

Excerpts and Audio Link for *Faith and Practice* Course

Catharine Novak has prepared an easily accessible audio recording of most of the excerpts used in the first study session, on Quaker faith expressions and common practices. The audio excerpts are posted to Soundcloud, for those who wish to hear a reading of the excerpts. Click on link:

<https://soundcloud.com/catherine-novak/quaker-faith-and-practice-readings-week-1>.

1.2 George Fox, 1647

I was under great temptations sometimes, and my inward sufferings were heavy; but I could find none to open my condition to but the Lord alone, unto whom I cried night and day. And I went back into Nottinghamshire, and there the Lord shewed me that the natures of those things which were hurtful without, were within the hearts and minds of wicked men...And I cried to the Lord, saying, "Why should I be thus, seeing I was never addicted to commit those evils?" And the Lord answered that it was needful I should have a sense of all conditions, how else should I speak to all conditions; and in this I saw the infinite love of God. I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. And in that also I saw the infinite love of God; and I had great openings.

1.7 *George Fox wrote the following message to Friends in November 1663 during a time of much persecution.*

Sing and rejoice, ye Children of the Day and of the Light, for the Lord is at work in this thick night of darkness that may be felt: and Truth doth flourish as the rose, and the lilies do grow among the thorns, and the plants atop of the hills, and upon them the lambs do skip and play. And never heed the tempests and the storms, floods or rains, for the Seed Christ is over all and doth reign.

4.1 George Fox, 1656...[B]e patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one, whereby in them ye may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.

1.11 Margaret Fell Fox, 1694 In the year 1652 it pleased the Lord to draw him [George Fox] toward us...and so he went on and said, How that 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, etc. And I stood up in my pew, and I wondered at his doctrine, for I had never heard such before. And he went on, and 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 Light and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest is it inwardly from God?"

4.48 Margaret Fell, 1666 Those that speak against the power of the Lord, and the Spirit of the Lord speaking in a woman, simply by reason of her sex or because she is a woman, not regarding the Seed and the Spirit and Power that speaks in her, such speak against Christ and his Church.

4.20 Margaret Fell, 1660 We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love, and unity; it is our desire that others' feet may walk in the same, and do deny and bear our testimony against all strife and was and contentions... Our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual...And so we desire, and also expect to have liberty of our consciences and just rights and outward liberties, as other people of the nation, which we have promise of, from the word of a king...Treason, treachery and false dealing we do utterly deny; false dealing, surmising or plotting against any creature upon the face of the earth; and speak the Truth in plainness and singleness of heart; and all our desire is your good and peace and love and unity.

1.12 John Woolman, 1762 There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages had different names. It is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren in the best sense of the expression.

1.13 Caroline Fox, 1882. The first gleam of light, “the first cold light of morning”, which gave promise of day with its noontide glories, dawned on me one day at Meeting, when I had been meditating on my state in great depression. I seemed to hear the words articulated in my spirit, “Live up to the light thou hast, and

more will be granted thee.”

1.15 Thomas Kelly, 1941 Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Centre, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return. Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto Itself. Yielding to these persuasions gladly committing ourselves in body and soul, utterly and completely to the Light within, is the beginning of true life. It is a dynamic centre, a creative Life that presses to birth within us. It is a Light Within which illumines the face of God and casts new shadows and new glories upon the face of men. It is a seed stirring to life if we do not choke it. It is the Shekinah of the soul, the Presence in the midst. Here is the slumbering Christ, stirring to be awakened, to become the soul we clothe in earthly form and action. And He is within us all.

1.57 Constance Mungall, 1998

This I know experimentally

That if I go within
I find a quiet place
full of Light.
That if I can be silent
I stay in that place.

I can speak and act from there.
I can trust

have faith
that what I say and do is
true, enlightened by
a universal energy. Divine.

I need no more words
to describe this joyful fact.
Only persistence
to follow the Light.

1.65 Ruth Walmsley, 1997. I can count on one hand the number of times in my life when I have experienced what I would consider to be a true leading of the Spirit. In each case, these leadings have been characterized by a compulsion to act, fears that I would not be able to live up to what was being required of me, and a deeper sense that I wasn't being asked to do this entirely on my own strength. In any case, I knew that a decision not to act upon my conscience would be like a small death, a failure to allow myself to grow and discover in myself new strengths and courage.

1.82 *In 1985 three hundred Young Friends from 34 countries gathered in a meeting at Greensboro, North Carolina, under the care of the Friends World Committee for Consultation. They represented different theological outlooks, diverse doctrinal language, various Quaker worship practices and differing forms of organizational structure. They reported that they had been “challenged, shaken up, at times even enraged, intimidated, and offended by these differences.” Yet they were able to express their spiritual unity in their final epistle, of which the following paragraph is one part.*

We have often wondered whether there is anything Quakers today can say

as one. After much struggle we have discovered that we can proclaim this: there is a living God at the centre of all, who is available to each of us as a Present Teacher at the very heart of our lives. We seek as people of God to be worthy vessels to deliver the Lord's transforming word, to be prophets of joy who know from experience and can testify to the world, as George Fox did, "that the Lord God is at work in this thick night." Our priority is to be receptive and responsive to the life-giving Word of God, whether it comes through the written word – the Scriptures, the Incarnate Word – Jesus Christ, the Corporate Word – as discerned by the gathered meeting, or the Inward Word of God in our hearts which is available to each of us who seek the Truth.

1.58 Patricia Loring, 1992

Spiritual discernment lies at the heart of Quaker spirituality and practice. It's grounded in the central Quaker conviction of the availability to every person of the experience and guidance of God, immediate as well as mediated.

Discernment is the faculty we use to distinguish the true movement of the Spirit to speak in meeting for worship from the wholly human urge to share, to instruct, or to straighten people out. It is the capacity we exercise in a centred meeting for worship for the conduct of business to sense the right course for the meeting to take in complex or difficult circumstances. It is the ability to see into people, situations, and possibilities to identify what is of God in them and what is of numerous other sources in ourselves – and what may be both. It is that fallible, intuitive gift we use in attempting to discriminate the course to which we are personally led by God in a given situation, from our other impulses and from the generalized judgment of conscience.