

repeating it from memory. Extempore prayer is the ideal in a small group, and in a large one if there be real unity of spirit and fellowship, and if he who leads is able to interpret adequately the needs and aspirations of the rest; but too often these conditions are not fulfilled, and then an ordered form of service seems less likely to give offence, and more likely to prove helpful. It has the further advantage that if a form of Litany is used the congregation themselves realize that their worship is a corporate act.

It is recorded in the life of Dr. Dale by his son that an old woman who attended the services in Birmingham used to say: "I can't understand his sermons, but his prayers do me so much good that I always *come*." We cannot all be Dales, but we can realize our own weaknesses and give to the prayers their due place in our worship and the attention they require.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

George Fox and Roger Williams.

A Battle of Giants.

IN the years 1671-73 George Fox, visiting the American colonies, accomplished what Dr. Rufus M. Jones calls "a piece of colonial missionary labour, which, so far as I know, no visitor to America in colonial times paralleled." In the course of this wonderful missionary journey* the Quaker pioneer came to Rhode Island, and there he narrowly (and to a certain extent unaccountably) missed a Homeric encounter with the redoubtable Roger Williams. Fox arrived at Newport on 30th May, 1672. The "yearly meeting," held soon afterwards, was a memorable occasion. Both the Governor (Nicholas Easton) and his deputy sat in the sessions, and people flocked in from all parts of the island and the country round about.

Roger Williams (says Dr. Jones) "though heroically devoted to liberty of thought and speech, was by mental constitution and temperament impervious to the message of the Friends. He was by natural bent of mind unmystical, and he had no sympathy with the idea of inward personal revela-

* See article upon "George Fox's Missionary Labours in America," by Henry J. Cowell, in the *Holborn Review* for July, 1924.

tion. He was as ready as any of the great theologians of Massachusetts to give a reason for the hope that was in him, and he stood possessed of a very definite set of doctrines and practices which were to his mind essential to a right conception of Christianity."†

The fame of Fox's preaching powerfully stirred Williams. He was now an old man, but the fire of his youthful days rekindled in him when he heard how the Quakers were spreading their doctrines among the people, and now the multitude were flocking after the apostle of Inward Light. Twice at the yearly meeting of 1671 he had endeavoured to have some public discussion with Friends, but on each occasion he had been stopped by the "sudden falling to prayer" of a member of the assembly.

When Fox was holding his great meetings in Providence, Williams kept away, for "having once tried to get public speech in the assemblies of Friends," he was resolved "to try another way, and to offer a full and fair dispute." Accordingly he drew up fourteen propositions, which he sent to the Deputy Governor, John Cranston, for him to deliver to George Fox.

For some unknown reason the Deputy Governor kept these propositions in his possession until 26th July, when it was found that George Fox had left Newport. Roger Williams claimed that this delay was made by collusion with Fox. "He knew that I was furnished with artillery out of his own writings. He saw what consequences would roll down the mountains upon him . . . and therefore this old Fox thought it best to run for it." Fox declares, however, "I neither saw nor ever heard of any propositions from Roger Williams, nor did I go away in fear of him or them."

The Quaker leader having departed, his friends went forward with the arrangements for the great debate. The date fixed for the opening was 9th August, 1672, and it was arranged to have seven propositions debated in Newport and seven in Providence. The champion against the Quakers, now more than threescore years and ten, rowed by boat more than thirty miles to meet his opponents. "God graciously helped me," he says, "in rowing all day with my old bones, so that I got to Newport toward the midnight before the morning appointed."

Governor Easton attended the debate and "maintained the civil peace" (although the wordy strife was so acute that "civil" tongues were out of the question!). Williams characterizes his chief opponent, William Edmundson, as "a pragmatcal and insulting soul," and, moreover, speaks of him

† *Quakerism in the American Colonies.*

as having "a flush of wit, a face of brass, and a tongue set on fire from the hell of lies and fury."

On the other hand Edmundson (as will be seen later) does not mince his words when referring to Williams. This William Edmundson was no bad substitute for George Fox himself—in fact, he was one of the Quaker leader's own personal converts. Born in Westmorland in 1627, he fought under Cromwell in the Civil Wars. In 1652 he settled in Ireland for purposes of trade. While on a business trip to England, he heard Fox, was "convinced" and "seized upon by the Lord's power," and from that time he became one of the foremost exponents of the new faith, first in Ireland and afterwards in Virginia and North Carolina.

When the debate was commenced at Newport, there were three Quakers opposed to the one doughty old man, who felt himself quite equal, however, to the apparently unequal contest. Williams had at least the advantage of being allowed to choose his own ground for argument. It will be noted that three days were devoted to dealing (at Newport) with the first seven propositions, and that on the second occasion (at Providence) Edmundson limited the discussion to one day. The only way to do justice to the propositions is to set them out in full:

"I. The People called Quakers are not true *Quakers* according to the Holy Scriptures.

"II. The Jesus Christ they profess is not the true Jesus Christ.

"III. The spirit by which they are *acted* is not the Spirit of God.

"IV. They do not own the Holy Scriptures.

"V. Their Principles and Professions are full of contradictions and hypocrises.

"VI. Their Religion is not only an Heresy in matters of worship, but also in the Doctrines of Repentance, Faith, etc.

"VII. The Quakers' Religion is but a confused mixture of Popery, Armineanisme, Socineanisme, Judaisme, etc.

"VIII. The People called Quakers (in effect) hold no God, no Christ, no Spirit, no Angel, no Devil, no Resurrection no Judgment, no Heaven, no Hell, but what is in man.

"IX. All that their Religion requires (externall and internall) to make converts and proselites amounts to no more than what a Reprobate may easily attain unto and perform.

"X. The Popes of Rome doe not swell with and exercise a greater Pride than the Quaker spirit hath expresst and doth aspire unto, although many truly humble souls may be captivated amongst them, as may be in other religions.

"XI. The Quakers' Religion is more obstructive and

destructive to the conversion and Salvation of the Souls of People than most of the religions this day extant in the world.

“XII. The sufferings of the Quakers are no true evidence of the Truth of their religion.

“XIII. Their many Books and writings are extremely Poor, Lame, Naked, and sweld up with high Titles and words of Boasting and Vapour.

“XIV. The Spirit of their Religion tends mainly (1) to reduce Persons from Civility to Barbarisme; (2) to an arbitrary Government and the Dictates and Decrees of that *sudden spirit* that acts them; (3) to a sudden cutting off of People, yea of Kings and Princes, opposing them; (4) to as fiery Persecutions for matters of Religion and Conscience as hath been or can be practised by any Hunters or Persecutors in the world.”

Having done Williams the justice of showing exactly what the challenge was that he threw down to the Quakers, it will be interesting to turn to his chief antagonist's version of the four days' debate, remembering that the Quaker's description is no more to be swallowed *holus-bolus* than Williams's propositions. Edmundson writes:

“One Roger Williams, an old priest and an enemy of truth, had put forth fourteen propositions (as he called them), which he would maintain against any of the Quakers that came from Old England, and challenged a dispute of seven of them at Newport and the other seven at Providence.

“I joined with Friends in the challenge. A great concourse of people of all sorts gathered. When those propositions came to be discoursed of they were all but slanders and accusations against the Quakers. The bitter old man could make nothing out, but on the contrary they were turned back upon himself; he was baffled, and the people saw his weakness, folly and envy against the truth and the Friends. There were many prejudiced Baptists would fain have helped the old priest against Friends, but they durst not undertake his charge against us, for they saw it was false and weak. So the testimony of truth in the power of God was set over all his false charges.

“When this meeting was ended, which lasted three days, John Stubbs and I went to Providence to hear the other seven propositions, which lasted one day. There was a very great gathering of people of both Presbyterians, Baptists and Ranters. Roger Williams being there, I stood up and told him in public we had spent so many days at Newport, where he could make out nothing agreeable to his challenge, but on the contrary manifested his clamour, rash and false accusations,

which he could not prove against us, that I was not willing to spend much time in hearing his clamour and false accusations, having other service for the Lord, therefore would only spend that day. So he went on as he had done at Newport. We answered to all his charges against Friends, and disproved them. The meeting, which proved a seasonable opportunity to open many things to the people appertaining to the Kingdom of God and way of eternal life and salvation, concluded in prayer to Almighty God, and the people went away satisfied and loving."

Needless to say, neither party convinced the other. Dr. Rufus Jones (influenced, possibly, by fraternal feeling) says the debate "seems to have won many new adherents to the Quaker faith; it certainly was felt to be a triumph by those already of the Quaker persuasion. Yet he is constrained to confess that "looked at calmly and critically from the point of view of our century it appears on both sides to be a tilting against windmills."

The two chief protagonists, although they just missed coming face to face, fought it out afterwards in print. Roger Williams published at Boston in 1676 a scathing attack upon the Quaker leader entitled, *George Fox digged out of his Burrowes*. This book, which Fox refers to as "a very envious and wicked book which Roger Williams, a priest of New England (or some colony thereabout) had written against truth and Friends," moved the Quaker prophet's soul in such a way that, while dwelling at Swarthmoor, he had to liberate his spirit by penning *A New England Firebrand Quenched*.

Dr. Thomas Hodgkin points out, in his *Life of Fox*, that "in Rhode Island the toleration conceded to the Friends was due to the wise counsel of that noble man who more than any other man deserves to be called the Apostle of Toleration." To Fox, says Dr. Hodgkin, Williams's book "probably seemed a very unscrupulous attack, and one that absolutely required a reply, but he could hardly have been aware how much the cause of religious freedom owed to Roger Williams and his Colony of Rhode Island, otherwise he would have spoken more respectfully of his antagonist."

The two books which record the "spiritual battle," comments Dr. Rufus Jones, "are full of antiquarian interest, but they are a melancholy monument of the bitterness of these seventeenth-century theological wars, and there is pitifully little in them—and apparently as little in the debate—which raises into permanent view the grace of saintliness, the beauty of holiness, or the persuasive sweetness of the Divine Light in man."

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