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# Holy Silence: The Gift Of Quaker Spirituality

J. BRENT BILL

foreword by PHILIP GULLEY



"A beautiful introduction to the depths and riches of silence."

PARKER J. PALMER

REVISED AND EXPANDED



## **Synopsis**

An invitation to experience more fully the life-changing power of sacred silence. For over a decade, J. Brent Bill's *Holy Silence* has been regarded as a contemporary classic on sacred silence. With warmth, wisdom, and gentle humor, Bill presents the Quaker practice of silence and expectant listening to a wider Christian audience. Revised and expanded edition. Includes new spiritual silence practices, new section on incorporating holy silence into worship. Written by one of the most respected interpreters of the Quaker tradition. Introduces a fresh way of connecting with God.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Not every way of finding the Divine Source fits everyone. Having said that, I joyously claim that Quaker spirituality resonates with me. Bill's book took me more deeply within than has most current books. He stops at appropriate times and guides the reader to experience a deeper sense of the silence. He adds a welcome glossary at the end, along with a list of quite profound queries. Finally, he gives an added gift of an annotated bibliography. Two of the potential quotations that encapsulates the flavor of the book for me are: 1) "Holy silence gives us a way to be with others, helping them wrestle with the large questions of life--why this, why me, why them, why now, why God?" (51). 2) "The apostle Paul's exhortation 'not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think' also carries the subtle suggestion that we should think RIGHTLY of ourselves....learning to care for ourselves" (56). This is the first book by Bill that I have read. I will now search out other books. His openness to Quaker spirituality of all stripes is so manifest in this book and is something

we can all benefit by emulating.

I was initially drawn to this book by its title as I am one who has always had trouble settling into a quite space. It contains suggestions and led exercises that are very helpful, especially focussing on the here and now, and moving into a deeper relationship with God. I would recommend it for experienced Quakers as well as those who are fledgling.

A wonderful book that nurtures a common spirituality in all people through the universal message of silence. Unifying humanity by bringing down the Tower of Babel.

Loved this book and plan on reading through it again. It reinforced my own journey in the last several years. I have grown to love the anticipation of silence!

"The Quaker view that all of life, including silence, is sacramental is based in the Bible as well as in Friendly faith. It is a practice solidly grounded in Christian theology, history, and Scripture." Holy Silence, page 21. I've read, blogged, and reviewed several of Brent's books and always appreciate that they're never too long, that he has close connections to nature, the environment, the land (I hope so, because he's a farmer!) and especially that all of them emphasize ways we can live closer to God and to all of God's creation. In theological and in practical everyday terms, I often consider "holy" as the sacred wholly-other-than the profane, the mundane, than the routinely commonplace. Then again, holy is the very here and now regular common earthbound stuff of our daily activities as we move closer to praying always and in all ways a sense of God's presence in, with, and under all the we do and everything we are. J. Brent Bill named his mostly photography website "Holy Ordinary." To my sacramental, liturgical tradition that affirms God's self-revelation, God's self-giving and grace via physical, earthly, everyday "means," Holy Ordinary sounds... highly sacramental. Although Quakers, or Friends don't formally practice ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, they do have a well-known formal practice of sitting in silence. So well-known that besides the guy on Quaker cereal boxes, silent worship probably is the main aspect of the Society of Friends most people have heard about. Then again, some Quakers have programmed worship that includes the usual type of printed Order of Worship bulletin handout, hymns, prayers offered out loud, a sermon or homily. The author gives us a short synopsis of biblical and Christian practices of silence; not surprisingly, early in the book Brent cites the famous story of Elijah not encountering God until the still small voice, whisper, or (best version) sheer silence. I love the idea of silence being sheer;

sheer sounds transparent, see-through to our senses and perceptions. Brent is very clear that Christians from very different traditions such as mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics that emphasize sacraments, Pentecostals who rejoice in the more demonstratively eschatological gifts of the Holy Spirit, easily can make Holy Silence at least a weekly, possibly a daily or monthly practice. He mentioned scheduling the Friends Meeting at his own farmhouse for a time other than Sunday mornings so people committed to Sunday worship with a different tradition also could take advantage of meeting Jesus in common community silence. In sheer silence, so the presence of God permeates all our senses. Final note: the plain yet elegant silver on white cover of this second edition of Holy Silence conveys a strong sense of what's inside those covers.

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