

A Brief Study Guide to the Journal of George Fox

**Compiled by
John H. Curtis**

References are to the Revised Edition
by John L. Nickalls, 1975, with a
table of cross references to the
Works of George Fox, and to the
Bi-Centenary Journal in its 1902 printing

1976

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Introduction

It is the purpose of this study guide to briefly comment on some aspects of the message of George Fox as expressed in his journal.

These comments are mostly on the beginning chapters of his Journal. It is hoped that the reader can then continue reading the rest of the Journal with an understanding of most of the ideas and expressions that are so distinctively a part of Fox.

George Fox dictated his Journal. He thought as if he were speaking. So it is helpful to read his Journal aloud. Also, his Journal lends itself to being read aloud and discussed by a group of people.

I hope that readers of the Journal may experience the same sense of strong inward confirmation of the message of George Fox that I have experienced when reading his Journal.

Location	Topic
<p><i>Nickalls</i> 1975 page 1 paragraph 1 1642</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Why Fox Wrote his Journal</p> <p>We learn from the first paragraph that Fox wrote his Journal so that "all may know the dealings of the Lord with me." Also, we will learn of various exercises, trials, and troubles through which Fox was led by the Lord as preparation for the work to which the Lord appointed him.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Lord</p> <p>In the first line we have a problem that is so typical of Fox's thought that some space should be devoted to a consideration of it right now. What does Fox mean by "the Lord?"</p> <p>The usual statement about the term "the Lord" is that it refers to God in the Old Testament and to Christ in the New Testament. This does not help here because we do not know whether Fox is using it in an Old Testament or a New Testament sense. It is my own belief that Fox is probably using it in both senses.</p> <p>Fox occasionally makes statements like, "I told them they were not to dispute of God and Christ but to obey him." In Fox's thinking, based on his experience, God and Christ are always present as in the Holy Spirit.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Truth</p> <p>The word "Truth" is used in this paragraph. It means the Quaker cause and the Quaker message. Thus one of the earliest queries was, "How does Truth prosper among you?" Here Fox's travels in the service of Truth were to proclaim the message and promote the cause.</p>

p.4 par.1 1644	<p style="text-align: center;">Professors that Did Not Posses</p> <p>"The did not possess what they professes." This was one of the strongest criticisms made by the early Friends.</p>
Par. 3,	<p style="text-align: center;">Tender</p> <p>"Tender" means spiritually sensitive.</p>
p. 5 par. 2 1646	<p style="text-align: center;">Christ's Death and Christ Centeredness</p> <p>Nathaniel Stephens may have felt that this was such an answer to his question as he had not heard before, but it strikes me as a well-expressed view which is held by many types of Christians. As I began to read Fox and the early Friends, I was surprised to find how close their thinking was to that of the other Christians of their age. The actions of Friends in worship, ministry, meetings for business, the peace testimony, status of women, etc., were all so radically different from other Christians, that I tried to find out the cause of these differences. I decided that the reason was that the Friends were much more Christ centered. As we read Fox's Journal, we will have many occasions to evaluate this conclusion.</p>
par. 3	<p style="text-align: center;">Despair and Temptation</p> <p>At this time in his life, Fox was seeking to know "the ground of despair and temptations" and how to overcome this "ground" or cause of despair and temptations.</p>

<p>p. 7 par. 1 1646</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Financial Resources of Fox</p> <p>Here Fox states he had sufficient funds for his own needs and to help others. The source of these funds is not known.</p>
<p>par. 2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Theological training not Necessary</p> <p>The opening that it is not necessary to go to a theological school to be a minister of Christ has been basic to Quakerism.</p>
<p>p. 8 par. 2 1647</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">God Does Not Dwell in Temples</p> <p>That God does not dwell in temples made with hands but that his people are his temple and he dwells in them is another basic belief of Fox.</p>
<p>par. 3</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Women's Souls</p> <p>This shows what a low regard some men had for women in 1647. It also shows Fox's contrary view and how he often used Scripture to correct those who held mistaken views.</p>
<p>p. 11 par. 2 1647</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Christ Can speak to Thy Condition</p> <p>This is the turning point in Fox's personal life. The voice told him that Christ Jesus can speak to his need. Fox saw that Christ enlightens, and gives grace and faith and power. This is how temptations and despair are overcome.</p>

par. 3	<p style="text-align: center;">God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit</p> <p>I feel Fox's basic theology is contained in the words "the Father of Life drew me to his Son by his spirit." Fox always thinks of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit as present.</p>
p. 12 par. 1 1647	<p style="text-align: center;">Christ a Present Help</p> <p>Fox puts great emphasis on Christ being alive, present, and active, as the last part of this paragraph shows.</p>
par. 2	<p style="text-align: center;">Wait Upon the Lord</p> <p>This paragraph is a moving statement of Fox's experience of the help and power that comes from Christ within.</p>
p. 13 par. 2 1647	<p style="text-align: center;">Christ Overcomes Evil</p> <p>Like much of Fox's writings, Biblical terms and quotations are paraphrased here which gives his meaning clearness and depth. The Serpent is Satan who is the power of evil. The Seed is Christ who is the seed of woman that shall bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15)</p>
p. 14 par. 2 1647	<p style="text-align: center;">Hope</p> <p>Here Fox tells of his opening that "all was done and to be done in and by Christ." This gave Fox hope. The sentences beginning, "And when at any time my condition was vieled..." and ending with "...and temptations are" has been of great encouragement to many people who have been in the midst of troubles, temptations, and despair. The soul's Bishop is Christ.</p>

<p>p. 16 par. 2 and p. 17 par. 2 1647</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Flesh, the Law, and Christ</p> <p>These two paragraphs give Fox's view of the law and of Christ. He tells how people must have the law as their schoolmaster and thus learn what is contrary to the law in themselves. Then they must come through the law to Christ who makes people free from the law of sin and death, and brings them into liberty and freedom to do the will of God. The word "flesh" is used by Fox to mean that which refuses to do the will of God, but does something else instead.</p>
<p>p. 18 par. 3 1647</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Perfection</p> <p>Here the Professors" could not bear to hear talk of "perfection," and of a holy and sinless life. The word "perfection" is used here in a technical sense. It means that it is possible to know and do the will of God in this life. It does not mean perfect in the sense of being sure one will never make a mistake.</p> <p>This was a major point of difference between the early Friends and other Christians of that time. The other Christians said that to believe that fallible human beings could know and do the will of God in this life was the worst sin of all – that of spritual pride. The early Friends said that through the help of Christ within it was possible to know and do the will of God in this life. Also, the early Friends said the others were pleading for sin for term of life.</p> <p>This continues to be a major difference between Friends and many other Christians. If it is not possible to do the will of God, all that people can do is to do the best they can and pray for forgiveness for not fully doing the will of God. This is sometimes called the tragic dilemma of Protestant ethics. By reading the Bible, people can learn what God wants them to do. but they can't do it. I believe that this is one of the reasons why salvation to the Protestants means forgiveness for sins committed.</p> <p>Fox believed in forgiveness for sins committed, but he also believed in salvation from sin. If a group believes that it is possible to do the will of God in</p>

	<p>this life (salvation from sin) that group will take very seriously what is the will of God for a particular situation. Friends, under the guidance of Christ within, have been led into many testimonies. These testimonies testify to the power of Christ to guide and empower people to do the will of God in this life.</p> <p>The better known testimonies are those against war and fighting, for simplicity and honesty, and respect for every person. Also, Friends have been led to be in the forefront of many movements for social betterment.</p>
p. 19 par. 2 1647	<p style="text-align: center;">An Infinite Ocean of Light and Love</p> <p>The sentence beginning, "I saw that also there was an ocean..." is often quoted. It shows that Fox had a positive faith that God's love prevails.</p>
par. 3	<p style="text-align: center;">Notions</p> <p>This is typical of Fox's belief. He contrasts words and notions with the inward life and inward cleansing blood of Christ. These words and notions were not based on experience of Christ within, but were intellectual speculation. Fox often uses the word notions in this sense.</p>

<p>p. 32 par. 1 1648</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Types, Figures, and Shadows</p> <p>Fox states many times that Christ the substance has come and therefore the types, figures, and shadows have been done away. By this he means that the coming of Christ into history and into each person has done away with temple worship, priests, human prophets, ceremonial washings, etc., which were part of the Old Testament times. Also, these things were shadows, types and figures of Christ who was to come. When Christ the substance has come these shadows, etc., have been replaced by the substance that they foretold</p>
<p>p. 33 par. 2 1648</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Light of Christ</p> <p>Fox often uses "light" or "light of Christ" in a variety of ways. This paragraph is a good example of such use. I believe Fox does this for at least two reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. He lived in an age when Christian terminology and doctrine were well known but nothing was known about Christ as experienced as our inward teacher, shepherd, counselor, etc. So Fox devotes most of his efforts to proclaiming that there is this experience which is much more than just a belief in the efficacy of Christ's death.2. Fox always thinks of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit as being present.
<p>p. 33 par. 2 1648</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Scriptures</p> <p>This paragraph also gives a good statement of Fox's view of the function of the Scriptures. These things are told in the Scriptures but we need the inward help of the Holy Spirit to know God, Christ, or the Scriptures aright.</p>

<p>p. 34 par. 3 1648</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Fox's Mission</p> <p>This paragraph tells of Fox being sent forth and of his mission. It is a good example of Fox's emphasis on the living, active presence of Christ, with God and the Holy Spirit also being present.</p>
<p>p. 49 par. 4 1649</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Change of Source Material</p> <p>In the fifth line of this paragraph the Nickalls edition changes from the Ellwood text to the original material from which Ellwood worked. This material is called the "Spence MS" and is printed in the Cambridge Journal of 1911.</p> <p>Since the various Journals of George Fox will differ from the Nickalls Edition after this point and since a number of comments have already been made in this guide, only a few further items will be discussed. This does not mean that the rest of the Journal is not important. In fact it is in the rest of the Journal that the message that Fox preached is made clear. It was this message that changed so many people's lives and produced the Religious Society of Friends.</p>

<p>p. 64 par. 3 1651</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Peace Testimony</p> <p>Here Fox states his belief in the life and power that takes away the occasion for all wars. I take this life and power to be Christ within. The belief that Christ takes away the occasion for war has meant a great deal to me.</p> <p>I feel that not participating in war is a very serious matter. Our family, friends, and other people can suffer in addition to ourselves because of our nonparticipation in war. It is only Christ's action that gives a sufficient basis to solve the many dilemmas of nonparticipation in war.</p> <p>This peace testimony is a testimony (witness) to the power of Christ.</p>
<p>p. 109 par. 2 1652</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Firbank Fell Sermon</p> <p>This summary of Fox's three-hour presentation gives the heart of the message Fox was preaching. The emphasis on Christ as living teacher, counselor, and particularly as prophet, is the key to understanding Fox's message. Christ is the prophet like unto Moses who must be heard in all things</p> <p>Many of the hearers and all of the teachers of that congregation were convinced by Fox. A number of these people went on to proclaim the same message. This meeting is usually considered to be the beginning of Quakerism.</p>

Cross References

Three Editions of the Journal of George Fox

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