Quakerism and Democracy

Some points concerning Revelation and Organisation

By EMILIA FOGELKLOU NORLIND

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Introduction

For churches as well as for states, the problem of to-day is not so much a question of creed or theory as a question of actual (not only traditional) religious *experience*, and of *organization*. "Every human community from the lowest to the highest should be a church or an organ for religion and its ends, otherwise it cannot match its destiny."[1]

Rufus Jones in his introduction to *The Second Period of Quakerism*, says: "Their Society was in idea a complete democracy,"[2] but he adds that the "formulation of Quaker doctrine was . . . not performed in a manner as accordant with the genius of the movement as was the form of the organization. . . ."[3]

Other churches were by tradition patriarchally organized. Political democracies were the result of revolutions and a definite change of national laws. Quakerism was born a democracy. Its organization was not a political revolution, but, in a constitutional way, became an affirmation of its creative origin, of what had already entered into real life.

We all know the intimate connection between the Levellers and some of those who first became Seekers and Quakers. Here it is unnecessary to stress this ideological affinity, with parallel customs to mark the equality of human value. What I want to stress now is the unique birth of

[1] C. J. Bostrom, a Swedish philosopher of the beginning of last century.
[2] Braithwaite, W. C., *The Second Period of Quakerism* (1919), xxix.
[3] *ibid.*, xxx.

religious first-hand experience, not only in one, but in so many of the first publishers of truth.

I can find nowhere in the earlier history of religion a corresponding group of finders, not adherents. The first publishers of truth did not go out to make adherents. They went out "to discover in all lands those who were true fellow-members with them."[1] "You are become companions with all that are born from above."[2]

William Sewel in his *History of the . . . Christian People called Quakers* (1722), expressly says: "There were also some others who, by the like immediate way, as George Fox himself, were convinced in their minds. . . . These unexpectedly and unawares came to meet with fellow-believers, which they were not acquainted with before. . . ."[3] This statement very well corresponds to the spirit of early Quakerism as documented in *The First Publishers of Truth*,[4] and in the letters of the earliest years, especially in letters written by, or to, those who shared the leadership.

But in a later period, the great survivor, George Fox, sums up the beginnings otherwise. In his Foreword to William Dewsbury's gathered writings[5]—1688, the year of William Dewsbury's death—he begins the story of Quakerism with the Balby group, who "came to me and were convinced . . . James Nayler was convinced after I had some discourse with him." Goodyear "came to me, and after I had declared the truth to him, he was convinced, and received the truth—and confessed to the truth, and received it, and after some time he did testifie it." Certain as he was that "ye truth sprange uppe first in Leistersheere"[6], he did not take any notice of the previous spiritual history of others. Dewsbury himself declares, "This I witness to all the sons of men, that the knowledge of Eternal life I came not to by the letter of the scripture, nor hearing men speak of the name

[1] Braithwaite, W. C., *The Second Period of Quakerism* (1919), xxvii.

[2] John Crook, quoted in Budge, F. A., *Annals of the Early Friends* (1896), 114.

[3] p. 28.

[4] *The First Publishers of Truth. Being Early Records . . . of . . . Quakerism . . .* Edited by Norman Penney, 1907. (Supplements 1-5 to *Journal F.H.S.*)

[5] *The Faithful Testimony of that Antient Servant of the Lord . . . William Dewsbery* (1689).

[6] *Journal of George Fox* (Camb.), II, 338.

of the Lord."[1] I shall return later to George Fox, whose own experiences are so richly documented. But now I will linger on other first-hand experience.

" It is evident that Farnsworth and Aldam, and probably the other members of the group, had reached the Quaker experience before Fox came among them."[2] As for Farnsworth " in influence he ranked by the side of Fox."[3]

Of Dewsbury, we get a similar impression in *The First Publishers of Truth*, where he is mirrored with great affection in several accounts. Dewsbury in every difficulty stands as an elder brother, courageous, suffering, understanding, always ready to find ways, never harsh, possessing a true Christian and democratic spirit of reconciliation.

Regarding James Nayler, " who made Quakers before he was one," I need not add much. He says himself: " I was at the Plough, meditating on the things of God, and suddenly I heard a voice. . . ." His inspired resolution after contact with Fox, the young prophet, should not be omitted. In the early years these two are often addressed together. Fox's *Journal*[4] includes Humphrey Norton's letter: " it lay upon me to lay it before the[e] and J.N. who are sufficient for these things." Richard Baxter as well as others look on Nayler as the chief Quaker. In Fox's *Journal* there is a strange little sentence. Fox has been beaten, and so has Nayler afterwards. Fox writes: " they never minded him till I was gonne."[5] Did not Fox become much more " minded " when Nayler was gone ?

William Crouch in his *Memoirs* says: " A particular account of each messenger and servant, whom it pleased God by his own immediate arm and power, to raise up, and send forth to publish . . . I cannot undertake to give."[6] Here, however, are personal confessions from some of them :

Richard Hubberthorne : " The Lord raised up in me a love to his Word. . . . This I was moved to declare from the spirit of my Father dwelling in me."

[1] Cadbury, H. J., *Letters to William Dewsbury* (1948), 54.

[2] Braithwaite, W. C., *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, (1912), 60.

[3] *ibid.*, 302.

[4] *Journal of George Fox* (Camb.), I, 246.

[5] *ibid.*, 60.

[6] Ch. II.

Thomas Green : " As I was walking in an orchard, the word of the Lord came unto me. . . ."[1]

William Britton : " The eternal God . . . by a further discovery of himself brought me back to silence that I should remain with the despised remnants of the Quakers."

William Ames : " I had no more need to be taught by men."

Humphrey Smith : " The Lord did not only call me but also thrust me forth of the world."

William Caton : " I began to find the truth of what he had spoken in myself."

It was said of William Crouch : " He was enriched with a large stock of experimental knowledge . . . though he lived not on his former experiences but upon Christ the living bread." And Fox himself : " seventy ministers did ye Lord raise uppe & sent abroade out of ye north Countryes."[2]

But I need not continue. I could go on quoting autobiographical confessions on convincement.

I only want to say some words about Elizabeth Hooton, " whose mouth was opnd to preach ye gospell,"[3] who probably " had been a Baptist preacher " before she met the young George Fox.[4] Fox writes : " She had Meetings at her house where ye Lord by his power wrought many Myracles to ye Astonishing of ye world & Confirming People of ye Truth."[5] Henry Cadbury remarks that the earliest miracle recorded is described as though neither Fox nor any other individual had performed it alone ; it took place in Elizabeth Hooton's house.[6] (To Muggleton, Elizabeth Hooton was one of the most dangerous " old dragons.") We have no autobiographical statement left from her. But a woman could not have been a Baptist preacher without a spiritual history. How much Fox owes her for his faithful

[1] In the notes to Penney's edition of Fox's *Journal*, Dewsbury, Farnsworth, Green and Nayler are mentioned as convinced through Fox ; in Ellwood's edition, Hubberthorne also.

[2] *Journal of George Fox* (Camb.), I, 14.

[3] *Journal of George Fox* (Camb.), II, 325.

[4] Braithwaite, W. C., *Beginnings*, 44.

[5] Manners, E., *Elizabeth Hooton*, 5.

[6] Cadbury, H. J., *George Fox's " Book of Miracles "*, 60.

standing up for women as fellow-workers in the Quaker movement we can only guess but never know. "Women were the first to preach the principles of Quakerism in London, in the English universities, and in the American colonies."[1]

The very heart of the early Quaker message was just this: finding your own teacher. And all the Journals, this very special contribution from Quakerism to the history of religious experience, are in themselves a testimony that the Quaker movement demonstratively began not with followers of one prophet, as most other religious revivals have done, but with human beings, "taught by God." "The Lord hath brought forth many" (R. Farnsworth to W. Dewsbury).

In confessions printed before 1669, no mediators are mentioned and what names are mentioned have no formal attributes affixed. During the years 1669 till 1688—years of persecution—very few, if any, such books seem to have been printed.[2]

But after 1688 Fox is put into the foreground in many journals as mediator, honoured with very special attributes never used in the early years. He is "God's dear servant G.F."[3] "Above all G.F."; "The true and faithful messenger G.F."[4] etc. In those days he is also to outsiders "George Fox of Swarthmore, gentleman."[5]

Summary of Argument

I. The first period of Quaker history was one of religious democracy, sprung up spontaneously after the experience of the Civil War. As far as I can see it represents something unique in Western history, and to study and renew it is of the utmost significance in our situation to-day.

II. In the second period—after the split of 1656, when enthusiasm (or rather one very exhausted enthusiast) became a source of scandal and was condemned—unemotionalism, reason and prudence marked out a gulf not to be bridged, and there arose in Quakerism, as in Cromwell's case, a tendency to "monarchy," i.e. towards one leader.

[1] Notes to the Cambridge *Journal*, II, 463.

[2] I owe this statement to Elin Sigmers who has had the kindness to go through some material for me in Friends House Library.

[3] Thomas Briggs.

[4] Ambrose Rigge.

[5] *Journal of George Fox* (Camb.), II, 361.

III. Interspersed we find attempts towards a collectivistic unity, in which Barclay and Penn with all their interest in constitutional government, shared with their contemporaries, had a certain influence, none of them having experienced the very first great convincement.

IV. It was Fox's genius which was able to provide a constitutional aspect, the " Gospel Order ", corresponding to the early democracy at least in giving great care to individual possibilities within the educative frame of smaller or wider assemblies. This " Gospel order " came to Fox as a revelation with a new wave of creative life. It is like a vessel in which wine from the grape of the early days could be gathered anew. In his own wonderful words : " The least member in the church is serviceable," and " all the members of Christ have need one of another."

An important part of democracy is its capacity or incapacity to settle conflicts. As for war, Quakers denied its means and spirit. As for the solution of internal conflicts, Dewsbury represents a deeper level than George Fox, who frequently condemned not only attitudes but persons, a weapon of more ancient model than his Gospel order. Of the three chief conflicts in English Quakerism during Fox's lifetime I find it most practical to deal with the first two before I consider the birth of Fox's constitution and to end by dealing with the Wilkinson-Story matter, which partly represents something of a constitutional conflict.

The Democracy of the Pioneers

" The great secret of the coming age of this world is that civilization rests not on reason but on emotion."[1] " Politics—in our present world situation, reckoning only with secular elements and leaving out man's spiritual existence—merits no other name than quackery " writes a more recent author from Finland. Secular politics does not yet count man as a spiritual being—a great wrong to mankind. In a Swedish paper of to-day (27. vii. 1949), I read : " Democracy will die for lack of communion between human beings." The early Friends were " bound up in union, in the free covenant of life in the Lord Jesus and one with another in the same spirit " (Dewsbury). Archbishop Tillotson in his description of

[1] Benjamin Kidd.

them, quoted in the Foreword to William Crouch's book,[1] accuses Quakers of exactly the same things for which democracies have been frequently blamed: they "bring men to a level, hoping it will be some justification of them, if they can but render others as bad as themselves!"

Quakers in their early days had not only expressed human equality on spiritual and political grounds, as had the Levellers and Diggers. The strength of fresh revelation was theirs. "O happy men," says Dewsbury, for the sake of the "living testimony that streams through the whole body as a river of oil and virtuous refreshings." The very glands had entered a new life with a joyous note, however hard was this life!

"In L[uke] H[oward] Life sprung. . ."[2] "Theyr flesh trembeled upon theyr bones."[3]

They knew the experience of being pushed out of their old surroundings into an isolation without which new births and new spiritual groupings seldom came into being. Most of them "had died" at least once in this life. "All my former life was ripped up," says young Ellwood. They entered a life of co-operation, of wonderful friendships in a dangerous and necessary common task. Quakerism, like early Christianity, stood for an experiment in community life not narrowed down to certain rites in common, but applied to the whole of life from a religious point of view. Their religious concerns were social concerns, and vice versa. They lived as children of a new age, asking, seeking, discovering, before every new situation or activity, not in blind obedience hanging on to conventional patterns of feeling and doing, which tend to turn life rigid and stiff. Also, as finders they must continue to be daily seekers.

The cultural background of their childhood and youth had been of a feudal type, which had imbued them—from church, home, army—with a thoroughbred force of loyalty, a great asset to any group life, even though it may imply some occasional sinking back into outworn attitudes of feudal pattern—after the passing of the first great convincement. Loyalty is a good backbone to enthusiasm. And so is friendship. The first movement is woven through with friendships and yokefellowships between those "who had first come to the spirit of God in themselves" and in each

[1] *Posthuma Christiana* (1712). [2] *F.P.T.*, 133. [3] *ibid.*, 116.

other, a friendship stabilized by the hardships of their work as "soldiers of the Lamb". Between some of them there was the spiritual bond of "father" and "son," but there were many fathers just as there were many sons. Hero-worship of a feudal type is not lacking, but there is also good comradeship with frank and friendly outspokenness. We all know those pairs of messengers—Burrough and Howgill, Camm and Audland, Caton and Stubbs, Mary Fisher and Ann Austin, Ann Audland and Mabel Camm, and so on. Fox and Naylor were such a pair in the beginning, settling meetings together at Isell,[1] writing books together, travelling together, being addressed together.

If Benjamin Kidd is right in what he says about civilization and emotion, this movement represents the "coming of age" of society. The community pattern is a tissue woven by threads of immediate warm and human affection between those who shared the great adventure, all the while "knowing the power of God in each other." There was no "tabu on tenderness"[2] in those days. . . . "I have cause to bless the Eternall God that ever I did see thy face, for what thou hast spoken to me is Eternall," Thomas Forester writes to William Dewsbury.[3]

Compare this with the mighty organization of the Jesuits, where special friendships are forbidden, and where the exclusion of the female sex is thought to favour the task.

This co-operation between men and women practised in the Quaker movement is a pioneer feature even to-day. It had utmost significance for this young "democracy"—not without its difficulties at a time when elsewhere it was out of custom, but furthering a synthesis between personal concern and flexibility of emotion, which are sometimes opposed to group loyalty.

We know the "extravagancies," acted by men as well as women in the period of abundant creative life. Acted out after the prophets in the Bible, or as fresh inspirations or imaginations, these "signs," as the atmosphere grew cooler and unfriendlier, fell down like angels with frozen wings, becoming ugly, blasphemous or meaningless in an alien climate.

[1] *First Publishers of Truth*, 43.
[2] Ian D. Suttee, *Origins of Love and Hate.*
[3] Cadbury, H. J., *Letters to William Dewsbury*, p. 22.

As for discipline in the early days, instead of laws or constitutions I find, together with the overwhelming influence of the silent meetings, three concepts of significance marked in early pamphlets and letters. They are Measure, Freedom and Power of the Lord.

(i) Regarding the word Measure, I quote Bonaventura's medieval expression: "None partaketh God supremely in the absolute sense, but supremely with respect to himself. For each one partaketh him so largely, not that he may not be partaken more, but that he may not advance beyond, and is utterly content with, that state which he hath." Man is born a slave under his inherited tendencies. In God he becomes freeborn, after his "measure." I quote George Fox: "Every one *in the measure of life* wait, that . . . all your minds may be guided up to the Father of life,"[1] "And if they should *go beyond their measure*, bear it in the meeting for peace and order's sake. . . ."[2] Margaret Fell: "Look not forth *from your own measures* at other's conditions and so neglect your own."[3] Nayler: "If thou standeth. . . . in the meek Spirit, not lifted up *above thy measure*, thou wilt come to feel how that of God in thee answers to the things of God."[4] James Nayler to Richard Myers: "Thou gets *above thy condition*." James Parnell on Martha Simmonds: "She is A faythful hearte *in her measure*."[5] Ann Sherwood to William Dewsbury writes of "the Lord, in whose treuth I now waite *in my meaesher*."[6]

"Measure" is a check on imitation and exaltation. It is the personal limit, which cannot be exceeded without trespassing on genuineness and authenticity. "Over-magnifying spiritual leaders"[7] offends against "measure"—it is a fall backwards into primitive idolatry in the form of hero-worship.

As for appreciative adjectives, the one who first came to a village usually got the strongest appreciation in its reports.[8]

[1] *Journal* (Bicentenary ed., 1901), I, 193.
[2] G. F. quoted in Braithwaite's *Beginnings*, p. 310.
[3] *A Brief Collection* (1710), 69.
[4] Works, p. 256.
[5] Cadbury, H. J., *Letters to William Dewsbury*, p. 41.
[6] *ibid.*, p. 65.
[7] Nuttall, G. F., *Studies in Christian Enthusiasm.*
[8] Small biographies of Dewsbury (197-199, cf. 294) and of George Fox (241, 311), Elizabeth Fletcher (260), Christopher Hutton (291), Richard Robinson (311).—*First Publishers of Truth.*

"That faithfull servant of the Lord" is said of Humphrey Smith as well as of George Fox and many others.[1] "That Eminent Minister and Faithfull Labourer James Parnell."[2] Many men unknown to posterity such as the "Brother [in] Laws"[3] were made great instruments in the hand of the Lord." "Eliz Hutton (Hooton), a good ould woman";[4] Gilpin, called "an apostele of thos parts";[5] Ann Downer, "Convinced of ye blessed truth through obedience thereunto . . . a faithfull Minister . . . very instrumentall for ye good of many";[6] "Our dear and honorable Friend, George Fox," and, in the same report, "our dear and Honorabel friend, Thomas Gilpin"; John Watson "one of the Lord's worthyes";[7] "Ye Servant of ye Lord and Minister of his Everlasting Gospel, Alexander Parker."[8]

On the other hand, George Fox is mentioned sometimes without adjective,[9] or they are all mentioned only by their names. They all get their share of affection and appreciation. Many are "Ready & ffree to Entertain the lords seruants."[10]

It may be that James Naylor somewhere is excluded, but nowhere is there a trace of extra blame on him. George Fox "the younger," whose letter on religious freedom Hubberthorne gave over to Charles II, is mentioned as "a true and faithful minister of Christ Jesus," who "laid down ye body" in 1661. "Friends grew as ye Garden of ye Lord."[11]

(ii) Freedom (in the moral sense) is parallel to "measure." When both an inner concern and an outward situation claim an action, the Friend is "free" to carry it out. In *Letters to William Dewsbury* you find this expression very often: "Dear brother let me hear from the as often as thou *finds fredom* in the Lord & canst conveniently."[12] "It were of great service if the Lord God should bring thee hither, *in my measure* I see it soe *I am free* to lay it before thee."[13] "I desired E.B. as he *found freedome*, for to goe & speak to Ja[mes Nayler]."[14] So in *First Publishers of Truth*, ". . . until *they were free* in the LORD to depart."[15] "They

[1] *First Publishers of Truth*, 105-6. [2] *ibid.*, 91.
[3] *ibid.*, 107. [4] *ibid.*, 219. [5] *ibid.*, 206.
[6] *ibid.*, 204. [7] *ibid.*, 71. [8] *ibid.*, 117.
[9] *ibid.*, 222. [10] *ibid.*, 224. *cf.* 237-8. [11] *ibid.*, 145.
[12] Cadbury, H. J., *Letters to William Dewsbury*, p. 18 (Thomas Stubbs).
[13] *ibid.*, p. 24. [14] *ibid*, p. 25. [15] *F.P.T.*, 132.

had not Freedome to receiue one penny of Them " who " would have given them both Gold & Silver."[1]

Admonitions concerning places, where one of the Friends feels another to be needed, are very often expressed in this form of confident freedom. Ann Sherwood has had " some movings concarning a generall meeting " ; she writes to Dewsbury about it, having feared that " something in the will *was not free* to write to thee."[2]

(iii) As for the " Power of the Lord " I can best refer you to Nuttall.[3] As long as they live, we find Dewsbury, Farnsworth and others of the first publishers " moved by the Lord," free to work and travel in communication with each other and also free to judge over what they think valuable to have in print or not, without submissiveness or disloyalty. The sincere comradely spirit without any trace of disloyalty could think as did John Lilburne : " George Fox . . . a precious man in my eyes, his particular actions being no rules for me to walk by."

I have gone through *The First Publishers of Truth* without finding an instance of anyone being sent away at the request of another in any accounts of " ye Breaking forth of Truth in this place."[4] The formulas are : " The Lords good hand brought amongst us Thomas Salthouse " ; Margaret Killam and Barbara Pattison, " whom the Lord maid his Instrjments "[5] etc. " It pleased God to putt it into the heart of his servant . . . to goe ouer to New England."[6] George Fox " was ordered first into these parts."[7] Miles Halhead " was moved of ye Lord," " Commanded of ye Lord."[8] " The first Comeing of the people of God "[9] came in the movings of the Lord ; " Sounding the Trumpett of the Lord."[10] "The Lord is to be looked unto who only and alone raises them up." The individual " publisher " steps behind his message : " it pleased the Lord, in the year 1653, to draw sevrall of his servants to Abby holme."[11] " In or about ye year 1653, did ye Lord move upon ye hearts of James Nayler & Robert Withers to come into Swaledale."[12] " God's

[1] *F.P.T.*, 135.
[2] Cadbury, H. J., *Letters to William Dewsbury*, p. 65.
[3] *Studies in Christian Enthusiasm*, 58 ff.
[4] *F.P.T.*, 91. [5] *ibid.*, 77-8. [6] *ibid.*, 159.
[7] *ibid.*, 293. [8] *ibid.*, 202. [9] *ibid.*, 323.
[10] *ibid.*, 293. [11] *ibid.*, 72. [12] *ibid.*, 309.

despised Truth shall Prosper whether I Live or Dye."[1] In the Wellingborough account Dewsbury's last words are quoted: "If any one has received any good or benefit thorow this Vessel, called, Willm Dewsbury, Give God the Glory, I'le have none, I'le have none, I'le have none."[2]

"The power of the Lord" can be dislocated by human limitations. As the fire of the divine election burns down, the pillar of fire can be turned into a pedestal below the chosen individual. He may get disordered or not return to his measure or become "an imperialistic human type on English democratic soil".

In the "Power of the Lord," nevertheless, the first Quakers challenged the whole feudal system in state and church, "exercised in going to their courts to cry for justice" (George Fox); "going to help the Lord against the mighty" (William Dewsbury). For three years and a half a revelation of democracy without external regulations was realized in England, nationally surrounded by the new republican spirit, and free from disaffections and inner disintegration.[3]

The Naylor and the Perrot Conflicts

The first conflict, so imbued with public disrepute and extended persecution, is not only a question of extravagance and hero-worship exaggerated into adoration. At bottom there is a personal conflict, a rivalry of influence, "secret smitings" and a sort of definite grouping round one only of the "dear friends George Fox and James Nayler," formerly so often addressed together.

The tension arises in London where George Fox, to begin with, "seems strange," and where Nayler seems "fitted for this great place," with his educational advantages, his many acceptable acquaintances[4] and his burning political interest, in the Fifth monarchy days, when official power evidently had made Cromwell a dictator, ready for kingship.

We all know the external picture of this conflict and its fatal consequences in splitting up and making ridiculous the Quaker movement. In it there are some traces of a

[1] *F.P.T.*, 289. [2] *ibid.*, 199. [3] *ibid.*, cp., p. 11.

[4] In Quaker literature we hear of *Captain* Stoddard and *Justice* Benson. Why is Nayler always termed "a soldier" A quartermaster had a high rank in the army as well as great responsibility.

" women's movement," not only from the then unbalanced Martha Simmonds, but also through other women taking sides with Nayler ; while young Burrough, the " son " of Fox, harshly dismisses their overtures.

The total conflict is known under the name of " Nayler's fall." Nayler obviously made the scandal.

But was there not subtly a George Fox's " fall "—without provoking any bad repute at all ? Not only Hubberthorne's letter to Margaret Fell reports what happened between the two in Exeter Jail. So also does Rich's report after Nayler's death, and above all Fox's own words about James Nayler long afterwards : he " was dark & much out : neverthelesse hee woulde have come and kisst me but I saide seeinge hee had turned against ye power of God Itt was my foote : & soe ye Lord God moved mee to sleight him & to sett ye power of God over him ".[1] As Cromwell felt God's call to chastise Ireland, so Fox was moved to " sett ye power of God over " Nayler. He identifies himself with God as did the anointed rulers of old. Fox had frankly and rightly said he was the son of God without being punished. Fox had got adoring letters[2] without being accused. Fox was cleared of connection with the public scandal because of his judging letter, found in Nayler's pocket. Fox is entirely on the side of reason, respectability and unemotionalism—but not of charity.

And now as to the way of dealing with this conflict, with its terrible public consequences, with echoes in books and pamphlets all over the continent, and with a considerable number of men and women taking Nayler's side. Nayler in prison after his cruel treatment, begins to realize the cost to Friends of his consent to an extravagance inspired by others. " James said that he see it his place to lie under the feet of all," Roger Hebden writes to Dewsbury,[3] ignorant of the smarting memory attached to those words. Several of the old friends show as before much affection to Nayler. Farnsworth, Hubberthorne, Dewsbury, Alexander Parker, John Audland, Rebecca Travers, Sarah Blackbury, " M.T."[4]

[1] *Journal* (Camb.), I, 244.

[2] For example ; *Journal* (Camb.), I. 245, " Umphery norton to g ff 1656."

[3] Cadbury, H. J., *Letters to William Dewsbury*, p. 25.

[4] *ibid.*, p. 23 (unidentified).

all take him in as of old. "The love that rounds to him I cannot express" (1658). Some of them endeavour to moderate Fox, who rode to meeting-place after meeting-place disowning not only the painful action, but also Nayler in person, especially in Bristol, where many had been moved by the spectacle of Nayler's martyrdom. "M.T." appeals to Dewsbury, whose "care in healing up breaches" is well known to the writer. And Alexander Parker writes to Margaret Fell, "My dear sister, as thou hast been tender and of large compassion unto the sufferers, I beseech thee make intercession for him; that in the spirit of meekness, he may be restored again." We see how all these here mentioned try to heal the wound.

I have not the date of a certain sermon by Dewsbury, included in his Works—maybe it came forth in those days: "Thou must be slain to thy pride . . . thou must have God to burn it up in thee. He abhors the proud. . . . People may die into life."

To Nayler, Fox shewed no meekness. Nayler went through the kneeling scene, described and opposed by Rich. Nayler would not continue the conflict by setting up others against Fox.[1] But he continued as an apostle, even in Bristol, much in London, during two years. On Fox's order to him to leave London and go into the country, Hubberthorne answers: "Here is great service for him, and several great ones have a desire to hear him." He is is in no disrepute among these comrades.

In Fox something hardened, just as Fox had found "O.P. began to harden."[2] From a secular point of view he had victoriously put down the resistance and for the future has prevented identification between Quakers and extravagance. But somewhere in the movement there was a deep loss on the emotional side, not only through giving up extravagances. Some of the group "runn out with" Nayler, others are "restored". But a deep wound of unemotionalism and fear of too immediate obedience to the Voice has marred the movement, and tends to reveal its existence in future relationships, not being abolished "by the mere fiat of power."

[1] His last words on "exaltation and cruelty" may mean the weak points on both sides (which will both be overcome by the spirit felt by him).

[2] *Journal* (Camb.), I, 263.

A year after Nayler's death (Margaret Fell could still write about Nayler's death without unkindness), George Fox visited the house where Nayler had died, " where ye maior of Huntingeton came to see me "[1] Nayler is not mentioned. After the death of Hubberthorne, Farnsworth and Dewsbury, Nayler's name becomes buried in hard silence. He is just " another " or one amongst " several others," his works being published only after George Fox's death. Crouch's (censored ?) autobiography, with so many vivid glimpses of the " first publishers," omits mention of Nayler.

Of the two reports from Swaledale,[2] one tells us of James Nayler and Robert Withers (already quoted) " being ye first yt we know of yt came there with yt Testimony." The other begins : " Note, That the first man that came into Swaledale to preach the Gospel was one Robert Wethers (so farr as can be maid out)."

In the report of Somersetshire[3]—where I do not know of any visit from James Nayler—we read : " Seuerall others there were That has a seruice And ministery for Truth About the Time before Mentioned, some whereof haue not Continued ffaithful to the Lord . . . are not worthy to haue Their Names Recorded amongst the Righteous. . . . This account is ffaithfully drawn up According to fformer advice ffrom the yearly meetting."

The Second Conflict

Out of this first conflict Fox went externally as the victor, the survivor, and by-and-by as leader above the others. On the inner stage things were perhaps otherwise. (I venture to believe that Nayler's loving spirit still worked in the silence for good !) But persecutions were terribly hard, life was dry and poor, and the need for a rock " in a weary land " grew stronger and stronger in the post-pioneer generation. " The power " was not something George Fox took. It was something he represented (biologically, psychologically). When the First Publishers were all gone nobody would doubt his supremacy ; idolizing affection had not been declined by him. But it was a step backwards from the original Quaker " democracy " where social contacts were woven through with spiritual unity.

[1] *Journal* (Camb.), II, 9. [2] *F.P.T.*, 309, 316. [3] *ibid.*, 224.

The second conflict was subdued by Fox on much the same lines as the first one. A definite antipathy against Perrot and his spontaneity, when the group so recently had passed through the great risk of extravagancy, acts in cutting off Perrot from the movement. After his adventures and sufferings in foreign countries, Perrot at his return in 1657 must have been struck by the radical change of atmosphere among Friends in London, and reacted against it, much supported by a hidden uneasiness in many. To the last he longed for "amity and unity" in his own way. As a democratic Swedish writer, writes: "He felt lack of interpersonal affection dangerous, naive as he was, this poet!" He had a refreshing effect on dry meetings, and was appreciated by Penington, Ellwood, Richard Davies and Jane Stokes—women on the whole did not seem to take a vivid part in this conflict.

Perrot's "Humility of God"[1] touched upon a delicate matter, and his testimony against formalities and the importance of the hat question, bitterly recalled the dynamic and smarting recollection of those (including James Nayler) who "kept on there hatts when I prayde," "ye first yt gave yt bad example amongst freindes."[2] The hat had grown to be an important symbol, like a banner to a nation. How many had not in the first days been cast into prison because of their hat.

Fox makes speedy work of it. He did not "see my soul," an expression by the poet Perrot. But he saw tendencies towards dissolving the Quaker movement, and judges harshly. Loyalty to Fox now very evidently influences most of those who had at first appreciated Perrot. They kept aloof, could not stand hearing "evil of Friends that bore the burden and heat of the day," nor the crying out "against Friends as death and formal."[3]

Braithwaite says of Fox: "With him tenderness to the individual must be subordinated to the welfare of the group." Of a secular group, perhaps. But was he true to his beginnings in his attitude towards Perrot? "Eccentricity is not healed by harshness."

[1] On men's judging: "There is a secret seed of prejudice and enmity in the heart, which stirreth up prejudice in the hearts of the persons judged."

[2] *Journal* (Camb.), I, 244.

[3] Braithwaite, W. C., *The Second Period of Quakerism* (1912), 230.

Spontaneity, enthusiasm and group consolidation became more and more separated. An aftermath spirit of disaffection ate like worms in spite of faithful loyalty to Fox's judgment.

Group Authority

After these first conflicts, during Fox's three years in prison we find a new tendency towards group consolidation. Farnsworth's constitutional proposal strengthens the group authority, the corporate sense, to which individual guidance must be subordinated. In Fox's long absence this church authority was the solution arrived at in 1666, at the special ministers' meeting in London. The group authority—over against other groups and other attitudes of a minority—has the day. There is a collectivistic trend, more or less outspoken. When the third conflict, the constitutional one, comes to life later on, we find that both Penn and Barclay, the two most interested in the great constitutional questions of their time, more or less openly think in terms of this group authority, while Fox comes out of his prison with a wonderful solution of another kind.

Neither "Foxonian unity"—his enemies' expression—nor the effort towards church control over individual consciences corresponds to the original unity of spirit, friendship, social conscience and great work. We are not able to realize fully the enormous cost and challenge of the revelation of a new human type of individual and community life, when there darted out into the world those first publishers of truth, "above 20 yeeres agoe when wee were but younge lads & lasses."[1]

The "Gospel Order"

There are leaders who avoid the organizational implications of the principle they stand for. George Fox did not. He is not the single "founder of Quakerism"; but he is the founder of the constitution through which a living Quaker movement was able to survive. There he stands foremost.

J. S. Rowntree says: "Beginning his ministry as an iconoclast—the apostle of a singularly individualistic faith . . . George Fox preserved that saving sense of the proportion of things, which qualified him to become the architect of a system of church organization suitable for the present need

[1] *Journal* (Camb.), II, 98.

of a religious body." Howard Brinton opposes the first part of this utterance and approves Troeltsch's assertion that the Quakers "overcame the natural anti-social or rather individualistic part of mysticism," I do not like to have the Society of Friends interpreted in terms of architecture. Early Quakerism was no "construction." It was the outcome of a spiritual and historical event, interpreted, after twenty years, in a unique religious constitution. And this constitutional interpretation—after several earlier tentative endeavours—was given through George Fox. His "Gospel Order" was revealed to him while he was "buried alive." In organizational form, Fox stated finally what had come into life as a fellowship 20 years before. He is not "the founder of a creed" but of an organization where it should be possible for living individuals to be their creed. I would modify Gerald Heard's saying: "History is only the shadow cast by growing and defining spirit of man," and say that the spirit of history discloses what existed before it was defined.

"Ye Lord opned to me & lett mee see what I must doe."[1] With an immense joy and inner strength Fox goes out with this revelation, although bodily much weakened. Fervently he stresses the importance of each individual for the whole group. "Every man & woman yt be ye heires of ye gospel they are heires of this authority."[2] Bodily pain and weakness is as if they are not. His newly-opened energy is "on top of it."[3] His inspiration drives him through all the meetings in England and out of his native country. This gospel order gives him the fresh gladness of early days. To quote again one of his latest expressions in this matter: "The least member in the church has an office and is serviceable, and every member hath need one of another."

Never was the *we* accent stronger in him. "And I said then [1672] it was time for mee to goe away, for then they would not come to their owne Teacher . . . for wee brought every one to their owne teacher."[4] I cannot with Rufus Jones see in this new task "opened to him" "a surrender

[1] *Journal* (Camb.), II, 111.

[2] *cf.*, ibid., II, 343, 344.

[3] Even if new personal hopes in connection with M.F. are part of this joy, it is but human and uplifting—as is love in every age of man.

[4] *ibid.*, II, 224 etc.

of the primitive dream," nor that he " bent in this crisis." The more I look on his " gospel order " and the spiritual freshness surrounding its origin, the more I find it a translation of the early glorious fellowship experience into terms of organization. The genius of Fox defined in action——not in analysing—what had already existed as a Quaker democracy. The melody of the early years echoes in the " Gospel Order."

But to Fox himself there is in it something more than merely fetching up the past. " The sacrifice of the man in power " was fulfilled in himself. In that moment he, for the most part, dethroned himself from a rather stabilized leadership. Is it too bold a conjecture to put the question thus: was this his way of unconscious, unspoken, but practised atonement for things past—mute in the world of spoken words, very real in demonstrative action? He never was conscious of sin,[1] but his incessant religious appeal to his inner Teacher cleanses the depths of his soul for action, even though personality traits betraying power-urge and domination are still identified with " ye power of ye Lord."

Even such an utterance as " Friends putt there names to them by my leave & order,"[2] with several others which seem to contradict the spirit of his own first inspiration, do not alter this fact. When a man's excellence is taken for granted, it is not easy to conquer the superman in him, especially in a person of his mature age with an overwhelming religious experience in his youth.

He now lives surrounded by an admiring wife and family. Margaret's sons-in-law defend his memory against William Penn, not to mention Margaret herself.[3] We are wrong to wish George Fox to remain a young prophet. Growing into manhood he was within his rights in enjoying a good reputation—none could take from him the merit of having suffered terribly for his deep conviction.

Yet Fox, for the most part, gave up being the man of power. It has been pointed out that Fox's death led to no

[1] *Journal* (Bicentenary), I, 2; *Journal* (Camb.), I, 2-4 etc.

[2] *Journal* (Camb.), II, 313. Compare his pungent words against *Gleichschaltung* when the priests " drew upp articles to bee reade in there parishes—& all ye people shoulde say Amen to them " (*ibid.*, I, 295). Or, " I did not set up that meeting to make orders against the reading of my papers " (Barclay: *Inner Life*, p. 403).

[3] For instance Spence MSS. 33 (or Camelford).

disturbance. This was a great victory. What that meant to the Quaker movement, nay, to Quaker democracy, is something great and unique. He had done what Cromwell could not do. "Ye Lord God whose I am & we are" opened to Fox another way. It is true "the system could only be worked well by men of enlightened spiritual experience,"[1] as were those first publishers of truth. Fox's outlook afterwards, during the years of subdued "extravagances" and quenched enthusiasm sounds like this: "Many have gone beyond their measures, but more have quenched the Spirit and so become dead and dull or subject to a false fear."[2]

"Peoples who had experienced and praised political freedom, abstained from it without resistance and ended by entirely forgetting it."[3] We have actual knowledge to-day of such experiences. The way to forward democracy to a new generation is through education. It is interesting to find how George Fox became open to this problem in his age. I am thinking not only of his ideas of schools, even for "lasses." I think also of the exercise of citizenship and responsibility brought forth through all the different "parliaments," monthly, quarterly, yearly, by far the most important education in democracy—the more so as in no other "church" do worship, debates and responsible citizenship go together in the same way. To-day when mechanization takes hold of human societies and "the tabu on tenderness" is the rule, I think there is much to learn from this constitutional synthesis, this vessel wherein inspiration was reckoned with in the social order, where debates alternate with silences, and where co-operation is possible without the rigid schemes of yesterday. Secular societies do not yet reckon for inspiration; Quakerism does not exist without it. The "machine way" of never touching each other, only fitting in with a part of our life in a common system, has nothing in it of early Quaker spirit.

There is no need in this place to linger on details or even occasional relapses to a wooden order, instead of actualizing always the living community, woven through with friendships and spiritual unity.

[1] Braithwaite, W. C., *Second Period*, 259.
[2] Fox, G., *Epistles*, No. 275, quoted in *Second Period*, 264.
[3] Bryce, J., *Modern Democracies*.

The Wilkinson-Story Conflict

Now to the third Quaker conflict in Fox's lifetime, the Wilkinson-Story separation. It is, partly, a real conflict of constitution, though other stronger problems of an emotional kind blur the contours. It seems to me a paradoxical situation, that the mistakes for which Fox is rightly criticized are chiefly his previous attitudes in the two earlier conflicts, while the real intentions of his constitution are not understood by many defenders, out of loyalty to Fox, nor by the opposers. Somewhat anachronistically, old wounds are disclosed as new suspicions against the constitutional aim, as is very often the case in secular political life, where there is seldom such a rich documentation at hand as in Quaker literature of the tissue of emotions and motives behind ideological contrasts, falsely taken as the only issue in question. Because of the scars left in the Quaker body after Fox's summary judging in the two previous conflicts (which were subdued, not solved), his renouncing of his special supremacy in order to get again a fellowship spirit is interpreted as if this very action were the utmost outcome of dictatorship.

A few of the oppositional items only: specialized business meetings as the opposers wanted, would have separated practical things from the spirit of worship—a unity which has meant so much to the Quaker message. Limiting Friends' opportunities of taking part in conferences would have meant reducing the possibility of education for responsibility. The opposition to women's meetings which turned up only after earlier approval, had a personal bias against Margaret Fox, " the woman high sheriff." There is also the very reasonable claim of the opposers that singing, groaning and other disturbances should not interefere with actual spoken witness.

The opposition to condemnation papers seems very sound, but it was weakened through a suspicion of self defence in the opposers. " Deal gently . . . instead of publishing their weakness."[1] " Condemnations should not stand on our deacon's books to posterity."[2] An accusation against Fox as lacking courage is entirely absurd. But the cardinal accusation has to be a little more examined.

Returning from America, where Fox had had such great

[1] Rogers, W., *Christian Quaker*, p. 29. [2] *ibid.*, p. 8.

care not to be in the foreground but to direct everyone to their inner Teacher, he found dissension between Margaret and John Story. "He did," says Braithwaite, "everything in his power to get the difficulty composed without assertion of his own authority," in harmony with the new order. He "was careful to leave the responsibility to the bodies concerned." At the opposers' visit to Swarthmore, he was "loving to them and tender on their behalf, letting them see the danger they were in." In his Epistle No. 308 he says: "when I turned you to Him that is able to save you, I left you to him." The strong condemnation of John Story and John Wilkinson by the Yearly Meeting of ministers in 1677 was not signed by George Whitehead and Fox kept in the background.

This reticence of Fox is consistent with the spirit of the constitution. But others are eager to have him "step in and stand in the gap." Margaret and other Friends, primarily defending Fox himself, not the "Gospel Order," had part in the stressed misunderstandings of the aim of the constitution. The words of the Y.M. Epistle of 1673 are in direct contrast to Fox's "Gospel Order": "A general care is not laid upon every member . . ." but "particularly our dear brother and God's faithful labourer George Fox." Here is that formulation of principle which becomes a fixed attribute—not belonging in a real fellowship where such things are not needed. "When love begins to sicken and decay it useth an enforced ceremony."[1] Not even Penn and Barclay, neither of whom had been among the first publishers, understood Fox's educational aim in making everyone able to give service. Both stress too much the corporate authority. When this point was exaggeratedly stressed from Barbados (as honouring Fox?) George Fox and others of the old fellowship replied that such is the very way to weaken the life of the whole body. "The universal spirit of God has unity with the least measure now as it was in the apostles' days."

But there are deep personal conflicts in the controversy, opening up old veins of disaffection.[2]

"What we stand for is Truth and Righteousness and that *Christ's Government* may be exalted in every heart . . . not

[1] Shakespeare, W., *Julius Caesar*, Act IV, Scene 2.

[2] Stirredge, E., *Strength in Weakness*, p. 36; *F.P.T.*, 267.

to depend on man for teaching but on sufficiency of God's grace."[1] And further: "Persons are exceeding prone to receive things as truths from those whom they have an high opinion of, and to imitate their practices and so hurt their own growth."[2] In a paper against the two Johns these were said to have "sleighted the cause of God."[3] Rogers quoted a letter from Fox in 1670: "This is the word of the Lord to you . . . you will become hardened and as bad as the old opposers James Nayler and his company, and John Perrot."[4]

Consciousness of the real content of the Nayler conflict is always lacking in Fox. There he tragically repeats old impressions in spite of all. Rightly he is answered: "Well may Friends be called apostates in their day and be cursed of men when they are dead . . . seeing James Nayler by thee is called an old opposer, who confest his weakness . . . and died in Truth and peace with God."[5] And Rogers also points out that the adoration for which Nayler was judged is just the peril of George Fox. Nayler seems to have grown into a type of every disturbance in Quakerism. "My judgment shall stand for ever noe pardon for thee." He, who "was in love of God to all that persecuted me" (1653) had a hard spot, where old friendship had been externally killed.

There are ". . . two ways. One is to build up round ourselves a protective wall, to shield our self-esteem . . . But in the end what we have built is not a fortress but a jail. The other is to endure the shame of self-revelation in a spirit of true humility."[6]

In a secular state only the hardened self-defensive man can lead. The Society of Friends began as a community where threads of love were the binding element "united (as they were) to the Lord & one to another in the blessed fellowship of the spirit, the which in those days was plentyfully enjoyed."

[1] Rogers, W., *Christian Quaker*, p. 27.

[2] *ibid.*, p. 90, quoted from Penington.

[3] *ibid.*, p. 26. The "two Johns" were, of course John Wilkinson and John Story.

[4] *ibid.*, p. 41.

[5] *ibid.*, p. 43.

[6] Hugh Stafford in *The Friend* (London), 15.iv.49.

But " It may be feared many do eye more the orders from thee than they eye the Lord in them."[1] " Hast thou forgotten how thou hast testified against J.N's. spirit, whose great fall was his owning or at least not reproaching the women ? . . . If such things are crimes in others, how comes it to pass that the like are not crimes when committed by thee ? "[2]

This unhealed wound lies behind much coldness and behind much wrongly directed, but real opposition, against a constitution born out of a renewed spirit of love. And although Fox had suffered so deeply that even in his constitution he made the attempt Cromwell could never make, he never became conscious of the enduring after-effect of the Nayler conflict, which was the petrified point in his great heart. I sometimes think that this after-effect secretly lasted longer in the Society even than the effect of the " extravagance " and the scandal.

[1] Rogers, W., *Christian Quaker*, p. 77.
[2] *ibid.*, p. 93.