

George Fox the Second Paul

Saul of Tarsus, on the road to Damascus, experienced the living Christ and heard his voice within. Saul was transformed by this experience from a persecutor of the followers of Jesus and received his vocation as Paul an apostle of the Risen Christ to the Gentiles, claiming that the Gospel he proclaimed had been received through a revelation of Jesus Christ, (Galatians 1:11-12).

In 2 Corinthians 12:1–4 Paul described his continued experiences of the light of the living Christ: 'I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a person in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows'.

George Fox, too, had similar experiences of the living Christ, which gave him his vocation: 'When all my hopes in all men were gone so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, oh then, I heard a voice which said, "There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition", and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy – and this I know experientially'. Fox throughout his life continued to have experiences of the power of Christ which gave him discernment.

Paul and George Fox were both dramatically changed by their meeting with the risen Christ.

Paul's experience turned his world upside down. From persecuting the followers of Christ he began tirelessly founding assemblies of Christians throughout the Roman Empire. Paul's communities were alternative models to that of empire, shaped by the experience of Jesus Christ crucified, who alone was Lord – not Caesar, nor the system of imperial domination. Christ crucified by Rome and raised by God changed everything for Paul, who saw Christ as 'the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1 Corinthians 1:24). And in Romans 12:2 Paul taught that we should not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For Paul, peace came not through victory but through love and justice, as shown by the crucified Christ. 'As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:27-28).

For Friends, too, the world was turned upside down. Their listening to Christ meant encouraging women to minister, seeing the equal worth of all, forswearing use of violence, adopting a single standard of truth and the willingness to go to prison for the truth that they saw in Christ's light.

Contemporaries of George Fox believed that Jesus Christ would soon return and would bring about God's Kingdom. George Fox and Friends knew experientially that Christ had already returned, that to follow the cross of Christ was working with God to create his Kingdom. They knew that God's kingdom or Loving Community, was here, and that those who take up the cross and nurture God's Realm participate in the Divine Kingdom.

Dear Friends, wait, wait in the light for Christ to come!

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