the name of Jesus, and you that be gathered in his name will feel him in the midst of you a prophet to open to you; a shepherd to feed you in his heavenly pastures of life; a heavenly bishop to oversee you in his heavenly possession; a counsellor to counsel you concerning your lot and state in the land of the living and in the things of the kingdom of God and in the world that has no end; and you will see Christ a leader and commander to lead you out of death, darkness, sin and corruption ... and command you to obey him, and hear him, and follow him, and take up his cross the power of God by which you are crucified to the world ... and to know him your priest that offered himself up for you and all men and sanctifies you and washes you and presents you to God without spot or wrinkle or blemish.⁵

Fox did not see this vision of salvation and life as something that only applied to a few people who were so constituted that “the early Quaker way” would suit them while the “Puritan way,” “Baptist way,” or “Anglican way” would be better suited for others of different temperament. Rather he was sent by God to challenge the whole of Christendom (so called) on the very issues of our condition in the fall and who Christ is and how he brings us salvation.

From Fox and the early Quaker vision, come ringing these questions: “You call yourselves Christians, but how do you know and experience Christ as he is the heavenly Prophet, sent to teach you the Father’s righteousness and empower you to live therein? How do you experience Christ as your shepherd whose voice you must hear and obey if you would have life? How do you experience Christ as your heavenly Counsellor, whose counsel must be heard if you would dwell in the land of the Living? How do you experience Christ, your heavenly Priest who is come to make you without spot and blemish that he may offer you up to the Father, a pure and holy offering? How do you experience Christ, the heavenly physician, sent to heal you of the malady of being like sheep without a shepherd?” And so on.⁶ These are not just idle questions that he has put forth in an effort to engage other “Christians” in ecumenical dialogue. Rather Fox is saying “this is the very stuff of salvation and life for all people everywhere, in every generation, under all circumstances. And if you are not living your life so as

⁵ Richardson MSS, p.278.

⁶ See Fox’s letter addressed “To all the Kings, Princes, and Governors in the whole world: and all that profess themselves Christians, ...” in *Works*, Vol. 5, *Doctrinals II*, pp 319-320.

to know and experience Christ in all his offices, you have no legitimate claim to the name 'Christian' (Christ-like)."

When Jesus states that he is "the way" to the Father (not "a way" – "no one comes to the Father but through me") it is because of the nature of his messiahship that he can make this claim. All these things that Fox spoke about concerning the offices of Christ are the very substance of this "way to the Father" and were the things written and spoken by the prophets concerning the messiah.

By
Ellis Hein

THE PLACE OF GEORGE FOX IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

It would seem reasonable to suppose that, nearly three centuries after the death of George Fox, there would be some measure of consensus among church historians concerning the place he should be assigned in Christian history. But this is not the case. They all agree that he has an assured place in history, but there is an astonishing variety of theories purporting to tell us exactly what that place is.

Since the purpose of these lectures is to focus on Fox's actual teachings as revealed in his writings, I shall not take time to review even the most important of these theories. What is abundantly clear from Fox's writings is that he and other early Quakers had a definite and unambiguous understanding of the place they occupied in Christian history. But most writers about Fox begin by rejecting his own self understanding as incredible, not even plausible. They tell us that Fox was mistaken in his understanding of his role and function, and that this misunderstanding must be corrected by his modern interpreters. A whole book could be written on the many ingenious attempts that have been made to explain Fox and what he was trying to do.

The choice of this subject, "The Place of George Fox in Christian History," as a starting point for this series was not accidental, nor was it prompted by intellectual curiosity. It was prompted by the fact that many Quakers today are so limited in their knowledge of what Fox taught that they think of him as having less to teach us than some of the other early Friends such as Naylor, Barclay, Penn, and Penington.

In every generation there are some students of Quakerism who feel empathy for a particular Quaker worthy of olden time and try to make him or her come alive for modern Friends. But we have not chosen to focus on Fox for any arbitrary, trivial, or capricious reason. We have not chosen to study Fox because he is the founder of the Quaker denomination, as might be the case if a Methodist or a Lutheran took up the study of Wesley or Luther. We have made Fox's teaching the subject of this study because we believe it is the prime source for understanding what produced the Quaker explosion in the seventeenth century, and also the prime source from which we can draw inspiration for a movement of Quaker renewal today.

As we have come to understand Fox's message, we have come to regard it as much more than a variant on themes derived from the Reformation of the sixteenth century, or from Roman Catholicism, or from the Christianity of Puritan England. Fox was making a new beginning from a new starting point. He claimed that he was preaching a gospel that had gone into eclipse since the apostolic age.

Fox was not preaching a revolutionary gospel unconsciously, or without a realization of what he was doing. He frequently called attention to the fact that

he was making a new beginning. I have found more than fifty places in Fox's writing where he says, "*Now* the everlasting gospel is preached *again*, after a long night of apostasy since the apostles' days" (my italics). This is quite a big claim to make: that the apostles had the true gospel and preached it, and then it went into eclipse for sixteen hundred years until the Quakers came along. In this statement Fox is telling us who he is, what he is doing, and what his place is in Christian history.

Fox also says that "the Quakers ... never came from the several Protestants nor Papists neither from their evil root nor stock." Commenting on this passage in *Catholic Quakerism*, I said, "Fox and early Quakers believed that their faith grew from an entirely different root system from that which nourished the several Protestant denominations ... they saw Quakerism *not* as a branch of Protestantism but as a new thing, which, because it springs from another root, must be seen as a whole new conception of Christianity."⁷

Robert Barclay declared that though the Protestants have reformed the Roman church "in some of the most gross points, and absurd doctrines, ... yet ... they have but lopt the branches, but retain and plead earnestly for the same root..." Yet the Puritan theory of Quaker origins is the one preferred in most American Quaker schools and colleges. In lecturing at Woodbrooke in 1964 I commented on this theory that "Quakerism differed radically from Puritanism in its view of the scriptures, its conception of the nature of the church, its doctrine of Christian worship and ministry, its view of the sacraments, its belief in the moral perfectibility of both the individual and the church by the power of Christ, its view of the relation of the Christian to the state, and its understanding of the meaning of the cross. Quakerism was militantly engaged in an attack on Puritanism on all these points."⁸

As T. Canby Jones asks, "Is it possible for Quakers to differ from Puritans about this many things and still be classified as a species of Puritanism?" But at the present time the Puritan theory is the prevailing one, although other theories still have some exponents in the Society of Friends today.

If Fox had been a reclusive scholar who merely rediscovered this lost apostolic gospel in his study and wrote a book about it, it is doubtful that he would have earned the place he now holds in Christian history. But as we now, he was called and commanded to confront the whole British nation with this challenging gospel message, and he inspired and nurtured seventy coworkers to go forth and preach that message to the inhabitants of the earth, so that during his lifetime sixty thousand people were gathered by its power into a

⁷ Lewis Benson, *Catholic Quakerism* (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1990), p. 12. (Originally privately printed by Lewis Benson 1966)

⁸ Ibid, p 10. [Barclay quotation from *Apology*, Prop. X, Section 5 (quoted on p. 12 of *Catholic Quakerism*)].

gospel fellowship, and became settled and established on the gospel foundation. All of this was accomplished by the faithfulness and prodigious labors of Fox and scores of others in the seventeenth century.

Today, the Quaker community has evolved into the type of church fellowship that sociologists call a denomination. As one modern Quaker historian has put it, "The Quakers have come to accept the role of a small sect in a big world." The everlasting gospel that Fox preached is no longer a part of any living Quaker tradition. The Quakers no longer have a unique gospel message that they believe is good and true for all people everywhere and in all ages. No longer are Quaker preachers to be found everywhere with this gospel message that they have been given to preach to the inhabitants of the earth. Today, the gospel of power that went into eclipse soon after the age of the apostles, and which was recovered and preached again by Fox and his associates, has gone into eclipse again.

However, this is only one side of the Quaker story today, because the everlasting gospel is being recovered again, a second time, and it is being preached again by a band of people in Canada, the U.S., and Britain. In trying to rediscover this message, this teaching of George Fox, we are not assuming that his tactics or lifestyle or vocabulary must be slavishly imitated. This would be a step backward rather than forward. Fox's preaching did not make clones of himself. His message was a seminal one, and where the seed took root it produced a wide variety of witnesses who made the message their own through the gospel experience. But we do believe that the gospel message he preached, which was the foundation of all his teaching, could bring new life and power to the Quakers today, and we believe that God will show us how to proceed if we are faithful.

We are trying to bring something new into Quaker life. In a report in the London *Friend* on his recent visit among American Friends, Ormerod Greenwood stated that in spite of many changes in the structure of American Quakerism there seemed to him to be a lack of anything really new. In reply, our English co-worker, Ursula Windsor, reported in the *Friend* that the message preached by New Foundation workers *is* experienced by our hearers as something new.

The Quaker world today is divided into adherents of three nineteenth-century traditions: conservative, evangelical, and liberal. And it is taken for granted by many that Quakerism must be defined as a pluralistic society in which these three traditions are maintained in balance. But none of these traditions, nor all three taken together, have the strength to support a vigorous witness for these times, or for the century that lies ahead. The men and women in each of these traditions are equally the rightful heirs of the rich legacy which Fox's message and teaching has to offer. Our message to all the Quakers is: claim your inheritance.

One of the objections most often heard against Fox's claim to have recovered the gospel that had been lost since the apostle's days concerns his use of the word "apostasy" to describe all Christian history from about 35 A.D.

to 1650. That's quite a claim to swallow, and the word "apostasy" seems like a red flag to a bull—people just don't like to hear it. Fox used the word all the time; certainly it is included in the majority of his early gospel messages. It is a central claim in the sermon he preached on Firbank Fell⁹ in 1652, which was the most important sermon of his career and the one that had the most far-reaching consequences.

Of course it is not the word "apostasy" that is important, but the claim. Was there indeed a gospel which was preached during the lifetime of the first Christian apostles, which went into eclipse when Christianity moved from Palestine into the regions to the west, where there was a great influence from Greek and Roman cultures? It is generally agreed that the gospel was, at the least, somewhat altered in emphasis by this move; this has been considered by most historians as a positive development, because it helped Christianity to prosper in the Greek and Roman culture. But the question remains: was anything lost in the transition? Fox says, Yes, the *main thing* was lost in the transition. The *gospel*, the power of God, was lost.

We will go into this question in more detail in the next lecture, but we can say that there was such a lost gospel. For a long time after I read Fox's writings and came to understand that he was making this extraordinary claim for himself—that he had recovered a lost gospel—I couldn't find any substantiation for it in the reference libraries in the theological seminaries. I couldn't find any indication, before 1945, that his claim could be backed up by modern scholarship. Christianity just hasn't been interested in this; it has been interested in other interpretations of who Christ is and how he saves us.

But after 1945 the books started to come out. Modern biblical scholars are beginning to study the christology of the apostles, the earliest stratum of Jewish Christianity. The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls in 1945, and studies of Samaritan religion, have prompted this research. And what the scholars are now finding is a tradition in the New Testament, especially in the Book of Acts, Hebrews, and the Fourth Gospel, that is very old, and that can be studied and analyzed.

It is important for us to realize that early Friends thought of themselves as a movement which was as important in history as the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and just as revolutionary. In 1677 the Quakers decided to make a major missionary effort to the European continent. They picked a blue-ribbon team which consisted of Fox, William Penn, Robert Barclay, George Keith, and a half-dozen others of that caliber, to invade Holland and Germany.

⁹ For further information concerning the Firbank Fell sermon, see the Appendix. This explanation, by John McCandless, appeared in *New Foundation Papers* No. 17, March, 1985.

What did they think they were doing in this effort? In his book on Barclay, D. Elton Trueblood quotes from a letter to David Van den Enden, a German sympathizer, in which Barclay wrote that “The Protestant churches need a reformation in the main not much less than the Romans did at the time that Luther appeared.” Trueblood comments that these Quakers “thought they had a big opportunity to lead a second wave of the Reformation in Germany,” and points out that Barclay stated in this letter that “the purpose was to reform Protestantism as Luther had reformed popery.”¹⁰ This is the image that the Quakers had of themselves. And where would they have gotten the energy and the capacity to suffer and bear their witness under all kinds of conditions, if they had had less of a vision?

But we do not have to go back to Barclay and 1677 to understand the vision early Friends had of their mission. The minute book of Crosswicks Meeting in southern New Jersey opens with a remarkable document written in 1684 by a group of Friends who knew where they were in history.¹¹ It is called “A Preface to the Ensuing Book,” a book which continues, for the minutes of Crosswicks Meeting are still being written:

It hath pleased the mighty God and great Jehovah, in this last age, after the great night of darkness and apostasy which hath spread over nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, since the glorious days in which the Apostles lived, by His outstretched gathering arm, and the word of His eternal power, to gather a people, who was weary of all dead forms and outside professions, into a waiting frame of spirit, where we durst not think of our own thoughts nor speak our own words in things relating to His kingdom and way of worship. And, being thus brought down by the mighty power of God, we were the more capable to receive instruction from Him, who, through and by His Son, Christ Jesus, the true light that lighteth every one that cometh into the world, appeared in us, and taught us His way and worship, which is in spirit and truth. This He taught us while we were in Old England, our native land, which, ... was, in this latter age, the first of nations where the Lord appeared in so mighty a power ... to the gathering of thousands into His fold, whereby his people became a body, whereof Christ is the head ... And the Lord, by his providence and mighty power, hath brought some of his people out of their native country, over the great deep, into this wilderness, and remote part of the world, as West Jersey, and places adjacent, where He hath laid the same weight and care upon some of us, as he did in our native land; that all things may be well among us, to

¹⁰ D. Elton Trueblood, *Robert Barclay* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 177.

¹¹ Ezra Michener, ed., *A Retrospect of Early Quakerism* (Philadelphia: T. Ellwood Zell, 1860), pp. 37-38.

the honor of his great and worthy name; which is the ground and end of this following book.¹²

¹² Minutes of Crosswicks Meeting, NJ, "A Preface to the Ensuing Book," 1684.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL PREACHED BY GEORGE FOX

At the funeral of George Fox in 1690, Robert Barrow gave the following testimony: “God hath made him the apostle of our time ... And there are many hundreds of people ... having the seal of his apostleship in their hearts, amongst which I am one.”¹³

An apostle is one who is *sent*, and Fox’s consciousness of being sent is clearly evident in his writing. For example, “We have received grace and apostleship [by Jesus Christ, our Lord], through which we are witnesses, and are called and made to declare and confess to the name of Jesus ... For we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” (5:94) At Firbank Fell he declared that “the Lord had sent me with his everlasting gospel to preach.” (Ni:109) Similar statements are made in the *Journal*: “The Lord God and his son, Jesus Christ, did send me forth into the world to preach his everlasting gospel” (Ni:34-35); “The everlasting gospel must be preached again to all nations ... And in this message of this glorious and everlasting gospel was I sent forth to declare ... and thousands by it are turned to God and have received it” (CI:249-250).

Fox believed that he was one who was sent, and sent with a message to proclaim. He was not simply a reformer connected with some Christian group that he was trying to persuade to accept certain articles of reformation, but God had called him and given him a message to preach.

Fox claimed that he was preaching a long-lost but newly-recovered gospel. His frequent use of the word “apostasy” is directly connected with his claim that the primitive apostolic gospel had been lost, soon after the apostolic age. Thus he says in his *Journal*: “There hath been an apostasy since the apostles’ days (which gospel is the power of God)” (BII:270).

If a motor-car is equipped with everything but a motor, we know it is useless. It’s completely non-functional. In like manner, Fox regarded the established forms of Christianity as lacking in the one thing needful. If they didn’t have the gospel, how could they claim to be functioning as a true church, a community of witnesses for Christ? He calls these established forms of Christianity “apostates from the gospel that the apostles were in.” In one of his longer sermons, toward the end of his life, at Kingston, Jamaica in 1689, his subject was “the gospel preached by Christ Jesus and his apostles and the apostasy from it since the apostles’ days” (SJ:197).

When Fox used the word “gospel” he almost always added the words, “the

¹³ Quoted in John & Isaac Comly, eds., *Friends Miscellany* (Byberry, PA, 1836), vol. 8, pp. 363-364.

power of God.” The phrase, “the gospel, the power of God,” is used almost as if it were one word in his vocabulary. He also refers to the cross as “the power of God,” and we will explore his teaching on this subject later in this series.

Fox believed that there had been many other losses as a result of the loss of the gospel foundation and its power. These included gospel church order, gospel worship, gospel ministry, and the church of the cross, which is always found where the everlasting gospel is preached and received. It is very seldom that Fox sits down and writes a paper on one subject and sticks to it all the way through, but he does have such a paper on the subject of what was lost, Epistle 262 (7:320-328). I have made a collection of passages that have the word “lost” in them, and there are 48 different things Fox says were lost because the gospel was lost. In other words, we lost everything when we lost the gospel.

Fox believed that by the re-proclamation of this everlasting gospel, a whole new era in Christian history would be inaugurated, bringing with it a new church order, a new worship, a new ministry, and a new righteousness, and so he proclaimed that “the gospel foundation ... is to be laid again in all the world.” (BI:349)

From 1650 to 1660 Fox gave absolute priority to the preaching of this gospel. Here again, he felt he had been *sent* or called to this mission. While he was in Derby jail in 1650-51 it was revealed to him that the message should be carried into every Christian congregation in the British Isles and presented on Sunday morning in the presence of the priest and people. Both Fox and Edward Burrough claimed that practically every congregation had been so visited by Quaker missionaries in that decade.

Many of the parish ministers published anti-Quaker writings, which was probably a natural result of the missionary campaign. In 1659 Fox wrote his only full-length book, *The Great Mystery*, replying to a hundred of these anti-Quaker books and tracts. His book is prefaced by a short history of the first seven years of the Quaker movement, written by Edward Burrough who had been convinced when he was a teenager. Rufus Jones has said that all Quakers should read this preface, because it breathes the spirit of the earliest years of Quaker history more than any other document.

In this short sketch, Burrough makes us feel the world-overcoming spirit of those first Quaker missionaries. Speaking of the commission that the “Valiant Sixty” felt they had received, he wrote:

Then [the Lord] having thus armed us with power, strength, and wisdom, and dominion, according to his mind, and we having learned of him, and been taught of him in all things, and he having chosen us into his work, and put his sword into our hand, and given us perfect commission to go forth in his name and authority, having the word from his mouth what to cut down and what to

preserve, and having the everlasting gospel to preach to the inhabitants of the earth, and being commanded in spirit to leave all, and follow him, and go forth in his work, yea an absolute necessity was laid upon us, and woe unto us if we preached not the gospel.¹⁴

Now we come to the specific content of this gospel. The everlasting gospel is, first of all, a proclamation concerning Jesus Christ. "Christ is the glad tidings which was promised," says Fox, "... and this we witness to be fulfilled" (4:42). It is a proclamation that Christ is alive and present in the midst of all who gather in his name. Further, he is present in the midst of his people in a functional way, and we can know him in these functions or "offices."

In a paper addressed "To all the Kings, Princes, and Governors in the whole world: and all that profess themselves Christians..." written in 1676, Fox asks:

"So now Christ is come, and you that are called christians will confess him; but does he exercise his offices in you, or amongst you? ...

Now consider, doth Christ exercise this office of a shepherd amongst you? do you follow him? do ye know his voice? and doth he lead you in and out into his pastures of life? or do you know the voice of the hireling and stranger, and follow them? which his sheep will not.

And likewise, how doth Christ exercise his office, as he is a bishop to oversee you, who is the heavenly and spiritual man, with his heavenly spirit, light, and grace, and the head of his church.(sic)

And how does Christ exercise his office, as he is a priest amongst you, who has died for you? do ye feel his blood sprinkling your hearts, and his pure water washing you, and he sanctifying of you, that he may present you holy, without spot or wrinkle, and without blemish to God. (sic)

And how do ye feel Christ exercising his office as a prophet amongst you? do you hear him in all things? doth he reveal the Father to you? for none knows him nor the Father, but by revelation? doth he open the book of conscience to you? and the book of the law, and the book of the prophets, and the book of parables, and the book of life? that you may see your names written in the book of life, and Christ, the end of the law and the prophets, and the sum and substance of all, who is the "rock of ages," your rock in this age to build upon, who is the foundation of many generations, and the foundation of the prophets and the apostles, and your foundation now to build upon.

¹⁴ Reprinted in Fox, *Works*, vol. 3, p. 14.

And how doth he exercise his kingly office amongst you, or in you? doth he rule in your hearts by faith? as he did in the church in the primitive times: so is Christ the heavenly and spiritual man your ruler, by his power, and faith, and spirit, and grace in your hearts.¹⁵

Fox had no place in his preaching and teaching for an absentee Christ. I've collected 120 references from Fox's writing in which he speaks of two or more offices, or functions, of Christ. He is proclaiming a Christ who can be known by what he *does*. This is significant in relation to Fox's claim that he is going back to the message proclaimed in the apostolic age. Those scholars in recent years who have been making a special study of the teaching and preaching of the apostles have concluded that the first Christians, the Jewish Christians in Palestine up to 70 A.D., thought of Christ primarily in terms of what he does.

I will try to summarize what I believe to be the heart of Fox's message:

First, it is a proclamation that Christ is alive, and that he is present in the midst of all who gather together in his name.

Second, the living Christ is present in our midst in a functional way. As our living shepherd he feeds us, as our living bishop he oversees us, as our living prophet and teacher he teaches us God's righteousness, as our living king he rules and governs us, and as our living priest he intercedes for us and forgives us.

These functions or offices of Christ are the central theme of Fox's gospel ministry. The purpose of this ministry was to turn people to Christ. And when we turn to Christ and come to know him in personal encounter, he becomes *our* shepherd, *our* teacher, *our* counsellor and leader and guide. We know him by what he does.

This is the message that caused many thousands to begin to gather in the name of Jesus in order to come to know him in all his offices.

In its shortest form, this gospel was sometimes reduced to just eight words: "Christ has come to teach his people himself." On the other hand, Fox on several occasions took up to three hours to preach the gospel. In these long evangelical messages he included his understanding of Christian history since the days of the apostles, his understanding of Christ as the substance of all that prefigured and foreshadowed him in the Old Testament, and his interpretation of the parables used by Jesus to convey his message to the world. The reason it took so long to present the gospel in the seventeenth century, and takes even longer today, is not that the message is complicated. The reason is that *we* are very complicated, burdened with innumerable hang-

¹⁵ Fox, *Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 319-320.

ups and doubts and questions, and so it takes a long time to understand and accept the message.

One of the early Friends, Stephen Crisp, maintained that the movement had expanded and grown rapidly as long as the Quakers “kept to the simplicity of the gospel.” When they stopped preaching this simple gospel, they ceased to grow. But although the gospel message itself is simple, it has tremendous consequences. It brings in a new fellowship, a new worship, new ministry, a new church order, a new righteousness. Fox never doubted that preaching this gospel would inaugurate a new era in Christian history, not by reforming the existing churches but by making a new beginning from this starting point. Because he attributed the “long night of apostasy”—the faithlessness of the church—to the loss of the gospel of power, he believed that it could be brought to an end by the re-proclamation of the long-lost gospel.

Francis Howgill, one of the people who was convinced at Firbank Fell, became the senior member of the team—with Edward Burrough—that took the gospel to London with great success. He described their work in these words: “We are come to the everlasting gospel again, and have received it, and it’s the power of God, which was to be and is to be preached again to the nations after the apostasy.”¹⁶

In a sermon preached on the island of Barbados in 1671, Fox said, “Since the days of the apostles they have lost the power [and] the life in the apostasy, but now the gospel is preached again among you ... now we have received the gospel again ... that which was preached in the apostles’ days in the beginning, the everlasting gospel” (R:271). Similarly, “Now must the gospel go over all nations again, ... seeing the apostasy has gone over all since the apostles’ days” (CI:249).

Some time after Fox stopped dictating his *Journal*, in 1676, he appended to the manuscript a brief account of all the preachers who had come forth in public ministry between 1649 and 1657. These were the people who devoted most of their time to “spreading the truth abroad” to North America, Europe, the Near East, the West Indies, and the British Isles. There are about 110 names of this list, and after each name is a brief description of the places where their preaching service took place. In 77 instances Fox specifically states the purpose of their missionary journey was “to preach the gospel” (CII:321-338).

Quakers and church historians of today find it difficult to account for the rapid expansion of the early Quaker movement, and several rival theories have been put forward to account for it. Some maintain that the early Quakers were made to be a great people by irresistible historical forces: they were creatures of their time, and therefore the Quaker explosion of the seventeenth century is

¹⁶ Francis Howgill, *The Dawnings of the Gospel Day* (1676), p. 221.

unrepeatable unless the cycle of history brings us around to a similar situation.

Another theory is that the personal leadership and charisma of people like George Fox is a factor that accounts for the notable achievements of early Friends, and that these achievements cannot be repeated unless we have another set of leaders like them.

But Fox and his co-workers had their own explanation for the rapid growth of the Quaker movement. They said it was because of *the convincing power of the gospel that they preached*. As long as they preached this gospel, they grew. When Quakers stopped preaching it, they became one of history's prime examples of a case of arrested development.

Most of us are familiar with the pattern of "gospel preaching" found among evangelical Protestants of our day. In this preaching, Christ is proclaimed as *forgiver* and *pardoner*. He is our savior because he has the power to take away the burden of guilt for past sin, and assure us of a better hope for whatever is in store for us after death. The object of this kind of preaching is to evoke in the hearer a willingness to make a public confession: "I accept Jesus Christ as my personal savior."

I don't know of any instance in the early Quaker movement where such a "gospel" was preached or where such a response was made. In Fox's gospel preaching, Christ was declared to have the power to forgive us for past sins, but also he is able to teach us what is right and what is wrong, and he gives us the power to do the right and reject the wrong. Moreover, when we receive him as our living teacher, he brings us into a fellowship of disciples who learn together, obey together, and suffer together.

Fox's Gospel message, "Christ has come to teach his people himself," is not just an individualistic gospel, and is not just a matter of saving souls one by one. Those who received this gospel were gathered into a new community, of which Christ is the living head. "This everlasting gospel being preached again, and received again, as it was in the apostles days," said Fox, "...the glorious fellowship of the gospel ... is known again, and received and obeyed by us, the people of God, called Quakers" (5:316).

When people received this gospel and became convinced of it, they always as a result ceased to be affiliated with whatever Christian body they had been connected with, and instead became Quakers. There was never anyone who came to Fox or the others and said, "I am thoroughly convinced of the truth of the message that you are preaching, and I am going to become a Baptist, or a Presbyterian." A short time after Margaret Fell was convinced, she told Fox she would like to have another conference with her parish minister, with whom she had been quite close. Fox felt that he had to explain this in his *Journal*, so he

said, “She was not wholly come off.” (NI:114 He figured that a few days had been ample time for her to break the association of a lifetime.

But before this gospel fellowship and gospel worship and gospel ministry can be known and experienced, the gospel must be preached and received. “The first work,” Fox said, “is to convince people of God’s truth, and turn them from the power of Satan to the power of God” (R:217). The whole thrust of early Quaker preaching was to call people to experience a personal encounter with the living Christ. However, the first thing that newly-convinced people did, after they had received the gospel, was to gather together “in the name of Jesus” to feel and know his presence in their midst, in all his offices. After Fox or some other early Quaker evangelist had visited an area, the only way you could tell who had been convinced and who hadn’t was that those who were convinced immediately began to meet to worship in a way that was new for them, and that had never been seen before in the British Isles.

Is it not reasonable to suppose that this same gospel, that was preached by the apostles and by the early Friends, can be preached today? And that we can begin to build as they did, on the same foundation, so that the great work of the Lord can be carried forward? But I can do more than suggest this as a possibility, because there is already such a contemporary movement, in which some of us are involved. This new movement is not an extension or development of liberal Quakerism or evangelical Quakerism or conservative Quakerism. Rather, we are going back to the beginning, to the gospel that Fox preached.

In one of his pastoral epistles (Ep.240) Fox wrote, “Ye that have seen the everlasting gospel, and known the everlasting gospel preached again, which was among the apostles, and have been reaped out from among the apostates, got up since the apostles’ days; I say, live in it, and dwell in it; in which life and power ye see over to the apostles’ days” (7:268).

THE RELATION OF FOX'S MESSAGE TO THE BIBLE

George Fox began his public work as a teacher and preacher by giving absolute priority to the proclamation of a message that he called “the everlasting gospel.” His opponents and critics call it “the Quakers’ new gospel,” but Fox maintained that he was re-proclaiming the gospel that had been preached by the apostles, but which had gone into eclipse since their day.

There are several distinctive features of this apostolic gospel that Fox preached, and what I have to say about the biblical basis of the message will be related to them. One of these distinctive features is what might properly be called Fox’s *functional Christology*. He called people to a personal encounter with a Christ who is alive and who manifests himself to us as the teacher, prophet, priest, and king of God’s people. These “offices” are not just honorary titles nor mere attributes. We are being called in this gospel to know and experience Jesus Christ as *our* king, *our* priest, *our* prophet, and we are called to know him as the king, priest, prophet, head, and orderer of God’s new covenant people, and to know ourselves as being gathered by the power of this gospel into this new covenant community.

Fox did not invent the “offices of Christ,” but neither is his message concerning them derived from mainstream Christian theology. In the teaching of the Reformers—Luther and Calvin—concerning the offices of Christ, the prophetic function is never invested with the same messianic and theological significance as the offices of priest and king. In Fox’s teaching, however, the prophetic office of Christ becomes no less important than his priestly and kingly functions, and this shift of emphasis brings about a Copernican revolution in our understanding of who Jesus Christ is and how he saves people.

Mainstream Christianity puts the emphasis on Christ’s priestly office. His saving work is seen as atoning for our sin, forgiving us for sin, and pardoning us for sin. By so doing, he delivers us from the consequences of sin, but does not deliver us from captivity to sin. By his atoning act on the cross, he reconciles us to God but does not give us the power to overcome sin and temptation. Therefore we will not know victory over sin until we pass into the next world. The theological term for this atoning act of Christ as our priest is “justification,” and a Christian is defined, according to this doctrine, as a justified sinner. It seemed never to occur to John Calvin that the sin of a justified sinner could lead to just as disastrous and tragic personal, social, and historical consequences as the sin of an unjustified sinner.

Fox was in revolt against this kind of Christianity. He maintained that Christ also has the power to save us from captivity to sin. When he preached that “Christ has come to teach his people himself,” he was proclaiming that Christ is the expected “prophet like Moses” who is able to teach us what is right and what is wrong, and to give us the power to do the right and reject the

wrong. He is able to save us *from sin*, and not, as the Calvinists maintain, unable to do more than save us from its consequences.

The chief point of controversy between the Quakers and the Puritans in the seventeenth century was whether or not Christ has the power to deliver us from captivity to sin. Because Fox and the Quakers were re-proclaiming the primitive gospel preached by the apostles, they were proclaiming that Christ, in his prophetic office, is able to teach us what is right and give us the power to do it. We might compare those who are conscious of having been made captive to sin, so that they are continually doing wrong, to a prisoner who is in a pit. His problem is to get out of the pit. If we offer him a salvation which leaves him in the pit, what good is this to him? If we come to a prisoner in this situation and tell him, "You are saved, but you are not going to get out of the pit until the time of your death," this is not "good news." The *good news* is that Christ has power to save us *from our sins*.

In my 1974 article on "George Fox's Teaching about Christ,"¹⁷ I reviewed the principal passages in the New Testament that Fox used in support of his prophetic Christology. These included the sermon by Peter in Acts 3 (in which many of the things Fox was preaching had first been preached in the Christian era), the opening chapter of Hebrews, the story of the transfiguration, the parable of the wicked husbandmen and the rejected cornerstone, the episode of the Samaritan woman, and the prologue to the fourth gospel. These passages were a prominent part of Fox's teaching and preaching.

When Fox reports of his Firbank Fell sermon that "I opened the prophets and the figures and shadows and turned them to Christ the substance," (Ni:109) his preaching is patterned after that of the apostles, especially Peter. He comments on the apostolic preaching that "In the old testament Christ was preached and held forth by promises, and by figures, types, and shadows, and by the prophets, and by the prophecies. And when Christ was come, the apostles proved ... out of the scriptures, Moses, and the prophets, ... that Jesus was the true Christ" (6:228).

Thus, Fox feels, we have in the Old Testament three types of witness which help us to know who Christ is: the promises, the prophecies, and the types, figures, and shadows. We will consider each in turn.

In his sermons Fox would have recited the *promises* of God concerning Christ, beginning with "the promise of God ... to man kind, 'that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head,'" a reference to Gen. 3:15 which Fox calls "the first promise of Christ." (6:9) Surely he would also have mentioned the great promise to Abraham that "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:18) which he

¹⁷ *Quaker Religious Thought*, Vol. 16, nos. 1-2 (cumulative nos. 39-40), Winter 1974-75, pp. 20-45.

refers directly to Christ in a 1676 tract (5:266). A third promise that he would have included comes from Isaiah 11:10, “there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign [‘a signal’ in some modern versions] of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek.” To Princess Elizabeth of the Palatinate, Fox wrote in 1677 that “the Lord is come to teach his people himself, and to set up his ensign, that the nations may flow unto it” (BII:270). And in 1690 he wrote a paper “concerning the Ensign, which Isaiah prophesied the Lord should set up for the Gentiles, which I showed was Christ” (BII:494-497).

Fox reviewed the Old Testament *prophecies* concerning Christ a number of times, referring to those of Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Samuel, Zechariah, and the archangel Gabriel. What especially concerns us in this study of Fox’s gospel message is his “opening the prophets” in a way that illuminated his teaching on the offices on Christ, particularly the office of prophet, which he mentions most frequently. In the Sermon in Acts mentioned earlier, Peter reminds his Jewish hearers of the passage in Deut: 18:18 in which Moses speaks prophetically of a prophet like himself whom the Lord would send at some future time, who would speak “all that I shall command him,” and, in Peter’s paraphrase, “you shall listen to him in whatever he tells you” (Acts 3:22 RSV).

Although not all modern biblical scholars agree that the passage in Deuteronomy is to be taken in a prophetic sense, it is nevertheless widely accepted that at the time of Christ both the Samaritans and the Qumran Community regarded this passage as having messianic significance. It was the basis of their expectation of a coming deliverer who would be “a prophet like Moses.” Certainly Peter and Stephen accepted this passage as a prophecy of “the coming one.”

Mainstream theology of the so-called “great churches” has ignored this apostolic witness to Christ. Although Calvin’s teaching preserves the traditional messianic offices of prophet, priest, and king, he makes no theological use of the office of prophet.¹⁸ In the first edition of Calvin’s *Institutes* he mentioned only the offices of priest and king, adding prophet only in the later editions but making no use of it in his understanding of Christianity.

Oscar Cullmann, in *Christology of the New Testament*, flatly declares that “there is only a single school of thought in the history of the Christological problem which consistently conceives Jesus as prophet [and that is] Jewish

¹⁸ See John Frederick Jansen, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (London: J. Clark, 1956), pp. 51, 53, 58.

Christianity.”¹⁹ What he is saying here is that since the days of the apostles the early prophet Christology of Peter and others has gone into eclipse and has never been revived. This judgment would have to be revised by anyone familiar with Fox’s teaching. I have found 47 references in his writings to Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Moses’ prophecy in Deut. 18:18.

In a sermon preached at Gracechurch Street Meeting in London in 1682, Fox tells us he declared the everlasting gospel, “which was preached in the apostles’ days ... and which the church in the apostles’ days received ... This gospel, I declared, was sent from heaven by the Holy Ghost ... And now this gospel is preached again ... to all nations, tongues, and people: and all people now are to hear Christ the prophet, in this his gospel of the new covenant. For as Moses said, ‘Like unto me will God raise up a prophet, and Him shall ye hear in all things’; so, said I, this prophet, Christ, is come, and all the Jews in spirit, the true believing Christians in the light, ... are to hear Christ in his gospel, new testament, and new covenant” (BII:364).

For Fox, the silent worship of Quakers was primarily an exercise in waiting to hear the voice of Christ in his office as prophet: “We are come to hear our own prophet, which God hath raised up, Christ Jesus, to open to us; and him do we hear in all things in our meetings” (6:245).

In addressing the Jews, Fox relied heavily on Old Testament prophecy. In his “Declaration to the Jews,” written in 1661, he speaks of Jesus Christ as “the Prophet that is to be heard, and King that Daniel prophesied of” (4:293).

Now we turn from the promises and prophecies to the third way that the Old Testament helps us to know who Christ is and what his work is in the world. What did Fox mean at Firbank Fell when he says he “opened the figures and shadows and turned them [the people] to Christ the substance?” (Ni:109).

Let me begin by quoting several authors who can help us to understand what is meant by the *types, figures, and shadows*. First of all, James Muilenburg has observed that “it is important to see that the New Testament, where the consciousness of the newness of the Messianic age is so central, is dependent upon the Old Testament for its categories of newness.”²⁰

Alan Richardson comments in his *Christian Apologetics* that “The fulfillment of prophecy [involves] more than the fulfillment of words and predictions; it involves the fulfillment of history, the validation of the prophetic understanding of [Old Testament] history ... The course of historical events, and not merely the words uttered by the prophets, contains an anticipation and foreshadowing of that which is to come. In the traditional language of Christian theology, the

¹⁹ Oscar Cullmann, *Christology of the New Testament*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), p. 38.

²⁰ James Muilenburg, *In The Way of Israel*, (New York, Harper, 1961), p. 135.

earlier is a ‘type’ of the later.”²¹ “If then, we follow the teaching of the New Testament and interpret biblical history in the light of it, we shall realize that the fulfillment of prophecy doesn’t primarily mean the detailed accomplishment of precise predictions ... It means rather that the prophets ... apprehended, however dimly, the very pattern of the process of salvation in history.”²²

And R. T. France, in *Jesus and the Old Testament*, states that “Jesus saw his mission as the fulfillment of the Old Testament scriptures; not just of those that predicted a coming redeemer, but of the whole sweep of Old Testament ideas. The patterns of God’s working that the discerning eye could trace in the history and institutions of Israel were all preparing for the great climax when all would be taken up into the final and perfect act of God which the prophets foretold. And in the coming of Jesus all this was fulfilled. That is why he could find ‘in all the scriptures the things concerning himself’.”²³

In Webster’s dictionary the first definition of “type” is “a person or thing (as in the Old Testament) believed to foreshadow another (as in the New Testament),” while a “figure” is defined as “a person, thing, or action representative of another.”

Fox is not vague or ambiguous about what he considers to be “types, figures, and shadows.” I have compiled a list of 37, which I don’t claim to be exhaustive, and which were all prominent in the life and history of God’s old covenant people. These include such things as the Mosaic covenant and law, the Levitical priesthood, temple, altars, holy days, feasts, oaths, and dietary laws, as well as “the outward Jerusalem,” the prophets, promises, and scriptures, of which Christ is the end and substance. These represent the priestly, kingly, and prophetic aspects of the religion of the Jews.

Fox declared that, as Christ has come and can be known by his new covenant people as their *living* priest, king, and prophet, he has therefore ended all these “types, figures, and shadows,” and has inaugurated a new Israel of God, of which he is the head. These things are not only *fulfilled* by the coming of Christ, they are also all *ended* and *abolished* by his coming. Fox says that “Christ came to put an end to all figures, types and shadows” (3:437), and “Christ Jesus is the substance of all figures and shadows, and he endeth the many things.”²⁴

If these are all ended and abolished by the coming of Christ, then there is nothing left of the old covenant. They are the shadows and Christ the

²¹ Alan Richardson, *Christian Apologetics* (New York: Harper, 1947), p. 188.

²² Ibid., p. 191.

²³ R.T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1982), p. 79, quoting Luke 24:27.

²⁴ Cadbury, AC, Cat. No. 3, 62D, p. 68

substance is the reality, and Fox says, referring to Col. 2:17, “When the substance was come, the shadows fly away.” (6:47) Christ, he says, “ends all the types, figures, and shadows, first covenant, and priesthood,” (7:81) and again, “all figures, shadows, and types, in the old testament and covenant, Christ the substance is come, and abolishes them, ... and he saith, ‘Behold, I make all things new’” (8:285).

By preaching Christ as the “substance,” Fox was also proclaiming him as the new covenant. He taught that Jesus Christ is not a messenger who brings us a new covenant that is distinct from himself. *He himself is the covenant.* Christ, says Fox, “is the beginning of the new world.” (6:472) As he makes all things new, the old things must be done away. The new order is “a new and living way ... a new prophet ... a new spiritual worship ... a new church which is in God which Christ is the head of.”²⁵ Fox proclaimed that “Christ is come, the covenant of God,” (4:153) whose followers “look to the everlasting covenant, Christ Jesus the prophet, to hear him, whom God hath raised up, which Moses prophesied of, which now thousands witness” (4:147).

“Therefore,” he urges, “know Christ, who is the substance of all the types, figures, and shadows ... The priests, and the law, and the first covenant, were figures of the everlasting covenant, Christ Jesus” (7:139).

Fox’s prime example of an apostle who preached “Christ the substance” was Stephen. Stephen is not called an apostle in the New Testament, and he is not reported to have used the term “substance.” But he functioned as an apostle and, according to Fox, he was the one who saw most clearly that Christ had ended the whole order of the old covenant, and it was this claim that provoked his death. Stephen saw that if we accept Christ the whole old covenant system comes to an end, and this was a scandal to his hearers.

I have found fourteen places where Fox refers to Stephen as having “confessed Jesus, the substance of all figures and types” (BI:217). For example, “he preached the substance, Christ the end of the law ... He did not establish the Jews in their ceremonies, signs, and types; but Stephen brings them to the substance.” (3:333-334) “Stephen was stoned to death for denying the temple, and for witnessing the substance.” (3:77-78) Again, “Stephen suffered death for witnessing against the shadows, and witnessing the substance” (3:335).

The word “substance” when used in contrast to “shadow,” appears only once in the New Testament, in Col. 2:16-17. Those versions most familiar to Fox had translated “soma” as “body,” a literal translation which does not clarify the contrast. Both Fox and Margaret Fell consistently understood “body” in this passage to mean “substance,” and each sometimes used both words, “body and substance,” when quoting it. The Revised Standard Version translates “soma” as “substance” in this passage, while the New English Bible uses “reality.” The

²⁵ George Fox, Headley MSS, (1672), Cat. Nos. 8, 55F, and 8, 56F, pp. 42, 43

complete RSV passage reads: “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath. These are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.”²⁶

²⁶ Jerusalem Bible translates this passage: “These were only pale reflections of what was coming: the reality is Christ.”

THE NEW WORSHIP

Over the years, the various groupings within the Quaker denomination have developed an amazing variety of worship practices, to such a degree that they often seem unrelated to one another. My purpose here is not to analyze the complex and confused state of Quaker worship, particularly in North America, nor to make a guess as to which of the current worship practices in the Society of Friends most nearly approximate the Quaker vision.

My purpose is rather to begin from a new starting point and to get a new perspective on the problems of contemporary Quakerism, and to bring something into the life of the Society of Friends today which is the heritage of all Quakers but has not survived in any living tradition. So let us take a look at the origin and nature of early Quaker worship.

George Fox maintained that the preaching of the everlasting gospel that had been lost “since the apostles’ days” would bring about the restoration of the true New Covenant worship, ministry, and church order that had been lost because the original gospel was lost. The first Quaker meetings for worship were composed of people who had heard and received this everlasting gospel and who were filled with a fervent desire to gather together in the name of Jesus to wait to feel his presence in their midst as their living teacher, leader, ruler, counsellor, and orderer.

Everyone who was convinced of the truth of the everlasting gospel began to worship in a new way, and they all ceased to worship in any other way. This gathering together “in the name of Jesus” to feel his living presence was the most visible and outward sign of conviction. When people were convinced to Quakerism in the seventeenth century, they weren’t invited to come down to the front of the auditorium to make a public confession that they had accepted Christ as their personal savior, or that they accepted as truth the message that had been preached. But the one thing they did do, the sign that they had received it, was to come into worshipping fellowships.

Conviction was not just an individual matter but led immediately to a corporate act of worship. Fox’s message was that “Christ has come to teach his *people* himself.” In his reports of his gospel preaching, Fox often concludes by saying that many were “convinced of the Lord’s everlasting Truth and are gathered into the name of Jesus, and sit under Christ their teacher and saviour” (Ni:241). He called these gatherings “gospel fellowships” and the worship they practiced he called “gospel worship.”

In a recent attempt to understand early Quaker worship, the book *Quaker Worship in North America*,²⁷ the author of the introduction, Maurice Creasey,

²⁷ Francis B. Hall, ed., *Quaker Worship in North America* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1978, a Faith and Life Study Book).

and the editor, Francis Hall, put forward the theory that the worship of early Friends was an oversimplification or abridgement of Christian worship as it has been practiced from the beginning. They believed that the simplicity of Quaker worship has been achieved by over-pruning, which has resulted in the impoverishment of what is now being called “traditional” Quaker worship, that is, a worship which has nothing to undergird it but a tradition. The shortcomings and failures of the more distinctively Quaker forms of worship are attributed to the excision of liturgical and homiletic elements of Christian worship, and the remedy is seen to lie in restoring these elements without destroying the freedom and spontaneity and prophetic spirit which are characteristic of Quaker worship at its best.

I will not here present a point by point refutation of this thesis; rather I will try to show that there is another approach to understanding the meaning of early Quaker worship. I do not think that early Quakers believed that, if the liturgical and homiletic elements were expunged from Christian worship, what remained would constitute the pure and unadulterated worship that God seeks from his New Covenant people. The seventeenth-century Quakers were not a reform movement for the restructuring of Christian worship. Their claim was that because the apostolic gospel had been lost, “the true worship hath been lost since the apostles’ days (7:323).

In 1658, Fox told a General Yearly Meeting of Friends that “In this night of apostasy, the pure religion and worship in Spirit ... were lost; but now they came to be set up again by Christ Jesus, his messengers and ministers of the gospel, as in apostles’ days. For as Christ sent his disciples to go and preach the gospel in all the world ... so now again, the everlasting gospel must be preached to all nations, ... that they may come into the pure religion, to worship God in Spirit and in truth, that they may know Christ Jesus, their way to God” (BI:420-421). In a “Warning to the Inhabitants of the City of Hamburg,” written in 1677 from Amsterdam, he wrote:

So all the children of the new covenant, that walk in the new and living way, hear Christ their Prophet, that God has raised up, and anointed to be their Teacher and Priest. So now, God doth speak to his people by his Son, as he did in the apostles’ days. The Lord is come to teach his people himself ... and to bring them off all the world’s worships, to worship God in Spirit and truth, which Christ set up above sixteen hundred years since (BII:296).

In the Old Covenant there was a prescribed way of worship, and the Old Testament has much to say about the temple, priests, and cultus of this worship. The New Testament has little to say by way of defining worship in the New Covenant. Jesus says it is not to be temple worship, and that the new worship which God seeks is “in spirit and truth.” But the new practice of Christian worship in the New Testament does not furnish a single definitive, normative pattern of worship for the guidance of the church in future ages.

Fox maintained that those who hear and receive the everlasting gospel are *constrained* to gather together in the name of Jesus to feel his living presence in all his offices. Thus the worship that belongs to the New Covenant is revealed and restored through the preaching of the gospel and the power of the gospel experience. One of the phrases that Fox often used when speaking of the Quaker community was “children of the New Covenant” and he says that the children of the New Covenant can be known and recognized because they gather in the name of Jesus and come to know him in all his offices. In “an epistle to be read amongst Friends” (1679) he wrote:

...[A]ll the children of the new covenant do gather together in the name of Christ Jesus ... And being gathered in the name of Jesus, he is in the midst of them the Prince of life and peace, and captain of salvation, and a prophet to open the book of conscience, and the book of the law, and [the] prophets, and [the] gospel, ... and a bishop to oversee them, and a heavenly shepherd to feed them in his heavenly pasture of life, and a heavenly King to rule in their hearts (8:166).

If the “gospel fellowship” or “children of the New Covenant” are those who meet or gather “in the name of Jesus,” then it is of prime importance to have a clear understanding of what it means to “meet in the name of Jesus.” There must be many millions of Christians who profess that when they practice Christian worship they are meeting in the name of Jesus. Are all these professing Christians “children of the New Covenant” and are they all gathered into the fellowship of the gospel and into gospel worship?

It seems reasonable to infer that when Fox speaks of meeting in the name of Jesus, he means that we must meet to feel the presence of the living Christ in our midst as a king to rule over us, a prophet to open to us, a priest to intercede for us, a shepherd to feed us, a bishop to oversee us. It follows that, in Fox’s view, if we do *not* gather together to feel the living presence of Christ in our midst in all his offices, then we are not meeting in the name of Jesus.” For Fox, meeting in the name of Jesus has a very definite content, and it has to do with the gospel experience, the experience of Christ as present, and present in a functioning way. I have found 22 references where Fox makes it clear that “meeting in the name” involves such a definite experience.

One of the outposts of early Quakerism was the handful of Danzig Quakers who had been first visited by William Ames in 1661. Danzig was the farthest east city in Europe where Quakers were known to exist, and they suffered frequent persecution. Although Fox was in Europe in 1677 as part of the missionary team to Holland and Germany, he was not able to travel as far as Danzig. But these remote Quakers in Poland were much on his mind, and in 1677 he wrote them a letter of love and encouragement in which he says:

I am glad the Lord hath witnesses in that city, to stand for his glory and name, and for Christ Jesus, the great Prophet, whom

God hath raised up, who is to be heard in all things; so that ye need none of the prophets, which men have raised up. Therefore, stand faithful to Christ Jesus, your Shepherd, that he may feed you; hear his voice, and follow him, who laid down his life for you: but follow none of the shepherds and hirelings, that are made by men ... Set up Christ to be your Counsellor and Leader, and then, ye will have no need of any of the counsellors and leaders of the world; for Christ is sufficient, whom God has given you. Set up Christ Jesus to be your Bishop and Overseer, who is sufficient to oversee, that you go not astray from God ... I am glad ye are come to own Christ Jesus, your High Priest, ... made higher than the heavens, as the church and the apostles owned him in their days ... and this do all the children of the new covenant witness, who walk in the new and living way (BII:286-287).

In 1685 the Danzig Friends were again under persecution and were imprisoned under close confinement on bread and water, and denied visits from their wives, children, and friends. So Fox wrote to the king of Poland, John III, on behalf of these “innocent and afflicted people,” and in his letter to the king he says:

Now this punishment is inflicted upon them only because they come together in the name of Jesus Christ, ... who is their Prophet, whom God hath raised up like unto Moses: whom they ought to hear in all things in this day of the gospel and new covenant; who went astray like scattered sheep, but now are returned to the chief Shepherd and Bishop of their souls ...

Now, O King! ... it seems hard to us, that any who openly confess Christ Jesus (yea, the magistrates of Danzic do the same,) should inflict those punishments upon an innocent and harmless people, ... only because they come together to serve and worship the Eternal God ... in Spirit and in truth which worship Christ Jesus set up sixteen hundred years ago (BII:422-423).

Those who were convinced of the truth of the gospel Fox preached were soon led to gather and to practice this new kind of worship, in which Christ becomes for all his people the new and living way to God as they come to know him in all his offices. Those who faithfully practice this worship are bearing a testimony for Christ and his gospel. This is why Fox was always exhorting Friends to keep up their meetings “in the name of Jesus,” for when they faithfully maintained their meetings “that Christ set up,” even in the face of persecution, they were doing something that was just as important as preaching the gospel.

So Fox writes “concerning our meetings and gatherings in the name of Jesus” that “We ... have felt Christ in the midst of us, and so, according to his promise, we feel him both prophet, priest and king, and lord and bishop, and

shepherd, who is the head of his church ... So, for our gatherings and meetings in the name of Jesus have we suffered imprisonment and spoiling of goods, and stoning, and beating and shedding of our blood, and life itself; so they have been purchased at a dear rate, even with life itself ... Therefore all in the Power of God keep your testimony in the name of Jesus for [these meetings].²⁸

Fox repeats this call over and over: “Keep your testimony ... for your worship in the spirit and in the truth, that Christ Jesus hath set up” (8:34); “keep up your testimony in the light, power, and spirit of God, for the worship, that Christ set up above sixteen hundred years since, in spirit and in truth, ... which is a worship that cannot be shaken.” (8:84) This is a testimony that the Quakers had before the peace testimony was formulated in 1660, and I think in Fox’s mind it was the most important of the Quaker testimonies. It is the thing that brings people to Christ, as they see that we are gathering together to feel his living presence in our midst.

It is hardly believable that early Friends would have endured so much persecution and hardship if they had thought the testimony they were bearing was merely to an auxiliary type of worship whose only justification was that it supplemented other types. Their advocacy of this worship was that it is the “worship that God seeks,” and that he expects from the New Covenant community. They understood it to be a universal worship which was good and true for all people everywhere and in all ages. In his lengthy and important Epistle 249, Fox describes the worship “which Christ set up, which every man and woman in the world must come to” as “the public and universal worship” (7:292). And in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, “God’s worship which Christ set up doth not change ... and this is the safe, perfect and infallible catholic or universal worship” (4:414).

We have been trying to understand the early Quaker movement as a new beginning, from a new starting point: the everlasting gospel that Fox preached, which he claimed was being recovered and proclaimed again after having been lost since the apostles’ days. When this recovered gospel was preached again, those who received it began at once to worship together in a new and revolutionary way, a way that Fox regarded as catholic and universal. Fox’s expectation that every man and woman in the world would come to it was based on his hope that the everlasting gospel would be preached again to all the inhabitants of the earth.

This worship in spirit and in truth is not something that can be detached from the gospel. We cannot reject the everlasting gospel and accept gospel worship. Fox would be skeptical about any movement to promote Quaker worship which was not at the same time a movement to preach the everlasting gospel again. Quakers in the seventeenth century who chose to meet in the name of Jesus and practice gospel worship in the face of bitter persecution did

²⁸ Fox, Richardson MSS, p. 282

not do so simply because they *preferred* the Quaker way of worship. They made this choice because they were convinced that Quaker worship was the true Christian worship that belongs to the New Covenant.

Today many Quakers take it for granted that only a small minority of people are likely to have a preference for a distinctively Quaker type of worship. Not even a majority of the members of the Society of Friends prefer it. Many Quaker parents today assume that the worship preferences of their children may not correspond to their own. As one Quaker parent explained to me as her twelve-year-old son went off to a church service, “John is a congenital Episcopalian.” It would never have occurred to early Friends that they were obligated to keep up their testimony for their worship for no other reason than that they happened to prefer it. As Fox put it, “all are to mind the worship that God seeks, and not the worship that men seek” (7:292).

I believe that the recovery and re-proclamation of the everlasting gospel that Fox preached will continue to cause people to gather in the name of Jesus to feel his presence in all his offices. We have found that there is a real hunger for gospel worship across the whole spectrum of contemporary Quakerism, and in a number of different situations, meetings in the name of Jesus have sprung up as a result of people’s conviction of the everlasting gospel.

George Fox saw that the gathering of gospel fellowships was the first step toward realizing a new kind of church order. During his entire ministry Fox was engaged in two major tasks. The first was preaching the everlasting gospel, and the second was helping and advising all who had received the gospel to become gathered into this new kind of church order which he called “gospel order,” the order that belongs to the gospel and the New Covenant. This “gospel order” is the subject of the next article in this series on Fox’s teachings.

THE NEW CHURCH ORDER

As a result of the early Quakers' preaching mission, hundreds of worshipping fellowships were gathered. These gospel fellowships were the starting point for the gathering of a great people. But George Fox saw that the great work to which he had been called was to go farther than restoring the lost gospel worship and gospel fellowship. He saw that "all that receive this gospel, the power of God unto salvation, in their hearts, receive Christ, (the power God,) and his government and order in the power," (8:207) and he asserted that "preaching of the gospel of Christ Jesus is to the intent that all may come to be heirs of the gospel, ... and to be heirs of Christ and of his government" (BII:241).

Margaret Fell shared Fox's vision of the restoration of the New Covenant church and of the church order that belongs to it. She wrote, "The Lord Jesus Christ is come down from heaven and manifested again in his spirit in the hearts of his people, and [he] is recovering and restoring again his pure and his holy church ... He is become the head of the corner of this building, his holy church and house, which house are we, which he is rearing and building." Again, "This is the great work which the Lord is working in this his day, and the spiritual building which he is rearing and setting up, and he hath put his hand to the work; and when he worketh who can [hinder] it?"²⁹

The "great people" that Fox saw was to be raised up by the power of the gospel was not, in his vision, to be a great *sect* or a great *denomination*, but a restoration of God's people in the New Covenant, which would be ordered by the order that belongs to the gospel and that covenant.

Fox said that in the apostasy "the gospel order was lost amongst them, and the government of Christ and his worship ... And therefore now the gospel order is to be set up again, and the government of Christ Jesus." (8:60) But those who received the everlasting gospel became gathered into this church order. In one of Fox's sermons he declared, "as ye come to the new covenant and into the order of the glorious gospel, there is a coming up again from this apostasy and beholding one another's comely order in the gospel of life."³⁰

Elsewhere he speaks of the gospel "in which ... is an everlasting perfect fellowship and order, which will stand when all others are gone." (8:157) *How* does the *gospel* lead into this perfect church order? In his *Journal*, he asserted that "all the children of the new covenant, that walk in the new and living way, hear Christ their Prophet, that God has raised up, and anointed to be their

²⁹ Margaret Fell, *A Brief Collection...*, pp. 321-322, 253.

³⁰ Fox, "Wheeler Street Sermon" (1680) in *Early Quaker Writings*, ed. Hugh Barbour and Arthur Roberts (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), p. 510.

Teacher and Priest. So now, God doth speak to his people by his son, as he did in the apostles' days. The Lord is come to teach his people himself ... to bring them off all the world's churches, to the church in God, which Christ the heavenly man is head of" (BII:296).

What does Fox mean by "the church in God" and "the church of which Christ is the head"? He and other Quakers made a distinction between the "gathered churches," which were voluntary associations organized by religious purposes, and the "gospel fellowship and order" that was being given to them through faith in Jesus Christ and his gospel. Early Friends did not consider themselves one of the many "gathered churches," although they also stood outside the national churches that were established by law and maintained and ordered by the civil authority.

The Quakers and the gathered churches such as the Baptists were allies in the crusade for religious freedom and the right of voluntary association, but the Quakers were calling people into the church in God of which Christ is the head, and they addressed this call also to those who boasted that their church order was based on Scripture, or who trusted in the stability furnished by charismatic leaders. On the statue memorializing Mary Dyer, on Boston Common and elsewhere, the inscription is that she died for the sake of "religious freedom," but I think Mary Dyer would be very surprised at this inscription. It was not for religious freedom that she died, but for the sake of bearing witness to the truth of this gospel that was being recovered and preached again, and for the church that was brought into existence by the power of the gospel.

As part of their mission to the gathered churches, early Friends addressed a number of pieces of evangelical writing to them. Thus Francis Howgill, who had been through the gamut of these groups, and had never been satisfied with his experience in them, wrote an essay entitled "Lamentation to the Scattered Tribes." And Fox wrote (in "To All That Would Know the Way to the Kingdom"), "the church in God is not in imitation, gathered from the letter of Scripture, ... but they who are born again of the immortal seed, by the word of God, which lives and endures for ever, ... which word is God, which word became flesh and dwelt among us; so he (Christ) is the head of the church It is a lie to speak and say, the steeple-house is the church; or to say, they that are gathered by the form of the letter, is the church of God." (4:18) In an early controversy with a preacher in Leicester (1648), Fox "told him the Church was the pillar and ground of Truth, made up of living stones, living members, a spiritual household which Christ was the head of ... in God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ni:24).

Fox never tired of repeating his testimony that both the gospel and the gospel order are not human inventions. "And this gospel may every one testify unto, and to the order of it, that it is not of man, nor by man, neither is it received but by the revelation of Jesus Christ, sent down from heaven" (8:78).

He called gospel order “the order which the Lord’s power and Spirit hath brought forth among his people,” (BII:417) and in a time of controversy he wrote to Friends that “The Lord God hath with his Spirit sealed to you, that your meetings are of his ordering and gathering, and he hath owned [recognized] them, by honoring you with his blessed presence in them ... He hath sealed your meetings by his Spirit to you, and that your gathering together hath been by the Lord, to Christ his Son, and in his name: and not by man” (BII:436-437). Fox is here referring to “meetings for worship, ... quarterly, monthly, and other meetings.”

So we may conclude that “the church in God” is one that is gathered to God and Christ by the power of the everlasting gospel and by the gospel experience. The order of this church is the order that belongs to the gospel. This new church order is not a technique for building a religious society which has validity apart from Christ and his gospel. Gospel order cannot be grafted onto a religious society that does not have Jesus Christ and his gospel at its center. “And therefore,” says Fox, “such as disobey the gospel of Christ, the poser of God to salvation, and will not receive it, nor believe in it, how can they receive the order of the gospel of Christ, the heavenly man, from whence the gospel comes; or to receive him to reign in their hearts?” (8:207).

We know that in recent years there have been a number of people who have thought that the way Quakers reach decisions and carry on their business is so good that it ought to be more universally used, even in the board meetings of banks and insurance companies and in all sorts of political organizations and the like. I don’t think George Fox would have been very enthusiastic about this sort of program. Again, there are some Quaker yearly meetings in which Jesus Christ can hardly be called the center, and they have a lot of trouble with questions of order. This creates a kind of backlash, and so there are two parties in this kind of yearly meeting: the order party, and the disorder party, order versus anarchy, and a lot of tension between them. But neither party is much interested in a gospel foundation for the order of the church. They are not concerned about Fox’s testimony for “the church in God, which Christ the heavenly man is head of.” Isaac Penington is equally clear on this question: “That which distinguishes [the church] from all other assemblies and gatherings; ... [is the] presence of the head with her ... This none hath but the true church.”³¹

In the second version Fox wrote of his sermon on Firbank Fell, in 1652, he declared that Christ “was come, and is come, the same today as he was yesterday and so for ever, a Leader, a Governor, a Prophet, a Bishop, a Shepherd and a Priest [and a King], to exercise his Heavenly Offices in his people, his living members, his church, which he is the holy head of.”³² Fox’s

³¹ Isaac Penington, *Works*, 4th ed. (Sherwoods, NY: David Heston, 1862), vol. II, p. 478.

³² *Narrative Papers of George Fox*, ed. Henry J. Cadbury (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1972), p. 168.

last General Epistle to all the meetings in London Yearly Meeting, in 1690, is addressed to “All Friends everywhere, that are alive to God through Jesus Christ, and are living members of Christ the holy Head.” In this epistle he wrote that “the Lord God ... hath settled all his people upon the living, holy rock and foundation ... and gathered [them] into the name of Jesus Christ ... He, their salvation and their living head, is felt in the midst of them,” and he speaks of Christ as prophet, shepherd, bishop, priest, king, and minister (BII:497-498). At Firbank Fell he declared that we know Christ as the head of the church when we know him in all his offices, and he was still saying this at the end of his life.

In an earlier lecture we noted that in Fox’s view, Quaker worship in the name of Jesus is a *testimony* for Christ. In like manner, he sees that the church in God, of which Christ is the head, can also serve as a testimony for Christ. The church itself, the way it is put together on the basis of this experience of Christ as present in all his offices, leads people to know Christ and to receive him. So he says, “keep up your testimony in the power of Christ, for the church that is made of living stones, (which he is the head of) ... a spiritual household, a royal priesthood ... who are of the church that is in God; gathered by the power and spirit of Christ to him ... who is the heavenly and spiritual head of his church” (8:84). “Keep your ancient testimony for the church which is in God, the living members, which Christ, the spiritual man, is the holy head of, and your heavenly rock and foundation” (7:332).

In what I have presented to this point, I have tried to show that the new church order which we find in the early Quaker community is not an added gimmick, but is rather the necessary and inevitable consequence of preaching the everlasting gospel. As Quakers ceased to preach the everlasting gospel to the inhabitants of earth, their understanding of gospel order became dim and finally disappeared altogether. Some vestiges of this gospel order remain in the Quaker structure, but they are now accounted for in various ways without any reference to the gospel foundation on which they were originally founded. Many good Quaker practices that had been firmly established on the gospel foundation have eroded away and disappeared, because they were being maintained on the basis of a tradition that was slowly fading away.

Since 1974 I have traveled extensively to bring the everlasting gospel that Fox preached to a wide variety of groups, and I have always requested a minimum of at least two sessions: one to speak of the everlasting gospel and the second to speak of gospel order. In nearly all of these sessions on gospel order, I contrasted Rufus Jones’s modern view of Quaker church order with the views of Fox as revealed in his writings. Jones considered it “the mark of the wisdom and sanity of George Fox that, mystic and idealist as he was, he faced the facts of life ... He came to see that disembodied spiritual movements cannot succeed and do a permanent work in the world; and when the hour came for it

he took the lead in organizing the Society of Friends for its expanding mission ... It was in some degree a surrender of the original ideal.”³³

Now let us look at Fox’s own words on this question. It is true that he did not *begin* to preach about gospel order. At Firbank Fell he did not say anything about Christ as orderer, and in fact that office of Christ did not come into his vocabulary for some years. But in at least three statements he asserted that he first went around the country to lay the gospel foundation, and then traveled again to get Friends to become gathered into gospel order on this foundation. In one such account he stated that God had “sent me forth by his everlasting power, first to declare his everlasting gospel, and then after people had received the gospel, I was moved to go through the nation, to advise them to set up the men’s meetings, and the women’s, ... that all that had received Christ Jesus, might so walk in him, and possess his government in the church ... Then men and women are heirs of the order of the gospel, which is from heaven” (8:61). This statement implies that when Fox was preaching the gospel, he knew that he would eventually return to these same people, telling them to be gathered into an order which would be sufficient for all their needs as the church of Jesus Christ.

In another place he said, “First I was sent out by the Lord God, ... to preach the everlasting gospel, the power of God, ... which gospel I received not of man, nor by man, but of the Lord Jesus Christ ... And so after I had received this, and preached it, and many thousands were come into it, ... then by the same power, and spirit, and light, I was moved to advise, to the setting up [of] the men’s Monthly and Quarterly Meetings, and the women’s meetings. So that all in the power of God, the gospel ... [might] keep this heavenly order of the gospel” (8:79-80). And in the *Journal* he wrote, “As I had been moved of the Lord to travel in his power round this nation, ... to preach the everlasting gospel, so I was afterwards moved to travel, in the same heavenly power, about the nation again ... to recommend to Friends the setting up of the quarterly and monthly meetings ... that all, both male and female, who had received the gospel, the Word of eternal life, might come into the order of the gospel, brought forth by the power of God” (BII: 247). The gathering together of the people into an orderly, disciplined community was not an afterthought on Fox’s part, but it is something that is implicit in the gospel he preached, and therefore was inevitable.

In my collection of *Notes on George Fox*, the three subjects on which I have accumulated the most references are the offices of Christ, shadow and substance, and gospel order. When I started to make these notes, none of those three subjects meant anything to me; they were not subjects that I’d ever thought about. The reason they have become so important to me is that, as I

³³ Introduction to Wm. C. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism* (New York: Macmillan, 1919), p. xxviii.

kept reading Fox and making notes, I found that these are the subjects he was talking about all the time.

Many people have been disappointed when they have heard me speak about gospel order. They had expected that I would furnish them with a detailed description of a system of church organization, which could serve as a kind of ready-reference manual, a practical guide for Quakers in conducting the affairs of the church. But gospel order is not a system of rules for ordering a religious organization, like *Roberts' Rules of Order*. The central, operative principle of gospel order is the presence of Christ in the midst of his church, manifesting himself in his many offices. There can be no gospel order apart from the presence of the living Christ. Gospel order comprehends everything that belongs to the work and mission of the church. It is not simply a method of conducting business meetings, or providing lubrication for the many corporate activities of the church.

We can mention some of the most important components of gospel order. In this series we have already considered worship, the gospel message and gospel preaching, and we will be taking up the ministry, the new righteousness, and cross-bearing. Other parts of gospel order are the corporate testimonies on moral issues and the maintenance of discipline within the gospel fellowship.

I believe that the most important church activity within the compass of gospel order is the work of preaching the everlasting gospel to the inhabitants of the earth. The foundation of gospel order is the gospel, and this gospel foundation cannot be laid just once with the expectation that it will furnish a foundation for all future generations. If the gospel is not preached, it gradually ceases to be the rock and foundation on which the whole superstructure of the church is built. The gospel is not "the power of God" unless it is proclaimed.

Another feature of gospel order is what Fox calls "the liberty of the gospel." In my personal experience I have come to set a high value on this element in gospel order. In modern Quaker life there has come to be a misunderstanding about the relationship of discipline to liberty. Many Friends have come to believe that if we have discipline in the church we cannot have liberty, and if we have liberty we cannot have discipline. But Fox believed that those who are gathered into a disciplined and ordered gospel fellowship under the rule of Christ will experience the maximum liberty that human beings are capable of knowing. Thus he urged Friends to "stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, by his light, grace, truth, spirit, faith, and everlasting gospel, the everlasting power of God, which is an everlasting freedom and liberty above all bondage and false fallen liberties and freedoms." (8:181) And in the *Journal* he exhorted Friends to "keep in the power, that ye may stand up for your liberty in Christ Jesus, males and females, heirs of him and of his gospel, and his order. Stand up for your liberty in the gospel ... for if ye lose it, and let another spirit get over you, ye will not so soon regain it." (BII:250) Surely Friends today can understand these last words, for as we have lost the

gospel foundation for church discipline, we have lost this sense of liberty and in its stead we have anarchy.

I have not commented here about the actual structure of interrelated meetings in the traditional Quaker organization. I find that some Friends regard the structure of Preparative, Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings as the real meaning and content of gospel order. But it is quite possible to have these outwardly visible aspects of gospel order, and at the same time *not* have the presence of Christ and the gospel foundation for them. The orderly rules for holding these meetings are not immutable, and are more in the nature of social conventions that can be revised and rearranged from time to time.

However, I think it is important to note that the arrangement of meetings that was set up in the seventeenth century served to avoid a totally congregational system of church order on the one hand, in which each particular worshipping fellowship had a great deal of autonomy, and on the other hand, a hierarchy that ruled the church from the apex of an organizational pyramid. The aim of the original Quaker system was to make it possible for Friends to have church fellowship on a local, regional, and national level. These levels of religious association can be visualized as three concentric circles, and at the center of each circle is the living Christ who is the living Lord and orderer of the whole body. In the twentieth century, this system has deteriorated quite rapidly, and has been replaced by a strictly congregational system at one end of the spectrum, and by a central bureaucracy at the other. What we are coming to is a society in which the local worshipping congregations are related to each other only through a central bureaucracy, and this is exactly what Fox and his associates were trying their best to avoid. Fox's vision of a functioning Quaker community, based on this gospel foundation that we have been discussing, is well summed up in this 1674 epistle:

[Friends] ought in all their meetings, that gather in the name of Jesus, to wait upon the Lord for wisdom, counsel, and understanding, that by it they may be ordered and directed in his holy service and business ... as they are directed and ordered by the Lord's power and wisdom, ... in the name of Jesus Christ, for he is in the midst of them, their prophet, priest, teacher, shepherd, bishop, and counsellor, opening with his heavenly power, feeding with his heavenly food, counselling with his heavenly counsel, ... overseeing them with his holy power and spirit ...

[Friends are] to wait upon the Lord; and feeling his power and spirit to lead them, and order them to his glory; that so whatsoever they may do, they may do it to the praise and glory of God, and in the order of the gospel ... which is the power of God (8:70-71).

THE NEW MINISTRY

In 1981, a group of Friends gathered at the Quaker Hill Conference Center for a “Consultation on the Ministry.” The group included Quakers from England and from several varieties within American Quakerism. The report of the proceedings of this gathering³⁴ is well worth study, and its monograph on the history of recording ministers in London Yearly Meeting is the most comprehensive treatment of this subject that I have seen. The author, Patricia Ann Brown, quotes the statement of Lucia Beamish that “the most serious effect of the Quietist spirit was its influence on the Quaker ministry.”

Since the publication of John Stephenson Rowntree’s prize essay, “Quakers Past and Present,” in 1858, there have been several schemes and programs for rejuvenating the Quaker ministry. The aim most of these schemes has been to reduce the influence of the quietist spirit on that ministry. The major assumption has been that ministry in the Quietist Quaker tradition has undesirable features due to a basic flaw that has been present in Quakerism from the beginning.

At one extreme, this has led to the abolition of the whole conception of ministry as a vocation to which some members may be called. There are at least eleven American yearly meetings in which there are no recorded ministers at all, and four others in which the number of those recognized as being called to exercise a gift in the vocal ministry is less than two per yearly meeting.

At the other extreme, there are fifteen American yearly meetings that, in 1981, reported they had a total of more than a thousand ministers, most of whom are engaged in the work of pastor or co-pastor in some local congregation. Most of these recorded ministers are fulfilling the familiar role of “pastor of the congregation.” Because so many Quaker ministers are actually functioning as pastors, the terms “minister” and “pastor” are beginning to be used as if they were interchangeable.

Thus we have two kinds of Quakers, pastoral and non-pastoral—those with “ministers” and those with no (or very few) ministers. Both groups have been trying to rid themselves of the last vestiges of the Quietist spirit, and both have largely succeeded in doing this. But because both groups have assumed that the Quietist spirit has its roots in the teaching of George Fox and early Friends, they have become emancipated from the spirit of Quietism with a minimum of help from Fox. The flight from Quietism has not helped us to understand what Quaker ministry was like before it came under the influence of Quietism.

³⁴ *Friends Consultation on Ministry*, Nov. 19-22, 1981, (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1981).

I think there has never been a time in Quaker history when the Quakers have been more explicit in their rejection of their heritage as it pertains to a distinctive understanding and practice of Christian ministry. I'll not take time here to spell out in detail the particular manner in which both pastoral and non-pastoral Friends have bypassed what can be learned about Christian ministry from Fox and his vision.

In my experience, the great difficulty of speaking about Christian ministry to contemporary Quakers is that, although most are familiar with one or more of the several Quaker traditions relating to ministry, there are now very few who have knowledge from *experience* of the *itinerant, prophetic, non-professional* Quaker ministry. People have just never met a minister of the type that was characteristic of the Quaker ministry in the 18th or 19th centuries. In short, it is not possible today to observe at first hand this distinctive type of ministry that is itinerant, prophetic, and non-professional. We know about it only by hearsay.

My own experience of this kind of ministry has been limited to the small remnant of aging ministers who remained after the recording of ministers was abolished in London Yearly Meeting and most of the Friends General Conference. However, I had a good opportunity to see the Quietist version of this kind of ministry among Conservative Friends in England and North America, before the number of such ministers became greatly reduced in the last generation. Howard Brinton stated that during his lifetime the Quaker minister became practically extinct in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, and his prediction that the distinctively Quaker minister is on the way out in other parts of the Friends community has proved to be correct.

At the present time the practice of worship and ministry varies so widely that visitors from one meeting to another often find themselves strangers and non-participants in an experience of Quaker worship outside their own tradition.

I have tried in these preliminary comments to put the subject into the context of the contemporary Quaker scene. My reason for doing this has been to stress the need to get beyond debating the merits or demerits of various types of Quaker ministry current among Friends today. Instead, I want to explore the implications for us today of the everlasting gospel that Fox preached, and especially to learn how it may bring us closer to the practice and experience of a living ministry.

George Fox believed that, as the everlasting gospel was preached and received again, all that had been lost since the apostles' days would be recovered; this included "the true ministry." It was said of Fox's ministry that "many through his ministry were turned from darkness to light, ... and

gathered to the true shepherd and bishop of their souls; for he did not preach himself, but Jesus Christ” (4:5-6). Fox declared that “the work of the ministry [is] to bring people to the knowledge of the son of God” (3:165). Looking back on thirty years of faithful service in the ministry, at a time when his leadership was under criticism, Fox wrote, “since I went forth, and forsook all things; I sought not myself, I sought you and his glory that sent me; and when I turned you to him, that is able to save you, I left you to him” (8:61). At a general meeting in 1658, in a sermon to Friends who were active in the ministry, he commented that “it is a weighty thing to be in the work of the ministry of the Lord God, and to go forth in that” (BI:425).

Both worship and ministry were weighty things to early Friends and to Friends in the 18th and 19th centuries, but how weighty are they today? I had occasion to ponder this more than forty years ago, while attending a yearly meeting of Conservative Friends in Ohio. A highly esteemed minister came to me and said that he would like to have an opportunity with me. This word “opportunity” has largely gone out of style among modern Friends, but in the old days and among the Conservatives it meant a time of worship and quiet in which there would be real communication, real communion. I knew enough Quaker history to know what I was being invited to. We sat in silence in one of the classrooms of the Friends boarding school in Barnesville, and after about fifteen minutes this Friend reached toward me and touched me, and he said, “It is wonderful thing to be called to the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Then we sat silently for a few more minutes, and that was it. How often this must have happened in Quaker history: that an older minister took the trouble and the interest to reach out to a younger person and hold up to him how weighty it is to be called to the ministry of the gospel. This is something I have never forgotten.

In 1671 Fox tried to spell out what it means to be a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in a paper called “The Call to the Ministry,” which unfortunately has never been published. In it he says, “First, they must be made alive by Christ, [who] is alive and liveth forevermore ... and quickened by him, before they ... can be ministers of the spirit, [and] be able to receive heavenly and spiritual things ... So, all must be called by Christ ... out of the world ... and receive his power, spirit and grace and truth and faith [before] they can preach Christ ... They must see him and know him and hear his voice, and have spiritual things from him ... and they must all receive their gifts from him for the work of their ministry ... It is Jesus Christ that doth make and ordain ... ministers by his power and spirit.”³⁵

This term “minister” covers a number of activities, and is not limited to vocal communications in regularly appointed meetings for worship. Fox had a concern for all the many kinds of ministry, and exhorted Friends to “mind that which is committed to you, as faithful servants, laboring in love; some

³⁵ Fox, Headley MSS, Cat. No. 8, 102F, p. 320

threshing, and some ploughing, and some to keep the sheep” (7:24-25). “And therefore all mind your gift, mind your measure; mind your calling and your work. Some speak to the conscience; some plough and break the clods; some weed out, and some sow; some wait [stand guard] that fowls devour not the seed. But wait all for the gathering of the simple-hearted ones; for ‘they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine for ever’” (7:18).

Fox pointed out that “there is difference betwixt Friends going into the world, and of coming among them that are come to silent meetings, and to feed there; for that which may be seasonable to the world, may not be to them” (7:128). In the earliest days of the Quaker movement, the work of the minister was mostly directed to “the world,” whereas in the 18th century the ministry was mostly, if not entirely, directed toward established and settled meetings of Friends. These are two quite different kinds of ministry and call for different approaches. In 1656 Fox wrote an “Exhortation to Friends in the Ministry” (BI:315-317) which is directed to those ministers who were constantly moving from place to place, breaking new ground and preaching the everlasting gospel to people who had never heard it before. This ministry involves engaging people who have never heard of Christ’s power to gather people to himself, his power to teach us the principles of righteousness, and his power to give us the ability to do the right. In Fox’s day as well as today, this preaching was hard work, breaking up the clods.

These ministering Friends were frequently exhorted by Fox to “stir up the gift of God” in them, and “always be ready to preach the word ... He that observes the wind or storms, will not sow the seed; and he that regards the clouds will not reap ... But the word of the Lord must be preached in season and out of season” (6:425). To a particular Friend in the ministry he wrote, “The Lord God of power give thee wisdom, courage, manhood, and boldness to thresh down all deceit. Dear heart, be valiant, and mind the pure spirit of God in thee, to guide thee up unto God” (7:113).

To Howgill and Burrough who were laboring in London he wrote, “Sow not sparingly”, and “stir abroad whilst the door is open ... Dear Francis and Edward, in the life of God wait ... that as good ploughmen, and good threshermen ye may be, to bring out the wheat” (7:131-132).

Toward the end of his life Fox became increasingly concerned that the ministry to “the world” should continue. But by this time there was a growing need for the kind of ministry that he called “keeping the sheep.” This latter ministry was primarily to the convinced. It also was prophetic, itinerant, and non-professional. It was not exclusively, or even primarily, exercised within the limits of the congregation of which the minister was a member. Such a person was known as a “public Friend”, which meant that his or her services as a minister were performed throughout the whole Society of Friends.

Very often these itinerant ministers undertook long journeys, which involved much more than just preaching in regular meetings for worship; they might also include special appointed meetings for youth or for the general public, meetings with families in their homes, and personal counselling. On such journeys a minister was usually accompanied by an elder, or by a younger or less experienced minister, and both the minister and the traveling companion carried credentials from the meetings of which they were members. Whether their ministry was to “the world” or to the settled and established meetings of Friends, this task involved strenuous work, sometimes undertaken under difficult traveling conditions.

I will not attempt to furnish a comprehensive description of this ministry, either to the world or to the church. But it was no light matter to be called to the ministry in either case. It took time and money, and involved making special arrangements for those times when family and business responsibilities would have to be accommodated to the work of the ministry. Among the earliest Quaker missionaries to the world were some who performed prodigious labors and traveled great distances. In some cases they were so much “on the road” that they were never members of any local congregation. Some were dependent for a subsistence allowance on funds raised by national collection. But the uncertainties and hardships of this vocation did not deter them.

It was said of Edward Burrough that for ten years he devoted all of his time to publishing Truth and reserved no time for himself at all. Robert Widders, a Friend from the north, was often a much-appreciated traveling companion of George Fox, and it was said of him that “he always put the Lord’s business before his own and so he never lost an inch of ground.” Those who ministered to the convinced were no less selfless in their devotion to the work of the ministry.

Eventually the mission to “the world” ceased to be a part of Quaker life, and the work of the ministry became limited to activity within the borders of the Society of Friends. Today in London Yearly Meeting and in many American yearly meetings there are no Quaker ministers of record. When members of these yearly meetings are asked why they have none who are recognized as having a special call to the ministry, they usually reply that “We are all ministers.” This explanation is apparently supposed to mean that all members and attenders are free to participate vocally in the meetings for worship, and seems to imply that in former times, when there were recorded ministers, the other members and attenders did not have equal freedom to speak in meeting—which was certainly not the case.

When we hear the declaration that “we are all ministers” we are not being told that every member now contributes the same unstinting labor and selfless dedication to the work of the ministry that was formerly contributed by Quaker ministers. At least, I do not find it possible to put that interpretation upon it.

These Quaker ministers were not a separate and ordained order of men and women. George Fox had said “Keep the ministers of the gospel equal brethren” (4:337), and this prophetic, itinerant, non-professional ministry was, he believed, the gospel ministry that belongs to the everlasting gospel and the new covenant. It ends forever the priestly office, and abolishes the dichotomy between priest and people, clergy and laity. It is that ministry which belongs to the new covenant worship, which has abolished both priest and ritual. Fox believed that this ministry was a direct consequence of preaching the gospel, and his hope for the future of the Quaker community was grounded in his hope that its ministry to the world and to the church would continue to gain in strength.

The weaknesses and failures of the Quaker movement were not all due to the influence of Quietism or the role played by elders. There was a much deeper and more profound cause: the winding down of the ministry to “the world,” and the concentration of Quaker ministry on nurturing the already convinced. Soon after the end of the 17th century, all the Quaker ministers were engaged in “watering” and none was engaged in planting. As a result of this shift of emphasis, what had been the main concern of this Quaker ministry—preaching the gospel—gradually faded into the background and then disappeared altogether.

Now that the everlasting gospel is being preached once more, this will certainly lead to a better understanding of the ministry that belongs to this gospel and to the new covenant. The preaching of this gospel has begun to stimulate interest in the nature of Quaker ministry, and this is sure to be the case wherever the everlasting gospel is preached and received.

THE NEW RIGHTEOUSNESS

Fox taught that there were two major areas of loss that resulted from the eclipse of the everlasting gospel. One of these was the order and government of Christ in his church, which Fox called “gospel order.” The other great loss was the moral certainty and moral power that he called “righteousness”.

When Fox declared that “the righteousness hath been lost since the apostles’ days” (7:327), he was stating his belief that the Reformers of the 16th Century had separated salvation from righteousness. They had ascribed to Christ the power to save us from the consequences of sin, but not save us from captivity to sin. Thus he says that “there is a faith, which Christ is not the author of, and that faith giveth not the victory, nor purifieth the heart, neither do they in it please God” (8:56).

Fox believed that the primitive apostolic gospel he was preaching had the power to restore this lost righteousness, and that as people came to know Christ as their living prophet and teacher, they would be taught the principles of God’s righteousness and given power to obey. He declared that people should meet “in the name of Jesus, who is alive, and he, their living Prophet, Shepherd, and Bishop, is in the midst of them ... He is... their righteousness” (BII:442).

For Fox’s Puritan opponents, there was nothing more offensive in the Quaker message than the proclamation that Christ can do more than forgive sin, that he [can] free us from captivity to sin and give us victory over temptation. This was the main point of difference between the Puritans and Quakers. It was the issue most frequently mentioned in the voluminous controversial literature produced by the early Quakers. They maintained that, in separating salvation from righteousness, the Puritans were denying that Jesus Christ had been sent by God to fulfill the Old Covenant. In other words, the Puritans were denying that the purpose of Christ’s coming was to gather a righteous, holy people to live under the rule of God.

According to Fox, “the righteousness within and sanctification within have been lost since the days of the apostles, in the apostasy” (3:292). But “God doth draw people from their unrighteousness and unholiness, to Christ, the righteous and holy One, the great Prophet in his New Covenant and New Testament, whom Moses in the Old Covenant and Testament said, God would raise up, like unto him, and whom people should ‘hear in all things’” (BII:458, quoting Deut. 18:15).

At this point, we need to take a look at the biblical basis of Fox’s understanding of the nature of man and the human problem, as well as his understanding of what God has done to reconcile us to himself. Behind all of Fox’s teaching concerning God, mankind, and salvation, is the underlying

assumption that human beings were not created for a life of moral autonomy, or of self-directing freedom in discriminating between right and wrong. They were to be guided in these matters by taking counsel with the Creator, and their well-being was determined by their willingness to act in accordance with God's commands. The Genesis story of Adam and Eve is based on these assumptions.

Fox summarizes his understanding in such passages as "the Lord God that made ... man and woman in his image, ... was their teacher, their guide, and their orderer, who did teach them what to do, and what to leave undone; and as long as they kept under God's teaching, they were happy, and kept in the image and likeness of God, *and in his righteousness and holiness* ... But when they forsook God's teaching, and *disobeyed* God's command, ... they lost the image, and *righteousness, and holiness*, and likeness of God" (5:313, italics added). "The living God of truth made man to see and hear him, and in his image and likeness, holy, righteous, and perfect, ... but they disobeying the living God, ... came to be blind, imperfect, unrighteous, and unholy, ... and so fell from life into death" (6:13).

It is by *disobedience* that men and women lost the righteousness that comes from God. This is not disobedience to a code of morality, but *disobedience to the living God*. Emil Brunner refers to such disobedience as the "assertion of human independence over against God." When obedience is seen as conformity to moral law, Brunner adds, this "places between the Divine 'Thou' and myself ... a 'something', an abstract rule ... Attention is directed to this 'something', which is required to be done, through the law as 'law', and in so doing man's relation to God ... becomes rigid and abstract."³⁶

The Old Covenant was a covenant of limited objectives. The Mosaic law which symbolized this covenant was not God's final answer to the need of men and women to be restored to the image of God and righteousness of God. The foundation of this covenant was in the word of the Lord that came to Moses:

Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. *Now therefore, if you will obey my voice* indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation (Exod 19:3-6 KJV, italics added).

The Hebrew prophets were the means by whom God kept reminding his covenant people that the condition which was the ultimate foundation of the covenant was, "if you will obey my voice." In the Old Testament the word "obey"

³⁶ Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt: a Christian Anthropology* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1939), pp. 129, 158.

is most frequently associated with the word “voice.” One might think it would be associated with the “law” but it is always “voice.” Jeremiah prophesied:

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel ... I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people (Jer 7:21-23 KJV).

Jeremiah foresaw that the legalism of the Old Covenant would be transcended by another covenant. George Fox believed that the coming of Jesus Christ brought in this New Covenant, in which the voice of God would be heard through God’s son, and the true righteousness restored by Christ. On Firbank Fell, Fox cited the word of the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration: “This is my beloved Son ... hear ye him,” (Matt 17:5) and in an epistle to Friends he says, “in the restoration by Christ ... you are brought into the image, likeness, righteousness, holiness and power of God” (8:135).

Fox speaks of men and women being “led by Christ ... into the Image of God as men and women were before they fell; and into that [original] righteousness by Christ the righteous one and holy one.”³⁷ And Margaret Fell writes that “the true Prophet is risen, which Moses said the Lord will raise, who teacheth his people himself ... whose name is the Lord of Righteousness, and whose Light leads into Righteousness and Purity.”³⁸

Thus Fox’s message that “Christ has come to teach his people himself” is a proclamation that God is now giving his covenant people the knowledge of his righteousness, apart from the law and legalism. “God is righteous, and he would have his people to be righteous, and to do righteously,” he declared (BII:457). In his vision near Pendle Hill he saw “a great people in white raiment,” who would be “coming to the Lord” (Ni:104). When he speaks of God’s people being “clothed in white raiment,” he means that they have put on “the righteousness of Christ.” The people of God, of whom Christ is the head, are to be known and recognized by showing forth his righteousness. Fox often speaks of this righteousness as “the badge and livery of Christ.” “All who profess themselves Christians,” he writes, “may come to wear the badge and livery of Christ, the heavenly man ... and to be clothed with the new garment, the righteousness of Christ” (5:369).

If this teaching is true, and Christ has indeed come to teach his people God’s righteousness and give them the power to obey, what is the basis of Fox’s complaint that “the righteousness hath been lost since the apostles’ days”? In dealing with this question, we must note that Fox maintained that, in both Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity, God’s call for righteousness is

³⁷ AC, Cat No. 61E, p. 92.

³⁸ Fell, *Works*, p. 469.

muted, and Christ's power to teach us this righteousness and give us power to obey is neutralized.

In Catholicism, the church itself claims to be the definer of what is right and wrong, as well as claiming to have the power to grant remission of sins. Although the "indulgences" granted by the church were, theologically speaking, less than full pardon for sin, nevertheless in practice and in the popular mind they were treated as though they were full absolution from penalty and guilt. This claim to have power to define sin and wrong-doing led to the compilation of lists of sins, so that sin came to be regarded as a catalogue of particular "sins," thus creating a kind of new decalogue that stood between the Christian and God, and creating a new legalism. Thus, when many Catholics think of sin, they are not thinking of alienation from the Creator, or of declaring their independence from the Creator, but merely of violating something on this list of sins. Sin is thus not some thing that involves the whole being and personality.

Martin Luther seems even less concerned than the Roman Catholics about God's call for righteousness, for he taught a doctrine that makes Christ's power to forgive identical with his power to save. Luther calls us to know Christ as our savior, only as he is our forgiver, and not as our teacher who shows us what to do and what to leave undone. By faith in Christ who forgives us, we become accounted righteous in God's sight and become part of a church which is an association of justified sinners. The Protestant ethos of the 16th Century did not produce a church of the cross. On the contrary, the main-line Protestant churches have been the persecutors of the cross-bearing church, as they certainly were in England in relation to the Quakers of the 17th Century.

In England, the Puritans developed an excessive moralism that was based on the Old Testament, so that for them the Old Testament was the book of righteousness whereas the New Testament was the book of salvation. This way of dealing with the problem separated righteousness from salvation, and was a step backward into the legalism of the Old Testament. This division of righteousness from salvation is still obvious today, especially in such Old Testament-oriented Protestant churches as those in South Africa, [and] Northern Ireland, and [in] American fundamentalism.

Thus when Fox says that "the righteousness hath been lost," he is commenting on the failure of both Protestant and Catholic Christianity to bear witness to Christ as the one who fulfills the law, and who brings in a new covenant wherein men and women can be led and taught by him, and so fulfill God's call for righteousness.

This new righteousness that comes from Christ does not smother the human spirit with a tyrannical code of morals, but it brings people to know "the glorious liberty of the children of God." As Emil Brunner says, "Because the being of man is actually based upon man's dependence upon God [and] upon the call of God which chooses him and gives him responsibility, his

freedom is only complete where he remains in this dependence. Hence ... the maximum of his dependence on God is at the same time the maximum of his freedom.”³⁹

It is very important that we recognize that there is a freedom involved in this call to righteousness. I have had occasion to observe and to experience in a limited degree the kind of discipline and morality in which there is no freedom. Although I was never a part of the “Bruderhof,” the Society of Brothers, I had close relations with it both in England and in America. This is a group that is devoted to corporate righteousness, to being gathered together to answer God in righteousness, but the basis for its existence includes a kind of enforcement and hierarchy; that has done great damage to many people in the fifty or more years of its existence.

We have an alternative to this in the kind of community that learns together, obeys together, and suffers together. Fox preached that there is a way of answering God and being a church of the cross without destroying or putting too great a burden on the human spirit. He points out that a great benefit of the new righteousness is that Christ not only teaches us what God would have us do, but he gives us the power to do it. This is something that Protestant morality finds to be a problem. Very often in Protestantism the statement is made that “we know what we ought to do, and of course we would do it in a minute if we had the power, but we don’t, and so we will just have to wait for a better world. Perhaps after we die we will be able to conform to this higher standard of morality.”

This problem of knowing what to do but being powerless to do it is absent from the early Quaker message. Fox states clearly that “God is equal and righteous, and commands nothing but what is equal and just, and measurable, and reasonable, according to that which men may perform ... God is not unrighteous, or a hard task master, to lay more upon a man than he can do” (3:553).

Isaac Penington puts the case very briefly, “The power never fails the faith,”⁴⁰ and Fox says in a similar vein that Christ “will lay no more upon you than you are able to bear” (7:258-259).⁴¹ This unity of testimony of the early Friends seems to me a wonderful part of our heritage. They knew that there are a lot of things that we can’t do, but God knows this, and does not lay on us anything that we *must* do but *cannot* do.

After I had studied Fox for a number of years, it seemed to me that God’s call for righteousness was the primary or basic assumption of both Old and New Testaments. And so it was a great surprise to me, when I had occasion to

³⁹ Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 263.

⁴⁰ Isaac Penington, *Works*, 4th ed. (Sherwoods, N.Y: David Heston, 1861), vol. I, p. 556.

⁴¹ See also I Corinthians 10:13.

use the library of Princeton Theological Seminary, to find that the section on “ethics and morality” was catalogued under *philosophy*. “Christian faith” and “salvation” were in one part of the library, but if you wanted to know about morality, you had to go to the philosophers. This is not the way Fox approached the subject. He believed that the knowledge of right and wrong comes to us from the Creator himself, and now comes to us from the Creator through his son.

Modern people have the dream of finding a “science” of morality, of applying the same disciplines to the problems of morality that we apply to our understanding of the natural order of the universe, and thus getting control over the moral problem. You can’t get more alienated than that from the God who seeks to be close to man and to be the author of his righteousness and morality. As Emil Brunner has said, “God has a different relation to men from what He has to other creatures ... He reveals His will to him and expects obedience and trust from him ... Man is designed for and called to a particular relation to God.”⁴²

⁴² Emil Brunner, *The Divine-Human Encounter* (London: SCM Press, 1943), p. 127-128.

RESTORING THE CHURCH OF THE CROSS

In approaching the subject of the restoration of the Church of the cross, we will begin again from Fox's sermon on Firbank Fell, in which he described "the state of the apostasy that has been since the apostles' days" (Ni:109). For Fox, this apostasy involved not merely error, but *loss*. In his book, *The Great Mystery*, he charges his opponents that "the Quakers are risen up in the night of apostasy, and discover you all what you are in, and what you went from, and what hath been *lost* since the days of the apostles" (3:99, italics added).

In discussing worship, I pointed out that Fox said the true worship had been lost, and the same was true of ministry and of gospel order. Another of the things that was lost was the church of the cross. "Here began the apostasy," says Fox, "... when they ... apostatized from the true cross, the power of God, and from the true church" (4:171). And he wrote in 1657 that "there hath been an apostasy in the whole of Christendom from the cross of Christ which is the power of God."⁴³

When he says that "the Christian's faith is not to stand in the wisdom of men ... but in the power of God," (8:283) he has two things in mind: the power of the gospel and the power of the cross. "The fellowship of the cross of Christ," he asserts, "... is not of man, nor by man; for it is in the everlasting power of God"; therefore, "no longer do you keep in fellowship, but as you keep in the cross of Christ" (8:67).

In a discussion of "the antiquity of our cross," written 1688, Fox asserted "That which crucifies people to the world, and the world to them, is the cross of Christ, the power of God ... and this was the church of Christ's cross in [the apostles'] days, and is the church of Christ's cross now" (6:370). And earlier, in 1662 in a time of great persecution, he had written to Friends in the Americas of "the fellowship of the cross, which keeps over all the fellowships in the world," whereas the fellowships of the oppressors were "out of the cross of Christ, the power of God" (8:218-219).

In a general epistle "to be read in all the christian meetings in the world," he cautions "my dear friends all everywhere" that "You must bow at the cross of Christ, which is the power of God, which since the apostles' days the apostate christians have lost ... Now bowing to the cross of Christ, which is the power of God, that strikes over ... that part that turns into ungodliness, and all that is bad, and is a cross to it. So bow to the power of God. If all christendom had done this, they had had a fellowship in this cross of Christ" (7:227). What has been lost is summed up in a later epistle: "The true hope, the true cross, the true faith, the true worship, the true religion, the true way, the true image, and true fellowship have been lost since the apostles' days" (7:322).

⁴³ Cadbury AC, Cat. No. 25C, p. 64.

George Fox believed that the great work to which he had been called was to gather people to Christ by the power of the gospel. His gospel message that “Christ has come to teach his people himself” is a call to people to become disciples of Christ, to be taught the principles of God’s righteousness by him, and to come into a fellowship that learns together, obeys together, and suffers together.

From the passages I have cited, I think it is reasonable to conclude that Fox was fully aware that what he was doing would result in the gathering of a church of the cross, and that it would be the role of the Quakers to be the sole representatives of the church of the cross in the English-speaking world. He saw that “they that followed Christ in his cross” would become “strangers in the world” and be “condemned by the world,” for “the world knew him not, neither doth it them that follow him now” (7:17).

Fox did not teach that there is merit or virtue in suffering as such. He was not a promoter of asceticism, nor was he like those sects in the Middle Ages who practiced self-flagellation and all manner of self-inflicted hardship in the belief that such practices would produce spiritual benefits. During the Second World War, I had a letter from a Friend in one of the largest cities in England, which was being heavily bombed, and he said that “we are beginning to learn what the cross means, what suffering means.” I don’t think this statement was made from a deep understanding of what the cross is, because it isn’t just suffering or hardship that comes from all kinds of places and causes. It means suffering for the sake of the righteousness of Christ and for bearing testimony to the truth which comes from Christ.

Fox was proclaiming that Christ has come to be a teacher of righteousness to his people, and he declares that “they who come to the church, which is in God the Father of Christ ... must come into the righteousness, true holiness, and image of God” (BI:345-346). And he urged the Quakers to “sanctify yourselves ... that ye may be a holy people to the Lord ... that ye may be the holy members of the church of Christ” (BII:474). To Friends who were suffering he wrote in 1684, “the eternal God knows, and his son Christ Jesus, it is for him alone, and his truth’s sake, we suffer” (8:251).

Suffering for the truth that comes from God and Christ involved, for the Quakers, suffering for the sake of preaching the gospel, and suffering for the sake of maintaining the worship and ministry that belongs to the order of the gospel. Also it involved suffering for refusing to obey the laws that compelled them to pay the tax that supported the ancient churchly establishment and its institutions. But, above all, it involved suffering for the righteousness that is taught and commanded by Christ. After quoting Paul (Philippians 3), Fox writes to Friends that “this is good advice, that God’s people ... let their sufferings be for righteousness’ sake, and with Christ, that they may reign with him” (8:280). And the well-known “1660 Declaration” addressed to Charles II

asserts that “although we have always suffered, and do now more abundantly suffer, yet we know that it’s for righteousness’ sake” (Ni:401).

To the Quakers Fox wrote, “If ye suffer for righteousness’ sake happy are ye, ... because ‘Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps’” (8:279, quoting I Peter 2:21). And he reminded Friends that “the Lord Jesus Christ ... hath supported, upheld, and preserved you steadfast to himself; so that neither reproaches, imprisonments, nor spoiling of your goods, [nor] death ... could ... make you turn from Christ, your life, priest, bishop, and shepherd” (8:307).

Of course the officials of established Christendom have sometimes suffered when hostile governments took away their privileges or threatened their ecclesiastical interests, as happened in Germany under the Hitler regime. But the aim of this kind of suffering is only to restore the church to its favored position of privilege and monopoly. After the Second World War the German church had several options: it could have become a free church, or even a gathered church. But, while much publicity has been given to the suffering of some German church leaders during the war period, it must be pointed out that after the war they went right back to the pattern that had prevailed before the war, in which the state picked up the cost of running the national church.

When Jesus spoke of the people of God and described them as “like a city set on a hill,” it was not his kind of monopolistic priestly establishment that he had in mind, for this statement follows the description of God’s people that he gave to his disciples:

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you,
and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in
heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt hath lost his savour,
wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but
to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot
be hid. (Matt 5:10-14 KJV)

Commenting on this passage in a general epistle to the yearly meeting at London in 1676, Fox speaks of “the Christians who lost the city, the hill, the salt, and the light since the apostles’ days” (BII:239), and again, “when they forsook the power of God, and their faith stood in words and men, and not in the power ... they lost their hill, their saltness, and their shining” (BII:237). The power that they forsook was the cross of Christ, which is the power of God; as Fox puts it, “God’s power ... is the cross, in which the mystery of the fellowship stands” (BI:346). Thus Fox is teaching that suffering, in the Christian sense, is for the sake of bearing a faithful testimony to the Truth that comes from God

and Christ, and especially for the righteousness that comes from God and Christ.

Much Protestant thought in Fox's time, as well as the fundamentalist theology of today, stresses only the righteousness that comes from the Old Testament, the Mosaic law. If there is a righteousness that comes from Christ, how are these two related? There is good reason to believe that Fox dealt with this question in his Firbank Fell sermon, of which he wrote, "I opened ... the figures and shadows and turned them to Christ the substance" (Ni:109). In the third session of this seminar we devoted a large part of the time to Fox's teaching on "shadow and substance," and we saw that there were many things in the Old Testament and Old Covenant that foreshadowed Christ. There were many shadows but only one substance, for Christ is the substance of them all. We also noted Fox's claim that not only is Christ the substance of all the shadows, but that when we come to know him as the substance we also know that the shadows have been ended and abolished.

Thus Fox says that "the law ... served until Christ the seed came ... For when the substance is come, the shadows fly away" (6:57-58). Of "all those outward things ... commanded in the law," he says that they "served till Christ the great prophet came in the new covenant and new testament, who is to be heard in all things; and he the substance putteth an end to all those figures and shadows in the law and old testament" (6:338-339). "He that is in Christ, is at the end of the law, and the precepts, and the statutes, and the ordinances, and the commandments, and is in the substance, God's righteousness" (3:270). "That righteousness which is wrought in us by the strength of Christ ... is Christ's who is the end of the law" (3:277). "God hath raised up a prophet like Moses ... who is the end of the law for righteousness' sake to them that believe, and the law served till he came, and when he came the law had done its service ... so people are to hear him whom God raised up, for he is ... the covenant."⁴⁴

Fox sums up his teaching on this theme in the great Epistle 249, written in 1667: "Christ the everlasting covenant, ends the first covenant ... And so Christ ends all the types, figures, and shadows, and variable things that were given to man since the fall, and held up by the law, ... which law served till Christ came, and was good in its place, and was added because of transgression ... This served with all its shadows till the seed Christ came; but Christ is come, who was the end of the law for righteousness sake ... and in Christ is no shadow, variableness, nor turning" (7:295).

⁴⁴ Cadbury, AC, Cat. No. 47E, p. 12

FOX'S TEACHING ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

There are two compelling reasons for devoting a whole session in this series to Fox's teaching about the Holy Spirit. The first is that Quakerism is now being categorized as belonging among the many Christian movements that make the Holy Spirit central to faith and experience. The other reason is that those who are now being called to re-proclaim the everlasting gospel will encounter many Quakers, and many Christians in all denominations, who make the Holy Spirit central. I have found in my own experience that where the charismatic or Pentecostal movements have established themselves there is a built-in resistance to the gospel that Fox preached. Therefore we have to study these movements and be prepared to respond when they say there is nothing in Fox's understanding of the gospel that they do not already have.

In this age of ecumenicity, the dreamers of the ecumenical dream have felt the need to assign descriptive categories to each of the denominations. This has been fairly easy with the larger denominations that are clearly Catholic or Protestant. But what about those groups which do not identify themselves as either one? These were largely ignored in the early stages of the ecumenical movement, but this is no longer possible because they have been growing and expanding rapidly in recent years. So a third category has been devised which is composed of Christian groups that make the Holy Spirit central to their faith and experience and in their witness to the world. Leslie Newbigin's book *The Household of God* gave a name to this third category and since 1953 his designation, Pentecostal, has been widely accepted.

The question we must raise here is whether the genius of the early Quaker movement can be attributed to a special emphasis on the Holy Spirit and to a penchant for making the Holy Spirit the central feature of its witness. We must also ask whether the charismatic and Pentecostal movements of today are preaching the same gospel message that Fox and the early Quakers were preaching in the Seventeenth century. Most important of all, we must ask whether the type of Christianity that makes the Holy Spirit central leads men and women to the new worship, new ministry, new righteousness, and new church order that have been discussed in this series. It is my position that Quakerism, when rightly understood, is *not* to be classified as a representative type of those churches which center their belief and worship on the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit does not occupy the central place in George Fox's teaching and preaching, though he has much to say about it, and what he says is an essential part of his understanding of the Christian revelation.

Let us begin by looking at the words of Fox when he says, "When all my hopes ... in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could 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' ... Then the Lord did let me see why there was none upon the earth that could speak to my condition,

namely, that I might give him all the glory; for all are concluded under sin, and shut up in unbelief as I had been, that Jesus Christ might have the pre-eminence ... I read the Scriptures that spoke of Christ and of God, yet I knew him not but by revelation, as he who hath the key did open, and as the Father of life drew me to his Son by his spirit" (Ni:11). These words, "The Father of life drew me to his Son by his spirit" are a summary of Fox's teaching concerning the Holy Spirit. He amplified these few words in some of his later writings, and some of these later passages have helped me to a better understanding of his teaching.

Three years before he died (1687), Fox wrote a short paper entitled, "The right way and means, whereby people might come unto Christ, and so be made like unto God," and in this paper he says:

Christ saith, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me," (John 14:6). And again, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him," (John 6:44). Now, what is the means by which God doth draw people to his Son, but by his Holy Spirit ... By this Holy Spirit, the holy and righteous God doth draw people from their unrighteousness and unholiness, to Christ, the righteous and holy One, the great Prophet in his New Covenant and New Testament, whom Moses in the Old Covenant and Testament said, God would raise up, like unto him, and whom people should "hear in all things ..."

They that do not hear the Son of God, the great Prophet, do not mind the drawing of the Father by his Holy Spirit to his Son, but to them that mind the drawings of the good Spirit of the Father to his Son, the Spirit giveth understanding to know God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life. Then they know that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and that none can come unto God but by and through his Son, who is their Shepherd to feed them in his pastures and springs of life ...

They know that Christ is the Bishop of their souls, to see that they do not go astray from God ... They know that Christ is their mediator, and makes their peace with God; and they know that Christ is their High priest, made higher than the heavens ... and is able to the utmost to save all that come to God by him (BII:458-459).

Two years earlier, in an epistle to Friends "to caution all to keep out of the spirit of the world," he wrote,

In this Holy Ghost, in which is your holy communion, that proceeds from the Father and the Son, you have fellowship in the Father and the Son, and one with another. This it is which links and joins Christ's church ... to Him the heavenly and spiritual head, and in unity in his Spirit ... who are gathered in the name of Jesus, who is your prophet, whom God hath raised up in the New

Testament, to be heard in all things; ... who is your Priest, made higher than the heavens ... by whom you are made a royal priesthood, to offer up to God spiritual sacrifice; who is the Bishop of your souls, to oversee you, ... who is the good Shepherd, that hath laid down his life for his sheep (BII:410-411).

And again in his *Journal* he reminded Friends that

Christ hath called you by his grace into one body, to him the holy Head ... for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, and have been made all to drink into one Spirit, in which Spirit the body and all its members have fellowship with Christ, the Head, and one with another. The unity of this Holy Spirit is the bond of peace of all the living members of Christ Jesus, of which he is the spiritual Head, Rock, and Foundation. In the midst of his church of living members, Christ exercises his spiritual prophetic office, to open to them the mysteries of his kingdom. He is a spiritual Bishop to oversee them, that they do not go astray from the living God that made them; a Shepherd that feeds them with bread and water of life from heaven; ... a Priest that ... sanctifies them ... and ruleth in their hearts by the divine faith, which he is the author and finisher of (BII:433).

Finally, in the last annual epistle he wrote for distribution with the London Yearly Meeting epistle, in 1690, Fox said,

All Friends everywhere, that are alive to God through Jesus Christ, and are living members of Christ, the holy Head ...

The Lord God ... hath settled all his people upon the living, holy rock and foundation, that stands sure; whom he hath drawn by his Spirit to his Son, and gathered into the name of Jesus Christ ... He is their living head, is felt in the midst of them ... who is his people's prophet, that God hath raised up in his New Testament and Covenant, to open to them; and their living Shepherd ...

Christ feeds his living sheep in his pastures of life ... with his living bread and water ... Christ's living children likewise know him, the bishop of their souls, to oversee them with his heavenly and spiritual eye ... They also know Christ, their holy priest ... who ... is not made a priest after the order of Aaron, with his tithes, offerings, etc., but makes an end of all those things, having abolished them; and ... [Christ] ever liveth to make intercession for his people: and is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through him. He is the one holy Mediator between God and man; who sanctifies his people, his church, that he is the head of ... a holy and heavenly King, who hath all power in heaven and earth given to him; and rules in the hearts of his sheep and lambs ... Christ is the minister of the sanctuary ... Therefore all the lambs and sheep of Christ must feel this holy Minister ... who ministers spiritual, holy, and heavenly things to them (BII:498-499).

In these passages Fox is telling us that he came to know Christ in all his offices through the instruction of the Holy Spirit, that was sent by God and Christ for that very purpose. He states further that “the Holy Ghost [was] a sufficient rule, that led the disciples and apostles of Jesus Christ ... [to] see the fulfilling of the law and [the] prophets in Christ,” and he asks, “is not the same Holy Ghost a sufficient rule for all Christians now to know God, and Christ, and the scriptures, ... seeing no man knows the things of God without the spirit of God.” (5:250) “It was the spirit of God [that] led the apostles to see Christ Jesus, who fulfills the Scriptures ... It is the same Holy Ghost now ... by which ... Christ Jesus is known and seen ... By that Holy Ghost they see him and call him Lord.”⁴⁵

He exhorts Friends, “Mind the good spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, to lead you and guide you [for] ... by it ... you will know Christ ... who ... is your way to God,”⁴⁶ and “by which spirit the believers are brought to the one head, which is Christ Jesus ... by which spirit they are ... instructed ... by which spirit they have an understanding, the spirit of wisdom and knowledge, which is to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent” (8:10-11).

Fox teaches that the spirit that is sent by God and Christ leads to Christ, and enables us to know who Christ is and how he saves people. He says, “I directed them to the spirit of God in themselves ... that by the Spirit of God, they might know God, and Christ whom God hath sent.” (BII:390) And he taught that “with the holy ghost, and with the light and power of God, do you build upon Christ the foundation.” (8:20) “Christ is the author of our faith ... The spirit that gave forth the scriptures teacheth us to know who is the author of our faith.” (7:160) “The spirit doth instruct [us] to know [our] redeemer and [our] mediator.”⁴⁷

So there is one foundation upon which to build, and this is Jesus Christ, and it is he who fulfills the law and the prophets and the promises. He ends the old Covenant and establishes the New Covenant, which is himself; he is the *substance* of all the types, figures, shadows, and signs in the Old Testament, and Old Covenant. Fox says, “As man comes through by the Sprit and power of God to Christ ... [he] is led by the Holy Ghost into the truth and substance of the Scriptures, sitting down in him who is the author and end of them.” (Ni:43)

What has been presented here containing Fox’s teaching about the Holy Spirit is at the same time his teaching concerning Christ. In Fox’s teaching, Christ is always central. He is present in the midst. He is in charge. He is Lord and head of his people. He is the orderer of his people, and he gives them an order that belongs to the gospel and the New Covenant. Fox knows nothing of an absentee Christ who is not available between the Ascension and Doomsday.

⁴⁵ Cadbury, AC, Cat. 100E, pp. 110-111.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Cat. 40E, p. 10.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Cat. 63E, p. 37.

The aim of Fox's gospel is to bring people to Christ. The church is a people gathered to Christ. "Your gathering together," Fox says, "hath been by the Lord, to Christ his Son." (BII:437)⁴⁸

In my own work to promulgate the everlasting gospel that Fox preached, there is one outstanding thing I have learned: you cannot overestimate the convincing power of this gospel. But there are exceptions. In many places where I have traveled, people have come to me to say, "I am a Holy Spirit Christian. I find the Holy Spirit language is sufficient to express my faith, and I feel no need for the 'Christ-language' that you use and that Fox uses." And they go on to argue that it is "the gift of the spirit [that] is the one essential element and focal point in becoming a Christian."⁴⁹ The major assumption behind this kind of Christianity is that Jesus Christ has departed and that the Holy Spirit has taken his place. I have found that it is of no avail to testify to a personal experience of Christ as my living teacher, or as the Lord from heaven whom I have encountered as he is present in the midst of his people in all his offices, and who is the head of a community that bears a Quaker testimony for his righteousness and has fellowship with him in his suffering. Such testimony carries little or no weight with a Holy Spirit Christian. He or she is only interested in the answer to one question: "Have you had an experience with the Holy Spirit?"

Among the most extreme Pentecostal Christians, this question will be followed by another, whether you have received the gift of tongues, because this gift is considered certain proof that the Holy Spirit has been received. Of course there is a broad spectrum of beliefs and practices among the Holy Spirit Christians, and it is not possible to attribute a uniform belief and practice to all. It is only in recent years that able apologists for the charismatic and Pentecostal position have furnished systematic interpretations of their faith. It is also comparatively recently that Quakerism has been categorized as a type of Spirit-centered community."⁵⁰

Those who are being called to preach again today the everlasting gospel that Fox preached must take into account that even in the Society of Friends there

⁴⁸ Most of the passages from Fox quoted here are not accessible to the ordinary reader, because they are from manuscript sources or from parts of the *Journal* that are not included in any of the Twentieth Century editions. About 200 pages, covering the last fourteen years of Fox's life, are omitted from modern editions of the *Journal*. Editors have offered the explanation that they contain abstract, theological material in which no one today would be interested. I have not found this to be the case, in fact I have found more material on which to make notes in the last fourteen years than in all the rest of the *Journal*.

⁴⁹ Quoted from James D. G. Dunne, *Jesus and the Spirit*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), p. 6.

⁵⁰ Geoffrey Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946). Nuttall was the first to promote the Puritan theory of Quaker origins, and he held that the early Quaker understanding of the Holy Spirit was closely akin to that of the Puritans. His views have been largely accepted and are taught in Quaker institutions today all over the world.

are many who accept the theory that Quakers are a Christian group which makes the Holy Spirit central. It cannot be stated too strongly that there is much at stake here, because the true Holy Spirit-centered groups, the charismatic and the Pentecostals, are promoting a type of Christianity that is not concerned with Christ as the fulfiller of the types, figures, and shadows of the Old Covenant. Their faith does not lead to a new worship, new ministry, new church order, and newly restored church of the cross, and they feel they have no need of the everlasting gospel that Fox preached. So the "Valiant Sixty" of today must be prepared to face opposition of the strongest sort from this quarter. Since the charismatic and Pentecostals see themselves as called to proclaim a Christian message which has the Holy Spirit at its center, and since their evangelistic labors have met with considerable success, they are often ready to dismiss the revival that is beginning to appear among Friends as simply part of the old order of Christianity that they are being called to replace.

For those who are convinced of the truth of the everlasting gospel there can be no compromise with this position. Once accepted, it weakens the faith in the everlasting gospel and robs the witness of its power and strength. It is an effective killer of the Quaker vision and the Quaker dream.

Further Comments on Spirit-centered Religion

(Editor's Note: In recent years use of the term "holy spirit" has become popular among some liberal Quakers and Unitarians, because it does not appear to commit them on the question of whether they and their denominations are Christian. While that usage is occasionally reflected in the preceding article, Lewis Benson's primary focus was on groups with a well-defined Christian theology of the Holy Spirit, such as the Pentecostal churches and portions of the charismatic movement.

This series of ten articles is prepared from the author's lecture notes, and from tape transcripts which frequently include valuable extemporaneous comments. Along with the notes for this ninth lecture I found the following brief statement, apparently written after the lecture had been delivered, in an effort to deal more completely with questions arising at that time. Because it is such a clear statement of some important differences between Christ-centered and Spirit-centered Christianity, it seems proper to include it here. [John McCandless, editor, New Foundation Papers]

In George Fox's preaching the encounter with Christ does not simply stimulate the new convert to engage in church-building. The knowledge of Christ as present teacher, governor, and orderer actually creates a new covenant community, because when we know the living Christ in all his offices we know him as head (prophet, priest, king, etc.). Thus the preaching of the gospel and receiving of the gospel creates a new order for God's people which is distinct from the order given to God's people in the old covenant. The

experience of Christ creates the new community and its order. In this experience of Christ we know him in a functional way—by what he does. He governs, he rules, he oversees, he forgives and intercedes, he reveals the righteousness of God and supplies the power to obey, he teaches what is right and what is wrong, he counsels, he leads, he feeds and comforts and heals. *Because* Christ can be known by his church in all these offices *he* is the architect and builder of his church. *He* is truly the corner-stone—the rock and the foundation.

Where the Holy Spirit is understood as the divine personal being, and where the *sine qua non* of discipleship is acquaintance with this personal surrogate Christ, we do *not* experience Christ in such a way that a distinctive, ordered, disciplined community comes into existence through the experience of Christ alone.

If the Christian can only know the Holy Spirit in personal encounter and can *not* know Jesus Christ in personal encounter, then the fruits of knowing the living Christ are not attainable.

It will not be sufficient to attempt to solve this dilemma by asserting that the Holy Spirit, though distinct from Christ, is not different and that therefore everything that can be predicted of Christ can be predicted of the Holy Spirit.

It simply does not work that way. A Christianity that has relegated Christ's saving work to his earthly ministry, death and resurrection, and his function as judge and divider at the end of the world, and which is building on the Holy Spirit as Christ's official representative who is alone accessible to us in personal encounter, will simply *not* have the same characteristics as a church whose faith is toward the present, living, active, functioning Christ.

The differences are not small.

Holy Spirit-centered Christianity does *not* produce a new covenant gospel fellowship with a distinctive gospel order. Holy Spirit-centered Christianity has made a minimal contribution to our understanding of the nature of the church. It has produced no distinctive ecclesiology.

It can hardly be claimed that Holy Spirit Christianity has been lacking in interest in moral questions. But its emphasis on holiness is on individual holiness. Where it takes a corporate stand on questions of morality it tends to keep well within the limits of the conventional morality of the society in which it finds itself. The Spirit-centered Christian society does not give us the model for the church that learns together, obeys together, and suffers together. It has not been in the vanguard of Christian moral witness in matters that involve conflict with established laws and customs. It has not been noted for a corporate witness against bearing arms and fighting. It is not a church of the cross.

If the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ are simply two names for a single spiritual reality, then why do the societies that stress one name produce fruits that are different from the societies that stress the other name?

THE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSALISM OF GEORGE FOX

In this seminar we have aimed to focus on Fox's actual teaching as revealed in his writings. The ten specific subjects were chosen to cover his basic teaching, with special emphasis on the gospel message that he preached. Today this message is not only being recovered by research, but it is being preached again, and it is reaching to the witness of God in people as it did in the seventeenth century. This seminar was set up in response to the concern of people who have been reached by the everlasting gospel and want to become involved in the work of preaching it again.

The last two sessions of the series, on the Holy Spirit and universalism, are really a kind of appendix to the rest of the material. They are included because anyone who goes out to bring this message to people today is going to run into questions about holy spirit religion and about non-Christian universalism.

I want to remind you again that the work of recovery and reproclamation of the everlasting gospel that Fox preached is not very high on the official agenda of the Religious Society of Friends. However, there is a movement among Friends to build again on the same gospel foundation that was laid by Fox and the early Friends. This movement has been growing *only* because the gospel has been preached and people have been convinced by it and received it and come into obedience to it. There are not historical forces either inside or outside the Society of Friends that are responsible for the growth of this movement. It will keep growing if there are people who continue the work of preaching the gospel, and it will stop growing if we fail to go on preaching it.

When I began to concentrate my studies on all the writings of George Fox more than forty years ago, it was during the period of Quaker history that might be called the "high tide" of the mystical interpretation of Quakerism. And when I had first encountered Fox's *Journal* just fifty years ago, I was not a professing Christian. If I had any bias when I read the *Journal* for the first time, it was in the direction of hoping to find in Fox the "perennial philosophy" of the mystics. But as I continued to study Fox I became convinced that the great work on which he labored so faithfully all through his life was to preach the good news concerning Jesus Christ and how he saves people, and I became convinced of the truth of this gospel message.

Melvin B. Endy, writing in *Quaker History*,⁵¹ points out that Geoffrey Nuttall's *Holy Spirit in Puritan Thought* (1946) marks the beginning of a shift in Quaker scholarship. Thus for 36 years we have seen a concerted effort by Quaker scholars to shift from the mystical theory of Quaker origins toward the Puritan theory. Melvin Endy maintains that the time has now come to review both theories and to correct and revise some of the more extreme expressions

⁵¹ *Quaker History*, Vol. 70, No. 1, Spring 1981, pp. 5ff.

of each. He seems disposed to revise Quaker historiography in a direction nearer to that of Rufus Jones than of his critics in the last generation. Although he agrees that Jones's claim of *historical* links between the mystics or spiritual reformers and the Quakers is not supportable, he feels that there is a spiritual kinship and similarity that needs to be recognized.

In addition to historians like Melvin Endy, there is an articulate minority that has been fighting what might be called a rear-guard action in support of Rufus Jones's interpretation of Quakerism. But some bold spirits have attempted to carry certain of his ideas to their extreme logical conclusion. The exponents of the mystical interpretation of Quakerism have always been interested in the mystical element in the "great religions of the world," and this has led to speculation as to whether "mystical Christianity" is simply one cultural form of a universal mystical faith that appears in a variety of such cultural forms. It is then only a short step to conclude that the cultural forms are secondary, and that there is a core of mystical truth behind all of them. If we follow this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion, we reach a point where it appears that the maximum understanding of this central core of mystical truth is arrived at by minimizing the secondary, cultural forms or eliminating them altogether.

At the present time [1982] in England there is a Quaker Universalist Group, at least some of whom are dedicated to eliminating the Christian content from Quaker thought and experience, on the grounds that this content is secondary and therefore expendable, and I have no doubt that there will be Quakers in the United States who will make a favorable response to this concern. In my own yearly meeting in New York it became a matter of policy a few years ago to accept into membership applicants who make no profession of faith in Jesus Christ, so that there is now a sizable number of members who are not professing Christians. The yearly meeting has been busily engaged in recent years in revising its book of Faith and Practice so that it will serve the needs of both its Christ-centered members and its non-Christ-centered members.

In addition to this extremist movement to expunge the Christian content from Quakerism, there is also an effort to preserve the mystical interpretation while at the same time keeping Christ at the center of Quaker faith. The chief exponent of this Christian-*cum*-mystical Quakerism is John Yungblut and the central feature of his mystical interpretation is his doctrine of Christ. For John Yungblut the term "Christ" or "spirit of Christ" is reserved for the universal spiritual reality that is believed to lie behind all authentic religious experience. Jesus of Nazareth is the historical human figure who was most completely filled with the spirit of Christ.

John Yungblut is a great admirer of Rufus Jones and believes that his interpretation of Quakerism is consistent with Jones's thought. While there was never a time in Rufus Jones's long life when he was not a professing Christian, his mind ranged widely in the realm of speculative religious thought,

and there is much in his writings that lends support to this interpretation. Thus he had written, "The apex, so far revealed, of the Eternal Gospel in history, the highest revelation of God in history, is the coming of Christ. It is the breaking in of eternity into time."⁵² Again, he wrote that "Jesus seems to us in the western world to be the supreme revealer of the highest values of religion ... [He] has seemed to many the most adequate expression of the nature and character of God that has been made to the world."⁵³

Rufus Jones also maintained that for early Friends "Christ ... was primarily the eternal Christ rather than the historical Christ of Galilee and Judea."⁵⁴ My researches haven't supported this view. Fox certainly does not separate "Christ" or "the spirit of Christ" from Jesus of Nazareth. Thus he says that there are many people among the uncovenanted nations "that do not profess Christ in words outwardly; yet they will confess to his light, that doth convince them of sin and evil ... [They] that deny him outwardly and confess to the Divine Light within though they do not obey it, if they did they would see Christ."⁵⁵ Even more clearly,

Believers in Christ Jesus and the apostles and disciples ... preach Christ the covenant of light among the Gentiles, and so bring them from the darkness to the light, from the power of Satan to God ... and brought them inwardly to the light that shines in their hearts, to give them the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.⁵⁶

Four years after Fox's death, George Keith charged that the object of the Quaker faith was not Jesus Christ who dwelt in Galilee and Judea and was crucified, buried, and rose on the third day. So some of the most trusted ministers and leaders of the Society of Friends at that time prepared a statement in 1694 entitled "The Christian Doctrine of the People called Quakers Cleared," etc. In this document they stated that

Any whom God hath gifted and called ... to preach faith in the same Christ, both as within and without us, [this] cannot be to preach two Christs, but one and the same Lord Jesus Christ ...

True and living faith in Christ Jesus the Son of the living God has respect to his entire being and fullness ... as all power in heaven and earth is given unto him; and also [with] respect to the same Son of God as inwardly making himself known in the soul ... The Son of God cannot be divided ... nor is the sufficiency of his light within set up by us in opposition to him, the man Christ, or

⁵² Rufus M. Jones, *The Eternal Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), pp. 85-96.

⁵³ R.M. Jones, *Re-thinking Religious Liberalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1935), pp. 24-25.

⁵⁴ R.M. Jones, "The Quaker Conception of God," in *Beyond Dilemmas: Quakers Look at Life*, ed. S. B. Laughlin (New York and Philadelphia, 1937), p. 35.

⁵⁵ Fox, Headley MSS, Cat. No. 10, 34F, pp. 7-8.

⁵⁶ Cadbury, AC, Cat. No. 115E, pp. 134-135.

his fullness, considered as in himself, or without us ... nor exclude him, so considered, from being our complete savior.⁵⁷

In the short history of the Quakers that Fox wrote in 1689 he reported that he had sent evangelical epistles to the heads of “the house of Austria, and to Holland, and Germany, and to the King of Spain, King of France, and King of Portugal, and to the Pope and Prester John and to the Mogul of China and the Tartars, and to Jews and to the most part of the world, [telling them]how that God was come to teach his people himself by his Son, etc.”⁵⁸ In fact he wrote to many more heads of states than are listed in this passage. During Fox’s lifetime the Quaker community was essentially a movement with a mission to all the inhabitants of the earth. It had not yet become afflicted with the denominational-mindedness which we find everywhere in the Society of Friends today.

The recovery of the everlasting gospel that Fox and the original Quakers preached will not leave this denominational-mindedness intact. The everlasting gospel challenged all the Christians of England, right across the wide spectrum of religious opinion that we find during the Commonwealth period, and it will surely challenge people again today. The power in the early Quaker movement was in the gospel they preached, in what they said about Jesus Christ and how he saves men and women. They were proclaiming that Christ, who is present in the midst of his people in all his offices, is the means that God has provided to save not just the Jews, or the Christians, but all people, all nations. The need today is for more men and women who are prepared to go forth and proclaim this gospel to Quakers, Christians, and people of all faiths, or none. “It is a wonderful thing to be called to the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

⁵⁷ William Sewel, *History of the Rise, Increase, and Progress of the Christian People Called Quakers*, 2 vols. (New York: William Sessions, 1844; copied from second English edition, 1725), Vol. 2, pp. 350-351.

⁵⁸ Cadbury, *Narrative Papers of George Fox*, p. 19.

Appendix

Firbank Fell Sermon

In [the] first essay, Lewis Benson refers to Fox's 1652 sermon on Firbank Fell as the most important of his career, and "the one that had the most far-reaching consequences." In his *Journal*, Fox tells us that he preached on this occasion for about three hours, to more than a thousand people.

Fox wrote or dictated two summaries of this sermon, both of which were prepared quite a few years after the event. The first such summary was written around 1675 but was not published until after Fox's death, when Thomas Ellwood incorporated it, with some rearrangement, into the first edition of the *Journal*, which appeared in 1694.

The second summary was written by Fox in 1689 for a book called *The Memory of the Righteous Revived*, prepared by Thomas Camm in memory of his father, John Camm, who had been convinced at Firbank Fell and had become a leading Quaker preacher. This version was reprinted in 1972 in *Narrative Papers of George Fox*.

Most editions of the *Journal* give the sermon summary as rearranged by Ellwood. However, in 1911 the original manuscript was published verbatim, with editorial notes by Norman Penney, thus restoring the order of Fox's own description. This order is followed in the 1952 edition [of the *Journal*], edited by John Nickalls, from which we reprint Fox's complete summary:

I was made to open to the people that the steeplehouse and that ground on which it stood were no more holy than that mountain, and those temples and "dreadful houses of God", (as they called them) were not set up by the command of God nor Christ; nor their priests as Aaron's priesthood; nor their tithes as theirs was. But Christ was come, who ended the temple, and the priests, and the tithes, and Christ said, "Learn of me", and God said, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." For the Lord has sent me with his everlasting gospel to preach, and his word of life to bring them off all those temples, tithes, priests and rudiments of the world, that had gotten up since the apostles' days, and had been set up by such who had erred from the sprit and power the apostles were in; so that they might all come to know Christ their

teacher, their counsellor, their shepherd to feed them, and their bishop to oversee them and their prophet to open to them, and to know their bodies to be the temples of God and Christ for them to dwell in.

And so I opened the prophets and the figures and shadows and turned them to Christ the substance, and then opened the parables of Christ and the things that had been hid from the beginning, and showed them the estate of the Epistles how they were written to the elect; and the state of the apostasy that had been since the apostles' days, and how the priests have got the Scriptures and are not in the spirit which gave them forth; who make a trade of their words and have put them into chapter and verse; and how that the teachers and priests now are found in the steps both of the false prophets, chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees, such as both the prophets, Christ, and his apostles cried against, and so are judged by the prophets', Christ's and the apostles' spirit; and all that were in it could not own them. And so turning the people to the spirit of God, and from the darkness to the light that they might believe in it and become children of the light, and turning them from the power of Satan which they had been under to God, and that with the spirit of Truth they might be led into all the Truth of the prophets', Christ's and the apostles' words.⁵⁹

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⁵⁹ *George Fox, Journal of*, ed. John Nickalls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p 109.

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