

RELIGIOUS IMMEDIACY IN RADICAL PURITANISM

(A STUDY OF ITS EFFECTS UPON THOUGHT AND CONDUCT)

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To the Congregation of the Presbyterian Church  
of Pleasantville, New Jersey, whose loyalty  
and generosity made available the leisure  
for the completion of this study.



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## FOREWORD

This study began as a search for a deeper understanding of the nature of vital religious experience. The first inspiration for a method of approach came from Baron von Hügel's classic description of the three elements which constitute religious experience, the mystical-intuitive, historical-institutional, and rational-philosophical. Equipped with this insight, it became apparent that the many books which have appeared on the subject of mysticism in the last fifty years have been an attempt to redress the over-balancing emphasis on the institutional in much of twentieth century religion. And since many of them had been inspired by studies of seventeenth and eighteenth century mystical writers, as Ronald Knox's Enthusiasm, for example, it seemed that this might be a fruitful period for investigation. Those who have actually experienced a personal relationship to God are often more helpful tutors than those who describe the experience of others.

In delving into the extensive literature of the seventeenth century, two writers especially, pointed the way to further investigation. The first was Dr. Gerald Brauer, now at the University of Chicago, who had published an article in Church History (September, 1950), "Puritan Mysticism and the Development of Liberalism", based on his Ph.D. thesis, "Francis Rous, Puritan Mystic". He had been impressed by the warmth and beauty of Rous's mystical life and its



profound influence on his later Parliamentary activity. He had also been led to believe that Rous was not only the striking phenomenon of a mystic in the ranks of the Puritans, but that he represented a mushrooming mystical element carried forward in others like John Everard and Peter Sterry. The prospect of following this suggestion was a fascinating one in itself.

The second discovery which confirmed a deepening interest in this period, was that of Geoffrey Nuttall's book, The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience. It was obvious that this study was historically sound, and that further work would naturally be built upon it as a foundation. It was also inspiring as a model of clarity and originality in the method of presenting the material.

Through these two sources, then, the problem began to formulate itself. It is to Principal Duthie that I owe the suggestion of the term 'religious immediacy', to describe the as yet unexplored religious experience of such men as John Saltmarsh, John Everard, and Peter Sterry. It brought the central question of the relation of the mystical to the institutional clearly to the fore.

The study has been of immense value personally, quite apart from any contribution which it might make to the understanding of the seventeenth century. It has been an experience of learning to appreciate more keenly the work of the Holy Spirit, particularly in relation to the Quaker statements of the liberty of the Spirit, and of the unity in the Body of Christ. The entire thesis could easily have been given over to the contribution of Fox and the Quakers alone, to 'religious immediacy'. But inasmuch as this was not

possible, it has opened up avenues of further study which can profitably occupy many years.

Beyond this, there is much of historical interest here, and especially as the theme has the advantages of lending itself to the study of the preachers themselves. It is thus possible to lift a relatively unknown segment of seventeenth century thought and life into fuller light, by seeing it from the inside, as it were.

This method of approach has, however, a number of problems inherent to it. Since the investigation involved six men in left wing Puritanism, it was impossible to present any one of them in detail. Hence it was necessary to assume that the reader already knew something about their background. Perhaps in the cases of George Fox, John Smith, Peter Sterry and Gerrard Winstanley, this might be true, for these have been the object of other historical studies. But John Everard and John Saltmarsh have been largely unexplored. Hence, whatever personal information is lacking can be obtained from the Dictionary of National Biography.

In addition, the brevity of these studies has also limited the amount of quotation from original sources, and demanded a certain amount of generalisation on theological issues which ought to have been treated in more detail.

Further, it is almost inevitable that in the desire to understand each of these men in relation to the issues current at the time, a degree of distortion must be expected in the impressions of their over-all theological positions. We are most anxious to evaluate either the contribution of each man to the problems being most



discussed, or his reaction against them, and thus tend to neglect other facets of his thinking which might have loomed large at the time. Nevertheless, if we concerned ourselves merely with the systematic exposition of their thought, without relating it to the seventeenth century, we would introduce an even greater factor of error, and misrepresent each one completely.

In this connection, we have frequently compared Fox to Everard or Saltmarsh, and indeed, each of the six men with the others at the relevant points in their thinking. In doing this we are aware that such comparisons do not tell the whole story of the left wing, for there are many others who also ought to be taken into consideration. However, these men do represent most of the varying types of religious experience which are to be found, and thus each in a sense describes a trend which may be repeated in others. Everard represents a spirit which is followed to a certain extent by men like John Webster and Thomas Collier, and Saltmarsh stands also with William Erbury and William Dell. The Quaker movement as a whole bears the stamp of Fox's unique experience, while Winstanley demonstrates the social application implicit in another type of mystical and millenarian thought. The Cambridge Platonists represent more of an intellectual approach to the problem, and Peter Sterry has affinities both with spiritual religion and latitudinarianism.

My indebtedness is manifold, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge the kindness and thoughtfulness of many. I am very grateful for the patient help of Miss E. R. Leslie and Dr. J. A. Lamb of the New College Library, for the use of the facilities of the National

Library of Scotland, of the British Museum, and of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. Dr. Frederick B. Tolles of the Friends Historical Library in Swarthmore very kindly gave of his time and made several valuable suggestions. I am particularly under obligation to Dr. Gapp and the staff of Princeton Seminary Library, as well as to several of the Professors, who gave extensively of their time in conference. Dr. Otto Piper and Dr. Georges Barrois were both very helpful in clarifying my understanding of the mysticism of the New Testament, and Dr. Loefferts Loetscher in helping to get the seventeenth century itself into proper perspective. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Geoffrey Nuttall of New College, London, both for the inspiration of his book, and his kindness in giving time and valuable suggestions relating to the Quaker portion of this study. Above all, I owe my deepest appreciation to Dr. Charles S. Duthie, Principal of the Congregational College, Edinburgh, for his encouragement to pursue this work in the dry and uninspiring periods of research, for valuable criticism and suggestion, and for his many kindnesses to me and my family. I am also very grateful to Mr. George Smith of Musselburgh for reading and correcting the final draft, and to Mrs. Thomas Chalmers for her excellent work in typing the thesis.

The spelling and punctuation in the quotations from the seventeenth century writers has been retained in all cases.

A word needs to be said about the editions which have been followed. The references to The Journal of George Fox have been taken from the 1952 edition throughout. Though the Cambridge Journal (1911) is the most trustworthy, the former has the advantages of the



inclusion of Ellwood's account of Fox's early years and conversion, the modernisation of spelling to aid in reading, and very helpful indices and notes, which together make it a most helpful study edition. Where quotations or references in this edition are not found in the Cambridge Journal, a notation has been made to that effect in the footnote, except in the case of the first forty-nine pages, which cover the period prior to that point at which the Cambridge Journal begins. The 1952 edition itself has indicated the source of this material, which is largely Ellwood, with the inclusion of some passages from the Short Journal.

In referring to A Collection of Many Select and Christian Epistles, we have merely used the number of the Epistle rather than the page number in the 1698 edition. Since copies of the Epistles are scarce, and Libraries which possess them usually have either the 1698 edition or the American edition of 1831, but not both, references can thus be found in either with relative ease.

We have used the 1653 edition of Everard's The Gospel Treasury Opened since the later edition of 1659 has an expanded text. This is probably the work of his biographer, Rapha Harford, who has, in most cases, sought to smooth out rough language and add many additional flourishes to his style. However, because Everard's translation of an excerpt from Sebastian Franck's Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is found only in the 1659 edition, this edition has been used in quotation, and notation made to that effect in the footnotes.

For the study of Winstanley, reference to the three earliest tracts, The Myserie of God, The Breaking of the Day of God, and

The Saints Paradise, has been made from the copies in the British Museum. In George Sabine's collection, The Works of Gerrard Winstanley, these are not included in full. For the rest, however, we have used Sabine's edition and have indicated so by the use of (S.) after the name of the tract from which the quotation has been made.

In the case of these three tracts of Winstanley, and other primary sources, which are also rare, notation has been made in the Bibliography as to where they may be found. Those in the British Museum have been designated (B.M.), and others, using the full name of the Library.

In order to simplify footnoting, use has been made of several abbreviations for frequently-quoted works:

- 1952      The Journal of George Fox, (rev.) J. L. Nickalls.  
(Cambridge: The University Press, 1952).
- C. J.      The Journal of George Fox, (ed.) Norman Penney.  
(Cambridge: The University Press, 1911).
- G. M.      George Fox. The Great Mistery of the Great Whore  
Unfolded.... (London, 1659).
- Doc.      George Fox. Gospel Truth Demonstrated....  
(London, 1706).
- Ep.      George Fox. A Collection of Many Select and Christian  
Epistles.... (London, 1698).
- G. T. O.      John Everard, Some Gospel Treasures Opened....  
(London, 1653).
- (S.)      The Works of Gerrard Winstanley, (ed.) George H. Sabine.  
(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1941).



## CHAPTER I

### THE FRINGE OF PURITANISM

The fascination of Puritanism is its rich diversity of religious, social, and political ideas. Few periods in modern history have produced such a wealth of insights so truly in advance of their time, and so upsetting, as a consequence, to the status quo. Indeed, the ferment of this first half of the seventeenth century could not resolve itself peaceably. The war began in the struggle over constitutional rights, and ended in the cry for religious toleration. But though the revolution was successful, and radical leadership proceeded to power in both Church and government, it proved an abortive attempt to introduce the new ideas of liberty and toleration. In the end, most of the leaders surrendered their visions of a spiritual or political Utopia, some even lost their lives and not one lived to see the fulfilment of this drive for liberty which has become so much a part of our twentieth century world.

The recent considerable interest in this period has done much to clarify some very cloudy thinking about the constitution of Puritanism. It is now accepted by most Puritan scholars that the movement cannot be described within the narrow defile of Non-Conformity and Presbyterianism. It must also include Separatists, Independents, individual preachers who simply gathered enthusiastic groups about them, and even Quakers. In this connection, Professor Nuttall has

placed all students in immeasurable debt for he has pointed out that within this diversity, there was a centrality of interest in the Holy Spirit, both in doctrine and experience.<sup>1</sup> Just as white light, in passing through a prism, is broken up into an infinite variety of colours, so the preoccupation with the Spirit, in the complex of the struggles for truth and freedom of the seventeenth century, led to many positions, ranging from an awakened conviction of the presence of God in the Church and Sacraments to the belief that the same power and inspiration as in the days of the Apostles had come to usher in a new age, where Church and Sacraments were no longer necessary.

Work still needs to be done on certain of the left-wing radicals, to place them in truer perspective to one another and to the centre parties, though one can see Puritanism in its wholeness through a concern for the varying conceptions of the role of the Spirit. For instance, careful study of such men as Saltmarsh, Dell and Everard reveals basic dissimilarities to George Fox, on the one hand, and Presbyterians and Independents on the other. Though the vehement opposition to Quakerism came more from the central and right wing parties in Puritanism, and hardly at all from the left wing, yet the Quakers were theologically nearer to the former than to the latter.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Geoffrey F. Nuttall, The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946).

<sup>2</sup>An excellent recent study is the work of Ralph Paul Bohn, "The Controversy between Puritans and Quakers to 1660", (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1955), in which the principle issues are shown to be (1) the problem of immediacy with reference to revelation, and (2) the problem of the historical vs. the personal (without vs. within) with reference to Justification and Sanctification (p.362). The study shows that the Quakers, though differing from the Puritans, nevertheless treated the Bible as seriously as their opponents. This is not true of many others in the left wing.



We shall see that there are extraneous elements of 'Spiritualisten' within the radicals which set them off from the main stream of either conservative Puritanism or Quakerism. The purpose of this study, then, is to seek to bring into sharper focus the types of religious experience found within the left wing of Puritanism, while relying on the basic work already done in the field.

The analysis is to be carried on by selecting certain key figures in Radical Puritanism, and allowing them to speak of their own experience of the Spirit. The first is George Fox, who is important not only for the richness of his spiritual experience, but for the movement which arose from his leadership and which has contributed so much to the world in the last three hundred years. Much controversy has centred around his conception of the Inner Light. Early scholarship linked with him Jacob Boehme.<sup>1</sup> He has also been thought to evidence a remarkable similarity to John Everard.<sup>2</sup> More recently, Fox's experience has been thought of as the end result of the spiritual religion typical of such men as Saltmarsh, Dell and Erbury<sup>3</sup>, and

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<sup>1</sup>Rufus Jones, Spiritual Reformers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1914), p.223.

Margaret L. Bailey, Milton and Jacob Boehme. A Study of German Mysticism in Seventeenth Century England (New York: Oxford University Press, 1914), p.100.

<sup>2</sup>C. R. Simpson, "John Everard, and His Relation to Quakerism", Friends Quarterly Examiner, XLVII (1913), p.493.

<sup>3</sup>Alan Simpson, Puritanism in Old and New England (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), p.44.

W. Schenk, The Concern for Social Justice in the Puritan Revolution (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1948), p.114.

Theodor Sippell, Verdendes Quäkertum (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1937), p.105.

Quakerism as the consolidation of groups of Finner Spiritualists under the leadership of George Fox.<sup>1</sup> Hence, both ideologically, and organically, Fox has been linked with the radical sects of the Interregnum, and the importance of shedding some light on this relationship is obvious.

Secondly, a man much neglected, but whose contribution to the religious life of the period was considerable, is John Everard. He is earlier than Fox (1575-1650), though a contemporary of John Saltmarsh who died in 1647. He was important as a mystical teacher, and pioneer of quietistic mysticism in England.<sup>2</sup> It is certain that he was one of the more important of those agents who introduced much of the medieval literature which flourished in England at this time.<sup>3</sup> One interesting suggestion of a recent study that he is an example of a type of Puritan mysticism also evidenced by Francis Rous, Peter Sterry and Walter Cradock<sup>4</sup>, deserves close attention.

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<sup>1</sup>George A. Johnson, "A Study in Seventeenth Century English Spiritualism before the Quakers", (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1948), p.19.

<sup>2</sup>Bailey, op. cit., p.45.

<sup>3</sup>Everard translated the Theologia Germanica into English in 1628, and it was circulated in manuscript form. He also published The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus (London: Printed by Robert White, 1650), and selections from Sebastian Franck, John Tauler, Hans Denck, Sebastian Castellio, and Nicholas of Cusa, which were included in the collection of his sermons, The Gospel Treasury Opened: Or the Holiest of All Unveiling (London: Printed by I.O. for Ralph Harford, 1659).

<sup>4</sup>Gerald C. Brauer, Francis Rous, Puritan Mystic, 1579-1659: An Introduction to the Study of the Mystical Element in Puritanism", (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1948), p.289.

Gerald Brauer, "Reflections on the Nature of English Puritanism", Church History, XXIII (June, 1954), p.106.



John Saltmarsh, the third man to be studied, is particularly interesting for several reasons. First, he began his career as a zealous advocate of episcopacy and conformity.<sup>1</sup> However, he soon moved toward the Left, embracing in succession, from 1640 on, Church reform, the Covenant, and finally complete religious toleration. Secondly, his religious thought underwent a radical change. While at Cambridge he was captivated by the current interest in Plato and metaphysical speculation. Later he went through a more Biblical phase when his writing was somewhat akin to Sibbes, Gouge, and other Puritan evangelicals. He found his way at last to the Army of the Saints, whose idealistic speculations about the new Age of the Spirit represented the most radical side of Puritanism. Thus he is in himself a microcosm of the rich diversity within the movement, as well as being one of the most important preachers in the struggle for religious liberty.

There are other names which will come in for briefer treatment, but which are nonetheless important. Gerrard Winstanley represents the spiritual concern taking a specifically social direction. He is important also for the considerable discussion as to his possible influences on George Fox.<sup>2</sup> Then there are the Cambridge Platonists

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<sup>1</sup>"Saltmarsh, John", Dictionary of National Biography, ed. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1908), XVII, p.709.

<sup>2</sup>Schenk, op. cit., p.107.

Winthrop S. Hudson, "Gerrard Winstanley and the Early Quakers", Church History, XII (September, 1943), pp.183,4.

The Works of Gerrard Winstanley, ed. George H. Sabine (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1941), p.34.

whose interest in Jacob Boehme and the 'birth of the infant Christ in the soul' has aroused the suspicions in some that there is, or ought to be, a connection here with the 'light' of George Fox.<sup>1</sup> Peter Sterry also represents beauty of mystical language, which has led some to place him along with Rous in a grouping of Puritan mystics.<sup>2</sup> In connection with these, many others will be mentioned briefly in an attempt to see radical Puritanism from the inside out, as it were.

The basic problem created by the interest in the Holy Spirit, we shall call 'Immediacy'. In the left wing it will be used to express the conviction that God's voice can be heard without the mediation of Church or Sacraments, and that worship is a simple direct experience of 'waiting' upon Him in the fellowship of the Saints. In short, it is religion which denies any authority but the Spirit, and which speaks of the personal rule of the Spirit in the heart, or of union with Christ in the soul. Moreover this experience was no philosophic speculation, but vivid, personal experience with the living God. But here lies the difficulty. There is seemingly a discontinuity between the personal, evangelical preaching of early Puritans, and the immediacy of men like Fox and Everard. For instance, for all their differences, the latter have in common the conviction of their contemporaneity with the first century manifestation of Christ

<sup>1</sup>Lewis Benson, Prophetic Quakerism (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1951), p.15.

<sup>2</sup>Brauer, "Francis Rous..," p.289.



and the Spirit.<sup>1</sup> Though they would not deny that there was an historical Jesus who was born, suffered, and died, nevertheless, to speak of that obscured for them the real spiritual issue for the life of the soul. Rather, the present experience of the power of God in the soul was the only thing that really mattered.

In their pioneer thinking on the Holy Spirit,<sup>2</sup> Richard Baxter and John Owen and others like them undoubtedly made a significant contribution to seventeenth century thought. William Bayly, Richard Sibbes, and William Gouge were passionate preachers of an intense, personal relationship to God in Christ.<sup>3</sup> One of the deep motives in Separatism was this same concern for personal religion, and though it was lost in the lifeless Biblicism of Puritanism, it was surely preserved by the Separatists.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For example, from Everard's Gospel Treasury, p.135: "Even so let me tell you, Christ Jesus himself, his outward, temporal and visible Actions were a Type of his inward and internal, and more weighty Miracles and Actions in the Souls of all Believers; He being their Life and Resurrection; they being before but dead men in Trespases and Sins, until his Actions be their Life, Resurrection, and Regeneration."

The Journal of George Fox, rev. John L. Nickalls (Cambridge: The University Press, 1952), pp.51-52: "They asked how we knew that Christ did abide in us. I said, 'By his Spirit that He has given us.' They temptingly asked if any of us were Christ. I answered, 'Nay, we are nothing, Christ is all.'"

<sup>2</sup>Nuttall, op. cit., p.7

<sup>3</sup>Brauer, "Reflections on the Nature of ..," p.101.

<sup>4</sup>Ralph Bronkema, The Essence of Puritanism (Goes, Holland: Oosterbaan and Le Cointre, 1929), p.61.

How was it, then, that despite the presence of this warm, personal relationship to Christ within the more conservative elements of Puritanism, the emphasis on immediacy with the loss of the historical aspect of faith made such an appeal? It is to this problem that we address ourselves.

As early as the end of the sixteenth century, one can observe these two factors, the historical and personal, held in tension within Puritanism. The Bible was treated as the revealed will of God for all of life. The Jews had lived under direct Divine orders, and God was still the ruler of His people, through His will, objectively present in the Scriptures. God's will had also called into being an Institution which the Puritans felt could be seen plainly in the Bible, and to which they must conform. At the same time, some of the Puritan preachers were exhorting men to a personal faith in Christ, and sounding the warning that the Church as an institution could not in itself save.<sup>1</sup> While these two factors were held in balance, and generally accepted by the people, the preachers could rejoice in the salvation of souls, and confidently await the reformation of the Church according to the principles of the Word. But the failure of reform, and the social and political upheaval of the Civil War, partly produced the phenomenon of the sects.

In the early years of Elizabeth's reign, though the Puritans were not wholly content with the Establishment, they pressed only for

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<sup>1</sup>Edward Dowden, Puritan and Anglican: Studies in Literature (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1901), p.11.



reforms in worship, vestments, and the prayer book. After 1571, however, a year significant for the appearance of Robert Browne's Trestise of Reformation without Tarying for Anie, many broke away as Separatists. The others, remaining within the Church, pursued their ends by more forceful methods. They pamphleteered vigorously, sought the help of Lawyers, lobbied at Parliament, but all to no avail.

They then turned their attention to a more crucial and controversial problem, the legitimacy of Episcopacy. This was not a reaction against the Church as such, however, but against a government of the Church "dependent upon the Crown, and out of sympathy with a great part of the common clergy and their people".<sup>1</sup> When it came to a showdown, the Anglicans, led by Thomas Hooker, easily disposed of Cartwright and Travers. But the debates had forced on the Puritans the issue of Biblical authority. The only basis on which they could attack Anglicanism was that of the revealed will of God as they considered it to be objectively revealed in the Scriptures. Once they had taken that stand, it was only a step to the extreme position taken by such men as Udall, Wigginton, Penry, and the author of the Marprelate tracts. Of course, these do not represent the typical Puritan position, but they do indicate a trend which was to become more vocal and prevalent.

The faint hope that the Stuart King might favour the Puritan

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<sup>1</sup>William Haller, "The Word of God in the Westminster Assembly", Church History, XVIII (December, 1949), p.200.

claims was smashed at the Hampden Court Conference. Thereafter, not only did the Puritan cause suffer royal disapproval, but many factors were producing a deep resentment of the Establishment. Charles' appointment of Laud to the Archbishopric, and his own seemingly pro-Catholic policy were among those matters stirring up most bitterness. Under Laud, the preferment of Arminians to some of the highest posts, had both pushed to the sidelines many men of evangelical piety, and troubled the Puritans with this seeming carelessness to maintain Calvinistic orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup> The zealous Puritan, William Prynne, complained bitterly when those who excelled in holiness were reviled by the Church, whereas those who excelled in the "natural humane excellencies" such as "Phisicke, Musicke, Law, Philosophy, or any liberall science..." were "honoured, revered, admired, and beloved..."<sup>2</sup> All this at a time when there were not enough priests, and when those available were often of low calibre, led many to an interest in sectarian literature, and to meet independently for prayer and Bible study. It was an easy step from this to lay preaching and the Conventicles, which, in steadily increasing numbers in the 1630's, was one of the most disquieting things to the Establishment.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, as he was harassing Baptists, Calvinists, and other critics of the Church, Charles introduced a policy of comparative

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<sup>1</sup>J. B. Marsden, The History of the Later Puritans (Second edition; London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1854), p.53.

<sup>2</sup>William Prynne, Histrio-Mastix, The Player's Scourge, or, Actors Tragedie, Divided into Two Parts... (First edition; London: Printed by E.A. and W.I. for Michael Sparke, 1633), p.810.

<sup>3</sup>C. V. Wedgwood, The King's Peace, 1637-1641 (London: Collins, St. James Place, 1955), p.100.



toleration of Roman Catholics. In addition, the existence of a Catholic mission at court, and Charles' exchange of agents with the Vatican in 1636, were producing a bad impression on Puritans.

In short,

"A court which favored the Catholics, a Church which persecuted the Calvinists, a navy which fired only on the Dutch--the simplified picture was open to a dangerous interpretation."<sup>1</sup>

To the Puritan mind, nothing could be more heinous than this flirtation with the arch-enemy of Protestantism, nor could further proof be needed to demonstrate the imperative of reform according to the Word of God.

In the Puritan frustration of these years before 1640, the concern in some for the historical aspect of faith as revealed in Scripture, became grossly disproportionate; and it is not surprising that a man like Francis Rous emerged, and after him, many others, to emphasise again the personal aspect of religion.

But there are many other factors involved as well. The appeal to the Bible as ultimate authority, the conviction of the supreme importance of preaching in worship, the abhorrence of idolatry which degenerated in some to a disrespect of church buildings<sup>2</sup>; all of these things were sowing the seeds of English denominationalism, and producing a climate conducive to the rise of the sect groups. The Puritans were simply unable to reverse a trend which they themselves

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.125.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.104.

had introduced.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Word preached and studied in Conventicle contributed to the rise of many sect groups, while the reaction to the Word exalted as final authority gave birth to the most radical notions among the sects.

There is another factor inherent in the English version of Calvinism which aids our understanding of the radical sects. Though it became the norm of orthodoxy after the reign of Mary, nevertheless,

"...the Puritans were never strictly Calvinists. They believed Calvin to be a pious teacher, but would not hesitate to disagree and felt they were simply in the tradition of truth when they read him. They studied the later reformers more than Calvin, and Augustine more than them all."<sup>2</sup>

Now the importance of this lies in the direction of departure. It is generally accepted that the native English temperament showed a tendency to be more personal than formal in religion, and more concerned with how to be saved than with the glory of God. Puritan preachers constantly yielded to the subjective in their preaching. Doctrine was meant to serve life.<sup>3</sup> In speaking of the Christian life, then, the motive to good works was the promise of reward and not the glory of God. But such subjectivism in theology gave way

<sup>1</sup>Haller, op. cit., p.204.

<sup>2</sup>Perry Miller, The New England Mind; The Seventeenth Century (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939), p.93.

Other Puritans scholars have followed the same line:  
William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), p.193.

Bronkema, op. cit., p.17.

Horton Davies, The Worship of the Puritans (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1948), pp.39-47. Mr. Davies points out that the Puritans preferred the authority of Scripture to the precedent of Geneva in establishing their form of worship.

<sup>3</sup>Bronkema, op. cit., pp.88-92.



to rationalism on the one hand and an extreme individualism on the other. Interestingly enough, the same logical development repeated itself in American Puritanism one hundred years later.<sup>1</sup>

Also worth mentioning is the note of ascetism in much of the Puritan preaching. The interest in Augustine, for example, would account somewhat for that tendency to renounce the physical world, and to see it rather as a copy of the real spiritual world. Indeed, an intensive study of this phase of Puritan thought has suggested to one author that

"... one can frequently detect in Puritan piety a practical if not a metaphysical dualism which is at times strongly suggestive of Neo-Platonism, of that thirst for God which leads to the long struggle to see him."<sup>2</sup>

This is reinforced by Puritanism's strong emphasis on the Fall and the subsequent vitiation of human powers, such that much more hope was placed in the life to come than in an improvement of the present.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Haroutunian, Piety Versus Moralism, the Passing of the New England Theology (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1932). Mr. Haroutunian shows that the followers of Edwards, though zealous to maintain his orthodox position, failed to see that the basis of his theology was his reverence for the glory of God. When this was not present as a central theme in their thought and action, and "...the glory of God was sought in the goodness of man," then the essence of goodness became obedience to law, and "The Calvinistic gospel had degenerated into the maxim, 'obey God, and you will be happy.'" Orthodoxy could then not hold its own against liberalism, for it had lost its power over men's minds. (pp.95-96).

<sup>2</sup>Garth W. Legge, "The Element of Christian Asceticism in English Puritanism and French Jansenism in the Seventeenth Century", (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1951), p.64.

<sup>3</sup>Baxter, preaching as a 'dying man to dying men', might lead to an almost "morbid contemplation of death as a spur to spiritual earnestness". Ibid., p.66.

Quite typical, then, is Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, which pictures the 'Celestial City' as the only worthy object of the Pilgrim's affection, and the life of watchfulness and discipline, along with occasional moments of spiritual exaltation, as the only sure way of attaining there-to. Hence, it is not surprising to read of occasional bodily mortification, especially in the form of fast days, both private and national.

Now the importance of this for the rise of the sects is considerable. The reaction against Biblicism, the authority of an external form of words, was accompanied by a reaction against an excessive regard for the forms of humility, as in fasting, which can be practised without true spiritual self-renunciation. However, some of the radicals, like Everard, instead of finding a true positive freedom from the authoritarianism of outward forms, exchanged asceticism for another negativism thought to lead to exalted spiritual ends. They seized on a speculative form of thought involving a spiritual self-renunciation which denied fasting. Thus where someone like Baxter or Bunyan might renounce this world, by disciplining the body, in favour of the world to come, many radical sectaries would renounce it as wholly evil, in the expectation of being swallowed up into the Divine in the here and now. And the basic difference between the two is simply that the latter has lost the element of the historical altogether, and projects into the present what the conservative Puritan knows can only come at the day of resurrection.

One cannot explain the origin of the sects wholly from Puritanism, however, as has already been intimated. If it is not true that the



continental German mystics had any appreciable direct influence on these men, nevertheless many of their ideas are admittedly current in the 1630's to 50's. The Familists are one of the important links here.<sup>1</sup> This sect, though never large, and antedating left-wing Puritanism by several decades, provided the vehicle for the transplanting of many continental mystical ideas. They revived the Joachimite hopes for the dawn of a new age of the Spirit<sup>2</sup>, and in the many books of Henry Niclaes, republished between 1649 and 1656, emphasised,

"righteousness of life, the work of the Holy Spirit, the fruitless lives of the letter-learned, the vanity of life apart from deep inner repentance, the uselessness of outworn sacraments, and the value of silent waiting."<sup>3</sup>

This repudiation of forms and ordinances of worship, along with ardent hopes for a new age is reflected again in diverse individuals in radical Puritanism, such as Saltmarsh, Everard, Roger Brierly and the Grindletonians, Henry Walwyn, and Gerrard Winstanley. These men are not by any means the copy of Henry Niclaes and yet, as is apparent from a recent thesis on the Familists, one cannot neglect the influence of their writings.

In addition, a great flood of mystical literature had been

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<sup>1</sup>These differed from some groups of Anabaptists who had also been established in England in the sixteenth century, but who were Biblical literalists and took the Sacraments seriously. William N. Kerr, "Henry Nicholas and the Familists. A Study of the Influence of Continental Mysticism on England to 1660" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1955), p.201.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.261.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.295.

pouring in from the continent as well; and though these writings, with those of English Familists, did not produce the outburst of interest in personal religion, they certainly fed the souls of men already aflame with the Spirit's presence.

It is significant, too, to notice the variety of religious and political backgrounds of those reading this mystical lore. On one side, the Cambridge Platonists, and especially Henry More, were keenly interested. In 1670, for example, the latter published a treatise dedicated entirely to the study of Jacob Boehme, entitled, Philosophiae Teutonicae Censura. On the other, Anglican high churchmen fed their spirits on the same mystical food, and wrote exalted poetry of lasting beauty and of a genuine mystical character.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in George Fox's Library were found copies of Jacob Boehme and Sebastian Franck.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the zeal to know God inwardly, forcing, as it did, certain issues within the left wing, must always be seen as part of a deeper struggle in the seventeenth century as a whole, the struggle to be free from external authority.<sup>3</sup> The times were out of joint, and men everywhere were seeking the truth about life and the mysterious world in which they lived. Over the whole land there was

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<sup>1</sup>Helen C. White, The Metaphysical Poets. A Study in Religious Experience (New York: Macmillan, 1936). Miss White analyses the poetry of five of the best known of these men, John Donne, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, and Thomas Traherne.

<sup>2</sup>J. L. Nickalls, "George Fox's Library", Journal of Friends Historical Society, XXVIII (1931), p.18.

<sup>3</sup>Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background; Studies in the Thought of the Age in Relation to Poetry and Religion (London: Chatto and Windus, 1942), p.72.



"a very general experience of religion in its enthusiastic form, and running the gamut of experience from pure mystical ecstasy to a belief in magic, from regenerating faith in the Inner Light, through alchemy, Rosicrucianism, apocalyptic prophesy, and other aberrations of the spiritual sense."<sup>1</sup>

Another obvious factor in the phenomenon of the sects is the personal religion of Oliver Cromwell and his army of saints. Without doubt his great source of leadership and power <sup>is</sup> discovered in that simplicity of spiritual religion which had been a product of Puritan preaching, and which, as the war proceeded, the preachers were finding so difficult to curb.<sup>2</sup> He came to regard the war as a religious crusade, his troops as a gathered Church, and the personal religion of his men as important as their physical welfare. He saw his part as General, and later as Protector, as forced upon him by Providence to carry out God's holy purpose in the nation.<sup>3</sup> Hence, what could be more natural than the feeling that as champion of the sect groups, he was promoting a form of religious expression upon which God had placed His divine approval? And, especially after Naseby, when his army seemed well-nigh invincible, was this sensed, for it put the Divine seal upon these sectarians who for God's sake were risking their lives.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, Cromwell finally realised that he had set in

<sup>1</sup>Bailey, op. cit., p.2.

<sup>2</sup>William Haller, "The Word of God in the New Model Army", Church History, XIX (March, 1950), p.15.

<sup>3</sup>Robert S. Paul, The Lord Protector (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), p.385.

<sup>4</sup>paul M. Pettit, "The Religion of Oliver Cromwell with Special Reference to His Conception of Providence", (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1952), p.74.

motion democratic ideas of which he did not at all approve. He was forced to put down the strong element in the army in favour of the Leveller movement, and suffered the rebuke of one of his most ardent preachers, John Saltmarsh, for having departed from his first calling from the Lord.<sup>1</sup> As Protector, he resisted constant pressure to allow complete religious toleration, realising that the people were not yet ready for democracy; nevertheless there was a measure of freedom from persecution not known before, or immediately after at the Restoration. It is certainly true that apart from this amazing man who ruled as Lord Protector, and his army of saints, the cause of enthusiastic religion would never have received the freedom and encouragement to flower in the way it did.

We have attempted to outline a few of the major religious factors which account for the diversity in the sects, and for the types of religious experience which are found. Having analysed something of the climate in which the sects flourished, we shall proceed to seek a fuller understanding of the types of religious experience found in the left wing of Puritanism, and shall endeavour to relate them to one another, and to the movement as a whole.

We have already suggested that the problem of radical Puritanism concerns the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in its many aspects as revealer of Truth, giver of Life, etc. However, this is part of a larger search for the truth about the mystery of life and the constitution of the world; it is a reaction against a partial reformation

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<sup>1</sup>John Saltmarsh, England's Friend Raised from the Grave, Giving Seasonable Advice to the Lord Generall... (London: Pr. for Giles Calvert, 1649).



and deadness of forms in worship; it is an extension of the ascetical ideal of denying the present world in favour of the next; it is a revolt against authority wherever it may impose its unwanted jurisdiction; and it answers certain political and social drives for fair representation in government, and a more even distribution of wealth. It is only when seen against this background that the theological issues take on their true proportion.

But there are also several other questions which are involved in the statement of the problem. The first is as yet not fully answered. Does radical Puritanism really justify the name Puritan? This also presses the question - Do all of the sects thought of as belonging together really partake of the same emphases? Have they in the main developed out of certain personal elements in Puritan evangelicalism, or do they represent purely a reaction against spiritual deadness? These suggest other questions which must be kept in mind. Is the mystical language of such men as Rous and Everard a recrudescence of the type of Catholic mysticism of Bernard and Tauler, and if not, then what does it mean in their writing? Is there any relation theologically to men such as Saltmarsh, Erbury, Vane and others who do not speak of union with God, but of being led by the Spirit into a new age? Do the Familists provide the key which unlocks this puzzling diversity of thought? Is Quakerism the 'fag end' of the radical movement, or does it represent a purified and spiritualised extension of Puritanism?

To the problems posed, no solution can be adequate if it does not, while keeping in mind what has already been said about the

seventeenth century, begin with reading the literature of the left wing for itself.<sup>1</sup> Before proceeding to this, however, it will be valuable to summarise an attempted solution by an American scholar, whose work on the mystical writings of Francis Rous has made a significant contribution to study in this field.

Professor Brauer skilfully demonstrates that Francis Rous in the types of mystical literature which came from his pen deserves a place alongside such recognised seventeenth century mystics as Traherne, Crashaw and Augustine Baker.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, by an examination of his more strictly theological works, he concludes that Rous was in no reaction to Puritanism, but that his mysticism was more a counter-balance to restore an original element of Puritanism itself, the personal and emotional side.<sup>3</sup> Further, he suggests that Rous is the first of several mystics who emerge as part of a distinct Puritan mysticism, the others being John Everard, Giles Rendall, Peter Sterry, and perhaps Walter Cradock and Morgan Llwyd.<sup>4</sup>

The development of the argument wisely rested on a definition of mysticism, which was worked out in such a way that Rous's writings illustrated it. He then proposed it as the basis for comparing the other names mentioned above. He, unfortunately however, leans

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<sup>1</sup>The value of Professor Nuttall's work, The Holy Spirit..., and its permanence as a base for study is that he has allowed these men to speak for themselves on all of the basic issues.

<sup>2</sup>Brauer, "Francis Rous...", p. iv.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 284.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 289.



heavily on the psychological scheme of Evelyn Underhill which, though accurate in some respects, lacks awareness of the historical setting, and considers all mystical experience, whether Christian or Pagan, as of a fundamental sameness. Briefly, his definition includes five main points. (1) Mysticism begins with the separate soul in the search for God. This is a desire for union with Absolute Reality, in an experience which transcends a mere psychological relationship. (2) Man is potentially capable of such a union because within him, in the 'ground of the soul', is the divine spark, or the 'concealed presence', which calls forth the soul to be joined to the One. (3) The entire Trinity plays a part in the soul's description of the ascent. (4) Mystics are at one in exhibiting a 'mystic path', stages of advancement by which the personal will is subdued and the soul freed to embrace the One. And (5) the result of the union experience is inexpressible, just as the experience itself is transitory.<sup>1</sup>

After illustrating these main points from Rous's writing, and seeking to demonstrate that the supreme drive of his spiritual life was for union with God, Dr. Brauer links this mysticism with Rous's Puritanism at the point of Salvation. For the latter, salvation was not the fellowship of the sinner with God, but

"...gradual deification of man through a conformity with God, produced by the successive visitations of the Bridegroom to strengthen the blessed knot of union."<sup>2</sup>

In order to evaluate the other radical preachers who do not use

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.11-13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.126.

this type of mystical terminology, Professor Brauer has grouped them together as Spiritualists, and, in indicating that their common concern is the Holy Spirit, has tried to show where they differed from the mystics. Fundamentally, the Spiritualist is one who feels that the Spirit is superior to all other religious forms, and claims that he has been reborn by the Spirit and is living in the Spirit. He thus is not concerned with perceiving God in a full union of the soul. Secondly, the Spiritualist does not dwell in a mystic way, for, although he may not, he can cast aside all the aids to worship, which the mystic uses in his ascent to union with God.<sup>1</sup> This then necessitates several groupings among Spiritualists, consonant with the degree to which externals in worship were repudiated. Thus he sees at least three possible attitudes: (1) Sir Harry Vane and Josiah Sprigg had not repudiated externals, but had subordinated them, and could have dispensed with them at any time with no harm to their idea of spiritual worship. (2) The Seekers, who were apparently only semi-organised in groups, had suspended all use of the Sacraments, waiting for a revelation of new forms by the Spirit. (3) Others, as Dell, Erbury, and Collier, believed that the new worship had been revealed, without Sacraments, and were not looking for a new dispensation.<sup>2</sup>

Now, there are several advantages to such an approach. First, this does provide a means of grouping men and ideas. Secondly, it brings into sharp focus this unusual outcropping of mystical language

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-27.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 294-95



which, without doubt, recalls something of the intensity and beauty of Bernard and Augustine. Finally, we should note that Professor Brauer has done a real service in emphasising the specifically Puritan emphasis in Rous's thought.

On the other hand, serious weaknesses appear when the attempt is made to apply his criteria to the left wing as a whole, and particularly to Everard and Sterry. Principally, this method fails for it does not see these men in the context of the seventeenth century. If, as Professor Brauer insisted, this mystical tendency is really a return to the personal element in Puritanism, then we must note that Everard could not have taken seriously this speculative mystical terminology, but rather he must have used it as a vehicle for describing an inner relationship with God which is immediate. The speculative mystic is indeed interested in knowing God, and yet to him this is not so much a personal relationship as an escape from the body to the 'Divine Dark'. But this kind of philosophical negativism is wholly foreign to Everard and to the issues of his time. Thus it is correct that Everard is seeking again the personal element in religion along with true righteousness and in so doing reads an ethical dualism into the metaphysical dualism of the mystics.

Another criticism is that the distinction between Mystic and Spiritualist draws a line between individuals at a certain point, without recognising that, crossing this one, other lines which represent more valid distinctions can be drawn. It will become clear in the discussion of individuals in later chapters, that the issue of the union experience does not really divide Saltmarsh from Everard, for instance, and does not help at all in understanding Fox

in relation to these two. Moreover, the most significant outside influences on all of the men in both categories come from the 16th Century Germans, Caspar Schwenkfeld, Hans Denck, Sebastian Franck, and the Familists as well, and it is their ideas about the Spirit and the Word which help to formulate the great movement toward freedom from the authority of Bible, Sacraments, and Church. In other words, if lines are to be drawn between men in the left wing, the truer criterion is in the relationship between the Spirit and the Scriptures characteristic of each man. When the speculative mystics are drawn into the argument by any one of these writers, it is to grapple with this fundamental problem, not primarily to urge the experience of union with God.

To conclude this discussion of the fringe of Puritanism, several points can be summarised as a guide to the study that follows.

(1) That there are outside influences which have introduced many of the radical ideas has been mentioned. No attempt will be made here to state categorically how various ideas were absorbed, but one must know what sort of thing was being read. There are some books which seem to have contributed more than others to the thought of the left wing. The only dependable way of knowing which are most significant, is to begin with the preachers, and then to look for the sources in the continental mystical writings available to the period. The two men whose ideas seem to be used most frequently are Caspar Schwenkfeld and Sebastian Franck. Both are sixteenth century German reformers, and a brief summary of their main themes would aid the understanding of the problem at this



point.<sup>1</sup>

Caspar Schwenkfeld has been described as the prince of the Spiritualists.<sup>2</sup> In the context of the truncated Lutheran reformation, he protested against traditionalism, against any objectification of forms of religious expression which were no longer genuine or adequate.<sup>3</sup> He conceived of God as the only ultimate reality, and of the world as preserved through the Son, but 'real' only to the extent that the Spirit reveals God in it.<sup>4</sup> This then is the background for contrasting the 'inner' and the 'outer' Word. God only speaks within by an 'inner Word' which is not of the order of the material world, viz., the Scriptures as a book. "'Abraham believed God, not the preached Word...'"<sup>5</sup> If that Word were given a thousand times to unbelieving ears it would still never be more than a physical sound, for God speaks only through the Holy Spirit in the heart.<sup>6</sup>

Schwenkfeld is definitely not a mystic in the sense that Eckhart and Tauler have won the name.<sup>7</sup> Yet, when he speaks of faith, he says that it is a grasp of divine truth itself<sup>8</sup>, a gift of

<sup>1</sup>Since it is impossible to give an extensive treatment, we will point up those ideas which are most relevant to the left wing radical position, remembering that this may present an unbalanced view of these continental writings.

<sup>2</sup>Jones, op. cit., pp.64f.

Joachim Wach, "Caspar Schwenkfeld, a Pupil and Teacher in the School of Christ", Journal of Religion XXVI (January, 1946).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.4

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.12

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.13

<sup>6</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p.4

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p.24

God<sup>1</sup>, and also participation in essence with the Giver, by which last he means

"'Faith is the enjoyment of him who works it all, a drop of the divine fountain, a little ray of the eternal sun, a spark of the divine fire which is God Himself.'"<sup>2</sup>

This, then, is mystical language used to communicate an immediate relation to God as over against a mediated relation through Scripture.

There is one other element which is significant. He conceives of the Christian life at one point as a process by which, through abandoning oneself, one at last becomes consumed with the love of God.<sup>3</sup> Or, developing the same theme in another way, he recommends suffering as the second stage on the way to perfection, till at last, participating in the suffering of the Cross, one comes to exult in God's love, and enters the Promised Land where untold riches await the soul.<sup>4</sup> This theme will also be recognisable later on in terms of a spiritual asceticism.

Sebastian Franck's Forbidden Fruit repeats some of the emphases in Schwenkfeld, elaborating others, and in all, drawing more directly from the earlier German mystics, Tauler and the Theologia Germanica.<sup>5</sup> Again, he is unconcerned with the issue of the union of the soul with God, but on the other hand strongly reflects the dualism between

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>5</sup>August Eluthenius, The Forbidden Fruit, or a Treatise of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evill, of Which Adam at the First, and As Yet All Mankinde Do Este Death, trans. out of Latine into English (London: Printed by T.P. and M.S. for Benjamin Allen, 1642), pp. 2, 5.



matter and spirit of speculative philosophy.<sup>1</sup> This governs his understanding of Scripture. The Word is powerful<sup>2</sup>, is placed as a kernel in Scripture<sup>3</sup>, but is not contained in the grammatical sense of Scripture<sup>4</sup>. Men must turn to God within the soul, must learn to be quiet and be taught by the Master Himself, and this is Life Eternal.<sup>5</sup> It follows that his interpretation of Scripture is allegorical in the extreme.

Franck also exalts the denying of the self life. He says, "We should labour to unlearn all things and put them off as tho they were death".<sup>6</sup> Again, we read that a man must deny and hate himself if he is to be a disciple of Christ.<sup>7</sup> This spiritual asceticism alone leads to the glory of the deified life which he describes in this way,

"...yes, he hath confirmed his Spirit, finger, word and Image in us; his spirit he hath clothed in us with flesh, and hath placed it captive in the midst of its enemies in the tabernacle of the flesh, that it may prevail and overcome, and subduing the flesh may with itself carrie it unto God, deifie it, engraff it, and unite it unto God; for this is the fight between the flesh and the spirit in us, of which Paul speaketh of."<sup>8</sup>

Again, mystical language is made to serve the purpose of immediateness.

(2) Whenever the left-wing writers who use mystical language, wish to support their experience with Biblical references, they usually appeal to Paul's flesh vs. Spirit passages and those

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

referring to his being 'in Christ', among others. The difference, then, between these preachers lies in the way in which these Pauline references are handled. On the one hand, a man like Everard, who has taken over some of the thought forms of speculative philosophy, translates Paul's ethical dualism of flesh vs. Spirit into a metaphysical dualism of matter vs. spirit. Pauline mysticism, if one may call it such, is then interpreted in terms of whatever mystical pattern is being followed, whether it be Eckhart, or Tauler, or the Theologia Germanica, or others. Very simply, the New Testament is overlaid with some form of Neo-Platonic mysticism. And all of the men can be evaluated relative to this standard, some allowing the New Testament to speak for itself more than others.

(3) The third point follows logically. The real issue is in understanding the relation of Spirit to Scripture in the different writers. Whether one or another actually attained union with God in the way in which Professor Brauer described the experience, does not really help in clarifying the relations between individuals in the left wing.

(4) One point will be noticed consistently, that regardless of theological position, the radical preachers to a man are guilty of having lost the historical perspective of faith. In some it will be more noticeable than others, but it is true of all.

We shall now proceed to George Fox, perhaps the greatest, if not the most controversial figure of radical Puritanism.



## CHAPTER TWO

### GEORGE FOX, PURITAN OPTIMIST

Undoubtedly, one clue to George Fox's source of spiritual powers lay in the loneliness of his early searching for the truth.<sup>1</sup> Often as he watched the sheep in the field, or walked the deserted country lanes, he would receive 'openings' which came as new insights to him. But they were not new in his time. Many an Anabaptist or Seeker before him had felt that University training in itself did not qualify for the ministry; they also held the view that God's people were more truly His Temple than any Steeplehouse.<sup>2</sup> But to Fox, with his mind so open to the promptings of the Spirit, these ideas could be interpreted as coming only from God. He felt that he owed nothing to history, or to the other religious expressions of his day.

However, to fail to interpret Fox in relation to his time is to misinterpret him completely. The religious impressions of the early years of childhood often leave a deeper mark than anything learned in later life. Indeed, Baron von Hügel warns us that there

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<sup>1</sup>(1952), p.10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.7,8.

Robert Baillie, Anabaptism, The True Fountaine of Independency, Brownisme, Antinomy, Familisme (London: Printed by M.F. for Samuel Gillibrand, 1647), p.53

is a law of 'apperception',

"...by which it is, as it were, with the tentacles, the mouth, the digestive apparatus of what I already know, hold, and am, that I can and do seize, and swallow, and assimilate what I do not yet know and have, and what as yet I am not."<sup>1</sup>

Hence, the expectancy of the dawn of a new day of spiritual power, likened to "that spirit of Messianic expectation which prepared the way for Christianity",<sup>2</sup> must have seized and held this young man, as it had so many others.

As has been suggested in Chapter One, there were abroad many extravagant notions about the Spirit. Although some were interested in them only as philosophy, most radical Puritans made them serve the purpose of feeding their desire for an inner assurance of reality. Basically, to them, these ideas expressed the nearness of God and the availability of salvation to all, assertions which ran counter to the Calvinistic doctrines of Election and Predestination. Though the Arminianism of the General Baptists had similarly opened the doors of Heaven to all, yet this was within the framework of a Biblical authoritarianism and thus unacceptable to those who believed only in the inner authority of the Spirit.

Now, of course, the main body of the Puritans repudiated such notions of the Spirit which claimed that God might be in or available to all men.<sup>3</sup> But the sects, regardless of other differences,

<sup>1</sup>Friedrich von Hügel, Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion (Second Series; London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1926) p.75.

<sup>2</sup>William C. Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1912), p.514.

<sup>3</sup>Nuttall, Holy Spirit..., p.157.



believed it passionately. In Baillie's Anabaptism, for instance, is the accusation against Anabaptists, that

"...they make God personally to subsist in every creature, they make him life of all the living, and his essence the proper form of all things."<sup>1</sup>

Or again,

"Others of them teach that the whole creation shall be annihilated and reduced into the divine essence again."<sup>2</sup>

These doctrines are inevitably connected with a theology of deification, as in the writings of Henry Nicholas,

"God hath made me alive through Christ, and anointed me with his godly being, manned himself with me, and godded me with him."<sup>3</sup>

As we shall see later, Everard, with a little less restraint, preached this same deified state. Morgan Llwyd, a Welsh mystical preacher with a message somewhat similar to the Quakers, could say that God was in our flesh if we were in His Spirit<sup>4</sup>, and that God was within every man, no matter how evil he might be.<sup>5</sup> Others again, if they did not believe that God was in all without qualification, made use of mystical terminology which could lead one to suspect that it was so. Henry Denne, the most powerful of the General Baptist preachers, speaks of the Spirit as having

<sup>1</sup>Baillie, op. cit., p.100.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.122.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.127.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Nuttall, op. cit., p.153.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.154.

E. Lewis Evans, "Morgan Llwyd and the Early Friends", Friends Quarterly, VIII (January, 1954), pp.48f.

come upon all men<sup>1</sup>, and of the Light within to lead to Christ.<sup>2</sup> Winstanley and Saltmarsh, Walwyn and Dell, Anabaptists, Antinomians, Familists, and Grindletonians all preached the universal indwelling of the Spirit and all in so doing more or less tending to obscure the boundary between God and man. Hence, when Fox came preaching the universal Light, 'that which lighteth every man', it answered this current of spiritual conviction already flowing strong among many on the fringe of Puritanism.

In England, also, there had appeared the writings of such men as Jacob Boehme<sup>3</sup> and Sebastian Franck<sup>4</sup>, which seemed to provide a striking parallel to Quaker teaching.

Franck speaks of the two seeds, that of the serpent, and that of the woman, which are in conflict in the heart of man.<sup>5</sup> Of the seed of the woman, which he likens to the secret treasure of God enclosed in a man's heart, he says that in the unconverted, it is

<sup>1</sup>Henry Denne, Anti-Christ Unmasked, in Three Treatises... The Third, The Drag Net of the Kingdome of Heaven: or Christ Drawing All Men, the first edition (Reprinted at London, 1646), pp.80f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.91.

<sup>3</sup>Jones, Spiritual Reformers..., pp.220f.

Nuttall, op. cit., p.17.

<sup>4</sup>Franck, Forbidden Fruit.

<sup>5</sup>Franck, op. cit., p.2.

"All Friends everywhere, know the Seed of God which bruiseth the seed of the serpent, and is a-top of the seed of the serpent, which seed sins not but bruiseth the serpent's head which tempts to sin and doth sin." (1952), p.174.



covered over with the "earth of the creatures, remaining in darkness."<sup>1</sup> Now, the 'Seed' passages are of prime importance in Fox's thought, forming, as they do, the next most significant imagery used, to that of the 'Light'.<sup>2</sup> But there is a fundamental difference between the underlying meaning of Franck and Fox. The former, drawing on Tauler and the *Theologia Germanica*<sup>3</sup>, thinks in the context of the dualism between creatureliness and spirit. Sin, then, is self-will, not the transgression of the law of God.<sup>4</sup> What the Christian seeks for, consequently, is to negate himself, that God may do all actions in him<sup>5</sup>, because "...all true Christians are of Christ the sonnes of God, gods, and God himself."<sup>6</sup> In Fox, on the other hand, there is comparatively little of the asceticism which aims at putting down all desires of the flesh life.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Franck, *op. cit.*, p.121.

"For when first I set my horse's foot a-top of the Scottish ground I felt the Seed of God to sparkle about me like innumerable sparks of fire, though there is abundance of thick, cloddy earth of hypocrisy and falseness that is a-top, and a briary, brambly nature..." (1952), p.331.

<sup>2</sup>The significance of the 'Seed' will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

<sup>3</sup>Franck, *op. cit.*, pp.2,5.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p.34.

<sup>7</sup>Among early Friends approval was shown of abnormal bodily states, as trembling and shaking, and abnormal relationships in marriage, which reflect such a suspicion of the body as is typical of Franck and the Familists, as has been shown by Professor Nuttall, Studies in Christian Enthusiasm Illustrated from Early Quakerism (Wallingford, Penna: Pendle Hill, 1948), pp.59,65. Nevertheless Fox's message is positive, and these attitudes must be seen as the remnants of a Familist background, which were gradually lost as Quakerism matured.

In the concept of 'unity with the creation', which separates him decisively from any such dualism, he emphatically declares that God's creation is good and not to be despised.

On the theme of revelation, Franck warns that the letter of scripture cannot contain the "majesty of the Word".<sup>1</sup> God is within, the 'Master', or 'Teacher', invading the heart with an exceeding force of spiritual power.<sup>2</sup> This inner Word is "a certaine light intended for the enlightening of men".<sup>3</sup> It is "not onely a Light and splendour given us from above, but also life."<sup>4</sup> This is "the interior Word....Christ dwelling in us."<sup>5</sup>

Again, there is a striking similarity with Fox's doctrine of the Light of Christ, man's inward Teacher. However, when one seeks the true motive for repudiating the letter of the Bible, the basic difference again appears. For Franck, the exterior world of nature is only an accident, a figure of the true and interior nature of things. Therefore, the words of Scripture are also only figurative portraying in veiled language what is being done in the real, interior world. But Fox, far from repudiating the historical as mere symbol, emphasises that he is guided and empowered by the same Spirit which gave forth the Scripture at first. Thus to Franck, the Bible is allegory; to Fox, it is a historical revelation made contemporary. Nor is there any necessary significance to the common use of the

<sup>1</sup>Franck, op. cit., pp.125, 171, 175.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.129, 137.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.175.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.176.

<sup>5</sup>Loc. cit.



term 'Light'. With the former, it may or may not refer to some form of 'Lichtmetaphysik'. In the latter, it is assuredly a Biblical term, used in the Biblical sense.

That Fox could read and appreciate such a book as Franck's Forbidden Fruit, without partaking of its fully radical character, is indicative that he is both an individualist, and perhaps unaware of the crucial points of difference between the latter and his own more Biblical point of view. It also suggests that perhaps Fox was misinterpreted both in his own time, and subsequently, simply because he was not aware of the confusion caused by his adaptation of some of the radical terminology and his uncritical use of it.<sup>1</sup> To cite an illustration from Fox himself, he finds it necessary to dispute the statement of Ralph Farmer "that this God who is the Creator is eternally distinct from all creatures".<sup>2</sup> This, by implication, puts him in the camp of the mystical preachers, like Everard, who believed the doctrine of deification. Actually, all he really means, as he says, is that the bodies of Saints are Temples of the Holy Spirit. Thus he seems to be unaware of the difference between the speculative philosophy of deification, and the New Testament conception of the indwelling of the Holy

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<sup>1</sup>"Serious weakness must, indeed, be acknowledged in the intellectual presentation of Christianity by the early Friends... they failed to find adequate terms in which to express the reality they had discovered." A. Neave Brayshaw, The Quakers; Their Story and Message (Second edition; London: The Swarthmore Press Ltd., 1927), pp.52-53.

<sup>2</sup>G. M., p.174.

Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, (because of the common emphasis on the Spirit and similarities of language), many in England and Holland were linking the Quakers with the extreme mystical sects. Henry Holleywell wrote a book entitled, An Account of Familism as it is Revived and Propagated by the Quakers. Henry More exposed what he considered to be a like similarity.<sup>2</sup> In the Netherlands, Quakers were regarded as followers of Jan Everhard, and labelled pantheistic mystics.<sup>3</sup> The very fact that Giles Calvert printed many of the Quaker books, as well as those of Saltmarsh, Dell, Winstanley, Henry Nicholas, and even Boehme<sup>4</sup>, might have suggested to some in that day that all of these bore something of the same stamp. Professor Nuttall is undoubtedly correct when he says that in 1654, though not in 1665, Quakerism was associated with Familism.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Other illustrations of a similar extravagance in language are not hard to find in the G.M., as pp.1,100.

Dr. Bohn has also noticed the semantic difficulties which led to misunderstanding between Puritan and Quaker (op. cit., p.356).

<sup>2</sup>Henry More, An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness (London: Printed by F. Flesher for W. Morden, 1660), p.xi.

<sup>3</sup>Frans Kuyper, Tweede Deel of Vervolg Van de Philosopheerende Boer (Rotterdam, 1676). Professor Nuttall discusses this reference at length in an article: "Early Quakerism in the Netherlands; Its Wider Context," The Bulletin of Friends Historical Association, XLIV (Spring, 1955), pp.15f.

<sup>4</sup>"Giles Calvert's Publishing Career", The Journal of Friends Historical Society, XXXV (1938).

<sup>5</sup>Geoffrey F. Nuttall, James Nayler: A Fresh Approach (London: Friends Historical Society, 1954), p.5.



That Fox was more truly Biblical than either his language or perhaps some of his associates were, will become clear as this study progresses. James Nayler certainly betrayed marked Familist leanings up to the time of his fall.<sup>1</sup> His exaggerated emphasis on fasting, and his statement that in the fast he is set "above all other created things,"<sup>2</sup> is a marked contrast to Fox. This is really a negative, ascetic emphasis more typical of the Familists, whose ideal of a progressive path to purity demanded separation from worldly pleasures, and rigid self-denial.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it is only toward the beginning of his ministry<sup>4</sup> that Fox writes of his own fasts. Thereafter, though he does fast occasionally, yet in the Journal, he refers only to the fasts of others<sup>5</sup>, and criticises the hypocrisy behind the fasts proclaimed by the state.<sup>6</sup> That other Quakers placed more emphasis on this practice than Fox<sup>7</sup>, demonstrates, perhaps, the vestiges of their own religious background, and the meagre measure of their own apprehension of the freedom and power which Fox was proclaiming in the Light of Christ.

It is also the willingness to accept "Messianic honours,"<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Geoffrey F. Nuttall (ed.), Early Quaker Letters from the Swarthmore Mss. to 1660 (London: The Library, Friends House, 1952), p.88.

<sup>3</sup>Kerr, op. cit., p.332.

<sup>4</sup>(1952), pp.9,147.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp.42,119,142,589.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp.293,348-49.

<sup>7</sup>Nuttall, op. cit., pp.195, 198, 267, 268.

<sup>8</sup>Nuttall, James Nayler..., p.16.

revealing his sense of oneness with the person and work of Christ, which marks out Nayler's affinity with the Familists. Of course, Nayler is not alone in this respect, as Fox also received such adulation.<sup>1</sup> It did demonstrate that they failed to distinguish clearly between the Spirit of God within and the earthly vessel.<sup>2</sup>

One other factor also tended to line up the Quakers with Familists and Ranters. The disuse of the Sacraments, along with the proclamation of a new age of the Spirit, had been the theme of the Familists in England since the turn of the century. Others in radical Puritanism had set aside the Sacraments, awaiting a revelation of new forms, and some had even said that a new dispensation in which the ordinances were no longer necessary had already come.<sup>3</sup> Thus, when the Quakers appeared, and adopted this extreme attitude, the inference of Familist origins could be easily made. There is one radical difference, however, between Familist and Quaker positions, which was perhaps not apparent to everyone in that day. The former rejected the Sacraments because a new age of the Spirit was about to dawn in which the Spirit should reign in all, and love should predominate among men.<sup>4</sup> However, this was not thought of as a return to apostolic practice, which was repudiated as a lower stage in the progressive revelation of the

<sup>1</sup>Nuttall, The Holy Spirit..., pp.181f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.182.

<sup>3</sup>Supra, Chapter One, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Kerr, op. cit., p.352.



ages of the Spirit.<sup>1</sup> Fox, by contrast, never spoke of a new age about to dawn,<sup>2</sup> but of the availability to all of the same inspiration and power as was in the Apostles. Thus the Joachimite eschatology which so influenced the Familists, and after them others, like Saltmarsh and Winstanley, and the Fifth Monarchy Men, has been applied mistakenly to the Quakers as well. Fox probably did not use the Sacraments because it was of the essence of spiritual religion in his day to set them aside. Thus here is one example of Fox's departure from Scripture because of the pressure of the claim of immediacy in relation to God.

Consequently, because of Fox's own naive use of language, and the disuse of the Sacraments, because of excessive enthusiasm which failed to reckon on the limitations of the body, and the Familistic leanings of some of the First Publishers, especially James Nayler, early Quakerism appeared to many to be simply another form of Ranterism. In other ways, too, the early Quaker movement partook

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 297. Kerr, however, is mistaken in attributing the Joachimite hope to Fox. Though Fox did not desire to recreate the New Testament Church according to the letter of Scripture, he did seek the Spirit of the New Testament, which is far different from the spirit of a new age superior to the New Testament.

<sup>2</sup>Fox quarreled with a group known as the Manifestarians who were awaiting a new dispensation, "for in Quakerism the manifestation of the sons of God was not to be waited for, it was already here." Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "'Unity with the Creation': George Fox and the Hermetic Philosophy," Friends Quarterly, (July, 1947), p. 140.

There is also a discussion of the Manifestarians in relation to Quakerism in Nuttall, Early Quaker Letters..., pp. 293f.

of the radical Puritanism within which it sprang up. In mode of worship and Church organisation, Fox is "irrigating a channel already made"<sup>1</sup> by Anabaptists and Seekers before him. Lay praying and prophesying had been common in radical Puritanism, though there was a 'separated' ministry, which only ceased to be separated with the Quakers.<sup>2</sup> The latter also abandoned a purely male ministry, a truly unique departure in the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> As to organisation, the assimilation of the Westmorland Seekers provided the seed out of which the Meeting, and the system of Quarterly and Yearly Meetings was developed.<sup>4</sup> Further, the concern to 'answer that of God in every man', which led to the refusal to take oaths, use flattering speech, show 'hat honour', etc., provided a deeper motive for conduct already common among Baptists.<sup>5</sup> The latter had had a tradition which followed the same pattern as the Swiss

<sup>1</sup>Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit...*, p.86.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.85.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.87.

Women were allowed to make public discourses in some Baptist Churches by 1640. William Tallack, George Fox, the Friends, and the Early Baptists (London: S. W. Partridge & Co., 1868), p.70.

Women were also beginning to assert their political rights for the first time at the close of the Leveller Movement. Joseph Frank, The Levellers (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1955), p.199.

<sup>4</sup>Braithwaite, op. cit., p.95.

Tallack, op. cit., p.77.

<sup>5</sup>F. J. Powicke, Henry Barrow Separatist (1550?-1593) and the Exiled Church of Amsterdam (London: James Clarke & Co., 1900), p.118.



Anabaptists of the sixteenth century;<sup>1</sup> although in contrast to the Quakers, it was from the desire to observe the strict letter of the Scripture.

It is clear that in many respects George Fox did not introduce anything new into the religious current of radical Puritanism. On the other hand, the Quakers, and Fox especially, are not to be explained by the men or movements with which they evidence a similarity. The Seekers were prepared for the message of Fox, but would probably not have become 'happy Finders' without him. About the man there was something unique which was carried over into the movement which he founded. Penn aptly described him in the familiar phrase, 'an original, being no man's copy.' Many have sought to discover the secret of the spiritual power which he so consistently evidenced. We are on the same quest.

It would be presumptuous to attempt to discover the hidden springs of power within George Fox merely through a psychological analysis or a reconstruction of his personality, for this would be ignoring the greatest discovery of his life, that the living Lord Jesus Christ could, and did speak to his condition. To look beyond this basic factor in seeking to understand Fox, is to introduce factors foreign to him. Baron von Hügel put his finger squarely on the matter in his observation that behind every great saint is another saint.

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<sup>1</sup>Roland H. Bainton, The Reformation of the 16th Century (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1952), pp. 99-101.

"Behind St. Paul stands the Jewish synagogue and the earthly Jesus, and behind George Fox stands the entire New Testament."<sup>1</sup>

In linking Fox with Paul and Fox's experience with the spirit of the New Testament, von Hügel has rightly intimated that Fox's genius lies in a tapping of the life of God which is revealed in the New Testament, and which is demonstrated supremely in the lives of John and Paul.

In George Fox is a new outpouring of the same Spirit which met Saul on the Damascus Road, which created the New Testament fellowship, which inspired men to band together and suffer persecution for Christ's sake, and which also inspired the Gospel interpretation of the events of the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord. Far from feeling that the New Testament was irrelevant or unimportant, Fox simply believed that the same Jesus Christ who had met Paul, had also met him. Therefore he could expect the same spiritual power over temptation, the same insight into truth, and the same personal guidance which Paul had received.<sup>2</sup> Other men were not so daring, spiritually, for their eyes were seemingly holden to the vision of the full life of the Spirit which Fox proved was possible.

<sup>1</sup>Friedrich von Hügel, Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1921), p. 293.

<sup>2</sup>"Since the Puritans, as well as the Quakers, affirmed that the prophets and apostles witnessed immediate revelation and were taught directly by God's Spirit, the Quakers had an incisive question when they asked why, if the Puritan writers were in the apostles' doctrine, were they not in the apostles' spirit?" Bohn, op. cit., p. 363.



There are two matters which clearly demonstrate this unique New Testament spirit, and with which we shall be concerned in the remainder of this chapter. These are his attitude toward Scripture, and his optimism about Christ's power to transform a man's nature. Actually, the right understanding of what Fox means by the 'Light within', a mystical conception, will be based on this discussion. As was suggested in chapter one, there is a mysticism in the seventeenth century which is speculative in nature and always in danger of not being wholly Christian. And there is the 'Christ-mysticism' of Paul and John which breathes a different atmosphere and creates a different life in relation to the world. We must seek to discover where Fox stands in relation to these two extremes.

It is interesting that Fox spends far less time than the average radical Puritan, crying against the deadness of the letter of Scripture. Rather, his is a positive message, urging men to turn to the Light within and the Teacher who is within. Thus he stands between the Puritan literalist, like Bunyan, for instance, and the allegorist, like Everard, for whom the letter contains no revelation at all. Actually, however, he is much nearer the latter than the former. The heated controversy with the Puritans over this issue actually forced each to overstate his position, the Puritans to insist on the letter and the Quakers on the Spirit, as though there were no balance between the two. The real point insisted on by the Quakers was that the letter was not inseparable

from the Spirit<sup>1</sup>, or to put it another way, that the Scriptures were not the touchstone of authority,<sup>2</sup> while the Puritans would not have the Spirit apart from the Scriptures. Having said this, however, the clearest way of realising the difference in the handling of the Word, is to compare the methods of interpretation shown both by Bunyan, one of the Quakers' most bitter antagonists, and by Fox. Here, we cannot trust their formal declarations about Scripture, which tend to be polemical, but we shall turn rather to their own experience of the part Scripture played in their coming to the assurance of salvation.

Bunyan speaks for himself in Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, and Fox in the opening pages of the Journal. Of course, to start with, the personalities of these two men are different. Bunyan makes himself seem to be more a 'man of like passions with us'. Fox always impresses one with possessing a heroic character, and a boundless power to discipline himself which is unusual with men.<sup>3</sup> Bunyan describes his childhood as filled with despair over sin, and troubled with visions about hell and judgment.<sup>4</sup> Fox, on the other hand, says that he has been kept pure in youth.<sup>5</sup> He subsequently experiences many temptations and great agony of soul<sup>6</sup>, but he does not picture it as a struggle with sensual sin which is

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.138.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.165.

<sup>3</sup>Nuttall, James Nayler..., p.20.

<sup>4</sup>John Bunyan, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, ed. Edward C. Baldwin (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1910), p.8.

<sup>5</sup>(1952), p.2.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp.9,12,13,14.



typical of Bunyan's account of his early days.<sup>1</sup> It would be misleading, however, to conclude that Fox had no struggles and therefore was a man of superficial optimism.

The common factor in the experience of Bunyan and Fox is the Bible. In addition, Bunyan confesses that he read Bayly's Practice of Piety, and much later, Luther's Commentary on Galatians, and that the latter spoke the language of his experience.<sup>2</sup> Fox, on the other hand, speaks only of the hours which he spent with his Bible. But it is their treatment of the Scriptures which concerns us. Because of his Independent background, Bunyan unconsciously gave great weight to the literal words of the Bible as the words of God. He was haunted by texts pronouncing judgment upon sinners, and by the awful words of the Lord about the unpardonable sin.<sup>3</sup> At times the verses which promised mercy came home to him and he was filled with joy. But it was only temporary. He continually asked himself if he really had faith, or if he was of the Elect.<sup>4</sup> His inner question, "whether the Scriptures could agree in the salvation of my soul,"<sup>5</sup> reveals the crux of the problem. He had no experience of the Spirit applying some portion of the Word, as God's message of truth to his soul. Rather, he was a slave to his own emotional reaction to the words themselves. The agony of soul over his salvation was finally

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<sup>1</sup>Bunyan, op. cit., pp.9,10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.47.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp.28,29,34,35,48,49.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp.22,24,72.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.75.

resolved only when he understood, in an intellectual way, the truth about the imputed righteousness of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Fox's Journal reads in striking contrast. He has no predilection for the literal approach to the Bible, although he uses Scripture more exclusively than Bunyan. He is constantly open to the voice of God, who may speak through Scripture, or apart from it. It is this openness which is in such marked contrast to Bunyan's bondage to his feelings, which alternated between fear of judgment and hope of mercy. Fox experiences the Spirit's revelation of truth in 'openings' or 'visions', likening them to Paul's similar experience.<sup>2</sup> He finds that when temptation of despair overtake him, the Spirit opens the Scripture to reveal God's deliverance and peace. The Scripture never causes despair, as in Bunyan's experience.

Thus, Fox's God is the living God of the Bible, whose power is always available to men in need. Of course, it must be said that because Bunyan's literalist approach was within a framework of Calvinism, he was really struggling to believe he was of the elect, a problem which would not have confronted another literalist such as a General Baptist. But the contrast in methods of interpretation reveals much. Fox is open to inspiration, taking for granted the historical truth of Scripture. Bunyan is already committed before he begins to read.

Much more needs to be said, however, to demonstrate that Fox succeeded in being true to the spirit of the Scriptures, From his

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.82-83.

<sup>2</sup>(1952), p.21.



account of his early years<sup>1</sup>, and from what others have said about him, he was certainly steeped in the Bible.<sup>2</sup> But because of the current of mystical ideas flowing so strongly in radical Puritanism at this time, one must look carefully to see whether he yielded to the temptation to overlay the Bible with some form of speculative philosophy.

Professor Brinton in one of the latest expositions of Fox's thought, has indicated some of the Biblical sources for his preaching. He has suggested that his 'philosophy of the Inward Light' is represented by a series of dualisms between substance and shadow, eternity and time, unity and multiplicity, and life and form.<sup>3</sup> The Professor is anxious to show that Fox draws heavily on the Scriptures, but unfortunately his own view of the New Testament, in which Platonic dualism is represented along with the Hebraic forms of thought<sup>4</sup>, confuses the issue rather than solves it. He feels that it is Fox's concern for the Word which produces this series of dualisms in his thought, whereas such Platonic dualism is not implied in either Paul or John. The

<sup>1</sup>"Yet I had no slight esteem of the Holy Scriptures, but they were very precious to me, for I was in that spirit by which they were given forth, and what the Lord opened in me I afterwards found was agreeable to them." (1952), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>The familiar words of Penn, "He had an extraordinary gift in opening the Scriptures." (1952), p. xliii.

<sup>3</sup>Howard Brinton, Friends for 300 Years; the History and Beliefs of the Society of Friends Since George Fox Started the Quaker Movement (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), p. 21.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 55-57.

question thus is to see whether Fox does possess such forms of thought. If he does, we must go to the Neo-Platonists for the source, not the New Testament.

A brief study of some of the questionable passages from the epistles will remove the suspicion of any taint of a Platonic dualism.<sup>1</sup> For example, in Epistle 72, "substance" is contrasted with "shadows, types, traditions, ungodliness, unrighteousness..." This is not a metaphysical but ethical dualism. In the next Epistle, 73, the same contrast is drawn, but the "substance" here is clearly Jesus Christ. The "shadows" or "figures" are by implication the forms of religion in which there is no power, in other words, forms of religion which are without Christ. Again, Epistle 147 pictures Christ as the "substance" of Old Testament types of the Messiah. Thus this is another use of the term with Biblical reference.<sup>2</sup> Or, in still another example, Epistle 173, men "running on in a form...lose power." They are to keep in the power and seed of God, in which is the substance. This is clearly an echo of Paul's "having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."<sup>3</sup> A great many similar illustrations could be produced.

What this demonstrates is that instead of Platonic forms of

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<sup>1</sup>These are passages which Professor Brinton cites as illustrating his point. Ibid., pp.21f.

<sup>2</sup>In the New Testament, 'shadow' refers to the Old Testament ritual as type of a deeper spiritual truth, as in Col.2:17 and Heb.8:5.

<sup>3</sup>2 Tim.3:5.



thought, Fox speaks imaginatively, using Biblical imagery and symbolism to portray graphically his message. He is thus, perhaps unconsciously, registering a protest against theological phrases like 'Justification' or 'Sanctification' which represent an intellectualisation of the soul's relationship to God. By contrast, he would speak simply, experientially, and dramatically, allowing the Scripture to illustrate itself. His most characteristic term, 'Light', quite apart from the intellectual content which Fox gave to it, was meant to suggest the inwardness of religion. His other basic words all suggest the experience of a relationship with God, along with giving a certain intellectual content to his Gospel. Thus the Seed, which we will see later is Jesus Christ, can be used in a variety of ways which all symbolise spiritual experience, as, it is a "suffering Seed,"<sup>1</sup> it reaches "from sea to sea,"<sup>2</sup> the "Seed reigns" within,<sup>3</sup> or "is a-top all" within;<sup>4</sup> he sees the Seed "sparkle."<sup>5</sup> There are many other words which are symbols of experience, as when men are to "feel the power arise,"<sup>6</sup> or "feel the life to flow over all,"<sup>7</sup> or are "under a cross in things."<sup>8</sup>

It is therefore of the first importance to realise the motive for Fox's use of this kind of symbolism. He is simply urging that external realities have no religious value unless they are received within through the revelation of the Light. The urge to make

<sup>1</sup>(1952), p.277.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.288.

<sup>3</sup>Ep. 99

<sup>4</sup>(1952), p.367.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.331.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.341.

<sup>7</sup>Ep. 174.

<sup>8</sup>(1952), p.114.

Scripture history contemporary was simply an extension of this, and not the desire to repudiate the historical background. Thus when he says that men should "find Esau and Ishmael in themselves,"<sup>1</sup> or "witness Christ born in them, passing through death...temptations..,"<sup>2</sup> he is warning against the mere acceptance of theological statements. Early in his ministry he saw to his sorrow,

"...how people read the Scriptures without a right sense of them, and without duly applying them to their own states."<sup>3</sup>

It is in this light that we can understand a passage such as the following:

"...through which Light we are grafted into Christ, the Heavenly, Spiritual Man, who hath saved, redeemed and purchased and bought us with his precious Blood, the Blood of the Heavenly Man..."<sup>4</sup>

Fox, here, is indirectly affirming the physical facts of Christ's life, but also emphasising that they must be applied to the heart and not merely believed with the mind. That Fox's language in such passages resembles that of a man like Everard, must have been misleading in the seventeenth century, but the similarity stops with the form of expression. Fox was genuinely concerned to experience salvation from the power of sin.

This brief discussion has shown that Fox did not use Platonic forms of thought. Actually, the concreteness of his speech, the frequent use of Biblical symbols and images, the avoidance of any dependance on allegorisation to demonstrate truth, all point to a

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.74.

<sup>3</sup>(1952), p.31.

<sup>2</sup>Ep. 45.

<sup>4</sup>Doc., p.508.



much closer adherence to Biblical language and thought than is readily apparent to those who read Fox's works. A more thorough study of his method of interpretation would be invaluable to a deeper understanding of his thought, and really needs to be done before any final word can be written about the central truths of his message.

As a summary a few points can here be suggested which will serve to direct our understanding of his use of the Bible:

(1) Because for Fox ultimate authority lies in the Spirit within, he unconsciously places more emphasis on certain passages which have been opened to him, while slighting others. This has the effect of pulling him away from a true Biblical balance in theology. (2) Moreover, because it is the same Spirit in him who inspired the Apostles, some passages which the Puritan moderates would spiritualise, or make conditional, Fox feels should be taken literally. The chief point at issue is, of course, Fox's acceptance at face value of John's use of 'the Light which lighteth every man,' and of the passage in his Epistle that 'whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.'<sup>1</sup> (3) By the same Spirit within, he also realises that words can never adequately convey the whole truth. And (4), Fox does not allegorise, as does Everard, the Familists, and some others who use mystical language; but he is concerned to make personal application to the life.

It is apparent, then, that though Fox has inherited the strong

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<sup>1</sup>John 1:9, 1 John 3:9.



conviction of his time that the Spirit is in all men, with him, at any rate, it is more Biblical than philosophical. With this in the background, it will be helpful to outline briefly the chief characteristics of the New Testament mystical experience of which Fox felt that he and his followers were partaking. This will serve both as a yardstick to measure Fox's adherence to the spirit of Scripture, and the way in which other mystical writers departed from it.

Most helpful to keep one on the right track, is the distinction between Prophetism and Mysticism made in Dr. Heiler's book, Prayer. The New Testament experience of John and Paul is set over against the speculative mystics who partake of Neo-Platonic dualism. In the New Testament is an uncontrollable will to live, being overmastered by values and tasks, and an enhancement of the feeling of life.<sup>1</sup> The mystics, on the other hand, have a deep mistrust of the world, and a burning longing for the Good to free them from it.<sup>2</sup> This is a statement of extremes, of course, since many mystics, like St. Bernard, have a more personal mysticism which partakes in some respects of the spirit of the New Testament. Miss Underhill has shown that others, in the United States, like St. Teresa or Ruysbroeck, have a positive attitude toward life and a commitment to the needs of the world that certainly marks the Prophetic character.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Friedrich Heiler, Prayer..., ed. and tr. Samuel McComb (London: Oxford University Press, 1952).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.136.

<sup>3</sup>Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism, A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness (4th ed.; London: Methuen & Co., 1912), pp.513-14.



Nevertheless, in the setting of the seventeenth century, this definition is particularly helpful. What, then, is the character of the mystical strain of the New Testament?

On the one side, there is no Platonic dualism in Paul.<sup>1</sup> The conflict between flesh and spirit is an ethical dualism. The 'flesh' implies those factors in a man's character, possessions, or surroundings which, though good in themselves, may be misused. It is inevitable that they will be thus misused, apart from grace, but it is only when sin enters that flesh becomes evil.<sup>2</sup>

Neither is Paul guilty of any substitutionary form of deification. When he says in Galatians 2:20, "...I live, yet not I, but Christ", he follows it immediately with, "...and the life which I now live in the flesh..." He thus qualifies what might be construed as a too close identification of the human and divine. Furthermore, Paul never loses sight of his heavenly reward, for "to depart and be with Christ is far better".<sup>3</sup> Thus he does not lose historical perspective, nor does he forget that there is something in being a man on earth that prevents complete oneness with Christ.

Moreover, it is obvious but crucial, that mysticism with Paul is not the starting point, but a corollary of the Christian life.

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth E. Kirk, The Vision of God; The Christian Doctrine of the Summum Bonum (2nd ed.; Bampton Lectures, 1928; London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1941), pp.78-80.

Auguste Sabatier, The Apostle Paul, ed. George G. Findlay, tr. A. M. Hellier (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1913), p.164.

<sup>2</sup>Kirk, op. cit., pp.91-2.

<sup>3</sup>Phil. 1:23.

Paul's chief goal is not union with the divine in the Platonic sense, but the "prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus".<sup>1</sup>

On the positive side, the initiative is with God, to meet man, and to transform his life. This power of Christ is depicted by Paul with a variety of expressions, such as the putting on of a 'new garment', as 'dying' and then being 'reborn', and as being 'transformed'.<sup>2</sup> By this is intimated no superficial change of mind, but a change of being, a new status, in which, through love, a man wills to do what God desires.<sup>3</sup> In this way the new life in Christ promises power over sin, a victory won in the resurrection of Christ, and made available through the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that man is passive, however, but that he wills complete obedience as a slave of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

Hence this relationship with Christ is a fellowship with the risen Lord, in which through love, and an openness of spirit, the mind is receptive to His voice and the will obedient to His command. But this does not do full justice to Paul's experience. How are we to understand the passages referring to being buried and risen again with Christ?<sup>6</sup> Several recent scholars have agreed that this

<sup>1</sup>Phil. 3:14.

<sup>2</sup>Rom. 12:2; Eph. 2:1,4; Gal. 3:27.

<sup>3</sup>Otto Piper, "The Transforming Power of the Gospel", Theology Today, (January, 1956), pp.437-442.

<sup>4</sup>Otto Piper, "The Apostle Paul", (unpub. classnotes of Prof. Piper's Seminar, 1952-53, Princeton Seminary Library), p.24.

<sup>5</sup>Rom. 6:16,18,22.

<sup>6</sup>Rom. 6:3-6.



sharing of the experience of Christ can only be thought of as operative in the sphere of the Body of Christ.<sup>1</sup> This emphasises that the Gospel power is never given merely for personal perfection. As Piper points out, Jesus always saw men as part of the Universe, and so to him, the goal of life was never merely Christ-likeness, in a moral sense, but also 'for-anotherness'.<sup>2</sup> Thus only in the fellowship of the Body of Christ is it possible 'to attain to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.'

One other aspect of Paul's mystical experience is important in its bearing upon Fox's thought. This is his understanding of creation. The world is not essentially evil, in that by virtue of its creatur<sup>o</sup>liness it stands as a mere shadow of what is real. x  
Rather, it awaits the final day of redemption, when, with men, "it shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."<sup>3</sup> Here, then, is the 'interdependence' of men with all of created life.<sup>4</sup>

To sum up, then, Paul's relationship to the person of the living Lord, is one of intimate and personal love and obedience, which at the same time is realised fully only in the Body of Christ.

<sup>1</sup>Piper, op. cit., p.61.

Vincent Taylor, Forgiveness and Reconciliation; A Study in New Testament Theology (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1941), pp.141-42.

John A. T. Robinson, The Body; A Study in Pauline Theology ("Studies in Biblical Theology"; London: SCM Press, 1952).

<sup>2</sup>Piper, "The Transforming Power...", p.448

<sup>3</sup>Rom. 8:20,21.

<sup>4</sup>Piper, Loc. cit.

It is a transforming experience, which at once gives promise that the whole created order shall at last be returned to its original state. Finally, in relation to the world, Paul can be a 'fellow-labourer with God', and through the divine power that comes from Christ, be a means of reconciling men to God.

It is against the background of this outline of the New Testament mystical experience, and with an appreciation of Fox's concern for the Bible, that his boundless optimism can best be understood. In contrast to the Familists, whose conception of salvation centred in deification<sup>1</sup> and whose hope of perfection lay along the road of strict self-denial<sup>2</sup>, Fox's experience remarkably re-echoes the spirit of the New Testament. It stands out, too, against the bondage and fear of those who, never sure if they were of the Elect or not, spent their lives looking within for evidences of a perfection which they hoped would recommend them to the mercy of God.

Of great value in understanding Fox's optimism is the record of his early years. Though there is a degree of uncertainty as to its authenticity<sup>3</sup>, yet it yields an insight into his life which is thoroughly in agreement with his later preaching.

There is one trait which stands out above all others in this

<sup>1</sup>Henry Nicholas uses the phrase, 'Godded with God', to describe salvation, Kerr, op. cit., p. 325.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>3</sup>Elwood's account is the only record of the earliest years. Some of the details are drawn from the Short Journal, but most of the facts do not appear elsewhere.



man's nature, and which separates him from a host of lesser souls. It is his passion for 'truth in the inward parts.' He could not tolerate within himself the chasm between what God had created him to be, and what he actually knew himself to be. He felt that if a man claimed to have the salvation of Christ, then he ought to be living in victory over sin; it would be denying the victory of Christ to prate about an imputed righteousness and go about sinning as before. It is in this light that we can understand one of the first recorded incidents of his adult life. His cousin and a friend, both of whom he calls 'professors', challenged him to a drinking bout. He was so grieved that any making a profession of religion should suggest such a thing, that he left them, deeply perplexed.<sup>1</sup> Afterward he was so upset that he could not sleep, and subsequently left home, deciding not to join himself to anyone, or any group. Certainly this was no Pharisaic reaction, for he did not think he was better than they. Later he confessed he was 'afraid' to join with other professors, because he was "sensible they did not possess what they professed."<sup>2</sup>

The general impression formed in one's mind of this early period, is that here is a young man with a passion to know the truth, who has found, to his sorrow, that there is no man who is possessed by it fully enough to be able to convey it to him. He knew that he

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<sup>1</sup>(1952), p.3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.4.

In his later preaching Fox would often say, "O, then, all ye that Profess, see that ye Possess, and Profess no more than you are." Doc., p.9.

was no different from them yet they were content to be as they were, and he "was in the deep, under all shut up", longing to conquer his sins without believing that he should ever overcome.<sup>1</sup>

"And I saw professors, priests, and people were whole and at ease in that condition which was my misery, and they loved that which I would have been rid of."<sup>2</sup>

Here, then, is the confession of the deep struggle against sin. But it is not of the punishment of sin that he is afraid. Rather, this is a deeper awareness that sin is an essential contradiction in one for whom Christ died. It implies something which later dominates his thought about the possibility of perfection, that man is not made for sin, but for life and God. His climactic vision of this early period, of going up through the Spirit into the "paradise of God", leads him to realise that he is meant to live in an even more sure state of innocence than Adam; it is "a state in Christ Jesus that should never fall."<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps Familist and other perfectionist ideas had originally suggested the possibility of a life of victory over sin. But Fox also read of it in the New Testament. Contrary to most others who might claim it in a superficial optimism, he knew that to accept a perfectionist theology could not produce perfection in the life. Perhaps one could say that during his seeking, as the writings of other men proved to be too weak and ineffectual to bring the promised

<sup>1</sup>(1952), p.12.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.27



victory, Fox was thrown back more and more on the Bible alone. It is thus that we can realise the crucial importance of the voice which came to him in his loneliness and despair, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, who can speak to thy condition.'<sup>1</sup> This is no moment of victory, but only the assurance that his longing for it will not be ignored, and that God will bring it, if it comes at all. After this experience, there is consequently no lessening of the struggle but actually an intensifying of it.

This period of his life is marked by a series of openings from Scripture which all bear on the theme of the power of Christ to deliver from the thrall of sin.<sup>2</sup> Twice he is helped by remembering that Jesus was severely tempted and overcame.<sup>3</sup> Using Paul in Galatians, he interprets the promise in Genesis 3 that the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent as meaning that Christ shall put down the ugly power of sin in his own heart.<sup>4</sup> He rehearses the conflict between flesh and spirit, remembering that the law of the spirit of life makes free from the law of sin and death.<sup>5</sup> It is opened to him that while he lives in the flesh, and does not give up his will to God, he is effectively veiled from God. If he gives himself up to the death of the Cross, then will

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.11.

<sup>2</sup>His visions correspond to the stage of his spiritual development. Thus the earlier ones had centred around his struggle over the apparent insincerity of others.

<sup>3</sup>(1952), pp.12,14. It is significant that again Fox does not minimise the importance of the historical Jesus.

<sup>4</sup>Gal.3:16.

(1952), pp.13-14.

<sup>5</sup>Rom.8:2.

(1952), p.17.

follow "the redemption of the body and of the whole creation."<sup>1</sup>  
 This is his profoundness, and his trueness to Paul, that Fox never  
 made God's plan for men purely individualistic.<sup>2</sup>

If these openings all led him to believe that there is a  
 victory over sin, he also recognised that this is no easy victory.

"If ye join to the Spirit and serve God in it, ye have  
 liberty and victory over the flesh and its works. Therefore  
 keep in the daily cross, the power of God, by which ye may  
 witness all that to be crucified which is contrary to the  
 will of God..."<sup>3</sup>

Victory must be won each day of a man's life as he walks in the  
 surrender and humility of the cross.

Despite the revelations vouchsafed to Fox, he is still dogged  
 by continual fears, temptations, and despair. He is still in  
 bondage to what he knows he is, though he knows what the life in  
 Christ ought to be. To Christ alone, does he give the glory for  
 the final victory which came to him. Unlike Paul's decisive  
 Damascus Road experience, however, Fox was given a series of visions,  
 all of which mark progress toward victory over himself, but none of  
 which brought him through with finality.<sup>4</sup>

During this time Fox was also called to preach. He is moved to  
 tears by those who have none to lead them to the truth.<sup>5</sup> He sees

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.15.

<sup>2</sup>Fox's unique application of this in his concept of unity in  
 the Light will be discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>3</sup>(1952), p.18.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp.21,27. In both visions, deliverance comes only  
 through Christ.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.21.



"the harvest white and the seed of God lying thick on the ground",<sup>1</sup> and realises by it that that of God in men is covered over by deceitfulness and sin and awaits deliverance in the preaching of the Light. What is significant is that he is aware that the same Spirit which was in the Apostles is now at work through him.

"And I was to direct people to the Spirit that gave forth the Scriptures, by which they might be led into all truth."<sup>2</sup>

His message is also clear at this point. He has come to preach repentance, to declare that Christ died for all men and is the propitiation for their sins, to turn them to the saving light which is within them, and to believe in it.<sup>3</sup>

One thing further needs to be mentioned before we tie together these aspects of Fox's spiritual beginnings. This is his deep humanity which compliments an otherwise all too superior nature, and which leaps out of these early pages of the Journal. During his deepest temptations, he would take money at Christmas time to those with nothing 'from house to house'<sup>4</sup>, or go around to a newly married couple and offer them assistance if they were poor.<sup>5</sup> Or again, his defence of the woman in the Leicester steeplehouse shows his deep respect for humankind, whether male or female<sup>6</sup>, and finally,

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.34.

<sup>3</sup>Penn also says of his preaching that the truths he taught were not "notional or speculative, but sensible and practical truths, tending to conversion and regeneration and the setting up of the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men; and the way of it was his work." Ibid., p.xliii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.7.

<sup>5</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.24.

we see him going to much trouble and inconvenience, to defend servants before a sitting of Justices.<sup>1</sup>

This brief look into the early formative years enables us to see developing some of the broad lines of his future ministry. First, Fox's struggles have not resembled the *via negativa* by which others in his day sought to purge themselves. He indeed fasted, but each significant advance toward victory came only as God came into his life.

Secondly, unlike Bunyan and other literalists, Fox's initial experiences tended to obscure the boundary between Justification and Sanctification. The moment of being saved was not as important as the moments when God spoke to reveal truth or acted to deliver from temptation. It was apparent that he did not fear the eternal consequences of sin so much as the essential contradiction of being a sinner. Thus it was deliverance from the power of sin that he sought, not release from the threat of hell; it was a real righteousness which he believed God had promised, not an imputed, and to him, imaginary, goodness. In a sense, then, he denied the finality of the Fall, but he never denied the seriousness of sin, though he did fail to understand the possibility of backsliding.<sup>2</sup>

On the one hand, this optimism marked him off from the superficial perfectionists, and on the other hand from the pessimists, who either denied the possibility of overcoming sin, or would have it

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.26.

<sup>2</sup>Nuttall, James Nayler..., p.20.



only at the price of a denial of one's humanity.

Fox has little interest in the future life, whether it be rewards and punishments, or the promise of the return of Christ. In this sense he is more in the school of our Lord and of the prophets, whose message always struck home at the here and now. God's judgment would surely come later, but in the present as well it was nevertheless imminent. If the Quakers shared the millenarian hopes of the radical sects, they differed from them in that they refused to hasten the day of Christ by political or military action.<sup>1</sup> The content of their expectation was also different in that while they shared some of the radical desires for social and political reform, they most earnestly looked for the conquest of the world by Quakerism.<sup>2</sup>

Last, Fox is convinced that God's plan for all men is outlined in the Apostolic life recorded in the New Testament. This does not mean that a slavish following of the pattern of New Testament Christianity will bring the Spirit, but that the life and power of the Spirit revealed in the Bible can be expected to come forth in the lives of men in the present.

As with every great preacher, Fox's message came to be characterised by one central theme which dominated all the rest, the 'Light of Christ within'. Jones has said that

<sup>1</sup>Schenk, op. cit., p.128.

<sup>2</sup>Many Fifth Monarchists and others became Quakers after the disillusionment of the Restoration. Nuttall, The Holy Spirit..., pp.110f.

"...every early Quaker publication resembles a palimpsest. Behind every word lies the idea of the inner light. It is the key to everything that is characteristic of the Quaker society."<sup>1</sup>

We turn, therefore, to a consideration of Fox's use of the term in its own setting.

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<sup>1</sup>Rufus M. Jones, Social Law in the Spiritual World; Studies in Human and Divine Inter-Relationship (London: Headley Brothers, 1914), p. 149.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE MESSAGE OF THE LIGHT

Though Fox's mode of expression seems obscure to the twentieth century reader, it is because he used a terminology which, in his own day, was not uncommon among many prophets of inward religion. When he spoke of the 'Inward Light', 'the Seed of the woman that bruises the head of the Serpent', or 'unity with the creation', many of his hearers would nod their heads approvingly. Unfortunately, because they had heard them used in another context, some people might have been misinterpreting the meaning that was in Fox's mind. Nevertheless, because Fox used them, he had an opening wedge which attracted many to his message. In contrast to these other preachers, Fox had somehow managed to inject into the meaning of these terms something of the Biblical setting from which they had been originally taken. Hence, if it is true that Fox shared some of the terminology of the radical preachers, and much of their drive for spiritual religion, it was on the Bible that he drew primarily for the substance of his message. It is the failure of Modern writers to see Fox from this point of view that has caused confusion among them as to the meaning of the Light.

Of course, there are several superficial factors which account for some of the difficulty in understanding Fox. First, Fox's writing is imaginative. He speaks pictorially, at times taking

symbols directly from Scripture. But if a Scripture symbol represents more than one idea, he might use it in several ways also, creating some ambiguity. For example, in Scripture, the term 'light' is sometimes used concretely for the person of Christ. In the Old Testament, Isaiah uses the term to refer to the Messiah and also to the people of God.<sup>1</sup> In the New, Christ is called the Light<sup>2</sup> both as pre-existent Son and as the man Jesus. But there are also passages where 'light' is merely symbolical, representing a contrast to darkness, or evil<sup>3</sup>, or where it is used as a symbolical representation of the character of the life of the one who believes in the Light. "Believe in the Light that ye may be children of Light."<sup>4</sup> Again, in Paul's descriptions of his Damascus road conversion, the term 'light' is used with the same imaginativeness. The 'light' shines about him, and he hears the voice which he recognises as that of the living Lord whom he has been persecuting in the Church.<sup>5</sup> Here, Christ comes in the 'light', but the 'light' is not completely described by His presence.

Thus if, in Scripture, the 'light' can represent both Christ and a symbol of goodness or God's presence, then it is not unusual to find the same duality in Fox. For example, in the phrase 'the Light of Christ', the word light is redundant if thought of in personal terms. Yet at other times, Fox specifically states

<sup>1</sup>Isa. 60:1-4; 49:6.

<sup>2</sup>John 1:7-9; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46.

<sup>4</sup>John 12:35-36.

<sup>3</sup>John 3:19-21.

<sup>5</sup>Acts 22:6-9; 26:13-15.



that the 'light' is Christ, or personal. This study will show that most of the time Fox uses 'light' in a personal way.

Secondly, the conflict between Fox's desire to preach a thoroughly inward Gospel, and the necessity of offering it to men by means of the very external method of preaching, automatically creates a confusion in the understanding of the activity of the 'light'. Von Hügel has suggested in relation to Paul himself, that because he stresses that the 'natural man' cannot receive spiritual truth except through an inner disposition of the Spirit, then it is inevitable that the Spirit, who is the object of the interior light, must also be the organ for its perception.<sup>1</sup> Thus the very problem created by the use of the term 'light' that it is that which speaks within, as well as that which is held up as the object of faith, is actually inherent in the Scripture itself. To put it another way, we might say that the 'light' can be, and indeed is, both Christ the inward Teacher as well as Jesus, the objective figure of history.

Thirdly, the problem of understanding is simply bound up with a multitude of different ways in which the term 'light' is used. Sometimes it refers unmistakably to Christ, at other times to the Spirit, and occasionally it has an impersonal sense. Thus one

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<sup>1</sup>Friedrich von Hügel, The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and her Friends (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1909), I, pp. 33-34.

recent study has suggested that the 'light' must be understood in terms of what it does<sup>1</sup>, and this important clue will be followed up presently.

We can now ask how Fox himself uses the term. Generally speaking, he either describes the activity of the Light, or else what men are to do in relation to the Light. Noting these two aspects in turn, we shall allow him to speak for himself.

There are at least eight different kinds of activity typical of the Light. These are the following:

(1) As King has so well pointed out<sup>2</sup>, the Light is that which reveals the sin in a man's nature.

"...for I turned them to the divine light of Christ and his spirit that let them see all their thoughts, words, and actions, that were evil."<sup>3</sup>

Or, as in Nayler's picturesque way of putting it, the Light "checks you for sin".<sup>4</sup> Puritans and Quakers were agreed that sin was rebellion against God, and a fundamental fact of man's character.<sup>5</sup>

(2) At the same time, the Light also leads men to perceive Christ as the Saviour. Very frequently, this affirmation is added

<sup>1</sup>Rachel H. King, George Fox and the Light Within (Philadelphia: Friends Book Store, 1940). Miss King concludes that the 'Light' is that which shows a man evil, and that in which is unity, leaving the definition in terms of these two activities.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 81f.

<sup>3</sup>(1952), p. 117.

<sup>4</sup>A Collection of Sundry Books, Epistles, and Papers Written by James Nayler, ed. George Whitehead (London: Printed and sold by the Assigns of J. Sowle, 1716), p. 37.

<sup>5</sup>Bohn, op. cit., p. 219.



to the first, so that the passage from the Journal quoted above continues,

"...with which light they may see their sins and with the same light they might see their saviour, Christ Jesus, to save them from their sins...to stand still in the light that showed their sin...and with the same light they may see Christ that died for them, who is their way to God and their redeemer and saviour."<sup>1</sup>

Fox's motive for placing these two activities of the Light side by side is to assure the availability of salvation to all. The typical Puritan knew that the warning of judgment for sin was certainly meant for him. Often, however, he could not realise that the promises of mercy were meant for him as well. But Fox could not believe in a kind of predestination that excluded anyone from the fruits of the Cross.

It is also significant that Fox here refers to the objective fact of the death of Christ, illustrating that he was not careless of the Jesus of the Gospel record.<sup>2</sup> It was the Quaker insistence that Christ must be experienced within, if He is to be really known, that led them to insist on the inner experience of His presence as opposed to the outer historical fact of His life. As Dr. Bohn

<sup>1</sup>(1952), Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>After years of controversy with the Puritans, Fox speaks with more balance, "...and they did confess Christ was come without them, and within them, and they were in him". (Doc., p.497.)

(1952), p.xxvii. Professor Nuttall makes the penetrating observation, "On the relation of the voice, or the light of Christ within the heart to the figure of the Jesus of Nazareth, Fox did not succeed in satisfying the theologians of his day...For Fox himself, however, there was the closest association, in whatever terms it was to be expressed. His principle of loving forbearance, to take a single but telling instance, was clearly influenced as much by the example of Jesus in the Gospels as by any inward voice."

has again observed, the confusion arose in the way the issue was formulated in the controversy with Puritans, which set against each other the historical and experiential aspects of the Atonement as mutually exclusive alternatives.<sup>1</sup> In insisting on that aspect of the truth which they felt safeguarded it from the radicalism of the other, both sides actually betrayed their own position.

We must also notice that Fox often yields to the pressure of declaring a certain finality to his formulation of the message of the Light, dogmatising what in its essence cannot be confined within intellectual bounds. He says,

"There is no justification out of the Light, out of Christ. Justification is in the Light; here is the doer of the will of God... (who) Now believing in the Light becomes a child of the Light..."<sup>2</sup>

"'Nay', said I, 'then how camest thou in if thou didst not by believing in the light, as Christ commands.'"<sup>3</sup>

What he is trying to say is that salvation does not rely on religious forms but that it must be something inward. But he was led away from this in the white heat of controversy to stress instead the validity of his terminology.

(3) The Divine Light is in all men, both the evil and the 'convinced'. In a conversation with John Owen, Fox declares,

"...and he said it was a natural light, and we showed him the contrary, and how it was divine and spiritual from Christ the spiritual and heavenly man, which was called the life in Christ, the Word and the light in us."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Bohn, op. cit., pp.193-94.

<sup>2</sup>(1952), p.175.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.335.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.274.



And in a dispute with a Baptist, Fox says,

"So I proved and affirmed that Balaam had the spirit of God and that wicked men had the spirit of God, else how could they quench it..."<sup>1</sup>

It is thus significant that the Light which is in all men is supernatural. It is not man's own spirit, by which the Quakers felt he can "see nothing"<sup>2</sup>, nor is it in any sense the remains of the first Adam<sup>3</sup>, but it comes from Christ. As we have already noted, this insistence led Fox to make statements that sounded blasphemous about the immediate relation of the Divine in man. But his real interest lay not in the divine spark in the 'apex of the soul' but in an inward Saviour and Teacher.

(4) This is the same Light by which the Scriptures were first given.

"Now where the same light is made manifest, as was in the prophets which saw Christ the light, and in the apostles the same light which gave forth the scripture..."<sup>4</sup>

With Fox the Puritans would not quarrel on this point, but it is the corollary which follows that seemed to them so dangerous.

(5) The same Light inspires men with equal validity in the present.

"...and I directed them to the grace of God that would teach them and bring them to salvation, and directed them from darkness to the light and to the spirit of God their free teacher."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.471.

<sup>2</sup>Doc., pp.626-27.

<sup>3</sup>William Dewsbury, The Faithful Testimony of that Antient Servant of the Lord, and Minister of the Everlasting Gospel (London: Printed and sold by Andrew Sowle, 1689), p.150.

<sup>4</sup>Doc., p.7.

<sup>5</sup>(1952), p.76.

Fox, however, differed radically from others who also claimed that they possessed this inward Teacher, but who actually wedded themselves to a form of speculative philosophy which prevented them from taking Scripture seriously. It will be interesting to note, when we study John Saltmarsh, that in the second phase of his spiritual pilgrimage he is most truly Biblical. The passion of his preaching then was that men might know Christ through an experience of His presence. But in the third stage, when his dominant interest has shifted to the Spirit, he is much less true to the spirit of Scripture, and is in danger at times of denying its historical validity altogether. This then is one aspect of Fox's uniqueness, that in contrast to many radicals, he maintained a balance between the historical and experiential. However, because it was with the latter that he was primarily concerned, the Puritans and others failed to appreciate this.

(6) The Light is also the basis of unity in the fellowship of Friends.

"...wait every one in the measure of light and of life, that ye may all come to witness the seal of the covenant, and be led and kept with that which will keep you spotless, and clean, and holy...so that in the light ye may all have unity, and in it be kept, and all that which is contrary to it, with it may be condemned."<sup>1</sup>

There are elements here which will be developed more fully presently. It is sufficient to mention that not only does the Light provide the basis for fellowship, but also that sphere in which personal purity is attained.

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<sup>1</sup>Ep. 63.



(7) The Light purifies and empowers, giving victory over temptation.

"...what the light doth make manifest and discover, temptations, confusions, distractions, distempers; do not look at the temptations...but at the light that discovers them...and with the same light you will feel over them, to receive power to stand against them."<sup>1</sup>

The First Publishers also speak passionately of the power of the Light:

"...fear not, lift up your heads and wait in the light with boldness, in it look up to Christ your King...and you shall behold him riding upon the wild asses coalt, your wilde nature subjecting it to himself, and skipping over all mountains, and leaping over all hills that hath separated you from the presence of God."<sup>2</sup>

At times, these early preachers broke out into such enthusiastic language that it echoed the mystical phraseology of a Bernard,

"But, (O Friends!) mind your Guide and follow him; arise, shine, your Light is come...come off from the world...be no longer in death and dead things...sing and rejoyce, the voice of a King is amongst you, and he will marry you to himself..."<sup>3</sup>

However, others seeking the promise of victory assured by these preachers, admitted that they had not yet attained it, as in this letter of Katherine Bull to William Dewsbury,

<sup>1</sup>(1952), p. 347. (This passage does not appear in C.J., but is found in Swarth Mss., vii, 123.)

<sup>2</sup>Dewsbury, op. cit., p.17.

<sup>3</sup>Nayler, op. cit., p.27.

For this same type of mystical terminology note also, Francis Howgill, The Dawnings of the Gospel-Day, and Its Light and Glory Discovered (Printed in 1676), pp.34-36.

"At this time I am oprest with in, but there is that stering that is willing to be what the Lord will in al things; but I see a Enemy ner but with the light he is judged. So I rest better knone to thee then to myselfe..."<sup>1</sup>

(8) Lastly, the Light is the agent of creation.

"...but the true light which John bore witness to was the life in Christ the Word, by which all things were made and created."<sup>2</sup>

In summarising that which the Light does, we must notice the context of the New Testament which has inspired most of the language. Here, it becomes obvious that Fox has ascribed, indiscriminately, to the Light the activities of both the Holy Spirit and of Christ. In Scripture, it is the work of the Spirit to convict of sin<sup>3</sup> as in (1), to reveal Christ to men as the Saviour<sup>4</sup>, as in (2), to inspire the writers of Scripture<sup>5</sup>, (4), and to give guidance in the present<sup>6</sup>, (5). Moreover, it is Christ's work to effect the salvation offered to men<sup>7</sup>, (2); it is the eternal Christ who is the light in men's hearts<sup>8</sup>, (3); it is the risen Christ as Head of the Body, which constitutes unity<sup>9</sup>, (6); it is 'in Christ that sin can be conquered<sup>10</sup>, (7); and it is the eternal Word who is the Creator<sup>11</sup>, (8).

Having seen this interpretation of the Light as the Divine activity of the God of the Bible, we are reminded that in relation

<sup>1</sup>Nuttall, Friends Letters, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>(1952), p. 303.

<sup>5</sup>2 Peter 1:21.

<sup>8</sup>John 1:9.

<sup>11</sup>John 1:3.

<sup>3</sup>John 16:8.

<sup>6</sup>John 14:26.

<sup>9</sup>Eph. 2:16-22.

<sup>4</sup>John 16:13-14.

<sup>7</sup>Rom. 3:24-25.

<sup>10</sup>Rom. 6:1-14.



to his thought as a whole, it is characteristic of Fox to think of the Godhead in terms of a Unity rather than a Trinity of distinct persons.<sup>1</sup> For this there is a certain precedent from Scripture itself, in such passages as in Romans 8:9-11, where 'Spirit' and 'Christ' are used interchangeably. This characteristic can also be seen in the type of mystical philosophy current in the seventeenth century which represented God as a Monism, and this may have also influenced Fox's suspicion of the Trinity.

In any event, the important point is the Biblical background of the use of Light. Contributing to this same point of view is the impression given by the verbs used to express man's response to the Light. On the positive side, with some overlapping, there are two main categories of usage. There is the exhortation to the unbeliever, where in relation to the Light, the preacher cries, 'believe in'<sup>2</sup>, 'come to'<sup>3</sup>, 'turn to'<sup>4</sup>, or 'obey'<sup>5</sup>. The Friend, however, is told to 'walk in'<sup>6</sup>, 'love'<sup>7</sup>, 'wait in'<sup>8</sup>, 'mind'<sup>9</sup>, 'heed'<sup>10</sup>, 'stand still'<sup>11</sup>, or 'dwell'<sup>12</sup> in the Light. On the negative side, men are warned lest they 'go from'<sup>13</sup>, 'deny'<sup>14</sup>, or 'hate'<sup>15</sup> the Light.

<sup>1</sup>Bohn, op. cit., pp.184-85.

<sup>2</sup>(1952), pp.174-75.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.92.

<sup>4</sup>Ep. 130.

<sup>5</sup>(1952), p.92.

<sup>6</sup>Ep. 105.

<sup>7</sup>Doc., pp.7,15.

<sup>8</sup>Ep. 105.

<sup>9</sup>Ep. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Howgill, op. cit., pp.70-71.

<sup>11</sup>Ep. 10.

<sup>12</sup>Doc., p.7.

<sup>13</sup>Ep. 130.

<sup>14</sup>Howgill, op. cit., p.72.

<sup>15</sup>Ep. 42.

The significance of these verbs is that they reflect the invitation to come to Christ as Saviour, or the warning lest one reject Him. They are used to exhort Christians to learn to abide in Christ, to trust Him as the Lord of life, or to seek His guidance. They express a warm fellowship with Christ which is anything but impersonal. They also fuse the activities which Scripture attributes separately to Christ and the Spirit.

Moreover, in addition to the activity of the Light, and man's response to it, there are names given to the Light which complement the picture we are seeking to draw, as, for example, the 'witness of God'<sup>1</sup>, the 'Bread of life'<sup>2</sup>, the 'royal seed'<sup>3</sup>, the 'springs of life opened to you'<sup>4</sup>, the 'Truth's voice'<sup>5</sup>, 'your habitation in the power of the Lord God'<sup>6</sup>, 'that of God in every one'<sup>7</sup>, 'that love which bears all things'<sup>8</sup>, or 'truth in the inward parts'<sup>9</sup>. These are for the most part symbols used in Scripture to describe in various ways God at work among men, or to show the experience Friends had of the power of God in their lives.

Having said this, there are certain obscure passages in Fox whose meaning can now easily be explained, as for, example,

"Christ it was who had enlightened me, that gave me his light to believe in."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ep. 208.

<sup>2</sup>Ep. 211.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Ep. 38.

<sup>5</sup>Ep. 222.

<sup>6</sup>Ep. 246.

<sup>7</sup>Ep. 182.

<sup>8</sup>Ep. 336.

<sup>9</sup>Ep. 186.

<sup>10</sup>(1952), p.12.



The passage makes sense when we see that the Christ who enlightens is actually the Holy Spirit, while the Light which is believed in, is the Jesus of the Gospel, this latter phrase having been lifted literally out of John 12:36. Thus, he has used 'Light', 'Spirit', and 'Christ' interchangeably.

The 'light' then is supernatural. It represents the Divine activity in its wholeness of purpose and power toward men. It is not abstract and impersonal and has no relation to the emanations from the god of the Hermeticists. Though the separate functions of Christ and Spirit are fused into one, nevertheless Fox is basically true to the spirit of Scripture. His God is concerned with creation, revelation, salvation, and the formation of the Body of Christ. In universalising the Light he simply makes available to all the divine offer of the new life in Christ. And behind all we can see the vitalising experience of the power of God as it has gripped George Fox. His message takes the form in which the power of God came to him both to reveal and to transform. He knew intuitively that it was meant not for him alone, but for all men.

Fox also uses another Biblical symbol, that of the 'seed', whose importance for his thought is second to that of the 'light'. There is a great deal of overlapping in the meaning of the two terms<sup>1</sup>, and yet a separate study of the latter will add considerably to the understanding of Fox's message.

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<sup>1</sup>Nuttall, The Holy Spirit..., p.158.

Professor Nuttall has already demonstrated that the meaning of the term comes quite naturally out of Scripture, and has no reference to any form of physical or spiritual growth, as so many have insisted.<sup>1</sup> Fox is simply tying together two familiar Scripture portions,

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."<sup>2</sup>

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."<sup>3</sup>

The Genesis passage was quoted frequently in the left wing, both in support of the metaphysical dualism of matter and spirit<sup>4</sup>, and the victory promised by God in the conflict with sin. Fox uses it in the latter sense, taking his cue from Galatians, where the 'seed' is referred to as Christ. Actually, his exegesis distorts Paul's meaning, for the latter meant that the promise, fulfilled in Christ, accrues to us as we are "one in Christ Jesus", or as we are "Christ's".<sup>5</sup> The 'seed' refers to Christ as having come from the loins of Abraham. But Fox sees the 'seed' in terms of the Genesis passage, as the Christ within, to whom the promise of victory over sin has been made. In contrast to his use of 'light', Fox always uses the 'seed' to mean Christ.

"If the power of God and the Seed spoke in man or woman, it was Christ."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nuttall, The Holy Spirit..., p.158.

<sup>2</sup>Gen.3:15.

<sup>3</sup>Gal.3:16.

<sup>4</sup>Franck, op. cit., p.2.

<sup>5</sup>Gal.3:28-29.

<sup>6</sup>(1952), p.96.



There are several ways in which the symbol of the 'seed' is used. First, it demonstrates the possibility of salvation for all men. In several of Fox's visions he pictured the 'seed' as having "long lain in death and bondage"<sup>1</sup>, or as being beneath the "earth in peoples' hearts".<sup>2</sup> This, in the imagery of Genesis 3:15, pictures the seed of the serpent as bruising the heel of the woman. This is sin ruling in the heart. There is the possibility of a misunderstanding, however, of which Fox seems to be aware. Thus, he makes the initiative for salvation come from without, in order that we do not look upon the seed of the woman as man's divine nature, temporarily encumbered with the seed of the serpent, or sin. It is the 'light', or the "power of the mighty God of life" which "is

"is raising up his living seed...which is turning up the earth, and cleaving it asunder, and removing it out of its place, and bringing into the faith of Abraham and to the God of Abraham."<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the 'seed' is never man's potential divinity; it is rather the assurance of the possibility of salvation pictorially set forth. The 'light' is 'that of God' in all men alike by which He brings into the experience of salvation. The only time that Fox uses 'seed' in connection with the offer of salvation is his reference to the verse in 1 Peter,

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God..."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 322.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Ep. 49.

<sup>4</sup>1 Peter 1:23.

(1952), p. 368.

Here, the 'seed' is simply the living Christ in the same sense as used in the 'light' passages. Hence he speaks of the "blood of the seed", which cleanses from sin<sup>1</sup>, or of that which "makes the seed of God to suffer within".<sup>2</sup> These likewise have no relation to the Genesis imagery but simply to the 'seed' as Christ.

By far the greatest proportion of 'seed' passages refer to the triumph over evil, in the context of which the passage in Genesis comes into its own. Personal purity is possible because we have been joined to the 'pure seed'.<sup>3</sup> It is thus inconceivable that sin can still have the same power in one who has come into such a close union with Christ.

"So feel the seed of God in every particular...and then ye come to be bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh... whereby ye may come to be inheritors in the Lord's strength, feeling it and professing it."<sup>4</sup>

Here is made manifest in full Fox's characteristic positiveness toward life. There is nothing within a man which need keep him enslaved if he will simply

"keep down to the Seed, and feel that atop all...that nothing may reign but the Seed itself."<sup>5</sup>

At this point Fox is simply echoing the dynamic conviction of Paul, that "sin shall not have dominion over you"<sup>6</sup>, and

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."<sup>7</sup>

But this is Fox's weakness as well as his strength. If he rightly

<sup>1</sup>G. M., p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>(1952), p. 277.

<sup>3</sup>Ep. 15.

<sup>4</sup>Ep. 99.

<sup>5</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup>Rom. 6:14.

<sup>7</sup>Rom. 6:22.



perceived that God has not left the Christian powerless against his lower self, he nevertheless expected as a normal experience the high spiritual standard which Paul set but never claimed to have attained.

The danger is, as Professor Nuttall has observed, that

"...for less heroic souls a rigorous (not to say rigorist) perfectionism easily becomes a shallow humanism, in which sin is overlooked, not overcome."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the 'seed' is the living Christ, in whom the promise of victory over sin becomes a reality as the Christian lets Christ reign in his life. There is one other phrase which graphically symbolises this possibility of perfection, and which recurs frequently in the Epistles. It is 'up to' or 'on top of'. Fox used it once in another connection, when he recommended that Friends take subpoenas and writs when they go to court, that they "be kept atop persecutors".<sup>2</sup> In the same sense, then, the First Publishers, in their struggles against the mountains of sin and opposition to Christ, should

"keep your feet upon top of mountains and sound deep to the witness of God in every man."<sup>3</sup>

Or again, "keep atop that which will cumber the mind"<sup>4</sup>, and "take heed of being worried with many thoughts, but live in that which goes over them all".<sup>5</sup>

Fox supplies his own corrective to the possibility of 'running out' into Renterism, in his sane and realistic emphasis on the need

<sup>1</sup>Nuttall, James Nayler..., p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Ep. 140.

<sup>3</sup>Ep. 195.

<sup>4</sup>Ep. 86.

<sup>5</sup>Ep. 95.

to grow as a Christian, and in the truthful appraisal that each has the 'light' only according to his own measure. Often, Fox warns against resting on the initial experience of coming to the 'light', for if Friends do not constantly seek the Lord they will grow cold, and then be able to speak only things "once opened from the Light".<sup>1</sup> In implying that there was the same need to participate actively in the life of the Spirit, he says, "Take heed that none of you walk by imitation of others only".<sup>2</sup> This, of course, was one of the greatest temptations in a fellowship that put so much emphasis on, 'But what canst thou say?'. Consequently, though Fox claimed that perfection ought to be the normal experience of the Christian, yet he could also say,

"and always feel a growing in the power of the Lord God, that is universal and everlasting, that ye may be all heirs..."<sup>3</sup>

Nayler, too, speaks strongly to this point in a tract written in 1653. It is advice which he somehow failed to follow himself,

"Therefore, dear Friends, look not out into the visible things... to lead out the vain mind into the liberty and boasting of high things, in words without power...Therefore sink down into the sufferings and death, that you may find the door wherest to enter; for there is a vale of tears to pass thorow...and take heed of that nature that would know more than God is willing to reveal...and wait upon God...in a cross to your own wills, for therein is the secrets of God revealed."<sup>4</sup>

In the reference to 'visible things' which men are to shun, and indeed from his general tone of negativism, Nayler here reveals his Familist tendency. But he also sounds an important warning, that Friends are

<sup>1</sup>Ep. 149.

<sup>2</sup>Ep. 47.

<sup>3</sup>Ep. 184.

<sup>4</sup>Nayler, op. cit., p.32.



not to pretend to a higher spiritual level than God has actually demonstrated in their lives, and implies that only by waiting on God through self discipline and effort, will His secrets continue to be revealed to them.

The other point is Fox's use of the term 'measure'. He uses it often in the Epistles in drawing a distinct line between Christians, who have a 'measure' of the Spirit and Christ, who had the Spirit without measure.<sup>1</sup> At this point, Fox seems definitely aware of the danger of identifying too closely the divine and human, and has carefully avoided it, though we have shown how in another context he was blind to the issue. But it is important here, for thereby he illustrates the necessity to grow in Christ. For example, Friends can "improve your measure" only by earnestly seeking God in the spirit.<sup>2</sup> The term is also used to warn against hypocrisy and over ambitious ideas as in the quotation from Nayler above,

"Let no Friends go beyond their own measure given them of God, nor rejoice in another man's line made ready to their hands."<sup>3</sup>

Dewsbury likewise often exhorts Friends,

"...all in your measure as you have received of the Lord, walk faithfully with Him."<sup>4</sup>

Hence by 'measure' Fox admits the limitations of our humanity, warns

<sup>1</sup>Ep. 117.

<sup>2</sup>Ep. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Ep. 118.

<sup>4</sup>Dewsbury, op. cit., pp.21,56.

against a too-easy perfectionism, and denies any doctrine of deification. It reminds us of Paul's word in Ephesians,

"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

The corporate life of the Friends is one of the most striking features of the movement, and highly significant of the type of mystical experience with which we are dealing. With Paul, the Body of Christ is that fellowship in which the life of Christ is manifested, both in communion with believers and in power over sin. Fox has reproduced remarkably the Pauline ideal, in the unity which is in the 'light'. Often in the early days in London after the great 'threshing meetings' when Nayler or Dewsbury had preached to great crowds of the unconverted, Friends would disperse and meet together in smaller groups for their 'silent meetings'. There they would wait on the Spirit for refreshing and inspiration.<sup>2</sup>

In a characteristic passage, Dewsbury says,

"...minde your union with the righteous seed in you all, that the cross be laid to the ground of all evil, and his seed over you reign, and in you, and thorow you minister, as you are called of God, to the building up one another in the life and power."<sup>3</sup>

Through their openness to His inspiration, thus, the Meeting became, in the life of the Friends, that sphere in which the living Christ ministered to His own. This, then, involves two factors. It is both the vertical relationship to Christ, and the horizontal extension

<sup>1</sup>Eph. 4:7.

<sup>2</sup>Braithwaite, op. cit., p.184.

<sup>3</sup>Dewsbury, op. cit., p.167.



of His Body in the physical togetherness of a group. Fox expressed it well this way, that everyone who turns to the Light and walks in it comes into a unity which both a "heavenly unity" and an "earthly fellowship".<sup>1</sup>

This expresses first the unique "with-ness" which Christians have with Christ.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the silent meeting is that men may be brought "into the Life"<sup>3</sup>, by which Fox meant that they might partake of the life of Christ. J. A. T. Robinson, in his recent study, The Body, speaks for Fox as well as Paul when he says that

"...to do or suffer anything 'with' Christ speaks of no external concomitance, like the P.T. instructor who says, 'Now do this with me', but of a common organic functioning, as the new tissues take on the rhythms and metabolism of the body into which they have been grafted."<sup>4</sup>

As a matter of fact, although achieved by few, the sense of this intimate sharing of Christ's life was sought after by all in the left wing. Most failed to attain it because they did not realise that it is most fully experienced only in the context of the 'earthly fellowship', which is His Body.

Here, then, is the uniqueness of Fox in his time. He somehow saw that one cannot experience by an individual effort of identification the victory over sin, implied in the Pauline language of sharing the death and resurrection of Christ. Rather, it must come as the effect of sharing in the fellowship, which is truly His Body; and it will in turn produce personal qualities of

<sup>1</sup>Doc., p. 853.

<sup>2</sup>Robinson, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>3</sup>Doc., p. 103.

<sup>4</sup>Robinson, loc. cit.

love and understanding which will effect a true unity in the fellowship. Fox, for example, spoke much of the 'daily Cross', by which he referred to the Christian's submission to the daily walk of humility. But he qualified it by adding, "this power is the cross, in which mystery of the cross is the fellowship".<sup>1</sup>

Again, he says,

"The Apostle saith, there is one Baptism, Ephes. 4. 5. and by one Spirit, we are all baptised into one Body...and have been all made to Drink into one Spirit."<sup>2</sup>

By baptism he is referring to the 'Baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire' wherein sin and corruption is burned up, and "God's Wheat and Seed is gathered into his Garner".<sup>3</sup> Fox is thus implying that the genuine experience of oneness in the Body comes through the personal transformation of the sharing of the death of Christ. And by practical admonitions which demonstrate that for him the Body was truly the sphere of Christ's spiritual baptism, he implements and makes practical this Pauline conception.

If, on the one hand, Fox says of the Meeting,

"And we are come to hear our own Prophet, which God hath raised up, Christ Jesus, to open to us, and him we do hear in all things in our Meetings; and we are come to our own Shepherd and Bishop to hear his Voice..."<sup>4</sup>

he can also say, on the other, that Friends need no paid priest to teach them the things of God, but should exhort and admonish one another to stimulate to faith and good works.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in actuality,

<sup>1</sup>(1952), p. 283.

<sup>2</sup>Doc., p. 1025.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 940.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 905.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 857.



it is Christ speaking through one Friend, that builds up another in the Life. In fact, Fox is so jealous of the corporate life as the real place where Christ deals with the needs of his own, that he warns Friends against those insidious things which would destroy the outward fellowship:

"And take heed of judging the measures of others..."<sup>1</sup>

"Therefore cover one another's nakedness; and let all things be done in love, and that will edify."<sup>2</sup>

"And the wrong eye, that looks out at one another's weaknesses, that must be kept under."<sup>3</sup>

"Wherefore beware of that spirit that cannot bear one another, or forgive one another; for that spirit which cannot will discover rather than cover."<sup>4</sup>

"And all take heed of vain words, and tattling idle words, but everywhere stop such."<sup>5</sup>

Thus, there is unity in the Light, the fellowship of Christ's body, because He is there. But there is always the need to submit to the reigning of the Seed in order that this spiritual unity may become in outward fact a fellowship for the edification of all.

Essential to this feeling for unity in the Body is also the profound belief in a 'unity with the creation'. Because of his fascination with the creation story in Genesis, Fox took as a sacred trust the charge to man to have dominion over all the creatures.<sup>6</sup> Also feeding this interest in man's relation to the created world was his contact with the Hermetical writings, and

<sup>1</sup>Ep. 48.

<sup>2</sup>Ep. 109.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Ep. 137.

<sup>5</sup>Ep. 131.

<sup>6</sup>Gen. 1:26-27.

other literature dealing with astrology, alchemy, and the herbalism so fashionable at this time.<sup>1</sup> Generally speaking, this was a manifestation of the new experimental spirit in science<sup>2</sup>, and Fox's direct interest seemed to be mostly in the new insights into medicine.<sup>3</sup> But he also adopted the term, 'unity with the creation', for a spiritual purpose, and filled it with his own meaning relative to life in the Light.

This 'unity with creation' had a variety of applications, but it is significant that it could only be experienced in the Light. For example, Fox felt deeply that medical doctors could not really understand the nature of men's bodies and how to cure their diseases until they came into the experience of the Light:

"And he showed me that the physicians were out of the wisdom of God by which the creatures were made..."

"And as the Lord opened these things unto me, I felt his power went forth over all, by which all might be reformed and brought into the true faith which is the gift of God...The physicians might be reformed...that they might receive a right knowledge of the creatures and understand the virtues of them..."<sup>4</sup>

In other words, the Fall was not final, and in the Light, man might return to the state of understanding of created life which Adam had, but which had been obscured by sin. Recall the words of one of his early visions,

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<sup>1</sup>Professor Nuttall has demonstrated the extensive seventeenth century interest in this concept of a divine harmony, and Fox's debt to it, in his article, "Unity with the Creation".

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.135.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.137.

<sup>4</sup>(1952), pp.28-29.



"Now I was caught up in spirit through the flaming sword into the paradise of God...All things were new, and all the creation gave another smell...The creation was opened to me, and it was showed me how all things had their names...And I was at a stand in my mind whether I should practise physic... seeing the nature and virtue of the creatures were so opened to me by the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

He was shown that man restored to Adam's state had an insight into the nature of things which the natural man did not have. The conclusion was that he then knew the Word that opens all things, and was "come to know the hidden unity in the Eternal Being".<sup>2</sup> This same strange conviction of knowing and thus possessing the creation is echoed in the Doctrinals, in this way,

"Therefore fear the Lord...and turn to the Light...and believe in Christ the Saviour of the world, the Offering for the Sin of the whole World, that you might have Life in him, and through him, and come to the Dominion (which Adam hath lost) over all the creatures..."<sup>3</sup>

Or again,

"Let all things be done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom all things were made and created, that ye may do that which ye do in the true dominion."<sup>4</sup>

The last phrase is striking, intimating again that only as one is in Christ, can he act in relation to created life as the true lord and disposer of what God has placed there for him. The familiar account of Fox putting John Story's pipe to his mouth, in order that the latter might not say he did not have unity with the creation<sup>5</sup>, adds weight to this conclusion. Thus to the Hermetic conception of a Divine harmony, and of the presence of God in all things<sup>6</sup>, Fox

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>Doc., p. 174.

<sup>4</sup>Ep. 171.

<sup>5</sup>(1952), p. 110.

<sup>6</sup>Muttall, op. cit., p. 135.

added his own typically positive conviction that being in the Light gave to men the understanding of, and the right to use anything which God had placed in the created order. Superstition and fear, arising from the mysteries of nature, could get little hold on a person who truly believed this.

Fox also made a number of applications of this principle to the social life of Friends. Because God had given men dominion over the creatures, Fox considered it a sacred trust, and thus a sin to squander or to waste what God had committed to them.<sup>1</sup> Immoderate use of food and drink, or even bad business practices, could not be condoned since neither of these was "serviceable to the creation".<sup>2</sup> By the same token, any who lose home or possessions for the Truth's sake, and are thus deprived of the use of the creation, are to be supplied in their need, in order that they are "kept in the service of the creation to God's glory".<sup>3</sup>

It is also interesting to realise that much of the early Quaker concern for social justice arose from this same principle of 'unity with creation'.<sup>4</sup> Schenk, quoting Burrough drives home the conviction that if Christians really belonged to the Body of Christ, they would not be content to see some starving with hunger, while others had too much.<sup>5</sup> This implies again that unity in the Light

<sup>1</sup>Gen.1:26-27.

<sup>2</sup>Ep. 200.

<sup>3</sup>Ep. 157.

<sup>4</sup>Note the excellent study by Schenk, op. cit., pp.114f.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.123.



has a profound relationship with the physical life as well as the spiritual. Hubberthorne also is quoted as saying that inequality and oppression really symbolised that, "in the widest sense of the word, 'the Creation is out of order'".<sup>1</sup>

Hence in the principle, 'unity with the creation', Fox extended into the physical realm what the Friends also experienced in their corporate life, and thereby he enriched immeasurably the hint of 'interrelatedness' which comes from Paul.<sup>2</sup> They lived in their Father's world, which had been created for their use, and given to them to manage. And if they did not seemingly respond to beauty in nature, or the colour and richness of the worship in the Established Church, they did sense and appreciate the order and beauty of the interrelation of all of life as God had made it, giving them one of the deepest legacies which comes to us from the New Testament.

If the creation is good, and profitable for men's use, Fox, by contrast, feels a deep antagonism toward the world, which he thinks of as that life among men which is set in opposition to God. Thus he shares Paul's concern that men be not conformed to this world<sup>3</sup>, when he says,

"...mind the Oneness, and that which keeps you in the oneness and unity, it is that which keeps you out of the world."<sup>4</sup>

There are two practical applications which arise out of this

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Paul, however, believed that all of creation shared in the Fall (Rom. 8:20-21). Fox at this point definitely follows the Hermetic teaching.

<sup>3</sup>Rom. 12:2.

<sup>4</sup>Ep. 46.

point of view. The first is that one of the motives for simplicity of speech is that it "slays the world's honour".<sup>1</sup> This also reveals Fox's consciousness of his prophetic mission, which is to continue to expose the world's sin that there might be a turning to God. The second, is that Friends are to keep to simplicity in dress and mode of life, that they might give evidence that they delight not in the creature more than the Creator.<sup>2</sup>

In the relation of Friends to others, whether in the world, or their own Meeting, they provided a strong point of contact and standard of honour in the conception of 'answering'. If Friends have loved ones whom they are seeking to win to the Light of Christ, they must above all live before them in purity and love, that they

"...may answer to the light in them...the light which they set contrary to may make them confess to your good conversation."<sup>3</sup>

The appeal was frequently made to endure suffering without malice or hatred of the persecutor, for by this means an inward witness could be made, 'answering that of God' in them.<sup>4</sup> Thus 'answering' really confesses that though God's dealing with each person is immediate, yet in a profound sense, He uses human personality to awaken the spiritual consciousness in others. In one sense it is at this point that the Puritan criticism of Fox's insistence on immediacy is valid.<sup>5</sup> Fox's entire career is ample evidence that God's power is mediated through human personality; and yet, perhaps

<sup>1</sup>Ep. 191.

<sup>2</sup>Ep. 102.

<sup>3</sup>Ep. 53.

<sup>4</sup>Ep. 93.

<sup>5</sup>Bohn, op. cit., p.43.



it is his own experience in youth, that there was no one who could speak to his condition save Jesus Christ alone, that led him to insist that it is God's initiative and inspiration alone, that count.

'Answering' is also the product of Fox's intense missionary zeal. Here is a man who shares Paul's deep travail of soul that others might come to the experience of Christ within. Professor Brinton has amply demonstrated Fox's consistent use of this term in his missionary letters, always coming to the point that missionaries should seek to win men as much by their lives as by their speech.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly all writers on Quakerism have been impressed by the prophetic character of Fox's life. It was striking and unusual in his own time, as it would be in any age, and all the more so because, while the other enthusiastic groups of the Interregnum dispersed with the Restoration, the Quakers flourished and took root. No amount of persecution or discrimination could destroy the spiritual life of the community of the Friends.

It is this prophetic element in Quakerism which has been in the background of the discussion of Fox's mystical experience, and which adds more weight to the evidence of his truly Biblical character. The prophetic and mystical are part of a whole with him, just as it was with Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or Paul. Consequently, it is appropriate to conclude this study of Fox with a cameo of the apostolic nature of the early days of the Quaker movement.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Brinton, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

<sup>2</sup>Since this aspect of Quakerism has been treated so frequently, we shall confine ourselves to a simple outline of the salient features, noting especially the similarity to Biblical religion.

As we have already seen, Fox was conscious from the first that he was possessed by the same power which the apostles and prophets had experienced before him. For example, he asked a Baptist preacher if he could say he was sent of God to baptise people as John was, and then made the statement,

"If you have not the power of God as the apostles had, then you act by the power of the Devil."<sup>1</sup>

Often he would greatly influence people by demonstrating that their ministers could not "confess to the same power and spirit that the apostles were in".<sup>2</sup>

His own message rang with the certainty of 'Thus saith the Lord', and produced that kind of heroic faith which recalled the quiet courage and strength of the early Christians. He confessed again and again that he was 'moved' to speak a certain message<sup>3</sup>, or was 'moved' to speak in a certain place, or to perform some special mission for the Lord.<sup>4</sup> He walked consciously in the will of God and in a sensitiveness to His voice, so that if the Lord moved him to pray, "the Lord's power was so great that the house seemed to be shaken".<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, if someone asked him to pray and he did not feel led, he would refuse, for he "...could not pray in man's will".<sup>6</sup> It recalls Paul's experience of guidance in his vision of the man in Macedonia. Common to both is the dependence upon the power and leading of God to give His message, and to

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<sup>1</sup>(1952), pp. 231-32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 419.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 341, 46.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 23.



accompany it with the power of His Spirit.

Fox conducted himself with that fearlessness of what men could do to him, that became the prophet of God. One incident stands out in the year 1652, when, at Ulverston, he was stoned and beaten unmercifully. When he finally came to himself after lying unconscious on the watery common, he confesses,

"I lay still, and the power of the Lord sprang through me, and the eternal refreshings refreshed me, that I stood up again in the eternal power of God and stretched out my arms against them all, and said again with a loud voice, 'Strike again, here is my arms and my head and my cheeks.'"<sup>1</sup>

At other times when the rude mob made as though they would take Fox and treat him as at Ulverston, he trusted the power of God to restrain them,

"And so the Lord's power came over them all and they had no power to touch me."<sup>2</sup>

Fox steadily resisted the temptation to seek, in any evidence of an outward nature, authentication for his calling or for his claim of immediate revelation. He simply believed that God's Spirit was at work through him. He might have appealed to the results of his preaching as proof of his calling, but he was content rather to say, 'and the Lord's power came over all'. This is the familiar phrase which characterises his whole life.

As important a proof of his prophetic ministry as any other is Fox's prayer life. Dr. Heiler has pointed out that this is one of the fundamental points of contrast with speculative mystics. All of the great prophets of Biblical religion have been great pray-ers,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.127,218.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.328.

from Jeremiah to Jesus to Paul.<sup>1</sup> And their prayers always evidenced a simple, personal relationship and communion with God, and at the same time, power to move the hand of God in the world. If Luther was the most powerful among eminent men who had a genius for prayer, since Paul<sup>2</sup>, then Fox deserves to be placed alongside him; for the Journal is marked by many instances of his prevailing power with God for the needs of men. Penn said of him that "...above all, he excelled in Prayer".<sup>3</sup>

Nearly all of the cures which were executed by Fox were done through prayer. In nearly every case he confesses that he has felt moved of God in the presence of the sick person, either to say the words, or pray the prayer that has healed.<sup>4</sup> He has prayed in public with such force that the house seemed shaken<sup>5</sup>, or that he could testify that the Lord's power came over them all.<sup>6</sup> His exhortations to Friends to pray, echo the same confidence in God's power as he himself has experienced,

"Pray, that peace may be multiplied, and the ministration of life, to the raising of the dead, that the 'seed of the woman may bruise the serpent's head', discover all deceit, and rend all veils and coverings, that the pure may come to life..."<sup>7</sup>

"...let all your cries and prayers be to the Lord in singleness of heart, in his spirit and power, and in belief in God through Christ, to receive what ye pray for. For the Lord's ears are open to the cries of his poor and afflicted ones."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Heiler, op. cit., pp.121f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.130.

<sup>3</sup>(1952), p.xliv.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp.49,147,171-72,228,641-42.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.22.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.271.

<sup>7</sup>Ep. 4.

<sup>8</sup>Ep. 148.



Other illustrations abound of the power of the Lord to quiet those that are distraught and to bring peace where there had been discord. One woman, in a very disturbed state, who had made havoc of Friend's meetings and brought discredit on them by associating with them, was not cast out but tenderly dealt with. One day, as they met about her, Fox reports that "the Light rose in Friends and said it was done".<sup>1</sup> And she rose up, her face composed, with a look of peace, and not knowing where she was. She had been made well.

Fox's power in prayer<sup>2</sup>, gift of healing, demonstration of physical endurance beyond the usual, are all part of the same garment. These are the apostolic gifts of the ministry. The picture is only complete, however, when we see him as the preacher. He was effective both in dealing with individuals, and swaying the crowd. Early in his ministry, at Mansfield, he spoke to one of the most wicked men in the district, and the man came afterward and told Fox, "he was so smitten when I spoke to him, that he had scarce any strength left in him".<sup>3</sup> The story of the 'convincement' of Sheriff Reckless and his family is reminiscent of Paul's experience with the Philippian jailor.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(1952), pp.42-43.

<sup>2</sup>Fox's confident, simple praying, contrasts markedly with Saltmarsh and Everard, both of whom felt that praying was part of a lower level of spiritual life. This demonstrates again Fox's prophetic and Biblical emphasis over against the negativism of others in the left wing.

<sup>3</sup>(1952), pp.26-27.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp.40-41.

His great public meetings were often called 'threshing meetings'.<sup>1</sup>  
 His own description gives the clearest impression of their spiritual dynamic:

"...and the Lord's power came over them all and reached the witness of God in them and they were all bound by the power of God. And a glorious powerful meeting we had and his power went over all; and the minds of people were turned by the spirit of God in them to God, and to Christ and God their Teacher, and the powerful word of life was largely declared that day so that in the life and power of God we brake up our meeting."<sup>2</sup>

Fox and the First Publishers carried forward their likeness to the Biblical prophets even to the pantomiming of the message of Judgment. It seems abhorrent to the twentieth century, and yet is not out of character in an age so strongly permeated by symbolism.<sup>3</sup> Both men and women participated in these actions, sometimes going naked, at others, putting on sackcloth and ashes, and crying the warning to repent lest judgment fall on them all. One might say that his cures were also a part of the signs accompanying Fox's ministry, and coupled with these vivid portrayals of coming judgment, must have made a strong appeal to the imaginations and consciences of many.

A final word regarding the Meeting itself. Here, as in the public ministry, the power of the Spirit manifested itself in an apostolic joy and fellowship.

<sup>1</sup>Ep. 114.

Braithwaite, op. cit., p.134.

<sup>2</sup>(1952), p.179.

<sup>3</sup>Schenk, op. cit., pp.123-24.



"And while waiting upon the Lord in silence, as often we did for many hours together...we received often the pouring down of the Spirit upon us...and our hearts were made glad, and our tongues loosed and our mouths opened...but this is the sum; life and immortality was brought to light, power from on high and wisdom was made manifest, and the joyful Sun of Righteousness did arise and shine forth unto us and in us..."<sup>1</sup>

Here was inspiration for the flagging, strength for the weak, a mutual fellowship in Christ which gave meaning to life and a sense of belonging. But the greatest witness to the world must have been the quiet submission to persecution, undertaken in the sure conviction that God would punish the offenders. Very often the Quakers were able to use this as a weapon in arguing their own case before the world. All others, Baptists, Presbyterians, Independents would fight and persecute one another, and especially the Quakers; but how incongruous to their claim to have the only true interpretation of the Gospel. Fox reminds them that they cannot pray, 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors', because they do not demonstrate the true spirit of Christ.

"Now they know not what spirit they are of, that will persecute and destroy men's lives, and not save them, we cannot trust our bodies, souls, nor spirits into their hands, that know not what spirit they are of themselves."<sup>2</sup>

What a potent argument to turn men to the truth as it is in Christ. It was true that the other religions sought support from authority, to establish themselves at the expense of others. But the Quakers stood immovable, appealing only to that of God in men, and His promises which were sure to the Seed.

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<sup>1</sup>G. M., "To the Reader".

<sup>2</sup>Ep. 171.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### JOHN EVERARD: PURITAN PESSIMIST

Some mystery and confusion have shrouded the figure of John Everard in recent years, though his name occurs very frequently in seventeenth century studies. One historian has spoken of him as an irresponsible radical.<sup>1</sup> Others, in one way or another, have failed to relate his thought to the real issues of his time, labelling him as a recrudescence of the German mysticism<sup>2</sup>, a mystic exclusively of the 'lichtmetaphysik' tradition<sup>3</sup>, or a pantheistic mystic.<sup>4</sup>

Such a variety of opinion about this controversial figure is justifiable, however, for there are very few surviving historical records of those with whom he associated. We thus cannot trace the development of his thought with the completeness that is possible with John Saltmarsh. Most of what we do know comes from Rapha Harford's introductory remarks to his volume of sermons.<sup>5</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution 1638-1647, ed. William Haller (3 vols.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), I, p.42.

<sup>2</sup>Rufus Jones, Spiritual Reformers..., pp.239-252.

<sup>3</sup>King, George Fox..., pp.32-34, 86-87.

<sup>4</sup>Sippell, op. cit., p.40.

<sup>5</sup>G. T. O., "Epistle Dedicatory" and "To the Reader".



Calendars of State Papers record his name quite frequently, first as a troublesome Puritan preacher at St. Martins-in-the-Field, London, and later as one who held dangerous Familist and Antinomian doctrines.<sup>1</sup> William Prynne confirms that Everard was chaplain to Lord Holland during his later years as a radical preacher.<sup>2</sup> But beyond these sources, history reveals little factual information about him. Even Thomas Edward's Gangraena omits mention of him, though the name of Giles Randall, with whom Everard has been associated by many, appears several times.<sup>3</sup>

A glimpse of the wide interest in his writings however is revealed in the names of those who recommended his volume of sermons. On the one hand, there was John Webster who was a noted radical preacher at All-Hallows in London at the time Everard's volume first appeared in print.<sup>4</sup> His sermons reflect Everard's pessimism and allegorical interpretation of Scripture<sup>5</sup>, and having studied and practiced medicine during the Civil War, he was also interested in the study of Astrology and the occult sciences.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"Everard, John," Dictionary of National Biography, VI, p.948.

<sup>2</sup>William Prynne, Hidden Works of Darkness (London: Printed by Thomas Brudenell, 1645), p.207.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Edwards, Gangraena (London: Printed for Ralph Smith, 1646), pp.80,97,173.

<sup>4</sup>"Webster, John," Dictionary of National Biography, XX, p.1036.

<sup>5</sup>Webster wrote a glowing testimony to Dr. Everard at the close of his volume of sermons, The Judgment Set and the Bookes Opened (London: Printed for R. Harford, 1654), pp.311-312.

<sup>6</sup>John Webster, Academiarum Examen (London: Printed for Giles Calvert, 1654), p.51.

In fact, it might be that his interest in the Hermetical literature for its scientific side led him to appreciate Everard who, in his preaching, had borrowed heavily from it.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, two well-known moderate Puritan Independents, prominent during Cromwell's time, also wrote approvingly of the Gospel Treasury. The first is Thomas Brooks, whom Baxter mentions with respect. He preached a warm, personal faith, and was certainly on the Puritan side in the controversy about the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, there was Joseph Caryl, a noted Bible expositor, who was Chaplain to the Council of State, and ministered to a congregation which, at his death, merged with a group led by John Owen.<sup>3</sup>

William Penn, representing yet another theological position, mentioned Everard three times in his printed works, speaking of him as "that renowned Independent", "that great spiritual Separatist", and "that notable and very religious man".<sup>4</sup>

It is significant that those who were willing to link their names with Everard's were in such widely separated camps, especially

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<sup>1</sup>As well as publishing The Divine Pymander, already referred to, Dr. Everard had also written extensive marginal notes for another treatise dealing with the occult sciences, Elias Ashmole, The Way to Bliss in Three Books (London: Printed by John Grismond, 1658).

<sup>2</sup>"Brooks, Thomas," Dictionary of National Biography, II, p.1347.

<sup>3</sup>"Caryl, Joseph," Dictionary of National Biography, III, p.1162.

<sup>4</sup>Jones, Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), p.77.



in that day when preachers were so quick to cry heresy of one another, and when lines were drawn so sharply over minor issues. It teaches us that at the very least, Everard was not out of touch with his time, and that he had something to say relevant to the seeking for a sure, inner authority in religion.

Everard did not possess the largeness of mind of men like John Hales, Peter Sterry, or the Cambridge Platonists. Though not behind these men in education, or intellectual acumen<sup>1</sup>, he did not possess their faculty of detachment toward the issues of the Puritan revolution. He threw himself into everything he did with great fervour and enthusiasm, and had been in prison often enough for his convictions, to feel that he shared the cause of religious freedom along with the most radical sectary. Yet he was no rabble rouser. Again and again, by preaching against pride, selfishness, and hypocrisy, he exposed the partisanship and self-seeking of the religious leaders in power, but he had no suggestion for rule by the saints.

Thus, it is not difficult to see why his message could never have had a popular appeal. In contrast to Fox, for example, whose Gospel made a direct application to the social and economic upheaval in progress, Everard's preaching was individualistic and aimed at making men content with their condition in the world. And despite his deprecation of reason, Everard tended to be too intellectualistic, and thus placed himself out of reach of those calculated to respond

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<sup>1</sup>His biographer says that Everard had a reputation as an eminent philosopher, few equalling him. (G.T.O., "To the Reader").

most readily to his message. But this is not to say that he was unimportant. It might be safe to conjecture that he was really a preacher's preacher, for his ideas can be traced to many others who, as we shall see presently, had the faculty of popularising his message more than he did. Furthermore, his translations of continental mystical treatises alone gives him an indirect influence, perhaps, out of proportion to his personal effect.

Fortunately, there is enough information available to enable us to piece together a bit of the picture of Everard's spiritual development. It was in 1619, when he was already forty-four years old, that he received his D.D. from Clare College, Cambridge. At the same time he was a well-known Puritan preacher in London, and had been imprisoned six or seven times for preaching against Charles' proposed marriage to the Infanta of Spain. The threat of this union had rankled the Puritans and especially those whose position might become all the more insecure if the Establishment drew closer to Roman Catholicism.

A sermon also comes down to us from this period, which adds another facet to the picture of Everard as a typical Puritan preacher. He delivered it in Holborne, in 1618, to the company of the Military Yarde at St. Andrews Church.<sup>1</sup> The main theme of the sermon is the holy war, in which he sees the Army as the Lord's warriors and victory as assured in the Providence of God. In typically Puritan

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<sup>1</sup>John Everard, The Arriereban: A Sermon Preached to the Company of the Military Yarde, at St. Andrewes Church in Holborne on St. James his Day Last (London: Printed by E.G., 1618).



fashion, he appeals to the Old Testament to prove that God will bless any war fought to preserve peace and justice.<sup>1</sup> He quotes from Augustine, that war is no offence unless promoted for gain<sup>2</sup>, and in support of this argument for a just and holy war, he goes on to appeal to an impressive array of Greek and Roman Fathers.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout his sermon, Everard continues to bring his hearers back to the need for personal righteousness, and to the conviction that to be a soldier is a high calling of God.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, in the end victory belongs to God alone.

"It was the Spartane resolution...to do their best and then to aske help from fortune; we have a more sure word..."<sup>5</sup>

One cannot help but feel that Everard is pleading for the very thing which was later embodied to a much fuller extent in Cromwell's Army.

This brilliant address, which must have made a powerful impression on the listeners, demonstrates how completely Everard was absorbed in the typically Puritan concerns, and attitude toward Scripture then prevalent. He even gives us a sample of the typical method of allegorisation when, to justify a point in his argument, he says he will "take off the cover of the Letter", of a passage in Isaiah.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.12-13.

Because to the Puritans, the letter of Scripture was of final authority, all laws, of both Testaments, were of permanent and universal force, and it was thus natural to justify war by Old Testament example. Dowden, op. cit., pp.79, 81.

<sup>2</sup>Everard, op. cit., p.16.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp.24, 52.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp.28,40,56-60.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.84.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.9.

He claims that the passage about beating swords into ploughshares must really be interpreted as the promise of unity and spiritual concord between those of the household of faith, and has nothing to say about prohibiting the use of weapons in a lawful war. His exegesis is unimportant except insofar as it demonstrates a contrast to his later attitude toward the Bible. At this point, he might do violence to a certain passage and yet he takes the Bible seriously, and indeed much of the time, literally. However, as a mystical writer, he will come to regard the Bible as one grand allegory to which only his philosophical system has the key. It is no wonder, then, that his biographer says of him,

"He was often known to say that he was now ashamed of his former knowledge, expressions, and preachings, ever since he commenced Dr. in Divinity."<sup>1</sup>

Nothing is known of the period of transition, when in his thinking, Everard was moving toward the left. The only clue is that by 1628, he had translated the *Theologia Germanica* and circulated it in manuscript form.<sup>2</sup> It is obvious from his later sermons that this little book profoundly affected his thought, and so we can suppose that this marks the beginning of his change in outlook.

In order to get Everard's thinking into proper perspective, it will be necessary to look first at the selection of mystical writers whose works he translated, and observe those emphases which attracted him most. From *Hermes Trismegistus* Everard is most interested in

<sup>1</sup>G. T. O., "Epistle Dedicatory".

<sup>2</sup>Germane Divinity: A Golden Book, tr. Dr. Everard, 1628. (Ms. Univ. Libr. Cambridge, Dd. xii, 68.)



the foundation doctrine that God is the Being and Existence of all things.

"For what is God, and the Father, and the Good, but the being of all things that yet are not, and the existence itself, of those things that are."<sup>1</sup>

The Hermetical writings also teach that the body is evil<sup>2</sup>, but that the soul may be deified if it "contemplates the beauty of the Good"<sup>3</sup>, which is within. This profoundly immanent philosophy is complemented by Everard's interest in the Pseudo-Dionysius, which, in stark contrast, is "a sense of the Divine transcendence run riot".<sup>4</sup> God is so infinitely beyond all that man can conceive, that He is above all negations.<sup>5</sup> In Eckhart and Tauler he is attracted by those passages which are more devotional than philosophical, and which urge men to seek God within, and to live a holy life, denying self for God.<sup>6</sup> In Hans Denck, he seems most concerned with the teaching that the Word of God is not tied to the Letter of Scripture<sup>7</sup>, and in Sebastian Franck, that man's greatest sin is his humanity.<sup>8</sup> We have described these briefly at this point because taken together we can see that they do not so much represent a mystical theology of the union of the soul with God, but rather stand as the signposts

<sup>1</sup>The Divine Pymander, p.41.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.7,10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.45.

<sup>4</sup>E. Herman, The Meaning and Value of Mysticism (London: James Clarke & Co., 1915), p.298.

<sup>5</sup>G.T.O., pp.778-79.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp.798-806.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp.789-797.

<sup>8</sup>G.T.O., Part One, pp.477f. (1659 ed.)

to religious immediacy. Everard's interest in the more philosophical of these writings is primarily for what they speak of the presence of God within. He makes his own application of these ideas to the great questions of the seventeenth century, and it is in these applications that he shows his devotional side, and his interest in sin and salvation.

We will now deal with his doctrine of God in a more formal way, seeking to show both how he drew on these sources, and how he departed from them. Everard's God is both Dionysian and the God of the Hermeticist. From the former he understands that God is inexpressible, unknowable, the One whose Name is 'I Am'. If one took all of the attributes of man, and raised them to infiniteness, or perfection, he would only be describing what God is not.<sup>1</sup>

From the latter he sees God as in everything, everywhere, enveloping the Universe in Himself.<sup>2</sup> His is not the Hermetical description of creation, however, that God created, not by a special act of will, but inevitably, through His essential nature which is dynamic radiation.<sup>3</sup> But he does employ the resultant feature of that idea, that all creatures, once set in motion, do not exist of themselves alone, but only as they receive energy from the primal source. Consciousness and Being depend on God alone.<sup>4</sup> This

<sup>1</sup>G.T.O., p. 387.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 390.

<sup>3</sup>H. F. Thoms, "The Hermetic Strain in Seventeenth Century English Mysticism: The Vaughans, Browne, Everard, Traherne" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1941), p. 51.

<sup>4</sup>G.T.O., p. 639.



provides the basic motivation in Everard's spiritual life, and the most direct link with the seventeenth century longing for immediacy. There is a reason why he can draw on two philosophical systems which are basically poles apart, God in the first being Transcendent and wholly other, and God in the second, Immanent in man and the world. It is that both share an ascetic way to the knowledge of God. It is fundamental to an understanding of Everard that he is using and not adopting these intellectual systems.

In his doctrine of the Trinity, Everard follows the theology of the German mystics<sup>1</sup>, principally Eckhart, whose God is also the God of Dionysius. Both make a sharp distinction between God in His Essence, and the Godhead. As God is, with respect to Himself, He is unspeakable and unknowable. With respect to His creation, God works in all through the Son, Who is the Essence and Being of all creatures.<sup>2</sup> Before creation, the Son was the Word Unspoken in the bosom of the Father, the Word of John 1:1.<sup>3</sup> But when once spoken in creation, the Word became 'the first born of every creature',

<sup>1</sup>One of Everard's translations in the G.T.O., pp.803f., "A Short Dialogue between a Learned Divine and a Beggar", is taken from Eckhart, though he mistakenly ascribes it to Tauler. Franz Pfeiffer, Meister Eckhart, tr. C. de B. Evans (London: John M. Watkins, 1924), pp.437-38.

<sup>2</sup>G.T.O., P.82.

Eckhart, op. cit., "Everything in the Godhead is one, and of that there is nothing to be said. God works, the Godhead does not work, there is nothing to do...God and Godhead are as different as active and inactive." (p.143).

<sup>3</sup>G.T.O., loc. cit.

God in men, and the means by which God makes Himself known to men.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Son, as the eternally spoken Word, is the Mediator between God and man. But this creates a problem for Everard when he wants to speak to the great themes of sin and salvation, for his theology has stressed the Incarnation above the Atonement, and Deification above Salvation.

It is also significant that the Holy Spirit does not figure prominently in the Divine economy, as is true also of Dionysius.<sup>2</sup> The Spirit is at times identified with Christ, and is often the revealer of the Word; but the main emphasis is always on the Son. Within the Trinity, the Spirit is the motion or reciprocation between Father and Son, and the expression of love between the two<sup>3</sup>, so that the Trinity is described as "the Loving, the Loved, and the Love".<sup>4</sup> But the point of interest to us is this lack of concern for the Spirit in a time when, through a fresh understanding of the Holy Spirit, men's minds were probing deeply for a solution of the relation of God to the world. But Everard is not out of touch with his time. He is travelling the same road, and pursuing the same spiritual authority as his contemporaries, but doing it via the mystical writings of the ancients.

Though the God of Everard can only be known as men unlearn all

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.83.

Eckhart says that Adam was not the first man God made, but Christ was the first man. This is the Word by which God's speaking is His begetting." (Op. cit., pp.195-96).

<sup>2</sup>Thoma, op. cit., p.63.

<sup>3</sup>G.T.O., p.84.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.85.



they have been taught, He is not stark Non-Being, or Zero. He is rather the fount of life, as we have seen, and though incomprehensible, yet nearer to man than touching. Precisely because he fills all creatures with His Being He is with men in every circumstance throughout their lives. This is the reason why it is possible to live at peace, as men trust Him to work all things together for good.

"Oh happy! Oh happy! yea, thrice happy indeed are thou that hast but these everlasting arms under thee, and his right hand to defend thee, and his care to provide for thee; what need'st thou to fear?"<sup>1</sup>

Here is a hint that Everard's God is, nevertheless, personal and approachable, though other than this in his theology.

If God is the Essence of all things, the philosophers were driven to another conclusion, that all other beings have only a relative or shadowy existence. Everard makes consistent use of this conclusion. He categorises all beings in the typically Neo-Platonic hierarchy, with pure Spirit, the Father, at the top, and pure matter at the bottom, and all creatures compounded more or less of matter and spirit on the way down the scale.<sup>2</sup>

This dualism of Being and Non-Being is fundamental to two of Everard's most frequent emphases. The first is the birth of Christ in the soul. If the indwelling God is bound or contained by man's preponderance of matter, man can be saved or deified only as he subdues the creature, by recognising this indwelling God and then humbling himself.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.400.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.414-15.

"If you would take from the creature...all accidents, all manner of fashion and form...then you shall finde the High and Holy One in His Tabernacle...Those who go about to find God this way, in the way of poyerty and taking away, they shall finde God in Christ Jesus..."<sup>1</sup>

And secondly, Everard depends on this dualism for his doctrine of the Scriptures. Here, he follows both Franck and Denck in concluding that if the world of sense is a world of shadow, it is in the act of passing away. The real world of spirit is within and eternal, and thus all of Bible history, depicting events in the world of sense, is only a shadow of what must be "continually accomplished and fulfilled, internally and spiritually".<sup>2</sup>

Looking at Everard from this vantage point, Professor Sippell is certainly right in questioning how such a negative mystical philosophy could be found with a positive Christianity.<sup>3</sup> However, if we allow Everard to speak for himself, we discover that he balances this dualism with a strong moral element, which prevents the former from dominating his mystic way.

To Everard, taking away the 'creature' most often means subduing pride, not eliminating creatureliness. He speaks with fervour of the soul's battle with sin if a man would come to know God intimately and personally.<sup>4</sup> With Augustine, he states the case for original sin. He points out that argument over this doctrine is fruitless for, when a man sees his house on fire, as

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.294.

<sup>2</sup>G.T.O., Part One, p.469 (1659 edition).

<sup>3</sup>Sippell, op. cit., p.40.

<sup>4</sup>G.T.O., pp.166f.



when he feels the power of sin rising within, he will not stand around asking how it happened, but will proceed immediately to quench it.<sup>1</sup> Thus he demonstrates that with him it is not merely an intellectual matter. He often cries out that the root of sin might be removed, and that the love of God be planted in men's hearts, for love is the fulfilling of the whole law.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting that this is the same deep concern which pursued George Fox all through his life. The difference in the two men lies in the corpus of truth which each followed in order to experience victory in himself.

Thus to Everard sin is self, but self in terms of pride, pretence, self-seeking. His deepest sins are the spiritual ones, not the sins of the body, proving that his Neo-Platonic philosophy does not wholly govern his thought, but rather provides a vehicle for it. At the same time, it is precisely because sin is real, that he stops short of any Neo-Platonic purgative way which is concerned only with the contemplation of the ascending degrees of reality: men, Angels, Heavens, Godhead. As we shall see in the next chapter, his mystical thought is strongly moralistic, with elements relevant to his time.

It is important, also, to see in Everard's doctrine of God, the basis for his concept of spiritual union. Here, he draws principally on the Hermetical rather than the Dionysian philosophy. God is the essential Life of all things, and therefore the end of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 707.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

all true knowledge is the sight of God.<sup>1</sup> To further this he uses an expression of an idea from Dionysius' angelic hierarchy, that every man has an angel within which is like a beam of light from the sun, and if he will lay his eye to that beam, he will behold God.<sup>2</sup> But, in contrast to Dionysius, he is wholly concerned here with the God within, not with the Transcendent God. Thus, when he speaks of union with this God, he most frequently uses, from such writers as Tauler, Denck, or Franck, the German mystical terminology of the indwelling of Christ. It is thus significant that he is not interested in that type of union which is an ascent to the Divine Dark of Dionysius, nor has he seriously adopted the Neo-Platonic dualism which is characteristic of Eckhart, when he is led to say, and mean, that he who does not abandon all creaturely externals "can neither be conceived nor born in this divine birth".<sup>3</sup> "Enter God, exit creatures."<sup>4</sup>

This is not to say that Everard is not guilty of utilising the dualism of Being and Non-Being. But it does mean that his passion is not for union with God as the speculative mystics pursued it. Rather, he is using the profoundly immanent philosophy of the Hermetica to preach a doctrine of God within and of a relation to that God, which will answer the cry for immediacy in the seventeenth century. The negativism of Dionysius actually appears in his pessimism about life, and the conclusion that in the body one can

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<sup>1</sup>Thoma, op. cit., p.275.

<sup>2</sup>G.T.O., pp.640-41.

<sup>3</sup>Eckhart, op. cit., p.9.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.11.



never really be different.<sup>1</sup> Fox's optimism about the transformed life in Christ is a striking contrast.

The Hermetica also inspires Everard's determinism, another favourite theme. We mention it here, because it illustrates again his use of an idea, not for itself, but for its application to the everyday life of the Christian.

Because God is the Essence of all creatures, He must therefore act in all, for one cannot separate from God's Being such attributes as His power.<sup>2</sup> This applies to all creatures, whether yielded to God or in rebellion against Him. Here, Peter Sterry writes in much the same vein as Everard, showing their common debt to Nicholas of Cusa, and the Theologia Germanica.<sup>3</sup> Both Everard and Sterry understand true liberty to exist in the relation or in the harmony between the essence of a thing and its operations. Hence, the will is truly free when it acts according to its own proper nature, which is divine. Real freedom lies, then, in yielding the will to God.

"That which is free, none may call his own, and he who maketh it his own, committeth a wrong."<sup>4</sup>

Thus, it is only as a man allows God to will all his actions in him

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Sippell is right in concluding that Everard's doctrine leads to no substantial change in the believer. (Op. cit., p.39.)

<sup>2</sup>G.T.O., p. 621.

<sup>3</sup>Vivian de Sola Pinto, Peter Sterry, Platonist and Puritan 1613-1672 (Cambridge: University Press, 1934), p.106.

Theologia Germanica, ed. Dr. Pfeiffer, tr. Susanna Winkworth (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1901), pp.198f.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

that he becomes truly free and blessed. This is the interpretation which Everard would give to the promise, that 'the Son shall make you free'. Sin, therefore, is devoting the will to self-ends, prostituting the power which in reality belongs to God. This is a determinism in sharp contrast to the juridical, mechanical determinism of Calvinism.

Both Everard and Sterry face the obvious question, Is God the author of evil?, and both answer it ultimately in the same way. Evil is necessary as part of the Divine plan, in order that men attain to perfection.<sup>1</sup> But though he admits the logic of his basic conclusion, Everard vigorously denies it all along the line, for if God be truth, goodness and being, then it is impossible that He should be the author of evil, falseness, or not-being.<sup>2</sup> He heaps up a mass of Old Testament illustrations to the effect that actions which were intended for evil resulted in good, and concludes by demonstrating that the evil of Judas' betrayal was the only way by which salvation could have been effected.<sup>3</sup> Realising that this still does not exonerate God, he falls back on the argument that God gives to the soul the power of speaking, thinking, going, doing, and the like, and the glory of the power therein belongs to God. Nevertheless, men must admit the guilt of using this power wrongfully.<sup>4</sup> Therefore men must separate the action from the sin that cleaves to

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<sup>1</sup>Pinto, op. cit., p.107.

G. T. O., P. 706.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 669.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 670-76.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 687.



the action, and give the glory to God.

The important thing is that Everard is not particularly concerned in educating his hearers in this philosophical concept for itself alone. He is interested rather in its several practical applications to the spiritual life. (1) We are thus to learn humility, to be willing to be little in our own estimation, and God will reward us by giving us all that we really need. (2) In that God is greater than all our enemies, we are to lean upon Him in confidence and trust, and to believe that He will guide us in all perplexities. And (3), we are to study to be content with whatever is our lot. Come health or sickness, riches or poverty, all must be received with thankfulness.<sup>1</sup> The reason for Everard's determinism is obvious. He is seeking to throw men back upon God in complete dependence, not only for the outward necessities of every day, but for the inward spiritual life, as well.

We are ready now to study what Everard has to say about the great issues of the seventeenth century, the Scriptures, the Church and Sacraments. His doctrine of Salvation, and passion for union with Christ will be left for separate study in Chapter Five.

Through the philosophical ideas that Everard adopted, he came to regard the Bible as a dichotomy. On the one hand, he insisted that the historical record of events in Scripture "...were all actually and really done in the flesh".<sup>2</sup> He was as emphatic as any Puritan in his day to say,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 689-91.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

"Cursed be those lips, and forever be they sealed up, even with the wrath of eternal fire, that shall deny in the least the truth of the Letter."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, having stated his belief in the infallibility of Scripture, he promptly declared its irrelevance to an understanding of Divine Truth. In order to hear God's voice, we must realise that beneath the letter of Scripture, just as in the warp of a fabric, runs a hidden meaning which can be discerned only by the Spirit.<sup>2</sup> Using a different metaphor, he likens the relation between the letter and the Word of God to a jewel wrapped in a covering, or to an oyster in its shell.<sup>3</sup> He is constantly emphasising that one cannot have the mysteries "without the letter of the Word"<sup>4</sup>, and that God had to use the letter in order to speak to us through its "internal sense".<sup>5</sup> But though Everard seems genuinely anxious to retain some objective importance for the Bible while pointing men to the spirit of the Scripture, he does not really succeed. He goes beyond the 'intent' of Scripture, with which he is not really concerned, to an allegorical interpretation of his own making. Everard's is a concern for inwardness run riot. George Fox, however, is concerned with inwardness under the inspiration of the Spirit.

With Everard, then, the 'letter' is true, but.... there are reasons why men must probe deeper. He conceived the great error of other preachers to be the intellectualising of faith. So many knew the Bible from cover to cover and used it in daily worship, and

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 585.



yet their lives were no different from others in the world. Paul had said that the "letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life"<sup>1</sup>, and Everard interpreted this to mean that there is a spiritual interpretation of the Bible which could produce the righteousness which so many seemed to lack in all of their letter-learning. It is typical of him to exclaim,

"...if you be always handling the Letter of the Word, always licking the Letter, always chewing upon that...No marvel you are such starvelings...never come to any growth."<sup>2</sup>

This, after all, was the great cry of all of the left wing preachers. If men really knew the Bible, they should also know Christ, and the righteousness which must accompany His presence in the soul.

Moreover, men who were content with the knowledge of the 'letter' often failed to discover that it was meant to provide a meeting-place between men and God. Of course, this had been the Reformed view. Calvin had said that "...Scripture exhibits the plainest evidences that it is God who speaks in it".<sup>3</sup> But in the seventeenth century many had forgotten this. Everard was right that men are always making God in their own image, and coming away from the letter of Scripture with their wills still their own and their carnal reason untouched.<sup>4</sup> But he was overstating the truth in implying that man could not meet God except in the particular interpretation which he

<sup>1</sup>2 Cor. 3:6.

<sup>2</sup>G.T.O., p.286.

<sup>3</sup>John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, tr. John Allen (2 Vols.; Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1909), I, vii, 4, p.79.

<sup>4</sup>G.T.O., pp.314-15.

gave to the 'letter'.

Hence also behind this mistrust of the 'letter' is the implication that it is impossible to convey 'precise truth' in a doctrinal formula, or indeed, in any verbal form. Everard asks the question, If God could speak a word that would perfectly describe Himself or His doings, where is there a man who could hear or understand?<sup>1</sup> Too much noise deafens us, too much light blinds our eyes, and so the Truth, were we competent to take it in, would "split the understanding".<sup>2</sup> This is the reason, he says, why there are so many schisms in the Church, for men claim to have the whole truth about salvation, when no such final formulation can be made.<sup>3</sup> This is the reason, then, why the Bible as a whole is to be regarded as a Grand Parable, in the style of our Lord's parabolic teaching:

"The wisdom of God in the Scriptures is such, that it minds higher things than to tell Stories, and relate Histories: but he would thereby set out to us the picture of ourselves, and of his own workings in us, and this is divine, the other humane."<sup>4</sup>

This is the underlying motive for Everard's allegorisation.

What Christ was and did in history was only a parable of what He, as the Living Word, is always doing in the lives of men.

"...for there is no part of Holy Writ, but is fulfilled always, in all times in every part thereof, either in every member of the Church, or in the enemies of the Church, at one time or another: always the same things are in doing throughout all ages."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.475.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>"Election, reprobation, predestination - these things are true, but as God intends." (Loc. cit.).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.283.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.280.



The Divine Revelation, then, is for the primary purpose of leading the soul to the experience of union with God. The personal relationship with God is actually prior to the Scripture, which only interprets and enriches it.<sup>1</sup>

What he means by union will be discussed in the next chapter, but the basis for it in Everard's method of Scripture interpretation lies in his making all Scripture events contemporary to the reader. The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ is a parable of His birth in the life of the soul, of the crucifying of the affections and lusts, and of the assertion of the new life of Christ within. He seeks to interpret all of the Bible according to the same pattern. For example, when he deals with the Old Testament, he denies that the Law can be an expression of God's nature and will in relation to men. God has always intended that men should live in the same relationship to Himself as the Son. This has nothing to do with the question of free grace; such a problem is outside the context of his thought altogether. But he is pressing for an interpretation of the Ten Commandments from the standpoint of the union of the soul with God. It shows also his complete lack of historical perspective.

For example, the fourth Commandment, which is the regulation about Sabbath observance, has a deeper meaning beyond keeping the seventh day holy. It implies an experience of inner rest, which

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<sup>1</sup>Everard commonly says that one must take the veil off the 'letter' in order that each may "see his own face in the Scripture" as a man sees his natural face in a glass. (Ibid., p.277.).

no man can feel in himself. God alone is at rest, while all creatures are constantly restless. But the man who gets above his circumstances to God can know it for himself. This eternal resting is not meant to be one day out of seven, but a continuing experience, for God Himself is the true Sabbath. "...Those that return to be with Him, they only keep the true Sabbath."<sup>1</sup>

To take another illustration, the seventh Commandment is that men should not commit adultery. The true spiritual interpretation is that men should not turn their eyes away from beholding God, to be enamoured of "...all those excellencies and beauties of the creatures".<sup>2</sup>

Scripture, then, is meant to provide a meeting ground between God and the soul, but only as it confirms and interprets what has already been experienced between the soul and God. Theologically, Everard in effect denies the necessity for any external revelation in the *ordo salutis*. But in practice, he uses it, and especially the Gospels, to describe the relationship of Christ to the soul.

The question might be asked, Does Everard define his allegorical method? The answer is no, if we seek an intellectual system for interpreting passages other than those he himself has explained. But he did not give his hearers *carte blanche* to interpret Scripture any way they fancied. He insisted on certain moral and spiritual dispositions, chiefly, humility, personal discipline, and self-denial. Indeed, this is what he meant when he said that one must

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 307.



"smite the letter" in order to come to the true meaning. One must be willing to see the Scripture fulfilled in himself, to see himself as the man Christ came to cure or to heal.<sup>1</sup> Then only, will God reveal the hidden meaning. Here then, are the two elements of immediacy and ascet<sup>ic</sup><sub>ism</sub>, which characterise Everard's version of the Christian life. It is a curious commentary on George Fox and John Everard, two of the most earnest men in the left wing who urged that Christ's life must be considered as contemporary, that the first could see nothing but personal victory over sin, as a man partakes of Christ's victory over the powers of evil, and the second, nothing but man's thralldom to sin, as he shares the suffering and humiliation of the Son. But it takes both Christ's humiliation and His victory to draw the full picture of His life. Hence each of these men were viewing His life with a measure of distortion. In this limited sense, Everard partakes more realistically of seventeenth century Puritanism than Fox, for we have seen that the latter's chief criticism of Puritan preachers was that they constantly plead for sin.

Concluding this section, we must see Everard's conception of Revelation as significant of a trend in seventeenth century Puritanism. The earlier Puritan evangelicals had maintained the balance between Spirit and the letter of Scripture, characteristic of the Reformers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 327.

<sup>2</sup>For Luther, "Spirit without Scripture is not revealed Spirit; Scripture without Spirit is only Law." (Leif Eeg-Olofsson, The Conception of the Inner Light in Robert Barclay's Theology (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1954), p. 147.)

Sibbes, for example, who believed in the Bible as God's Word, nevertheless contended that the Word of God comes only through an encounter with Christ, who meets one in the Scripture.<sup>1</sup> He could even go so far as to say that along with the outward revelation there must be an inward light in the soul,

"So there must be a Spirit in me, as there is a Spirit in the Scriptures before I can see anything."<sup>2</sup>

At the same time Puritan preaching was dramatic and imaginative, and the use of allegory common to portray the epic of the Christian life. The birth of Christ in the soul was nothing new with Everard, but had been the means, along with the dramatisation of the Passion, of

"describing all existence and every human life as a phase of the conflict between Christ and Satan."<sup>3</sup>

Bunyan and Milton, in producing the greatest Christian allegories of the modern world, partook of the inspiration of this inwardness of Word and spiritual life.

At the same time, the Bibliolatry among many Puritans, and the failure to carry through Church reform on these same inward, spiritual principles, set up the reaction which characterised not only the left wing, but the general trend in England toward freedom from the authority of tradition. In radical Puritanism, the preachers repudiated the Spirit-Scripture relationship of Sibbes and

<sup>1</sup>Frank E. Farrell, "Richard Sibbes: A Study in Early Seventeenth Century Puritanism", (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1955), p.144.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.146. (Farrell is quoting Sibbes.)

<sup>3</sup>Haller, The Rise of Puritanism, p.151.



the earlier Puritans, though it had made ample room for an inward and spiritual religion, because this definition was no longer relevant to the experience of the Holy Spirit within. As one of Sibbes' more extreme statements had intimated that it might, the balance had shifted from the Spirit in Scripture to the Spirit in men. Milton and the Cambridge Platonists were caught up in the same appeal to the inner principle of authority, though to them, reason, or the moral sense, was the final tribunal.<sup>1</sup> And George Fox had discovered the living Christ within, who had brought to him the same inner verification of truth.

Thus the extreme kind of allegorisation represented in a man like Everard certainly was not, at least to him, a radical departure. Puritan preaching at its best had always used that method. He was using it to assure inwardness in the spiritual life. After all, Sterry, Milton, and the Cambridge Platonists all believed that truth could be given figuratively, and through their mutual interest in Neo-Platonism often portrayed earthly things as corresponding shadow-wise to their heavenly patterns.<sup>2</sup> Even among some of those interested in the new scientific movement - men such as Sir Thomas Browne - the Scriptures were considered to have a spiritual meaning pointing beyond the literal sense. The latter could not conceive of a Divine Word without a double meaning.<sup>3</sup> Thus, there

<sup>1</sup>Willey, op. cit., p.73.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.70.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp.60,61.

were many followers of this principle of an inward authority in religion, though at the same time there were almost as many different expressions of it. What is interesting for this study is what happens to the 'Inward Light' of Fox when Robert Barclay systematises Quaker thought.

Barclay was anxious to sound as orthodox as possible, but he was also committed to a theology of inwardness. He emphatically affirmed that Scripture, as history, was certain and infallible.<sup>1</sup> But like Everard, he was forced to turn about and say that the only criterion for the judging of Scripture was the Spirit, because he believed that the true knowledge of God was inner and spiritual.<sup>2</sup> He thus involved himself in a dualism similar to Everard's, though of different background. The 'letter', because it is outward, physical and imperfect, could not, by its essence, communicate the saving knowledge of God which is inner, immediate, and perfect.<sup>3</sup> Hence it was impossible that the Spirit could be given through the 'letter', or, to put it another way, Divine Revelation could not take place until the Spirit had 'opened' the Scripture. To a certain extent, this was implied in Fox himself, and yet the latter never involved himself in this kind of a dualism. What Barclay really represents is a shift in emphasis from a concern for Christ as the inward Teacher, to a concern for inwardness for its own sake. To this extent Quaker theology lost some of the positiveness of

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<sup>1</sup>Eeg-Olofsson, op. cit., p.140.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.141.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp.100-101.



George Fox, from which it has never recovered. But this also brings up the basic weakness in the approach of John Everard. He was attracted by the principle of inward authority as he discovered it in the Hermetica and the mystical writers of the Neo-Platonic tradition, and, rather than discover, as George Fox did, the spirit of Scripture through the Spirit who inspired it, he sold himself to the idea of inwardness.

We come now to Everard's doctrine of the Church and Sacraments. It is interesting, that if any of his sermons could be said to treat the question of the Church to any extent, it is the one on a text from the Canticles, 'Where Christ Resteth and Feedeth'. He sees in this the grand love song between Christ the Lord and his dearest Lady, the Church.<sup>1</sup> Often, in the style of St. Bernard, this song illustrates the union between the individual soul and God<sup>2</sup>, but Everard has a special point which he wishes to make regarding the Church, and this interpretation affords him the opportunity he is seeking.

He asks two questions at the opening of the sermon. First, Who is the Church? He answers that she is "...the congregation or the whole body of his saints and servants".<sup>3</sup> Like Saltmarsh, who in this same period, is calling on the Church leaders to remember that there is a Body of Christ which cuts across denominational lines,

<sup>1</sup>G.T.O., p.429.

<sup>2</sup>Brauer shows that Rous also speaks of the Church as "the 'Bed of Solomon' in which the Christian gains warmth through fellowship". (op. cit., p.217.)

<sup>3</sup>G.T.O., p.429.

Everard is seeking to express the spiritual character of the Church.

In his next question, In what does the perfection, or wholeness of the Church consist?, he is emphasising the unity of the Body, not structurally, but organically. He says that there is no perfection in any person, taken alone,

"But if you look upon the whole church then she is all fair, that is, the compleat body together...But take the religion of one, and the charity of another, the zeal of another, the faith of another, and go through the whole body, and look upon these as a compleat body, and then thou mayest see truly: Thou art all fair, my Love."<sup>1</sup>

Everard is earnestly pleading for toleration and co-existence between the various Churches, but beyond this, as we found so uniquely in George Fox, his conception of the Body of Christ makes no provision for the experience of the life of Christ in the community of believers.

Everard does not seek to define what constitutes the Body, but he states emphatically what it is not. No person or group which holds itself aloof from others can truly represent Christ's Body, for

"It is to the Church that Christ makes all His promises...not to any particular Church, neither to an assembly of men and women, as particular and separated from His Body; but to the visible and invisible congregation of saints, which are His members and make up His Body."<sup>2</sup>

It is unthinkable, then, that within the Body there should be quarrelling and lack of understanding and love. Christ's blessing can only come to the Church in its wholeness. She is "our Mother" and "our Mistress".<sup>3</sup> He pleaded that the narrow bigoted sectaries

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.429-30.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.463.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.437.



should desist from pulling apart their neighbour's religion, for by this "...what a hook the Devil hath put in their nostrils".<sup>1</sup> And to all he would say

"...if you be a living Member, you will sympathise in love and fellow-feeling with the rest of the members; for the Apostle saith, Love is the fulfilling of the Law."<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the Millenarians, and others sharing the recrudescence of the Joachimite hope of a new age, Everard did not repudiate the Sacraments, nor was he expecting a new revelation concerning their use. He does not give them as high a place in his experience as Francis Rous, another of the mystical writers,<sup>3</sup> but he confessed that God had often appeared in them<sup>4</sup>; and that they were to be used as "...Schoolmasters and Tutors to bring us to Christ".<sup>5</sup>

He does reveal his interest in mystical literature, however, when he suggests that as the soul draws closer to Christ in the experience of union, the sacraments become less important, and in fact, there is a point in the spiritual life when one cries out,

"What's duties? What's Ordinances? What's Christ in the flesh? I beseech you, give me leave; what are all these when the soul embraces the truth of all these things? Can the soul at that time leave its Beloved's arms, and come down to, or prize the shadows, the handmaids above or equal to Him?"<sup>6</sup>

The great mystics, in the climactic experience of the union of the soul, have said much the same thing. Everard, however, is simply

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.435.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.440.

<sup>3</sup>Brauer, op. cit., p.213.

<sup>4</sup>G.T.O., p.550.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp.557-58.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.561.

expressing a closeness to Christ which many felt was more intimate because it was immediate. But it caused Everard concern that some would claim this exalted relation to God and then forsake the Sacraments. He is referring to men like Saltmarsh, Erbury and Dell. He feels that they are skirting dangerously near a fleshly liberty<sup>1</sup>, for the Ordinances are meant to keep us within bounds, to be a guide to the spiritual life.<sup>2</sup>

Everard looked upon the Ordinance of Baptism as the shadow of what ought to be a daily, inner experience. To him, as to nearly all in the left wing, it represented the dying to the old nature. He quoted Jesus, saying to Zebedee's children, 'Can you be baptised with the baptism wherewith I am baptised?'<sup>3</sup> But again, unlike Fox, he failed to see the implication for the experience of this truth within the corporate fellowship of the Body of Christ. One comes to ask, What, after all, attracted Everard to Neo-Platonism and the Poemander of Hermes? Perhaps he had come across these writings in the course of his University training, or it might be that an interest in them for scientific reasons had directed his mind to the religious implications. In any event, it was most certainly not a purely intellectual interest, for though his sermons contain an undue amount of philosophy for the average reader, he never failed to apply his teaching to the soul in need of salvation and inner certainty. This is doubtless the reason why he translated and circulated the Theologia Germanica. He found that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 562-63.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 564.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 560.



it 'spoke to his condition', and so made it available to others as a spiritual guide. After all, the educated, who alone would understand it as philosophy, could read it in the Latin. Moreover, aside from their philosophical background, these mystics, no matter how they might express the relationship, communicated the feeling that they had found God, and knew Him experimentally in the deep of the soul. They spoke of this experience as the only true goal of life, and it met and satisfied the keen desire of the seventeenth century man to know God immediately, in an experience which is self-authenticating.

We are ready now to undertake a study of Everard's expression of his experience of God, and to evaluate how successfully he related it to the seventeenth century concern for true righteousness and immediacy in relation to God.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE MESSAGE OF THE CHRIST WITHIN

It is possible to read The Gospel Treasury and to interpret it as the recrudescence of the fourteenth century German mystics, Eckhart, Tauler, and the writer of the Theologia Germanica. Everard speaks fervently of the birth of Christ in the soul and of the mystic path of self-denial which must precede this experience. He echoes Tauler's rich and warm re-creation of the life of Jesus within the soul. His attitudes toward the Sacraments, and the disciplines of prayer and corporate worship are the same as theirs. Taken alone, and without reference to the seventeenth century, his sermons seem to breathe the same atmosphere of an intense desire for the union of the soul with God.

But, as we have sought to point out in the previous chapter, any treatment such as this does violence to the spirit of Everard's teaching. He is an ardent preacher, chiefly concerned with moving men to the pursuit of God in the soul. Hence his interest in speculative philosophy is primarily directed toward the seventeenth century problem of attaining true righteousness through an inner relationship with God. In his use of language, we need to remember that there is something of the typical Puritan preacher, who moves men by stirring their imaginations and by dramatising the soul's struggle with sin. Much of the time, therefore, because Everard



speaks graphically and poetically, he may be misunderstood.

To come to a decisive understanding of Everard, we must focus our attention on the crucial problem of what he means by the union of the soul with God. The truest approach to a solution lies in allowing Everard to speak for himself from those rather infrequent passages where he bursts forth into glowing mystical expression. We will then be able to summarise a few points to serve as guides for the remainder of the study.

"Learn we henceforth to know, wherein our Riches and Happiness lies. O Beloved! Deceive not yourselves, and dote not on these outward temporal things, on Honors, Lands, Livings, Meats and Drink, and those despicable things, compared with these Riches and Pleasures which indeed are but poor cockel-shells for children to play withal...you must learn to distinguish between the Riches and Glory of the King, and the Cockel-shells at the shore...

"Beloved! Let us call to minde, what hath been here set before us, and stand and wonder!...And therein to be lost and swallowed up in an everlasting Abyesse of Silence and Serenity: And say to ourselves, as the Rich man in the Gospel...Soul, soul! Take thine ease, take thy rest, sing and rejoyce, thou hast much goods laid up in thy God, not only for many years, but for ever and ever."<sup>1</sup>

Here, union is expressed in the negative, Dionysian terms of the soul being 'swallowed up in an everlasting abyss'. But at the same time, he also speaks of it in the New Testament sense of spiritual joy and reward. The obstacles to union are not creatureliness as such, but rather pride and sensuality.

"O now let us forever take delight under his shadow...Being ravished in beholding him, filling All Things; and seeing him more ourselves than ourselves...See him, hear him, and adore him, and entertain all familiar and amorous parlyes, Rosey kisses, and sugred expressions with him: in which condition thy soul will be (as it were) annihilated and lost; being swallowed up and drowned in him."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>G.T., pp.424-25.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.425-26.

Philosophically, this is an impossible combination of the transcendental and immanent. The warm, personal relationship to the soul's Bridegroom expressed in the first part, is actually in opposition to the philosophical and impersonal relationship of the second. Thus, it would seem, that the Dionysian terminology is being accommodated to the imagery of the spiritual marriage, the former being used to create a feeling of the greatness of the God with whom the soul is united. The use of this sexual imagery in the seventeenth century was actually quite common to dramatise the closeness of the fellowship with Christ.

"Beloved, if you would have power to remove mountains, and to offer violence to the Kingdom of Heaven; then you are to be thus qualified, that thou hast experimentally seen and felt in thy soul how that thy sins have ploughed, and made long furrows upon his back, as David saith; and how you by your sins have quenched the light that is in you; and how he in thee is crucified, dead, and buried; and how thou hast drawn grave-stones of custome over Him; and how you have buried His Light and resisted his spirit in you; and that you have found him arise in your own souls; that you have really felt all these things actually done within you, his death, his life, his birth, his resurrection; that as his enemies have overcome and crucified him in you, so you have found him arise gloriously and triumphantly in you...Now I am so far gotten from, and forsaken the world, and myself, that now I desire but one thing, and that will I seek after; even that thou wouldest give me thyself; unite me and make me one with thine own life."<sup>1</sup>

This is highly poetic and imaginative. It pictures union as a sharing of the life of Christ, and the road to that experience as initially the awareness of sin followed by the experience of God coming forth in power within. Many non-mystical preachers, however, also spoke of His birth within the soul and identified our sins with those

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.750-51.



which crucified the Lord.

"You being once come to this pass, really in experience, then you also may say: All power is given to me in Heaven and Earth; for then you are (as I may say) within an inch of being swallowed up into God...if it be so, then Christ Himself lives in us, and all our words are the words of Christ; we have no thoughts but the thoughts of Christ; we have no life but Christ lives in us..."<sup>1</sup>

It is important that this passage, which again reveals the juxtaposition of the Dionysian terminology of union with the personal and positive emphasis on sharing Christ's life, directly follows the previous quotation. It demonstrates again that the ultimate experience of being swallowed up in God is not philosophical, but really an extreme negativism. In contrast to the optimism of Paul and Fox, the self cannot be transformed, but must be rejected.

"Beloved, the onely reason that we remain such empty drops is because we esteem our selves to be somewhat, when indeed we are nothing; while we set such a price upon our selves, and look on our selves as holy, and pure, and what a progress in Religion we have made, and despise others, this keeps us from being united to him...As long as thou art something in thyself, so long thou art nothing; and when thou beginnest to be nothing in thy own esteem, then thou beginnest to be really something; then is Jesus Christ beginning to arise, and to exalt himself in thee..."

"Up Lord, why sleepest thou? avenge us on our adversaries: God is asleep in men, till this work be brought about in them."<sup>2</sup>

As here with Everard, so with all left wing preachers, pride and religious pretence are among the most heinous sins. The phrase 'God is asleep in men' reveals again the starting point for his preaching. Even as Fox consistently turned men to the Light which was already within them, Everard cried out, Plus Ultra, God is in all creatures. But in neither is this the 'Divine spark' of the mystics.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 751-52.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 757-59.

It is rather the inescapability of the claims of God upon the soul of man.

From the preceding quotations, several preliminary conclusions as to the meaning of union can be drawn. (1) The obstacles are described as sin, pride, pretence, and a dependence for spiritual life on the forms and traditions of religion. (2) Union is only possible, then, when a man is willing to renounce Self, in terms of ambition, desire, and religious pretence. (3) The experience is negative and ascetic rather than positive and transforming. (4) The most frequent images used to express union are the birth of Christ in the soul, and the spiritual marriage. (5) That God is unknowable actually expresses the awesomeness of Him who is within, not an impersonal Deity who is wholly other. Everard's God is definitely personal. (6) The result of the experience of union is life on a higher spiritual plane, but the attainment of this level must be preceded by the painful process of humbling oneself.

It is obvious that Everard uses a philosophical vehicle to attain a primarily ethical and spiritual end. If we place a passage from Eckhart side by side with these just quoted, the contrast to the speculative type of mysticism stands out boldly.

"God longs as urgently for thee to go out of thyself in respect of thy creaturely nature as though His whole felicity depended on it. Why, man, what is the harm of letting God be God in thee? Go clean out of thyself for God's sake, and God will go clean out of his for thy sake. Both being gone out, what remains is simply the one. In this one the Father gives birth to his Son, in his innermost source. Thence blossoms forth the Holy Ghost and thence originates in God the will belonging to the soul."<sup>1</sup>

This is primarily the transcendental experience of the Pseudo-Dionysius.

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<sup>1</sup>Eckhart, op. cit., p.15.



The hindrance of creatureliness to the Divine Birth is illustrated again in another passage in which Eckhart says that the image of the Son cannot compete with the image of any other creature in the soul.<sup>1</sup> In answer to the question, Why does God unite with the soul without images?, he answers,

"Not knowing makes her wonder and leads her to eager pursuit, for she knows clearly that it is, but not how nor what it is. No sooner does a man know the reason of a thing than immediately he tires of it...The soul is constant only to this unknowing knowing which keeps her pursuing."<sup>2</sup>

But this is a transcendental experience empty of the warmth of personal relationship, or serious interest in the life of Christ. Even the experience of the Divine Birth, which to the devotional mystics is a psychological expression of the nearness of the life of the Son within, is without any personal implications in Eckhart, for he can speak of successive births<sup>3</sup>, which are each God's self-revelation in some new knowledge or some new mode.<sup>4</sup> It is not impossible to understand, however, how Everard could appreciate Eckhart. By interpreting creatureliness in a moral sense, and the birth of Christ within as personal and psychological, Eckhart can be made to sound like others in his time such as Tauler who were much less philosophical than he.

Actually, Everard's most intense mystical expressions echo the tone of Tauler more than any other writer whom we know he read. For example, the following illustration from Tauler could almost have

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.4-5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.46.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.417.

come from Everard's pen:

"After this the vine-dresser loves to strip off the leaves, that the sun may have nothing to hinder its rays from pouring on the grapes. In like manner do all means of grace fall away from this man, such as images of the saints, teachings, holy exercises, set prayers and the like. Yet let none cast these things aside before they fall away of themselves through divine grace; that is to say, when a man is drawn up above all that he can comprehend, then do these precious and divine fruits grow more sweet and delightful than either sense or reason may conceive, and it is possible for him to be carried so far that his spirit is as it were sunk and lost in the abyss of the Deity...and the man's being is so penetrated with the Divine substance, that he loses himself therein, as a drop of water is lost in a cask of strong wine."<sup>1</sup>

Tauler here stresses that religious exercises must serve the purpose of preparing the soul for an experience of union with God which then transcends whatever was employed to attain it. But union is immanent, not transcendental as in Eckhart, and it can be expressed as 'sweet' or 'delightful' even though Tauler also uses the negative Dionysian terminology. It also speaks directly to the desire for immediacy, as in this passage,

"Dear child, thou must utterly die, if God Himself without a medium is to become thy life and being."<sup>2</sup>

This death to self, echoed by Everard, is not flying from creatureliness, but is ethical and spiritual. In yet another passage, Tauler describes the three stages of 'dying to self' as (1) When a man still regards himself as his own property and the love of God is wanting, (2) When he endures insult or undeserved injury, and is

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<sup>1</sup>The History and Life of the Reverend Doctor John Tauler of Strasbourg, with Twenty-five of His Sermons, tr. Susanna Winkworth (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1857), p.253.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.326.



led to realise his unworthiness, and (3) When self-sufficiency is driven out and he is willing to share fully in the suffering and humiliation of Christ as an inward experience.<sup>1</sup> Everard pictures the road to union with God in almost the same ethical, personal terms. With this in the background, we are now able to approach his sermons as a whole and to evaluate more accurately his dramatisation of the relationship of the soul to God.

As we have already pointed out, there are several factors preventing what Everard describes as the experience of the union of the soul with God. The typical Puritan preacher would say that the only barrier to knowing God is a man's sin. This is Everard's first point, but not his only one, since his chief concern is to know God inwardly, and the need for salvation, though real, is only subsidiary to this. The greatest sins to Everard are the spiritual ones, and so in one of his most interesting treatments of the life of Christ, he describes the Doctors who disputed with Jesus in the Temple as 'pleasure', 'profit', 'honour' and 'arrogance'.<sup>2</sup> These sins blind the soul to the possibility of union and must be overcome if a man is really to know God.

"...for the creature is but a meer instrument in the hand of the Almighty, and hath nothing of his own but sin: and therefore they should in themselves be vile and nothing, little in their own eyes; else we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God; as our Saviour saith, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter."<sup>3</sup>

Another of the Doctors in the passage mentioned above is 'reason',<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 384-396.

<sup>2</sup>S.G.T., pp. 64-70.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 70-72.

and this suggests that the second barrier is the intellect, or the mind of the natural man. God cannot be known until we ourselves admit that we know nothing about Him.<sup>1</sup> This attitude was also common among many others, who saw in the faculty of reason, as in the Bible or the Sacraments, something outward, which hindered the inward, or immediate apprehension of God.

Finally, dependence on any outward form of worship or means of grace, such as the literal interpretation of the Bible, or the use of the Sacraments as ends in themselves, will blind the soul to the God who stands behind them.<sup>2</sup>

The preceding are what Everard refers to as 'creature' or in general, sin. Anything which, in a phrase from Tauler, "affords thee comfort out of God"<sup>3</sup> will keep the soul from knowing God, and thus is sin.

Everard is not interested in 'conversion' as such, but he does describe an awakening of the self to God. It is at this point that Everard and Fox touch, as it were, and reveal one of the common themes of the left wing. It is not the Holy Spirit, given through the Scriptures, who convicts of sin and leads to Christ as Saviour; rather it is the God who is already within all men as the 'light that lighteth every man'. This is simply the expression of immediacy, which is the common drive of both Everard and Fox. But though the former uses the term 'light' to represent God within, the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.398.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, Chapter Four, pp.127f.

<sup>3</sup>Tauler, op. cit., p.246.



difference in emphasis and direction between the two men is apparent as soon as the latter describes what he means. With Everard, when the 'light' reveals the presence of the "hidden King" in a person,

"then he falls down with trembling and fear, and judges himself, and his own loose actions, and submits himself to the will and pleasure of the King".<sup>1</sup>

This marks the beginning of the "eternal Sabbath"<sup>2</sup> with God, and the first step in the long process of humbling that leads eventually to union. In Everard's description, sin is revealed in order that self be humbled, and the God who is within enthroned upon the will. But to Fox, as soon as the 'light' reveals sin, one is to turn from it, to Christ, and in the discipline, joy and fellowship of the Body, the self is transformed and not negated.

In pointing to formalism and hypocrisy as the great barriers to knowing God, Everard belongs unmistakably to the left wing of Puritanism. It is in his choice of a vehicle for expressing this concern, that he introduced modes of thought that were uncongenial. It is all the more likely that he might be confusing to some, because we have already seen that he uses two distinct frameworks of philosophy to describe the spiritual process which leads to union. In this sense he seems to have two different expressions of the so-called 'mystic way'. The first purgative way proceeds more directly under the impetus of the terminology of Neo-Platonic dualism of Being and Non-Being, and untempered by the second, is

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<sup>1</sup>S.G.T., p.96.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.99.

simply an extreme form of self-denial in terms of the spiritual life. However, in the second he uses the warm, personal vocabulary of the 'mystical marriage', typical both of many Puritan evangelicals and of the western mystics who were decidedly Christocentric. We shall discuss these two in turn.

The first is found in a series of sermons in the Gospel Treasury, "Of Suffering and Reigning with Christ", in which Everard suggests the successive steps in the spiritual life which must precede the experience of the union with God. This 'via negativa' Everard calls, "The Six Steps to Solomon's Throne". It is remarkably similar to a treatment of the same theme by Tauler<sup>1</sup> and also to The Book of the Nine Rocks, which Dr. Jones describes as the greatest literary creation of the Friends of God.<sup>2</sup>

The steps in this spiritual way are these: (1) Condemnation of self, (2) Annihilation, (3) Abdication, (4) Indifferency, (5) Conformity to Christ, and (6) Deiformity.<sup>3</sup> We will discuss what Everard means by each of these in turn.

(1) Condemnation of Self.<sup>4</sup> Everard pictures this beginning of the spiritual life as taking place in the context of the conflict with sin, in contrast to Eckhart, who sees it as a violent struggle to drive back and inhibit all the senses.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Tauler, op. cit., pp.182-83.

<sup>2</sup>Rufus Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1909), p.267.

<sup>3</sup>S.G.T., p.131.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp.203-14, 217-27.

<sup>5</sup>Eckhart, op. cit., p.14.



"Do thou, O Lord, put all thine enemies to silence, and rule thou in the midst of thine enemies: put to silence our own reason, all our affections, our own will, our own joys, our own fears, our own hopes; and then hear what God shall say. There is no hearing of God till these be put to silence."<sup>1</sup>

This struggle against self as one begins the pursuit of God, is the natural background for what Everard has to say about salvation.

Because the Puritan preachers made the experience of salvation dependent on the knowledge of the facts of Jesus' life and death, Everard spoke also of a 'saving knowledge'. Yet he did not thereby refer to anything historical, but to the contemporary experience of Christ's saving or healing the soul.<sup>2</sup> This is not to be interpreted as a simple, positive emphasis on the personal aspect of faith, however, as Sibbes or Gouge might have done it. Rather, Everard's principle of an inner meaning of Scripture was really made to serve the purpose of illustrating the life of self denial as the true way to God. He said, quite frankly, that the ineffectiveness of the 'letter' was due to the fact that "it never makes a man to deny the World, to rejoyce in the Cross, to sell all and follow Christ".<sup>3</sup> Thus though at times Everard speaks of the 'saving knowledge' in terms of what Christ does within, yet always in the background is the necessity that a man must first deny himself. He obviously

<sup>1</sup>S. G. T., p. 219.

<sup>2</sup>Another illustration of inwardness in interpreting scripture is this passage, "I found I had a continual running issue, that continually ran to the polluting of my soul, and to the dishonor of God; and the touching of his garments hath healed me...this is saving knowledge of the scriptures". (Ibid., p. 78.)

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 313.

did not believe that to tell men what Christ could do for them, even in the most intimate, personal, inward terms, would accomplish a real change in their lives. The only sure way was to demand first the rejection of sin and self in every form. Salvation was then only a matter of course.

It is thus interesting to see how Everard made the plan of salvation accommodate itself to this underlying ascetical approach. If the first step in the ascent to union with God was the willingness to embark on the life of self-denial, then prior to this must be a recognition of one's sin and distance from God. Everard addressed himself to this theme with vigour and forcefulness. In the manner of the most severe Puritan, he attempted to paint a black and perilous picture of man's nature without God. Men not only perform individual acts which are sinful, but if one once told a lie, in God's eye he is always lying; if one once committed adultery it is always so to God.<sup>1</sup> But more than this, each man bears not merely the inherited sin of the first Adam, but the guilt of the sin of all the world.

"When thou wert but six days old, thou wert six thousand years a sinner; when thou wert little above a span long, thou wert an everlasting transgressor."<sup>2</sup>

This is intense and dramatic. When Everard applies the remedy of Christ, we must remember that the background is still 'Condemnation of Self', or, in the larger context, the first step of the ascent to Solomon's Throne'.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 222-23.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 223.



"I know you can in words have present recourse to that saying that though we are sinners indeed, and grievous sinners, yet the blood of Christ purgeth us from all sin. I know this very word, were it spoken by Christ himself, is enough indeed to silence Death and Hell, and all the powers of darkness, and is armour proof against all Satan's fiery darts; and it is a most undoubted truth: but then say I, Christ must pronounce this saying to thee, The blood of Jesus Christ purgeth thee from all sin. If Christ pronounce these words, then art thou indeed forever acquitted: but if thou sayest this of thyself, to thyself, and by thyself, thou art not acquitted."<sup>1</sup>

Fox also demanded that men obey the 'light', and believe in the 'light' if they would know God, but there is for this insistence a major difference in the motive of each. The latter is seeking to guarantee the inwardness of the Gospel message. The former is emphasising, not inwardness primarily, but the negation of personal will. He goes on to say of Christ's speaking within, that it is "...the utter destruction to sin and Sathan".<sup>2</sup> However, "...if spoken only by thyself, they do but harden thee in sin".<sup>3</sup> In other words, if Christ's speaking means death to sin, and, by the same token, death to self, or self-will, this is possible because man has already completely yielded up his will to Christ and cannot himself ask even for mercy. Everard would never have said, for example, as the Antinomians did, that simply by virtue of an inner assent of faith, the self life had been put down and the new life in Christ now reigned in its stead. The act of asking Christ for forgiveness confirms a man in sin only if this act of will is seen as itself the essence of evil. Hence we can see that the issue of immediacy has been forced into the background and made to serve a negativism

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.225.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp.225-26.

fed by the springs of Neo-Platonism. Everard has another more positive side, however, as we shall see presently.

To return to the place of the scheme of salvation in the way of self denial, we can conclude that, although those who have not heard the word of forgiveness spoken in the soul are still accountable for their sins, the tragedy is not that they are not saved, but that they have not set foot on the first step which leads to 'Condemnation of Self' and union with God.<sup>1</sup> It is apparent also, from the place of salvation in the larger scheme of union, that the sufferings of Christ upon the Cross are relevant only as they typify the eternally suffering Christ, 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world', in whose sufferings, humiliation, and self-effacement the Christian is to share. As Jesus 'made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men', so must we also.<sup>2</sup> Thus atonement as a scheme for justifying sinners has receded into the background, and the idea of reconciliation through identification has come to the fore. We must share in the sufferings of Christ as the only way of sharing the Divine life. Those who thus suffer with Him

"...have cast anchor, and are entred with Jesus within the vail, into the Holiest of all...these, not onely see, but enter and possess the land of Canaan..."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.226.

<sup>2</sup>This text, Phil.2:7,8., is the basis for several sermons, "On Suffering and Reigning with Christ". (Ibid., pp.101-264.)

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp.122-23.



(2) Annihilation.<sup>1</sup> The first step simply shades into this second one, which represents the soul as becoming empty of self. The whole of sin is in the letter 'I'.<sup>2</sup> Everard's practical suggestions for this stage centre around the willingness to abdicate all personal desire. Men are to be like a broken pitcher, unable to hold either honour or praise, wealth or poverty, sickness or health.<sup>3</sup> All possessions are to be held with indifference so that if God calls for them, they may be willingly forsaken. The only thing one must prize is the Holy Spirit, the source of all inward joy and refreshing.<sup>4</sup>

(3) Abdication.<sup>5</sup> In learning to forsake all things, men are to love God alone in them. Nothing, not even the members of one's family inasmuch as they are creaturely, could be loved with more than an earthly, sensual, devilish love. But in beholding God in them, there is a pure love, which separates the precious from the vile.<sup>6</sup> This is extremely harsh, and, in the course of elaborating what he means, Everard retreats to a certain extent. He explains that all men, even the heathen, love their families, but that he is contending for a higher love than this, the love for God in them.<sup>7</sup>

(4) Indifferency.<sup>8</sup> The theme of this stage is that men learn

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.228-36.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.230.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp.231-32.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.236.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp.236-44.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.239.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp.242-43.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp.237-64. (Mispagination. In the text this p.237 follows p.246, and is thus really p.247. The pages are numbered in this section, therefore, pp.237-50, 261-64. At p.261 the mistake has been corrected.)

to acquiesce in all situations and difficulties in life, desiring nothing that may cross God's will or mislike His providence.<sup>1</sup> This is tantamount to saying that God directs all events in the world's existence and there is nothing that anyone can do to alter the course of things. Poverty, suffering, and imprisonment must simply be tolerated.<sup>2</sup> In another place, he says, unworthy rulers and social inequalities must be accepted.

"He takes care (whatever thou thinkest) that the higher members, and more exalted and empowered, shall not oppress the lower (no further than he in his wisdom thinks meet).<sup>3</sup>

When someone asked him, Why pray, then?, he answered that one must simply pray the prayer of resignation to God's will.<sup>4</sup> As we suggested previously, this fatalistic submission to the status quo could hardly have made an appeal to most seventeenth century enthusiasts whose religious beliefs were prompted as much by the desire for liberty as for God.

We can make a few observations about these first four steps before noting briefly the last two. First, this is not really an

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 238. (This is part of the mispagination above.)

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 656.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 243. (This is part of the mispagination above.)

It is noticeable that Everard does not recommend prayer or Bible reading as valuable for Christian growth, whereas Francis Rous, labelled as a mystic by Professor Brauer, does. But Rous, in this and other ways, is much nearer the Puritan and Biblical tradition than Everard. Hence it is confusing to relate Rous' experience to any definition of a form of speculative mysticism. It is Everard, more than Rous, who is marked by these mystical emphases. But even Everard is not a speculative mystic.



ascending ladder of perfection as in the form of mysticism where the soul is seeking to escape from the body. Each step merely represents another illustration of the one underlying theme of self-effacement, an extreme form of the asceticism<sup>ic</sup> which had already found its way into some Puritan practice and to which we have already drawn attention. Everard would have said that fasting is an outward and worthless form of self-discipline; but the resignation of all things and desires really accomplishes the avowed purpose of rooting out the self. It is in this light that we can understand the extreme negativism of these first four steps. Secondly, we can see that Everard tends to use language extravagantly in order to produce an effect, and in so doing, perhaps, exaggerates what he really means. When speaking of sin, for example, we could not help noticing how he dramatically heaped all of the world's sin upon every man's back, in a more drastic way by far than the doctrine of original sin. Hence we can see that the ascetic, mystical language really dramatises the need to reject sin in order to come to a personal relationship with Christ.

Everard only summarises the substance of the last two steps in a few brief paragraphs, since he was taken off his public preaching in Kensington before he had had time to preach them in sermon form. But the general direction of his thought is clear.

(5) Conformity to Christ. It is interesting that the emphasis shifts here to a concern for the 'imitation of Christ'. He suggests that, following Christ as our pattern, we should seek to live out

each situation in life as He would.<sup>1</sup> Now, if Everard were a speculative mystic, he might have recommended emulating Christ for the lower levels of the spiritual ascent, but not the higher; for in such a form of mysticism the historical Christ is not the revealer of God's will, but only the outward symbol of the Divine Dark. The seeker for union must therefore advance beyond the historical Jesus, and be rid of His image, as of the image of every other creature.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in the first four steps of Solomon's Throne, we might think that, by his extreme negativism, Everard was recommending this approach to the mystical life. But the concern for the historical Jesus, here near the top of the ascent to union, reveals the ethical and practical bent to his thinking. It also gives us the clue to interpreting what he means by the last step, Deiformity.

(6) Deiformity. This is the state in which a man acts no more for himself, but God's will is now supreme within. Here at last, a man may cry out, 'Christ liveth in me'. Now, all of the members of his body are instruments of righteousness in God's hands.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of 'deification' has had an ancient and at times respected place in Christian theology.<sup>4</sup> Among many Church Fathers this conception was considered the necessary corollary to the doctrine

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.131.

<sup>2</sup>Heiler, op. cit., pp.150-51.

<sup>3</sup>S.G.T., p.131.

<sup>4</sup>Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma, tr. James Millar from the Third German Edition (2nd impression; London: Williams and Norgate, 1912), III, p.164. The Greeks spoke of salvation as 'deification' and meant by it imperishableness more than justification. (pp.165,288f.)



of the Incarnation, as in the oft-quoted phrase of Athanasius, "For He was made man that we might we made God".<sup>1</sup> Later, the mystics used it in two distinctly different settings. Eckhart, on the one hand, expanded the Patristic view according to his Neo-Platonic mould of thinking and said,

"Our Lord says to every living soul, 'I was made man for you, and if ye are not God for me ye wrong me.'"<sup>2</sup>

This is what Dean Inge has called 'essentialisation'<sup>3</sup>, because it is a philosophical notion expressing the transmutation of the soul into a state corresponding to the object of its quest.

On the other hand, there is a form of deification which has been called 'substitution', which is more religious than philosophical, and arises from a feeling of sinfulness.<sup>4</sup> The soul, longing for a righteousness which is imparted, not merely imputed, claims the experience of the immediate, personal, indwelling of Christ in the soul. The will becomes passive, and it is God who acts within.<sup>5</sup>

Though Everard at times sounds like the first, especially when he describes the soul as 'swallowed up into God', yet he can also speak positively, asserting his individuality in relation to Christ, as "yet we are, we have a being"<sup>6</sup>, or "we are more than thou canst

<sup>1</sup>A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, tr. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace ("Second Series"; New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1892), p.65.

<sup>2</sup>Eckhart, op. cit., p.144.

<sup>3</sup>William R. Inge, Christian Mysticism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), p.358. (Appendix C).

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.364.

<sup>6</sup>S.G.T., p.756.

imagine"<sup>1</sup>, and "we are members of the very body of Jesus Christ".<sup>2</sup> We have also noticed his emphasis on the imitation of Christ. Thus in reality his concern is genuinely moral and personal, and the union of which he speaks is truly with Christ, not with an impersonal Deity. As a matter of fact, the experience of union is described most frequently in the erotic imagery of the 'Mystical Marriage', or Christ as the 'Bridegroom'.

"Beloved, were you but once come to this sight, you should behold God, glorious and amiable, full of love and mercy, and tender bowls: All wrath and frowns blown clean away... but there will be a most sweet and amorous beholding of one another: he will love and delight in us, and we shall love and delight in him."<sup>3</sup>

"Love is the knot that must unite us eternally, that must forever knit us together..."<sup>4</sup>

This certainly implies the personal relationship to God in Christ. Though this had been used by many mystics whose writings Everard had seen, we must remember that there were, within Puritanism, many who were not at all mystical, but who also spoke in this fervent, imaginative way. Among conservative evangelicals, Sibbes and Bayly often spoke of Christ as the Bridegroom of the soul or of Christ as born within.<sup>5</sup> Saltmarsh, while still an Anglican, expressed great joy in the nearness of the Bridegroom, "every part of my soule is musicall when thou art with me..."<sup>6</sup> Howgill,

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.361.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.462.

<sup>5</sup>Brauer, op. cit., p.39.

<sup>6</sup>John Saltmarsh, Holy Discoveries and Flames (London: Printed by R. Y., 1640), p.18.



a Quaker<sup>1</sup>, and many other preachers in the left wing all partook of this same kind of terminology. Thus while Everard used a framework of Neo-Platonism, it is not unlikely that his chief interest was really in presenting a Christ who could be known in experience.

This concludes a consideration of the first of the two ways of expressing the mystic way to union with God. The Six Steps to Solomon's Throne began with a negative, ascetic demand for self-effacement which led up to an experience of union which was actually more devotional than metaphysical, and more moral than intellectual. It is obvious that Everard has been concerned throughout with the problem of real versus imputed righteousness. He cannot tolerate hypocrisy, or any person's claim to be what he is not. This underlies the intensity with which he condemns the self and any form of religious pretence. In this respect he shares with Fox the same primary conviction, but in contrast to him, Everard is extremely pessimistic about human nature, and the possibility of a genuine change through faith in Christ. Consequently, the only path which opens up to him is that of self-denial, and he ventures down it courageously, undaunted by the radical demands to reject all forms of the assertion of the self. The climax of this pursuit of nothingness is the union with Christ, and the glad acknowledgement that His will now reigns within.

The second of the two descriptions of the soul's ascent to God centres around the idea of sharing the life of Christ in the soul.

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<sup>1</sup>Howgill, op. cit., pp.34-36.

In this, Everard is distinctly in the tradition of the western mystics, men like St. Bernard, who, though not free of the primary aim to deny the self, nevertheless do not express it in such grossly negative terms as those used by Eckhart. It is interesting that Bernard was the first to give a comprehensive treatment to the life of Christ as the object of contemplation.<sup>1</sup> In one sense it is a return to a concern for the Incarnation as emphasised by the Patristic writers, and in another, it brings the mystic life back to more of a psychological than metaphysical relation to Christ.

Much of Everard's language and feeling for the closeness of Christ has apparently been inspired by Tauler who often points to the sufferings of Christ as worthy of contemplation,

"Therefore, if we desire to follow Him, we must mark the way which he has shown us and trodden for three and thirty years, in misery, in poverty, in shame, and in bitterness, even unto death."<sup>2</sup>

He clearly distinguishes between suffering of different degrees of merit. In the lowest, men are merely bearing the consequences of their sins. In the next degree they are suffering from hardship and privation. But in the highest, which is for those who wish to experience the vision of God, they share the sufferings of Christ Himself. By the last, he means the willingness to become nothing, to share with the Son the cup of humiliation, and the dishonour that men heaped upon Him.<sup>3</sup> It is thus Christ's rejected humanity which

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<sup>1</sup>This is really Bernard's greatest contribution to the mystical life, rather than the speculative side of his teaching, for which he owes much to Augustine. (Inge, op. cit., p.140.)

<sup>2</sup>Tauler, op. cit., p.320.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp.262-64.



is the pattern for the sufferings of those who would know Him in union. Everard builds his whole dramatic scheme upon this foundational idea.

We are to share fully both in the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, but humiliation must come first. He describes it as the Christian's year,

"his winter of affliction and suffering, and his summer of joy, refreshing, and consolation...his night and evening of darkness and sorrow, and then his morning of joy and refreshing."<sup>1</sup>

This sharing of the divine life must begin with the birth of the Son in the soul. Everard and Fox again share the same concern that the Jesus of history be the Christ of experience. Everard, for example, in a passage characteristic for its emphasis on the inwardness of the events of Christ's life can say,

"As one of the Fathers said, It was not that Christ that the Virgin Mary carryed in her womb, that did save her, but that Christ that she carryed in her heart."<sup>2</sup>

As we noted before, however, Everard implements this concern for inwardness with a negativism foreign to the spirit of Fox. Hence, in the Gospel Treasury the Divine Birth takes place in the midst of the pain and agony of the soul's struggles with sin. This is a real fight against the lower nature, and the inward birth is pictured as coming at the height of the struggle,

"But before this time, when you see the woman in travel and hath great pain, and cryeth out extreemly, and hath bitter pains, then you know the childe is near delivery; that is, when this beloved old man...cryes out like a travelling woman...When you hear your flesh cry out, Oh! would to God I had never been born...But know, Beloved, when these pains are upon you, that the childe is at the birth, near to be delivered."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>S. G. T., p. 108.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 60-61.

This sharing of Christ's life, from the birth just described to death and resurrection, follows a consistent pattern of allegorisation of Scripture, taken mostly from the Gospels. For example, as the star appeared in the east after Christ's birth, in like manner will the star appear in us to lead us to Him, and "...then He increases and grows up in us...".<sup>1</sup> Here is the positive emphasis on the need to grow in grace, and also the warm devotional touch characteristic both of the devotional side of the mystics and many seventeenth century Puritans.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, as Jesus was circumcised, we are also to submit to any outward ordinances which are imposed on us.<sup>3</sup> Though acknowledging the Sacraments in the lower stages of the spiritual life, the implication is that they can be later cast aside, even as later Jesus in His resurrection triumphed over the Law.

Jesus, in His youth, put the Doctors in the Temple to confusion, and we must let Him put to shame within ourselves the doctors of pleasure, profit, honour, arrogance, and reason.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as Jesus turned the water into wine at Cana of Galilee, and the guests discovered that it was better than had been served at first, we are to find that the truths of the Gospel, though bitter and painful at first, are at the last most blessed and promising of the best joy.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.59.

<sup>2</sup>He devotes an extensive part of another sermon to this theme of growing, Ibid., pp.568-73. "That faith which is not a growing faith, is not a true faith...and that light that increaseth not, is not true light; that Christ that grows not in you, dwells not in you." (pp.568-69.)

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.63.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp.64-72.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.73.



As He healed many then, so will Jesus open our blind eyes, unstop our ears, and open our mouths to show forth His praise. He shall die in us and be raised again.<sup>1</sup> We are to share His life in every detail of it. In contrast to his negativism elsewhere, he tends here to emphasise what Christ will do in and for a man, and what he will do for Christ. He concludes this section with a passage of genuine beauty wherein he is seeking to express more the Pauline yielding of the will to Christ, than the complete denial of self.

"...Have I been the man that hath put the Son of God to death? Have I trampled his blood under my feet? I will not any more adde to his torments, no not to gain the world. Hath he dwelt so near, been my guest, and lodged within me?, been my life and my stay? And have I been he that hath starved and famished him? Have I so often mockt, whipt, derided, crucified him? Rather than I will do it again, I will dye ten thousand deaths...I will now be ruled by him, I will now do his will not mine own: I will now (by his assistance) live as he will have me live...And so by this means Christ shall be fed, nourished and brought up..."<sup>2</sup>

The greatest amount of space and emphasis in this sharing of Christ's life is nevertheless on the aspect of sharing His suffering. Going even beyond the illustration from Tauler, Everard passes by Christ's sufferings on the Cross, and thinks rather of the self-emptying of Christ in His Incarnation. It is not that he denies the Cross or the pain which Jesus suffered there, but he felt that men who limited it to the thirty-three years of Jesus' earthly life, vastly underestimated the extent of the Divine suffering.<sup>3</sup> This meant, however, that Everard skirted around any aspect of man's physical suffering as worthy of spiritual significance. He would

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 587.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 450.

say that for men to suffer in any way but in the pain of self-denial, be it ever so difficult or tragic, would still contain the element of self in the suffering. There would always be the likelihood of complaint and bitterness. As Augustine had said of these, They carry the cross but do not follow Christ.<sup>1</sup>

"Suffering with Christ in the outward man is nothing to these sufferings, namely thus; for a man to lay down his own will, to cross himself, to forsake and empty himself...herein lies the sufferings of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

This statement brings us back again to the same desire for self-effacement as in his "Six Steps to Solomon's Throne", but Everard has followed, not a speculative dualism, but a devotional and psychological concern for sin and the power to overcome it.

Because Everard's conception of the Divine suffering is in the nature of the contradiction of God coming in human flesh, it results in a positive, practical application to the Christian life. It is that God therefore shares man's suffering in its most agonising aspect, the suffering which arises out of the conflict that men are human and yet have a divine destiny. Everard, for example, could say that God could not suffer except in the Word, and the Word only as it indwells man.<sup>3</sup> There is the implication, then, that there is a Divine understanding of a man's involvement in sin.

Nor does Everard lack further references to the positive results of the spiritual life. Though it might seem that on the whole his chief concern is to negate the self, he also insists that the knowledge of God must lead to action:

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.121.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.94.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.90.



"Oh thou whom my soul loveth! She so presseth her suit, as if she would not be satisfied without the granting it: tell me, she would (for all her knowledge) still know more, that so she might do more: she would have her light shine before men, that they may magnifie and glorifie her Spouse and Husband."<sup>1</sup>

Or, using the symbolism of Aaron's rod that budded,

"Those that are accepted to look into the Holies of Holies, their fruit is always flourishing and green; their good works never dye, but they ever after bring forth fruit like a tree planted by rivers of waters."<sup>2</sup>

What sort of thing did Everard expect to find in the Christian's life? (1) Men will experience a new motive of love in their day to day living.<sup>3</sup> (2) Privation, difficulty, and persecution can be more than endured, can even be accepted joyfully in the confidence that God knows about it and is guiding one's life.<sup>4</sup>

"What a comfort is this? to see that when either the North winde or the South winde blow any kind of condition, yet his garden, his soul flourishes, and the spices thereof flow: nothing is a rod to him, nothing a judgment but all that comes is mersy and loving kindness: this is the soul that lives with God and lives in God: this soul is at rest..."<sup>5</sup>

(3) Life can be free of tension and anxiety because one can sit loosely on the world, grasping for nothing beyond that which God is pleased to give.<sup>6</sup> (4) There need be no fear of death, for a man can know the life of Christ within, and have thereby a taste of the Heaven that awaits him.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.433.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.360.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp.440-41.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp.654-55.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp.764-65.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp.762-63.

"Such things as these, and whatever the heart of man can imagine are but poor things to what we shall there have and live with, and live in, in Heaven; the beginnings whereof are given you here as an earnest and first fruits; for heaven is nothing but grace perfected, 'tis of the same nature of that you enjoy here; for he that is united and made one with Jesus Christ by faith, hath a true and real glimpse of those ravishing glories and delights which he shall for ever enjoy."<sup>1</sup>

In this unusual passage, Everard speaks of the Heaven without, as well as within a man. And (5), Christ brings forth the fruit of holiness, for He has come to dwell in the temple of a man's soul, and He lives above the reach of the Law.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting in this connection, that he speaks again of a positive, day to day growing up into Christ. But even here, it is not the same as Fox's conviction of the Seed getting 'atop' evil in a man's life. Instead, to grow up is to learn to depend less and less, as a guide for conduct, on anything outward, such as the Law or Sacraments. As in the following passage, God's will must rather be done from an inner motivation if it is to represent a real righteousness. X

"But when once the true heir comes to age, then cast out the bondwomen and her son...not that they do cast away obedience according to the Law, but that they do it on another account, even from love."<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the premium is placed on inwardness, not on Christ. The implication is that when one attains that state of self-denial when the vision of Christ within is unobstructed by the self, then love for Christ will produce a spontaneous righteousness.

Thus we can see that Everard is seeking to speak with relevance to the needs of men, and though it is not with a popular message, he

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 365.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 550.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 566-67.



does succeed in touching the great issues of his time. He advises resignation and acquiescence to social and political injustices, provides a negative and ascetic version of the current, keen interest in religious immediacy, and gives a promise of real righteousness, though only as the Divine will is substituted for one's own.

It is unthinkable that Everard should have been seriously accused, as he was, of Antinomianism. He did speak, though very rarely, of living above the Law, but when he did, it was, as above, in the context of the ecstatic description of the experience of union<sup>1</sup>, indicating that it was meant only for those who had already travelled the painful road of self-effacement. Everard was certainly not a preacher of easy righteousness, but there were superficial similarities that the careless observer might use to identify him with this heresy.

At this time one of the most vigorous exponents of Antinomianism was John Eaton<sup>2</sup>, whom Haller associates with Everard.<sup>3</sup> Eaton, like Everard, complained that there were many professors of religion who, though zealous about their faith, lacked the true righteousness of Christ in their lives. He believed that justification ought to and did lead to the experience of Christ's righteousness in a man's heart.<sup>4</sup> Beyond this, the similarity in the theology of the two men

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 550.

<sup>2</sup>Gertrude Huehns, Antinomianism in English History with Special Reference to the Period 1640-1660 (London: The Cresset Press, 1951), p. 147.

<sup>3</sup>Haller, The Rise of Puritanism..., p. 213.

<sup>4</sup>John Eaton, The Honey-Combe of Free Justification by Christ Alone (London: Printed by R.B., 1642), pp. 2, 7.

ceases. Eaton believed that justification had been accomplished as an objective fact in the death of Christ. Because God had promised this righteousness to men 'in Christ', Eaton simply assumed that He meant to bestow it unconditionally and perfectly at the moment a man believed.<sup>1</sup> Hence there was no room for Law in any form and this is what disturbed the conservative Puritan who saw that all restraints on the morals of the people were being swept away. As we noticed in his treatment of the Decalogue, Everard also denied the validity of the Law, but he substituted for it another Law more rigorous than the first, demanding by it the denial of inner desire as well as outward act. Now, what this means is that Eaton was simply denying the reality of the flesh by refusing to recognise the continuing fact of sin, the direct opposite to Everard's serious attempt to repress the flesh through self-denial. It is in this light that we can understand Eaton's use of enthusiastic language. In a completely irresponsible emotionalism he declares that he has gone out of the self, is found in Christ, and is even being "made Christ".<sup>2</sup> But the only proof that this is so, is that he feels that it is so and, furthermore, it is this feeling which assured him that he had been made righteous indeed.<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that Eaton and the many like him were not sincere. They did not pretend to be filled with God's power. They felt it. But it was an overpowering enthusiasm that made them suppose a level of spirituality which was not there.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.7,20-22.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.87,423,439-41.

<sup>3</sup>"...if this union bee rightly understood...it works great joy in our hearts; but if it work not this joy, we can neither understand this great glory of it, neither be thankfull for the same." (Ibid.,p.441.)



By contrast, Everard's way led through humility and selflessness to a hard-won and self-evidencing righteousness. We cannot help but wonder at the unique character of George Fox, who, standing apart from all of these, discovered what both were seeking, by accepting the flesh, and the power of Christ to transform it.

It is also interesting in passing that this very repudiation of the flesh led the Antinomians to favour revolutionary solutions to any social or political problem to which they were exposed. Because they had been lifted to another plane of living by this superficial spirituality, they could not easily feel at home in what was fundamentally a false environment.<sup>1</sup> Hence a man like Walwyn would find his Antinomian convictions congenial to the social upheaval which he advocated. Everard's real denial of personal desire left him no alternative save to criticise these men severely.

In conclusion, we must see first of all that Everard's interest in mystical and metaphysical writings places him alongside the keenest intellects of the seventeenth century. Platonism and the Hermetical writings, the Pseudo-Dionysius and the German mystics were eagerly read by men interested in science, in poetry, in philosophy as well as in religion. Some, it is true, were more attracted by what these writings pretended to reveal of the secrets of the universe than by their devotional or mystical side. But in all they confirmed the growing reaction to external authority in thought or the moral life.

The intellectual dominated Everard's sermons too much to give

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<sup>1</sup>Huehn, op. cit., p.18.

them a popular appeal. Nevertheless, his deepest concern is to know God in a personal way. Both Everard and Fox share this basic drive, and both are convinced that this spiritual experience, if genuine, must be accompanied by a profound change in the moral nature. Neither could believe that God intended that those who knew Him should remain a slave to their sins. At the same time, neither could tolerate the easy optimism of the Antinomians. As we have seen, however, Fox and Everard are poles apart in the way in which they go about reaching their common goal, and the former is eminently more successful than the latter. Everard believes that a man must eliminate all self and desire before he can know God in a free and joyful relationship. He thus admits a basic pessimism about human nature and God's power to do anything about it. Fox, in the opposite extreme, is confident that the power of Christ, through discipline and the fellowship of His Body, can transform a man's nature as he submits to it.

It is significant that though Everard does spiritualise the Sacraments and allegorise Scripture, he does not go to the extreme of Saltmarsh, Erbury, Dell, Collier and others, of repudiating these as the vestiges of a lower form of spiritual revelation. They are handmaids to lead the soul to a personal experience with Christ and thus necessary. But in this respect, he reveals again his detachment from national issues, even ecclesiastical ones. Other radicals had been forced to carry the principle of immediacy through to its logical conclusion, and repudiate all externals, in order to demonstrate the truly spiritual rather than secular authority that ought to reside



in the Church. But for Everard the only thing that really mattered was the soul's relationship to Christ. This is one of his greatest weaknesses, and part of the reason for his lack of popular appeal.

If Everard is unique or original in any sense, it is in his method of scripture allegory. From the fourteenth century German mystics he used the two predominant themes that God, beyond understanding in His greatness, is nevertheless in all of His creatures, and that this God can be known through self-denial and union with the Son. He made these ideas serve his own conviction, and a concern which was also growing among many, including the Cambridge Platonists, that only the truly righteous could see God. And he portrayed his message by means of a unique and dramatic allegorisation of scripture. The 'imitation of Christ' was not new. But in the place of the contemplation of the historical life of Christ, Everard substituted an inward experience of a contemporary Christ. Thus the birth of Christ in the soul, and the subsequent sharing of all of the events of saving history were an application of the 'via negativa' of mystic contemplation, in a seventeenth century setting of immediacy. As we have seen, from the Biblical point of view, Everard largely passed over Christ's victory and was interested primarily in His humiliation and suffering. It became thus an extension of an ascetical Puritanism which to Everard had been ineffective because it left the inner nature untouched. Despite the fact that he repudiated the 'letter' of scripture, it nevertheless formed the backdrop of his whole conception of the life of self-denial. But it was a distorted background because his eye fell only on the

suffering Christ and not on the victory of His resurrection. Thus though Everard claimed that he took Scripture seriously by portraying its hidden, inner meaning, in reality he was led away from it by losing the balance of the historical, and by taking a much more pessimistic view, than is consistent with the spirit of the New Testament, of the power of Christ to transform.

Finally, it is interesting to notice how many others were also preaching this same dramatic message that God is in our flesh. John Webster, for example, who confessed his spiritual indebtedness to Everard, could say in a passage that might have been quoted directly from the latter,

"But the true coming of the Messiah and the fulfilling of all the promises concerning him, was by being made Immanuel to us, and being brought forth in us; this is the life and mystery of the Word, and of Christ being made flesh..."<sup>1</sup>

"...be content to sit down in this poverty, to see themselves naked and miserable, and then to wait upon Him, who would certainly come."<sup>2</sup>

John Saltmarsh wrote a brief recommendation for a volume of Thomas Collier's sermons which represents the same theme of the need to renounce self in order that Christ might be born within the soul.<sup>3</sup> And Saltmarsh, himself, in the last year of his life, echoed the same ideas, as we shall see in Chapter Six. Roger Brierley was actually more positive than Everard, not stressing the negative

<sup>1</sup>Webster, The Judgment Set..., p.234.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.241.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Collier, The Glory of Christ, and the Ruine of Anti-Christ... (London: Printed by Giles Calvert, 1647), "To the Reader".



ascetical life, and speaking of the inward birth as "the beginning and fountain of man's happiness and freedom".<sup>1</sup> However, his followers, the Grindletonians, were more ascetical.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Fordage, the Behmenist, was also spreading, among others, this negative mystical idea.<sup>3</sup> We have already called attention to Henry Nicholas and the Familists as demonstrating another channel through which this approach to life was making an impact upon many. The latter two, of course, had admittedly drawn on continental, mystical sources, but the others had undoubtedly been influenced by their contemporaries as well. Thus Everard's writings unlock some of the mystery of the strain of ascetical, negative, and individualistic preaching which characterised so many in the left wing of Puritanism.

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<sup>1</sup>Roger Breirly, A Bundle of Soul-Convincing, Directing, and Comforting Truths (London: Printed by J.R., 16--), p.217.

<sup>2</sup>"Brereley, Roger," Dictionary of National Biography, II, p.1175.

<sup>3</sup>Nils Thune, The Behmenists and the Philadelphians (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1948), pp.29-30.

## CHAPTER SIX

### JOHN SALTMARSH: PURITAN SPIRITUALIST

The religious experience of John Saltmarsh is, for several reasons, of particular interest in the study of radical Puritanism. First, his ecclesiastical pilgrimage from the Established Church to Independency and beyond is significant for the light it shed on what was happening to many in the ferment of the 1640's and 50's. Secondly, as a chaplain in Cromwell's New Model, 1646-47, his preaching points to the type of religious experience characteristic of this Army of saints. Thirdly, the examination of his thought enables us to place in truer perspective men like Everard and Randall, on the one hand, and George Fox, on the other. And finally, he is worthy of study for himself, for he is one of the most luminous, gifted, and large-hearted men in the left wing of Puritanism.

Saltmarsh, of course, in his own day, was considered both by Thomas Edwards and Robert Baillie, to be a dangerous heretic.<sup>1</sup> Richard Baxter, who had refused Cromwell's invitation to act as Chaplain in 1642, repented of it in 1645 when he visited headquarters and saw there the kind of enthusiastic religion fostered by men like Saltmarsh. Expressing the danger that he perceived in the preaching

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<sup>1</sup>Baillie, op. cit., pp.98-9.

Edwards, op. cit., p.115.



of these men, he said,

"Some think the truth will not thrive among us, till every man have leave to speak both in Presse and Pulpit that please: God forbid that we should ever see that day! If ten men's voyces be louder than one, then would the noyse of Errour drown the voyce of Truth... For the godly, compared with the ungodly, are not neer so few as the men of cleer understanding, in comparison of the ignorant: And they that are most forward to speake, that know least."<sup>1</sup>

Samuel Rutherford described Saltmarsh as a Familist<sup>2</sup>, and even if that accusation cannot be wholly substantiated, yet his sympathy with all of these radical sects can lead to the verdict of guilty by association.

Thus it is not strange that modern scholarship has looked upon Saltmarsh as anticipating many of the characteristics of early Quakerism.<sup>3</sup> Professor Haller suggested that his voice was but another added to the swelling tide of such preachers of inward religion as John Everard, Giles Randall, and John Eaton.<sup>4</sup> Through his army experience, he has been connected with the Leveller Movement, which Dr. Frank has described as the "Puritan Revolution's non-mystical left wing".<sup>5</sup> We shall now seek to study his writings

<sup>1</sup>Richard Baxter, Aphorismes of Justification (Hague: Printed by A. Brown, 1655), "To the Reader".

<sup>2</sup>Samuel Rutherford, A Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist Opening the Secrets of Familisme and the Antinomianisme in the Anti-Christian Doctrine of John Saltmarsh... (London: Printed by J.D., 1648).

<sup>3</sup>Sippell, op. cit., p.98.

Johnson, op. cit., considers Saltmarsh the link between the Seekers and the Quakers. (p.ii).

Jones, Mysticism and Democracy..., p.90.

<sup>4</sup>Haller, "The Word of God in the New Model...", p.21.

<sup>5</sup>Frank, op. cit., p.113.

critically from the point of view of the specific problems of the seventeenth century, noticing the relation of his thought to that of those already suggested, but giving special attention to any effect he might have had on the mushrooming Quaker movement.

There are a few important characteristics of the man which are worth mentioning before beginning the study of his pamphlets and books. He was a contemporary of Whichcote and More at Magdalen College, graduating M.A. in 1636. The current revival of Platonism interested him, and probably inspired two slim volumes of poems which he published. Though not brilliant, they did show some talent, and resembled somewhat the metaphysical poetry of George Herbert.<sup>1</sup> This is significant in that Platonism probably introduced him to spiritual religion, his concern for which grew until it became the consuming passion of his life. One fundamental difference which we shall observe between Saltmarsh and John Everard, who was also led to the religion of the spirit through Greek philosophy, is simply that the latter was by nature more intellectual and philosophical, while the former was more devotional and practical. Thus Everard's framework of Neo-Platonism protruded through the fabric of his thought at nearly every point, while Saltmarsh, outwardly at least, seemed to be influenced less.

Many of Saltmarsh's works went through several editions between 1640 and 1660, but the reason was their polemical and not their poetical value. Unfortunately, the most beautiful of all that he

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<sup>1</sup>Schenck, op. cit., p.86.



published, his Holy Discoveries and Flames, was not reissued. This work demonstrates above all his unusual clarity and beauty of style, which is missing from some of his later writings, both because of his absence from his library and the pressure under which they were written. He is also outstanding, among left wing writers, for his modesty and restraint, his terseness, and the obvious ease with which he writes.

In addition to the style of his writing, Saltmarsh stands out from other radical preachers for the tender, loving and forgiving spirit which characterised his whole life. For example, in one of the earlier tracts, he says,

"I here present ye things only to be considered, to be quered, in the behalfe of truth and the advancement of your State, to which I am covenanted; and I am the bolder and freer, having sold something that I had for that pearle, for which we are bidden to sell all..."<sup>1</sup>

The willingness to see the other fellow's side, and to admit that he might not have the whole truth himself, was typical of the latitude of spirit which he showed right up to the end of his brief career. When Edwards defamed him in the Gangraena, he was content to reply that the accusation was false, and pointed out that the latter had not presented the least particle of reason to prove his charge. He desired only that he would repent and write against his own book.<sup>2</sup>

Saltmarsh was also a visionary. At every point in his career he was looking for the perfect Church, and so moved from one form of

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<sup>1</sup>John Saltmarsh, Groanes for Liberty (London: Printed for Giles Calvert, 1646), "To the Reader".

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

its expression to another in the expectancy of finding his ideal. For example, in an early pamphlet, dated 1643, when he was looking to the Westminster Assembly for the reform of the Church, he expostulated with someone for the pessimistic attitude that there could never be a perfect Church on earth.<sup>1</sup> Later, the hopes of the dawning of a new age of the Spirit, preached by the Familists and others, carried him forward on an immense wave of expectancy of a "social order free from all compromise with the world, which would be 'Christian' in the true sense of the word".<sup>2</sup> Hence his sympathy with the Leveller movement was simply this idealism expressed politically. As he himself said, he never took part, while a Chaplain, in the political debates, but preached Christ only.<sup>3</sup> His sharp criticism of Cromwell and Ireton, for having strayed from their loyalty to Christ, doubtless originated mostly from their action to thwart the budding Leveller group.<sup>4</sup> The left wing as a whole shared this intense idealism, though many of the men, as Everard, for example, were not idealists themselves.

We shall divide this study into two parts, looking first at Saltmarsh's shift in ecclesiastical position, and secondly considering

<sup>1</sup>John Saltmarsh, Examinations, or, Discovery of Some Dangerous Positions Delivered in a Sermon of Reformation... (London: Printed for L. Blaiklock, 1643), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, tr. Olive Wyon (2 vols.; London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1931), II, pp. 779-80.

<sup>3</sup>Saltmarsh, A Letter from the Army..., pp. 4-5.

<sup>4</sup>John Saltmarsh, Wonderfull Predictions Declared in a Message... (London: Printed by R. Ibbitson, 1647).



how the tendency toward immediacy in relation to the use of externals in worship, contributed to basic changes in his theological thought.

Ecclesiastically, Saltmarsh passed through all the stages from a parish minister under the Establishment, to an unidentifiable position beyond Independency from which he could sympathise with and appreciate the most radical sect groups. In 1639, he was pastor at Heselton in Yorkshire, and continued in that charge until 1643. At the beginning of this ministry he was a zealous advocate of Episcopacy and conformity. Holy Discoveries and Flames (1640), coming in this period, enables us to see a warm, devotional piety, in the context of the exalted importance of the Sacraments, the ministry, and the unity of the Church. Some of his most beautiful writing recommends the Sacraments as the sphere of God's activity in the soul:

"...now thou art for the sacrament; thou might'st as easily have passed over this Baptism, as over Jordan; but thy holy guests for salvation are in order and method: neither wilt thou come about into thy Church, but the next and nearest way, through this current of Baptisme. Thou stepped'st into the water that we may follow thee...this is thy honour to thy minister, thou wilt not wash unlesse he hold the water, thou wilt not divide John and Jordan."<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of the Eucharist, Saltmarsh emphasises that one is to seek in it the true Bread of Life:

"...thou canst winne us with thy earthly fare to the heavenly, with thy temporall to thy spirituall; thou canst bait thy trap of Christianity with a loafe, and catch us by the soules at such a time of releefe."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>John Saltmarsh, Holy Discoveries and Flames..., pp.12-13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.183.

In these he has struck a fine balance between the Church's mediation of Christ, and the soul's immediate apprehension of the supreme Object of Love. The minister must introduce his people to Him who would be the Bishop of their souls, but the Church must not remain the intermediary, for the highest point in the spiritual life is the personal communion with Christ.<sup>1</sup> Saltmarsh is aware that there are some who would come to Jesus without a mediator, "...they will not be beholden to the Church, they'll find out Jesus themselves...".<sup>2</sup> He does not harshly condemn these, but is chagrined that they have failed to understand the Church's function as mediator.

It is also interesting, in the light of his later spiritual development, that he is keenly pained by the rents and divisions which are becoming so apparent in the Church at this time.

"...division is the leekes of the Kingdome, and where these are open, there may soon spring in a tide which may drown all."<sup>3</sup>

While still in his parish at Heselton, this ardent pilgrim passed through a radical change, mostly in relation to his ideas about the Church and the Sacraments. Within three years after the publication of Holy Discoveries, a flood of pamphlets began to appear in support of the reforming efforts of the Westminster Assembly. One of the first shows the direction which his thought was taking. In answering a sermon delivered by Thomas Fuller, he insisted that any solution which maintained the distance between the clergy and the laity, treating the latter as a "prophane crew, and to be taught their

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.169.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.222.



distance"<sup>1</sup>, would be an incomplete reform. It is interesting that in Sparkles of Glory (1647), he describes the distinguishing mark of the new age of the spirit as simply that the ministry of Jesus Christ is in all His saints, and not in a mere called-out few.<sup>2</sup>

A second tract, written shortly after leaving Heselton, approved the aim of the Assembly, but contended that it was not pressing reform hard enough. He recalled moments in England's own history, when the reform of the Church was stopped short of what might have been accomplished, and warned them to grasp this strategic moment and act.<sup>3</sup>

By 1644 we can see beginning that move away from loyalty to the Presbyterian cause. In Dawnings of Light, Saltmarsh is probing the true basis for reform of the Church, and beginning to ask questions about the legitimacy of its connection with the state. This means, of course, that he has already acknowledged the place of the Spirit, though he is obviously uncertain as to how much authority belongs to each. He admits that though the work goes forward but slowly, God uses human agencies to carry out reform, as He did with Henry, Edward and Elizabeth.<sup>4</sup> He also argues against complete toleration<sup>5</sup>,

<sup>1</sup>Saltmarsh, Examinations..., p.6.

<sup>2</sup>John Saltmarsh, Sparkles of Glory (London: Reprinted for William Pickering, 1847), p.37.

<sup>3</sup>John Saltmarsh, A Solemn Discourse upon the Grand Covenant (London: Printed for L. Blaiklock, 1643), pp.52-53.

<sup>4</sup>John Saltmarsh, Dawnings of Light... (London: Printed for R.W., 1644), p.27.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp.38-39.

which implies that he still believes in the external unity of the Church, and thus in some form of Establishment. Yet he seems to be haunted by the conviction that there is a more spiritual way, a more immediate way of reforming the Church, than linking it with a particular political party in power in Government.<sup>1</sup> In apostolic times the interest of reformation lay in the "naked and immediate power of God, subsisting in its very omnipotence"<sup>2</sup>. Why, then, could this not be the guide post for the Puritan reform? It disturbed Saltmarsh that so many were concerned only with the "naturall interest of Reformation, not upon the supernaturall..."<sup>3</sup> But what this really means for Saltmarsh is that his deepest concern is for a revival of spiritual religion in the Church, and only incidentally, an organisation which will serve this end. If the leaders in Westminster are not striving for such a spiritual awakening themselves, then no Church settlement can represent a true reform. And Saltmarsh is possibly beginning to suspect that they are not wholly committed to this spiritual end.

Thus though the visionary has not been completely disillusioned about the possibility of reform through the Westminster Assembly, he has already committed himself to a concern for spiritual religion which will carry him far to the left. He does not reveal, however, any of the deviations of other radicals on scripture, prayer, or salvation, but only shows an intense desire for Christ's government

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 18.



in the Church, both in its organisation, and personally, in its ministers and laymen.<sup>1</sup>

By 1646, he has finally concluded that Presbytery is as ~~tyrannical~~ as Prelacy, and that it is not interested in a genuinely spiritual reform.<sup>2</sup> Looking back to the Bible for the pattern of spiritual religion, he cannot help commenting that,

"The Apostolical eldership and Presbyterie were more infallible; they were more in the Light, and immediate way of the revelation of truth."<sup>3</sup>

Consequently he was led to write a telling tract, Groanes for Liberty, in which he reminded the House of Commons of the clamour of Presbyterians some four or five years previously over "conscience-yoaks" and "spiritual tyrrany", which they were now re-introducing.<sup>4</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that Saltmarsh proceeds to develop a theme which was already vocal in his writing of two years before, the complete separation of Church and state. He had tackled one aspect of this issue the year before, in Opening Master Prynnes New Book. In this review of the Westminster Assembly debates, he pointed out what he considered to be the error of the Parish system, that the distinction between the church and the world was lost. The implication most upsetting to him was that the Sacraments would be

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>John Saltmarsh, An End of One Controversy... (London: Printed for Giles Calvert, 1646), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>John Saltmarsh, The Smoke in the Temple... (2nd ed.; London: Printed for Giles Calvert, 1646), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Saltmarsh, Groanes for Liberty..., "To the Reader".

offered to regenerate and unregenerate indiscriminately.<sup>1</sup> He could see that this of necessity made the Lord's Supper as much a 'converting ordinance' as the preaching of the Word<sup>2</sup>, an idea now abhorrent to him in his spiritual understanding of the Gospel. He still values the Sacraments for the Christian life, however.

Hence by the following year he had come to feel that the Church could not be constituted by the state, not only because the Church was really a more spiritual body within the state, but also because he felt that all dissenting groups had a right to exist and worship in their measure of the truth. For example, he raised an incisive question when he asked, in the midst of the debates on church government,

"Where is the church now? Not in the Assembly, they are but consulting how to build the church; not in the Presbytery, for that is a church unbuilt yet; not among the Parishes, they are not Scripture Churches or Congregations as the same 'Smectymnus' says; then where is the Church of England?"<sup>3</sup>

The implication was, of course, that the Church is a spiritual body, not essentially an organisation constituted by man's authority. As he said in another tract of the same period, the Church is a spiritual building,

"...of true, reall, essentially spirituall living stones; so the church below is to consist at least of such as visibly and formally appear so; and therefore the Apostle calls them in his epistle saints, and called to be saints."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John Saltmarsh, The Opening of Master Prynnes New Book... (London: Printed for Giles Calvert, 1645), pp.6-8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.12.

<sup>3</sup>Saltmarsh, Groanes for Liberty..., p.13.

<sup>4</sup>Saltmarsh, The Smoke in the Temple..., p.31.



In this last step in his thinking, at least, he must have been deeply affected by others in radical Puritanism who, in repudiating Presbyterianism, were demanding a standard of spiritual religion similar to that advocated by Franck, Schwenkfeld, and Coornheert on the Continent, and the Familists, Seekers, and others in England. When he describes the Seeker position on the Sacraments, he implies that here is an element of truth as important to be recognised as the views of Presbyterians and Independents:

"...because they finde that the power was at first given to the Apostles with gifts, and from them to others, and they dare not take it from Anti-Christ and the Bishops, as the Reformed kingdomes generally take it, nor from the Churches, because they finde no such power begun from the Churches."<sup>1</sup>

Within a very few months he came to feel that even the Seeker position was not spiritual enough for the meaning of the Sacraments.

He was, at this time, ministering to a congregation in Brasted, in Kent, and consistent with the left wing criticism of the tythe, had not only refused that support, but even decided that he should not accept the free will giving of his people.<sup>2</sup> Thus it is readily apparent that the year 1645-46 saw the most radical change in Saltmarsh's position, and the assimilation of those ideas which carried him rapidly beyond Independency to the radicalism of the sects. It is not improbable that what Dr. Frank wrote of William Walwyn could also be said of Saltmarsh,

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<sup>1</sup>Saltmarsh, Groanes for Liberty..., p.23.

<sup>2</sup>John Saltmarsh, An End of One Controversie..., found in Some Drops of the Viall, Powred Out... (London: Printed for Giles Calvert, 1646), p.115.

"As those leading opposition to the King and bishop came closer to power they tended to renege on the implications of their own democratic slogans. Consequently Walwyn more and more found his allies among the political outcasts, the sectaries, who saw in the success of the Puritan Revolution the only guarantee of their own continuance. Himself no sectary, he was compelled by his liberal Antinomianism to identify himself with the persecuted and dispossessed."<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, Saltmarsh had confessed,

"Why do they cry out of Separatists, when they see Separatists have not so much made themselves so, as they have been made so by others, and they have been rather driven away, than they have drawn away themselves."<sup>2</sup>

Thus the incompleteness of the Presbyterian reform compelled Saltmarsh to look to a completely spiritualised meaning for the Church, and led him to adopt the idealistic hopes of those preaching a new age of the Spirit. If his pamphlets are again considered chronologically, this time from the point of view of the development of a theology of the Spirit, further light can be shed on the difficult problem of his transition from orthodoxy to radicalism.

The published poetry of 1636 is chiefly devotional and shows little concern for philosophy or speculative mysticism, though Saltmarsh has obviously been affected by the revival of interest in Platonism at Cambridge. He writes, for example, of the nearness of God within man,

"I live and move in thee; and Lord so neare  
Thou border'st on my essence, thou art here.  
In thee I have my being: when I crie  
Do not remove O Lord, but be still nigh."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Frank, *op. cit.*, p.39.

<sup>2</sup>Saltmarsh, Groanes for Liberty..., p.7.

<sup>3</sup>John Saltmarsh, Poems upon Some of the Holy Raptures of David (University of Cambridge, 1636), p.12.



Or again, the discovery of the God who is within,

"The intellect saw God, and could advance  
To heav'n at pleasure in a blessed trance..."<sup>1</sup>

Because this is poetic and psychological, however, and not mystical, we find that he also takes seriously the fact of sin and the healing which comes in the Sacrament:

"But oh how is this picture ruin'd! Where  
Lives there so much of God, one may say, Here  
Was he presented once? Yet we have juice  
That from a sacred side dropt; we make use  
Of this so rich a colour to redeem  
Gods thus decay'd complexion, till it seem  
As fresh as at the first. Oh may I see  
Such a fair picture so reviv'd in me!"<sup>2</sup>

He also reflects the typical pessimism about the present world as he says,

"My days are like a shadow, ill exprest:  
Ev'n I am but a shadow at the best."<sup>3</sup>

The only real hope for men rests in the Eternal future:

"We are God's tapers, this dark world's his night:  
Death his extinguisher puts out the light:  
Our bodies fall like snuffe; yet will he deigne  
At his great fire to light us up again."<sup>4</sup>

This poetry represents a warmth and devotion in the context of sacramental religion, an acceptance of the finality of sin for this life, and hope of Heaven. Whatever there is of immediacy he owes to Platonism as well as the Bible.

The Practice of Policie, published in 1639, is wholly out of

<sup>1</sup>John Saltmarsh, The Picture of God in Man... (University of Cambridge, 1636), p.7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.8.

<sup>3</sup>Saltmarsh, Poems..., p.5.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.7.

character with the rest of his writings. It expresses a superficial religion unrelated to life, and he later had good reason to repudiate it.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the book is to apply spiritual principles to problems in business and social life, but it reads more like a seventeenth century version of How to Win Friends and Influence People, than advice from a minister. He deals with such things as how to make a good impression<sup>2</sup>, or how to gain a business advantage.<sup>3</sup> He suggests in all seriousness that the cunning tradesman knows how to raise his rate in a quick market<sup>4</sup>, and that one ought to learn how to flatter the great to obtain their favours.<sup>5</sup> He even goes so far as to advocate turning anew to God in time of trouble, "...to strike a new bargaine for a blessing."<sup>6</sup>

If this represents to any degree the depth of spiritual understanding in the ministry at this period, one can understand the hunger in the souls of some for a religion of the Word and spirit which could inspire them to a deeper purity of life. But by 1640, Saltmarsh himself had apparently experienced a transformation of life, for Holy Discoveries is not merely beautiful writing, but an expression of an intense spiritual devotion and moral concern. He is still an Anglican, and as we have already seen, profoundly

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<sup>1</sup>John Saltmarsh, A Vindication of the New Quere from Master Ley's Resolution, found in The Smoke in the Temple..., p.13.

<sup>2</sup>John Saltmarsh, The Practice of Policie in a Christian Life (London: Printed by E. G., 1639), p.24.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp.29-30.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.32.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.184.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.77.



sure that God comes in an intimate, personal way to the soul, mediated by the minister, Church, and sacraments.

What is most significant is that while he is truly sacramental, yet it is the personal relationship with Christ which is ultimate. For example, he uses exalted mystical terminology, in the symbolism of the spiritual marriage, speaking of the revellings and divine espousal of the soul to her heavenly Bridegroom.<sup>1</sup> Even Francis Rous does not outdo Saltmarsh in this kind of expression, and yet the latter is not a mystic in any philosophical sense. He is only describing the immediate relation of God to the soul, as in such other passages, as,

"But Lord, be thou my carpenter (thou wert called the carpenter's sonne) and build mee my house, and give me timber and graces to joist and siele it: give me windows for my house too, for here we see darkly as through a glass...be thou my rock too for foundation...then I shall stand sure all windes and weathers... then shall I be thy house...yet, Lord, if any tile or outward grace bee blown from my house, or any of my wals bee dasht, my casements or doores be cast off the hinges (for those are my doores and passages where my soule can come forth, and look abroad...) do thou, O Lord, repaire all my decayes and dilapidations: so shal thou make me to heare of joy and gladness..."<sup>2</sup>

Or again, when sick of soul and needing the healing of Christ, he says,

"Lay thy hand upon the pulse of my soule, the affections and passions which beat so violently for want of thee..."<sup>3</sup>

Further, he prays that God will make him a fit vessel for His use:

<sup>1</sup>Saltmarsh, Holy Discoveries..., p.18.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.9-11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.24.

"...that the graces and vertues which thou dost powre into me, may not spill nor runne forth...Now that I am thy bottle, fill me, O Lord, with solide vertues...keepe me ever open and cleare for receiving...keepe me cleane and handsome, that no dusty vice nor dregge and less of sinne and corruption staine me... Fill me, O Lord...so that I may powre back myself to thee againe..."<sup>1</sup>

In many ways, Saltmarsh at this point represents the simple, positive, devotional religion of many moderate Puritans and Anglicans. He shares the same respect for the value of fasting which, he says, is a "...diet as will make you a leane man, and a fat Christian..."<sup>2</sup> Many did not go beyond this stage in their spiritual lives, feeling satisfied and at home in the balance between the emotional and the institutional. Even Francis Rous, for all his mystical expression, was content to remain within the reach of the Sacraments and Independency. But somehow Saltmarsh was driven onward by an idealistic hope of finding a Church which would express all that his soul had discovered of the nearness of God. And the more the perfect Church eluded him, the more spiritual were his requirements for it.

His writings reflected little concern for theology for itself, until the appearance of Free Grace, in 1645. It is here that we can see for the first time the development of his thought, two years after he has formally declared himself on the side of the Presbyterians. He no longer recognises the mediation of the Church and Sacraments for the grace of God, nor has he repudiated them as unnecessary to the Christian life. He is evangelical much in the fashion of Preston,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.33-34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.150-51.



Rogers, or Sibbes, whom he admittedly admires and uses as support for his presentation of 'free grace'.<sup>1</sup> He expresses some sympathy with the Antinomian's desire to avoid legalism, but avoids the errors of this irresponsible heresy himself. It is perhaps more for this expressed attitude toward them than for anything he wrote that Edwards and others tended to suspect him. His style is clear and forthright. He continually appeals to the Bible for support in his argument, and is free of his later tendency to deprecate the letter of Scripture. He also avoids the temptation to dogmatise, and shows his largeness of mind in declaring that no man can understand the whole mystery of God in Christ's work of salvation.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, Free Grace is the most truly Puritan stage in Saltmarsh's pilgrimage. He is the typical left wing preacher in making the backdrop for his message, the plight of the 'carnal professor'. This man is ignorant of the riches of grace because he is still under the tyranny of a legal faith. He has discovered no more freedom under the Gospel than he knew under the Law, for he has sought Paul's victory over sin in a literalist or theological way, substituting for the authority of the Spirit, the authority of Scripture, theology or the Church.<sup>3</sup> In saying this, however, he means that the Spirit is still mediated through the Scripture, though the emphasis is on the

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<sup>1</sup>John Saltmarsh, Free Grace: Or, the Flowings of Christ's Blood Freely for Sinners... (2nd ed.; London: Printed for Giles Calvert, 1646). Saltmarsh quotes extensively from the writings of these men at the conclusion of his own presentation.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.121.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., "To the Reader".

former, as interpreter of the latter. Hence, as we shall see, his aim is simply to understand Scripture through the aid of the Spirit, and to experience a measure of the spiritual life of the men of the New Testament.

His version of the Gospel is evangelical and simple:

"Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of sins in his Name, and redemption through his blood, is the first and onely thing held forth in the Gospel to sinners...Jesus Christ crucified is the best story for sinners, and Jesus Christ exalted for saints."<sup>1</sup>

"...in the salvation we have by Christ, we receive all, not doing anything that we may receive more, but doing because we receive so much, and because we are saved."<sup>2</sup>

Saltmarsh makes the simple story of Christ crucified very appealing by telling it as the manifestation of God's love. How seldom in the seventeenth century did the love of God form the background of the Gospel, and how true to the spirit of Scripture when it is so pronounced as here.<sup>3</sup>

"The love of Christ exceeded in this, that he gave himself to die for us when we were enemies to him...and greater love than this hath no man. This is the mystery that man could not live in Christ, till he had killed Christ first: And thus he was wounded in the house of his friends. O all ye that passe by the way, behold and consider, if ever there were mystery like unto this mystery."<sup>4</sup>

"The whole businesse of Christ as it was begun in love, and brought forth in love unto the world, and all the actings and workings of it from God's being in Christ, to Christ's sitting at the right hand of God, are but a Gospel or story of unspeakable love revealed to the world."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.190-91.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.192.

<sup>3</sup>Among some of the more radical men like Walwyn and Winstanley, the theme of God's love can also be found, with social as well as spiritual implications.

<sup>4</sup>saltmarsh, op. cit., p.134.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.139.



Thus even faith is simple persuasion of Christ's love.<sup>1</sup>

It is in this context of the love of God, manifested on the Cross, that Saltmarsh unfolds the central theme of free grace. The soul must rely on the strength of God's love alone, to save. Many have a terrible fear of judgment because they feel they have not been sufficiently sorry for their sins, or because they could not believe that they were of the Elect. But in a series of mock interviews, with persons disturbed by these fears, Saltmarsh assures them that God's pardon is free. When it comes to being saved, men must neither pride themselves on what they do, nor condemn themselves for what they fail to do; and if anyone cannot shake the fear that he is not of the Elect, he is to disregard the doctrine.<sup>2</sup> We are face to face again with this same conflict which we noticed before in the brief side-glance at John Bunyan.<sup>3</sup> There must have been many tender souls who lived in mortal fear of condemnation. Thus how welcome was this assurance of God's love, and how just Saltmarsh's criticism of many pastors,

"...who keep their Patients from healing too soon, that they may make the cure the more admired, do accordingly keep such souls with their wounds open; and if they pour in anything, it is rather wine than oyl, rather something of the Law than the Gospel."<sup>4</sup>

Thus the message of 'free' grace was meant more to guard against the despair of not doing enough to merit Heaven, than to offer too easy an access to it. When he defends his position against Samuel Gataker's

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.94.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.11-31.

<sup>3</sup>Supra, Chapter Two, pp.44f.

<sup>4</sup>Saltmarsh, op. cit., p.37.

accusation of Antinomianism, he insists that even repentance and faith are the work of Christ in the soul.<sup>1</sup> This he does, in order that the assurance of salvation might not depend on whether one can detect the work of grace in his outward actions or not. In the same context as above, he replies to Mr. Gataker by saying,

"For my part, I cannot be so uncharitable but to wish you a better assurance than what you and your brethren can find in your own works or righteousness."<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, Saltmarsh avoids the pitfall of Antinomianism in that he takes sin seriously. He says that this constant inward gaze at the progress of the soul can only reveal how sinful we still are, and thus how completely we need to rely on Christ, because,

"...sin hath ever a stronger side in us then the Spirit; and in this life, the sin is more taken away than the lust, and our blessedness is more in having the curse of it removed, then the corruption; and our justification is more glorious than our sanctification, and our forgiveness from sin than our cleansing from sin. For the just shall live by faith, which is not a life by sense and sanctification meerly, but a life by beleiving in another, in Christ; and therefore our life is said to be hid with Christ."<sup>3</sup>

Here, then, is the more realistic view of sin which is missing in the writings of George Fox. It is a pessimism about the possibility of real righteousness, and the admission of man's humanity. It is thus more Biblical than Fox, and more positive than that type of Puritanism embodied in Bunyan, or in its extreme form, in Everard.

Justification and sanctification are consequently two separate phases of the work of Christ. He says quite realistically that after

<sup>1</sup>John Saltmarsh, Shadows Flying Away..., found in Some Drops of the Vial..., p.137.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.142.

<sup>3</sup>Saltmarsh, Free Grace..., pp.56-57.



conversion a man must not expect to stop sinning.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, he believes in the engrafting of a new nature by the Holy Spirit, "...which weakens and impairs and works out the flesh".<sup>2</sup> If one asked if he ought not to co-operate with the new nature by mortifying the body, he would reply that this does not get at the root of the sinful nature. Rather, there is a more spiritual way,

"...yet it is an implanting, or embodying with Christ in the fellowship of his sufferings, passion, death, and resurrection; and it is a dying to the dominion of sin, more than to the nature of sin."<sup>3</sup>

Therefore it is in one's union with Christ that his sinful nature will "waste and die daily"<sup>4</sup>, and in the context of which one strives against sin.<sup>5</sup>

Union with Christ is one of the great themes of Saltmarsh's writing. He never treats it ascetically, nor does he use the terminology of the speculative mystics. Neither is this merely enthusiastic language to cover a superficial optimism as in John Eaton. To Saltmarsh it is psychological and personal relationship with the Christ within, the 'new man', who is in conflict with the 'old man'.

"But it is Christ crucified, which is the power of all, and in all, it is Christ lifted up as Moses lifted up the Serpent, which strikes in more soundness into the wounded beholder, than any other meerly legal way or experiment, wherein many beleivers have toyed and carnally fished all their time for power over some corruptions; and like Peter and the rest, have caught little or nothing, because Jesus Christ was not in the company."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.61.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.60.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.62.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.64.

<sup>5</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp.68-69.

He also conceives of this relationship as one which must grow:

"...the more of Christ we take against sin, the greater and surer will our victory against corruption and sin be..."<sup>1</sup>

Thus Saltmarsh would simply have men look to Christ within, fix their eyes upon their Saviour, and in walking with Him in a day to day experience, find that He can help them to overcome to a degree against their sins. The experience of Christ which he is recommending is similar to that which we discovered in his writing of 1640. What has changed is the framework in which it is given. Sacramentalism has been exchanged for the theology of 'free grace' from Scripture, that is to say, the Christ within coming not through the sacrament, but through the Divine offer of mercy in Scripture.

Finally, in describing the Christian life, Saltmarsh maintains the delicate Scripture balance between commands to be obeyed, and the grace by which they are to be followed.

"There is a doctrine of holiness in the Gospel, as well as of grace and love; and there are commands for obedience, as well as tydings of forgiveness...God, the Father, may be seen in commanding holinesse, and the Spirit in forming the holinesse commanded, and the Son in redeeming us to holinesse..."<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, he affirms that the law to be obeyed is not merely a law within the conscience, but the law in scripture, not indeed as the letter of the law that the Jews must obey, but "a Law in the hand of Christ, and with the promises of Christ about it, to make it spiritual indeed".<sup>3</sup> This same pattern of obedience through love holds in all situations in life. Because we love Christ, everything that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.68.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.150.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.151.



we have belongs to Him, and "... if he call for their credit, he shall have it".<sup>1</sup> Because God has reconciled us to Himself, we love all whom He loves, the naked, the hungry, and those closest to us, for in being thus reconciled, "...they behold God reconciled to them too; they are now in the way of his love".<sup>2</sup>

Extensive quotation has been made here in order that the contrast to his thinking as revealed by Sparkles of Glory may be fully realised. The most striking feature of his Free Grace is the balanced, positive scriptural approach, in a full appreciation of the work of Christ, on the one hand, and man's continued sinfulness and humanity on the other. The element of immediacy in relation to God is certainly here, but held in check by a serious concern for scripture. He still thinks in terms of the individual rather than the group, or Church, and of personal piety rather than the social or political implications of his thought.

In turning now to Sparkles of Glory, we cannot help noticing that Saltmarsh's disillusionment with the reform efforts of the Westminster Assembly coincides with his turning from this Puritan and Biblical approach, to the idealistic, unbiblical hopes of the sect groups. He himself admits, in one of his last letters,

"Indeed, formerly, I was a stickler in Yorkshire for the Parliament; but I have been since taught (I blesse God) onely to pray for them and obey them."<sup>3</sup>

In thus having been forced to the left ecclesiastically, Saltmarsh

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.170.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.171.

<sup>3</sup>Saltmarsh, A Letter to the Army..., p.5.

found that he could also be at home in the atmosphere of the spiritual religion of the sects, which he came fully to share.

The passion of the preacher is no longer directed solely toward personal salvation and piety. He is rather the harbinger of a new age of the Spirit. The background of this teaching comes indirectly from Joachim of Flora and the German mystics already mentioned, and probably more immediately from the Familist groups. Saltmarsh has nothing new to contribute to this version of the idealistic hope of a new day, but simply adds his voice to the chorus already shouting its advent. Though he is no longer the Christ-centred, biblical preacher, nevertheless he demonstrates a loving spirit, and is humble enough to realise that he still does not possess the whole truth.<sup>1</sup>

In announcing a new day, he makes the familiar criticism of such other reform efforts, as those of Hus, Wyclif, Luther, and Calvin, that these were below "the pure glory of the first Gospel-administration in gifts and ordinances."<sup>2</sup> But he does not mean that what is needed is a return to the ordinances and worship of the apostolic Church as revealed in Scripture. This, the Anabaptists sought seriously to do. In one way the biblicism of the Puritans was also an expression of this desire. Rather, the burden of his message was that the first Gospel dispensation was only the prior phase of an even more spiritual ministry which, in Saltmarsh's own day, was to reach its culmination as a break-through of Christ into

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<sup>1</sup>Saltmarsh, Sparkles of Glory..., p.110.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.69-70.



His own people.

"The Ministry of Jesus Christ the great Prophet in all his saints, or people, or body, is a Ministry exceeding the Ministry of the Gospel in gifts of miracles and other gifts; for that was in some, this in all, that of men more immediately, this of Jesus Christ more immediately; that of some gifts, which, though excellent in their nature and operations of the same Spirit, yet these might be such as were not spiritual but carnal..."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the distinguishing feature of this religion of the Spirit is that now all men are to be gifted alike with the gifts and unction of the Spirit. This in itself is tantamount to repudiating a called-out ministry and the use of the sacraments. In contrast to the Seekers, then, who were awaiting the revelation of new forms, Saltmarsh had advanced beyond all form. Though he admittedly does not know what the true form of the Church ought to be, he is committed to the constant shifting to the left, so long as there is a yet more spiritual form of religion revealed. Consistent with this view, he would now describe Christian maturity in these terms:

"The pure, spiritual, comprehensive Christian is one who grows up with God from administration to administration, and so walks with God in all his removes and spiritual increasings and flowings; and such are weak and in the flesh who tarry behind, worshipping that form or administration out of which God is departed."<sup>2</sup>

It would almost seem as though sanctification is now a process of yielding ever more completely to the Spirit's control in all things, for he says that Christians are to pass through all the different dispensations of Law, Gospel, and finally Spirit, and the end of this last phase is "...to Spirit, and so to more Spirit, and at length

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

into all Spirit...".<sup>1</sup> This is simply a thoroughly consistent form of immediacy, in which the form of the Church is meant to serve the life of the Spirit. If the Spirit is hindered by form in worship, then the Church must dispense with form, not only in worship, but in organisation as well.

Saltmarsh has also spiritualised his expression of the way of salvation. Though he claimed that his book, Free Grace, still adequately stated his position<sup>2</sup>, nevertheless his emphasis has so shifted that he is no longer concerned with justification and sanctification as the way of describing the soul's relation to God. Rather, he uses the terminology of immediacy. Thus, if it is the Christ within that matters supremely, the scripture must now be read as an allegory which portrays this mystery of God in all of His creatures.

"This Gospel, which is no other than the mystery of Salvation, revealed or declared in Spirit to men, is clothed in several administrations, as that of the Old Testament and the New, the Scriptures of both being the Revelation of heavenly things by earthly or created things, or by natural forms and expressions, so as the letter is a parable, figure, or allegory..."<sup>3</sup>

This expresses the same conflict between inner and outer as we saw in Everard, though in the latter it is clothed in the speculative dualism of creature versus spirit. Because all outward events merely typify what is real, Saltmarsh portrays the Christian experience in terms of the re-creation of the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ within.<sup>4</sup> It is only the spirit of Jesus Christ within which constitutes the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 206-208.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 127-32.



true Christian.<sup>1</sup> But this is actually only an extension of his description of the union experience in Free Grace, without the balancing historical factor of an objective atonement and revelation in Scripture. Saltmarsh is much less concerned with theology at this point and does not describe how this birth of Christ occurs within, except to say that "the Christian is one in whom Christ is formed".<sup>2</sup> Hence the awareness of the Spirit within has taken the place of the formal decision to put one's faith in Christ as Saviour.

The concern for Spirit was also accompanied by the same asceticism and pessimism which was typical of nearly all in radical Puritanism except Fox on the one hand and the Antinomians on the other. Saltmarsh felt that no man can see God who has not crucified his own reason, righteousness, will, affection, desire, and lust.<sup>3</sup> He does not deal with this extensively, however, indicating that this was not his primary concern, but rather the spiritualising of worship and the Church.

Because Saltmarsh pictures the Christian life as an ascent to an immediate and spiritual relationship with God, dogmatising on its outward form becomes impossible, and toleration of other forms must follow as a natural and necessary concomitant. He thus does not specifically support toleration until 1646, though it had always been his nature to seek to understand and appreciate the position of others.

In a tract of unusual breadth of insight and understanding, Saltmarsh indicates how he would discover oneness in the Church

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 66-67.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 180-81.

despite the diversity of opinion which existed. He sees each group as needing the other in order that the complete truth of God might be known and expressed, an idea also found in Everard. He suggested, for example, that Presbyterians needed reminding by Independents that there is a unique Body of Christ, a purer communion of saints than that represented by the parish. Anabaptists remind both former and latter that the apostles' baptism was of believers only, and the Seekers hold up before all groups the deeper spiritual experience which lies behind the physical act of sprinkling the water or taking the bread and wine.<sup>1</sup> He is really emphasising that there is actually no final form for the ordinances of scripture, and that to make unity rest on such an outward thing, rather than on the spirit of Christ, did violence to the intent of the Spirit. "And if Christians should not be one, till they be like one another, how little would the peace be."<sup>2</sup> Of course, it is far easier for one who feels that he has gone beyond the need for ordinances to claim that their form is not important, than for one to whom they communicate the grace of God.

It was a far different motive from some in the left wing which prompted Saltmarsh to seek toleration. He was pleading for separation of Church and state in order that minority groups might not live in the fear of persecution by those in power<sup>3</sup>, that there

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<sup>1</sup>John Saltmarsh, Reasons for Unity, Peace, and Love... found in Some Drops of the Viell..., p.122.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.123.

<sup>3</sup>Saltmarsh, Smoke in the Temple..., p.4.



might be freedom to print and write<sup>1</sup>, that men would not be despised either for too much or too little learning<sup>2</sup>, and that heretics be rebuked, as they must, with all spiritual meekness and humility.<sup>3</sup> His chief concern was that all men have the opportunity to seek God in the Spirit.

Though there are many phases in Saltmarsh's spiritual development, yet there are only two major ones from the point of view of a study of immediacy, the period to 1645, and the last two years of his life. The major characteristic of the first, regardless of the shift in his ecclesiastical affiliation, was the personal relationship of the soul with Christ, mediated first through the sacraments and then the theology of 'free grace'. In the second, Saltmarsh has discovered an immediate relationship to God in the Spirit which has taken him beyond the use of any form in religion.

From both periods, there are certain similarities to the thought of George Fox, although the differences tend to become accentuated the more Saltmarsh is carried away by the conviction of a new age about to dawn. Of course, the concern for a religion of the heart is common to all in the left wing. By placing Christ at the heart of his theology in Free Grace, Saltmarsh demonstrated something of the Christocentric emphasis which we have already noted in Fox. The conviction that all men could be saved if they desired to be, was also reflected by Fox, though Saltmarsh did not suggest that God was in all men alike until he had entered the last, more radical phase, when

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.16.

he and Fox bore much less resemblance theologically. In addition, as Dr. Sippell has pointed out, there is in both, the common priesthood of those who have the Word within, in contrast to the traditional Churches where men are gathered about the Word and Sacraments.<sup>1</sup> It is safe to say that both of these men represent a common reaction to the authority of Church and sacraments and a recognition of immediacy in relation to God, which in the end, however, took quite different forms in each of them.

The differences between Fox and Saltmarsh are more pronounced than the similarities, especially in the last phase of the latter's life. In expecting a new age of the spirit, Saltmarsh expresses a different relationship to the Bible and to history than Fox did, for he repudiated apostolic Christianity as a lesser dispensation destined by God to disappear, while Fox breathed again the very life and power of the New Testament. In 1645, Saltmarsh was seriously concerned with Bible truth, as Fox was all his life, but he turned in the last two years to a type of allegorisation which supported his spiritual religion, although, in so doing, he lost contact with history and the Gospel as revealed religion. Furthermore, in contrast to Fox's positive Gospel, Saltmarsh took a more pessimistic, if realistic, point of view about sin. In Free Grace, his awareness of man's continued humanity kept him truer to the balance of Scripture than Fox. Later, however, he adopted an ascetical attitude more characteristic of Everard, though without the

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<sup>1</sup>Sippell, op. cit., p.105.



extreme emphasis on the negation of the self. In addition, he almost always spoke of the soul's relationship to God in individual terms, in contrast to Fox's unique application of the concept of the Body of Christ. Finally, Saltmarsh's earnestness about toleration, and his breadth of spirit, mark him off from Fox. Whereas the former continually asserts that he has not yet found the whole truth, there is no doubt in Fox's mind but that the 'light' is all that he needs. It is thus unlikely that Saltmarsh could have directly prepared the way for the Quaker movement. He does, however, represent a consistent form of immediacy, which indirectly was preparing men everywhere for the message of the 'inward light'.

We must also notice Saltmarsh's debt to the Familists, and his similarity in part to men like Everard. Though Saltmarsh did not adopt the mystical tendencies of Henry Nicholas, he certainly reflected the revival of the hope of a new age of the Spirit so pronounced in the latter's writing. It is interesting that what the Neo-Platonist mysticism was to Everard, as a framework for immediacy, the Joachimite hope became for Saltmarsh. Neither completely absorbed the external thought form which he used, but both discovered that it furthered the desire to know God immediately. Everard's use of mystical writings follows his chief interest in personal piety, attaining real righteousness through union with Christ, while Saltmarsh's concern for the new age shows that his main interest is in worship and the Church. We have already pointed out that for both, there resulted an allegorical approach to the scripture, the loss of the historical perspective, the feeling for Christ as

contemporary, and an ascetical and pessimistic view of the Christian life. Everard, however, does not repudiate the Sacraments, since the framework of his speculative philosophy does not require it, as does Saltmarsh's new age of spirit. There is one final point of comparison, which, though minor in one sense, does reveal the similarity in spiritual attitude between these two men. Like Everard, Saltmarsh speaks of prayer as though it were the remnant of a lower form of spiritual worship, which in the fulness of the spirit would pass away:

"Prayer is the workings and weaker or fainter manifestations of the Spirit of God in the Christian, while he is in bondage, that is, while God is not the fulness, the light and glory, and all in all unto him; for where there is any asking, or seeking, or desiring there is not perfect rest."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the results for the spiritual life were practically the same, whether the preacher followed the inspiration of the mystics, or the prophets of a new age, for behind the use of both was the primary concern for immediacy in relation to God, and the suspicion that being in the body somehow prevented that full and complete union with Him.

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<sup>1</sup>Saltmarsh, Sparkles of Glory..., p.148.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### VARYING DIRECTIONS: WINSTANLEY, SMITH, STERRY

It is becoming apparent throughout this study, that if the one unifying theological concern in the left wing was the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, there was another concept, nearly as important, which demanded the attention of everyone. That was the relation between Justification and Sanctification. The left wing radicals framed the problem thus, Was there a real righteousness which characterised the man who knew Christ in a personal way? If there was, did it result simply by being imputed? The Antinomians thought so. Or, might it be the transforming work of the Inward Light, in the fellowship and discipline of others in that Light? The Quakers testified that this was true. Again, did it lie rather in self-denial, and the union with Christ? Everard, and many like him, felt that this was the only way. Many others were also struggling with this problem which had been forced upon them, and we shall now take a brief look at three of these.

First, Gerrard Winstanley, a unique figure of this period, was demanding what he considered to be real righteousness in the social relationships of the seventeenth century. Secondly, the Cambridge Platonists, who were concerned primarily with the problem of reason and revelation, were nevertheless emphasising that only the truly righteous were prepared to hear God's voice. Thirdly, Peter Sterry,

Platonist and poet, was dramatising a spiritual life in which goodness came forth as the spontaneous result of the sharing of the Divine nature.

#### Gerrard Winstanley

As we have already encountered in our study of others in the left wing, there has been some confusion over the religious position of Gerrard Winstanley. His use of the term, 'Inward Light', along with other similarities of language, have led several to feel either that he is the direct precursor of the Quakers<sup>1</sup>, or else that his writings bear a marked resemblance to theirs.<sup>2</sup> Another feature, his tendency toward secularism, led another writer to interpret his mystical language as merely the result of the failure of his social reform.<sup>3</sup> As Dr. Schenk has rightly pointed out, however, he is a deeply religious man whose social philosophy arises out of his spiritual convictions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hudson, "Gerrard Winstanley...", suggested that Saltmarsh, Randall, Winstanley, and Dell belonged to a mystical sect which was the precursor of Fox. (p.180.)

<sup>2</sup>Lewis H. Berens, The Digger Movement in the Days of the Commonwealth (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co. Ltd., 1906), pp.49-67. Dr. Berens fails to show any real similarity between Fox and Winstanley. He does not actually quote Fox to substantiate his claims, but only refers vaguely to the 'Inward Light' and silence in the Meeting.

Sabine, The Works of Gerrard..., p.34.

<sup>3</sup>David W. Petegorsky, Left Wing Democracy in the English Civil War (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1940), pp.115,178-79.

<sup>4</sup>Schenk, op. cit., p.110. This is by far the best treatment of Winstanley from the standpoint of his religious thought, for it sees him as a part of the seventeenth century, something that previous studies all failed to do.



We shall be concerned primarily in tracing the development of Winstanley's thought, and in discovering that particular kind of mystical experience of the left wing which gave rise to his social philosophy.

Four tracts, all written in 1648, before he received the vision which directly preceded the experiment at Cobham, provide an excellent source for judging his spiritual background. In none of these did he elaborate a social programme, and only in the last, Truth Lifting Up Its Head, do there appear with any definiteness the signposts which led him to a plan of action in his social and economic reform.

In all of his writings Winstanley is dramatic and imaginative, allegorising Scripture unashamedly, and without any concern to justify why he should use that method. In contrast to Everard, who was always anxious to state his orthodoxy, he had no regard whatever for traditional religion, and expressed toward the clergy an increasing antagonism which in his writings grew to a major emphasis. But at the same time he was deeply religious, a thinker, and a man of action, and any interpretation of him which fails to take this into account must fail to see him as he really was.

Winstanley shared the same enthusiasm of many other radicals for the theme of the immanence of God. Interestingly enough, in his expression of it, we can see a repetition of four of the major points of Everard's thought. He is both mystical and ascetic, a universalist and perfectionist. We shall note briefly how he develops these ideas in his early writings.

In the Mysterie of God, which was written to justify universalism, Winstanley uses, to portray his main theme, the very familiar seventeenth century allegorisation of the story of the Garden of Eden. The 'mystery of iniquity', man's selfishness, was the forbidden fruit which, when Adam partook of it, brought pride, envy, and discontent in its wake.

"...and so this self-honouring would sit in God's temple, that is the Humane nature, which God made a garden for himself to walk in."<sup>1</sup>

But it would be a reproach to God if men were allowed permanently to mar His will for creation, and so the 'mystery of God',

"...is to destroy this serpent out of flesh, and all beeings, that is enmity against him, and to swallow up his creature man into himself, and so there may be but one only pure, endlesse, and infinite being, even God himself all in all, dwelling in this garden, menkinde..."<sup>2</sup>

To Winstanley, the world has already seen this great mystery illustrated in the man Jesus, "who was the first manifestation of this great mysterie of God".<sup>3</sup> God dwelt bodily in His human nature, even as He will "in every man and woman without exception".<sup>4</sup>

Unless it be a crass optimism, this mystical conception necessarily demands self-denial in the deepest spiritual sense, and so Winstanley also says,

"To advance selfe, and deny God, is the creatures' death. But to deny self and to acknowledge God, is the creatures' life..."<sup>5</sup>

What he means by the 'self' is not clear in this first tract, but in

<sup>1</sup>Gerrard Winstanley, The Mysterie of God... (Printed in 1648), p.7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.7-8.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.8.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.10.



the succeeding ones, we shall see that he emphasises more and more the things which men seek in the material world, and the greed which drives them on to obtain them.

Also typical of the radical enthusiast of his time, was Winstanley's testimony to having risen above the power of sin. He had obviously had a profound spiritual experience himself, which he described in the phrase "...since God revealed his Son in me", and from that time had experienced victory over sin.

"...yet every appearance of this wicked one in me becomes his further ruine, and shall never rise to rule and enslave me as formerly...God hath freed me therefrom, and taken me up into his own being, so that now his wisdom, his love, his life, his power, his joy and peace, is mine..."<sup>1</sup>

This same fervent, mystical writing carries over into the next three tracts as well. Though the Breaking of the Day of God is largely his dispensational teaching, he speaks in a mystical vein which is not, on the surface, too unlike Fox:

"Now brethren, you I speak to, in whom the serpent is subdued, you see and feel that God is your Teacher, your comfort, your life, your strength, your liberty, you are set free by him, and it is a sweet satisfying freedom..."<sup>2</sup>

These same men whom he thus addresses, are those whom God is using in these last days to 'bruise the serpent's head' and usher in the new age. Many despise this anointing of God upon mechanics, tradesmen, and carpenters, but nevertheless these have proved that Christ is King "in their own experience".<sup>3</sup> Winstanley is thus thoroughly in

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.14.

<sup>2</sup>Gerrard Winstanley, The Breaking of the Day of God... (London: Printed for Giles Calvert, 1648), "To the Reader".

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.14.

sympathy with the religion of the radical Independent 'mechanic preacher', and convinced that God is within them, and within himself, in a dynamic and personal way:

"...and Jesus Christ as he is called the Anointed of the Father, cannot properly be called a perfect man, if he should be separated or stand at a distance from the saints."<sup>1</sup>

Saint's Paradise again reveals a marked mystical element which at certain points is closely associated with Fox and Everard. For instance, when he speaks of the scriptures, he justifies his method of interpretation in the way that Fox often did:

"But if the same anointing, or power and wisdom of God dwell and rule in you, as did appear in the Prophets and Apostles that writ, then you can see into that mysterie of the scripture...and so can speak the minde of the Scriptures though you should never see, hear, nor reade the Scriptures from men."<sup>2</sup>

But he is far less persistent in his desire to seek the true meaning of scripture than Fox. Rather, he is really more like Everard, if not more prone to disregard the 'letter'. He says that he had come to realise that knowing the scriptures was not enough; "...for I rested in those beams, not in him that was the sun, from whence those beams came...".<sup>3</sup> He had now discovered the God of the Bible in an immediate relationship, and like other mystical enthusiasts, could say, "...that to rest and lie down in God alone is the sweetest rest that ever you tasted of".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.31.

<sup>2</sup>Gerrard Winstanley, The Saints Paradise... (London: Printed for Giles Calvert, no date), p.14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.17.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.19.



Perhaps the most interesting mystical idea which he portrays in this tract is that of God, suffering in these saints which endure persecution.

"Therefore now Judge if God be not the chief sufferer, because they will not leave God a seed on earth..."<sup>1</sup>

This striking idea must have been encouraging to many who suffered for their convictions, and was often appealed to by the radical preachers. Everard had said practically the same thing, though without making this personal application, "Christ in himself cannot suffer, but he suffers in his body, in his members."<sup>2</sup>

As we have suggested, Winstanley develops his ascetic notion around the idea of men's desires for things in the world. And thus in this tract he says

"God bids the heart trust in him by inward whisperings, the heart, not knowing God, looks after the creature, and thinks it cannot live without money, lands, help of men, and creatures; this is the Devill that tempts."<sup>3</sup>

The spirit of this negativism is the same as Everard's.

Truth Lifting Up Its Head represents in some respects a maturing of Winstanley's thought. He is less personal and mystical, and though he still preserves the emphasis on the complete inwardness of religion, he turns it to the wider application of the redemption of the whole of creation. He uses many different types of imagery to preach this message. We shall select three which together give a balanced view of the mystical character of his thought.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.25.

<sup>2</sup>S.G.T., p.90.

<sup>3</sup>Winstanley, op. cit., p.32.

The first is his use of the term 'Reason' to characterise the God who is within.<sup>1</sup> He tells us that this name is only one of many names given to God, but he prefers it because,

"Reason is that living power of light in all things; it is the salt that savours all things; it is the fire that burns up dross, and so restores what is corrupted; and preserves what is pure..."

"It lies in the bottom of love, of justice, of wisdom; for if the Spirit Reason did not uphold and moderate these, they would be madness; nay, they could not be called by them names; for Reason guides them in order, and leads them to their right end, which is not to preserve a part but the whole creation."<sup>2</sup>

The implication is that religion and the state have distorted true love and justice by making laws which serve their particular desires and by leaving the poor, the other part of creation without redress, and with only the hope for betterment in the next life. To Winstanley it is unreasonable "...to preserve one creature and destroy another"<sup>3</sup>, and yet this is what the existing social conditions were doing. If men would only look within to Reason, the Spirit of the Father,

"...which as he made, so he knits the whole creation together into a oneness of life and moderation; every creature sweetly in love lending their hands to preserve each other, and so upholds the whole fabrique."<sup>4</sup>

Thus 'Reason' really "makes a man to do as he would be done unto".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Schenk is correct in saying that this does not represent any 'scientific rationalism', but is rather Winstanley's unique religious terminology by which he attempts to describe the working of God's Spirit within. (Op. cit., p.107.)

<sup>2</sup>Truth Lifting Up Its Head, pp.104-05. (S.)

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.105.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.108.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.109.



This is the 'golden rule' operative in social relationships. This idealism is simply the expression of the demand for real righteousness from those who profess to be 'in Christ'. His anti-clericalism arises from the fact that as long as religion is the handmaid of the state, she cannot be true to this standard of real righteousness. Hence where Everard was concerned because traditional religion left the individual's moral life as corrupt as the man of the world, Winstanley was just as keenly interested in the same problem in social relationships.

There was one troublesome matter, however. If Reason is in all men, then why does It allow men to go on acting unreasonably toward one another in oppression and injustice? Winstanley's answer to the question reveals that he still believes in the principle of self-renunciation:

"To destroy the powers of the flesh; which leades creatures into diverse waies of opposition one against another, and to bring all into experience of that sweet rest and peace that is in the unity of himselfe, the one spirit."<sup>1</sup>

He has not yet realised that he cannot leave it to God alone, in quiet waiting, to bring in the new day.

Secondly, Winstanley's treatment of the Gospel story of the death and resurrection of Christ illustrates his inwardness and his growing concern for the redemption of all of creation. He passes briefly over the meaning of personal salvation, making it simply an identification with the spirit of Christ,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.110.

"And therefore when the same Anointing or Spirit that was sent downe into that body; is sent down into yours, changing your vile bodies and making them like that glorious body, killing all the cursed powers in the flesh; making your flesh subject to the Spirit; now you are become one with Christ, and with the Father, which is your salvation."<sup>1</sup>

He has no time for a theology of Justification or interest in the historical events of the life and death of Christ. However, he does make his own unique application of these events in portraying the universal salvation of all of created life. First, in His patient and uncomplaining death, Jesus removed the "venome" from those whose covetousness and violence had put him to death.<sup>2</sup> Because they could thus not "distemper" him, "...hee gives testimony to the world that it is he himself that is the Seed that bruises the Serpent's head...".<sup>3</sup> But more than this, having killed the spirit of venome in flesh,

"...that body being laid in the earth purges it from that curse that man had filled it with by his unrighteousnesse; and so his spirit doth spirit the Earth in righteousness."<sup>4</sup>

Thus the death of Jesus serves to redeem not only mankind, but all of creation. To show that he really refers to the whole of creation, he makes the body of Jesus in the earth restore the four elements of creation, fire, water, earth, and air,

"...and so he spreading himselfe in the body of the Creation took of the curse: so that the foundation of the restoration of all things was laid in and by him."<sup>5</sup>

The direct source of this unique teaching is difficult to find.

Through the widespread interest in Hermetical and Theosophical writings,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.112-13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.113.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.116.



we know, of course, that there was a general belief in the divine harmony of the universe<sup>1</sup>. Paul also had promised that creation should be redeemed.<sup>2</sup> But whatever the original inspiration, Winstanley has certainly made his own interpretation of it. The most interesting thing about this idea is that it leads directly into the underlying assumption of his economic philosophy, that the earth must become a 'common treasury'. Though he does not develop this conception until he writes The New Law of Righteousness, the idea is implicit, that if Christ is restoring all of creation through His death, it is in order to restore the primitive state of common ownership. It is very evident that his mystical ideas gave rise directly to his most radical social theory.

Thirdly, in portraying the realisation of his idealistic hope, Winstanley again uses language characteristic of Fox when he says,

"...that the same spirit that hath layne hid under flesh, like a corne of wheat for an appointed time, under the clods of earth, is now sprung out, and begins to grow up a fruitfull vine, which shall never decay...This is the graine of mustard seed..."<sup>3</sup>

What he means, of course, is that created flesh should be subject to the spirit. This is a form of negativism, and a way of dramatising Everard's hope that covetousness and greed shall be eliminated in men. There is really little similarity to Fox, for when he speaks of the 'seed' the latter uses the imagery of Genesis 3:15 to illustrate

<sup>1</sup>Nuttall, "'Unity with the Creation'..", p.135.

<sup>2</sup>Rom. 8:21-23.

<sup>3</sup>Truth Lifting Up Its Head, p.124. (S.)

salvation from sin, whereas Winstanley's seed is a growing consciousness of the claims of the 'golden rule' as a way of life.

We have liberally illustrated Winstanley's mystical writing in order to see him in the perspective of the seventeenth century, and to show that his is a genuinely religious spirit, despite the seeds of secularism which can be seen even in his earliest writings. We must also take a brief look at three other themes, all found in these first four tracts, which bear on our understanding of his later position. These are his quietism, dispensationalism, and anti-clericalism.

We have already seen how Everard's negative attitude toward himself, and his conviction that God fills all things, drove him to accept all situations in life with meekness and surrender. The same is true of Winstanley. In his first tract, The Mysterie of God, he says,

"...for as God is a Spirit, he delights in spirituall things, but these outward creatures were made for the pleasure, profit, and use of man while he is carnall, and stands in a being distinct from God: and when man is made spirituall, and swallowed up in life, or taken into the beeing of God, there will then be no more use or need of these outward creatures, as cattell, corn..."<sup>1</sup>

One has no interest in fighting for his rights to this world's goods if he has repudiated them as part of a lower form of existence. Strangely enough, this same attitude persists throughout all these tracts, even though he is developing an incipient social concern as well. In Saints Paradise, for example, he advises his hearers to strip themselves of all desire for outward things, and "trust

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<sup>1</sup>Winstanley, The Mysterie..., pp. 20-21.



providence for subsistence...".<sup>1</sup> Even their unjust suffering must be endured silently because by this the Father is perfecting them.<sup>2</sup> Of course, this meekness in the face of persecution characterised the Diggers in all of the difficulties they faced at Cobham, but at least, by then, they had decided that the time to trust God for food had passed and that they must now act in accordance with their rights to the 'common treasury' of the earth.

There is a spiritual quietism in Winstanley's writings as well. It is best illustrated in his advice on praying, which obviously arises both out of his disdain for outward expressions of the religious life, and his passion for deeds rather than words. First and most important, prayer is simply living by the 'golden rule' and in moderation.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, it is the "reasonings of the heart", by which a man looks within to judge if his actions correspond with his words.<sup>4</sup> Thirdly, and least important, it is a form of words which, if used without the Spirit's direct prompting, are not even acceptable by God as prayer.<sup>5</sup> Since so many radicals repudiated it as an exercise of the spiritual life, prayer must have been regarded by many in the seventeenth century as merely a means of gratifying personal needs, rather than a communion with God.

Winstanley's anti-clericalism was implicit from the first also,

<sup>1</sup>Winstanley, The Saints Paradise..., p.33.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.61.

<sup>3</sup>Truth Lifting Up Its Head, pp.136-37 (S.).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp.137-38.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp.140-41.

though not voiced with clarity until The New Law of Righteousness.<sup>1</sup> As we have suggested, it does not denote in itself a repudiation of religion, but only of that church which in his eyes was no longer serving Reason, but the state. Thus in Breaking of the Day of God he says that the anointing of God is now upon mechanics, tradesmen, and carpenters, and He is using these saints as His instruments to bring in the new age.<sup>2</sup> Winstanley's attitude here is typical of the left wing as a whole, and especially of those tinged with the Joachimite hope of a new age. He thus shares the fervour of many for enthusiastic religion. Men cannot even call God their God, until they have made Him God indeed within them, until their "...flesh is subject to him".<sup>3</sup>

Finally, we can discern a progress in his dispensational ideas as well. In the Mysterie of God his ideas are similar to those of Saltmarsh, in that each successive dispensation is merely a more spiritual form of the preceding one. He describes seven, the sixth of which is the present reign of God in the flesh of His saints. God has thus poured out His Spirit in fulfillment of the promise given in Joel.<sup>4</sup> At a loss, however, to know just what form of spiritual worship this will lead to, he speaks with the indefiniteness of the Seekers.

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<sup>1</sup>The New Law of Righteousness, p.187. (S.)

<sup>2</sup>Winstanley, The Breaking..., pp.14-15.

<sup>3</sup>Truth Lifting Up Its Head, p.108. (S.)

<sup>4</sup>Winstanley, The Mysterie..., pp.33-36.



"...and againe, thinke it not strange to see many of the Saints of God at a stand in a wilderness, and at a losse, and so waiting upon God to discover himself to them..."<sup>1</sup>

The sixth period is to give way to the seventh, which is the Day of Judgment and the redemption of the whole creation. It is interesting that at this point the thought of a redeemed creation is still reserved for the future. It is in bringing this up to the present and representing it as real righteousness, in the context of a realised eschatology, that his shift to the philosophy of the Digger movement is noted.

In Breaking of the Day of God there is still no development on the theme of the Mysterie, but only an elaboration of the theme of God now rising in His saints. The shift begins to appear in Truth Lifting Up Its Head, but not however as a new interpretation of the Joschimite hope. He simply implies a new age in such a passage as,

"...as the first man filled the earth with unrighteousnesse, and corrupted all: so this second shall take the Kingdom in latter dayes, and reign King of righteousness in flesh, and spread as far in restoring al things, as the first man corrupted all things."<sup>2</sup>

Thus the individual and mystical still dominates his thinking throughout all of the first four tracts, though we have seen developing the tendencies which are clearly discernible in the full-blown economic philosophy of The New Law of Righteousness.

As well as sharing the currency of mystical and dispensational ideas which we have seen in Everard and Saltmarsh, Winstanley also

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>Truth Lifting Up Its Head, p. 121. (S.)

displays some acquaintanceship with the teaching of Dr. John Fordage and the Behmenists.<sup>1</sup> Boehme had spoken of the relationship of the soul to God as "an assimilation of Christ into one's being"<sup>2</sup>, and had described the prerequisite to that experience as the "complete mortification of all external, elementary things in man...".<sup>3</sup> This, of course, had become the common legacy of most of the mystical literature which Englishmen read.

Another of Boehme's themes was his assault on the church and its ceremonies which led him to say that the Christian can belong to no sect.

"...he may live among the sects, and also attend their divine services, but yet not belong to any sect; he has only one science - - Christ in him."<sup>4</sup>

This somehow describes one aspect of Winstanley. He had a passion for the inward God, Reason. But contrary to other radicals who broke away from religious groups in order to form their own, he eventually established not another religious sect, but a community which, though based on religious principles, had an entirely different motive for its existence.

What perhaps is most interesting is Boehme's treatment of the Millenium. Dr. Thune suggests that he was not interested in any

<sup>1</sup>Professor Sabine suggested this possibility when he mentioned that William Everard, Winstanley's associate, and perhaps the real Digger leader in the early days, had been a member of the community which surrounded Dr. Fordage. (Op. cit., pp.103-04.)

<sup>2</sup>Thune, op. cit., p.29.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp.29-30.

<sup>4</sup>Thune quotes Boehme, Ibid., p.30.



earthly reign, but

"the restitution of the paradisiacal world by the principle of light regaining its dominion and causing the present elementary world to disappear."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps it was this reference to a return to a paradisiacal existence which inspired Winstanley's imagery of Christ's death as restoring all of creation to its original state before the fall.<sup>2</sup> Certainly the Familists had taught a new age of universal brotherhood and love<sup>3</sup>, but they were not interested in that new age as the re-creation of the world of paradise. Hence, though Winstanley's earliest tracts simply portray the Joachimite hope as interpreted to the seventeenth century by Henry Nicholas, his later ideas represent a deviation, perhaps explained by this reference to Dr. Pordage and the Behmenists.

Before concluding this brief look at Winstanley, it will be helpful to attempt to trace some of those factors which explain the transition from a personal, mystical experience to his social philosophy.

First, we must remember that Winstanley had himself suffered considerable personal misfortune as a result of the Civil War. Having been reared in a comparatively comfortable middle class home, and then reduced to poverty because of the very bad times which accompanied the war, he must have asked himself, Who, after all, is benefitting by all of this? He realised that the masses, who had won the war for the Parliament side, were actually in a worse plight

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup>Kerr, op. cit., p. 261.

than before. Dr. Petegorsky is quite right that his own experience gave him a clear insight into the motive behind the war. To him, it was really the struggle for economic supremacy between the crown and the gentry.<sup>1</sup> Further, because the Church had also been wedded to this struggle, linking its fortune to the moneyed interests of Parliament and not the common man, he could only treat it as apostate and no longer representing God in the world.

Secondly, the mystical conception that God is coming into all of creation to restore it to its original purity, led him to associate the current keen interest in the appeal to natural law, with the re-assertion of man's rights as bestowed in the creation.

Dr. Troeltsch placed his finger squarely on the real matter in hand when he said, of Winstanley,

"But this Christian-Social ideal, which he upheld as the original result of this spirituality of the Inner Light and of the Indwelling Eternal Christ, which is in harmony with the creative Divine Reason, is the ancient sect-ideal of the Absolute Natural Law, as it was before the Fall, the ideal of freedom, equality, and brotherhood, which only recognised the use of law, force, and dominion insofar as those things are permitted by the full consent of the individual members of Society, and as they freely serve the common good."<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, he must have been profoundly impressed by the Leveller movement, and by its appeal to natural law in support of property rights and political equality. Perhaps it was from them that he

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<sup>1</sup>Petegorsky over-simplifies the issue, however, by failing to see the religious issues involved. Nevertheless, Winstanley probably interpreted it in this way. (Op. cit., p.195.)

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, op. cit., II, p.711.



seized on this appeal to natural law as the expression of the ideal of the restoration of creation, and thus came to dub his movement the 'True Levellers', to distinguish himself from the political ambitions of the Levellers themselves.

Fourthly, throughout his writings, Winstanley makes his appeal for the principles of the Digger movement primarily the appeal for real righteousness. What in the earlier tracts was the mystical concern for righteousness through asceticism comes to be righteousness in men's relations to one another. Whereas before, men were to renounce the creation in order to attain a mystical union with God, they are now to renounce the desire to possess it so that all may share equally in its benefits.

"Man-kinde was made to live in the freedome of the spirit, not under the bondage of the flesh, though the lordly flesh hath got a power for a time, as I said before; for every one was made to be a Lord over the Creation of the Earth, Cattle, Fish, Fowl, Grasse, Trees, not any one to be a bond-slave and beggar under the Creation of his own kinde."<sup>1</sup>

Being a slave to creation he interpreted both as working for another, as men did for the great land-owners<sup>2</sup>, or being denied the right to the 'common treasury' of the earth.

In other ways, also, he makes his social programme a spiritual issue. Very frequently, he appeals to the Bible in support of his contention that the earth is a common treasury.<sup>3</sup> In A Watch-Word to the City of London he reminds his readers of the spiritual vision

<sup>1</sup>The New Law of Righteousness, p.180. (S.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.192,96.

<sup>3</sup>The True Levellers Standard, p.260. (S.)

which had been given earlier, "Worke together. Eat bread together"<sup>1</sup>, and confesses that it was this which led him directly to take up the spade, for

"...my mind was not at rest, because nothing was acted, and thoughts run in me that words and writings were all nothing and must die, for action is the life of all, and if thou dost not act thou dost nothing."<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, he judged that pure religion was action without words, the 'golden rule' in all of our relationships.<sup>3</sup> And if men cannot love their enemies and "doe as you would be done by"<sup>4</sup> then they "worship God at a distance!"<sup>5</sup> One can interpret this as humanism or secularism, yet with Winstanley it never ceased to have a spiritual basis, unless, perhaps, in his last literary work, The Law of Freedom. But in A Watch-Word, he cries out in the midst of oppression and defeat that their cause is God's, Who alone can vindicate them<sup>6</sup>, and then says,

"I tell thee thou England, thy battells now are all spirituall, Dragon against the Lamb, and the power of love against the power of covetousnesse..."<sup>7</sup>

Hence we have sought to demonstrate that the one consistent theme throughout all of Winstanley's writing was that of real righteousness, first as inward purity, and then in terms of men's relations with one

<sup>1</sup>The New Law of Righteousness, p.190. (S.)

<sup>2</sup>Watch-Word to the City of London, p.315. (S.)

<sup>3</sup>A New-Yeers Gift, pp.365-66. (S.)

<sup>4</sup>Fire in the Bush, p.476. (S.)      <sup>5</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup>Watch-Word to the City of London, pp.328-29. (S.)

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p.336.



another. The philosophical framework which he used was basically the same as that of many other radicals, the immanence of God. But in contrast to Everard, he lost the balancing emphasis on the transcendence of the God who is within, and so carried to its extreme the element of immanence, a danger implicit in every use of this Neo-Platonic framework. However, we must say that he did not thereby become a pantheist, for he also lost the feeling for the supernatural. Thus in his last published work, The Law of Freedom, religion has become for him simply the expression in deeds of the 'golden rule'<sup>1</sup>, and though he is not conscious, perhaps, that he has secularised religion, he has led no little distance along that road many others who did not have, as the background for their thinking, his profound mystical experience of the presence of God in all things.

#### John Smith and the Cambridge Platonists.

One of the great issues developing in the seventeenth century was over the relation between faith and reason. Both in the Established Church, through the influence of Socinianism<sup>2</sup>, and among the Cambridge Platonists, the real thinkers of the time were urging that reason must be the ultimate arbiter in formulating truth. The radical Puritans were often as vehement in condemning the authority of reason

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<sup>1</sup>The Law of Freedom, pp. 562-69. (S.)

<sup>2</sup>Socinian books found their first readers among churchmen of the Laudian party, but the chief interest was not the rejection of the deity of Christ, or the atonement, but the emphasis on reason as final authority. (H. John McLachlan, Socinianism in Seventeenth Century England (Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 71, 96.)

as the Platonists were in asserting it, but nevertheless they were both reacting against a rigid Biblicism and the false aura about propositional truth which had forbidden criticism or fresh evaluation. As we have already seen there was a widespread desire among many of different backgrounds to establish truth on a completely different basis from that of an external authority.

The Cambridge Platonists were particularly anxious to establish truth on the basis of the capability of man to receive and understand it, and so were keenly interested both in Platonism and the Theologia Germanica. They shared Neo-Platonism's conviction about absolute and eternal values and their inward perception, and the respect for science and human reason which it permitted.<sup>1</sup> But they never surrendered their basic Christian convictions that God, even though Transcendent, is still knowable, that love is the primary motive for this relationship, and that Christ is the only mediator to effect it.<sup>2</sup> The Theologia Germanica attracted them for its deep piety, and the insight that purity and humility are pre-requisites to knowing God.

Thus they felt that the truth could never violate pure reason of a purified heart, though it might transcend it. In Smith especially, as we shall see, the truth was never merely intellectual facts about God, but also personalised, and the object of the union of the soul. How, then, could there be disharmony between faith and reason? As

<sup>1</sup>Frederick J. Powicke, The Cambridge Platonists: A Study (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1926), p.19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.20-21.



Henry More would say of reason,

"...the oracle of God, is not be heard but in His holy Temple -- that is to say, in a good and holy man, thoroughly sanctified in spirit, soul, and body!"<sup>1</sup>

Thus the life of faith was by its very nature the life of holiness. Reason and the conscience were inseparably linked together. By this means they erected an inner authority for religious truth, interesting to us in this study particularly, for two of its primary consequences. The first is that Scripture was no longer considered an outward authority beyond the reach of reason or the Spirit; the second, that God was interested in real, not imputed righteousness in men.

It is striking that these two themes also characterise much that we have already discovered in radical Puritanism. It will be of interest, therefore, to study the Cambridge Platonists from the point of view of their contribution to the issues which have already been raised throughout this study. This must of necessity be only partial treatment of their thought, and will not do justice to their important place in the seventeenth century considered as a whole. But, if nothing else, it will serve to indicate further the breadth of concern for immediacy and the questions which men were asking about religious authority during this time.

We shall be considering mainly the writings of John Smith, as a representative of the Cambridge men, and in a minor way, those of Henry More, since these two showed the greatest interest in the matters which most concerned the left wing.

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Powicke, Ibid., p.48.

The central theme of the first of Smith's Discourses is the way to Divine knowledge through union with the Truth. As to many others, the outward facts of religion, in the Bible or theology, were powerless in themselves to change a person. To be good, it was not new ideas that men needed, but the infusion of a Divine life.

"The knowledge of Divinity that appears in Systems and Models is but a poor wan light, but the powerful energy of Divine knowledge displays it self in purified souls..."<sup>1</sup>

To Smith, however, religion was not merely an inward, spiritual relationship with God. It was also profoundly ethical. If the soul harboured sin, then this would be "perpetually twisting up itself into the thread of our finest-spun Speculations"<sup>2</sup>, for such as men are within themselves, so will God appear to be.<sup>3</sup> Thus the prerequisite to knowing the will of God was that the soul be purged of its sin:

"There is a knowing of the truth as it is in Jesus, as it is in a Christ-like nature, as it is in that sweet, mild, humble, and loving Spirit of Jesus, which spreads itself like a Morning-Sun upon the Soules of good men, full of life and light. It profits little to know Christ himself after the flesh; but he gives his Spirit to good men, that searcheth the deep things of God."<sup>4</sup>

Here, he has put the premium on humility rather than brilliance, and on an experience of God rather than speculation about Him.

The question arises, however, If goodness must precede knowledge, then how shall men know what it is to be good? He answers that some principles of truth are so deeply imbedded in man's nature that their

<sup>1</sup>John Smith, Select Discourses (London: Printed by F. Fleisher, 1660), p.3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.5.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.8.



impression cannot be totally obliterated.<sup>1</sup> But more than this, evil men are not always evil, as good men are not always virtuous. Hence,

"...a Divine spirit blowing and breathing upon them may then blow up some live sparks of true Understanding within them; though they may soon endeavour to quench them again, and to rake them up in the ashes of their own earthly thoughts."<sup>2</sup>

Therefore men are never beyond the wooing of the Spirit, but in a very real sense, it is up to them to pursue that purity of life which will win for them the intimacy of the Divine.

"We must therefore endeavour more and more to withdraw our selves from these Bodily things, to set our souls as free as may be from its miserable slavery to this base Flesh: we must shut the Eyes of Sense, and open that brighter Eye of our Understandings, that other Eye of the Soul..."<sup>3</sup>

Then only will faith become vision<sup>4</sup>, and our eye presented with a "blissful, steady, and invariable sight of him".<sup>5</sup> It is important to realise that this exalts the intellectual side of a man's nature. The supreme experience for the Christian is the contemplation of God when a man gets above the limitations of the body.

Smith then develops the same theme again by means of grouping men into four ranks "according to that Method which Simplicius upon Epictetus hath already laid out to us".<sup>6</sup> The first kind of man is one in whom spirit and sensuality are so mixed that he is not freed from his self life, and can understand little or nothing of heavenly things.<sup>7</sup> The second is a moral man. His soul rules his body.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.16.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.17.

<sup>6</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp.17-18.

He is susceptible to the common principles of virtue and goodness. But because he is still concerned with ruling the body, he is not free to contemplate Divine truth.<sup>1</sup> The third man is he whose soul has already been purged of this lower kind of virtue, and is continually flying off from the body and returning to it again. But he has not yet received the vision of God because of pride or self-love.<sup>2</sup> The fourth, Smith calls the "true Metaphysical and Contemplative man".<sup>3</sup> This man has so abstracted himself from himself, that he has attained union with the Divine essence, which he describes in the terms, "...a living Imitation of a Godlike perfection drawn out by a strong fervent love of it".<sup>4</sup>

This is strongly marked by Platonism. Such a grouping indicates that it is not sin so much as the body which separates the soul from God. Nevertheless the experience of union is not, strictly speaking, that of the speculative philosopher. First of all, the result of union yields moral purity as its primary fruit, not abstraction from the self. Secondly, it is described further as,

"...nothing else but God's own breath within him, and an Infant-Christ (if I may use the expression) formed in the soul..."<sup>5</sup>

This is a personal relationship with Christ, not the impersonal absorption into the Divine Dark. And thirdly, the very use of the term 'infant' to describe the Christ within, was deliberately chosen by Smith, as he tells us, in order to convey the limitation on that which we can hope to know of God in this life. We shall really

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.18-19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp.19-20.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.20.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.21.



know as we are known only when mortality is swallowed up in life.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting that Everard, who shares Smith's interest in Platonism, immediacy, and real righteousness, nevertheless differs on one major point of emphasis, thereby giving to his preaching a wholly different character from that of Smith. The former never really took seriously the Platonic conception that Ideas are the only Reality. And beyond this, he carried his concern for inwardness to such an extent that he even repudiated reason as an outward and hence unworthy means of receiving truth. The discipline of contemplation was therefore missing in his pursuit of God, and in its place was the spiritual way of self denial. We noticed that when Everard recommended the 'imitation of Christ', it was not as an intellectual contemplation, but a moral asceticism. Thus though Smith speaks of the purging of the soul of sin, he does not recommend the severe, negative rejection of all personal expressions of desire and feeling, because to him it is not the moral self which must be put down so much as the intellectual self liberated.

Most of what Smith has to say about Evangelical Righteousness comes in the seventh Discourse. God's plan for men in the Gospel Age is that they might be truly good. The Old Testament dispensation had made no further progress toward goodness than an external declaration of Law. But the nature of the Gospel is an internal manifestation of the Divine life, "a vital efflux from God"<sup>2</sup>, which he calls "an Energetical Spirit and Principle of Righteousness in the

<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 312.

Souls of men".<sup>1</sup> Inasmuch then as real righteousness is only possible through a transformation of the inner nature, the offer of the Divine life must also be inner, and so the Gospel cannot consist in dogma and notions about justification. This would be to no advantage above the Law. Christ's blood must be not only without, but within, conveying "that blood of sprinkling into our defiled Consciences to purge them from dead works."<sup>2</sup> Fox was insisting on the same inward application of Gospel history, though perhaps more dramatically, when he saw the 'blood of the Seed' in a man's heart, purging it from sin. Thus to Smith it was not facts, but the experience of those facts, which saved.

More than this, however, Smith was emphatic to state that God would not accept any man except by "a true compliance with the Divine will".<sup>3</sup>

"This is the Scope and Mark which a true Heaven-born faith aims at; and when it hath attain'd this End, then it is indeed perfect and compleat in its last accomplishment."<sup>4</sup>

But in order that men despair not of reaching Heaven, he assured them that

"God's justifying of Sinners in pardoning and remitting their sins carries in it a necessary reference to the sanctification of their Natures."<sup>5</sup>

To him, the mere pardoning of sin, without the assurance of relief from the misery of sinning would be of small benefit to men, and of little credit to the supposed triumph of Christ.<sup>6</sup> Henry More also

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.312-13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 324.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 328.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 329.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp.330-31.



earnestly contended that God intended men to attain real righteousness through discipline and His Spirit.

"...which therefore will neither charge the condition of Nature, as being utterly uncorrigible, that cannot be reduc'd to Obedience, no not by the power of the Spirit of God; nor cast it upon God himself, as being unwilling or not caring that Nature should be thus reduc'd and brought under to the obedience of Christ. But a man will charge himself in all his miscarriages, and hold it his duty...to yield his Members as Instruments of Righteousness to God, as well as he did before yield them as Instruments of Unrighteousness to Sin. For sincerity implying a faithful purpose and will of doing what is right, Christ has hereby wone the Castle or Fort of his enemy, and all the Ammunition and Engines therein will certainly then be used for right designes."<sup>1</sup>

If God requires true goodness, He has promised to help men to attain it by faith. To Smith, as also to More, this did not mean an intellectual assent to facts, but the life of self-denial and contemplation on man's part, with the assurance of the working of God's Spirit, on His.

"A true Gospel-faith is no lazie or languid thing, but a strong ardent breathing for and thirsting after divine Grace and Righteousness...it is not patient of being an Expectant in a Probationership for it untill this Earthly body resignes up all its worldly interest...but it is here grasping after it, and effecting it in a way of serious Mortification and Self-denial."<sup>2</sup>

Through the denial of self, the eyes of the soul are opened to see the glorious vision of God, hence,

"A truely-believing Soul by an ingenuous assistance in God and an eager thirst after him is alwaies sucking from the full breasts of the Divine love; thence it will not part, for there, and there only, is its life and nourishment..."<sup>3</sup>

The spirit of the Cambridge Platonists is more akin to that of

<sup>1</sup>More, op. cit., p.572.

<sup>2</sup>Smith, op. cit., pp.338-39.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.339.

Fox than Everard, in the sense that it emphasised the positive power over sin through the personal relationship of the soul with God. If the element of self-denial entered on the scene, it did not play the dominating role which it did in Everard's thought. More had confessed in 1660 that he agreed with the Quaker insistence on the 'Inward Light'. What he could not accept was what appeared to him to be the repudiation of reason, and the identification of the 'Light' with "wild imagination" or "unaccountable suggestion".<sup>1</sup> Realising later that in their inwardness they had not lost touch with the historical, he admitted that he had been wrong about them.

Nevertheless, there was no real rapprochement between the Platonists and the Quakers. Both emphasised the inwardness of saving history, and yet the former believed in the living Christ of the Bible, while the inner 'Divine Principle' of the latter was really the Idea of Ideas. For all the warmth of devotion in Smith's writing, it was the mystical fervour stimulated by the contemplation of the Divine image within the soul. Fox's praise of the Light, however, was prompted by the joy of sin trampled under foot. Hence despite Fox's positiveness and optimism toward human nature, he really succeeded in taking sin more seriously than did the Platonists.

#### Peter Sterry.

Peter Sterry has already received significant recognition as one of the truly great prose artists of the seventeenth century, having

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<sup>1</sup>More, op. cit., p.408.



been ranked along with Milton, Vaughan, and Traherne.<sup>1</sup> But his spiritual kinship with these men has somewhat obscured his very real relation to the thinking and personalities of the more radical Puritans. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to see him in perhaps a truer perspective, and while retaining in our minds that artistic, humanistic side of him which naturally shares the spirit of the metaphysical poets, to add to that picture, that by which he was also a radical Puritan, and a preacher whose activity was considered dangerous by the heresy-hunter, Thomas Edwards. Sterry is truly a remarkable man whose many gifts are over-shadowed only by this versatility in thought and attitude, which enabled him to comprehend within himself so many facets of the religious life of his time.

We shall attempt to see him first more as his associates in the left wing of Puritanism did. We remember that his college was Emmanuel, a leading Puritan stronghold, that he graduated M.A. in 1637, and a year later accepted a pulpit in London. He was in the forefront as a Puritan Independent almost from the first, in his outspoken position in the Westminster Assembly and later as Chaplain to Cromwell and the Council of State.

Sterry's religious stand is, in one sense, unusual when we consider that Benjamin Whichcote was his tutor and patron at Cambridge. The Platonists as a group were chagrined by the unrestrained enthusiasm of the sects, and the frequent deprecation of University

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<sup>1</sup>Pinto, op. cit., Miss Pinto's treatment is excellent, though in studying him as a poet and Platonist, she did not do full justice to that in Sterry's writing which made him a Puritan Independent.

Vivian de Sola Pinto, "Peter Sterry and His Unpublished Writings", The Review of English Studies, VI (October, 1930).

training by the latter. And yet Sterry, even as a radical Puritan, owed much to the Cambridge men, especially the introduction to Plato, Plotinus, and the medieval mystics which he received from Whichcote's tutorship. It inspired a very wide reading which included such writers as Origen, Scotus Erigena, the Italian Platonists Ficino and Campanella, Boehme, Cusa, and many others.<sup>1</sup> It was obviously this, more than their concern for reason, which attracted him. These mystical writings led him along the road toward immediacy in thought and experience as they had also influenced Everard, to a less extent Saltmarsh, and many others. It is thus not surprising to discover that Sterry's God bears resemblance to Everard's in many respects. For example, Sterry's is a monist<sup>2</sup>, his God is immanent in all of creation<sup>3</sup>, and as we already noted, both believe in a form of determinism<sup>4</sup>, which reveals the same inspiration. That he did not share Everard's pessimism about human nature, and consequently his asceticism, reveals the other side of his nature which, as we shall see presently, is more akin to Smith and the Cambridge Platonists.

Associating him further with the typical left wing point of view, was Sterry's rejection of the place which the Cambridge men had given to reason. As Miss Pinto points out, in Sterry's first published work, The Spirit Convincing of Sinne (1645), he carefully distinguishes between reason and spirit, and indicated his belief in the superiority of the latter.<sup>5</sup> But with Sterry, it was not a

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<sup>1</sup>Pinto, Peter Sterry..., p.89.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.90.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.95.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.98.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.16.



repudiation of reason so much as the conviction that reason cannot penetrate the realm of spirit where the soul sought to venture.

More than anything else, however, it is Sterry's zeal for spiritual religion, and his profuse and imaginative mystical language which makes for him a home within radical Puritanism. The greatest blessing in the victory over the Scottish Presbyterians, for instance, is that there is no longer any fear that they will condemn the rising of the Spirit in the saints of God.<sup>1</sup> With Saltmarsh, Collier, Dell, and a host of others, he could say that God had now come to men in "a full and immediate Expression of himself"<sup>2</sup>, and even intimates that this new dispensation is superior to any other, for the time has come "when the first and fleshly discoveries of Christ shall empty themselves into his last, and Spirituall Appearance".<sup>3</sup> However, he is no millenarian, repudiating or discounting history, for he could say, that in Wyclif, Hus, Luther, and even Edward VI, God had been leading England forward as a great spiritual nation.<sup>4</sup>

His writing is full of the mystical expression so characteristic of Rous, Everard, Saltmarsh and others.<sup>5</sup> For example, he also criticised the Presbyterians because

<sup>1</sup>Peter Sterry, England's Deliverance from the Northern Presbytery Compared with Its Deliverance from the Roman Papacy (Leith: Printed by Evan Tyler, 1652), p.18.

<sup>2</sup>Sterry, The Appearance of God to Man in the Gospel... (London, 1710), p.6.

<sup>3</sup>Sterry, England's Deliverance..., p.12.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.36.

<sup>5</sup>One of the greatest helps in Miss Pinto's book is the large section of excerpts from his writing which are of rare beauty and mystical fervour.

"These contemne the Spirit and its impressions upon the heart...rejecting also the openings of the glory of Christ, the mutuall interviews, walkes, embraces, kisses, between God and the soul, in the Spirit, as whimsicall."<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, he reveals the same quietistic spirit that we have noticed consistently in these who use the mystical terminology. He tells us that "Prayer is the Breath in the Nostrils of the Spiritual Man, while he is cloth'd with an Earthly Body".<sup>2</sup> Men are to seek for nothing beyond God's will,

"...that thou may'st have no Designs, or Desires in thy Soul, but from this Divine Principle, the Will of God."<sup>3</sup>

He echoes another of Everard's favourite applications of this principle of resignation in a passage which is different only because of its heightened beauty:

"O! with what a sweet Indifferency may we now walk thorow all the Changes of Life, and Death, when our Heavenly Spouse hath thus embalmed, annoynted, filled all with the Delights, and Glories of His Unchangeable Person and Presence.

"There is no real Difference between having a Husband, Wife, or Children, and having none; between being in Grief, or Joy, and Being without Grief, or Joy..."<sup>4</sup>

Hence it is interesting that in Sterry the Platonic dualism of flesh and spirit is at least as marked as it is in Everard. He does not recommend as severe a spiritual asceticism, or self-denial, but he fervently longs for the day when he shall put off the physical body, which has obscured the vision of the God who is within, and shall be

<sup>1</sup> Sterry, England's Deliverance..., p.20.

<sup>2</sup> Sterry, The Appearance..., p.78.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.165.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Sterry, The Rise, Race, and Royalty of the Kingdom of God in the Soul of Man... (London: Printed for Thomas Cockerill, 1683), p.279.



"...joyned together in Christ by the band, and unity of the Eternal Spirit, and make one Spiritual Man, or Person, in Christ."<sup>1</sup>

But there is another side to Sterry from that which we have seen in these few illustrations. His mysticism is not the severe negativism that we noticed in Everard, nor his confidence in the new age, the radical dispensationalism of Saltmarsh. He has the definite leanings toward the Cambridge men and the Latitudinarians, which prompted one left wing preacher, William Erbury, to say of him that though he was among those who "hold forth Christ in the Spirit", these are "neerest Zion, yet are they not come into it".<sup>2</sup>

Quite unlike his more radical associates, Sterry showed a deep love and appreciation for art, poetry, and beauty in nearly every form. His writing, for example, though in prose style, is of an exalted poetic nature.<sup>3</sup> This perhaps is why he could never get enthusiastic about an extreme self-denial. As a matter of fact, he criticised the Presbyterians for an austerity which checked "the delights of sense and fancy as vain".<sup>4</sup> He found that God was revealed to him as much through the things of beauty in God's world, as through the inner avenue of the Spirit, and to this extent he never shared the stark immediacy of a man like Everard. When someone asked, "May we not enjoy the delights of the Creature, which is an Inferior Image?", Sterry answered in a way that would never have satisfied the latter,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 463.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted by Pinto, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>4</sup>Sterry, England's Deliverance..., p. 20.

"Please thyself to the full with every Content. Only let it be no Cloud to cut off: but a Christal to take in the Divine Glory, that this may shine, and flame in them."<sup>1</sup>

And in relation to the possibility of becoming good, Sterry is also strangely out of company with Everard, yet he also expresses a different spirit from the extremes of either Fox or the Antinomians. He does not seek to triumph over sin through the Spirit's work in transforming the inner nature, nor through an enthusiasm which does not take the flesh seriously. Rather, in a way strikingly similar to John Smith, he finds a Divine Principle within, to which the soul is united, and which brings with it a spontaneous goodness.

"He that lives, as a Son, under the Gospel, lives in a Divine Principle, is naturally good. If you ask, why this man is good against the stream of all earthly things, which are evil. It is his nature to be so. For he is made partaker of the Divine Nature."<sup>2</sup>

Hence, "Faith is our union with Christ".<sup>3</sup> Justification and Sanctification are part of the same work of Christ in the soul:

"'Tis at the very Moment of Day-break in your souls. The first Beam that falls from Christ, is a Chain coupling Christ and you in one Righteousness."<sup>4</sup>

Or, as he puts it in another way which beautifully sums up this thought, "A Saint has a Being and a Beauty in the Heart of the Father".<sup>5</sup> This reflects to a certain extent the Platonic legacy of the unreality of evil.<sup>6</sup> It is the Idea of the spiritual man within, and the union of the soul with this Idea, which leads to the dominance of this

<sup>1</sup> Sterry, The Rise, Race..., p.17.

<sup>3</sup> Sterry, The Appearance..., p.18.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.225.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.70.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.227.

<sup>6</sup> Pinto, op. cit., p.109.



Divine Principle over the tendency of the flesh. But because only death will sever the soul and its real spiritual body from the body of flesh, perfect righteousness is never possible in this life:

"The State of Justification is as the Possession of an Inheritance, which is perfect all at once. Sanctification the Improvement which grows."<sup>1</sup>

In this, Smith and Sterry take the same point of view.

It is also noticeable that Sterry's latitudinarianism marks him off from most in the left wing. To be sure, Saltmarsh also felt keenly about toleration and wrote fervently in support of it, but he was alone among most men, who did not appreciate the meaning of the liberty of the Spirit. Sterry's most significant contribution to the literature of toleration is the preface to the Discourse of the Freedom of the Will which is a truly magnificent hymn of love.

Hence we can see that Peter Sterry holds that rather unusual position in Puritanism of belonging to the movement as a whole, of having united the mystical with the appreciation of sense experience, and the zeal for spiritual religion with a sincere toleration of those who felt that they must disagree. For all of his appreciation of beauty in poetry and art, his leaning toward Platonism, and his positive attitude toward the body, he was nevertheless a left wing Puritan, actively promoting spiritual religion, and working energetically to effect toleration for all.

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<sup>1</sup>Sterry, The Appearance..., p. 231.

## CRITICAL CONCLUSION

There are several predominant notes which were echoed by all of the principals of this study, as by the left wing of Puritanism as a whole. The first was the immanence of God, expressed as 'the Light which lighteth every man', the appearance of 'God in the saints', the 'hidden King' in every man's soul, or 'Reason'. Though there was some scriptural justification for this emphasis, it was also inspired by the speculative philosophy which was read so avidly by these men. The dependance on this philosophical notion led in some cases to serious consequences for theology, however. Winstanley, for example, neglected the balancing idea of the transcendence of God, and it was an easy step to secularism. With the Cambridge Platonists, the Divine within tended to be associated with the reason, and the result was rationalism and humanism. Among others, like the Antinomians, it simply gave way to an unrestrained enthusiasm. And in all, it gave rise to the universalism characteristic of the left wing.

The second was the dramatisation of the Gospel as reconciliation, rather than atonement. The incarnation and the birth of the Christ in the soul played a much more significant role than the death of Christ on the Cross. When the latter was thought of, it was more as an illustration of the life of self-denial than the means of justification. Of course, this had also been true of Puritan



preaching as a whole.

Thirdly, much controversy raged around the relation between justification and sanctification. Both Fox and the Cambridge Platonists said that God's saving was also His perfecting, that forgiveness without the power to stop sinning was a mockery to God. Indeed, all of these whom we have studied felt that the Christian life ought to lead to real righteousness. But in Everard and Saltmarsh, by contrast, it was only possible through self-denial, a form of self-effort. There was consequently the sharp contrast between the pessimism of Everard and the optimism of Fox and the Platonists. But as we noted, even the Cambridge men differed radically from Fox in that the Platonic setting of their thought lent an unreality to sin.

On the doctrine of sin, all were agreed at least that total depravity was not consonant with the mystical element in religion. If God was in the soul, and real righteousness was possible in this life, then man's nature could not have been totally marred by sin. However, there was some disagreement as to the relative meaning of the flesh as over against the spirit. All to some extent attributed the idea of humanness to the flesh. To the extent that this was true as we have seen, sin was not taken seriously. The Platonists were the most guilty of this deviation. The Familist influence marked early Quakerism to a degree, and Neo-Platonism, Everard and Saltmarsh. Nevertheless, in the last three mentioned, the moral struggle between sin and righteousness predominated.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit did not receive the formal

recognition which we might have expected, considering its importance to left wing thought. Fox did not distinguish between the work of Christ and the Spirit in his use of the 'light', but fused them into one. In Everard and Winstanley there was little mention of the Spirit, though the doctrine was always in the background in the insistence on inwardness. Saltmarsh, in contrast, made the new age of the Spirit the central idea in his writing. In Sterry and the Cambridge Platonists, the concern for reason did away with the centrality of the Spirit as revealer of truth. It is significant that the omission of the Spirit occurs in those who drew primarily on mysticism and speculative philosophy for their inspiration. The work of the Spirit was thus unconsciously included in the idea of the immanence of God.

If only a segment of left wing thought was concerned primarily with the Spirit, all nevertheless shared in the emphasis on the liberty of the Spirit. Men were not to be bound by any external authorities in their relation to God, nor were they to be hedged in by any external means of receiving guidance, grace, and pardon. All at least were seeking the spiritual meaning behind the sacraments, if not their repudiation altogether, as a lower manifestation of the spiritual life. And all were seeking the 'saving history' of scripture in the deeper meaning which was revealed, either by allegory, or by allowing the Spirit freely to speak to the soul through it.

Finally, there is a common interest in the millenium, whether as a completely realised eschatology as in Everard, the dawn of a



new age with implications for the social and political life as in Saltmarsh, Sterry, and Winstanley, or as implying the success of their missionary endeavour, as the Quakers thought.

The different ways in which these great themes were handled originated to a certain extent in the temperaments and backgrounds of the individuals concerned. Fox was exceedingly sensitive, with a natural bent for complete openness and honesty in relation to himself and others. He could not tolerate falseness in religious profession, nor any doctrine which forced a man to pretend to be what he was not. This might have led to pessimism and scepticism. It did not, however, through his dynamic experience of Christ within. He thus found for himself that it was possible to possess what one professed, and the sharing of this conviction became the consuming passion of his life and preaching.

John Everard was zealous and earnest, both as a typical Puritan preacher and then as teacher of the new spiritual religion. He was also a thinker, and though the framework of his philosophy showed through at many points, his primary aim was not intellectual but devotional and religious. He had had no vitalising experience such as Fox, however, but was drawn toward immediacy by the experience of the mystics who had found God through asceticism and self-denial. In this respect, Everard and Fox demonstrate opposite extremes in the left wing.

John Saltmarsh was an idealist, a tender and loving spirit, with a depth of understanding equalled by few. It bound him to the persecuted sects whose liberty he championed, and whom he

later joined. Thus his zeal for toleration, as well as a growing suspicion of the externals in religion, led him into the camp of the radicals.

Gerrard Winstanley was one of the most original men of these studied. His was a deeply religious nature, combined with a keen perception of the political and social issues of his time, which arose somewhat out of his own peculiar misfortune. Like the others he became greatly disturbed over what appeared to him to be the hypocrisy of the organised religion of his day. But he could not rest in simply crying against it. He formulated a programme to do something concrete about it.

John Smith was both a great soul and a brilliant thinker. Because of his philosophical mind and his interest in Platonism, however, he was less concerned with the practical and devotional side of religion than with the intellectual. In that respect he approached the problem of authority from a different point of view from others in radical Puritanism.

Peter Sterry was by temperament a poet and artist, and employed his talent in the service of spiritual religion. It was natural, then, that he should express his conception of the truth in an aesthetic rather than an intellectual vein. For this reason he was never interested in theological hair splitting, and thus a rare example of a spirit of toleration in the seventeenth century.

In a sense, then, temperament had something to do with the solutions which each gave to the problem of immediacy. Vocation, and background before conversion, also influenced each one considerably.



Both Fox and Winstanley were of the lower or middle class, without much formal education. Both had either belonged to sectarian religion or been strongly influenced by it before beginning their careers as religious leaders. Both, consequently, in their native feelings, had a taste for something of the kind of religious life which they later taught.

Everard, Saltmarsh, and Sterry, however, had all received University education and were conservative Puritans before the change in their lives which placed them with the radicals. This therefore became a new environment to them, which they never fully shared. They probably failed to understand what an effect the depreciation of University training would have on a host of ignorant and impressionable people, when they let loose such an explosive idea. At the same time, they themselves, because of their own intellectual backgrounds, were perhaps less popular among the masses than some of their followers among the mechanic preachers. Erbury, for example, was never wholly convinced that Sterry belonged with the radicals.

Of course, the Cambridge Platonists being University professors, and committed primarily to the intellectual and theological side of the problems being raised, placed themselves in a separate category from radical Puritanism.

The most important single factor bearing on the reason for the various methods of approaching the question of immediacy, was the attitude taken toward the mystical and philosophical ideas prevalent in the left wing. No one could avoid contact with them, directly or indirectly, but some absorbed them with a greater seriousness than

others. Everard was one of the key figures promoting the immanence of God, and the way of self denial as the means of an intimate experience of His presence. He made philosophy serve the purpose of his dramatisation of this personal relationship, however, rather than taking it seriously as the 'via negative' of the speculative mystics.

Both Saltmarsh and Winstanley adopted the same pessimistic and quietistic expression of the soul's relation to God, as we found in Everard, Dr. Pordage's exposition of Boehme, and the Familists. Their concern went beyond the individual desire for union with God, however, which saved them from such an extreme emphasis on self denial. But what is interesting is their use of this terminology at all, which illustrates again that it had been adapted to a seventeenth century application rather than being taken seriously for itself.

Both Sterry and the Cambridge men show considerable influence from Platonism. Because the former is more a poet than a theologian, however, it is difficult to judge where he stood, but it is certainly obvious that he shared the optimism of the Platonists rather than the pessimism of Everard.

Of all the others, George Fox was influenced most by the Bible, and least by either the temper or the theology of the speculative mystics. His use of some of the mystical phrases, and the association of Quakerism with Familism in the early years, gave his movement the appearance of an affinity with these other negative groups, which was not the case.

It is important to notice once more the social implications of this type of mystical teaching. Everard and Saltmarsh were both



quietists, though the latter could sympathise keenly with the Levellers. Smith, apparently, did not trouble himself audibly to speak against injustices, and Sterry, though active in the Cromwell government, was fighting for religious toleration rather than the redress of grievances of an economic or political nature. All of these, having received the stimulation for their spiritual lives from mystical and philosophical writings, demonstrate again the effect of this kind of excessive emphasis on the individual relation to God, and the suspicion of the flesh and of the world.

Fox refused to join other millenarian groups on the basis of his principle of pacifism. This did not mean, however, that he did not sympathise with the ends for which these groups were struggling. Beyond this, Quakerism demonstrated a unique concern for its own poor and downtrodden, which became an inspiration to many on the outside.

And finally, though Winstanley's social philosophy arose out of his mystical background, the motivation for it was external. Thus, as his new social ideas matured, his religious life also experienced a change, tending to be less mystical and individualistic, and more humanistic and social.

In many ways the Quakers were more successful than any of the other left wing movements. They gained more adherents than the rest, and managed to survive the severe persecution both of the Inter-regnum and the Restoration period. The message of the 'Light' met the demand for 'immediacy' in relation to God. It was a simpler Gospel in its own day than it appears to us now. Much of Fox's terminology had been used by many other radical preachers, though not preached

with such authority and positiveness. He spoke imaginatively and concretely, using imagery taken primarily from Scripture. He avoided the negative, pessimistic outlook of the more mystical preachers, offering a positive appeal to those disillusioned with more conservative religion, and to those looking for the dawning of a new Gospel day. It was a religion of supernaturalism, and yet it spoke to the social and political situation which was developing. Perhaps most important for its continuance, it produced a remarkable fellowship which was the source both for spiritual growth and for economic and educational help for those Friends who were in need.

Quakerism bears a closer relationship to Puritanism as a whole, and to the trends in spiritual religion to which men were looking, than any of the other movements which we have studied. In the theological debates over the relationship of Spirit to Scripture, and of Justification to Sanctification, there were real differences, but they tended to be differences of emphasis more than wide disagreement. In sharp contrast to the others we have studied, Fox took the Bible seriously. If this would seem to represent the Quakers as having a closer relation to New Testament Christianity than is warranted, it is because we are seeking to emphasise the remarkable dissimilarity of Quakerism to the negativism and pessimism of the other groups with which Quakerism has so often been linked. It is true that Fox was not seeking to recreate a New Testament church, but he was profoundly in the spirit of the New Testament, and convinced that the same Spirit which inspired the Bible was still in the world, and working in men's hearts.

One of the great weaknesses of the left wing group was the



unfortunate disparagement of reason, and the suspicion of the intellect. Another was the failure to be aware of the importance of the historical in providing continuity to the religious life. Because both the intellectual and institutional elements of religion were thus disregarded, it was inevitable that the spiritual life of the sects should give way, as it did, either to irresponsible enthusiasm or to secularism.

In the case of Quakerism, the idea of 'unity in the Light' restored the institutional element. Barclay sought to provide the intellectual, in a 'theology of the inner light'; but though he succeeded in rationalising the experience of the 'light', he failed to communicate the really vital experience of Fox, and ultimately divorced Quakerism from the historical element of faith. It therefore remained a truncated religious experience, without the inner life and power to propagate itself with the energy and vision which it demonstrated in the early years.

Perhaps the most serious fault which this study has revealed was the uncritical regard for mystical sources which themselves belonged to another era of religious experience and intellectual climate. The Cambridge men, alone, took Platonism seriously, but were also to that extent out of touch with the others in the left wing, who never really appreciated these mystical writings for what they said.

There are several suggestions for further study in connection with the investigation of George Fox. The first is his use of the Bible. A thorough study of his use of scripture imagery and his method of interpretation would reveal much more clearly just how much Familism influenced his early teaching. It would also be of present value in

rediscovering a dynamic Spirit-scripture relationship which, leaving room for personal guidance, gives full weight to Scripture itself.

Secondly, much could be gained from a more detailed understanding of the implications of Fox's 'unity in the Light'. This was one of the great reasons for the success of Quakerism, their care for their own, their willingness to lay down their lives for one another, their idea of group guidance, and of personal spiritual victory in the life of the soul. A woman with a demented spirit was healed when 'the Light rose in Friends'. How often they spoke of the springs of Divine life which flowed in their meetings. It was thus in the fellowship of the 'Light' that the most unusual and significant resultant of 'religious immediacy' was manifested. How could that fellowship be created today? What would be required of those who might seek to join it? What element of our Christian faith is lacking if we have never experienced this? Further study would perhaps answer these questions, and point the way to a revitalising of the Church today.



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