

Quakerism 101: Testimony of Integrity

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Excerpts from *The Testimony of Integrity* by Wilmer Cooper, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 296.

“Without a doubt one of the unique characteristics of the Religious Society of Friends is what we have called the Quaker testimonies. We might refer to them as the Quaker equivalent of the creeds of the churches, though the intent of testimonies is primarily ethical rather than doctrinal. The claim is that the testimonies grow out of our inward religious experience and are intended to give outward expression to the leading of the Spirit of God within...” p. 7

“There is no definitive list of Quaker Testimonies. They have differed throughout the history of Friends.” p. 8

“A typical list of Friends’ testimonies today includes peace, simplicity, honesty, equality, community, and care for the environment. Undergirding all of these is the concern that our outward lives bear witness to truth discerned inwardly. It is in this framework of thought that the Testimony of Integrity needs to become the common denominator of all the other Quaker testimonies.” p. 10

“If a sacrament is an outward sign of an inward grace, or an outward sign of an inward spiritual commitment, then ‘letting our lives speak’ is indeed an outward sacrament of an inward leading of the Spirit.” p. 11

“Another descriptive saying of Friends is that ‘Quakerism is a way of life,’ which is to suggest that the testimonies are the moral and ethical fruit of the inward leading of the Spirit. ... ‘They arise more out of a concern for purity, holiness, consistency with divine order than from a passion for social justice.’” p. 11

“‘Early Quakerism was the first Protestant “holiness” or “perfectionist” movement...George Fox cannot be understood apart from a recognition that the driving force in this life at this time was for complete integrity. With a passion that defies logic he demanded for himself and for others a life of holy obedience in even the smallest detail of life (Hinshaw, “Christian Perfection in Quakerism,” 1-3).’” p. 12

“‘The chief purpose of all religion is to redeem men from the spirit and vain pursuits of this world, and to lead them into inward communion with God’ (Barclay, *Apology*, 389).” p. 17

Four ways to practice Testimony of Integrity p. 18-24

- truth-telling
- authenticity, genuineness, and veracity in one’s personhood (vs. trying to be something or somebody we are not)
- obedience or faithfulness “to conscience illumined by the Light Within”

“[Quaker truth and integrity] is truth which may well have objective validity ... but if it is not truth which is internalized in each of us, and for which we take ownership, then it is not truth which is valid and binding for us. But once it lays hold of us, it is truth that will not let us go until we have acted upon it. This kind of truth is new and fresh and therefore vital. It is not grounded in dogma, creeds, abstract philosophical ideas, or theological affirmations. It is not to be found in religious textbooks or Quaker books of discipline, but it is grounded in a living faith and experience of the present moment. It is the basis for the Quaker testimonies...” p. 20-21

- wholeness

“Integrity forms the basis for a covenant relationship in which persons exercise a sense of responsibility and accountability toward one another. Individualism, which is preoccupied with doing one’s own thing, often with little concern for how it affects other people, dominates much of our behavior in western society, and in our American culture in particular, and it affects the Religious Society of Friends as well.” p. 21

“If the wholeness aspect of integrity leads to a sense of community of persons, likewise it can lead us to an experience of spiritual wholeness in our relationship with God. ... ‘integration is not an end to itself; it is a means to an end, and the end is God’ (Wyon, *On the Way*, 69).” p. 24

“Is it not true that we are in about as much danger of being destroyed by our own moral sickness and culpability, as a society, as we are in danger of annihilation by a nuclear explosion?” p. 27

“We need to learn how to model our Testimony of Integrity in our personal, professional and vocational lives. We need to learn how to teach our children these testimonies. We need to begin to live the way we want the world to become, rather than the way the world is now. The crying need is for integrity in daily life, and Friends would do well to undergird all of their outward testimonies with the Testimony of Integrity, which must begin within the sanctuary of our own souls.” p. 28

Queries for Worship Sharing, Discussion, or Reflection

Testimonies and the inner life

1. When I first encountered Friends, how did the testimonies resonate with me? Which ones had an especially deep resonance? Where did that resonance come from? *Why* did they have meaning for me?
2. Which drew me more to Friends, its testimonies or the experience of worship and their spiritual life? Or was it something else?
3. What for me is the inner life and how does that translate into outward testimonies? Does my inner life lead me to a testimony that does not fit into the standard Quaker testimonies? In response to my inner life, how am I led to let my life speak?
4. How do I feel about creeds? Do I feel a need to identify a clearly stated set of beliefs to define my faith? How would creeds help me know what to do or how to live? What does help me to know how to live? Can testimonies define my faith? How?

The Testimony of Integrity

5. In what ways do I see the Testimony of Integrity challenged in modern life? How might these ways manifest themselves in my life? What are some things that everyone does and therefore I do as well, even though they are arguably wrong? (for example, anything relating to taxes?)
6. When have I justified myself because I followed the letter of the law while knowing I was not following the spirit? (“geez” instead of “Jesus”?) When have I justified myself because I followed the spirit of the law while knowing I was not following the letter? (speeding?) Are both forms of hypocrisy? Is one worse than the other? Think of the 10 commandments or Jesus’ 2 commandments. Which do we follow by the letter? by the Spirit?
7. Do I feel that God is calling me to “be perfect?” What is my response to that calling? Am I willing to embrace it? What help do I need?
8. What “vain pursuits” of this world distract me from communion with God? Is faithfulness required for integrity?

Integrity and Spiritual Community

9. Do I feel that I have entered into a covenant relationship with this meeting? If so, what is that covenant? How am I or should I be responsible and accountable to the meeting? How does my relation to my spiritual community help me be whole?
10. Do I have a leading that I feel is shared by others in this meeting community? How is it shared? Do I pursue it on my own or look for ways to pursue it through the meeting?