



Walk In The Light

The story behind
the “George Fox Song”

By Dana Kester-McCabe

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About The Author Of The Lyrics

Sydney Carter was a Christian poet, songwriter, and folk musician from Britain. Though he was not a member of the Religious Society of Friends they had a big impact on his life. He was a pacifist and served with the Friends Ambulance Service during World War II.

He studied history and became a school headmaster. But his great love was music and poetry. He wrote and performed folk music alone and with a number of famous musicians. His song "The Lord of the Dance" became a big hit. It is sung in many churches and has been used in other theatrical presentations as well.

*"Your holy hearsay is not evidence
Give me the good news
in the present tense ...
So shut the Bible up and show me how
The Christ you talk about is living now."*

Sydney Carter
1915-2004

The Story Behind The Song

This song is about George Fox, the founder of The Religious Society of Friends. He was born in England in 1624. He lived until 1691.

He and his Friends were also called Quakers by people who did not like them because they sometimes "quaked" when they were preaching. Quakers don't mind the name now. In fact they think it is pretty cool.

The tune to this song is a traditional English folk song. Some versions of this song were probably sung with different verses to make fun of the Quakers.

Now they have fun with the song. Sydney Carter wrote these lyrics in 1964. The words help tell about some of the Quaker beliefs.

Chorus

To "walk in the Light" means to try to be good people, to pray, and to listen for God's guidance.

George Fox was trained to be a leather worker. Even though he gave up that job to be a preacher, he wore clothes that he made. They were practical. They lasted a long time.

Fox believed God wants people to live simply and try not to be wasteful. That is why he also did not spend a lot of money to get his hair cut and so he had shaggy, shaggy locks.

People thought he looked a little weird. They also thought his ideas were dangerous. But Fox thought he was "walking in the Light" of God.

Some people sing the last line like this:
You are pulling down the pillars of the world George Fox!

Chorus

**Walk in the Light,
wherever you may be!**

**Walk in the Light,
wherever you may be!**

**In my old leather breeches and
my shaggy, shaggy locks,**

**I am walking in the glory of the
Light, said Fox.**

Verse 1

Quakers believe there is "that of God in everyone." They also believe that God is like a great Light shining for everyone.

When Fox lived, the people in his country were mostly Christians. A lot of them were afraid of people from other religions: Jews and Turks. Some people called any Moslem a Turk because Turkey was then the center of the Moslem religion at that time.

Fox and the Quakers saw these people being treated badly. Because they believed that God loves everyone they said this should not be done.

This verse means that no matter what religion you are - God loves you.

Verse I

**There's a Light that was shining
when the world began,**

**And a Light that is shining
in the heart of man:**

**There's a Light that is shining
in the Turk and the Jew,**

**And a Light that is shining,
friend, in me and in you.**

Verse 2

When Fox started preaching, there were only a few kinds of churches in England where he lived. The government ran one of those churches. If you did not follow that church's rules, you could get thrown in jail.

In this verse the book is the Bible. The steeple represents church buildings. Church bells told everyone what time it was and when to come to church. And the keys to the jails were held by the church appointed judges who decided who got punished.

Fox said all these things were made by people who were not listening to God. He said that God's love was more important and stronger than all these things. He said it would last forever so we should listen to God most of all.

Verse 2

**With a book and a steeple
and a bell and a key**

**They would bind it for ever -
but they can't, said he.**

**O, the book, it will perish,
and the steeple will fall,**

**But the Light will be shining
at the end of it all.**

Verse 3

In Fox's day, if you wanted anyone to believe what you were saying you had to put your hand on the Bible and promise God that you would be honest. This is called swearing an oath.

Some people thought that meant when you did not swear an oath, that it was OK to lie. Many people also thought the Bible was magic and could make you tell the truth. Fox said these things were wrong.

There was a lot of fighting going on then. Many different groups wanted to run the country. They all thought they were on God's (the Lord's) side of fighting evil (the devil).

Fox said that hurting people was not what God wanted. He said that you could not do one bad thing to stop another bad thing.

Verse 3

**"Will you swear on the Bible?"
I will not," said he,**

**"For the truth is as holy
as the Book to me."**

**"If we give you a pistol,
will you fight for the Lord?"**

**"You can't kill the devil
with a gun or a sword."**

Verse 4

George Fox had many mystical experiences where God showed him how to live. Once when he was feeling very sad, he had a vision that he was in a very scary place: an "ocean of darkness."

Then God showed him with the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, everything would get better. He felt God's love deep in his heart and knew that it would always be there. Then in the vision the darkness was replaced with an "ocean of Light."

This made him feel much better and it gave him great courage. It helped him tell the people who put him in prison that he could go through anything because that Light was always with him.

Some people sing the next to the last line as:

For the Light is forever,
and the Light it is free.

Verse 4

**There's an ocean of darkness and
I drowned in the night**

**Till I came through the darkness
to the ocean of Light**

**You can lock me in prison
but the Light will be free.**

**And I'll walk in the glory
of the Light, said he.**

Walk In The Light

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when the world began,
And a Light that is shining in the heart of man:
There's a Light that is shining
in the Turk and the Jew,
And a Light that is shining, friend,
in me and in you.

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Walk in the Light, wherever you may be!
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About The Author

Dana Kester-McCabe is an artist, writer, and freelance graphic designer living on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. She is a lifelong member of the Religious Society of Friends. Her home meeting is Wicomico River Friends Meeting in Salisbury, Maryland. She has served on many local and regional committees. At the time this was written she was the Regional Coordinator for Southern Quarter of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

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*The last page of this document
is a coloring sheet.*

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