

25s.), suffers from the defects of being a doctorate thesis with its inevitable repetitions and the desire to leave nothing out. But the book is eminently readable and the idea of this 'primitive' liturgical movement is of great interest. His conclusion that the evangelical worship of the Puritans was characterised by purity, simplicity and spirituality should be studied in view of the contention in the article above.

(c) G. F. Nuttall: *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Blackwell; 15s.) is another doctorate thesis but with fewer of the defects of its kind. The author shares with Dr Davies a lack of appreciation of the religion of those who lived before the reformation; but the book gives a comprehensive view of the Puritan mind in regard to its central tenets. The same author has since published a small companion volume (*The Holy Spirit and Ourselves*; Blackwell, 5s.) to popularise the doctrines and attitudes revealed in his work of scholarship. This latter is a practical little book in which the author attempts to give some idea of the meaning and nature of 'Holy Spirit', which had been so neglected by the authors whom he had studied.

(d) W. Schenk: *The Concern for Social Justice in the Puritan Revolution* (Longmans; 15s.) is a most balanced and delightful book of scholarship. Based on the well-known work of R. H. Tawney, the author reveals some modifications which must be made to the former thesis. He shows wherein a comparison could be made, but mostly wherein it cannot be made, with the modern Marxists. 'One could indicate the historical position of the Puritan Radicals by saying that in their criticism of society they had much more in common with William Langland than with Thomas Paine or Karl Marx'. (p. 161).

IN PRAISE OF QUAKERS

IN the year 1924 the Society of Friends, which cherishes an ancient 'testimony' against the celebration of special days, waived its scruples to celebrate the birth of George Fox, who, if not exactly the founder, was the coherer of those wandering souls who became known as Quakers.

About the time the Quakers [I must be forgiven if from time to time I call them Friends] are, if not celebrating, at least turning their minds to the tercentenary of their existence as a religious body. I believe also that other religious bodies, especially Christian bodies, will according to their capacity give thanks to God for the Quakers. Even that Christian body to which I have been given the grace to belong, that body without which there could not be in any sense a Christian body, very properly and without retracting in the slightest

degree from her witness to herself as Christ's one and undivided Church outside which there is no salvation, may rejoice.

Strictly and narrowly the thing called Quakerism is a heresy and as such it must be condemned and detested. As a Catholic I abjure with all my heart and mind the heresy of Quakerism. Yet very few Quakers are heretics. They are not because very few have received the sacrament of baptism. Those who have received it are those who have joined the Society of Friends from some Christian group which gives valid baptism. Looking at the Society of Friends still in this narrow way, we may doubt whether it is, in fact, a Christian body at all.

But this is, as I admitted, a narrow view. The early Quakers were almost certainly heretics for they had been baptised by that water baptism they came to spurn with all 'outward' elements in religion. But what sort of heretics were they? I do not merely mean to ask whether they were formal or material heretics. As far as I know they were mostly of the latter category. But I think we may add to the old distinction. There is the heretic who faces away from the Church—the man who willingly leaves her, the Luther and the Calvin. Later is the man, whether he be a formal or material heretic, who revolts against the sect to which he has joined himself, to turn in the direction of the Church. I believe George Fox was that sort of heretic. So was Robert Barclay, the young ex-Calvinist who at the age of twenty-seven wrote in Latin that scholastic attack on scholasticism, the *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* [of the Society of Friends], a work which enables us to see so much more clearly what Quakerism is, a matter of some importance after we have read the more prophetic utterances of Fox and the mystical sentences of Pennington. And it is clear that, against the prevailing Calvinism of his time and surroundings, Barclay turned towards the Church.

It is often said by a kind of Quaker (for Quakers are not like peas in a pod) that Quakerism is poles apart from Catholicism and yet extraordinarily near it. When I became a Catholic I was in fact rather embarrassed by those Quakers who gave me credit for an interest in the spiritual life I did not possess. I did not, as they believed, become a Catholic in a mysterious leap from pole to pole, nor because I saw a similarity in the writings of Isaac Pennington and of St John of the Cross. I became a Catholic simply because I was afraid of going to hell. And it is no exaggeration of the evangelical truth contained in the first Quaker ministry to say that the first Quakers were on fire to save men from hell.

They came upon the 17th-century scene when the Commonwealth was jostled by multitudinous sects. They arrived at that later phase

of the Protestant Reformation when Protestantism was really in decay. The Book, which the first reformers so confidently believed would give the Truth however indiscriminately used, was now rent asunder, for each sect made its own interpretations. In addition there were dryness and lack of spiritual life in the land, even though there were oases as of some spring watered from Catholic sources.

Abroad, there were movements of 'independent spirituals' especially in Holland and the Germanies. Some of these 'independents' were nominally Lutheran or Calvinist. We may add to them the Cambridge Platonists of the Anglican Establishment; and we may justly trace a sort of pedigree back to the late medieval Friends of God and the *Theologica Germanica* and the Dominican Tauler.¹ Charles Kingsley saw this when he wrote, in commending an edition of the *Theologica Germanica*, 'To those who cannot help seeing that the doctrine of Christ in every man as the Indwelling Word of God, the Light who lights every man coming into the world is no peculiar tenet of the Quakers. . . .'

But we must go further to say that the interiority which is Quakerism's chief characteristic has roots in primitive Christianity.² It will suffice to recall St Augustine's: 'I have laboured much seeking Thee out of myself and Thou dwellest in me if only I desire Thee'.

But the Catholic sources of Quakerism are muddled almost from their beginnings. By the time the anonymous Dutch author of *The Light in the Candlestick* had written what Quaker authorities regard as proto-Quakerism, the Catholic sources had almost been forgotten. Moreover, the Quaker revival of the spiritual life rose up in a Protestantised England. The atmosphere is clearly Protestant. This helps to explain why the Quaker apologetic is worked out on Protestant lines, e.g., the constant appeal to Holy Scripture. Robert Barclay, of course, as an ex-Calvinist (trained in the Paris Theological Academy) is hard put to it indeed in trying to explain why Quakers are determined on getting behind the letter of Scripture to the Authority which begat Scripture. He is, as far as I can see,—and I began reading his *Apology* in my 'teens and have since re-read him frequently—nervous lest any Protestant shall think him tender towards the papistical arguments upon the value of Holy Scripture. The Catholic will find him not a little confused at this point. Just as he is developing with superb clarity what seems indistinguishable from the Catholic case, he seems suddenly suspicious of himself. On the question of merit he is clearly on Catholic ground again. Against the general run

1 Also the Dominicans, Henry Suso, Nicholas of Strasburg—not to be confused with Nicholas of Basle, a Waldensian—and of course Eckhart.

2 The early Friends regarded their message in such terms as to explain the title of Penn's book, *Primitive Christianity Revived*.

of Protestant thought he urges the need for meritorious works and then apologises lest anyone say he is giving papistical arguments. Or yet again on the 17th-century controversy on grace and free will he is markedly nearer the Catholic view or views, and Baron von Hügel asserted that on this point the Quakers were to be ranked with Catholics against Protestants. Barclay, indeed, makes contradictory attacks on the Dominican school here for in one place he accuses St Thomas Aquinas of having paved the way for the heresy of Calvin and in another of having had too high a regard for free will. Many modern Quakers regard Barclay as being not altogether freed from his upbringing.³

If a Quaker has read so far he is already, no doubt, mildly irritated at my having dwelt so much on Barclay. For however much a Quaker admires that Quaker theologian—perhaps the only Quaker theologian of consequence—he will be sensitive to the Quaker testimony which aims at showing the need for being ‘above theology’. And this forces me to answer as best I can the question which Quakers are continually asking themselves, ‘What is Quakerism?’

Now the fact that there is no unanimity among Quakers on a definition not only indicates the practical impossibility of a non-Quaker giving the right answer but it indicates the road to the right answer. Here perhaps a little personal digression is necessary.

When I was in my early ‘teens my Quaker father wrote a very controversial letter to *The Friend* on the decline of Christian orthodoxy in the Society. Here is a question which has plagued Quakers since their beginning but particularly since the Hicksite schism of the early 19th century.⁴ I noticed then the great cleavage between Friends—not a cleavage on doctrine so much as a cleavage between those who wanted to get behind all verbal expressions of faith. A Quaker as pronouncedly ‘evangelical’ as my father would withstand his demand for a minimum doctrinal statement as opposed to all Friends stood for. Then I began to notice that some Friends would say of another: ‘He is of course at heart a chapel-man’. Or, ‘Poor So-and-so, he doesn’t understand Quakerism!’

And this explains why my concern with Barclay will be met with irritation by the Quaker. He will vastly prefer my dealing with the story of George Fox. And this I must do, even though I do not apologise for my primary note on Barclay.

Fox was a seer. He wrote a Journal which ranks, at least for its Anglo-Saxon vigour and home-spunness, among the greatest spiritual

³ He is also freely accused by Friends of being subject to the dualism of Descartes.
⁴ Although the Hicksite schism brought in the United States the Socinian element in the Society on Hick’s side, the schism had nothing much to do with a trinitarian controversy. It was really a revolt against the discipline of the Elders.

autobiographies. In that Journal we read of a young man, a shepherd on the Leicester uplands, who thirsted after the knowledge of God. The 'priests' denied him such a knowledge. He went down into the dark night and though he walked there not altogether unconsolated he walked to be delivered into the Light. When all his hopes in man had completely gone then he heard a Voice which said: 'There is one, even Christ Jesus which can speak to thy condition'. Then his heart leapt for joy and he immediately began to collect together other seekers to tell them the good news. His mission was a success. William Penn the courtier-sailor, Barclay, cousin of the Stuarts, Jane Stuart, a daughter of James II, came from the higher ranks of society to swell the ranks of the Friends or Quakers as they were nicknamed after Fox told a magistrate to quake before the Lord. The Friends soon appeared with a message if not a doctrine. This message was: 'Look unto Christ in you. Not unto men'. Dr Rufus Jones's definition of Quakerism, the most accurate I can find, describes what has happened to the message.

'Quakerism is no isolated or sporadic religious phenomenon. It is . . . a serious attempt to achieve a more complete Reformation, to restore primitive Christianity and to change the basis of authority from external things of any sort whatever to the interior life and spirit of man'. There is the Light on the Candlestick. There is the Quaker interpretation of the text 'the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord'. 'God is to be found in the inner man'. There is 'the inner Light', 'the Seed', or as Fox put it once or twice, 'that of God in every man', or Barclay's '*Vehiculum Dei*'. But here is a matter which Isaac Pennington seems best to write of:

'The seed of God is the word of God. . . . It is a measure of the light and life, of the grace and truth, which is by Christ Jesus. It is a heavenly talent which is given to man in the virtue and strength of Christ to improve for God. This which God hath placed in man to witness for himself and to guide man from evil unto good (in the pure breathings, quickenings and shinings of it), this is the seed, freely bestowed, to spring up and remain in him and to gather him out of himself, into itself'.

To Pennington the knowledge of God 'is wrapped up in this seed'. 'In the springing Light of this seed, God and Christ are revealed. Yea, here we know the righteous spirit, the righteous nature, the righteous life, of Christ and feel Him to be one with the Father, who begets of the same spirit nature and life in us'. The seed is immortal and incorruptible, it is of a gathering nature, it purges and cleanses, sanctifies, enriches, improves and makes to grow.

I am not, I need hardly say, a theologian, but I doubt whether

anything written there is opposed to Catholic truth. The doctrine of the Inner Light which, in a sense, is Quakerism is not un-Catholic but it becomes so when it is over-emphasised, or, better, made *the* Christian message instead of part of it. Penington goes on to state that this discovery was such as to remove into the shadows along with the old dispensation all 'outward' things. 'A Christian is he that comes into this substance [N.B. that word, so common to the mystical writers] of all the shadows contained in the law . . . and lives in this substance and in whom this substance lives. Christ is the substance'. As to some assertions concerning Faith he writes that men receive Christ's revelation 'not by study, reading, willing, running, but by being formed in the will of life by being begotten of the will of the Father and by coming forth in the will'. A man may be always learning but never come to the knowledge, 'may so get and hold the knowledge of the truth as man in his wisdom may get and hold it from the letter'.

It is very clear that when Catholics and Quakers are talking about Faith (and much more) they are not thinking of the same thing. To the Quakers 'faith' is not so much an assent to truths of divine origin as an experience. When the early Quakers demand 'experience' of God, they are not concerned with what Catholics know to be revealed truth. The early Quakers did, in fact, take 'as read' the bulk of revealed truth, e.g., the Blessed Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the Atonement, the Resurrection and the Ascension and they accepted them without qualification. What the Quakers meant by faith may be discovered from Fox himself. 'I asked them whether they were believers and had faith and they said "Yes". I asked them "In whom?" And they said "In Christ". I replied "If ye are true believers in Christ you are passed from death to life . . . it will give you victory over sin and the Devil, purify your hearts and consciences"' (for the true faith is held in a pure conscience). I bid them give over babbling about the Scriptures which were holy men's words while they pleaded for unholiness'.

Fox was here attacking the general Protestant denial of the possibility of sanctification. His opponents held grimly to that view of imputed righteousness as if the robe of Christ would hide the leprosy of sin. To Fox and the Quakers the righteousness [I must use here the word more familiar to Protestants] of Christ had to be 'in' or it was of no avail. But to Fox and the Quakers a man in grievous sin had lost faith as well as hope and charity. It is true that he might lose faith if his sin were against faith, but Fox and the Quakers regard faith as so much of the will that any sin means the loss of faith. They are anti-intellectuals with a vengeance.

Bad Catholics may still have faith. But the Quakers do not mean that sort of faith. They mean something like fiduciary faith, trust—a virtue akin to hope. Or they mean faith vivified by Charity. And it is of course true that a soul in grievous sin lacks that. But it is to be emphasised that the Quakers believed, and acted on their belief, that men may attain holiness this side of the grave against the 17th-century Protestant denial of that doctrine, a denial that amounted to antinomianism especially among the Ranters. The government of the day, though it persecuted Quakers, was aware of the beneficial action of the Quakers. 'If God had not raised up this principle [Quakerism] the nation would have been over-run with Ranterism'.

The Quakers then are firmly set towards the Catholic view of holiness. But they were naïvely optimistic. Though in their beginnings they were quite clearly opposed to the pelagian heresy (Barclay is so careful as to refute pelagian and semi-pelagian errors), they seem not to have realised the full consequences of original sin,—the extent to which it darkened the understanding and weakened the will, effects which baptism did not set right. In my days among the Quakers very much was made of the difference between Fox's view of himself as a child and young man and the view of his contemporary and violent antagonist, Bunyan. Fox said in a charmingly humble way that as a child he was pure and knew purity and kept pure. Bunyan almost revels in recounting his vileness before his 'conversion'. As a young Quaker I came to believe with most Quakers that the account Fox gives of himself is the Christian account, and that talk of original sin and the actual sins of children is to be deplored. The only gloss which I had for such a theory was from a holy Quaker elder who was my dearest friend. He was a man of prayer and fasting, and was known to have prayed through the night till he was found by the clerk of our meeting bathed in sweat. I know he knew much of the workings of the human soul and yet I was surprised when one day shortly before his death he told me that Fox had inadvertently misled Friends. Fox was not a mere English mystic (my mystical friend hated the word 'mystic'). Fox had been a great sinner, a man buffeted by Satan, burnt by a very ardent fire of Grace which cleansed him to overcome and ascend to God. I asked my friend where in the Journal this was to be found. In a voice rather prophetic in its gravity the elder told me just to re-read the story of Fox's conversion. I re-read it when I became a Catholic and I think the elder was right. It is not what Fox writes but what he leaves out. If Fox did not know himself to be a great sinner then the account of what he felt after his experience makes no sense at all. Bunyan on the other hand is in comparison a rather ordinary sort of sinner, with all those 'popular'

sins on his shoulders, sins which in their number fall weekly from the backs of so many Catholics. No one can read the Journal without concluding that Fox was either a nice young man or else what that Quaker elder knew him to be, a sinner saved by grace.

Yet Quakers do not seem to have realised the spiritual difficulties of the mass of men in their desire—so far as indeed they are moved by divine help—to move towards God. In actual practice Quakerism has not spoken to most men's condition. The Quaker attitude towards the Sacraments has always dismayed even those Christians who are no less 'interior' than the Quakers, and those who like to be known as friends of the Friends. Who is more 'interior' than St John of the Cross? But did he eschew the 'outward', the daily Mass for example? I am in no mood to argue about this with Quakers. But, indeed, even were I in such a mood I know how utterly useless it is, for Quakers do not bother about argument. For example, they seem to be quite unconcerned about what many critics have alleged against them, to wit, a seeming inconsistency in their outward discipline as in Quaker Church Government and their adhesion to the supremacy of the Light within each soul. Perhaps this is rather a superficial criticism. As my youngest brother, once also a Quaker and now a High Anglican, wrote in *The Friend*: 'If Light is within me, it is everywhere about me'.

Early Quakers were fond of speaking about 'that of God in one another'. The clue suffices. Going a little more deeply than the superficial critic I only ask why it is that Quakers have not bothered to seek that Light in one another in that divine authority which resides in his Mystical Body, not so much an exterior Authority in opposition to an interior but One which is both one and the other. When I as a Catholic obey the Pope, the Quaker must clearly understand I do not obey a voice different from the voice of God within. The voice of the Pope speaks to me as the voice of 'one another'. Deep calls to deep.

The Quaker understanding of the light in one another leads logically enough to the Quaker philanthropy, which doubtless is often Charity. It is the clue to the work of Elizabeth Fry, John Woolman and Stephen Grellet, my favourite Quaker. But I do not, I hope, offend Quakers by saying that the Quaker philanthropy (including the Charity) does not come up to the Catholic. I do not speak quantitatively. The Quakers are a small body, whose good works, for which they merit a reward, are immeasurably more numerous than those of any body in proportion to their numbers. Yet even Quakers, especially those of the 'primitive' school feel something is missing. And that which is missing I found in Grellet, cradle Catholic, voltairian, and then evangelical and evangelistic Quaker.

Grellet was an aristocrat who had that aristocratic 'roominess', enhanced by what I believe was an uncovenanted grace of great measure, which made him superbly careless of his philanthropy. He always seemed quite at home in prisons, among Karaite Jews, with Pius VII, Spanish grandees, Lutheran barons, timbermen and other American backwoodsmen. He is rather singular in this respect among Quakers, who have developed a less catholic taste in their missionary and philanthropic enterprise. Grellet, from what I see in the two-volume *Life*, towers above Woolman, the champion of negro rights, or Elizabeth Fry, who toiled for the felons of Newgate, in that he never seems to regard himself as possessed of any special concern. I hope I do not wrong Woolman or Elizabeth Fry; but this catholicity of Grellet is so huge it cannot be missed. Of course it depended on certain natural traits, his aristocratic upbringing, his adventures in the Austrian army, his Gallic background—there is nothing provincial about Grellet as there is of most Quakers, who exhibit the strength and weakness of their being practically confined to Teutonic, Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon regions.

The Quaker 'service' (a pet word among Quakers as well as Rotarians) has tended towards the intelligentsia, e.g., those of Vienna and parts of Germany or among those forlorn intellectuals of the South Wales mining areas. I think that though they do not shrink from the ordeal Quakers are well content to leave to the Salvation Army and the Catholic Church the oversight of the botched, the pimply, the syphilitic, the depraved, the under-privileged, the bastards, the hideously deformed and the monsters. It is a Catholic who embraces a leper; and though the Quakers have a Franciscan cultus, *that* actualisation is rather out of their reach. And it is a Catholic who lived and died at Molokai.

Or again, the work done by the Quakers for the negro slaves, a work which brings to mind the names of others beside Woolman, e.g., Levi Coffin of 'underground railway' fame, is one to be remembered with gratitude. But it does not approach the work of St Peter Claver.

If this is clear of the works of corporal mercy, I think it is even clearer in the work of the contemplative life. The writings of Quakers abound in evidence of their deep spiritual life and eagerness for deeper deeps. And especially would I bring out in this connection the works of Isaac Penington, which stand as a reproach to us rather ordinary Catholics who are not at all keen on climbing Carmel.

And yet the Quakers freely acknowledge their debt to the Catholic mystical and ascetic writers and to the Catholic mystics and ascetics who wrote nothing. As a Quaker of the 'Bible-evangelical' school this

meant little to me, for I was much more interested in the fact that only in the Catholic Church was there the promise that that Evangelical mission would remain. When I was first brought (by a Quaker) to the works of St John of the Cross, it was his title that attracted me, not his writings. And though we may find Quakers to whom the Cross means so much, I believe it is the Quaker failure to understand the Cross that has led to the Quaker failure in general.⁵

The clue to the charity of Elizabeth Fry is her understanding of the Cross. It drove her to Newgate. It drives Salvationists to look after the down and out. It is, of course, the sanction for the holy work of Catholic nuns. As the Society of Friends steadily declines from the Evangelical position, so steadily it loses that passion for souls and develops a syncretism which tends more and more to theosophy. My Baptist uncle once asked a Quaker of this 'modern' school (more and more the average Quaker) what he would do for or say to a dying man, crying out in despair for his sins. The Quaker could say nothing. My uncle could have done and said much. So could a Catholic. A Catholic has a crucifix. And the crucifix can show a dying man what the Quaker cannot. The crucifix reminds us of a Man spat upon, drooling with blood, racked with unknown pain, suffering an unknown ignominy, dying of thirst as it were the thirst of the thirsty world, shame and inexpressible heartbreak, and yet at the same time pardoning another dying man—and all sorrowful dying men. And we are all dying. No wonder the Church is what it is. We are supremely thankful for St Mary Magdalene and St Margaret of Cortona, St Augustine and St Camillus de Lellis. Because we have those penitent saints we are careful about excluding burglars and murderers and other notorious sinners.

In face of this I ask myself often what the Quakers are likely to be in the future. I think we shall find them splendid examples of good men of high integrity and intelligence, notable citizens contributing of their excellence to the service of society, worthy of respect, and not least in the Kingdom of Heaven.

H. W. J. EDWARDS

⁵ Hicks, for example, denied that the Blood spilt outside the walls of Jerusalem was of any avail to mankind.