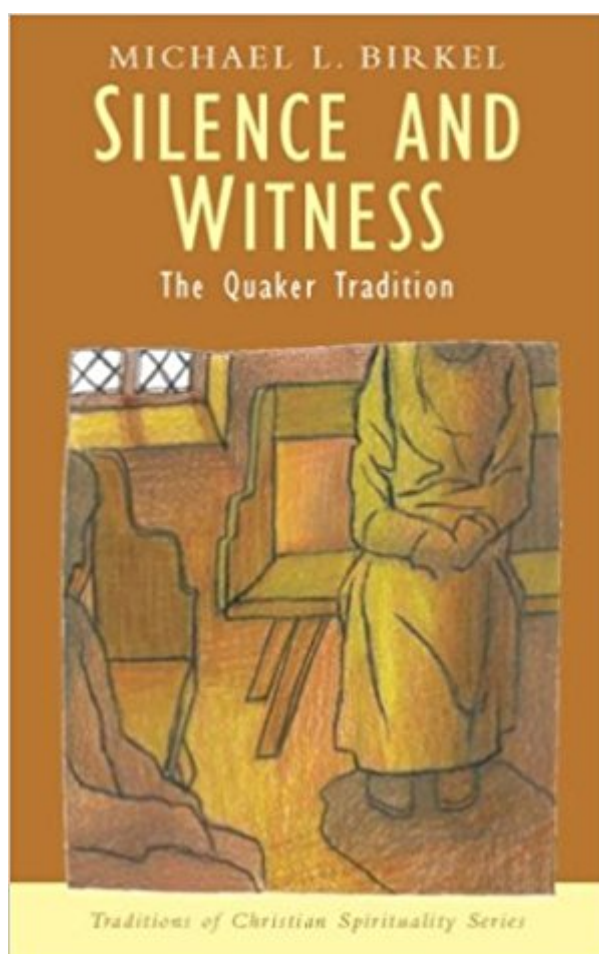




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# Silence And Witness: The Quaker Tradition (Traditions Of Christian Spirituality.)



## Synopsis

Shares an introduction to Quaker spirituality covering its history, significant voices, and its characteristic themes, including silent worship, the way of simplicity, prayer, discernment, and an emphasis on inner growth.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have been a practicing Quaker for the last fifteen years and I believe that this should be the first book in any Quaker's library. Both spiritual and instructional, this little jewel is very well written. My little Meeting has decided to give this volume to each of our new members.

A very good read and well worth purchase, consider doing likewise, it will be worth your time and nourishment for the soul.

Personal statement about the author's family history of Quaker living.

Good Quaker book

As a Friend I always get something out of every book. The section on George Fox was affirming.

*Silence and Witness* (2004) by Michael L. Birkel provides a concise overview of the

Quaker spiritual tradition, also known as the Religious Society of Friends. I have to say I was personally drawn to this volume in the Traditions of Christian Spirituality series as I was raised in the Philadelphia area and have benefitted from visiting Quaker Meeting houses in the past. I found the quiet and perceived lack of structure something of a challenge to my own liturgical upbringing! Nonetheless, this is an enjoyable and immensely practical book. Perhaps its most outstanding feature is its unique blend of history and quotes from many of the Quaker greats. The opening chapter provides a nice outline of Quaker history. Quakerism was founded during the English Civil War (Puritan Revolution) in the mid 1700s. It got its unique name because members trembled or "quaked" before the Word of the Lord—at least according to George Fox! George Fox, one of the founders of Quakerism, had a strong inward spiritual experience which he referred to as the inner light and wrote and preached extensively on the inner struggle with good and evil, and God's righteousness and man's sin. Fox and other Quakers referred to this struggle as the Lamb's war. The book moves onto the typical Quaker service and what to expect in the Quaker Meeting House—and it's quite a contrast to what happens in most Christian Churches throughout the land! Quaker services stress silence and "vocal ministry", that is those who speak during the service. Different techniques are used to keep spiritual focus and include meditation, or saying a mantra. Don't make the mistake of thinking worship is just an individual experience as there is also a collective dimension to worship. Quakers also practice spiritual discernment and use moral purity, patience, consistency with the Bible, and ongoing vigilance when making collective decisions. A process is described where everyone can air their views and feel part of the collective decision making process to ensure there are no quarreling factions which results in a stronger sense of community: "When genuinely open to the guidance of God, we can discover a way forward that is superior to any previously held opinion that any one of us brought into the room. When we succeed in getting in touch with our own deepest desires, instead of our surface desires that can be a distortion or digression from the deeper desires, we find that these deep desires are in fact God's desires. For Friends, those deep desires can often be articulated in terms of our testimonies of equality, simplicity, integrity, and peace" (72-3). Makes total sense to me and it seems these principles of discernment could be used in many venues—not just in church! Another interesting chapter, "Nurturing the Inner Life" demonstrates that Quakerism is more than just gathering at the Meeting house and also includes interior prayer, meditative readings of Scripture, and spiritual nurture from elders. Two devotional texts are also used by Quakers; "A Guide to True Peace" and "A Testament for Devotion", which are a group of essays by Thomas Kelley. As in other

volumes in the Traditions of Christian Spirituality series, this is a fascinating and interesting overview of the Quakers with many wonderful quotes and references. After reading this book, you'll want to visit your nearest Society of Friends!

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