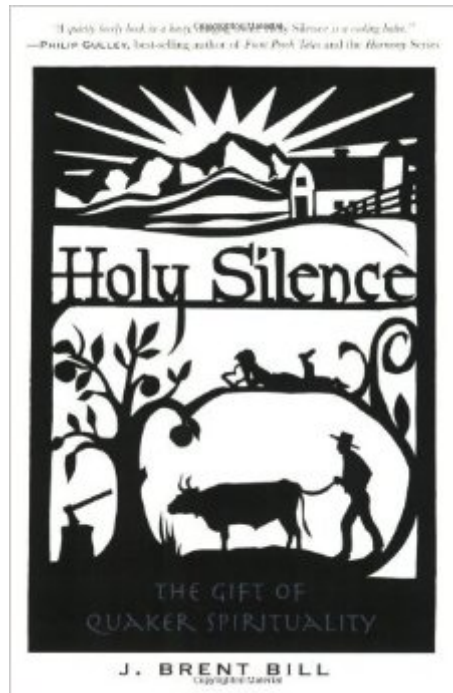


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Holy Silence: The Gift Of Quaker Spirituality



Synopsis

An eloquent introduction to Quaker spirituality---for all who are seeking a fresh approach to God.

Book Information

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INTRODUCTION:If you were every wondering what makes Quakers stand out from the rest of the Christian traditions, it is their simplicity, their emphasis on a worship comprised of 'holy silence' and their pacifist stand. They are also known as the "the Society of Friends." Reading this book I could only be tempted to visit the closest Quaker meeting place in my Santa Cruz.

AUTHOR:In the tradition of Richard Foster (another great Quaker author - "Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth") - J. Brent Bill expands our horizon about Christian spirituality. Bill focuses on one primary aspect of Quaker life - silence.

CONTENT:In this book I was introduced to the "holy hush" theology and practice of Quaker spirituality. The Friends have their origin in 17th century England, have no liturgy, no creed, no observance of a Christian calendar, no professional clergy, and above all no sacrament (maybe silence is the exception). The simplicity of the Quakers is centered in "silence" - both in their corporate worship and in their personal spiritual life. "Holy Silence" six chapters discusses how to find silence amid the noise of daily life, ways to practice silence both individually and communally, and how to listen to God with one's whole heart and

mind.

CONCLUSION:I have never read anything like this before. For someone who values moments of solitude, of escape from noise (external and internal), and deep personal peace, I had a lot to learn from fellow Christian J. Brent Bill. In our post-modern fast-paced society and our chatty & noisy personal lives, "holy silence" can be something very elusive to attain ... but a valuable

treasure, nevertheless..

Some books on spiritual disciplines are fuzzy. Some lift the discipline up as a way to solve all problems, that if one can just get the technique right, life will be sunny and warm. This book is not one of those. This sturdy volume looks wisely at the living tradition of silence among the Friends. It neither promises too much or too little. The author knows his tradition, the deep value of listening to God, for God, and also the pitfalls of humans participating in such a discipline. Clearly, the author believes in the value of silence, believes that it has its own intrinsic worth. He is also wise enough to know that our attempts at listening are full of grace yet tinged with challenges. The author supplements observations about the tradition of the discipline with anecdotes from his own experience. The anecdotes are always interesting, helpful, and add just the right measure of whimsy and grace. Well-written, this book is conversational in style and almost perfect in form. In what setting would this book make most sense? It would work well for personal enrichment and even better for small group study, particularly the kind that could take place within the context of a faith community. This book tells about silence. More importantly, it invites us to participate in this rich discipline.

I found this book to be both inspirational and a delight to read. Anyone who is interested in what Quaker silent worship & contemplation is all about will find this book to be a Godsend. As a recent convert to Quakerism this book gave me all the insights I needed to truly understand how Quakers get in touch with "that of God in all of us." Granted, the idea of silent worship seems odd at first. Most people are used to church services where there is hymn singing & a sermon. But in silent worship the Quakers wait upon the spirit of God to move someone to speak. I have found that I get more out of the heartfelt testimonies of the Quakers than I have ever had just listening to a sermon. So for anyone interested in a different way of approaching spirituality I highly recommend this book. It will open your eyes to a whole new way to worship!

I pre-read Holy Silence to see if it would be suitable for my Quaker meeting's study group. I've been a Quaker for 42 years, and Holy Silence is helpful for both the experienced practitioner of silent worship and the newcomer. When I recommended the book to our study group, it was with the proviso that while Brent Bill is not at all doctrinaire, he does make heavy use of Christian metaphors, which the Universalists in the group should be prepared to learn from. If the Universalists in your group are similarly non-doctrinaire about their Universalism, they can profit from the book. If some

metaphor sticks in someone's craw, my advice would be to challenge the group to brainstorm together how else to express the idea. Throughout the book Bill has inserted opportunities to experience silence while responding to a query. I will recommend to the study group that we respond to the Quietude Queries together, and afterward share what bubbled up to us during the silences. I look forward to reading the book again in the company of good Friends.

I got this book as a companion to Quaker Poems, expecting that this other book would be good material for non-Quaker centering prayer praxis. It turned out that this book, which is primarily a manual for how to behave spiritually throughout the day is actually a far better book for my purposes. The Quakers have no prayer book, like "The Book of Common Prayer", so they make do with a series of practices such as asking questions and other techniques. The entire book is a series of exercises, reflections, prayers, and questions to help achieve "quietude". This is a much richer state than simply sitting quietly. One may consider it "mysticism lite". It reaches out and grasps the essence of prayer, which does not require words, and which, in some ways, be thwarted by words. If your primary interest is Quaker spirituality or quiet centering prayer, then this is the book you want.

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