

## A Tract Attributed to George Fox

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**J**N 1659, Edward Burrough, after a missionary visit to Dunkirk, published an Epistle to the English soldiers quartered there, which from its warlike spirit and incitements to a crusade against Pope and Inquisition has called forth the gentle reprimands of Quaker historians from Sewel onwards.<sup>1</sup>

This Epistle is well known : a curious fact, not easy to explain, is its similarity to an anonymous tract attributed to Fox, which also belongs to the year 1659. This is an eight-page pamphlet entitled : *To the Councill of Officers of the Armie, and the Heads of the Nation, and for the inferior Officers and Souldiers to read.* It is signed "F.G.," but the copy at the Friends' Reference Library is endorsed in pencil in a later hand : "G.F. 1659," and at some time in the eighteenth century it was bound up in a volume of tracts mainly by Fox.<sup>2</sup>

Opening abruptly, "O Freinds, do not Rule with your own Reason !" the writer goes on to plead against oppression and persecution of all kinds. Friends have suffered "this seven or eight years" in England, and now they are enduring fresh cruelties under "the new Inquisition set up in New-England." An animated description is given of the persecution of Friends in their worship, and in private life :

"And many valiant Captains, Souldiers, and Officers, have been put out of the Army (by Sea and Land) of whom it hath been said among you, That they had rather have had one of them, then seven men, and could have turned one of them to seven men ; who because of their faithfulness to the Lord God, being faithful towards him, it may be for saying *Thou* to a particular [single person], and for wearing their hats, have been turned out from amongst you."

Appealing to the army, which had acted as the agent of persecution, the writer declares :

"Had you been faithful to the power of the Lord God which first carried you on, you had gone into the midst of *Spain*, into their land, to require the blood of the Innocent that there had been shed ; and commanded them to have offered up their Inquisition to you, and gone over them as the winde, and knock't at *Rome's* gates before now, and trampled Deceit and Tyrants under, and demanded the Pope himself, and have commanded him to have offered up all his Torture-houses and his Wracks, and Inquisition, (which you should have found as black as hell), and broke up the barrs and gates where all the just blood hath been shed, which should have been required : And this you should have required, and this you should have seen done in the power, when you had been the dread of all Nations, you had been a dread to them, and should have set up a

<sup>1</sup> Burrough, *Works*, 1672, pp. 537-540. "To the English Army, to Officers and Souldiers."

<sup>2</sup> The Tract is numbered i. 56 in D. Miss Brailsford discusses it in an article in the *Contemporary Review*, November, 1915, "Cromwell's Quaker Soldiers," but attributes it to the year 1657, at the time of the "purge" of Quakers from the Army. The allusion to New England makes this date almost impossible, and the writer mentions the Quaker evictions from the army as one incident only of a long persecution.

Standard at *Rome*. And then you should have sent for the *Turks'* Idol, the *Mahomet*, and plucked up Idolatry, and cried up Christ, the onely King and Lord."

At the close of the tract the exhortation is repeated :

" And if ever you Souldiers and true Officers come again into the power of God which hath been lost, never set up your Standart until you come to *Rome*, and let it be atop of *Rome*, then there let your Standart stand, and look at the power of the Lord God, and never heed gold or silver, for the power of the Lord will give you enough."

Compare this with Burrough's exhortation to the soldiers at Dunkirk to take no rest

" till you have visited *Rome*, and inquired after and sought out the Innocent Blood that is buried therein, and avenge the Blood of the Guiltless through all the Dominions of the Pope : the Blood of the Just it cryes through *Italy* and *Spain*, and the time is come, that the Lord will search it, and seek it out, and repay it ; and it would be to your honour to be made use of by the Lord in any degree. . . . It is the Lord's Work, I know, to make men truely religious ; but yet the Lord may work by you, to break down the Bryars and Thorns, and Rocks and Hills, that have set themselves against the Lord."

And at the close of his Epistle he urges them to " seek the Glory of the Lord and the Freedom of the Oppressed ; and in that you will be blessed and prosper, till you have set up your Standard at the Gates of *Rome*."<sup>3</sup>

Yet " F.G." if not Burrough, evidently believes that the " power of the Lord " would have accomplished his ends without violence and bloodshed, for on another page he says that those obedient to Christ love their enemies, and only one " out of truth, a worshipper, will kill and compel and persecute to death, to worship." Again in the closing passage immediately before the reference to the " Standart " at Rome, he says :—

" Stand in that in which there is peace, the Seed, Christ, which destroyeth the Devil, the author of wars, strifes, and confusion," and exhorts the soldiers to do violence to no man nor be like blind persecutors " for persecution was always blind."

It seems impossible either to prove or disprove the authorship of Fox. The handwriting of the MS. index to the volume of Tracts is apparently that of Joseph Besse, which would carry the attribution to Fox back to the early eighteenth century. It is noted under Fox's name in Joseph Smith's *Catalogue of Friends' Books*, but in this he was probably following the pencil endorsement on the tract itself. On the other hand, I have not found its title in two very careful and elaborate chronological indices to Fox's works, made either during his life-time or immediately after his death, and now in the Friends' Reference Library. The style of the tract is not altogether characteristic of Fox, and in some points more resembles that of George Fox " the Younger," particularly in the elaborate conclusion :

" From a Lover of peace, and all souls, who stands in the Election before the world began,

F.G."

<sup>3</sup> Burrough's *Works*, pp. 537-8, 540.

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One sentence almost implies that the writer had been a soldier (as Fox "the Younger" had been)—"thousands of us went in the front of you, and were with you in the greatest heat." This lesser Fox too, in his acknowledged writings, showed some interest in the political changes of the year between the death of the Protector and the restoration of Charles, and the writer of this tract declares

"What a dirty, nasty thing it would have been to have heard talk of a House of Lords"!

The signature "F.G." however, or its manuscript equivalent "ff g," is not known to have been used by Fox "the Younger," while, though rare, it does occur in some of Fox's pamphlets and letters, notably the declaration to Cromwell in 1654, preserved in the *Cambridge Journal*.<sup>4</sup>

The tract has no publisher's name. On the whole I am inclined to think it may be a *resumé* of recent utterances and writings of several leading Friends made for the benefit of the army by an ardent follower (possibly George Fox the Younger?) without their knowledge. This would explain its echoes and inconsistencies. The passages about Spain and the Pope resemble Burrough's Epistle too closely to be mere coincidences.

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<sup>4</sup> *Cambridge Journal*, i. pp. 161-2.

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"THE parents of Peter were modern young people. . . . His father came of an old Quaker stock. Quakerism in its beginnings was a very fine and wonderful religion indeed, a real research for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, a new way of thinking and living, but weakness of the mind and spirit brought it back very soon to a commoner texture. . . . Peter's great grandfather, the West of England cloth manufacturer, was an emotional person with pietistic inclinations. . . . Religion was his only social recreation, most other things he held to be sinful, and his surplus energies went all into the business." *Joan and Peter*, by H. G. Wells, 1918, p. 2.

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*Findings from the Book of Discipline of the Society of Friends and Questions thereon* is the title of a pamphlet consisting of extracts from Part II. Christian Practice, 1911 (Ethel M. Ashby, Brendon, Red Hill, Surrey, *et al.*). The headings are "On Meetings for Worship," "On Responsibility for Meetings for Worship," "On the Call and its Claims," "On Conscience," "On War," "On Marriage, Home, and Simplicity," "On Wrong Doing," "On Other Races."