The writings of George Fox, Edward Burrough, and Margaret Fell demonstrate that at least these three, first-generation Friends, were reading the Bible with empathy. They stood within the thought and life-world of the earliest Christians and looked at the world through the window of biblical faith. For them the heart of the Bible lay in its personal narratives—the stories of living men, women, and communities; unlike many Christians, then and now, they did not look at the Bible as a legal constitution. They reveled in the poetic language of the Bible’s rich symbol and metaphor. Out of this empathetic reading emerged not only some of their strange behaviors, such as going naked in public “as a sign,” but also their innovative understanding of the Christian way of life—their anti-war testimony and commitment to social justice (through their empathetic “Lamb’s War” reading of the Book of Revelation), their insistence on the full equality of women and men in preaching and declaring the Christian message.

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