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The Nature of Mysticism

And the Sources of Religious Insight in the Journal of George Fox

GAYLE BEEBE

As a definitive work of the Society of Friends, the *Journal of George Fox* has set the tone and tenor for the Society's understanding of one's experience of God or the ultimately Real.¹ Various interpretations of Fox have been offered, but a consistent theme in all interpretations has been Fox's emphasis on the necessity of an experimental or experiential understanding of one's encounter with God. A result of this consistent emphasis has been a trend Fox started himself: since one's experience of God is the touchstone of religious faith, the role or importance of religious texts, religious communities and religious doctrines must play a secondary role in one's apprehension of the ultimately Real. Because Fox emphasized the primacy of the Spirit, or the "light of Christ within," over any other religious authority the interpretive tendency has often treated his work as a call for radical individualism in religious experience. But this is simply not the case.²

George Fox did emphasize the responsibility each individual possesses to seek God. Fox did not, however, believe this search took place apart from others or apart from the necessary input of religious texts.³ God calls us to

1. By ultimately Real I mean the highest being or state to which each religion's adherents are inclined to aspire. I am indebted to John Hick's definition as outlined in *An Interpretation of Religion*, for this designation.

2. In the epilogue to *The Rich Heritage of Quakerism*, Paul Anderson offers a helpful summary of changes in scholarly opinion since the 1950's which substantiate this thesis. See *The Rich Heritage of Quakerism* (Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 1987), pp. 254 ff.

be in prayer, but also calls us to join together in worship and good works, as Fox's own life testifies. As the Society developed under the guidance of George Fox, a greater emphasis was laid on the role of corporate guidance over individual guidance, on the Spirit that never leads contrary to Scripture, and on replacing or modifying those doctrines which seem contrary to Scripture, not simply discarding or ignoring their valuable role in guiding one's religious quest.⁴

Combined with an emphasis on the individual aspect of his thought, other more recent interpretations have looked for parallels between Fox's understanding of religious experience and the understanding of religious experience found in the major religions of the world.⁵ Most of these attempts, however, have tended to diminish the role played by both cultural currents in seventeenth-century England and historical developments in the Christian church in Fox's understanding of the religious life.⁶

It is true that Fox emphasized a return to "Primitive Christianity," which he identified as New Testament, first-century Christianity as found in the Bible. But this emphasis should not sidetrack us from the very clear contextual nature of his thought. That is to say, while Fox may not have returned to "Primitive Christianity" as he claimed, he nonetheless provided a unique contribution to a part of the Christian mystical tradition which began as early as the twelfth-century in Europe and England.

As a result, in approaching a sensitive treatment of Fox's *Journal* it will be necessary to demonstrate that Fox was part of a broader community of interpretation that had emerged in England. In demonstrating this connection, it will also be necessary to show how Fox's understanding of religious experience included the role of religious texts, the importance of religious doctrines and the specific structure of religious communities, all of which place his thought in a specific religious tradition. Although efforts to find the common ground of religious experience across religious traditions is necessary, in Fox's case it is quite artificial and forces one to find the lowest

3. One of several examples that could be cited is Fox's "Letter to the Governor of Barbados," as reprinted in *Faith and Practice*, Southwest Yearly Meeting, 1988.

4. Russell, Elbert. *A History of Quakerism*. Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1973 (reprint from 1945 edition); Barclay, Robert. *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity*. Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1978 (reprint). Both books give extensive coverage to this point.

5. Gracia-Fay, Ellwood. "The Proclamation of Paradise: George Fox as Mystic and Prophet," Summer, 1991. Gracia-Fay's paper is a helpful treatment of George Fox and for the most part I agree with her analysis. My main point of disagreement concerns the suggestion that Fox combines personal communion mysticism and ontological union mysticism in his thought. He does believe in union, but it is clearly the "unio mystica" union of the Christian tradition, and not the ontological union of transpersonal monism, as my paper will try to demonstrate.

6. Latourette, Kenneth Scott. *A History of Christianity*, Volume II. San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1953, 1975, pp. 797-835.

common denominator in order to defend this position.⁷ There are parallel ideas and even similar phrases, but Fox consistently worked within a Christian framework and envisioned the outcome of the religious life to be one which led not only to personal communion with God, but also to union with God through the witness and work of Jesus Christ.

Consequently, in order to do Fox's understanding justice we must see that he was not only a part of his English religious context, but also a part of the Augustinian-Franciscan synthesis provided by Bonaventure and mediated into England by the Cambridge Platonists and others. Clearly, distinctions such as "personal communion" and "ontological union" are useful in considering Fox's thought.⁸ But these distinctions remain accurate only to the extent they are modified to reflect Fox's own personal understanding and application.

For example, to suggest Fox's understanding of ontological union and Shankara's understanding of ontological union are similar or even compatible grossly misrepresents the distinct differences between both lines of thought.⁹ Fox never believed union with God meant merging into God or a universal spirit, nor did he believe it was something accomplished without Jesus Christ.

Therefore, in proceeding with this treatment, it will be necessary to contrast Fox's understanding of the nature of religious experience with the prevailing tendency to see religious experience as an individual and autonomous category unto itself. Coupled with this consideration will be the need to show that religious experiences, although similar in their pre-reflective states, are not similar when interpreted across religious traditions, but differ according to the conditioning of consciousness each religious tradition provides. Finally, it will be necessary to show the way in which the major currents moving in Fox's own personal context influenced his own unique synthesis which emerged.

Towards a Working Definition of Mystical Experience

Attempting to define mystical experience is as varied as it is complex. The word, "mysticism," is a derivative of the Greek term, "Muein," which

7. For example, in the first one-hundred pages of Fox's *Journal*, there are at least 148 direct references or allusions to the Christian Bible as well as Fox's personal admission that he came to an understanding of God's love through the mediation of Jesus Christ.

8. I am indebted to the definitions offered by John Hutchison for this point. Mysticism of "personal communion" is typified as leading to immediate communion with the religious object while the mysticism of ontological union is typified as absorption into this object. Hutchison, John A. *Paths of Faith*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969, pp. 510-512.

9. Shankara's *Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*. Translated with an Introduction by Swami Prabhacanda and Christopher Isherwood. Hollywood, CA: Vedanta Press, 1946.

means "to remain silent."¹⁰ Originally, it pertained specifically to the Greek Mystery Religions and included the acquisition of special knowledge leading to mystical insight. As early as 1899, W.R. Inge, offered as many as 26 different definitions of mysticism in an appendix to his definitive work, but summarized his study by suggesting that, "true mysticism is the attempt to realize, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal."¹¹ Evelyn Underhill, writing twelve years later suggested that mysticism is "the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order..."¹² Ernst Troeltsch, identified mysticism as the primacy of direct or immediate religious experience.¹³ And Rufus Jones, making his own original contribution to the discussion, defined mysticism as, "...the type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense, and living stage."¹⁴ More recently, mysticism has come to mean the sense of immediacy that ensues when religious documents and religious experience emphasize such immediacy.¹⁵

Beginning with William James and his landmark work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, an effort to define and identify religious experience has dominated the agendas of philosopher and theologian alike. Within this treatise, James himself considers various types of religious experience, including legitimate and pathological forms, as well as an extensive treatment of mysticism which has set the tone for much of the discussion in the English-speaking world. Of central significance for our purpose is the attempt James makes to identify four common elements native to all mystical experiences: ineffability, noetic, transiency, and passivity.¹⁶

Ineffability is essential to mystical experience and expresses the inability of language and concept to articulate this state or experience adequately.¹⁷ A noetic quality is also an essential ingredient in defining mystical experience and is defined by its ability to enlarge one's perspective, alter one's conscious

10. Louis Dupre, "Mysticism," p. 245, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. #10. Edited by Mircea Eliade. New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1987.

11. Inge, William Ralph. *Christian Mysticism*. London: Menthuen Pub. Co., 1899, p. 335.

12. Underhill, Evelyn. *Mysticism*. 1911.

13. Troeltsch, Ernst. *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, Vol. I, II.

14. Jones, Rufus. *Studies in Mystical Religion*. New York: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1923, p. XV.

15. *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*. Edited by Stephen Katz. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983.

16. James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Mentor Books, 1958 edition, pp. 292-293.

17. James, pp. 292-293. As early as Schleiermacher's *On Religion* (1799), Schleiermacher is noting the difference between one's intuition of the infinite, and the inevitable necessity yet difficulty of placing this intuition within a specific religious tradition in order to understand it.

awareness or in some way shift a person's outlook from one point-of-view to another.¹⁸ Transiency is a third element of mystical experience and James indicates that this is not essential, but often seems present when one describes a mystical experience—i.e. the state comes and goes; it does not linger.¹⁹ Passivity indicates that the individual does not produce the mystical encounter, but through discipline one can prepare for it.²⁰

The impact of James' work is impossible to overestimate. Although other prominent works either accompanied or followed him, no single work cast such a long shadow over the discussion in the twentieth-century. The most significant effect of his work is the impact it has had in defining the parameters of the discussion. The way people have understood, interpreted, and approached mysticism and religious experience have followed largely the categories James first established.

Of critical significance is the effect his focus on the individual nature of religious experience has had in diminishing the role and importance of religious communities and traditions. Although James captured a vital part of the mystical life in emphasizing the individual, he diminished the importance of the process of preparation which often precluded such individual experiences.

In virtually every major religious tradition an emphasis is placed on the importance of preparation to realize the desired goal or state of that specific religion. In each context, a variety of paths of preparation are offered in order to help the individual realize or encounter the ultimately Real. These are not done apart from a communal context, but are interpreted to the individual through the traditions and the history of one's community. Some may pursue this state by the path of knowledge through rational dialectic, others may pursue this state through moral deeds, while still others may pursue this state through ascetic practices. Even Amazon tribes advocate special modes of preparation, utilizing the mind altering capacities of certain drugs in order to reach their desired goal. This is all to say there is a

18. James, p. 293. John Hick discusses this sort of change or transformation as a change from self-centeredness to reality-centeredness. *An Interpretation of Religion*. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1989.

19. James, 293.

20. James, p. 293. Bertrand Russell, in *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays*, notes four areas he considers typical of mystical experience. First, is insights based on intuition over reason, sense and analysis. Reality, therefore, lies behind the world of appearance. Second, all reality is unified. Third, the temporal dimension of reality is denied. And fourth, all evil is mere appearance. Besides failing to offer cogent examples that substantiate his thesis, Russell also ignores the possibility of an experience interpreted mystically which re-orders one's life. Consequently, although a valuable essay for its discussion of the motive behind mysticism and science, it is not satisfactory in providing explanatory power for a wide array of experiences and phenomena.

strong emphasis in all religious traditions that preparation can be a useful tool in one's apprehension or experience of the ultimately Real.²¹

In Christianity, choosing the Christian mystical path will in some way include the person or being of Jesus Christ. In Advaita Vedanta, one's complete absorption into Brahman will result from the corporate preparation of text and religious community. In Zen Buddhism as depicted by Shibayana's *A Flower Does Not Talk*, or by Suzuki in *The Manual of Zen Buddhism*, the goal of emptiness is informed by the religious texts as well as by the values re-enforced by the structure of the monastic community. In the case of the Apostle Paul, even his mystical encounter with God on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) is clearly set within the communal and historical perimeters of his Jewish heritage.²²

This cursory glance at various traditions is meant to suggest that the dominant element in mysticism is not the uniqueness of individual experience spread across various religious traditions, but the uniqueness of mystical experience within each religious tradition. Mystical experience, although possessing unique qualities and effects, is not a separate, autonomous category of human experience, but in each religion contains a specific understanding and structure concerning how one experiences a state of ultimate Reality as defined by that religion.

In a helpful article on the role each religious context plays on its own understanding of mystical experience, Robert Gimello writes,

Mysticism is inextricably bound up with, dependent upon and usually subservient to the deeper beliefs and values of the traditions, cultures, and historical milieux (sic) which harbour it. As it is intricately related to those beliefs and values, so must it vary according to them.²³

Elsewhere, Gimello argues that it is not only impossible, but also quite artificial to try to reduce the variety of mystical experiences to a vital common core.²⁴ By contrast, all religious traditions illustrate that mystical experiences within their tradition have specific structures formed by con-

21. Within the Christian tradition this is a pivotal part in all mystical literature. For George Fox, his nearly five-year quest, culminating in the experience of Christ addressing him directly, was a direct result of his arduous preparation. Elsewhere, in Pascal's *Pensees*, Pascal offers advice to the reader who is having trouble believing in God by suggesting that they should change their habits so that they can develop a dispositional state that will lead them to God. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, (Krailshheimer edition, 1965, fragment 149).

22. Segal, Alan F. *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1990. Segal makes a provocative case that Paul's conversion is closely contained within his Jewish community.

23. Robert M. Gimello, "Mysticism in Its Contexts," p. 63, *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, Edited by Steven T. Katz. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

cepts, beliefs, values and expectations built into the very fabric of a specific religious tradition.²⁵

Combined with the specific understanding of mysticism as mediated by various religious traditions is the belief that no religious experience gains cognitive meaning without some form of mediation. This is a difficult part of the argument since many attempts to explain religious experience have sought to do so by reducing religious experience to a naturalistic explanation.²⁶ Without digressing too far, however, it is important to note that as early as Schleiermacher, pre-reflective experience which acquires cognitive meaning was being argued. Despite various criticisms of this line of argument,²⁷ there are plenty of sources to support the notion that we have experiences which go beyond our capacity to understand them. These experiences become intelligible when set within a religious context which can interpret them.

Earlier, it was noted that James had included "immediacy" as one of the four elements distinguishing mysticism.²⁸ This emphasis, however, captures only the initial experience and not the whole event. The whole event would include why humans have this experience, why humans refer this experience to a higher power, what experiences and habits predispose one to such an experience, and what makes one feel the need for such experiences. It is in the pre-immediate anticipation of and post-immediate reflection upon mystical experience that so many other dimensions of knowledge and understanding come into play.

Hans Penner amplifies this point when he writes,

If mystical experiences have any significance it will be necessary to locate these experiences within the set of relations which mediate them.²⁹

This is not to say that one does not have an experience they interpret as "immediate." Such an interpretation of "immediacy," however, typically comes through categories and dispositions either already existent in the person or as mediated out of the social context of which the person is a part. This is not to deny various forms of epistemology, most notably Hegelian epistemology, which suggest that through the tension and interaction of a variety of inner and outer forces new understanding comes to the human.³⁰ Actually, this position is built on such an epistemology. A person

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-65.

26. Ludwig Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* is perhaps the finest attempt since it incorporates a systematic effort to reduce all aspects of religion (experience, dogma, text formation, community of faith, et. al.) to a naturalistic explanation.

27. Wayne Proudfoot's *Religious Experience*, Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1985, is one notable example.

28. James, *Varieties*, pp. 292-293.

29. Hans Penner, "The Mystical Illusion," p. 98, *Katz*, loc. cit.

must have an experience which needs further understanding. Such a need results in consultation with past knowledge and drives the human to discover new knowledge in order to understand a dimension of reality introduced through religious experience.

To illustrate further, consider two examples from Western religious traditions, one from the Hebrew Scriptures, the other from the Christian Scriptures. In I Samuel 3, Eli and Samuel are in the private quarters of the Temple, almost asleep, when Samuel hears a voice he interprets as Eli's. Three times he hears the voice believing each time that it is Eli's. From the text it is apparent that Samuel has not yet acquired the categories to hear this voice as originating in God. Subsequent to the third encounter, however, Eli realizes that the voice is coming from God, although there is no indication that he has ever heard the voice himself.³¹ Nevertheless, he gives Samuel specific instructions regarding how he should respond. Eventually, Samuel hears the voice again and because of Eli's tutoring is able to enlarge his perception and come to a more complete understanding of God.

What is unique in this story is not the manner in which Samuel's experience is alike or different from other mystical experiences, but the way in which Samuel's perception of God is changed. This understanding of religious experience was part of the communal context within which Samuel had his own religious experience. Consequently, Samuel's understanding of this experience, even though the experience was temporal and passive, but not ineffable, became noetic only after Eli's assistance in helping Samuel become aware of God.

A second illustration, taken from the life of the Apostle Paul, augments this point. In Acts 9, Paul has a mystical encounter with God which fundamentally re-orders his life and his understanding of the Absolute or ultimately Real.³² Traveling to Damascus to further his campaign against the first Christians, Paul is blinded by a light and hears a voice telling him to change his ways and come to a new understanding of God.

This experience does fit all four categories of James' definition, but the important element beyond these categories is that this experience fits entirely within the religious context of which Paul was a part.³³ This experi-

30. Hegel, G. W. F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford University Press, 1977 edition.

31. Since this incident is largely descriptive it is sometimes neglected as a legitimate source of religious insight. In an unpublished paper, "The Epistemology of Religious Experience," I have argued for the epistemic value of such an experience similar to the epistemic criteria found in Pascal's *Pensees*. It is more than merely a will-to-believe, as is often thought, but includes the role of human need in the development of legitimate epistemic criteria.

32. Revised Standard Version of the Bible, 1946, 1952, 1971, 1973, Acts 9.

33. See Alan Segal, in chapters one and two of *Paul the Convert*, argues this point convincingly. Also, John Hutchison, *Paths of Faith*, New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1969, amplifies this point when he defines an Old Testament prophet as one who hears the word of God and does it.

ence did not lead Paul off in an entirely unknown direction, but altered his understanding of the timetable of God and the value of non-Jews in God's ultimate purposes.³⁴

Both examples are cited in order to suggest that within specific religious traditions, mystical experiences are understood and interpreted along lines compatible with that religious tradition. Both examples emphasize the perceptual shift that must occur in order to see reality accurately as defined by their religious tradition. In neither case could the established conceptual apparatus handle the new experience, but through a perceptual shift new conceptions were created which could bring illumination and understanding to these new experiences.

The efforts in recent years to find a common core to mystical experience is part of a larger project to account for the varieties of religious traditions found throughout the world. Although the explanatory hypothesis offered by John Hick³⁵ and others has been useful, it has often sublimated certain unique claims made by specific religions in order to achieve its purpose.³⁶ In the process, the unique features of a specific religion and the unique experiences of the Absolute or the ultimately Real chronicled and encouraged by each religion have been sacrificed in order to find points of contact compatible across religious lines.

Echoing this point, Steven Katz observes,

The Christian experience of unio mystica (mystical union) fulfilled in Christ is not the Buddhist experience of nirvana. The Buddhist is 'nirvanized' i.e. becomes a new ontic reality in which there is no place for either individual souls or a transcendent Divine Being...Karma not grace governs the movement of the historic-transcendental situation and necessity rather than a benevolent will provides the causal power.³⁷

Robert Corrington amplifies this point when he makes an excellent case for the epistemological role played by one's relation to their community. It is within one's communities that signs and symbols are appropriated, reviewed and either rejected or embraced which facilitate an individual's acquisition of knowledge. Subsequently, signs and symbols play an indispensable role in one's understanding and interpretation of their lived experience. In moving cross-culturally, one comes to realize that signs and symbols must be modified if even rudimentary understanding will occur.

34. To an extent, Early Christianity was a form of Mystical Judaism, but became a distinct religion of its own as it moved beyond its Judaic borders.

35. Hick, op. cit.

36. *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*, edited by Leonard Swidler and *No Other Name?* by Paul Knitter are two of several other sources which substantiate this observation.

37. Steven Katz, "The 'Conservative' Character of Mystical Experience," pp. 40-41, Katz, op. cit.

Nevertheless, the cross-cultural context becomes a new embodiment of community within which new signs and symbols can emerge.³⁸

This is not to deny the reality of the individual dimension in religious experience. It is simply an attempt to show that there is more to religious experience than an individual's experience of it. The community of context does make an impact and must be factored in if one's understanding of religious experience is to be comprehensive and accurate. In the next section, a demonstration of the context within which George Fox had his religious experience will be attempted.

Sources of Religious Insight in the Religious Context of Seventeenth-Century England

Around 529 C.E., the Academy in Athens closed its doors and the first Benedictine monastery opened its doors signifying a shift in emphasis that would dominate the Christian world.³⁹ This shift would come to have a marked influence not only on the religious life of England, but also on the understanding and experiences of George Fox. Several individuals played a role in this transition including Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, Meister Eckhart and Francis of Assisi.⁴⁰

Francis' impact was particularly significant as it shifted the emphasis of Christian mysticism away from its neo-platonic influences and back towards the Biblical tradition of the Hebrew prophets.⁴¹

Eventually, George Fox incorporated much of this mystical tradition into his own thought. Of particular significance, was the Franciscan emphasis on an itinerant ministry, a willingness to suffer at the hands of the authorities, an understanding of the true church as those whose life exemplifies the life of Christ, and a recognition that union with God was possible only through the mediating role of Jesus Christ.⁴² All of these themes were central to Fox's ministry, but all were not at odds with the dominant religious culture of seventeenth-century England as is commonly thought. Clearly, the Church of England and its understanding of the nature of the religious life held sway. But the dominant religious culture did not prevent the incursion of several other themes into its religious and cultural life. Paramount among these incursions was an understanding of the religious life

38. Corrington, Robert S. *The Community of Interpreters*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987.

39. "Benedict," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Vol. II. Edited by Mircea Eliade.

40. Hutchison, op. cit., p. 511.

41. Of particular impact was Francis' desire to cultivate a devotion to the earthly, human example of Jesus Christ. Francis did not reject Augustine's understanding of the inner Christ as teacher, but instead, amplified this teaching in order to include the outer witness of Jesus' life as recorded in the Gospels.

42. H.P. Owen, loc. cit.

which emphasized unity with God through Jesus Christ. Although ostracized for this position, Fox's declaration of this thought was new neither in Christianity nor in England itself.

As early as Origen the understanding of 'unio mystica' included a focus on the soul as the bride of Christ.⁴³ Augustine modified Origen and found in Christ the Logos as the interior teacher of wisdom.⁴⁴ This interior guide was the foundation of knowledge and supplied the mind with what it needed to know and understand. "Jesus alone," began Augustine, "teaches me anything who sets before my eyes, or one of my other bodily senses, or my mind, the things which I desire to know."⁴⁵

Eventually, George Fox would modify Augustine to emphasize the "light of Christ Within" which leads into all truth. But this inner light always followed the Biblical Jesus. Understanding was governed by this inner light, but the reality of applying this inner understanding in outward form was governed by the Biblical Jesus.⁴⁶

This emphasis by Fox was not new to him, but included a stream of thought beginning as early as the twelfth-century. Bernard McGinn provides a helpful discussion of this development when he identifies four primary issues which developed between the twelfth- and the sixteenth-century which became characteristic of Christian mysticism.⁴⁷ McGinn notes that the new understanding of union with God which began to emerge in the twelfth-century was based on a new understanding of the role of love and knowledge in the mystical life. Of particular significance was the emphasis on love and knowledge as not only critical to realizing this union, but also as an integral part of the experience itself.

McGinn continues by noting the way in which these unique developments led to a specific understanding of union within Christian mysticism. Specifically, the Christian understanding of union was not an ontological union of essence or substance, but an effective, functional union of willing and loving.⁴⁸

Bonaventure, as an heir of this development, systematized Francis' insight in such works as *The Soul's Journey Into God* and *The Tree of Life*. *The*

43. Louis Dupre, "Mysticism," p. 252. *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Edited by Mircea Eliade. op. cit.

44. Bernard McGinn, "Love, Knowledge and Unio Mystica in the Western Christian Tradition," pp. 59-87. *Mystical Union and Monotheism: An Ecumenical Dialogue*. Edited by Moshe Idel and Bernard McGinn. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1989.

45. Augustine, "The Teacher," p. 31. *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. Translated text edited by Hyman and Walsh. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1973.

46. *Journal of George Fox*, Edited by John L. Nickalls. Philadelphia: Religious Society of Friends, 1985, pp. 33-35.

47. Idel and McGinn, op. cit., p. 61.

48. Idel and McGinn, op. cit., p. 63.

Tree of Life, for example, was a series of meditations from the life of Christ and reflected a Franciscan-type devotion to the historical Jesus.

Clearly, there are other sources of influence, but this Augustinian-Franciscan-Bonaventure influence entered the English context through such works as *The Cloud of Unknowing* and the Cambridge Platonists.⁴⁹

Other sources, such as Jacob Boehme's, *The Way to Christ*, would enter through the Cambridge Platonists, but the intellectual and spiritual heritage would be marked by a clear understanding of two mystical traditions: the personal communion tradition of the Hebrew prophets and the union with God through Jesus Christ of St. Francis. This latter form of union was not synonymous with ontological union since the Christian context always retained a sense of separation between the Creator and the creature. This distinction was retained by Fox, as well, and represented a unique understanding of union mediated by Jesus Christ.⁵⁰

H. P. Owen extends this point when he writes,

Christian mysticism has always been Christocentric. Through Christ, union with God and a knowledge of divine things is attained.⁵¹

Elsewhere, Owen elaborates, observing,

...mystical experience...is (meant to lead to) the perfection of charity and not, as in the case with other mystics, a mysterious means of acquiring transcendental knowledge.⁵²

Owen summarizes his own treatment of Christian mysticism by noting two tendencies of mysticism in England: first, they (English mystics) believed that what dogma and Scripture described as possible was in fact attainable experientially. And second, the truth determined by Scripture and dogma was meant to give focus to one's religious quest. Both tendencies became powerful forces in Fox's thought and identified the way in which he came to approach his own religious journey.

Before moving on to a consideration of Fox's own thought a brief comment on Jacob Boehme is important. There is no doubt that Jacob Boehme influenced George Fox. How extensive this influence was, however, is hard to determine since Fox never footnotes his sources. Clear evidence is appar-

49. I cite *The Cloud of Unknowing* since it resembles Fox's own thought so closely. Of particular interest is the emphasis on desire which leads to an immediate experience of Christ. This line of thought is echoed in Fox when the culmination of his own desire leads to an immediate experience of Jesus Christ (p. 11, elsewhere). *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Edited with an Introduction by James Walsh, S.J. New York: Paulist Press, 1981.

50. H. P. Owen, op. cit., p. 159, *Katz*, op. cit.

51. H. P. Owen, op. cit., p. 158, *Katz*, op. cit.

52. Owen, p. 159.

ent in the use of identical or slightly modified phrases. Both borrow extensively from images found in the Johannine literature. Both use the phrase, "the light which lighteth every man," or slight modifications of it, to describe their understanding of the role of Jesus Christ. Both emphasize the importance of following the light within.⁵³ Both emphasize the role of human initiative in seeking God.⁵⁴

Secondary references include the fact that followers of Boehme eventually identified with the Quaker movement.⁵⁵ Further evidence is found in the fact that in 1647, John Sparrow translated one of Boehme's most popular works, *The Way to Christ*, into English,⁵⁶ and by 1661, had translated a major portion of his entire corpus. Of course, the role played by the Cambridge Platonists in introducing Boehme's work into England cannot be ignored either. Louis Bouyer has noted that such themes as the inner rational light, the significance of the Bible, the role of the Biblical Jesus, the emphasis on the Church as the bride of Christ, and the importance of obedience to the Biblical witness of Jesus are all important themes which developed at this time in part because of the influence of Boehme on the Cambridge Platonists.⁵⁷ Of course, close parallels with Fox's own religious thought are striking. All of this is meant to illustrate that although Fox did not refer to Boehme personally, Boehme's influence was pervasive in the culture and Fox, whether knowingly or not, reflected many of Boehme's themes in his own writings.

Evidence of the Sources in the Journal of George Fox

Throughout the *Journal* of George Fox the various sources noted above are evident. From the beginning, the emphasis of identity with the historical Christ is apparent. Fox, at the beginning of his religious quest, notes,

And then I saw how Christ was tempted...and how Satan...laid snares for me and baits to draw me to commit some sin...⁵⁸

Elsewhere, Fox emphasizes the importance of following Christ's historical example by refusing to honor social customs which were against the designs of God. In one telling example, Fox, believing God alone deserves

53. Boehme, Jacob. *The Signature of all Things*. Translated by Clifford Bax. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., p. X, no printing date is given, but it was originally released in 1621.

54. Boehme, Jacob. *The Way to Christ*. Translated by Peter Erb. New York: Paulist Press, 1978, p. 15. Fox, George. *Journal*. p. 11.

55. *Christian Spirituality*. Edited by Frank N. Magill and Ian P. McGreal. San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1988, p. 273.

56. Boehme, *The Way to Christ*, p. 2.

57. Bouyer, Louis. *A History of Christian Spirituality III: Orthodox Spirituality and Anglican Spirituality*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1982, pp. 134-166.

58. Fox, p. 4.

honor and respect, refused to doff his cap as custom required. Defending his action, Fox exclaimed,

But Christ tells us, "how can ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"⁵⁹

Later, when extolling the witness and testimony of Jesus and Scripture as sufficient for belief, Fox argued,

And so I directed people to their teacher, Christ Jesus their saviour,...and so did set up Christ in the hearts of the people.

A corollary to the Franciscan emphasis on the historical Jesus is an emphasis on an itinerant ministry and the sufferings incurred as a result of such a ministry. For much of Fox's life the Quaker movement was officially outlawed. Much like Christianity in its first four centuries, waves of persecution against Quakers ebbed and flowed according to the attitudes of different rulers. Not until 1689, two years before Fox's death, with passage of the Act of Toleration,⁶⁰ were Quakers able to gain legal status in English society.

Throughout his ministry, Fox encountered serious persecution at the hands of his detractors. A perceived threat to the social and religious order of his day, Fox became a target for some of the most persistent and pernicious torment in seventeenth-century England. As early as 1649, Fox was imprisoned for his refusal to honor the specific precepts of England's state religion.⁶¹ Upon his release, Fox challenged his accusers and a long and difficult period in which Quakers suffered severe and terrible misfortunes at the hands of the English legal system ensued.⁶²

Other examples abound including a stoning by the citizens of Lancaster (120), a complete and thorough beating by the constables and citizens of Ulverston (127-128), and a deliberate miscarriage of justice in Fox's trial upon a return trip through Lancaster (133-134.) All of these examples illustrate the extent to which Fox and the Early Quakers suffered for their religious faith.

A second element in the *Journal* is the significance that the Bible played in Fox's own understanding of religious experience. As noted above, in the first one-hundred pages of the *Journal*, there are at least 148 direct references or allusions to the Christian Bible.⁶³ Fox consistently used the Bible to

59. Fox, p. 37.

60. Russell, Elbert. *The History of Quakerism*. Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1979, pp. 3, 186, 189.

61. Fox, p. 62.

62. Fox, pp. 66-72.

63. Fox, 1-100.

gain insight into the realities of life and to show the relevance of the religious life to these realities.⁶⁴ In every instance, Jesus was the key who, as inward teacher, unlocked the hidden mysteries of life and granted one noetic insight into these mysteries. Defending his position, Fox explained, "...how by Jesus, the opener of the door by his heavenly key, the entrance was given."⁶⁵ Even when interpreting the Old Testament, Fox believed Christ was the key to understanding stories and themes of ancient Israel.⁶⁶ His emphasis enlarged the allegorical interpretation of Scripture and included the role Christ played in bringing understanding to the religious seeker.

The difficulty for Fox, however, was getting people beyond the objective text of Scripture to capture the spirit of God, which is love, that is present in Scripture. For Fox, this meant the spirit of Scripture must be exalted over the text of Scripture.⁶⁷ Inevitably, this heightened the spirit of conflict between Fox and the religious authorities. Following the example of Francis, Boehme and the Apostle Paul, Fox consistently showed how the Bible illustrated the true nature and purpose of the religious life. As the movement gained momentum, Fox amplified the importance of Scripture, citing the Hebrew prophets to illustrate how God wanted us to live and the writings of John to illustrate how God wanted us to love.⁶⁸ Even Fox's challenge to the ruling government was based on Scripture.⁶⁹

The third and perhaps most significant element in his thought is the role he ascribes to Christ as the inner teacher. Following the example of Augustine, Fox identified Christ as the inward teacher who alone could bring insight. In developing this treatment of Christ, Fox used two phrases interchangeably. One was the "light of Christ within." The other, a reference to "Christ as teacher." Both embodied the Augustinian ideal and stood apart from either Locke's understanding of the "light of reason,"⁷⁰ or Descartes' understanding of the "light of nature."⁷¹

As early as 1647, Fox began to co-mingle references to the Holy Spirit with the divine light of Christ evident in all things.⁷² His intent was to direct people to the light within, which is Christ, who can teach one all things.⁷³

64. Fox, 13.

65. Fox, 13-14.

66. Fox, 32.

67. Fox, 40.

68. Fox, 186-87, 236, 243.

69. Fox, 220.

70. Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Abridged by Richard Taylor. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1974, pp. 123-125.

71. Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy* Translated with an Introduction by Laurence J. Lafleur. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1951, 1960, pp. 37-39, 41-50. Originally published in 1641.

72. Fox, 15.

Whether or not Fox believed this light could literally teach a person everything, thereby rejecting all academic endeavor as some Quakers claim, it is clear that Fox believed this light was sufficient to teach a person all they needed to know about the religious life.

When confronting priests in Mansfield, for example, Fox rebuked their ambitions for human learning by asking, "...if they had not a teacher within them...[who could answer their needs and questions]..."⁷⁴ Believing that Christ as teacher was the sole criterion for gaining wisdom and understanding of God, Fox rejected all religious traditions, exclaiming,

...I was [sent] to bring people off from all the world's religions, which are vain, that they might know the pure religion, and might visit the fatherless, the widows and the strangers, and keep themselves from the spots of the world...and turn people to the inward light...by which all might know their salvation.⁷⁵

Later when addressing the religious leaders in Ratcliffe and a congregation in Malton, Fox synthesized Augustine and Francis by first directing people to their inner teacher and then admonishing the people to live an outward, obedient life after the example of Jesus.⁷⁶

Fox's contention with the religious establishment heightened with his teachings of Christ as the inward and sufficient teacher. Criticizing the ministry of the professional clergy, Fox urged that people follow, "the true teacher [and not these] hirelings such as teach for fleece and prey upon the people..."⁷⁷ His only desire was to see people come to an awareness of the spirit of God in themselves, by which they could know God, apprehend Christ, understand Scripture and enjoy heavenly fellowship in the spirit.⁷⁸

Throughout his ministry Fox sought to direct people to the inward Christ. This incessant desire and drive was born out of his own religious quest and his personal, experiential discovery of Christ's satisfaction of his inner need. Writing after nearly four years of his own religious quest, Fox exclaimed,

73. Fox, 20.

74. Fox, 20.

75. Fox, 35. I do not wish to explore this extensively, but two items emerge from this quote, the first regards Fox's possible attitude towards other religions. Since there is no evidence he encountered any religions other than Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, or Calvinism this is sheer conjecture. Nevertheless, it does seem clear that in whatever context, Fox would have emphasized the hidden presence of Christ and would have embraced a position similar to Karl Rahner's in our own time. The second item is simply an observation that Fox believed the primary goal of religion was soteriological in much the same manner John Hick, *op. cit.*, has argued.

76. Fox, 82-85.

77. Fox, 149.

78. Fox, 155.

And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then Oh then, I heard a voice which said, 'there is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,' and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy.⁷⁹

This discovery of Fox's cemented his own sense of the need for the human to desire God in order to discover the significance of Christ for the religious life. This element of desire was an important ingredient in Fox's focus on the role of Christ. He took the admonition to seek God literally and believed this search would culminate in the experience of the presence mediated by Jesus Christ.⁸⁰ Fox did not want to receive mediated knowledge, but wanted and believed Christ alone could bring him into union with the spirit of God and believed people's desire to experience God often became sidetracked by all sorts of superstitious ceremonies.⁸¹

A fourth element in Fox's thought is the clear suspicion of religious practices and religious traditions. This is an unfortunate theme in Fox's thought and represents one of the most significant oversights of his *Journal*. Fox's suspicion of religious tradition and ritual entirely sidestepped the religious traditions and rituals he quickly prescribed for the new sect. He completely rejected the Roman Catholic traditions [p. 78], and consistently challenged the traditions of the Church of England and even in some cases the dissenting groups in England itself.⁸² In all cases, Fox justified his teaching by reference to Scripture, but this did little to soften his dismissal of the valuable role tradition and discipline could play in the religious life.⁸³

In addition, so much of Fox's own thought was informed by the rituals and traditions which had governed his earlier life. Clearly, he felt they had impeded his access to an experiential understanding of God. But in rejecting the significance of religious tradition, Fox failed to see the significant and important role they could play in facilitating one's search for God. Instead, Fox offered his own definition of the true church and the people who make up the true church. Following the tradition of the English mystics, Fox suggested that the true church was,

...the pillar and ground of Truth, made up of living stones,...a spiritual household of which Christ was the head.⁸⁴

All of this helped accelerate his rejection of churchly authorities and further alienated him from the cultural mainstream.

79. Fox, 11. cf. 69.

80. Fox, 11-12.

81. Fox, 87.

82. Fox, 47, 113, 1844, 417.

83. Fox, 184, et. al..

84. Fox, 24.

In some circles, these very cultural conditions have been used to provide a sociological explanation for religious experience. In particular, Stephen Kent has argued that the Quaker movement emerged because of the sociological deprivation to which it was subjected.⁸⁵ Although one can concur with Kent's emphasis on the role sociological conditions can play in one's understanding of mystical experience, he entirely ignores both the religious contributions made to this context and the possibility and even validity of religious experience discovered by George Fox.

A fifth element in Fox's thought is the noetic quality akin to William James which Fox finds in religious experience. As early as 1647, Fox realized that following the light of Christ would consistently lead to new insights.⁸⁶ This knowledge was acquired as one learns to love God and this love for God brings one to a deeper union with God in Jesus Christ. This perceptual shift does not occur easily or often, but is gained by one who is committed to the light and subsequently acquires illumination of the truth of God through this light.

In seeking to augment this perspective, Fox utilized the life and witness of the Apostle Paul. Noting that Paul had been raised in the outward law of his Jewish heritage, Fox went on to suggest that his conviction on the road to Damascus had changed Paul's entire life and ministry. His absorption into the spirit of Christ had caused Paul to see life in a new way.⁸⁷ Fox does not explore this observation further, nor does he note that much of what Paul perceived in a new way was simply an outcropping or fulfillment of his own religious tradition. Nevertheless, this perceptual re-ordering was critical for Fox and for his belief about what an encounter with God and guidance by the light of Christ would accomplish.

A sixth and final element in Fox is his acknowledgment that the law of the Spirit is actually the pure love of God.⁸⁸ This perception by Fox, gained during the period of his own religious awakening, shaped much of his later emphasis in ethics. Pacifism was not a retreat from society, but the active love of God capable of engineering peace throughout the world.⁸⁹ Prison reform was not the latest crusading notion of a social activist, but the active love of God restoring human dignity to all of God's creation.⁹⁰ Honesty in business was not the accidental product of social upbringing, but the out-working of God's love to live all of life with integrity.⁹¹

85. Stephen A. Kent, "Mysticism, Quakerism, and Relative Deprivation: A Sociological Reply to R. A. Naulty," *Religion* (1989) 19, pp. 157-178.

86. Fox, 16, etc. al.

87. Fox, 22.

88. Fox, 16.

89. Fox, 197.

90. Fox, 19, 42-46

91. Fox, 169-170

In each case, Fox saw in the endless love of God the satisfaction for all human need and the ultimate pattern for human living. At times, his identification with the suffering and rejection of Christ became distorted, but these distortions were due in part to his greater desire to help people see the infinite love of Christ which conquers suffering.⁹² Fox believed the ultimate goal of life was to exemplify this love and as such believed proper teaching in any context was teaching which led people to understand this love. To love one's neighbor, in Fox's mind, was to learn what it meant to love oneself and to hurt one's neighbor was to discover that you were in fact hurting yourself.⁹³

The parallels with Martin Buber's *I And Thou* are striking. Like Buber, Fox believed that one comes to a proper understanding of God by understanding and participating in human relationships. Clearly, this is a pattern found in most forms of 'personal communion' mysticism, but beyond defining it as a certain type it represents Fox's implicit acknowledgment of the role of the religious community. His correctives to radical individualism in religion emerged gradually and developed mostly in reaction to the Ranters and other fringe groups he encountered. Although he recognized and emphasized the role of individual responsibility, he always did so in relation to the communal context of which he was part. Elsewhere, Fox emphasizes the significance of Christ as the mediator of this love and the way by which humans become open to this love. He also noted, however, the way humans often ran from this love and the unquenched desire which inevitably led them back to his love. Ultimately, Fox believed this love was the spirit which united humans with the Spirit of God.

This emphasis was more than just an individual learning how to enter active service of God. It was the cornerstone of society, the spirit by which Fox, and later William Penn, believed all elements of life should be governed. It was unique not because it was a new insight or even an entirely original synthesis, but because it was applied across such broad domains of society and culture. Trade and commerce, war and peace, justice and social relations, education and prison reform and care for the poor were only a few of the areas touched by Fox's life and teaching. Later, new accents would emerge as other members of the Society assumed leadership, but always with the belief that to apply the pure love of God to social relations was to experience God's pure love itself.

Conclusion

Throughout the *Journal* Fox's disarming frankness often causes one to overlook his connection with a legacy that preceded him. His own reliance

92. Fox, 68, et. al.

93. Fox, 28.

on the spirit for guidance and his frequent use of the Bible make it appear that these two elements alone were sufficient for understanding the development of his thought. Nevertheless, this paper has attempted to show the underlying reliance Fox had on sources other than himself and God.

Religious texts, religious doctrines and the religious community all played a pivotal role for Fox. Of particular importance were the writings of the Gospel of John whose emphasis on love and whose effort to establish a community based on love were critical. Fox also absorbed a theme from John and echoed in Boehme that heaven and hell were not modes of eternity in the life to come, but states of existence experienced presently. The Bible was, for Fox, a source of primary insight into the nature and reality of God and the nature and reality of the religious life. It was also Fox's favorite weapon when defending his point of view against the numerous detractors in seventeenth-century England.

Religious doctrines played an important role as well, although Fox often appeared to diminish this role. In one notable exchange, Fox rejected the legitimacy of the Ranters because they believed that God's substance was changeable. Fox could not accept a God who could change and could not accept any group as legitimate who taught such a position. Another example is his acceptance of the legitimacy of the canon of Scripture. Unlike Luther, who wanted to discard books like the epistle of James, Fox never challenged the legitimacy of the traditional canon. Even in his treatment of the Old Testament he never digressed into discussing the possible incompatibilities between the God of the Old Testament and the God of love of the New Testament. In fact, to a large extent, the only differences Fox had with Orthodox Christianity are the ones Robert Barclay outlined in his defense of the Quaker interpretation of the Christian faith.⁹⁴

The religious community was extremely important to Fox and the role he played in forming various communities of faith throughout England played an indispensable role in the growth and survival of the Quaker movement. To a certain extent, Fox's understanding of how one experiences God could be considered as a form of social mysticism since he placed such a heavy emphasis on the role played by the gathered community in one's encounter with God. It was in one's relation to another human that one gained insight into their relation with God. In fact, Fox's emphasis on the way in which one comes to understand God in community foreshadows Hegel's later emphasis on the Absolute coming to an understanding and manifestation of itself in the religious community.⁹⁵

Fox's thought, moreover, was clearly contextualized within a Christian framework. When he emphasized the role of community it was the Chris-

94. Barclay, *op. cit.*

95. Hegel, G.W.F. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Translated and edited by Peter C. Hodgson, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983, pp. 470-489.

tian community he envisioned. One can only speculate as to how he would handle the reality of world religions, as is noted above. Anything which stifled the human spirit coming to an understanding of the ultimately Real would be condemned by Fox. Most likely, he would make allowance for the existence of world religions by emphasizing the light of Christ hidden throughout the world as noted by Paul in Romans 1. But this remains sheer conjecture.

On the importance of religious experience, Fox would have no equal. Religious experience, or mystical experience, was for Fox the paramount experience of life. Such an experience ushered in the peace that comes from the pure love of God. Such experience could not be engineered, but it could be prepared for if one understood the nature of the religious quest. The religious quest was a rigorous journey which often alienated one from the mainstream of society. Beginning with the Hebrew prophets and flowing through Jesus Christ, the first disciples, the Early Church, Francis, Luther, Boehme, and others, Fox had ample evidence that the religious journey often alienated you from your own cultural context. Nevertheless, Fox advocated this approach in religion since it was the only one which could bring an individual into fellowship with God.

Although Fox used terms like "salvation" sparingly, he clearly believed the religious quest was salvific in nature. The only measure of a religion was its ability to bring the human into fellowship with the love of God. The soteriological nature of Fox's thought focused on the peace experienced and the insight gained. The human's understanding of their experience of this love became the final criterion in one's experience of true religion. Later, when exposed to a broader culture than seventeenth-century England, this insight would not withstand the onslaught of individual authority in religious interpretation. Nevertheless, Fox insisted on the centrality of Christ in mediating this new state.

Fox seemed at times to border on the bizarre in his religious quest. Visually reliving the martyrdom of one-thousand residents in Lichfield was only one example of many visions and premonitions which informed his religious quest. He was not a religious lunatic or even a psychologically unstable person, as some have claimed, but was driven by a need to identify with the experiences of Jesus Christ. In suffering, in joy, in insight, in gaining insight, in gaining access to God and even coming to understand one's true relation to God were for Fox all a part of his quest to follow the example of Christ.

The life of Christ formed the central metaphysical key to Fox's system. Through his life and through one's experience of his guiding light one discovered the sufficiency of Christ leading one to the fullness of love experienced in God. His emphasis on the sufficiency of Christ as inward teacher and his focus on the historic events of Christ's life, however, led Fox

and others into several abuses which embarrassed the Society. Most notable among these episodes was James Naylor's enactment of Christ's triumphal entry in which women stood by the side of the road giving praise as Naylor rode by on a donkey. The incident deeply angered Fox and gained Naylor the punishment of a heretic. But its long term effect was to help Fox and others realize the danger inherent in overemphasizing the individual nature of the religious quest. Gradually, such events helped the Society develop a stronger sense of the corporate nature of the religious life and helped them form a theology of religious experience which would allow the Society to endure.

Fox's deep resistance to religious tradition is one of the most puzzling parts of his thought. Unlike many other religious mystics, Fox did not easily accept the religious traditions and doctrines of his religious context. To an extent he exemplified the "protestant principle" at its finest in repeatedly reforming the nature of religious doctrine and its ability to influence the religious life based on his own authority and interpretation. But this did not always serve the Society well and allowed a seed of suspicion to enter the Society which has never been eradicated. Robert Barclay helped to correct this tendency partially, but the authority and influence of Fox has prevented its removal entirely.

Finally, the majesty of love formed the pinnacle of Fox's thought. The Spirit of God was the spirit of love and as such formed the foundation of personal ethics, social concerns, communal relations and economic commerce. To love and to live life with love was to work to bring the abstract principle of God's love into concrete reality. Fox never wearied of making this emphasis. He believed that if individuals could have an authentic encounter with the spirit of love then all concerns in civil society were solvable. The idea of two independent spheres of life living alongside one another, as Augustine had argued in *The City of God* and the Calvinists of Fox's time made popular, found no reception with Fox. Life was a single piece and one was to live life at all times as a single piece.

Fox had his flaws, but they were no more significant than the flaws of other great mortals. His emphases at times were extreme, but only because the circumstances of his time were extreme. He was caught in the flux of revolutionary times and sought to find a calming influence in the love of God. There were many streams of life and thought which flowed into Fox and out of his unique synthesis came an understanding of mystical experience which launched a new movement in religious history. The uniqueness of these insights would at times wane, but the clarity and authority with which he expressed these insights have made an enduring contribution to our understanding of religious experience.

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