



## Zen and the Art of Quaker Maintenance

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This booklet presents some ideas for revitalizing Quakerism and deepening worship, based on writings of early Quakers and insights from Zen Buddhism. The ideas discussed here are not unique to Zen, but the Zen perspective may provide clarity.

Part of my motivation for writing this is the existence among Quakers of different views as to what Quakerism is about. Some have sought a remedy in restating “what Quakers believe”, but as discussed throughout this booklet, I don’t think that articulating “beliefs” is the right approach. In this, I draw support from Zen, which is skeptical of teaching beliefs. Like Zen, Quakerism is hard to pin down. This does not mean that there is something wrong, but it does mean that explaining Quakerism is a challenge.

Quakers need not import anything from Zen. Rather, Zen can help elucidate things that are already part of the Quaker tradition. Gaining a better understanding of Zen could help Quakers appreciate what Quakerism is about.<sup>2</sup> As Steve Smith has said: “Radically understood and faithfully followed, the Society of Friends needs no bolstering by alien traditions; rather Quakerism is itself a fully sufficient path of transforming spiritual power and grace.”<sup>3</sup> Another

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<sup>1</sup> Copyright 2022 by Victor Thuronyi. I am grateful to everyone who has read and commented on this document. Several people have made constructive comments, including specific wording suggestions, including Sharon K. Stout, Michael Newheart, Michael Levi, Janacki Spickard-Keeler, and Danny Parker, so that it has become a group effort. In particular, some of the text relating to Zen Buddhism was written by Danny Parker.

<sup>2</sup>Sallie King, “The Mommy and the Yogi,” in *Beside Still Waters* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, Harold Kasimow et al. eds, 2003). “Both Quakerism and Buddhism were very flexible on doctrine, both finding religious truth to exist primarily in experience, and all verbal formulations to be provisional.” Scott Crom, *Quaker Worship and Techniques of Meditation* (Pendle Hill Pamphlet #195, 1974), 8-9 (Quakers “should see if there are not some weaknesses in our traditional manner of worship which these ancient techniques might help to strengthen.”)

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Quaker in the Zendo*, 29.

example of Quaker/Zen parallels is George Gorman's book, *The Amazing Fact of Quaker Worship*,<sup>4</sup> a book that is based on the author's experiences of Quaker worship. Gorman does not explicitly mention Zen, but the book is consistent with a Zen approach.

Some Quakers consider themselves Zen Buddhists in addition to being Quakers, in a similar way that Quakers may follow another religion (such as Islam, Judaism, or another branch of Christianity), either loosely or as a full member. Some Quakers adopt some Zen practices, or practice yoga or tai chi, or some other form of meditation. One might draw a distinction between a Quaker following such practices, and importing these into Quakerism.

## **I. Worship**

### **A. Testimony of early Friends and Zen**

This section discusses what Friends do (or might do) in meeting for worship; it weaves together a discussion of Zen meditation, current Quaker practice, and what early Friends had to say about worship. I use the term "meditation" to refer to a practice that, like Zen, does not involve cultivating thoughts. (Confusingly, in the Christian tradition, meditation (in Latin *meditatio*) refers to a practice that does involve thinking spiritual thoughts, but I don't use the word in this meaning here.)

Zen meditation has developed over a long period, thereby allowing the practice to be well worked out. Zen originated in China around 520 A.D. (its founder Bodhidharma was an Indian Buddhist monk) and came to Japan around 1200. Zen is a sect of Buddhism, which goes back to about 500 B.C., with earlier roots in Hinduism; Zen is also influenced by Taoism, which goes

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<sup>4</sup> (Headley Brothers: London 1979).

back to about the sixth century B.C. in China. Zen may be undergoing a new time of transformation as it moves to the U.S. and other countries; in some ways, Zen transcends Buddhism and can be seen as a way of thinking as well as a locus of meditation practice. This is why the answer to the question whether Zen is a religion is – “it depends” (it certainly is a religion for some Zen adherents). In this sense Zen differs from most religions, which don’t have as much of a non-religious penumbra.

Zen suggests that the intellect cannot understand reality on its own. One comes to enlightenment through practice, either by sitting (Soto school) or working through koans (Rinzai school), neither of which involves coming to an intellectual understanding. Enlightenment is not something that is achieved or definitive (or even to be sought after). Indeed, Zen Buddhists believe enlightenment is already there, so there is nothing to be attained. It is only to be realized - thus the term “realization” may be more relevant to the Zen view.

Once one has had an enlightenment experience, it does not mean that one is “done.” On the contrary, to have that experience is to realize that any continuation of wisdom or actualization of insight is to continue practice. The significance and nature of enlightenment is difficult to pin down. Practice and direct experience are key. It is not a matter of being taught beliefs and adhering to them. This is simply not the way Zen operates. A key reason for this is that the insight that one obtains through enlightenment cannot be communicated through words, and does not necessarily form a logical system. If any words are used, they are most likely to take the form of poetry or paradox. Words, while helpful, can be misleading, the same way one cannot eat a recipe. There is no substitute for the real, raw nature of reality.

Many who are interested in spirituality have turned to Zen because it has developed a strong tradition of meditation practice. However, Zen does not have a monopoly on meditation.

Sitting in silence is also central to Quaker meeting for worship. Quakers can reaffirm a tradition of spiritual practice and in doing so offer a home for this practice that is as solid as that offered by Zen.

There are numerous meditation techniques.<sup>5</sup> While the classic Zen technique appeals to me, I don't have a sufficient overview or experience to be able to claim that the Zen approach is better, or even to review what all the possible approaches are, and in any case what is the best approach for any one person will likely differ from person to person and must be decided individually. So I will describe my understanding of what the Zen approach is, mindful of the fact that some might prefer something different. Quaker meeting can accommodate a variety of different approaches that involve sitting in silence. The Zen approach appears to be close to what early Quakers did.

For beginners, Zen masters recommend counting the breath. You can count "one" on the first inhaling breath, "two" on the second and so forth. This goes up to ten, and then you start over. This may sound simple, but in fact, it is easy to become distracted. When distraction occurs, the advice is to go back to "one." You don't agonize over the distraction, but just move on. When you find that you are consistently counting the breath from one to ten, then you can move to the next level, which is to drop the counting. In other words, you focus on the in-breath and the out-breath. When thoughts arise, you can briefly note the fact that those thoughts are arising, and go back to focusing on the breath. With more experience, the focus might largely leave the breath in favor of a more open-ended awareness.

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<sup>5</sup> See generally Daniel Coleman, *Presence and Process* (2017).

Even with substantial experience in sitting, thoughts will continue to arise. One thing we can learn from this is that there is not an “I” who is in charge in the sense of being able to decide, “I will stop generating thoughts for the next 20 minutes and just sit.” The thoughts that arise in your mind are not under your control. Sitting does not involve quieting the mind so that thoughts cease, but rather continuing on, letting those thoughts fall away. This poem encapsulates well the state of No-Mind that is involved:

To think, “I will not think”

This, too, is something in one’s thoughts.

Simply do not think

About not thinking at all.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to being distracted by thoughts, when we sit we might be distracted by sounds or by feelings that arise in our own body, for example an urge to cough, sneeze, scratch, or change our posture. In all these cases, the basic approach is the same as for thoughts – to note the distraction and let it fall away. In some cases, we find that we have to cough or to move. If that happens, the best thing is to go ahead and change posture, cough, or move in some other way, once, and then resume sitting still. In some cases it is possible to continue sitting still without coughing or moving.

Particularly in an intense meditation experience (e.g., a week-long retreat) some may find that they experience visions or other remarkable experiences when they meditate. Zen has a term for this, namely, *makyo*.<sup>7</sup> The advice is to essentially ignore *makyo* and move on. *Makyo* arise

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<sup>6</sup>Takuan Soho, *The Unfettered Mind* (William Scott Wilson trans., Boulder, CO: Shambala, 2012)(written in the early 1600s).

<sup>7</sup>Literally “diabolic phenomena”. *Concise Dictionary of Buddhism*, 138.

from the unconscious, and may be of interest to someone undergoing psychotherapy. However, from the point of view of Zen, they are a distraction.

You may ask –“why sit?” It is difficult to provide an answer as to why sitting is a worthwhile activity. Long time Zen practitioners say a key reason is that the mind can settle profoundly over time and clarity and insight follows. My own approach is to observe that Zen practitioners have been doing this for hundreds of years and seem to have done well. I rely on the experience of others to validate that this is something worth doing. Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh answers : “Because I like sitting.”<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to base the validation on one’s own experience because it might take years of experience to note a substantial benefit. A similar question is how often one should meditate. Again, there is no definitive answer to this. Probably 20 minutes daily is a minimum (coincidentally the same as the minimum for strenuous exercise), but it is difficult to say what a good amount of time for meditating might be. This may differ from person to person. So if we meet together once a week on Sunday mornings, that is likely not enough. At many Zen centers, people sit for approximately 30 minutes. Frequency is more important than periodic big efforts (e.g. a retreat). Sitting 20 minutes a day all year is much more valuable than a concentrated retreat over a week.

The above approach to the question of why to sit is spiritual. From a strictly scientific point of view, one might handle the question differently, pointing to the health benefits. From a spiritual point of view, though, those may not seem so relevant. On the other hand, without a body in this realm, there is no way to survive on the earth. Thus, health impacts are always some part of one’s spiritual life. What may be more important is the change in mindset that sitting can

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<sup>8</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *How to Walk* (2015), 13.

help bring about. More radically, Zen suggests that one does best not by sitting in order to achieve something. Zazen is beyond goal; it is to sit in the middle of life and see what emerges. Indeed, to sit in meditation with a goal is to cripple the fundamental power of Zen—to point beyond current conceptual thinking, plans or ideas. Only by calmly sitting without gaining ideas can something fresh emerge.

How does Zen practice relate to Friends meeting? An unprogrammed meeting involves sitting in silence. Friends tend not to talk too much about what they actually do when they sit in silence in meeting for worship, and individual practice varies. “The Society of Friends has never issued specific instructions regarding what the worshiper should do during the silence, believing that such instruction would limit the freedom of the Spirit which, like the wind, ‘bloweth where it listeth.’”<sup>9</sup> Some modern pamphlet writers have taken on the subject, but there is no uniformity of approach.<sup>10</sup>

Jean Toomer, in *Interpretation of Friends Worship*, offered the following guidance:<sup>11</sup>

Settle into your place as an anonymous member of an anonymous group....Lay aside all your worldly relationships and your everyday interior states. In fine, forget yourself. Surrender yourself. Immerse yourself in the

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<sup>9</sup>Howard Brinton, *Guide to Quaker Practice* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania:Pendle Hill Pamphlet #20, 1955), 11.

<sup>10</sup>Bill Taber, *Four Doors to Meeting for Worship* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania:Pendle Hill Pamphlet #306, 1992); Brinton, *Guide to Quaker Practice*, 11-15; Howard Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years* (1964), 72-78; George Peck, *What is Quakerism?* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania:Pendle Hill Pamphlet #277, 1988), 21; Howard Collier, *The Quaker Meeting* (Pendle Hill Pamphlet #26, 1944), 8 (“awareness of self must be lost or held in abeyance”), 11 (“what we usually term ‘our thoughts’ must be quieted”).

<sup>11</sup>Jean Toomer, *An Interpretation of Friends Worship* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Friends General Conference, 1947), 21-24.



life of the group. This is our chance to lose ourselves in a unified and greater life....Quiet and relax the body....Though relaxed it should not become limp or drowsy. It must be kept upright, alert, wakeful... Still the mind... turn it steadfastly towards God....It is by stilling the body-mind that we center down. I would judge that all Friends have in common the practice of centering down....From here on, however, each of us is likely to go his individual way.... We are not called upon to follow any fixed procedure....Once I have centered down I try to open myself, to let the light in. I try to open myself to God's power. I try to open myself to the other members of the meeting....I encourage a feeling of expectancy....

Toomer's advice is quite consistent with what is done within a Zen sitting.

What do contemporary Quakers actually do in a silent meeting for worship? Stanford Searl interviewed 47 Friends in the Northeast U.S. and in England and asked about their experiences. He found that many reported that they "wait upon the Spirit" and practice "centering down" but that they did this in different ways.<sup>12</sup> "Many Quakers recognized or practiced a kind of receptivity to others... In a number of cases, Friends used words or phrases in order to help them get started in what they thought of as a process through which they would get quiet, grow in stillness, experience depth, and be more open to the Spirit."<sup>13</sup> Others moved into silence more directly: "Just close my eyes and I'm quiet ... that's all."<sup>14</sup> Others let their minds

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<sup>12</sup>Stanford J. Searl, Jr., *The Meanings of Silence in Quaker Worship* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 15, 37.

<sup>13</sup>Searl, *Meanings of Silence*, 28.

<sup>14</sup>Searl, *Meanings of Silence*, 12.

wander.<sup>15</sup> Some “spend time thinking and trying to seek God’s guidance in decisions.”<sup>16</sup> In 1989, 692 British Quakers answered the question, “What kind of activity best describes what you are doing in Meeting for Worship?” Participants could tick more than one box. They reported praying (35%), meditating (42%), listening (54%), communing (30%), seeking God’s will (34%), thinking (66%), and opening up to the Spirit (60%).<sup>17</sup>

There is general agreement that Quaker worship involves waiting on God.<sup>18</sup> For William Taber, “the heart of worship is communion with this invisible but eternal stream of reality in which is the living and eternal Christ.”<sup>19</sup> He describes several techniques that Friends use in entering worship and centering, including repeating a prayer, using a mantra or centering prayer, praying for each person in the room, using mental images, or just becoming aware of that Quiet Presence that they may “go there, wordlessly.”<sup>20</sup> He considers these as transition steps, after which we experience being united with a group which is “waiting on the Lord.” Then “the mind slows down into a reverie-like state” but “others may experience an effortless flow of logical thought about some problem which has surfaced in the mind. Or perhaps scenes from the past week may pass in review...” We may “find ourselves confronting some unpleasant situation in our lives,” “realize that we are seeing a familiar member of the meeting in a new way,” or “explore old memories.”<sup>21</sup> So, for Taber, there can be a fair amount of imagining and thinking going on, while he notes that for others the experience is wordless. On the other hand, for Peter

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<sup>15</sup>Searl, *Meanings of Silence*, 32-37.

<sup>16</sup> Pink Dandelion, *The Liturgies of Quakerism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 91.

<sup>17</sup>Dandelion, *Liturgies of Quakerism*, 119-20.

<sup>18</sup>Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (Quaker Heritage Press, online, 1678), Eleventh Proposition (Concerning Worship), §III.

<sup>19</sup>Taber, *Four Doors to Meeting for Worship*, 4.

<sup>20</sup>Taber, *Four Doors to Meeting for Worship*, 14-16.

<sup>21</sup>Taber, *Four Doors to Meeting for Worship*, 19-21.

Bien, “when we gather in our silent meetings we still try, following Barclay’s advice, to abstain from one’s own thoughts and to quiet the imagination.”<sup>22</sup>

The paucity and inconsistency of guidance on what is a central feature of Friends’ practice, together with the substantial diversity on what this practice involves for contemporary Friends, led me to wonder whether further insight could be obtained from the writings of early Friends, as well as whether Zen practice could offer some help. There is also a fair amount of literature available on prayer, meditation, and mysticism more generally.<sup>23</sup> There is of course a dizzying variety of meditation techniques from different traditions, raising the question as to which might be suitable for a Quaker meeting. As discussed above, Zen provides very clear instructions on how to sit and let thoughts go. But does Quaker practice ideally involve letting our thoughts go? When we sit in silent worship, do we use the time for reflection (which involves thinking), or work towards inward silence?

We can find a pretty clear answer to these questions in the writings of the early Quakers. For them, worship involved waiting upon God and, as part of doing so, turning away from their own thoughts. In the words of Robert Barclay, who wrote the first systematic theology for Friends:

“All true and acceptable worship to God is offered in the inward and immediate moving and drawing of his own Spirit...we ought not to do it in our own will...”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Peter Bien, *Words, Wordlessness and the Word* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Pamphlet #303, 1992), 5. (“when we gather in our silent meetings we still try, following Barclay’s advice, ‘to abstain from one’s own thoughts and to quiet the imagination. All of the mind’s own labors and the roving of the imagination on things that are essentially good as well as things that are evil must be brought to a halt.’ If this is successful we speak of a gathered meeting....”)

<sup>23</sup>Wayne Teasdale, *The Mystic Heart* (Novato, Calif.: New World Library, 1999); Coleman, *Presence and Process* is a helpful recent summary.

<sup>24</sup>Barclay, *Apology*, Eleventh Proposition, first paragraph.

“[W]hen assembled, the great work of one and all ought to be to wait upon God, and returning out of their own thoughts and imaginations, to feel the Lord’s presence.”<sup>25</sup> This is even clearer in the Latin, where Barclay refers to driving our thoughts out of ourselves.<sup>26</sup>

“[I]t may and hath often fallen out among us that divers meetings have pas[sed] without one word.”<sup>27</sup>

“As there can be nothing more opposite to the natural will and wisdom of man than this silent waiting upon God, so neither can it be obtained nor rightly comprehended by man but as he layeth down his own wisdom and will so as to be content to be thoroughly subject to God...And so from this principle of man’s being silent and not acting in the things of God of himself until thus acted by God’s Light and Grace in the heart, did naturally spring that manner of sitting silent together and waiting together upon the Lord. For many thus principled ...each made it their work to retire inwardly to the measure of Grace in themselves, not only being silent as to words but even abstaining from all their own thoughts, imaginations and desires....”<sup>28</sup>

It is noteworthy that many meetings were entirely silent. Vocal ministry was not excluded, but it didn’t always happen; silence often prevailed.

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<sup>25</sup>Barclay, *Apology*, Eleventh Proposition, §VI.

<sup>26</sup>“uniuscujusque opus esse debet, Deo attendere et, ex propriis cogitationibus et imaginationibus egredientes, vel eas potius ex se pellentes, Dei praesentiam sentire...” (the work of each one should be to attend to God and, departing from their own thoughts and imaginings, or preferably driving them out of themselves, to feel the presence of God.) Robert Barclay, *Theologiae Verè Christianae Apologia* (Amsterdam, 1676), 226 (Thesis Undecima, §VI).

<sup>27</sup>Barclay, *Apology*, Eleventh Proposition, §VI.

<sup>28</sup>Barclay, *Apology*, Eleventh Proposition, §VII.

Barclay doesn't just explain how Quakers worship in silence, but offers some arguments as to why they do so. The first is that worship involves being attentive to God, and that in order to be attentive (to listen) to someone, you need to refrain from speaking, pay attention, and stop your own thinking. The second argument sounds odd to modern ears, since it has to do with the work of the devil. Barclay's argument is that, as long as we are thinking, the devil can insinuate himself into our thoughts and imaginations, but cannot do so if we become silent: "when the soul comes to this silence, and, as it were, is brought to nothingness, as to her own workings, then the devil is shut out; for the pure presence of God and shining of his Light he cannot abide, because so long as a man is thinking and meditating as of himself, he cannot be sure but the devil is influencing him therein, but when he comes wholly to be silent, as the pure Light of God shines in upon him, then he is sure that the devil is shut out."<sup>29</sup>

Barclay acknowledges that mysticism is not original with Quakers; he cites as antecedents Christian mystics, for example Balthazar Alvarez,<sup>30</sup> who described his prayer method as "to place himself in God's presence... and to rejoice with Him permanently...[with] no reasoning of the mind."<sup>31</sup>

Barclay concludes by answering an objection to the form of worship he advocates:

*Obj.* [I]t seems to be an unprofitable exercise for a man to be doing or thinking nothing and that one might be much better employed either in meditating upon some good subject or otherwise praying to or praising God.

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<sup>29</sup>Barclay, *Apology*, Eleventh Proposition, §XII.

<sup>30</sup>Barclay, *Apology*, Eleventh Proposition, §XVI.

<sup>31</sup>Augustine Baker, *Holy Wisdom* (Christian Ethereal Classics, online)(originally Douay Abbey, 1657), 387-88 (Barclay cites this book).

*Answer.* ...[T]hat is not unprofitable which is of absolute necessity, before any other duty can be acceptably performed, as we have shown this waiting to be. Moreover, those have but a ...gross apprehension of God ...that imagine that men please him by their own workings and actings, whereas, as hath been shown, the first step for man to fear God is to cease from his own thoughts and imaginations and suffer God's Spirit to work in him.<sup>32</sup>

This is not just Barclay's view of Quaker worship: those who have studied the writings of early Quakers agree that their practice of worship involved stilling the mind of thoughts and imaginations and waiting on God's spirit.<sup>33</sup> For example, George Fox advised Lady Claypole: "be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts."<sup>34</sup> In his 10<sup>th</sup> Epistle, Fox stated: "Friends,—Whatever ye are addicted to, the tempter will come in that thing; and when he can trouble you, then **he gets advantage over you** [2 Cor 2:11], and then ye are gone. Stand still in that which is pure, after ye see yourselves; and then mercy comes in. After thou seest thy thoughts, and the temptations, do not think, but submit; and then power comes. Stand still in that which shows and discovers; and there doth strength immediately come. And stand still in the light, and submit to it, and the other will be hushed and gone; and then content comes. And when temptations and troubles appear, sink down in that which is pure, and all will be hushed, and fly away. Your strength is to stand still, after ye see yourselves; whatsoever ye see yourselves addicted to, temptations, corruption, uncleanness, &c. then ye think ye shall never overcome.

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<sup>32</sup>Barclay, *Apology*, Eleventh Proposition, §XVII.

<sup>33</sup>David Johnson, *A Quaker Prayer Life* (San Francisco, CA: Inner Light Books, 2013); George Gorman, *The Amazing Fact of Quaker Worship* (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1973); Steve Smith, *Eastern Light* (Duluth, MN: QUPublishing, 2015).

<sup>34</sup>George Fox, Letter to Lady Claypole (1658), in *Journal of George Fox* (John Nickalls ed., Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1952), 346.

And earthly reason will tell you, what ye shall lose; hearken not to that, but stand still in the light that shows them to you, and then strength comes from the Lord, and help contrary to your expectation. Then ye grow up in peace, and no trouble shall move you. **David fretted himself, when he looked out [Eccl 12:3]; but when he was still, no trouble could move him.** [Psa 37:1,7f] When your thoughts are out, abroad, then troubles move you. But come to **stay your minds upon that spirit** [Isa 26:3] which was before the letter; here ye learn to read the scriptures aright. If ye do any thing in your own wills, then ye tempt God; but stand still in that power which brings peace.” As Isaac Penington put it: “For man is to come into the poverty of self, into the abasedness, into the nothingness, into the silence of his spirit before the Lord, into the putting off of all his knowledge, wisdom, understanding, abilities, all that he is, hath done, or can do...”<sup>35</sup>

The popularity of a work entitled “A Guide to True Peace,” which was compiled by two English Quakers in 1813 and was quickly republished in America, suggests that this form of silent prayer continued to be practiced by Quakers:

We must retire from all outward objects, and silence all the desires and wandering imaginations of the mind; that in this profound silence of the whole soul, we may hearken to the ineffable voice of the Divine Teacher... But how seldom is it that the soul keeps itself silent enough for God to speak! The murmurs of our vain desires, and of our self-love, disturb all the teachings of the Divine Spirit.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Isaac Penington, A brief Account concerning Silent Meetings, in *The Works of the Long-Mournful and Sorely-Distressed Isaac Penington, Vol. II, Second Edition*, (London, 1761), 353.

<sup>36</sup>“A Guide to True Peace,” (York: W. Alexander, 2d ed., 1815), 8.

Writing in 1973, George Gorman is also quite clear, “The meeting comes to be truly gathered when most, if not all, of those present have themselves been drawn in to the very depths of themselves so that even their thoughts have been stilled and their minds, while by no means empty, are in near perfect rest.”<sup>37</sup>

The Quaker practice of silent worship as described by Barclay has been there from the beginning and continues to the present day but, as discussed above, current-day practice varies. My experience is that getting back to the practice of early Quakers would deepen meeting for worship. Even though I came to this realization through my Zen experience, reading Barclay makes it clear to me that putting aside our thoughts in worship is squarely in the Quaker tradition. It is not a new or foreign idea for Quakerism.

Barclay talks about “attending to” God. Attentiveness is central to Zen. Some Zen teachers are not shy about instructing their students what to do, and the instructions are clear and explicit. These often deal with posture and physical setting. Other Zen teachers, encourage practitioners, beyond posture to find out for themselves what helps most. Instructions concern posture as well as what to do with the mind. Posture is of great importance for Zen: “The state of mind that exists when you sit in the right posture is, itself, enlightenment.”<sup>38</sup> Posture includes sitting upright and not moving for the duration of the sit. Sitting in the lotus posture is ideal, but seldom practical for westerners. , For most who cannot do this, there are less demanding postures, and a meditation bench or chair can be used by those for whom a cushion does not work.<sup>39</sup> As discussed below, Zen teachers also discuss what to do with thoughts that arise, as

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<sup>37</sup>Gorman, *Amazing Fact of Quaker Worship*, 40.

<sup>38</sup>Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (New York: Weatherhill 1970), 28.

<sup>39</sup>Philip Kapleau, *The Three Pillars of Zen* (Garden City, New York: Anchor, 1980), 327-53.



well as what to do about other difficulties while sitting, although in many cases the advice needs to be individually tailored. The Zen practice of shikantaza (just sitting) involves attentiveness, without a specific focus on the breath. When thoughts arise, these are let go, like any other distractions. When distractions come, these are likewise accepted and put to one side. The same practice could be followed in Quaker meeting and seems consistent with the writings of early Quakers. Perhaps one reason why the Zen technique seems suitable for Quaker meeting is that it is hardly a technique at all. The basic instruction on how to sit zazen (specifically shikantaza) is: “Just sit.” Sitting in this way therefore does not involve introducing something foreign into Quaker meeting. Rather, it involves simply sitting attentively, without pursuing thoughts. This differs from some meditation techniques of other traditions, which are more involved. This sparseness is one reason I prefer Zen to other meditation traditions, and why I feel it is suitable for Quaker meeting.

If Quaker worship involves quieting the mind and listening to God, what of those who don't believe in God? If they adopt an attitude of attentiveness, would that be the same thing as being attentive to God, or would the absence of an explicit intention to listen to God mean that they are doing something different from what Barclay describes? The key to answering this question is to recognize that listening to God does not involve forming an idea of God, because such an idea is part of the thoughts and imaginations that Barclay advises us to drop. Quakers have different ideas about God. Some might identify as agnostic or atheistic; some might believe in a Spirit, but not a God who intervenes directly in human history;<sup>40</sup> while others believe in a personal God who does so intervene. These differences in beliefs do not prevent Friends from being united

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<sup>40</sup>Bruce Birchard, *The Burning One-ness Binding Everything* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Pamphlet #332, 1997), 22.

with others in experience of the Spirit in a meeting for worship.<sup>41</sup> Another way of putting this is that the practice and experience of sitting in meeting for worship does not depend on theological belief. Zen does not necessarily involve a belief in God (although Zen adherents, including Christians, are clear that those who believe in God can practice Zen. Zen practice does not involve signing on to Buddhist beliefs.). Also, one should be aware that even some of the most devoted Zen teachers leave room for God in human life as an unknown being behind and beyond human faculty. According to Shunryu Suzuki:

“We understand that each one of us is a tentative form of the absolute being and whatever we do is the activity of the absolute being, which is not possible to be known by us completely, but something which we cannot doubt its existence. It exists, but we cannot know it completely. And this is the origin and source of our life. And it is also the life to which we resume after cessation of our activity. If there is something which we should believe in, this kind of absolute unknown being is the only thing. So the purpose of our practice is to get accustomed to living without being attached to many things—except this unknown being. When we find our meaning of life in this way, we naturally can help each other. We will love each other without forcing anything on others, keeping harmony between us and animate and inanimate beings. We are all friends.”<sup>42</sup>

As Barry Morley has eloquently explained, setting aside our preconceived ideas is also integral to Quaker business meeting.<sup>43</sup> Again, differences in theological belief should not prevent Friends from uniting in a sense of the meeting, even though different Friends would describe the process of meeting for business in different ways. Some might say that business

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<sup>41</sup>Birchard, *The Burning One-ness*, 5-6.

<sup>42</sup> Lecture of Shunryu Suzuki, April 22, 1967, Cuke Archives at Cuke.com.

<sup>43</sup> Barry Morley, *Beyond Consensus* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Pamphlet #307, 1993), 13. See also Britain Yearly Meeting, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, (Warwick: 1995), 3.02.

meeting is a body that dwells and works in the mind of Christ,<sup>44</sup> others that they are led by the Spirit, or that business meeting involves setting aside our egos and our individual desires and opinions. These differences in verbal formulation do not, however, point to differences in substance.

### **B. Deepening worship and learning from Zen**

Can we deepen our meetings for worship? Can gathered meetings become more a norm than a rarity?

I think so -- specifically if we get back to what Barclay said. At the same time, I would be reluctant to disturb the Quaker practice of refraining from issuing instructions on what to do in meeting for worship. An attempt to issue such instructions would likely fail, in any event. That does not mean, though, that we cannot talk about it at all, and cannot help each other work through what we might do in meeting for worship. It may be that emphasizing the general intention and approach, rather than the specifics of what each of us does, would work.

In thinking about how to deepen meeting for worship, Quakers could learn from Zen practice.

If we want to do as Barclay advises us, how might we go about it? One answer is that Zen offers specific tips and procedures for quieting our minds of thoughts and imaginations. Spiritual formation groups might more explicitly include a discussion of Zen sitting. Instructions

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<sup>44</sup>Bill Taber, *The Mind of Christ* (Michael Birkel ed., Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Pamphlet #406, 2010), 6.

for Zen sitting might be referenced in Quaker websites. Many Friends might appreciate this guidance.

Good seating can help folks sit still in meeting for worship. For most people, this means straight-backed seating where it is possible to sit at length without moving. Meditation cushions could be made available for those who can use them.

Another step would be to emphasize the importance of coming to meeting on time and maintaining silence on entering the room.

Zazen (Zen meditation) of course does not involve speaking out of the silence, and this is the main difference between a Quaker meeting for worship and a Zen sitting. If meeting participants focused more on silence, there would likely be less spoken ministry, although this would depend on the dynamics of the specific local meeting. It is common for a Quaker meeting to begin with a substantial period of silence before any vocal ministry, and this might be encouraged, if only to help assure that as many as possible are gathered before vocal ministry begins.<sup>45</sup> However, the time when vocal ministry begins during a meeting is fundamentally not subject to control or fixed rules.

I also like the practice of a small meeting which I attend periodically. There, meeting for worship is usually silent, but it is followed by an occasion for worship sharing, where we can each share a joy or concern, a request to hold in the light, or whatever thought we wish. The advantage of this approach is that the meeting for worship is usually silent and concentrated

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<sup>45</sup>Tamura, *A Zen Buddhist Encounters Quakerism*, 13 (“To me a good Quaker meeting seems to be one in which deep silence continues at least for the first half hour...”); Barclay, *Apology*, Eleventh Proposition, §IX. (“we judge it needful there be in the first place some time of silence, during which every one may be gathered inward..., from which he that ministereth may receive strength to bring forth what he ministereth...”)

(spoken ministry is not ruled out, though), but we also have an opportunity to build a connection with other meeting members about what is on our minds, without necessarily expressing this as a message during meeting.

### **C. Providing Guidance**

Another change that might be inspired by Zen involves individual guidance by a teacher/mentor/guru/coach. If practice in meeting for worship becomes more intense, and is perhaps supplemented by more Friends sitting on their own at home or in small groups during the week, the availability of a teacher or teachers to a meeting becomes important. Zen has a strong tradition of teachers. While the instructions are simple, sitting can involve challenges for the beginner (e.g. dealing with *makyo*, feelings of insecurity and of whether one is making progress in meditating), and it can take years for someone to become totally comfortable with their meditation practice. Many people benefit from the guidance and encouragement of a teacher even after practicing for decades.

The Quaker tradition would reject the Zen requirements of lineage and hierarchical succession as defining those who are qualified to instruct students and would favor a more open and less hierarchical approach. At the same time, those Friends who would hold themselves out as offering individual guidance for practice in meeting for worship should have some training and experience. This could be developed as a ministry. Quakers have processes for recognizing ministry which can be applied to this case, and have been applied from time to time to recognize a specific ministry for spiritual development.

Such a person could be called an “elder”, but I don’t think one needs to overthink the terminology. If the job is for the person to guide those who want to deepen their practice in

meeting for worship as well as meditating on their own, then the job is that of a meditation teacher or coach, and persons with appropriate experience and orientation can be recognized by the meeting as having this ministry.<sup>46</sup>

#### **D. Does Zen Sitting Differ from Quaker Worship?**

Some have asked whether Zen sitting differs from Quaker worship.<sup>47</sup> It is a much more complex question than might initially appear. Fran Taber answers it like this:

Either a group of persons doing Zen sitting or a group practice of centering prayer can look from the outside much like a Quaker meeting for worship, but operates from somewhat different assumptions. Neither of them expects to function as a body or to be united in a corporate experience. Each has more the character of a number of individuals engaging in personal practice together. Zen practice does not assume an active Divine principal at work.<sup>48</sup>

I disagree with Taber on the individuality of Zen practice. A basic tenet of Zen is the artificiality of envisioning an individual as having a separate existence from the universe as a whole. Particularly when one is sitting, one tends to experience *not* being an individual. So to characterize Zen sitting as an individual exercise would be fundamentally wrong and based on a misunderstanding of Zen. Admittedly, many beginners might initially experience the practice as an individual one, but with experience and guidance this kind of attitude tends to drop off.

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<sup>46</sup>On process for recognizing gifts of ministry or eldering, see Martha Paxson Grundy, *Tall Poppies: Supporting Gifts of Ministry and Eldering in the Monthly Meeting* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Pamphlet #347, 1999); Alastair Heron, *Gifts and Ministries: a discussion paper on eldership* (Quaker Home Service: London 2d ed. 1993).

<sup>47</sup>QuakerSpeak, *Is Quaker Worship Meditation?*; Valerie Brown, *Living from the Center*.

<sup>48</sup>William and Frances Taber, *Building the Life of the Meeting* (Melbourne Beach, Florida: Southeastern Yearly Meeting 1994), 9-10.

Of course, in practice, it is not so easy – even for those with experience -- to get to an enlightened state of no-self. I would also question whether in practice a Quaker meeting or a Zen group sitting together are “more united” as a body. It could well be the Zen group.

Taber’s second point that Zen “does not assume an active Divine principal at work” may be accurate for some but not all Zen practioners, but this would also be true of many Quakers. While the traditional Quaker explanation of what happens in meeting for worship assumes the working of God, not all would use this language. I don’t think that the actual worship experience of those who do not think in terms of God differs because of this difference in belief (more on Quaker belief below).

There are certainly approaches to meditation that would not be suitable for Quaker meeting, for example meditation done for the purpose of achieving a health or other personal benefit.<sup>49</sup> The same thing is true for Zen, which distinguishes between zazen (sitting meditation) and meditation done for various non-spiritual motives. There is also a strong tradition within Zen that would say that anything done with an intention of gaining a benefit is not true Zen practice.

Friends can engage in any number of spiritual practices on their own, which may be quite different from what they do in meeting for worship. Sitting with a group in meeting for worship will always be different from any spiritual practice one does on one’s own. When we sit in meeting for worship we feel the community gathered. For Brinton, this group mysticism is a defining feature of Quakerism.<sup>50</sup> As Barclay said: “For when I came into the silent assemblies of

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<sup>49</sup>Crom, *Quaker Worship and Techniques of Meditation* (Pendle Hill Pamphlet #195, 1974), 5-6.

<sup>50</sup>Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years*, xiii.

God's people I felt a secret power among them which touched my heart,"<sup>51</sup> and "the seeing of the face one of another, when both are inwardly gathered unto the Life, giveth occasion for the Life secretly to rise and pass from vessel to vessel; and as many candles lighted and put in one place do greatly augment the light, and makes it more to shine forth; so when many are gathered together into the same Life, there is more of the glory of God..."<sup>52</sup> The prospects of a gathered meeting are much enhanced if Friends are as much as possible waiting silently and stilling their minds of thoughts and imaginations as Barclay recommends.

What specifically Friends do to achieve this stillness will be different. Some might just sit. Others might focus on the breath, or say a mantra. But if all are sitting with a view to cease from their own thoughts and imaginations and suffer God's Spirit to work in them, then the meeting should be on the right track. If Friends gather with the intention to open themselves to Spirit, all are engaged in meeting for worship. For those Friends familiar with Zen, their practice might be informed by their Zen experience, but this does not make it alien to meeting for worship.

To me, the key difference between a Zen sitting and a Quaker meeting is that the latter involves being open to vocal ministry. A Zen sitting would never involve this. How significant a difference this is will depend on the culture of the Quaker meeting in question. Some meetings have a culture of little if any spoken ministry. Others do not. For those meetings where there is significant vocal ministry, the experience will be quite different from a Zen sitting. I appreciate both kinds of Quaker meeting: the silent ones and those with vocal ministry which allows us to hear others share from their heart. Even for those messages that may seem problematic, the

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<sup>51</sup>Barclay, *Apology*, Eleventh Proposition, §VII.

<sup>52</sup>Barclay, *Apology*, Eleventh Proposition, §XVII.



meeting provides an occasion to practice nonjudgmental listening, which is an activity that few of us engage in as fully as we should.

## II. Belief

Besides worship, another key area where Zen can inform Quakerism is the role of beliefs. The two areas are closely linked, as silent worship and noncreedalism go hand in hand.

“The Society of Friends has no formal creed.”<sup>53</sup> But why not? As Robert Griswold explains, based on what founding Quakers (George Fox, Margaret Fell, et al.) said, Quakerism is noncreedal not as an accident, but because Quakers consider creeds antithetical to our experience of truth.<sup>54</sup> As Brinton put it: “Friends have never officially issued statements of their beliefs comparable in authority to the written creeds of many other Christian bodies. Their reason for refraining from the formulation and use of creeds is the conviction that no form of words can

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<sup>53</sup>Baltimore Yearly Meeting, *Faith and Practice* (Sandy Spring, MD: Baltimore Yearly Meeting, 1988), vi. Noncreedalism is not uniform among Quakers, though. The Richmond Declaration of 1887 states (biblical references omitted): “We believe in one holy, almighty, all-wise, and everlasting God, the Father, the Creator and Preserver of all things; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, by whom all things were made, and by whom all things consist; and in one Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, the Reprover of the world, the Witness for Christ, and the Teacher, Guide, and Sanctifier of the people of God; and that these three are one in the eternal Godhead...” Friends United Meeting reaffirmed the Richmond declaration at its 2007 General Board Meeting.

<sup>54</sup>Robert Griswold, *Creeds and Quakers: What’s Belief Got to do with it?* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Pamphlet #377, 2005). Steven Smith, “‘Leadings’ For Nontheistic Friends?”, *Friends Journal* 57, no. 1 (Jan. 2011): 22 (“what counted most for early Friends were not the words one used to describe one’s spiritual experiences, but those experiences themselves”); *The Quaker Way* (London, Quaker Home Service, pamphlet, 1998) (“Quakerism is a group of insights, attitudes, and practices which together form a way of life, rather than a dogma or creed. It rests on a conviction that by looking into their inmost hearts people can have a direct communion with their Creator. This experience cannot ultimately be described in words, but Quakers base their whole lives on it.”).

adequately convey the living, growing truth of the Christian religion.”<sup>55</sup> Griswold argues that “truth is not served by being captured in particular creeds”<sup>56</sup> and that Quakers rely for authority not on scripture, or the teaching of ministers, but on direct experience of the Divine. For Griswold, “The individual had to be convinced that following the reality encountered inside, rather than his or her own notions, was the only hope for an authentic life. And in this process each person had to give up something. Wrote Isaac Pennington: ‘Give over thine own willing, give over thine own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything, and sink down to the seed which God sows in thy heart and let that be in thee.’”<sup>57</sup> Pink Dandelion is surely correct that the noncreedalism of modern liberal Quakers represents an evolution in theology as compared with early Quakers,<sup>58</sup> but this does not negate Griswold’s argument that noncreedalism has strong roots in early Quakerism.

As Fox said: “But all you who rely on your own wisdom and your own reason, you make out that silent waiting on God would leave you famished. It would indeed be a strange life to you to learn to be silent; you would have to enter a new world. Now you have to die in the silence, you with your wisdom, your knowledge, your reason and your own understanding.”<sup>59</sup> This emphasis on setting aside our ideas and beliefs as a first step in a search for truth goes hand in hand with what we do in meeting for worship. Putting aside our thoughts is not just a

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<sup>55</sup>Brinton, *Guide to Quaker Practice*, 7

<sup>56</sup>Griswold, *Creeds and Quakers*, 8.

<sup>57</sup>Griswold, *Creeds and Quakers*, 16.

<sup>58</sup>Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 134. This is, for example, evident from reading George Fox’s Letter to the Governor of Barbados, 1671, which reads very much like portions of the Nicene Creed. Quaker thinking has evolved since that letter. The letter for example contains two paragraphs about slavery that modern-day Quakers would find abhorrent.

<sup>59</sup>George Fox, “An epistle to all the people of the earth” (1657), in Rex Ambler, ed., *Truth of the Heart: An Anthology of George Fox*, (Quaker Books, 2001), 25.

technique, but is an essential step in listening to God. Likewise, putting aside our ideas is an essential step in searching for truth, which cannot be described in ideas and words.

When we put aside our thoughts, we open ourselves to the promptings of the Spirit. This is the basis of the Quaker principle of continuing revelation, the idea that we can directly experience communication from the Spirit within each of us. This principle is also inconsistent with a creed, because it implies that our individual and corporate understanding of the truth can change over time.

Griswold quotes Fox's admonition to "stay aware of truth, and keep digging for the pearl in your own field."<sup>60</sup> In this view, truth is not something that we find and are then done, but something that involves constant searching. Griswold reads Fox as saying that "truth (reality) is something to be *aware* of, not something to be believed."<sup>61</sup> For Pink Dandelion, liberal Quaker theology is a seeker's theology, involving a process of searching for truth more than a provision of final answers.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Griswold, *Creeds and Quakers*, 9. Rex Ambler, ed., *Truth of the Heart: An Anthology of George Fox*, Epistle 281 (1670), p. 11.

<sup>61</sup>Griswold, *Creeds and Quakers*, 9.

<sup>62</sup>Dandelion, *Liturgies of Quakerism*. See also Toomer, *An Interpretation of Friends worship*, 11 ("Most religions offer formal official statements of what they believe God to be. They say what God's nature is, and set forth his attributes. Friends make no such pronouncement; and I, for one, am glad there is none. Man's words about God cannot substitute for a first-hand experience of the living reality. Friends are directed to seek for the reality within themselves.... We are urged to try to sense God's presence, daily to practice His presence. By such practice, if we persevere, we shall surely come to have a convincing experience. Worship is our response to God's reality, a reality which is, to be sure, within men, but which also is the radiant foundation of the entire universe.")

There are several reasons for a witness against theological beliefs.<sup>63</sup> One involves ineffability. God, or ultimate truth, is ineffable.<sup>64</sup> Life is fundamentally a mystery. The mystery of life resists being reduced to a set of logical syllogisms. All religions entertain this idea to a greater or lesser extent, but it is central for Quakers.

Second, a witness against beliefs involves a caution against undue certainty. The concept of continuing revelation suggests that each of us may encounter new information that will cause us to change our minds on an issue. Because we believe there is that of God in every person, we are open to listening to others speak their truth, and we are open to allowing what we hear to change how we view the world. Those who claim absolute certainty can base their claim on the words of scripture or the statements of the church hierarchy, but Quakers do not consider these to be infallible sources.

Third, Fox taught that the way to truth was not through our own powers of thinking and reason, but rather through direct experience.<sup>65</sup> That experience (corresponding to what Zen would call an enlightenment experience) can result in freedom, including freedom from doctrines:

And so, if the truth have made you free, then you are free indeed; free  
from all the will-worships, and from all the windy doctrines; from all the evil

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<sup>63</sup>Pink Dandelion identifies eleven reasons that Liberal Quakers do not adopt a credal system of belief. Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 136-37.

<sup>64</sup>Peter Bien, *Words Wordlessness and the Word* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania:Pendle Hill Pamphlet #303, 1992); Thomas Gates, *Reclaiming the Transcendent* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania:Pendle Hill Pamphlet #422, 2013). Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 142 (For Quakers, “The response to any direct, precise question on faith or morals has to be silence.”). See also on the diversity of Quaker beliefs and vocabulary used to describe God, Rhiannon Grant, *Telling the Truth About God* (2018).

<sup>65</sup>Griswold, *Creeds and Quakers*,10-15.

inventions, traditions, imaginations, and notions, and rudiments of Adam in the fall....<sup>66</sup>

Finally, as the above quotes from George Fox and Isaac Pennington suggest, early Friends saw beliefs (“notions”) as something our egos become attached to and which we need to let go of if we want to apprehend ultimate truth, just as we let go of our notions when we gather for worship.

A noncreedal approach offers an exciting opportunity for people differing in theological belief to worship together as a community despite those differences. This is a reality for many Quakers, although not all Quakers are on board with noncreedalism. Some branches of Quakerism define their membership much more along creedal lines, Indiana Yearly Meeting being an example.<sup>67</sup>

Pink Dandelion cites as advantages of creeds that they express faith in memorable words, educate new members, symbolize unity, defend the faith in relation to other faiths, maintain discipline, and provide a public identity.<sup>68</sup> While true, the same can be said of noncreedalism. A well-articulated Quaker noncreedalism fulfills all these functions. And if noncreedalism is true to what Quakers (or a particular branch of Quakers) feels they are, then it makes sense.

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<sup>66</sup>George Fox, Epistle 260 (1668), reprinted in *The Works of George Fox*, Vol VII, page 311 (State College, Pa.: George Fox Fund 1990)(reprinted from the edition of 1831)., p. 19.

<sup>67</sup>See Indiana Yearly Meeting, *Faith and Practice*, which includes the Richmond Declaration. (“Friends receive into adult membership those whose faith in God and in Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord is manifest in their lives and who are in unity with the teachings of Christian truth as held by the Religious Society of Friends.”)

<sup>68</sup>Dandelion, *Liturgies of Quakerism*.

Punshon is critical of using continuing revelation to support noncreedalism.<sup>69</sup> I agree with Punshon that it is disingenuous to argue that the noncreedal view of Quakerism, pushed to the extent of being welcoming of non-Christians (including atheists) into Quakerism, can be found in the views of George Fox and other early Quakers. The better view is that, while noncreedalism has a grounding in the thinking of Fox, he was clearly a Christian, and would have undoubtedly been surprised to see what liberal Quakerism has come to look like. The argument for noncreedalism is not that Quaker tradition mandates this, but rather that noncreedalism has roots in Quaker tradition and we think it is the better approach for today. We should acknowledge that it represents an evolution in thinking. At the same time, Quakers are not at the point of embodying a strong noncreedal approach in the Faith and Practice of the various yearly meetings. Not all Friends will agree on noncreedalism. What I hope is that our Quaker community can include both Friends who consider themselves traditional Christians, and lean towards a creedal approach, as well as those with a fairly strong noncreedal approach. For liberal Friends, the marker can be the absence of a creed applicable to all, rather than agreement on a theory that we should not have a creed. Proponents of noncreedalism should themselves exercise some humility and acceptance. Punshon states: “I cannot minister as I feel called, because I know the words that come naturally to me are often unacceptable to you.”<sup>70</sup> I hope that this statement is not true for many monthly meetings. Proponents of noncreedalism should never make traditional Christians feel uncomfortable using the language that comes from their hearts. Noncreedalism is based on acceptance of those who might have different life experiences and points of view.

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<sup>69</sup> John Punshon, Letter to a Universalist (Pendle Hill Pamphlet 285) (1989).

<sup>70</sup> Punshon, Letter to a Universalist, p. 3.

Being silent, ceasing from thought, dying to your ego, letting go of the notion that you can figure out the answers through a process of reasoning, as advocated by Fox and Penington, are all quintessentially Zen as well. Zen very explicitly warns about beliefs, and drives the point home by celebrating paradox and lack of logic. Zen is very clear that truth cannot be expressed in words or by logic:

“Empty-handed I go, and behold the spade is in my hands;  
I walk on foot, and yet on the back of an ox I am riding;  
When I pass over the bridge,  
Lo, the water flows not, but the bridge does flow.”

“This is the famous gatha [poem] of Jenye [sixth century]...and it summarily gives the point of view as entertained by the followers of Zen....Nothing can be more illogical and contrary to common sense than these four lines....What is Zen through these apparent trivialities and irrationalities really driving us to comprehend? The answer is simple. Zen wants us to acquire an entirely new point of view whereby to look into the mysteries of life and the secrets of nature. This is because Zen has come to the definite conclusion that the ordinary logical process of reasoning is powerless to give final satisfaction to our deepest spiritual needs.”<sup>71</sup>

Noncreedalism is a key feature of Zen. Admittedly, there is a lot of Buddhist doctrine, but Zen de-emphasizes it. Zen embraces the idea that a true view of reality is not based on logical syllogism, and that concepts can impede understanding. This does not mean that Zen

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<sup>71</sup>D.T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1964), 58.

adherents have nothing to say about how to look at the world;<sup>72</sup> just that any verbal formulations have limited validity.

Theological speculation is discouraged in Buddhism generally. When asked such questions as whether the world is eternal and whether the Buddha exists after death, the Buddha refused to answer.<sup>73</sup>

Learning about the non-creedal nature of Zen, its paradoxical nature, and its attitude about ineffability can help inform those who are trying to wrap their minds around the non-creedal nature of Quakerism and the benefits of that approach. Not only do I think that a non-creedal approach for Quakerism is right, but more transparency around the concept of noncreedalism could serve as a way of unifying Quakers with different beliefs. It could help Quakers become more inclusive, which would be a good thing. Admittedly, this may apply only for liberal, perhaps also Conservative, Friends; it might be harder to bring FUM Friends on board, although the possibility of doing so by an appeal to George Fox's thought should not be excluded. Emphasizing the benefits of noncreedalism might also help some liberal Quakers understand that the absence of a creed is a virtue, not a liability.

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<sup>72</sup>For example, key ideas that we might find in Zen are: everything changes, nothing is permanently enduring (another way of saying this is that things are “empty”); this includes the self; there is suffering and a way to eliminate suffering (four noble truths); all is subject to cause and effect; all is one reality (nondualism).

<sup>73</sup>Culamalunkya Sutta, in *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (Bikkhu Nanamoli and Bikkhu Bodhi trans., Somerville, Mass: Wisdom Publications 2009), 533.



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## Appendix

### Robert Barclay, Apology, THE ELEVENTH PROPOSITION

## *Concerning Worship*<sup>74</sup>

All true and acceptable worship to God is offered in the inward and immediate moving and drawing of his own Spirit, which is neither limited to places, times, nor persons: for though we be to worship him always, and that we are continually to fear before him, yet as to the outward signification thereof in prayers, praises or preachings, we ought not to do it in our own will, where and when we will; but where and when we are moved thereunto by the stirring and secret inspiration of the Spirit of God in our hearts; which God heareth and accepteth of, and is never wanting to move us thereunto when need is, of which he himself is the alone proper judge. ....

§I. . . . Now I come to speak of worship, or of those acts, whether private or public... whereby man renders to God that part of his duty which relates immediately to him; and as "obedience is better than sacrifice," so neither is any sacrifice acceptable, but that which is done according to the will of him to whom it is offered. But men, finding it easier to sacrifice in their own wills than obey God's will, have heaped up sacrifices without obedience, and thinking to deceive God as

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<sup>74</sup>Editor's Note: This is an edited version of the Eleventh Proposition of *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* by Robert Barclay (about one-quarter of the length of the original). The purpose of the editing was to come up with a version that would be short enough for most people to read. This is an important text, because it provides guidance for Quaker worship. However, it is a bit inaccessible because at about 22,000 words the original takes several hours or even a full day to read and most people don't want to spend the time to do that. Barclay also repeats himself, goes on at undue length, and spends time on controversies which do not seem relevant today. I have made no changes to the language – only deleted material – and indicated all places where deletions have been made. I have focused on those parts of the text which provide a description of and guidance for meeting for worship.

The version presented here is based on: Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, 1678, online edition: Quaker Heritage Press: <http://www.qhpress.org/texts/barclay/apology/>. This should be identical to printed early editions. Other modern versions include *Barclay in Brief* (Pendle Hill Pamphlet #28, 1945 <https://pendlehill.org/product/barclay-brief/>) and *Barclay's Apology in Modern English*, edited by Dean Freiday (Barclay Press, 1961, reissued 2000). The version that follows contains all the material from the proposition On Worship that is found in *Barclay in Brief*, plus additional material. It is shorter than *Barclay's Apology in Modern English* and also differs from Dean Freiday's work in that I made no changes to the original language.

they do one another, give him a show of reverence, honor and worship, while they are both inwardly estranged and alienated from his holy and righteous life, and wholly strangers to the pure breathings of his Spirit, in which the acceptable sacrifice and worship is only offered up....

[§II. Omitted]

§III. ... albeit I say that this worship is neither limited to times, places, nor persons, yet I would not be understood as if I intended the putting away of all set times and places to worship. ... To meet together we think necessary for the people of God, because so long as we are clothed with this outward tabernacle there is a necessity to the entertaining of a joint and visible fellowship, and bearing of an outward testimony for God, and seeing of the faces of one another, that we concur with our persons as well as spirits. To be accompanied with that inward love and unity of spirit doth greatly tend to encourage and refresh the saints.

But the limitation we condemn is that whereas the Spirit of God should be the immediate actor, mover, persuader and influencer of man in the particular acts of worship when the saints are met together, this Spirit is limited in its operations by setting up a particular man or men to preach and pray in man's will, and all the rest are excluded from so much as believing that they are to wait for God's Spirit to move them in such things; and so they neglecting that which should quicken them in themselves, and not waiting to feel the pure breathings of God's Spirit so as to obey them, are led merely to depend upon the preacher and hear what he will say.

.... But he hath hammered together in his closet, according to his own will, by his human wisdom and literature, and by stealing the words of Truth from the letter of the Scriptures and patching together other men's writings and observations, so much as will hold him speaking an hour while the glass runs, and without waiting or feeling the inward influence of the Spirit of God, declaims that by haphazard, whether it be fit or seasonable for the people's condition or no, and when he has ended his sermon, he saith his prayer also in his own will, and so there is an end of the business. ....

§IV. ... we know no moral obligation by the fourth command or elsewhere to keep the first day of the week more as any other, or any holiness inherent in it....

[§V omitted]

§VI. ... to come then to the state of the controversy, as to the public worship we judge it the duty of all to be diligent in the assembling of themselves together...

and when assembled, the great work of one and all ought to be to wait upon God, and returning out of their own thoughts and imaginations, to feel the Lord's presence and know a "gathering into his Name" indeed, where he is "in the midst" according to his promise. And as every one is thus gathered, and so met together inwardly in their spirits as well as outwardly in their persons, there the secret power and virtue of life is known to refresh the soul, and the pure motions and breathings of God's Spirit are felt to arise, from which as words of declaration, prayers, or praises arise, the acceptable worship is known which edifies the Church and is well-pleasing to God, and no man here limits the Spirit of God nor bringeth forth his own cunning and gathered stuff, but everyone puts that forth which the Lord puts into their hearts: and it is uttered forth not in man's will and wisdom but "in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit and of Power." Yea, though there be not a word spoken, yet is the true spiritual worship performed and the body of Christ edified; yea it may and hath often fallen out among us that divers meetings have pas[sed] without one word, and yet our souls have been greatly edified and refreshed, and our hearts wonderfully overcome with the secret sense of God's Power and Spirit, which without words hath been ministered from one vessel to another. This is indeed strange and incredible to the mere natural and carnally-minded man, who will be apt to judge all time lost, where there is not something spoken that is obvious to the outward senses; and therefore I shall insist a little upon this subject, as one that can speak from a certain experience and not by mere hearsay, of this wonderful and glorious dispensation which hath so much the more of the wisdom and glory of God in it, as it's contrary to the nature of man's spirit, will, and wisdom.

**§VII.** As there can be nothing more opposite to the natural will and wisdom of man than this silent waiting upon God, so neither can it be obtained nor rightly comprehended by man but as he layeth down his own wisdom and will so as to be content to be thoroughly subject to God. And therefore it was not preached, nor can be so practised, but by such as find no outward ceremony, no observations, no words, yea not the best and purest words, even the words of Scripture, able to satisfy their weary and afflicted souls; because where all these may be, the life, power, and virtue which make such things effectual may be wanting. Such, I say, were necessitated to cease from all outwards and to be silent before the Lord, and being directed to that inward principle of Life and Light in themselves as the most excellent teacher, which "can never be removed into a corner," came thereby to be learned to wait upon God in the measure of life and grace received from him, and to cease from their own forward words and actings in the natural willing and comprehension and feel after this inward Seed of Life; that, as it moveth, they may move with it and be acted by its power and influenced, whether to pray, preach or

sing. And so from this principle of man's being silent and not acting in the things of God of himself until thus acted by God's Light and Grace in the heart, did naturally spring that manner of sitting silent together and waiting together upon the Lord. For many thus principled, meeting together in the pure fear of the Lord, did not apply themselves presently to speak, pray, or sing, &c., being afraid to be found acting forwardly in their own wills, but each made it their work to retire inwardly to the measure of Grace in themselves, not only being silent as to words but even abstaining from all their own thoughts, imaginations and desires, so watching in a holy dependence upon the Lord thus his Name comes to be one in all, and his glory breaks forth and covers all; and there is such a holy awe and reverence upon every soul that if the natural part should arise in any, or the wise part, or what is not one with the Life, it would presently be chained down and judged out. And when any are through the breaking forth of this power constrained to utter a sentence of exhortation or praise, or to breathe to the Lord in prayer, then all are sensible of it; ...And there being many joined together in this same work, there is an inward travail and wrestling; and also, as the measure of Grace is abode in, an overcoming of the power and spirit of darkness; and thus we are often greatly strengthened and renewed in the spirits of our minds without a word .... Now as many thus gathered together grow up in the strength, power, and virtue of Truth, and as Truth comes thus to have victory & dominion in their souls, then they receive an utterance & speak steadily to the edification of their brethren, and the pure Life hath a free passage through them, and what is thus spoken edifieth the body indeed. Such is the evident certainty of that divine strength that is communicated by thus meeting together and waiting in silence upon God, that sometimes, when one hath come in that hath been unwatchful, and wandering in his mind, or suddenly out of the hurry of outward business, & so not inwardly gathered with the rest, so soon as he retires himself inwardly, this Power, being in a good measure raised in the whole meeting, will suddenly lay hold upon his spirit, and wonderfully help to raise up the good in him and beget him into the sense of the same Power, to the melting and warming of his heart, even as the warmth would take hold upon a man that is cold, coming in to a stove, or as a flame will lay hold upon some little combustible matter lying near unto it; yea if it fall out that several met together be straying in their minds, though outwardly silent, and so wandering from the measure of grace in themselves... if either one come in, or may be in, who is watchful, and in whom the Life is raised in a great measure, as that one keeps his place he will feel a secret travail for the rest in a sympathy with the Seed which is oppressed in the other and kept from arising by their thoughts and wanderings; and as such a faithful one waits in the Light, and keeps in this divine work, God oftentimes answers the secret travail and breathings of his own Seed through such a one, so that the rest will find themselves secretly smitten without words, and that one will be as a

midwife, through the secret travail of his soul, to bring forth the Life in them, just as a little water thrown into a pump brings up the rest, whereby Life will come to be raised in all and the vain imaginations brought down, and such a one is felt by the rest to minister life unto them without words; yea sometimes when there is not a word in the meeting, but all are silently waiting, if one come in that is rude and wicked and in whom the power of darkness prevaieth much, perhaps with an intention to mock or do mischief, if the whole meeting be gathered into the Life, and it be raised in a good measure, it will strike terror into such an one, and he will feel himself unable to resist, but by the secret strength and virtue thereof the power of darkness in him will be chained down, ... For not a few have come to be convinced of the Truth after this manner, of which I myself, in a part, am a true witness, who not by strength of arguments or by a particular disquisition of each doctrine and convincement of my understanding thereby, came to receive and bear witness of the Truth, but by being secretly reached by this Life: for when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people I felt a secret power among them which touched my heart, and as I gave way unto it, I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up, and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this Power and Life whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed:....

**§VIII.** Our work then and worship is, when we meet together, for everyone to watch and wait upon God in themselves & to be gathered from all visibles thereunto. And as everyone is thus stated they come to find the good arise over the evil and the pure over the impure, in which God reveals himself and draweth near to every individual, and so he in the midst in the general. Whereby each not only partakes of the particular refreshment and strength which comes from the good in himself but is a sharer in the whole body, as being a living member of the body, having a joint fellowship and communion with all; and as this worship is steadfastly preached and kept to it becomes easy, though it be very hard at first to the natural man, whose roving imaginations and running worldly desires are not so easily brought to silence; and therefore the Lord oftentimes, when any turn towards him and have true desires thus to wait upon him, and find great difficulty through the unstayedness of their minds, doth in condescension and compassion cause his Power to break forth in a more strong and powerful manner; and when the mind sinks down and waits for the appearance of life, and that the power of darkness in the soul wrestles and works against it, then the good Seed, as it ariseth, will be found to work as physic in the soul, especially if such a weak one be in the assembly of divers others in whom the life is arisen in greater dominion, and through the contrary workings of the power of darkness there will be found an inward striving in the soul, as really in the mystery as ever Esau and Jacob strove

in Rebecca's womb. And from this inward travail, while the darkness seeks to obscure the Light, and the Light break through the darkness (which it always will do if the soul give not its strength to the darkness) there will be such a painful travail found in the soul that will even work upon the outward man; so that oftentimes through the working thereof the body will be greatly shaken, and many groans and sighs and tears, even as the pangs of a woman in travail, will lay hold upon it;...; and thereby trembling and a motion of body will be upon most, if not upon all, which, as the power of Truth prevails, will from pangs and groans end with a sweet sound of thanksgiving and praise, and from this the name of "Quakers," i.e., *Tremblers*, was first reproachfully cast upon us, which though it be none of our choosing, yet in this respect we are not ashamed of it but have rather reason to rejoice therefore, ...

§IX. Many are the blessed experiences which I could relate of this silence and manner of worship, yet I do not so much commend and speak of silence as if we had a law in it to shut out<sup>5</sup> praying or preaching, or tied ourselves thereunto; not at all: for as our worship consisteth not in words, so neither in silence, as silence; but in an holy dependence of the mind upon God, from which dependence silence necessarily follows in the first place, until words can be brought forth which are from God's Spirit; and God is not wanting to move *in* his children to bring forth words of exhortation or prayer when it is needful, so that of the many gatherings and meetings of such as are convinced of the truth there is scarce any in whom God raiseth not up some or other to minister to his brethren, that there are few meetings that are altogether silent. For when many are met together in this one Life and Name, it doth most naturally and frequently excite them to pray to and praise God and stir up one another by mutual exhortation and instructions; yet we judge it needful there be in the first place some time of silence, during which every one may be gathered inward to the Word and Gift of Grace, from which he that ministereth may receive strength to bring forth what he ministereth, and that they that hear may have a sense to discern betwixt the precious and the vile, and not to hurry into the exercise of these things so soon as the bell rings, as other Christians do; yea and we doubt not but assuredly know that the meeting may be good and refreshful, though from the sitting down to the rising up thereof there hath not been a word as outwardly spoken; and yet Life may have been known to abound in each particular, and an inward growing up therein and thereby, yea so as words might have been spoken acceptably and from the Life; yet there being no absolute necessity laid upon any so to do, all might have chosen rather quietly and silently to possess and enjoy the Lord in themselves, which is very sweet and comfortable to the soul that hath thus learned to be gathered out of all its own thoughts and workings, to feel the Lord to bring forth both the will and the deed, which many

can declare by a blessed experience, though indeed it cannot but be hard for the natural man to receive or believe this doctrine; and therefore it must be rather by a sensible experience, and by coming to make proof of it, than by arguments that such can be convinced of this thing, seeing it is not enough to believe it if they come not also to enjoy and possess it;....

§X. That to wait upon God, and to watch before him, is a duty incumbent upon all, I suppose none will deny.... But that it may be the better and more perfectly understood, as it is not only an outward silence of the body but an inward silence of the mind from all its own imaginations and self-cogitations, let it be considered according to Truth and to the principles and doctrines heretofore affirmed and proven, that man is to be considered in a twofold respect, to wit: in his natural, unregenerate, and fallen state; and in his spiritual and renewed condition; from whence ariseth that distinction of the "natural" and "spiritual man" so much used by the apostle, and heretofore spoken of, also these two births of the mind proceed from the two seeds in man respectively, to wit, the good Seed and the evil. ...Also this spiritual wickedness is of two sorts, though both one in kind as proceeding from one root, yet differing in their degrees, and in the subjects also sometimes. The one is, when as the natural man is meddling in and working in the things of religion, doth from his own conceptions and divinations affirm or propose wrong and erroneous notions and opinions of God and things spiritual, and invent superstitions, ceremonies, observations, and rites in worship, from whence have sprung all the heresies and superstitions that are among Christians. The other is, when as the natural man, from a mere conviction of his understanding, doth in the forwardness of his own will and by his own natural strength, without the influence and leading of God's Spirit, go about either in his understanding to imagine, conceive, or think of the things of God, or actually to perform them by preaching or praying.... For this kind of idolatry, whereby man loveth, idolizeth, and huggeth his own conceptions, inventions, and product of his own brain, is so incident unto him, and seated in his fallen nature, that so long as his natural spirit is the first author and actor of him, and is that by which he only is guided and moved in his worship towards God, so as not first to wait for another Guide to direct him, he can never perform the pure spiritual worship nor bring forth anything but the fruit of the first, fallen, natural and corrupt root. ...Since then man in his natural state is thus excluded from acting or moving in things spiritual, how or what way shall he exercise this first and previous duty of waiting upon God, but by silence, and by bringing that natural part to silence? Which is no other ways but by abstaining from his own thoughts and imaginations and from all the self-workings and motions of his own mind, as well in things materially good, as evil, that he being silent, God may speak in him, and the good Seed may arise. ...He, that cometh to



learn of a master, if he expect to hear his master & be instructed by him, must not continually be speaking of the matter to be taught and never be quiet, otherwise how shall his master have time to instruct him? ...So also, if one were about to attend a great prince, he would be thought an impertinent and imprudent servant, who, while he ought patiently and readily to wait, that he might answer the king when he speaks, and have his eye upon him to observe the least motions and inclinations of his will, and to do accordingly, would be still deafening him with discourse, though it were in praises of him, and running to and fro, without any particular and immediate order to do things, that perhaps might be good in themselves, or might have been commanded at other times to others. Would the kings of the earth accept of such servants, or service?

Since then we are commanded to "wait upon God diligently," and in so doing it is promised that our "strength shall be renewed," this waiting cannot be performed but by a silence or cessation of the natural part on our side, since God manifests himself not to the outward man or senses, so much as to the inward, to wit, to the soul and spirit; if the soul be still thinking and working in her own will and busily exercised in her own imaginations, though the matters as in themselves may be good concerning God, yet thereby she incapacitates herself from discerning the "still, small voice" of the Spirit, and so hurts herself greatly, in that she neglects her chief business of waiting upon the Lord; nothing less than if I should busy myself crying out and speaking of a business, while in the meantime I neglect to hear one who is quietly whispering into my ear, and informing me in these things which are most needful for me to hear and know concerning that business. .... This great duty then of waiting upon God must needs be exercised in man's denying self, both inwardly and outwardly, in a still and mere dependence upon God, in abstracting from all the workings, imaginations and speculations of his own mind, that being emptied, as it were, of himself; and so thoroughly crucified to the natural products thereof he may be fit to receive the Lord, who will have no co-partner nor co-rival of his glory and power. ...

**[§XI omitted]**

**§XII.** ...the excellency of this silent waiting upon God doth appear in that it is impossible for the enemy, viz. the devil, to counterfeit it, so as for any soul to be deceived or deluded by him in the exercise thereof. Now, in all other matters he may mix himself in with the natural mind of man, and so by transforming himself he may deceive the soul by busying it about things perhaps innocent in themselves, while yet he keeps them from beholding the pure Light of Christ and so from knowing distinctly his duty, and doing of it. For that envious spirit of man's eternal

happiness knoweth well how to accommodate himself and fit his snares for all the several dispositions and inclinations of men; if he find one not fit to be engaged with gross sins or worldly lusts, but rather averse from them and religiously inclined, he can fit himself to beguile such a one by suffering his thoughts and imaginations to run upon spiritual matters and so hurry them to work, act, and meditate in their own wills, for he well knoweth that so long as self bears rule, and the Spirit of God is not the principal and chief actor, man is not put out of his reach; so therefore he can accompany the priest to the altar, the preacher to the pulpit, the zealot to his prayers, yea the doctor and professor of divinity to his study, and there he can cheerfully suffer him to labour and work among his books, yea and help him to find out and invent subtle distinctions and quiddities by which both his mind, and others through him, may be kept from heeding God's Light in the conscience and waiting upon him. There is not any exercise whatsoever wherein he cannot enter and have a chief place, so as the soul many times cannot discern it, except in this alone; for he can only work in and by the natural man and his faculties, by secretly acting upon his imaginations and desires, &c., and therefore when he, to wit the natural man, is silent, there he must also stand. And therefore, when the soul comes to this silence, and, as it were, is brought to nothingness, as to her own workings, then the devil is shut out; for the pure presence of God and shining of his Light he cannot abide, because so long as a man is thinking and meditating as of himself, he cannot be sure but the devil is influencing him therein, but when he comes wholly to be silent, as the pure Light of God shines in upon him, then he is sure that the devil is shut out, for beyond the imaginations he cannot go, which we often find by sensible experience. For he that of old is said to have come to the gathering together of the children of God is not wanting to come to our assemblies, and indeed he can well enter and work in a meeting that is silent only as to words, either by keeping the minds in various thoughts and imaginations, or by stupefying them so as to overwhelm them with a spirit of heaviness and slothfulness; but when we retire out of all and are turned in, both by being diligent and watchful upon the one hand, and also silent and retired out of all our thoughts upon the other, as we abide in this sure place, we feel ourselves out of his reach; yea oftentimes the power and glory of God will break forth and appear, just as the bright sun through many clouds and mists, to the dispelling of that power of darkness; which will also be sensibly felt seeking to cloud and darken the mind, and wholly to keep it from purely waiting upon God.

**[\$XIII -- XV omitted]**

**§XVI.** And though this worship be indeed very different from the divers established invented worships among Christians, and therefore may seem strange

to many, yet hath it been testified of, commended and practised by the most pious of all sorts in all ages, by many evident testimonies might be proved, so that from the professing and practising thereof the name of mystics hath arisen, as of a certain sect generally commended by all, whose writings are full both of the explanation and of the commendation of this sort of worship, where they plentifully assert this inward introversion and abstraction of the mind, as they call it, from all images and thoughts and the prayer of the will; yea they look upon this as the height of Christian perfection, ...

§XVII. *Obj.* First, it seems to be an unprofitable exercise for a man to be doing or thinking nothing and that one might be much better employed either in meditating upon some good subject or otherwise praying to or praising God.

*Ans.* I answer, that is not unprofitable which is of absolute necessity, before any other duty can be acceptably performed, as we have shown this waiting to be. Moreover, those have but a carnal and gross apprehension of God and of the things of his kingdom, that imagine that men please him by their own workings and actings, whereas, as hath been shown, the first step for man to fear God is to cease from his own thoughts and imaginations and suffer God's Spirit to work in him...

*Obj.* Secondly some object, If your worship merely consist in inwardly retiring to the Lord and feeling of his Spirit arise in you, and then to do outward acts as ye are led by it, what need ye have public meetings at set times and places, since everyone may enjoy this at home? ...

*Ans.* ... God hath seen meet, so long as his children are in this world, to make use of the outward senses as a means to convey spiritual life, as by speaking, praying, praising, &c., which cannot be done to mutual edification but when we hear and see one another, but also to entertain an outward visible testimony for his Name in the world: he causeth the inward life (which is also many times not conveyed by the outward senses) the more to abound when his children assemble themselves diligently together to wait upon him; that as "iron sharpeneth iron,"<sup>o</sup> so the seeing of the face one of another, when both are inwardly gathered unto the Life, giveth occasion for the Life secretly to rise and pass from vessel to vessel; and as many candles lighted and put in one place do greatly augment the light, and makes it more to shine forth; so when many are gathered together into the same Life, there is more of the glory of God, and his power appears to the refreshment of each individual for that he partakes not only of the Light and Life raised in himself but in all the rest; and therefore Christ hath particularly promised a blessing to such as assemble together in his Name, seeing he will be "in the midst of them"...

[§**XXVIII** - **XXVII** omitted]

§**XXVIII**. So that to conclude, the worship, preaching, praying and singing which we plead for is such as proceedeth from the Spirit of God and is always accompanied with its influence, being begun by its motion and carried on by the power and strength thereof, and so is a worship purely spiritual such as the Scripture holds forth (John 4:23-24; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 6:18, &c.).