

Letter to the Governor of Barbadoes
Attributed to George Fox and Other Quakers, 1671

Whereupon I, with some other Friends, drew up a paper, to go forth in the name of the people called Quakers, for the clearing truth and Friends from those false reports. It was after this manner:

"For the Governor of Barbadoes, with his council and assembly, and all others in power, both civil and military, in this island; from the people called Quakers.

"WHEREAS many scandalous lies and slanders have been cast upon us, to render us odious; as that "We deny God, and Christ Jesus, and the scriptures of truth", &c. This is to inform you, that all our books and declarations, which for these many years have been published to the world, clearly testify the contrary. Yet, for your satisfaction, we now plainly and sincerely declare, that we own and believe in God, the only wise, omnipotent, and everlasting God, who is the creator of all things both in heaven and in the earth, and the preserver of all that he hath made; who is God over all, blessed for ever; to whom be all honour, glory, dominion, praise and thanksgiving, both now and for evermore! and we own and believe in Jesus Christ, his beloved and only begotten Son, in whom he is well pleased; who was conceived by the holy ghost, and born of the virgin Mary; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; who is the express image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature, by whom were all things created that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers; all things were created by him. And we own and believe that he was made a sacrifice for sin, who knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; and that he was crucified for us in the flesh, without the gates of Jerusalem; and that he was buried, and rose again the third day by the power of his Father, for our justification; and we believe that he ascended up into heaven, and now sitteth at the right hand of God. This Jesus, who was the foundation of the holy prophets and apostles, is our foundation; and we believe there is no other foundation to be laid but that which is laid, even Christ Jesus who we believe tasted death for every man, and shed his blood for all men, and is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world: according as John the Baptist testified of him, when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world". John i. 29. We believe that he alone is our Redeemer and Saviour, even the captain of our salvation, who saves us from sin, as well as from hell and the wrath to come, and destroys the devil and his works; who is the seed of the woman that bruises the serpent's head, to wit, Christ Jesus, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. That he is (as the scriptures of truth say of him) our wisdom and righteousness, justification and redemption; neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we may be saved. He alone is the shepherd and bishop of our souls: he is our prophet, whom Moses long since testified of saying, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you: and it shall come to pass, that every soul that will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people". Acts ii. 22, 23. He it is that is now come "and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true". And he rules in our hearts by his law of love and life, and makes us free from the law of sin and death. We have no life, but by him; for he is the quickening spirit, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, by whose blood we are cleansed, and our consciences sprinkled from dead works, to

serve the living God. He is our Mediator, that makes peace and reconciliation between God offended and us offending; he being the oath of God, the new covenant of light, life, grace, and peace, the author and finisher of our faith. Now this Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly man, the Emanuel, God with us, we all own and believe in; he whom the high priest raged against, and said, he had spoken blasphemy; whom the priests and elders of the Jews took counsel together against, and put to death; the same whom Judas betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, which the priests gave him as a reward for his treason; who also gave large money to the soldiers to broach a horrible lie, namely, "That his disciples came and stole him away by night whilst they slept". And after he was risen from the dead, the history of the Acts of the apostles sets forth how the chief priests and elders persecuted the disciples of this Jesus, for preaching Christ and his resurrection. This, we say, is that Lord Jesus Christ, whom we own to be our life and salvation.

"And as concerning the holy scriptures, we believe they were given forth by the holy spirit of God, through the holy men of God, who (as the scripture itself declares, 2 Pet. i. 21.) "spoke as they were moved by the holy ghost". We believe they are to be read, believed, and fulfilled, (he that fulfils them is Christ): and they are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, (2 Tim. iii. 16.) and are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus". We believe the holy scriptures are the words of God; for it is said in Exod. xx. 1 "God spake all these words, saying", &c. meaning the ten commandments given forth upon mount Sinai. And in Rev. xxii. 18. saith John, "I testify to every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man addeth unto these, and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy", (not the Word), &c. So in Luke i. 20. "Because thou believest not my words" And so in John v. 47. xv. 7. xiv. 23. xii. 47. So that we call the holy scriptures, as Christ, the apostles, and holy men of God called them, viz. the words of God.

"Another slander they have cast upon us, is, "that we teach the negroes to rebel"; a thing we utterly abhor and detest in our hearts, the Lord knows it, who is the searcher of all hearts, and knows all things, and can testify for us, that this is a most abominable untruth. For that which we have spoken to them, is to exhort and admonish them to be sober, to fear God, to love their masters and mistresses, and to be faithful and diligent in their service and business, and then their masters and overseers would love them, and deal kindly and gently with them; also that they should not beat their wives, nor the wives their husbands; neither should the men have many wives; that they should not steal, nor be drunk, nor commit adultery, nor fornication, nor curse, swear, nor lie, nor give bad words to one another, nor to any one else; for there is something in them that tells them they should not practise these nor any other evils. But if they notwithstanding should do them, then we let them know there are but two ways, the one that leads to heaven where the righteous go; and the other that leads to hell, where the wicked and debauched, whoremongers, adulterers, murderers, and liars go. To the one the Lord will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"; to the other, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels": so the wicked go into "everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal". Matt. xxv. Consider, friends it is no transgression for a master of a family to instruct his family himself, or for others to do it in his behalf; but rather it is a very great duty incumbent upon them. Abraham and Joshua did so: of the first, we read the Lord said, Gen. xviii. 19. "I know that Abraham will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of

the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham the things that he hath spoken of him." And the latter, we read, said, Josh. xxiv. 15. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." We declare, that we esteem it a duty incumbent on us to pray with and for, to teach, instruct, and admonish those in and belonging to our families; this being a command of the Lord, disobedience whereunto will provoke his displeasure; as may be seen in Jer. x. 25. "Pour out thy fury upon the Heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." Now, negroes, tawnies, indians, make up a very great part of the families in this island; for whom an account will be required by him who comes to judge both quick and dead at the great day of judgment, when every one shall be "rewarded according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil"; at that day, we say, of the resurrection both of the good and of the bad, and of the just and of the unjust, when, "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe in that day." 2 Thes. i. 8. &c. See also, 2 Pet. iii. 3. &c."

This wicked slander (of our endeavouring to make the negroes rebel) our adversaries took occasion to raise, from our having some meetings amongst the negroes; for we had several meetings with them in divers plantations, wherein we exhorted them to justice, sobriety, temperance, chastity, and piety, and to be subject to their masters and governors. Which was altogether contrary to what our envious adversaries maliciously suggested against us.

As I had been to visit the governor, as soon as I was well able, after I came thither; so sometime after when I was at Thomas Rouse's, the governor came to see me, carrying himself very courteously.

The above is one of the three principal doctrinal documents of Orthodox Quakerism. The others are the Richmond Declaration of Faith and Essential Truths.