

The Third Way: A Vision of Holiness

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Abstract.

This paper articulates “The Third Way” as an account of holiness that integrates Scripture and Spirit, proclamation and presence, leadership and congregational participation. Drawing on a multitude of voices, this paper argues that holiness is a communal vocation sustained by the Light of Christ, enacted through the priesthood of all believers, and embodied in a non-anxious, evangelically faithful presence for the blessing of everyone.

Thesis

The Third Way names a vision of holiness as a whole-of-life vocation that is Scripture-soaked (immersed) and Spirit-led, in which every member ministers while recognized leaders equip the saints (Eph 4:11–13, NASB), the meeting discerns Christ’s present leadership together (1 Pet 2:9), and the church embodies a non-anxious, evangelically faithful presence whose worship and “business” are one seamless life (Rom 12:1–2).¹

¹ Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). Biblical claims summarized from 1 Pet 2:9; Eph 4:11–13; Rom 12:1–2

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Introduction: Beyond Clergy/Laity

Among those of the Friends Faith, there is no ontological clergy-laity divide; ministry is the calling of all God's people, with some being recognized and sometimes released for specific tasks. Trueblood calls this “a society in which all are ministers,” locating authority in the living presence of Christ, not in sacerdotal hierarchy.² Brinton’s classic synthesis and Dandelion’s contemporary mapping of the global family position this paper’s “Third Way” within the broad Friends tradition, especially among programmed Friends who value Scripture and proclamation while maintaining corporate discernment.³ Gwyn illustrates how early Friends understood proclamation as apocalyptic unveiling, a world-reframing word, which complements our focus on kerygma combined with presence.⁴ The Third Way revives this ecclesial imagination. It blends with the Wesleyan Holiness Movement of the 19th century and the virtue formation of the Quaker faith, offering an alternative to both professionalized clericalism and leaderless populism.

Methodological Commitments

(See Addendum for an expanded view of research and evaluation.)

1. **Scripture and Spirit held together.** Friends have always insisted that the inward illumination of Christ’s Light operates under the canon: the Spirit who inspired Scripture guides the church’s faithful reading and corporate obedience.⁵
2. **Holiness as wholeness.** Spencer’s “constellation” (conversional, charismatic, contemplative, communal, cruciform, missional, prophetic, eschatological) keeps the tradition from reductionism.⁶ Maddox and Collins provide Wesleyan dialogue to sharpen the grammar of grace (operative/co-operative) and teleology (holy love), while Oden anchors the project in catholic breadth.⁷

² D. Elton Trueblood, *The People Called Quakers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 53–60.

³ Howard H. Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1952); Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁴ Douglas Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word: The Life and Message of George Fox (1624–1691)* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1986).

⁵ Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1678; London: Friends Book Centre, 1908), Props. II, X–XI; Paul N. Anderson, “Spiritual Discernment in the Gospel Tradition,” in *Following Jesus: The Heart of Faith*, ed. Paul N. Anderson (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 115–134.

⁶ Carole Dale Spencer, *Holiness: The Soul of Quakerism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2007), 1–5, 227–235.

⁷ Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1994); Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007); Thomas C. Oden, *Classic Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 1992).

3. **Corporate discernment.** Following Anderson's teachings, the Meeting for Business seeks unity in Christ's will; the decision is a doxology, not mere consensus.⁸ Rowan Williams's reading of Origen deepens the contemplative soil of such discernment.⁹
4. **Virtue formation for vocation.** Wright frames character as Spirit-graced habit; MacIntyre and Hauerwas locate virtue within the practices of a community, strengthening our ecclesial account of holiness.¹⁰
5. **Leadership as equipping.** Leaders are given to equip the saints (Eph 4:11-13); MacArthur's exegesis guards against performer-centric ministry.¹¹
6. **Courageous, non-anxious presence.** Brown's research on courage and vulnerability, read alongside Bowen's systems theory and Steinke/Gilbert's ecclesial applications, provides tools for steady leadership amid anxiety.¹²
7. **Mission along the roads.** Newbigin's "church as hermeneutic of the gospel," Frost/Hirsch's missional-incarnational language, and Parker's place-based pedagogy frame Friends witness as everyday, local, and public.¹³

Biblical Foundations for the Third Way

The New Testament's vision coheres around three interlocking realities:

- a) **A consecrated people.** "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation..." (1 Pet 2:9, NASB). Priesthood and proclamation belong to the people of God as a whole; holiness is a public vocation of praise and witness.
- b) **Leaders who equip, not perform.** Christ "gave some as... pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service" (Eph 4:11-12, NASB). The grammar places "work of service" with *the saints*; leadership catalyzes rather than monopolizes ministry.¹⁴
- c) **Worship as life.** "Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice..." (Rom 12:1, NASB). Corporate life becomes seamless: gathered worship and "business," proclamation and neighbor-love inhabit one offering.

⁸ Paul N. Anderson, "The Meeting for Worship in Which Business Is Conducted," *Quaker Religious Thought* 96 (2001): 3–22.

⁹ Rowan Williams, "In the Place of Jesus: Insights from Origen on Prayer" (2014).

¹⁰ N. T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (New York: HarperOne, 2010); Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

¹¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 151–60.

¹² Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts.* (New York: Random House, 2018), 67–108; Murray Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1978); Peter L. Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2006); Roberta M. Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership* (Falls Church, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2009).

¹³ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003); Cyndi Parker, *Encountering Jesus in the Real World of the Gospels* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2021).

¹⁴ See John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 157–60; and MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 151–60.

Friends Roots: Gathering a People

Barclay's *Apology* holds Scripture and Spirit together and refuses a ministerial caste; ministry is the manifestation of Christ within a gathered meeting.¹⁵ Trueblood describes Friends as "organized to minister," where recognizing gifts (elders, overseers, released ministers) exists to serve the ministry of all.¹⁶ Brinton traces how this imagination was institutionalized, and Dandelion charts how diverse streams hold (or lose) these convictions today.¹⁷ Anderson shows how Meeting for Worship for Business functions devotionally before it is managerial: in expectant quiet, the church listens for the unifying motion of the Spirit and minutes unity when it comes.¹⁸ Williams's Origen reminds us that such listening is formed in prayer to the Son **in** the Son—discernment as participation in Christ's own life with the Father.¹⁹

Holiness as Wholeness: Spencer's Constellation in Dialogue with Wesley

Spencer's eight-point constellation prevents false binaries—contemplation vs. mission, charisma vs. order, suffering vs. joy; by holding them in a Spirit-formed wholeness.²⁰ Maddox's *Responsible Grace* clarifies how grace enables but also expects co-operation through practices; Collins centers Wesley's "holy love" as the telos of sanctification; Oden's patristic ressourcement guards the project's catholicity.²¹ The Third Way thus stands as a Friends-Wesleyan holiness: conversion anchors identity, charisma empowers service, contemplation sustains discernment, community orders gifts, cruciformity purifies motives, mission extends love, prophecy confronts powers, and hope orients endurance.

Life from the Center: Thomas R. Kelly and Friends Spirituality

Kelly's *A Testament of Devotion* calls believers to live from the "Divine Center," yielding the fractured self to a single obedience in the Inward Light of Christ.²² Rufus Jones supplies a philosophical-mystical backdrop that ties inward experience to ethical fruit, and as Foster traces the disciplines that train attention and availability to divine initiative.²³ For The Third Way, committees, calendars, and callings cohere as they flow from this Center.

Equipping the Saints: A Pauline–Pastoral Anchor

MacArthur's exposition of Ephesians 4 emphasizes that pastors/teachers are given to the church to train others for ministry, so that the whole body may mature into unity and Christlikeness (Eph 4:13-16).²⁴ This cuts against consumer religion (professionals perform,

¹⁵ Barclay, *Apology*, Props. II, X–XI.

¹⁶ Trueblood, *People Called Quakers*, 53–60.

¹⁷ Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years*; Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*.

¹⁸ Anderson, "Meeting for Worship in Which Business Is Conducted," 3–22.

¹⁹ Williams, "In the Place of Jesus."

²⁰ Spencer, *Holiness*, 1–5, 227–35.

²¹ Maddox, *Responsible Grace*; Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*; Oden, *Classic Christianity*.

²² Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (New York: Harper, 1941), 1–24.

²³ Rufus M. Jones, *Social Law in the Spiritual World* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1904); Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978).

²⁴ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 151–160

congregants watch) and against leaderless activism (zeal without wisdom). In Friends terms, recognized leaders equip the whole church's ministers.

Character and the Future: Virtue for Faithful Presence

Wright argues that Christian character emerges where Spirit and habit meet.²⁵ MacIntyre's account of practices/traditions and Hauerwas's "community of character" place those habits within an ecclesial ecology, precisely what Friends' business-as-worship and testimonies cultivate.²⁶ Thus, holiness shows up reliably in ordinary speech and action—especially "when no one is looking."

Proclamation and Presence: Kerygma in Kairos

Sweet reframes evangelism as *nudge*: awakening one another to the God already at work.²⁷ Montesano clarifies how *kerygma* operates rhetorically in *kairos*—proclamation as God's timely act forming a people.²⁸ Green shows historically that ordinary believers were the primary evangelists of the early church; Pohl recovers hospitality as the social architecture of the gospel.²⁹ Gwyn's reading of early Friends adds an apocalyptic edge: proclamation unveils a new creation order into which people are summoned.³⁰ The Third Way, therefore, weds preaching to presence: truth in plain speech, welcome at real tables, attention to the person before us.

Non-Anxious, Courageous Community: Systems and Virtue

Brown's research demonstrates that shame-resilient, value-clarified cultures enable brave work and truthful relationships.³¹ Bowen's systems theory explains how anxiety infects groups and how differentiated leaders steady them; Steinke and Gilbert translate this to congregations. Friends' practices—plain speech, queries, eldering, and a bias for listening—fit this playbook: they form a courageous presence that neither dominates nor withdraws.³²

Mission Along the Roads: Place, People, and Public Truth

Newbigin calls the church "the hermeneutic of the gospel," a public people embodying truth.³³ Frost/Hirsch presses mission into neighborhoods through incarnational practices; Parker's place-based teaching enables learners to "hear" the land and its roads, making discipleship geographically literate and locally responsive.³⁴ For Friends, this means the Light of Christ turns up in precinct meetings, break rooms, kitchen tables, and city councils; international trade routes and school bus routes alike become stages for holy influence rather than domination.

²⁵ Wright, *After You Believe*, 147–173

²⁶ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*; Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*.

²⁷ Leonard Sweet, *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who's Already There* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010), 19–42.

²⁸ Mark Montesano, "Kairos and Kerygma: The Rhetoric of Christian Proclamation," paper.

²⁹ Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970); Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

³⁰ Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*

³¹ Brown, *Dare to Lead*, 67–108.

³² Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*; Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times*; Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership*.

³³ Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*.

³⁴ Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things to Come*; Parker, *Encountering Jesus*.

Practical Ecclesiology: Seamless Unity Worship–Ministry–Business

Practically, The Third Way yields a gathered life in which:

- **Ministry is mutual.** Gifts are named, tested, and deployed across the body.
- **Leaders equip.** Elders and released ministers prioritize formation, teaching, and gift cultivation.
- **Discernment is doxology.** Meetings for Worship for Business aim to hear and obey Christ together.
- **Mission is ordinary faithfulness.** Evangelism, justice, and neighbor-love travel the everyday roads of life.

Conclusion

The Third Way is neither clericalism nor activism, neither privatized holiness nor programmatic busyness. It is a holiness that is Scripture-soaked and Spirit-led, a way of life in which every member ministers, leaders equip, the meeting discerns Christ's leadership, and the church becomes a non-anxious, evangelically faithful presence for the world God loves.

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Addendum: Methodological Commitments (Expanded)

How these commitments shape research and evaluation

- **Sources & Citation.** Scripture (NASB) as norming norm; Friends/Wesleyan primaries as controlling dialogue partners; secondary literature (Maddox, Collins, Brinton, Dandelion, Newbigin, MacIntyre, Hauerwas, et al.) as contextual ballast.
- **Method.** Practical-theological cycle: gather the community's practice, read it in Scripture/Spirit, test in worship-for-business, enact, and reassess.
- **Assessment.** Track not only outputs (attendance, events) but **formation indicators:** participation in prayer/hospitality, distribution of ministry, conflict health (time to resolution; reduction in triangulation), and witness in local "roads."
- **Expansion** of the Methodological Commitments—each with (1) core claim, (2) biblical/theological warrant (NASB), (3) Friends–Wesleyan anchors, (4) practical implications for a meeting, and (5) common distortions to avoid.

1) Scripture and Spirit Held Together

Claim. The same Spirit who inspired Scripture (2 Tim 3:16) illumines the church to hear and obey the living Word today (John 16:13), so discernment is both canonical and charismatic.

Warrant. "All Scripture is inspired by God..." (2 Tim 3:16, NASB); "When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13, NASB).

Friends–Wesleyan anchors. Barclay insists that the Inward Teacher never contradicts Scripture but opens it; Anderson shows how Friends test "leadings" corporately; Wesley's *quadrilateral* (Scripture primacy with Spirit-used tradition, reason, experience) coheres with Friends' practice.³⁵

Practices. Weight biblical reading in worship-for-business (a psalm to quiet, an epistle to shape counsel), requires Scripture-anchored minutes, and keep a standing agenda item: "How does this motion accord with the gospel?"

Distortions to avoid. (a) Biblicism: treating the Bible as a databank detached from the Spirit's present work. (b) Enthusiasm: elevating impressions that lack canonical testing.

2) Holiness as Wholeness

Claim. Holiness is the Spirit's re-ordering of the whole life toward God: conversional, contemplative, communal, cruciform, charismatic, missional, prophetic, and eschatological.

Warrant. "Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice" (Rom 12:1, NASB).

Friends–Wesleyan anchors. Spencer's "constellation" guards against reduction; Wesley names holy love as telos (perfecting love); Oden shows its catholic roots.³⁶

³⁵ Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1678; repr., London: Friends Book Centre, 1908), Props. II, X–XI; Paul N. Anderson, "Spiritual Discernment in the Gospel Tradition," in *Following Jesus: The Heart of Faith*, ed. Paul N. Anderson (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 115–34; John Wesley's "quadrilateral" as commonly summarized within Wesleyan studies.

³⁶ Carole Dale Spencer, *Holiness: The Soul of Quakerism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2007), 1–5, 227–35; Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1994); Kenneth J. Collins,

Practices. Balance your meeting's calendar across Spencer's axes (e.g., prayer retreat → contemplation; service day → mission; testimony Sunday → prophetic witness).

Distortions. Moralism (holiness as rule-keeping) or quietism (holiness without mission).

3) Corporate Discernment as Worship

Claim. Decision is doxology: the meeting listens for and obeys Christ's present leadership (Col 1:18) in the gathered hush.

Warrant. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Col 3:15, NASB); Acts 15 models' discernment: "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28, NASB).

Friends–Wesleyan anchors. Anderson's account of Monthly Meeting for Business; Rowan Williams (via Origen) on prayer that conforms desire to the Son.³⁷

Practices. Appoint a "reader" to restate the question; ask for the *sense of the meeting* before wordsmithing; minute only what unity bears; pause when heat rises.

Distortions. Corporate managerialism (consensus by vote) or spiritualized drift (endless deferral that avoids obedience).

4) Virtue Formation for Vocation

Claim. The Spirit forms stable habits (virtues) so that the church reliably does what love requires, especially when unobserved.

Warrant. "Solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (Heb 5:14, NASB).

Friends–Wesleyan anchors. Wright (habits + Spirit → character); MacIntyre (virtues in practices and traditions); Hauerwas (community forms character).³⁸

Practices. Build a simple *rule of life* (daily prayer, weekly table fellowship, monthly service); tie ministries to virtues (e.g., hospitality → Pohl's practices).

Distortions. Technique-ism (virtues without grace) or spontaneity-ism (grace without training).

5) Leaders as Equippers (Decentralized Ministry)

Claim. Christ gives pastors/teachers "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service" so that ministry is distributed across the body.

Warrant. Eph 4:11-13 (NASB) places the "work of service" with the saints.

Friends–Wesleyan anchors. MacArthur's exegesis underscores equipping; Trueblood/Brinton on Friends as "a society of ministers."³⁹

The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007); Thomas C. Oden, *Classic Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 1992).

³⁷ Paul N. Anderson, "The Meeting for Worship in Which Business Is Conducted," *Quaker Religious Thought* 96 (2001): 3–22; Rowan Williams, "In the Place of Jesus: Insights from Origen on Prayer" (2014).

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³⁹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 151–60; D. Elton Trueblood, *The People Called Quakers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 53–60; Howard H. Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1952).

Practices. Every program owns a **training lane** (e.g., prayer team apprentices; teaching team coaches readers); publish a gifts map each year.

Distortions. Performer clergy (professionals do ministry) or anti-leadership populism (charisma without formation).

6) Courageous, Non-Anxious Presence (Systems-wise Holiness)

Claim. Holy leadership is characterized by clarity in convictions (differentiated), closeness in connection, and calmness in reactivity—enabling truth-telling with love.

Warrant. “Speak the truth in love” (Eph 4:15, NASB); Jesus’ steady presence amid conflict (Mark 2-3).

Friends–Wesleyan anchors. Bowen (differentiation), Steinke/Gilbert (congregational applications), and Brown (courage/vulnerability) are integrated with Friends’ plain speech and eldering.⁴⁰

Practices. Normalize “pause, name, ask” in tense moments; teach amygdala-aware meetings (short silence before responding).

Distortions. Triangulation (talk about, not to), niceness (conflict-avoidance), or bluntness without love.

7) Mission Along the Roads (Public, Local, Neighborly)

Claim. The church is the public hermeneutic of the gospel: proclamation joined to lived presence in concrete places.

Warrant. “You will be My witnesses” (Acts 1:8, NASB); “Let your light shine before men... that they may see your good works and glorify your Father” (Matt 5:16, NASB).

Friends–Wesleyan anchors. Newbigin (church as hermeneutic); Frost/Hirsch (incarnational mission); Sweet (nudge evangelism); Parker (place-aware discipleship); Green (ordinary evangelists).⁴¹

Practices. Name your parish by map (schools, shelters, routes); weave hospitality (Pohl) into the calendar; train members to tell the gospel in their own words.

Distortions. Program-centrism (mission outsourced to events) or privatism (faith without public witness).

⁴⁰ Murray Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1978); Peter L. Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2006); Roberta M. Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership* (Falls Church, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2009); Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts.* (New York: Random House, 2018), 67–108.

⁴¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003); Leonard Sweet, *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who’s Already There* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010), 19–42; Cyndi Parker, *Encountering Jesus in the Real World of the Gospels* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2021); Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970); Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

8) Simplicity of Center (Friends Spirituality for Coherence)

Claim. “Life from the Center” (Kelly) unifies calendar, committees, and callings under a single obedience to Christ’s Light.

Warrant. “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” (Matt 6:33, NASB).

Friends–Wesleyan anchors. Kelly (Divine Center), Rufus Jones (mysticism with ethical fruit), Foster (disciplines as training in availability to God).⁴²

Practices. Begin and end meetings in silence: ask “What must die so this can live?” to prune busyness; rotate testimonies on simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality.

Distortions. Activism without prayer or contemplation without mission.

⁴² Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (New York: Harper, 1941), 1–24; Rufus M. Jones, *Social Law in the Spiritual World* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1904); Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978).