



Doctrine of Christian Discovery A Journey of Healing

The Workshops on the Doctrine of Discovery are a project of the Racial Social and Economic Justice Committee of the NEYM with technical assistance provided by the American Friends Service Committee Healing Justice Program.

HANDOUT: NEYM SESSIONS 2013 MINUTE

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING SESSIONS 2013 MINUTES

52. Committee on Racial, Social, and Economic Justice, clerk Rachel Carey-Harper (Barnstable), expressed appreciation and gratitude for the wisdom and guidance of Jamie Bissonette Lewey, Mother Bear and other traditional tribal people in New England who have invested much energy and love in their commitment to stay with us on this journey, sharing their experience of the Doctrine of Discovery. She read to us a revised version of the minute on the Doctrine of Discovery. The presiding clerk asked that friends speak out of worship about their learning and experience with the Doctrine of Discovery, and many brought messages:

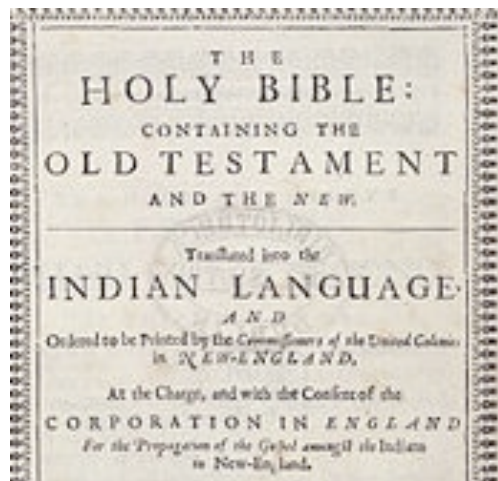
We know that to simply say “we repudiate this doctrine” does not do enough. We need to make amends, we need to learn more, and we need to find out how to do more. What would it mean to truly live in a way that acknowledges and works to rectify this terrible injustice? We need to move from empire to beloved community, knowing the history of papal injunctions to justify the claiming of land and how tightly this way of thinking underlies the charter granted to William Penn as well as many other examples of the ways that this doctrine continues to inform so many aspects of how we live in the world now, our policies, practices, and possessions. It is important to reflect on the local specificities of the history of the doctrine of discovery here in New England: from whence come the titles to our meetinghouses? A Friend from Bolivia, an Aymara woman who knows in deep personal experience what it means to live under the Doctrine of Discovery, has gradually come to see and feel the presence of this doctrine not only in Bolivia but here among Quakers in the United States. This is not just an historical question; it is a present question; it is a future question. At its heart is failing to see the light in all people, failing to see that all people have needs, failing to see people at all. Every day we give ourselves permission to do things that rest upon our privileges and we can daily personally take responsibility for how we live with each other, recognizing that no one of us is any more precious than anyone else. We cannot change the past, but we can change how we record history and the stories we tell, so that the truth of our actions is openly explored. We need to recognize that there is much work to do in our own Quaker communities, in our souls. We share this world.

After this period of worship Friends approved the following Minute:

The Doctrine of Discovery was used to justify Christians “right” to dominate, exploit and claim the lands of non-Christians that they “discovered.” In the days of European exploration and colonization, governments relied on the Doctrine of Discovery, which has its roots in racism, to commit great harm against Native peoples. This doctrine has justified policies of deception, forced removal, sterilization, enslavement, and genocide. The doctrine has not disappeared or been revoked. It has force of law globally and serves as a framework of oppression fully intact in US federal Indian law today. In 2012 the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) focused on encouraging global repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery.



We as New England Yearly Meeting repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery. We are beginning a journey to consider the moral and spiritual implications of how we benefit from and have been harmed by the doctrine as individuals and meetings. The workings of this doctrine are invisible to most of us. Our first work is to remove the logs from our eyes so that we may see. We need to learn more, find ways to seek forgiveness, and to ask how the Spirit might lead us. We have heard powerful testimonies of how these issues have affected our



lives. We encourage consultation with Indigenous Peoples to restore the health of ourselves and our planet. We recognize that this is our work to do. On this path, respectfully traveled in love, our goal is true healing so the Light of God can be answered in everyone. Our intention is to walk toward being in right relationship with the whole human family and the planet.

EPISTLE

August 8, 2013

To all Friends everywhere:

We gathered in Smithfield, Rhode Island, for the 353rd sessions of New England Yearly Meeting, held Eighth Month 2013.

"Live up to the Light thou hast, and more will be granted thee" was God's ministry to 19th century Friend Caroline Fox as she grappled

with deep sadness. The story of how she received the first glimmer of light and the promise of more spoke strongly to our condition as we explored our own stories, both individually and as a body.

Many of us arrived already weary from lives burdened with concerns. We came seeking divine guidance and the nourishment we know we find in worship and love and community. The fragrance of scripture that infused the writings of early Friends invites us to draw sustenance from our roots.

As we considered many challenges, we acknowledged our agony at the condition of the world and our longing for more ways to redress injustice. Among these concerns, we report to you about an issue that Friends worldwide are considering -- the Doctrine of Discovery. We repudiate this doctrine, which is rooted in racism and which has been used to justify great harms to Native peoples. This is only the beginning of a process of study and self-examination that must lead to personal and collective action.

At this point in the story of our yearly meeting, we feel spiritual restlessness and continued discomfort. We are aware that many things that worked for us in the past are helping us less now. The stories we believe and tell will help to shape the future. The process of moving through transformation takes time and patience. We must not overstep our Guide. We have a joyous sense that new life is rising, but its green shoots are too small for us to know what the plant will be. Discomfort and uncertainty are part of growth. How shall we seek out and nurture those tender shoots of needed change?

Divine Lover and Guide, we know that your house is a wonderful place to be. Thank you for holding us all under the shadow of your wings. Help us to love your Truth even when it shows us our faults. O Thou who art closer than breath to us, hold us secure lest we fall.

On Behalf of New England Friends,

Jacqueline Stillwell

Presiding Clerk

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SO HOW CAN THIS TIME BE DIFFERENT?

The preceding minute on the Doctrine of Discovery is but one in a long line of spectacular work done by NEYM on racism. Over 15 Minutes and many actions state or imply that Friends agree to "examine our individual and corporate complicity". How can it be different this time? It really is up to us. One serious question that came forward during this process. Could NEYM really do this with integrity? This is an excellent query.

