

George Fox : Manchester or Mancetter?

Upon the uncertain question as to whether George Fox as a young man worked as a shoemaker at Manchester or at Mancetter, two miles from Fenny Drayton, we now have further evidence in favour of Mancetter in the following extracts from the parish registers there which M. Christabel Cadbury has kindly examined.

MANCETTER (Warwickshire) PARISH REGISTER, A.

[The handwriting is very irregular and not well preserved.]

1596, July : R. h. Gee [or Cee ?], taylor, buried.

1597, January : George J. Gee [or Cee ?] and Jane Lawnfield, married.

1618, December : — Gee, son of George, baptised.

1628, March : Isabel Gee dau. of John Gee, buried.

1629, February : Francis Gee dau. of John Gee, buried, 25th day.

1636, April : Edward Gee son of John Gee, buried, 13th day.

1643, March : Mary [?] Gee, dau. of John Gee buried, 6th day.

REGISTER B.

1666, November : William Gee son of John, buried.

1669, August : John Gee of Atherstone, buried, 17th day.

It was stated by William Rogers in *The Christian Quaker*, 1680, pt. v., p. 48, an anti-Quaker work, that George Fox worked as a journeyman shoemaker with George Gee of Manchester. W. C. Braithwaite in *Beginnings of Quakerism*, p. 30, suggests that Manchester is a mistake for Mancetter, and points out that it was formerly spelt Mancestre, and was called Manchester in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.

If the employment by George Gee referred to by W. Rogers was, as W. C. Braithwaite suggests, apprenticeship when Fox was a boy (*Jnl.*, Bicent., i., 2), clearly Mancetter is the more likely, but if it was in 1647 (*Jnl.*, Bicent., i., 18), where Fox himself says he stayed a while in Manchester, then there is no quarrel with the reading "Manchester".

It was pointed out in *Jnl. F.H.S.* vii., p. 2, that Gee was a common name in Manchester in George Fox's time. Fox himself does not mention either George Gee or his work at either place. The earliest mention of Manchester in this connection appears to be in John Wiggan's *Antichrist's Strongest Hold Overturned*, 1665, p. 59, but Gee is not named. Curiously enough in Thomas Curwen and others : *An Answer to John Wiggan's Book*, 1665, the answer to the previous tract attacking Fox and Friends, Margaret Fell, author of part of it, says (p. 114) "and if I had [mentioned that George Fox was a shoemaker] I had spoken that I did not know".

See also *Jnl. F.H.S.* iv. 86, vi. 143, vii. 44, 86; and Brayshaw : *Personality of G. F.*, 29.

J.L.N.