

Worship Sharing

11-21-23

Simplicity

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“The form of our witness to simplicity has changed as the world’s fashions have changed. At various times Friends got carried away and became overly obsessed with the details. In Scotland in 1692 a minute condemned men’s ‘broad ribbons or hatbands, all cocking up the side of their hats, all their bushy and long cravats, fringed or speckled’. By 1700 Margaret Fell, the ‘mother of Quakerism’, felt this had gone far enough and reminded Friends bluntly that concentrating on specific details was a ‘silly poor gospel’, what mattered was to let the spirit guide us to understand what was true”

“Simplicity is bound up with truth; in the absence of simplicity the truth becomes obscured. The American Quaker Rufus Jones said: ‘The fountain must be right if we want the water to be clear. Unclouded honesty at the heart and centre of a man is the true basis of simplicity!’ So our challenge is to hold on to that basis, to see in what ways it is threatened in our days, and to affirm it.”

“Simplicity like all the testimonies is essentially a spiritual discipline. We simplify our lives in order to come closer to the truth. We reject those things that are unnecessary and superficial, because we know they are what John Woolman called ‘cumber’ – things that clog up our life and divert us from what really matters. So the testimony is both a moving away from the things of the world and a moving towards the things of God. “

“Simplicity is not about ‘simple living’, but about appropriate living. It brings out positive values. It can be a source of witness even if we do not intend it to be. It is a testimony to be embraced with joy and love.”

Queries

How do these quotes speak to you?

How does this understanding of Quaker simplicity mesh with your understanding?

How can we embrace this testimony with joy and love?

<https://thefriend.org/article/testimony-to-simplicity>