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SPURGEON ON FOX

George Fox has been praised by many "outsiders," and may again be during this tercentenary. A leading outsider from the past century was C. H. Spurgeon. He delivered an address to Friends in Devonshire Meeting House on November 6, 1866 (printed by Henry Longstreth, Philadelphia, 1898). Young Fox was, said Spurgeon, "a man with so many angles and corners that he was best alone," his "awkward kind of conscience," offended people then, and would do more so, now, he thought. Although he guessed that Fox would label him a "Chaffy Baptist" Spurgeon admired him nonetheless, and thought the world ought to have more such vigorous Christians. He praised Fox for lifting up the spirituality of true religion, for resisting religious intolerance and ceremonialism, for obeying Christ in a straightfoward manner on the matter of oaths, for his "fearless reliance upon the force of truth," and for testifying "against the abomination of war."

Because some nations are once again in a militaristic mood—indeed downright jingoistic at times, Christians and others might well ponder these words of the popular British Baptist evangelist. I say ponder, perhaps I should add, prayerfully.

I am always glad to hear of a soldier being a Christian; I am always sorry to hear of a Christian being a soldier. Whenever I hear of a man who is in the profession of arms being converted I rejoice; but whenever I hear of a converted man taking up the profession of arms I mourn. If there be anything clear in Scripture it does seem to me that it is for a Christian to have nothing to do with carnal weapons, and how it is that the great mass of Christendom do not see this I cannot understand; surely it must be through the blinding influences of the society in which the Christian church is cast. But Fox's singularly clear, mental vision could see that to buckle on the carnal sword was virtually to be disobedient to Christ May the day come when war shall be regarded as the most atrocious of all crimes, and when for a Christian man, either directly or indirectly, to take part in it shall be considered as an abjuration of his principles. The day may be far distant, but it shall come, when men shall learn war no more; a right view of the true character of war may hasten that happy era. —A.O.R.