

GEORGE FOX'S TEACHING ON THE PLACE OF SCRIPTURE

This file contains some passages I've found in the writings of George Fox that explain his view of the Bible and indicate the basis for his hermeneutic, or principle of interpretation. If you know of additional passages on this theme, please advise me. --George Amoss

(1) A famous passage from the Journal:

And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly, to help me; nor could tell what to do; then, O then, I heard a voice which said, "There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition": and when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy. (...) Thus when God doth work, who shall let it? and this I knew experimentally. My desires after the Lord grew stronger, and zeal in the pure knowledge of God, and of Christ alone, without the help of any man, book, or writing. For though I read the scriptures that spake of Christ and of God, yet I knew him not, but by revelation, as he who hath the key did open, and as the Father of life drew me to his son by his Spirit. Then the Lord gently led me along, and let me see his love, which was endless and eternal, surpassing all the knowledge that men have in the natural state, or can get by history or books; and that love let me see myself, as I was without him; and I was afraid of all company, for I saw them perfectly, where they were, through the love of God which let me see myself.

(2) From the Journal:

[...the priest] took for his text these words of Peter: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well, that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." And he told the people that this [word] was the scriptures, by which they were to try all doctrines, religions, and opinions. Now the Lord's power was so mighty upon me, and so strong in me, that I could not hold, but was made to cry out and say, "Oh! no; it is not the scriptures;" and told them it was the Holy Spirit, by which the holy men of God gave forth the scriptures, whereby opinions, religions, and judgments were to be tried; for it led into all Truth, and so gave the knowledge of all Truth.

(3) From the Journal:

That which I was moved to declare was this: "That the holy scriptures were given forth by the Spirit of God; and all people must come to the Spirit of God in themselves, by which they might know God and Christ, of whom the prophets and the apostles learnt; and by the same Spirit know the holy scriptures; for as the Spirit of God was in them that gave forth the scriptures, so the same Spirit of God must be in all them that come to understand the scriptures; by which Spirit they might have fellowship with the Father, with the Son, with the scriptures, and with one another; and without this Spirit they can know neither God, Christ, nor the Scriptures, nor have right fellowship one with another. I had no sooner spoken these words, than about half a dozen priests, that stood behind me, burst out into a passion. One of them, whose name was Jackus, amongst other things that he spake against the truth, said, That the Spirit and the letter were inseparable. I replied, "Then everyone that hath the letter hath the Spirit; and they might buy the Spirit

with the letter of the scriptures." This plain discovery of darkness in the priest moved Judge Fell and colonel West to reprove them openly, and tell them, That according to that position, they might carry the Spirit in their pockets, as they did the scriptures.

(4) From the Journal:

These things I did not see by the help of man, nor by the letter, though they were written in the letter, but I saw them in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by his immediate Spirit and power, as did the holy men of God, by whom the Holy Scriptures were written. 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.

(5) From the Journal:

They asked me whether the scripture was the word of God. I said [that] God was the Word and the Scriptures were writings, and the Word was before writings were, which Word did fulfill them.

(6) In Epistle CCCXX, after many pages of scriptural references which he adduces to confirm the validity of women's meetings and ministry, Fox makes this remarkable statement:

And if there was no scripture [that is, no scriptural warrant] for our men and women's meetings, Christ is sufficient, who restores man and woman up into the image of God, to be helps-meet in the righteousness and holiness, as they were in before they fell. So he is our rock and our foundation to build upon.

(7) From Epistle CCLXV:

...for he that believes in the light, it lets him see the scriptures, the prophets, Christ and the apostles' words, and by it they do distinguish the true prophets' words from the false, the holy men's words from the unholy, the sanctified from them that are not sanctified, Christ's words from the antichrist's, the true apostles' words from the false. So Christ the light teacheth his people to believe in that which manifests all things; and they that believe in the light have the witness in themselves of Christ, in whom they do believe, they have the witness in themselves, that he is their redeemer, and savior, and their way, their truth, and their life....

NOTES:

Except where otherwise noted, the quotations from George Fox's Journal are taken from a 19th century printing from Friends' Book-store in Philadelphia.

- (1) Fox's *Journal*, pp. 60, 61
- (2) *Ibid.*, p. 76
- (3) *Ibid.*, p. 128
- (4) *Ibid.*
- (5) Fox's *Journal*, John T. Nickalls, ed., pp. 158-159