

A Biography of George Fox

By T. Canby Jones

The Life of George Fox
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George Fox, (1624-1691) was an itinerant preacher and religious reformer and founder of the Religious Society of Friends called "Quakers." He was born in Drayton-in-the -Clay in the Midlands of England, the son of Christopher and Mary Lago Fox. As a boy he learned the trades of shepherding, leather working and shoemaking. He spent the hours looking after the sheep poring over the Scriptures, so much so that he virtually memorized the whole Bible. In an age of theological controversy when arguments were "won" by "proof-texting" from Scripture Fox could counter arguments with Biblical texts so effectively that one of his enemies said of Fox in later life, "If the Bible were lost it could be found in the mouth of George Fox."

As a young man Fox wandered the north of England seeking spiritual solace from, as he called them, "the priests and professors" of faith. But he found them all "empty and hollow casks." In 1647 in his despair of finding outward human help, he heard an inward Voice that said to him, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, who can speak to thy condition.' "And when I heard it my heart did leap for joy!" Fox now knew experimentally that, "As the Father of Life drew me to his Son by his Spirit ... He let me see his love which is endless and eternal and surpasses all the knowledge men have." (N.J. p.27)

Further, Fox was now convinced that he had been brought "through an ocean of darkness and death into an ocean of light and love which flowed over the ocean of darkness by the eternal glorious power of Christ." (N.J. p. 21) In addition, Fox testifies, "Now I was come up through the flaming sword into the paradise of God. All things were new ... I knew nothing but pureness, innocency and righteousness, being renewed up into the image of God by Christ Jesus ..." (N.J. p.27)

George Fox, a large man of great strength, began gathering a people to the Lord in 1648 and began to reach large numbers by 1652. His courage, bravery and his ability to endure physical violence were unusual. Attacked and beaten with hedge stakes or even pulpit Bibles, the "Lord's power" would raise him up to continue witnessing. Once a man ran at Fox with a naked rapier intending to run him through. But George stared at his assailant and shouted, "Alack for thee, it is no more to me than a straw." His attacker withdrew in confusion.

On another occasion two "desperate fellows" in an Inn where Fox was staying got into a fight. Fox intervened "in the Lord's power" took them by their hands and they departed "loving and very thankful." (N.J. p229).

Fox made extended journeys in his ministry not only up and down Britain but also visited the Netherlands twice, Germany once and in 1672 made an extended visit to America.

George fox believed in the sovereign power of God in Christ to overcome all evil and that the spirit of God rules and will triumph in human history in the face of humanity's disobedience and sin against God and his covenant. The Light of God in Christ enlightens every person who comes into the world whether they know Christ by name or not. If persons obey that inward Voice and live godly and righteously in whatever culture they live, they will be accepted and achieve victory in this life and the next.

But the weapons of this conflict are strictly spiritual, the only war permitted is "The Lamb's War" fought by long-suffering, peaceable persuasion, faithfulness to Truth and the confidence that the Lord of love will overcome enemies.

"God is no respecter of persons" and has made all his children, male and female of equal value to Him. Therefore there shall be no human discrimination or social preference or honor shown to any

person more than any other. Also, Jesus commanded his followers, "Swear not at all." This meant that Friends could take no oath of any kind, even the oath of allegiance to the Crown. More than 50,000 early Quakers suffered imprisonment or distraint of their good for this refusal. They had only one king and one Lord and that was Christ ruling by his inward Presence in their lives.

Perhaps the most striking thing about the life and faith of George Fox was his confidence of victory! He was sure the Power of the Lord would overcome all and that Christ's Peaceable Kingdom would become the kingdoms of this earth!