

# **A Review of the Writings of George Fox**

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This paper is the result of a review of the writings of the founder of Quakerism, George Fox, to document what he had to say about many issues currently debated in the Society of Friends.

It is the bias of this writer that the evangelical branch of The Society of Friends has been more faithful to the beliefs and practices of Fox than more liberal Friends. A personal study of the writings of George Fox was undertaken as part of a sabbatical (8/15/2014 - 11/16/2014) to attempt to verify this thesis and document the same in Fox's own words. It should be acknowledged that this project has not included a parallel study of the writings of current liberal or evangelical Friends, but instead bases their comparison with Fox's beliefs more on perceptions and reputations than upon their documents. This paper will attempt to summarize and document many of the key tenets of George Fox's belief system and then compare or contrast them with those currently held by evangelically minded Friends as well as those currently accepted by more liberal Friends.

## **What Current Version of Quakerism Would George Fox Embrace?**

Most would agree that the spiritual movement ignited through the influence of George Fox has evolved significantly in the past 300+ years. There are a wide variety of Quakers today with significantly different perspectives of what it means to live out the vision of Friends. It is the contention of this paper that no current manifestation of Quakerism is completely faithful to the movement's origin although evangelical Friends are more theologically loyal.

In this paper the use of “evangelical” will refer to a basic theology that is centered in the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ, the reliability and authority of scripture, and a commitment to live out the great commission to go and make disciples. The term “liberal” here will be used to describe a theological frame of reference that does not adhere to the characteristics of evangelicalism as listed above. Those who would regard themselves as “moderates” will find this terminology unsatisfactory, but in this paper the evangelical perspective is being contrasted with the entire continuum of non-evangelicals.

Here an attempt will be made to articulate simple summarizations of Fox's faith with the intent of comparing and contrasting the Quakerism of his day with both liberal and evangelical manifestations of present day Quakerism. Is there a current manifestation of Quakerism with which Fox would resonate?

### **Fox's Writings and their Context**

The writings of George Fox fall into four categories. The first would be his Journal, which is probably the most familiar and widely read of all his works. In addition to this work Fox pub-

lished volumes of essays articulating and defending early Quaker faith and practice. These doctrinal books represent the largest body of Fox's writings. A third category includes hundreds of epistles written to a variety of recipients including Quakers in several countries in various circumstances, as well as government leaders. "The Great Mystery" represents the fourth category. This volume is a large collection of responses to works published by critics of Fox and the Friends movement, in which Fox answers common accusations and stinging criticism directed against early Quakers. The full title of this work includes a heading with two full explanatory paragraphs. The heading is "The Great Mystery of the Great Whore Unfolded; and Antichrist's Kingdom Revealed unto Destruction," indicative of the defensive and combative tone of these writings.

It seems that Fox made good use of his long tenures in jails and prisons to write prolifically. In so doing he has provided valuable documentation of his beliefs as well as considerable context of the spiritual condition of the church and the world at the time of the rise of the Society of Friends. This paper will include both summaries of Fox's faith as well as quotations taken directly from his own writings as examples of the conclusions reached by this writer.

George Fox (1624-1691) lived in a period of time after the death of John Calvin (1509-1564), but prior to the birth of John Wesley (1703-1791). What we would refer to as strict Calvinism was certainly a prominent characteristic of the seventeenth century church which Fox reacted against so vehemently. And while Fox's emphasis of "perfection" is not couched in the same terminology as future Wesleyan holiness teaching, there are some striking similarities.

## **A Clearly Christian Faith**

There is no doubt that Fox regarded his faith to be Christian. His intention was not to begin a new religion, but rather to reclaim the faith of the first century church and actually live it out sixteen hundred years later. He affirmed the divinity of Jesus Christ, the fallen nature of mankind, and the blood atonement. Fox's faith, however, was not one of doctrines to be professed, but rather one of a personal experience of God to be possessed.

### **The Trinity**

Quakers were accused of not believing in the Trinity, but it seems that Fox's resistance was to the Roman Catholic Church's coinage of the term "Trinity" which is nowhere found in the bible, as evidenced in the following excerpts. Fox clearly affirmed his belief in the unity of Jesus Christ with God the Father and also spoke often of the Holy Spirit.

*And as for the word trinity, that comes from the old stock, the pope; the scripture teacheth us no such word (The Works of George Fox, Vol III, The Great Mystery; p.142)*

*As for the word trinity, and three persons, we have not read it in the Bible, but in the common-prayer-book, or mass-book, which the pope was author of. But as for unity we own it, and Christ being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his substance (of the Father) we own; that which agrees with the scripture, and for that which the scripture speaks not... we deny. (The Works of George Fox, Vol III, The Great Mystery; p.180)*

### **The Divinity of Christ**

Fox did not use the same terminology of the theologians of his day, yet his reverence for Jesus Christ included an understanding that His nature was divine.

*...and we are witnesses of Christ's birth, suffering, death, and resurrection, and of his flesh, and of his divinity... (The Works of George Fox, Vol V, Doctrinal Books; p. 91)*

*I told him, Mary was His mother and that he was supposed to be the Son of Joseph, but He was the Son of God. (The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; p. 73)*

### **The Fall**

More liberal Friends tend to emphasize Fox's terminology about "that of God in every person" which in some cases has resulted in a New Age understanding of human nature - one that regards us as carrying our own divinity - rather than understanding mankind as fallen; in need of a Savior. The following words of Fox indicate his understanding that mankind is fallen, and in need of a Savior:

*...by which they might come to see they were in the fall of old Adam, and darkness and death, strangers to the covenant of promise, and without god in the world; and by the same Light they might see Christ that died for them to be their Redeemer and Savior and their way to God. (The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; p. 162)*

### **The Atonement**

While some Friends prefer to emphasize the example and teachings of Jesus, Fox saw the necessity of Jesus Christ giving his life, spilling his blood, as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of all.

*I told them at that time the sins of all mankind were upon Him, and their iniquities and transgressions, with which He was wounded; which He was to bear, and*

*to be an offering for, as He was man; but died not, as He was God; so, in that He died for all men, tasting death for every man, He was an offering for the sins of the whole world. (The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; p. 71)*

*And whereas, many lies and false reports have been cast upon us by both priests and professors, that we do slight, deny, and undervalue, the blood of Jesus, who do value and esteem it more than any of them; (The Works of George Fox, Vol V, Doctrinal Books; p. 365)*

*For the old testament and covenant was established by the blood of the outward clean creatures, but the new covenant and new testament is established by the blood of Christ, the blood of the everlasting covenant, by whose blood we are washed, and cleansed, and sanctified, and made clean, and presented to God. (The Works of George Fox, Vol VI, Doctrinal Books; p. 344)*

One of the characteristics of modern day liberal Friends is the lack of a consistent unified theology shared by all. Rather, there is a "big-tent" flexibility that extends liberty for Friends to identify as Quakers without explicitly embracing Christianity, or at least without explicitly embracing the very truths that were centerpieces of Fox's Christian teaching. In this respect, liberal Friends have moved far from their founder. More evangelically minded Friends have made a concerted effort to maintain a scripturally consistent body of Truth, which to this writer seems more consistent with the approach of Fox and the early Friends.

### **The Necessity of Christian Experience**

One cannot entirely understand Friends without at least some degree of awareness of the culture in which this movement was born. In Fox's mind the church of his day did not resemble the

church that was described in the New Testament. While the church of his day emphasized saying the right words and partaking of religious rites there seemed to be little if any spiritual power characterizing the seventeenth century church in England. Fox, on the other hand, insisted that a palpable experience of God's power should be normative for Christians both individually and corporately.

### **New Birth**

Fox was not hesitant to use the terminology of scripture that spoke of being born again and even quoted the admonition of Jesus from John 3, “ye must be born again.” While Fox more often spoke of “convincement” than of the new birth, it was not foreign to him and in a letter to his parents described his own experience to be a spiritual birth.

*None come to the new birth, but they who come to the light which every man that comes into the world is lighted withal; which believing in, they are children of the light. Believing and receiving it, they receive power to become the sons of God. (The Works of George Fox, Vol. III, The Great Mystery; p. 50)*

*Dear father and mother in the flesh, but not of that birth which speaks to you: for like to that which doth beget, is that which is begotten. Praises, praise be given to my heavenly father, who hath begotten me again by the immortal word. (The Works of George Fox, Vol. VII; p. 19)*

### **Receiving Christ**

Fox believed that there was action required upon the part of an individual to respond to the Light within. This response was frequently couched in the language of “receiving Christ.” It was also

clear to Fox that to experience “salvation” there was no other path other than through Jesus Christ.

*It was proclaimed amongst the people that the day was now come wherein all that made a profession of the Son of God might receive Him; and that to as many as would receive Him He would give power to become the sons of God, as He has done to me. (The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; p. 195)*

*There is but one way to God, out of the fall, into the paradise, to the tree of life, out of condemnation, and that is Christ the light, the covenant of God. (The Works of George Fox, Vol. III, The Great Mystery; p. 157)*

*So we (the people of God called Quakers,) do say let all the house of the professors of the letter, without the possession, whether Jews, Turks, christians, or heathens, know there is no salvation in any other name under heaven, whereby they must be saved, but ‘in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, which was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, whom God hath raised up from the dead’ ... (The Works of George Fox, Vol V, Doctrinal Books; p. 87)*

### **Conversion**

The terminology most frequently used by Fox to describe what many would refer to as “conversion” was “convincement.” Far from referring to a mental assent to the truths of Fox’s teaching, convincement indicated a transformation not only of thought but also of one’s life. Occasionally Fox employed the term “converted” as well as “convinced.”

*Several were convinced in those parts and were turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, and many were raised up to praise God. When I reasoned with professors and other people, some became convinced. (The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; p. 86)*

*But notwithstanding all that was acted against us, and spoken, many hundreds of the honest and sober people owned us, and also many rude and ungodly persons were converted to the truth... . (The Works of George Fox, Vol. III, The Great Mystery; p. 20)*

Fox also pointed to the personal experience of God's power that he believed would normally result in trembling or quaking. Though seldom explicitly explained, it seems that Fox believed trembling to be evidence that conversion/convincement had taken place.

*Habakkuk's lips quivered, David's flesh trembled, Daniel trembled, Paul trembled, David's bones quaked; and the man the Lord regards who trembles at his word, though cast out by thee and thy generation in this age, as in the days of Isaiah. So thou and thy generation, who say 'away with trembling of the flesh and body,' say away with the power of God that throws down that which defiles the flesh. (The Works of George Fox, Vol. III, The Great Mystery; p. 162)*

### **Evangelism**

In one of Fox's many books, "The People of God in Scorn Called Quakers, Their Love to All Mankind Asserted," a paragraph-long sub-title expresses Fox's deep passion for what can fittingly be described as evangelism:

*For as God's love through Christ hath been shed abroad in our hearts, we cannot but in the same love desire the eternal good, and the Salvation of all mankind, and would have them to repent, and turn to Jesus Christ, whom God hath given in his love to be their Way, Leader, and Captain of their Salvation, and hath tasted death for every man, and hath bought them with a price, therefore that they all might serve and live to him, and glorify God with their bodies, souls and spirits, which are the Lord's that he hath made, and Christ, who hath redeemed and bought them. (The Works of George Fox, Vol V, Doctrinal Books; p. 217)*

The following excerpt from one of the Epistles likewise provides a window into Fox's passion for evangelism:

*All Friends, every where, that have Indians or blacks, you are to preach the gospel to them, and other servants, if you be true Christians; for the gospel of salvation was to be preached to every creature under heaven; (The Works of George Fox, Vol VIII, Epistles, p. 160)*

### **The Light**

Fox spoke often of the "Light" within. To grasp Fox's understanding of the Light it is essential to look at the first chapter of the Gospel of John which includes this statement: "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John 1:9 (KJV) Fox's emphasis upon this scripture was in stark contrast to the permeating Calvinism of the seventeenth century church that taught that some, the elect, were predestined for salvation while others were predestined for reprobation. In a culture that largely believed that some individuals, or some classes of individuals, had no spiritual capacity, Fox's emphasis upon "the light that lighteth every man" was a revolutionary concept.

*...and understand, and see perfectly, that God had given to us, every one of us in particular, a light from himself shining in our hearts and consciences; which light, Christ his son, the saviour of the world, had lighted every man withal; which light in us we found sufficient to reprove us, and convince us of every evil deed, word, and thought, and by it, in us, we came to know good from evil, right from wrong, and whatsoever is of God, and according to him, from what is of the devil, and what was contrary to God in motion, word, and works. And this light gave us to discern between truth and error, between every false and right way,*

*and it perfectly discovered to us the true state of all things... (The Works of George Fox, Vol. III, The Great Mystery; p. 12)*

*And we found this light to be a sufficient teacher, to lead us to Christ, from whence this light came, and thereby it gave us to receive Christ, and to witness him to dwell in us; (The Works of George Fox, Vol. III, The Great Mystery; p. 12)*

*The Governor, with his wife, received us lovingly; but a doctor there would needs dispute with us. And truly his opposing was of good service, giving occasion for the opening of many things to the people concerning the Light and Spirit of God which he denied to be in everyone; and affirmed that it was not in the Indian. Whereupon I called an Indian to us, and asked him whether when he lied, or did wrong to any one, there was not something in him that reprove him for it. He said there was such a thing in him, that did so reprove him; and he was ashamed when he had done wrong, or spoken wrong. So we shamed the doctor before the governor and the people... (The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; p. 526)*

Though clearly influenced by the terminology of John 1:9, Fox also found the same concept in James' epistle, from which he often quoted the exhortation to "...receive with meekness the engrafted word that is able to save your souls." James 1:21(KJV) Fox's emphasis of this scriptural teaching about a light within has led some more liberal Friends to recoil from the concept of evangelism, apparently concluding: what more is needed if each individual already has the Light? Ironically, Fox understood the Light in every person to be an encouragement to preach to all people, assuming that God had already planted something in the heart of every person that would be receptive to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

*Walking in which light, it will bring you to receive Christ, from whence it comes.  
(The Works of George Fox, Vol. VII, Epistles; p. 33)*

### **Judgment**

For Fox, much was at stake. He was highly motivated by his understanding of the catastrophic consequences of not receiving Christ.

*So they that do not believe in Christ, the light, as he commands, John xii.36. they abide in spiritual death and darkness, and under the judgment and condemnation of Adam in the fall, in the perishing state. (The Works of George Fox, Vol. VIII, Epistles; p. 302)*

Likewise, one of Fox's books carries this sobering title:

*The Vials of the Wrath of God poured forth upon the Man of Sin, and upon all Professors of the World, who deny the Light of Christ, which he hath enlightened every one withal, and walk contrary to it; with it they are condemned. (The Works of George Fox, Vol. IV, Doctrinal Books; p. 27)*

Today evangelical Friends continue to share a passion for the necessity of Christian experience as Fox understood it. These Friends are comfortable with terminology that includes conversion, receiving Christ, and being born again. They are committed to evangelism and are motivated not only by the love of God but also by the judgment facing those who do not receive Jesus Christ. Evangelical Friends are less likely to use the terminology of "The Light" as Fox did, yet are comfortable with concepts such as prevenient grace and the work of the Holy Spirit drawing all men to Christ.

Liberal Friends today are more likely to speak of “convincement” but this seldom assumes a spiritual experience that transforms one’s life. Most liberal Friends may talk of advancement, or occasionally outreach, but few feel comfortable with the idea of evangelism as employed by their evangelical counterparts. Liberal Friends tend to emphasize heeding the Light within, without any presupposition that the Light will lead to a conversion experience. Liberal Friends are likely to advocate spirituality, but are hesitant to insist upon the necessity of Christian experience.

### **Holiness**

One of Fox's greatest points of contention with the church of his day was its insistence that sin could never be overcome in this lifetime. As he repeatedly expressed it, so-called ministers of the church "pled for sin." For Fox, however, experiencing not only forgiveness from sin but the power to overcome it in daily life was not only possible, but the expectation for true Christians.

*For of all the sects in Christendom (so called) that I discoursed with, I found none who could bear to be told that any should come to Adam’s perfection, -- into the image of God, that righteousness and holiness, that Adam was in before he fell; to be clean and pure, without sin, as he was. Therefore how shall they be able to bear being told that any shall grow up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, when they cannot bear to hear that any shall come, whilst upon the earth, into the same power and Spirit that the prophets and apostles were in?  
(The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; p. 526)*

*So the light being turned to, man receiveth the spirit of God, which sanctifies him, the spirit of sanctification in Christ Jesus the sanctification and redemption. (The Works of George Fox, Vol. III, The Great Mystery; p. 168)*

The holiness revivals of the nineteenth century have had a significant impact upon the evangelical Friends in America, but even so, most evangelical Friends today who do embrace holiness theology are hesitant to express it in terms of "perfection" to the degree that was characteristic of Fox. For more liberal Friends, the more legalistic outward forms of "holiness" have largely been relaxed if not disregarded altogether. For them the pursuit of social justice seems to be a greater concern than the pursuit of personal holiness.

An interesting observation on this point is that traditional sexual taboos are among the outward forms of holiness discarded by some liberal Friends, particularly the traditional perspective on homosexuality. Many present-day Friends are advocating for full acceptance of gays, lesbians, bi-sexuals and transgendered. Fox, however, explicitly addressed this matter of homosexual practice in one of his writings, "To the great Turk and King at Algiers: together with a Postscript of George Pattison's taking the Turks and setting them on their own shore."

*And is it not declared against, by the mighty and eternal God, by Moses and all his holy prophets; who saith it is an abomination to lie with mankind as with woman-kind: and such men as commit these abominations have defiled the land, and God will spew them out. (The Works of George Fox, Vol. VI, Doctrinal Books, p. 78)*

## **Scripture**

Fox regarded Jesus Christ, pre-existent from the beginning, to be the "Word of God" as described in John 1:1: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* (KJV) While the church of Fox's day regarded scripture as the Word of God, he under-

stood it to be the "words" of God that were issued forth by God's Spirit. Some have erroneously concluded that Fox had thus devalued the scriptures when, in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Fox's writings are full of scriptural quotations, references and imagery. He challenged opponents of Quakerism to prove their cases scripturally, and Fox went to great pains to give scriptural support for every aspect of Friends faith and practice in his day. Fox recoiled against the church of his day that he saw as possessing the scriptures while not possessing the Spirit from which they were given.

*Yet I had no slight esteem of the holy Scriptures. They were very precious to me; for I was in that Spirit by which they were given forth; and what the Lord opened in me I afterwards found was agreeable to them. (The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; p. 103)*

*And all worship that is in the truth, and in the spirit that gave forth the scriptures called the Old and New Testament, we own, and is owned among the Quakers. For God who is a spirit, led his servants, and prophets, and son, by his spirit to speak forth the scriptures, which Christ the son is come to fulfill... (The Works of George Fox, Vol. III, The Great Mystery; p. 255)*

*And also, this is an invitation to all sects and professions of people, to come forth and try if what they hold and profess be according to the scriptures of truth; (The Works of George Fox, Vol. III, The Great Mystery; p. 5)*

Evangelical Friends continue to highly value scripture as Fox did, although many are prone to refer to it as the "Word of God," something that would likely be troubling to Fox. There very well may be some doctrinal differences between Fox and present-day evangelical Friends on this point; although some might argue that the larger issue is one of semantics. It is probably accu-

rate to assert that liberal Friends, on the other hand, have largely devalued the role of scripture, while not disregarding it altogether.

### **Authority**

Fox reacted strongly against the Papacy and its influence even upon Protestant doctrine, worship and polity. Fox repeatedly quoted the biblical admonition that all things be done decently and in order, but he sought to establish order that arose out of scriptural precedent, while avoiding one that even resembled a Popish system. For Friends, the ultimate authority was and is to be God alone. The organization and order that developed among Friends was intended to focus upon the will of God, rather than the whims of men.

### **Accountability**

Acknowledging God as the ultimate authority, however, did not diminish a sense of mutual accountability that was evident among early Friends. There were clear expectations of personal righteousness and righteous practices. When Friends would stray from the way Fox was not hesitant to hold them accountable and encouraged other Friends to do the same.

*And all Friends that have dishonoured God, and his truth, and people, and Friends have been to admonish them in a gospel-way, and they still go on in their wickedness and do not repent; Friends may draw up a paper at their meeting, (when they are clear of them,) against them and their disorderly walking, and unruly spirits, and looseness...showing that we have no unity nor fellowship with such workers of darkness... (The Works of George Fox, Vol. VII, Epistles; pp. 222-223)*

*Therefore, such must be exhorted and reprov'd if they go under the name of Quakers, and are not in the life. (The Works of George Fox, Vol. VII, Epistles; p. 304)*

In his Journal Fox reports an example of holding accountable some Friends in America who were a threat to the well-being of New England Quakers meeting at Oyster Bay:

*Here we met with some bad spirits, who had run out from Truth into prejudice, contention, and opposition to the order of Truth, and to Friends therein.*

*...I would not suffer the service of our men's and women's meetings to be interrupted and hindered by their cavils.*

*...but the deceitful spirit was judged down and condemned...*

*Which was of great service to Truth, and to the satisfaction and comfort of Friends; glory to the Lord for ever! (The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; pp. 502-503)*

Today, evangelical Friends seem to be more likely to hold other Friends accountable, while liberal Friends tend to embrace individual liberty of conscience while finding accountability to some ecclesiastical authority troublesome. For them, Quakerism is to be a religion of tolerance.

### **Tolerance**

It's interesting that some have come to understand tolerance to be a core value of Quakerism, while George Fox seemed to be far from tolerant of other faith expressions in his writings. The following quote is one of many examples:

*And you about Newcastle, ministers and teachers, are like a heap or dunghill, sogged and mudded; but come to the witness, else eternally you will be condemned. (The Works of George Fox, Vol. III, The Great Mystery; p. 145)*

It is true that Fox did make appeals for tolerance but it was in a context where Quakers were being harshly persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, and sometimes killed for their faith. He appealed to the Christian conscience of governing authorities, pleading for humane treatment – tolerance - of Friends and their expression of faith.

*And let the truth be set up and exalted, wherever it is, and all deceit thrown down to the ground; and let us war with the weapons of the spirit, against error and false religion one in the other, but let us not hurt or imprison persons, not stock and whip, and make them to suffer. But let us thresh deceit, and whip and beat that, and all false opinions, let us throw them down where they are found, whether in them or in us, and let us fight with the weapons of the spirit, that are spiritual, and let them fight no longer with such cruel and carnal weapons. (The Works of George Fox, Vol. III, The Great Mystery; p. 27)*

In this case it seems that liberal Friends have taken Fox's emphasis entirely out of context and have used it to promote openness to doctrines and practices that Fox would never have tolerated.

## **Quaker Testimonies**

With some notable exceptions, present-day evangelical Friends tend to highly value orthodox Christian doctrine while holding Quaker testimonies more loosely. Liberal Friends tend toward the opposite extreme, holding Christian doctrine more loosely while highly valuing Friends testimonies including simplicity, peace, integrity, community and equality. These testimonies are clearly rooted in seventeenth century Quakerism and are reflected in Fox's writing.

### **Simplicity**

Fox frequently encouraged Friends to avoid fashionable dress, and eschewed participation in idle entertainment. His motivation appeared to be the avoidance of worldliness. The use of simple language, thee and thou, was also a point of emphasis for early Friends. Fox's motivation here appeared to include a concern for the use of scriptural language, a concern to not show preferential honor to individuals, and possibly a concern for proper grammar.

Today both evangelical and liberal Friends have largely abandoned the use of plain language, plain dress, and many of the traditional taboos of anything that smacked of worldliness. Liberal Friends tend to have a greater interest in the testimony of simplicity, but with differing motivations that likely arise out of issues related to social justice.

### **Peace**

The peace testimony is clearly rooted in early Quakerism and some of Fox's most well known quotes relate to it as he testified to living out of that life and power that takes away occasions for all war. The context of the peace testimony articulated by Fox included his personal conviction that as a Christian his conscience would not allow him to participate in warfare. He operated out of a deep belief that God's kingdom was a present reality and that it used spiritual weapons, not carnal ones, to accomplish its purposes.

*And in the old testament, the outward Jews defended their religion by carnal weapons, and outward armour; but in the new testament, the children of the new covenant, their armour and weapons are spiritual, not carnal. (The Works of George Fox, Vol. VIII, Epistles; p. 285)*

Interestingly, much of Fox's advocacy for peaceful methods was directed toward ecclesiastical and governmental authorities that were cruelly persecuting early Friends. Fox never pled for national disarmament and even acknowledged the legitimate role of government to bear the sword.

*But if thou dost that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain;  
for he is a minister of God to revenge and execute wrath upon him that doth evil.  
So he is the revenger and executioner of the wrath upon the evil doer, as God  
hath placed him... (The Works of George Fox, Vol. VIII, Epistles; p. 87)*

The peace testimony is clearly weaker among evangelical Friends today. Among liberal Friends it tends to not only be present but is often elevated as a centerpiece of Friends faith. While evangelical Friends regard Quakers as a Christian movement which has traditionally had a concern for peace, many liberal Friends regard Quakerism as a peace movement which has a tradition rooted in Christianity. Fox would likely find both current expressions to be perplexing, if not distressing.

### **Integrity**

Many Friends, including Fox, suffered imprisonment and great loss for refusing to take oaths. Friends sought to live out the biblical admonition to let one's yea be yea and nay be nay. Quakers were well known for their honesty, quality craftsmanship, and fair business practices. The desire to be obedient to Jesus' command to "swear not at all" certainly motivated early Friends greatly. Today both liberal and evangelical Friends would agree that integrity continues to be the calling of all Friends.

### **Community**

Fox's vision for Friends was a biblical one. He saw the Christian community of the first century to be the model, which was vastly different from the institutional church of seventeenth century England. The desire for "primitive Christianity revived" as early Friends were described is present among both branches of Quakers today, though the experience of it is at times lacking.

### **Equality**

In regard to this testimony, Fox's voice was a breath of fresh air in a culture where this concept was not the norm. We see evidence of this testimony in Fox's refusal to use titles of honor to address others, in his refusal to use the plural "you" to address individuals, in his concern for the spiritual well-being of blacks and Indians, and in his efforts to release the gifts, ministries, and leadership of women. Evangelical and liberal Friends alike continue to value this testimony.

### **Other Testimonies**

Among more liberal Friends earth care, or environmental concerns, seems to be an emerging testimony. One would be hard pressed to find evidence of this particular concern in Fox's writings. While the above listed testimonies are rooted in Fox's writings (and have their own acronym: SPICE), he likely would have described the testimonies of the early Quaker movement differently. It likely would have included concerns such as these:

- Use of proper (biblical) language (thee and thou for singular, you for plural)
- Avoidance of worldliness in dress, fashion, and amusements
- Avoidance of idolatry by not using names of pagan gods as names for months or days
- Resistance to keeping the sabbath as prescribed by the church
- Resistance to paying tithes (in support of an apostate church)

- Not showing preference to some people over others by use of titles, hat honor, bowing, etc
- Not swearing at all
- Ministry arising out of a calling from God, not from the training and ordination of man
- Worship that is not scripted, but arising out of waiting

These testimonies that seemed to define early Friends lifestyles are seldom more than quaint memories that rarely find such counter-cultural expression today among evangelical Friends, though less rarely among liberal Friends.

### **Eschatology**

Most evangelical Friends today are Millennialists, looking forward to a literal thousand year reign of Christ on earth upon His return followed by a new heaven and earth. Fox's beliefs contrast this greatly and he would be described today as an A-millennialist, believing that the thousand years mentioned in Revelation 20 is a symbolic number, and that the millennium has already begun (Wikipedia).

*Now this is the day of Christ in his new covenant of light, life and grace, in which the 'earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters do cover the sea.' [Mark] 'The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.' (The Works of George Fox, Vol. V, Doctrinal Books; p, 422)*

Fox's rejection of Millennialism may have been a reaction against the Fifth Monarchists of his day. This sect's eschatology led them to believe that they would be involved in warfare as Christ

returned to set up His kingdom. It is interesting to speculate to what degree Fox's rejection of their eschatology shaped his views of non-participation in outward warfare.

*While I was in prison here, the Baptist and Fifth Monarch men prophesied that this year Christ should come, and reign upon earth a thousand years. And they looked upon this reign to be outward; when He was come inwardly in the hearts of His people, to reign and rule; where these professors would not receive Him. So they failed in their prophecy and expectation, and had not the possession of Him. (The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; p. 264)*

*As for the Fifth-monarchy men I was moved to give forth a paper, to manifest their error to them; for they looked for Christ's personal coming in an outward form and manner, and fixed the time to the year 1666; at which time some of them prepared themselves when it thundered and rained, thinking Christ was then come to set up His kingdom, and they imagined they were to kill the whore without them.*

*But I told them that the whore was alive in them, and was not burned with God's fire, nor judged in them with the same power and Spirit the apostles were in; and that their looking for Christ's coming outwardly to set up His kingdom was like the Pharisees' "Lo here, " and "Lo there." But Christ was come, and had set up His kingdom above sixteen hundred years ago, according to Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's prophecy, and He had dashed to pieces the four monarchies, the great image, with it's head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and it's feet part of iron part of clay; and they were all blown away with God's wind, as the chaff in the summer threshing floor.*

*And I told them that when Christ was on earth, He said His kingdom was not of this world; if it had been, His servants would have fought; but it was not, therefore His servants did not fight. Therefore all the Fifth-monarchy men that are*

*fighters with carnal weapons are none of Christ's servants, but the beast's and the whore's. Christ said, "All power in heaven and in earth is given to me"; so then His kingdom was set up above sixteen hundred years ago, and He reigns. "And we see Jesus Christ reign," said the apostle, "and He shall reign till all things be put under His feet"; though all things are not yet put under His feet, nor subdued. (The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; pp. 384-385)*

The A-millennialist view of last things more closely resembles the beliefs of present day liberal Friends today, than the common view held by evangelicals. Interestingly the peace testimony is correspondingly stronger among liberal Friends while weaker among evangelicals.

### **Signs and Wonders**

A frequent description of early Friends meetings was that the power of the Lord was over them. This sense of spiritual power covering their meetings was in stark contrast to what Fox found among the professing church of his day which he described as having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5 KJV).

Not only did early Friends experience a sense that they were gathered under the power of God's presence, there were reports of miraculous manifestations of God's presence. Even evangelical Friends can be somewhat suspicious of the current-day Charismatic movement with its experiences of healing, deliverance, speaking in tongues, words of knowledge, and accounts of people being "slain in the Spirit." Nevertheless, Fox himself reports these kinds of experiences, while possibly not the norm, were present among Friends in the beginning.

*Many great and wonderful things were wrought by the heavenly power in those days; for the Lord made bare His omnipotent arm, and manifested His power, to the astonishment of many, by the healing virtue whereby many have been deliv-*

*ered from great infirmities. And the devils were made subject through His name; of which particular instances might be given, beyond what this unbelieving age is able to receive or bear. (The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; p. 113)*

*As I admonished him, I laid my hand upon him, and he was brought down by the power of the Lord; and all the watchmen stood amazed. (The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; p. 144)*

*I was moved of the Lord to say unto him amongst all the people, "Stand up upon thy legs," for he was sitting down. And he stood up, and stretched out his arm that had been lame a long time, and said, "Be it known unto you, all people, that this day I am healed." Yet his parents could hardly believe it; but after the meeting was done, they had him aside, took off his doublet, and then saw it was true. (The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; p. 180)*

*He asked me about a woman in Cumberland, who, he said he had been told, had been healed by our prayers, and by laying on of hands, after she had been long sick, and given over by the physicians; and he desired to know the certainty of it. I told him we did not glory in such things, but many such things had been done by the power of Christ, (The Journal of George Fox edited by Rufus Jones; pp. 525-526)*

*...hearkening to his word, we received often the pouring down of the spirit upon us, and the gift of God's holy eternal spirit as in the days of old, and our hearts were made glad, and our tongues loosed, and our mouths opened, and we spake with new tongues, as the Lord gave us utterance, and as his spirit led us, which was poured down upon us... (The Works of George Fox, Vol. III, The Great Mystery; p. 13)*

It is interesting that when similar experiences, associated with the ministry of John Wimber of Yorba Linda Friends Church (California/Southwest Yearly Meeting) in the 1970s became regular occurrences, even evangelical Friends in California were unable to embrace such manifestations as appropriate in the Friends context. For liberal Friends there seem to be few if any "Charismatics" in the fold, yet some branches of liberal Friends are open to Wiccans and Pagan Quakers who dabble in spiritual power, even when the source of that power is suspect.

### **Final Thoughts**

Again, it is the contention of this paper that no current manifestation of Quakerism is completely faithful to the movement's origins although evangelical Friends are more theologically loyal.

This study has tended to verify this, however it is this writer's opinion that George Fox would find fault with both evangelical and liberal Friends as they are presently constituted. He would likely cite liberal Friends for an apostasy of Truth. Fox's faith was Christocentric and immersed in scriptural teachings. This is not the norm for liberal Friends. Fox would likely find fault with evangelical Friends for an apostasy of power. While he would certainly resonate with the more biblical beliefs of evangelical Friends, he could probably find some comparisons with the seventeenth century church that had not forsaken the Bible, but lacked personal experience of the power of God.

Both liberal and evangelical Friends are likely to agree that Quakerism is an experiential faith. Sadly, many evangelical Friends have maintained orthodox doctrine, yet the power of God goes lacking in their lives and in their meetings. While many liberal Friends continue to highly value a deep spiritual experience, the drift of some away from their Christian roots begs the question: Is theirs always a Christian spiritual experience? Fox cautioned Friends in this regard

*So that which you call light, (how could Christ but say as he does,) 'take heed, therefore, lest that light which is in you be darkness, who reject the light of Christ, Pharisee and Jew-like, which should light your candles, your spirits, that you may see Christ your Savior, your way, truth, and life. (The Works of George Fox, Vol. V, Doctrinal Books; p. 350)*

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