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"That of God in Every Man" --

What Did George Fox Mean by It?

LEWIS BENSON

The phrase "that of God in every man" has been widely used in the twentieth century as an expression which signifies the central truth of the Quaker message. Many present-day Quakers, when asked what the Quakers believe, are likely to reply: "They believe that there is that of God in every man."

George Fox used this phrase, or variants of it, hundreds of times. This phrase does not occur in the Bible and some have been tempted, as I have been, to suggest that it may have originated with Fox.¹ It is doubtful if Fox thought of himself as its originator. We know that Fox had the first chapter of Romans in mind when he used this phrase, for he refers to it in his reply to Enoch Howet. Howet, a Baptist of Lincoln, had written in 1655, "There is nothing to speak to in man, but man,"² and Fox replied: "Here the scriptures are a correction for thee... for the apostle saith, 'that which may be known of God is manifest in man, for God hath showed it unto them' Romans 1."³ Burrough and Naylor both refer to Romans 1 in their replies to Howet.

That Fox saw "that of God in every man" in the context of Romans 1 is evident from the following passage written in 1658: "So that which may be known of God is manifest within people, which God hath showed unto them... and to that of God in them all must they come before they do hold the truth in righteousness, or retain God in their knowledge, or retain his covenant of light..."⁴

Fox does not use the declarative sentence, "There is that of God in every man," and he never makes it the central theme of any of his sermons or writings. His collected doctrinal writings, *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, contains few references

to that of God in every man. References occur in abundance in his *Journal* and *Epistles* when he is writing about Quaker ministry, and exhorting Quaker ministers to reach and answer the witness of God in all men. This phrase belongs to his pastoral vocabulary rather than to his doctrinal vocabulary.

Two salient facts point to an understanding of what Fox meant by "that of God in every man": first, it is not used by Fox to designate the central truth that he is proclaiming; and, second, it is used most frequently to refer to the response that Friends were trying to evoke by word and deed. The object of Quaker ministry was to reach, touch and answer something in man which is distinct from intellect, feeling, or action. What was this special kind of response that they were trying to arouse in all men? This question cannot be answered without first exploring Fox's teaching about the nature of man, and man's relation to God.

MAN'S RELATION TO GOD

In Fox's theology, God, the Creator, is unbound and unconditioned by his creation. The wisdom and power of the Creator is the ultimate wisdom and power. It cannot be set aside, or overruled by, any other wisdom and power. The Creator has imparted a unique status to man. He communicates with man in such a way that his wisdom and power are made accessible to man. This is the glory of man — that his life can be informed and shaped by the word that proceeds from the Creator. Man is not compelled, by his human nature, to hear this word or to obey it. When he hears and obeys he is brought under the authority of the Creator, and his life reflects the image of the Creator. When he closes his ear, or refuses to obey, he loses the divine image and the consequence is death, darkness, and captivity to demonic forces. By refusing to hear and obey the Creator, man loses his favored position among God's creatures and becomes instead the destroyer of himself, of human community, and of his natural environment. Man cannot truly live except by the word that comes from the Creator.

Man's relation to his Creator is therefore personal — like that of a son to a father, a wife to a husband, or a disciple to

a teacher. This can be called the prophetic conception of man because prophecy, in its biblical sense, is essentially a word to man from his Creator.

The restoration of the image of God in man is, therefore, not accomplished by reactivating a dormant spiritual potential in man, but by re-establishing the link of communication between man and his Creator. God has taken effective action in history to restore all men to true manhood. Jesus Christ is the way that God has chosen to restore the line of communication between man and himself.

Fox's Christology focuses on the prophetic office of Christ. Conventional Christology has focused on the Atonement, interpreted in various ways, accomplished by Jesus' death; and on the Incarnation, that is, the embodiment of the divine word in human flesh. Fox's Christology puts the emphasis on Christ as the fulfilment of the prophecy that a prophet like Moses would come, who was to be heard and obeyed in all things. From Fox's viewpoint, a messiah who is not the universal prophet who now teaches the principles of God's righteousness to all men is not the savior of the world. Through his office of heavenly prophet, Jesus Christ overcomes and vanquishes the darkness, death and captivity that came upon man through disobedience, and a new era of light, life and freedom is born. This new era did not have the transforming effect on history that it should have had because the prophetic power of Christ's redeeming work has been rendered ineffective in the course of Christian history. Fox accused the historical Christian churches of "denying the power." The power that they were denying was the power that comes from the Creator through Christ, the heavenly prophet.

Fox's first public act was to proclaim a fresh beginning of the Christ-era of liberation — the Day of the Lord — and to call for repentance. He announced that "Christ has come to teach his people himself." Christ, the teacher of righteousness, is the new way that God has chosen to bring all men to himself.

Fox's message is about Jesus Christ and how he saves men, and not a message about the nature of man. This message makes certain assumptions about the nature of man. Man's

life is conditioned by his relation to his Creator. He encounters the Creator as lawgiver. In the Bible, law and prophecy are parts of a single conception. The God of the prophets is one who tells us what we ought to do, and what we ought not to do, and calls for an obedient response. If there had never been a Mosaic Code, God would still be the lawgiver. Fox says, "Adam broke the law before it was written, and was reproved."⁵ To live by the voice and command of God is to live by the light. The Bible says, "The law is light." (Pr. 6:23)

In the Bible the "law of God" is used in two senses. In its broader and more general sense it expresses man's basic relation to God. In its more particular sense it refers to the Mosaic Code. When Fox speaks of "the life of the law" he has in mind the more general sense of the basic relation between God and man that the prophets are most concerned about. The interposition of the Mosaic Code between God and man does not completely restore the basic relation that was lost through disobedience. The giving of the Mosaic Code was not a terminal action in God's dealing with men. It was part of a long-term redemptive work leading toward a full restoration of the lost dialogic relationship between God and man. Christ, the eternal prophet, is the new and living way by which the breach between man and God is healed, and all is restored that was lost through disobedience. It is in the context of this conception of man and God that we can now begin to examine what Fox meant by "that of God in every man."

THAT OF GOD IN EVERY MAN

"That of God in every man" is not a human means of knowing like reason, intelligence, feeling, intuition, natural conscience or moral law within. It is a means of knowing that can be described as *seeking counsel of the Creator*. The Creator imparts his wisdom to man. This is not human wisdom, but the voice and wisdom of the Creator. We cannot produce the equivalent of this voice and this wisdom from our human resources. It must be heard and received. There is a hunger in every man for this voice and this wisdom — a need to be taught what is right by the Creator. In every man there is a witness for God that summons him to remember the Creator.

This is "that of God in every man." It is not an organ, or faculty, or gland. It is a hunger and thirst that God has put in man. People, says Fox, "are led by the witness of God up to God. . . . And in this that eye is opened which beholds God and his law, which answers that of God in everyone. . . ." But there are those who "stop their ears and close their eyes to that of God in them," and concerning these Fox says, "they never knew the spirit of the Father speaking in them but follow their own . . . spirits, and stop their ears against that of God in them; and that immediate voice within, which is the word of God in their hearts, which men should obey."⁸ All man's troubles arise from not hearing and obeying this word. There is more disobedience than obedience, and this is the problem of man. The witness of God in man is unheard, unheeded, or disobeyed. Fox says that where that of God within, that pertains to the righteous law of God and answers it, is transgressed, "the spirit of man is not sanctified; . . . the soul comes into death . . . man comes to be defiled and . . . a stranger to the life of God."⁹ "Transgression," he said, "must be brought down before the principle of God, which hath been transgressed, be lifted up."¹⁰ Fox's message included a call to repentance, and in his letter to Friends in the ministry urging them to "walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone," he concludes by saying, "The call is now out of transgression. . . . The call is to repentance, to amendment of life, whereby righteousness may be brought forth."¹¹

When Fox speaks of "that of God in every man" he is talking about a voice that is personal and transcendent. It calls us to repentance. It judges and condemns the transgressor, and blesses the obedient. Fox says, "if . . . you know not a principle within, which is of God, to guide you to wait upon God, ye are still in your own knowledge. . . . But waiting all upon God in that which is of God, you are kept open to receive the teachings of God. And the pure wisdom and knowledge is that, which comes from above, which is to know God and Jesus Christ, the way, . . . and to walk out of your own ways, and out of your own thoughts."¹²

Fox's Christology focuses on Jesus as prophet, and this is equally true of his soteriology. If the great need of man is to

re-establish the lost line of communication with the Creator, then, says Fox, filling this need is exactly what Christ does in his office as prophet. Christ speaks to us with the wisdom and authority of the Creator. When we hear and obey, we become recipients of his saving power. The proclamation "Christ has come to teach his people himself" puts Christ as prophet at the very center of the Quaker message. The Mosaic covenant brings man into a covenant relation with God through the Law. In the new and living way proclaimed by Fox, man is brought into a covenant relationship with God through a master-disciple relationship to the living Christ; Christ, the teacher-prophet, is the new covenant and the new way to God.

Reporting on a sermon that he preached in 1682, Fox says that he declared that "all people now are to hear Christ the prophet, in this his gospel of the new covenant. For as Moses said, 'Like unto me will God raise up a prophet, and Him shall ye hear in all things'; so, said I, this prophet, Christ, is come, and all . . . are to hear Christ in his gospel, new testament and new covenant. . . . So Christ was and is their treasure of wisdom, life, knowledge and salvation."¹³ The encounter with Christ as heavenly prophet is at the very heart of Fox's conception of Christianity. It is the cornerstone of his whole theology. Fox frequently refers to Christ as the cornerstone, and he does so in the context of the parable of the wicked husbandmen in which Jesus seems to be saying that a long succession of prophetic encounters has culminated in God's son appearing as the prophet to end all prophets. Though God's son is rejected like all previous prophets, yet he is described as the head cornerstone whose preciousness is not dimmed by man's rejection. Jesus, as the prophet who speaks from heaven, is the stone that the builders rejected. The rejectors of this stone are those main-line theologians and church leaders who have constructed a detour around the conception of Christ as heavenly prophet. These Fox calls "the wise master builders, who rejected Christ the cornerstone, and his order, and his government, and his counsel."¹⁴

Fox links the parable of the wicked husbandmen with the opening statement in Hebrews that "God, who . . . spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last

days spoken unto us by his Son" (Hebrews 1:1, 2). Commenting on this Fox declares: "now in these last days, God teaches us, and speaks to us by his son Christ Jesus, whom God hath appointed to be heir of all things, by whom he made the world . . . and all the children of the Lord are taught of the Lord."¹⁵ That which answers that of God in every man, he says, "is of the son of God."¹⁶

Fox's favorite descriptive title for Jesus is "the prophet who speaks from heaven." This has its source in Hebrews 12:25 where the author says: "See that you refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall we not escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." Concerning this Fox says: "Let him have your ear, that speaks from heaven, that you may come to observe his counsel, teaching, instruction and direction. . . ."¹⁷ Concerning the voice of this heavenly prophet Fox says that it is "distinct from all the voices of this world" and distinct from "all the voices of natural Adam's sons and daughters," and "all the natural men's voices upon the earth."¹⁸ This voice, which is not man's voice, is the voice of the Creator. Fox makes this most explicit when he states that before Adam disobeyed and refused God's counsel he was informed by a light that "did not come from the creation, nor by things that are made; if it were given from the creation, it comes by nature," "the light, which is Christ within, by which all things were made and created, was . . . before nature, for all the naturals that were made, were made by the light, Christ Jesus, who is the wisdom of God, by whom all things were made. . . ."¹⁹ This light "was before conscience. . . . For that which convinceth of sin is above the creature; checks him, and reproveth him, and lets him see where he goeth astray from the Creator. . . ."²⁰

In the foregoing I have tried to bring out some of the major theological assumptions that underlie Fox's use of "that of God in every man." Another approach is to study the way in which he actually used it. I will proceed to examine his use of the words "answer" and "reach," and the terms used for that which is answered — such as "witness of God" and "just principle"; and the terms for that which does the answering — such as "sons of God" and "wisdom of God"; and, finally, I

will look at some of the consequences resulting from answering that of God in every man and also at some of the means by which men are reached and answered.

ANSWERING AND REACHING

The verbs that Fox usually links with "that of God" are "answer" and "reach." The goal of Quaker preaching, either by word or deed, is to reach or answer something in all men. When a person is thus reached or answered, is this the same as being convinced? Fox says, "it is the light that makes manifest to a man when he is convinced: it answers to something, and reaches to something in their particulars."²¹ He reports in his *Journal* that, on one occasion, some "were reached and convinced."²² On another occasion he was moved of the Lord to speak to a man and "it reached to the witness of God in the man" and "he was convinced of the Truth by the spirit of God in his heart."²³ If to be reached and to be convinced can be linked in this way, it throws light on the meaning of "reached." Fox describes convincement as coming under Christ's teaching. To be convinced involves repentance, coming under obedience to Christ, and faithfulness under persecution.

THAT WHICH IS TO BE REACHED

Fox taught that, in departing from God's counsel, or refusing to obey it, man forfeits his humanity and cuts himself off from the life that God intended for him. The Mosaic law was part of God's action to bring man back to himself, but obedience to the Mosaic law is not the open relationship to God that God intended in creating man. The law "was added because of transgression" (Gal. 3:19). There was the possibility of obeying the Mosaic code without knowledge of the Creator, and Jeremiah says of such that they handled the law but knew not the Creator (Jer. 2:8). To know God and obey him is what Fox means by "the life of the law." Christ restores the open relationship between man and his Creator. Fox equates the life of hearing and obeying the Creator with "that of God in every man." Concerning those who "could not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears," he says that such "were out of the life of the law, and were from that of God in them."²⁴

Writing to Oliver Cromwell he says, "Friend, to that in thy conscience I speak, that with it thy mind may be guided up to God, to receive the Law from God, which is perfect, which is according to that of God in everyone's conscience."²⁵ It was opened to him that "the law of God that is perfect answers the perfect principle of God in everyone. . . . None knows the giver of this law, but by the spirit of God, neither can any truly read it or hear its voice but by the spirit of God."²⁶

Fox uses a number of variants for "that of God": that which is to be "reached" or "answered" is sometimes called "something of God," "the principle of God," "Witness of God," "spirit of God," "truth of God," and "law of God." He states that, in each of these variants, the thing which is of God has been either "transgressed," "disobeyed," "vexed," "quenched," "grieved" or "buried." Other variants are "the good," "the grace of God," and "that which may be known of God" in all men. These terms all refer to the same thing.

THAT WHICH DOES THE ANSWERING

In Fox's theology, man's creaturehood means that there are definite limitations on his way of knowing. In creating man, God did not create another god. Man was not endowed at creation with the wisdom of God, but is a creature to whom God imparts his wisdom. The disorder in human affairs is due to man's unwillingness to accept his creaturehood and his failure to seek counsel from the Creator. God has acted to restore the broken relationship between himself and man through his Son. Christ answers man's need for God's counsel. For Fox, "gospel" means that God has closed the breach between himself and man by sending his son to be a prophet and teacher.

Fox declares that *the gospel answers that of God in every man*, and in his *Journal* he says, "The gospel is not of man, nor by man, but it is the power of God, and answers the truth in all."²⁷ "There is something in man," he says, "that answers the power which is the gospel."²⁸ He asserts that "all shall be taught of God from the greatest to the least" by "Christ Jesus, the new covenant," and he asks "is not this gospel?"²⁹ "For it is the word of the Lord, and the light of God, that prophesieth and revealeth the dispensation of the gospel of Christ unto

people." Be faithful to that holy gift of prophecy, he exhorts, "through which you answer that of God in all."³⁰

Fox taught that it is *the wisdom of the Creator* that *answers the witness of God* in all men. "In the wisdom of God wait," he says, "that you may answer that of God in everyone."³¹ To Lady Claypole he wrote: "as the principle of God in thee has been transgressed, come to it . . . and deny thy self. . . . And there the wisdom of God will be received, which is Christ, by which all things were made and created. . . . Therefore . . . keep low in his fear, that thereby you may receive the secret of God and his wisdom."³² And in a General Epistle to Friends he wrote: "In the fear of the Lord God live, . . . and therein ye will receive the wisdom of God by which all things were made and created. . . . And with that wisdom use all things . . . to the glory of him that created them. . . . And in this you will feel the Lord God . . . giving you dominion in his wisdom; . . . and with that ye may come to answer that of God in everyone."³³

A thing that stands out with particular clarity in Fox's teaching is his insistence that *that of God in man is not answered without the fear of God*. "What God doth," he says, "it is in his wisdom, beyond the ignorance of mankind, and they that receive it must be in his fear."³⁴ In his Epistles he writes, "dwell in the power, dread and fear of the Lord God, that you may answer that of God in every man."³⁵ "Keep in God's fear that ye may receive his wisdom from above, that with it you may order all things to his glory, answering the witness of God in everyone."³⁶ He describes the Quakers as a people who fear God and "tremble at the word of God, by which all things were made and created."³⁷ This emphasis on the need to fear God gave Friends the name by which they were best known.

That which answers that of God in man is the truth. For Fox, receiving truth is not a matter of assenting to certain propositions, but it is a person to person relationship to the living Christ who is the prophet who speaks from heaven who must be obeyed in all things. Fox says, "the truth is Christ by whom the world was made."³⁸ He announces that the truth "shall be exalted, which shall answer that of God in everyone

upon the earth."³⁹ I have found nine instances where he states that "spreading the truth abroad" answers that of God in man, and eight places where he asserts that being "valiant for truth" answers that of God in all.

The help of God's spirit is needed in a ministry that answers that of God in man. Fox says, "the Spirit... giveth an understanding... how to wait, speak, and answer the Spirit of God in his people... The Holy Spirit teacheth the holy, gentle, meek, and quiet lowly mind to answer... the light, grace, and Spirit and the gospel in every creature."⁴⁰ Hendrik Kramer maintains that communication of the gospel "is neither primarily nor ultimately dependent on our human ability to communicate, ... it is not a transmission of doctrines or truths..." "Throughout the Bible," he says, "it is consistently maintained that the primary author of the effective transmission of the message is the Holy Spirit... In other words, communication of the gospel although it certainly has much in common with the universal phenomena of communication between men, cannot be regarded as *one* of the many forms of communication. It is a category *sui generis*, at least theologically speaking. It is not simply communication between two partners, but the invisible third partner, the Holy Spirit, is the chief one."⁴¹

WHAT RESULTS FROM ANSWERING THAT OF GOD IN MAN

Answering that of God in man involves the judgment of God and a call to repentance. In his *Vials of Wrath Poured Forth* (1654) Fox writes, "Repent for the day of the Lord is coming. Awake, ye worldlings, hearken to that in your consciences, which shows you sin and evil... To that in your conscience I appeal, which Christ hath enlightened you withal, which calls you to repentance, which shows you your evil deeds, which will be your teacher..."⁴² "Consider the Lord's ways and walk in his paths, lest his judgments kindle among you, and his fire break forth with burning, for to judgment is the Lord come and coming, who will judge the earth in righteousness and answer that of himself in everyone."⁴³

Fox maintains that *there is something of God in man that shows him what is evil.* "You must come to the witness of God

in yourselves," he says, "which lets you see sin and evil."⁴⁴ "Do rightly, justly... [and] equally to all people in all things, and that is according to that of God in every man, and the witness of God and the wisdom of God, and the life of God in yourselves."⁴⁵ What is it, he asks, that the children of disobedience are disobedient to? "...is not this something of God which is disobeyed? Is it not that which is of God manifest in them, which God hath shown them... which lets them see... when they act unrighteously?"⁴⁶

Is this "something of God" the same thing as conscience? Many of Fox's critics believed that when he spoke of "that of God in man" and "the light that lighteth every man" he was really talking about conscience. In reply to this Fox says, "The light which everyone that cometh into the world is enlightened with is not conscience, for the light was before anything was made... So the light is that which exerciseth the conscience toward God, and toward man, where it is loved and the voice heard."⁴⁷ The voice of conscience is not the voice of the Creator. Conscience must be informed and instructed by a teacher who speaks with the wisdom and authority of the Creator. That of God in the conscience is not conscience itself, but the word by which all things, including conscience, were created.

The witness of God in man teaches us how to use, and not to misuse our natural environment. It would be reasonable to expect that this aspect of Fox's teaching would receive special attention in an age when the increasing pollution and destruction of our natural environment has become a matter of global concern. But this, too, has been allowed to drift into obscurity like most of the rest of Fox's teaching.

Much has been written in the past few years about the biblical doctrine of man's God-given dominion over nature, and it has been asserted that in modern technological civilization we see the triumph of this doctrine over primitive man's awe, fear and reverence for nature. In the present stage of technological development man has come to believe that he has the knowledge and power to control nature absolutely. It is now being argued that the man of biblical faith is committed to extend technological development to its ultimate potential, and that this is what God wants us to do.

This interpretation of the Bible omits one factor which for Fox is the key to the whole thing. These modern interpreters seem to have forgotten that man's dominion over nature is conditional. Man retains dominion over nature only as long as he keeps in God's counsel and, in the fear of God, seeks the wisdom that comes from the Creator. The light of Christ, that answers that of God in every man, restores the true relation between man and his natural environment. Fox says, "wait in the light for the wisdom by which all things were made, with it use all the Lord's creatures to his glory... and with the wisdom by which they were made ye may be kept out of the misuse of them... and ye may come to see that the 'earth is the Lord's'."⁴⁸ The wisdom of God, he says, "preserves the creation and is not destructive."⁴⁹ "Honor God with your substance;" he exhorts, "for nothing brought you into the world, nor nothing you shall take out of the world, but leave all creatures behind you as you found them, which God hath given to serve all nations, and generations."⁵⁰ It is Christ, he says, that "renews man again to the image of God and brings him again to his dominion over the handiworks of God."⁵¹

By using God's earth in the wisdom by which it was created the Christian man answers the witness of God in all men. In an early Epistle Fox writes, "In the fear of the Lord God live, departing from sin and evil... and therein ye will receive the wisdom of God, by which all things were made and created. ... And with that wisdom use all things, and order all things that are under your hands and dominion, to the glory of him that created them. And in this you will feel the Lord God going in and out amongst you... and his blessing and presence with you... and he over all giving you dominion in his wisdom, power and life; that with that you may come to answer that of God in every one."⁵²

HOW THAT OF GOD IN MAN IS ANSWERED

Fox mentions five ways by which the witness of God in all men may be reached or answered. *Preaching by word of mouth is one of the ways of answering that of God in every man.* Preaching the gospel is not one of the ordinary means of communication. Fox taught that a true preacher of the

gospel is one who preaches to the inward ear. To "Friends in the Ministry" he wrote, "All Friends, who are moved of the Lord to speak the word of the Lord, whom the Lord has made to be his mouth, speak not your own words... But... speak the word of the Lord faithfully, neither add to it with your reason, nor diminish from it with a disobedient mind... trample that which is contrary to God under your feet; that ye may answer that of God in every one." "Minister in that love, and grace, and power that keeps all things in subjection and order, and in unity in the life and in the power, and light, by which you may see that of God in every man, and answer to that which God hath showed unto people."⁵³ He counsels those that go forth in the Lord's service not to go "before they are moved," for to do so is "out of the wisdom and out of the fear," and, he says, that "answereth not the light in every man's conscience, neither doth it reach to the life... And such are stumbling blocks, and do not answer the witness of God in the conscience." "...keep down that which would not be subject to Christ; that He, the Holy One, may reign in your hearts; that your lives... and words may preach righteousness and truth; that you may all show forth good examples of true believers in Christ, in virtue and holiness, answering that which may be known of God in all people."⁵⁴

Preaching with our lives answers that of God in man. Today, there is a popular Quaker notion that preaching with lives is superior to preaching with words, and can actually be substituted for preaching with words. It is not possible to find the source of this notion in Fox's teaching. His desire for Friends was that their "lives and words may preach righteousness and truth." In his Epistle to London Yearly Meeting in 1679 he wrote: "Friends, the Lord doth require more of you than he doth of other people; because he hath committed more to you. He requires... the fruits of righteousness, holiness, godliness, virtue, truth and purity; so that you may answer that which is of God in all people."⁵⁵ Let your lives preach, he says, "so that you may be as a city set on a hill... and as lights of the world answering the equal principle in all."⁵⁶

The Love of the Brethren for one another answers that of God in man. Fox wrote to Friends in Dantzic: "Live in peace

and love with one another, and in the pure, gentle wisdom of God. . . . And let all your conversations be according to the glorious gospel of life and salvation; so that you may come to answer the truth in all people."⁵⁷ In an Epistle addressed "To Friends to live in love and unity together in the power of God" he wrote, "Live all as the family of God in love . . . that ye may answer that of God in every man."⁵⁸

Unity of the Brethren is another way of answering that of God in man. For Fox, that of God in man is not an individualistic concept for, he says, "that which is of God within every one is that . . . which brings them into unity, and this unity answers the witness of God in all men."⁵⁹ Writing from Amsterdam he says, "Friends here are in unity and peace . . . answering . . . that of God in people."⁶⁰ Unity, he says, "brings all into oneness, and answereth the good principle of God in all people."⁶¹

Fox believed that no matter how difficult it may be for God's people to come into unity it is never impossible where God is feared and his wisdom sought. What Fox called "the perfect oneness" is not possible without God's help and counsel. This is why the "unity of the saints" is a witness for God's power and wisdom, and answers that of God in all men. It is at this point that Fox's teaching is most at variance with current Quaker opinion and practice. Fox's belief in the possibility of unity in the Christian community has recently been called "naive" and "epistemological unsophistication," and the effort to reach unity has been largely abandoned by Friends. In its place is an attempt to cultivate love and tolerance in a situation of permanent diversity. In the place of stubborn differences it is better to practice love and tolerance than hate and intolerance — but this "better" is not the best. The permanent diversity that is now accepted as normative by many Friends is what Fox called confusion. In a letter to preachers he writes: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ go on, that that of God in all consciences may witness that ye are sent of God . . . and so according to that speak, to bring all up into the head, Christ, . . . for there is the unity, and out of it is the confusion."⁶² That which breeds confusion, he says, "reaches not to the witness of God in every one."⁶³

Finally, *that of God may be reached by direct encounter with that which is contrary to truth.* Fox called this "confounding deceit." Much time and energy of early Friends was devoted to the work of "confounding deceit." Whenever an anti-Quaker publication appeared some Friends would usually answer it. Fox himself answered over one hundred anti-Quaker books in his *Great Mystery*. "Confounding deceit" is one of the ways that we are to "walk cheerfully over the world answering that of God in every one."⁶⁴

THAT OF GOD IN EVERY MAN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Between 1700 and 1900 "that of God in every man" virtually disappeared from the Quaker vocabulary, but early in the present century it came back into use, and became one of the most widely used symbols for what twentieth century Friends believe. How did this long-forgotten phrase get into the spotlight and stay in the spotlight?

In seeking an answer to this question we must take into account that, at the turn of the century, a revolution was taking place in Quaker life and thought. A new interpretation was beginning to appear which claimed that at the center of the Quaker faith is a belief about the nature of man, and that the ancestry of this belief goes back in direct line "to the Socratic movement in philosophy of those who find God involved and implicated in the nature of normal self-consciousness and in the idea of the Good toward which we live."⁶⁵

The earliest instance of the revived use of "that of God" that I have been able to discover is found in Rufus Jones' "Introduction" to his abridged edition of Fox's *Journal*, first published in 1903, in which he expresses his opinion that the "larger truth" implicit in Fox's early experiences is the discovery that there is a "universal principle, that the Spirit of God reaches every man." He then adds: "To all sorts and conditions of men, Fox continually makes appeal to 'that of God' in them or to 'the principle of God within man' In every instance he means that the Divine Being operates directly on the human life."⁶⁶ In the following year he wrote: "What was the Inner Light? The simplest answer is: The Inner Light

is the doctrine that there is something Divine, 'Something of God' in the human soul."⁶⁷ As a consequence of statements like these, the phrase "that of God in every man" began to acquire a meaning for twentieth century Friends that it did not have for Fox. The new "interpretation" made "that of God in man" the central conception around which everything else in Quakerism revolves. In so far as this "interpretation" came to be established and accepted as standard, it had the effect of decreasing the interest in Fox's teaching as a whole, and this partially explains why Fox's message has received so little attention from the present generation of Quakers.

There is another reason why Fox has been ignored. Rufus Jones says of Fox that he was "naive, spontaneous and unreflective. He knew no school metaphysics. He simply called men to 'that of God' in themselves.... He assumed that universal experience bore witness to a divine light within man. He rested his entire faith upon the testimony of the soul. Wherever man is found, some moral and spiritual truths are revealed to him. How the Divine and human can be conjunct, how God and man correspond and cooperate did not greatly concern him."⁶⁸ "He never tried to think his principle through in any systematic way. He depended on flashes of insight, sudden openings, swift intuitions, and we need not expect to find adequate or consistent interpretations of the principle in his voluminous, but somewhat confused books and tracts."⁶⁹ Such passages helped to create the myth that Fox was constitutionally incapable of interpreting his own message. The word from Rufus Jones is clear: Once you grasp the principle of "that of God in every man" in the context of an enlightened Christian Platonism you can safely ignore most of Fox's inadequate, inconsistent and confused interpretations.

It is a curious fact that Rufus Jones made no attempt to study systematically what Fox meant by "that of God in every man" until the last few weeks of his life. When he finally did locate fifty-one references in Fox's *Epistles* it raised a doubt in his mind as to whether the interpretation that he had put forward for forty-five years was consistent with that of Fox. He raised the question "whether George Fox thought of this 'more' as an inherent part of man's nature, as the mystics of the Four-

teenth Century under the influence of Plotinus almost certainly thought of the Divine Spark in the soul, or whether George Fox thought of this 'more' as Barclay certainly did, as a super added bestowal of Divine Spirit; it is a question not easy to answer because he never clarified his position. But it is more probable that he agreed with the position of Barclay."⁷⁰ (I am not here concerned with whether Barclay's interpretation was correct, or whether Fox's was the same as Barclay's. The point relevant to this discussion is that Rufus Jones had always believed that Fox's interpretation was closer to his own than to Barclay's. A study of the sources caused him to question this belief.)

The doctrine of "that of God in every man" quickly spread throughout the Society of Friends, but I don't think we can account for its rapid acceptance entirely on the basis of the popularity of the books of Jones, or A. Neave Brayshaw, who did the pioneer research which has been a source for other scholars. A major contributing factor in the dissemination of this idea has been the torrent of promotional literature and other publications that flows from the pens of the publicists and staff writers of the American Friends Service Committee. For generations the Service Committee has contended that its role is service, and that it is up to the Society of Friends to furnish the moral and religious philosophy for this service. In actuality, however, the Service Committee, by frequently reminding us that its central motivating principle is "that of God in every man," has exerted a much greater influence on Quaker faith and thought than anything emanating from the Society itself. A curious factor here is that the kind of AFSC literature under discussion is seldom graced by an author's name. We are continually bombarded by a word whose author is an institution. A typical instance of this is the recent publication *Who Shall Live?*,⁷¹ in which we are told: "The conviction of the universality of that of God in every man... is at the center of the work of the American Friends Service Committee. It is the reason for the traditional attitudes of Friends against the taking of human life in war and in capital punishment." An impressive array of names appears in the opening pages of this book, but we don't know the author of the lines quoted

above. Anonymity implies the sanction of the whole organization, while reducing the hazards of critical challenge.

The elevation of "that of God in every man" to the status of *root principle* has affected Quaker life in several areas, namely: the peace testimony, social testimonies, the meaning of membership, and missions.

First, let us consider the peace and social testimonies. In Sidney Lucas' exposition of modern denominational Quakerism he says, "Belief in the existence of God in every man led Friends to renounce war and all violence."⁷² He also asserts that "As a recognition of that of God in every man led Friends away from war, so it led them into a genuine feeling of equality with all men," and he goes on to cite the Quaker testimony against slavery as an instance of this.⁷³ In his critical comment on this kind of attempt to extract Friends' motivation for peace and social testimonies from the principle of "that of God in every man" Henry Cadbury says, "when early Friends recommended social action they were not thinking of the Light within others, within the object or recipient of their enlightened behaviour, but within themselves. I know of no mention of the Light within others as the motive of our own action. Modern thinkers commonly maintain that the Friends emphasized the sacredness of personality, the value of the individual, and the equality of all men (including women), and they assume that recognition of the divine Light or Spirit or Seed in our neighbors will lead us to the appropriate conclusions for our own action. Logically it should do so, yet in so far as Friends actually did maintain these principles, the principles appear to be independent of any such deduction."⁷⁴

In contrast to this modern Quaker peace position, Fox counsels Friends to stand "in the fear and dread of the Lord, his power, life, light . . . and wisdom by which you may take away the occasion of wars,"⁷⁵ and "as everyone comes to the life that gave forth the scriptures, with which they see Christ the end, the substance of them, him by whom the world was made . . . such . . . come to know . . . the occasion of war taken away."⁷⁶

The Quaker conception of membership and missions has been greatly affected by this doctrine. Among Quakers today there is a widespread belief that the central truth of Quakerism

is a principle that is not solely derived from the Christian revelation. It is therefore regarded as possible to be a Quaker within the context of a variety of world religions — not excluding the Christian religion. This has raised the question of whether the Society of Friends can become a multi-faith society in which members are joined in a common allegiance to a principle that transcends and comprehends the religions of the world, while leaving individual members free to retain an open connection with some particular religious tradition. The pros and cons of this cannot be discussed here, but it is within the scope of this essay to point out that for a considerable number of Friends "that of God in every man" is the symbol of a principle that transcends and comprehends Christianity. We know that it is the policy of some Monthly Meetings to make belief in "that of God in every man," which has been called "the Quakers' creed," a primary and essential condition of membership, whereas faith in Christ is regarded as a secondary and non-essential factor in examining prospective members. I maintain that this meaning and use of "that of God in every man" has no connection with its meaning and use in the writings of Fox. There is no such Christ-transcending principle in the thought of Fox.

Where the above speculations about the meaning of membership have been transferred to the policy of Friends in those areas of mission where Christianity is a minority religion they have caused much confusion. The point at which this vast question touches our present interest is in the claim that Fox's own missionary strategy reveals a tendency deliberately to reduce the Christian content of his message when addressing non-Christians. It is argued that his message to Muslims, Indians, Blacks and Chinese had no other object than to win from them the acknowledgment that they had "that of God" in them.

It is true that Fox's starting point with non-Christians was usually the *fact* that there is that of God in them. But in his dealings with non-Christians his greatest concern is that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and partakers of God's promise in Christ by the gospel.⁷⁷ He exhorted all Friends in America that had Blacks or Indians "to preach the gospel to them . . . you are to open the promises of God to the ignorant, and how

God would give Christ a covenant, a light to the Gentiles... and that he is God's salvation to the ends of the earth. ... all are to bow at the name of Jesus; for there is no salvation in any other name... whom God now speaks to his people by, his Son; and all are to hear him, the great prophet."⁷⁸ They that gather in the name of Jesus "bid farewell to all other names and gatherings.... So then it is clear, if the gathering of all nations be unto Christ, they must forsake all that into which they were gathered before.... And... this doth fulfill Moses' prophecy, who said, 'Like unto me will God raise up a prophet, whom in all things the people shall hear', who is the salvation to the ends of the earth, to whom the gathering of all nations must be...."⁷⁹ He counsels Quaker ministers to "go and discourse with the [Indian chiefs] desiring them to gather their people together, that you may declare God's everlasting truth, and his everlasting way of life and salvation to them, knowing that Christ is the promise of God to them, a covenant of light to the Gentiles."⁸⁰

To the Chinese he wrote: "This is the true light which doth enlighten every man that cometh into the world, which is Christ, the Son of God, the way to the father... if you receive this light, you receive Christ."⁸¹ He urges Quaker captives in Algiers to meet in the name of Jesus so that "Christ's ensign may be set up in those parts; that with his light in all men, they may all see it, and flock to it..."⁸² Three days before he died he wrote to Quaker ministers in America to "Let your light shine among the Indians, the Blacks, and the Whites, that you may answer the truth in them, and bring them to the standard and ensign, that God hath set up, Christ Jesus."⁸³ The argument that Fox preached Christ and the gospel of Christ to Christians but held in reserve a quite different message for non-Christians is plainly at variance with the facts.

From the foregoing study it should be evident that we can claim, as Neave Brayshaw did,⁸⁴ that there can be no full understanding of Fox and his message apart from a knowledge of what he meant by "that of God in every man." However, when we jump to the conclusion that "that of God" is the central truth of the Quaker message, then we cut ourselves off from

that which Fox made central; namely, the message about Jesus Christ and how he saves men. If we make "that of God in man" the basis of our peace testimony and other testimonies then they become an inference from a theory about the nature of man rather than a response to a divine command, and our witness loses its prophetic impact. While we are under the spell of the "that of God" theory we cannot make the witness for the distinctive interpretation of Christianity which is the special task for which we were called to be a people, and the inner life of our Society becomes confused and at war with itself. The irony of our present situation is that any plea to seek the unity that is received from Christ is bound to be regarded in some quarters as a breach of the truce between divergent opinions that we have come to regard as the highest measure of unity of which we are capable. This false peace must be broken before we can enjoy the unity in Christ which God intends for us.

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