

GEORGE FOX' S CATECHISM FOR CHILDREN 1660

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UNIVERSALIST

George Fox's *A Catechism for Children*, written in 1660 follows the traditional question and answer format. Fox discusses many things in the book but principally it is an explanation of what he believes about the Light.

George Fox was a religious genius. An orthodox Christian, his faith grounded in the Bible, he believed that he was specially chosen by God, specially loved by Him. He believed that everyone was specially chosen and loved. A universalist, Fox believes that everyone may know God. A Universal God is One who pours out His Spirit on all men and women, young and old, rich and poor, with dark or light colored skin, so that all may know and worship Him. Fox uses universal, inclusive language: words like "all, everyone, people everywhere, company of people, citizen, every man and woman", when he writes of those individuals whom God loves, and whom Christ enlightened and died for.

Fox also believed in the universal Christ who by the Grace of God, died for every man and woman, gave himself a ransom for everyone and is the propitiation, not for the sins of Christians only, but for the sins of the whole world. He believes in a God who has enlightened every man in "general and particular." A God who saves all people but who is also our intimate Friend.

Because God created everyone in His Image, we are all His Children and so are all equal before Him, have great value. But Fox made this equality an every day thing with women not having to stay at home and do the dishes while men went out and did more interesting things.

Marriage law and practice were in chaos and Fox brought order and stability to it for Friends.

Filled with joy – joy seemed to bubble up in him – he wanted everyone to have prosperous happy lives.

Beaten, abused, imprisoned, Fox could still envision a world without war and violence.

Fox had a rare moral clarity and knew right from wrong. He doesn't ask any sacrifice or suffering of his followers that he wasn't willing to undergo himself.

WORLD VIEW

Fox made whole what others only saw in part, a complete plan for how to live a holy life. He gives the answers to such questions as:

Who is God?

What is our relationship with God? What is His relationship to us?

How are we to live in the world?

How do we behave, what are our responsibilities toward others, to ourselves?

What is moral and good and what is not?

How do we live a peaceful life?

The crown of Fox's experience is his knowledge and passionate love of God and his ability to communicate this to others. He shows that it is possible to know and love God. He wrote about this love and his deep belief in Him in an extraordinary way that few people have. An expert in knowing and loving God, he doesn't compartmentalize, put God in a corner of his life. His love of God fills his whole life. There is a goodness, wholesomeness, depth and genuine excitement to this belief that isn't often found in this world.

He believes that Friends are the chosen and the elect; God loves them the best. (But God loved everyone the best.) God had a plan – the path of Quaker holiness – for them so that they may live in the world.

Christ lives within them as the Light so they enlightened by Him.

They are created in the image of God so can be like Him peaceful, loving and good.

They can witness too, and answer the good in everyone.

They may live in God's peaceful Kingdom on earth; they will live in God's Kingdom in heaven for eternity.

THE LIGHT

The First Principal of pure religion and the primary and central belief of the Religious Society of Friends is that Christ the Light said, "I am the way who doth enlighten every man that cometh into the world, and no man cometh to the Father but by me, every man having a light from Christ the way, it leads to the Father." Fox names Christ many names but His true and best name is Christ the Light who has enlightened every man who comes into the world.

The true Light comes from God the Father and is glorified with the Father; He is also the way to the Father of Light. No man comes to God but by the Light. Every man and woman has a light from Christ which leads to the Father.

The Light enlightens every man and woman in the world but the Light is not of the world, being immortal and eternal. The Light comes from and gives knowledge of God by whom the world was made. Men err in knowledge and wisdom because they do not profess the Light.

The Light lives within everyone, helps them, shows them what is right and wrong. Everyone should stand still in Him who discovers all things and makes them readily seen and understood. All sinners must be brought to the Light, for the Light reconciles sinners to God and to one another. The Light destroys the Devil, the author of darkness, the author of sects, who is out of the truth.

The Light is the healer. He is concerned for all hurting, weary, sick, sinful humans. He is the binder up of the broken, restorer and seeker of the lost; he brings back those who are driven away. He is the Mediator between God and man, reconciles us to God, justifies us to God, breaks our bonds of iniquity and blots out our sin.

The idea of all things becoming brand new, starting over, is an appealing one. For Fox there is a new covenant, priesthood, temple, living way. But above all, the Light of Christ makes everything new.

We must own the Light that shines in our heart. (Own means to confess, acknowledge, be aware of the Light.) This doesn't mean that we possess the Light, can tell Him

what to do. We are obedient to Him, not He to us. He lives in us, helps us, shows us what is right and wrong.

We may become children of the Light by believing in the Light.

LIVING FAITH, THE LIVING HOPE

Fox names God Living. There is a true and living faith, the Light Christ, Author of our faith who gives us Faith, . He brings everyone in oneness to one Faith. There is a true and Living Hope, Christ the Mystery – Fox also names Him the Hope Christ – who anchors our immortal soul, purifies as God is pure, makes us not ashamed. Hope saves us. In the Light Christ, who is a better hope, we live in unity and have the Hope of Glory.

On the contrary, the hope of the hypocrite shall perish for they are not in the Living Hope but in the perishing Hope.

Fox makes us active participants in our relationship with the Light.

The Light brings us to God.

We are to heed the Light.

We are to stand still in the Light, who discovers all things, and makes words, thoughts and actions thoughts clear and understandable.

We can stand against spiritual wickedness in the whole world.

We walk in the Light and have fellowship with the Son and the Father.

We are to wait in the Light to inherit the promise of Christ and abide in Him.

Fox makes it sound so easy to be acquainted with the Light. All we have to do is turn our minds inward to God the Light away from the distractions of the world. In this way we may be acquainted with the Life and Power of God which is without end. He believes that it is possible for believers see Christ through the Light, see him whose name is called the Word of God.

If we own the Light, we will see Christ the Hope of Glory. The Light is manifest. This means that He is apparent, obvious, readily seen and understood. With the Light we can also see and understand ourselves. The Light also enables us to see the Kingdom of Heaven. (When the child asks, "What is the Kingdom of Heaven?" Fox replies, "Why, it is the Light, child." Luke 17.21)

In the Light the Lord God is "seen and beholden."

The scriptures are from the Light, given forth from the Spirit of Truth. We see and understand them through the Light.

The Light also helps us see the devil, the Prince of the dark power and of the Air.

The Light also gives us knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ; the Light is the way to wisdom which is from above; this wisdom, which is pure, gentle and easy, does not persecute anyone.

The Light, the Teacher, is the way to the Father; The Light is the Author of our Faith who brings all subjects in oneness through one Faith. Col.1.18. (One, oneness, unity are words that Fox uses often when referring to God, Christ and the Light.)

THE FIRST ADAM AND THE SECOND ADAM

All those in the first Adam died. He sinned and went out of life into death. Death reigned from Adam to Moses. The first Adam was in death because he sinned against God's Law and Commandments. He was out of the Light, out of Truth, out of the way to the Father.

The Second Adam, Christ the Light, bore the sins and iniquities of all mankind, and was an offering for the sins of the whole world so that we may have Life through Him. The Second Adam brings back that which was driven away.

In the first Adam all died but in the Second Adam Christ all are made alive. He is the quickening spirit who destroys death and its power. He is the Glory which was with the Father before the world began.

TRUE RELIGION

Fox believed that no one but himself held the true faith in its true form and had not done so since the time of the Apostles. He understood God's holy Prophets and believed the Apostles' words. But no one else correctly understood the Old Testament which prophesied Christ's coming; no one understood the New Testament which fulfilled the promise of this prophecy. He also believed that social and religious problems were due to individuals' worshiping God in many false ways. Men – women too – did this because they are sinners, out of the Gospel, the Power of God. They worship their own wills and so grieve and extinguish the Spirit of God in themselves. They should worship God the Father and His Son Christ the Light who came to enlighten them; they should stand against the spiritual wickedness which takes the form of various sects, opinions and judgments.

The True Light by whom the world was made is eternal: the true Light who was glorified with the Father before the world began.

(See the Appendix for additional information on Fox's belief in the Light.)

CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

God creates men and women in His own Image. Everyone can be like God, pure, holy, perfect and righteous. These are moral characteristics. What Fox seems to be saying is that we can be like God in that we can live good moral lives. We are in God's Image in that we know right from wrong, good from evil. We are capable of loving others, of living a peaceful life, of being pure and chaste.

Because God creates us in His Image and lives within us as the Light, we have great value and can be truly human. Our decisions need not be completely selfish and self-serving but can consider other people's wants and needs. We can live a full life and use the gifts that God has given us.

It is possible to lose the Image of the Creator and to be driven from God on the earth. For some people are out of the Image of the Creator and set up images of strange gods made of stone and wood. But if we dwell in the Light and wait upon God, He will renew His Image. Christ Jesus redeems men and women up into the image of God as they were before they fell. In Christ it becomes clear what being in the Image of God means.

TRUE CHURCH, TRUE CROSS, GOSPEL

The Church of God is the “pillar and ground of the Truth” with Christ Jesus as its Head, the Rock upon which it is built. It is neither a great house nor an invention of something in the mind of man.

The world’s soldiers claim that they are the church and its ministers. But they do not worship God, are not the soldiers of Christ the Prince of Peace.

The true Cross of Christ is the Power of God. It is not a creation of someone’s mind, not on top of a steeple-house, not made of wood or stone.

The Gospel is not Matthew, Mark and Luke but Christ, the everlasting power of God unto salvation. We can be acquainted with this Power.

PURITY

Mind that which is pure in one another, which joins you together. For nothing will join or make fit, nor unite, nor build but what is pure. Letter 13, 1652

The Light leads us to purity and holiness so that we may be our best selves, our real selves. Christ purifies us as He is pure. More than just everyday goodness, purity is all that is virtuous. It is innocence, untouched by evil and free from guilt. Chaste is a synonym for pure. It means purity in conduct and intention. Holiness is also a synonym for purity. If something is pure, it's not contaminated in any way. Fox admonishes us to heed the Light and escape all the pollution of the world.

When the word pure is used to refer to God, it means absolute goodness and absolute integrity. We are created in the Image of God so we can be made pure like Him. We can be good and act with integrity, be disciplined and capable of holy obedience. This is rather fancy. How does integrity translate into everyday behavior?

- We don't lie; we can be trusted.
- We don't pretend to be something that we're not.
- We follow our conscience.

Purity is absolutely essential to being a Friend. To know God, follow our conscience, live a good life, get into heaven, we must be on very close terms with purity. We are to live a spiritual life, not a natural one. For nature doesn't purify as God is pure. We may dwell in that which is pure and wait for the Power of God to preserve us in that which is pure.

A MORAL LIFE

The Light admonishes us, condemns us; the Light will teach us to give up our sins; the Light saves us from sin. If we pay attention to the Light, we will be kept from “all distractions and distempers, and drunken thoughts and imaginations.” One reason that men and women act in such terrible ways is that they go from that of God within them. (We also have God’s Power within us to help us.) No one steals, covets, makes idols with their own hands, commits adultery – in other words breaks the Ten Commandments – unless they first go from the God within them. But when they do this, they go from the Power and Light into darkness and blindness.

Instead of what we should do – which is to turn our minds inward to know God and be guided by Him, be acquainted with His Life and Power – we turn our minds outward to the world and are strangers to the Life of God and His Covenant of promise, the Light. God shows everyone the Truth. But men and women may choose to turn from the God of all Truth within them. In this way they lose God’s Garden and

become a wilderness. They have made a deliberate choice to go over to the dark power instead of living a godly life.

We love our neighbor because he or she is enlightened with the same Light as we are. We love our neighbor but we love God above all possessions and created things. The Light brings us to God. If we love the Light, we will love God who is the Light.

The child in the Catechism asks: I see drunken company drinking healths, drinking Ale and strong Beer, may I not go and drink with them?

Fox's answer is emphatically "no" unless the individual is going among these drinkers to reprove them. He is very hard on drunks for they are out of the Light, out of the fear of God. They glory in their flesh and "devour the Creation upon their lusts."

Men and women can't lie, as the devil does, to bring themselves gain. This goes out of the Truth and brings the individual to scorn.

THE ANTI-CHRIST; THE DEVIL

The anti-christ does not confess the Light; he hates the Light. He denies the Light, does not see the Light, and is against Him who has enlightened every man who comes into the world. A seducer and a liar, he is a false prophet.

The Devil, Prince of the air and of darkness, does not abide in the Truth; he has lost his Dominion over all the creatures. Like the Anti-christ he is a denier of the Light but he is also a deceiver whose fruits – thorns and thistles – declare him.(I John 2. 22.)

Both the anti-christ and the devil go from the Light which enlightens them and so are against it in others; both have abandoned the Light so are full of darkness.

MANY SECTS

Fox's believed that sects were "all on heaps one against another both in Teaching and Church Religion." Men and women started to believe in many sects instead of the one true religion when they lost the Image of God and began to sin. The Word was in the beginning and sees over all these sects, religions, and teachings. The only true unity is

in the Word Christ.

He also believed that some of the most terrible sins in the world were the “abundance of worships” and people having no unity with God. Even though everyone was given the Light, they did not worship in “Spirit and in Truth.” John 4:23 The root cause of this is that some Christian Teachers and professors, those who profess Christ, did not believe that Christ enlightens everyone. They profess the Scriptures but do not believe in the Light who enlightened every one who comes into the world. John 1.9 & 8. 12 (17?)

These Teachers and Professors made gods with their hands, fell down to them. They destroy one another about their gods. They go from the God within them; they are strangers to the Life of God. For no one sins unless they begin by going from that of God within them. But God is “over all their wiles,” that is, the wiles of the people who are “out of the truth.”

Fox condemns these professors, teachers, Christians who teach Christ but deny the Light and don’t understand scripture. They are filled with unrighteousness, pride, wickedness, and ungodliness. Religion is just a pretense for them. Fox contrasts their behavior with the righteousness of God and His Son.

But by the Power of God sects, judgements, opinions are “broken down.” The Power of God is Truth. Many sects are out of the Truth. Their members destroy one another, kill one another, over the way that they worship. Sects are earthly and have their authority from the devil, the prince of darkness and of the air, not Christ the Light, the Prince of peace and Life.

Christ brings everyone into oneness. (Thus there should not be any sects nor any divisions or strife in the world and certainly not within Meetings.) The Word was in the beginning – in whom there is Unity, Peace and Quietness and reconciliation with God – but professors and teachers did not come from the beginning.

Christ Jesus the Light is the true Teacher. Some teachers – made by the will of man and set up by the powers of the earth – profess Christ's words and the Scriptures but don't have his Spirit and Mind. They profess the Scriptures but are out of the Life and Power that gave them forth. They have a blind zeal, not a true zeal which is in the Spirit that gave forth the Scriptures.

The crux of the matter was that Preachers, Teachers and Professors said that Christ did not enlighten every man that cometh into the world. This is not the Truth but is made by the will of man not the Will of God.

Sects are distinct one from another and have no unity. They are out of the life of God and out of the Covenant. Individuals who put forward various sects are not true ministers. Many sects, many religions, many teachings are

Out of the Gospel
Out of the doctrine of Christ
Not in the Spirit and in the Truth.
Out of the True Church and out of the True worship.

THE WORLD

Many people are not in the Kingdom of God but live in the world. They are out of the image of the Creator. Their behavior is evil; they live in the power of darkness, not in the power of the Light. They set up strange gods, making them of wood and stone. They make gods of creatures and come to trust graven images; they follow their inventions and imaginations that did not come from the beginning. Out of the Dominion, out of the Truth, they live in uncertainty and bewilderment. Neither the God of Power, nor the Prince of peace is the author of this confusion. The author of this is the devil, the wicked one who is the distraction and confusing imagination.

THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD

The people of the world set up strange gods – making gods of stone and wood which

the Living God hath made – and live in the power of darkness and sin. They are out of the image of the Creator, out of the dominion, out of the Truth, in confusion.

The Devil, the Prince of the air and of darkness went out of the Truth and led the people of the world out of it. He ruled in the hearts of some men and women who went from the Principle of God in themselves and so behaved like Cain. They killed another person about Religion, Worship, Church, Ministry and sacrifice. They became false prophets and anti-christs.

These people of the world worship their own wills and quench the Spirit of God in themselves. They also worship the world and “stand not in the Spirit but in their wills.” When men and women go from that of God in them, they are all “on heaps;” they lose unity, become proud and self willed. If we worship the world, we do not stand in the Light but in our wills.

All the problems of the world may be healed if we answer and witness to the God and the good within everyone. For Fox healing comes when everyone is brought to the Light, the power that answers the principle of God in all. All sinners must be brought to this power; all must see the good in themselves and in others. Then everyone must know and believe in the Light who enlightens them even if they have sinned.

God cares for us so that we may live in the world by giving us the Light to live within us and to enlighten us. He created us in His Image. His Kingdom on earth is a peaceful and joyful one. He shows us how to answer the God in others, that which is good in them. In this way we can understand others and get along with them.

People kill one another over the way they worship because they do not believe in Christ the Light who enlightened them. They are all out of the Image of God, out of the life of God; they are out of the doctrine of Christ that says love your enemies.

HOUSES OF CORRECTION

Houses of correction are prisons where Friends are imprisoned for not swearing allegiance to the king and for not paying to maintain Anglican priests. But Fox believes that the real reason that they are imprisoned is for the way they worship God. Teachers, made by the will of man, and professors, who are out of the mind of Christ, “hold up such things.”

WARS AND FIGHTINGS

Fox maintained that the origins of outward war are the lust, pride, ambition and disobedience of men and women, their treason to the Light Christ Jesus. In other words human sin. The devil is also a major cause of war and strife. He went out of the Truth and led others out of the Truth.

Men and women behaved like Cain. The great act of betrayal which led to war and every other evil occurs when men and women go from the Spirit of God in themselves. Then the devil rules in all their hearts so they lose the Power of God within themselves. No man kills another about religion, worship, church, or ministry without first going from the Principle of God in himself. The devil went out of the Truth and led others out of the Truth. He ruled in their hearts. Christ the Light destroyed the devil but this conquest must begin again in the hearts of every Friend.

Christ the Light says that we are to love our enemies and overcome evil with good. He seeks the peace of all men. He does not want us to fight with carnal weapons, not fight with flesh and blood, for His weapons are spiritual. Friends have the Armor of God, their feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel, and their head a helmet of Salvation.

Our spiritual weapons are kindness, love, truth, persuasion, propaganda and non-resistance. Carnal weapons are illegitimate; individuals who use these throw away the spiritual ones. The weapons of the Spirit are what we might expect: persuasion and non-resistance. Then two more that we might not expect: rebuking and confronting “spiritual wickedness in high places” and fearless preaching.

Christ the Light is the first step of peace, the way of Peace. Fox names Christ the Light the Prince of Peace and Life. We should live in peace and unity of the spirit with God.

There are soldiers of the Prince of Joy and Peace – possibly of all the names that Fox gives Christ the Light this is the most beautiful and comforting – who came to save men's lives. These Soldiers of the Light stand against spiritual wickedness, sects and opinions and overcome them and bring all creature into the liberty of the Sons of God.

There are soldiers of the Prince of darkness who destroys God's workmanship. The Devil's soldiers fight with God's Creatures. They make houses of correction where God's Creatures are imprisoned.

A COVENANT OF LIGHT AND PEACE

Fox believed that both he and his followers lived in a covenant of peace and light. Christ, the Covenant of Light, is an everlasting covenant, a covenant of promise. The Old Testament, the old covenant, prophesied Christ's coming; the New Testament, the new covenant, fulfilled this promise. The Law and the first Covenant stood in types and shadows and made nothing perfect. The first Covenant must end. Everyone must become acquainted with the Covenant of promise and the Covenant of God through which men have peace. The Light Christ, the Prince of Peace, reigns as ruler of the universe, is the answer to all human ills.

