

Towards Understanding Margaret Fell of Swarthmoor Hall



George Fox's talk¹ Ulveston church in 1652

“He is not a Jew who is one outward, neither is circumcision which is outward; but he is a Jew that is one inward, and that is circumcision which is of the heart; **whose praise is not of man but of God**Christ was the light of the world and lighteth every man that cometh into the world and that by this Light they might be gathered to God...**and so....come out of their outward ordinances and traditions of men to the light of Jesus Christ which he had enlightened them;**².... **how that God was come to teach his people by his spirit, and bring them**

off all their old ways...for all their religion and worship and ways was but talking of other men's words...they were out of the life and spirit that was in them that gave them forth ³ The scriptures were the prophets words, and Christ's and the apostles words and what they spoke they enjoyed and possessed and had it from the LordThen what had any to do with the scriptures but as they came to the spirit that gave them forth. You will say, Christ said this, the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of light, hast walked in the light, and what thou speakest is it inwardly from God?”

Margaret Fell wrote, “This opened me so that it cut me to the heart; and then I saw clearly, we were all wrong”. So I sat down in the pew again and cried bitterly; and cried in my spirit to the Lord. ‘We are all thieves, we have taken the scriptures in words, and know nothing of them in ourselves.I was struck into such a sadness, I knew not what to do.....I saw it was the truth, and I could not deny it; I did as the apostle said, I received the truth in the love of it; and it was opened to me so clear, that I never had a tittle in my heart against it. I desired the Lord that I might be kept in it”.⁴

Message from Margaret Fell In her own words Swarthmoor 1654/5⁵

“To the light of Christ Jesus in your Conscience which he has enlightened you withal *who is the Light of the world, and doth enlighten everyone that cometh into the world* John 1:9 *and if you love the Light you bring your deeds to the Light to be proved and tried , whether they be wrought in God*⁶ *and this is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men love darkness rather than light, because their Deeds are Evil, for everyone that doth Evil, hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doth truth, cometh to the Light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God* John 3:18-21. Now all people see where you are, and try your teachers, what they lead into, who draw you from the Light, which Christ Jesus hath enlightened you withal, who said, *He that walks in the Light shall have the Light of Life*. And John saith, *that in him was life and the Life was the Light of men.*(John1) ...”

¹ Text mainly from Margaret Fell's testimony at start of George Fox's journal also including see note 2&3

² Blue text from p 19 Short Journal Penny 1924

³ Green text from p 48 Vol 1 Penny 1911 Verbatim & Literatim George Fox Journal

⁴ Edited by Charles B. Lamb see www.cblfriend.com

⁵ Her writings extracted from two letters, To the World, Priests and People 1654, To Francis Benson and family 1655. read text in context see letters 30 & 38 in

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⁶ Magenta extract from letter 38 to Francis Benson and family



Dining room at Swarthmoor Hall

“All poor people who are in the dark World led with the blind guides, beware and look where you are, lest you and they fall into the Ditch
 Matt15:14 If you tune your mind ever so little to the holy within you, you will see them blind who is out of the Light and if you keep your minds to the Light then will the witness of God rise in you..... To that of God in your consciences I speak... the direction of your mind to the light of Christ Jesus in you which is one in all, which is our teacher. ...Therefore all people as you love your souls, turn to the Light which shows you your sin and evil and lets you see the deceit of

your hearts and all your thoughts and hard speeches, and brings to remembrance what has been wrought in darkness, this is the Light that shines in darkness John 1:5 if you are obedient it will let you see your Saviour...and by Jesus who is the Light shall you come to be saved and know the living God.”

“Therefore all People to the Light in your Conscience, which Christ Jesus hath enlightened you withal, turn within, keep to it, and go not forth, nor look outward, and it will let you see the Deceivers and Betrayers of your Souls, and if you be faithful and obedient to it, it will let you see your Saviour, for false Prophets and Antichrists are in the world, and the Deceivers are of the world, but those that dwell in Light which Christ hath enlightened them withal, this leads out of the world and the worlds ways, fashions and customs, and this makes a separation from the world.”

“The perilous times have come 2Timothy3, and woe to you if you do not harken to the warning of the Lord God, who calls unto you for repentance, and to turn to the Light of Christ in your Conscience; and to turn from (teachers)

...having a form of Godliness, but denying the Power, (teachers) who keep you ever learning, 2Timothy3:6-7 and tell you that none can be perfect while they are here on earth.”

“Now see your Leaders and Teachers, if they have not another Spirit than Christ and the Apostles had, who make it their trade to plead for Sin against Perfection⁷, against Christ Jesus and against the Apostles and Prophets and all the Holy Men of God; for Christ saith, Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect . Matthew 5:48 And again, Christ saith unto the young man (who asked Christ what he yet lacked) if thou wilt be perfect⁸, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor Matthew 19:21. And again the Apostle said He preached wisdom amongst them that are perfect. 1Corinthians 2:6 and when he parted with the Brethren he bid them be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind. 2Corinthians 13:11 Gifts (were given) to the Prophets, Apostles and Evangelists for the perfecting of the Saints Ephesians4:11-13 and the Apostle went about warning every man in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” Colosians1:28

⁷ Jesus proclaimed liberty to the captive Luke 4:18 and George Fox saw that the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus had set free from law of sin and death Romans 1 It is recorded in George Fox’s Journal that People argued about sin and perfection this with him in Derby prison in 1650 see p 46 George Fox Formative Years booklet available for free download website www.cbfriend.com After James Nayler fell there was more

awareness of need to take care lest one fell 1Corinthians 10:12-13 Philippians’ 3:12-15

⁸ Less than 10 years later. In Court in 1663 when pressed to stop having meetings in her home and to swear oath of allegiance to King Margaret Fell answered a judge “That I rather choose a Prison for obeying of God, than my Liberty for obeying Men, contrary to my Conscience.” So they passed

Sentence of Praemunire upon me, which was ‘That I should be out of the King’s Protection, and forfeit all my estate, Real and personal to the King and Imprisonment during Life’. But the great God of Heaven and Earth supported my Spirit under this severe Sentence, that I was not terrified; but gave this Answer to Judge Turner, who gave the sentence, Although I am out of the King’s Protection, yet I am not out of the Protection of the Almighty God;....