

**THE EARLY FRIENDS AND THEIR
SERVICES IN AMERICA: AN ADDRESS
BEFORE THE FRIENDS' INSTITUTE FOR
YOUNG MEN PHILADELPHIAM,
SECOND MONTH 15, 1883**

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JAMES J. LEVICK

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EARLY FRIENDS
AND
THEIR SERVICES IN AMERICA

AN ADDRESS BEFORE
THE FRIENDS' INSTITUTE FOR YOUNG MEN
PHILADELPHIA,
Second Month 15, 1883.

BY
JAMES J. LEVICK, M. D.

Third Edition.

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TO

ELIZABETH W. LEVICK,

THAT DEAR MOTHER

WHOSE TENDER SYMPATHY AND CARE IN THEIR EARLY DAYS

WERE SO PRECIOUS TO HER CHILDREN,

AND WHO NOW, IN HER NINETY-SEVENTH YEAR,

WITH MENTAL VIGOR UNIMPAIRED,

IS STILL THEIR COMFORTER IN SORROW, THEIR COUNSELLOR IN DOUBT,

THE JOY OF THEIR HEARTS AND THE LIGHT OF THEIR HOME,

THIS BRIEF HISTORY

OF THE FAITH IN WHICH SHE SO HAPPILY LIVES

AND IN WHICH HER FOREFATHERS PEACEFULLY DIED

IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED.

TWO hundred and thirty-five years ago the Religious Society of Friends began to be known in England. Two hundred years ago this Province was first settled by William Penn. Of the latter event we have lately heard much, of the former but little; and yet the latter was so much the natural sequence of the former, that the history of the one is incomplete without the history of the other.

I propose, therefore, this evening to speak of three men, each of whom was prominent in the early history of the Society of Friends, and each of whom had somewhat to do with the settlement of Pennsylvania and its vicinity. I allude to George Fox, Robert Barclay and William Penn.

I am well aware that to some who are present this account will have for them all the familiarity of a thrice-told tale. I cannot but believe that to others, and especially to the younger members of this Institute, there will be some facts mentioned which are new to them, and I am strong in the conviction that it will do no harm to any of us often to be reminded what manner of men they were to whom as Friends, and as Pennsylvanians, we owe so much.

George Fox was born in Leicestershire, England, in the month called July, 1624. He had a good ancestry, for his father was a man whose honesty was proverbial, and his mother was of the stock of the martyrs. His school education was but moderate, and yet he was by no means ignorant or illiterate. He was carefully brought up in the faith and practices of the Church of England, to whose communion his parents belonged, and of which it was at one time proposed he should become a clergyman. This, however, was objected to by some of his family, and it ended in his being

apprenticed, as he writes, to "a man who was a shoemaker by trade," though it does not appear that George Fox himself ever belonged to what our poet, Whittier, calls "the gentle craft of leather," for, as Fox says of his master, "He dealt in wool and used grazing, and sold cattle, and a great deal of it went through my hands."¹

As his childhood had been a remarkably grave and staid one, so his youth was one of great innocency and purity. At twenty years of age grave and perplexing questions, doubts and temptations, pressed heavily upon him. The mysteries of this life and of the life to come enshrouded his mind in much darkness, and were accompanied with a state of unrest from which he vainly sought relief. Various were the suggestions made to him at this time by his relatives. One who knew the steadying influence of a good wife, advised him to marry; but, says he, "I told him I was but a lad, and must first learn wisdom." Another bade him join the auxiliary band among the soldiers; "but I refused, and was grieved that they proffered such things to me, being a tender youth." And so, his relatives proving no help to him, he turned, almost in despair, to "the priests," whom, however, he found to be "miserable comforters." One told him to "take tobacco and sing psalms." "Tobacco," he says, "was a thing I did not love, and I was not in an estate to sing—I could not sing." One made his troubles the sport of his servants; while another, whose conversation at first gave him some encouragement, flew into such a violent passion when young Fox accidentally set his foot on the side of a flower-bed, that he went away in sorrow, worse than when he came.

By this time certain thoughts, which before had been vague, now began to assume a definite form and shape.

¹ William Penn says of him, "As for his employment, he was brought up to country business, and took most delight in sheep, and was very skilful in them, an employment that well suited his mind in several respects, both for its innocency and solitude, and was a just figure of his after ministry and service."

Very interesting is it to note the gradual manner in which great truths dawned upon him. Among the very first of these "heavenly openings," as he deemed them, one is thus recorded by him: "As I was walking in the field on a First-day morning, the Lord opened to me, that being bred at Oxford and Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ." "And," says he, in his quaint language, "I stranged at it, for it was the common belief of the people; but I saw it clearly, and was satisfied, and admired the goodness of the Lord who had opened this thing unto me." At another time, he writes, "It was opened in me that God, who made the world, dwelleth not in temples made with hands. This at first seemed a strange word, . . . but the Lord showed me that He did not dwell in temples which man had commanded and set up, but in people's hearts." And then, rapidly following this, came the revelation, "'There is an anointing within man, and God will teach his people Himself.'"

Closely allied to this, if not identical with it, was opened to his view, in the vale of Beavor, "how that every man was enlightened by the Divine light of Christ, and that they who believed in it came out of condemnation and came to the light of life, and became the children of it; but that they that hated it and did not believe in it, were condemned by it, though they made a profession of Christ."

Having had little comfort from the priests of the Established Church, he turned his attention to the dissenting people, among whom he found, as he writes, "some tenderness;" "but as I had forsaken the priests, so I left the separate preachers, for I saw there was none among them that could speak to my condition. And when all hope in them and in all men was gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, then, oh, then! I heard a voice which said, there is One even Christ Jesus, which can speak to thy condition. Then the Lord did let me see why there was none upon the earth that could speak to my condition, namely, that I might give Him all the glory."

I have quoted largely George Fox's own words, because they are necessary fully to understand the character of the man, and because on them and what they express, hinged, as it were, his whole subsequent life, his teaching and his preaching. "After this," says he, "all things were new, and all the creation gave another smell to me than before, beyond what words can utter." And now, with all the earnestness of undoubting conviction, he recognizes fully his call to preach the Gospel to his fellow men. First appearing as such in the year 1647, when but twenty-three years old, his progress as a preacher is a rapid one. Even before the organization of the Society of Friends as such, he travelled largely in the north of England, and found tender-hearted people who heard with gladness his gospel message, which they freely owned, and to which they found an answer in their hearts and enlightened consciences.

For this was a time, if ever so in its history, that the religious mind of the English people was stirred to its very depths. The execution of King Charles, the rule of Cromwell, followed by his death, and the short-lived protectorate of his son, soon succeeded by the restoration of the Stuarts, had produced a sense of insecurity among all the people.

To this was added, during the times we are considering, the prevalence of that fearful pestilence known as the Plague. It is at such a time as this, when every earthly prop seems to be insecure, that the soul, almost in despair, certainly with great eagerness, grasps at whatever gives promise of real support. For these among other reasons was it that so many of the people heard George Fox's gospel message, and many of them gladly received it.

And now, before passing further, it may be well to ask, what was this gospel message, and what were some of the religious views of George Fox and the early Friends?

I think this message may all be epitomized in his own words: "I saw that Christ died for all men and had enlightened all men and women with his divine and saving

light, and that no man could be a true believer but who believed in it."

I have said that his whole gospel message might be epitomized in these words, and I repeat it; but it will be seen that few as they are, these two propositions cover the whole field of Christian faith. They are, however, inseparable one from the other, and George Fox did not separate them. He held in all its fulness the doctrine of the propitiatory offering of Christ on Calvary; and he recognized in all its force, the doctrine of Christ as the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

I need not adduce any lengthened evidence to prove to this audience the first of these statements. Its truth is to be found all the way through his Journal, which is the reflex of his faith and of his life.

Very early in his history, when but little more than twenty-one years old he records that, "the priest of Drayton asked me a question, viz.: why Christ cried out on the cross, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And why He said, If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not my will, but thine be done? And I told him," says Fox, "that at that time the sins of mankind were upon Him, and their iniquities and transgressions with which he was wounded, which He was to bear, and to be an offering for them, as He was man; but died not, as He was God. And so in that He died for all men, and tasted death for every man, He was an offering for the sins of the whole world." And the priest said it was a very good, full answer, and such an one as he had not heard.

Another record in his Journal reads thus: "When in Darby dungeon, A. D. 1651, there came to see me a man from Nottinghamshire, a souldier, and with him came several others; and in discourse this person said: Your faith stands in a man that died at Jerusalem, and there never was any such thing. I was exceedingly grieved to hear him say so, and I said to him: How! did not Christ suffer without the gates of Jerusalem through the professing Jews and Chief Priests