WAS GEORGE FOX A GNOSTIC?

GLEN DAVID REYNOLDS

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ABSTRACT

The critique of Quakerism made by John Owen (Puritan Vice-chancellor of Oxford University) in tracts published in 1655 and 1679 was that Quaker theology renewed aspects of Gnosticism, a theology interpreted by patristic commentators as a Christian heresy. Owen's comparison was confined to the Quaker concepts of Light and spiritual perfection (which Owen viewed as being similar to the nature and function of Gnostic revelatory knowledge). This thesis argues that Fox's theological message (and in particular his interpretation of the concept of revelatory Light) incorporated a remarkably similar soteriology and realised eschatology to that found in Valentinian Christian Gnosticism.

Gnosis is defined (Chapter 1) as an individual's realisation, arising from revelatory knowledge and spiritual baptism (received in a Christian context from the redeemer figure of Christ) that a divine ontological component exists within the human body which needs to reunite with a consubstantial eternal heavenly Light/Christ. The soteriological and eschatological implications arising from Valentinian Gnostic revelation are therefore:

1. supernatural reunion of the divine element in the individual with Christ (chapter 2) awakening the individual to their divinity, resulting in spiritual perfection and freedom from the power and temptation of sin on earth (chapter 3);

2. the consequential devaluation of calendrical time/events (as significant aspects of theological exegesis) in pursuance of an anti-cosmic/historical emphasis upon inward revelation, thus limiting the authority of a) Scripture and b) communion and baptism to the extent that they are historically particular outward rituals (chapter 4).

Fox claimed to restore primitive Christianity, yet unconsciously renewed aspects of Valentinian Christian Gnosticism. His quest for divine

union, perfection and a realised eschatology is readily transferable to the early Church context of Valentinian Gnosticism in which (in opposition to the authority of the developing orthodoxy) reunion with God is a realisable eschatological aim on earth. The concept of union with God is a "keystone" of Foxian theology and incorporates the use of "Light" in an eschatologically motivated metaphysical dynamic. Previous scholarship has generally emphasised "Light" and "union" in Fox's theology as merely ethically motivated concepts. The conclusions of this thesis place Fox's quest for divine union and perfection in a Valentinian context, as opposed to the purely apocalyptic framework identified in current research. The thesis detects similarities between the demise of Valentinian Gnosticism and the abandonment of a distinctive Valentinian theology in Fox's message.

There is no evidence that Fox used or was influenced by Gnostic mythological texts, save for an isolated reference Fox makes to concepts found in Gnostic-Hermeticism. This fact, together with a difference in scriptural/sacramental exegesis between Fox and Valentinian Gnosticism and the Valentinian reservation of a postmortem element to eschatological completion, results in the thesis concluding that Foxian theology is not Gnostic *per se* but is nevertheless remarkably similar to Valentinian Gnosticism.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BJ Bicentenary Edition of George Fox's Journal
BNTC Bible and New Testament Commentary
CBQ Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CH Corpus Hermeticum
CJ Cambridge Journal of George Fox
FHL Library, Friends House London.
FQ The Friends' Quarterly

GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JFHS	Journal of the Friends Historical Society
JR	Journal of Religion
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
LSF	Library of Society of Friends, London.
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codex
NHL	Nag Hammadi Library
NHLE	Nag Hammadi Library in English
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NJ	Nickall's Journal of George Fox
N.p.	No identifiable publisher
NTL	New Testament Library
NTS	New Testament Studies
Nov.T	Novum Testamentum
QHS	Quaker Home Service
QRT	Quaker Religious Thought
QS	Quaker Studies
RGG	Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions
SMSS	Swarthmore Manuscript
ThR	Theologische Rundschau
VC	Vigiliae Christianae

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND CONTEXT

The "essence"[1] or "summary"[2] of the theology of George Fox (general organiser and leader of the early Quaker movement[3]) can be described as: "Christ has come to teach his people himself."[4] Following this belief, Fox sought to revive a "pure and undefiled religion which the apostles in the primitive times did own"[5] and which "since the days of the apostles...hath been in the wilderness."[6] Fox's formative spiritual development resulted in a theology that launched him into the world with a gospel message decidedly different from that of his Puritan contemporaries.[7]

This thesis argues that the theology Fox subsequently promoted is not a reversion to and continuation of apostolic Christianity, but is comparable to that form of Christian Gnosticism identified as Valentinian Gnosticism (described in section 1.1). John Owen (a contemporary Puritan opponent of Fox) was the author of two tracts (1655 and 1679, 1.4) and when read together, Owen accused (albeit indirectly) Quaker theology as being similar to

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[1] Taylor, E.E. *The Valiant Sixty*. London: Bannisdale Press, 1947:13.
[2] Benson, L. *Catholic Quakerism: A Vision for all Men*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1968: vi.
[3] Moore, R. *The Light in Their Consciences: Early Quakers in Britain 1646-1666*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000:35., based upon Moore's "The Faith of the First Quakers: The Development of their Beliefs and Practices up to the Restoration." PhD dissertation, University of Birmingham, 1993.
[4] Fox, G. *The Works of George Fox*, vol. 1, Philadelphia: Gould, and New York: Hopper, 1831:177. (Reprinted T.H.S. Wallace, ed. State College Pennsylvania: George Fox Fund, Inc. and New Foundation, 1990). As a result of variations in the different published versions of Fox's writings, the following citations will be employed throughout this thesis:

NJ: George Fox, *Journal*, John Nickalls, ed. Cambridge: University Press, 1952.
BJ: George Fox, *Journal*, Bicentenary Edition, Norman Penney, ed. 2 vols. London: Friends Tract Association, 1891.
CJ: George Fox, *Journal*, Norman Penney, ed. 2 vols. Cambridge: University Press, 1911.
Works: The Works of George Fox. 8 vols.

The above citations, followed by a colon, volume and page number, provide the location of materials quoted or referred to in this thesis.
[5] *Works*: 8:274.
[6] Ibid., 7:127.
[7] Gwyn, D. *Apocalypse of the Word: The Life and Message of George Fox (1624-1691)*. Richmond: Friends United Press, 1984:63.

Gnosticism. In making this allegation, Owen was unique amongst the opponents of Fox. The hypothesis of this thesis is that whatever Fox's explicit intent, Fox does not inherit the mantle of apostolic succession, but rather that of the Valentinian Gnostic opponents of the early Church. Fox unconsciously attempted to renew this form of Gnosticism in relation to his own theological battle with opponents of the established Church.

There is no evidence that Fox used or was influenced by Gnostic mythological texts (save for speculation as to a reference by Fox to Gnostic-Hermetic concepts, 3.4). Such an omission, and differences in scriptural/sacramental exegesis between Fox and Gnosticism (i.e. the Valentinian acceptance of various levels of exegesis as individually legitimate, in contrast to Fox's emphasis upon a sole legitimate and higher level of exegesis 4.3-4.5) and a postmortem reservation of eschatological completion in Valentinian Gnosticism, results in this thesis concluding that Foxian theology is not Gnostic *per se* but is remarkably similar to Christian (Valentinian) Gnosticism or gnosis. The analysis of Foxian theology in relation to Valentinian gnosis and Gnosticism is pursued in the light of an increased knowledge and understanding of Gnosticism since Owen's comparison.

In making reference to texts including those of the Nag Hammadi Library[8] (NHL) the thesis examines Fox's theology from a Valentinian[9]

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[8] *Nag Hammadi Library*. Facsimile Edition. 13 Volumes. Leiden: Brill, 1972-1978; *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. [NHLE] Revised edn. ET., members of the Coptic Gnostic Library Project of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont, California; Robinson, J.M., gen. ed., Leiden: Brill and New York/San Francisco:Harper Row, 1978, 1988. The library is hereinafter referred to as "NHL". From the NHL, references are made throughout this thesis to Nag Hammadi Codices "NHC" with recognised standard scholarly abbreviations for each Coptic text included in the NHL. The citation "NHC" in this thesis will therefore be followed by a colon and the Codex (Roman numeral), tractate (italicised numeral), page and (if necessary) line number. All NHL references in this thesis are to those based on the texts of the NHLE. For example, in relation to the three versions of *The Apocryphon of John*, the page and line number references relate to the English translation of the long recension in Codex II.

[9] Valentinian Gnostics and their texts have been categorised as Christian Gnostic works, following classification by Martin Krause at the international conference at Yale University 1978 "The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism", in B. Layton ed., *The*

Christian Gnostic perspective and context, an aspect previously missing from any detailed examination of Foxian theology. Whilst there is some disagreement as to the Gnostic or non-Gnostic categorisation of certain NHL texts, this thesis will refer to those texts which are generally concluded[10] as of the Valentinian school or indeed possibly written by Valentinus himself. These are contained almost entirely in Codex 1 of the NHL (the Jung Codex) although reference is made to *The Gospel of Philip* in Codex II. Also of great significance in Codex II and elsewhere in the NHL are versions of the *Apocryphon of John* which incorporate a "classic" version of the Gnostic myth which had arguably influenced the Valentinian myth and its texts. Logan[11] has strongly suggested that the text in *The Apocryphon* is not of a pre-Christian Sethian school but is inherently Christian as opposed to having been Christianised (see fn.22 for a comparison of the *Apocryphon* and Valentinian texts) and as such is of importance to understanding the nature of the Valentinian myth portrayed in this thesis. Additionally, other Valentinian texts outside of the NHL, such as the significant contributions made by Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*[12], and *Excerpta ex Theodoto*[13] by Clement of Alexandria, will be referred to where appropriate.

It is the evaluation of Valentinian primary evidences to which parallels and resonances with Foxian theology are emphasised throughout this

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Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut March 28-31, 1978 vol. 1, *The School of Valentinus*. Leiden: Brill, 1980-1.

[10] Williams, M.A. *Rethinking "Gnosticism". An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*. Pinceton: Princeton University Press, 1996: 47-8, contains a useful tabulated analysis of attempts to categorise the NHL texts from the perspective of several scholars, including an indication as to those (approx.one third) where some ambiguity exists as to their classification.

[11] Logan, A.H.B. *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy: A Study in the History of Gnosticism*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996, and in "At-Onement - The Nature and Challenge of Gnostic Soteriology", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 50 (1997) 4:484-485.

[12] Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion (haer. 33 3-7.10)* ,ed. K. Holl (GCS 25) Leipzig:Hinrichs, 1915.

[13] Clement of Alexandria, *Extraits de Théodote*, Sagnard, F. ed., SC 23 (1970): 78.1-2.

thesis, although general references to Gnosticism and gnosis will be made where appropriate.

The thesis demonstrates that Fox incorporated Valentinian themes into his theology. Chapters Two (Revelation), Three (Perfection) and Four (Scripture, Baptism and Communion) contain original research analysing these aspects of Foxian theology in the context of Valentinian Gnosticism and gnosis. Each of these chapters considers the Valentinian implications of Fox's use of revelatory "Light" resulting in the "keystone"[14] of Fox's theology, that of unity with God. Bailey identified the potential for a generalised "Gnosticism" in Fox's theology: "like some ancient Gnostics, Fox stressed unity and identity with the divine rather than distinctiveness from the divine."[15] Moore[16] states that Bailey's research stands alone in its initial but incomplete examination of the Quaker concept of unity with God, with Christ or, as the visible focus of the "unity", with Fox himself. Previous scholarship has made brief reference to similarities in Fox's theology and "Gnosticism". This thesis examines the comparison in detail, including (within a Valentinian Gnostic context) the concept of reunion with God.

1.1 DEFINING GNOSIS AND VALENTINIAN GNOSTICISM

In relation to the definition of gnosis and Gnosticism, there exists a complex issue surrounding the terminology to be employed throughout this thesis. As Puech notes: "There is a danger that this word [gnosis] will evoke only vague or confused ideas, for indeed it can be taken in several different senses."[17] There are no current conclusive definitions relating to the terms

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[14] Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 109.
[15] Bailey, R. *New Light on George Fox and Early Quakerism: The Making and Unmaking of a God"*. San Francisco: Mellen, 1992: xii.
[16] Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 262fn.9.
[17] Puech, H.C. "Gnosis and Time", in Campbell, J., ed., *Man and Time: Papers from the Eranos Yearbook*, Vol. 3, New York: Pantheon, 1957:39.

Gnostic, Gnosticism and gnosis, and the reservations made by Williams in this respect are forceful (pp. 7, 11, 12, 14, 15, 26, below). Generally, there are broad and narrow interpretations attached to these terms.[18] An example of the former is where there is no redeemer figure. Nock suggests that in the broadest sense, the existence of "a Gnostic way of thinking has been recognised as involving any process by which alienation of the individual from a state of perfection is overcome."[19] Bloom distinguishes between a type of Gnosticism which (as in the case of those Gnostics referred to by Owen) related to a particular historical phenomenon, and that use of "Gnosticism" applicable to a "timeless religious stance."[20] This latter view is maintained by those advocating a "new-age", modern and secular understanding of "gnosis" "Gnosticism" and "Gnostics", which (despite the claims that there may be an affinity to the ancient Gnostics) bears little if no

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[18] An introduction to modern distinctions between the terms "Gnosticism", "gnosis", and "Gnostic" is appropriate. "There is no generally accepted definition of Gnosticism":Rossbach, S. *Gnostic Wars: The Cold War in the Context of a History of Western Spirituality*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999:47. Unless specified otherwise, references made throughout this thesis to "Gnosticism" refer to the theology and practice of those early church Gnostics alluded to by Owen and considered by him and the patristic commentators as Christian heretics; or the "specifically Christian heresy of the second century A.D.":Wilson, R.McL. *Gnosis and the New Testament*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968:9; or "fully developed organised systems" of Gnostic belief: Yamauchi, E.M. "Gnosticism and Early Christianity", in Helleman, W.E. ed., *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World*. Maryland: University Press of America/Institute for Christian Studies, 1994:45.
The use of "gnosis" herein is in contrast to any spiritual or revelatory knowledge deemed true or acceptable "gnosis" by the patristic commentators: White, V. *God and the Unconscious*. London: The Harvill Press, 1953:196; Brown, S. "Gnosis, Theology and Historical Method," in *Hellenization Revisited*, 282. The use of "gnosis" within this thesis relates to that knowledge which is "falsely called gnosis" (1 Tim.6:20). As Simone Pétrement states in *A Separate God*, 8.,: "it is not enough to define it [Gnosticism] by the meaning of the word gnosis; that is to say, Gnosticism cannot be defined simply as a doctrine emphasizing the importance of knowledge for salvation. For there have been a number of other doctrines of salvation by knowledge that had nothing to do with "Gnosticism."
"Gnosis" and "Gnostic" are terms arguably broader in understanding than the restricted usage of "Gnosticism":Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament*, 9. On this basis, the use of "gnosis" need not imply an organised system of "Gnosticism." However, in the context of Owen's comparison with early church Gnosticism (1.4), this thesis refers to the narrow definition of "Gnostic", "Gnosticism" and gnosis as described above, in its comparison with the theology of Fox.

[19] Nock, A D. "Gnosticism." *HTR* 57 (1964): 276.

[20] Bloom, H. *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post Christian Nation*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992:50.

relation to the type of Valentinian Christian gnosis and Gnosticism which is the subject of this research.[21]

This thesis employs a narrow definition to what is Gnostic, Gnosticism or gnosis, since the Valentinian Christian Gnostics under comparison are those historical, classic systems of Gnosticism identified by patristic commentators.[22] Rudolph observes " the Church Fathers[23] as

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[21] The Gnosticism of modern culture can arguably be construed in a wider context than the second century Christian heresy which bedevilled the Church Fathers. Raschke states that "the Gnostics of the new age have set their face not against a moribund ecclesiastical establishment, but against the entire saeculum, against the triumphant pragmatism and egalitarianism which reckons time as linear function of social improvement.": Raschke, C. A. *Modern Gnosticism and the Origins of the New Religious Consciousness*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1980: 24. Further, Perkins believes that "the ancient rhetoric has been modified with earlier symbolism transmuted into a skein of images more congenial to the epoch of science and precise knowledge, resulting in the absence of revelation as *divine* gift and liberation": Perkins, P. *The Gnostic Dialogue: The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism*. New York: Paulist Press, 1980: 216. All eschatology is to be played out in this world. Jung viewed modern Gnostics as finding the transcendent source of order and salvation in their own consciousness: Jung, C. *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*. Princeton: Princeton University, 1968 [originally 1951]: 194.

[22] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 14., states: "Until the discovery of the Nag Hammadi texts [especially Codex 1] perhaps the most famous source providing information about a "gnostic system" was the summary of Valentinian teaching provided by Irenaeus...in the opening ten chapters of the first volume of his five-volume...*Adversus haereses*... Valentinus himself was a Christian teacher from Egypt who moved to Rome around 140 C.E. or before and set up a school."

Logan, in "At-Onement", 484., states: "the Valentinian school of Christian Gnosticism of the middle to late second century, [was] the chief target of Irenaeus' polemic, since he clearly saw this school as the greatest threat to the Christian faith precisely because it was so Christian... Now Irenaeus, who, when one compares him with the original texts from Nag Hammadi, does seem to give quite an accurate picture of the Valentinians and their competing opinions, claims that the Valentinians derived from an earlier school whom he dubs "Gnostics", two of whose systems he summarises at length at the end of his catalogue of heresies which completes book 1 of *Adversus haereses*."

Logan is here partly referring to those Christian Gnostics whose classic myth is preserved in the *Apocryphon of John* and who are arguably the spiritual predecessors of the Valentinians. Contrary to the views of Logan, *The Apocryphon* has been regarded as a secondarily Christianised version of a pre-Christian Sethian myth by some scholars. At p.488 of "At-Onement", Logan contrasts the classic myth found in the *Apocalypse of John* with that of the Valentinians: "But there are striking differences between the two systems, if also a concealed similarity. First, it is the soul [in the classic myth] and not some higher, pneumatic element which is saved. Second, unlike the ostensible Valentinian claim, souls are not saved by nature, only by the descent of the Spirit. All have the capacity not all the experience. Third, it is a matter not of plural good and evil spirits, as in Valentinianism, but of the Holy Spirit and its demonic counterpart. Conversely, as with Valentinianism, salvation should not be understood as an automatic process...some souls with saving knowledge (i.e. those on whom the Spirit has descended in baptism/chrismation) can yet reject it and turn away."

Further, at pp.494-495 Logan states: "the Valentinians can see some educative value in this world and history, do present a Jesus suffering on the cross, and offer a metaphor of *Christus victor*, Christ victorious over the powers and structures of ignorance that still

conscious of the frightening variety of Gnostic teachings; they compare them with the many - headed hydra of Greek legend."[24]

There was no Gnostic Church, normative theology, rule of faith or any dogma of exclusive importance. No limits were set to theological speculation within the framework of a perceived Gnostic anti-cosmic view of the world. There was no Gnostic canon of Scripture, unless it was the "Holy Scriptures" of other belief systems, which have been argued as parasitically employed and interpreted for the purpose of authorising the Gnostics' own teachings.[25] The unwarranted prejudicial connotation of the use of the term "parasite" in what can be a normal and expected process in religious innovation has been noted by Williams[26] who views the negative terminology as a distraction from the dynamics of Gnostics as "innovators" and the legitimate process of borrowing and manipulating common tradition. This process of interrelation and innovation was evidenced by the various teachers of the Valentinian school whose principles arguably illustrated continuity as opposed to parasitic behaviour.

This lack of uniformity in the usage of "Gnosticism", "gnostic" and "gnosis" has led to ongoing unresolved and speculative views amongst scholars surrounding the origins, sources and definition of those terms. In particular, the analysis of Williams suggests that:

> "Gnosticism" as a typological category has increasingly proven to be unreliable as a tool for truly illuminating analysis and more often has

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dominate our world...one which stresses the all-embracing love of God seeking atonement, the restoration of all things to their original unity."

[23] e.g., Irenaeus of Lyons, *Contre les hérésies 1*, Rousseau, A. and Doutreleau, L. eds., Sources Chrétiennes, (hereinafter SC) 263-4. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1979. (hereinafter cited as *Adv. haer.*).

[24] Rudolph, K. *Die Gnosis; Wesen und Geschichte einer spätantiken Religion*, Leipzig: Koeler & Amelang, 1977.; ET *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, tr. R. McL. Wilson, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987:53.

[25] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 53.

[26] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 80-95.

> begun to function as a laborsaving device conducive to anachronism, caricature and eisegesis.[27]

However, a Valentinian Gnostic explanation of the type of knowledge which is "gnosis" has been recorded by Clement of Alexandria in the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*:

> Now it is not merely the washing (loutron) which liberates, but also the knowledge (gnosis): Who were we? What have we become? Where were we? Into what place have we been cast? Whither are we hastening? From what have we been delivered? What is birth? What is rebirth?[28]

The Gnostic is estranged from his or her heavenly home and origin. Whilst imprisoned in a visible universe under the domination of ignorant and hostile powers, the Gnostic needs a heavenly revealer/redeemer to mature or perfect the divine element of the body in preparation for the return of that element to the heavenly home. It follows that gnosis has evident cosmic and metaphysical implications in addition to any ethical/moral considerations.

Filoramo states with regard to the metaphysical aspect to gnosis:

> The presupposition of the Gnostic theory of enlightenment is a metaphysics of the light that arises and is established throughout the Christian era. Instead of simply being a means of knowledge, a "how" of existence, as is typical of the classical tradition, the light becomes its privileged object. It is transformed in fact into a force, a power that is life, incorruptible, divine life.[29]

The function of gnosis is to reunite the divine light or heavenly substance/essence in the individual, with that of the heavenly realm of light, via a redeemer (Christ) who is consubstantial[30] with the heavenly component trapped in the body. The realisation (knowledge) and growth of this divine

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27 Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 51.
28 Clement of Alexandria, *Extraits de Théodote*, 78.1-2.
29 Filoramo, G. *A History of Gnosticism.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1990:44.
30 *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 247 defines "consubstantial" as: "Theological: of the same substance, (esp.of the three persons of the Trinity)."

element in the body, through the workings of the redeemer/light is the means and end of gnosis. The divine and eternal within the body is that redeemed through gnosis, described in various terms in Gnostic texts including the "seed of light, the inner man"[31], spark, light, seed, self or (as in the non-Valentinian but arguably Christian Gnostic *Apocryphon of John*) the soul.[32] As illustrated in the Marcosian[33] (Valentinian) formula reproduced by Irenaeus:

> The perfect redemption [gnosis] is said to be the knowledge of the ineffable Greatness. From ignorance both deficiency and passion arise; through "knowledge" will the entire substance derived from ignorance be destroyed. Therefore this "knowledge" is redemption of the inner man.[34]

Gnosis is salvation when it is special knowledge of this "inner man", one's true self, and the recognition of one's kinship with the unknown transcendent God and of the true nature of the visible world. An example of this Gnostic 'At-Onement'[35] with God is evidenced by the hope of reunion and perfection through knowledge in the opening to a text which may have been written by Valentinus himself, *The Gospel of Truth*:

> The gospel of truth is a joy for those who have received from the Father of truth the gift of knowing him, through the power of the Word, that came forth from the Pleroma - the one who is in the thought and mind of the Father, i.e. the one addressed as the Savior, the name of the work he is to perform for the redemption of those who were ignorant of the Father, while the name of the gospel is the proclamation of hope, being discovery for those who search for him.[36]

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[31] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 109.
[32] Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 239.,
[33] Marcus was a student of the Christian Gnostic Valentinus in Egypt during the period 135-160A.D. and became the leader of his own Valentinian school of Gnosticism whose principles are described as Marcosian.
[34] *Adv. haer.* 1.21.4.
[35] Logan, 'At-Onement', 493.
[36] NHC: I, *3*. 16.31-17.4

Logan[37] suggests that a fundamental idea in Gnosticism arising from this kinship and identification with the divine, is the consubstantiality of God and the divine element in humanity, i.e., the saving knowledge or gnosis is the recognition of one's essential and ontological heavenly nature.

The Gnostics and Valentinians identified by Irenaeus have been described by Jonas[38] in seminal works as employing a theology fundamentally characterised by "an anti-cosmic attitude", that is by a devaluation of the world. In relation to this analysis of Jonas, Pétrement states:

> for some Gnostics, the world was foreign to the soul, foreign to good, foreign to God. The world was of a different , though not necessarily opposed kind. It is the attachment and enslaving of the soul to that which is foreign to it that seems to have been truly evil to them. Some Gnostics did say that the world was evil...Gnostics also preached the opposition of the soul to the power of the world, at least to the power the world exercises within us. They did not preach a violent revolt against external powers, but they refused to admit that these powers should be adored by the soul.[39]

In relation to the problem of distinguishing Gnostics and Gnosticism from similar doctrines, this anti-cosmic characteristic is too general. For example, apocalyptic theology may be anti-cosmic but not necessarily Gnostic (as in Jewish apocalyptic). Within Greek philosophical thought Rudolph[40] suggests that regardless of the dualism of spirit and body within Greek philosophy, there is generally no such anti-cosmic development. The Greek conception can be shown to be unmistakably "pro-cosmic", or as

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37 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 211-212.
38 Jonas, H. *Gnosis und spätantiken Geist*. 2 vols. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Vol. I 1934; 2nd ed. 1954; 3rd ed.1964; Vol. II, 1954; 2nd ed. 1966; *The Gnostic Religion*. Boston: Beacon, 1958, 2nd ed. 1963, 3rd ed. 1970; London: Routledge, 1992. Hereinafter reference will be made to *The Gnostic Religion* as published by Beacon, unless specified otherwise.
39 Pétrement , *A Separate God*, 9.
40 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 60.

Williams describes: "a more optimistic cosmic attitude in Greek philosophy than what we find in classical Gnosticism."[41] Plotinus (3rd century C.E.), the "leading figure of late or Neoplatonism"[42], defended this positive approach against the Gnostic depreciation of the cosmos. In his first treatise *On Providence* Plotinus states:

> No-one therefore may find fault with our universe on the ground that it is not beautiful or not the most perfect of the beings associated with the body: nor again quarrel with the originator of its existence[43]

In a treatise specifically entitled *Against the Gnostics*, Plotinus claims:

> For of all earthly things nothing is of value for them [Gnostics], but only an Other after which they will at some time strive.[44]

From such polemic the contrasting position of the Gnostic view of the world is evident. The unknown "Other" (a positive pole of Gnostic dualism) to which Plotinus refers in the last citation, is a higher world which, portrayed in very varied and differing fashion, culminates in the "assumption of a new otherworldly and unknown God who dwells beyond all visible creation and is the real lord of the universe."[45]

Festugière[46] recognises two contrasting aspects to Plato which relate to the Hermetic treatises; an optimistic line, in which the world is presented as a beautiful and well-ordered place, and a second and pessimistic line in which the world is described as evil, a place of corruption and chaos. This

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41 Williams, M.A. "The Demonizing of the demiurge: The Innovation of Gnostic Myth." *Religion and Society* 31 (1992):78.
42 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 60.
43 Plotinus, *Enneads in Plotinus*, trans. A.H. Armstrong, London/Massachusetts: Heinemann/Harvard University Press, 1961: III, 2, 3.
44 Ibid., II, 9,15.
45 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 61.
46 Festugière, A.J. *La révélation d'Hermes Trismegiste*. 4 Vols. Paris: J. Gabalda, 1949-1954.; Vol.2: *Le Dieu cosmique*. Paris: J. Gabalda, 1949:ix.

difference is resolved by Festugière noting a development in Plato's thought from the earlier and older pessimistic line, to the optimistic thought of his final writings such as in *Timaeus and the Laws*.[47] The anti-cosmic element within Gnostic mythology is variable in its emphasis and significance and may be dependent upon the type and date of any Platonic literature incorporated by Gnostic teachers within their mythology.

Williams[48] views the anti-cosmism that is employed to define and distinguish Gnostic dualism from other dualist systems (or by implication the alleged hostility of the Gnostics to the world) as not evidenced by the tractates that indicate a movement seeking to integrate itself more and not less, with the world. In addition to an anti-cosmic criterion, Jonas[49] and Pétrement [50] equally assert a fundamental theme of Gnosticism as being that which distinguished between the true God and the creator god (or demiurge) i.e., the God of the Gospel and the God of the Old Testament. However, Gnostic texts do not all share a common dualistic doctrine, nor do they share a negative attitude towards the creator God or demiurge. In particular, the Valentinian texts are distinctive in a generally more positive approach. Williams provides some examples:

> In still other cases, the devolution of the demiurge(s) seems actually to be in accordance with divine providence...The Valentinian Ptolemy depicted the demiurge sympathetically. In his *Letter to Flora*, the creator is described as a God who is just and hates evil, not one who brings corruption (in Epiphanius, *Pan.* 33.3.6). The same thing is true in the Nag Hammadi Valentinian treatise the *Tripartite Tractate* (100,19-103,12). In the *Excerpts of Theodotus* (47.1-2), a collection by Clement of Alexandria of excerpts from the second-century Valentinian Theodotus and other Valentinian sources, the Saviour is

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47 Ibid., Vol. 2, xii.
48 Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 97.
49 Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 42.
50 Pétrement, *A Separate God*, 10. Pétrement clarifies this dualist approach to deity as a structural system which has "two levels in the supraterrestrial world...each of which has a representative that can be called God, though only the representative of the upper level can be the true God. It is this which makes Gnostic doctrines impossible to confuse with others..."

> actually called the first demiurge while Wisdom is the second. Wisdom brings forth the "Father", the god through whom she then makes heaven and earth.[51]

As Logan observes of Valentinianism: "the Old Testament God is not demonized but demoted to an ignorant and arrogant Platonic Demiurge, the God of creation and law."[52] Valentinus was in many ways more compatible with Christian orthodoxy than any other leader of a Gnostic school.[53] Yet the division of the divine, the denigration of the Old Testament God and all that it entailed (especially the resultant general dualist approach) angered Irenaeus who viewed the Valentinians as ignoring God's dispensation, the rule of faith, Scripture and tradition.[54]

A Valentinian attempt to mediate with orthodox Christianity can be seen in the followers of Ptolemy (those identified by Irenaeus in the first eight chapters of *Adversus haereses*) where the symbolic role of the cross is highlighted in Valentinian texts. As a symbol of division, the use of the cross according to Theodotus[55] divides Gnostic believers from unbelievers, while the *Tripartite Tractate* seeks to harmonise Valentinian theology with the "great Church", and views the use of the cross as symbolic of a boundary, not

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51 Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 99.
52 Logan, A.H.B. "Magi and Visionaries in Gnosticism" in J.W. Drijvers and J.W. Watt eds, *Portraits of Spiritual Authority: Religious Power in early Christianity, Byzantium & the Christian Orient*. Leiden: Brill, 1999:38.
53 *The Other Bible*, W. Barnstone and others eds., New York: Harper Collins, 1984:610: "in the middle of the second century this educated Egyptian [Valentinus] was a candidate for election as the new Bishop of Rome. It is always fascinating to speculate what would have been the history of Christianity, indeed of Western culture, had Valentinus won that election and become a Gnostic pope. Saint Augustine two centuries later also had a Gnostic past, having been a Manichean for nine years, but his conversion like that of Paul was accompanied by ardent opposition to, rather than compatibility with, his past."
54 Vallee, G. "Theological and non-Theological Motives in Irenaeus's Refutation of the Gnostics." In E.P. Sanders, ed., *Jewish and Christian Self Definition*, Volume One: *The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980: 177-179.
55 *Exc. ex Theod.* 42.1-2.

to cause incomprehensibility but as part of the providential plan of the ineffable Father.[56] As Logan notes of the *Tripartate Tractate*:

> [it] presents a remarkably subtle picture of how from the transcendent, ineffable God as Monad there yet emerged the variety, evils and deficiencies of the present universe, in such a way as to explain the logic of God's loving and gracious self-revelation to the aeons and the cosmos, without God himself or the aeon who began it all (not the feminine Sophia, but the masculine Logos) being blameworthy.[57]

The Valentinian *Gospel of Philip*[58] also makes a fruitful use of the cross, both as a symbolic event marking the division Christ makes between believers and unbelievers and between the three cosmic elements in Valentinianism, pneumatic (spiritual) psychic (earthly, governed by works) and hylic (material) that were temporarily combined in him. But the most striking of the Valentinian texts from the NHL is the *Gospel of Truth*[59] which represents (contrary to the generalisations of Irenaeus) a demythologised mediation albeit mystical in nature, on the person and work of Christ incorporating concepts of good news, self knowledge, redemption, triumph over the deficiency caused by ignorance, and joyful union with the Father.

Williams' dissatisfaction with the ambiguous terminology employed when defining Gnosticism generally, by using "dualism", "anti-cosmism", hostility, rebellion against the Old Testament, libertine or ascetic practices, concludes with a recommendation that an alternative to "Gnosticism" is "biblical demiurgical" as the arguably single most genuine definitive characteristic.

In a comprehensive analysis of the influence and cross-fertilisation of key Gnostic mythological texts, Logan (in examining the "classic myth" in

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56 NHC: I, *5*: 76.32-77.1
57 Logan, "At-Onement", 492.
58 NHC: II, *3*: 67.20-68.27.
59 NHC: I. *3:* 16.31-17.4

The Apocryphon of John) expands upon the demiurge concept in Gnostic theology which has arguably influenced schools of Gnosticism such as the Valentinian:

> The "classic" Gnostic myth ...could not but develop differently from the "orthodox" version by its downgrading of the Old Testament, its Creator God and his prophets, its preference of the heavenly Son/Christ of Paul, John and Hebrews to the earthly Jesus of the Synoptics, and its focus on baptism and chrismation rather than on the eucharist as the climax of illumination and salvation, but its claim to be a valid interpretation of the Gnostic's ecstatic experience of and identification with the heavenly Revealer/Redeemer, i.e. Christ, should not be doubted.[60]

This thesis suggests that whilst asserting an alternative title to a movement that called itself "Gnostic" and was clearly identified as such in its distinctive beliefs by Irenaeus, Plotinus and Epiphanius (a point made by Logan[61]) this thesis argues that Williams has simply changed the terminology without remedying the problem of diversity amongst Gnostic belief. As will be discussed in relation to the social and historical context to the development of Valentinianism and the Quaker movement (1.3) Williams does however make a valuable contribution in drawing upon a social science analysis regarding the nature and dynamics of the Gnostic phenomenon. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Williams suggests that the term "Valentinianism" remains appropriate as:

> a subtradition within the broader early Christian tradition. There will be debates about the degree to which this or that document is really "Valentinian." But that there was a Valentinus or a Ptolemy no one denies, and doctrinal continuities can be traced between figures such as Ptolemy and other Valentinian teachers, or between these teachers and certain Nag Hammadi tractates.[62]

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60 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, xx.
61 Logan, "Magi and Visionaries", 27.
62 Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 51.

The following section considers the visionary experiences of Valentinus and Fox prior to examining the apocalyptic and social context common to both.

1.2 FOX AND VALENTINUS AS VISIONARIES

Formative revelatory experiences in 1647/48 (2.2.1) resulted in Fox claiming he had returned to the pre-Fall state of paradise and had reached a state of divinity comparable with that of Christ. No other Quaker (or "Friend") dared to make such claims with this certainty.[63] A consequence of such a return to paradise and union with God was as suggested by Fox , that he had reached an *irreversible* state of divine being. Aune has suggested that this irreversibility is characterised exclusively (in the context of early Christianity) by those movements designated as Gnostic.[64]

The author of the *Refutatio omnium haeresium*[65] (Hippolytus or a predecessor of his school[66]) declared that Valentinus' vision of Christ was the impulse for the composition of the Valentinian myth (VI, 42,2). Quispel states:

> On the whole this metaphysic poem seems inspired by vivid emotions and personal experiences. Valentinus was not a philosopher, not a theologian, but a visionary mystic, who expressed his tragic conception of life in the symbols of creative imagination.[67]

Filoramo[68] compares the visionary experiences of Valentinus to the Damascus experience of Paul; an internal spiritual occurrence that became a

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[63] Bailey, R. G. *New Light on George Fox and Early Quakerism - The Making and Unmaking of a God.* San Francisco: Mellin Research University Press, 1992: 115.
[64] Aune, D.E. *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity.* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972:13.
[65] Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutatio omnium haeresium*, ed. P. Wendland (GCS 26) Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1916.
[66] Logan, "Magi and Visionaries", 34fn.34.
[67] Quispel, G. "The Original Doctrine of Valentine", *VC* 1 (1947) 47.
[68] Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 156.

formative turning point in the development of his beliefs. The author of *Refutatio* states that Valentinus saw a newly born child who said that it was the Logos. By implication, the vision incorporated a redeemer figure of the heavenly Christ, and the unknown God. An analysis by Logan[69] of Valentinus as a visionary and cult founder concludes that Valentinus should not be considered ill or mad for his revelatory experiences. Drawing upon the subcultural-evolution model of Stark[70] as opposed that of the psychopathological or entrepreneurial models (see below in relation to apocalyptic context 1.3), Logan states:

> Now this scenario [revelations arising during social crisis] corresponds very strikingly, I suggest, to the picture of Valentinus and his followers given both by the heresiologists and by primary Valentinian texts like Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*. From the fragments Valentinus comes over as a very attractive and creative personality, the author not only of letters, homilies and books, but also of one of the most evocative myths of all time, if building on an existing, but much less sophisticated Gnostic one.[71]

Whilst Fox had no theological or academic training he had a similar Pauline experience to that of Valentinus which was that of a vision of God/paradise, and the comparison is significant to the extent that their theologies ensued from such formative, internalised spiritual, revelatory and visionary experiences.

Following the above comments of Logan relating to the mental state of Valentinus, it is appropriate (as a preface to an objective historical, social and apocalyptic analysis) to consider the subjective impact of psychology and Fox's mental state upon any conclusions made and drawn.[72]In the modern

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[69] Logan, "Magi and Visionaries", 34-40.
[70] Stark, R, "How sane people talk to the gods: A rational theory of revelations", *Innovation in Religious Traditions: Essays in the Interpretation of Religious Change, Religion and Society*, eds. M.A. Williams, C.Cox and M.S. Jaffe. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992:22-9.
[71] Logan, "Magi and Visionaries", 36.
[72] I am grateful to Revd Dr Jim Francis for suggesting the inclusion of a psychological

context of "gnosis", psychological issues are discussed within current research into a broadly defined Gnosticism *per se*, (i.e., that modern interpretation of Gnosticism referred to above,[73]). In adopting the narrow definition of Valentinian Gnosticism, it could be argued that the mythological framework within which gnosis operates excludes consideration of a purely psychological process.[74] Additionally, as Benson states:

> Fox's religious ideas were produced by a personal encounter with a personal God within the context of a particular historical situation. Therefore Fox's ideas cannot be abstracted from the story of his life.[75]

However, Knight suggests a psychological perspective to the development of Fox's spiritual journey which indicates the freeing of an otherwise dormant personality:

> that it is such an absolute religion of personal experience rather than a religion of faith alone which Fox insists upon as the only true religion. To such a God centred religion as his was personally, he inspired the entire organisation of the Society of Friends... It is this dynamic type of true religion which Fox had found through the emancipation of his higher selfhood. George Fox had felt a direct and special call from the Lord to bring people off from the world's religions that they might know the pure religion.[76]

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perspective within this thesis.

[73] Jung, C. *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, 194.; Raschke, C. A. *Modern Gnosticism and the Origins of the New Religious Consciousness*, 24.; Perkins, P. *The Gnostic Dialogue : The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism*, 216.

[74] Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 46.

[75] Benson, L. "George Fox: Prophet of a Spiritual Reformation - A descriptive and partial outline of the projected book now in preparation." unpub., n.d., London: Library of Society of Friends (hereinafter "LSF") .

[76] Knight, R. *The Founder of Quakerism: A Psychological Study.* London: The Swarthmore Press Ltd, 1922: 258.

In relation to the juxtaposition of Fox's mental state and spiritual experience, James[77] suggests the Quaker religion which Fox led is something impossible to overpraise:

> In a day of shams, it was a religion of veracity rooted in spiritual inwardness, and a return to something more like the original gospel truth than men had ever known in England. No one can pretend for a moment that in point of spiritual sagacity and capacity, Fox's mind was unsound...Yet from the point of view of his nervous constitution, Fox was a psychopath or detraque of the deepest dye.[78]

Jones[79] suggests that the revelatory experiences indicate that Fox was subject to deep subliminal transformations. Knight argues the most characteristic mystical experiences of Fox relate to the openings or direct revelations that "burst into his consciousness."[80] With regard to the spontaneous nature of the revelations, Knight states:

> I believe that these openings are a betrayal of the workings of his mind in accord with normal mental procedure. This does not mean that the experiences were less divine than Fox assumed, or that it was less a revelation of truth.[81]

James' observations as to any personality disorder (arguably corroborated by Fox's anti-social behaviour) are similar to accusations made by contemporary opponents[82] of Fox who criticised him for his unruly behaviour and lack of academic background.

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77 James, W. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Edinburgh: Longmans, 1902.
78 Ibid., 30.
79 Jones, R. ed., *George Fox:An Autobiography*. London:Headley Brothers, 1904:88.
80 Knight, *The Founder of Quakerism*, 73.
81 Ibid.
82 Charles Leslie, in *The Snake in the Grass*, London: N.p., 1696:5 suggests that Fox and his followers were ignorant of "sense and English"; Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, [1702], Vol.2, Murdock, K., ed., Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977: 455 states that Fox was: "a proud fool who could scarce write his name"; Henry More, "Enthusiasmus Triumphatus" [1656] in *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*, London: N.p., 1662:24, states of Fox: "For a man illiterate, as he was, but of good parts, by constant reading of the Bible will naturally contract a more winning and commanding Rhetorick than those that

A psychological perspective to Gnosticism has been identified within the first Biblical mention of gnosis, the Pauline reference (1 Cor. 8:1): "Gnosis puffs up", upon which Brown[83] states:

> Since religious knowledge seems to be at issue here, Paul cannot be referring to the arrogance which is sometimes associated with superior intellectual gifts. Rather, Paul's astute observation has to do with a phenomenon for which modern depth psychology provides us with fresh insight.
> Unlike the religious knowledge which comes from without, through the preached word (cf. Rom.10:17), gnosis comes from within, through transformative experience. Gnosis, in this paper, refers to such introverted religious knowledge. This psychological understanding clearly differs from attempts to provide a doctrinal definition of *gnosis*;[84] it would fall under what E. M. Yamauchi refers to as "Gnosticism" in the "broad sense."[85]

Corbett's[86] examination of contemplative psychology recognises the religious significance of knowledge in terms of "to know thyself," including the experiencing of the divine by means of human facilities leading to a form of naturally acquired, experiential knowing. Jung's enthusiasm for gnosis as illustrated by the research of Segal,[87] is well established. In Jung's words "gnosis is psychological knowledge whose contents derive from the unconscious."[88] Within a psychological framework gnosis can occur gradually as "unconscious" thoughts and realisations are slowly assimilated, whereas at times gnosis has been seen to virtually force its way into consciousness.[89]

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are learned; the intermixture of Tongues and of artificial Phrases debasing their style, and making it sound more after the manner of men, though ordinarily there may be more of God in it than in that of the Enthusiast."

83 Brown, "Gnosis, Theology and Historical Method", 279.
84 Yamauchi, "Gnosticism and Early Christianity", 29-61.
85 Ibid., 29
86 Corbett, L. *The Religious Function of the Psyche*. London: Routledge, 1996:221.
87 Segal, R.A. *The Gnostic Jung*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
88 Jung, C.G. *Collected Works*, Vol. IX, New York: Pantheon Books, 1958:para.350.
89 Corbett, L. *The Religious Function*, 221.

There is therefore an important area of overlap between gnosis and contemplative/depth psychology or focusing[90] (within the broad definition of gnosis/Gnosticism) with an emphasis upon self-knowledge and direct experience. As Jung indicates, such contemplative psychology can be argued as producing a form of gnosis, or inner knowing, which is not primarily dependent on pre-existing doctrine, on reason, on thought, or even on innate intuitive knowledge.

Ambler's pioneering practical research into the use of the concept of Light by early Quakers observes a rational and arguably psychological understanding of Fox's seventeenth century message, from which similarities with Jung's view of gnosis can be seen. For Jung, gnosis frees and makes conscious that which was formerly unconscious. In relation to the false as opposed to the unrevealed/unconscious true self within, Ambler states:

> The "Light" was a capacity within them to see what they were doing or thinking, while "the self" was struggling at the same time to keep it well hidden - it wasn't in the interest of the self to acknowledge the truth. If however, those early Friends accepted the light, then in time, after a period of struggle, this stubborn old self would be deposed and a new self, "the seed", would come to life within them.[91]

The "self" referred to above, keeps the "truth" hidden, or unconscious, whilst the Light reveals or makes conscious that truth which in second century gnosis is the realisation of the divine within the individual.

Ambler's analysis of Foxian texts indicates the similarity between Jungian appreciation of Gnostic dynamics, and that of Fox in his interpretation of the nature and function of the Light:

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90 Gendlin, E. *Focussing*. New York: Bantam Books, 1978.
91 Ambler, R. *Light to live by: an exploration in Quaker spirituality*. London: Quaker Books, 2002:6.

> 'the light within' would normally have been understood as a natural capacity for understanding and insight, like reason or conscience, but Fox differed from most in saying it was a special, divine capacity, a function of the Spirit of God within people, which enabled them, for example, to 'see themselves'.[92]

Further, in employing the language of psychology:

> The light of God is certainly within people, but it is not part of their normal mental make-up. It is not part of the ego, or the conscious personality...They have simply to pay attention to what is happening, without intervening in the situation with their own thoughts, plans, arguments or imaginings, and then they will experience something else happening that is not of their own doing.[93]

Ambler[94] suggests that the Quaker "Light" was distinct from "conscience," a separate nature and function which this thesis suggests (2.8) is part of a metaphysical dynamic within the workings of the human conscience:

> Early Friends all make a point of referring to the light in their conscience, implying that it was something distinct. And I take the difference to be this: your conscience makes you feel good or bad about things you've done, and the light then shows you precisely what those things are. The function of the light is to show you what's really happening: "the light is that by which ye come to see,"[95] for with the light man sees himself."[96]

As a result of the specifically Christian and mythological aspect to the "gnosis" under consideration in this thesis, further detailed examination of the psychological aspects to gnosis, the conscious and the unconscious, is not considered appropriate. Whereas the framework (as evidenced by his use of Scripture and Christ as Light) within which Fox's theology moved was

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92 Ambler, R. *Truth of the Heart: an anthology of George Fox*. London: Quaker Books, 2001:161.
93 Ibid, 184.
94 Ambler, *Light to live by*, 17.
95 *Works:* 7:42.
96 *Works*: 7:142.

Christian, the origin or source of any influence upon Fox remains speculative. The benefit of personal and divine revelation left Fox without crediting any individual or school of thought for his formative revelations of 1647 and 1648 (2.2.1).

1.3 THE APOCALYPTIC CONTEXT OF FOX AND VALENTINIANISM

As mentioned in the previous section, Stark and Bainbridge[97] in analysing the nature and dynamics of the Gnostic phenomenon from the perspective of social science, have made a significant contribution to examining the environment in which religious movements such as the Valentinian Gnostics have materialised, research which has been commended by Williams[98] and Logan.[99] The "liminality" aspect to the social circumstances set out below is referred to in the historical analysis of sections 5.0 and 5.1.

Of the three models[100] which may generate novel and innovative movements; psychopathological[101] (as discussed above and arguably applicable to Fox) the entrepreneurial model (a repackaging of an existing idea with a view to obtaining a benefit in the future) and the sub-cultural evolution model, the latter is adopted by this thesis as common to the formation of Foxian and Valentinian theology, for the reasons indicated below.

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[97] Stark, R and Bainbridge, W.S. *The Future of Religion, Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
[98] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 219-234.
[99] Logan, 'Magi and Visionaries', 27, 34-42.
[100] Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 171-88.
[101] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 220: "innovations that sometimes originate from psychotic episodes on the part of an individual facing some sort of crisis or distress, who then interprets his or her psychiatric syndrome in terms of religious experience (visions, new revelation and the like) and eventually succeeds in forming a new cult attracting persons facing the same crisis or distress. This explanation certainly cannot be ruled out in many instances, though among many social scientists it has probably been more popular as a laboursaving theory than the evidence warrants."

Whilst creative individuals who are neither ill or insane are according to Stark[102] capable of experiencing revelation, the intervention of "genius" has the potential for profound revelations which lead to a new "culture" becoming externalised. In paraphrasing Stark's analysis, Logan states :

> Novel revelations will most likely come to persons of deep religious concerns who perceive shortcomings in the conventional faiths, something that increases during periods of social crisis. During such periods the numbers of people who receive novel revelations and the number willing to accept them is maximised. The more reinforcement the recipient receives, the more likely they are to have more revelations. And the interaction between successful founder and their followers tends to amplify heresy. The result of these processes and interactions is more radical revelations. As Stark notes, this model of revelations is now linked to the sub-cultural evolution model.[103]

Both Quakerism and Valentinianism have surfaced during periods of social upheaval in an apocalyptic environment (see 4.2 on the apocalyptic nature of historicised Christian Gnostic eschatology) where divine knowledge is essential to redemption and *mutatis mutandis*, redemption is essential to knowledge.

Apocalyptic[104] is an adjective used to describe religious groups and teachings that emphasise the end of the world, the second coming of Christ, and other eschatological themes.[105] As will be shown below, the chaos in Puritan society induced or was indicative of a period of apocalypticism from which Quakerism ensued. The following discussion is in the context of Gnostic intentionality and does seek to re-open the ongoing debate as to Gnostic origins.

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[102] Stark, R. "How Sane People talk to the Gods: A Rational Theory of Revelations." in Williams, M.A., Cox, C., and Jaffee, M.S., eds., *Innovation in Religious Traditions*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992:19-34.
[103] Logan, "Magi and Visionaries", 36, specifically referring to Stark, ibid., 22-9.
[104] Greek apokalypsis = "revelation" or "removing the veil"
[105] Dandelion, B.P., Gwyn, D., Peat, T. *Heaven on Earth: Quakers and the Second Coming*, Kelso and Birmingham: Curlew Productions and Woodbrooke College, 1998:101.

Of Gnosticism, Pearson has stated that what lay behind the radical hermeneutics of a Jewish intelligensia estranged from the "mainstream" of their own culture and dissatisfied with traditional answers, was "doubtless a historical crisis, perhaps even a crisis of history."[106] Following a series of failed hopes, expectations and disappointments resulting in a climate of pessimism there was "a radical case of cognitive dissonance in the encounter with the older religious traditions, especially the sacred text, and in particular (initially) the Old Testament."[107]

Pearson's comments relate to the conclusions of Grant[108] that certain Jews may have been motivated by the uprisings of A.D. 66-70 and 132-135 in developing a Gnostic theology which out of disillusionment and lost messianic expectations, revolted against their own God and pursued demiurgical/dualistic myths. In essence, Grant's social/psychological analysis of Gnostic origins saw Gnosticism as having "originated in the debris of apocalyptic- eschatological hopes which resulted from the fall of Jerusalem."[109]

Specifically in relation to Valentinus, Logan[110] notes (in relation to shortcomings in conventional faith or a societal crisis which led to Valentinus' revelations and cult movement) that he originated from Alexandria and went to Rome where there was no dominant religion. In Alexandria there were Diaspora Jews and Jewish-Christian groups that had incurred the revolts and brutalities of the messianic uprising of Jews in Cyrenaica, Egypt and Cyprus in A.D. 115-117. Logan states that:

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[106] Pearson, B.A. "Some Observations on Gnostic Hermeneutics." In *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts*, ed. by W.D. O'Flaherty, Berkeley Religious Studies Series. Berkeley: The Graduate Theological Union, 1979:253.
[107] Ibid., 247.
[108] Grant, R.M. *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, rev.ed. NewYork: Columbia Press, 1966: 27-38.
[109] Ibid., 34-35.
[110] Logan, "Magi and Visionaries", 37.

The crisis among Jews over another failure of their God to send a messiah who would save his people, coupled with a related crisis of faith amongst Christians, victims of persecution both by Jews for their messianic beliefs and by pagans for their similarity to Jews and finding it increasingly difficult, a difficulty spectacularly highlighted by Marcion, to reconcile the God of the Old Testament and of the Jews with the loving Father of Jesus Christ, may have been the final catalyst which provoked Valentinus' vision of the unknown God and his revealer, the heavenly Christ.[111]

Williams (following his general caution concerning individual emphasis upon any single criterion in defining or establishing the origins of Gnosticism) notes that H. Byron Earhart[112] concludes that social disruption, personal anxiety and social crisis is particularly relevant to the social or sub-cultural environment factor mentioned above (when combined with the personal contribution of the individual innovator or founders).

Whilst social unrest may too easily lead to the automatic assumption that this is a causal link with the Gnostic's dark, pessimistic view of this world, (and may not therefore be decisive in isolation) a significant point raised by both Williams and Earhart is that the social environment factor as a motivator for Gnosticism (when combined with social crisis) requires the influence of the prior history of development within the religious tradition in question.[113] The allegation of apostacy proclaimed by Fox, and his disillusionment with the scriptural interpretation of the established Church, is particularly relevant here.

Gwyn[114] states that the relationship between experience, Scripture and history led Fox to understand Christ's revelation as an apocalyptic event. There exists a strongly apocalyptic perspective to Fox's declaration that

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111 Ibid.
112 Earhart, H.Byron. "Toward a Theory of the Formation of the Japanese New Religions: A Case Study of Gedatsu-kai." *History of Religions* 20 (1980): 223.
113 Ibid., 223.
114 Gwyn, *Apocalypse* , 209.

"Christ has come to teach his people himself."[115] The epochal disruption in society at the time of Fox's revelations is emphasised by Green:

> No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth from the meeting of the Long Parliament. England became the people of a book and that book was the Bible...The whole temper of the nation felt the change. A new conception of life and of man superseded the old. A new moral and religious impulse spread through every class...The whole nation became in fact a Church. The great problems of life and death, whose questionings found no answer in the higher minds of Shakespeare's day, pressed for an answer not only from noble and scholar but from farmer and shopkeeper in the age that followed him.[116]

In 1655 the Quaker missionary Alexander Parker, wrote: "A great shatter is among all the forms and gathered churches...and many are enquiring after the truth."[117] Grant states that Gnosticism has roots in similar decisive moments in history.[118]

Gwyn compares the Puritan atmosphere to the modern apocalyptic environment of 1960s United States of America with its " great expectations and crashing disappointments."[119] Similarly, Grant applies social-psychological criteria in comparing the Plains Indians of nineteenth century United States to the Gnostics of the second century A.D. He concludes:

> when their [Jewish] warfare failed, the traditional culture became inadequate..[with consequential] social maladjustment.., questioning of custom, social unrest, increased non-conformity, breakdown of social control and personality maladjustment.[120]

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115 NJ: 48, 74, 122,190, 235-237.
116 Green, J.R. *Short History of the English People*, chap VIII. London:Macmillan, 1878., passage referred to by Braithwaite, W.C in *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 1.
117 Barclay, A.R. ed., *Letters of Early Friends*. London: Harvey and Darton, 1841:30.
118 Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, 34.
119 Dandelion, Gwyn, Peat, *Heaven on Earth*, 144.
120 Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, 34 -35.

Arising from the breakdown in traditional structures and expectations is the nature and extent of the divine knowledge and revelation that are characteristics of gnosis and apocalypticism. Stone[121] states that apocalypticism assumes extraordinary means of obtaining knowledge in order to become redeemed. These include the individual spirit ascending to heaven in order to attain knowledge that anticipates, and even presupposes the person's redemption. This is identical to the advanced experiential and paradisiacal state of knowledge acquired by Fox, illustrated throughout this thesis and in particular, 2.2.1, 3.5 below. Knowledge and redemption become inextricably interdependent.

This section and section 1.2 illustrate similarities in the formative visionary experiences of Fox and Valentinus, and in both the psychological arguments concerning the validity of those experiences and the significant aspect of the apocalyptic environment in which both Foxian and Valentinian theologies arose. The following section will examine how John Owen correctly identified those movements as having a parallel impact in their respective historical settings, resulting in similar theologies.

Owen's comparison is of Gnosticism (including Valentinian Gnosticism) with Quaker theology generally. The thesis question (1.0) relates to the theology of George Fox specifically, but Owen's comparison remains applicable: "Fox was the mirror which reflected what early Quakerism was and his immutability enables us to assess what Quakerism became."[122] Whereas Owen was unique in making the comparison with early Church Gnostics, the following section identifies those aspects of Foxian theology which Owen and Quaker opponents generally, argued as illegitimate.

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[121] Stone, M.E. "Apocalyptic Literature", in M.E. Stone, ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period.* Philadelphia: Fortress , 1984:383-441.
[122] Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 225.

1.4 JOHN OWEN AND THE QUAKER/GNOSTIC LINK

The question of any similarities in George Fox's theological message with that of Gnosticism and gnosis arises not least from the observations made in 1655 and 1679 by the "most extensive and incisive"[123] of Puritan opponents of Quaker theology, John Owen.[124]

Referring to Eph.4:13 in the context of preserving the foundation of the gospel, Owen stated in 1655:

> ...and continual oppositions have there been made thereto, and will be, till we are all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...In this work of building are some employed by Jesus Christ, and will be so to the end of the world...but some of them build on this foundation gold, silver and precious stones, keeping fast in the work to the form of wholesome words and contending for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints.
> Others, again, lay on "wood, hay and stubble," either contending about "foolish questions," or "vain and unprofitable janglings," or adding to what God hath commanded, or corrupting and perverting what he hath revealed and instituted, contrary to the proportion of faith, which should be the rule of all their prophecy, whereby they discharge their duty of building in this house. Those with whom I am present to deal, and concerning whom I desire to tender you the ensuing account, are of the latter sort; such as, not content, with others, to attempt sundry parts of the building, to weaken its contexture, or deface its comeliness, do with all their might set themselves against the work [rock?] itself, the great foundation and

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123 Gwyn, *Apocalypse,* 84.

124 *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 26, Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1997:216., states of Owen: "the Independent clergyman John Owen guided the religious settlement under Cromwell... the Commonwealth in which parish churches were led by men of Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist or other opinions...he [Owen] was an advocate of Congregationalism and an aide to Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector of England from 1653-1658."
The Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XLII, Lee, S., ed., London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1895:424 states: " On 8th March 1649 Owen was appointed preacher to The Council of State...On 15.6.1652 Cromwell [the Chancellor of Oxford University] placed him [Owen] with the Board of Visitors...following nominating him Vice Chancellor and on 16th October, put the Chancellorship in commission and made Owen first Commissioner. About the same time [Owen] was placed on the Commission for licensing translations of the Bible, and on 23.3.1653, on that for approving public preachers.", and at p.427: " Owen ranks with Baxter and Howe among the most eminent of Puritan divines."
Braithwaite, W. C. in *The Beginnings of Quakerism*. London: Macmillan, 1912:288, refers to Owen as "a man of rare force of character, high in Cromwell's confidence..."

corner-stone of the church, the Lord Jesus, who is "God blessed for ever." They are those I say whom I would warn you of , in who, of old and of late, the spirit of error has set up itself which such an efficacy of pride and delusion, as, by all ways means [and] devices imaginable, to despoil our dear and blessed Redeemer, our Holy One, of his "eternal power and God-head;" or to reject the eternal Son of God, and to substitute in his room a Christ of their own, one like themselves and no more; to adulterate the church, and turn aside the saints to a thing of naught.[125]

Owen proceeded in the same tract (as illustrated below) to identify those holders of anti-Trinitarian beliefs to which he is referring in the passage above; the Gnostics and Valentinians, the Ebionites and Socinians (who denied the deity of Christ viewed as a mere human) and thirdly, those who dispoil Christ of his eternal power and Godhead (the Arians). There are three dominant themes included in the above passage to which Owen objects:

a) the present contention over a faith once delivered unto the saints;

b) the devaluation of scriptural authority and Christ as revealed in Scripture, by the addition of uncontrolled revelatory activity substituted in error as the authentic Christ;

c) the arrogance of those who believe in (a) and (b), resulting in an attack on the authority of the Puritan, established Church.

As illustrated in Chapter 3, Fox interprets Eph.4:13 as corroborating the possibility of immediate perfection and sainthood to be experienced on earth. Owen interprets the unity and perfection of Eph.4:13 as an eschatological impossibility in this life, accusing early Quakers and Gnostics

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125 *"Vindiciae Evangelicae or The Mystery of the Gospel Vindicated and Socinianism Examined...To the Right Honourable the Council of State and to His Highness the ensuing Vindication of the Glory and Doctrine of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, written upon their command..."* Oxford, 1655. The paper concerned a refutation of the Socinian religion in which the deity of God, the Father and Son was disputed, and appears in Owen, J. *Works*, Goold, W., ed., Vol. 12, London/Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1853:1-638.

of heresy in believing in the possibility of a universal sainthood and perfection in the present. Points (a)-(c) above, relate to a belief by the individual that they are identifiable with the divine as a result of revelatory activity, a fundamental soteriological aim of the Gnostics (1.1, 2.2-2.2.1).

Pursuing the theme of anti-Trinitarian beliefs, further in the tract of 1655 Owen perceived early Quakers as agents of Satan, stating:

> all to be watchful against this great, and I hope the last considerable attempt of Satan (by way of seduction and temptation) against the foundation of the gospel.
> Those then, who of old opposed the doctrine of the Trinity, especially of the Deity of Christ, his person and natures...to be those who are commonly esteemed to be followers of Simon Magus, known chiefly by the names of Gnostics and Valentinians. These, with their abominable figments of aeons, and their combinations, conjugations, genealogies, and unintelligible imaginations, wholly overthrowing the whole revelation of God concerning himself and his will, the Lord Jesus and the gospel, chiefly, with their leaders, Marcus, Basilides, Ptolemaeus, Valentinus secundus (all following or imitating Simon Magus and Menander), of all others most perplexed and infected the primitive church...To these may be added Tatianus, Cerdo, Marcion, and their companions...I shall not separate from them Montanus, with his enthusiastical formal associates; in whose abominations it was hoped that these latter days might have been unconcerned, until the present madness of some, commonly called Quakers, renewed their follies, but these may pass (with the Manichees) and those of the like fond imaginations, that ever and anon troubled the church with their madness and folly.[126]

Whilst Owen does not in this passage explicitly identify Quaker theology with that of the Gnostics (he made a comparison with the spiritualists and Enthusiasts of Montanus) the later treatise of 1679 (below) justifies this thesis' hypothesis that Owen ultimately identified Quaker theology with that of the Gnostics and Valentinians.[127]

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[126] Owen. J. *Works*, Vol.12, 11-12.

[127] Owen did this by comparing Quaker "revelation" with ideas of gnosis. It is the concept of "gnosis" that Owen focused upon. The thesis does not make a detailed comparison of Fox's Quakerism and the mythology of Valentinianism or of Gnostic mythology in general.

Owen in 1679 began by implicitly reiterating the view that Quakers were renewing Gnostic theology:

> The second way whereby Satan attempted the same end, and yet continueth so to do, was by pernicious errors and heresies. For all the heresies wherewith the church was assaulted and pestered for some centuries of years, were oppositions unto their faith in the person of Christ. I shall briefly reflect on the heads of this opposition, because they [anti-Trinitarians] are now, after a revolution of so many ages, lifting up themselves again, though under new vizards and pretences[a reference to Quakers]...
>
> That which introduced other doctrines and notions of divine things, absolutely exclusive of the person and mediation of Christ. Such was that of the Gnostics, begun as it is supposed by Simon the magician...Christ was such an emanation of light and knowledge in them as made them perfect – that is, it took away all differences of good and evil, and gave them liberty to do what they pleased, without sense of sin, or danger of punishment. This was the first way that Satan tempted the faith of the church, viz., by substituting a perfecting light and knowledge in the room of the person of Christ.[128]

Elsewhere, Owen complained that Quaker Light had no real power to mortify sin, and that Quakers suffered from a "pleasing dream of perfection."[129] The clarification of 1679 expanded the generalised earlier observations without deviation from his central criticism concerning the Quaker and Gnostic emphasis upon Christ experienced by revelation alone and the alleged subsequent saint-like divinity of the recipient. Significantly (in relation to later metaphysical analysis, 2.8.1) Owen views the Quaker concept of Light as that of emanation.[130] Light, Owen suggests, devalues not only the historical person of Christ but the difference between good and evil

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[128] Owen, J. *Works*, Goold W., ed., Vol. 1, London/Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850:38.
[129] Owen, J. *Works*, Goold W., ed., Vol. 3, London/Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1853:556.
[130] *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 381., defines "emanation" as: "something that emanates from a source (esp. of virtues, qualities)."

in conduct, a life without fear of sin and punishment. In essence, Owen in 1655 and further in 1679 accuses Quakers of substituting a different source of revelation from that in Scripture. Other opponents of Fox and early Quakers criticised specific theological characteristics without making a connection between those characteristics and Gnosticism (below, 1.5.1-2). Owen's comments relate to the recurring Puritan query as to the nature of the Quaker means of revelation and the principle of a universally available saving "Light,"[131] and its relation to the Trinity. Owen asserted that the revelatory activity or Light as interpreted by Quakers, devalued if not negated the Trinity and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and the authority of Scripture. As Creasey confirms in relation to Puritan criticism and Quaker universalism:

> contemporary orthodoxy tended to confine the activity of the spirit of Christ to those who possessed [through Scripture] the knowledge of the life and teaching, death and resurrection of Christ. Quakers were different.[132]

The view of Owen and contemporary Puritanism was that, according to Davies:

> all men were imbued with a degree of natural light as part of God's creation, but that this was of itself insufficient to guarantee salvation. After the Fall man was so mired in sin as to be unable to discern the will of God. When redemption was delivered it was through the supernatural workings of the Spirit, whose latent presence was drawn out through study of the Bible. Spirit and Bible together could deliver salvation but even then only partially: that outcome lay in the hands of God, not man.[133] Opponents said that the Quakers' errors derived

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[131] Hereinafter, the capitalised use of "Light" will refer to Quaker use of the term as distinguished from the Puritan or any other use which shall be identified as "light", unless the term is specified otherwise as part of a quotation.

[132] Creasey, M. "Early Quaker Christology: With Special Reference to the Teaching and Significance of Isaac Pennington 1616-1679." Ph.D dissertation: University of Leeds, 1956:115.

[133] Nuttall, G.F. The *Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946:20-30, 160-2. Reprinted with new introduction by Lake, P., Chicago: University Press, 1992.

from their failure to distinguish between the natural and the divine light. Quakers argued that since mankind was partially saved, only obedience to the inner light was needed to bring this seed to fruition. The proposition shocked many, for its implication was that pagans, heathens, and even Turks might be saved even though they possessed no knowledge of the scriptures or Christ. Worse, it was objected by some that under this doctrine even those who were sinners might be redeemed.[134]

Benson notes this difference in the nature of the early Quaker theology as representing freedom from the constraints of Puritan orthodoxy:

> The Quaker revolt appeared as a twofold thrust against two elements in the prevailing form of Christianity that were preventing men from experiencing the full power of God to save through Christ. First, it was a revolt against a form of the Gospel that gave Christ less power to save from sin than God intended and left the evil power in man undefeated. Second, it was a revolt against a view of the church as a "mixed multitude", composed of the righteous and the unrighteous...Fox expected that this revolt would produce a new kind of Christian and a new kind of church...[135]

It is the possibility of salvation through an unmediated divine spirit (as witnessed by Quakers and Gnostics) to which Owen objected and for which Quakers and Gnostics were persecuted. In relation to the universal approach to spirituality, Perkins states:

> resistance to ecclesiastical pressure led some Gnostics to insist on more universal access to the divine than was being permitted by the new move to draw boundaries and to cut down on the fluidity of Christian tradition...[136]

Owen's observations responded to a similar attack (as he saw it), upon ecclesiastical authority in his own time (and ongoing since the time of the early Church) in which the historical revelation of Christ and the Gospel is

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[134] Davies, A.T. *The Quakers in English Society, 1655-1725*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2000:16.
[135] Benson, L. *A Revolutionary Gospel.* Philadelphia: Tract Association of Friends, 1974:11.
[136] Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue*, 203.

undermined by "unintelligible [i.e. by implication, inauthentic] imaginations" in the form of Gnostic revelation (i.e., gnosis) .

Characteristic of the attack upon ecclesiastical authority is the devaluation of the "person and natures" of Christ, i.e., the human and historic incarnation of Jesus. Owen asserted that Quaker and Gnostic theologies substituted for Christ a perfecting Light and knowledge (i.e., gnosis) which denied the significance of Scripture, the historical Jesus and by implication, the Trinity.

1.5 OWEN'S VIEW OF QUAKER "LIGHT"

In the 1658 treatise *De Lumine Interno*, the fourth Exercise of *Pro Sacris Scripturis Adversus Hujus Temporis Fanaticos,*[137] Owen views the "Light" referred to by Quakers (which Quakers assert can save without Scripture) as a faint "blinking light"[138] arising from natural conscience and involved merely with mental activity (namely reason and emotion). Owen[139] (in an exclusive rather than inclusive interpretation of John 1:9) believed that the authentic light of Christ is received and understood (limited to those whom Christ chooses to save) through the workings of both Scripture and the revelation of the Holy Spirit. This is a fundamental difference from the position of Fox who emphasised an identical saving Light or spirit to that of the apostles/prophets, i.e., the same Light of Christ could save all those living before and after the incarnation:

> The lord had said unto me, If but one man or woman were raised by his power, to stand and live in the same spirit that the prophets and apostles were in who gave forth the scriptures, that man or woman

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[137] Owen, J. *Works*, Goold, W. ed., Vol. 16, London/Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1853:426-476.
[138] Ibid., Section XVI.
[139] Ibid., Section XXV.

should shake all the country in their profession for ten miles round.[140]

Elsewhere:

none are successors to the Prophets and Apostles, but who succeed them in the same power and Holy Ghost that they were in.[141]

As Gwyn notes:

> Fox rejects the standard Puritan belief that the prophets and apostles, as writers of scripture, received an extraordinary inspiration, in contrast to the ordinary inspiration in subsequent times. His repeated claim for the Quaker movement is that it is in the same Spirit and power that the prophets and apostles were in.[142]

Section 4.2 below, suggests that this view of Fox (that those prior to and after the incarnation can be saved) has important implications regarding the significance of the historical incarnation in Fox's theology, with a similar devaluation of history within Gnosticism. As Puech states:

> It would be inaccurate to say that Gnostic salvation , though intrinsically atemporal both in its object and in its effects, is wholly exempt from temporal conditions. But where time does enter in, its role is reduced to a minimum and the tendency is to annul it...Yet in so far as the inner revelation has to be awakened or reawakened by a Revealer, Salvation depends on a Saviour who intervenes in time. But the Gnostic attaches no importance to the historical aspect of this intervention.[143]

Conversely, Owen[144] believed that the saving light of Christ only enlightens those chosen by Christ who live subsequent to the incarnation. In emphasising conscience and mental activity, Owen failed to appreciate the pivotal experiential aspect of Christ as a redeemer figure, upon which Valentinian gnosis and the Quaker concept of "Light" is dependent.

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140 *Works:*1:140.
141 Ibid., 2:169.
142 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 87.
143 Puech, "Gnosis and Time", 80.
144 Owen, J. *Works*, Vol. 16, Section XXV:426-476.

Fox and early Quakers insisted that the Light they experienced was the authentic Light of Christ and not simply an undefined and unspecified divine illumination. Creasey confirms the Christian context of Quaker theology by stating that:

> the early Quakers were in the Seventeenth Century, feeling after an interpretation of Christ which was then very far from being widely shared, - indeed, was regarded with deep suspicion and horror as being destructive of all the fundamentals of the Christian faith.[145]

Owen correctly perceived the Quaker threat to the orthodox Church as comparable to that of the Valentinians at the time of the early Church (section 1.3 above). According to Pagels,[146] Gnostics conversely portrayed the orthodox (through their Christian Gnostic mythology) as agents of evil, using the demiurge (or creator God) and its archons, as ciphers for the orthodox bishops.

The above analysis and context of Owen's 1655/1679 criticism of early Quaker theology can now be summarised, from which a framework is provided for the subject matter of chapters within this thesis. Owen argues that Gnostics/Quakers claimed:

- an anti-historical emphasis as a result of the authority attached to gnosis obtained by revelation (1.5.1).
- a resultant spiritual reunion with Christ/divinising perfection claimed by the individual further to receipt of gnosis through revelation (1.5.2).
- a devaluation of the authority of Scripture (1.5.3).

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145 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 375.
146 Pagels, E. "The Demiurge and His Archons - A Gnostic view of the Bishop and Presbyters?" *HTR* 69 (1976):301-24.

Owen's interpretation of Gnostic theology (which although non-explicit, emphasises revelatory gnosis) includes these characteristics. Following the above analysis of Owen's criticism and by way of explaining the chapter structure in this thesis, Valentinian gnosis is defined as :

> an individual's realisation, arising from revelatory knowledge and spiritual baptism (received in a Christian context from the redeemer figure of Christ) that a divine ontological component exists within the human body which needs to reunite with a consubstantial eternal heavenly Light/Christ. The soteriological and eschatological implications arising from Valentinian gnosis are:

1. supernatural reunion of the divine element in the individual with Christ (chapter 2) awakening the individual to their divinity, resulting in spiritual perfection and freedom from the power and temptation of sin on earth (chapter 3);

2. the consequential devaluation of calendrical time/events (as significant aspects of theological exegesis) in pursuance of an anti-cosmic/historical emphasis upon inward revelation, thus limiting the authority of a) Scripture and b) communion and baptism to the extent that they are historically particular outward rituals (chapter 4).

Owen's criticisms of Valentinianism and Quaker theology are considered in the following sections and expanded upon in later chapters.

1.5.1 ANTI-HISTORICAL EVENTS AND REVELATION

The 1655 passages of Owen (1.4) accuse Quakers and Gnostics of essentially devaluing the historic and eternal Christ as revealed in Scripture and the institution of the Church, by the emphasis they place upon revelatory Light. It is the claimed supremacy and authority of immediate revelation over Gospel truths revealed in Scripture to which Owen objects.

Owen's contemporary Henry More states of Quaker "Light" theology that: "the inward following of the light often seems to exclude, or at least neglect, all that advantage that accrues from the history of Christ, and in this

they [Quakers] antiquate the Christian Religion."[147] More suggests that the immediacy of Light and revelation means that Quakers reduced the significance of the incarnation and devalue that "knowledge of God which is given in reason, in conscience and nature."[148]

Unlike Owen, More does not view Quaker Light as incorporating reason, conscience and nature, but criticises the immediacy of inward revelation in the absence of a scriptural guide. The immediacy of revelation has important eschatological consequences as far as the spiritual state of the individual is concerned, including states of sinlessness, perfection and divine union which More argues the Quakers claimed in error (Chapter 3).

1.5.2 PERFECTION

Perfection for Owen has predominantly moral and ethical repercussions in relation to sin which this thesis analyses in Chapters 2 and 3 (2.7, 3.1-3.5). Briefly stated here, the criticism of licentious activity arising from perfection is replicated within anti-Gnostic rhetoric, a view weakened with a current greater knowledge of Gnosticism. Wink summarises the position:

> It was once popular to infer from their antipathy to life in the flesh that they [the Gnostics] became either ascetics fighting bodily passions, or libertines indulging themselves in every form of licentiousness, since the body is irrelevant to the spirit's salvation. It is now clear that such a view is an oversimplification. Gnostics were probably indistinguishable in most cases from orthodox Christians, with some celibate and ascetic, others married and continent, others married and producing families, and a tiny fraction experimenting sexually and communally.[149]

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[147] More, H. *Divine Dialogues*, Vol. 8, London: James Flesher, 1668: section C.xii, 287f.
[148] Ibid., Vol. 3: sect. C.ix, 53.
[149] Wink, W. *Cracking the Gnostic Code: The Powers in Gnosticism.* Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993:41.

A leading critic of the Quakers, Richard Baxter, cited the Quaker claim to perfection as an example of excessive pride, remarking that "the devil himself has either less pride or less ignorance."[150] Quakers and Gnostics are thus criticised in their own respective historical settings for their perfectionism and their claim of authentic and immediate revelatory experiences - essentially, they are considered arrogant.

The anti-historical emphasis upon the immediacy of revelation questions the authority of pre-conceived spiritual guidance in the form of text (such as Scripture) and moreover the authority of external practices. This includes those based on the recognition and remembrance of an historical event such as the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (such as the Eucharist and baptism).

1.5.3 SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

Owen believed in the supremacy of Scripture as guide and authority over revelation. He viewed the primacy of authority attached to revelation as promoting the idea of freedom from sin and temptation, stating in 1682:

> But when anyone shall pretend unto spiritual actings or enjoyments which are neither prescribed nor promised in the Scripture, nor are investigable in the light of reason, no man is upon this mere profession obliged to give credit thereunto;- nor can any man tell what evil effects or consequences his so doing may produce; for when men are once taken off from that sure ground of Scripture and their own understandings, putting themselves afloat on the uncertain waters of fancies or conjectures, they know not how they may be tossed, nor whither they may be driven. If it shall be said that the holiness and honesty of the persons by whom these especial privileges are enjoyed are sufficient reason why we should believe them in what they profess, I answer, they would be so in a good measure if they did not pretend unto things repugnant unto reason and unwarranted by the Scripture; nor can their holiness and honesty be proved to be such as

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[150] Baxter, R. *The Quakers Catechism*, London: N.p., 1655.

> to render them to be absolutely impregnable against all temptations, which was the pre-eminence of Christ alone.[151]

The freedom from the constraints of Scripture and from temptation/sin on the basis of an individual becoming "impregnable", forms the basis of a key accusation made against both Quakers and Valentinians. They promoted spiritual and Christ-like perfection as possible whilst living on this earth. Owen did not believe this was valid theology.

1.5.4 SUMMATION OF OWEN'S VIEWS

The elements detailed in the subsections 1.5.1 -1.5.3 are inherent characteristics of Valentinian Christian Gnosticism. Whilst not specifically referring to gnosis but rather to Gnostics, Owen emphasises these aspects of revelation and gnosis in observing similarities in Quaker and Christian Valentinian Gnostic theology regarding the concept of a perfecting Light. Owen views these elements as characteristic of an emphasis upon revelatory activity to the exclusion of ecclesiastical authority and the Gospel foundation. In a broader context, Owen is objecting to characteristics of a belief held by Quakers and Valentinians as to the universality of, and freedom of access to, a saving and perfecting Light beyond the revelation in Scripture.

Having examined what Owen has said about the connection between Quakers and Christian Gnostics, the following section will explore references to such a relationship made in contemporary research.

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[151] Owen, J. *Works*, Vol. 4, 333.

1.6 PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND FOXIAN THEOLOGY

This section identifies within current scholarship:

1.6.1: Explicit references to the theology of Fox and a connection (justified or not) with Gnostic theology generally, and

1.6.2: Contemporary research that identifies aspects of Fox's theology which (this thesis suggests) are characteristics of Valentinian Gnosticism.

1.6.1 EXPLICIT REFERENCES TO FOX AND GNOSTIC THEOLOGY

Theological connections have been made between Fox/early Quakers and Gnosticism, without detailed elaboration. Seven researchers into early Quakerism have been discovered to have made an explicit connection: contemporary scholarship includes references by Bailey, Gwyn, Ingle, Samuel, Walker and Brooks-Saxl. Additionally, Creasey in the 1950s observed that Owen (1.4) recognised a "revived Gnosticism"[152] in early Quakerism: "at worst a Satanic delusion - at its best, a high flying gnosticism - attracting unstable souls by its claim to be a 'purely spiritual' religion."[153]

Bailey identifies Owen's charge of an anti-historical tendency in Quakerism, suggesting Owen "spoke of Gnostic tendencies in Quakerism with reference to their replacing the historic Christ with the inner light."[154] Moreover, Bailey suggests that Fox:

> could not have read the Gnostics since their works lay buried from the 4th Century...but quite unconsciously of Gnosticism, this idea cropped

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[152] Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 157.
[153] Ibid., 158.
[154] Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, xii. Bailey refers to Owen's *Works*, 1850, Vol. 1: 38.; 1852, Vol. 4: 331.

> up in Fox as it did from time to time like spring water bubbling beneath the surface of human experience.[155]

Bailey's conclusions are analysed later (3.5, 5.2) but in summation, the "idea" is that "like some ancient Gnostics, Fox stressed unity and identity with the divine rather than distinctiveness from the divine."[156]

There is no evidence that Fox drew or rejected comparisons between Quakerism and gnosis, Gnosticism or Gnostics. Further, whilst there is no evidence that Fox read the early Church commentators critique of Gnosticism, Bailey fails to recognise this even as a possibility, or that Fox may have read Owen's above account of Gnosticism and its comparison with Quakers. There is however, no evidence of a written response by Fox to Owen's accusations.

Gwyn[157] suggests that Fox never responded in writing to Owen's comparison as the claims Owen made were written in Latin. A more likely explanation is that Fox (unlike some early Quaker scholars[158]) was not sufficiently aware of matters such as gnosis and patristic arguments regarding Gnosticism, to enable him to produce a response to Owen directly or by dictation.

Ingle refers to Fox's theology as "a kind of gnosticism in which Jesus' outward humanity paled into insignificance before the divine and indwelling Christ."[159] Such undetailed references amount to no more than accusations of docetism,[160] involving an eternal transcendent spirit devoid of any

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155 Ibid., xii.
156 Ibid.
157 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 87.
158 Whilst making no specific reference to Owen's 1655 comparison of Quakers with Gnosticism, Samuel Fisher in *Rusticus ad Academicos*, London: N.p., 1660 is noteworthy for the extent of his detailed refutation of Owen's criticism of the Quaker theology of Light and inspiration contained in the addendum to Owen's paper "*Of the Divine Origin, Authority, Self Evidencing Light and Power of the Scriptures*", London: N.p., 1659.
159 Ingle, H. L. *First Among Friends - George Fox and the Creation of Quakerism*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1994:112-113.
160 Creasey in "Early Quaker Christology", 318., quotes Edward Grubb on docetism and the

structure or framework (an accusation easily applicable to other beliefs and philosophies as to Gnostic ones).

The "Quaker personal perception of truth" has been suggested by Samuel as "comparable [with gnosis] save for elaborate Gnostic cosmology where it exists."[161] Samuel seemingly views a Gnostic connection with Quakerism purely on the grounds of subjective revelatory experiential behaviour. This observation is too ambiguous for detailed analysis and the "personal perception" criteria fails to acknowledge the essential nature of experiential divine knowledge within the gnosis examined in this thesis (2.2.1) and noted by Owen (1.4).

Walker[162] refers to the message of Fox as containing "strong Gnostic elements" but fails to itemise or clarify these elements. Brooks-Saxl[163] has more extensively examined similarities between Gnostic dualism and an alleged animism[164] of early Quakers in the devaluing of the historic Christ. Brooks-Saxl believes that (as in Gnosticism, 2.2.1) Quakers can experience personal resurrection in this life in their worship. However, there is no evidence for the conclusion that early Quakerism was based on Gnostic dualism, which Brooks-Saxl limits to a simplistic distinction between the spiritual and the physical. In addition, Brooks-Saxl fails to acknowledge within Fox's theology, the corroborative role of Scripture within a Christian framework, incorporating a process of perfection leading to deification of the individual rather than mere spiritual development.

Quaker Light doctrine: "it has some kinship with the Docetic doctrines of the early Christian centuries with their sharp separation between spirit and matter, to the detriment of the latter."

[161] Samuel, A. E. "How Many Gnostics?" *Bulletin of American Society of Papyrologists.* 22 (1985): 297-322.

[162] Walker, B. *Gnosticism - its History and Influence.* Wellingborough: Aquarium Press, 1983:186.

[163] Brooks-Saxl, D. "Gnostic Dualism as a Means of Explaining the Quaker Experience," in *Dualism: Immanence & Transcendence in Quaker Theology.* Birmingham: The Quaker Theology Seminar (May 1999):55-65.

[164] Brooks-Saxl states in this regard, ibid., pp. 59-60: "early Quakers...saw Jesus as immanent and transcendent and moved away from the historical Jesus. They discovered the light within, as an immanent force coming into the individual - which brings us into the realms of animism."

In summation therefore, contemporary references to a theological connection between Fox and Gnostics are rare and inadequate for any detailed response. There is no prior research that refers to Foxian theology and that of Valentinian Gnosticism. Previous research has failed to explore the general observations made by Owen.

1.6.2 RESEARCH IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS OF VALENTINIAN GNOSTICISM IN FOXIAN THEOLOGY

This section identifies research which emphasises aspects of Fox's theology (which this thesis argues, stress the three main characteristics objected to by Owen in his comparison with gnosis) which are aspects of Valentinian Gnosticism; a) the authority and emphasis attached to revelation b) the ambition of spiritual perfection whilst on earth, c) the devaluing of Scripture and the external aspects of communion and baptism.

A) REVELATION

The immediate realisation of eschatological aims as a result of revelation has been analysed in terms of the apocalyptic element in or the revolutionary nature of Fox's message. Gwyn,[165] in following the pioneering work of Benson,[166] recognises a revolutionary and apocalyptic nature to the message of Fox who preaches "Christ [or God] is come to teach his people himself."[167] The concept that Christ had and would continue to come by revelation in order to perfect individuals whilst living, illustrates the innovative character of Foxian theology.

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165 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, generally.
166 Benson, L. *Catholic Quakerism: A Vision for all Men*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1968.
167 *Works*:1:139.

Ingle[168] states that Gwyn and Benson interpret the apocalyptic nature of Fox's theology too narrowly, in relying upon an eschatological component yet avoiding incorporation of any millenarian and historical analysis of the social, political and economic milieu. Such an historical perspective has led Hill[169] and Reay[170] for example, to conclude that (independent of theological concerns) the historical context led to the development of Quaker practices which were perceived as threatening the existence of the State and the stability of the social order. Gwyn[171] claims that the historians are similarly at fault in failing to consider theological analysis in drawing their conclusions.

Regardless of the debate between historical and theological analysis, there has been notable contemporary[172] interest in the distinctive nature of Fox's theology in contrast to Puritanism and the theology of other early Quakers. This research is inherently related to this thesis' argument that Valentinian gnosis is similar to Quaker revelation and the realised eschatology achievable through the Quaker concept of Light. Ingle claims that Quaker theologians have "been at pains to present to the public a definition of [early Quaker] faith that would not cast them or it in a bad light."[173] Ingle states that Fox had a "hidden faith"[174], broadly illustrated in terms of Fox's claims to divinity or God-possession, which theologians have sought to

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168 Ingle, H.L. "On The Folly of Seeking the Quaker Holy Grail." *QRT* 25/1 (1991):24.
169 Hill, C. *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986.
170 Reay, B. *The Quakers and the English Revolution.* London: Temple Smith, 1985.
171 Gwyn, D. "Response", in *QRT* 25/1 (1991):31-33.
172 Ingle, "On The Folly ", 17-29 and "George Fox as Enthusiast : An Unpublished Epistle." JFHS 55/8, 2 (1989): 264 -270; Bailey, *New Light on George Fox;* Tarter, M. L. *Sites of Performance: Theorizing the History of Sexuality in the Lives and Writing of Quaker Women 1650-1800.* University of Colorado at Boulder: University Microfilms International, 1993 and "Quaking in the Light: The Politics of Quaker Women's Corporeal Prophecy in the Seventeenth-Century Transatlantic World", in Lindman, J.M. and Tarter, M.L. eds., *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America*, . Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001:145-162; Moore, "The Faith of the First Quakers" and *The Light in Their Consciences.*
173 Ingle, "On the Folly ", 17.
174 Ingle, "George Fox as Enthusiast", 265.

exclude from any definition of early Quaker faith (5.2). This thesis identifies the hidden faith as that unity with God (2.7-2.8) and perfectionism (Chapter 3) resulting in a theology remarkably similar to that of the Valentinians.

Smith[175] suggests that the state of perfection and consequent denial of the carnal, ego or "self", by way of total subordination to the "Light" within was a mystical negation quite peculiar to the Quakers in its extremity. It is this "Light" that Owen (1.4-5) suggested was substituted by Quakers and Gnostics for Christ; that Christ was such an emanation of light and knowledge in the Quaker that Quakers believed they were spiritually perfect and free of sin.

B) PERFECTION

Whilst agreeing with Gwyn's interpretation of Fox's eschatological belief (A, above) Wilcox[176] states that the perfectionist claims of Fox are better understood (within the context of the early Quaker sense of a realised eschatology, 2.2.1) on the basis that :

> Christ had purged them not only from individual sinful acts, but that he had brought them into a higher state than that of Adam before the fall...Their understanding of perfection was not based on an ethical code, so much as on the conviction that they were living the life of the age to come here and now.[177]

Current research, whilst acknowledging an apocalyptic element in Fox's theology, has interpreted the perfectionism of Fox (and indeed, the function of Light) narrowly in terms of ethical conduct and righteousness with moral or works-based consequences. The thesis will illustrate that Fox's

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[175] Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640-1660.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989: 66.
[176] Wilcox, C. *Theology and Women's Ministry in Seventeenth Century English Quakerism: Handmaids of the Lord.* Lampeter: Edward Mellen Press, 1995:14fn.19.
[177] Ibid., 247.

perfectionism related additionally to the attainment of a divine and Christ-like state as a prerequisite to secondary and consequential moral and ethical conduct (3.4-5).

Damrosch suggests that in relation to spiritual perfection, Fox had adopted a literal interpretation of Christ's command "Be ye perfect, therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt.5:48), which was "the most offensive of Quaker positions to the Puritan opposition."[178]

Moore states that: "some Friends [Quakers] said that perfection was not wholly complete at first"[179] and "Quakers made great use of the concept of one's own 'measure' of the Light or Spirit, and while Fox's 'measure' may have been greater than anyone else's, it was not different in kind."[180] Sections 3.6-3.8 examine this concept of partial or incomplete perfection and a similar belief within gnosis. The thesis illustrates that spiritual "measure" relates to perfection as if it were a sliding-scale in which the individual reaches an adjustable level of divinity up to the fullness of Christ, a concept which is metaphysical in nature yet retains ethical considerations (a view also illustrated within gnosis).

In addition to the perfectionism of early Friends, Moore suggests that the "earliest Quaker teaching was mainly concerned with direct union with Christ or with God, expressed in terms of the body of Christ or of divine Sonship, or of divine indwelling."[181] This was not just a vague sense of undefined spiritual unity; body and spirit together were one with Christ.[182]

Wilcox[183] also emphasises the early Quaker sense of a spiritual unity with Christ which was all important to attain the state of perfect

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178 Damrosch, L. *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Naylor and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996:97.
179 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 79.
180 Ibid.,78.
181 Ibid.,77.
182 Ibid.,78.
183 Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry*, 5.

righteousness. Prior to Moore's analysis of this sense of unity, Bailey had argued that:

> the early Quakers followed a Christocentric, immanent theology which stressed ecstatic experience, interpreted as the possession of the inner person by the pre-existent spirit of God - a process resulting in "celestial inhabitation" or the notion that the saints became the flesh and bone of Christ.[184]

Bailey believes that Creasey, Benson and Gwyn recognise the "Christopresentism"[185] (Bailey's term), in Fox's message but fail to acknowledge the celestial adoption or inhabitation theory of Fox - namely, that the inward dwelling Christ literally transformed and perfected the saints in order that they became flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. Bailey's arguments are illustrated in more detail in 3.5, 5.4, below.

A corporeal physical (as opposed to metaphysical and spiritual) transformation in terms of flesh and bone is completely alien to Valentinian Gnostic reunion and perfection. However, in its sense of unity (as in the identification of the divine in the individual with the consubstantial redeemer) what Bailey suggests of Foxian theology is similar to that extent, with Valentinian Gnosticism.

The emphasis within Valentinian gnosis is upon the realisation of the ontological spiritual divine or pneumatic seed within the individual, and a reunion of this divine element with the consubstantial redeemer figure and ultimately, with the heavenly realm from where the divine element originated.

These mechanics are absent from Bailey's interpretation and emphasis upon making the *flesh* holy. Bailey[186] does however, acknowledge Gnosticism within Fox's theology in relation to the nature of the very real

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184 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, ii.
185 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 19.
186 Ibid., iv.

(rather than merely mystical or figurative) union with God, as referred to by Moore, above.

Bailey suggests that what was involved in the early stages of Quakerism was a recrudescence of early Christian charismata, in fact a recrudescence of one aspect fundamental to Gnosticism - that of the divine within. Bailey does however fail to acknowledge that any question of the Quaker theological process leading to divinisation of the flesh is far removed from the Valentinian concept of redemption and rescue of the immediately experienced and consubstantial divine element by way of perfection and reunion. The Gnostic is already divine and is not engaged in a *process* leading to divinity.

Drawing on elements of Bailey's research, Tarter argues that: "Fox's vision threatened the long-standing Christian social order by presenting the flesh as something integral to holiness and divination",[187] and quotes Fox:

> Doth not the Apostles say, the saints were made partakers of the divine nature? and that God dwells in the saints, and Christ is in them...and do not the saints come to eat the flesh of Christ? And if they eat his flesh, is it not within them?[188]

The unity of the divine in the individual with the redeemer, and the extent that God exists within and transforms the Gnostic, relates to the formation, maturity and perfection of the Gnostic divine seed, emphasising the union as a reality rather than an abstract concept.

Bailey[189] asserts that Barclay[190] and Penn[191] "de-divinized" the inner Light through the metaphoric and figurative use of "Light", leading to a

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187 Tarter, *Sites of Performance*, 26.; "Quaking in the Light", 145-162.
188 *Works*: 3:181-2.
189 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 135.
190 *Barclay's Apology in Modern English*, Freiday, D., ed. Philadelphia: Friends Book Store, 1967: 85. First published as *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity*. London: Sowle, 1676.
191 Penn, W. "The New Athenians", in Dunn, M.M., and Dunn, R.S., eds., *A Collection of*

redefinition of the inner Christ and the figurative sense of the union with Christ/God. However, Barclay believed that the seed, light, divine principle or *vehiculum Dei* was spiritually inhabited by the divine presence but it was not Christ, nor was it the glorified Christ's flesh and bone. For Barclay and Penn the divine within was merely a vehicle created and used by God to draw believers to God. This radical re-interpretation of Fox's message will be analysed to illustrate what this thesis terms as, a *de-Gnosticising* of Foxian theology (5.2.).

Moore states that in relation to pp. 92-99 of Bailey's work (which describes the glorification and perfection of the saints as part of the Godhead, the divinity of Fox and the implicit claim by Fox to equality with God) the reality of the union [with God] as expressed by Bailey, is "probably as nearly accurate as it is possible to come."[192]

Moore[193] concludes that Bailey's research stands alone in its initial but incomplete examination of the Quaker concept of unity with God, with Christ or, as the visible focus of the "unity", with Fox himself. This thesis will examine the unity with God relationship in detail (within Chapter 2). The analysis includes a possible non-Christian influence upon Fox, the Gnostic-Hermetic "unity with the creation" which Nuttall[194] linked with Fox in terms of the primordial reality or glory of the first body, an eschatological goal to which Fox was attracted. This thesis argues in 3.4 that Fox (due to the primary authority attached to revelation) may have incorporated unorthodox ideas and language to explain his interpretation of Christianity.

Carter[195] has pursued Fox's use of unity with the creation in the context of the alchemical theme of separation of base material and the vain

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the Works of William Penn, Vol.2, London: J.Sowle, 1726:801.
[192] Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 262fn.9.
[193] Ibid., 78.
[194] Nuttall, G.F. "Unity with the Creation: George Fox and the Hermetic Philosophy," 135fn.3.
[195] Carter, M. "Early Friends and the Alchemy of Perfection." *JFHS* 58/.3:246.

world, by the Light. This division and quest for unity has been explored by Canby Jones[196] in relation to the power of separation as an experience and primary function of the Light.

In summation therefore, Bailey and Tarter adopt a more physical / bodily approach to the process and effect of unity with God. However, the revelatory nature and unifying power of the Light as noted by King[197] is continuing to be examined by contemporary scholars such as Gwyn, Carter and Wilcox (as above) in addition to Ambler,[198] each emphasising the spiritual and practical aspects and function of unity of the Light, which Brooks-Saxl[199] believes can lead to Gnostic personal resurrection.

From the above it can be concluded that recent research into Fox's theology has been directed towards a radically new perspective. This thesis advances scholarship in demonstrating that Fox's theology incorporates principles similar to that used in Christian Valentinian Gnosticism, i.e., in terms of the degree of perfectionism and the quality and nature of the unity sought with God as a result of divine revelation or gnosis.

C) SCRIPTURE AND EXTERNAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNION/BAPTISM

Chapter 4 concentrates upon similarities in the degree of authority attached to Scripture and external rituals within the theologies of Fox and Gnosticism. This thesis suggests that, unlike the direction of present research illustrated in (A) and (B) above, the understanding of Fox's view of sacramental practice is unaffected by contemporary research. Fox's interpretation of baptism according to Pickvance:

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196 Canby Jones, T. *The Power of the Lord is Over All: The Pastoral Letters of George Fox.* Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1989:12.
197 King, R.H. *George Fox and the Light Within 1650-1660.* Philadelphia: Friends Book Store, 1940: 123.
198 Ambler, R. "Experiment with Light", unp. paper delivered at Birmingham, 8.2.1997:9; *Light to live by; Truth of the Heart.*
199 Brooks-Saxl, "Gnostic Dualism", 65.

is emphasizing that water baptism is concerned with the merely physical and outward, whereas the spiritual baptism of Jesus' and the Apostles' teaching is about immersion of our human spirits in the one Spirit...Spirit is a more real substance than water, immersion in the Spirit is an actual event.[200]

Kolp states that if understood in the above manner, Fox and Quakers can argue that sacraments are necessary and that the individual must go through a baptismal/sacramental experience to come to and remain in the Light:

> This does not mean that we have to go down to the River Jordan. It does not even mean that we have to have the water of traditional baptism. It does mean, however, that we have to progress to that place where the Spirit of God descends upon us and where we can hear God's word proclaim that we are sons and daughters of God.[201]

In relation to Scripture however, as a fundamental difference between the theology of Fox and that of the orthodox Church, Bailey[202] suggests that Fox never acknowledges the finality of Scripture. Fox refers to John and other Scripture as the "words"[203] and not Word of God, i.e., that it was possible to give revelation primacy whilst acknowledging that Scripture has an important role.

Moore states that "there could be no contradiction between the Bible and Spirit...and so for all practical purposes the Bible was authoritative."[204] However, the primacy in authority attached by Fox to the interpretative powers of revelation is a significant difference from the position of Owen and the contemporary Church. Moore fails to recognise a fundamental point of

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200 Pickvance, J. *A Distinction Between the Two Baptisms.* Gloucester: George Fox Fund, 1986: 1.
201 Kolp, A. "Friends, Sacraments and Sacramental Living." *QRT* 20/3 (Summer 1984): 48.
202 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox,* 182.
203 *Works:* 2:119.
204 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences,* 52.

principle which separated Fox from his Puritan contemporaries, namely, that Fox sought out, relied upon and interpreted the Bible solely as a corroborative tool and not as a provider of supreme authority.

1.6.3 SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The subject matter of this thesis can be placed within previous scholarship concerning the radical and distinctive nature of Fox's message. Contemporary research has provided brief and undetailed explicit mention of Fox's relationship with Gnosticism, yet current research emphasises those characteristics of gnosis recognised by Owen and analysed herein.

Arising from an apocalyptic environment and theology, Fox's realised eschatology has been identified by research as leading to claims by Fox of divinity or God-possession. Scholarship has examined the spiritual and moral perfectionism arising from such a realised state. Such scholarship includes Fox's consequential claims for union with God which are considered both in a figurative or metaphorical sense as well as a real sense of metaphysical, graphic union in which Christ in various forms, is literally present in the body. Contemporary research into Fox's approach to external ritual and sacramental practice has continued to emphasise the internal spiritualised dimension and the devaluation of external practices made redundant by the revelation in Christ.

1.7 THESIS STRUCTURE

The thesis chapters develop the following arguments:

1.7.1 CHAPTER TWO: REVELATION

The Gnostic revelatory "call" follows Fox's mental state of turmoil and alienation as a "stranger" in the world. Jonas[205] identifies the "call" in Gnosticism as containing doctrinal features of information, promise of redemption and practical guidance. The chapter compares these characteristics with the recorded formative revelations of Fox in 1647 and 1648. Owen has correctly identified a similarity in the principle of experiential revelation within Foxian and Gnostic theologies, which incorporate concepts of perfecting light and knowledge.

Sections 2.2-2.2.1 consider the question of salvation and eschatological completion for the Valentinian whilst on earth, as a matter of nature or grace, a theme which is examined also in the following chapter. Previous research concerning Fox's concept of Light has generally emphasised its nature and function in terms of ethics, morality and the avoidance of sin. Additionally, research identifying an aspect of Light as that producing "unity", has emphasised fellowship and behaviour rather than, as this chapter illustrates, an aspect of metaphysical unity with God that produces or awakens the individual to their divinity. Current scholarship has however included consideration of the literal and physical presence of Christ within the "flesh and bone" of the believer.

The spiritualised aspect of union in Fox's theology is illustrated by Fox's concept of the emanation of the soul. The soul is or contains the nature and disposition of God, a divine element which develops and grows upon receipt of the divine Light/Christ. This concept is seen to incorporate an

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[205] Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 81.

eternal, immortal essence of God in the soul, which is reunited with God/Christ, from where it originated. The process is similar to the metaphysical dynamics of Valentinian soteriology.

The immediacy of Fox's realised eschatology and resurrection (in that Fox does not appear to defer any eschatological component) is in contrast to Valentinianism where the postmortem ascent of the divine element and ultimate reunion with the pleroma is the eschatological completion. Foxian theology is however, identifiable with Valentinianism which emphasises the completion of salvation on earth in preparation for the postmortem ascent and consummation.

1.7.2 CHAPTER THREE: PERFECTION

A consequence of revelation as described above is a Quaker "perfectionism" that Creasey saw as "proclaimed with a conviction and an apparent naiveté that called forth from their opponents some of their strongest denunciations."[206] Owen[207] adopts a criticism of early Quakers that they, like the Christian Gnostics, declared themselves through the workings of the Light to have reached a state of spiritual perfection (and freedom from the power and temptation of sin). Fox[208] employs a universal approach to perfection in which Christ was fully present in any individual that turned to the Light, enabling them to achieve a state as he had, from which they would never fall. An irreversible realised eschatology has been noted as a distinctive characteristic of those movements designated as "Gnostic" by the patristic commentators. However, the traditional, determinist Valentinian approach identified by Irenaeus[209] and Bultmann[210] that the Gnostic was saved by

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206 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 124.
207 Owen, J. *Works*, Vol.12, 12.
208 *Works*: 1:85.
209 Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.6.2f.
210 Bultmann, R. *Theology of the New Testament* Vol.1 tr. K. Grobel, London: SCM, 1952: 168, 174, 178, 181-3.

nature has, in light of the NHL, been revised. The chapter (sections 3.3, 3.6-3.8.) expand upon the views of Schottroff [211](section 2.2: salvation and perfection/eschatology based on grace and free will - the indicative of salvation balanced by an imperative) and that of Pagels[212] (election through grace) with analysis of Logan's[213] examination of *The Apocryphon of John* illustrating its attempt to resolve the tension between these conflicting claims.

In essence, it will be demonstrated that the Valentinian approach to eschatology is more subtle than the traditional view. The process of salvation for the Valentinian Gnostics and those of *The Apocryphon of John*[214] (via classes of souls) is other than automatic even for the pneumatic elite of the Valentinian school. It was capable of being lost/rejected in a similar fashion to that employed by Fox in terms of "measure."

A dualistic interpretation of perfection was identified in the chapter; that which works upon the divine element through union with God, and that which has secondary ethical and moral consequences. As with the analysis of revelation, previous research has incorrectly emphasised the latter over the former.

As an illustration of the graphic representation of perfection by Fox, he employs the concept of "measure", which is capable of increase and decrease as if on a spiritual sliding scale. Additionally, Fox uses non-Christian language, possibly borrowed from Hermetic literature, from which Fox promotes the concept of "unity with the creation" and the "wisdom of the eternal being". These concepts emphasise the state and wisdom of the creator that led to the perfection of Adam and Eve before the Fall, a state of being in which Fox claims to have exceeded.

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211 Schottroff, L. "Animae naturaliter salvandae: zum Problem der himmlischen Herkunft des Gnostikers" in *Christentum und Gnosis* (Beihefte zur ZNW 37) Berlin: 1969:65-97.
212 Pagels, E. "The Valentinian Claim to Esoteric Exegesis of Romans as Basis for Anthropological Theory", *Vigiliae Christianae* 26 (1972): 241-258.
213 Logan, "At-Onement", 481-496.
214 NHC: II, *I.* 27.21-3.

Whilst Fox and the Gnostics proclaimed perfection which led to accusations of licentious behaviour from their respective opponents, Fox and the evidence from the NHL, do not indicate that such behaviour was generally adopted.

1.7.3 CHAPTER FOUR: SCRIPTURE, BAPTISM AND COMMUNION

This chapter examines the consequences of the previous analysis in Chapters 2 and 3, a realised eschatology which necessarily impacts upon the authority attached to Scripture and on sacramental practice. Creasey[215] noted that opponents of Quaker Christology viewed such notions of the inward Light as an example of the rejection of all external authority which need have no connection with any outward or historic revelation, whether as source or criterion. Section 4.2 revisits the views of Schottroff and others in relation to the impact of a realised eschatology and any futuristic component upon ritual and cultic practice.

Both Foxian apocalyptic theology and Christian gnosis incorporate aspects of vertical and horizontal eschatology, i.e., they include an historical perspective in which salvation has to include historical considerations, albeit nominally. In particular, Fox and early Quakers are seen as devaluing the historical Jesus to a point of insignificance.

The established Church for the Gnostic and for Fox, is seen as exercising a restrictive role in its limited interpretation of Scripture and sacramental practice. The role of the Church is viewed by Fox and Gnostics as a barrier to perfection and the potential for unity with God/Light.

Both Fox and Gnostics use Scripture as a significant corroborative tool whilst emphasising the authority attached to the spiritualised and inward, over external text and practices.

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[215] Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 339.

Sacramental practice varies considerably within Gnostic schools of thought, with the Valentinians as the sole school which emphasised degrees of exegesis, albeit from the psychic to the pneumatic. This concept will be illustrated by reference to Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*[216], a Catholic Christian whose faith as a psychic included the necessity of works. The highest levels of exegesis refer to that salvation perceived by both Fox and Valentinians, as that provided by Christ who conveys spirit/Light in a process of perfection and unity. Whereas Valentinian Gnostics viewed lower levels of exegesis as valid interpretations that may progress to higher and more spiritualised exegesis, Fox did not adopt such an approach.

There are specific Gnostic rituals identifiable in Gnostic texts, emphasising the eschatological completion of unity with, and a return to, the Light. In discussing the possibly unique[217] Valentinian sacrament of *Apolutrosis*, Pagels[218] states that this sacrament is a spiritual baptism that perfects and reunites the seed or divine within, with the Pleroma or heaven beyond in a spiritual marriage. Such an internalised rite will be shown as identical to the approach of Fox regarding baptismal and communion practice.

1.7.4 CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Following the theological principles outlined in previous chapters, the individual finds themselves in a state of realised eschatology yet remaining on earth. This chapter considers the tension of the "liminal" movements experiencing such a paradox, and how this dilemma is resolved. For Fox and the Valentinians, such liminality invites the question as to the extent to which

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[216] Epiphanius, *Pan.* 33.31-33.7.10.
[217] Hippolytus of Rome. *Refutatio onmnium haeresium*, ed. P. Wendland, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte (hereinafter cited as GCS) 26 (1916):6,42.; *Adv.haer.* I, 13. I.
[218] Pagels, E. "A Valentinian Interpretation of Baptism and Eucharist - and its Critique of 'Orthodox' Sacramental Theology and Practice." *HTR* 65/2 (April 1972):153.

the believer engages with human institutions in maintaining or promoting eschatological aims on earth.

The tension in the dilemma of passively waiting for final redemption or acting with political institutions, was for Fox, a cause of mental breakdown following (amongst other considerations) the refusal of Parliament to abolish tithes and the maintenance of the priesthood in 1659 - key aspects of Fox's theology. Additionally, Fox was opposed to engaging with politicians and encouraging participation in judicial and political institutions which some leading Quakers promoted. Fox preferred the approach of the Gnostics who relied upon God to transform society. Following this period and the restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, the chapter examines the censorship and/or moderation of the Quaker theology, in particular that which relates to the metaphysical and literal presence of Christ in the individual, and claims of perfection.

The work of this thesis is then considered in the context of current scholarship relating to George Fox. This previous scholarship is seen in two schools of thought; that which emphasises the ethical and moral perspective of Fox's concept of Light, and secondly, that which identifies a supernatural, corporeal or (as argued by this thesis) metaphysical approach to Foxian theology. Fox cannot be termed Gnostic or as having employed gnosis *per se*, due to the terminology established at the outset of the thesis. However, the chapter concludes with a belief that Foxian theology can be described as remarkably similar to Valentinian Gnosticism due to commonly held beliefs in soteriological and eschatological concepts.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Owen was correct in identifying similarities in the theology of Fox and Gnostics, specifically the Valentinian Gnostics identified by Owen. There are three main theological characteristics common to both:

- an anti-historical emphasis as a result of the authority attached to gnosis obtained by revelation,
- the resultant spiritual perfection claimed by the individual after receiving gnosis through revelation.
- the devalued authority of Scripture and the external aspects of communion and baptism.

Owen's comparison of Quakers and Gnostics on these grounds, remains valid for analysis. Current research has failed to fully explore this connection.

The distinctive personal experience of revelation as gnosis and the nature and function of Light in Fox's message, are the subjects of the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: REVELATION

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 illustrated how Owen's comparison of Gnostic and Quaker theology related to aspects of gnosis and its similarity to the Quaker concept of Light. This chapter compares Fox's concept of the Light (revelation of God through the Light of Christ) with Gnostic revelation which is, and confers gnosis. Logan states of that distinctive knowledge of God which is gnosis:

> We do not come to such knowledge by rational investigation and philosophical enquiry; it is a religious knowledge; it has ethical connotations; and above all it is a matter of revelation.[219]

This chapter commences with a preliminary analysis (2.1) of the sensory condition necessary for the individual to experience primal and continuous Gnostic revelation, i.e., a mental state of alienation and (in varying degrees of hostility) an aversion to the world and all things created/visible.

Two formative revelations (as recorded by Fox), are examined in the context of the Gnostic "call", realised eschatology, resurrection and Fox's experience of heaven on earth (2.2 and 2.2.1). Thereafter, Owen's interpretation of Quaker revelation/Light is compared with the current understanding of gnosis in Valentinian Gnosticism. Following the revelation(s) the recipient [220] experiences a sense of freedom and liberty from the world and matter (2.3). Subsequent to his revelations, Fox's approach to fallen creation is examined (2.4) along with the experiential nature of those revelations (2.5).

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219 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 212.
220 Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 333.

Previous research into the effects of Quaker Light upon the recipient have incorrectly emphasised consequential ethics and behaviour rather than the awakening, transformative, perfecting and uniting nature of Light in terms of gnosis (2.6). The aspect of Light within Fox's theology which unites the individual with God is similar to that aspect of gnosis which awakens the Valentinian to their divinity and reunites the divine seed with the consubstantial redeemer (2.6.1). Existing scholarship regarding Foxian theology has also limited its focus upon union with God in terms of a merely ethically motivated fellowship with God and one another (2.7).

Finally, this chapter considers (2.8) the metaphysical understanding of union in terms of Light, and Fox's distinctive concept of the soul (2.8.1) which demonstrates a similarity to the light-metaphysics found in Valentinian Gnosticism. The chapter thereafter summarises its findings (2.9).

2.1 FOX'S ALIENATION

In 1643 Fox, then aged 18, refused a drinking bet stating thereafter that God spoke to him in the following terms:

> Thou seest how young people go together into vanity, and old people into the earth; thou must forsake all, young and old, keep out of all, and be as a stranger unto all.[221]

King[222] suggests this passage is remarkable for its lack of moral condemnation so prevalent elsewhere in Fox's condemnation of the ways, customs and fashions of the world: "There is simply the overwhelming sense of the transitoriness of life. He expresses the same [transitory] feeling in his early letters."[223] For example, in 1654 Fox writes:

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221 *Works*: 1:69.
222 King, *George Fox and the Light*, 113.
223 Ibid.; *Works:* 7: 26, 30, 57, 86, 87, 92, 119.

> O all Friends! in the unchangeable life and power, and seed of God live, and be out of the low, earthly, changeable spirit of the world, which is given to changing and tossing, and tempest and waves, by which dirt is cast up. Oh! therefore, the life and power of God and his seed live in, which never changeth, by which every one may stand in the power of God, and in his life and wisdom, through which ye may all live. And stand steadfast in the unchangeable life and seed of God, which was before changings and alterings were; and which will remain when they are all gone.[224]

Section 3.5 illustrates how Fox's theology regarding spiritual perfection (achievable on earth) is identical to the eternal state emphasised in the above passage. Fox's 1643 statement, above, is indicative of a person in despair with the carnal and earthly, the changeable and alterable. Fox describes his spiritual turmoil prior to his formative revelatory experiences of 1647 and 1648 which are detailed at 2.2.1 below:

> I wondered why these things [an acknowledgement of the transitoriness of the visible world] should come to me. I looked upon myself and said "Was I ever so before?"...but temptations grew more and more, and I was tempted almost to despair; and when satan could not effect his design upon me that way, he laid snares and baits to draw me to commit some sin, where by he might take advantage to bring me to despair...and some years I continued in that condition in great trouble...[225]

By 1647 Fox's recognition of his plight in the world was reaching a climax:

> I fasted much, walked abroad in solitary places many days and often took my bible, and sat in hollow trees and lonesome places till night came on; and frequently in the night walked mournfully about by myself: for I was a man of sorrows in the time of the first workings of the Lord in me....but gave up myself to the Lord, having forsaken all evil company, taken leave of father and mother, and all other relations, and travelled up and down as a stranger in the earth, which way the Lord inclined my heart...for I durst not stay long in a place,

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224 *Works*: 7:86.
225 Ibid., 1:69.

> being afraid both of professor and profane, lest, being a tender young man, I should be hurt by conversing much with either. For which reason I kept much as a stranger, seeking heavenly wisdom, and getting knowledge from the Lord; and was brought off from outward things, to rely on the Lord alone.[226]

Fox's use of the Bible does not contradict the process of gnosis *per se*, as discussed in Chapter 4.[227] Section 3.1-2 will demonstrate that, as within Valentinian Gnosticism, the "knowledge" sought was the realisation of the divine within and subsequently, maintaining that divinity. Fox is also explicit that the Lord alone can redeem the individual; Scripture is not essential to salvation.[228] Moreover, Fox's reference to "stranger in the earth" and "stranger" may be significant allusions to Old Testament passages in which the individual is a "stranger" as they inhabit a land which is not theirs (Gen.15:13, Ex.2:22, Dt.23:7, for example). By employing "stranger" Fox indicates an alienation of himself from the visible and created world.

Further to 1.1 above (in relation to anti-cosmic and dualistic attitudes surrounding the demiurge) Jonas refers to the plight of the "stranger on earth" as referred to in Gnostic texts to illustrate the early workings of gnosis upon the alienated divine within the individual:

> The alien [the divine within and/or the redeemer figure], is that which stems from elsewhere and does not belong here [in the visible world]. To those who do belong here it is thus the strange, the unfamiliar and incomprehensible; but their world on its part is just as incomprehensible to the alien that comes to dwell here and like a foreign land where it is far from home. Then it suffers the lot of the stranger who is lonely, unprotected, uncomprehended and uncomprehending in a situation full of danger. Anguish and homesickness are part of the stranger's lot. The stranger who does not

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226 Ibid., 73.

227 By way of introduction, Logan in *Gnostic Truth*, 12., states that texts, whether scriptural or otherwise, were important to Gnostics who were "literary creatures."

228 Fox may have been identifying with the Pauline reference in Gal.1:11 in which Paul states: "As for the gospel that has been preached by me, I want you to know, brothers, that it rests on no human foundation, for , neither did I receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through direct revelation by Jesus Christ."

becoming estranged from his own origin...The recollection of his own alienness, the recognition of his place of exile for what it is, is the first step back; the awakened homesickness is the beginning of the return. All this belongs to the "suffering" side of alienness. Thus the alien taken absolutely is the wholly transcendent, the "beyond", and an eminent attribute of God...the term "alien" or its equivalents can enter into manifold combinations: "my alien soul, " "my world-sick heart," "the lonely vine," apply to the human condition, while the "alien man" and "the stranger" apply to the messenger from the world of Light...[229]

The Gnostic concern in this liminal state of awaiting redemption from their alienation (3.6-8, 5.1) is to avoid becoming contaminated by the world. Franzmann[230] states that as the Gnostics remain strange or alienated in this world, there is less chance that they will be contaminated by the things of the world. Additionally, Franzmann notes that in the Gnostic text *Apocryphon of John*,[231] there is reference to the community upon whom the "Spirit of life" descends, so that they are unaffected by being in the world yet still existing in the flesh.[232] Gnostics endure this state while seeking the time when they will be met by the heavenly receivers.[233] Fox urged followers to constantly aspire to be strangers in the world:

> that your lives and conversations may be in heaven, and above the earth...So that you may pass your time here in fear, as pilgrims, and strangers, and sojourners having an eye over all things that are uncertain, as cities, houses, lands, goods, and as things below. Possess them as if ye had not...[234]

Similarly, the Valentinian (or in any event Christian Gnostic) *Apocryphon of James*[235] states that the Gnostic community are to know what

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229 Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 49.
230 Franzmann, M. *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996: 173.
231 NHC: II, *1*. 25.23-28.
232 Ibid., 25.33-35.
233 Ibid., 25.35-26.1.
234 *Works*: 7:301.
235 NHC: I, *2*. 25.3-5.

things are theirs and what things are alien as part of the world. The text exhorts Gnostics to liken themselves to "foreigners" and generally separate themselves from other citizens.[236] Brown[237] states that Gnostics would sympathise with their third century Christian counterpart: that the move to the desert symbolised rejection of all the strains, tensions and obligations of the world in which people lived.

Moreover, some Gnostics incorporate in their mythology, hostility towards a demiurgic figure or creator God, motivated by the sins that beset such worldly associations. These include; boasting, envy, jealousy, anger, irrational violence and constant concern over who might outdo or become superior to oneself. The non-Valentinian (but arguably Christian Gnostic, cf. fn.22) *Apocryphon of John*[238] characterises the true Gnostic soul as one which concentrates on its immortality and is not overwhelmed by such passions and conflicts.

Some Gnostic texts suggest being a stranger in the earthly region does not necessarily mean isolating oneself from others. The Valentinian *Gospel of Philip*[239] refers to the free individual (the Gnostic) who is actually a slave because of love for those who have not yet been able to attain the freedom of knowledge.[240] The text[241] exhorts believers to be like Jesus Christ who did not burden anyone, giving comfort rather than distress to the great and the small, to the believer or unbeliever. Where the Gnostic cannot help causing distress to non-Gnostics, the text states that it is the wickedness of others which is responsible.[242]

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236 Ibid., 11.18-23.
237 Brown, P. *The Body and Society*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988:83-95.
238 NHC: II, *1*, III, *1*, IV, *1*, BG 8502, *2*.
239 NHC: II, *3*.
240 Ibid., 77.25-29.
241 Ibid., 80.1-4.
242 Ibid., 80.17-20.

"Stranger in the earth " as employed by Fox (in an Old Testament context) is similar in usage to that discernible in Gnostic texts. It illustrates that for Fox and the Valentinians, being a "stranger in the earth" entails a degree of ontological aversion or hostility to the visible and created world, as opposed to a mere desire for detachment from the world. This concept is also discussed in 2.4, below.

James[243] senses Fox expressing an "isolation" when religion began to ferment within him. However, the above texts of 1643 and 1647 describe more than isolation or depression; rather an attitude towards a hostile world in which Fox is an alienated stranger. There is an emphasis upon divine knowledge by way of revelation and a total commitment to spirit - led guidance to the exclusion of all else. Foxian theology leads to the devaluation of Scripture to a mere corroborative tool of revelatory activity.

James[244] suggests that when the craving for moral consistency and purity is developed to this degree (as in Fox) the individual may well find the outer world too full of shocks to dwell in, and can unify life and keep his soul unspotted only by withdrawing from it.[245] However, Brinton states that: "Fox made no attempt to take the Quakers out of the world, but he did often tell them to live at the same time at a different place, the inward world ruled by the spirit of Christ."[246] Brinton fails to consider that the alienation that Fox expresses is not limited to the effect of the fashions or ways of the world but emphasises a distinct attitude to the eternal over the physical, created and historical (2.4). This approach to the external includes the outward, established Church.

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243 James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 328.
244 Ibid., 292.
245 Such beliefs have of course been held by the Desert Fathers, within Monasticism and elsewhere, as illustrated in France, P. *Hermits: The Insights of Solitude*. London: Pimlico, 1996.
246 Brinton, H.H. *The Religious Philosophy of Quakerism*. Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications, 1973: 30.

The following sub-section examines how in light of the sense of alienation from the world and the established Puritan Church, expressed by Fox in his role as "stranger", this turmoil results in decisive revelatory experiences which can be interpreted within a Gnostic context.

2.2 THE "CALL" OF GNOSIS AND THE REVELATIONS OF FOX

The significance of revelation within Valentinian Gnosticism is considered before examining how Fox's own epochal experiences are identified as incorporating a similar revelatory experience to that of the recipient of gnosis.

Gnostic revelation is not limited to a single decisive experience. Rudolph[247] describes how Gnostic systems have given expression in various forms to the idea of a continuing activity of revelation before culmination upon death. In a Christian-Gnostic context, Logan[248] views the Gnostic concept of primal, continuous and decisive revelation as an attempt to resolve the "orthodox" Christian dilemma: how to present salvation before Christ as a real and continuing possibility, as a reality now in the light of the incarnation of Christ, yet not complete until consummation upon death. These aspects will be left to Chapters 3 and 4, but is of relevance to the current analysis of two significant revelations experienced by Fox.

Jonas[249] describes how the Gnostic awaits the "call", a revelatory awakening fundamental[250] to gnosis, directed at the divine within an individual who exists in the alienated circumstances similar to those of Fox, above. Logan states:

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247 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 132-133.
248 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 283.
249 Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 81.
250 Foerster, W. *Gnosis*, Vol. 1., trans, R. McL. Wilson, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972: 2ff.

> Salvation in terms of gnosis is understood in terms of the awakening call, the saving revelation, allowing us to do what we cannot of ourselves, i.e., recognise our essential divine nature.[251]

The divine nature in the individual is described[252] as being trapped in the body/matter, and drunk, asleep or oblivious to its plight. The Gnostic "call" is directed by the redeemer figure of Christ or Light at the consubstantial "seed of light"[253] within the individual (described in Gnosticism generally, as "soul, spark, power, seed, substance or race"[254]) which it awakes and unites with the realm of light from where it originated. Green notes, "while in principle it is available to all to be called ("I am the hearing which is attainable to everyone"[255], "I cry out in everyone"[256]) Valentinian Gnostic theology suggests that only a few are pneumatic [spiritually receptive]."[257] In addition, as Logan[258] states, salvation depends on the human response to the call (variations in Valentinian soteriology is analysed further at 3.3, 3.6-8, 4.2).

The individual is obliged to be a seeking, receptive participant in their own redemption and self-realisation. The "day of visitation" as discussed by Barclay[259], in terms of Quaker revelation of God through the Light of Christ, could similarly be a missed opportunity if the recipient failed to respond to the call.

As Logan identifies from the Hermetic Gnostic text *Poimandres*:[260] "the saving revelation is only near to those who by their conduct deserve it,

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251 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 213.
252 NHC: I, *3* and XII, *2.*, 22.2-20.; Macrae, G.W. "Sleep and Awakening in Gnostic Texts," in *Le origini dello gnosticismo*, 496-507.
253 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 119.
254 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 239., cf. fn.22, above.
255 NHC: VI, *2.* 19, 20-22.
256 NHC: XIII, *I.* 36, 15.
257 Green, *The Economic and Social Origins*, 213.
258 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 263.
259 *Barclay's Apology*, 84.
260 *Poimandres* of Hermes Trismegistus, *Corpus Hermeticum* 1, ed. A.D. Nock, tr. A.J. Festugière. Paris:Bude, 1945: 1.18.; 21f.

and who are thereby enabled to perceive the truth."[261] Gnosis is not purely about self - redemption (contrary to the views of Quispel and Colpe)[262] since the ability to receive gnosis is influenced by conduct and a "corresponding way of life"[263](discussed in 3.6-8). Additionally, Irenaeus[264] notes that the teachers or spiritual elite amongst the Valentinians promoted education or training in order to achieve and sustain the maturity, perfection and salvation of the divine element in the body through gnosis, although the pneumatic seed of salvation is sown within them from birth.

It is appropriate (prior to further examination in 3.6-3.7) to highlight the research into whither, in response to the above, salvation by gnosis is by nature or by grace. Green states that "liberation is not due to grace but to knowledge,"[265] but as knowledge in Gnosticism is also provided by grace, Green's exclusive approach is arguably invalid. Logan[266] concludes that there is a false dichotomy representing the Gnostic paradox and suggests that gnosis involves the possibility of salvation (by nature) and also the descent of the saving spirit (grace). Logan[267] has usefully embodied the scholarly arguments in his own research (shown here in summary):

> If then we are unable to save ourselves and need revelation and salvation from outside, does that mean that gnosis is something entirely new, a matter of sheer divine grace, as e.g. Quispel has argued... This would certainly go against the traditional interpretation of Valentinian (and *a fortiori* of Gnostic) soteriology, found both in ancient heresiologists...and in modern commentators like Bultmann, which seized on the Gnostic claim that they were being saved by nature [and their] view of salvation as essentially determinist...It would also contradict what we have been arguing is a fundamental idea in Gnostic theology, the consubstantiality of God and the divine element in humanity - if the saving knowledge be interpreted as

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261 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 212.
262 Quispel, G. "Der gnostische Anthropos und die jüdische Tradition" *Eranos Jahrbuch* 22 (1953): 234; Colpe, *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 2:1657
263 Rudolph, *Gnosis*,117.
264 *Adv. haer.* 1.6.1; 6.4; 7.5., cf. Clem. Alex. *Excerpta* 45.1, 59.1.
265 Green, *The Economic and Social Origins*, 215.
266 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 240.
267 Ibid., 212.

recognition of one's essential heavenly nature...the determinist interpretation has been criticised particularly by Schottroff, who has argued that the *salvandus* is not assured of salvation as a substance, it is rather a matter of grace and free will: the indicative of salvation is balanced by an imperative...However the [determinist] idea does occur in the Tripartite Tractate,[268]and E. Pagels has argued, on the basis of an analysis of Valentinian exegesis of Romans, that both the traditional view and that of Schottroff are misleading, since they are cast in terms of the antithesis free-will determinism, rather than of an experience of election through grace which she finds as the basis of the Valentinian three nature concept.[269]

Pagels suggests that the Valentinians:

> encounter the revelation in Christ as a recognition of their own hidden, unknown, true identity, an identity that they realize cannot be worked for or gained by their own effort, but is given "freely" to them. Their experience cannot be described, either, as an act of their own choice or decision. On the contrary, they experience the awareness of already haven been "chosen"...Their response to the savior is not one of crisis and decision, but of immediate, uncritical, spontaneous faith.[270]

The appropriate answer to the nature/grace debate is a combination of both; what Pagels states is true of salvation by nature, but the Gnostic must work at preserving the newly discovered divinity he/she has experienced. (3.6-3.8). The continuous aspect to revelation must involve an aspect of grace and works in order to preserve the knowledge which the Gnostic has achieved. To suggest otherwise does not justify the inclusion of an ethical perspective in the Valentinians ability to receive the "call".

This process of working on the preservation of the state of divinity is clearly illustrated in the Christian Gnostic text *The Apocryphon of John* at the preface to a passage on the destiny and categorisation of various souls. Prior to referring to those souls who will be saved "in any case", it illustrates that

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268 NHC:1, *5*. 119.16ff.
269 Pagels, "The Valentinian Claim to Esoteric Exegesis", 241-58.
270 Pagels, E. *Heracleon's Commentary on John.* New York: Abingdon Press, 1973:120.

for some souls, preservation of the divine state through "works" in preparation for eternal life after death is necessary whilst the Gnostic lives in the flesh:

> And I said to the savior, "Lord, will all the souls then be brought safely into the pure light?" He answered and said to me, "Great things have arisen in your mind, for it is difficult to explain them to others except to those who are from the immoveable race. Those on whom the Spirit of life will descend and (with whom) he will be with the power, they will be saved and become perfect and be worthy of the greatness and be purified in that place from all wickedness and the involvements in evil. Then they have no other care than the incorruption alone, to which they direct their attention from here on, without anger or envy or jealousy or desire or greed of anything. [i.e., works] They are not affected by anything except the state of being in the flesh alone, which they bear while looking expectantly for the time when they will be met by the receivers (of the body).[271]

In contrast with the above descent of the spirit is the ostensible Valentinian notion of formation of the divine element according to nature and knowledge, by union with the Saviour and the subsequent battle of good and evil plural spirits, overcoming the passions as in the cases of Sophia and Achamoth (below). The following commentary from Irenaeus illustrates the Valentinian use of their mythology in demonstrating the position regarding the lifetime conflict with the passions and victory in reunion with Christ through gnosis:

> They [Valentinians] relate that Wisdom [Sophia] when she met him, first covered herself with a veil out of reverence, but, having gazed upon his entire prolific retinue, she took courage from his appearance and ran towards him. He then formed for her the formation that is according to knowledge and healed her passions by removing them from her and not neglecting them; for it was not possible to annihilate them... But having separated them he mingled and consolidated them and changed them from an incorporeal passion into incorporeal substance...and so there would be two substances, the one, coming from the passions, evil; the other, coming from the amendment, liable

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[271] NHC: II, 25.16-26.7.

> to suffering...They teach too, that when Achamoth had been freed from passion and had with joy received the contemplation of the lights which were with him, that is, of the angels that were with him, and had yearned after them, she brought forth fruits after their image, a spiritual offspring, born after the likeness of Savior's bodyguard."[272]

Similarly, in *The Excerpts of Theodotus*[273] (a collection by Clement of Alexandria of texts from the second century Valentinian Theodotus, amongst other sources) the spirit is emphasised as putting and end to the flesh by avoiding evil and the passions.

The command of gnosis to awake is connected with certain doctrinal elements which Jonas[274] details as principally:

> a) the reminder of the heavenly origin and the transcendent history of humanity
>
> b) the promise of redemption, to which also belongs the redeemer's account of his own mission and descent to this world
>
> c) practical instruction on how to live in conformity with the new-found knowledge.

Jonas[275] indicates that these characteristics are not exhaustive or definitive, varying in their application and emphasis from Gnostic text to text. The following section considers them in the context of Fox's experience, with this caveat in mind.

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[272] *Adv. haer.* 1.4.5., cf. 1.2.4.
[273] Clem. Alex., *Excerpta* 45.1.
[274] Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 81.
[275] Ibid.

2.2.1 THE REVELATIONS OF 1647 AND 1648

Gwyn notes that the following revelations are the:

> conclusion of George Fox's formative spiritual development, one that launched him into the world with the gospel message decidedly different from that of his Puritan contemporaries.[276]

The revelations recorded by Fox demonstrate the workings of the Light which revealed God to Fox within a quasi-Gnostic framework. They are experiences which (along with the openings Fox records of 1643 and 1647, above) incorporate in general terms the elements referred to by Jonas in 2.2. Fox records the following experience of 1647:

> And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outward to help me, nor could tell what to do; [the state of Gnostic alienation] then, Oh! then I heard a voice which said, "There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition." [The awakening and promise of redemption.] When I heard it, my heart did leep for joy. Then the Lord 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. [The transcendence of humanity.] For all are concluded under sin, and shut up in unbelief, as I had been, that Jesus Christ might have pre-eminence, who enlightens, and gives grace, faith and power. [Instruction on living.] Thus when God doth work, who shall let it? This I knew experimentally. [A gnosis-like experience of the transmission of knowledge.] 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.[277]

The divine is actually experienced or realised by Fox, and the revelation does not merely impart information already known. The experience of Fox is individualistic, and as Green states in connection with the call and revelation of the Gnostic in receipt of gnosis: "it democratizes in the broadest sense, by providing the freedom to experience the divine without

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276 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 63.
277 *Works*: 1:74.

mediators...".[278] Fox has a different revelatory experience in 1648 to that of 1647, the later arguably the eschatological completion or culmination of the earlier.

The following experience of 1648 is unique throughout Fox's written record in its graphic description of the process leading to the state of divinity into which Fox had been spiritually transported. Not only was it formative of a theology different from that of Puritanism (Gwyn, above) but led to a message distinctive amongst contemporary Quakers in its Valentinian content. Experienced by Fox at the very earliest period of the Quaker movement, the claims of an irreversible pre-Adamic state were never explicitly withdrawn by him throughout his life:

> Now I was come up in spirit, through the flaming sword, into the paradise of God. All things were new, and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter. I knew nothing but pureness, innocency, and righteousness, being renewed up into the image of god by Christ Jesus; so that I was come up to the state of Adam, which he was in before he fell. The creation was open to me; and it was showed me, how all things had their names given them, according to their nature and virtue...But I was immediately taken up in spirit, to see into another or more steadfast state than Adam's in innocency, even into a state in Christ Jesus, that should never fall...[279]

The final words illustrate the importance Fox attached to the state from which it was possible never to fall. Without encroaching onto the subject matter of 3.4 (Fox's Christian state of pre-Fall perfection) the spiritual state claimed by Fox above illustrates an important aspect of Fox's radical theology.

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[278] Green, *The Economic and Social Origins*, 214.
[279] *Works*: 1:84.

The promise of God to restore all things to their pre-Fall state of perfection and glory (Jeremiah 31:34) was according to Fox,[280] made to the pre-existent "seed" (the Pauline Christ of Gal.3:16) in woman and the seed in her offspring, i.e., all humankind. Fox attaches eschatological significance to his interpretation of "seed" (5.4). It is this "seed" that will end the power of Satan and restore the broken unity between humankind and God, restoring the unity of pre-Fall heaven and earth.[281] In 1647 Fox had stated of this "seed":

> At another time I saw the great love of God, and was filled with admiration at the infiniteness of it. I saw what was cast out from God, and what entered into God's kingdom; and how by Jesus, the opener of the door by his heavenly key, the entrance was given. I saw death, how it had passed upon all men, and oppressed the seed of God in man, and in me; and how I in the seed came forth, and what the promise was to.[282]

Section 2.8.1 will consider further the metaphysical and emanationist theology of Fox, illustrated in the above. Fox[283] believed that as the restoration involves the seed (or Christ) in woman, it was through her offspring that salvation was universally available to all humanity. Salvation was possible totally and irreversibly in this life (contrary to the Puritan belief of Fox's time, which denied that any could achieve the realisation of eschatological hope and expectations in this life).[284]

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[280] Ibid., 3:508.; 8:146.
[281] Ibid., 7:75, 155, 210, 218, 264.
[282] Ibid., 1:76.
[283] Ibid., 7:225, 228, 254, 325; 8:139, 243.
[284] The seed or Christ in woman is developed into an eschatological context by Fox, identifying the seed with the power of Christ to thwart the power of sin, and return the individual to the pre-Fall state of Adam.: Doncaster, H; "Early Quaker Thought on that State which Adam was in before he Fell", 18. As the seed is raised up in the believer, he or she comes to dwell in that which inherits the promises of God, as well as the Kingdom of God. The seed is not many but one (Gal.3:16), therefore all that know this seed raised up within are in the unity of this one seed, whether they be male or female. In emphasising the universally accessible seed of Christ as opposed to the sexual imagery and metaphor of Adam and Eve in the paradise story Gen. 1-3., Fox uses the story of the flood and spiritual marriage to demonstrate his contempt of the world as opposed to the Puritanical emphasis upon original sin.

In *Works*: 7:180., Fox states: "and mind the example of the old world, when the sons of

This revelatory activity reflects an experience similar to gnosis in its inward realisation of a divine state of being and a spiritual state of a return to the pre-Adamic realm of light. Fox records (referring perhaps to 1 John 3:9) that it was a divine state that he was incapable of losing. This was not a state of future glory, it was a present reality without a future eschaton. Fox had attained the spiritual state of the saints,[285] the sons of God of the same "flesh and bone" as Christ.[286] When the saints became sons of God through the indwelling Christ they became indivisibly united with the divine nature or essence, a metaphysical approach of gnosis, identified below (2.8-2.8.1).

Following the vision of 1648, Fox preaches that (based upon his own experience of the realisation of the inward Christ/seed) the breach between heaven and earth had been repaired. Humanity had regained the divine powers that were lost at the time of the Fall and again at the time of the apostasy[287] (5.1). This is a similar experience to that of the realisation of the heavenly nature or divine element in the individual following gnosis.

God saw the daughters of men were fair, they took unto them wives of all that they liked; and so made no distinction between the righteous and the wicked...Though Enoch, Methusalah, and Lamech, and the holy men of god, their marriages God did not judge; but when the sons of these holy men, which were called the sons of God, went to the world for wives, they slew the spiritual birth in them, and quenched the holy spirit of God in them, and corrupted the earth,, and filled it with cruelty, and followed the imaginations of their own hearts lusts continually...they followed a strange flesh by which they came to be corrupted; and therefore god sent a flood and destroyed the old world and its ungodly deeds. And there is your example, that marry with the world (Gen.6)."

As Rudolph illustrates, the biblical story of the Flood attracts considerable attention in Gnostic texts; it is evaluated as an example of the deliverance of the Gnostic (recognising that of the seed or divine within him/her), from the attempts of the evil rulers of the world to destroy them: *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, 134-136.

In terms of Fox's own marriage to Margaret Fell in 1669, Fox employed extraordinary symbolism to emphasise the spiritual union under the guidance of Christ. Fox speaks of "being commanded" to take Fell as his wife, testifying that his marriage illustrated "the church coming out of the wilderness, and the marriage of the Lamb before the foundation of the world.": *Memorandum*. N.d., Portfolio X, 53, LSF; *Works*: 2:93; CJ:2:153-4; Fox, G. Epistle 2. Oct.1669, in Cadbury, H. J. ed., *Narrative Papers of George Fox*. Richmond: Friends United Press, 1972:78-88.

285 *Works*: 5:226.; Caton MSS, Friends House, London: 2:48.

286 CJ: 1:65.

287 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 64.

The consequences of such a realisation, i.e., (for Fox) an irreversible state of divine being (within a realised eschatology) is characterised exclusively in the context of early Christianity by those movements designated as Gnostic.[288] Sections 1.2 and 1.3 above, have referred to Fox and Valentinus both having formative visionary experiences and the respective social contexts which may have inspired their novel revelations, an analysis detailed by Logan, Stark and Bainbridge.[289] In returning to the pre-Fall state of paradise, Fox is fully divinised, and no other Quaker dared to make such claims with the certainty of Fox.[290] This determines the distinctive nature of Foxian theology amongst other Quakers.

The Valentinian experiences an instant or realised eschatology: with their response to the call, they experience awakening, resurrection and rebirth (albeit with a residual eschatological component fully realised after death, (2.6.1, 2.8.1, 3.7-8). Pétrement [291] notes that for the Gnostic, resurrection is not a future event, but something that takes place in the present and has already occurred for those who have knowledge or gnosis. By implication (as referred to in 2 Tim. 2:18.) the resurrection that has already occurred must be spiritual and not physical as the Gnostic remains bodily present on earth.

With reference to resurrection of the Gnostic, the words of Paul are recalled in the Valentinian *Letter to Rheginos* (I, *4*):

> As the Apostle said, we have suffered with him [= with the Savior], and we were resurrected with him and have ascended into heaven with him. Putting him on, we are his rays and we are surrounded by him till our setting, which is our death in this life. We are drawn [attached] to heaven by him, as rays by the sun, so long as nothing obstructs us. This is the spiritual resurrection...[292]

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288 Aune, *The Cultic Setting*, 13.
289 Logan, "Magi and Visionaries", 34-42.; Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 171-88.; Stark, "How Sane People Talk to the Gods", 19-34.
290 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 115.
291 Pétrement, *A Separate God*, 160.
292 Peel, M. L. , ed. *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian letter on the resurrection.* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969:7: 45, 24-40.

Separate yourself from divisions and ties, and you already possess resurrection.[293]

And further, the Valentinian *Gospel of Philip* states:

If they do not receive the resurrection while they live, when they die they will receive nothing[294]... If anyone does not receive it [light] while he is in these places, he will not be able to receive it in the other place[295]

Pétrement states that: "the parallelism between these two phrases [resurrection/light] probably demonstrates that resurrection is to receive light."[296] An identical mechanism is illustrated in Foxian "Light" mechanics, 2.7-2.8.1 below. Fox believes that through the Light, heaven can be experienced inwardly on earth, as the individual may experience resurrection inwardly on earth. In 1658 Fox records the following principle (P) put to him by an opponent, and his answer (A):

P. To witness heaven within and hell within, and the resurrection, is the mystery of iniquity.

A. Which shows thou never knew heaven in thyself, nor hell there, nor Christ the resurrection and the life, which they are blessed that are made partakers of the first resurrection, on them the second death shall have no power. And the scriptures do witness heaven within. And if Christ that was offered up, the resurrection and the life, be not within thee, thou art a reprobate.[297]

In contrast with the realised nature of Gnostic eschatology however, Rudolph notes (at an individual level) the dilemma faced by the Gnostic who is alive and thus remains on earth:

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293 Ibid., 49, 13-15.
294 NHC: II, *3*. 73. 3-5.
295 Ibid., 86. 6-7.
296 Pétrement, *A Separate God*, 161.
297 *Works*: 3:183.

> [liberation from the earth] can only naturally be completed at death, when spirit or soul (as descriptions of the particles of light) are separated from the body. Then begins the true liberation to which the Gnostic aspires: The final act of the ascent of the soul, an eschatological component which makes real what the Gnostic has already obtained through knowledge.[298]

The knowledge or gnosis obtained on earth is therefore limited and to that extent not "real" because the Gnostic is clearly still physically on earth despite their consubstantial union with the divine. However, having attained the experiential *knowledge* (although not the *reality*) of actually being in heaven, there is in Valentinianism Gnosticism a potential for completion of eschatological goals in life (save for the residual postmortem ascent of the divine element). As Pétrement states:

> Gnosticism has a preference for realised eschatology. Even though futurist eschatology is preserved in many of the doctrines [for eg., the ascent of the divine element referred to above] it has lost its importance for them; the most important resurrection is that which takes place in the present.[299]

Similarly, with Fox's apparent disinterest in the afterlife (evidenced by his pre-Adamic Christ-like state realised on earth, 2.2.1) and his denial of the state of "purgatory"[300] professed by apostate Christians, he appears to have no significant interest in a residual eschatology after death. This approach is confirmed by statements of Quaker opponents:

> they [Quakers] boast that Christ is come to them, neither look they for any other coming: that the world is ended with them, neither look they for any other end: That the Judgment is past with them, neither look they for any other Judgment.[301]

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298 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 115.
299 Pétrement , *A Separate God*, 162
300 *Works*: 6:362.
301 Wright. *Testimony*, London: N.p., 1661:78., referred to by Underwood, T. L. *Primitivism, Radicalism and the Lambs War: The Baptist -Quaker Conflict in Seventeenth Century England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997:65.

Fox's approach is different from that of the Gnostic who whilst emphasising the preservation of the divine state in this life, retains an eschatological interest in the ascent of the soul or the divine seed in a postmortem Valentinian consummation. This thesis argues however that Foxian theology can be readily incorporated within the Valentinian "preference for a realised eschatology" (referred to by Pétrement, above). Indeed, it could be labelled as "extreme" in its Gnostic emphasis upon immediate, realised eschatological aims, even to the exclusion of postmortem considerations.

Having considered the epochal revelations of 1647 and 1648, the following section examines the effect of Fox's experiences within a Gnostic context, in what Jonas[302] suggests as the sense of "liberty"- the starting point for any analysis of Gnostic redemption, an authentic freedom which is wholly a matter of the spirit.

2.3 GNOSTIC FREEDOM

This section considers the distinctive Foxian and Gnostic quest for freedom and liberty from the visible world by way of an introduction to Gnostic salvation. Such an approach, in which the divine within an individual seeks reunion with its perfect origins and freedom from the world is not unique to the Gnostics. It has been suggested as "undoubtedly Platonic"[303] in origin.

Bultmann views Gnosticism as testifying to a definite philosophy of life which represented the freedom of the individual from the world:

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302 Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 333.
303 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 22. Logan at p.168 suggests that the Gnostic approach to the imprisonment of the divine is more pessimistic than the Platonic view. This is indicative of the general anti-cosmic view of the Gnostic.

> It represents a discovery of the radical difference between man and the world in which he lives. Thus it is the exact opposite of the Greek understanding of human nature. It has a sense of the radical otherness of man, of his loneliness in the world.[304]

Filoramo[305] notes the existential situation of the Gnostic as a consequence of this discovery, longing yet unable to be free until a redeemer figure (Christ in Christian gnosis) provides the revelatory gnosis. Section 2.1. above, demonstrated Fox's record of his pre-revelation mental state as compatible with alienation from the world (if not ontological hostility to the earth and matter) as portrayed by Bultmann and Filoramo, above.

The mental state recorded by Fox is followed by his revelatory experiences (2.2.1) and a sense of freedom resulting in his theology being radically different from, and allegedly heretical in the eyes of , that Christianity professed by Owen (1.4-5).

Fox's response to his despair is a turning to God alone (2.2.1). Knight suggests Fox did not view the world as a philosopher: "He begins with the demands of life and its ideals, but he never moves on to look for a reconciliation of these with the orderly procedure of nature."[306] Conversely, Brinton has stated that: "As philosopher, Fox followed the Hellenic tradition, apprehending the inner Unity which exists beyond time and space."[307] As will be illustrated in 3.4, the latter view is adopted by this thesis in indicating that both Fox and the Gnostics shared a similar concept of unity with pre-creation perfection. As 5.1 illustrates, Fox did not however, turn to politics for a response to the major problems facing the world, preferring guidance and destiny derived from Christ/the Light. Fox did not put his trust in politicians or the political process.[308]

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304 Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*, 164.
305 Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 104f.
306 Knight, *The Founder of Quakerism*, 244.
307 Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years*, 21.
308 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 170.

The response of the Gnostic to social and psychological dislocation from the world was similarly mystical, not political. Green states:

> although Gnosticism was grounded in a dissatisfaction with the existing social order, this dissatisfaction was not expressed in political terms - a mystical search for salvation is by nature individualistic and apolitical.[309]

The potential Gnostic feels unable to bring about a change in their alienated condition through an earthly process. Bultmann notes:

> the world is an alien abode and the individual is the lonely victim of a dreadful fear - fear of infinite space and time, of the turmoil and hostility of the world, or rather, fear of the demonic powers at work in it, seeking to lead the person astray and alienate them from their true self. He is no longer his own master, but the playground of the demons.[310]

Fox and the Gnostics recognised that the true self, seed, Light or Christ (the divine within) involved a devaluing if not negation of all that which is not transcendent or eternal, including the visible world, the established Church and the political process. The following section illustrates Fox's theology as it relates to an emphasis upon the eternal rather than the external and created.

2.4 FOX AND FALLEN CREATION

In 1653 Fox alludes to Isaiah 40:6-8; that created things, including the flesh and earth, are temporary and not eternal, that: " He that doth the will of God, abideth in that which endureth forever, and seeth all flesh to be as grass and the glory of the world to pass away."[311] Moreover, if anything was constructed, created or devised from earthly matter, human invention, and

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309 Green, *The Economic and Social Origins*, 263.
310 Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*, 165.
311 *Works*: 7:31, 291.; 8:45.

was not eternal, it was under the curse of God[312] who was "the Prince of the air."[313] Fox views all things visible as carnal and to be cast from the mind:

> For whatsoever is seen with the carnal eye is carnal. See, if ye do find something in your understanding made manifest, which is eternal, to guide your minds out of all external things, which wither away, and fade.[314]

Fox speaks of "freedom from the world",[315] the "evil present world"[316] and the "rude wicked world."[317] Such negativity may be argued as a limited hostility to the world's customs and ways or fashions, but in 1669 he urges followers (using 1 John 2:15-17 and 1 Peter. 2:11) to seek out redemption from the world itself:

> All Friends, be ye as strangers to all things visible and created, but be acquainted with the Creator, your maker, the Lord God Almighty; for outward things are not durable riches nor durable substance, for they have wings and will fly away; and so therefore be as pilgrims and strangers to the world, and all worldly, created and visible things, and witness redemption from the earth, that you may reign upon the earth, as kings and priests to God...Therefore as I said before, be as strangers and pilgrims to the world, and all things therein, possess as though you did not possess them, and what you enjoy as though you did not; be above all such things, and lose them to the invisible life and power, which is over all things.[318]

There is however, some confusion concerning Fox's position on created matter and the earth. Moore[319] states that Fox's use of Light and denial of the world did not mean abhorrence of creation. This positive relationship of Light and the creation is illustrated by Fox as follows:

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312 Ibid., 7:32.
313 Ibid., 7:251.
314 Ibid., 7:26.
315 Ibid., 4:21.
316 Ibid., 4:22
317 Ibid., 4:25.
318 Ibid., 8:18.
319 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 128.

Such as are turned to the light which comes from him who is the heir of all things...these come to see how all the works of the Lord praise him;...day and night praise him; summer and winter praise him; ice and cold and snow praise him; and that is the bad and evil that calls him evil...seed-time and harvest praise him; all things that are created praise him. This is the language of them who learn of him; hear him...who upholds all things by his word and power, by whom all things were made...that above all things he might have the pre-eminence.[320]

Whilst never asserting that the true God was anything other than the creator God, Fox in this passage, however, is emphasising the worship of God rather than what God has created.

There is an alternative approach by Fox in which he emphasises the eternal (as illustrated above, 2.1) employing a distinctive protological and anti-historical argument that paradise and perfection are that sought after spiritual state or Light that existed prior to the creation of the world:

> which light was before conscience was, or creature was, or created or made light was. He made the sun, the moon, &c. and the light which was before these were made...[321]

Elsewhere:

> so these [religious] meetings are for the converted and elect "before the world began" and such as are heirs of the power...[322]

And further: "for all sin and imperfection are in the first Adam, in the earth."[323] In the following Fox explicitly connects the Fall with the time the world began or was founded:

> All my dear friends and brethren, who are off the royal seed of God!-Patience obtains the victory that runs the race and obtains the crown; be married and joined to the seed Christ the Lamb, slain from

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320 Fox, G. *Concerning Good Morrow and Good Even.* London: Simmons, 1657:12.
321 *Works:* 3:48.
322 Ibid., 7:16.
323 Ibid., 3:413.

> the foundation of the world; from its foundation, I say. For as you joined to the seed, and married to that which hath been slain from the foundation of the world, which hath the victory and doth overcome; by this you come to the end of the world; mark, to its end. And now all Friends, look upon the sufferings that have been since the Fall and since the world began...[324]

Fox identified the Fall as synonymous with the foundation of the world, and Wink[325] confirms the view indicative of Gnosticism, that the creation of the earth was not followed by the Fall, but the creation of the earth *was* the Fall. Fox did not assert such an ontological negativity towards the world as some Gnostics, but (in the context of Fox's eschatological emphasis upon that which was before the world began) viewed the world and matter as being contaminated as if in a fallen state since its foundation:

> For where the only true seed takes root, there all man's plants and plantations are plucked up; for there the earth, in which the earthly plants grow, is broken up, ploughed up, and ripped up, and all things made manifest, which have laid hidden in it. For in the earth dwell all the noisome creatures, and the evil beasts which are hurtful to the creation: for in the earth the devil dwells and walks; but the earth being ploughed up, he is made manifest, and the seat of his dwelling is broken up.[326]

Gwyn[327] suggests that Fox distinctively interpreted Rom.8:18 as viewing the fallen state as not only applicable to humanity, but additionally to creation. As the world was no longer under human dominion in God's image, it was cast adrift from its created purpose. It is this aspect of Fox's theology which determined his distinctive negative attitude towards "matter" generally. Sub-section 5.4 illustrates that Fox's approach to the fallen state of creation meant that Satan was a graphic and real (as opposed to mythological)

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[324] Ibid., 7:259.
[325] Wink, W. *Cracking the Gnostic Code: The Powers in Gnosticism*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993:16.
[326] *Works:* 7:32.
[327] Gwyn, D. "Captivity among the Idols: The early Quaker view of sin and evil." *QRT* 66 (1987):7.

presence in the world. The "spiritual orders of the universe followed humanity into confusion. The devil had also manipulated these "principalities and powers [including the forms without power - e.g., the established Church] to uphold his kingdom."[328] Fox believed that the fallen state is indicative of idolatry and the worship of external forms (the visible, the created) as opposed to the seeking of inward unity with God.[329] Individuals were far from being gods as promised by the serpent, but in their idolatry, were slaves to the devil.[330]

The following extract from 1659 illustrates Fox's hostility to anything "outward"; calling for the removal of heaven and earth and all that was not extant before the world began:

> And so, all to live in that which is the same today, as it was yesterday, Christ Jesus, the power of God, and the seed of life, and the word that was in the beginning; so, no new thing, but that which was and is to all eternity: let your fellowship be in that, and your unity and communion be in that; for by the spiritual eye the eternal unity with the eternal God is seen. So, here his voice everywhere, that speaks from heaven, whose voice shakes the earth, and not the earth only, but heaven also. The heaven signifies joy; so, all the false joys, the lifted up joys, or exalted joy, and joy in vain glory, and joy in the world, or any outward thing or creature, or men or women, his voice, that speaks from heaven, shakes the earth and the heavens , and these must be shaken and removed, both the heaven and the earth, before that doth appear that can never be shaken, the noble, royal seed, elect and precious, which was before the world began...[331]

The metaphysical dynamic to Fox's reference to "eternal unity with the eternal God", and the similarities with Valentinianism, are considered in 2.8.1 and 3.4 below. Gwyn[332] confirms the potential for alleging Fox's negation of the outward material world as Gnostic, but states that Fox escapes

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328 Ibid.
329 *Works*: 7:71.
330 Gwyn, "Captivity among the Idols", 7.
331 *Works*: 7:173.
332 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 115.

such a charge of Gnosticism, as Quakers were given an active, practical role in establishing a new world order. Gwyn appears to overlook important ethical[333] and communal[334] aspects to Gnosticism, discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Whilst this "inward" emphasis (as Gwyn[335] confirms) need not amount to an ontological aversion to external matter *per se*, the above quotations from Fox arguably illustrate a radically negative evaluation of post-Fall Creation and matter. At the very least, created matter and the visible world are treated by Fox as "foreign" or fundamentally different in substance from the good, God or the soul. The *internal* spiritual and visionary experiences (as opposed to the external influences of this world) of Fox and Valentinus were arguably formative in the development of their re-construction of a pre-existing established theology. In relation to Valentinus, this has been noted by Filoramo[336] and Logan. However, the devaluation of external matter within Gnostic theology (as a corollary to degrees of hostility to the creator God) varies considerably from one Gnostic text to another and is therefore not a *decisive* characteristic of Gnosticism or gnosis (1.1).[337]

To summarise, Fox's theology can be seen to incorporate detachment and alienation from the world, and the negation of all things created, even if Fox does not unambiguously express an ontological aversion to matter and the visible world *per se*. The above sections attempt to illustrate that the earliest workings of God upon Fox indicate a process similar to that undergone by potential Gnostics. This includes an experience of despair with the world

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333 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 212.
334 Brown, "Gnosis, Theology and Historical Method", 282.
335 Personal correspondence between the author and Douglas Gwyn, 1.9.00, Gwyn states: "when Fox speaks of the world, or the 'flesh', or even 'the earth', he is not referring to matter per se but to the fallen way humans live in the material world, idolatrously and egocentrically fixated on things, on the creature in place of the creator."
336 Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 156.; Logan, "Magi and Visionaries", 35.
337 Pétrement , *A Separate God*, 9.

from which Fox was open to direct revelation from God. Fox's subsequent message incorporated a view of the world from which it is appropriate to consider the decisive revelations within a Gnostic context.

Before considering the nature and function of Light in connection with the revelatory experiences recorded by Fox, the following section will revert to an examination of the quality of experience which affected Fox's future ministry.

2.5 THE EXPERIENTIAL BASIS OF FOX'S REVELATIONS

Brayshaw stated that in relation to Fox's revelatory experiences generally, "it was first hand knowledge as his own possession"[338] that Fox experienced, i.e., not a superficial experience or knowledge that could be acquired from others. This is common to the experience of gnosis as Green indicates above (2.2.1) where the Gnostic experiences the divine directly rather than receiving second hand knowledge or hearsay as a basis for religious belief.

Further, Brayshaw[339] noted that Fox's revelatory experiences are unique and personal ones which all his prior learning cannot provide. For the first time Fox discovers the purpose and meaning of previously acquired knowledge attained through Scripture.

The revelatory experiences of 1647 and 1648 (2.2.1) amount to a personal apprehension of God which, in the immediacy of its realised eschatology, differs from and challenges the Puritan thought of the day. The experiences emphasise personal assurance as the ultimate ground of religious belief, deeper than outward authority, including the authority of the Bible.[340]

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338 Brayshaw, *The Personality of George Fox*, 19.
339 Ibid., 14.
340 Ibid.

Grubb states that: "This note of personal discovery, of the certainty of truth inwardly revealed, is almost universal in the writings of the early Quakers."[341]

Knight[342] suggests that Fox insists upon the absolute religion of personal *experience* as the only true religion, rather than a religion of *faith* alone. For Fox, such a God-centred religion inspired his theology and the entire Quaker organisation.[343] Fox claims a direct and special call from the Lord "to bring people off from the world's religions that they might know the pure religion."[344]

What Fox envisages in terms of religion is radically different from Owen's theology which relies upon contemporary Church structures, the authority of Scripture and Gospel authority. Knight notes a distinctive character in Fox's message that incorporates and necessitates direct revelatory experiences:

> Fox was driven by a desire for peace of mind and his period of storm and stress was one of extreme tension. He was a seeker for the life of the spirit. The jovial and superficial social life of his community repelled him. He sought out the more serious-minded people in nearby and even distant towns. Still he found no relief. Out of this condition of affairs there arose a clear and definite answer to his need in a way that seemed to him a direct revelation from the Lord- indeed the very voice of the Lord speaking to him.[345]

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341 Grubb, E. *Authority and the Light Within*. London: Headley Bros., 1908:32. Popular opinion regarded the Quaker conception with horror. Brayshaw in *The Personality of George Fox*, 17fn.5., refers to *The Spirit of Enthusiasm Exorcised*, by George Hickes n.p., (1680) who states: "Let me show you what a dangerous, damnable and precarious principle that is which asserts that immediate revelation or inspiration is not ceased, but is a standing a perpetual gift in the Church of Christ."
342 Knight, *The Founder of Quakerism*, 258.
343 Ibid.
344 *Works*: 1:104.
345 Knight, *The Founder of Quakerism*, 74.

The following section examines how Fox interpreted the immediacy of his revelatory experiences and the direct relationship with God/Christ, in terms of a distinctive concept of "Light."

2.6 LIGHT AND CHRIST

Section 1.4 illustrated that Owen views Gnostics and Quakers as holding confused and imagined theological beliefs arising from (as he saw it) subjective and inauthentic interpretation of revelations. Owen suggested such beliefs are the result of a negation and devaluing of the historical revelation of the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Gospel tradition, including Scripture. Moreover, Owen objected to the claim that the same spirit of Christ that inspired the apostles and prophets also revealed itself to Quakers. However, as Fox stated:

> none are successors to the Prophets and Apostles, but who succeed them in the same power and Holy Ghost that they were in...Possession is above Profession, and how the professors now do persecute Christ in Spirit, as the professing Jews did persecute him outwardly in the days of his flesh.[346]

Fox here illustrates the same point, but employs the terminology of "Light":

> Now walk in the light, and it will let you see that all the prophets of God spoke from the same light, and in the light, and all the saints which were in unity one with another, were in the light and had joy in the light and light of one another in the light, as Christ saith, Father you in me and I in you, one light from the Father and Christ, in the Saints, and to Christ is the way to the Father: all the Ministers of God spoke from the light, and in the light, and all of one way, one light, the Saints, Christ and God, all come up to be one light, and so they have unity with the Father, and unity with the Son and the Father...[347]

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346 BJ: 2:234.
347 Fox, G. *A Declaration Against All Profession and Professors.* London: N.p., 1655: 27.

Elsewhere, Fox's message regarding the same spirit before and after incarnation is used to identify the hypocrisy of those who preach from Scripture without possessing the spirit of Christ:

> for the Lord had said unto me if I did but set up one in the same spirit that the prophets and apostles were in that gave forth the Scriptures, he or she should shake all the country in their profession ten miles about them; and if they did own God and Christ and his prophets and apostles, they must own him or her. For all people had the Scriptures, but were not in that same light and power, and spirit that they were in that gave forth the Scriptures and so they neither knew God, nor Christ, nor the prophets, nor the apostles, nor Scriptures, neither had they unity one with another being out of the power and spirit of God.[348]

Whilst Moore[349] and King[350] suggest that Fox's interpretation of "Light" varied, the identification of Light with Christ is seen emphatically here in the following extract from Fox:

> Christ is the light, and the light is but one, and it leads all one way, in one truth and unity, to be of one mind, one soul, one heart, to the Lord God of light, Father of light, and to the Church that is in God, with whom there is no shadow, no darkness at all.[351]

The significance of the impact of this interpretation of Christ upon the contemporary Church (as indicated by Owen's reaction, 1.4-1.5 above) is noted by Creasey:

> the early Quakers were, in the seventeenth century, feeling after an interpretation of Christ which was then very far from being widely shared - indeed, was regarded with deep suspicion and even horror as being destructive of all the fundamentals of the Christian faith.[352]

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348 NJ: 103.
349 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 109.
350 King, *George Fox and the Light*, 37.
351 Fox, G. *A Declaration Against All Profession and Professors*, 25.
352 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 375.

The interchangeable Quaker use of "Christ" and "Light" and its impact upon the Puritan Church in Fox's time has however been more optimistically interpreted by Schaff:

> Quakerism thus boldly breaks through the confines of historical Christianity and the means of grace, indefinitely expands the sphere of revelation and carries the saving power of Christ, even in this present life, into the regions of heathen darkness...the doctrinal standards of the orthodox Churches...know of no Christ and no salvation outside of Christendom and without the written or preached gospel... [the Quakers] teach the absolute universality, not indeed of salvation, but of the offer and the opportunity of salvation.[353]

Section 4.2 will consider the implications of history within the theologies of Fox and the Gnostics, but the universality of access to the divine has been similarly noted[354] as of significance in the development of Gnosticism. Creasey suggests that this interpretation providing "absolute universality" of salvation opened Quakers to criticism:

> The Quaker insistence upon the universal significance and scope of Christ's Person and work seemed to pay insufficient attention to the historic Person and work...[355]

The objection (from those such as Owen) is to the supremacy and authority of subjective, immediate revelation over Biblical and historical revelation and context. Whilst Owen[356] praised the edification of the silent worship of the Quakers, he believed that the intervention of unrestrained mental activity during prayer could be damaging. Owen views such freedom of immediate spiritual guidance as too individualistic, in 1682 stating that it

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353 Schaff, P., ed. *History of the Creeds of Christendom*, Vol.1, New York: Harper & Bros., 1877:869-870.
354 Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue*, 203.
355 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 352.
356 Owen, J. *Works.* Vol. 4, 331.

was "altogether useless, uncertain, an effect of and entertainment for vain curiosity"[357]

Creasey suggests the Puritan view on revelation failed to appreciate the Christian dimension of the early Quaker concept of the inward Light:

> For, by insisting as they [Quakers] did that the Light is the Light of Christ, and not simply an undefined and unspecified divine illumination, they were, surely, saying that what God showed himself to be in Jesus Christ he eternally is in relation to all men.[358]

Owen's criticism of Quaker Light as an illegitimate interpretation of the workings of Christ revealed through Scripture is typical of those contemporaries opposed to early Quakers and the theological significance of seventeenth century Quakerism. Creasey states (in relation to the contemporary approach to Fox's concept of the Light):

> Those of who take note of it do so, in the main, as being an extreme example of the rejection of all external authority, whether of Church or Scripture, and of an unbalanced and purely subjective reliance upon a vaguely conceived principle of revelation, the inner Light, which has, or need have, no connection with any outward or historic revelation, whether as source or criterion.[359]

Fox's[360] emphasis upon teaching the operations of the "Light" encourages the tendency to devalue the historic Christ. An illustration of this is Fox's[361] exclusion of any Christian framework, save for the eternal Christ. Moore states:

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357 Ibid.
358 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 348.
359 Ibid., 339.
360 Fox, G. *Catechism for Children*. London: Calvert, 1657.
361 *Works*: 2:230 is such an illustration where Fox states "I desire that all may be comprehended in that thing which doth open to them; and that they may all keep in the daily cross."

Many Quaker writers in the latter part of the 1650s, responding to their opponents demands that they should clarify their ideas on the meanings of "the light," came to pay less and less attention to the life and death of Jesus. Modern apologists for Quakerism often assert that the early Quakers accepted the true humanity of Christ, as well as his divinity. It is true that Fox often expressed a belief in the Christ that died at Jerusalem...although their interpretation of this belief was unconventional...The majority of Quaker pamphleteers did not even pay lip service to traditional Christian formulations.[362]

Moore[363] suggests that Quaker apologists[364] have inserted a theology incorporating the humanity of Jesus (as well as Jesus' divinity) into early Quakerism and do so with only nominal evidence to support the inclusion. Whilst Fox acknowledges "the Christ that died at Jerusalem,"[365] the *historical* aspects of Jesus' life and Atonement have no bearing upon his inward - orientated universalist theology. Contemporary scholarship which includes early Quaker reference to the historic or human aspect to Jesus Christ is indicative of the fact that Quaker theologians have "been at pains to present to the public a definition of [early Quaker] faith that would not cast them or it in a bad light."[366]

Owen's criticism of the Quaker emphasis upon, and authority given to, direct revelation from God (to the exclusion of an historical perspective) has therefore been substantiated by recent scholarship which has examined the early Quaker record. Within Owen's criticism is the Quaker and Gnostic use of a perfecting revelatory Light by employing, he alleges, revelations that are beyond Scripture. The Quaker and Gnostic Light is the means and end of an inward realisation or knowledge of the Christ within. It is a knowledge which

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362 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 109.
363 Ibid., 268.
364 Barbour, H. *The Quakers in Puritan England*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964. Reprinted with a new preface by Barbour. Richmond: Friends United Press, 1985.; Gwyn, *Apocalypse*; Nuttall, G.F. *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946, reprinted with new introduction by Peter Lake. Chicago: University Press, 1992.; Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology".
365 *Works:* 7:143.
366 Ingle, "On the Folly", 17.

transforms and teaches as it develops within the individual. Creasey recognises that early Quaker "knowledge" was employed in a distinct way:

> If it is true that...the issue of our knowledge of Christ will be a new vision and a new certainty in action...then it must be conceded that the early Friends knew Christ; and it would be an unwarranted restriction of the word "knowledge" to deny that such knowledge as they had is of theological significance.[367]

The significance is that "knowledge" in the context of "Light" was used and interpreted by Quakers in a way recognised by Owen as similar to that of the Gnostics in terms of gnosis - it produced a supernatural and metaphysical union with God, a realisation that the individual has within him/herself an element of divine origin, following which there was the capacity for spiritual perfection, maturity and formation of the pneumatic, spiritual seed within (discussed in Chapter 3).

Moore[368] states that in the collected works that form *The Great Mystery*,[369] Fox repeats the doctrine that salvation came from the Light (which was from and was Christ) by direct revelation. Fox used biblical language to describe the work of Christ, especially Paul's "first" and "second" Adam metaphor: Christ was "the second Adam, the quickening spirit...the covenant ...of Light, of life, of peace, who was glorified with his Father before the world began."[370]

However, Moore[371] states that Quakers never clearly defined what they meant by "Light", nor its relationship with the Holy Spirit within a Trinitarian context:

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367 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 347.
368 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 108.
369 *Works*: 3.
370 Ibid., 3:17, 104.
371 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 81, 103.

> Fox certainly did not equate the Light with the Holy Spirit, and whilst plenty of examples equate the Light with the spiritual presence of Christ, he by no means always did so, and he was often ambiguous.[372]

This ambiguity may have induced Owen (1.4) to claim that Quakers and Gnostics opposed the doctrine of the Trinity. Fox's position is clarified from the following (an opponent's principle followed by Fox's answer):

> P. It is impudency in the Quakers to deny the word trinity, and three persons. And the church ever denied such as deny the doctrine of the trinity.
>
> A. As for the word trinity, and three persons, we have not read it in the Bible, but in the common-prayer-book, or mass-book, which the pope was the author of. But as for unity we own it, and Christ being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his substance (of the Father) we own; that which agrees with the scriptures, and for that which the scriptures speak not, which men speak and teach for doctrine, their own words, that the scriptures speak not nor teach, such the scriptures shut out, and we deny.[373]

Fox denied recognition of any doctrine of the "Trinity" as such, and creates ambiguity surrounding the position of the Holy Spirit which he does not clarify. Indeed, Fox seems to distinguish the Light and the Holy Ghost: "He that hates the light...is not like to receive the spirit"[374] and: "many have turned from the darkness to the light...and came to receive the Holy Ghost."[375] King suggests of Fox's theology that the Light is not, but bears a "close resemblance to, the Holy Ghost...The light within is sometimes said [by Fox] to be Christ, sometimes to be from Christ, sometimes from God, sometimes from Christ to show men the way to God."[376]

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372 Ibid., 109.
373 *Works*: 3:180.
374 Ibid., 3:342; 7:65.
375 Ibid., 1:195; 3:122.
376 King, *George Fox and the Light*. On 87fn.32, King states that from her research of *Works*:1: 260-306, *Works* 3: 206-269 and *Works* 7: 18-71, 133-188.: "I have counted the instances in which Fox uses such expressions as the light is Christ, the light is from or of Christ, or from or of God. I find that Fox relates the light to God only twenty times while he

Moore believes that Fox commonly described the Light as something that comes from Christ, or God - "the Light that Christ hath enlightened you withal"[377] without actually being Christ or God. The phrase "inner light", (often used by modern scholars) never occurs in early Quaker writings, and "inward light" is rare.[378]

Knox[379] views any ambiguity and contradiction arising from Fox's revelations as the consequence of adopting the inward Light as the rule of faith. Brinton suggests that "Fox had no consistent system of philosophy or theology into which he could fit his doctrine of the Light Within."[380] Ambiguity could lead to the possibility of inauthentic revelation and guidance, as recognised by Owen and indeed by Fox. Gwyn suggests that Fox "warns Friends [Quakers] against a mere gnosis..."[381] when Fox states: "many may have precious openings, but I desire that all may be comprehended in that thing which doth open to them; and that they may all keep in the daily cross..."[382]

Creasey illustrates how such ambiguity in "Light" terminology could inappropriately be seen and used by opponents as a weakness in Quaker theology:

> The language of the "inner light" was , and must necessarily be, unable by itself to express the full truth of the Christian gospel. By itself, and unless constantly re-charged with the rich historic, personal and incarnational content of Christian faith, it will continue to result,

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relates it to Christ one hundred and twelve times. Of the latter one hundred and twelve instances only thirty state that the light *is* Christ, and twenty instances of this thirty occur in [*Works*: 3]...This suggests that Fox usually thinks of the light as *of* or *from* Christ, and that he tends to emphasize the extreme position that the light *is* Christ when he is driven to do so by his opponents attack upon the diviness of the light."
On p.78., King notes a general identification of the Holy Ghost with the Light in *Works*, 3:107, 413; 7:53.
377 Fox, G. *To All People that Meet in Steeplehouses*. London: Simmons, 1657:5.
378 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 81.
379 Knox, R.A. *Enthusiasm*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950: 152.
380 Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years*, 20.
381 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 79.
382 *Works*: 2:230.

> as it did in the seventeenth century, in misunderstanding and misrepresentation both amongst those who use it and those who hear it used...it will give the impression that Friends fail to apprehend or appreciate the value of what is involved in the truth that the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.[383]

Moore[384] suggests that the possible introduction of an additional element to the "Trinity" (i.e. Light) caused problems in interpreting and defining Fox's message. It is the role and function of this additional element (which this thesis claims is similar to gnosis) which will now be considered.

2.6.1 THE FUNCTIONS OF LIGHT AND GNOSIS

The following statement of Benson is illustrative of the approach of previous research concerning the emphasis placed upon morality and ethics in considering the nature and function of Christ as "Light":

> The moral character of the Quakers was even more remarkable because it was not linked to any kind of legalism, biblical or otherwise, nor was it inspired by some abstract ascetic ideal. Behind the Quaker character was the Gospel that they preached: "Christ has come to teach his people himself." They believed that they were being taught the principles of God's righteousness and that when Christ led them into a course of moral action the power to obey would be given. This gave them a moral certainty which was accompanied by the gift of moral energies which were sufficient to give them a moral strength that they knew was beyond their human capacities.[385]

The moral/ethical emphasis has devalued if not excluded, the function of gnosis/Quaker Light that awakens the individual to the divinity that exists within them through union with Christ, and the process which may follow, i.e., the perfection and maturity of the divine element. Chapter 3 will illustrate that whilst the Gnostic is awakened to their divinity in this respect

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383 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 360.
384 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 109.
385 Benson, *Catholic Quakerism*, 12.

(as was Fox during his formative revelations in 1647/48, above) Foxian theology thereafter emphasised for others if not for Fox personally, a *process* leading to the possibility of divinity to the fullness of Christ, which the Gnostic had already achieved through a sacramental rebirth and initiation. A perfectionist and spiritually "enthusiastic" theology was however seen as at its "most extreme"[386] in the message of Fox, and was observed by Owen in his comparison of Quakers with the followers of Montanus (1.4).

The following sections illustrate (including reference to Fox's distinctive concept of the "soul" 2.8.1) that Fox used the dynamics and language (not the science) of metaphysics or *a Lichtmetaphysik*,[387] in his interpretation of the concept of Light. The metaphysical dynamic and the process of reunion of the soul/seed with its divine counterpart, illustrates a soteriology similar to the "light" dynamic of gnosis. Arising from Fox's metaphysical approach, Owen's criticism of Quaker theology and its comparison with gnosis is based on what Owen saw as the perfecting nature of gnosis and Quaker Light through inauthentic revelation. By implication, Quaker "Light" was dismissed by Owen[388] as conscience, a natural and inauthentic light of Christ operating in the absence of Trinitarian scriptural

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386 King, *George Fox and the Light*, 69: "The unqualified claims for the sinlessness and perfection of regenerate individuals occur in the [*Works*:3] ...where he [Fox] is pushed to extremes in combating his Calvinistic opponents who declare that although the saints are fully justified by God, yet in this veil of tears the actual progress to moral perfection is slow and incomplete."

387 Ibid., 86. King's use of this term relates to the English translations of German texts by John Everard, whom she believes employed "a definite Lichtmetaphysik" - an organically orientated metaphysics in which God is Light. King illustrates the concept by referring to Everard, John. *Some Gospel Treasures Opened.* London:N.p., 1653:341, 342, 381, 387, 425, 636, 637, 641.: "God is light; he is veiled from our sight by accidents; if we could truly see we would see that the eternal God flows into all creatures as the River Thames flows into all its adjoining creeks; the discipline required for the return of the soul to God includes the via negativa which is common where matter as such is thought to be a hindrance; the final goal is the return of the soul into God so that the individual becomes swallowed up in an everlasting abyss of silence and serenity."

388 Fisher and other early Quaker contributors to the Quaker-Puritan debate regarding the relationship of Quaker Light and the Trinity are reviewed by Creasey in "Early Quaker Christology", 154-181; and by Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 82-91.

assistance. Owen refers to a Quaker/Gnostic belief in a continuous process of uniting with and participating/sharing in, the consubstantial divine element:

> Christ was such an emanation of light and knowledge in them as made them perfect...This was the first way that Satan tempted the faith of the church, viz., by substituting a perfecting light and knowledge in the room of the person of Christ.[389]

Creasey states that Owen recognised a "revived Gnosticism"[390] in early Quakerism: "at worst a Satanic delusion - at its best, a high flying gnosticism - attracting unstable souls by its claim to be a 'purely spiritual' religion."[391] In gnosis, as in Fox's theology (2.2.1), spiritual resurrection and a realised eschatology can be experienced upon earth by all the regenerate.[392]

Rudolph notes the postmortem residual element to eschatological goals (above, 2.2.1) and that by implication death for the Gnostic is not the culmination of the process of gnosis, working throughout the Gnostic's life. The present and future aspects of salvation are therefore often very closely linked in the Gnostic texts. The Gnostic is already redeemed, although the completion of the redemption is still outstanding.[393]

The NHL confirms that a principal function of gnosis is (through experiential knowledge) to awaken, perfect and resurrect (2.2.1) the individual into recognising their divinity and reuniting the seed or soul with the redeemer - in essence to become a Christ by spiritual union with the redeemer pending final reunion after death.[394] Within gnosis, revelation to the Gnostic may be the Light itself or may lead to the Light.

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389 Owen, J. *Works*, Vol.1., 38.
390 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 157.
391 Ibid., 158.
392 King, *George Fox and the Light*, 112; *Works*: 3:93.
393 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 115.
394 Logan, A.H.B. "The Mystery of the Five Seals: Gnostic Initiation Reconsidered" *Vigiliae Christianae* 51 (1997): 188-206.

The Valentinian *Gospel of Philip*[395] states that perfection/union with God on earth is made possible by the ability to truly experience and become what is seen, in contrast with the earthly context where one visualises things but does not become them: "the region above you saw the spirit, you became the spirit; you saw the Christ, you became the Christ; you saw [the Father, you] shall become the Father"[396] Franzmann[397] indicates by reference to a Valentinian (or Christian Gnostic) text:

> that union is clearly possible for the Gnostic between the earthly and heavenly regions is implicit in all the [NHL] texts, and made explicit in passages such as [*The Letter of Peter to Philip*] "I am Jesus Christ who am with you forever."[398]

Perfection and the intimacy of the union with Christ/God is expressed in NHL texts in a variety of metaphorical images involving friendship, marriage, the body and clothing.[399] It is difficult to differentiate in the texts between what belongs to the activity of redemption/salvation, and what belongs to the unity between God and the divine in the individual, experienced by the elect in an ongoing process.[400]

Some examples of the use of metaphor illustrating Gnostic intimacy with God resulting in a real union and perfection of the pneumatic seed can be provided. In the Valentinian *Treatise on the Resurrection*,[401] the believer is embraced by Christ and "wears" Christ in this world. In *The Tripartate Tractate*[402] the Valentinian shares the body and essence[403] of the Saviour as

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395 NHC: II, *3*.
396 Ibid., 61.20-35.
397 Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 175.
398 NHC: VIII, *2*. 134.17-18.
399 Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 175.
400 Ibid., fn.1
401 NHC: I, *4*. 45.29-39.
402 NHC: I, *5*.
403 Ibid., 122.12-15.

if like a marriage[404] because of the unity and agreement with the Saviour. The Valentinian *Gospel of Philip*[405] refers to a union with the Saviour and the community in the bridal chamber with the believer clothed in Christ and becoming like Christ.[406]

The following section will consider this perfecting, reuniting and metaphysical transforming nature and function within the dynamics of Quaker Light.

2.7 THE TWO-FOLD NATURE OF QUAKER LIGHT

King[407] suggests a twofold distinction of Fox's interpretation of "Light":

a) that which shows, teaches and reveals evil in order to avoid it,

b) an element of "unity" with God, resulting in good conduct.

These morally and ethically motivated functions of Light are viewed as being of parallel significance in previous research, neither being secondary to the other.[408] Both are the consequence of divine revelation alone. More recently, Gwyn[409] interprets Fox's use of "unity with God" in terms of a covenantal fellowship, guiding individuals towards ethical behaviour.

However, within gnosis that element of the divine in the individual needs perfecting or maturing as it is already divine and consubstantial with the redeemer. Fellowship and conduct may have implications concerning the

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404 Ibid., 122.15-17, 136.1.
405 NHC: II, *3*.
406 Ibid., 67.26-27.
407 King, *George Fox and the Light*, 108.
408 Ibid., 71.
409 Gwyn, *Heaven on Earth*, 116., interprets the union as a covenant of Light, and in relation to the creative dynamics of the Light's apocalyptic revelation: "they experienced the light healing them, binding them into new solidarity, helping them to live more healthily and simply in God's creation."

preservation of the newly rediscovered divinity of the individual, but they are secondary to what has already occurred.

King[410] suggests the "revealing" or "teaching" usage and purpose of Light reflects the Puritan influence upon Fox. Additionally, the concept of ultimate unity with God (however defined) illustrates a mystical, Spiritualist influence that was reaching England from the Continent in the seventeenth century.[411] In terms of the Light's teaching role regarding individual conduct, Fox further divides the role between:

> a) that conduct to be followed in life (that of God) and conversely,
>
> b) that which is to be avoided (of the world).

Fox therefore identifies a separating function of the "teaching" Light which forms part of a process of spiritual growth:

> And let not thy nor none of your desires wander from that which is pure eternally in you. Then your conditions will be kept clear and pure to see all things as they are, and a clear separation will be made from that which is of man and of your own and that which is of God. And there will be a growing in that which is pure. And be low, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in you all...[412]

Fox refers to the separating process only after there is a focus upon the heavenly nature or divine within, which grows as the teaching guidance is acted upon. The following statement from Fox indicates that alongside the teaching function is the second role, that of unity grounded in conduct-related fellowship. Fox suggests that subsequent to the teaching process of making

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410 King, *George Fox and the Light Within*, 109.
411 Gwyn, *Seekers Found*, 64-65.
412 Fox, G. Swarthmore Manuscript, (a collection held at FHL, hereinafter referred to as SMSS) 7:103.

ethical and moral decisions (separating worldly concerns from those of God) there follows spiritual purity, holiness, and uprighteousness:

> wait on him for teaching, till an entrance thereof be made to your Souls, and Refreshment come to them from the presence of the Lord. There is your Teacher, the Light, obeying it, there is your Condemnation, disobeying it. If ye hearken to the Light in you it will not suffer you to conform to the evil ways, customs, fashions, delights and vanities of the world.; and so lead you to purity, to holiness, to uprighteousness, even up to the Lord.[413]

By experiencing the Light, Canby Jones[414] suggests Friends came into the covenant with God, into true knowledge and were separated from the vain world.

Wilcox[415] emphasises the revelatory powers of the Light in revealing the extent of the state of sin and granting the power to obey Christ and overcome sin. If the individual is "in Christ" or the Light, they are empowered to overcome individual sinful acts and temptations in their daily life. Wilcox suggests it reveals the way back or return to God, a process of reuniting "without metaphysical connotations."[416] This view is unjustified when regarding the following arguments, in particular that illustrated by 2.8-2.8.1. On the teaching and revealing aspect of Light, Ambler states that :

> The "Light" was a capacity within them [early Quakers] to see what they were doing or thinking, while "the self" was struggling at the same time to keep it well hidden - it wasn't in the interest of the self to acknowledge the truth. If however, those early Friends accepted the light, then in time, after a period of struggle, this stubborn old self would be deposed and a new self, "the seed", would come to life within them.[417]

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413 *Works:* 7:25.
414 Canby Jones, T. *The Power of the Lord is Over All: The Pastoral Letters of George Fox.* Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1989:12.
415 Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry,* 32.
416 Ibid.
417 Ambler, *Light to live by,* 6.

Moreover, Ambler[418] states that the process or moment of enlightenment (within the mechanics of the Light) is first of all a liberation from the illusions of self-centredness. This entails a release from customary habits of decision-making based on subjective judgment. Ambler states that a condition of being in the Light is that it is surrendered to (recognising that a true vision of the world comes from beyond humanity) when the individual can be free of the ego that obscures the true reality.[419]

Ambler's emphasis upon an objective surrendering to a true vision from beyond in order to reach the true "self" or divine within (as opposed to an emphasis upon moral/ethical discipline) is similar to the function of gnosis in its aim for union of redeemer and the inner divine, and the potential for growth in the divine element. However, unlike the objectivity emphasised by Ambler, the subjectivity inherent in any psychological analysis of the ego in terms of conscious and unconscious thought, is not part of gnosis. As Filoramo states:

> The Gnostic self, the ontological ego, the reality that makes one divine, must neither be regarded as an impersonal force that, as in ancient Dionysiac ecstasy and Apolline prophecy, penetrates the individual and expels the individual ego, suspending the individuality and the unconsciousness of the possessed during a period of ecstasy, nor must it be interpreted in terms of modern depth psychology or the blandishments of currently dominant subjectivism, as a reality for the Gnostic within one's own consciousness and therefore attainable by a simple act of inner reflection, a withdrawal into oneself. The "return to the self", the leitmotif of Gnostic knowledge, is not only a bare movement of the mind, by means of which the empirical ego, the "me", of everyday consciousness, the subject immersed in the world of becoming, is able to intuit and thence to grasp his or her ontological base, but also (and principally) an objective process, which develops outside the "me", which fulfils itself upon meeting the self, the divine and celestial counterpart of the Gnostic (variously named in Gnostic texts), which is the intermediary of revelation and at the same time its ultimate object and purpose.[420]

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418 Ambler, *The Discipline of Light*, 9.
419 Ibid.
420 Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 40.

This approach is similar to that of Ambler in its rejection of the "me" of ego-based false self, and the emphasis upon a union with an objective and eternal state beyond humanity. However, Ambler's interpretation of the nature and function of Light does not involve the individual being awakened to their divinity as in gnosis. The immediacy of this experience was claimed by Fox for himself (2.2.1) and was potentially available to others albeit by way of a process.

In the following texts Fox typically combines the teaching function of the universal saving Light ("light in the conscience") with the "unity" aspect of fellowship in Christ/God:

> To the light in all your consciences I speak everywhere, which will let you see all that is contrary to it. To that I am made manifest, the light, which if you love it, it will guide your hearts together into unity; for the unity is in the light; and up to God the Father of Light, and there is your teacher present always wither forever ye go or lying in your bed, this light doth not change.[421]

Further:

> and is against such an act contrary to the light of God in the conscience, who is the lover of peace and unity, in that which never changeth...where all the children of God in the light meet in one judgment and mind; which light is the condemnation of the world; in which light they walk...[422]

In relation to Fox's use of "conscience", Ambler[423] states:

> Early Friends all make a point of referring to the light in their conscience, implying that it was something distinct. And I take the difference to be this: your conscience makes you feel good or bad about things you've done, and the light then shows you precisely what those things are. The function of the light is to show you what's really

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421 Fox, G. *The World Profession Without Foundation.* London: N.p., 1655: 15.
422 Ibid.
423 Ambler, *Light to live by*, 17.

happening: "the light is that by which ye come to see"[424], for with the light man sees himself."[425]

Fox interprets the Light as that which brings into unity (the means) and in which is unity (the end) illustrating an unmediated relationship with God: "And in that they have victory, and in that they have unity one with another, and in it have access to God."[426] Further, "in which light we have unity which gathers our hearts together to God."[427] Fox also employs the figurative language of incorporation into Christ: "the light [within] leads up to Christ, from whence the light comes, and so joins to the head, and brings the body together, which are all joined together in the light."[428]

Brinton states that "Light is a source of power by which those that follow it may create unity, not only in their own fellowship, but by answering that of God in everyone."[429]

Carter[430]states that by waiting and meeting in the Light, Friends experienced a joining together with each other and with Christ - the Light was associated with God's power to unify, to bring illumination and wisdom, to make humble and judge, to effect perfection and give dominion over all things.[431]

This section illustrates that Fox did see a function of the Light as conduct and fellowship orientated, with a teaching aspect. The following sections demonstrate that Fox was equally if not primarily concerned with the function of Light which metaphysically transformed the divine in the

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424 *Works*: 7:42
425 Ibid., 142.
426 *Works:* 3:450.
427 Fox, G. *A Declaration Against All Profession and Professors*, 9.
428 Fox, G. *The Unmasking and Discovery of Anti Christ*. London: N.p., 1653:10.
429 Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years*, 30.
430 Carter, "Early Friends and the Alchemy of Perfection", 246.
431 Ibid.

individual following a concept similar to that of Valentinian supernatural union with God.

2.8 METAPHYSICAL UNION IN THE DYNAMICS OF THE LIGHT

Gwyn states that: "Fox's sense of union with the divine is ethically defined, not a matter of philosophical, metaphysical speculation... Their [early Quaker] preoccupation with concrete sinfullness cannot simply be shrugged off..."[432]

However, Fox[433] claims to be free of sin, a permanent state of being from which he suggests he would not fall (2.2.1). The metaphysical dynamics of Gnosticism incorporate conduct and ethics as relevant to whether the recipient would receive gnosis, perfection and union, as Logan[434] states in the introduction to this chapter (and further detailed consideration will be given in 3.7-3.8, below). King also adopts a similar view to Gwyn, above:

> In *Lichtmetaphysik* the light is thought of in terms of being, [i.e., as in gnosis] with the distinction of right and wrong as secondary considerations; with Fox the distinguishing feature of the Light is that it has to do with moral right and wrong.[435]

This chapter and Chapter 3 will attempt to show that morals were a consequential aspect of the metaphysical state of being, arising through the function of revelatory Light. The metaphysical state is a spiritual transformation of the individual. The transformation impacts upon the physical body only in so far as the body becomes of, or includes, the divine essence and nature, in a union with God.

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[432] Arising from private correspondence between Douglas Gwyn and Glen Reynolds in relation to a draft of a thesis chapter, 20.6.00.
[433] *Works*: 1:84.
[434] Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 212.
[435] King, *George Fox and the Light*, 85.

In relation to *Lichtmetaphysik*, the above over-generalised view of King fails to appreciate the necessary conduct required to be receptive to the lifetime workings of gnosis. For example. Stroumsa[436]states that there is "an obsessive preoccupation with the problem of evil " in order to preserve the state of divinity once realised. This concern lead to conduct and sin-related considerations within Gnostic communities.

The prior research emphasis upon ethics rather than the metaphysics of a divine state in Fox's Light theology is in stark contrast to the identification with the divine by Fox when stating of God: "As he is, so are we in this present world."[437] For Fox, ethical and moral issues were consequential to the spiritual transformation that occurred through a supernatural union with God. In essence, without the spiritual transformation, the ethical significance is redundant. As King acknowledges, concluding with a reference to 1 John 3:9:

> Regeneration for Fox is a change of state. A sum of good deeds does not make a good man, but he only is a good man whose whole will has turned towards the light in obedience, which act brings man into a state in which he can be supernaturally born again. The regenerate man is born of God and does not commit sin, neither can he.[438]

Filoramo illustrates the metaphysical approach to Light dynamics within Gnosticism, to which Fox's Light theology will be compared:

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436 Stroumsa, G.A.G. "Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology." (a Monograph in a Series) *NHS* 24. (1984):17

437 *Works*: 1:65.

438 King, *George Fox and the Light*, 46. Moore in *The Light in Their Conscience*, 87 and 264fn.39., refers to Fox's contemporary Martin Mason in *The Proud Pharisee Reproved*, London: N.p.,1655 as stating: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin", claiming that Mason suggests that: "the plain meaning of the Greek word translated as "commit" is that those "born of God" do not commit any sin at all, not that they do not practice sin or make a habit of sinning, which was the usual interpretation put forward by most biblical commentators."

> The presupposition of the Gnostic theory of enlightenment is a metaphysics of the light that arises and is established throughout the Christian era. Instead of simply being a means of knowledge, a "how" of existence, as is typical of the classical tradition, the light becomes its privileged object. It is transformed in fact into a force, a power that is life, incorruptible divine life...A desire is born, an acute longing to open itself to that light world of the divine life, to return once again to rest in the calm, tranquil bosom of primordial light. In its more radical formulations, this nostalgia for its openness means only the drive to become and to be light, to participate in that particular life to the point of identifying with the divine light that constitutes the substance of the world of the pleroma - that is , of the fullness of the divine reality.[439]

Fox identified himself with the Light as evidenced by his fully realised eschatology, his claims to be a son of God, his perfection and the state of paradise in which he found himself (2.2.1 and below). King (by way of an apparent contradiction with the statement above on *Lichtmetaphysik*) believed that Fox came close to the type of Light dynamic illustrated by Filoramo. King states that Fox's ultimate relationship of unity is one of fellowship (in the sense suggested by Carter and Wilcox, above) "but more intimate than this - God and man are now at one... It is near to the deification of man."[440]

However, Fox's sense of union[441] and consequent salvation is later described by King in terms of "the deification of humanity."[442] King's conclusions are inconsistent when also stating that: "Fox's unity with God is never the merging of the human with the divine, never a swallowing up of the human in the divine."[443] Whilst use of the term "deification" is not considered appropriate to the seventeenth century, King appears reluctant to accept that Fox pursued a theology that incorporated the possibility of "deification", perhaps an illustration of the caution of scholars suggested by Ingle.[444]

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439 Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 44.
440 King, *George Fox and the Light*, 46.
441 *Works*: 3:34, 165, 233.
442 King, *George Fox and the Light*, 68.
443 Ibid., 120.
444 Ingle, "On the Folly ", 17.

This section will now examine how Fox's unity with Christ or the Light (the means and end being revelation) is interpreted by this thesis as similar to Valentinianism. The "unity" Fox advocates is that reached via the divine Light, soul or seed which exists within all individuals.[445] In Gnosticism, the Light, divine spark,[446] seed[447] or soul within the individual is "awakened" (typically from sleep or drunkenness within Gnostic texts) by the call/revelation of the redeemer. Similarly in relation to Quaker "Light", King[448] states that the divine within every individual is in death prior to regeneration (for which organic garden symbolism is employed[449]) and unity with the divine follows.

Fox[450] described this regeneration in terms of a physical sensation and process, that Christ gives his blood to the saints constantly for their nourishment. This is not simply figurative as Fox[451] asserts he can mystically feel the blood within as he can feel the Light within. King believes that this transformed state is the "extreme and atypical position of Fox."[452] This thesis argues that this state results in the unqualified claims for the sinlessness and perfection of regenerate individuals as referred to in *The Great Mystery*,[453] examined in Chapter 3.

This distinctive position adopted by Fox (as to the supernatural workings of Light) is similar to that of gnosis and illustrated Fox's belief in the possibility of perfection and union with Christ by the Light and not simply a conduct-related phenomenon. This "extreme and atypical" position of Fox

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[445] King, *George Fox and the Light*, 123.
[446] Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 44. Jonas notes from Gnostic texts that as part of Gnostic anthropology: "Enclosed in the soul is the spirit, or "pneuma" (called also the spark), a portion of the divine substance from beyond which has fallen into the world."
[447] The use of "seed" as divine particles to be united with and returned to the Pleroma is discussed in Pagels, "A Valentinian Interpretation", 153-169.
[448] King, *George Fox and the Light*, 121.
[449] Ibid., 76.
[450] *Works*: 3:49, 345.
[451] Ibid., 268.
[452] King, *George Fox and the Light*, 69.
[453] *Works*: 3:268.

(noted by King in 1940) has not been analysed in terms of gnosis within the general conservative approach of subsequent research indicated above in this section. However, Fox's identification with the divine is illustrated in contemporary research, below.

Unlike the "degrees" or "measures" of perfection (3.6) the individual is either in the Light or out of it. There is no difference in degree of unity in the Light *per se*, it is a question of whether the individual's openness to Light is acted upon by God or not.[454] Creasey[455] observes that in the matter of perfection, Quakers regarded it as a genuine possibility in proportion as the Light was obeyed and followed. Fox's greater calling (as evidenced by his revelations in 1647 and 1648, 2.2.1) was recognised by other Quakers as Fox having a greater union with Christ than they did:

> in principle all Quakers were sons or daughters of God and united with Christ, but everybody's "measure" was not equal and Quakers recognised that some people had a special calling as Elders or Ministers to the flock. George Fox had an extra special calling, and few Quakers quarrelled with this assumption.[456]

As evidence of metaphysics in terms of mechanics and imagery in pursuit of "fullness," in the following 1658 publication, Fox includes cautionary guidance against activity and declarations which are beyond a person's spiritual "measure":

> Every man that hath a measure of the spirit of God, in the least measure or degree, it is infallible, and so far may they teach infallibly, and know scriptures; but they cannot know all scriptures, but as they attain to the full measure of the spirit of the prophets and apostles, and to the measure, and stature, and fullness of Christ. And if they do not

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454 Ibid., 119.
455 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 160.
456 Moore, *The Light In Their Consciences*, 44.

> attain to all this, they are not able to know all the scriptures.. And take heed of any of you going beyond your measure.[457]

From the above it is clear that individuals may fail in attaining paradisiacal perfection yet come close to it, as if on a metaphysical sliding spiritual scale (3.6). The cautionary addition of exceeding one's measure relates to those who claim a degree of spiritual or scriptural understanding without merit, i.e., through arrogance or hypocrisy.

What is significant in this context of a comparison with gnosis is that Moore believes that a real union with Christ, however expressed, was fundamental to Fox, indeed, the "keystone"[458] of his theology. In a comparison with Fox's contemporary, the controversial Quaker James Nayler (5.2) Moore states that :

> Nayler's writing did not show the intensity of personal religious experience of Fox, but, like Fox he wrote of a real union with God, although he understood this as a rather static, mystical union, while for Fox it was a dynamic take-over related to his own prophetic call.[459]

Moore[460] suggests that in 1650 Fox employed a distinctive language of "unity with Christ" not discernible in his later published Epistles: "The more extreme language describing union with God or with Christ was confined to letters, while material for publication was more cautiously expressed."[461] Such enthusiasm was at risk of being found contrary to legislation, i.e. the Blasphemy Act of 1650. This Act prohibited anyone to claim:

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457 *Works*: 3:347.
458 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences,* 109.
459 Ibid., 79.
460 Ibid., 76.
461 Ibid., 78.

> to be very God, or to be infinite or Almighty, or in Honor, Excellency, Majesty and Power to be equal, and the same with the true God, or that the true God, or the Eternal Majesty dwells... in them and nowhere else.[462]

Fox used language involving union or identification with God which was seemingly in contravention of this legislation. However, Fox may have been referring to John 1:12 or Psalms 82.6 in his "Godded" language when stating:

> God is pure who hath spoken it, and as many as received the word, I say unto you, ye are gods, as it is written in you...now wait all to have these things fulfilled in you, if it be never so little a measure wait in it, that you may grow up to a perfect man in Christ Jesus, there is a feeding upon the milk of the word, before you come to the words.[463]

The response from contemporary anti-Quaker tracts[464] demonstrate that: "the earliest Quaker teaching was mainly concerned with direct union with Christ or with God, expressed in terms of the body of Christ, or of divine indwelling."[465] This direct union was not just a vague sense of undefined spiritual unity; body and spirit together were one with Christ. Fox employs a language which linked the spiritual with the physical: "The blood of Christ which satisfies the Father, which the saints drink, and his flesh which they eat."[466]

In contrast to Fox's use of "unity" some influential early Quakers avoided such terminology in expressing the regeneration that occurs within the person.[467] Fox (despite the Blasphemy legislation), continued to think of

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462 Firth, C.H. and Rait, R.S., eds., *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*. 3 Vols. London, 1911.
463 SMSS II, 55.
464 Higginson, F. *Brief Relation of the Irreligion of the Northern Quakers*. London: T.R., 1653.; and the anonymous *Querers and Quakers.*
465 Moore, *The Light in their Consciences*, 77.
466 *Works:* 3:227.
467 e.g., Farnworth. *Englands Warring Peace.* York: Thomas Wayte, 1653:15.

salvation in terms of divine sonship and used contentious language. He would express it in terms of New Testament text: " You that are turned to this Light which doth enlighten you, you are turned to Christ the power of God...and you that receive the Light, shall receive power to become the sonnes of God."[468]

Ingle states that early Quakers were "enthusiasts" (as did Owen, 1.4) i.e., they believed they were possessed by God:

> Two of their central teachings, that Christ was present to teach and lead his people and that every person possessed the Inward teacher, easily shaded over into the view that Christ was within each individual. Hence the Quaker assertion that the divine Christ lived in them seemed an obvious attempt to identify with the messiah, perhaps even to claim divinity.[469]

When rumours circulated that Fox had been calling himself Christ, Fox denied the charge but confused the issue by calling his accuser a "Judas."[470] Fox continues to use the expression that he was, and others could be, sons of God;[471] he agreed with the charge that he was the son of God at Carlisle in 1653[472] and stated as such in a letter to Oliver Cromwell in 1654.[473]

As 5.2 illustrates, an editorial process of moderating Fox's theological approach (what this thesis asserts as similar to Valentinian Gnosticism) in the early Quaker record led to the 1694 edition of Fox's Journal (edited by Ellwood) excluding reference to these passages and such "enthusiastic" language. Ingle[474] suggests that Ellwood and other moderators did this

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[468] Fox, G. *This For Each Parliament Man*. London: Simmons, 1656:1.
[469] Ingle, "George Fox as Enthusiast", 266.
[470] Ellwood, T, ed., *Journal of George Fox*. London: Sowle, 1694:67.
[471] Penney, N., ed., *Short Journal and Itinerary Journals of George Fox*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925:17.
[472] Ibid., 33.
[473] CJ: 1:161-2., 425-6.
[474] Ingle, "George Fox as Enthusiast", 266.

because they wished to make Fox appear respectable to the established Church.

The "son of God" language (whilst rare) provides a better understanding of the early "union with God" theology of Fox, than that published at the end of the seventeenth century.[475] The following 1653 Epistle was addressed to "Margaret Fell and evry [sic] other friend who is raised to discerning" and represents a statement of Fox's belief in God-possession following his revelations of 1647/8 (2.2.1):

> According to the Spirit I am the Sonne of God and according to the flesh I am the seed of Abraham which is Christ, which seed is not many but one, which seed is Christ and Christ in you. The mystery which has been hid for ages is now made manifest...which seed bruised the serpents head...According to the spirit I am the Sonne of God before Abraham was, before Jerusalem was, the same which doth descend, the same doth descend...[476]

Irrespective of the possibility that Fox may have been referring to the language of John 1:12, the later Quaker embarrassment with the Epistle is illustrated by the revised opening line given to it by the anonymous seventeenth century compiler of the *Annual Catalogue of George Fox's Papers*.[477] Instead of reading "I am the son of God", the compiler gives two alternative readings: "I am chosen" and (more significant still, for this wording completely undercuts the force, power and meaning of the Epistle according to Ingle[478]) "Christ is" the son of God.

Bailey suggests the term "Christopresent" to indicate Fox's claims that he was the very Son of God :

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[475] Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 76
[476] SMSS II, 55.
[477] Cadbury, H.J., ed., *Annual Catalogue of George Fox's Papers*. Philadelphia: Friends Book Store, 1939:42 (item 19, 67A).
[478] Ingle, "George Fox as Enthusiast", 269.

> Fox was casting himself, not only as an eschatological prophet but as a magus, avatar - a new incarnation of Christ representative of the culmination of God's dealing with human history...It was his claim to divinity above all else that prompted the charges of heresy and blasphemy.[479]

Bailey argues that the following statement of Fox indicates the operative theme of celestial inhabitation in his theology - that there were no distinctions in the Godhead as "leading early Quakers refused to separate Christ's body and Christ's spirit."[480] Fox stated:

> And you say the spirit is distinguished from the Father and the son from eternity, and Christ saith it proceeds from him and the Father, and he is the God and the Father of all spirits of all flesh, and the substance of all things...And are there not three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the word, and the spirit, and are they not all one? How then are they distinct?..And Christ saith, "I and my father are one"...and he is in the saints and so not distinct.[481]

The literal as opposed to figurative presence of Christ in the theology of Fox occurs because early Quakers had a tendency to confuse the earthly creature with the glorified inner being of the believer.[482] Bailey states that the "context of celestial inhabitation really implied deification at least until the time of the transformation of the doctrine of the inner light."[483] For Fox and early Quakers generally, there was little distinction between the physical and the spiritual; the relationship between Christ and the believer was very close, described as being "flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone."[484] Fox typically combines both in the following text:

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479 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*,19.
480 Ibid., 78.
481 *Works:* 3:180. Further examples of Fox's combined use of Christ's spirit and body in texts are at *Works*: 3: 206, 243-44, 291-92, 340, 397, 399, 402.
482 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 133.
483 Ibid., 123, fn.129.
484 *Works*: 3:2, 46, 51.

> for he that holds up priests which receive tythes according to the Law, and now doth deny Jesus Christ come in the flesh, and who loves the light that he hath give them, witnesses Jesus Christ come in the flesh...[485]

Bailey[486] uses the term "Christopresentism" to describe the displacement of the human body when the spirit or Light was in the believer; this term means present as in "flesh and bone"or "in fact," rather than "in essence." Conversely, within Valentinianism Irenaeus[487] stated that the Gnostic emphasis upon the spiritual dictated that the transformation is a realised divinity without physical or corporeal connotation. It is a realisation and growth of the divine nature and essence of Christ/God. The following extract of Fox is relied upon by Bailey in identifying a concept of "celestial inhabitation" in Fox's theology:

> And the scriptures do witness heaven within...And if the saints sat in heavenly places with Christ Jesus; and if the saints in heaven must have a heavenly body, and Christ a human body, (which I say is earthly), how doth this agree with scripture, that says Christ's is a glorious body? And is it an earthly body the saints eat, when they eat the flesh of Christ? And are not people in their first state, in the earthly, before they come to witness a spiritual body like unto his glorious body? How do you divide the word aright? And they that have the spirit of Christ, their spirits are in heaven, and they have unity with the Father.[488]

Bailey suggests that in Fox's theology more than grace is infused into the believer; "the inhabitation of the celestial Christ within effects a pervasive and permanent transformation wherein the saint is divinized."[489] Bailey is explicit in his belief (with which this thesis concurs), that Fox's emphasis upon unity is similar to Gnosticism in character, and further states

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485 Fox, G. *A Word from the Lord To All the World.* London: N.p., 1654:4.
486 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 80.
487 *Adv. haer.* I. 21.4., referred to by Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 176.
488 *Works*: 3:183.
489 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 79.

that: "like some ancient Gnostics, Fox stressed unity and identity with the divine rather than distinctiveness from the divine."[490]

However, whereas Bailey correctly observes that "deification was a natural corollary to celestial inhabitation"[491] as 5.4 will emphasise, Gnostic perfection, union and gnosis is not concerned with making the *flesh* holy, which is at the heart of Bailey's argument. As this thesis argues that Gnostic salvation is by nature as well as by grace[492](2.2-2.2.1, 3.6-3.8, 4.2) these aspects illustrate a difference between Bailey's interpretation of Fox and the salvation or soteriology within Gnosticism. It is the Gnostic realisation of a divine element within (the potential for salvation by nature) and its reunion thereafter with the external consubstantial divine (through a process of grace) which is fundamental to gnosis as determined by its mythology. The Gnostic mechanics of salvation are missing from Bailey's concept. In addition, the object of salvation in Bailey's interpretation - the divinisation of "matter", i.e., flesh and bone as distinct from the perfection and maturity of the pneumatic element, seed, spark or soul (2.8.1, 3.7-3.8) would be anathema to Gnostic soteriology.

Naylor comments upon the glorified state of Fox, noting that Fox speaks as Christ, having transcended the carnal state into the glorified: "The spirit that spoke in him [Fox] is equal with God."[493] As discussed in 5.2, Bailey suggests that after 1670, Fox[494] toned down his status from avatar or a revelation of the divine in the last days, to confirming that he had the same spirit as the Apostles.

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490 Ibid., xii.
491 Ibid., 81.
492 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 240.
493 Naylor, J. *A Discovery of the Man of Sin*. London: N.p., 1655:13., *An Answer to the Book Called the Perfect Pharisee*. London: N.p., 1655:4.
494 CJ:2:252.

Bailey[495] asserts that Creasey,[496] Benson[497] and Gwyn[498] saw the "Christopresentism" in Fox but they failed to draw out the most radical implications of Fox's celestial adoption theory - that the inward dwelling Christ literally transformed and perfected the saints so that they became flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.

Creasey[499] specifically addresses this issue of "inward dwelling," drawing a distinction between Christ's "being in" (the Christopresentism referred to above) and his "indwelling", and agrees with Barclay who stated: "we are far from ever having said that Christ is thus formed in all men."[500]

Creasey[501] believes that the phrase "formed within" implies a "union" but "inhabitation of Christ" occurs only in so far as the soul turns to and obeys the Light: it is a process involving travail, and is a great attainment. Barclay, as shown in Chapter 5, is a second generation Quaker operating in a time in which censorship and moderation is apparent. Creasey, in following Barclay's approach, fails to recognise that a far from superficial "union" (if not necessarily in the flesh and bone as suggested by Bailey) was inherent in the message of Fox.

There is no lengthy published response to Bailey's study.[502] However, Moore supports Bailey's analysis of the Quakers' understanding of their relationship to Christ (in terms of the non-figurative sense of union) describing it as "probably as nearly accurate as it is possible to come."[503]

Smith reaches the same conclusion as Bailey regarding Fox's combined use of spirit and body in language, but argues that "since so much

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495 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 19. fn.53.
496 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology".
497 Benson, *Catholic Quakerism*.
498 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*.
499 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 111.
500 Barclay, *Barclay's Apology in Modern English*, Props. V-VI.
501 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 111.
502 Bailey, R. Letter to the author of this thesis, 25.2.1999.
503 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 78.

of early Quaker protest depended upon bodily as well as verbal gesture, body and language were inextricably linked as the sites in which the workings of the inner Light were known."[504] Additionally, Smith states that Bailey's view of Fox developing a doctrine of "Christopresentism," with the possibility that the inward Light makes the flesh holy: "seems an exaggeration or the result of too willing an ear given to Fox's Puritan opponents, but the fact is that such concerns are important."[505]

In following Bailey's approach, Tarter's research concerning Fox's principle of unity is argued in terms of flesh and "fusion" with Christ, stating that Friends:

> waited to receive divine movement within, and upon feeling this ecstatic embodiment, they in a sense became transubstantiated - Christ as flesh and bone inhabiting them, fusing with them.[506]

Tarter states that Fox told his followers that the eternal Christ was with them, inhabiting every particle of their body: "The eternal Christ was located within every human being and accessible to any who waited and listened in silence to feel the voice of inward Light."[507] In using the same language ("flesh and bone") as Bailey identifies in Fox, this thesis suggests in 5.3, that the emphasis upon physical unity is inappropriate.

Scriptural language according to Smith,[508] (such as the flesh and bone of Ephesians 5:30) becomes an allegory for the workings of the inward light and the change in anatomy for a regenerate Quaker. This may explain Fox's possible interest in Hermetic writing (3.4) - what is usually seen as

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504 Smith, N. "Hidden Things Brought to Light", in T.N. Corns, D. Loewenstein., eds., *The Emergence of Quaker Writing: Dissenting Literature in Seventeenth Century England.* London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.1995:57.
505 Ibid.
506 Tarter, *Sites of Performance*, 27.; "Quaking in the Light", 145-162.
507 Tarter, *Sites of Performance*, 27/28.
508 Smith, "Hidden Things Brought to Light", 57.

metaphorical becomes something much more challenging: a real transformation. However, the transformation was spiritual and not identified with the physical. Fox was interested in the eternal rather than created and physical matter (2.1, 2.3).

Fox imagined that he had transformed his entire being: he was in a pre-Fall Adam and Eve state in a perfect natural world. Fox explains how he "under a great work of the Lord fell into a trance for a fortnight and was very much altered in countenance and person as if my body had been new moulded or changed."[509] During the 1650s the definition and comprehension of concepts relating to matter and substance, the body and its relationship with the soul, was at the heart of the sectarian debate. Early Quaker writing expressed an interest in such matters in common with the milieu of the time.[510]

The above sub-section illustrates previous research as generally emphasising the ethical and behavioural aspects of the unity dynamic of Light, but some present research is identifying Fox's use of Light in a more than figurative sense, in which similarities with gnosis and Gnostic soteriology are discernible. This is not to suggest that Fox's account of the Light (as with the gnosis of the early Church) failed to acknowledge an important, albeit secondary, emphasis upon ethical consequence in terms of fellowship.

The metaphysical aspect of Fox's theology is best illustrated by his distinctive concept of the divine in the soul, the mechanics of which are remarkably similar to the reunion/perfection aspects of Valentinian soteriology.

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509 *Works*: 1:80.
510 Smith, "Hidden Things Brought to Light", 65.

2.8.1 THE REUNION OF THE DIVINE SOUL

A distinctive aspect of Fox's concept of the Light is now demonstrated as similar to an "essential basic idea"[511] of Gnosticism. This aspect relates to Fox's interpretation of the divine in the individual, and its relationship with Light, and the immortal soul. King illustrates the distinctive approach of Fox:

> It seems to me that Fox comes the nearest to giving an explanation for this change in being [to a regenerated state of spiritual perfection] in his theory of the soul, which always has human connotations but is so intimately connected with God as to be practically an emanation from God. The divine is supposed to be in man and of man but it is in death before regeneration. Thus this unity of man with God which is spoken of as fellowship, would seem to involve, or at least to have overtones of, a certain amount of identity of being of man with God.[512]

In 1653 Fox states:

> And know the word of God abiding in you, which was in the beginning, and brings to the beginning; which word being ingrafted, it saves the soul, and hammers down, and throws down, and burns up that which wars against it.[513]

In a significant observation, Jones stated that Fox believed: "there was something of God, which may be called a divine seed or a divine Light, laid down in the nature and disposition of the soul."[514] The caution suggested by King above (regarding the potential for "deification" of the soul in Fox's theology) is not reflected in the following language used by Fox in 1658 (in the context of Fox's answers (A) to principles (P) offered by opponents):

> P. That is the weak, ignorant, dark, and the wicked sect of the devil, that maintain an equality with God; the soul to be one being with God,

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511 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 57.
512 King, *George Fox and the Light Within*, 121.
513 *Works*: 7:30.
514 Jones, R. *The Life and Message of George Fox* (Tercentenary address given at Haverford College, May 17th 1924), New York: The Macmillan Co., 1924:10.

or part of God...The Quakers say, there is no scripture speaks of a human soul, and the soul is taken up into God and God is all in all.

A. The assembly, or synod of priests, put forth a catechism, and say that the holy ghost and the son are equal with the Father in power and glory: and this they put forth that people should learn it: then, if any come to witness the holy ghost, they come to witness that which is equal in power and glory with the Father? If any come to witness the son of God revealed in them, (which he that hath not, hath not life,) do they not come to witness him who is equal in power and glory with the Father? This is your own catechism. And is it blasphemy to confess your own words, that ye have given people to learn? God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul. God, who hath all souls in his hand...And is not this [breath of life] that cometh out from God, which is in God's hand, part of God, of God, from God, and goes to God again? Which soul Christ is the bishop of. And dost not [opponents of Quaker theology] speak of a human soul, an earthly soul, and is earthly immortal? Cannot it die nor be killed? And is not that which came out from God, which God hath in his hand, taken up into God again, which Christ the power of God is bishop of, is not this of God's being? And dost not the Scripture say, God is all in all?..

P. It is a wretched doctrine to say men have not a human soul in them, and to say that the soul is part of the divine essence.

> A. Is not that of God that came out from him? and is not the earthly and human of the ground? and is that not mortal? and is that which is immortal human? And dost thou say it is human, and is that not earthly? And where doth the scripture of the prophets, Christ or the apostles, tell people of a human soul; and of Christ having a human body in heaven? And doth not the apostle speak of his glorified body?[515]

Fox is clear that the soul receives part of the divine essence at the birth of the individual. Fox emphasises that "God breathed into man the breath of life", not the possibility that God may do so. In a Gnostic context, Filoramo has stated:

> revelation is possible only because within the Gnostic there somehow pre-exists a disposition, a capacity, a potential fitted for testing and getting to know that particular reality [the revealer, i.e., Christ]. Only

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515 *Works*: 3:180-1.

> like can in fact know like. Only spiritual beings can perceive, receive and understand the spiritual.[516]

This "disposition, capacity, a potential" is the divine essence breathed into the soul in the individual, that of God in the "nature and disposition of the soul", as recognised by Jones[517] in the theology of Fox. This is illustrative of the ontological perspective, i.e., the significance of the nature and quality of the divine component within a metaphysical context. Fox states that whilst available to all from birth, that of God in the soul was still capable of being rejected by the individual who would be reprobated.[518]

The divine element of the soul is a separate and distinct entity, emanating from God and sharing the divine existence to the extent that it is equal with God in nature and substance. In advance of Chapter 5 (which illustrates the bowdlerisation of Fox's texts) Bailey asserts: "that it was the glorified soul that Quaker theologians de-divinized"[519] from Fox's message.

Fox's view of the eternal nature of the immortal divine soul within the individual, consubstantial with Light and alien to darkness, is graphically represented in the following:

> The ministers of the spirit watched for the soul, the prophets and apostles knew its state, and knew Christ the bishop of it, and saw when the soul was in death, and saw when God saw pleasure in it, when it lived...For who have the mysteries of the gospel, which is the power of God, which gives liberty to the captive soul... Such a one is a true workman, that divides his work aright, and is not ashamed of his work, of his building, but presents his soul to God, and knows when it is in death, and when it is living. And so they who are come up into the bishop, Christ, are one soul, they know the hand of God which the soul lives in (which is the power) and so know it from eternity to eternity...And so what fellowship hath the light with darkness? It hath no fellowship with it...And you are stumbling at such as are become the sons of God, adopted sons and heirs, and of the flesh and bone of

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516 Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 40.
517 Jones, *The Life and Message of George Fox*, 10.
518 *Works:* 1:349.
519 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 228.

> Christ, and of his mind and spirit, who are in possession of the scriptures, the durable life of the saints...The soul is that which came out from God, and is in God's hand...And appetite and pleasure are human; these are not immortal, which the soul is.[520]

In 1677 (indicative of what this thesis argues as the de-gnosticising of Foxian theology, Chapter 5) Fox appears to adjust his position regarding the nature of the soul: the individual's spirit, body, mind, soul and conscience became identified with the created human body (rather than emanated from God) until lit by the revelatory Light of Christ:

> And so Christ, who is the light, who enlightens every man that comes into the world with his divine light, which is called, the life in the word, which was in the beginning, who is the light of the world; which is not a natural light, or a created light, but a spiritual, heavenly, and a divine light, which enlightens every man's spirit that comes into the world, his candle; for the spirit of man, is the candle of the Lord, and the candle stick is every man's body, mind, soul and conscience, that with this spirit their candle being lighted, and set up in its candlestick, they may see all that is in the house; and with this light they may see Christ that died for them, and is risen for them: so come by this light, which is life in the word, to be grafted into Christ the word, which was in the beginning , which lives and abides, and endures forever...[521]

The "spirit of man" (i.e., not the Holy Spirit) was the candle, i.e., a vehicle (natural and created) which was present from birth and when receptive of the Light of Christ, enabled the believer to be grafted into Christ and perfected (Chapter 3). But the natural and created soul still contained something of the divine essence, with the potential for divinisation as it awaited receipt of the divine Light. As Bailey notes: "the soul was divinized at the birth of Christ within...Fox's inner light never changed. It always remained the presence of the celestial Christ."[522] In terms of a similar approach within Gnosticism, the divine element in its possession of the

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520 *Works*: 3:371.
521 *Works*: 5:341-81, 346.
522 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 228.fn.25.

divine essence or heavenly Light, is metaphysically distinct from the natural and created body.

Prior to the NHL, Jonas[523] seemingly identifies the soteriological significance of the soul within Valentinian texts in which it is viewed in negative terms as a product of hostile or cosmic powers. However, identical to Fox's concept of the soul, enclosed in the natural human soul is the portion of the divine substance which in various complex schemes within Gnostic literature, awakes to the presence of the light-power.[524] In relation to the Christian Gnostic text *The Apocryphon of John*,[525] Logan[526] identifies the light-power which descends and works upon the soul present in humanity to ensure its essential salvation. For the Valentinian it is the divine element, seed or spark that unites with the pleroma (fn.22 above).

As indicated above, 2.2.1, Rudolph[527] suggests that in Gnosticism, perfection is only capable of completion and fully realised at death, when the spirit or soul as descriptions of the divine particles of light are separated from the body. This process is illustrated in the *Book of Thomas the Contender*.[528] The light withdraws to its true beginning and its true liberation.[529]

Fox's view of the soul is that it is, or consists of, an emanation from God (Light) in the individual as suggested by King. The Light affects the nature and disposition of the soul which is or becomes immortal and divine. The divine Light in the soul is consubstantial with Christ (the heavenly redeemer) who in Fox's theology and in Gnosticism, seeks out the divine element trapped in the human body which need to be reunited with God, to the realm of the eternal Light.

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523 Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 44.
524 Ibid.
525 NHC: II, *1*; III, *1*; IV, *1*; and BG 8502, 2.
526 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 259.
527 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 115.
528 NHC: II, *7*.
529 Ibid., 139. 28-30.

The metaphysical language employed by Fox[530] at the beginning of this section is used to illustrate his principle of the soul's reunion with God. It is indicative of the metaphysical union of the consubstantial divine Light in the individual with God and the redeemer, in Valentinianism. In advance of a comparison of Fox and Gnostic Hermetic influence/literature in Chapter 3, van den Broek[531] states (in relation to the soul) that divine revelation rather than any philosophical tradition of the Hermetic tractates, incorporates and teaches the way of obtaining gnosis. Hermetica illustrates the process by which the Gnostic goal of divinity is attained:

> Hermetica teaches a way by which the soul can ascend to the divine realm above the sphere of the fixed stars from which it has originally come down. There it mingles with the divine powers, comes to "see," that is , to know God, which means to become absorbed in God. As the "Poimandres" puts it : "This is the final good for those who have received Gnosis to be made god."[532]

Complete salvation for the Gnostic is, according to van den Broek,[533] fully attained after death when the soul ascends to God *but can also be an inner experience during this earthly life.* The realised immediacy of this experience is contained within the theology of Fox.

2.9 SUMMARY

Fox's sense of alienation and hostility to the world is compatible with that which has been recognised as formative in terms of gnosis. Even if not an ontological negation of the world and matter, a sense of the world as foreign is generally identifiable in Foxian theology. The epochal revelations which Fox experiences in 1647 and 1648 are in their experiential character

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530 *Works*: 3:181.
531 Broek, R van den. *Gnosis and Hermeticism - from Antiquity to Modern Times.* New York: State University of New York Press, 1998.
532 Ibid., 5
533 Ibid.

within the criteria for a Gnostic calling as identified by Jonas. Logan[534] has examined the aspect of Valentinus as a visionary, along with the Gnostics Simon Magus and Marcus the Magus. This chapter, and section 1.2 above, assert that the novel revelation experienced by Valentinus is comparable with Fox's of 1647 and 1648, both being internalised spiritual visionary experiences which were formative in developing theologies that emphasised direct contact with a Christ/God previously unknown and without the necessity of, external mediation.

In addition to an anti-historical consequence resulting from the significance attached to revelatory experience, Owen correctly identified a similarity between the overriding principle of revelation within Quaker and Gnostic theology, incorporating the concepts of a perfecting light and knowledge. Current scholarship illustrates a dual role of Quaker Light, yet has failed to acknowledge a Valentinian Christian Gnostic characteristic (in terms of an awakened divinity, perfection and metaphysical reunion) within a generally ethically- orientated appreciation of Light dynamics. Fox's interpretation of the Light (as that which provides, and is unity) can be seen from the context of gnosis where ethical considerations and those relating to fellowship are secondary to the transformative spiritual aspect of union with God. However, current research has illustrated how the sense of union in the language and context of the seventeenth century includes a non-Gnostic corporeal, physical transformation of the individual as part of union with the divine.

An aspect of Gnostic anthropology and eschatology, (that of the reunion of the divine in the individual with God) is seen to exist in a similar way with Fox's distinctive concept of the soul. In language if not science, Fox can be seen in the above section to have used a metaphysical element of

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534 Logan, "Magi and Visionaries", 27-44.

unity with God. The metaphysics concern the emanation of the divine from God becoming engrafted in the human soul, which itself becomes divine through a process capable of increase and decrease.

The metaphysical dynamic is recognisable from Creasey's observation regarding the subject of the following chapter: " in the matter of perfection, which Quakers regarded as a genuine possibility in proportion as the light was obeyed and followed..."[535] Perfection, as a consequence of Light activity, is now examined.

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[535] Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 160.

CHAPTER THREE: PERFECTION

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 concludes with the concept that having received and experienced the revelatory Light of Christ, spiritual perfection was claimed by early Quakers. As with the nature and function of Quaker Light (2.7) scholarship has suggested that the claim to perfection arising from revelation was limited to moral perfection resulting in a sin- free state for the individual. However, this chapter will demonstrate that Fox's claim for perfection also entailed a divine state resulting from the union with God discussed in 2.8-2.8.1. To illustrate the context of this chapter, Braithwaite states that Fox, and other early Quakers:

> had a vivid sense of personal union with their living Lord, but they coupled this experience of the indwelling Christ with a doctrine of perfection that betrayed them, during the first exhilaration of the experience, into extremes of identification with the Divine. They believed that inspiration gave infallibility, ...and they had to learn...that the inspired servant of God remains a man, liable to much of human error and weakness...it was this inadequate recognition of the earthly character of the vessel that was responsible for most of the excesses of early Quakerism.[536]

And more recently observed by Smith:

> though most Quakers were soberly self-denying, their direct claim for unity with God through the inner light, the consequent release from sin, and the implicit rejection of predestinarian theology, led some Quakers to claim a spiritual perfection.[537]

In gnosis, perfection means to become part of the heavenly realm or protological paradise. It includes the union of the divine light in the individual to the heavenly realm (pleroma) which is otherwise deficient of that light or knowledge of God (gnosis). Through this metaphysical and

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[536] Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 109-110.
[537] Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 9.

ontological process, the divine element in the individual becomes perfected.

A universal approach is illustrated by the Valentinian *Gospel of Truth*:

> Since the deficiency came into being because the Father was not known, therefore when the Father is known, from that moment on the deficiency [ignorance] will no longer exist.[538]

Jonas notes the metaphysical aspect of that knowledge which is gnosis:

> in the more radical [Gnostic] systems like the Valentinian, the knowledge is not only an instrument of salvation but itself the very form in which the goal of salvation, i.e., ultimate perfection is possessed.[539]

The spiritual perfection for the Gnostic (with collective and futuristic aspects, 3.7, 3.8) is therefore a metaphysical process of reunion of its own divine light with, and contribution to, the restoration of the eternal realm of light/God or the heavenly pleroma.

This chapter commences with an examination of Fox's use of perfection from the beginning of his ministry in (relation to a state of being and sinlessness, 3.1) with a subsequent analysis as to whether Fox extended the meaning of perfection in Matt. 5:48 (3.2). The meaning and use of perfection within gnosis is then considered (3.3). Section 3.4 considers Fox's interpretation of "perfection" as a pre-Fall state influenced by Hermeticism, and thereafter Fox's use of "perfection" within a Christian context is considered (3.5).

Perfection of the divine element both within Fox's message (3.6) and within gnosis (3.7) is capable of being viewed in an organic, measured perspective, capable of increase and reduction whilst on earth, with both

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538 NHC: I, *3*. 24.28-32.
539 Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 35.

Quakers and Gnostics being wrongly accused of promoting licentious behaviour as a result of their perfectionist claims.(3.8) The chapter concludes with a summary (3.9).

3.1 FOX'S EARLY USE OF PERFECTION

In 1655 (1.4) Owen alleged that Quakers reintroduced anti-Trinitarian aspects of Gnostic theology and later stated that Quaker inward Light had no real power to mortify sin, and that Quakers suffered from a "pleasing dream of perfection."[540] Significantly, in 1679 Owen referred to the concept of "emanation" as discussed above (2.8.1) and emphasised the moral consequences of a perfecting light:

> Christ was such an emanation of light and knowledge in them [Gnostics and by implication, Quakers] as made them perfect – that is, it took away all differences of good and evil, and gave them liberty to do what they pleased, without sense of sin, or danger of punishment. This was the first way that Satan attempted the faith of the church, viz., by substituting a perfecting light and knowledge in the room of the person of Christ.[541]

Owen's concern over Quaker perfectionism may have arisen from statements such as the following from Fox in 1658:

> And men being in the light which they are enlightened with, and coming by the light to him from whom the light doth come, they come into the perfection, out of sin; for all sin and imperfection are in the first Adam, in the earth. And perfection is in the second Adam, Christ Jesus, who bruiseth the serpent's head, the author of imperfection. And they who are in him, are in a perfection without sin, and there is no sin in perfection, nor any error in the perfection of Christ. And all who are in the unreasonableness are ignorant of the spiritual substance, and power of God, and holy ghost, the spirit of truth, the spirit of Christ, the nature that dwells in the saints, all which are substance and not shadow, and the divine power, and the power of the

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[540] Owen, J. *Works*. Vol.3, 566.
[541] Owen, J. *Works*. Vol.1, 38.

> Lord God. And God doth not change, nor his spirit, nor the soul, nor his power; so read thyself. God doth not change in his being, neither doth that which comes from him, that which he hath in his hand, and in his power.[542]

The language used in the above passage (and in light of the following analysis) is not limited to emphasising the absence of sin in individuals, but implies a graphic *state of being*; "in him", "in a perfection", "a spiritual substance", likened to that "God which does not change in his being". The individual is free of sin *because* they are in a Christ-like state of being, emphasising a cause and effect process: "into the perfection, out of sin".

This thesis does not claim that Fox's perfectionist language excluded serious consideration of sin or error, to which Gwyn, for example limits Fox's use of "perfection":

> By perfection, Fox makes it clear that he means the absence of sin or error. The systematic rooting out and destruction of sin by the light and the "taking possession" of the inheritance of the kingdom in gospel order are intended to create a total transformation.[543]

Brinton also views Quaker perfection in terms of conduct:

> Perfection means simply living up to the measure of light that is given, (our [the Quakers] one talent), and if we are faithful to that, we shall be given more.[544]

However, Wilcox[545] states that the perfectionist claims of Fox are better understood within the context of the early Quaker sense of realised eschatology (2.2.1) as a spiritual experience in which:

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542 *Works*: 3:413.
543 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 77.
544 Brinton, *Friends for Three Hundred Years*, 48.
545 Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry*, 14fn.19.

> [early Quakers] conceived only of a short time scale, and this enabled them to live what they believed to be the life of the new age in the present fallen world. Perfection for the early Quakers was essentially a spiritual experience...Christ had purged them not only from individual sinful acts, but that he had brought them into a higher state than that of Adam before the fall...Their understanding of perfection was not based on an ethical code, so much as on the conviction that they were living the life of the age to come here and now.[546]

Wilcox notes the combination of a state of being, as well as moral consequence, a view this chapter seeks to demonstrate. As illustrated below, Fox uses graphic, organic language (including that of measure and degree of perfection, 3.6) which cannot be construed as motivated by conduct and morality alone.

Fox emphasises the distinctive importance of perfection in his early message, as indicated by the following 1650 statement placing perfection before (and distinguishing it from) the more ethically and conduct-orientated "righteousness":

> It was a strange thing then to be imprisoned for religion; and some thought I was mad, because I stood for purity and perfection and righteousness.[547]

Further and more indicative of a "state of being" approach; during his interrogation in Derby in 1650 Fox asserted that he had reached a paradise state:

> At last they asked me whether I was sanctified
> and I said sanctified; yes, for I was in the paradise of God.
> and they said, had I no sin?
> Sin? said I, He hath taken away my sin (viz: Christ my saviour), and in him there is no sin, & many such like words.. & so they committed me upon that as a Blasphemer, & a man having no sin...

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546 Ibid., 247.

547 CJ: 1:10. The less contemporaneous and subsequently written version of the Journal: *Works*: 1:114., edits this extract by changing the order as "purity, righteousness and perfection." This may be immaterial, but in the context of bowdlerisation (5.2), it may have been to reduce the priority of perfectionism in Fox's early message.

> And so when professors came to see me to dispute and discourse I should feel them before they came to plead for sin and imperfection, .. and I said to them: if you believe you are past from Death to Life, and so from the sin that bringeth Death (and they said that they believed no such thing that any could be free from sin while upon the earth)...[548]

Fox believes that perfection and freedom from sin (as distinct from the power not to sin, 3.2) was possible on this earth. Puritans viewed such perfection as previously attainable by the saints alone, or for others, in the heavenly life after death. In the following proposition and answer, Fox responds to an opponent by referring to Matt. 5:48 (3.2) and the state of being as that body which being in the first Adam, contains sin in a graphic, organic sense. This was in contrast to Fox's own state "in perfection, and in that which is perfect [and as a consequence] and makes free from sin...":

> P. That there is no perfection attainable in this life.
>
> A. There is no perfection but in wickedness, in the life of Adam in the transgression, and there men live in sin, and have it in their body, and carry a body of sin and transgression, which came by the devil; but Christ, the second Adam, destroys the devil and his works, and the power of death, who saves men from sin, and blots out the sin and transgression, and redeems from the earth; and they who are in Christ, the second Adam, are in perfection, and in that which is perfect, and makes free from sin, and the body of it, and death, and him that hath the power of death, and they come to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect. And the work of the ministers of Christ, was to the perfecting of the saints, and thou that dost deny perfection, hast denied the ministers of Christ's work, who preach Christ within, and preached everyone perfect in him.[549]

Elsewhere:

> Now ye that say they shall not be perfect, and that none shall be without sin upon the earth, no perfection in the life we live in, are

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548 CJ: 1:2-3.
549 *Works*: 3:440.

physicians of no value; ye are not worthy to have the name of physicians, ministers, nor teachers...for ye are pleading that while men are upon earth they must have a body of sin...and so ye keep them in their wounds and sores, putrefying and imperfect, and are not makers up of the breach, and binders up of the wound. And the Lord saith, "though their sins be as red as crimson, I will make them as white as wool and will blot out sin and transgression.[550]

The above passages are a further illustration that Fox views sin as a condition or ailment of the body (a literal presence like an innate disease, as opposed to the purely figurative) which the established church was failing to cure. In 1652 Fox[551] in his *Journal* criticises Priest Lampitt for "high notions and perfections" although in context it appears that Fox was attacking hypocrisy (3.8) rather than perfection as a concept *per se*. Smith[552] indicates that Quakers were not alone in their perfectionism which had characterised the Family of Love and marked out later groups including the Seekers and Ranters in the late 1640s and early 1650s.

Penn[553] deliberately understates the radical perfectionism of Fox's early theology for reasons which are discussed in relation to editorial reservations, bowdlerisation and censorship (5.2). Creasey notes the embarrassment caused by the early Quaker use of perfection:

> This doctrine of perfection occupied a much larger place in early Quaker teaching than it came to do later. It was proclaimed with a conviction and an apparent naiveté that called forth from their opponents some of their strongest denunciations; and it may well be that even some of the early Quaker leaders came to feel some

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550 Ibid., 374.
551 Ibid., 1:146., where Fox states: "With him I had a great deal of reasoning; for he would talk of high notions and perfections [CJ: 1:47., uses "perfection", more indicative of a single state] , and thereby deceived the people...He said, he was above John; and made as though he knew all things. But I told him "Death reigned from Adam to Moses; and that he was under death, and knew not Moses: for Moses saw the paradise of God; but he knew neither Moses, nor the prophets, nor John." For that crooked and rough nature stood in him, and the mountain of sin and corruptions...he confessed he had been under a cross in things; but now he could sing psalms, and do anything."
552 Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 7.
553 *Works*: 1:iv-xiviii.

> hesitations about what could so easily be represented as mere "ranterism".[554]

Whilst both claimed perfection, contemporary Ranters were viewed by Quakers as libertine in contrast to the asceticism of early Quakerism.[555]

Jones recognises the distinctive nature of the early perfectionist message of Fox in moral terms whilst also acknowledging a second aspect - that of the condition of Adam before the Fall:

> At the very beginning of his ministry George Fox evidently preached the possibility of complete freedom from sin. But he was very careful to avoid presenting the mere theory or "notion" of perfection, which was common among all the types of "Ranters." He believed that Christ came to destroy sin, and he stoutly held that when He ruled in a man sin and the dominion of it were done away. Man could come into "the condition Adam was in before he fell."[556]

Fox claims a state further than this, that of Christ beyond falling (2.2.1). This divine state is that which the Valentinian Gnostic is awakened to, having received the "call". The "mere theory or notion of perfection" is, as Jones suggests, in stark contrast to the overtly practical experiential knowledge emphasised by Fox (2.2.1, 2.5). Fox believes in and promotes perfectionism as a practical possibility because he experiences it as a result of revelation alone, rather than having read of it as a notion, or knowing it only in theory.

Moore states that following the trial and punishment of a leading Quaker contemporary of Fox (James Naylor in 1656) Quakers moderate their perfectionist language in some respects but:

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554 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 124. Barclay in *Apology*, Prop.VIII., states with reference to 1. John 3:9: "Though I affirm, that after a man has arrived to such a condition, in which a man may not sin, he yet may sin; I will nevertheless not deny but there may be a state attainable in this life, in which to do righteousness may become so natural to regenerate souls, that in the stability of this condition they cannot sin."

555 *Works*: 1:ibid., xi.

556 Jones, ed., *George Fox - An Autobiography*. Vol. I., 85, fn.20.

they did not abate their claims to the possibility of moral perfection; this view is indeed to be found in Robert Barclay's *Apology*, probably the greatest Quaker theological work, which was published in 1676.[557] [However, Moore then adds] Fox wrote in *The Great Mistery* that the believer, being "in Christ" was like Christ, and was Christ, and so was perfect.[558] ...Other writers, however, following the more placatory approach that became general from 1657, were more cautious.[559]

Fox's concept of perfection was of something dynamic and flexible, capable of achievement at any moment in history; Knight[560] suggests that Fox took literally the command of Jesus in Matt.5:48: "Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect" because Fox believes in the Atonement, not as one historical event in the past, but as a continuous experience of "the daily cross"[561] which can "increase daily."[562] Cope[563] indicates that Fox's protological emphasis upon the pre-Fall divine state (as evidenced by the revelations of 1647 and 1648 (2.2.1) relates well to the time- conquering stasis of Christian perfection. Fox does not employ perfection as other contemporary Christian groups, i.e., as a warning, instruction or exhortation because for him, it was a quest to retain the divinity he had realised following his formative revelations. This is remarkably similar to the quest for the Valentinian which is to mature and perfect through gnosis, the newly realised divine element in the body. Significantly, Fox *became* divine and seeks to preserve this state; the Valentinian *becomes aware* of their pre-existent

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557 Barclay, *Apology*, Proposition 7.
558 *Works*: 3:52. Fox was never explicit in claiming equality with God or in saying that he was Christ, although he came close to it. Fox used the scriptural language of Heb. 2:11and Eph.5:30, as in CJ: 1:69: "He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one in the Son...the sons of God and the Father and the Son are one of his flesh and of his bones."
559 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 110.
560 Knight, *The Founder of Quakerism*, 261.
561 *Works*: 7:307.
562 Ibid.
563 Cope, J.I. "Seventeenth Century Quaker Style." *Publications of the Modern Language School of America.* 71 (1956):734.

divinity and needs to perfect the divine seed in union with the redeemer Christ.

This quest sits well within a context of gnosis where reunion with God/the heavenly pleroma is a realised eschatological aim on earth which incorporates the potential for consummation or full divinisation after death (2.2.1). The above section has considered how Fox emphasises perfection both as a state of being, achievable on earth, and one which frees the individual from sin. This is a contentious aspect of Fox's theology apparent from the earliest period of his message. The next section considers research which has considered Fox's use and interpretation of the term "perfection".

3. 2 FOX'S INTERPRETATION OF PERFECTION

A semantic study by Seppanen[564] states that whilst the idea of "perfection" is prominent in Fox's theology, it has no "distinctive" use in Fox's language. This is arguably indicative of Fox's inconsistent language (as in that of "Light" employed by Fox, 2.6) in which Fox's experiential belief is inadequately suited to the confines of description and vocabulary. Additionally, the lack of distinctive usage has arguably fuelled the interpretation of "perfection" in primarily ethical terms.

However, analysis of the term has led Randall[565] and Wallis[566] to suggest that the Greek word translated as "perfect" in Matt.5:48 can mean "complete" or "whole" - that people are called to be complete human beings just as God acts out of a sense of complete divinity. Gwyn[567] concurs that perfection (as an image of the ascent back to paradise, i.e., reunion with God)

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564 Seppanen, A. "The Inner Light in The Journals of George Fox: A Semantic Study." PhD dissertation. Historical-Philological Section of the Faculty of Philosophy at Helsinki University. Helsinki, Feb 1965:181. Published by the Department of English Philology, University of Tampere 1975.
565 Randall, L. "Paradox: Key to Unlocking the Perfection Trap?" *Friends Journal* Philadelphia: Friends Publishing Corporation, Sep 1999:15.
566 Wallis, J.H. *Jung and the Quaker Way*. London: Quaker Home Service, 1988: 70.
567 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 76.

illustrates how original wholeness plays an important part in Fox's understanding of final, apocalyptic fulfilment. However, both Randall and Wallis conclude that the interpretation of "perfect" in Matt.5:48 was extended by Quakers and Puritans to indicate divinity, beyond the intention of Jesus as described in Scripture. Perfection is therefore used in a manner conducive to a state of being rather than in primarily ethical terms. By way of example, Fox states in the following:

> and they who are in Christ, the second Adam, are in perfection, and in that which is perfect, and makes free from sin, and the body of it, and death...and they come to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect.[568]

The use of "in" throughout the above passage illustrates again that Fox can use the language of "perfection" (albeit not exclusively) in terms similar to Gnosticism, i.e., as a state of divine being, rather than in purely moral and behavioural terms. In examining this radical interpretation, Damrosch[569] has stated that Quakers assumed the most offensive of positions to their opponents, in their insistence on taking literally the perfection command of Christ which invites the individual to become God-like. This is in contrast to the Valentinian view in which gnosis awakens the individual to the fact that they are already divine with a consubstantial divine element in the body. Regarding the Puritan hostility to the Quaker view of perfection, Spencer states:

> The concept of perfection...was a key Quaker belief, perhaps their defining belief...But perfection (or deification, to use the Orthodox term) was not a belief accepted by the Puritans or most "Protestants" in seventeenth-century England. As unpopular as many Quaker beliefs were at the time, perfectionism was identified with Catholicism, with

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568 *Works*: 3:440.
569 Damrosch , L. *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996: 97.

> the hated Jesuits, and as mysticism or monasticism, all abhorrent to seventeenth-century Puritans.[570]

As previously mentioned, it is suggested that the term "deification" is inappropriate in a seventeenth century context, as it is in Valentinianism. Firstly, in Foxian theology it was not employed and, secondly, in Valentinianism the term implies a process which is inapplicable to extant divinity. The literal interpretation of perfectionist theology as described in Matt.5:48 was considered abhorrent by opponents of Quakers, as it meant that God, manifested as the sinless Christ, is fully realisable in and by human beings whilst on earth. As such, all can be liberated from the tyranny of sin.[571] Moreover, Fox's interpretation means that all can be restored to the pre-lapsarian condition of Adam, if not further, to that of Christ.

Fox[572] speaks of the restoration in 1. John 3:9, to "a state in Christ Jesus that would never fall," which he claims to have experienced himself (2.2.1). This experience is common to Foxian and Valentinian theology, for Fox as a result of his formative revelation/s, and for the Valentinian who is awakened to their divinity. Fox's interpretation of this scriptural passage as implying such perfection was available whilst on earth, was unacceptable to his contemporary opponents such as Owen who limited such perfection to the saints. As with the interpretation of Scripture, Owen objects to the claims of early Quakers and the Gnostics as to the accessibility of sainthood and

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570 Spencer, C. "James Naylor: Antinomian or Perfectionist?" *Quaker Studies* 6/1 (2001):108 states: "Perfectionism unlike antinomianism [alleged in the Ranters], is an ancient Christian belief, accepted within the Orthodox tradition. In Roman Catholicism Christian perfection means the attainment of holiness or sainthood and within the Eastern Orthodox tradition it is known as "deification" or theosis. Throughout the High Middle Ages, the imitatio Christi, was the highest ideal to which the devout, the monk, nun or saint, could ascribe...The *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis, became the most widely-read devotional book in Western Christianity . So the highest form of spirituality, the Imitation of Christ, complete obedience to and identification with Christ, became the goal of the most devout."

571 Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus*, 97.

572 *Works*: 1: 85.

divinity: "some are contending for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints."[573]

Smith[574] views Fox's literal interpretation of Matt.5:48 as typical of the post-Reformation mystical and occult groups which developed and encouraged claims of personal perfection upon the earth. Individuals could claim to be deified or to be in a state close to this. Such perfectionism and the resultant revelations were argued as superior evidence of divine truths than that provided by Scripture. Those who argued for any delay in the possibility of a sin-free existence on earth were condemned by Fox and treated as consequentially imperfect, sinful and unable to enter the Kingdom:

> And all ye letter-professors that plead for imperfection, and your body of sin and death to the grave, which are the devils dregs, these gates are guarded against you with that great luggage on your backs to enter in at.[575]

Fox makes such claims as a result of belief in a state of spiritual being rather than a quest for moral purity in isolation. This state arises from a supernatural union with God, a concept employed within gnosis and fundamental to a Gnostic understanding of perfection.

3.3 PERFECTION AND GNOSIS

Perfection for the Valentinian is redemption, a process by which the divine light, seed or element in the individual is matured and formed (whilst imprisoned in the darkness of the earthly world) and is reunited with the heavenly realm pending final consummation.[576] Foxian theology also incorporated the potential for metaphysical spiritual maturity following union

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573 Owen, J. *Works*, Vol. 12 12.
574 Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 107.
575 *Works*: 5:140.
576 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 115.

with the Light. A simple illustration of the process exists in *Thomas the Contender*: "But when all the chosen ones lay aside the animal existence, [i.e., the body], then will the light withdraw to its true being."[577] This process is similar to the mechanics of the return of the soul to God within the functions of Light, as described by Fox above (2.8.1).

The state of an Adamic pre-Fall figure of perfection is referred to throughout Gnostic texts such as *The Apocryphon of John*[578] as the perfect or primal Man, a protological and eschatological figure seen by scholars as central[579] to Christian Gnostic mythology. In Gnosticism, the perfecting of an individual is commonly[580] expressed as a process of reunion of the divine element of the perfect, primal Man in the body, with the redeemer Christ: the redemption in effect, of the imprisoned redeemer. The perfection process is seen by Rudolph[581] in terms of a correction of an impurity, "error" or "deficiency" in humanity (as with imperfection in the Fall). The error or deficiency is corrected by the ultimate reunion of God and the heavenly realm of Light (via the redeemer figure of Christ), with the primal perfect element within the individual.

Logan[582] detects the deficiency/perfection theme as a recurring eschatological motif in a collective context in *The Apocryphon of John*, when the divine lights of all individuals are reunited with the heavenly realm or pleroma. Logan states:

> Perfection would appear to refer to the original state of humanity to which it is eventually to be restored, and is thus a term, as in Valentinianism, with collective and futurist connotations.[583]

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577 NHC: II, *7*. 139, 28-30.
578 NHC: II, *1*, III *1*, IV *1*, and BG 8502, *2*.
579 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 169-173.
580 Ibid., 172.
581 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 116; Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 44-46.
582 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 305.
583 Ibid., 306.

This protological state of being is identifiable as similar to that pre-Adamic state of paradise claimed by Fox (2.2.1) which also may involve a process with delayed completion or fullness (the measure referred to at 2.8, 3.6 above).

Bultmann[584] notes Gnostic and non-Gnostic Christian theological similarities in the conception of the Fall of the archetypal perfect being. As seen above, within gnosis an element of the pre-Fall perfect being is retained as the divine within the individual, a part, splinter or spark of a heavenly figure of light or God. Fox's emanation concept regarding the divine element of the soul (2.8.1) identifies with this Valentinian anthropology/mythology in terms of a divine element distinct from, and laid down in, the nature and disposition of the soul. However (in acknowledging the ambiguity surrounding Fox's interpretation) to the extent that the Fox's concept refers to the soul *per se*, as the divine element, it is more identifiable with the Christian Gnostics of the *Apocryphon of John*, as identified by Logan (fn.22, above). In terms of the Fall, perfection and freedom from sin, Rudolph notes:

> Gnostic redemption [and perfection] is a deliverance from the world and the body, not as in Christianity from sin and guilt, mainly in so far as the earthly and corporeal world as such represents the sin into which the divine soul has innocently fallen; through its involvement with the cosmic powers, however, it has become guilty, and it can be freed from this guilt only through [a process of] insight and at the same time repentance.[585]

Bultmann[586] suggests that whereas Gnostics have seen the dilemma of the Fall as solely in terms of *fate* (the fault of Satan rather than Adam), Christianity has regarded it in terms of the *guilt* referred to above. For the

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584 Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*, 191.
585 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 116.
586 Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*, 191.

Gnostic, the powers under which humanity is held in bondage are the powers of the cosmos, seen as flesh, law, sin and death. The Gnostic is free (from the law, the obligations and criteria of the created world) and free from the world (2.3) a difference from the Pauline Christian who is free of the law whilst maintaining the obligations and criteria of the created world.[587]

Fox's realised eternal and irreversible eschatological state (2.2.1) is similar to the Gnostic freedom (as opposed to mere withdrawal) from the world. Fox[588] witnesses redemption from the world and freedom from sin. Both Fox and the Valentinians are conscious of ethical concerns in preserving that realised state/knowledge once received.

According to Rudolph,[589] "Christian" Gnosis fully justifies its epithet on the grounds that the Gnostic and Christian ethos can be seen as non-contradictory. The Gnostic that is free from the world and has dominion over sin is also the Gnostic that can love those without gnosis until they too are free. This is illustrated by the Valentinian *Gospel of Philip*:

> He who has the knowledge (gnosis) of the truth is free. But the free does not sin. For he who sins is the slave of sin...Those to whom it is not permitted to sin, the world calls "free"...knowledge lifts up (their) hearts, which means it makes them free, and makes them be lifted up above the whole place (of the world). But love (agape) edifies. But he who becomes free through knowledge is a slave for love's sake to those who have not yet been able to take up the freedom of knowledge. But knowledge makes them worthy so that (it causes them) to become (free).[590]

Fox opposes those who plead for sin and imperfection as permanent features to life on earth. Sin could be avoided permanently if the individual were open to the spirit or Light of Christ. Within the dynamics of gnosis, sin,

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587 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 115.
588 *Works*: 8:18.
589 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 264.
590 NHC: II *3*. 77 (125), 15-35.

flesh and other imperfections become similarly irrelevant as they relate to the world from which the Gnostic has escaped. Pagels states:

> In the overwhelming sense of divine grace given to them, they [Christian Gnostics] are untroubled by a sense of guilt over their [former] sins. They recall their former lives with bewilderment and shame at their former ignorance of God and of their own needs. Their concern, however, is not to be "forgiven", but to find a way of accounting for their former ignorance and alienation.[591]

Fox too, encourages adherence to nothing save the eternal guidance from, and quest for union with, the Light (2.2.1, 2.5, 2.6). The following section examines how Fox illustrated redemption from the world into a paradise state, and how this concept may have been influenced by Gnostic Hermeticism.

3.4 FOX'S PRE-FALL STATE AND HERMETIC INFLUENCE

There is an ongoing discussion as to Fox's relationship with esoteric beliefs such as alchemy[592] and Hermeticism,[593] both of which arguably influenced Fox's attitude towards the quest for unity with a pre-Fall state of perfection. Language employed by and about Fox indicates that he drew inspiration from belief systems outside of the Christian faith.[594] The eternal

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591 Pagels, *Heracleon's Commentary on John*, 120-121.
592 Carter, "Early Friends and the Alchemy of Perfection", 235.
593 Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century*; Nuttall, "Unity with the Creation".
594 The influential Seeker and predecessor of Fox, John Everard, translated Hermetic texts which were available to and read by Quakers: Nuttall, "Unity With The Creation", 135fn3. Jones suggested that Everard's influence "prepared the way for Quakerism": *Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth.* Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1932: 63ff, 77ff., and also by Sippell in *Wernendes Quakertum*, Chapter 1. Everard translated the Hermetic text *Hermes Trismegistus,* whose opening treatise *Poimandres* had first appeared in England in 1650. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers of the Seventeenth Century*, 243., states: "Everard's translation of *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Trismegistus* became a work which nearly all the spiritual Humanists ranked in the very first list of religious literature." Whilst it is not known that Fox read such a text, Nuttall, G. in "George Fox's Library," *JFHS*

nature of Light as understood by Fox is similar to that characteristic of gnosis whereby light/gnosis attaches itself to diverse beliefs and frameworks. Cadbury notes Fox's peculiar use of non-Christian points of reference:

> For George Fox's many esoteric interests we might quote either the epithets applied to him by William Penn in the testimony he wrote as a preface to the Journal "a divine and a naturalist and all of God's own making" or the report of a conversation with Fox made by Edward Bourne, a physician and prominent Friend riding together from Worcester to Tewksbury in 1656 when Fox was aged 32.[595]

The record of Bourne's conversation with Fox states:

> In our discourse together on the road before our parting, he [Fox] spoke of the glory of the first body, and of the Egyptian learning, and of the language of the birds, and of what was wonderful to me to hear, so that I believed he was of a deep and wonderful understanding in natural, but especially in spiritual things.[596]

Cadbury[597] suggests that whereas it is difficult to ascertain what realm of thought or reading lies behind the subjects discussed by Fox with Bourne, the "glory of the first body" may refer (in a Christian context) to the perfect nature of humanity before the Fall. Section 2.2.1 above, has already considered how Fox[598] believed that following the experiences of 1647 and 1648, the broken unity of God and humanity had been restored.

However, Fox's protological emphasis could arise from Hermetic concepts concerning union with the creation which Fox may have learnt from the contemporary translations of John Everard, in particular of the

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28 (1931):18., suggested it was probable, and this view is strengthened by the fact that Fox is known to have possessed at least one other of Everard's translations, Sebastian Frank's *Hidden Fruit.*

595 Cadbury, H.J. "Early Quakerism and Uncanonical Law." *HTR* 40/3 (July 1947):191.

596 Penney, N., ed., *The First Publishers of the Truth: Early Records of the Introduction of Quakerism into England and Wales.* London: Headley Bros., 1907:276, 278.

597 Cadbury, "Early Quakerism and Uncanonical Law", 192.

598 *Works*: 7:75, 155, 210, 218, 264. This reconciliation was ultimately the uniting of heaven and earth into one again: *Works*: 8:273.

Poimandres.[599] This text incorporates a "light" dynamic similar to that of Foxian theology, and refers to concepts relating to the eternal wisdom and body. In the following from 1652, Fox uses the concept of unity with the creation:

> & there came Jo Storey to me and lighted his pipe of Tobacco: & said will you take a pipe of tobacco saying come all is ours:& I looked upon him to be a forward bold lad: & tobacco I did not take: butt it came into my mind that the lad might think I had not unity with the creation: for I saw he had a flashy empty notion of religion: so I took his pipe and put it in my mouth & gave it to him again to stop him least his rude tongue should say I had not unity with the creation.[600]

In terminology alien to Scripture but not to Hermetic concepts, Fox peculiarly speaks of a state of unity in which the individual may: "receive the Word of Wisdom, that opens all things, ... come to know the hidden unity in the Eternal Being."[601] In relation to the "Egyptian learning" reference above, Cadbury states that:

> There is much evidence that the early Friends were attracted by the writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, an Egyptian deity upon whom were fathered many Neo- Platonic or astrological treatises composed at different periods of the Christian era. The attraction of the pseudonym for Friends was not the lure of Egypt, though of course Egyptian wisdom had long been fabulous, but rather the congenial content of the religious and philosophical tracts and the universally accepted antiquity of the authorship.[602]

In 1657 Fox raised queries regarding the pre-Fall perfect state of Adam and Eve who Fox suggested were by implication equal in nature to, or had the same wisdom as their Creator:

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599 fn.643, above and 2.8.1.
600 CJ: 1:44.
601 NJ: 28.
602 Cadbury, "Early Quakerism and Uncanonical Law", 192.

the ground of all diseases, and whether Adam or Eve had any before they fell, and whether there was any in the restoration by Christ Jesus again, and whether any knew the virtue of all the creatures in the creation whose virtue and nature was according to its first name, except they was in the wisdom of God by which they was made and created.[603]

Fox refers to the "first name" concept, a reference he had made when describing his own pre-Fall state of 1648 (2.2.1). He emphasises the attainable state in which one has unity with the wisdom and nature of the Creator. Ellwood excludes this reference to Adam and Eve and the restoration whilst editing the *Journal*, a further example of the censorship examined in 5.2. Nuttall[604] suggests scholars have devalued the 1657 passage (and that of the conversation with Edward Bourne, above) as examples of "a certain parade of learning which was one of Fox's weaknesses."[605]

Whilst this Egyptian learning originated outside of a Christian framework, Fox applied its language and concepts to his own Christian pre-Fall perfection. Similarly, the content of the NHL (the inclusion of Hermetic texts in Codex VI, *6 The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*, VI, *7 The Prayer of Thanksgiving* and VI, *8 Asclepius*) illustrate how the broader interpretation of Gnosticism has crossed religious boundaries as a result of its emphasis upon revelation /perfection to the exclusion of historical precedent (4.2).

Gwyn[606] states that the perfectionist imagery used by Fox (of an ascent back to paradise and original wholeness) is an important part in Fox's understanding of final fulfilment and typical of apocalyptic thought. Nuttall[607] states that for Fox, it is through Christ that the individual may be

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603 CJ: 1:269.
604 Nuttall, "Unity With the Creation", 137.
605 Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 301f.
606 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 76.
607 Nuttall, "Unity With the Creation", 140.

restored to the condition of Eden, and again be in full unity with the creation.

Fox describes the original state of harmonious unity as follows:

> using the creatures in their service, as servants in their places, to the glory of Him that created them: they being in their covenant, and I being brought up into their covenant, as sanctified by the Word which was in the beginning, by which all things are upheld; wherein is unity with the creation.[608]

Brayshaw suggests that Fox's use of "unity with the creation" was: "part of his intense perception of the divine harmony, of the need for all things being in their right place, and being put to their right use."[609] An extract from the 1647 revelation is indicative of this approach:

> The creation was open to me; and it was showed me, how all things had their names given them, according to their nature and virtue...But I was immediately taken up in spirit, to see into another or more steadfast state than Adam's in innocency, even into a state in Christ Jesus, that should never fall...[610]

Nuttall suggests this conception of divine harmony in creation was not peculiar to Fox:

> it was a fundamental element in a strange complex which it is not easy to reconstruct, though with imagination this may be done, the complex of astrology, alchemy and herbalism in which so many of Fox's contemporaries were interested.[611]

Further, Hutchinson states that in the middle of the seventeenth century, it was a widespread view amongst persons of a religious character to:

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608 BJ: 1:2., referred to in Nuttall, ibid., 143fn.i.
609 Brayshaw, *The Personality of George Fox*, 77.
610 *Works*: 1:84.
611 Nuttall, "Unity With the Creation", 135.

> believe in the unity of the world in God and the interpenetration by the Divine spirit of all created things, whether animate or inanimate, believing that secrets of nature...could be revealed only to the God fearing.[612]

Fox's interpretation of "original wholeness" had a bearing on an interest in medicine. In the early experiences of Fox it was opened to him: "that the physicians and doctors of physic were out of the Wisdom of God by which the creatures were made and so knew not the virtues of the Creatures."[613] This is indicative of Fox's emphasis upon the knowledge of the Creator rather than the created. Similarly, Fox states of his own condition:

> I was at a stand in my mind, whether I should practise physic for the good of mankind, seeing the nature and virtue of things were so opened to me by the Lord.[614]

Nuttall[615] remarks that the above statement arises due to Fox's belief of having been renewed into the image of God by Christ Jesus, to the pre-Fall state of Adam. Cope[616] suggested that identical with the "unity in a primordial Light" concept of Fox, is his additional use of gathering in the "Name" as referred to below - that "Name" which was in the beginning, the Word. In an epistle from 1662 Fox stated:

> for being gathered in the Name of Christ Jesus, whose Name is above every Name, for all things that were made, were made by Christ, whose Name is above every Name, into his Name are you gathered; so above all names and gatherings are you gathered, who are gathered in the Name of Jesus Christ, by whom all things were made and created; and being gathered in the Name of Jesus Christ by which salvation is brought, by the Name of Christ , and not by any other name under Heaven, but by the Name of Jesus Christ is salvation brought, by whom all things were made; for you being gathered in this Name by

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612 Hutchinson, F.E. *Henry Vaughan*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947:153, 185.
613 Cadbury, *George Fox's Book of Miracles*, 120.
614 *Works*: 1:85.
615 Nuttall, "Unity With the Creation", 140.
616 Cope, "Seventeenth Century Quaker Style", 730.

> which salvation is given, here you come to be heirs of salvation, and then to inherit salvation, which is Christ...there is no assurance of salvation upon earth, who are gathered in other names, but not in the Name of Christ, by whom all things were made; and this is the standing gathering in the Name, in the strong Tower, where is the safety, where is the salvation, given and brought.[617]

Through the epithet of "gathered in the Name," Cope argues that Fox discovers not only the divinity which was in the beginning, but his audiences' participation in a time-conquering stasis of Christian perfection (4.2):

> What had begun as warning, instruction, or exhortation becomes, through the hypnotic utterance of divine names, a vision of human beatification for the Children of the Light [Quakers]. The incantation of the "Name" has undercut the progression implicit in grammar because it has revealed the heart of a world above time.[618]

The protological references by Fox to "all the creatures in the creation whose virtue and nature ...according to its first name," are examples of the "parade of learning" mentioned above. The divine harmony and quest for unity with the creation identified by Neave Brayshaw[619] is similar in concept and motive to the Gnostic idea of restoration of light to the primordial heavenly realm (3.3). It is the contribution towards, and the identification with, the original harmony and wholeness of the pre-creation pleroma which is sought within gnosis by the return of their light to God. Having considered the possibility of Hermetic influence, the following section examines the Christian framework within which Fox's state of being was expressed.

3.5 FOX'S CHRISTIAN STATE OF PARADISE

Fox believes in and proclaims for himself (in 1648, 2.2.1) an Adamic state of perfection achievable on earth and from which falling is not possible.

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617 *Works*: 7:226.
618 Cope, "Seventeenth Century Quaker Style", 734.
619 Brayshaw, *The Personality of George Fox*, 77.

Whereas "perfection" is illustrated in terms of morality and freedom from sin, this chapter demonstrates that perfection additionally emphasises individual divinity and a God-like state of redemption in which the fallen curse of Gen.3:16 has been removed. The general conviction of early Quakers that they were living in an Adamic state free of sin and transgression is illustrated by a letter from Thomas Salthouse to Margaret Fell :

> This very hour, being about the 7th hour at night, is Walter Clement's wife delivered of a daughter by the mighty power of the Lord...and to the promise and honour of him that have taken away the curse and redeemed his own from under the transgression.[620]

This passage illustrates the belief of Quakers who turned to the Light and had union with God, that the curse[621] of Gen.3:16 had been removed by Christ or the Light. They were in the state in which Adam and Eve had been in before the Fall. However, as 4.2 considers, this state is not a reversion to a solely protological state of being but additionally is a reference to a state without an historical time or spatial framework. As Doncaster notes:

> Thus Friends believed that they were called into God's Kingdom here and now, that this meant that they were to be in a state of perfection comparable to, and even better than, that of Adam before he fell. It was this conviction that if they were obedient to the Light of Christ they would be completely freed from the power of sin in their lives, that was one of the most liberating and appealing elements in the gospel they preached.[622]

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620 SMSS. III, 158.

621 James Parnell in his collected *Works*, London: N.p., 1675:97-98., expresses the position more adequately than Fox: "Man was perfect without sin before the fall, or else he could not have been the image of God; for God is pure and perfect, and he made us man after his own image, pure and perfect without sin; but when he sinned he defaced his own image, and lost his pure state, and was drove out of paradise...but God promised the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpents head:and Christ, the Seed, said he was come to preach deliverance to the captive..."

622 Doncaster, H.L. "Early Quaker Thought on that State in which Adam was before he Fell." *JFHS* 41/1 (1949):17.

Fox demonstrates that some people did not welcome the universal message that any may surpass the state of pre-Fall Adam, attaining even to that of Christ:

> I found none that could bear to be told that any should come to Adam's perfection, into the image of God, that righteousness and holiness that Adam was in before he fell; to be clear and pure without sin as he was. Therefore now should they be able to bear being told that any should grow up to the measure of that stature of the fullness of Christ?[623]

This "measure" is the divinity Fox had achieved and others could attain. However, as a foretaste of the bowdlerisation of the literal interpretation of Scripture (Matt.5:48) in Fox's perfectionist message (5.2) Doncaster states of the "untutored Fox"[624] that the redeemer Christ can only redeem perfectly if the individual can respond perfectly "and our response we know to be imperfect."[625] Doncaster further states:

> This thought form of Friends can only be understood in the light of their own experience; and it was a fact that they did know an amazing release from the burden and bondage of sin, coupled with a Pentecostal experience of fellowship with one another in Christ. They were so wrapped up in this experience of the coming of Christ to rule in them that they could not recognise the imperfection of the human response to the perfect will of God, nor the fallibility of the human discernment of the infallible will of God; and so they spoke with the authority of those living in the Kingdom and acting under divine command, and not in the tentative "I think" or "I feel" of the present day.[626]

Barbour points out that perfection for Fox and the early Quakers:

> was not a matter of individual infallibility, but of a transformation through personal experience into perfect conformity to God's

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623 CJ:1:34.
624 Doncaster, "Early Quaker Thought", 22.
625 Ibid.
626 Ibid., 21.

> purposes, a transformation of one's inner nature as well as of the physical world through obedience to the Light.[627]

Section 3.1. illustrates how perfection was interpreted by Fox's opponents, but Bailey suggests that in a Christian context, Fox was clear about his perfect state of being:

> [Fox] it was implied, had fully returned to the pre-Fall state of innocence and perfection.. His return to Paradise was complete. He was fully divinized. No other Quaker dared to make such claims with the certainty of Fox.[628]

Unlike the Valentinian, Fox's divinity is complete without the future consummation and postmortem aspect evident in Valentinianism. Further,

> Fox was not the first to proclaim a total reversal of the effects of the fall in this life. The Marcionites and the Montanists did so before him, as did the Cathars.[629]

The Marcionite and the Montanist movements embody elements of Gnosticism and were identified by Owen[630] in his Gnostic comparison with early Quakers (1.4) . In relation to this fully realised eschatology of Fox, the following statement of Aune is fundamental to the research question:

> nowhere in early Christianity is eschatological salvation irreversibly realised on the individual level except in the variety of religious sects which are designated Gnostic.[631]

Sections 3.7 and 3.8 below, will seek to demonstrate that this process of salvation is not automatic and whilst some Gnostics are saved by nature,

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627 Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England*, 150-2.
628 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 115.
629 Ibid., 23fn.4.
630 Owen, J. *Works*, Vol. 12 12.
631 Aune, *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology*, 13.

there exists a significant aspect of human response and grace to the inevitability of complete salvation.

Fox's quest to restore a "pure and undefiled religion"[632] of the apostles, a primitive Christianity in which "Christ had come to teach his people himself",[633] in fact results in a theology similar to the Valentinians of the early Church. In an eschatological context, the following extracts from 1662 illustrate how Fox maintains his perfectionist arguments and theology within a fully realised eschatology and Christian framework. Fox asks three rhetorical questions illustrating the differences in the levels of salvation. Following each is a subtext by way of explanation of the question posed:

> **a)** " Whether it [salvation] be not in Adam and Eve in the Fall, with his sons and daughters?"[634]

Fox saw this state as offering merely limited *hope* in the form of Christ "as we had a great deal of work with priests and professors, who pleaded for imperfection",[635]i.e., sin was incapable of removal from the individual whilst on earth.

> **b)** "Or, in that state before they fell, which was a good state, in righteousness and holiness?"[636]

Fox states: "I was opened to declare and manifest to them that Adam and Eve were perfect before they fell, and all that God made he saw was good."[637] This is the perfect state that Fox explains as capable of increase or reduction in perfection by "measure" or "degree" (3.6).

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632 *Works*: 8:274.
633 Ibid., 1:177.
634 Ibid., 7:232.
635 Ibid., 1:399.
636 Ibid., 7:232.
637 Ibid., 1:399.

> **c)** "Or, whether it be in Christ that never fell, whom it cost his blood and his life to fetch Adam and Eve, and his sons and daughters, out of that state in the fall, (out of the unjust state,) to set them in the state before they fell; and not only there, but to bring them into himself that never fell."[638]

This is the paradisiacal state Fox experiences in 1648 (2.2.1), from which falling is impossible, following 1. John.3:9. More perfect that Adam before the Fall who subsequently fell, it is the state of Christ / God, perfection or divinity beyond degree. This concept is remarkably similar to the realised divinity of the awakened Valentinian Gnostic.

The fact that Fox in 1662 refers to the possibility of a Christ state (from which falling was impossible) is at variance with the more moderate emphasis upon "measure" throughout the 1650s (3.6).[639]This moderate theology expressing a process of perfection leading to divinity or the fullness of Christ, is clearly different from the Valentinian scheme in which divinity is already realised and the Gnostic has become a Christ. Whilst Fox's theology arguably never changed (5.2) the 1662 statement is exceptional in its language, and possibly indicative of the occasional inconsistency expressed in Fox's theology.[640] In recognition of contemporary concerns (3.1) reflecting unease at the unequivocal language Fox used, subsequent to 1650 Fox generally stresses the element of "measure" in relation to perfection rather than the complete realisation of the divine state of the pre-Fall being.

Gwyn acknowledges that Fox views Christ's salvation as more than a return to Adam's state before the Fall (i.e., the state indicated at (b) above):

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638 Ibid., 7:232.

639 Ibid., 7: 28.

640 In Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 225 (and 5.2 below), it is suggested that whilst Fox's language in printed texts may have been moderated, he maintained his theological position as to a process of perfection to an Adamic state free of the power and temptation of sin. Moore, in *The Light in Their Consciences*, 110., suggests that Fox was one of few early Quakers who maintained a boldness in their theology where other Quakers were more cautious after 1657 and the Naylor incident.

> It establishes believers in "heavenly places"[Eph.2:4-8[641]] - a fulfilment which overcomes the ethical separation between God and people. It establishes believers together in a way less prone to fall as Adam did.[642]

There is no question of "less prone"- indeed, the state envisaged and experienced by Fox in 1648[643] if not 1647[644] is one in which the fall into sin became impossible. Fox's spiritual state is the *fullness* of the eternal Christ, developed from the early 1647 message of Fox "which is above degrees, that which degrees end in"[645] or in a state of the eternal "Christ, which is the perfection of God."[646] There is a significant distinction to be made between this immediate state of divinity and perfection realised by Fox and that emphasis he placed on "measure" or "growth" *leading* to a possible spiritual fullness comparable to that of a Christ. The former closely resembles the experience of the Valentinian who becomes aware of their hidden divinity, the latter is markedly different from the Gnostic concept.

Quakers ceased to be sinners as long as they participated in Christ's holiness and maintained paradisiacal perfection. Brayshaw[647] views Fox's technique of removing sin as a characteristic teaching of early Quakerism - that a person could have no knowledge of their sin unless they had a measure of the Light of God to show it to them. If the individual took heed of the Light rather than the exclusive contemplation of sin, it was overcome. To claim sinlessness was as repugnant to orthodox thinking as the ambiguous and more widespread assertions of perfection.

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641 Perkins, in *Gnosticism and the New Testament*, 78., states "the dynamic imagery of Ephesians also leaves room for a gnosticizing interpretation, which second century Gnostic authors would exploit. The Epistle emphasises Christ's heavenly enthronement above all the powers (Eph.1:20-23). The elect, who have been predestined by God from all eternity, already receive the blessings from the heavenly places (Eph.1:3-4, 18-19; 2:5-6).
642 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 76.
643 *Works*: 1:84.
644 Ibid., 1:74.
645 Ibid., 3: 447.
646 Ibid.
647 Brayshaw, *The Personality of George Fox*, 157.

Harvey[648] suggests that the single great difference between the Quaker and the Puritan is the optimism of the former (in relation to the possibility of achieving freedom from sin on earth), compared with the pessimistic convictions of the latter. A further distinction from the Puritan approach is seen by Nuttall as the universality of the freedom of access to the Light, the true "contradistinguishing character of Quakerism."[649] Each individual that encountered this new experience of the divine felt as if they became, according to Barbour, "a new Prophet".[650]

Antagonists such as Richard Baxter were infuriated by Quaker claims of a sin-free state:

> Is it possible that any man in this life, that is not mad with spiritual pride, can indeed believe that he hath no sin? What? that he transgresseth no law? that he doth love God in the highest degree that he is bound to do? that he never hath a thought or word that is sinful, nor sinfully loseth one moment of his time?[651]

Fox believes that whilst in the Light/Christ, the individual is free of sin, an optimism which Puritans did not share. Fox further incites criticism from opponents by stating that Christ having removed the curse of Genesis 3:16, those who are redeemed are no longer governed by *any* law, Mosaic or otherwise:

> but who are redeemed from under the curse, and all the pollutions and filthiness, to live up to God, are out of all laws.[652]

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[648] Harvey, E. *The Rise of the Quakers*, London: Headley Bros. 1905:62.
[649] Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit*, 151.
[650] Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England*, 28.
[651] Baxter, R. *An Answer to a young unsettled Friend, who before inclining to Anabaptistry, at last fell in with the Quakers, part of the unpaginated prefatory material in the Quakers Catechism*. London: A.M., 1655.
[652] Fox, G. *Newes Coming Up Out of the North Sounding Towards the South*, London: N.p., 1654:23.

If indwelling sin was inescapable as Puritans such as Owen proclaimed, then the law "written on the heart" (Jeremiah 31:33) was argued by Fox as a cruel mockery, used by the Puritans who were interpreting Scripture in a way that provided limited powers of salvation and protected the powers of the established Church. In relation to the differing theological approaches of Fox and his contemporaries, Gwyn[653] states that Puritans taught salvation *in sin* rather than *from sin*, and argues that Fox claims that there was no salvation from the wrath of God except in salvation from sin. The following epistle from Fox illustrates the principle of limited freedom *in sin* as opposed to *from sin*:

> This is as much as if one should be in Turkey a slave, chained to a boat, and one should come to redeem him to go into his own country; but say the Turks, thou art redeemed, but while thou art upon the earth, thou must not go out of Turkey, nor have the chain off thee. So say Satan's messengers, you are redeemed, but must carry a body of death about you, and cannot go to your father Adam's house before he fell, but you must live in your father Adam's house in the fall, while ye be upon earth.[654]

Fox, unlike his Puritan contemporaries, used the principle of perfection as the means by which the law of Moses (and the law written on hearts) is capable of being satisfied in the present in accordance with Matt. 5:17. More than a theoretical possibility, a sin-free state on earth is achievable and maintainable, for all. Fox states in a reference to 1. John 3:9:

> He that is born of God doth not commit sin, seeing the seed of God remains in him; and that is the doctrine of perfection in the creature. And Christ makes all things new; and thou that canst not witness any thing made new, art in the old things, crying up imperfection; and that is perfect that brings men to confess their sin...[655]

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653 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 76.
654 *Works*: 7:232.
655 Ibid., 3:445.

Further,

> And the blood of the seed cleanseth, it makes free from that which the law takes hold of; and the blood of the seed cleanseth from sin, from the power and stain of it, and then the guilt of it is gone.[656]

As will be illustrated below (3.6) some Quakers believed that perfection was not wholly complete at first. Fox distinctively describes his personal perfection (in terms of freedom from sin) without qualification, with a strict literal interpretation of 1 John.3:9 adopted by himself and Quaker scholars.[657] Unlike Fox, "most biblical commentators"[658] have not interpreted 1 John.3:9 as an achievable perfection on earth, but an ideal to be sought: that no Christian born of God "can be a deliberate and consistent sinner; no Christian can live a life in which sin is dominant in all his actions."[659] It is not within the scope of this thesis to engage in the debate over the interpretation of 1 John 3:9, but this chapter indicates the strict literal interpretation adopted by Fox, which facilitates his quasi-Gnostic quest for divinity.

Gwyn[660] and Barbour[661] confirm that Quakers had to endure long inward battles to stay in the Light and remain free of sin - it was not a quick remedy to avoid evil. The same situation of struggle and inward turmoil exists within Valentinianism (3.7). Logan states in relation to Gnostic salvation that: "he or she is saved from above but must work out that salvation in a continuing struggle with evil and ignorance until the final, eschatological denouement."[662] The sinless condition professed by Fox followed claims of

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656 Ibid., 447.
657 Mason, M. *The Proud Pharisee Reproved.* London: N.p. 1655.
658 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 87.
659 Barclay, W. *The Daily Study Bible: The Letters of John and Jude*. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1976:79.
660 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 72.
661 Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England*, 94-126.
662 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 217.

spiritual perfection and unity with God, the shared eschatological aims of the Valentinian. However, there is a significant eschatological component reserved within Valentinianism, that of postmortem consummation and eschatological completion. Opponents of Fox concentrated their attack on Quaker theology in relation to such beliefs.[663]

The following section examines the more moderate language of "measure" and "degree" of perfection employed by Fox as a result of persecution and criticism by Quaker opponents.

3.6 FOX'S SLIDING -SCALE OF PERFECTION

Section 2.8. (in relation to metaphysics of the Light), mentions preliminary aspects of a "measured" representation of Light in the theology of Fox. Whilst limiting Fox's interpretation of perfection to sin and error, Gwyn states:

> At the same time, however, he [Fox] understands that perfection is fulfilled only in the *measure* of light, faith, or grace which one receives (Rom.12:2f; Eph. 4:7-13). Any striving outside the light, beyond one's measure, will achieve only a human righteousness - a righteousness of one's own (Rom.10:3). Fox testifies, "the faith of God is the gift of God, and it is perfect in us in its measure and degree...We say, faith is perfect in the least measure and degree, the righteousness of faith" (Rom.10:6).[664] Thus, "so far as men are perfect,"[665] it is by the measure they have received from Christ.[666]

The introduction of an organic/metaphysical dimension to perfection by measure or degree facilitates the concept of "states of being" as something definable, as opposed to a measure of sin or error. Indeed, Seppanen[667]

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663 e.g. Higginson, F. *A Brief Relation of the Irreligion of the Northern Quakers*. London: T.R., 1653: 25.
664 *Works*: 3:338.
665 Ibid., 148.
666 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 77.
667 Seppanen, "The Inner Light in the Journals of George Fox", 136.

suggests Fox's usage of "measure" is identical in usage to that of Paul in Rom.10:3 and 2 Cor.10:13-15, 12:7; the measure of perfection is the degree of divinity, the measure of Christ, of God or the Light. It was a term similarly employed by the Puritans although confined to the indwelling of the Spirit exclusively in the saints. This closely resembles the Valentinian concept of perfection as that which involves the maturity and formation of the pneumatic seed in the body.

Fox's language implies some form of theoretical quantifiability, and contributes to a more metaphysical understanding of Fox's position on divinity that results in perfection, rather than one which relates purely to conduct. It is an illustration of a more Gnostic emphasis upon a transformed state as a result of Light, rather than upon conduct alone. Canby Jones is correct in identifying Fox as "an explosive, prophetic person who thought in organic imagery"[668] which results in the metaphysical language and the above interpretation of measure and degree by Fox.

Divinity, according to Fox, was (as a matter of nature in relation to Fox's position regarding that of the divine laid down in the nature and disposition of the soul, 2.8.1) given to every person, yet there were different degrees of its possession. The Valentinian concept of salvation by nature as a result of the pneumatic seed working upon the psychic soul, is clearly comparable. "Measure" therefore is that quantity or amount of the divine which is realised within the individual. It varies with individuals but by turning to live in union with it, every person can increase their "measure". This is similar to the Valentinian position in relation to growth and maturity of the pneumatic element in the body, but the Valentinian has been awakened to their hidden divinity although the form or degree of salvation is, through gaining or losing perfection, uncertain.

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668 Canby Jones, "The Nature and Function of the Light ", 69.

Cope is in agreement with Mather (an opponent of Fox) in suggesting that Mather "had seen deep into the Quaker mind",[669] in recognising that "measure of perfection" related so graphically to the Christ or Divine within. Mather states of the Quaker "measure":

> There is in every man a certain excusing and condemning principle; which indeed is nothing but some remainder of the divine image, left by the compassion of God upon the conscience of man after his fall; and this principle the Quakers called, a measure of the Man Christ, the light, the seed, the word. The whole history of the gospel they therefore beheld as acted over again every day as literally as ever it was in Palestine.[670]

This passage bears close resemblance to Fox's concept of the soul, (2.8.1). Cope indicates that the concept of "measure" meant that the same spirit informed the prophets and the apostles of Christ as the modern saints of Fox's time, i.e., "all true spiritual realisation is alike at its heart."[671] This was a view upon which Owen disagreed with Fox, namely that Fox viewed pre- and post- incarnation Light as identical (2.6) but Owen and Cope fail to appreciate the Foxian view that only the Light of Christ was the true faith.[672] Fox indicates that paradisiacal perfection is *possible on earth* for everyone and illustrates this by reference to the righteousness of the saints "who sit with Christ in heavenly places and judge the world."[673] Anyone could, if they turned to the Light, have that perfection of Christ in heaven: "He that is perfect, as his heavenly Father is perfect, is perfect as He is perfect."[674]

King[675] states that Fox[676] claims complete lack of error for the divine Spirit within the individual since the person after regeneration is joined to this

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669 Cope, "Seventeenth Century Quaker Style", 747.
670 Mather, C. *Magnalia Christi in Americana*, rev.ed., Vol.II. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977:452.
671 Cope, "Seventeenth Century Quaker Style", 748.
672 *Works*: 3: 122.
673 Ibid., 340; CJ:1:65.
674 for example: *Works:* 3:79, 265, 445.
675 King, *George Fox and the Light*, 68.

Spirit. Whilst an individual is without error (to the extent they are perfect by "measure") the question of perfection by process needs to be considered in relation to eschatological completion.

Certain Quakers (notably Naylor[677]) believed that perfection was a *process* leading to the paradise state such as that already reached by Fox in 1648 (2.2.1, 3.5), and Moore concludes:

> Quakers made great use of the concept of one's own "measure" of the Light or Spirit, and while Fox's "measure" may have been greater than anyone else's, it was not different in kind. Son of God he may have called himself, but he directed others towards the Christ in themselves.[678]

Moore's observation as to the greater "measure" of Fox is key to making a closer comparison between Valentinians and Fox's own experience, rather than a comparison with Valentinianism and other Quakers. Whilst Fox's own recorded experience (2.2.1) claimed the attainment of immediate Christ-like perfection, his general message thereafter emphasised interim degrees of revelation and salvation by "measure", a process leading to the possibility of eschatological completion on earth and the fullness or divinity of Christ. This is a fundamental difference in the soteriological position of the Valentinians and that of Foxian theology generally. Fox promoted (for others but not for himself) a stage by stage "building up" process - with the possibility of ultimate paradisiacal perfection being realised in this life. Brinton[679] states (in referring to Luke 2:52) Fox's perfection not only permits growth, it requires growth. Conversely, the Valentinian who has received the awakening "call" is immediately aware of their divinity/divine origins and the

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676 *Works*: 3:62, 84, 445.
677 Naylor, J. *Love to the Lost*. London: Calvert, 1656:22.
678 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 78.
679 Brinton, *Friends for Three Hundred Years*, 48.

process thereafter is perfecting the newly revealed divinity within; a growth or maturity pending ultimate consummation after death when the final reunion of the spiritual pneumatic element and God takes place in the pleroma. Foxian (perfection) in relation to his own revelatory experiences of 1647/8 closely resembles this save that Fox has scant regard for the afterlife. Fox appeared to have no interest in post-mortem eschatology and argues against the concept of purgatory.[680] However, the theology Fox promoted for his followers is that of a process leading to the fullness of Christ, i.e., divinity.

A further illustration of perfection as stages towards a divine state (as opposed to a purely morally defined term or a one-off process), is its power to enable the better understanding of Scripture. In the following Fox illustrates this concept in addition to emphasising the experiential, physical sensation of the divine within:

> when their minds are guided up unto God, and their spirits and minds are quieted in silent waiting upon God...and here they come to feel that which quiets their minds to God, and they find and feel the way of peace, and come to grow up in that life the scriptures were given forth from, and the life the saints lived in...yet if every particular of you do not come to feel that of God, which God hath manifested in you, and shewed to you to guide your minds to God, you cannot know any of the scriptures; for that opens the words to every particular...[681]

Brayshaw[682] notes that a central principle of Fox was that any living understanding of the Bible was only possible in virtue of the possession of a measure of that divine spirit which the writers of it themselves possessed. The purpose of the perfection process was not therefore limited to participation in the spiritual realm but would enable the individual to understand Scripture and therefore its hidden message (4.3).

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680 *Works*: 6:362.
681 Ibid., 4:125.
682 Brayshaw, *The Personality of George Fox*, 14.

Fox's opponents such as Owen view divine inspiration as a peculiar gift bestowed upon the writers of Scripture alone, enabling them to record and interpret all divine revelations from God from the beginning of the world to the end.[683] The revelations of Fox enable him to know and experience the Light and the Life that gave forth the Scriptures, and to have Witness in himself. Thus, Fox claimed to have the same authority as the writers of Scripture.

In the following 1658 publication, Fox included cautionary guidance against activity and declarations regarding the interpretation of Scripture which are beyond a person's spiritual measure:

> Every man that hath a measure of the spirit of God, in the least measure or degree, it is infallible, and so far may they teach infallibly, and know scriptures; but they cannot know all scriptures, but as they attain to the full measure of the spirit of the prophets and apostles, and to the measure, and stature, and fullness of Christ. And if they do not attain to all this, they are not able to know all the scriptures...And take heed of any of you going beyond your measure.[684]

Individuals may fail in attaining paradisiacal perfection yet come close to it, or roll backwards on the spiritual sliding-scale. The cautionary addition of exceeding one's measure may relate to those who claim a degree of spiritual or scriptural understanding without merit, i.e., through arrogance or hypocrisy.

In addition to "measure" or "degree" Fox employs language implying a process or stages of divine spirituality, such as: "growing up in the power of his resurrection, and be made conformable to his death."[685] This is in contrast to the secular language of "room for more growth" used by Barclay, below.

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683 Ibid.
684 *Works*: 3:347.
685 Ibid., 3:26.

Fox simplified his written perfectionist theology in order that it can be understood by all classes of society, as he stated in the *Journal*:

> that this might the better be understood by the lowest capacities, I used a comparison of two old people who had their house broken down by an enemy...They tell them, the house can never be perfectly built up again in this life, though they have taken the people's money for doing it. I told the people, Christ was come to do it freely.. and makes man's and woman's house as perfect again as God made them at first...[686]

This passage metaphorically illustrates not only a process of regrowth and rebuilding, but a building back up to a perfect previous state as before the Fall. Barclay later illustrates the principle of measure in a similar, simplistic way:

> This is not a perfection that has no room for daily growth. It is by no means a claim to be as pure, holy, and perfect as God. It is a perfection that is proportional to a man's requirements. It is sufficient to keep him from transgressing the law of God and to permit him to do what God requires of him...A little gold is just as perfect as a large mass, and a child's body is as perfect as a man's although it grows more and more each day...[687]

With the perfectionist theology of Fox in mind, Barclay attempts to de-Gnosticise Foxian theology by claiming that it is a theoretical position proclaimed only by a few:

> Even though a man may reach the state where he is capable of resisting sin but sins anyhow, nevertheless a state can be attained in this life in which it becomes so natural to act righteously that a condition of stability is achieved in which sin was impossible. Perhaps there are those who say with certainty that they have attained this state. Personally, I have to be modest and merely say that it is attainable, because I confess ingenuously that I have not yet attained

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686 Ibid., 1:399.
687 *Barclay's Apology*, ed. Freiday, D., 156.

> it. But that is no reason to deny that there is such a state. One of the apostles has clearly asserted that there is, in 1. John 3:9...[688]

The moderation of Fox's earlier message by subsequent Quakers is discussed in 5.2. In the context of the evidence in this chapter, the message of Fox, if not other Quakers, incorporated the God-like perfection from which Barclay and Penn were anxious to distance themselves and the post-Restoration Quaker movement.

This approach of Fox illustrates the universal possibility of individual divinity to the fullness of Christ which Fox claimed he had reached and retained during and since his formative revelations. No other Quaker claimed this state of perfection with the certainty of Fox. Having examined Fox's approach to "measure", the next section considers whether there is an equivalent concept in gnosis.

3.7 THE GNOSTIC SLIDING SCALE OF PERFECTION

This section will illustrate that following consubstantial union with the redeemer, a spiritual sliding scale is equally applicable for the Valentinian but it is an occurrence subsequent to the individual awakening to their divine origins and not a process leading to it.

Whilst recognising that residual or futuristic eschatology in Gnosticism may vary (2.2-2.2.1, and the points raised by Rudolph and Pétrement therein) this section examines the Gnostic tension within those Gnostic communities that believe in a realised eschatology on earth, yet with postmortem completion yet still to occur. Within Valentinian Gnosticism it has been stated that consummation and reunion will be fully achieved after death, when the pneumatic seed ascends to God, but it can also be an inner

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[688] Ibid., 157.

experience during this earthly life.[689] The question is what happens to the divine element during the life of the believer, and whether the consubstantial divinity in the body is, through perfection, formulation, maturity or growth capable of increase and decrease, as in Fox's concept of "measure"? Gnostic texts illustrate a conflicting and varying portrayal of the experience of salvation/soteriology in Gnosticism. However, Logan[690] recognises that in Valentinian and Sethian Gnosticism in particular, "different era's, stages or degrees of salvation" are identifiable.

Sections 2.2-2.2.1 above, examined the question of Gnostic soteriology and whether it was a matter of nature (the traditional deterministic approach) or by grace and free will (Schottroff) or in the view of Pagels (election through grace). Indeed, Pagels has made a forceful argument that the traditional view of Irenaeus for example, excluded an optimistic approach of the Valentinians to the participation of the psychics in the final reunion/consummation following works and ascetic practice.[691]

Unlike the Christian Gnostics of the *Apocryphon of John* who are saved partly by the descent of the Holy Spirit, the Valentinian is involved with a cosmic battle of good and evil spirits whilst on earth, (cf. *The Gospel of Philip*, II, *3*. 65.1-66.4; *Adv.haer.* 1.2.4., 1.4.5; Clem.Alex. *Excerpta* 45.1) following which perfection of the pneumatic seed could grow or diminish, influencing the potential for complete or full salvation, whilst still remaining divine on earth. As Fox spoke of "measure" as that which leads to the fullness of Christ, the Valentinian is already in the fullness of Christ yet the consummation or completion of salvation could be affected by the conduct and response of the individual. As Logan states,

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689 van den Broeck and Hanegraaff, W.J. eds, *Gnosis and Hermeticism*, 5.
690 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 266.
691 Pagels, "Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatology", 35-53.

> the entire Valentinian scheme depends on the value of this world and history as the necessary sphere for the formation, education and perfection of the pneumatic seed, just as the first class of souls in the Apocryphon [p.71-72 above] reaches perfection through ascetic effort.[692]

Chapter 4 will adopt a negative approach to the influence of history upon the Gnostic. However, we are assisted by the pre-Valentinian *Apocryphon of John* in this respect and the analysis of Logan, as the text seeks to ease the tension between the competing soteriological views of Christian Gnostics where there is:

> the blissful certainty of election felt by some, yet equally with the facts of ignorance, lack of response, even apostasy and rejection on the part of others...the idea of a divine spark in everyone, the source of life and knowledge, remaining till death, but which then, it transpires, is only found in believers...[693]

The second class of souls in the *Apocryphon* is readily identifiable with the Valentinian view:

> I said to him, "Lord, the souls of those who did not do these works, (but) on whom the power and the Spirit descended, (IV 40, 24-25: will they be rejected?" He answered and said to me, "If) the Spirit (IV 40, 24-25: descended upon them), they will in any case be saved and they will change (for the better). For the power will descend on every man, for without it no one can stand. And after they are born, then, when the Spirit of life increases and the power comes and strengthens that soul, no one can lead it astray with works of evil. But those on whom the counterfeit spirit descends are drawn by him and they go astray."[694]

Thus one class of souls in the *Apocryphon* "will in any case" be saved without the need of works in a concept close to that of the Valentinian approach to nature, even if (in following Pagels view as above) there is a vital element of human response. It is a result of this response that within Valentinian texts, there is some disparity as to the emphasis that is placed

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692 Logan, "At-Onement", 488.
693 Ibid., 486
694 NHC: II, *1*, 25.16-26.25.

upon the degree to which eschatological salvation is illustrated as achievable whilst on earth.

Certainly some Valentinian Gnostic texts, such as the *Gospel of Philip*,[693] indicate that resurrection must come before death (2.2.1, 2.6.1.) In other texts, a form of salvation has occurred for the divine Gnostic whilst on earth (e.g., *Tripartite Tractate*[694]; *Dialogue of the Saviour*[695]) although the Gnostic anticipates final consummation after death. As such, the division between the Gnostics and the heavenly community becomes transient. In *The Gospel of Truth*[696] the delineation between the earthly, hostile powers and influences and the Gnostics is unclear, because the elect are already enjoying *some* of the existence in the heavenly region above whilst waiting in the earthly region below. Similar Valentinian ideas of the heavenly existence of some kind while still living in the earthly realm can be found in *Tripartite Tractate*,[697] and *Treatise on the Resurrection*.[698]

Filoramo notes the dilemma of Gnostic redemption, a state between the already and the not yet (equally applicable to Fox, 5.1) and the consequent necessary role of this world, time and history in the ultimate Gnostic eschatological goal for the individual and the community: "Only with the end of the world, therefore, can the drama of Gnostic salvation be fulfilled."[699] This collective eventuality is reached when all individual particles of light are returned to the pleroma, i.e., when all Gnostics have left their mortal bodies. However, for the individual Gnostic, the dilemma is still present, having attained the knowledge or gnosis required for some form of salvation, yet remaining alive on earth.

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693 NHC: II, *3*. 86.6-7.
694 NHC: I, *5*. 119.16-18., 123f; Epiphanius, *Pan*. 31.7.8.
695 NHC: III, *5*. 121.20-122.1.
696 NHC: I, *3*. 42.17-39.
697 NHC: I, *5*. 135.9-18.
698 NHC: I, *4*. 47.26-27.
699 Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 129-33.

Therefore, as Logan[700] states, such a realised Gnostic eschatology must be balanced by a futurist, an individualist involving the heavenly journey of the soul or self and by a collective involving the Gnostic "Church".

Rudolph[701] states that the individual in Gnosticism can only become aware of the Gnostic view of the world and the possibility of redemption by revelation, by the process described as the "call" (2.2):

> In many cases a Gnostic doctrine is the unfolding of the original wakening call to the sleeping soul, a process which we find exemplified on the basis of the Adam story. It is a question of the awakening of the seed of light in the thought of men, and this can come about in various forms and is repeated again and again wherever the call to conversion or repentance is heard : "Still are you asleep and dreaming. Wake up, turn about, taste and eat the true food! Impart the word (logos) and the water of life! Cease from the evil desires and wishes and the (things) which are unlike (you)[702]

This passage indicates that Gnostic revelation can be continuous - revelatory activity does not necessarily stop and by implication, the level of gnosis is susceptible to alteration.

Moreover, Logan[703] believes that (from texts such as *The Apocryphon of John*[704] and other related texts including the *Trimorphic Protennoia*[705]) salvation in a Christian-Gnostic context occurs within a scheme of primal, continuous and decisive revelation. This is an attempt to resolve the classic dilemma also faced by more orthodox Christians: how to present salvation before Christ as a genuine and continuing possibility, as a reality now in the light of the decisive Christ event, yet not complete till the consummation.

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700 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 302.
701 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 119-120.
702 NHC: VI, *4*. 39.33-40.7
703 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 282.
704 NHC:II, *1*, III, *1*, BG 8502, *2*.
705 NHC:XIII, *1*.

In relation to the individualistic type of mysticism and perfection which Bultmann[706] notes as a characteristic of Gnosticism, there is in mediation and ecstasy an implicit anticipation of future consummation.

Williams notes (by reference to Gnostic texts) the struggle with cosmic sinful powers in order to preserve the perfect but incomplete state of gnosis when achieved on earth :

> The myth of the creation of Adam in the Apocryphon of John shows that the bodily sphere can easily be invaded by the demonic. Cosmic powers can incite the passions assigned to its various creator demons. As a result the Gnostic must wage an incessant war against the chaos of the passions and the powers that manipulate those passions to imprison human beings.[707]

Peel[708] indicates four distinct approaches to the eschatological position of the Gnostic which are discernible from Valentinian and non Valentinian Gnostic texts:

a) A causal link of baptismal rite and the present realisation of future expectation.[709]

b) An idea of the knowledge (once imparted), conferring on the recipient a full realisation of divine nature in the present.[710]

c) The concept that a person having received the divine gnosis, has already been transported to the realm of light or Godhead.[711]

d) The view that the eschaton has arrived in the present for the Gnostic.[712]

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706 Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*, 203.
707 Williams, M.A "The Immovable Race: A Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity." *NHS* 29 (1985):129-31.
708 Peel, M.L. *Gnostic Eschatology and the New Testament. Nov.T* 12 (April 1970):150-153.
709 *Menander*, the *Pronoia hymn of Apoc.John*, the Marcosian baptismal formula, the *Hermetica*, the *Naassene Preaching* and the *Epistle to Rhegimus*.
710 *The Gospel of Truth*, *Poimandres* and the *Apocryphon of James*.
711 *Epistle to Rhegimus, the Hermetica* and the *Authoritative Teaching*.
712 *Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Truth* and the *Dialogue of the Saviour*.

The above is offered simply to indicate variations in concepts as to the present and deferred achievement of eschatological goals in Gnostic texts generally.

As with Fox, perfection of the divine seed is the eschatological aim of the Valentinian at an individual and community level.[715] The function of gnosis after awakening the individual to their divinity is to participate in a process of metaphysical perfection in order to establish the Godhead as ultimately free of deficiency.[716] Upon death the individual spirits or Lights return to or are reabsorbed in the Godhead.[717] Fox's eschatology is comparable with those Gnostics for whom complete salvation has occurred whilst on earth (above) and the divide between him and the heavenly realm is transient.

The immediacy of Fox's realised eschatology, and the inward spiritual judgment already experienced, results in no meaningful theology of the afterlife. Fox emphasises a process of growth whilst on earth which, for the Valentinian Gnostics and for other Quakers according to Fox, was capable of increase and decrease.

3.8 GAINING AND LOSING PERFECTION

In Christ, the divine dwelled in its fullest measure. Therefore "the measure of Christ" means the level or degree of Christ-like perfection. Fox speaks of the degrees or measure of perfection of the saints:

> but a perfection in glory is attained to while the saints are upon the earth, for they were "changed from glory to glory." There is a perfection in the least glory, and that glory which the saints were changed from into glory, was not glorious, but as it was in the perfection in the least degree or measure as it is in itself.[718]

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715 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 311.
716 Ibid., 307.
717 Ibid., 302.
718 *Works:* 3:407.

Fox expresses perfection as the degree of spiritual holiness:

> The least unity is perfect in the spirit, and the least knowledge, and the least holiness in the spirit; and you acknowledge you have not perfect unity, perfect knowledge, perfect holiness, and this hath been the cause you have kept all people since the apostles in blindness...for the least degree of holiness is perfect, and in the holiness is the unity, in which is the perfect knowledge, though in the least degree...for who are sanctified have perfect unity, perfect knowledge, perfect holiness.[719]

In 1669, Fox indicated that "measure" is capable of reduction once achieved, as well as increase :

> All Friends everywhere, in the living spirit, and living power, and in the heavenly light dwell, and quench not the motions of it in yourselves, nor not the moving of it in others; though many have run out, and gone beyond their measures, yet many more have quenched the measure of the spirit of God, and after became dead and dull, and questioned through a false fear; and so there hath been hurt both ways.[720]

This passage illustrates not merely the need to be open to changes in measure, but the connection between measure and hypocrisy in conduct should an individual exceed their measure of perfection. The above passages indicate that perfection could not be quantifiable, or discussed in terms of degree and measure, if the concept was purely conduct-orientated. A state of being can be more readily illustrated in terms of increase and decrease as it relates to the literal presence of the divine, growing and developing within the individual. In gnosis, as Logan has observed in relation to the analysis of Gnostic texts:

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[719] Ibid., 3:432.
[720] Ibid., 8:19.

> salvation/revelation is not simply original and continuous, but must be decisive and eschatological. Conversely, the Gnostic *Heilsgeschichte* implies that salvation is not a permanent possession but a gift of grace, which requires constant effort to retain.[719]

Salvation/revelation is the presence and activity of the Spirit or the Son of God awakening the power, freeing the Gnostic from the earthly world.

Gnostic salvation is essentially something that comes to the individual and is thus a matter of grace. It can be lost.[720] It is to be remembered that the classic definition of Gnostic salvation by the Valentinian Theodotus stated that it is not purely baptism that saves but also the unique Gnostic knowledge or gnosis.[721] As such, it is capable of manipulation arising from human behaviour and response, and may be determined by ethics.

Rudolph states that the view adopted by Gnostics that they had achieved a sin-free state in their life on earth did not mean that they were at liberty to conduct themselves as they wish:

> Gnosis is not a theology of salvation by nature as the heresiologists caricature it; it is rather thoroughly conscious of the provisional situation of the redeemed up to the realisation of redemption after death. Otherwise the extant literature which relates to existential and ethical behaviour is inexplicable. Naturally the pneumatic element cannot perish and its entry into the Pleroma is pre-ordained, but the why and the how are not independent of the right conduct of its bearer.[722]

As Logan[723] states in relation to that knowledge of God which is gnosis: "We do not come to such knowledge by rational investigation and philosophical enquiry; it is a religious knowledge; it has ethical connotations..."

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719 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 239.
720 Ibid., 272.
721 *Exc. ex. Theod.* 78.1-2.
722 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 117.
723 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 212.

Wilson[724] suggests that Gnostic ethics is dominated by a concern for purity, for the restoration of a lost ideal, for the recovery of primal innocence, and is therefore mainly of an ascetic or encratite character. Doresse in the first full scale survey of the NHL notes:

> Nothing in these documents leads us to suppose that the Gnostics in question were addicted to licentious rites: one finds oneself almost disappointed in this, so freely had the heresiologists given us to understand that mysteries of that description were common practice in the principal sects![725]

The possessor of gnosis becomes perfected and sin free though not necessarily through an "entirely automatic process."[726] As has been seen above, there exists in the experience of Fox and in gnosis, an immediate realisation, if not completion, of the eschatological goals. Whilst constant vigilance is required, gnosis releases humanity from the shackles of the cosmic (material) world and all its manifestations including its laws, a position arguably identical to that of Fox (3.2, 4.0). Green[727] details how the Mosaic law in particular (identified as the law of the creator God and cosmic world) was rejected and reinterpreted by Gnostics. Green states that:

> ideologically the Gnostic is asserting that the norms of the non-spiritual realm are not binding upon someone who has received Gnosis, as the Gnostic is of the spirit.[728]

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[724] Wilson, R. McL. "Ethics and the Gnostics" in W. Schrage, ed., *Studien zum Text und zur Ethik des Neuen Testaments: Festscrift zum 80. Geburtstag von Heinrich Greeven.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1986:449., in what bears a remarkable similarity to Fox's restorative approach to a pre-Fall state of being.
[725] Doresse, J. *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics.* New York: Viking Press, 1970:251.
[726] Logan, *Gnostic Truth,* 263.
[727] Green, "The Economic and Social Origins of Gnosticism", 209.
[728] Ibid.

The Gnostic ethos and the goal of gnosis is to reveal to the individual their inner divine nature and thereby to liberate them from the fetters of the cosmic world, such as sin.[729] Bultmann[730] suggests that for the Gnostic, the Mosaic law becomes a lethal power over humanity - sin becomes recognisable once confronted by the law - it awakens desire by transgression or lustful impulse and can be used to "boast" before God in order to attain life by personal effort. It becomes a power which controls and leads to death.

As with Fox and his perfectionism as seen above (3.6) the preservation of gnosis was also an ongoing phenomenon. Wilson highlights the curious phenomenon that alleged asceticism and lubricity within Gnostic communities had been viewed as springing from "the self-same root, that of the Gnostic denigration of this present world..."[731] One approach was that the recipient of gnosis did not belong to this world and should have nothing to do with it - the daily concerns of the ordinary citizen in this life were of no concern to the Gnostic. Alternatively, the Gnostics were at liberty to do whatsoever they chose. One road was to asceticism, the other to practices of a libertinarian character, and this is illustrated by the variations within Gnostic practice.[732]

In this respect, the experience of Paul and the Corinthians is informative. Barrett[733] submits that it is the same group of gnosticising pneumatics that form Paul's opponents throughout his letters to the Corinthians. Goulder[734] agrees that at no point does Paul suggest that there is more than one opposition group involved and examines the seemingly contradictory attitude of Paul's gnosticising pneumatic opponents as

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729 Ibid., 211.
730 Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*, 192.
731 Wilson, "Ethics and the Gnostics", 441.
732 Ibid., 443, fn8.
733 Barrett, C.K. *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. London: Black, 1971:144-145.
734 Goulder, M.D. "Libertines? (1 Cor. 5-6)" *Nov.T.* 41/4 (Oct.1999):335.

portrayed in 1 Cor: 5-6, and those in 1 Cor: 7. In the former the opponents appear to be libertines:

> they not only connive at the incest in Chapter 5, but seem to justify sexual promiscuity at large with their "Anything is permissible" in 6:12-20. However when we turn to Chapter 7 we find them behaving as ascetics: they seem not only to abstain from sex themselves but to require the same standard from other people - husbands are not to sleep with their own wives, the unmarried are to stay celibate, married couples are to divorce. This presents the reader with a paradox: Paul's opposition were libertines and ascetics at the same time. [735]

Barrett[736] states that developed Gnosticism in the second century moved sometimes in the direction of asceticism, sometimes in that of libertinism. Goulder states in relation to the above chapters of Paul:

> Those who live in the Spirit should no longer concern themselves with physical pleasures; sex is the primary pleasure of the flesh, and they should rise above it, and live ascetic lives (Chapter 7). But equally one may take it that all that matters is in the spirit, and the acts of the flesh are irrelevant: in which case "anything is permissible" on the physical level without affecting the spirit (Chapters 5-6).[737]

From these passages regarding Paul, it appears that fundamentally sex was the enemy of the communities Paul was corresponding with - it led to conception and so to the endless extension of the world of darkness.[738] Conzelmann[739] examines the possibility that discussions between the libertinist and the ascetic persuasions within the community did take place. Rudolph states that: "so far no libertine writings have appeared even among

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735 Ibid., 334.
736 Barrett, C. K. *A Commentary*, 144-145.
737 Goulder, "Libertines?", 335.
738 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 270-272.
739 Conzelmann, H. *1 Corinthians*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975:115.

the plentiful Nag Hammadi texts. The witnesses for the libertine tendency are restricted to the Church Fathers."[740]

Similar distinctions are made and drawn between the practices of those early Quakers claiming to be sin-free, and those perfectionists of the Ranter movement (3.2). In a theology arguably similar in other respects, Penn distinguishes the Ranter practices from those of Fox in stating:

> For they interpreted Christ's fulfilling the law for us, to be a discharging of us from any obligation and duty the law required of us, instead of the condemnation of the law for sins past, upon faith and repentance, and that now it was no sin to do that which before it was a sin to commit...divers fell into gross and enormous practices; pretending in excuse thereof, that they could, without evil, commit the same act which was sin in another to do.[741]

In effect Ranters were free of sin in a different way from that claimed by Fox. Ranters were licentious and considered themselves free to commit any act as the concept of "sin" no longer existed. Early Quakers were accused wrongly (as were the Gnostics in the second century) of advocating licentious behaviour as a result of their perfectionist claims. It appears that as with the Ranters in Fox's day, there were however, some Gnostics who carried out licentious behaviour in the exercise of their freedom from the earthly laws and moral constraints. For the gnosis noted in the NHL, and for the early Quakers, such freedom did not inevitably lead to transgression into evil and immoral behaviour.

Whilst liberating believers from the rigors of the Mosaic and New Testament laws, the doctrine of perfection as professed by Fox required an extreme level of adherence to the Light on the part of true believers. Smith[742] states Quakers insisted on absolute moral uprightness in this most

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740 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 254.
741 *Works*: 1:xi.
742 Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 105.

conservative sense of the Old Testament commandments. Fox perceives Quakers as inheritors of the apostolic succession and the New Testament law written on the heart, and emphasises the necessity to live in accordance with the perfectionist doctrine:

> here is the pure and undefiled religion, which the apostles in the primitive times did own, and which now do we own: this is pure religion, and is undefiled before God the Father, and to keep unspotted from the world... and if you live in it and obey it...it will keep you from the body of death and sins of the world...[743]

Once living in a state of divinity and in union with God and in the Light and in perfection, behaviour was not governed by laws and codes, but transformed the individual in a way that behaviour could be none other than God-like righteousness. Self-condemnation and repentance for sin would lead Puritans to vow to sin no more but the Quaker position, Smith suggests,[744] is that a Quaker was supposed to be perfect and repeated sins showed that an individual was a unregenerate sinner and therefore not a Quaker.

3.9 SUMMARY

In the context of perfection or union with God or the Light, the significant difference between Foxian theology and that of the Valentinians is that following his revelations Fox implicitly claims that he has *become* divine as he is in a state more advanced or perfect than Adam prior to the Fall, indeed he had attained the fullness of Christ from which he would not fall. Valentinian gnosis confirms for the individual that they are *already* divine and perfection subsequently strengthens, moulds and develops the pneumatic seed within the body, in its union with the pleroma. The experience of Fox is closely identifiable with the Valentinian, but a moderated Foxian theology

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743 *Works*: 8: 274.
744 Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 105.

subsequent to 1650 emphasised the element of measure and Fox promoted a theology reliant upon a *process towards* divinity which is different from that of the Valentinians, and generally in Gnosticism.

However, both Fox and Valentinians believed in the continuous nature[745] of revelation and this thesis argues, that of perfection or union with Christ. Fox viewed perfection as that of a pre-Fall or primordial divine condition which was related to the divine measure within. Valentinian perfection concerned the maturity, formulation and strengthening of the union of the pneumatic element and the redeemer figure, having already realised their divinity through gnosis. For both Foxian and Valentinian theology, salvation was not an automatic process. Whilst both claimed the immediacy of divinity, salvation was capable of being lost for the Gnostic, although Fox claimed it as irreversible in relation to himself.

Damrosch[746] states that Quakers assumed the most offensive of theological positions to their opponents, in their insistence on taking literally the perfection command of Christ in Matthew 5:48. Fox believes that God/the sinless Christ was fully present in human beings and thus, all could be liberated from the tyranny of sin.[747] Fox goes even further, (1 John 3:9) and speaks of restoration (that he had experienced, and was possible for others) to "a state in Christ Jesus that would never fall."[748] The Valentinian had through gnosis already discovered that they were in a similar divine state, and needed to work at its preservation pending consummation after death, a post-mortem consideration of no interest to Fox.

As part of a process of maintaining perfection, Fox uses the organic imagery of measured perfection, capable of reduction and increase within the individual. Valentinian texts illustrate a similar process albeit following the

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745 Ibid., 25.
746 Damrosch , *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus*, 97.
747 Ibid.
748 *Works*: 1: 85.

divinity of the individual which is already realised. Perfection and union of the pneumatic seed with the redeemer is capable of growth and diminution, particularly arising from the cosmic battle between the powers of good and evil which seek to influence the formation of the divine element in the body. In Christian terms, for Fox and within Valentinianism the state or measure of spiritual fullness which the Gnostic has realised in relation to its newly discovered divinity, and that of Fox which he claimed following his revelations, is the perfection of Christ to a level beyond further degree.

There are two elements to perfection, that which involves a divine/pneumatic element in the body, and ethical/moral considerations arising from such a realisation. Previous research wrongly emphasises the latter to the detriment of the former, a similar conflict that arose in relation to the dynamics of the Light and revelation in Chapter 2.

Despite proclaiming perfection and the consequential accusations of licentious behaviour from opponents, Fox (along with the Gnostics illustrated in the NHL), did not adopt the libertine practices which the Ranters and some Gnostics pursued whilst in their sin-free paradise state.

Sacramental practices and external rites will now be evaluated to ascertain the extent to which they were considered necessary whilst Fox and Gnostics pursued claims of pre-Fall divinity.

CHAPTER FOUR:
SCRIPTURE, BAPTISM AND COMMUNION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapters 2 and 3 examined the emphasis upon revelation and perfection in the theologies of Fox and Gnosticism, and the consequent claims of total or partial fulfilment of eschatological hopes and expectations on earth (2.2-2.2.1, 3.6-3.8). This chapter illustrates how perfection and eschatology for Fox and Valentinians, ultimately determines their respective approach to Scripture, baptism and Communion/the Eucharist. However, diversity amongst Gnostic schools and even within Valentinians in this respect means that universal conclusions and comparison with Fox's message cannot be decisive. Tripp has stated that there is an " irreconcilable inconsistency"[749] in the sacramental approach taken by various Gnostic communities. This chapter will seek to illustrate that in relation to sacramental practice and the use of Scripture, there are some themes and modes of interpretation common to Foxian and Valentinian theologies. This commonality arises from their shared eschatological stance, the emphasis upon revelation and consequential perfection/union with God/the heavenly pleroma.

Both Fox and Gnostics view their respective Church communities as entirely God-driven, organic and "religionless" movements without the imperfections of human and material structures (4.1). The realised nature and eternal, perfected divinity which is possible within Foxian and Gnostic eschatology impacts upon the subsequent degree of significance attached to historical events (and therefore the concept of "time"). This includes a devaluation of New Testament witness to the life, death and resurrection of

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[749] Tripp, D. H. "Gnostic Worship: The State of the Question." *Studia Liturgica* (1987): 210-220.

Christ, along with outward rituals derived from scriptural teaching, such as baptism and the Eucharist (4.2).

Fox and Gnostics both view the established Church as interpreting Scripture at a lower, ethically motivated level of exegesis in which the true interpretation of Christ's activities (to perfect the individual in a reunion with God), is withheld from the believer (4.3, 4.4). Fox viewed outward and external events as "types, figures and shadows," which are redundant when seen in the true sacramental theology (4.5) of the inward Light. This is a similar concept to the outward and material "types and images" of Valentinianism, viewed as an external and inferior representation of the inward reality of gnosis.

The true baptism and sacramental theology, generally, in Fox's message (4.6) and in gnosis (4.7) is spiritualised, and perfects the individual in a union with God. The diverse practices of Gnostics (including amongst Valentinians) nevertheless illustrate lower levels of sense-orientated and ethically motivated exegesis as legitimate practice with the possibility that one level may lead to the highest. This is best illustrated by the text of the Valentinian student Ptolemy, in the *Letter to Flora.*[750] Amongst Gnostics, the Valentinians are unique in their interpretation of various levels of exegesis and the possibility of an individual progressing from one level to another, if only from the psychic level to the pneumatic. Irenaeus (in the first eight chapters of Book 1 of *Adversus haereses*) identifies the followers of Ptolemy as those who in their use of symbolism, the cross and resurrection, develop a redemption rite which includes a form of Eucharist (below).

The *Letter to Flora* illustrates progression from one level of exegesis to the next by way of Ptolemy's explanation to his student, of the source of the Old Testament Law. It was neither from the perfect God and Father of

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[750] Epiphanius, *Pan.* 33. 3-7, esp. 7.8-10.

Jesus Christ or from Satan but came from an intermediate deity, the creator or demiurge God of righteousness. According to the *Letter to Flora* the Law was divided into three parts, one from the Lawgiver, one from Moses and one from the traditions of the elders. The Law given by the Lawgiver was itself in three parts; the pure legislation fulfilled by the Savior, the law interwoven with injustice which is to be destroyed, and the ceremonial law which is to be given a spiritual or allegorical interpretation.

Ptolemy promises to the psychic Christian, Flora, a future explanation (if Flora becomes initiated) as to how the three types of natures thus revealed (the spirit of the pneuma, the soul/mind or psyche, and matter or hyle) derive from a single principle, namely an exposition of the Valentinian myth. Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* takes the student along a seemingly orthodox path to the point where she will recognise that the Valentinians share the apostolic tradition and that the truth of Valentinian teaching is guaranteed by the words of the Savior:

> For, if God permit, you will later learn about their origin and generation, when you are judged worthy of the apostolic tradition which we too have received by succession. We too are able to prove all our points by the teaching of the Savior.
> In making these brief statements to you, my sister Flora, I have not grown weary; and while I have treated the subject with brevity, I have also discussed it sufficiently. These points will be of great benefit to you in the future, if like fair and good ground you have received fertile seeds and go on to show forth their fruit.[751]

The above emphasises the importance of God's grace in achieving pneumatic exegesis in the Valentinian scheme, with the conduct and worthiness of the recipient being material considerations. Gnostic sacramental practices generally assist in the uniting of the divine seed or soul with God/the pleroma in redemption and sealing (anointing) rites. These

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[751] Ibid., 33.7.8-10.

include; the Valentinian rite of passage/perfection known as *Apolutrosis* (4.7.1) assisting the restoration of the divine element with the pleroma in a spiritual baptism; *Apokatastasis* (a Marcosian rite given to the dying to aid the ascent of the soul) and, in relation to the Christian Gnosticism of *The Apocryphon of John* and the Sethian Gnosticism of the *Trimorphic Protennoia* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, a five seals rite involving anointing and protection of the soul from evil. There will also be consideration of the Valentinian rite of the bridal chamber, a rite of spiritual marriage emphasising the union of consubstantial spirits, and the "bread and cup" of the Eucharist (4.8). The chapter concludes with a summary (4.9).

4.1 FOX, GNOSTICS AND THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH

In their realised eschatologies emphasising eternal states of being, both Fox and the Gnostics devalue the role of any human structures or hierarchical aspects within their respective theologies. Jones[752] states that the aim of Fox was to organise a movement (as distinct from a sect or church within Protestant churches) that sought the restoration of apostolic Christianity, a fresh beginning of the Church of Christ. In taking the unorganised stage of apostolic Christianity as their model, Quakers were:

> determined to create, or rather to restore, a wholly different type of Church. It was to have no connection with the State. It was to have no infallible creed. It was to be governed by no authoritative hierarchy. It was to have no essential forms, rites, ritual, or ceremonies. It was not even to be an organisation in the strict sense of the word. It was to be a fellowship, a society, a communion.[753]

Elsewhere:

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[752] Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, xxvii.
[753] Ibid., xxv.

> It was not to be a man-made or man-governed institution. It was to be a Christ-made and a Christ-governed society. It was in conception a living organism rather than an organisation.[754]

Valentinian Gnostics perceived themselves as "Christian" and not pagan and by using the appellation, severely vexed their ecclesiastical rivals.[755] They claimed themselves as a "primordial generation"[756] and as such their Church was the society of the elect which had existed from the beginning, prior to creation, in the heavenly realm of light. Not only did the Son of God exist from the beginning, but so did the Gnostic "Church". The Gnostic "Church" was a spiritual organism in the Pauline sense of the term and (similar to Fox's Quaker movement), without ecclesiastical structure.[757]

However, Brown[758] states that Gnostics did not reject established or orthodox Church structures outright in the development of their own form of community life. But Gnostics did not *need* these established structures and their implicit elitism in this regard posed a challenge to local Church authorities. The Gnostic Church aimed to be "religionless" as it claimed to have existed prior to humanity and creation itself.

Similarly, Benson[759] believes that Fox's vision of a religionless way to God was in contrast to the established Christian religion which Fox views as a creation of humanity with roots in human inventiveness and not in the free act of obedience to God. By the time Christianity had become a state religion with the Bishop of Rome as its autocratic head, it had become a humanly invented religious system which completely eclipsed the new way to God that Christ had inaugurated.[760]

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754 Ibid., xxvii.
755 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 206.
756 Ibid.,
757 Ibid., 216.
758 Brown, "Gnosis, Theology and Historical Method", 282.
759 Benson, *Catholic Quakerism*, 11.
760 Ibid.

Fox[761] believed that since the Apostles' days, false Churches have set up their own images of a way, worship and faith to which all people must conform under threat of banishment, torture, and fines. Gwyn notes that :

> Fox criticised the institution of the Church far more than the drunkard or the whoremonger, and far more than any other social institution because he saw how the Church thwarted the purposes of God in history. Its knowledge and authority were worldly and therefore hindered the individuals entry into the Kingdom...He was calling men and women not only into a deeper faith, but also into a radically new mode of Church. And frequently those who responded were not the unchurched but those passionate Christians most concerned for the Church.[762]

Ingle[763] views Fox as simply anti-institutional, with Fox's intensely personal appeal calling into question the trappings and rituals of organised religion, both in themselves and as part of the social and political order. Gwyn reaches the same conclusion and states Fox's belief that the church is:

> not set up in the infallible Spirit and Power of God. The images of the churches, whether icons, clerical authority, doctrinal formulations, or traditions, are forms without power. Christendom has been subjected to these forms, worshipping them, in effect. In doing so, they exchange the Truth of God for a lie.[764]

Fox views some of the worst social evils of his day as rooted in bibliolatry and the exercise of false authority in the Church: the English church had become an impediment, keeping men and women from entering the Kingdom (Mt. 23:13f). Ingle refers to "established Christianity" and Fox's reaction to it:

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761 *Works*: 6:95., 7:326.
762 Gwyn, "Captivity among the idols", 15-16.
763 Ingle, *First Among Friends*, 61.
764 Gwyn, "Captivity among the idols", 10.

> In leading people to focus on the outward institution, Scriptures, and rites, it usurped the kind of personal revelations he [Fox] had experienced. As he was, so he wanted others to become: A stranger to all, relying wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ.[767]

Section 2.1 considered the concept of "stranger" and alienation from the world as a precondition to a Gnostic receiving gnosis. The anti-cosmic nature of Gnosticism has, Rudolph[768] observes, led to a belief that all "hylic" (material) institutions are disqualified and regarded as futile for redemption. Sacraments like baptism and the last supper (Eucharist) cannot effect salvation and therefore do not possess those qualities that are "necessary for salvation." At most they can confirm and strengthen the state of grace that the Gnostics (pneumatics), enjoy already, insofar far as they are retained.

The emphasis upon revelation and the rejection of a religious human hierarchy and structure by both Fox and the Gnostics will now be considered within the context of a realised eschatology, and the distinctive approach to "time" adopted by both theologies. The concept of the "call" within Gnosticism, 2.2 above (and the revelatory Light within Fox's message, 2.6) is central to their respective theologies and leads to the view, as Schottroff[769] argues, that salvation is essentially timeless, or in other words existential, without any interest in historical precedent or textual guidance.

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767 Ingle, *First Among Friends*, 43.
768 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 218.
769 Schottroff, L. "Heil als innerweltliche Entweltlichung: Der gnostische Hintergrund der johanneischen Vorstellung vom Zeitpunkt der Erlosung." *Nov.T* 11 (1969):294-317., 315ff.

4.2 THE CONCEPTS OF TIME AND HISTORY WITHIN GNOSIS AND THE MESSAGE OF FOX

When the individual is in a realised eschatological state above time and beyond time (2.2.1) it invites the question as to what further theological use can be made of earthly external rituals, practices and texts.

Fox[768] believed that the identical and universal spirit of Christ was extant in persons prior to and after the incarnation. This approach by Fox resulted in disputes with contemporary opponents such as Owen, concerning the role of the historic Christ in salvation (1.4). Creasey[769] notes the extent to which correspondence between the early Quakers and their opponents was dominated by issues concerning the historic aspects of the person and work of Christ (arising from the universal and anti-historical approach to the incarnation). For Fox, the Atonement is continuous and not something that happens at a particular moment in time.[770]

Fox retains the traditional Protestant belief in the unworthiness of humanity and the consequent necessity of "the daily cross" for salvation. However, Fox finds it difficult to explain how the necessity of the cross could be reconciled with the Quaker idea of the Light available to all. As Moore states: "However strongly Quakers declared that: 'the death of the man Jesus which suffered at Jerusalem we own and witness, the same Christ that suffered at Jerusalem we own made manifest', they could not convince their opponents."[771] Quakers were attacked in print for their anti- historical theology. In the words of one anti-Quaker tract:

> We gladly own Christ is in us by his spirit to crucify our flesh, and raise us up in our hearts...but we detect [in the Quakers] that doctrine

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768 *Works*:1:140; BJ: 2:234.
769 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 195.
770 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 107.
771 Ibid., 103.

that destroys the atonement in his blood, and the truth of his humanity.[772]

Further, as Ralph Farmer (another leading critic of Quakers) wrote:

Thus when Quakers say they own and witness the Christ that died at Jerusalem, they mean nothing more than the fact, it has no effect.[773]

Moore[774] concludes that such criticisms regarding the diminished role of the Atonement and the limited interest in the historical Jesus were frequently voiced and never adequately answered:

> Many Quaker writers in the latter part of the 1650s, responding to their opponents demands that they should clarify their ideas on the meaning of the "light," came to pay less and less attention to the life and death of Jesus... During 1657 and 1658, about fifty Quaker authors (excluding Fox and Burrough), in some sixty pamphlets, gave their accounts of salvation. Of these perhaps eight ascribed any serious importance to the earthly life and death of Christ. All the others wrote of Christ and the light as though they were precisely equivalent terms, and several rarely mentioned Christ at all, concentrating almost entirely on the light.[775]

Further,

> Fox's writings showed and encouraged this tendency; his *Catechism for Children,*[776] instead of being an account of the whole Christian faith with a Quaker leaning, is almost entirely about the operations of the light. ...They took to extremes the tendency derived from continental writers...to emphasize the divine eternal Christ at the expense of the human, and the contemporary accusation, that Quakers did not believe in a human Jesus, had much evidence to support it.[777]

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[772] Kellet, J., Feake, C., et al., *A Faithful Discovery of a Treacherous Design*. London: Brewster, 1654:30.
[773] Farmer, *The Great Mysteries of Godlinesse and Ungodlinesse*. London: S.G., 1655:63.
[774] Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 104.
[775] This was a form of Wisdom Christology, based on texts such as John 1:1-14, Philippians 2:5:11, and passages from the first three chapters of Hebrews. The figures come from data collected for Moore's PhD dissertation, "The Faith of the First Quakers". It is not possible to be certain of exact numbers, but there is no doubt as to the general trend.
[776] Fox, G. *A Catechism for Children*, London: Calvert, 1657.
[777] Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 109-10.

Ingle believes that whilst Fox[778] rejects charges that he depreciated the historic Jesus (as well as the Scriptures that related to what Fox called the "story"[779] of Jesus of Nazareth) "his theological position did add up to a kind of gnosticism, in which Jesus' outward humanity paled into insignificance before the divine and indwelling Christ."[780]

This section demonstrates that the concept of that Light which revealed God through Christ (in the message of Fox) has a similar function to that of gnosis in terms of its negative treatment of "time" and "history" within a realised eschatological framework (i.e., once the individual is in the Light or is the recipient of gnosis). This function results in important implications in terms of the devaluation if not negation of history, historical precedent, Scripture, and outward events/rituals in salvation.

Puech[781] in 1949, set out the general approach adopted by the Gnostics:

> The Gnostic's [hostile] attitude towards time was part of his general attitude toward the state of man here below and consequently toward the world as a whole, its history past and future, and the drama that is being enacted in it...the problem of time lies at the heart of Gnosis.[782]

By way of introduction; the contrasting concepts of time/history within the general principles of Greek philosophy, within Christian theology, and finally within gnosis, are illustrated:

> the Greek world conceived of time as above all cyclical or circular, returning perpetually upon itself, self-enclosed, under the influence of astronomical movements which command and regulate its course with

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778 Fox often expressed a belief in the "Christ that died at Jerusalem" although Fox's interpretation was unconventional: Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 109.
779 *Works*: 1:22-23.
780 Ingle, *First Among Friends*, 112.
781 Puech, "Gnosis and Time", 38-84.
782 Ibid., 38.

necessity. For Christianity, on the contrary, time is bound up with the Creation and continuous action of God; it unfolds unilaterally in one direction, beginning at a single source and aiming towards a single goal: it is orientated and represents a progression from the past towards the future; it is one, organic and progressive; consequently it has a full reality. Then comes Gnosticism. With its need for immediate salvation, it rejects the servitude and repetition of Greek cyclical time as well as the organic continuity of Christian unilinear time; it shatters them both into bits (the figure is no exaggeration). More succinctly, we might speak of a game among three opposing conceptions, the first representing time by a circle [the Greek conception], the second by a straight line [hereinafter referred to as linear or horizontal eschatology], the third by a broken line [hereinafter described as vertical eschatology].[783]

The "immediate salvation" is the realised eschatological position of the Gnostic and Fox (2.2.1) resulting in Fox incorporating a vertical eschatology in an otherwise purely horizontal Christian framework. Gwyn states that Fox's use of the term "time" includes what we today would call "history," and is seen in a different perspective in the Light.[784] This "different perspective" is tantamount to that Gnostic vertical break in an otherwise Christian linear and horizontal view of history and time. The purely vertical perspective results in history and time (with all the structures and precedents they incorporate) having no theological significance. The horizontal position entails the incorporation of historical events and earthly organic time as relevant to theological exegesis. As will be seen below, Gnostic vertical eschatology is not devoid of the horizontal eschatology where a Christian redeemer is involved.

A significant aspect to Gnostic vertical eschatology is the horizontal implications of a residual or futuristic component to an otherwise incomplete eschatology (2.2-2.2.1, 3.6-3.8). Schottroff[785] argues against any Gnostic futurist eschatology (i.e., aspects of continuous revelation and the post

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783 Ibid., 40.
784 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 116.
785 Schottroff, "Heil als innerweltliche Entweltlichung", 294-317.

mortem survival and ascent of the soul: 2.8.1, 3.7), contrary to the views of Bultmann[788] and Jonas[789] who argue that such a futuristic component exists.

For Schottroff the time of redemption is the time of revelation without a residual eschatology. Schottroff argues (as does Pétrement , 2.2.1) sacramental or eschatological forms of gnosis representing anticipation of future completion of eschatological expectations may exist, but they are to be explained as peripheral phenomena only.[790] These contrasting views reflect the "central paradox of the Gnostic experience of salvation",[791] the Gnostic having the possibility of salvation and is redeemed, yet redemption is not complete whilst alive, (or salvation is dependant on maintaining the gnosis achieved which may be lost). Ultimately, the unresolved argument reflects "the conflicting nature of the Gnostic experience of salvation",[792] and inconsistencies in the position reflected in Gnostic texts, demonstrating theological differences as to whether Gnostic salvation is by nature, by grace, or as suggested above (2.2) a combination of both.

Rudolph[793] argues that Schottroff has gone too far in explaining certain forms of Gnostic sacramental or eschatological practice as peripheral phenomena, as it ignores the futuristic eschatological component of gnosis. This makes real what the Gnostic has knowledge of in this life and cannot be overlooked; it is an horizontal aspect to an otherwise vertical form of eschatology. Additionally, the influence of ethics and conduct-related elements upon the achievement of gnosis is not sustainable in a purely vertical eschatology devoid of a futuristic component.

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788 Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*, 203.
789 Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 45.
790 Schottroff, "Heil als innerweltliche Entweltlichung", 294-317.
791 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 239.
792 Ibid., 265.
793 Rudolph, K. "Gnosis und Gnostizismus, eine Forschungsberichte." *TRu.* 36 (1971):29.

Gnostic vertical eschatology has had to incorporate a horizontal dimension of history due to the Gnostic paradox identified by Irenaeus[792] (3.7-3.8) concerning the nature of Gnostic salvation. As Logan[793] observes, Gnostic salvation incorporates three factors in an unresolved tension; salvation by nature, by divine grace as a lifelong possession of believers, and as a gift to believers, capable of being lost. Gnostic salvation is not an isolated decisive event without futuristic (and therefore chronologically significant) historical connotations. Additionally, if salvation is understood in terms of the awakening "call", this implies a redeemer/revealer whose revelatory activity can be continuous throughout linear history.

Quispel[794] suggests that Christianity introduces the concept of a redeemer figure, Christ (and by implication an horizontal dimension) into a Gnostic theology which is otherwise purely a matter of self-redemption. This is too limited a view: Schenke and others have shown how there is practically no Gnostic work or system without a redeemer figure: "from the concrete historical figure of Simon Magus at one end, to the abstract concept of the call at the other."[795] Puech has comprehensively stated the Gnostic position:

> It would be inaccurate to say that Gnostic salvation , though intrinsically atemporal both in its object and in its effects, is wholly exempt from temporal conditions. But where time does enter in, its role is reduced to a minimum and the tendency is to annul it...Yet in so far as the inner revelation has to be awakened or reawakened by a Revealer, Salvation depends on a Saviour who intervenes in time. But the Gnostic attaches no importance to the historical aspect of this

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792 *Adv.haer.* 1.24.1
793 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 213.
794 Quispel, G. "Der gnostiche Anthropos und die jüdischeTradition." *Eranos Jahrbuch* 22 (1953):234; Colpe, C. *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule:Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnostichen Erlosermythus* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments), Göttingen:Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961:30, 198; Schmithals, W. *Gnosticism in Corinth*, tr. J.E. Steely. Nashville: Abingdon, 1971: 30, fn.12; Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 103, fn.11.
795 Schenke, H-M., "Die neutestamentliche Christologie und der gnostische Erloser", in Tröger, K-W., ed., *Gnosis und Neues Testament: Studien aus Religionswissenschaft und Theologie.* Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1973:205-25., 208.

> intervention...It is not his [the Saviour's] acts that save, but the symbols that materialize his acts, or the teaching he dispenses. No value of sacrifice, of expiation for the sins and the flesh, no significance of redemption is attached to the sufferings or Passion of the Saviour, whether he be Jesus or Mani. The essential is not the concrete, realistic historical character of the drama that is the Saviour's earthly life but the intellectual , exemplary, atemporal character of the revelation divulged by the Saviour...This is particularly evident in the Christian Gnosis, which could not help taking the historical figure of Jesus into account... Above all, Jesus was not really incarnated: his substance was purely spiritual, "pneumatic." Jesus was not in any true and profound sense, placed in a concrete segment of time...Thus the miracles, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection have neither full reality nor concrete efficacy: at most they are symbols or examples. Either a fantastic drama was enacted behind the historical reality or else the historical setting was illusory, so that the reality expressed through it remains atemporal. Fundamentally, this Gnostic conception, designated as "docetism", negates the historical, temporal character of the life and work of Jesus.[796]

Logan[797] suggests that a striking orthodox precedent for the hypothesis of a combination of primal and continuous revelation is found in the Logos doctrine[798] of the heresiologist, Justin Martyr. Justin[799] answered pagan insinuations about the falsehood and novelty of Christianity by claiming that the divine Son or Logos (known in all his fullness to Christians through the Incarnation) was yet partially known in his primal revelation in and through his activity in creation. Thereafter, continuous revelation was received by choice souls (Abraham, Socrates, etc.) in history.

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[796] Puech, "Gnosis and Time", 80.
[797] Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 215.
[798] Justin suggests that non-Christian texts, religious or philosophical might serve as a parallel, preparatory function for those who did not have access to the Old Testament as the texts contained the "seed of Christ": Tiessan, T. "Gnosticism as Heresy: The Response of Irenaeus", in Helleman, ed., *Hellenization Revisited*, 348. Irenaeus denied this, stating that the "seed of Christ" in Scripture was the announcement of Christ in the Old Testament, not the presence of the Word in creation or the creature, as in the stoic doctrine of *logos spermatikos*: *Adv. haer*. IV, 10, 1. Justin's parallelism, and the concept of *logos spermatikos*, fits well with the Gnostic principle that revelation is not confined to a specific moment in time or history.
[799] Edman, I. ed., *Justin's Apology, Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*. New York: Walter J Black, 1945.

This dilemma ultimately entailed Gnostics engaging with temporal, horizontal "in time" eschatological aspects such as rituals and baptismal rites, as noted by Puech:

> Gnostic soteriology may imply a temporal perspective in terms of eschatology. The Gnostic identifies resurrection with the awakening of the spirit to truth and with inner regeneration through knowledge... he held the spiritual man, once illuminated, to be already resurrected and forever...on the other hand he anticipates the final consummation to come by accomplishing it in himself and for himself; he participates in it, enacting the event through the medium of a rite...And the eschatological events are turned inward....he has himself attained the state which, temporally speaking, must, in the future, follow the end of the ages.[802]

Contemporary research challenges the widespread assumption (particularly in Johannine scholarship) "that apocalyptic eschatology offended the Gnostic and that vertical eschatology was uncharacteristic of the Apocalypticist."[803] Hill[804] confirms and demonstrates the presence of "vertical eschatology" in apocalyptic texts, and challenges the traditional view of Gnostic realised eschatology by demonstrating the presence of apocalyptic eschatology in Gnosticism with particular reference to six texts of the NHL: (the Valentinian texts NHC: I,*4*: *The Treatise on the Resurrection* and II,*3*: *The Gospel of Philip*; and non-Valentinian texts VII,*1*: *The Paraphrase of Shem*; VI,*4*: *The Concept of our Great Pow*er.; II,*5*: *On the Origin of the World*; II,*7*:*The Book of Thomas the Con*tender). Pearson is critical of Hill's thesis on the basis that research since 1989 has not been referred to, which establishes that:

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802 Puech, "Gnosis and Time", 82.
803 Pearson, B. Review of "An Examination and Critique of the Understanding of the Relationship between Apocalypticism and Gnosticism in Johannine Studies" by R.A. Hill, New York: Edwin Mellin, 1997 in *Religious Studies Review*. 24/3 (July 1998): 303-4.
804 Hill, R.A. *An Examination and Critique of the Understanding of the Relationship between Apocalypticism and Gnosticism in Johannine Studies*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1997.

no one could any longer argue that Gnosticism is devoid of linear eschatology, except perhaps people who are totally ignorant of the available sources. In other words, much of what Hill seeks to demonstrate is now usually taken for granted in current scholarship.[805]

Christianity (including Christian Gnosticism) has a reference point with the incarnation of Jesus. This ascertainable event in history affects and determines the entire perspective of Christian human history. Christianity was able to establish historical continuity with Hebrew texts, and in this way it established an organic, continuous bond between the present and the past. This close bond was also reinforced by Christian eschatology born out of apocalyptic ferment. The expectation of the end of the world was the foreseeable continuation of the past, which even with the postponement of apocalyptic prospects, remained a movement heading towards a future with a defined direction and certainty.

However, the Gnostic is haunted by an obsessive sense of evil and feels crushed by the weight of earthly destiny, subjected to the limitations of time. Time and history are within gnosis perceived and conceived of as strangeness, an obstacle. It is the abode of servitude, of exile, of oblivion, ignorance and sleep, and all these are states contrasting with that perfection sought, a state beyond the world or before there was a world. Fox's perfectionist, realised eschatology and apocalyptic theology combine the horizontal and vertical eschatologies which are now accepted by scholars as incorporated within Christian and Christian Gnostic theologies.

Fox (in a distinctive radical and apocalyptic typology), views Satan as using history or time to imprison the workings of the Light, to "captivate" the divine within. Fox states: "that which [Satan] brings to look into the world,

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805 Pearson, *Religious Studies Review*, 303-304.

into time, captivates."[804] Whilst the individual is in and maintains the state of realised eschatology as experienced by Fox, 2.2.1 (or is redeemed as the recipient of gnosis) events and structures based on time and history are no longer relevant to theological exegesis. Prior to Fox's revelatory experiences of 1647 and 1648, time was a barrier to the fulfilment of eschatological hopes. The divine or the seed within the individual is in prison, in time. Fox stated: "for the promise is to the seed...which fetches up the seed out of time who hath been in prison in time, and brings it by the power of God where there is no time."[805]

Subsequent to 1647/48, and now in a paradise state, Fox can see how time is and has been, a satanic tool of evil. Once the individual turns to the Light and is freed from the earthly constraint of time, the historical significance of events and outward signs/rituals becomes redundant or is devalued. Fox stated:

> the unknown truth, [i.e.God] unknown to the world [is] made manifest, which draws up that which lies in prison, and refresheth it in time, up to God, out of time, through time.[806]

Gwyn suggests the above passage contains three significant directional propositions relating to Fox's use of the word "time," in which Fox describes the life of faith:

> *out* of time (or history) as a primary reference, yet still *in* time and *through* time. This interface between time (the old, present age) and the everlasting (the new, coming age) is the place of the cross.[807]

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804 *Works:* 4:124.
805 Ibid., 3:563.
806 Ibid., 4:18.
807 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 117.

The Gnostic position is as described by Fox[808] above, salvation for the imprisoned divine in the person occurs "out of time". As Puech states:

> In separating our spirit, our self, from the body, this Salvation places us outside of time; it introduces us into a situation that transcends the limited, and therefore captive - the phenomenal, and therefore illusory- existence that has hitherto been ours. It consists not in fulfilling ourself in time but in finding oneself fulfilled beyond time and before time. It releases us from time in order to carry us back to our original, atemporal condition.[809]

In gnosis and Foxian theology, *salvation* does not occur "in time and through time" as these are the domain of Satan. These horizontal eschatological aspects may be relevant to the process of salvation however, as they contextualise the imprisoned divine in the individual, trapped by Satan "in time", which needs to freed "through time". That which frees the imprisoned seed captivated "in time" and which liberates it to salvation and the eternal, out of time, is similar to the concept of gnosis.

Dandelion,[810] in an examination of the second coming period at the beginning of Fox's message, comments upon current research into the meaning of living at a time when Christ was deemed to be coming to teach his people himself, in a second incarnation : Damiano[811] claims that living in the endtimes involves a sense that "life proceeds in God's time rather than humanity's" whilst Nuhn[812] views that the Day of the Lord is a "change in the very mode of experience of time: a change from quantitative to qualitative experience and from linear to eternal time." Matthew Fox[813] states: "Now is

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808 *Works:* 4:18.
809 Puech, "Gnosis and Time", 77., fn.64.
810 Dandelion, *Heaven on Earth*, 149-150.
811 Damiano, K. "On Earth as it is in Heaven: eighteenth century Quakerism as realised eschatology." PhD dissertation, Union of Experimenting Colleges and Universities, 1988:118.
812 Nuhn, F. "The Peaceable Kingdom: the Quaker witness and the Judeo-Christian hope", in Freiday, D., ed. *The Day of the Lord: eschatology in Quaker perspective*. Newberg: Barclay Press, 1981:38.
813 Fox, M. *Original Blessing*. Santa Fe: Bear and Co., 1983:105.

the time; Now is the place; Now is the occasion; Now is the bringing together of the best of the past and of the future; Now is the moment of divine breakthrough."

The view of Nuhn is closest to that position of gnosis, with a clean break from a horizontal eschatology to that of a vertical breakthrough and rejection of the past in terms of any eschatological significance attached to historical events and structures.

Whilst the above quotations signify experiences for any Christian contemplating the second coming, the position of Fox is different; Fox claims an irreversible realised eschatological state of divinity and freedom from sin on earth which other Christians did not. It is this element of Gnostic vertical eschatology which distinguishes Fox's eschatology from apocalyptic horizontal Christianity.

As Gwyn notes of Fox's theology: "The Church incarnates Christ's ending of history - Jesus Christ is the culmination of God's historical dealings with the Hebrew people...the inward experience of the risen Christ is an advance view of the consummation of the outward in history."[814] The inward apocalyptic experience of turmoil in which "the Lord is coming in flames of fire"[815] is a preparation for those in the Light, for the end of the created world and its structures.

When in the Light, the individual realises that, as Fox stated: "all figures and shadows were and are comprehended in time"[816], i.e., outward and external rituals were only relevant to Christian theology when history/time imprisoned the divine seed in the individual prior to the reception of Christ/the Light within.[817]

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814 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 116.
815 *Works*: 3:37.
816 BJ: 2:418.
817 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 116.

Fox believed that any outward, historical work or ritual culminated in Jesus Christ revealed inwardly by the Light. Similarly, when in receipt of gnosis the individual does not attach theological significance *per se* (as an aid to perfection) to external ritual or structures. Fox opposed the liturgical calendar (with its appointed days and rituals) in favour of the Light's day of visitation, removed from an historical framework (as Fox states: "receive this day in your time"[818]). Fox is referring to a clean break from the linear position, to the vertical intervention of the day of visitation.

The analysis of what Gwyn views as Fox's "apocalyptic radical typology"[819] suggests that Fox's approach was distinctive for two reasons:

> it places a total emphasis upon the apocalypse, or revelation, of Christ by his Light; and second, the scope of this revelation embraces all things, Moses/Christ, Israel/the Church, old creation/new creation - the inward and new is revealed in counterpart to the outward and old.[820]

Of the anti-historical position of revelatory gnosis, Pagels states that:

> Gnostics did not believe that the revelation of Christ required mediation, by way of events in history, space or time or by way of outward types or signs. Historical typology as exegetical methodology was not part of Gnostic theology.[821]

The Valentinian position may therefore be different from that of the Quakers. Gwyn emphasises that the nature of the typology so important to Quakers was "apocalyptic typology." Conversely, in rejecting the accuracy of Old Testament Scripture and adopting a generally negative approach to Old Testament characters as figures of salvation, Valentinians preferred allegory

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818 *Works:* 5:423.
819 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 115.
820 Ibid.
821 Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel*, 115.

to the typology of their opponents in the established Church. Creasey observed that Henry More certainly suggested a Quaker allegorising mode of interpretation of Scripture; interpreting passages which refer to the Passion, resurrection and ascension of Christ as if their whole meaning were concerned with, as Creasey notes "a mere representation of something to be performed within us - a mode of interpretation to which Quakers were prone."[822] However, Gwyn states of the distinctive Quaker typology :

> But it [history] was still crucial to the early Quaker mind. Their use of Scripture was a matter of historical typology, not allegory. They assumed the historicity of the Scriptural account, but felt that it needed confirmation in personal experience to be more than mere notion.[823]

Historical account in itself, was not authoritative for Fox. Similarly, Valentinians did not deny the historical accuracy of events contained in the New Testament witness, or of historical events *per se*.[824] But in terms of gnosis (and "Light" within the message of Fox) the historical actuality remains irrelevant and meaningless unless perceived in the context of the higher levels of exegesis, i.e., that gnosis which is inherently experiential.

Whilst accepting "horizontal" concepts of time, Gnostics perceived that if such a limited view of historical reality were adopted, historical events could serve as an obstacle to understanding, as the historical event itself could be incorrectly interpreted as the revelation tied to time and space.

The lack of emphasis upon the historical life of Christ was indicative of Foxian and Valentinian radical exegesis in which the outward, external or visible is made redundant in the Light or gnosis, and superseded by inward experiential knowledge.

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822 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 187.
823 Private correspondence between Douglas Gwyn and the research author, 20.6.00.
824 Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel*, 118.

To conclude, the picture resulting from the above investigation of "time" as conceived by Gnosticism may appear confused, unbalanced, even contradictory. Time exists but on the one hand it is a captor, while on the other it is broken by the intervention of revelation and by the Gnostic's will to break it in order to break with it. Fox's hostility to the notion of time (incorporating a continuous Atonement and a recognition that the spirit of Christ was extant and revealed prior to and after the incarnation[825]) are indicative of that criticism of Owen which suggested that early Quakers renewed aspects of Gnosticism in their interpretation of Light. The following section examines another criticism of Owen, that Quakers fail to acknowledge the supremacy of Scripture.

4.3 FOX AND SCRIPTURE

Fox states "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..."[826] The emphasis by Fox upon the relevance of Scripture in terms of Fox's spiritual state "by which they were given forth" is indicative of Scripture's secondary and corroborative significance.

Fox[827] believes that no amount of time reading the Scriptures could give a person the right knowledge of Christ or the Word of God; one must come first to the spiritual state of the writers of Scripture.

The historian Ingle[828] states that in interpreting Fox's approach to Scripture:

> Fox in an untutored way hit upon a way to revive a Christianity lost after centuries of apostasy. Prophet of a mystical way to apprehend truth, he chipped through a Protestant orthodoxy of frozen biblical revelation and proclaimed what Christ had come to reveal: To believe

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825 NJ: 103; BJ: 2:234.
826 NJ: 34.
827 *Works:* 1:88.
828 Ingle, *First Among Friends,* 113.

in Christ simply because of the Scriptures is to have [as Fox states, referring to Gal:1:1, 1:12] "been taught it and have received it of man, that is, not taught it by the revelation of Jesus Christ."[829]

Further, Fox states that mere words never had life unless they were:

first written in the heart of man by God and Christ, and from the spirit they were spoken forth and was known by the spirit of God in others. We know the scriptures by the spirit that gave them forth.[830]

In a similar approach to that adopted by Gnostics (who devised levels or degrees of scriptural exegesis, below 4.4) Fox viewed the contemporary established Church as interpreting Scripture by a limited, lower level of exegesis which denied the spiritualised perfection by the Light/Christ. In essence, Scripture was being used as a barrier to an individual's salvation and perfection (Chapter 3). Gwyn states that:

Fox shared the Radical Reformation's critique of Scripture as the Protestant idol, a barrier frequently placed between the Christian and Christ, but he departed from their system of group exegesis. Protestantism had placed primary authority upon Scripture as a reform against the vested authority of Church hierarchy. Yet to place primary authority on an outwardly received witness to Christ inevitably runs into the same idolatrous trap that Paul described with the law of Moses. No written code is able to save. If true Jewishness is a circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:25-28), then similarly true Christianity is an inward baptism, and the primary authority of the Church must be the living Word spoken in the heart. In his day Fox saw the sin of bibliolatry tearing up the English Commonwealth, setting Presbyterian against Congregationalist in a battle over which model of Church government derived from the New Testament would rule English Christianity.[831]

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[829] Fox, G. *Concerning Revelation, Prophecy, Measure, and Rule, and the Inspiration and Sufficiency of the Spirit.* London: N.p., 1676:18.; *Works:* 5:228.
[830] Fox, G. *This is a Controversy Betwixt the Quakers and the Papists.* London: N.p., 1664:2-3.
[831] Gwyn, "Captivity among the idols", 11.

Owen, on the other hand, viewed Scripture as supreme authority over subjective revelation, 1.4 above. The following contains the crux of Owen's criticism of the early Quaker devaluation of Scripture:

> But when anyone shall pretend unto spiritual actings or enjoyments which are neither prescribed nor promised in the Scripture, nor are investigable in the light of reason, no man is upon this mere profession obliged to give credit thereunto;- nor can any man tell what evil effects or consequences his so doing may produce; for when men are once taken off from that sure ground of Scripture and their own understandings, putting themselves afloat on the uncertain waters of fancies or conjectures, they know not how they may be tossed, nor whither they may be driven. If it shall be said that the holiness and honesty of the persons by whom these especial privileges are enjoyed are sufficient reason why we should believe them in what they profess, I answer, they would be so in a good measure if they did not pretend unto things repugnant unto reason and unwarranted by the Scripture; nor can their holiness and honesty be proved to be such as to render them to be absolutely impregnable against all temptations, which was the pre-eminence of Christ alone.[832]

Creasey[833] states that contemporary orthodoxy tended to confine the activity of the spirit of Christ to those who possessed knowledge of the life and teaching, death and resurrection of Christ. In contrast, Quakers emphasised that Christ's saving work was carried on within the heart of anybody, regardless of their academic or theoretical knowledge of God or Christ. Christ's redeeming presence and activity was not dependent upon the knowledge of Scripture, as Fox asserted:

> though that sayest thou hadst not come to repentance, if thou hadst not known the Letter, thou deniest Christ, who came to call sinners to repentance before the Letter was: it was he that calls sinners to repentance, and not the Letter.[834]

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[832] Owen, J. *Works*. Vol. 4, 333.
[833] Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 115.
[834] Fox, G. *To all that would know the way to the Kingdom*. London: N.p. 1655., ref. in "Early Quaker Christology", 116.

Fox's contemporary Henry More was also critical of Quakers in terms of their mode of scriptural interpretation. More testifies to the extent to which Quakerism moved within the framework of Biblical ideas and language, yet in his view, Quakers:

> vilifie that by which they have been taught [and are] so phrantick and peevish that they would fling away that staff without which they are not able to make one step in religion [yet] they retain the very phrases of what they have learned out of Scripture, and know not how to speak without Scripture terms nor can make any show without Scriptural allusions.[835]

Rosemary Moore states that the young Fox exercised "considerable ability to use it [Scripture] for his own purposes"[836] (as suggested above) or when it suited him, unlike the older, more cautious Fox who spoke of holding Scripture in high esteem. Scripture for Fox was a corroborative, although significant tool in conveying his message.

Henry More objected, in particular, to the universal and anti-historical approach of the Quaker interpretation of Heb.13:8 ("Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever") and 2 Cor.5:16 ("though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more"). More's criticism is indicative of that against Quakers generally, that Quakers devalued the significance of the incarnation through their immediate emphasis upon Light, to the detriment of events in history. As indicated above, this criticism is justified.

More states that Quakers: "fancy to themselves such a Christ only as was as well in Moses' time as now, and was ever the same from the beginning of the world, and ever will be."[837] Gwyn's analysis of the apocalyptic nature

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[835] More, H. "Divine Dialogues," in *Collected Theological Works*. Vol.8. London: James Flesher, 1678:288.
[836] Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 54.
[837] More, H. *Collected Theological Works*, op. cit., Vol. 6, c. xv, 180.

of Fox's spirituality denies abstract allegorisation but reveals Fox using: "all the descriptive language of scripture as functioning potentially in this figural, parabolic manner of pointing toward inward, spiritual realities...the possibilities of typological interpretation are limitless."[838] The limitless potential is illustrated by Fox:

> the Lord speaking low things, comparisons like to that nature in many; that man may look upon the creation with that which is invisible, and there read himself; there thou mayest see wherever thou goest...[839]

The stark Quaker contrast (regarding the authority attached to Scripture) between Fox and the position of Owen and More is illustrated by Gwyn's analysis of Fox's criticism of the Puritan Church:

> [Fox's] critique centers on the inability not of Hebrew Scripture [as in the belief of Paul] but of Christian Scripture to save. And again we find a specialized form of idolatry is at the heart of the matter. Fox portrays the fall of the Church as a specialized form of the universal Fall. The apostasy of the Church since the Apostles' days, literally the "turning away", is the same turn from inward integrity to outward forms and confusion, inspired by the same god of the world.[840]

Fox believed that the contemporary Church (along with the Creation generally: 2.1.2) was in a fallen state and being out of the Light, people worshipped the outward and worldly Church rather than the inward spiritual Light. As with other outward signs and rituals, the Church became the object of worship and idolised as such, along with all its tools, including Scripture.

The early Quaker position concerning the relationship between the knowledge of Scripture and the saving knowledge of Christ is thus summed up by Fox:

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838 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 114.
839 *Works*: 4:37.
840 Gwyn, "Captivity among the idols", 10.

> This is the state and right use of the Scriptures, for all people to believe in them and to read them and to walk in the Light, and to feel the power and Spirit which was in them that gave them forth, by which they may know them and have them revealed to them, and to feel Christ which is the top and corner stone, which doth fulfil them, and so to receive and live in him that doth fulfil them, who is the end of the Prophets, and all Types, Figures and Shadows. So the Scriptures of Truth, I say, were given forth to be believed, read, fulfilled and practised, and the things enjoyed they speak of, that is Christ Jesus the Substance.[841]

Fox refers to Jews who employed "figures and shadows"[842] (Gnostics use the terminology "types and outward signs" for the same concept, albeit indicating a lower yet valid level of exegesis, 4.5). Gwyn views the role of Scripture in Fox's theology as providing "a kind of travel guide out of this outward wilderness, to the safety and certainty of inward knowledge."[843] Moore[844] states that for practical purposes the Bible was authoritative - there could be no contradiction between the Bible and Spirit; Friends accepted the Bible as true and as their guide for conduct.

Moore's view, it is suggested, is too simplistic. There was no contradiction between the Bible and the Light/Spirit because Fox interpreted Scripture to give ultimate authority to the revelation of Christ by the Light. As a fundamental point of principle, individual revelation is paramount.

In theory and in practice, revelation was the final authority and Scripture would fall within revelatory activity. As a purely theoretical point of theological principle, this was totally at odds with contemporary Puritan belief (Owen, above 1.4). Fox's scriptural exegesis and emphasis upon

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841 Fox, G. *Some Principles of the Elect People of God who in scorn are called Quakers.* London: N.p., 1661:16.
842 BJ: 2:418.
843 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 114.
844 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 52.

revelation over all else, enabled him to determine the limits of scriptural authority and the boundaries of permissible conduct.

With specific reference to Gnosticism, Ingle states that Fox was indifferent to scriptural authority unless it was of corroborative use to him:

> But even if he had known technical words like "gnosticism" or had the advantage of foresight, criticism such as this made little difference to Fox, who built his theology on his own experience. He did not stop to ask whether any of his ideas had been considered heretical ages ago, for his experience with God transcended in importance anything human beings could say or do about his views. When he found that his meeting with God, the experience of gripping revelation and direct guidance by one demanding his ultimate allegiance, coincided with a biblical passage or two, then so be it - this confirmed that his encounter with God's spirit had indeed made him the Son of God, and so all genuine disciples could be.[845]

In reinforcing Ingle's view and that of this thesis that Scripture was of corroborative use only, Fox states: "what the Lord opened in me I later found was agreeable to them"[846] (i.e. was authorised by Fox's scriptural interpretation). The Quaker insistence on the secondary place of Scripture was intended not to derogate from their true value, but in Barclay's words simply in order:

> that people may be directed to that inward living Word; for by their being so much called the Word of God, they have been put in Christ's stead, and have been set up as an idol instead of that from whence they came; so that to avoid this hazard we have put them in their due place.[847]

Owen and the established Church employed 2 Pet.1:19. which states that Scripture was "the more sure word of prophecy" in emphasising its

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845 Ingle, *First Among Friends,* 113.
846 NJ:34.
847 Barclay, R. "Truth Clear'd of Calumnies", in *Truth Triumphant: Collected Works.* London: N.p., 1692:15.

authority. However, Bailey[848] notes that Fox[849] never acknowledged the finality of Scripture, (even at a later stage of the movement in 1671, referring to John and Scripture as the "words" and not Word of God) i.e., that it was possible to give revelation primacy whilst acknowledging that Scripture has an important role. The following section considers the approach of Gnostics to Scripture.

4.4 GNOSIS AND SCRIPTURE

Perkins[850] states that in order to appreciate the perceived threat to gospel order from Gnostics (referred to by Owen, 1.4) it is necessary to recognise that the Christian community's relationship to its own past generally, was still largely oral. Though the situation with regard to the New Testament canon remained fluid throughout the third century, pressures for a normative textual embodiment of the tradition were moving Christians towards adopting a canon.[851] This development entailed Gnostics having to respond to the development of Scripture by the established Church.

In pursuing their own interests, the second and third century Gnostics interpreted the same sayings and Pauline letters as did orthodox Christians.[852] Rudolph[853] suggests that Gnostics attached decisive importance to literary activity: it gave vibrancy to the community and instruction to Gnostics and potential new members. Similarly Logan[854] notes the importance of texts to

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[848] Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 182; Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 118., states in relation to Fox's first arrest at Nottingham in 1649: "he could not resist interrupting a sermon to contradict the assertion that the scriptures are the 'more sure word of prophecy'...Even with Baptists, who [Quaker theologians] Geoffrey Nuttall and Hugh Barbour closely identify with Quakers as radical, spiritual Puritans, Fox had vigorous disputes over the Word of God.": NJ:145f, 295fn.; *Works*: 3:467fn., 507f.

[849] *Works:* 2:119.

[850] Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue*, 197.

[851] Campenhausen, H.von. *The Formation of the Christian Bible*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972:170-172.

[852] Kennedy, G. *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World.* Princeton: Princeton University, 1973:86ff.

[853] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 218.

[854] Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 12.

the Gnostics who were literary creatures, combining Scripture and other texts within their own mythology which portrayed the fall of the divine spark. However, as Perkins states:

> Gnostic writings never claim to do more than embody true tradition. They never claim to be the textually authoritative source of reflection, authority or even contact with the divine. The revelation about which they speak may put an individual in touch with the truth about God, about the cosmos, about himself or herself, or about salvation, but that truth is not definitively embodied in any inspired text.[855]

What was important for salvation to the Gnostic was the ontological spiritual state as opposed to the consequential written word. Text was a guide rather than the source of revelation. This is similar to Fox's interpretation of Scripture as the "words" and not the "Word" of God (4.3, 5.2).

However, as with cultic practice (4.7-8), there was no uniformity as to the interpretation of Scripture within the Gnostic schools of thought.

Irenaeus[856] states that the Gnostics make the following varied arguments:

a) they claim that Scripture is not correct.
b) they claim that Scripture is not authoritative.
c) they claim that Scripture is ambiguous; it can mean different things.
d) they claim that the truth cannot be discovered by someone who is ignorant of the truth, which was handed on orally.

The Valentinian or Christian Gnostic *Apocryphon of James*[857] illustrates a picture of the New Testament which underlies Irenaeus' list of objections. Its narrative shows that New Testament writings were claimed by Gnostics as individual, mixed with error, not authoritative and out of touch with the tradition which the Saviour wished to be passed on to followers.

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855 Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue*, 201.
856 *Adv.haer.* III 2, 1.
857 NHC: V, *3*; V, *4*.

However, in following the Valentinian tradition (which applied a metaphysical principle of three ontological levels of being) it is possible to deduce three distinct levels of scriptural exegesis as employed by the Gnostic Heracleon in his *Commentary on John*:

> Visible, historical events perceived through the senses occur at the hylic level, the ethical interpretation of these events is perceived as the psychic level, true insight (gnosis) into them is perceived only at the pneumatic level. Whoever understands the text pneumatically, then, transcends the mere historical level, and transcends as well its ethical meaning. He comes to interpret the whole symbolically.[858]

Rudolph states that Heracleon's views are "among the most important witnesses for the gnostic interpretation of scripture."[859] In an important contrast with Fox's approach, Pagels states of the Gnostics:

> The Valentinian theory of different "levels" enables him to differentiate these without having to reject either one as false. He is able to sustain, for example, the validity of the psychic level, while simultaneously showing how it is limited and bounded to ethical categories. He is also able to point beyond the psychic to that level incomprehensible in terms - to the experience of redemption as the elect receive it.[860]

As an important example of this concept, Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* was referred to above (4.0). Pagels (in an analysis of Gnostic Christian sacramental practice) states that: "in the majority of Christian groups around them, however, they [Gnostic Christians] find that the preaching consists predominantly of a moralizing paraenesis."[861] Fox encountered a similar restrictive interpretation of Scripture by Puritans and "all ye letter-professors that plead for imperfection"[862]

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858 Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel*, 52.
859 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 17.
860 Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel*, 121.
861 Ibid.
862 *Works:* 5:140.

Unlike Valentinians, Fox considered ethically or sense related exegesis as redundant and nowhere considers the possibility that there is a valid although limited interpretation save for his own higher level of interpretation (that of the pneumatic in gnosis). However, Naylor (described by Moore[863] as: "the most competent Quaker theologian" of the time) adopted a similar approach to that of the Gnostics in terms of accepting lower levels of exegesis as a valid part of a process leading to a higher level of exegesis, yet limited in its inability to redeem. As with Fox, Naylor opposes those who:

> stick in the outward things, contending about Dipping or Sprinkling [water baptism], but neglect the power and Life...[but unlike Fox, Naylor approved of] any that do it in obedience, and so come up above it.[864]

Creasey[865] was of the view that early Quakers were not against externals *per se* if the individual then went on to the level advocated by Fox. However, Creasey provides no evidence for this assertion save for the Naylor quotation above, which is exceptional. In relation to Fox and the research question of this thesis (1.0) Fox makes no compromise with lower levels of exegesis.

The above three methods of Gnostic exegesis are expanded upon by Pagels who confirms the highest level of exegesis (pneumatic gnosis), as that which has no historical input and interprets Scripture and New Testament witness solely in terms of a guide to a time-conquering universal spiritual process (4.2):

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863 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 104.
864 Naylor, J. *Salutation to the Seed of God.* London: N.p., 1655. In *A Collection of Sundry Books, Epistles and Papers Written by James Naylor*, Whitehead, G. ed., London: J. Sowle, 1716:247-248.
865 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 132.

> The Valentinians, of course, in common with all Christians, agree that the gospel cannot be read as revelation so long as it is read only literally. Literal (or in their terms, "hylic") exegesis, would read it simply as the historical account of the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth. But, the Valentinians add, in distinction from "the majority", neither is the gospel to be interpreted only "psychically", that is, as revelation actually given in and through historical events. Such a reading, in their view, reifies and absolutizes the events themselves as being the actual revelation...given "in history". What the psychics fail to apprehend is that the events of the oikonomia, such as Jesus' birth and death, are themselves "images". Psychic Christians, reifying these, insist that salvation comes to them only because these events actually occurred...They fail to realize that these events can only be understood "spiritually" as signs and symbols of a spiritual process that is not bound to specific time and place.[866]

Valentinians insist that only when all the objects, events and persons described in John, for example, (in relation to baptism) are interpreted as "images of things in the pleroma,"[867] that is, as symbols of a reality that transcends space, time, and nomos, is the gospel read "in spirit and truth."[868]Only by such an exegetical process does the written account become revelation for the reader.

As will be seen in relation to Gnostic baptismal rituals where they exist, the psychic level of apprehension offers no possibility for interpreting the experience of conversion except in terms of ethical choice and action. Pagels[869] suggests that the Valentinians are concerned primarily to express their apprehension of the experience of redemption on this level. In doing so they claim to present no new doctrine or theory, but only to expound the theology of election and grace they claim to find, especially in the writings of Paul and John. This is identical to the scriptural interpretation used by Fox which concludes that the priesthood were limiting scriptural interpretation in order to prohibit the ability for salvation on earth (4.3).

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866 Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel*, 118.
867 Ibid.
868 Ibid.
869 Ibid., 121.

The above indicates the importance of levels of exegesis in Valentinianism. Gnostics viewed the contemporary established Church as offering lower levels of scriptural interpretation/salvation, which were merely ethically orientated. Unlike Fox, they did not view sensory and ethically motivated practice as invalid in themselves, but stages in reaching the higher level of exegesis, gnosis. As with Fox, Gnostics did not portray their belief as anything other than that indicated in their own interpretation of Scripture. The inward spiritualisation of ethically motivated external and earthly events and structures is replicated within a similarly diverse Gnostic interpretation of sacraments.

4.5 SACRAMENTS

As with the interpretation of Scripture, (4.3.1) in cultic sacramental practice there are a number of behavioural patterns which exist side by side, even within the same Gnostic school such as the Valentinians. Rudolph identifies three basic attitudes amongst Gnostics:

a) The tacit retention of cultic ceremonies from the surrounding world, adapted to their own thought, which often involves a transmutation of ideas.
b) Amplification, improvement or even innovation of ceremonies, in many cases as the result of a transposition from mythology, i.e. by "ritualizing" mythological events.
c) Rejection or at least rigorous spiritualization of the cult.[870]

Whilst Valentinians generally, were certainly amongst the last category, some Valentinian communities retained cultic ceremonies, including the use of water baptism. Irenaeus summarises the Valentinian position in the following, identifying a contrast between the psychic baptism

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[870] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 219

of Jesus and the pneumatic spiritual baptism introduced by Christ, and variations where baptism in water was practised:

> There are those who say it is useless to lead people to the water. So they mix oil and water together. This they put on the heads of the one's to be initiated...This, they hold, is the redemption. They, too, anoint with balsam. Others, however, reject all these things. They assert that the mystery of the unspeakable and invisible Power ought not to be consecrated by visible and corruptible creatures; nor the mystery of the unthinkable and incorporeal, by the sentient and corporeal... Therefore, the redemption too must be spiritual; for the inner, spiritual man is redeemed by knowledge. And this deeper knowledge of all things is sufficient for them.[871]

Some Valentinian texts which allude to the meaning and value of sacraments (both within the context of the Valentinian conception of the human predicament and life after death) contain a polemic against the use of falsely understood rituals by the catholic Church. Indeed, to emphasis the disparity within different Gnostic communities, the Valentinian *Testimony of Truth* (NHC: IX, *3*) for example, commences with a polemic against the practices of the established Church (29, 6-45) and then proceeds to argue against the practices of other Gnostics, seemingly including the Sethians who maintain external rituals of "sealing" by baptism (45, 6-end). The Valentinian *Apocalypse of Adam* contains what was arguably an addition to an original version, which specifically emphasises the hostility to water baptism (NHC: V, *5*, 84.5-85.25).

In relation to sacramental and eucharistic practice, the *Gospel of Philip* (NHC: II, *3*) is a helpful text which in its overall polemic emphasises the significance of sacramental rites of initiation for a Valentinian community. The text views the desperate state of humanity as a result of the differentiation of the sexes. The purpose of Christ's coming is to reunite

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[871] *Adv. haer.*, 1,21,2-4., cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 34,20, 7-8.

Adam and Eve (70, 12-17). Just as a husband and wife unite in the bridal chamber, so also the reunion effected by Christ takes place in the bridal chamber, the sacramental one (70, 17-22) where a person receives a foretaste and assurance of ultimate union with an angelic, heavenly counterpart (58, 10-14). In what may be five stages of a complete initiation, it states: "The Lord did everything in a mystery, a baptism and a chrism and a eucharist and a redemption and a bridal chamber" (67, 27-30). A reference to God as a dyer appears to indicate that baptism was by immersion (61, 12-20) and the chrism may have involved a warm perfumed oil as evidenced by the reference to chrism as fire (67, 5-9; 57, 27-28) and the oil being fragrant (77, 36-78,7; 82, 15-23). Further, a priest consecrates the bread and cup for the Eucharist (77, 2-8).

In referring to the "soul" and what is now regarded as the distinctive non-Valentinian, yet Christian Gnosticism of such texts as *The Apocryphon of John*, Jonas suggested that the task of sacramental practice in Gnosticism: "is sometimes said to be that of making the souls in their future ascent [after death] invisible to the archons who would block their way."[872] Sacraments were considered an aid to experiencing now, the preparation for the future ascent of the soul.[873] The celestial journey becomes visualised in this life. However, the use of ritual as opposed to the spiritualisation of the cult may be an example of different levels of exegesis and perfection. For example, Jonas[874] states that for the Valentinians, spiritualisation was an important step towards an emphasis upon union with God and distancing themselves from reliance upon the symbolism of mythology.

As with scriptural exegesis, this thesis argues that the "higher" the level of perfection of the divine seed and completion of eschatological aims

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872 Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 135.
873 Ibid., 166-7.
874 Ibid., 60.

on earth, the less emphasis upon ritual is necessary. Gnostic scriptural and sacramental exegesis may be linked to the level of perfection and stages reached in the eschatological process.

For example, the repudiation of cultic practice, as in (c), above, was directed against the ecclesiastical institutions of water baptism and the Eucharist,[877] institutions which were considered redundant and agents of Satan by Fox and some Gnostics. Illustrative of this isolation from ecclesiastical structure and the achievement of the highest, pneumatic form of gnosis, Irenaeus notes a Valentinian group that rejected all water and anointing rites associated with the redemption process. These Valentinians asserted that:

> the mystery (mysterion) of the ineffable and invisible power ought not to be performed through (by means of), visible and corruptible created things, nor the inconceivable and incorporeal by means of what is (sensually) perceptible and corporeal.[878]

Valentinians believed that "perfect redemption" (reunion with God/the pleroma or the rite of *Apolutrosis*, 4.7.1, regarded among other groups as a cultic act) is the "knowledge" (gnosis) of the ineffable Greatness"...therefore knowledge is the redemption (*Apolutrosis*) of the inner man.[879]

The commentator Epiphanius (referred to by Owen[880] in the paper of 1655) gives an account of a similar attitude taken by the so-called Archontics (probably related to the Sethian branch of Gnosticism[881]):

> they condemn baptism even though some of them were previously baptized. They reject participation in the (church) sacraments

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877 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 219.
878 *Adv. haer*. 1. 21, 2-3, 5.
879 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 219.
880 Owen, J. *Works*, Vol.12, 12.
881 Logan, A.H.B. "The Mystery of the Five Seals: Gnostic Initiation Reconsidered." *VC* 51 (1997):199.

> (mysteries) and deny their value, as extraneous and introduced in the name of the demiurge....And when the soul acquires knowledge (gnosis) and shuns the baptism of the Church and the name of [the demiurge] who has given men the Law it ascends from heaven to heaven.[880]

However, for most Gnostics, including some Valentinians, ceremonies appear to have played an important part in the Gnostic community. As Rudolph notes, these include:

> baptisms and washings (lustrations), anointings with oil (so-called sealings), festive meals (e.g. the eucharist), death rites (for the ascent of the soul)...at times "five seals" are mentioned, chiefly amongst the Valentinians but not only by them, and this evidently refers to five ceremonies which, at least according to *The Gospel of Philip*[881] include baptism, anointing, eucharist, "redemption" (Apolytrosis) and "bridal chamber."[882]

Logan's[883] analysis of the five seals rite concludes that it concerns chrismation (the Gnostic becoming anointed as Christ/Christian) rather than five sacraments, and also the sealing (protection against external evil forces, the promise of immortality and the gift of the Spirit). Rather than sacraments, the anointing relates to the five organs of sense (in the *Trimorphic Protennoia*[884]) or in the *Apocryphon of John*,[885] the organs for which souls can be assumed to possess equivalents: two eyes, two ears and a mouth.[886]

A detailed statement fundamental to the understanding of the sacraments in Valentinianism is available in *The Gospel of Philip*.[887] This

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[880] Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* (*haer.* 1-33), ed. K. Holl, rev. J. Dummer (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte 31) Berlin:Akademie, 1980: 40,2,6.8.
[881] NHC: II, *3*.
[882] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 226.
[883] Logan, "The Mystery of the Five Seals", 188-206.
[884] NHC: XIII, *1*.
[885] NHC: II, *1* and IV, *1*.
[886] Ibid.
[887] NHC: II, *3*. 86 (134), 4-9.

attempts to elucidate the indispensable correlation between the image-character of earthly or cultic activities (the types and images corresponding to the "types, figures and shadows" referred to by Fox,[888] 4.3 above) and their realisation in the next world (rebirth, resurrection, restoration). *The Gospel of Philip* states:

> Truth did not come into the world naked, but it came in types and images. It [the world] will not receive it any other way. There is a rebirth and an image [of] rebirth. It is truly necessary to be reborn through the "image". What is the resurrection and [its] image? It is necessary to rise again through the "image". It is necessary that the bridegroom [in the rite of the bridal chamber, 4.7] and the "image" through the "image" enter the truth: that is the restoration [of the Pleroma, or *Apokatastasis*, 4.6.1][889]

This passage illustrates that through resurrection on earth, the Gnostic no longer needs external imagery, but in obtaining gnosis, enters the heavenly realm where external practice is spiritualised internally. For both Fox and Gnostics, the internalising of sacramental practice is essential if the individual is to be and remain in, the Light/perfection. However, in relation to outward sacramental practice, Barclay summarises the contextual position of Fox and early Quakers:

> For we are certain that the day has dawned in which God has risen and has dismissed all those ceremonies and rites. He is to be worshipped only in Spirit...For we know that he has risen and has been revealed in Spirit.[890]

Creasey states the Quaker position as being that "sacraments are non necessities"[891] to the extent they are an outward form. The emphasis of

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888 Fox, G. *Some Principles of the Elect People of God who in Scorn are called Quakers.* London: N.p., 1661:16.
889 NHC: II, *3*. 67 (115), 9-18.
890 *Barclay's Apology*, 361.
891 Creasey, M.A. "Quakers and the Sacraments" *QRT* 5/1 (Spring 1963):2-25.

Quaker sacramental theology was upon the invisible spiritual reality to the negation of any visible signs.

Kolp[892] distinguishes the position of Fox in that water baptism or any other outward ceremony/rite is redundant (which is in contrast to suggesting there is no internal Quaker sacramental theology[893]) but spiritual baptism is crucial to Fox's theology, as is illustrated in the following section.

4.6 FOX AND BAPTISM

Fox believes (employing Rom.2:25-28) that true Christianity involves an inward spiritual baptism. Fox's[894] 1685 paper (relevant to the examination of sacramental theology in early Friends) distinguishes outward water baptism from baptism of the spirit. Fox emphasises that real communion takes place primarily on a spiritual level, thereby denying the need for mediation through physical matter and outward ritual:

> Spiritual Communion is within, not in the flesh, but in the spirit, and they that are baptised into Christ have put off the old man and the body of sin is destroyed, and they are baptised by one spirit into one body which is spiritual, and have put on Christ the new man, and there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and the true union.[895]

Elsewhere:

> keep the unity of ye spirit which is ye bond of peace...and baptiseth all into one body with one spirit and being written all in one anothers harte, have all one voice...and the eternal unity in one spirit...[896]

Fox draws a distinction between the water baptism - that using the "outward elementary water"[897] of John which "must decrease"[898](John 3:30)

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892 Kolp, A."Friends, Sacraments and Sacramental Living." *QRT* 20/3 (Summer 1984):36.
893 Ibid., 38.
894 *Works*: 6:282-294.
895 Ibid., 6:293.
896 SMSS II 48.
897 *Works*: 6:293.
898 Ibid.

and the later spiritual baptism by Christ. The former is viewed as a temporary device limited to ethical repentance (as in the Gnostic psychic exegesis) while the latter does increase and perfects, including providing freedom from sin (as in the pneumatic exegesis of the Gnostics):

> Christ who came after John; who baptises with fire and the holy spirit; who comes with his fan and thoroughly purges the floor of the heart from sin and corruption, and burns up the chaff with unquenchable fire.[899] (Matt.3:12)

Fox's scriptural interpretation is that John's coming was prophesised by Isaiah (Isa.40:3,4) and that John's "elementary" water baptism was acknowledged as limited by John: " he that comes after me, is mightier than I, whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose. He shall baptise you with the holy spirit and with fire..." (Matt.3:11)

As a further indication that the true baptism was that of Christ, Fox refers to Paul who: "thanked God that he had baptised none of the Corinthians but Crispus and Gaius" as Christ had sent him "not to baptise, but to preach the Gospel, not with the wisdom of words, less the cross of Christ be made of none effect."(1 Cor.1:14,17). Pickvance suggests Fox's baptism:

> is emphasizing that water baptism is concerned with the merely physical and outward, whereas the spiritual baptism of Jesus' and the Apostles' teaching is about immersion of our human spirits in the one Spirit...Spirit is a more real substance than water, immersion in the Spirit is an actual event.[900]

However, Kolp states that even if understood in the above internalised or spiritualised manner, sacraments are necessary and Quakers must go

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899 *A Distinction Between the Two Baptisms.* Pickvance, J., ed. Gloucester: George Fox Fund, 1986:2.
900 Ibid., 1.

through a baptismal/sacramental experience to come to, and remain in the Light:

> This does not mean that we have to go down to the River Jordan. It does not even mean that we have to have the water of traditional baptism. It does mean, however, that we have to progress to that place where the Spirit of God descends upon us and where we can hear God's word proclaim that we are sons and daughters of God.[901]

The above section illustrates the importance of inward sacramental practice to the theology of Fox, in particular (as within gnosis) the significance attached to spiritual baptism in the form of a revelatory perfecting Light. Fox distinguishes the limited level of ethically defined exegesis employed by the contemporary Church, from the higher level of perfection indicated in Fox's scriptural interpretation of the true baptism. Although Scripture refers to sacramental practice as detailed in New Testament historical events, the Light removes the significance of the act from its historical context.

4.7 GNOSIS AND BAPTISM

The Gnostic tendency to undermine the traditional religious institutions is evidenced, according to Irenaeus,[902] by the approach that true perfection had no need of any external ceremony. However, Filoramo[903] suggests that Gnostic ritual (including types of ritualised water baptism) varied and could be classified under three different types of practice; the purely symbolic including reference to ritual immersion,[904] the presence of a

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901 Kolp, "Friends, Sacraments and Sacramental Living", 48.
902 *Adv.haer.* 1.21.4.
903 Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 179-180.
904 Angus , S. *The Religious Quest of the Graeco-Roman World.* London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929:340, states that: "The Hermeticists occupied the position among the ancient religiously minded distinctive of the Quakers today, inasmuch as their faith necessitated no fixed cult and dispensed with sacraments and their concomitant sacerdotalism". However,

specific ceremonial, and new ritual forms invented by Valentinians such as that of the "bridal chamber" and *Apolutrosis*.

Baptism in varying forms was clearly attested to among the Valentinians.[907] Spiritual baptism was essential as an initiation rite to enter into gnosis.[908] Those like the Christian Gnostic, Marcus[909] (who believed in the usefullness of a tangible rite) appeal to the water baptism of Christ by John. Two forms of baptism were identified by Gnostics; that which was outward, imperfect (and used by members of the Church in connection with the remission of sins) was the baptism of the earthly Saviour, the visible Jesus, announced by John the Baptist for repentance. The second, the Gnostic form, was spiritual baptism, the redemption brought by Christ for perfection.[910] Fox distinguishes two levels of baptism and employs similar scriptural interpretation in reaching an identical dualistic approach, i.e., the external and the spiritualised internal (4.4). Pagels[911] analysis of the sacramental theology of the Valentinian Heracleon as examined by Origen in his *Commentary on John* [912] concludes that Valentinian Gnostics believed that :

a) baptism was essential for the Gnostic initiate

b) there were different sacramental roles for Christ and John the Baptist

c) a higher spiritual baptism of Christ conveyed the spirit and perfection, unlike inferior water baptisms

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Tröger , K.W. in *Mysterienglaube und Gnosis in Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, Berlin, 1971:56-57, suggests that symbolic language in Gnostic texts concealed genuine practice of ritual immersion.

[907] Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 180: the symbolic practise of water immersion is in contrast to the eschatological baptism which takes place in the realm of Light.

[908] Pagels, "A Valentinian Interpretation", 157.

[909] *Adv. haer.* 1.21.2.

[910] Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 179-180.

[911] Pagels, "A Valentinian Interpretation", 153.

[912] Preuschen, E. *Origen's Commentary on John* (GCS X) Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1903., cf. Brooke, A.E., ed., *The Commentary of Origen on St. John's Gospel*, rev., 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896.

d) spiritual baptism or *Apolutrosis* perfects and reunites the seed or divine within the individual, with the pleroma or heaven beyond, in a spiritual marriage (the rite of the bridal chamber).

Gnostics view the established Church which merely offers the water baptism of John, as offering a limited salvation. This baptism performs a purely sensory orientated or somatic act of physically washing with water (the hylic exegesis referred to above, 4.4). It conveys the limited (psychic) benefit of forgiveness of sins that grants a capacity for salvation if individuals persist in good works. This is similar to the language Fox directs against the priesthood concerning their limited powers of salvation, those powers which emphasise the ethical and moral over the prospect of immediate perfection.

In Valentinian Gnosticism and in Fox's message, the spiritual baptism conveys the third and higher baptism which is actual salvation. This is the redemption of Christ which redeems them from the psychic (ethically motivated) elements of their own existence and from the hostile earth, conveying the spirit which brings them to perfection and restores them into unity with the heavenly Light (*Apolutrosis*).

By way of examination of this analysis, Heracleon differentiates between the two aspects of John and his activity.[913] The first aspect of John is sense-perceptible or somatic (the purely physical act), which is expressed as an "outward washing with water".[914] Heracleon asserts a general Gnostic principle that the images of spiritual reality should not be mistaken for the reality itself - that outward signs or "types" are unnecessary.[915] The second aspect is the psychic, the inner repentance of baptism referred to in Matt.3:11-12, Mk.1:9.

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913 Pagels, "A Valentinian Interpretation", 161-2. Pagels suggests that such liturgical tradition and interpretation was common to various Gnostic groups, including Valentinians, as indicated by common wording in different texts.
914 Preuschen, *Origen's Comm.*, 139, 30-140, 5.
915 Ibid., 243, 12-32.

Similarly, Fox (4.6) states that John's water baptism was physical, merely a dipping or plunging with no spiritual significance in relation to perfection, (the immediate possibility of which, it attempted to delay). Fox sees John's baptism as relevant for the purposes of repentance but no more in terms of salvation, i.e., it was limited: "that which must decrease": John 3:30 until the coming of Christ "whose baptism does increase": Matt.3:12.

Irenaeus' description of Valentinian baptismal theology offers an illuminating parallel with the position of Fox:

> The baptism of the visible Jesus, on the one hand, is for the remission of sins; but the redemption of the Christ, who descends on him, is for perfection. The first is psychic, the second pneumatic. For the baptizing of John is preached for repentance; but the redemption of the Christ who is in Jesus is ordained for perfection.[916]

As with Fox's emphasis upon spiritual baptism, Heracleon states that Christ offers the third and highest form of baptism, operating on a spiritual level, that of the Logos.[917] Christ encompasses all three levels referred to above.[918] Pagels[919] states that the higher (Christ or spiritual baptism), is that of redemption in Valentinian sacramental theology - the spirit is conveyed and rendered for purposes of perfection.

4.7.1 APOLUTROSIS

Irenaeus refers to the spiritual baptism of *Apolutrosis* or rite of redemption as a distinctive Gnostic sacrament:

> These Gnostics claim to have become perfect, to have received gnosis of the ineffable power and to have been freed from all the powers of

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916 *Adv. haer.* 1, 21, 2.
917 Preuschen, *Origen's Comm.*, 129, 1-3.
918 Pagels, "A Valentinian Interpretation", 155.
919 Ibid., 157.

> the demiurge: they claim that because of the Apolutrosis they neither can be apprehended nor perceived by the judge.[918]

There are no explicit *Apolutrosis* formulae[919] and in the reproach of those who go beyond the Church's baptism, Irenaeus states that: "there are as many schemes of *Apolutrosis* as there are teachers of these mystical options."[920] Pagels suggests that in essence *Apolutrosis* amounts to a spiritual baptism that enables the spiritual, who come to recognise their kinship with the higher powers, to escape the judgment of the demiurge, having been united with those powers that transcend and direct the authority of the demiurge.[921] *Apolutrosis* results in perfectionist claims of freedom from the powers and temptations of the world, claims also exhibited by Fox in relation to sin (Chapter 3).

In *Apolutrosis* there is an identical combination of means and end, of unity and perfection, as used by Fox (Chapters 2 and 3). The baptism is the revelatory Light that first reveals and then unites in a state of spiritual perfection. Irenaeus[922] recognises the uniting aspect to *Apolutrosis* - to reunite the seed that has been scattered and divided in the cosmos - and similarities can be seen here with the reuniting ends of the Foxian Light, in particular in relation to the mechanics of the soul and the function of the Light (2.8-2.8.1). The concept of unity within gnosis is commented upon by the Valentinian Theodotus in the context of baptism:

> Jesus was baptized, to divide the undivided, until we should enter with them into the pleroma; that we, the many, becoming one, may be mingled in the one nature which was divided for our sake.[923]

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[918] *Adv. haer.* I, 13, I.
[919] Pagels, "A Valentinian Interpretation", 159.
[920] *Adv. haer.* I, 21, I.
[921] Pagels, "A Valentinian Interpretation", 159.
[922] *Adv. haer.* I, 21, 3.
[923] *Exc. Theod,* 36, 1-2, London: Casey, 1934:66.

Irenaeus describes the initiate entering gnosis and *Apolutrosis* as "not dividing the spirit of Christ" and the initiate prays to enter " into the divinity and redemption of the Father."[926] An additional rite is that of *Apokatastasis* (a rite of the dying) which concerns the restoration of the redeemed soul and guarantees its journey to the Pleroma with a sealing which includes the pouring of water and oil on the head.[927]

In summary therefore, Valentinian Gnostics consider that the Church's baptism consists of; a somatic aspect which physically washes the body, a psychic aspect which releases the individual from the prospect of death (conveying forgiveness for sins) the pneumatic and true baptism of *Apolutrosis* which releases the spiritual from the psychic aspects of the individual's cosmic existence. The latter redeems the person altogether from the jurisdiction of the demiurge and restores the individual into unity with the heavenly Light that is God.[928] Fox's concept of unity with and in the Light (2.7) is similar to that concept of *Apolutrosis.*

4.8 THE EUCHARIST

In relation to the "outward" supper of bread and wine (1. Cor. 11:26) Fox asserts that Christ intends this as a purely temporary measure until his resurrection - thereafter that Christ intended a higher, spiritual marriage supper[929] which is an immediate communion with Christ. As illustrated in 4.2 above, the inward experience of the risen Christ/the Light, not only removes the necessity for such outward signs, but frees the individual from the historical significance of events.

The last supper as an historical event is, in the Light, seen as Fox describes all historical events, in negative terms:

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926 Ibid., 22, I-6, 56-58; *Adv. haer.* I, 21, 3.
927 *Adv. haer.* 1, 21, 5.
928 Pagels, "A Valentinian Interpretation ", 162.
929 *Works*: 6:285.

> Now these things [baptism and the Last Supper] which they jangled about, were things that were seen, and not eternal things, but temporal; for, if they did not come to Christ Jesus, the substance of those things, they remained in the reprobation from the life, truth and substance.[930]

Seen in the Light, the Last Supper becomes an inward reality detached thereafter from the historical context and significance in which the events occurred. The Eucharistic communion is (in the Light) perceived by Fox as an inward reality, and one at which the instrumental highpriest is Christ Jesus. Priesthood in the physical sense of a human presence and the administration of an earthly ritual is redundant under the new covenant, as Fox stated:

> there is the everlasting priesthood, the end of the old priesthood...so we are brought off from the old priesthood that changed, to Christ, to the new priesthood that changed not and off from the first covenant, that decays, to the everlasting covenant that does not decay, Christ Jesus, the Covenant of Light.[931]

Ingle[932] suggests that Fox completely rejects the validity of the sacrament, the Eucharist or Holy Communion, which was not only carnal but played to the deceitfullness that marked so much of the ecclesiastical establishment. Fox does not hesitate to declare that his movement represents "the true church, the elect seed, the church in England."[933]

An analysis of Valentinian eucharistic theology is possible from extracts of Heracleon that Origen cites in a commentary on John, referred to above.[934] Gnostics apply the same distinction as Fox does, between spiritual

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930 *Works*: 7:266.
931 BJ:1:355-6.
932 Ingle, *First Among Friends*, 113.
933 Fox, G. *An Answer to a Paper which came from the Papists lately out of Holland.* London: N.p.1658:12,51,61.
934 Pagels, "A Valentinian Interpretation", 153-169.

reality and image/type, as with baptism. Heracleon asserts that as the Church centres their eucharistic theology and practice on the images they mistake for reality, they worship "in flesh and in error."[935]

From the Gnostic perspective, what the established Church celebrates in the Eucharist is the Passover of the Jews and they mistake the historical event of the death of Jesus for the reality of the Eucharist (which the Gnostic interprets as the restoration of the initiate to the Father, *Apolutrosis*). External physical elements of bread and wine are mistakenly confused by "the many"[936] as "signs"[937] of an inner transformation. The Eucharist is interpreted as a divine spiritual Passover, bringing them into spiritual maturity in the present, and anticipates the eschatological marriage (the bridal chamber rite) in which they become one in spirit with God.[938]

Valentinian Gnostics view such a spiritual marriage similar to that figured in the Biblical marriage at Cana where water was converted to wine.[939] In Valentinianism, through the spiritual marriage, the human is transformed into the divine, a transformation ritual that Irenaeus condemns as a magic trick.[940]

The Valentinian intention is to become "what he [the Saviour] is"[941] and Heracleon explains further that the initiates become "of the same divine nature" as the Logos and Saviour: the human counterpart must become transformed into the divine. In relation to sacramental theology therefore, the human receives from the Saviour its divine counterpart and will finally upon death enter into the "bridechamber," that is, the pleroma or heaven of Light unity.[942]

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935 Preuschen, *Origen's Comm.*, 168, 28-169, Pagels, ibid., 162.
936 Pagels, *The Johannine Gospels*, 116.
937 Ibid.
938 Pagels, "A Valentinian Interpretation", 169.
939 from Heracleon, vol.II., Fragm. 45., ed. A. Brooke, *The Commentary of Origen*, 259-60.
940 Pagels, "A Valentinian Interpretation", 167.
941 Preuschen, *Origen's Comm.*, 248, 28-249, 4.
942 *Adv. haer.* I, 6, 4 -I, 7, I.

The Gospel of Philip provides some further information on the Valentinian interpretation of the Eucharist. Rudolph states that as in the established Church, it consists of a ceremony involving "bread and cup."[943] The ceremony is however manifestly Gnostic, anticipating the union of the Gnostic with a divine image: it effects a realisation of the original oneness of the pleroma (as indicated above):

> The cup of prayer (i.e. the thanksgiving, eucharist) contains wine (and) water, (both) being appointed as the type (typos) of the blood over which thanks is given, and it is full of the Holy Spirit and belongs to the wholly perfect man. When we drink this (cup), we shall receive for ourselves the perfect man.[944]...He (Jesus) said on that day in the eucharist: "(You) who have joined the perfect, the light, with the Holy Spirit, join the angels with us also, the images."[945]

As Rudolph[946] notes, the flesh and blood of Christ as they are represented in the Last Supper are for the Gnostic "Word" (Logos) and "Holy Spirit": " He who has received these has food and drink and clothing."[947] The Gnostic that receives the Eucharist is in possession of perfection and eternal life. Further, Irenaeus'[948] account of the Valentinian Marcus' eucharistic theology involving "bread and cup," concludes that it invokes grace on the Gnostic and thus strengthens the seed of light in the individual, perfecting and maturing the pneumatic element in its union with Christ.

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943 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 241.
944 NHC: II, *3*. 75 (123), 14-21.
945 Ibid., 58 (106), 10-14.
946 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 241.
947 NHC: II, *3*. 57 (105), 3-8.
948 *Adv. haer.* 1 13, 2.

4.9 SUMMARY

Arising from a radical apocalyptic typology, Fox's theology and that of gnosis both involve a distinctive approach to history and time in which historical and calendrical considerations as a basis for exegesis, are redundant for the recipient of gnosis, or in Fox's terminology, when the individual is in the Light. Gnosis/the Light of Christ changes the quality of history to the extent that all outward rituals and scriptural witness to the life and death of the historical Jesus become meaningless as a basis for salvation *per se*. Such an approach involves an interpretation of the established Church as having a restrictive role in salvation, along with the continued use of external tools of mediation which are seen as barriers to perfection and the potential for unity in the Light.

Whilst baptismal practice and ritual varied within Gnostic communities, the highest level of exegesis is recognised by Fox and within Valentinianism as that provided by Christ who conveys spirit/Light in a process of perfection and union with the Light/God. Both Fox and Valentinian Gnostics see lower levels of exegesis used by the established Church as limiting the scope of salvational activity to ethically motivated considerations in Scripture and sacramental practice. Unlike Fox, Valentinian Gnostics interpret lower levels of exegesis as valid, but this may be replaced by higher levels of exegesis through grace and works, which complete the process of redemption.

Valentinian Gnostics have been identified as using a distinctive sacramental practice of *Apolutrosis* in which the emphasis is upon the eschatological completion of unity with, and return to the Light, symbolised by a spiritual bridal-chamber ritual referred to in Valentinian texts. This is similar to the unity aspect of Chapter 2, in particular the reunion of the divine soul with God (2.8.1).

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION
THE DE-GNOSTICISING OF FOX

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The conclusion to this thesis commences with an analysis of how and why aspects of Valentinianism in Foxian theology came to be moderated and redefined by post-Restoration Quakers in order to present Foxian theology as non-threatening to the established Church. Section 1.3 above has already discussed the sub-cultural evolution model of Stark and Bainbridge[948] in the context of social crisis and novel revelations, all of which arguably inspired the development of Valentinian and Foxian theologies. The analysis of this chapter commences with a focus upon the tension of a virtually complete realised eschatology for an individual remaining in the earthly, as opposed to the heavenly, realm and is considered in terms of "liminality."(5.1) Franzmann's study of this concept as identifiable in the NHL draws upon the work of Gilhus:

> Gilhus identifies Gnostics as permanent liminal groups, characterised as those experiencing a period of transformation and danger after separation from the world, while the heavenly region or fullness of salvation is not yet attained.In this liminal stage, the Gnostic receives *gnosis* and experiences *communitas* ("a relatively undifferentiated community of equal individuals under the authority of the elders or the instructors"[949] which opposes existing social structures and maintains the unity of the group.[950]

Gilhus'[951] study, drawing on Turner's[952] outline of the three phases of Gnostic rites of passage as separation, limen (margin) and aggregation, identifies Gnostics as permanent liminal groups. These are characterised as

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948 Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 171-88.
949 Gilhus, I. "Gnosticism - A Study in Liminal Symbolism." *Numen* 31 (1984): 119.
950 Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 164.
951 Gilhus, "Gnosticism-A Study", 106-28.
952 Turner, V. *The Ritual Process:Structure and Anti-Structure*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.

those experiencing a period of transformation and danger after spiritual separation from the world, while the heavenly region or fullness of salvation is not yet attained.

Franzmann[953] disagrees with Gilhus' identification of the liminal stage of separation as that alienation *from the world* prior to entrance into the heavens. Franzmann views the liminal stage as the state of being in the world after the divine eternal component in the believer is alienated *from the heavenly realm*, prior to the Gnostic's return. In relation to the liminal state, Filoramo suggests it "amounts to an intermediate place destined to perform the function of cushion and mediator between two conflicting and apparently irreconcilable spheres of reality."[954] The liminal state is the spiritual and mental place between the world of divine plenitude and the place of deficiency and non-being.

The culmination of what this thesis argues as a similar liminal tension pervading the Quaker movement adapting to failed apocalyptic hopes, was a redefinition of a concept fundamental to Fox, that of the metaphysical presence of Christ within. This theological retreat included corporate control of the publication or promotion of views similar to Valentinianism and claims to divinity, perfectionism and prophesy of the individual, private spirit. Early Church Gnosticism failed to survive as a result of similar tensions, including the failure to adapt to community-orientated authoritarian theology. (5.2)

The following section (5.3) includes consideration of the trustworthiness of source material and the potential for bias in developing the thesis' arguments. Prior scholarship which had previously emphasised the ethical and moral perspective of Quaker Light is advanced by placing the formation and development of Foxian "union with God theology" in a Gnostic and metaphysical context.

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953 Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 164.
954 Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 57.

This thesis engages with and contributes to, recent research which has identified a more literal presence of Christ within, and a supernatural, as opposed to figurative, union of Fox and God. The chapter concludes with an epilogue (5.4), which claims that the evidence throughout this thesis justifies Foxian theology being described as remarkably similar to Valentinian Gnosticism. Fox unconsciously employed a theology resembling that of the Valentinians albeit without reference to Gnostic texts. Foxian theology differed from Gnosticism in its reluctance to accept limited scriptural and sacramental exegesis as valid stages towards the fullness of pneumatic perfection, and the further difference in that there is a reservation of postmortem eschatology within Valentinianism. As illustrated by the views of Owen (1.4) and of the patristic commentators, the response of the catholic Church was to accuse Fox and the Valentinians respectively, of anti-Trinitarian beliefs and inauthentic revelations beyond those prescribed by Scripture. The shared quest for divine union, perfection and a realised eschatology, determined the common theological approach and response of the Valentinians and Fox in opposition to their respective orthodox opponents.

5.1 LIMINALITY : TO WAIT OR TO ACT

Within the environment of a realised eschatology, tension (or the 'Gnostic paradox' 2.2.1, 3.7) exists as a result of a liminal state in which the Gnostic awaits the end of the world and the completion of eschatological hopes and expectations. Fox encounters a similar liminality: to engage or not to engage with human structures and institutions whilst in a paradise state, yet still alive on earth and in a world which was not ended. As Gwyn states:

> The undeniable problem with apocalyptic movements is that history always seems to prove them wrong. They declare the imminent end of the world, but it does not come...

> The true apocalyptic tradition, as we find it in Jesus, Paul and the early Friends, is centred in an experience of God as a revealing *presence*; it discovers the kingdom of heaven to be an unfolding *present*. It *enacts* the kingdom of God and invites others into it; it moves from inward experience to outward action...
> But the problem with apocalyptic movements remains: their participants expect the entire world to be overcome soon by the same power that has overwhelmed them. What does it mean when the world remains largely unmoved?..
> To the extent that the church compromised with the world, it collaborated in putting off the kingdom of God on earth. Departing from an end-time vision, the church reframed itself for the meantime.[955]

Fox found himself surrounded by people and a world that does not conform to heaven on earth, nor does the world end. Bailey states:

> The eschatology of Fox in which Christ had already come meant that no physical coming was anticipated. All that was expected of the future was the capitulation of Babylon as the stone (Christ) grew. This was where a tension arose between an inward and present, and a yet-to-come Kingdom in Fox's eschatology.[956]

Maclear states that it cannot be doubted that events in 1659 produced "an almost unbearable tension in the Quaker community between the tendency toward awaiting the rule of Christ in a quietistic political indifference and the ambition to rule for God."[957] It is in this context that early Quakers were a liminal movement and the tension created was a contributory factor in the change from a theology similar to Valentinianism to a theology moderate and conservative in nature.

Like Valentinians who awaited freedom from the bondage of this world, Quakers were convinced that the disorder and distortion of all creation was approaching the end of its term, and that soon all things would be

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955 Gwyn, *Heaven on Earth*, 125-126.
956 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 33.
957 Maclear, J.F. "Quakerism and the End of the Interregnum: A Chapter in the Domestication of Radical Puritanism." *Church History* Vol. XIX, 1950:246. 260.

"brought into their course and order again as before the fall."[958] This imagery and attitude to the world suits the concept of the liminal group; that is, those who are neither at home in the world, nor yet fully at home in the heavenly region.

It is against this background of apocalyptic excitement and confidence that the Quaker agitation for a social transformation in England occurs.[959] The Quaker refusal to pay tithes or to wield the sword, the denunciation of the rich and the powerful, the demand for the abolition of lawyers' fees or payments due to the Lords of the Manor, are in the nature of witness to the approaching Kingdom of God. Fox and the Valentinians were in a liminal state of remaining in the world, yet anticipating deliverance from it.

The strangeness of the world in which the Gnostics find themselves remains, pending completion of salvation with the return to the heavenly realm. This is similar to the realised state of paradise which Fox finds himself in 1648 (2.2.1) and the subsequent tension encountered in relation to Fox's alienation from the ways of the world, and his nervous breakdown in 1659 (below).

Rudolph[960]and Wink both adopt a similar approach to the Gnostic language of the heavenly powers as that which "masks a vehement protest against the actual order of the world, in its socio-political as well as its spiritual aspects."[961] This protest is not however, turned into political action for social transformation. Wink[962] laments that the Gnostics, for all their insight into the powers, do not move subsequently to engage them in order to recall them to their divine vocation. Gnostics are only biding their time on

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958 Schenck, W. *The Concern for Social Justice in the Puritan Revolution*. London: Longman, Green & Co., 1948:119.
959 Maclear, "Quakerism and the End of the Interregnum", 245.
960 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 264.
961 Wink, *Cracking the Gnostic Code*, 5.
962 Ibid.

earth in the flesh and in the earthly prison, enduring until they can return to the heavenly realm where they really belong.

Fox's attitude towards action and intervention in society whilst in a state of realised eschatology is inconsistent. In 1654 Fox addresses justices and other commissioners, criticising not their lack of activity, but it is suggested here, their hypocrisy:

> Christ gives marks to his disciples, and to the multitude, how to try those that you are to try. They are called of men masters, they love the chiefest seat in the assemblies, they are sayers but not doers...[963]

In 1643 Fox walks away from the world, at the command of God having left his "relations and brake off all familiarity or fellowship with young or old."[964] Subsequently, Fox declares that he has found a hidden unity in the Creation by which the "power of God...will bring Nature into its course, and give thee to see the glory of the first body."[965] Similarly, Gruenwald[966] states that the Gnostic attitude of non-involvement in action to deter evil, was either based on eschatological reality, or simply utopian. Once evil had no adherents among humanity, its corrupting power would simply vanish:

> The detailed and colourful descriptions which many Gnostic writings devote to the powers of evil, their creation and function in the cosmos, should not be misinterpreted. Whatever one may think about Gnostic dualism, the vividness of its presentation in the writings of Gnosticism aims at driving home as convincingly as possible the special vitality these powers possess, and hence the extraordinary mental energy required on the part of the Gnostic believers to resist their temptation...Although comparatively little is known from the writings in Gnosticism concerning the eschatological fate of the powers of evil, it seems quite likely that the Gnostics believed in the inevitable

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963 *George Fox Journal*, 6th Edition. Vol.1., Leeds: Anthony Pickard, 1836:279.
964 *Works*: 1:69.
965 Ibid., 1:376.
966 Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism*, 95-96.

> abolition of these powers. This will be the result of man's turning his back on them.[967]

Gnostics and Quakers faced intense persecution and their communities developed protective measures accordingly. Gilhus[968] states that Gnostic communitas has two directions: opposition to the existing structure of society - an anti-structure, and secondly, the maintenance of the communion upon which it is built. There is often conflict on a cosmic scale, or a mixture of earthly and cosmic conflict, and although some texts appear to include only earthly adversaries, the texts allude to the possibility that the earthly adversaries are influenced by cosmic forces.[969]

This thesis now considers how the community led by Fox responded to the tension induced by the dilemma of being active or passive in the fulfilment and/or preservation of eschatological hope and expectations. In 1656 Quakers in Balby declared that "if any be called to serve the Commonwealth such service should be undertaken and in faithfullness discharged unto God, that therein patterns and examples in the thing that is righteous ye may be to those that are without."[970] In 1657 Republican leaders designed a petition which was reissued after the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658, being part of an appeal for the support of Quakers and others, for the protection of all genuine professors of religion.[971]

Taylor[972] records that in or about mid-May 1659, Sir Henry Vane (a Member of Parliament) made the Quaker leadership an offer - that they should aid in a sweeping reorganisation of the magistracy of the Commonwealth government, a reorganisation in which Justiceships would be

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967 Ibid.
968 Gilhus,"Gnosticism-A Study ", 119.
969 Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 185.
970 Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 313.
971 Maclear, "Quakerism and the End of the Interregnum", 250.
972 Taylor, J. *A Loving and Friendly Invitation to All Sinners to Repent, and a Warning to all Backsliders to Return unto the Lord.* London: John Bringhurst, 1683:13.

given to Friends or to those sympathetic to the Quaker movement. Fox was even offered a colonelcy as recognition of his powers of leadership.[973]

A list[974] of Quakers willing to serve the new government and indicating their support for certain Justices sympathetic to the Commonwealth was compiled locally by leading Quakers in the Shires, and sent to London for consolidation. Some 15,000 names were compiled.[975]

Penney states:

> It is well known and understood that the hardships suffered by Friends often resulted from whim, fancy, or even personal dislikes [by and from the magistrates]...It is not so well understood, and indeed it has come as a surprise to those best acquainted with the history of Quakerism, that Friends exerted themselves eagerly to obtain the appointment, as Justices, of persons whom they knew to be inclined to fairness and good ruling.[976]

Moore[977] states that in the summer of 1659, Parker and Howgill (leading Quakers) asked Fox about who should serve in militias, or accepting other office, and Fox replied that they should not get involved in the political process.[978] However, at the end of June 1659, five leading Quakers had been commissioned in the Westminster militia. Fox confirms this fact, implying that he was against these appointments, and that they occurred when Fox was "out of town."[979]

Indicative of Fox's reluctance to engage with this process of Quaker involvement in earthly politics, rather than transformation of society through the guidance of God alone, was his prevention of the purchase of the

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973 Cope, "Seventeenth Century Quaker Style", 750.
974 *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series*. London: Longmans & Co., 1886 Vol. IX (1655-56): 64; Vol. XII (1658-59):351-358.
975 Maclear, "Quakerism and the End of the Interregnum", 257.
976 Penney, N., ed., *Extracts From State Papers Relating to Friends 1654 to 1672*. London: Headley Bros., 1913:6-13, 105-115.
977 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 169.
978 SMSS I. 84.; VII. 157, 165.
979 Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 18n.3.

government-owned Somerset House in London for Friends: "I was moved of the Lord to forbid them so to do."[980] This attitude was indicative of the fact that Fox, whilst seeking and praying for the changes he outlined, was not willing to participate in the external, worldly process of change. This approach would ultimately lead to Fox's diminishing role as "general organiser"[981] of the Quaker movement (below).

In June 1659, a contemporary commentator states of the tension in the Quaker movement (surrounding whether to engage with politics or not) that: "the parties [Quakers and politicians] are like so many floating islands, sometimes joining and appearing like a continent, when the next flood or ebb separates them so that it can hardly be known where they will appear next."[982] Maclear[983] suggests that there appeared to be no universal commitment to political abstention, which is why Sir Henry Vane constructed his attempt to harness Quaker support for his political endeavours.

The approach of Fox was different from that of Vane and his followers within the early Quaker movement. Fox disagreed with Vane regarding the diminishing role of the inward Light as guide to political decision-making:

> Thou hast knowne somethinge formerly: but now there is a mountaine of earth and imaginations uppe in thee & from that arises a smoake which has darkened thy braine.[984]

Unlike Vane, Fox was willing to assume a Gnostic position and abstain from worldly involvement in matters of Government or politics. Any

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980 CJ: 1:334.
981 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 35.
982 Firth, C.H. *The Cambridge Modern History*, IV., New York: Macmillan, 1934:542.
983 Maclear, "Quakerism and the End of the Interregnum", 246.
984 CJ: 1:312-316.

social action and/or concerns were in anticipation and furtherance of an eschatological end and not to promote secular activity in its own right.

Reconciliation between Fox and Vane proved impossible. The language of politics with its cynical employment of bargaining points, its mutual concessions, and its compromises on matters of principle was a language and mechanism which Quakers never properly learned to use. In 1659, these constant "overturnings" and the liminal tension in the Quaker movement could mean only that the Lord was preparing to bring some great thing to pass:

> And this great thing hath times and seasons been altered, powers and Authority changed and altered, Statuts, Lawes, and Decrees, changeable and alterable, for as the iniquiyty of one power was filled up, that was cast down, and another had it's day...and in all these overturnings, breakings down, and overthrowings, the very hand of the Lord hath bin.[985]

Between the fall of the second Protectorate in May and July of 1659, Fox[986] wrote a text in relation to fifty-nine concerns mentioned below, an optimistic tract of social radicalism. It was addressed to Parliament and contained a complete programme for the social and to some extent, constitutional, reform of England, a protest at the social conditions of a nation requiring to be purged of religious persecution and political corruption.

The Quaker protests against imprisonment for non-payment of tithes, against "hat honour" and oaths, speaking in churches and vagrancy were common,[987] but its concern for sweeping political, legal and judicial reforms of a universal note was new. Fox stated the principle: " Let all the poor

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985 Burrough, E. *A Message to the Present Rulers of England.* London: Giles Calvert, 1659:6-7.
986 Fox, G. *To the Parliament of the Common-Wealth of England, Fifty Nine Particulars Laid Down for the regulating of Things, and the Taking Away of Oppressing Laws, and Oppressors, and to Ease the Oppressed.* London: Thomas Simmons, 1659.
987 Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 445-448.

people, blinde and lame, and creeples be provided for in the Nation, that there might not be a beggar in England."[988]

This grand scheme was to be accomplished by the appropriation of all the great houses, Abbeys, Steeple-houses and White-hall for use as alms houses, while abbeylands and glebelands were to be turned for the support of the poor. Fox states: "Let all those Fines that belong to Lords of Manors, be given to the poor people, for Lords have enough."[989] Fox recognises that England was standing on the threshold of a new day when the country would become "a free Nation, and so a free People [but significantly, only] by the power of God."[990] However, Moore suggests that this tract with fifty-nine concerns showed "little interest in practical detail except as they relate to Friends."[991] The emphasis upon the transformation in society by the "power of God" illustrates that it remained a document of spiritual ideals and hope rather than a wholly political tract.

By the beginning of July 1659 the campaign against tithes received a major setback, for Parliament voted that payments should continue until some other form of maintenance could be devised.[992] It was stated that: "The Quakers are not at all satisfied with this act [sic?] but it is more prudent to please the Presbyterians."[993] The abolition of tithes/State priesthood was at the very core of Fox's theology with its Valentinian emphasis upon unmediated access to God, free of payment. This compromise by Parliament devastated Fox and the continuation of his realised eschatology and theology. As Evans states:

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988 Fox, *Fifty Nine Particulars*, 9.
989 Ibid., 8.
990 Ibid., 5.
991 Moore, "The Faith of the First Quakers", 246.
992 *Great Britain Journal of the House of Commons*, Vol. VII. London: N.p., 1659:694.
993 Guizot, F.R.G. *History of Richard Cromwell and the Restoration of Charles II.* Vol.1, London: R. Bentley, 1856:424.

> The Society of Friends was the largest and most influential sect which consistently expressed a philosophical objection to the payment of tithes either to ministers of the Church of England or to lay owners...compulsory maintenance of a Christian ministry contradicted Christ's command: "Freely ye have received: freely give."[994]

The tension over delayed apocalyptic expectations and Fox's diminishing role as leader may have caused Fox's nervous breakdown during late July-October 1659, when Fox went to Reading undergoing intense periods of spiritual suffering, silence and isolation.[995] Fox comments at this time on the "great deal of hypocrisy, deceit and strife that was got uppermost in people who were ready to sheath their swords in one anothers bowel's."[996] Moore states that:

> Fox's sickness in 1659 was probably psychosomatic, the result of developing tensions within the movement, and the realisation that even leading [Quaker] Ministers such as Edward Burrough and Richard Hubberthorne were tending to a different point of view [i.e., Fox was against political engagement] from himself.[997]

Moore[998] suggests that Fox had a nervous breakdown due to fact that the Quaker movement was running out of control. Additionally, Fox would have been dismayed by leading Quakers such as Burrough and Howgill who were both too involved in politics for Fox's liking.[999] Whilst ill, Fox revealingly wrote:

> It is ye word of ye Lord god to you all...this power, life, light, seed and wisdom by which ye may take away ye occation off ye warrs and soe

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994 Evans, E.J. "Our Faithful Testimony: The Society of Friends and Tithe Payments 1690-1730." *JFHS* 52/2 (1969):106.
995 Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 534.
996 CJ: 1:341.
997 Moore, "The Faith of the First Quakers", 255.
998 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 170.
999 Ingle, H. L. "Richard Hubberthorne and History: The Crisis of 1659." *JFHS* 56/3 (1992):189-200.

> know a kingdome which hath noe end and fight for it with ye spirituall weapons which takes away ye occation of ye carnal.[1000]

Fox emphasises the spiritual over the carnal in relation to a kingdom that is still expected. Maclear[1001] wonders whether such a strain upon Fox was as a result of the problems posed by the attempted inclusion of the Quakers in Vane's "Kingdom of the saints". This decisive moment in early Quaker history increased the tension in the Quaker community as to the extent of participation in what was a liminal society awaiting eschatological completion in a hostile world.

The above experiences of 1659 had brought with them distrust and bitter disillusionment for Fox. When Fox emerged in October 1659 with the offer of a colonelcy, his vision was (as in the liminal Gnostic communities) to dissociate himself and the Quaker movement from any political struggle. However, as illustrated below in relation to the change in theology (5.2) contemporaneous with the events of 1659, Fox's theology progressed at this stage from a dynamic Christianity incorporating aspects of Valentinianism, to static post-Restoration, respectable Quaker non-conformity. Fox wrote at this time in an effort to calm the Quaker community:

> And great fears and troubles was in many people and looking for the kings coming in and that all things should be altered but I told them the Lords power and Light was over all and shined over all...For in my travaile and sufferings at Reading when people was at a stand and could not tell what might come in nor who might rule: I told them the Lords power was over all...and all would be well whether the king came in or no to them that loved God and was faithful to him.[1002]

Cope[1003] suggests that the cause in the decline in spiritual ardency and expressive vigour lay in the theological and social history of the society.

1000 SMSS II.103.
1001 Maclear, "Quakerism and the End of the Interregnum", 262.
1002 CJ: 1:334.
1003 Cope, "Seventeenth Century Quaker Style", 750.

The evangelising energy of the early Quakers had put them rapidly in the "vanguard of the enthusiastic movement."[1004] They regarded themselves as a spiritual Israel within the nation rather than as a separated sect.[1005] Braithwaite states that having built up a membership of 40,000 within a dozen years of their beginnings,[1006] Quakers were given a great opportunity to make England a spiritual Zion in 1659. By retreating into dynamic-quietism, the opportunity for political influence was lost. Through the emphasis upon the power of God, Quakers saved face, but lost influence.

5.2 THE THEOLOGICAL RETREAT

The change in that Foxian theology similar to Valentinian Gnosticism was a process which began prior to the Restoration, as a result of the trial and punishment for blasphemy of James Naylor in 1656. The incident scandalised Quakers publicly and privately and forced them to find ways to contain the chaos which Fox identified above, 5.1.[1007] Bailey[1008] states that the Naylor incident resulted in Fox and his followers publicly disassociating themselves from their earlier fundamental beliefs. These are identified in this thesis as immediate revelation (Chapter 2) perfection and union with God (Chapter 3) and apocalyptic urgency (Chapter 4). When combined, this thesis identifies them as establishing Fox's theology as similar to Valentinian Gnosticism. Indicative of the moderation of these aspects is the fact that the first Quaker corporate discipline appeared and extravagant claims of spiritual states were toned down in publications. Language and metaphors became more conservative and Biblical. Fox stopped using "son of God" talk. Perfectionist

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1004 Nuttall, G. *Studies in Christian Enthusiasm: Illustrated from early Quakerism.* Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill, 1948:23.
1005 Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 508.
1006 Ibid., 512.
1007 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 284.
1008 Ibid., 207.

claims were muted. Crusading rhetoric was dropped and eschatological urgency receded - a reaction to dashed hopes and Restoration persecution.

The new political realities of the Restoration, combined with the process of maturation inherent in any multi-operational movement, drove a wedge into the heart of the revolutionary dynamic. Bailey[1009] states that the first signs of Church discipline and formal organisation appeared in 1656, an attempt to limit the decisive influence of, and damage caused by, Naylor (whose trial was the last for blasphemy in the period of early Quakerism).[1010] Friends also began to censor their own writings, avoiding publication of those aspects referred to above.[1011]

In 1657 John Camm died, marking the first passing among the itinerant evangelists who formed the first leaders and supporters of Fox and his (as this thesis argues) Valentinian Gnostic message.[1012] However, in 1658 came the publication of *The Great Mystery of the Great Whore Unfolded; and AntiChrist's Kingdom Revealed Unto Destruction*[1013] in which Fox hoped to regain theological momentum by confronting the arguments of opponents with bold statements reiterating those Valentinian aspects of theology mentioned above, albeit in more tempered language.

An examination of this text illustrates that Fox[1014] concedes nothing in terms of theology: saints were the sons of God, they knew the bodily presence of Christ, were partakers of divine nature and assumed the glorified body of Christ. The saints were not distinct from Christ. Fox however, moderates the personal and Valentinian claims to divinity in favour of a

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1009 Ibid., 178.
1010 An account of Naylor's role as publicist for the early Quaker movement, and the repercussions of Naylor's trial and punishment upon the role of Fox as leader and the Quaker movement generally, is provided by Moore, *The Light in Their Conciences*, 35-48.
1011 Oliver, P.M.C. "Quaker Testimony and the Lambs War." Ph.D. dissertation., University of Melbourne, 1977:82.
1012 Cope, "Seventeenth Century Quaker Style", 750.
1013 *Works*: 3.
1014 Ibid., 57, 59, 180-183, 206, 221, 235, 243-244, 291-292, 340, 344-345, 358, 400, 457, 509.

general claim of divinity in the saints. The realised nature of the divine within (2.2.1) arising from the functions of the Light and the divinity of or in the soul comparable to Valentinian soteriology (2.8.1) are preserved. God's essence within the individual remains part of Fox's theology as does the possibility of participation in the divine existence. The saints are resurrected, glorified, perfected and divine. There is a perfection and divinity of the saints in general. The saints are the incarnation of Christ on earth.

To retain a Valentinian Gnostic theology which includes reunion with God and perfection through the workings of the Light as universally possible, means that the presence of God in a consubstantial relationship with the redeemer figure of Christ had to be interpreted literally and not figuratively. In the absence of the real and supernatural union of the divine within the individual with Christ as redeemer, Fox's belief in an irreversible state of perfection free from sin (Chapter 3) and the pre-Fall state of glory (3.5) would be unsustainable. As Bailey states:

> the bedrock of Fox's new religion was his doctrine of the real corporeal presence of the celestial Christ in the saint. Co-habitation of Christ in the believer explains the charismatic nature of early Quakerism.[1016]

Whilst this thesis argues that the presence of Christ in the individual is real, the Valentinian Gnosticism in Foxian theology dictates that the presence is metaphysical, and spiritual, not corporeal, or of that "matter" alien to the Gnostic. The presence of this celestial Christ is organic and described in graphic language, but from a metaphysical rather than physical perspective. Tarter[1017] argues that: "Fox's vision threatened the long-standing Christian social order by presenting the flesh as something integral to holiness and

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[1016] Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 282.
[1017] Tarter, *Sites of Performance*, 26; "Quaking in the Light", 145-162.

divination", but this thesis rejects this argument for the same "physical" or corporeal emphasis found in Bailey's theory.

The saints were not, however, distinct from Christ: herein lies the central profound truth that led Fox to renew a religion resembling Gnosticism which was later reinterpreted and erased from the record in the name of respectability. Not only was the spirit of Christ not disembodied, but the saints were inhabited by the heavenly body of Christ. They were equals in the Godhead.

Quakers did not begin to consider the inward Christ metaphorically at least until the 1670s.[1017] Quakers believed that spirits were immaterial substances that could inhabit the mortal body. In Fox's explanation of the nature and function of Light there is little distinction between physical and spiritual; the relationship between Christ and the believer is very close, described in the same terms that Fox had used before, as being "flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone."[1018] The following passage also combines use of physical and spiritual imagery:

> The blood of Christ which satisfies the Father, which the Saints drink, and his flesh which they eat which in so doing have life is that which the world stumble at; which who drinks it, lives for ever.[1019]

Moore suggests that belief in a real union with Christ, however expressed, remains the keystone of Fox's theology.[1020] A metaphysical union is fundamental to gnosis. However, the emphasis upon the immediacy of knowledge within individual revelation (which forms the basis of the consubstantial union within Gnosticism) was during the mid-1660s beginning to diminish in Quakerism. As Bailey notes:

1017 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 80.
1018 *Works*: 3:46, 51.
1019 Ibid., 3:227.
1020 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 109.

> Immediate inspiration was beginning to give way to the words of other prophets, ancient and modern. The words of others were used to prove the truth of one's own views and this recourse to external prophecy was novel in Quaker ranks. It was symptomatic of a general devolution of the prophetic spirit within the movement which was part of a general retreat from immediacy after the Naylor incident.[1021]

Part of this retreat was a clear attempt to limit the individualised prophetic spirit by the criticism of extravagant ministry.[1022] Within Gnosticism and the early Valentinian message of Fox, such restrictions upon the efficacy of authentic, individual, experiential knowledge and revelation was anathema to the unmediated workings of the Light upon the soul. Quaker revelatory activity was becoming harnessed and rationalised, as Owen had advocated in the 1650s (1.4).

In May 1666 a declaration was signed in London by eleven senior Quakers (excluding Fox) *The Testimony of the Brethren*, containing six points aimed at controlling "dissidents". Those items relevant to the moderation of (Valentinian aspects in) Foxian theology are listed below:

> *Second*: these dissentients...have not any true spiritual, nor gospel authority to be judges in the Church...for of right the elders and members of the church, which keep their habitation in the truth, ought to judge matters and things which differ.
> *Third*: giving final authority to the church business meeting...if any difference arise in the church...we declare and testify, that the church, with the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, have power (without the assent of such as dissent from their doctrines and practices) to hear and determine the same.
> *Fourth*: on the authentication of ministry...if any go abroad hereafter, pretending to that weighty work and service, which either in life and doctrine grieves good Friends...then ought they...forbear going abroad and ministering till they are reconciled to the church, and have approbation of the elders and members of the same.
> *Fifth*: And if any man or woman that are out of unity with the body of Friends, print...anything which is not of service for the truth...then we

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1021 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 193.
1022 Bauman, *Let your Words be Few*, 142.

> do warn and charge all Friends that love the truth...to beware...of having anyhand in...spreading such books or writings.[1024]

Moore suggests that the document signifies the end of the early Quaker movement, and it epitomises the nature of Quakerism over the next two centuries:

> The grip of the leaders of the meeting on expressions of the Spirit was formalized. Given the need for discipline perceived and wanted by many Quakers, as a necessary outward expression of the corporate spiritual unity in which they believed, some such development was inevitable. Political situation made the situation more urgent...it was regularly quoted by dissidents during internal disputes in later years, as a dreadful example of the lengths to which the Quaker establishment would go to maintain its authority.[1025]

The Testimony of the Brethren illustrates that its male and London-based authors were assuming the role of patriarchs and apostles with the exclusive right to interpret faith, history, and practice. It amounts to the usurpation of that power argued by some Quakers as rightfully reserved for the spirit alone. George Bishop, for example, observes that Quakers were reverting to those "outward things" such as papers and strivings to bolster their power.[1026] Bishop considers (as had Fox, 4.2) that Quakers had advanced beyond the early Church, which had centralised power in the hands of apostles and elders. Bishop states: "We have not now things in the disposition of [one] person, but according to the power that moves in every one."[1027] The freedom of the individual prophetic spirit (readily incorporated within gnosis) was being reined in and moderated by centralising Quakers.

1024 Barclay, A.R. ed. , *Letters of Early Friends*. London: Harvey and Darton, 1841: 318-24.
1025 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 225.
1026 Ingle, *First Among Friends*, 222-3.
1027 Bishop, G. "Epistle", 3rd January 1667, in Mucklowe, W. *Tyranny and Hypocrisy Detected*. London: Francis Smith, 1673:34-36.

In 1671 Fox[1027] wrote to the Governor of Barbados: "they asked me whether I had the same spirit as the Apostles had, and I said I had..."[1028] In this document Fox concedes his 1647/8 position (2.2.1), i.e., being in an irreversible spiritual state beyond Adam to a state akin to Christ, and admits to a current spiritual state identical to that of the Apostles. The general implications of the letter were in effect, that any preacher who succeeded the Apostles had to demonstrate the same spirit and power the Apostles possessed. However, Fox still refused to acknowledge the finality of Scripture, referring to "words" rather than the "Word" of God - implying the possibility of further or continuous revelation.

Bailey states that in moving away from avatarial language, the letter illustrates a lack of eschatological discussion, "or is it implied in the wily acceptance of scripture as the words [not Word] of God, with its denial of completeness and finality?"[1029] Further, the Barbados letter meant that Fox and his followers were effectively disassociating themselves from their earlier fundamental Valentinian postulates of immediate revelation, perfection, divinity, union and apocalyptic urgency. This is illustrated here (in Fox's grammar) by what Fox states of Scripture and salvation:

> Now Concerning the Holy Scriptures...Wee doe beleive that they were given forth by the holy spirit of God through the holy men of God...they are to be read and beleived and fulfilled and he that fulfills them is Christ and they are profitable for doctrine of reproofe for Correction & for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all Good workes...and are able to make us wise as to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus...[1030]

[1027] CJ: 2:197-202. Quakers have generally accepted this letter as an orthodox statement of faith from Fox and a modification of his earlier views.: Holden, D. *Friends Divided: Conflict and Division in the Society of Friends.* Richmond: Friends United Press, 1988:2.
[1028] CJ: 2:252.
[1029] Bailey, *New Light on George Fox,* 182fn.11.
[1030] CJ:2:199-200.

In 1672 an Epistle from Friends of the General Meeting advises: "not to teach the highest doctrines like perfection until people's minds were ready, for it was a stumbling block to minds biased against Truth."[1031] William Penn[1032] in the preface to the "Ellwood" Journal[1033] understates the radical perfectionism of Fox's early theology similar to Valentinianism. Quakers were also advised by the General Meeting to "avoid all imagined, unreasonable and untimely prophesyings,"[1034] reminiscent of the language of Owen (1.4). Additionally the meeting of 1672 minuted that "no new book should be printed without an order from this committee."[1035]

Leading post-Restoration Quaker theologians like Penn and Barclay were beginning to disembody and de-gnosticise the Spirit and turn the literal presence of the glorified body of Christ in the believer into a strictly figurative presence:

> The de-divinisation of the inner light involved a shift from the idea of the real, corporeal presence of the glorified flesh of Christ in the saint, to a doctrine of the disembodied spiritual presence which was a mere spiritual influence or inspiration. Although Fox's imagery and metaphors of light, seed and even inner Christ were retained there was a fundamental shift in the conception of these metaphors which assumed the function of true metaphor and were stripped of Fox's tendency to merge the identities of God and human.[1036]

The post-Restoration world was immeasurably different from that of the first Quakers. It was the Restoration world of Penn, a world of reasonable temper whose aim was clarity and polish and whose chief fear and detestation was that enthusiasm which had been the badge of prophecy to the early

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1031 Barclay, ed. , *Letters of Early Friends*, 330-332.
1032 *Works*: 1: iv-xiviii.
1033 Ibid., 1.
1034 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology", 221.
1035 Wright, L.M. *The Literary Life of Early Friends.* New York: AMS Press Inc., 1966:104-108.
1036 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 285.

Quakers.[1037] Bailey asserts: "that it was the glorified soul that Quaker theologians de-divinized"[1038] from Fox's message. This thesis argues that it is the metaphysical dynamic of the Valentinian divine seed or Gnostic soul which Penn sought to counter, in the same way that the patristic commentators opposed Gnostic theology. By way of example, William Penn in 1673 attempted to change the metaphysical meaning of what Fox said about the soul (2.8.1):

> George Fox says: "God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul; and is not this of God, of his being, &c. And is not this, that comes out from God, part of God?" G.F. intends that divine life, power, and virtue, by which Adam in soul and body came to live to God: not that the soul of man, as a mere creature, created capacity, is of God's own being and substance.[1039]

Penn reinterprets the sense that the soul had anything to do with the divine nature. Penn suggests that when Fox states the soul was part of God, Fox intended to mean "the divine life, power and virtue, by which Adam in soul and body came to live in God."[1040] Fox's concept of the "soul" (or the divine element in it) meant that it derived from, and returned to God, but Penn reinterpreted this as a divine power that *directed* the person to God. This interpretation meant the soul is divested of its divine element, which it had in gnosis as it had for Fox. For Penn, even after regeneration, when the soul was restored to its primitive perfection, it was not the same substance as God. When Fox says that "God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul"[1041] Penn states that Fox meant "inspired" for "breathed",

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[1037] Ibid., 216.
[1038] Ibid., 228.
[1039] Penn, W. *The Papers of William Penn.* 4 vols. Dunn, M.M and R.S. eds., Vol.2. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981-86:521-522.; *Works*: 3:181.
[1040] Penn, W. *Reason Against Railing, and Truth Against Fiction Being an Answer to Thomas Hicks, an Anabaptist Teacher*, in *The Papers of William Penn*, ibid., vol. 2:521.
[1041] *Works:* 3:181.

drawn from the Latin *inspirare* and the Greek *emphusao*. Penn states that when God breathed into man he:

> inspired man with something of his own substance...he contributed something to him, and bestowed something of his own divinity on him, and that God did inspire man with the Holy ghost...which is as much as can be collected or justly concluded from what George Fox has said concerning men.[1042]

Additionally, in *The New Athenians,* Penn said Fox never intended to say that Christ and the saints were not distinct:

> You will have us confound God and his saints, from a passage in G.F's. Mystery: "He is deceived, that saith, Christ is distinct from his saints." The page is not quoted, but we know the place: we suppose it is a mis-printing gives you that apprehension; distinct for divided; they are distinct, but not divided. And this is that which was intended.[1043]

Fox employs this argument in blasphemy trials in the 1650s, i.e., that unity does not imply equality. Fox's Valentinian Gnosticism is being systematically altered. Fox in *The Great Mystery*[1044] is explicit that Christ and the saints are not distinct. Such comments from Penn led to a posthumous attack upon Fox from the Anglican critic, Charles Leslie :

> the Ingenious Mr Penn has of late refined some of their gross Notions...has made them speak Sense and English, of both which George Fox (their first and great Apostle) was totally Ignorant.[1045]

In a spirit of compromise and concession, in 1675 Robert Barclay published an *Apology ... for the people called, in scorn, Quakers*, an

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[1042] Penn, *Reason Against Railing*, 521-22. Also, Penn, "The Invalidity of John Faldo's Vindication," in *The Papers of William Penn*, vol. 2:435-36.
[1043] Penn, W. "The New Athenians" in *The Papers of William Penn*, vol. 2:802.; Fox in *Works*: 3:180,291.
[1044] *Works*: 3:57, 59, 180-183, 206, 221, 235, 243-244, 291-292, 340, 344-345, 358, 400, 457, 509.
[1045] Leslie, C. *Snake in the Grass*, London: N.p., 1696: 5.

assurance to Charles II that Quakers were not (anymore) interested in radical social upheaval:

> Would not have any judge that ...we intend to destroy the mutual Relation, that either is betwixt Prince and People, Master and Servants, Parents and Children...and that our Principle in these things hath no such tendency, and that these Natural Relations are rather better established , than any ways hurt by it...Let not any judge, that from our Opinion in these things , any necessity of Levelling will follow, or that all Men must have things in common.[1046]

Moreover, Barclay adopted Penn's attack upon any concept of the real presence or union with God derived from the realisation of the divine within the individual:

> When we speak of the seed, grace, word of God or the light and say that everyone possesses a measure of it, we do not refer to the proper nature and essence of God...The seed or light in man may be quenched, bruised, wounded...but this is not so of God's own nature...When we speak of the seed or light we understand a spiritual, celestial, and invisible principle, a principle in which God dwells as Father, Son and Spirit. A measure of this glorious and divine principle exists as a seed in all men which by its nature draws, invites, and inclines the individual toward God. Some call this the *vehiculum Dei*, or the spiritual body of Christ, the flesh and blood of Christ, which came down from heaven...[1047]

Barclay stated that when Quakers affirmed that Christ dwelt in them, they meant God was mediated as a divine principle in the *vehiculum dei*. It was not literally the celestial Christ who dwelt in the saints, as Fox believed until his death. Barclay does not interpret soul, seed or Light, as Fox does, in a Valentinian sense (the divine essence in the individual, uniting with Christ).

[1046] Barclay, R. *An Apology for the true Christian divinity*, 6th edn., London: T.Sowle, Raylton and Luke Hind, 1763:516-517.

[1047] Barclay, R. *An Apology for the true Christian divinity*, D. Freiday, ed., 85. Barclay possibly derives this notion of *vehiculum Dei* from George Keith who developes his notion about the pre-existent heavenly humanity of Christ from the esoteric circle that gathered around Anne, Viscountess Conway (fn. 1162., below).

Bailey notes that Barclay views the divine in the person as a divine presence and not essence:

> But it was not part of the literal body of Christ or of the divine essence. It was a divine *presence... It contained the power to save*, but it was not in any way a residual part of God's image that somehow remained after the Fall, nor was it a natural power of the will.[1049]

In adopting a more conservative tone to the apocalypticism of Fox, the real target of Barclay's attack are those who protest at the apostasy and formality of the new Quaker regime.[1050] The cultural pull of individualism was an inevitable factor among Friends with their emphasis upon unmediated revelation in the human conscience. However, the mercurial power of the Quaker revolution consisted in the interaction between its collectivist, covenantal character on the one hand, and the anarchic, experimental quality of individual and group innovation, on the other.

Gwyn perceives the Quaker movement as having lost its temporal character as an apocalyptic event; a personal and social crisis. It became more timeless, a static presence in the human conscience: "the frame of reference for understanding the light within thus shifts from providential history to providential nature."[1051] Wright suggests that leading Quakers:

> fostered the spirit of conservatism and of group solidarity already at work and constantly increasing among the Friends - they were able to secure unanimity of expression and to forestall printing injurious to its interests.[1052]

Whilst post-Restoration Friends held unwaveringly to the ideals of primitive Quakerism, they chose to proclaim the doctrine of the inward Light

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1049 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 234.
1050 Ibid., 326.
1051 Gwyn, D. *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism.* Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications, 1995: 325.
1052 Wright, *The Literary Life of Early Friends*, 97-109.

in a more conservative fashion and in a less spectacular manner, cautious in terms of performing and publicising visions, prophecies, lamentations, healings and facts. The age of prose and reason was at hand, especially in religion where an intellectualised approach to religion was in opposition to the Quaker theory of spiritual experience. New leaders faced conditions exactly the reverse of those which had confronted the first Quakers of the 1650s.

A powerful Second Day Morning Meeting was established in 1672, consisting of leading London male Friends and visiting ministers, having responsibility for publications, and acquiring something of the function of a national executive.[1052] Morning Meeting Minutes from 1678 show an emphasis upon rationalising mystic experience, removing the immediacy of prophetic revelation and those texts which promoted it. The Quaker Ralph Fretwell submitted a book written about the teachings of Jacob Boehme to the Committee which refused to authorise publication as the text was considered "neither suitable nor safe."[1053] The committee considered Boehminists as "a mixture of light and darkness," who promoted the individualisation of revelation and metaphysical spiritual unity with God.[1054] These concepts are found in the theology of Fox in the 1650s (Chapter 2, especially 2.8, 2.8.1) and indeed, William Bayley, Soloman Eccles and other Quakers had in the 1650s felt themselves indebted to the works of Boehme and advocated Boehme's mystical teachings.[1055]

However, Trevett believes that "the Morning Meeting set about ensuring that Friends, male and female, did not rock a steadying boat by their actions or writings."[1056] It was the forum in which it was decided whether a

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1052 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 227.
1053 Wright, *The Literary Life of Early Friends*, 104.
1054 Morning Meeting Minutes 7, 2 no.4, 1673., referred to by Wright, ibid.
1055 Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, 220-234.
1056 Trevett, C. "Not fit to be printed: the Welsh, the Women and the Second Day's Morning Meeting." Presidential Address to The Friends Historical Society (unpublished, to date).

text was "fit" for publication, "where Quaker power interacted with Quaker response to the wider world. Its Minutes are the place to see late seventeenth century Friends' pragmatism, politics and patriarchy at work."[1057] The editor of Fox's *Journal*, Thomas Ellwood, argues that there should be censorship of works which advocated and promoted the workings of a "private spirit," which was not in the exercise of the Spirit of Truth and sound judgment.[1058] Ellwood's judgment is indicative of an interplay between individual and colective minds within the Quaker group and the relative weight given to individual consciences as opposed to institutional arrangements. Ingle states that the editing of Fox's *Journal* by Ellwood illustrates that:

> the desire to depict Fox as a moderate inevitably meant that he had often to soften sometimes rough edges and reduce the vigour and firmness of the real man. Just as surely, the sanitized Fox who emerged from the Journal fed the institution building efforts of his successors, a useful process now as then.[1059]

William Rogers of Bristol in *The Christian - Quaker*[1060] castigates former colleagues for confining the spirit, arguing that nothing should be allowed to hamper the workings of the spirit. Rogers[1061] stated that Morning Meeting was not giving the group liberty to write "as the spirit moved them", Morning Meeting was wrongly considering itself as above "divine moving" that arose in individuals' hearts. Gwyn states that:

> It seems as if Fox and other Quaker leaders were at some pains to downplay the more controversial and revolutionary dimensions of the early movement. By the end of the Restoration the turbulent 1650s seemed like a strange, distant world to everyone. So while his writings

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Yearly Meeting , Exeter, August 2nd 2001: 2.
1057 Ibid., 4.
1058 Wright, *The Literary Life of Early Friends*, 108.
1059 Ingle, *First Amongst Friends*, 215.
1060 Rogers, W. *The Christian - Quaker*. London: N.p., 1681:30, 32.
1061 Rowntree, J.S. "Life and Work. Micab's Mother, A Neglected Chapter in Church History." *JFHS* 57/1:142-76.

> in the 1650s tended towards the prophetic oracular, with a strongly apocalyptic sense of social crisis and disjuncture, the Journal's perspective from the mid 1670s stresses the continuity and progress of events in the founding of the Religious Society of Friends.[1062]

The de-gnosticising of Foxian inward Light, when combined with the creation of the Second Day Morning in 1672, sealed the fate of Fox's early vision. The need to curb extravagances was a pressing one, especially in the climate of Restoration persecution. Fox volunteered to censor some of his own writings, selectively editing the Swarthmore Letters in the early 1670s, although there is evidence that Fox was not entirely happy with this process.[1063] In 1683 Fox[1064] outlined rules by which Friends' books were to printed. The Second Day Morning Meeting performed an important function, as it became the tool through which Quaker leaders were able to stamp out "enthusiasm." Manuscripts were edited with this in mind and anything that was not "sound and savory" was omitted from publication, or altered.[1065] Fox's works were posthumously selectively edited with this in mind. Also repressed by the Second Day Morning Meeting was excessive language, "apocalyptic papers, and anything chaotic in expression."[1066] Indeed they intervened whenever they could to ensure that the image the world received of Quakerism (especially through the written word) was a respectable and inoffensive one.

[1062] Gwyn, *The Covenant Crucified*, 318.
[1063] Trevett, "Not fit to be printed", fn.25 states: "One of George Fox 's works fell foul of the Morning Meeting in its early years, which prompted his observation that he had not been "moved to set up that meeting to make orders against the reading of my papers; but to gather up bad books that was scandalous against Friends; and to see that young Friends books that was sent to be printed might be stood by...and not for them...to stop things to the nation which I was moved by the Lord to give forth to them." Additionally on censorship and the moderation of the individual spirit, cf. T.P. O'Malley: "Defying the Powers and Tempering the Spirit: A Review of Quaker Control over their publications 1672-1689" *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982):72-88, especially 75-6.
[1064] Box A, Portfolio 10 November 19, 1683 at FHL.
[1065] Ingle, *First Amongst Friends*, 256.
[1066] Cope, "Seventeenth Century Quaker Style", 227.

There has been little scholarly examination of the process of censorship which occurred, largely due to its speculative nature. In examining the early relationship of Margaret Fell and George Fox in the light of messianic correspondence between them, Kunze states that: "Although evidence is incomplete, there is a compelling consistency to the evidence we do have that suggests that suppression took place in the early Quaker record."[1067] Wilcox agrees that there was some form of censorship, but clarifies what may have been the reasoning behind it :

> The writings of George Fox present their own special problem, for his works span some forty years, during which time his beliefs developed and were redefined in the face of persecution from outside, dissension within the movement, and a lack of fulfilment of early eschatological vision. Fox, in my opinion, did not so much abandon his early vision as redefine his understanding of how it would be fulfilled.[1068]

This view is correct - Fox never changed the early explicit theology emphasising the authority of revelation which resulted in a divine state of being, albeit a state identical to that of the Apostles, if not of Christ. Those who had the spirit had revelations, those out of it belonged to Babylon. This position was reaffirmed in 1690, just before Fox's death:

> And now all the doctrines, rudiments, and commandments of men, which are not to be touched nor tasted, and so are not to be conformed unto, but transformed from; for they are but the inventions of such as have not heard God and Christ's voice, though they may have all the form of godliness both in the Old and the New Testament; and being out of the power and spirit that they were in that gave it forth, all such are to be turned away from, and not to be conformed unto, according to the apostles' doctrine.[1069]

[1067] Kunze, B. Y. *Margaret Fell and the Rise of Quakerism.* London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1994: 231.
[1068] Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry*, 14 f., 19.
[1069] *Works*: 6:94.

Some previous associates of Fox gloated over the transformation in Quaker theology (such as Viscountess Conway and others who delighted in observing Quakers turn away from their exuberant past and don respectability, having "emerged above that low beginning"[1070]). However, without the redefinition of the inward Christ from what Fox intended to a figurative concept, Quakerism would arguably have remained an enthusiastic sect and would not have survived the disdain of an increasingly rationalist and scientific seventeenth century. Trevett notes that :

> The Yearly Meeting Epistle of 1692 referred to "a quiet life", which was to be conserved under "the higher powers that God is pleased to set over us". Greater conformism was valued, albeit in a setting which was always counter-cultural, simply by virtue of being Quaker.[1071]

The demise of Valentinian Gnosticism appears to have occurred for similar reasons to that which led to the bowdlerisation of Fox's quasi-Gnostic theology. Due to the lack of documentary evidence, the cause of Gnostic decline is speculative (as are its origins) and any evidence is not from direct source material. Rudolph states:

> The gnostic schools... did not succeed in becoming broad mass movements; for this they were too narrow-mindedly esoteric and , above all, too hostile to the world...Moreover, account must be taken of the fact that the Christian Church, by adapting to its environment, and by accepting the legitimate concerns of gnostic theology into its consolidating body of doctrine, developed into a forward looking ideology and community structure, which ultimately made it heir to the religions of antiquity.[1072]

The above paragraph reiterates the Gnostic dilemma similarly encountered by Fox in terms of whether or not to engage with the world and

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[1070] Correspondence from Henry More to William Penn (22.5.1675) *The Papers of William Penn*, Vol.1, 304-323.; and Conway to More (29.11.1675) *The Conway Letters*, ed. M.H. Nicolson, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992:407-409.
[1071] Trevett, "Not fit to be printed", 2.
[1072] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 367-8.

its political process (5.1) a reluctance illustrated by his generally anti-cosmic theology. Additionally, Fox's negative attitude towards human institutions as outward and created bodies, in deference to the inward Light and revelation, failed to embrace human institutions as successors to apostolic Christianity. Moreover, the response of post-Restoration Quakers such as Penn and Barclay was to ensure that Quaker theology became more compatible with Puritan beliefs, and Puritans became tolerant of the non-threatening and moderated Quakerism. Similarly, the early Church incorporated aspects of Gnosticism into its own theology, moulding and refining them until Christian Gnosticism ceased to exist:

> By avoiding extremes and by transforming the radical traits of the early Christian message into a form acceptable to the world, thus not persisting in mere protest but at the same time accepting the cultural heritage of antiquity, it increasingly reduced the influence of Gnosis until it ultimately, after having been invested with the authority of the state (in the 4th century), succeeded in mobilising the physical political power against it which the remaining adherents could not resist for any length of time.[1073]

Gnostic and orthodox Christians remained together in the same ecclesial circles into the third and fourth centuries,[1074] with Gnostics viewing themselves as an inner circle of Christianity.[1075] However, Perkins states:

> The social and religious patterns of the Christian empire were shifting out from under them...[Gnostics were] unable to move into the new world of stable, local Christian communities. These local communities had to take on themselves the responsibilities of ordering their larger social milieu as well as of developing theoretical and intellectual insight into the nature of human life, society and government that could supplant pagan philosophy.[1076] ...The larger

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[1073] Ibid.
[1074] Koschorke, K. *Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegan das kirkliche Christentum. NHS* 12 (1978):228-32.
[1075] Ibid., 220f.
[1076] Brown, P. "The Diffusion of Manichaeism in the Roman Empire", in *Religion and Society in the Age of Augustine*. London: Faber, 1972:107f, 111-115.

context of reflection on God, the cosmos, and human bondage in the material and psychic world has been dissolved into a quasi-magical, esoteric sect - a sect that might be appealing to some, but hardly the dangerous hydra perceived by Plotinus, who defended the old classical order against it, or by Irenaeus, who set the emerging Christian order on a different course.[1077]

The ideas of Irenaeus triumphed in the fourth century and a conservative impetus was to set the pace. Vallee states of early church commentators:

> Theologians were told to avoid dangerous speculations and to bow before authority and the majority. An authoritarian structure of Christianity was adopted to promote faith rather than knowledge. An authoritarian pattern was devised to meet heretical challenges, the essential features of this pattern being the criterion of antiquity (apostolicity) and that of consent (majority). This pattern set the course for the future of Christian development.[1078]

As with the demise of Foxian theology in the context of post-Reformation consensus, the emerging Christian order was set on a different course. Both Fox and the Gnostics suffered the unavoidable fate of missionary religious ideals in a world of shrinking horizons, in which the immediacy of a perfectionist, realised eschatology, succumbed to the strength and security of an ecclesiastical hierarchy.

5.3 THIS THESIS AND CURRENT SCHOLARSHIP

This section illustrates how research conducted in this thesis contributes towards and advances existing scholarship surrounding the theology of George Fox. Despite the criticisms of John Owen, no detailed comparison of Fox's theology with Gnosticism has been made in previous research.

1077 Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue*, 203-4.
1078 Vallee, "Theological and non-Theological Motives", 184-5.

The ongoing speculation as to the nature and interpretation of Fox's apocalyptic message is fuelled by the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in Fox's adoption of the inward Light as a rule of faith.[1079] In addition, as Moore[1080] indicates, there is a vast amount of material available for the study of early Quakerism and different scholarly conclusions may arise from a biased selection of source material, or the source material may itself contain bias. In relation to the collected *Works*[1081] of George Fox referred to throughout this thesis, Moore states:

> It should be mentioned that those collected editions of the works of early Quaker writers which were compiled in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries cannot safely be relied upon. They are not necessarily complete and, without careful checking, one cannot be sure that works and parts of works unacceptable to the editor have not been omitted. This includes the recently reissued collected edition of the works of George Fox.[1082]

The previous section has considered the change in Fox's Gnostic theological language if not his theology *per se*, as detected from an examination of the collected works and additional independent textual material, which has been excluded from the collected works but is referred to throughout this thesis. In this respect, Moore states that Gwyn's[1083] biography of Fox, for example, refers to and relies upon the allegedly biased collected *Works*. This thesis argues that (in light of the above section and illustrated by Gwyn's conclusions as to a non-Gnostic theology on Fox's part) any bias in the theological published message would only be to the detriment of establishing that the theology of Fox is similar to Valentinianism.

1079 Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 152.
1080 Moore, R. "Evaluating the Evidence: The reliability of Sources of Information for Quakerism before 1660." *The Friends' Quarterly* 27/8 (1993):365.
1081 T.H.S. Wallace, ed., *The Works of George Fox*. 8 vols. Pennsylvania: State College, New Foundation Publication, 1990.
1082 Moore, "Evaluating the Evidence", 370.
1083 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*.

The evidence uncovered and referred to throughout this thesis, is that which has escaped censorship from moderating editors and may be the minimum source material available to corroborate its argument. On the basis that the evidence available and referred to is that which has survived the process of censorship, it should be considered as reliable to the extent that further evidence is likely to corroborate the research argument, rather than weaken its hypothesis.

However, in terms of the ambiguity surrounding the true picture of Foxian theology, Brinton's remark that "Fox had no consistent system of philosophy or theology into which he could fit his doctrine of the Light Within"[1084], is no longer justified in view of the similarities with Valentinianism indicated in this thesis. Whether Fox would have been happy with this conclusion is not something that can be answered. The fact that Fox did not respond to Owen's implicit association of Quaker theology with Gnosticism in 1655 or in 1679 (1.4) may indicate that he was not too concerned by the accusation.

A reluctance to consider Fox's theology in terms of the alleged Christian "heresy" of Gnosticism is because, as Ingle states, Quaker theologians have "been at pains to present to the public a definition of [early Quaker] faith that would not cast them or it in a bad light."[1085] The "hidden faith"[1086] in Fox's theology, as identified by Ingle (broadly illustrated in terms of Fox's claims to divinity or God-possession) is that knowledge in and of the Light, which is similar to Valentinian gnosis.

A metaphysical, supernatural or visceral approach to Gnostic and Quaker Light (as opposed to a purely figurative or metaphorical interpretation) is fundamental to the hypothesis set out in the research

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1084 Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years*, 20.
1085 Ingle, "On the Folly", 17.
1086 Ingle, "George Fox as Enthusiast", 265.

question (1.4, 5.2). Underpinning this metaphysical analysis is the argument that "leading early Quakers refused to separate Christ's body and Christ's spirit."[1087] This is applicable to the language of Fox, but arising from this, opponents could not then understand the early Quaker distinction between the physical or earthly, and the literal, real presence of a yet spiritual and glorified Christ in the believer.[1088]

Some contemporary scholars have specifically denied a metaphysical dimension to Fox's theology of the Light. Gwyn, for example, has stated that "Fox's sense of union with the divine is ethically defined, not a matter of philosophical, metaphysical speculation... Their [early Quaker] preoccupation with concrete sinfullness cannot simply be shrugged off..."[1089] However, the weakness in this argument is shown up by the reference Gwyn makes to a potential charge of Gnosticism against Fox. Gwyn[1090] confirms that Fox's negation of the outward material world is potentially Gnostic, but states that Fox escapes such a charge on the basis that Quakers (unlike Gnostics) were given an active role in establishing a new world order. It is a view of Gnosticism which negates or devalues Gnostic interest in communal, ethical and moral behaviour (such behaviour which Gwyn, Brinton[1091], Carter[1092] King[1093] and Wilcox[1094] emphasise as the solitary nature and function of Foxian Light).

However, the evidence from the NHL illustrates the importance of ethical[1095] and communal[1096] aspects to Gnosticism within a futuristic and

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1087 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 79.
1088 Ibid., 133.
1089 Arising from private correspondence between Douglas Gwyn and Glen Reynolds in relation to a draft of a thesis chapter, 20.6.00.
1090 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*, 115.
1091 Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years*, 30.
1092 Carter, *Early Friends and the Alchemy of Perfection*, 246.
1093 King, *George Fox and the Light*, 85.
1094 Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry*, 32.
1095 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 212.
1096 Brown, "Gnosis, Theology and Historical Method", 282.

continuous revelatory process, incorporating a realised if not fully complete eschatology. The communal and ethical consequences of guidance from Gnostic texts which include "Love your brother like your soul, guard him like the pupil of your eye",[1098] cannot be discounted.

Of great significance is the influential Christian Gnostic text *The Apocryphon of John* which although not a Valentinian text, is a vital source as it illustrates a context from which Valentinianism arguably grew. Its section on the destiny of souls (NHC: II, 25.16-27.31) indicates that salvation for the Gnostic was not an automatic process (3.7 above) and incorporates an aspect of grace from God, and worthiness on the part of the Gnostic. The analyse of Logan[1099] in relation to the *Apocryphon* has been referred to throughout this thesis. The education of the spiritual element or the pneumatic through a lower level of exegesis, that of the psychic and the moral element of the world is most clearly evidenced in Valentinian terms by Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*[1100] (4.0) which illustrated a less hostile approach to the demiurge God (1.1). The ethical significance has also been illustrated by the Valentinian *Gospel of Philip*:

> He who has the knowledge (gnosis) of the truth is free. But the free does not sin. For he who sins is the slave of sin...Those to whom it is not permitted to sin, the world calls "free"...knowledge lifts up[their]hearts, which means it makes them free, and makes them be lifted up above the whole place [of the world]. But love [agape] edifies. But he who becomes free through knowledge is a slave for love's sake to those who have not yet been able to take up the freedom of knowledge. But knowledge makes them worthy so that [it causes them] to become [free].[1101]

1098 NHC: II, *2*. 25.
1099 Logan, esp. *Gnostic Truth*.
1100 Epiphanius, *Pan*. 33. 3-7, esp. 7.8-10.
1101 NHC: II *3*. 77 (125), 15-35.

As with Fox, Stroumsa states of the Gnostics that there is "an obsessive preoccupation with the problem of evil,"[1101] in order to preserve gnosis when received. Rudolph,[1102] emphasises that "Christian" Gnosis fully justifies its epithet on the grounds that the Gnostic and Christian ethos can be seen as non-contradictory. The same Gnostic that is free from the world and has dominion over sin, is also the Gnostic that can love those without gnosis until they too are free.

The Gnostic is thoroughly conscious of the provisional situation of the redeemed up to the realisation of redemption after death. Otherwise, as Rudolph notes, the extant literature which relates to existential and ethical behaviour is inexplicable. The right conduct of the bearer is essential to preserve gnosis.[1103] Logan notes in relation to that knowledge of God which is gnosis: "We do not come to such knowledge by rational investigation and philosophical enquiry; it is a religious knowledge; it has ethical connotations..."[1104] Wilson suggests that "Gnostic ethics is dominated by a concern for purity, for the restoration of a lost ideal, for the recovery of primal innocence, and is therefore in the main of an ascetic or encratite character."[1105]

Nor is Gnosticism devoid of community and leadership:[1106] indeed, Logan[1107] has identified the significant aspect of communal eschatology within Gnosticism as that fully completed eschatology when all individual divine lights have returned to the heavenly realm or pleroma, at the end of the world (3.7). In summation, Wink observes that Gnostics were probably

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1101 Stroumsa, G.A.G. *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (a Monograph in a Series) NHS 24 (1984): 17.
1102 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 264.
1103 Ibid., 117.
1104 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 212.
1105 Wilson, *Ethics and the Gnostics*, 449., in what bears a remarkable similarity with Fox's restorative approach to a pre-Fall state of being.
1106 Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 213.
1107 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 302.

indistinguishable in most cases from orthodox Christians, with some celibate and ascetic, others married and continent, others married and producing families...[1108] The Gnostics were (in their liminal state, 5.1) obliged to consider their life on earth as individuals and collectively; albeit, as in case of Fox, reluctant to engage with earthly structures in doing so.

Whereas previous research has emphasised the ethical and behavioural aspects to the unity dynamic of Light, more recent research is identifying Fox's use of Light in a metaphysical sense in which similarities with gnosis are more readily discernible . Moore[1109] supports an analysis of Fox's message in which a real sense of supernatural union with God was the keystone of his theology. This view, and that of Bailey, Smith and Tarter, below (as opposed to Gwyn and others, mentioned above) is similar, in its metaphysical appreciation of Fox's theology, to the Valentinian Gnosticism demonstrated in this thesis.

The metaphysical dynamics of Fox's theology is best illustrated by his distinctive concept of the soul - the emanation aspect which was identified by Owen[1110] (1.4) and cautiously alluded to by King[1111] (2.8.1). Cope,[1112] along with Mather, recognises the graphic approach to the divine within, in relation to Fox's "measure of perfection"(3.6). In a similar approach to the Gnostic imagery surrounding the fall of the ontological divine element or spark,[1113] Mather states of the Quaker "measure": "There is in every man some remainder of the divine image, left by the compassion of God upon the conscience of man after his fall; and this principle the Quakers called, a measure of the Man Christ, the light, the seed, the word."[1114] As Rufus Jones

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1108 Wink, *Cracking the Gnostic Code*, 41.
1109 Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 109.
1110 Owen, J. *Works*, Vol.1., 38.
1111 King, *George Fox and the Light*, 121.
1112 Cope, "Seventeenth Century Quaker Style", 747.
1113 Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament*, 4.
1114 Mather, C. *Magnalia Christi Americana*, (1702; Hartford, 1820), II 452.

stated of Fox's distinctive concept of the soul: "there was something of God, which may be called a divine seed or a divine Light, laid down in the nature and disposition of the soul."[1116] The de-gnosticising of the soul (or seed in the soul) by more moderate theologians has been referred to above, 5.2.

During the 1650s the definition and comprehension of concepts relating to matter and substance, the body and its relationship with the soul, were at the heart of the sectarian debate and very early Quaker writing expressed an interest in such matters in common with the milieu of the time.[1117] Fox imagined that he had transformed his entire being, stating he: " was very much altered in countenance and person as if my body had been new moulded or changed."[1118] Indeed, the regeneration (which this thesis identifies as perfection and union with God through a process similar to that of gnosis once the Gnostic is awakened to their divinity) is at its "most extreme"[1119] in the perfectionist message (Chapter 3) of Fox, and was correctly observed by Owen in his comparison of Quakers with Gnostics (1.4).

Gwyn (2.8) argues against any metaphysical motif, by stating that Fox developed the doctrine of celestial flesh (that assimilates the individual into Christ's celestial nature) to merely speak of the perfecting power of Christ in people's lives with far-reaching moral, social, and even political implications. However, in contrast to the position of Gwyn, Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis demonstrate that the sense of union with God which Fox promoted involved a divinisation and promotion of a God-like state for the individual, and that

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1116 Jones, *The Life and Message of George Fox*, 10.
1117 Smith, "Hidden Things Brought to Light", 65.
1118 *Works*: 1:80.
1119 King, *George Fox and the Light*, 69: "The unqualified claims for the sinlessness and perfection of regenerate individuals occur in the [Works:3] ...where he [Fox] is pushed to extremes in combating his Calvinistic opponents who declare that although the saints are fully justified by God, yet in this veil of tears the actual progress to moral perfection is slow and incomplete."

moral/ethical outcomes were consequent on spiritual perfection, as they are within gnosis.

Examples of the Gnostic identification with the divine have been provided: in the Valentinian *Treatise on the Resurrection*[1120] the believer is embraced by Christ and "wears" Christ in this world. In *The Tripartate Tractate*[1121] the Gnostic shares the body and essence[1122] of the Saviour as if like a marriage[1123] because of the unity and agreement with the Saviour. *The Gospel of Philip*[1124] refers to union with the Saviour and the community in the bridal chamber with the believer clothed in Christ and becoming like Christ.[1125]

Within the Gnostic identification with the divine, it is important to emphasis that the revelatory process involves the relationship of the Light outside the body with the consubstantial divine or heavenly element within the individual. Gnosis involves an identification with and realisation of, the heavenly component in the body, which in Valentinian Gnostic theology is a divine spiritual element, seed or spark *distinct* from the psychic soul and it is this element that achieves entry to the Pleroma, complete perfection and union with God. Foxian theology (2.8.1) is ambiguous as to whether Fox (in referring to the divine element) means the soul, or something in the soul. The Gnostics of the *Apocryphon of John* for example, certainly envisage salvation of the *soul* as opposed to the distinct separate divine element of the Valentinians. However, the metaphysical state suggested generally in Gnosticism, is a spiritual transformation of the divine in the individual and any transformation of the physical body would be totally alien to their theology.

1120 NHC: I, *4*. 45.29-39.
1121 NHC: I, *5*.
1122 Ibid., 122.12-15.
1123 Ibid., 122.15-17, 136.1.
1124 NHC: II, *3*.
1125 Ibid., 67.26-27.

Whereas Bailey correctly observes that "deification was a natural corollary to celestial inhabitation",[1126] Valentinian perfection and union with God is not concerned with making the *flesh* holy which is at the heart of Bailey's (and Tarter's) arguments. Valentinian soteriology, and that of Fox, is primarily concerned with the salvation of the divine element in the body. The object of salvation in Bailey's interpretation - the divinisation of "matter", i.e., flesh and bone as distinct from the soul or divine element in the soul (2.8.1, 3.7-3.8) would be anathema to Gnostic soteriology. This thesis suggests that in Foxian and Valentinian theologies, it is the realisation of a divine element within (the potential for salvation by nature) and its reunion thereafter with the external consubstantial divine (through a process of perfection, grace and works) which is fundamental to salvation. The Gnostic mechanics of salvation are therefore missing from Bailey's concept. As Fox[1127] suggests, salvation for early Quakers (and for Gnostics) involved returning to God that which belongs to God (2.8.1).

Bailey[1128] is correct to assert that Creasey,[1129] Benson[1130] and Gwyn[1131] saw the "Christopresentism" in Fox but failed to draw out the most radical implications of Fox's celestial adoption theory. But Bailey is incorrect to state that whilst employing the scriptural imagery of "flesh and bone", (Ephesians 5:30) Fox necessarily meant that the individual was corporeally transformed into the same flesh and bone as Christ. Smith[1132] is surely correct in this regard, that "body and language were inextricably linked as the sites in which the workings of the inner Light were known", yet, the

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1126 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 81.
1127 *Works*: 3:181.
1128 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 19.fn.53.
1129 Creasey, "Early Quaker Christology."
1130 Benson, *Catholic Quakerism*.
1131 Gwyn, *Apocalypse*.
1132 Smith, "Hidden Things Brought to Light", 57.

possibility that the inward Light makes the flesh holy "seems an exaggeration or the result of too willing an ear given to Fox's Puritan opponents."[1133]

Tarter's[1134] concept of "fusion" of Christ with the believer is more akin to that of Gnostic spiritual union. In particular, the idea that: "The eternal Christ was located within every human being and accessible to any who waited and listened in silence to feel the voice of inward Light", [1135] is identical to the spiritualised union of the redeemer and the soul, spark or seed within the individual. However, Tarter retains the "flesh and bone" language Bailey identifies in Fox, and this thesis argues such literal interpretation concerning the physical, as opposed to the spiritual, is inappropriate.

Scriptural language (such as the "flesh and bone") according to Smith,[1136] becomes an allegory for the workings of the inward light and the change in anatomy for a regenerate Quaker. This explains Fox's interest in Hermetic writings (Chapter 3) - what is usually seen as metaphorical becomes something much more challenging: a real transformation. However, the transformation was spiritual and not identified with the physical. Fox was interested in the eternal rather than created and physical matter (2.1, 2.3). As Brinton has stated: "As philosopher, Fox followed the Hellenic tradition, apprehending the inner Unity which exists beyond time and space."[1137]

Fox identified himself with the Light as evidenced by his fully realised eschatology, his claims to be a son of God, his perfection and the state of paradise in which he found himself (2.2.1).

1133 Ibid.
1134 Tarter, *Sites of Performance*, 27; "Quaking in the Light", 145-162.
1135 Tarter, *Sites of Performance*, ibid., 27/28.
1136 Smith, "Hidden Things Brought to Light", 57.
1137 Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years*, 21.

5.4 SUMMARY AND EPILOGUE

Foxian and Gnostic theologies are liminal movements in which an influential tension occurs regarding how the individual and/or community feel they should respond to partially realised or completed eschatological aims whilst remaining on earth. This tension influences the extent to which these movements should engage with human structures and the institutions the world has created. In Gnosticism, the dilemma of being on the earth yet receiving gnosis or knowledge of the heavenly realm has resulted in ethical and moral consequences for the individual and community (5.3). For the Quakers, the tension created an atmosphere in which Fox's ultimate withdrawal from engagement with the political process (as opposed to influencing change in society through the power of God) was followed by a moderation in theology as other Quakers such as Penn and Barclay sought to redefine the Valentinian concepts within the early message of Fox.

In continuing to emphasise the moral and ethical perspective of Fox's concept of the Light (in contrast with the realisation of the literal presence of Christ in the soul) some current scholars have maintained the moderating work and censorship of post-Restoration theologians such as Barclay and Penn. A second and more recent trend of scholarship has identified the keystone of Fox's theology as being his use of Light which induced a real and supernatural (or corporeal, in the arguments of Bailey and Tarter) understanding of union with God and the inner seed or Christ. This is in contrast to a purely metaphorical or figurative approach to the nature and functions of Light.

An area of possible future research arising from this thesis involves Fox's distinctive eschatological use of "seed" (the Pauline Christ of Gal.3:16) in the context of the revelation of 1648 (discussed at 2.2.1 along with the flood and Gen.6) and the promise of God to restore all things to their pre-Fall state of perfection and glory (Jer.31:34). Fox claims to have inwardly

experienced this restoration. It is this "seed" that will end the power of Satan and restore the broken unity between mankind and God, restoring the unity of pre-Fall heaven and earth.[1138]

Although Valentinians did not use the term "seed" to indicate Christ but rather the divine element within, Fox's eschatological use of "seed" as an object of divine unity (an alleged "unity" for which Fox was tried three times for blasphemy) is demonstrated in the following extracts from *Newes coming up out of the North.* It is indicative of Fox's belief in a metaphysical unity with Christ/God similar to that in Valentinianism. The same lettering of paragraphs is used as appears in the original text:

a) I speak the same seed which is Christ...Jesus Christ the way, the truth and the life, he is the door that all must pass through, and he is the porter that opens it.

c) The same Spirit that raised up Jesus Christ, the same Spirit raises up the same seed in you.

d) To all you who can witness the second birth, and are born again, which all the promises of God are to, the seed...except you be born again, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God...but as many as receive Christ, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God.

g) To all you that can witness the seed of the serpent is bruised with the seed of the woman...your light is Christ...your baptism is with the Spirit into one body, your communion is the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all filthiness and redeems from your vain conversation.[1139]

As 2.2.1 indicates, Fox[1140] believed that as the restoration involves the seed (or Christ) in woman, it was through her offspring that salvation was universally available to all humanity. Salvation was possible totally and irreversibly in this life (as in Gnosticism and contrary to the Puritan belief of Fox's time which denied that any could achieve the realisation of

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1138 *Works*: 7:75, 155, 210, 218, 264.
1139 Fox, G. *Newes coming out of the North*. London: N.p., 1654.
1140 *Works*: 7:225, 228, 254, 325; 8:139, 243.

eschatological hope and expectations in this life). Further, in a concept reminiscent of Gnostic mythology, paragraph (g) above illustrates a cosmic battle in which the divine seed of the woman (the light of Christ), and the seed of the serpent confront each other in a war of good against evil.

Foxian theology in some respects, is distinctive in its message and varies from a more moderate theology adopted in a broader Quaker theology by other Friends. Variations generally in what Fox believed and how his belief differed from contemporary Quakers are beyond the scope of this thesis but worthy of further research. In relation to a Valentinian Gnostic aspect however, some evidence is appropriate. In principle, all Quakers were sons and daughters of God and as such united with Christ, but the measure of perfection was greater in the case of Fox, as evidenced by his claim to have reached an irreversible state of paradise (2.2.1).

Fox is alone amongst contemporary Quakers in making such claims. King recognises that the immediacy of spiritual perfection to the fullness of Christ as claimed by Fox if not others, led to a transformed state of being which was illustrative of an "extreme and atypical position of Fox."[1141] This results in Fox's unqualified claims for the sinlessness and perfection of regenerate individuals as referred to in *The Great Mystery*[1142]and examined in Chapter 3.

Additionally, Foxian theology is distinctive in its Gnostic view of Satan at work in the visible and outward created world. As Gwyn states of Fox's paradoxical approach :

> Fox rejects the monistic conception of evil as the shadow side of a single God or unified reality, which must be accepted along with the good. Such a conception would leave us with an impersonal God, or at least a God with a two sided personality we could not trust. On the

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1141 King, *George Fox and the Light*, 69.
1142 *Works*: 3:268.

> other hand, the devil is not another god who truly challenges God on equal ontological grounding. Satan is real, yet out of the Truth.[1143]

Fox's theology regarding Satan, evil and sin is distinctive in its acknowledgement of a very "real" and active presence of evil associated with the visible and created world, resulting from the fallen state of humanity but also the Fall of creation and the established Church. Moreover (in a similar view to the Gnostics) the source of evil in the world is the devil manifested primarily in the idolatry of the established Church. In a common theme pertaining to Gnostic anti-cosmic thought, the devil and its agent (the established Church) manipulate the "principalities and powers"[1144] to uphold Satan's kingdom which is the fallen world (Eph.6:10ff). Additionally, Fox[1145] adopts a distinctive Gnostic approach in viewing humanity as having moved away from inward unity with God, and towards idolatry, the created and the outward; all of which as tools of Satan, captivate the individual in time (4.2) and in sin. As Gwyn states:

> Far from being the focal point of God's saving purposes on earth, the English church had become an impediment keeping men and women from entering the Kingdom (Mt.23:13f). All this Fox saw as the work of the dragon and his two monstrosities, the beast and the false prophet (Rev. 13). The true Church, authentic gatherings of men and women under the actual authority of Christ, had been driven by the dragon into the wilderness (Rev. 12:13ff), into marginal or persecuted existence....
> Fox did not envision the Quaker movement as an ultra-radical reformation of the established church structures. Instead, he saw Friends gathering into a fresh formation of the Church, separated from existing gatherings, and beginning again at the true foundation.[1146]

1143 Gwyn, "Captivity among the Idols", 5.
1144 *Works*: 6:19.
1145 Ibid., 7:71.
1146 Gwyn, "Captivity among the Idols", 11-12.

Fox's quest to revisit primitive Christianity (1.0) was however, a revival of a theology resembling the Valentinian Gnostics of the early Church, as illustrated throughout this thesis. In 1653, Francis Higginson[1147] lists three aspects to Quaker claims which opponents of Fox saw as erroneous theology and incompatible with the Puritan faith; a) Christ is come in their flesh, b) the soul is or becomes part of the divine essence, c) the claim of attaining perfection in this life. These are all contributory aspects of gnosis. In 1655 Owen made his claim that Quaker theology was comparable with the ancient Gnostics, essentially incorporating the above observations into an attack upon the Quaker concept of Light which results in the emanation of Christ in the body, and claims of perfection.

Following the conclusions drawn from this thesis, it is suggested that Owen was correct in making his comparison. The charges of blasphemy became a formidable weapon used by the established Church to silence dissent. However, even after the scandal of Naylor in 1656, Fox's radical message of identification with the divine was published in *The Great Mystery of the Great Whore*.[1148] Seemingly by way of admission of this fact, 5.2. above has indicated how contemporaries of Fox reinterpreted the original message within a moderating process through which the Quaker movement survived. Bailey sums up the implications of the change in theology:

> By disembodying and de-divinising the inner Christ, radicalism and enthusiasm could be exorcised, the exorbitant claims minimised, perfection muted, eschatological urgency dropped and in the meantime ecclesiology adopted. Indeed, by redefining the inner Christ it became possible for the whole movement to be transformed into the respectable and mystical religion that it became.[1149]

1147 Higginson, F. *A Brief Relation of the Irrelegion of the Northern Quakers.* London: T.R., 1653:4-10.
1148 *Works*: 3.
1149 Bailey, *New Light on George Fox*, 223.

More recent scholarship has devalued Fox's theological quest with unjustified criticism of Fox, compatible with that of his Puritan opponents. Nuttall[1150] argues that Fox suffered from a "faulty psychology" that led to extravagant claims of unity with God and perfection. In relation to Fox's claim to be the son of God, Penney suggests: "probably more has been read into these words than they were ever intended to convey. It must be remembered that Fox's mind was not trained in accurate theological expression."[1151] The biblical knowledge expressed not least in *The Great Mystery*, does not justify this assertion.

Gnosticism also has its modern day critics. In a similar vein to the unworthy criticism of Fox, Pétrement states of modern day scholars dismissive of Gnosticism:

> What a picture of Gnosticism can be painted if we read certain books or certain articles! The authors are often very learned, often even very intelligent, but because they are *a priori* scornful of their subject, they really understand almost nothing. They present it in such a way that one can only make fun of it and ask how such thoughts could occur to so many men. If Jonas, among our contemporaries, is one of the rare men who have understood the character of Gnosticism quite deeply (I say character and not origin, because the search for an origin was not his object), it is because he thought he might find resemblances in it to a philosophy he very much admired, that of Heidegger. He did not scorn it *a priori*.[1152]

Those who wish to disparage Valentinian gnosis, Gnosticism or the Gnostics, have in their armoury the undoubted complexities concerning definition and origins. Yamauchi's[1153] survey article illustrates how competent scholars, evaluating the same evidence, come to strikingly different conclusions over definition. Nor is this surprising. There is an inevitable circularity in the doctrinal definition of gnosis and the

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1150 Nuttall, *Studies in Christian Enthusiasm*, 88.
1151 CJ: 1:425.
1152 Pétrement, *A Separate God*, 22.
1153 Yamauchi, "Gnosticism and Early Christianity", 29-61.

identification of Gnostic texts: a teaching is considered "Gnostic" if it is found in a "Gnostic" text, but for a text to be judged "Gnostic," it must contain "Gnostic" teaching.

In following the exclusive approach and narrow definition employed by Logan[1154] and Pétrement[1155] (and in the absence of evidence that Fox was influenced by Gnostic mythological texts or had specific knowledge of Gnostic religious doctrine) to conclude that Fox was a Gnostic, Valentinian or employed gnosis in the narrow sense is arguably unjustified. In addition, as indicated at 4.3 - 4.5, unlike Gnostics, Fox considers ethically or sense-related exegesis as redundant and nowhere considers the possibility that there is a valid although limited interpretation save for his own higher level of interpretation (that of the pneumatic in gnosis). Further, unlike Valentinian Gnosticism, Fox has no interest in postmortem eschatology. Regardless of the omission of mythological texts and the negation of limited and valid systems of exegesis, Fox does unconsciously incorporate fundamental Valentinian Gnostic soteriological and eschatological principles within his theology. As such there is sufficient evidence justifying Foxian theology being described as remarkably similar to Valentinian Gnosticism. To further justify this assertion, in the "classic myth" of *The Apocryphon of John*, Logan identifies the heavenly plan of Gnostic redemption through gnosis:

> We do not live in Paradise; we are aware of our lack of perfect knowledge and of the tragic splitting of our original unity, of that mystery of the power found in us which seeks reunion, perfection. We live in a world under a curse, the creation of an ignorant demiurge, a dominant characteristic of which is the male's lordship over the female, despite their true but hidden equality and unity. But the Gnostic is conscious, through the presence of the divine power within and the work of the divine Spirit, of the mystery of the heavenly plan

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1154 Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, xix-xx.
1155 Pétrement, *A Separate God*, 8.

> of restoration and the removal of the deficiency, the ignorance that drowns that divine element in oblivion.[1156]

This thesis demonstrates each and every one of the above characteristics within the theology of Fox, save for that which concerns the dualism surrounding the Creator God. The relatively recent scholarly appreciation of Fox's theology as incorporating a quality of union with God over and above a previous emphasis upon morality and ethical consideration is opening a new chapter in understanding Foxian theology. Fox's quest for divinity and his opposition to Puritanism took place following a period of alleged apostasy from which Fox sought to revive primitive Christianity.

This thesis demonstrates that in fact, Fox reverts to a similar theological situation as that faced by the Valentinians in opposition to the early Church. The shared quest for divine union, perfection and a realised eschatology determines the entire theology of the Gnostics and Fox. This thesis' conclusions enable the foundation and development of Foxian theology to be illustrated in a Valentinian Gnostic context rather than the apocalyptic framework suggested by previous scholarship.

This thesis does not diminish the role of conduct and morality, or the importance of sin in Fox's theology. However, as Eckhart states in relation to what is of primary importance in salvation, so it was for Fox:

> People do not need to think so much what they should do, but rather how they should be. If we are good, then our works are radiant. If we are just, then our works also are just. We should not think to found sanctity on doing things, but rather on a way of being, for works do not sanctify us, rather we sanctify works.[1157]

[1156] Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 232.
[1157] Davies, O. *God Within*. London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1988:64-65.

Fox's approach towards his emanation concept of the soul (2.8.1) is demonstrative of the heart of Fox's theology: the metaphysical reunion of the consubstantial divine element in the body with that of God revealed through Christ in the Light. It was left to Penn and Barclay to "de-gnosticise" a theology which Fox never admitted as unsound.

It was not only Owen who provoked such eminent, wealthy theologians into editorial activity. Perhaps Owen's contemporary, Henry More, understood Fox's distinctive theology better than most. More associated Fox with primitive, early Quakerism which held: "nebulous and confused ideas about the inner light which compelled silly-minded Quakers to think of themselves as gods."[1158]

What is certain is that the theology and style of the early Quakers died together. After 1659, the goal was to win toleration for Quakers. Having removed the apocalyptic frame of reference and revolutionary social impetus from its ambitions, "the operation was a success but the patient died."[1159] The charismatic Quaker movement had gone, and was being replaced by the Religious Society of Friends.[1160]

[1158] More, H. *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness*. London: N.p., 1660, Book 1, Chapter 6:14.
[1159] Gwyn, *The Covenant Crucified*, 324.
[1160] Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences*, 228.

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