

Session 6 Outline: Worshiping together – September 16, 2018

Based on Rex Ambler's *The Quaker Way*, Chapter 3, pp. 58-63

1. Check-ins

- Greet returnees and introduce newcomers
 - How have you been since we saw you last? Interesting experiences to share?
 - Comments on the experiment of "going into the silence"?
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- Review *Group Agreement*

○ non-judgmental	○ tolerance	○ I-language
○ no argument	○ empathy & patience	○ clarity
○ mutual respect	○ confidentiality	○ active listening to understand
○ civility	○ the right to pass	○ safe to share uncomfortable things

2. Revisiting Session 5: What is the Bible to Quakers?

We began by rejecting the modern notions of *scriptural literalism* and *fundamentalism* that ascribe "final authority" to the Bible as all one work, dictated by God, with specific assertions of what is "right belief" and "right behavior."

Quakers instead follow the principle of *continuing revelation*. In this spirit, the Bible is not a fixed and final authority on religious and moral matters, but as a library of sacred texts, available for our shared inner light to use in bringing us new understanding. Margaret Fell, who eventually married George Fox, wrote of this new approach to scripture in her description of first hearing Fox speak [emphases added]:

"[He] opened the Scriptures and said the Scriptures were the prophets' words, and Christ's and the apostles' words, and what as they spoke they enjoyed and possessed and had it from the Lord. And said, then *what had any to do with the Scriptures but as they came to the Spirit that gave them forth?*

"*You will say Christ saith this and the apostles say this, but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of the Light and hast thou walked in the Light, and what thou speakest, is it inwardly from God, etc.?*

"This opened me so, that it cut me to the heart, and then I saw clearly that we were all wrong. So I sat me down in my pew again and cried bitterly: and I cried in my spirit to the Lord, We are all thieves, we are all thieves, *we have taken the Scriptures in words, and know nothing of them in ourselves.*"

– from *The Journal of George Fox*

It is important to seek understanding of this distinction between Bible as authority and inward Spirit as authority. In waiting worship, we are learning how to listen to this Spirit that "gave forth the Scriptures."

3. Waiting Worship – 10 to 15 minutes

- *Query*: In whatever form of silent waiting you do, what do you experience early in your sitting, and how does your inner awareness change throughout your quiet time.
- Worship sharing on the query, followed by discussion.

4. During the week...and when Quakers come together

"Our practice of coming together once a week to sit in silence makes sense only if we have learned to do that during the week and have got to know the people we sit with in ordinary, everyday interactions. This would have been easier perhaps for the first Friends, since silence was part of their lives anyway, and the people with whom they worshipped would have met in other ways during the week. When they came together on Sunday, or whenever, they would truly 'meet' one another, since they knew one another well from their daily contacts, and they would be spiritually 'trained' to be open to one another and the experience of corporate worship." (Ambler 57)

- *Discussion*: What might we do to transcend the modern challenge of our separateness during the week?

3. Waiting Worship – 10 to 15 minutes

- *Queries:* What do you notice in your body at different times during silent waiting? What changes in body awareness help you to go deeper into the silence? In what ways are you aware of the people worshipping with you?
- Worship sharing on the queries, followed by discussion.

Wrap-up and Homework