

Study Guide: Conscience, Community, and Resistance in Quaker and Related Traditions

This study guide is designed to help you review and deepen your understanding of the provided source material, focusing on themes of moral decision-making, resistance, community support, and spiritual conviction, particularly within the context of Quakerism and conscientious objection.

Quiz: Short Answer Questions

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. **What is the core belief of Quakerism regarding an individual's connection to God?**
2. **How is the philosophy of the Volunteer Service Mission (VSM) described, and what is its financial model?**
3. **What did Jeff Kisling's experience with draft registration at Scattergood reveal about peer influence and personal conviction?**
4. **According to the source material, what makes discerning God's will difficult, and what comforting realization is mentioned in this context?**
5. **What are the primary objectives of the Friends Volunteer Service Mission (VSM) as outlined in the text?**
6. **How does the concept of "LANDBACK" relate to the opposition to fossil fuel extraction projects in the provided text?**
7. **Describe the Doukhobors' core belief and how they interpreted the derogatory term "spirit wrestlers."**
8. **What specific pressures does the Selective Service System use to influence young men, and what negative consequences are associated with these pressures?**
9. **What was John Griffith's experience in the "hole" (solitary confinement), and how did he cope with it?**
10. **How did John Griffith's father support his son's conscientious objection during a confrontation with the US District Attorney?**

Answer Key: Short Answer Questions

1. The core belief of Quakerism is that there is "that of God in everyone," meaning every individual has the ability to communicate with God within themselves. This direct personal experience of knowing God's will is the foundation of their faith and Christianity.
2. The philosophy of VSM is accurately depicted by the concept of "released Friend," where an individual pursues a deep concern with spiritual and material support from their meeting. VSM is designed to be financially self-sufficient, with individuals finding jobs and pooling wages to cover expenses and later support full-time community work.
3. Jeff Kisling initially registered for the draft, but a friend's comment about him not looking like "the same old Jeff" immediately highlighted the impact of his decision. This peer observation, combined with the heavy weight of the draft, prompted him to reconsider and eventually decide to turn in his draft cards.
4. Discerning God's will is described as difficult due to influences from people, law, and self (selfishness and pride). However, the text mentions the comforting realization, like Thomas A'Beckett's experience, that even when feeling "loathsome" or uncertain, "He still loves."
5. The primary objectives of the Friends Volunteer Service Mission (VSM) include providing the reconciling presence of the Church, expressing personal commitment to Christ, fostering personal and social growth, solving problems in community, and acquiring relational skills with diverse cultures. It also aims to express gratitude to God through service.
6. The concept of "LANDBACK" is described as the reclamation of everything stolen from original Peoples, and it aligns with the opposition to fossil fuel extraction projects. The text suggests that such projects involve "theft of land," even when legally defined by eminent domain, thus connecting LANDBACK to the larger fight against these practices.
7. The Doukhobors believed that God did not dwell in the church, but in each human being. They embraced the derogatory term "spirit wrestlers," stating that they "wrestle with and for the Spirit of God against those things that are evil."
8. The Selective Service System relies on pressures such as tradition, parental and peer pressure, and the law to attract men to the armed forces, while not widely

publicizing alternatives. This process is described as frustrating and anguishing, stifling personal growth and leading to a loss of idealism and faith in humanity.

9. John Griffith was confined in a "hole," a solitary confinement cell, which was filthy, hot, and offered minimal provisions (two slices of white bread and cold water). He coped by exercising, reciting Bible verses, singing, and meditating, which helped him manage mental anxiety, even as the physical conditions were very stressful.
10. During the confrontation with the US District Attorney, Mr. Sapp, John Griffith's father interrupted Sapp's aggressive and disrespectful remarks. He firmly stated his own military service and subsequent disillusionment with war, emphasizing that patriotism doesn't require war and that he would stand by his son's religious conscience.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the role of "conscience" and "God's will" in guiding individual decisions within the provided texts. How do various individuals discern and act upon these internal directives, especially when faced with external pressures like societal expectations or legal requirements?
2. Analyze the concept of "mutual aid" as presented in the source materials, particularly in relation to Quakerism and Doukhobor epistemology. How is mutual aid depicted as a spiritual practice, and what are its practical manifestations in the lives of the individuals and communities described?
3. Compare and contrast the experiences of individuals facing draft resistance and imprisonment as depicted in the sources. What common challenges and sources of strength do they describe, and how do their responses to persecution and confinement reflect their core beliefs?
4. Explore the tension between individual conviction and community support as illustrated in the texts. How do Quaker meetings and family relationships provide guidance and solace for those making difficult moral stands, and what challenges arise when these support systems are tested?
5. The idea of "story" is presented as central to human identity and connection. Discuss how the narratives of personal experience, historical events, and philosophical concepts contribute to the overarching "story" of resistance, spirituality, and social change within the provided excerpts.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Ashram:** A spiritual hermitage or a monastery in Indian religions. In the context of the text, a place visited for chanting, silent meditation, and teaching of self-reflection.
- **Civil Disobedience:** The active, professed refusal of a citizen to obey certain laws, demands, orders, or commands of a government, or of an occupying international power. It is a nonviolent resistance.
- **Conscientious Objector (CO):** An individual who has claimed the right to refuse to perform military service on the grounds of freedom of thought, conscience, or religion.
- **Doukhobors:** A spiritual Christian movement that originated in Russia in the mid-1600s. They believe God dwells in each human being and are known as "spirit wrestlers" who wrestle against evil. They practice pacifism, often to the point of vegetarianism, and mutual aid.
- **Draft Cards:** Documents issued by a government to individuals, typically young men, requiring them to register for potential military conscription.
- **Epistemology:** The branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge. It studies the nature, origin, and scope of knowledge, epistemic justification, the rationality of belief, and various related issues.
- **Friends (Society of Friends/Quakers):** A historically Christian group of religious movements. Quakers are known for their belief in "that of God in everyone" (the Inner Light), their commitment to pacifism, and their practice of silent worship meetings.
- **Inner Light:** A central concept in Quakerism, referring to the direct, personal experience of God's presence and guidance within each individual, without the need for intermediaries or elaborate rituals.
- **LANDBACK:** A political movement and concept advocating for the return of land to Indigenous peoples. It implies not just physical land, but also sovereignty, cultural revitalization, and environmental justice.
- **Meeting (Quaker):** A gathering of Quakers for worship or for conducting business. Quaker worship meetings are often held in silence, allowing individuals to seek direct communion with God and to share messages when moved by the Spirit.

- **Mutual Aid:** Voluntary reciprocal exchange of resources and services for mutual benefit. In the context of the text, it is also described as a part of spiritual tacit knowledge, especially among the Doukhobors.
- **Non-cooperation:** A form of nonviolent resistance where individuals refuse to comply with certain demands, laws, or systems that they deem unjust or immoral.
- **Pacifism:** The belief that war and violence are unjustifiable and that all disputes should be settled by peaceful means. It is a fundamental principle for Quakers and Doukhobors.
- **Released Friend:** A concept within VSM and Quaker tradition where an individual is supported by their meeting (financially or spiritually) to pursue a deep concern, often related to spiritual or community service, without the need for conventional employment.
- **Scattergood:** Likely a reference to Scattergood Friends School, a Quaker boarding school mentioned in the text, which appears to have been an environment supportive of pacifist and conscientious objection views.
- **Selective Service System:** An independent agency of the United States government that maintains information on those potentially subject to military conscription (the draft) and manages the registration of young men.
- **Spirit Wrestlers:** A term adopted by the Doukhobors, originally derogatory, which they embraced to describe their struggle for and with the Spirit of God against evil.
- **Volunteer Service Mission (VSM):** A program, particularly associated with Friends United Meeting, designed for young individuals to engage in community service, often in financially self-sufficient living arrangements, as an outward expression of their spiritual beliefs and commitment to Christ.