

Early Quaker Thought on "That State in which Adam was before he Fell"

THE teaching of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God is so rich that we discover more and more of its nature as we ponder on his words. One aspect which has been emphasized a good deal recently is his stress on the present reality of the kingdom. Whether or not he thought of an ideal state in the future, when laws would be just and generous or even unnecessary, when the Church would be a genuine fellowship in the spirit, and when men would love their neighbours as themselves, it is at least clear that he believed that in some sense in his lifetime the kingdom had come on earth. John the Baptist had taught, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."¹ The first thing we are told of Jesus' ministry is that he came preaching, "The kingdom of God is at hand."² When he sent forth the twelve he told them, "Go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"³ T. W. Manson's careful analysis of his teaching concerning the kingdom, shows that in the early part of his ministry he speaks of the kingdom as coming, and in the later part he speaks of people entering it. It appears "that Jesus held that the Kingdom had come in some real sense during his ministry."⁴ This must mean at least that his disciples are called to acknowledge the full sovereignty of God, and to give their allegiance first and foremost to him. They must obey God rather than men. Only as they are loyal citizens of the City of God, can they be truly loyal citizens of the cities of men.

Amongst the early Christians it appears to have been widely expected that the coming of the kingdom would mean the outward return of Jesus. "They shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."⁵ Gradually this expectation of an outward second coming gave place to a realization of the inward presence of the Holy Spirit, identified with Jesus Christ ("Christ in you the hope of glory"),⁶ and the Christian's

¹ Matt. 3 : 2.

² Mark 1 : 15.

³ Matt. 10 : 7.

⁴ Manson, T. W., *The Teaching of Jesus*, 1935, 129-130.

⁵ Matt. 24 : 30.

⁶ Col. 1 : 27.

loyalty was still first and foremost to God so revealed. The developing thought of Paul seems to show both these beliefs: an early expectation of the outward coming of Jesus, and a later realization of the intimate and ultimate significance of the Holy Spirit.

Geoffrey Nuttall¹ has recently pointed out the widespread revival of eschatological consciousness in mid-seventeenth century England, issuing particularly in millenarianism. Many groups and individuals among the different sections of the Puritans were expecting the outward manifestation of Jesus Christ,² and several dates in the 1650's and 1660's were predicted for his coming. It was a period of great expectation. It was just at this period that the Society of Friends was born, and many of those who came into it came from groups with millenarian expectations.

As in New Testament days we see the change from expectation of an outward second coming, to a deeply spiritual conviction of the actual inward coming, so in Quakerism we see the spiritualization of this contemporary thought. This is admirably shown in a passage in Fox's *Journal* under the year 1656.³

While I was in prison here, the Baptists and Fifth Monarchy 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 there, and these professors would not thus receive him. So they failed in their prophecy and expectation, and had not the possession of him. But Christ *is* come, and doth dwell in the hearts of his people, and reign there. Thousands, at the door of whose hearts he hath been knocking, have opened to him; and he is come in and doth sup with them and they with him; the heavenly supper with the heavenly and spiritual man.

That this thought is confined neither to Fox nor to this date is very clear. Margaret Fox writes in 1664, " Now the Lord Jesus is come, so that those that have long sitten in darkness may see great light."⁴

Robert Barclay, ten years later, expresses the same conviction:⁵

¹ *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith & Experience*, 1946, 104f.

² An interesting example is the dream of Mary Springett before she was a Friend that " Christ is come indeed and is in the next room " quoted by L. V. Holdsworth in *Gulielma*, 1947, 26-27.

³ Fox, G., *Journal*, 1901, I, 314.

⁴ *Works*, 1710, 310.

⁵ Barclay, R., *Truth Triumphant*, 1692, 210.

And this is that we are persuaded, the Lord is bringing about in our day, though many . . . are now despising Christ in his inward appearance, because of the meanness of it ; as the Jews of old did him in his outward : yet notwithstanding there were some then, that did witness . . . that he was come. Even so now are there thousands, that can set to their seal, that he hath now again the second time appeared, and is appearing in ten thousands of his saints ; in and among whom . . . he is restoring the Golden Age.

This passage suggests that although Friends believed in a spiritualized millenarianism, they still believed that they were living at the particular time of his second coming, in the Golden Age itself. Often they announced the Day of the Lord,¹ and sometimes they did this in apocalyptic language as the following extracts from George Bishop (writing in 1656)² and Josiah Coale (writing in 1664)³ both show :

The powers of the earth are hardened and sealing up, and together will they give a stroke at the truth, but their sword shall return into their own bowells, and their bow shall be broken, and over all the heathen shall the kingdom of which there shall be no end, be exalted : the day is at hand, the hour is near ; glory and honour and praises unto him who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.

Josiah Coale's lines were written from prison addressed to Sectaries and especially the Church of Rome. Of the saints he says :

. . . strong and mighty men they are :
They will not spare nor pity thee, in this day o' the Lamb's war ;
For it's the day of veng'ance great, of our Almighty God,
He'll do to thee as thou hast done, thou can't escape his Rod.
The holy Prophets in their day, foretold these things of thee,
Which to our consolation (!), we hope to live and see.

This sense of living in the day of the Lord, when judgment is come upon the wicked and salvation to his followers, is naturally associated with claims of the fulfilment of messianic prophecy. For example, they defended their pacifism on these grounds. In their famous declaration

¹ e.g. Fox, G., *Journal*, 1901, I, 376 ; Howgill, F., in his testimony to Edward Burrough, unnumbered page at beginning of Burrough's *Works*, 1672 ; Marshall, C., *Works*, 1704, unnumbered page in *Journal* referring to 1670 ; Penn, W., *Works*, 1726, I, 93, 98.

² Cadbury, H. J., *Swarthmore Documents in America*, 1940, 24.

³ Coale, Josiah, *Works*, 1671, 111.

to Charles II, Fox and Hubberthorne write, “ Our swords are broken into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks, as prophesied of in Micah 4. Therefore we cannot learn war any more.”¹ Barclay uses the same defence in his *Apology*.² Friends similarly frequently defended the ministry of women by reference to Joel 2 : 28. In addition to the defence of their practices, consciousness of being in the messianic kingdom led them to use messianic language in relation to one another, hailing Christ in each other in terms which were only used for the Messiah.³

This vivid awareness of living in the last days, or the messianic kingdom, was shared by many of their contemporaries. But for the early Friends history was divided into three phases : before the Fall, in the Fall, and in the restoration by Christ. (The apostles were in this last, and Friends were called to it, but in between there had been “ a long night of apostasy.”) Friends thought of the last phase in terms of the first : they believed that in Christ they were renewed into that state in which Adam was before he fell ; or, to put it in terms of Pauline thought, that through the Second Adam they were created new men like the first Adam. This is a division to which Fox and his friends return again and again. One example from Fox will illustrate clearly his own thought :⁴

God was the first teacher in Paradise ; and whilst man kept under his teaching, he was happy. The serpent was the second teacher ; and when man followed his teaching, he fell into misery, into the fall from the image of God, from righteousness and holiness, and from the power that he had over all that God had made ; and came under the serpent, whom he had power over before. Christ Jesus was the third teacher, of whom God saith, “ This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him ” ; and who himself saith, “ learn of me.” This is the true gospel teacher who bruises the head of the serpent, the false teacher . . . Now Christ . . . said, “ I am the way to God, I am the Truth, I am the Life, and the true Light.” So as man and woman come again to God, and are renewed up into his image, righteousness and holiness, by Christ, thereby they come into the Paradise of God, the state which man was in before he fell : and into a higher state than that, to sit down in Christ that never fell.

¹ Fox, G., *Journal*, 1901, I, 498.

² Barclay, R., *Apology*, XV, 14.

³ This subject has been helpfully discussed by Geoffrey Nuttall, *op. cit.*, Appendix II.

⁴ Fox, G., *Journal*, 1901, II, 199.

They firmly believed that the coming of Christ had restored to men the possibility of living in God's kingdom as Adam had lived in Eden. But they went further, and emphasized too that they were called to “ a higher state than that ” of Adam, because they were called into the restoration in Christ who never fell.

This conviction that they were called into a pre-Fall state is most strikingly shown in a letter from Thomas Salthouse to Margaret Fell written on the day of Fox's release from Launceston :¹

this very hour, being about the 7th hour at night, is Wa(l)ter C(lement's) wife delivered of a daughter by the mighty power of the Lord, before she travailed she brought forth, to the astonishment of the heathen that cannot believe, and to the praise and honour of him that hath taken away the curse and redeemed his own from under the transgression, who is risen with healing in his wings.

The curse of Gen. 3 : 16 had apparently been removed, and they were in fact renewed up into that state in which Adam and Eve had been before the Fall.

This view of history is repeated over and over again in Fox's writings, but is in no way confined to him. It crops up, for instance, in the titles of works by Friends, such as William Bayly's “ A Short Discovery of the State of Man before the Fall, in the Fall, and out of the Fall again, &c.”² or Charles Marshall's

The Way of Life Revealed and the Way of Death Discovered : wherein is declared, Man's happy estate before the Fall, his miserable estate in the Fall, and the way of the restoration out of the Fall, into the image of God again, in which man was before the Fall.³

or again in Margaret Fox's

A Call to the Universal Seed of God . . . to come up to the spiritual worship, which Christ Jesus the great prophet hath set up, who took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, whereby he comes to raise up man out of Adam's fallen state, into a state that shall never fall.⁴

In this last it will be seen that the title itself bears witness to the “ state that shall never fall.”

Thus Friends believed that they were called into God's kingdom here and now, that this meant they were to be in a

¹ Swarthmore MSS. III, 158, per G. F. Nuttall.

² Bayly, W., *Works*, 1676, 85.

³ Marshall, C., *Works*, 1704, 43.

⁴ *Works*, 1710, 304.

state of perfection comparable to, and even better than, that of Adam before he fell. It was this conviction that if they were obedient to the Light of Christ they would be completely freed from the power of sin in their lives, that was one of the most liberating and appealing elements in the gospel they preached. It permeates much of their teaching and practice, and is the setting against which some of their testimony needs to be seen in order fully to be understood. In what follows, certain aspects of Quaker thought are looked at in this light, but it should be emphasized that they are here viewed only in this way, and that other aspects of the same thought, such as the biblical or ethical, are ignored.

The Seed

One of the terms used by Friends to express the experience of the divine element in man, is “the seed.” Geoffrey Nuttall¹ has pointed out how often Fox refers back to Gen. 3:15 in this connection, and abundant evidence could be brought to show that this was a key thought for many of the early Friends. The passage is that in which it is said by the Lord that the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent, and it is developed into an eschatological context by Friends. They identified the seed of the woman with Christ, who breaks the power of the serpent and restores man to the pre-Fall state. All the promises are fulfilled in him. Margaret Fox expresses it clearly;² referring to Christ she writes,

by him, in him, and through him, is the Restoration, and Redemption, and building up again, out of the fallen state of lost Adam, and of all mankind in the Fall: and he it is that the Lord promised to that end unto Adam . . . And the Lord God said unto the Serpent . . . I will put Enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed, and it shall bruise thy head . . . And so by this Seed, Christ Jesus, is the Serpent's power broken down: and all the promises are in him. Yea and Amen: he is the first Fruits of them that sleep, and the first begotten from the Dead, the first Born of every creature: by whom the worlds were made in the beginning, by whom also that which was lost is restored, and that which was broken down is builded up again, and renewed up into a better state than Adam was in before he fell, into a State that will stand and endure for ever, of whose kingdom, and Dominion, and Government, there shall never be end.

¹ Nuttall, G. F., *op. cit.*, 157-159.

² *Works*, 1710, 309-310.

Perfection and Infallibility

Some of Fox's most perplexing teaching concerns perfection. It perplexed his contemporaries more than it does us :¹

I found none that 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 clear and pure without sin as he was. Therefore, how should they be able to bear being told that any should grow up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ . . . ?

This is no place to review this teaching and that of contemporary Friends, but examples may be given to show the pre-Fall setting in which it must be seen in order to be understood. He tells us,²

I knew nothing but pureness and innocency and righteousness, being renewed up into the image of God by Christ Jesus, to the state of Adam, which he was in before he fell ;

and again.³

they asked me, Whether I was sanctified ? I answered, Yes ; for I was in the paradise of God. Then they asked me, If I had no sin ? I answered, Christ, my Saviour, has taken away my sin, and in him there is no sin :

and again, in discussion with a “ priest,”⁴ “ I told him. There is a perfection in Christ, above Adam, and beyond falling . . . ”

James Parnell well expresses the position :⁵

Man was perfect without sin before the Fall, or else he could not have been the image of God ; for God is pure and perfect, and he made man after his own image, pure and perfect, without sin ; but when he sinned he defaced his image, and lost his pure estate, and was drove out of Paradise . . . but God promised the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head : and Christ, the Seed, said

¹ Fox, G., *Journal*, 1901, I, 34.

² *ibid.*, I, 28.

³ *ibid.*, I, 50.

⁴ *ibid.*, II, 218. This is developed at length in George Fox's *Epistles*, 1698, pp. 190-192.

⁵ *Works*, 1675, 97-98.

he was come to preach deliverance to the captive, and to heal the broken hearted, and to seek that which was lost, and to bring again that which was driven away ; and this was his work, to redeem to man that which man had lost . . . I shall leave this as Query to all, both priests and people who deny perfection from sin here, Whether Christ is but a part of redeemer, or a perfect and full redeemer ; and which is the place betwixt heaven and earth where man shall be made free and cleansed from sin, if not upon earth ? Seeing that no unholy nor unclean thing can enter the Kingdom of God.

This query puts the position admirably. To Friends Christ had come and had redeemed them perfectly. Anything short of this appeared to be a blasphemous denial of the power and significance of Christ in his kingdom. Steven Crisp, for instance, satirically portrays those “ who are fighting the devil’s quarrels in this matter ” as saying, “ Rule thou in Heaven if thou wilt, for on Earth thou shalt have no place, no, not one soul to bear rule and sovereignty over.”¹ Their logic said, A perfect and full redeemer will perfectly and fully redeem and has perfectly redeemed us ; and the quality of their experience in those halcyon days made possible and endorsed their logic ; whereas the quality of our spiritual experience drives us to question their logic and find the *non sequitur* : a perfect redeemer only redeems perfectly if man responds perfectly and our response we know to be imperfect. Salvation is not the same as perfection ; salvation is dynamic, having reference to saving from present sin, and leaving room for improvement, unlike perfection.

But their logic led further, to the higher state than that of Adam, from which there is no fall. Reference has already been made to this,² but the point may be driven home by other examples. Fox, after going through the familiar story of Adam and Eve, emphasizing the promise that the seed of the woman (Christ Jesus) should bruise the serpent’s head, and that Christ does in fact set men free, continues,³

So he is sufficient and of ability to restore man into the state he was in before he fell ; and not into that state only, but into that also that never fell, even to himself.

¹ Crisp, S., *Works*, 1694, 14-15.

² pp. 16-19, and see later pp. 21, 23.

³ Fox, G., *Journal*, 1901, II, 136.

And again,

And though Adam and Eve fell from Paradise, the Jews fell from the law of God, and many of the Christians fell from their prophecies . . . and the stars have fallen, as was spoken of in the Revelations : yet the spirit, grace, faith and power of God remain.

Many such states have I seen within these twenty-eight years ; though there is a state that shall never fall, nor be deceived, in the Elect before the world began. These are come to the end of the prophecies, are in him where they end, and renewed by Christ into the image of God which man was in before he fell . . . and not only so, but they “ attain to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” who never fell.¹

This thought form of Friends can only be understood in the light of their own experience ; and it was a fact that they did know an amazing release from the burden and bondage of sin, coupled with a pentecostal experience of fellowship with one another in Christ. They were so wrapped up in this experience of the coming of Christ to rule in them that they could not recognize the imperfection of the human response to the perfect will of God, nor the fallibility of the human discernment of the infallible will of God ; and so they spoke with the authority of those living in the kingdom and acting under divine command, and not with the tentative “ I think ” or “ I feel ” of the present day.

The Unity of Knowledge

Another aspect of the claim to infallibility is shown in Fox’s insight into the unity of all branches of knowledge which led to an apparent claim to universal knowledge, made early in his *Journal* :²

I was immediately taken up in the spirit, to see into another and more steadfast state than Adam’s innocency, even into a state in Christ Jesus, that should never fall. And the Lord showed me that such as were faithful to him, in the power and light of Christ, should come up into that state in which Adam was before he fell : in which the admirable works of creation and the virtues thereof may be known through the openings of that divine word of wisdom and power, by which they were made . . . As people come into subjection to the spirit of God, and grow up in the image and power of the Almighty, they may receive the word of wisdom that opens all things, and come to know the hidden unity in the Eternal Being.

¹ Fox, G., *Journal*, 1901, II, 239.

² *ibid.*, I, 28f.

And so the untutored Fox continues to show that the representatives of the great professions of his time, the physicians, the priests and the lawyers, were unaware of this unity and therefore “ ruled the world out of the wisdom, out of the faith, and out of the equity and law of God ” ; and he “ was at a stand . . . whether (he) should practise physic for the good of mankind, seeing the nature and virtue of things were so opened to (him) by the Lord.”

The same thought is found in the incident at Lyme Regis in 1657 when, writes Fox,¹

we drew up some queries, of the ground of all diseases (and whether Adam or Eve had any before they fell ; and whether there was any in the restoration by Christ Jesus again), and whether any knew the virtue of all the creatures in the creation.

War

There are many roots to the Friends' peace testimony, and this thought of being in a pre-Fall state is but one of them. It is nowhere as explicitly stated as in the other subjects under review. But when we remember the defence of the peace testimony in terms of fulfilment of messianic prophecy as mentioned above,² and the identification of the messianic kingdom with a pre-Fall state in the present, Fox's answer when he was “ courted ” to accept a captaincy in the Commonwealth army is illuminated,³

I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars . . . I was come into the covenant of peace, which was before wars and strifes were.

The experience is that of being in that state in which Adam was before he fell, of being in the kingdom of him whose servants do not fight.

Women

Fox's contribution to raising the status of womanhood by affirming men's and women's complete spiritual equality, is something often insufficiently recognized. The thorough-going way in which he defended his position gains much from this thought-setting, as is shown clearly in the title of one of his later writings,⁴

¹ *Camb. Jnl.*, I, 269.

² pp. 15-16.

³ Fox, G., *Journal*, 1901, I, 68-69.

⁴ *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 1706, 990.

Here you may see how male and female were meet-helps in the government, when God made them in his image of righteousness, and holiness, and how Christ restores man up into his image again, and how that male and female are all one in him, and of the increase of Christ's government and peace there is no end.

Again,¹

For man and woman were helpsmeet in the image of God . . . in the dominion before they fell; but after the Fall . . . the man was to rule over his wife; but in the restoration by Christ, into the image of God . . . in that they are helpsmeet, man and woman, as they were in before the Fall.

And the same thought reappears in the passage which has become famous in relation to his view of scripture,²

And if there was no scripture for our men and women's meetings, Christ is sufficient, who restores man and woman up into the image of God to be helpsmeet . . . as they were in before they fell.

Marriage

It is natural that the same thought is behind his conception of marriage. One of the references just given refers to the equality of husband and wife in the restoration by Christ, and Fox's ideal of marriage was clearly the equality of the pre-Fall state. His view of the marriage ceremony is stated explicitly in his *Journal*,³

I was moved to open to the people the state of our marriages, declaring how the people of God took one another in the assemblies of the elders, and that it was God who joined man and woman together before the fall. And though man had taken upon them to join in the fall, yet in the restoration it was God's joining.

And so neither priests nor justices were to have a hand in the marrying of Friends.

Character of Church Membership

One of the beautiful letters written by Fox to Friends, pleading for tenderness and charity in judgment, is based on this thought-setting. The following extracts are taken from a long paragraph.⁴

¹ *Epistles*, 1698, No. 291, p. 323.

² *ibid.*, No. 320, p. 388.

³ Fox, G., *Journal*, 1901, II, 75.

⁴ *ibid.*, I, 345-346.

Now that ye know the power of God . . . that crucifies you to the state that Adam and Eve were in, in the fall . . . by this power of God ye come to see the state they were in before they fell ; which power of God is the cross . . . which brings up into . . . the image of God . . . and to a higher state, to the Seed Christ, the second Adam . . . But it is said, the church is in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ : so they who come to the church, which is in God the Father of Christ, must come to God again : and so out of the state that Adam and his children are in, in the fall . . . The way to this is Christ . . . So they that come to the church that is in God and Christ, must come out of the state that Adam was in, in the fall . . . to know the state that he was in before he fell.

Later he tries to express himself concisely in seven points,¹ from which the following are extracted.

First, They that sit down in Adam in the fall, sit down in misery, in death, in darkness and corruption.

Fourthly, They that sit down in the state in which Adam was before he fell, sit down in that which may be fallen from ; for he fell from that state, though it was perfect.

Seventhly, They that sit down in heavenly places in Christ Jesus sit down in him that never fell nor ever changed. Here is the safe sitting for all his elect, his church, his spiritual members, of which he is the living head . . . “ For,” as the apostle said, “ he hath quickened us, who were dead in sins and trespasses, &c., and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus : that in ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Jesus Christ.” Now the ages are come, that his kindness and exceeding riches towards us through Jesus Christ, are truly manifested in us, as in the apostles’ days.

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¹ Fox, G., *Journal*, 1901, I, 419-420.

The Deposition Books of Bristol. Vol. 2. 1650-1654.
 Edited by H. E. Nott and Elizabeth Ralph. Bristol,
 Printed for the Bristol Record Society, 1948. (*B.R.S.*
Publications. 13.)

One interesting series of statements in this volume tells of a dispute concerning the Parliamentary election of July 1654. Objection to the return was made on behalf of the unsuccessful contestants John Haggett and George Bishop (representing the “ godly party ”) and it is illuminating to find among Haggett’s supporters so many who soon afterwards became Friends. Other commercial documents calendared concern Christopher Birkhead (Birkend), Edward Pyott, and others in their pre-Quaker period.