

George Fox the Younger: an early Quaker conservative?

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Quakerism is conventionally viewed as a politically radical movement at its foundations. This thesis has been challenged recently, but the problem remains that early Quakers provided little justification for a politics comfortable with established social and political hierarchies. This article proposes that early Quakerism's 'incoherence', a feature which intellectual historians are often alert to within political texts and movements, was patched up by the efforts of George Fox the Younger (d.1661), a previously little studied Friend. Scholars have often discounted or misinterpreted Fox's work, but it can provide a key to understanding political boundaries which the movement respected in practice. This essay establishes his thought's representative quality, despite the relative singularity of his voice. This may provide a hermeneutic for other studies of Quakerism and intellectual history; and some reflections upon Fox's abiding normative importance are made.



Studies of Quaker and seventeenth-century English politics have overlooked George Fox the Younger ('Fox', hereafter). Quaker scholars have recently made a welcome habit of rediscovering early leaders' distinct positions and personalities,¹ but have subjected Fox to at best incidental, at worst incorrect, glances. He has struggled, perhaps understandably, to escape the limelight of his better-known namesake ('Fox the elder' below), in relation to whom he was younger in 'Truth', though not years.

Fox was, however, a significant figure in Quaker political thought. He accurately gauged a boundary within Quaker politics, even if his contribution was not feted. Fox argued – haltingly at times – against extended political participation as a resolution to England's troubles. Rather than taking a radical line often associated with the early movement, Fox recommended the normative, 'pragmatic' response of accepting established political powers, even stating a preference for some traditional, elitist modes of governance.

The reason Fox, rather than another Quaker, did this remains unclear, and his statements cannot be taken unproblematically as representative. But Fox's ideas provided a superior rationale for Quaker actions than most statements, and his thought provokes interesting questions for scholars of political thought. I have recently argued that Quaker radicalism in theology and ecclesiology did not carry over to their political thought, at least as we might expect.² Quaker politics of the Interregnum and early Restoration were defined by pleading to the 'Light' of everyone, advocating God's 'counsel' among subjects and rulers, within established structures. Affirmations of obedience to the powers that be, often invoking Rom. 13 and the second verse's guidance that 'Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God', were integral to early approaches.³ Even if civil disobedience became a central testimony to Quakers,⁴ this did not stray into questioning the grounds of constituted powers. Quaker political approaches have ranged from 'full participation to complete withdrawal and abstention';⁵ but they have rarely proved revolutionary or radically democratic, despite tackling malignant institutions related to slavery or war.

Fox provided a rationale for some implications of this – namely, not placing faith in the 'people' or representative institutions per se, and even to focus upon elites – in

¹ Angell, S. W. and Dandelion, P., (eds), *Early Quakers and their Theological Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

² McArthur, E. D., 'Theological Counsel in the Early Quaker Movement', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 74, 2023, pp. 68–91.

³ Calvert, J., 'The Quaker Theory of a Civil Constitution', *History of Political Thought*, 27, 2006, pp. 586–619, p. 595.

⁴ Calvert, 'Quaker Theory'.

⁵ Tolles, F., 'Quakerism and Politics', 2007 [1956], <https://quaker.org/legacy/pamphlets/ward1956b.pdf> (accessed 10/03/2023), p. 23.

a manner not previously confronted. Fox occupied a curious position: his essays bore an unusual message, but better justified the practices of other Quakers. Modern studies of political thought have rightly drawn attention to the importance of marginal literature to major movements,⁶ and historic thinkers and texts that display ‘incoherence’.⁷ With Quakerism, we have some incoherence between its political actions and theory: support for established hierarchies existed only *de facto*. Their affirmation found some ‘marginal’ articulation, however, in a Fox’s positions on popular politics, radical ideas, the military, and Parliament.

Biographical details

Fox hailed from Charsfield, Suffolk. His year of birth is unknown, but he served in the army before converting to Quakerism, a path trod by other early leaders including James Nayler, Richard Hubberthorne, and William Dewsbury. Like these, and many Quakers of the 1650s and 1660s, Fox’s missionary work in the years following met with frequent persecution. Fox was convinced by George Whitehead, then a teenager touring Suffolk, at a meeting in summer 1655.⁸ He began preaching and assisting other Friends: in October 1656, after Whitehead and others were indicted as ‘Common Disturbers’ at Bury St Edmunds, Fox challenged a local judge about their mistreatment, who promptly imprisoned him too.⁹ Fox and Whitehead were joined by three others, and suffered themselves, evidenced partly in a pamphlet of May 1656, *The Grounds and Causes of our Sufferings*, which they collectively authored.¹⁰ The Council of State ordered their release in October, following personal appeals to the Lord Protector of England, Oliver Cromwell.¹¹ Fox authored his first solo pamphlet, *Compassion to the Captives*, in the previous month. This explicated a conventional understanding of the Light of Christ amongst early Friends: calling listeners to recognise that of God within them, their true ‘Teacher’ against outward authorities and material temptations.¹² It also outlined his first objections towards the army, a topic discussed below.

⁶ Skinner, Q., *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: volume 1, the Renaissance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. x–xi.

⁷ Ward, M., and Rose, J., ‘Hobbes, Empire, and the Politics of the Cabal: Political Thought and Policy Making in the Restoration’, *Journal of British Studies*, 62, 2023, pp. 333–61.

⁸ Whitehead, G., *The Christian Progress of that Ancient Servant and Minister of Jesus Christ, George Whitehead*, London: J Sowle, 1725, p. 53.

⁹ Besse, J., *Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, vol. I; London: L. Hinde, 1753, p. 660.

¹⁰ Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 661.

¹¹ Whitehead, *Christian Progress*, pp. 95–96.

¹² Fox, G., ‘Compassion to the captives’, in *A Collection of the Several Books and Writings, Given Forth by that Faithful Servant of God and His People*, London: Robert Wilson, 1662, p. 12.

Roughly a year's gaol-time did not dissuade Fox. Many Quakers came to Scotland in 1657; Fox joined them, getting as far as Orkney. General Monk, then head of the army in Scotland, shortly expelled most English Quaker missionaries, however.¹³ Fox was in Dunstall, Suffolk, in 1658/59, where he showed 'Christian Courage' to preach in the face of violence, winning an assailant's respect.¹⁴ When preaching at Aldeburgh and Southwold in 1659 at dates unknown he suffered further imprisonments and mob violence.¹⁵ In late August, he and Whitehead debated a 'priest', Thomas Smith, at Christ's College, Cambridge. Pamphlets from Smith¹⁶ and Richard Blome,¹⁷ the later cartographer and bookseller then trying his hand at religious controversy, followed about this dispute. Whitehead and Fox responded, in turn, with *Truth Defending the Quakers*.¹⁸ In October 1659, he and Whitehead met another set of disputants, Arminians John Horn and Thomas Moore, whom the Quakers labelled 'Manifestarians' for their peculiar doctrines on Christ's coming.¹⁹ Pamphlets attending this followed, too, including one authored by Whitehead with his brother, John, and Fox.²⁰

Fox's reputation was growing: other Quakers began to refer to him as an intellectual authority.²¹ Yet apart from manuscript epistles, debate appearances, and writings with Whitehead, he released only one solo pamphlet before 1659. That year, in addition to his travels, Fox spent time in London, producing several works addressed to political authorities. Through these, he became a significant political as well as theological voice. His missionary activities continued to draw him into broader conflicts. In May 1660, after preaching in Harwich, Essex, Fox was set upon by mob and magistrate. Fox was told that the imminently restored King would 'hang or banish you all', yet he continued to speak against 'Ungodliness'. He and Robert Grassingham were imprisoned for 'disturbing the Peace'; again, both were subject to abuse from those claiming, among other things, that Charles II would 'hang all the Quakers'.²² Fox's plea for mercy, *A Noble Salutation and Faithful Greeting Unto Thee Charles Stuart*, written at Harwich, was

¹³ Stockdale, W., *The Doctrines and Principles, the Persecution, Imprisonment, Banishment, Excommunicating of the Saints of God, by the Priests and Magistrates of Scotland*, London: Robert Wilson, 1659, pp. 4–5.

¹⁴ Besse, *Sufferings*, p. 667.

¹⁵ Besse, *Sufferings*, pp. 667–68.

¹⁶ Smith, T., *The Quaker Disarm'd*, London: J.C., 1659.

¹⁷ Blome, R., *Questions Propounded to George Whitehead and George Fox*, London: [s.n.], 1659.

¹⁸ Whitehead, G., and Fox, G., *Truth Defending the Quakers*, London: Thomas Simmonds, 1659.

¹⁹ Whitehead, *Progress*, p. 171.

²⁰ Whitehead, G., Whitehead, J., and Fox, G., *A Brief Discovery of the Dangerous Principles of John Horne (A Priest in Lin) and Thomas Moore Junior*, London: Thomas Simmonds, 1659; Whitehead, G., *The Quakers no Deceivers*, London: Giles Calvert, 1660.

²¹ Moore, R., *George Whitehead and the Establishment of Quakerism*, Leiden: Brill, 2021, p. 22.

²² Besse, *Sufferings*, pp. 194–97; Fox, G., 'A true relation of the unlawful and unreasonable proceedings of the magistrates of Harwich', in *Collection*, pp. 193–207.

delivered by Richard Hubberthorne to the King in July. But the Convention Parliament upheld the local magistrates' actions; Fox and Grassingham were shortly taken to Lambeth 'House' or Palace, then a prison. Their letters and printed appeals to the House of Commons were ignored. After fourteen weeks' imprisonment, the Commons ordered their release in August. Upon not paying their gaolers' fees, however, they remained imprisoned while the Commons referred the case to the Privy Council. Fox wrote letters and epistles during this time, first from Lambert House, and then the Gatehouse Prison, Westminster.²³ He was released in late 1660, before being imprisoned again in early 1661. Friends record his death in Hurstpierpoint, Sussex, in July that year.²⁴ As a Quaker, he had rarely ceased preaching, writing, debating, or suffering persecution from various authorities.

What legacy did Fox leave? He was notably the first Quaker to have his writings compiled in a collected works, in 1662; this contained a testimony from Isaac Penington, another major figure of the period.²⁵ His epistles and pamphlets were translated into French and Dutch, showing an importance overseas.²⁶ Mostly overlooked since then, his letters to Charles attracted praise from some from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Quakers and sympathisers.²⁷ Some identified him as a peculiarly prophetic figure in early Quakerism, given predictions about the Commonwealth in 1659.²⁸ There is little evidence for this reputation;²⁹ many Quakers predicted vengeance upon parliamentarians and the army. Turning to his political positions, however, a strident and singular line is discernible.

Fox's political thought

In surveys of Quaker political thought, assessments of Fox have been ambivalent. Short biographies have focussed on his theology and missionary activity, diminishing his political ingenuity.³⁰ On other occasions, he has been briefly identified as opposing

²³ See Fox, *Collection*, 'The Dread of Gods Power', pp. 155–62; 'His Faith Touching Four Particulars Demonstrated', pp. 208–11; 'A General Epistle and a Tender Greeting', pp. 230–40; 'To The Called of God', pp. 245–248; 'The Breathings of True Love', pp. 250–62.

²⁴ Penney, N. (ed.), *The First Publishers of Truth*, London: Headley Brothers, 1907, p. 238.

²⁵ Braithwaite, W. C., *The Second Period of Quakerism*, London: Macmillan, 1919, pp. 417–18.

²⁶ Smith, J., *A Descriptive Catalogue of Friends' Books*, London: George Rymer, 1863, pp. 697–704.

²⁷ Alexander, W., *Collectitia*, York: W. Alexander, 1824, pp. 17–21, 132; Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans*, London: R. Cruttwell, 1796, p. 509.

²⁸ Storrs Turner, F., *The Quakers: A Study Historical and Critical*, London: Swan Sonnenschein & co., 1889, pp. 132–36.

²⁹ Compare Willsford, J., *The Lying Spirit and False Aspertions Turned Home Again*, London: [s.n.], 1673, p. 15.

³⁰ Greaves, R. L., 'Fox, George, the younger (d. 1661)' [2004], DNB, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10030> (accessed 10 March 2023).

‘pure democracy’, but misidentified as Fox the elder, and his pamphlets misdated.³¹ From a radical angle, historians have argued that his ideas lent support for ‘universal suffrage’;³² or labelled Fox as inspired by the Levellers, a movement originating in the 1640s which sought greater political equality.³³ From another perspective, he has been argued to be a rightward figure, even where Quaker moderation is acknowledged;³⁴ or been regarded as exceptional for his coolness towards Parliament amidst a general Quaker radicalism.³⁵ Below, it is argued that both positions – of Fox as a radical, or as a moderate amidst militants – fail to appreciate the identity of his thought or its relation to others’ ideas and practice.

To interpret Fox’s views as democratic constitutes an almost axiomatic misrepresentation of ‘radical’ opinion in this period.³⁶ Fox sympathised with established elites. But this position was also an accurate, rather than abnormal, presentation of Quaker political practice. Fox’s counsels affirming socio-political hierarchies, opposing popular government, and rejecting political radicalism *tout court* were more overt, but clarified the principles behind others’ actions.

Fox’s theology was relatively conventional. His early writings emphasised the Light of Christ within, upbraiding those who failed to heed it.³⁷ His *A Visitation of Love Unto all People*, probably his first 1659 work, analysed the Light’s universality and power; while *A Word to the People of the World, Who Hates the Light* in the same year challenged those who opposed the faithful. During one London confinement, he wrote intriguingly of humanity being justified ‘freely by [God’s] Grace, through Faith in Christ Jesus’.³⁸ But this is consonant with other Quaker statements, and lacks precision to suggest an unusually predestinarian or *sola fide* approach to salvation. More prominently, he argued for the debasement of all before God and Christ, including political figures. His first solo pamphlet exalted God as ‘our King for evermore’ in conclusion; in a poem posthumously released which pleaded for devotion in the face of sufferings, he demarcated the Quaker as one who would ‘Deny themselves in every thing,/And wait

³¹ Calvert, J., ‘Political Obligation and Civil Dissent in Quaker Theologico-political Thought’, *Quaker Religious Thought*, 106, 2006, p. 78, n.12; Calvert, ‘Quaker Theory’, p. 602.

³² Gwyn, D., *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism*, London: Quaker Books, 2006, pp. 203, 219.

³³ Cole, A., ‘The Quakers and the English Revolution’, *Past & Present*, 10, 1956, pp. 39–54, pp. 42–43; Hill, C., *The Experience of Defeat*, London: Faber, 1984, pp. 133, 135.

³⁴ McArthur, ‘Theological Counsel’, p. 76.

³⁵ Mayers, R., *1659: The Crisis of the Commonwealth*, Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004, pp. 66–69, 262.

³⁶ See also Burgess, G., and Festenstein, M., (eds), *English Radicalism, 1550–1850*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

³⁷ See Fox, *Collection*, especially ‘Compassion’, pp. 3–12; ‘The words of the Everlasting true Light’, pp. 47–56; ‘A word to the people of the world, who hates the Light’, pp. 57–73.

³⁸ Fox, ‘His Faith’, p. 209.

on him who is their King'.³⁹ Fox upheld God as 'King' above all earthly rulers, a thread teased out below.

Generally, early Quaker political figures focussed on persuading government elites towards godly rule, and sought relief on particular issues such as tithes, oaths, and religious liberty.⁴⁰ While revolutionising the theological capacity of persons – allowing each ruler and subject to access and express God's 'counsel' – this meant accepting the politically quotidian: immediate revelation would bring policies forward. In a broader schema, they were not 'utopians' like Gerrard Winstanley, a 'Digger' who supported ideas of agrarian communism, or James Harrington, a political theorist supporting widescale reforms, both of whom attempted to fix fallen humanity through institutional fixes in the 1640s and 1650s. Nor did they advocate for a moral commonwealth (the Levellers) or political millennium (the Fifth Monarchists) under the English Commonwealth established since 1649.⁴¹ They were constitutional 'reformists' vis-à-vis their contemporaries. Their theology and ecclesiology were revolutionary, and their pamphleteering encouraged wider political participation.⁴² But their counsels were *appeals* to constituted powers; and even lobbying of this kind became part of normative, non-revolutionary politics in the seventeenth century.⁴³

This approach dovetailed, admittedly, with a radical theology which degraded worldly reform relative to inward transformation. This spilt over, particularly around the 1653 Barebones Parliament and 1659–60, to apocalyptic and eschatological forebodings that the Lord would avenge his persecutors.⁴⁴ God might, they warned, 'overturn' rulers,⁴⁵ or set his wrath on them.⁴⁶ But it resulted in few concerted political manoeuvres: these statements expressed providential confidence, and were accompanied with persuading, rather than cajoling or rejecting, political authority and authorities. God was the real 'King' to Fox and others – hinting at a cosmos comprised of

³⁹ Salt, W., *Some Breathings of Life*, London: [s.n.], 1663, p. 19.

⁴⁰ See McArthur, 'Theological Counsel', for this interpretation.

⁴¹ See Davies, J. C., *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A study of English utopian writing, 1516-1700*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp. 26–30, 33–37.

⁴² Peters, K., *Print Culture and the Early Quakers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, especially pp. 42, 155, 210, 232.

⁴³ Rose, J., 'The problem of political counsel in medieval and early modern England and Scotland', in Rose, J., (ed.), *The Politics of Counsel in England and Scotland, 1286-1707*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 1–44, pp. 29–30.

⁴⁴ Burrough, E., *A Trumpet of the Lord*, London: Giles Calvert, 1656; Fox, G. [the elder], and Nayler, J., *Newes Coming up out of the North*, London: Giles Calvert, 1654, p. 6.

⁴⁵ Fox, 'The words', p. 52; Nayler, J., *The Power and Glory of the Lord Shining out of the North*, London: Giles Calvert, 1654, pp. 14–15.

⁴⁶ Burrough, E., *A Presentation of Wholesome Informations, unto the King of England*, London: Robert Moon, 1660, 'The Epistle', pp. 3–4 (unnumbered).

two, perhaps unbridgeable, ‘kingdoms’⁴⁷ – but this prescribed individual communion with Him, rather than a strict theocratic or ecclesiastical polity.

What, then, of Quaker manoeuvring in 1659? From May 1659 to Charles II’s Restoration in May 1660, power continually shifted between the army and Parliament. Fox became energised as a writer at this time; Quakers, among others, seemed to proffer radical solutions as the constitutional order changed month-to-month. Some Quakers appealed to the ‘Good Old Cause’, the slogan of parliamentary and army radicals, but generally did so ironically or to upbraid its proponents by their standards. A brief analysis of two Quaker activists, Edward Billing and Edward Burrough can illustrate the marginality and limitations of more manifestly ‘radical’ manoeuvres. In doing so, this attests to the basically representative quality of Fox’s ideas. Billing, another former soldier, recommended clear, comprehensive reforms in *A Mite of Affection* (1659).⁴⁸ But this text did not receive widespread endorsement, and unusually used the singular pronoun rather than the Quaker ‘we’.⁴⁹ Burrough, by contrast, briefly hinted at extensive designs. In a manuscript entitled *To the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England* (mid-1659), for example, he set forth ideas for a national ‘Councell’ comprising different religious groups and ‘the ablest and soberest men’.⁵⁰ Yet this was not a consistent policy; merely one that appeared useful and attainable in its time, and was then delimited to the ‘soberest men’. And even this idea, as well as more apocalyptic soundings, remained out of print.

Radical endeavours were consistently marginal within the movement: Billing was shunned by other Quakers when he refused to repudiate weapons after the Restoration.⁵¹ He appeared, even to outside observers of the Quakers, as ‘suspicious’.⁵² On other occasions, Billing fell into line: he, alongside other leading Quakers, signed a document authored by Burrough in November 1659 which declared that ‘neither are we for one party, or another, nor do we side with one sort, and rebell against another [...] we have chosen the Sonn of God to be our King’.⁵³ He refused to join the militia as some Quakers were summonsed to in this year, albeit on the protestation that he could not swear an

⁴⁷ Masters, S., *The Rule of Christ: Themes in the Theology of James Nayler*, Leiden: Brill, 2021, pp. 63–65.

⁴⁸ Billing, E., *A Mite of Affection*, London: Giles Calvert, 1659.

⁴⁹ Nickalls, J. L., ‘The Problem of Edward Byllynge, Part II’, in Brinton, H., (ed.), *Children of Light: Essays in honor of Rufus M. Jones*, New York: Macmillan, 1938, p. 123.

⁵⁰ Reay, B., ‘The Quakers and 1659: two newly discovered broadsides by Edward Burrough’, *The Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, 54, 1977, pp. 101–111, p. 107

⁵¹ Ellis Hookes to Margaret Fell, November 25, 1662 in Penney, N., (ed.), *Extracts from State Papers Relating to Friends, 1659–1664*, London: Headley Brothers, 1911, p. 153.

⁵² Robert Johnson to Secretary Bennett, August 21, 1662, in Penney, N., (ed.), *Extracts from State Papers*, p. 156.

⁵³ Burrough, E., *A Declaration from the People called Quakers*, London: [s.n.], 1659, p. 8.

oath.⁵⁴ But, publicly and privately, oaths rather than monarchical government remained his primary source of discontent: Billing wrote to Fox shortly after the Restoration reporting his suffering, and the suffering of Quakers under *all* governments on account of their testimony regarding oaths.⁵⁵ His newer pamphlets waxed on this theme.⁵⁶ To Fox, he expressed no dissent towards Charles II, nor support for raising arms. While the Quakers suffered significant theological schisms in their early years – over Rhys Jones, James Nayler, and John Perrot – their political unity was greater.

Quaker initiative in constitutional politics, so pertinent to the period, appears slight. The movement advised Charles II on similar terms as Interregnum rulers regarding liberty of conscience, relief from sufferings, and a more Christianised politics. Pamphlets towards Parliament or the army simply declined in proportion after the King's accession.⁵⁷ Hubberthorne and Margaret Fell, a prominent Friend based in Lancashire, met Charles in July 1660;⁵⁸ Hubberthorne delivered Fox's *Noble Salutation*. Other writers affirmed Quaker obedience: Burrough wrote of its necessity even to 'unjust' government.⁵⁹ Fell published a tract signed by Fox the elder and other leaders affirming their 'Fidelity to the King'.⁶⁰ The more famous 'Peace Testimony' of 1661, outlining the Quakers' pacifism, did the same.⁶¹ The spiritual 'Lamb's War'⁶² – facing rulers and subjects – remained primary to overcoming injustice.

Any radical soundings did not lead even Restoration Quakers to consistently back Parliament against the King. Admittedly, most Friends seemed to shun kingly prerogative when they refused to accept Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence of 1672. This extended temporary toleration, but not full legality, to Protestant Dissenters outside the Church of England; some churches accepted licenses under it.⁶³ But Friends also upbraided the High Church 'Cavalier Parliament' (1661–79).⁶⁴ They continued appealing to kings, culminating in William Penn's partly successful wooing of James

⁵⁴ Nickalls, 'Byllynge', pp. 118–19.

⁵⁵ Nickalls, 'Byllynge', pp. 112–15.

⁵⁶ Billing, E., *An Alarm to all Flesh*, London: Robert Wilson, 1660.

⁵⁷ Peters, K., 'The Quakers and the politics of the army in 1659', *Past & Present*, 231, 2016, pp. 97–128, p. 107.

⁵⁸ Braithwaite, W. C., *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, London: Macmillan, 1912, pp. 475–78.

⁵⁹ Burrough, E., *A Visitation and Presentation of Love unto the King*, London: Robert Wilson, 1660, p. 22.

⁶⁰ Fell, M. (with 13 other signatories), *A Declaration and an Information, From us the People of God called Quakers, To the Present Governors, the King and Both Houses of Parliament*, London: Robert Wilson, 1660.

⁶¹ McArthur, 'Theological Counsel', pp. 71–72.

⁶² See Gwyn, D., 'James Nayler and the Lamb's War', *Quaker Studies*, 12, 2008, pp. 184–87; Masters, *Rule of Christ*, pp. 57–64; and Fox's works his *Collection*, especially, 'Compassion', p. 11; 'A few plain words', p. 101; 'For the Parliament', p. 102.

⁶³ Braithwaite, *Second Coming*, p. 81; Rose, J., *Restoration England: The politics of the royal supremacy, 1660–1688*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, chapter 4.

⁶⁴ White, D., *Friends, You That are of the Parliament*, London: [s.n.], 1662.

II for an Indulgence of 1687. Quakers may have received this more favourably,⁶⁵ and some were cautious, initially, to repudiate the fleeing monarch during the Glorious Revolution of 1688–89.⁶⁶ Billing himself became a Governor in New England (1680–87); Penn was made proprietor of Pennsylvania by Charles II. The more participatory constitutions they designed for these territories potentially showed the Quakers' true hand.⁶⁷ But both had accepted these royal grants, and neither advocated for such a programme in England. Indeed, Penn's lobbying of parliamentarians and then James II saw him ridiculed by many Whigs and Dissenters as the King's toady.⁶⁸ His pamphlet literature tied governmental responsibility to the protection of property;⁶⁹ and related his lack of inherent interest in 'Frames and Models' of government.⁷⁰ Any constitutional novelties, as for Billing and Burrough earlier, were limited by time and place.

Penn was a 'moderate', dividing his support between King and Parliament, but this was characteristic of the movement he joined.⁷¹ Where did Fox fit into the earlier milieu? In a pamphlet of May 1659, he offered 'counsel' to the army, albeit in excoriating terms.⁷² Like others before and beside him, Fox proposed moral reforms to soldiers and parliamentarians, advising the Golden Rule that rulers should 'do the same [to others] that you would have them do for you'.⁷³ He advised Charles II to change his disposition, and 'Rule over all as one'.⁷⁴ Quakers would 'shew [...] Governours in plainness what is wrong in them, and in the Government', trusting in change and forbearing adversity.⁷⁵ As for his cohort, Fox's pamphlets made persistent reference to the 'Light' and the 'Lamb' in overcoming evil; descending to specifics, they criticised tithes, supported religious freedom, and discouraged gameplaying.⁷⁶ Fox's belief in the amenability of all regimes to the Light and the specific reforms commended cohered with broader Quaker thought.

⁶⁵ Harris, T., *Revolution: The great crisis of the British monarchy*, London: Penguin, 2007, pp. 217–18, 263–64.

⁶⁶ Southcombe, G., 'The Quakers and Politics, 1660–1689', in Allen, R. C., and Moore, R., (eds.), *The Quakers, 1656–1723: The evolution of an alternative community*, University Park: Penn State University Press, 2021, pp. 170–90, pp. 187–88.

⁶⁷ Calvert, 'Quaker Theory', p. 603.

⁶⁸ Braithwaite, *Second Period*, pp. 146–49.

⁶⁹ Penn, W., *England's Present Interest*, London: [s.n.], 1675, pp. 31–38.

⁷⁰ Penn, W., *The Frame of the Government of the Province of Pennsylvania*, S.I.: [s.n.], 1682, Preface.

⁷¹ Murphy, W., *Liberty, Conscience, and Toleration: The political thought of William Penn*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 8–9, 12–13, 19–21.

⁷² See Fox, G., 'Honest, Upright, Faithful and plain dealing with thee O Army of the Common-wealth of England', in *Collection*, pp. 80, 90–91.

⁷³ Fox, G., 'A few plain words to the Army and others, about the choice of a Parliament by the voyces of the People', in *Collection*, pp. 92–101.

⁷⁴ Fox, G., 'Honest plain down-right dealing with the People called *Episcopal* men and *Presbyterians*', in *Collection*, p. 135.

⁷⁵ Fox, 'A Noble Salutation and faithful greeting unto Thee Charles Stuart', in *Collection*, pp. 105–108, 126–27.

⁷⁶ From Fox, *Collection*: 'Honest, Upright, Faithful', p. 75; 'The words', p. 52.

His appreciation of secular politics did too. Fox's texts impress the vanity of worldly rule or trying to 'preserve' regimes,⁷⁷ and necessity of harmony with God. An (undated) 1659 text, *The Words of the Everlasting and True Light Who is the Eternal Living God*, was mostly 'theological' but pointedly argued that God did not care for the name of 'King, Protector, Prince, Duke, Lord, Judge, Justice, Parliament, Priest, Lawyer, gathered Churches, Army, Gentry, mean Men, or Beggars', all of whom had taken the 'counsel of the Serpent'.⁷⁸ Men cannot institute or preserve government against God's will, and it is wrongheaded to attribute 'good things' to earthly rulers, regime types, or constituencies.⁷⁹ Confidence should be checked by knowledge of insecurity.⁸⁰ In an epistle from Lambeth, he judged that '*in vain shall Powers and Armies withstand the Lord*'.⁸¹ He argued the sins of Parliament in 1659,⁸² and affirmed after the Restoration God's smiting it.⁸³ Parliament deceived others, even itself, in its hubris;⁸⁴ many of those backing Cromwell with good intentions surrendered to sinfulness.⁸⁵ Dissembling is the greatest political danger, with history witnessing this in the many individuals who swore for Parliament and then the King.⁸⁶ This was tempered by professions of obedience. A tract co-authored with Hubberthorne, shortly after the latter had delivered Fox's letter, argued that all temporal authority, including 'our lawful King' Charles, was worthy of submission, if not an oath. Charles was ordained by God; in all 'outward affairs' they were bound to him. Though conscience allows passive disobedience, they refused any 'outward, opposition, as rebellion, by insurrections, plots, or carnal weapons, to destroy or over throw, either him or the Government thereby'.⁸⁷ The abuse Fox faced from royalists was not returned to them or their king.

Quaker coolness towards Parliament never coalesced with monarchist arguments that republican, military, and parliamentary regimes were inherently illegitimate.⁸⁸ The Lamb's War, and God's providential reckoning, remained primary over human agency. Fox reminded Charles that God, rather than his power or right, restored his

⁷⁷ Fox, 'Noble Salutation', pp. 105–106. See also Fox, 'A General Epistle', p. 239.

⁷⁸ Fox, 'The words', p. 51.

⁷⁹ Fox, 'A few plain words', p. 96.

⁸⁰ Fox, 'Touching compelling of Engagements', in *Collection*, pp. 267–68.

⁸¹ Fox, 'General Epistle', p. 239.

⁸² Fox, G., 'His Message predicting the down-fall of the Parliament, directed to the Parliament and their Army', in *Collection*, pp. 101–102.

⁸³ Fox, G., 'Englands sad Estate and condition lamented', in *Collection*, p. 212; Fox, 'Noble Salutation', pp. 108–109.

⁸⁴ Fox, 'Noble Salutation', pp. 114–15.

⁸⁵ Fox, 'Noble Salutation', pp. 116–17.

⁸⁶ Fox, 'Englands sad Estate', pp. 224–25; Fox, 'Noble Salutation', p. 116.

⁸⁷ Fox, G., and Hubberthorne, R., *Something Against Swearing and Concerning the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy*, London: G.C., 1660.

⁸⁸ Mayers, 1659, chapter 1.

government.⁸⁹ Burrough married criticism of Parliament and the army with advice to Charles and 'Royallists' to promote Christianity rather than their persons.⁹⁰ Fox's positioning of governments beneath Christ was, therefore, typical, including the historical analysis appended to it following the Restoration. With others, he avowed the legitimacy of Charles' government, mediated through God, and the efficacy of appeals to him. The task remained to appeal to rulers' conscience, rather than institute popular or theocratic rule.

Quaker faith in an Inward Light was not extended to the masses on aggregate. Few advocated for widened political participation, and internal meetings eschewed reaching judgments by the 'greater vote', as Burrough noted in 1662: Friends that were 'anciently grown in the Truth' took precedence.⁹¹ Most took the elitist conditions of politics for granted; there were enemies amongst 'Priests, Rulers, people & professors'.⁹² Salvation was potentially universal, but their political attitude and approach focussed on reforming rulers. Only in Fox's writings, principally *A Few Plain Words to be Considered by Those of the Army* (late 1659), *A Noble Salutation* (July 1660), and *Englands Sad Estate* (early 1661), however, is this anti-democratic vein explicit. Driving this home across texts which straddled the Commonwealth and Restoration, Fox articulated a consistent position.

Shades of this attitude can be seen in Fox's, and others', words on the status of the Church. Fox identified the Quakers are a 'little flock'⁹³ or remnant;⁹⁴ Fox the elder and Burrough acknowledged the Quakers' minority⁹⁵ or 'Elect' status.⁹⁶ Rather than being characteristic of post-Restoration 'pacifist' or post-1688 'quietist' accommodations, this idea was seminal. In *A Few Plain Words* Fox applied this to politics. Addressing the military Committee of Safety, which dissolved the restored Rump Parliament in October and ruled until December 1659, Fox argued that because the righteous church is usually a minority, a parliament chosen by the people will be unlikely to govern for God.⁹⁷ The majority 'do not truly desire the good of God's people', and will choose worldly men like

⁸⁹ Fox, 'Honest plain down-right dealing', p. 139.

⁹⁰ Burrough, *Visitation*. See also Penington, I., *Some Few Queries and Presentations Proposed for the Cavaliers*, London: [s.n.], 1660.

⁹¹ Burrough, E., 'A Testimony Concerning the Beginning of the Work of the Lord', in Barclay, W., (ed.), *Letters &c. of Early Friends*, London: Harvey & Darton, 1841, pp. 305-306.

⁹² White, D., *A Diligent Search Amongst Rulers, Priests, Professors, and People*, London: [s.n.], 1659, p. 2.

⁹³ Fox, 'A few plain words', p. 94.

⁹⁴ Fox, G., 'The Dread of God's Power uttering its voyce', in *Collection*, pp. 174-75; Fox, 'Englands sad estate', p. 219.

⁹⁵ Burrough, E., *To the Rulers*, London: Thomas Simmonds, 1659, pp. 2-3, 7-9; Reay, 'Quakers', p. 111.

⁹⁶ Fox, G. [the elder], *A Message from the Lord, to the Parliament of England*, London: [s.n.], 1654, p. 8.

⁹⁷ Fox, 'A few plain words', p. 92.

themselves; the path towards Christ is necessarily chosen by the few.⁹⁸ It disparaged the notion of a voting 'Birth Right' (dear to Levellers and republicans); people were said to be in 'great Blindness, in contending for parliaments so chosen'.⁹⁹ (Burrough briefly wrote of a 'birthright' privilege being lost to Cromwell, but this appears to have referenced religious freedom.)¹⁰⁰ Fox did not link the universal Light to a widened franchise. The majority are generally unrighteous, and will pick 'like minded' people. Even good intentions are insufficient and often deleterious: being 'zealously affected to a good Cause' must be 'moderated with the Wisdom of God'.¹⁰¹

This text made a fundamental case against a widening the electorate to any extent. By contrast, contemporary pamphlets from republicans and 'Commonwealthmen' expressed dismay with the army's coup, and hope for such reforms.¹⁰² Other Quakers appealed to the Committee,¹⁰³ showing their flexibility and amenability, without making explicit their disillusion with popular politics. They had all, however, along with Fox in an earlier 1659 pamphlet entitled *This is for You Who are Called the Comon-Wealths-Men Both in the Army and Parliament*, urged the army's moral reformation and adherence to religious toleration, rather than recourse to the masses or implementation of a constitutional programme.

Quaker appeals to Charles II confirmed this approach. But only Fox, in *The Testimony of God to Those Rulers, Teachers, and People of this Present Age* (June 1660, at Lambeth House), argued to 'Kings' and 'People' that if 'the Righteous are fewer in number then the unrighteous' then government by the 'most voyces' will endanger the former.¹⁰⁴ This bore repeating, for it justified Quaker conduct before and after the Restoration. Nonetheless, Fox sometimes argued for plebeian virtues. *A Noble Salutation* (July 1660) advertised to Charles the Quakers' origins among 'contemptible Instruments, (as to outward appearance) as in Trades-men, Plough-men, Servants, and the like'.¹⁰⁵ *The Testimony* argued that God blesses the meek and scorns the rich.¹⁰⁶ Even *A Few Plain Words* criticised the class biases of the franchise: using property qualifications exclusively barred many honest men. It rejects rule by the 'most voices of the outwardly rich People' as potentially oppressive, and 'exactly contrary to God's calling and

⁹⁸ Fox, 'A few plain words', p. 93.

⁹⁹ Fox, 'A few plain words', p. 97.

¹⁰⁰ Burrough, E., *Good Counsel and Advice*, London: Thomas Simmonds, 1659, p. 21.

¹⁰¹ Fox, 'A few plain words', pp. 92–93.

¹⁰² Mayers, 1659, p. 274.

¹⁰³ For example, Howgill, F., *An Information, and Also Advice to the Armie on Both Parts*, London: [s.n.], 1659.

¹⁰⁴ Fox, G., 'The Testimony of God, to those Rulers, Teachers and People of this Present Age', in *Collection*, p. 149.

¹⁰⁵ Fox, 'Noble Salutation', p. 109

¹⁰⁶ Fox, 'Testimony of God', p. 150.

chusing'.¹⁰⁷ But the potential goodness of the poor, and their right to freedom from oppression, did make them a valid political constituency. *A Few Plain Words* also argued that the *majority* often support their oppressive rulers: hope cannot inhere in them. The people can be trusted to choose religious 'Teachers', and those constructing the law should act in their interests,¹⁰⁸ but not encourage broader political participation.

Fox affirmed this position as persecutions increased in early 1661. *Englands Sad Estate* blamed the nation for rejecting God's 'Counsel', and compared the contemporary population to 'Athenians', ignorant of the harm done in subjecting any form of government to their will.¹⁰⁹ Addressing the 'People' in conclusion, the text advised them to throw off their rebellion towards God.¹¹⁰ Political mobilisation receives no mention. Evocations of the Quakers' lowly origins did not, therefore, lead to belief in the political acumen of subordinate groups.

Indeed, Fox favoured rule by the best, aligning with other leaders' approaches to those in power. As per *A Few Plain Words* and *Englands Sad Estate*, the 'soberest and honestest men' should be preferred to the 'wild disaffected people'. Fox regretted reports of the former being 'over-voted';¹¹¹ the 'people' remain as 'unstable as Water'.¹¹² They are easily 'stirred' by priests and 'flattered' by other oppressors; the rich have used 'smooth words and large promises'.¹¹³ This is inevitable, and recent times show the 'honest party' becoming 'the lesser party' in Parliament.¹¹⁴ When given rein, the people show their imprudence.

The frankness of Fox's arguments against democratic impulses are unprecedented. Only Penington's arguments against 'party' rule provide, perhaps, a parallel.¹¹⁵ But they were consistent with movement's early instruction of elites, whether parliamentarians, Cromwell, or Charles II. There existed a persistent indifference towards kings and parliaments, and mistrust of the 'people' in themselves. This did not amount to compromising, a point evident in Fox's case given his long years in prison. Instead, his ideas supported the movement's political practice, and were more novel for their clarity than their themes. He justified the preference for mixing obedience with instruction.

This tendency for Fox to characterise what other Quakers were *doing* is evident elsewhere. His positions on military and parliamentary authority have been even

¹⁰⁷ Fox, 'A few plain words', pp. 96-97.

¹⁰⁸ Fox, 'A few plain words', pp. 98-99.

¹⁰⁹ Fox, 'Englands sad Estate', pp. 214, 224.

¹¹⁰ Fox, 'Englands sad Estate', pp. 227-29

¹¹¹ Fox, 'A few plain words', p. 94.

¹¹² Fox, 'Englands sad Estate', pp. 224-25.

¹¹³ Fox, 'A few plain words', p. 97.

¹¹⁴ Fox, 'A few plain words', p. 94.

¹¹⁵ Penington, I., *Somewhat Spoken to A Weighty Question*, London: Thomas Simmonds, 1661, p. 14.

less remarked upon, but were as significant to contemporary debates and practices. His stance on the military aligned with others' words, as we shall see, while also acknowledging uncomfortable truths. Fox smooths over the compromise whereby Quakers did not bear arms, but remained hesitant regarding war for others. His *This is for You Who are Called the Comon-Wealths-Men* endorsed an army's legitimacy in ensuring 'outward Peace', 'Just laws', and 'Freedom', as well as acting against 'Evil Doers'.¹¹⁶ It appealed to those of true faith within the army: only they can 'truly be called the Commonwealths-men, or servants'.¹¹⁷ Fox tacitly made the Quakers a peculiar people, who absented from but accepted military vocations. He affirmed where others maintained silence: usually, moral advice towards soldiers or rejections of the 'carnal sword',¹¹⁸ a position Fox agreed with,¹¹⁹ did not grant justice to the military's functions otherwise.¹²⁰ That armies would be used to some ends was usually assumed. Fox's words were not unprecedented, however: a 1659 tract of William Smith's defined the Quakers' 'spiritual warfare' while upholding the army's prevention of evil.¹²¹ Penington defended armed force against 'forraign invasions' and 'evil doers' in 1661, while pleading for peace.¹²² But commending the army's jurisdictional and defensive functions was at least unusual, and again affirmed what others implicitly allowed.

Paradoxically, Fox upbraided the army in the present. This was particularly true in his *Honest, Upright, and Plain Dealing with Thee O Army* (May 1659) and *A Few Plain Words*, which criticised military men for betraying their principles and the Quakers. This was a relatively commonplace line among Friends, and Fox's representativeness has been correctly identified in this regard.¹²³ Burrough argued that soldiers had 'fallen from your first integrity' as early as 1656,¹²⁴ and other former soldiers, such as Richard Crane, pleaded with military 'Friends' not to continue rejecting the 'Council of the Lord'.¹²⁵ Fox characteristically advised soldiers, acknowledging that there might be 'Friends in the Army' acting on good conscience.¹²⁶ Indeed, Fox's first pamphlet, *Compassion to the*

¹¹⁶ Fox, G., 'For the Common-wealths men, both in the Parliament and Army', in *Collection*, p. 276.

¹¹⁷ Fox, 'For the Common-wealths men', pp. 277-78.

¹¹⁸ McArthur, 'Theological Counsel', pp. 71-72.

¹¹⁹ Fox, 'For the Common-wealths men', p. 276; Fox, 'Noble Salutation', pp. 127-28.

¹²⁰ See, for examples, Fox, G. [the elder], *This is to All Officers and Souldiers*, London: Thomas Simmonds, 1657; Hubberthorne, R., *The Good Old Cause*, London: Thomas Simmonds, 1659, pp. 3-4.

¹²¹ Smith, W., *A Right Dividing*, London: Thomas Simmonds, 1659, pp. 3-4.

¹²² Penington, *Somewhat Spoken*, p. 8.

¹²³ Greaves, R. L., 'Shattered expectations? George Fox, the Quakers, and the Restoration state, 1660-1685', *Albion*, 24, 1992, pp. 237-38.

¹²⁴ Burrough, *Trumpet*, p. 8.

¹²⁵ Crane, R., *A Few Plain Words to the Officers of the Army*, London: Thomas Simmonds, 1659, p. 8.

¹²⁶ Fox, 'A few plain words', p. 98; Fox, 'For the Common-wealths men', pp. 276-78.

Captives, contained an address to the army, recognising that ‘you acted faithfully for a time’, particularly against idolatry and the ‘Tyrants in these Nations’. He was critical even then, accusing some of growing rich and oppressing the ‘poor’.¹²⁷ It is unlikely these were ‘republican’ or ‘Leveller’ ideas: the ‘Tyrants’ in question were clerical authorities, and Fox’s main line was against tithes and for liberty of conscience, rather than reforming secular government. Criticism of inequality was frequently qualified by rejection of ‘levelling’ in Quaker tracts.¹²⁸ Fox’s *Compassion* urged soldiers towards the ‘Light of Christ in all your consciences’; and addressed itself to ‘Nobles and Rulers, Captains and mighty men, Priests and People, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free’, all of whom were guilty.¹²⁹ His army criticisms in 1659 were similarly dispositional: despite formerly feeling ‘tender towards you’, in truth most had fallen from their original ‘honest Principle’, taking upon a ‘lofty, proud, covetous, deceitful nature’.¹³⁰

This is relatively conventional for Quakers of the period. But Fox accompanied these arguments with overt rejection of the radical constitutional beliefs some soldiers upheld. *A Few Plain Words* railed against prevalent ideas on voting, majorities, and Parliament. Fox argued for the army’s ordinary functions, therefore, and against not only its failure to protect liberty of conscience, but also its democratic tendencies. Again, however, he evoked a generally assumed position among Quakers activists, which upbraided their hypocrisy without endorsing radical institutional solutions.¹³¹

Where did this leave Parliament? Fox rarely made a positive case for it, although *Truth Defending the Quakers* (with Whitehead, late 1659), decried ‘War and Rebellion’ under any regime, and the royalist Booth’s Uprising of August that year in particular.¹³² He was, nonetheless, critical of the Commons for having ‘despised the Counsel of the Lord’ in *For the Parliament of England* (January 1660). This was a characteristic position – for himself and the movement – of criticising members’ failure to heed the Lord. Notably, a copy of this pamphlet was given to each MP shortly before Monk’s march, encouraging them to ‘tremble and dread before the Lord [...] you shall be weak, even as the weakest of men’.¹³³

Fox extended the implications of this, however, attacking the *concepts* of parliamentary government alongside its incumbent reality. His address to the *Commonwealths-men* remembered the hope Friends had for liberty and equality previously;

¹²⁷ Fox, ‘Compassion’, p. 14–15.

¹²⁸ Fox, G. [the elder], *A Declaration Against All Profession*, London: Giles Calvert, 1654, p. 4.

¹²⁹ Fox, ‘Compassion’, pp. 18, 23.

¹³⁰ Fox, ‘Honest, Upright, Faithful’, pp. 73, 78.

¹³¹ See, for examples, Fox, G., *This is to all Officers and Souldiers of the Armies in England, Scotland, and Ireland*, London: Thomas Simmonds, 1657; Hubberthorne, R., *A Word of Wisdom and Counsel to the Officers and Souldiers of the Army*, London: Thomas Simmonds, 1659.

¹³² Fox and Whitehead, *Truth*, pp. 16, 25.

¹³³ Fox, ‘For the Parliament’, pp. 102–103.

Parliament had been led astray by lying priests and worldly temptations.¹³⁴ But *A Few Plain Words* argued that Parliament's very ideals were pernicious: its supporters appeared in 'a pretence of a very great Zeal, that you have for Liberty, Equality, and Justice'.¹³⁵ The (self-)deceit arising from notions of 'Freedom' is argued to be detrimental: only the 'Fear of the Lord' can provide good government.¹³⁶ In a May 1659 address to the army, and *A Noble Salutation* to Charles, he argued that liberty is just '*another Name*' under which oppression appears,¹³⁷ subject to hypocritical affirmation.¹³⁸ The same ambitiousness is held to have motivated men in swearing first for Parliament and then for King.¹³⁹ Across several pamphlets, therefore, Fox pioneered a critique of the very concepts of parliamentary government, the franchise apart. This elucidated, however, the assumptions governing others' practical distance from regimes and secular ideologies, which were shown across Interregnum and Restoration periods.

We can now compare Fox's positions on the 'people' or voting, the army, and Parliament. Fox attacked parliamentary concepts in addition to its empirical failures. By contrast, for the army criticism of its 'present estate' was paramount.¹⁴⁰ He praised its usual functions, but traduced the historically existent forces (representing a radical political element). The net result, alongside his strictures regarding wider franchises, was to support a more traditional social structure than most Quakers usually upheld. Other leaders advocated across regime types, but provided only *de facto* support for conventional hierarchies. Fox turned the movement's critical lance against parliamentary and army freedoms in a way these individuals did practically, if vacillating theoretically. Some, potentially, had residual sympathies for Parliament and democratic ideals. But the belief that any political elites could recognise the Light was integral to all thinkers' strategy. Any revolutionary overtures of 1659 provided a poor rationale for the movement's *practices*, whereas Fox's ideas married with them.

Fox's positions on family life show a belief in earthly accommodations percolate to domestic scenes; the interplay between his and other Friends' positions is, once more, revealing. The year 1659 also saw Fox publish *An Exhortation to Families*, as a standalone pamphlet and as an addendum to fellow Quaker Stephen Crisp's *A New Book for Children to Learn In*.¹⁴¹ Alongside this interest in schooling, modern historians have recognised

¹³⁴ Fox, 'For the Common-wealths men', pp. 272–74.

¹³⁵ Fox, 'A few plain words', p. 92.

¹³⁶ Fox, 'A few plain words', p. 97.

¹³⁷ Fox, 'Honest, Upright, Faithful', p. 75.

¹³⁸ Fox, 'Noble Salutation', pp. 113–14.

¹³⁹ Fox, 'Englands sad Estate', p. 224–25; Fox, 'Noble Salutation', p. 116.

¹⁴⁰ Fox, 'For the Common-wealths men', p. 272.

¹⁴¹ Crisp, S., *A New Book for Children to Learn In*, London: A. Sowle, 1682. For Crisp's earlier edition, see Gaskin, J., *A Just Defence and Vindication of Gospel Ministers and Gospel Ordinances Against the Quakers*, London: W.G., 1660, 139; Misoplanes, *The Papists Younger Brother*, London: Edward Brewster and Simon Miller, 1679, pp. 27–28.

Fox's support for the treatment of labourers and servants.¹⁴² His friendliness to children and working people is undoubtable, but equally notable are the guards Fox set up against levelling in either sphere. There existed fears of Quakers abandoning their families or questioning domestic authorities; many Quakers suffered *de facto* ostracisation by their parents.¹⁴³ But few voluntarily repudiated their families, least of all their partners and children.¹⁴⁴ Nayler affirmed that Quakers could 'leave your particular callings or families to wander up and down the nation',¹⁴⁵ but this did not mean rejecting family members, even when they did not become Quakers. Respect for the family can be found some early guidelines, whether the 1656 *Epistle from the Elders at Balby*,¹⁴⁶ or writings of Fox the elder¹⁴⁷ and Balby-attende Richard Farnsworth.¹⁴⁸ Either side of Fox's *Exhortation* appeared Fox the elder's *Catechisme for Children* (1657)¹⁴⁹ and William Smith's *A New Primer* (1662),¹⁵⁰ both of which made Quaker theology pedagogical, albeit without advising on relations within the family. At Cambridge, and in a pamphlet describing the debates, Fox upheld Quaker fidelity to parents and spouses, while again placing fidelity to God above all.¹⁵¹ This was another area in which convergence is apparent, even if published works did not espouse lengthy positions.

Fox, again, took an expository lead. The *Exhortation* advised 'Ye Fathers and Mothers' to remain loving, but raise their young 'in the fear of the Lord'; it advised children to remain obedient, and not 'walk in stubbornness'.¹⁵² Discipline is central, but any rifts are healed by affirming their mutual, God-ordained obligations within traditional familial structures. Crisp's *New Book* opened with arguments that 'A wise Child preserveth himself from Correction by Obedience; but a Foolish Child procureth Strips by his Rebellion [...] Obedience to Parents is of good Report among all men'.¹⁵³ Harmony is apparent with Fox's notions. The *Exhortation* also commended respect between masters and servants. Being 'High-Minded' is a sin for either,¹⁵⁴ but it is the mindedness, rather

¹⁴² Braithwaite, *Second Period*, pp. 560, 563.

¹⁴³ Walsham, A., 'Nature and Nurture in the Early Quaker Movement: Creating the Next Generation of Friends', *Studies in Church History*, 55, 2019, pp. 163–64.

¹⁴⁴ Davies, A., *The Quakers in English Society, 1655–1725*, Oxford: Clarendon, 2000, pp. 195–201, 214–15, 222–23; Fox, G. [the elder], *The Works of George Fox*, vol. VII, Philadelphia: T.C. Gould, 1831, p. 19.

¹⁴⁵ Nayler, J., *A Dispute between James Nayler and the Parish Teachers of Chesterfield*, London: Giles Calvert, 1655, Preface.

¹⁴⁶ Dewsbury, W., Farnsworth, R., and 'others', 'The Epistle from Elders at Balby, 1656', Quaker House Press, <http://qhpress.org/texts/balby.html> (accessed 10 March 2023).

¹⁴⁷ Fox, G. [the elder], *The Unmasking and Discovering of Anti-Christ*, London: Giles Calvert, 1653, p. 7.

¹⁴⁸ Farnsworth, R., *An Easter-Reckoning* London: Giles Calvert, 1653, pp. 18–19.

¹⁴⁹ Fox, G. [the elder], *Catechisme for Children*, London: Giles Calvert, 1657.

¹⁵⁰ Smith, W., *A New Primer*, London: Robert Wilson, 1662.

¹⁵¹ Fox and Whitehead, *Truth*, p. 11.

¹⁵² Fox, G., 'An Exhortation to all Families', in *Collection*, pp. 42–43.

¹⁵³ Crisp, *New Book*, p. 7.

¹⁵⁴ Fox, 'Exhortation', pp. 44–45.

than being high or low, with which Fox finds fault. For servants, their obligations are such that even if one is called by the Lord, they must give their 'Masters or Dames sufficient notice of it', and afterwards 'return to your places again'.¹⁵⁵ The emphasis falls, again, upon repairing relationships within earthly hierarchies. Humane understanding is the best option. Fox the elder also denounced 'levelling', and Burrough discouraged 'sloth' among poorer friends.¹⁵⁶ But Fox justified hierarchal relationships, with views perhaps echoed in Penn's paternalism towards the unfortunate.¹⁵⁷ In yet another sphere, Fox played the role of expositor for the Quakers' reformism: justifying the movement's practices ahead of itself, where others felt it uncomfortable or unnecessary.

Conclusion

The Quakers participated in civic institutions through the Restoration and Glorious Revolution where they could; lobbying, even voting, became consistent aspects of this.¹⁵⁸ In the eighteenth century, Friends retained a persistent 'social concern' and interest in justice despite the social mobility of many.¹⁵⁹ Few today hold that this was a monolithically 'quietist' period, even if it was quieter.¹⁶⁰ Yet neither then, nor before or after, has this translated into faith in political majorities or revolution in themselves. Historical Quakers favoured individual acts of resistance to 'protesting *en masse*, which they believed could be too disruptive'.¹⁶¹ Largely, they worked within established political structures, mixing elite persuasion and wider proselytisation.

Fox's case highlights the importance of 'marginal' literature, particularly when an intellectual or political movement appears to pull in multiple, perhaps incoherent, directions. Like the rest of the movement, Fox's radical theological and ecclesiastical positions did not convert into wanting to bind rulers or enforce constitutional change. Fox justified this, pointing to the dangers of reliance upon widespread voting, political majorities, representative institutions, or radical constitutional changes. But he was mainly exceptional for his clarity: his ideas complemented others' strategy, which was consistently non-revolutionary and non-majoritarian. Egalitarian impulses may have led others to renege from endorsing social and political hierarchies, but Fox's views were more coherent and, perhaps, more honest, with their behaviours. His texts looked

¹⁵⁵ Fox, 'Exhortation', p. 45.

¹⁵⁶ Burrough, 'Testimony', p. 308.

¹⁵⁷ Penn, *Frame*, p. 212.

¹⁵⁸ Braithwaite, *Second Period*; Davies, *Quakers*; Morgan, N., *Lancashire Quakers and the Establishment, 1660-1730*, Halifax: Ryburn Academic, 1993; Southcombe, 'Quakers'.

¹⁵⁹ Murray, K., 'Social Justice and Sustainability', in Angell, S. W., and Dandelion, P., (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Quakerism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 88-105, p. 91.

¹⁶⁰ Tolles, 'Quakerism', p. 10-25.

¹⁶¹ Calvert, 'Quaker Theory', p. 616-17.

concretely at what the Quakers did and desired; focussing upon reforming individuals rather than institutions. Such coherence from the margins has been proposed for ‘theological’ figures such as Nayler or John Perrot, but may be equally true for ‘political’ ones such as Penn or John Woolman. Indeed, as a hypothesis or hermeneutic it may be appropriate for wider studies of political movements and thinkers.

Fox expounded premisses more alien to us moderns, which might undermine our appropriation of egalitarian-sounding conclusions from other Quakers.¹⁶² Normatively, how might these findings relate to Quaker politics today? There are Foxean echoes in contemporary Quakers’ engagement with political regimes and individuals in good faith; albeit shorn of the apocalyptic that sometimes characterised his and others’ early rhetoric. Individual acts of civil disobedience usually win out against belief in a systematic programme, and testimony is directed as much towards political rulers as it is towards mobilising masses. But while Fox’s views might correctly describe and justify a tranche of Quaker politics, they need not prove a straitjacket; they have not been such to many Quaker activists and thinkers who see institutional change, democratic politics, and radicalism as consistent with, and even compelled by, the Light within. It remains pertinent to look back to Fox and other early figures: examining the correspondence between their arguments and more recent thinkers. Britain Yearly Meeting’s annual Swarthmore Lectures have over the previous two decades eschewed withdrawal in favour of challenging ‘structures of power, oppression and exploitation’.¹⁶³ British Quakers’ *Faith and Practice* has much on challenging the world’s ways, systems, and conventions; even ‘underlying causes’ and ‘unjust structures’.¹⁶⁴ Yet there remains support for ‘obedience’ and spiritual rejuvenation, and opposition to antagonism and absorption in politics;¹⁶⁵ advice ‘not be content to accept things as they are’ remains vague.¹⁶⁶ As in many Quaker debates, there are dualisms, or areas where the movement is ‘still searching for a corporate view’. Fox clearly conceived the ‘corporate’ practice of the early movement; yet ideas such as his rarely received corporate sanction, pointing perhaps to tension.

¹⁶² For an exemplary warning against such appropriations, see Dunn, J., *The Political Thought of John Locke*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

¹⁶³ Steven, H., *No Extraordinary Power: Prayer, stillness and activism*, London: Quaker Books, 2005, 63; West, C., and Hull, A., *Faith in Politics?: A testimony to equality*, London, Quaker Books, 2019.

¹⁶⁴ *Quaker Faith and Practice* (5th edn), <https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/> (accessed 10 March 2023), 23.13, 28.18–19, 23.49–50, 23.53.

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

