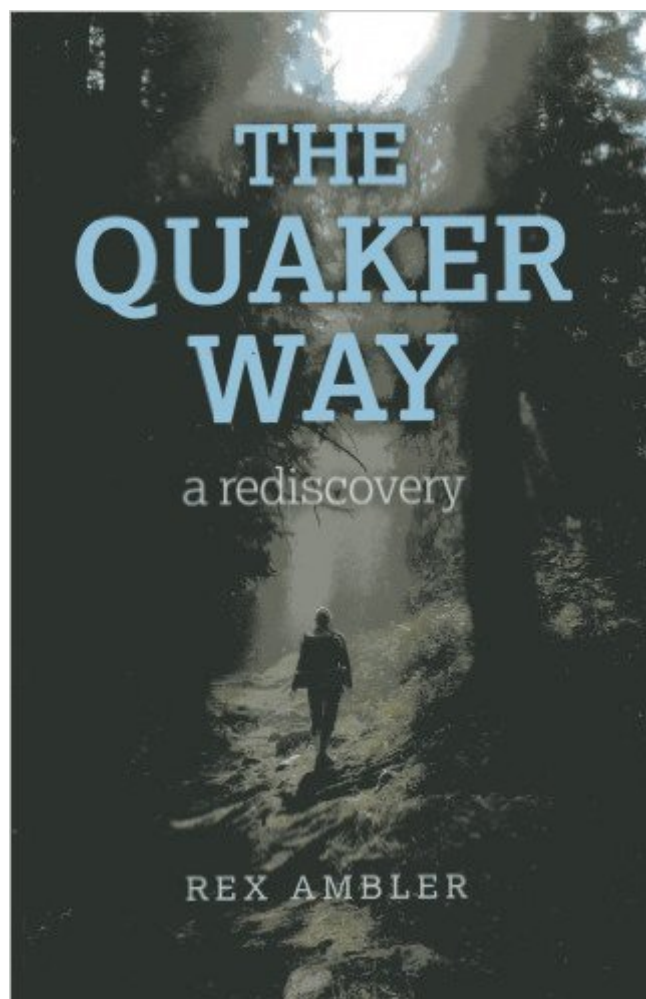


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The Quaker Way: A Rediscovery



Synopsis

This book is an attempt to explain the Quaker way, as far as that is possible. It is a distinctive way and, though perhaps no better than others, it has its own integrity and effectiveness. Although it is fairly well known, Quakerism is not well understood, so the purpose of this book is to make it intelligible, to explain how it works as a spiritual practice and why it has adopted the particular practices it has. It is aimed primarily at non-Quakers, who may nonetheless be interested to know what Quakerism is about.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Quaker Way, A Rediscovery by Rex Ambler succeeds in its self-appointed task of providing an entryway to understanding Quakerism for the uninitiated and an opportunity to learn, relearn, solidify, and organize for Quakers of all levels of understanding. (That is for that branch of Quakers who worship by sitting in silence. I doubt that Evangelical Quakers will find it all that helpful nor is it intended for them.) As a person who has attended a Quaker meeting for a decade, been a "convinced" (officially received into membership) Quaker for five years, and read prodigiously Quaker sources and Quaker literature for all that time, this book was a summary and culmination of all that went before. If you were to read one book this one is the best. If you were to read several, this book should be the first. I wonder some at the sub-title of "A Rediscovery." How is he rediscovering what I have already learned from other sources? But then I suspect he may be assessing the reality that what he presents may not be that widely known within Quakerism. The silence and the liberal mores of this branch of the Society of Friends of the

Truth allows a freedom that defies confident descriptions of what is going on in a Meeting for Worship. Ambler's strategy is to avoid discussing our history, our organization, our dress, our internal quarrels and the major personalities in favor of focusing on the spiritual life of the Quaker, starting with the core, "What is the Quaker doing while sitting in silence?" Then spilling out from that point to the resulting attitudes and practices of the Quaker. The core is seeking the truth by looking inward, first seeing the dirt, scum and evasions we hide from ourselves, and then the perfect image we hide behind, and then the truth of our being, and then the workings of the spirit and the growth of new being within us, a God-derived reality. (Here I am attempting to remain true to his perspective some of which is not mine while compressing more than a chapter of his thought into a paragraph. Forgive me any slippage from his intent.) This search for the truth inside leads then to attitudes and actions. When meeting for work or decisions, we meet in such a manner as to care for the measure of truth held by each person in attendance. When in contact with other religions we recognize that they too deserve respect not only for their sincerity in seeking the truth but for the undoubted reality that they too hold a measure of the truth that may have been hidden from us. When invited to partake in war, we refuse. From our insight into ourselves we recognize the truth that there is "that of God in all" and it is not given to us to harm or kill other vessels of the divine. And so on. All stemming from the practice of silent sitting and observing our inner self. Of course, this leaves out much about Quakerism, but this focus on the center provides in one small book (159 pages-8.5 by 5) the essence of the silent Quaker's spiritual, and for that matter, life journey. If that is what you bought it for, you will be well rewarded. Three notes: Ambler does offer descriptions of the internal growth of the Quaker based on present day psychological theory. They are useful but of course the Seventeenth Century Quaker did not think about spiritual progress in those terms. They might say, "Give up your own willing," and Ambler will describe what that means in our terms. In some ways the brutal slap of the founders is more effective than the modern unpeeling of the spiritual onion. But both do not hurt as long as one remembers which is which. Ambler also has a tendency to stray from the absolute dependency of the Quaker "giving up" to a slightly less giving in the giving up. For instance in the paragraph describing the core above he would have us "looking inward" which might imply a self-directed search where the founders would simply observe the inward light, which chooses what it chooses, as it selected for their attention what it would. Ambler describes The Society of Friends as one among many religions. The founders did not feel that way, nor do I. They were confident that they were one of a kind, and the right kind at that. I am a little gentler, feeling that Quakerism has grasped the truth to be found only in the silence, a

rare occurrence in dualistic spirituality. That great truth can be grasped in many of the eastern religions but to join them seriously it is necessary to give up on the dualistic genius, that is: fixing the world. I too think we are singular. Not the sole possessors of truth, but with a unique perspective and a rare possessor of this measure of the truth. Don't let these caveats stand between you and buying the book. If you are ready for it now, there is much to be gained, and I know no better place to gain it.

One of the best discussions of the Quaker Way rooted in the history of the Society of Friends. Many topics are covered rationally from a spiritual depth rather than an intellectual approach. Worship and discernment are coverage in depth and with modern British Quakers in mind. This book is relevant for "unprogrammed" Friends in North America.

We read this in our Quaker book club. It was very well liked by all our members as Ambler presents Quaker ideals in a way that makes them very accessible for everyone.

An excellent review for and about Quakers. Very useful to understand the complexity of Quakerism, which looks so simple. But it seems repetitious/redundant in places. Could be a shorter book. Easy reading, good overview of what Quakerism is all about. I highly recommend it.

Rex Ambler draws on his teaching experience as a theology professor and practicing Quaker to immerse the inquiring reader in a spiritual adventure unlike any other. Intellectually satisfying and heartfelt story telling. The God Experience promised to all sincere seekers.

Ambler lost me when he admitted he didn't like being told what to do.

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