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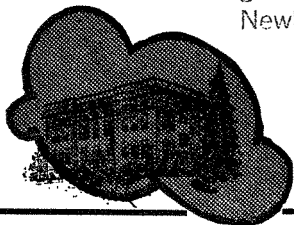
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"These are members of the true church, who know the work of regeneration. . . and being come to be members of the church of God, they are indeed members one of another in the power of God."

Journal, George Fox, 1656

George Fox's Concept of the Church

BY ARTHUR O. ROBERTS, PH.D*

The purpose of this study is to determine the significance of George Fox's concept of the Church for his doctrinal teachings and for his work as a religious leader in seventeenth century England. Literature in the field of early Quakerism, extensive and varied though it is, has neglected formulation of Fox's views on the basis of such a dominant ideal. The present study is based primarily upon the printed collection of Fox's *Works*.

During the Interregnum, England struggled for both authority and unity. Fox was part of the radical wing of the Puritan movement and his own spiritual struggles mirrored the unrest of the times. While unity was sought primarily under the impetus of Christian motivation, the radical groups reflected varied attitudes toward the Church. The Seekers

(*) For brief educational background and explanation of this article see item on next to last page.

waited for the Church, the Ranters despaired of it, the Fifth Monarch men looked for its rule in the imminent return of Christ, the mystics spiritualized it passively, the Levellers spiritualized it actively, while the Baptists and Independents separated congregations of its believers from the world.

Fox shared in the criticism of existing churches. He considered the church to be apostate on these counts: (1) impure conduct, by which professing Christians separated religion from morality by the sins of pride, greed, and cruelty; (2) empty forms, equating buildings with the Church, outward methods for true worship, and sacraments for the real presence of Christ; (3) unworthy methods of church maintenance, consisting of the forced support of spiritually unqualified ministers who resorted to persecution to defend their "man-made" religion; and (4) inadequate doctrines, consisting of the rejection of claims upon a Christ experimentally known and the excuse to continue in sin until death.

With what seemed to his enemies to be audacious effrontery, Fox not only criticized the Church, but dared claim it in the gathering "of those in scorn called Quakers." Fox cannot be understood at all apart from an appreciation of his dependence upon revelation. He believed that Christ was gathering his Church currently as he had been in apostolic days. Fox did not deny the inspiration of Scripture, but asserted that God inspired men, not in defiance of what had already been done and said, but in accordance with the unity of God's revealed ways of redemption. Fox believed that the true Church was being gathered in the power of Jesus Christ, whose atoning death and mediatorship, and whose life-bestowing resurrection effect salvation to those who accept him, coming to man's experience as the Word of God, the Inward Light.

Fox depicted Christ as the Seed whom God elects for the destruction of the evil nature in man. The doctrine of election was thus enlarged: men may respond to the elected One, or they may reject. Fox is perfectionistic. His soteriology called for the restoration of man to a moral state in which the com-

gency of radical Puritanism to secularize the Christian ideal.

Fox's optimism toward the complete realization of the coming of Christ was based upon his visions of the conquest of the world by the weapons of the spirit—a conquest by evangelism. He viewed the final judgment as a warning against those who would assume rights over the souls of men and as the vindication of God upon evil, and good. Fox stressed the future life rather briefly, content with the expositions given in the New Testament. The Church triumphant begins, for him, with the new birth; hence the Church already knows a triumph and a presence, the beauty and glory of which can only be extended in the restitution of all things unto God.

Thus the ideal of the Restored Church is central for Fox. It provides the framework for his views on the doctrines of salvation, on spiritual authority and individual freedom in Christian society, and on the meaning of God in history.

Writer Is New Professor at GFC

At our request, this issue of the Journal has been written by one of our new faculty members. He is Dr. Arthur O. Roberts, Assistant Professor of Religion and Philosophy. Dr. Roberts in a way is a member of the college family who has come home. He graduated from Pacific College, now George Fox, in 1944, after which he served some pastorates in the Oregon and Kansas Yearly Meetings of Friends. In 1951 he received his B.D. from the Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, and his Doctor of Philosophy degree in Church history at Boston University in the summer of 1953.

The preceding abstract from his doctoral dissertation is relevant from the standpoint of current interest in Quaker thought and in the relationship between church and state. The abstract was selected to appear in the *Boston University Graduate Journal*, December, 1953.

authority in opposition to congregationalism, and aims at giving a "divine unction" to the practical administration of church affairs.

(3) *It is the holy community*, demonstrating the restored nature of its members devotionally, through worship which claims the inspiration of the spirit and needs no outward symbol for its communion with Christ; ethically, through testimonies against compulsory tithes and the taking of oaths as unworthy of the New Testament, and for honesty, simplicity and active love as the true Christian witness to holiness; and socially, by emphasizing *marriage as a sanctifying ordinance* of God, to be guided by the Church, *children as a heritage of the Lord*, to be trained and brought to the Covenant of Light, and the *needy as responsibilities* for its care.

(4) *It is a fellowship of evangelism*, in which the apostolate rests upon the ministers who are called out of common walks of life to speak the words of reconciliation. The ministers are distinctly called of God, they may receive voluntary support in their public service, and their gifts of ministry are recognized and guarded by the Church.

Fox believed that Christ had come in an inward but decisive way, during his own time, to gather together the true Church from out of the apostate church, upon which the judgments of God were falling. The realized eschatology finds in the awareness of Christ the "pearl of great price" and the "mountain that fills the earth." Redemption in Christ is the beginning of the end, delayed, but now resumed. Seeing the Church thus in motion, Fox viewed the state with little optimism. He opposed all attempts to displace "God's prerogative" in the matter of conscience. He asserted the right of the state to punish evil doers; but insisted that people who do evil are not Christian. Hence, Fox placed the responsibility for positive good in the world directly upon the Church, treating the state as a kind of interim order, needed because of wickedness. He would not discard the Church visible for Commonwealth, Protectorate, or King; nor would he restore "King Jesus" with a sword. Thus he reacted against the ten-

plete Fall is negated by the complete holiness of Christ. Neither drama nor legal fiction sufficed: redemption must consist of real, imparted righteousness. Fox's thought reveals a double dualism: the one is between the opposites, good-evil, seed of the serpent and the seed of God, deceit and truth, false church and true church; and the other is between the old and the new, the old covenant and the new, the old baptism and the new. Over the first dualism Christ brings victory; to the second, completion. Thus, metaphysically and historically, the true Church is composed of sanctified, restored individuals.

Outward baptism was considered outmoded. Fox considered that Christ's baptism with the Holy Spirit could certify the grace of God experientially. This sense of the real presence of Christ marked his idea of conversion experience with the note of victory. Puritan "wayfaring and warfaring" had for him a destination and a victory in this life as well as in the life to come. Charges of infallibility assailed Fox, but he refuted them from the basis of the certainty of God's revelation. God's contact is in personal, present experience. Fox is saved from subjectivism by his position that there is unity and constancy in God, in the redemptive history, and in the reality of Christ who leads his people together. The mystery of the relationship of God and man was found in transference, not accommodation; in Christ, not in man; in will, not in essence.

This gathered Church presents itself, believed Fox, in ways which may be described as follows:

(1) *It is a gospel fellowship* uniting restored persons by the common inward experience of salvation. Under the leadership of Christ, the Church is able to give outward recognition to those whom Christ has gathered to his body. Christ universally available is the guarantee of the catholicity of the Church, and the gathered fellowship is his visible body.

(2) *It is a gospel order*, whereby the apostolic pattern provides an historical basis and guide for revealed authority, serves to check individualism, posits a universal basis for

CALENDAR

- December 18—4:00 p. m., Christmas Vacation begins.
January 4—8:00 a. m., Classes resume.
26-29—First Semester Examinations.
29—End of First Semester.
February 1—8:00 a. m. to 5:00 p. m., Registration
for Second Semester.
2—8:00 a. m., Second Semester Classes
Convene.
5—8:00 p. m., Formal Party.
7—3:00 p. m., Gospel Quartet Festival at
Newberg High School Auditorium.
12—Quarterly Meeting of George Fox Col-
lege Board of Trustees.
14-19—Lecture Series, J. A. Huffman, Pres-
ident of Winona Lake School of The-
ology.
25-27—GF Club Grade School Basketball
Tournament.
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