

As Others See Us

SILENCE IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

“ . . . For nearly three centuries the members of the Society of Friends have been trying to show to the rest of the world the place of silence in Christian worship ; and now, at last, men who in things ecclesiastical are separated from them by a whole diameter are beginning to ask themselves if the time has not come when the Quaker ideal of worship should be used to enrich the life of the whole Christian community. True, one swallow does not make a summer, but Mr. Hepher's book [*The Fellowship of Silence*] is no solitary sign ; on every hand the feeling gains ground that our ordinary services, with their uninterrupted course of praying, reading, singing, and preaching, need to be modified to make room for that quiet waiting upon God which, as the Psalms remind us, is so real an element in all true worship. Only within the last few days I have come across the notice of a fourteen days' ' Quiet Time Mission, ' conducted by the pastor of a Methodist Church, who gave addresses on ' The Power of Silence. ' For Methodists this is a new type of ' mission ' indeed ; and when even the most vocal of the sects finds itself constrained to walk in the ways of George Fox, the Quaker may well feel that his long plea for wordless worship is at last bearing fruit. G. J.”

From the *Manchester Guardian*, 14th November, 1917.

VOTING AND PRAYING

“ . . . At present, Church assemblies habitually decide by voting, and the will of the majority becomes effective. Yet it should be recognised that this whole procedure is a second-best. There is a method known to the Society of Friends and to various religious movements by which on almost all great issues unanimity can be confidently secured. It is the method of corporate waiting upon God. We understand that in the Society of Friends the member appointed to speak for the meeting is able with complete assurance at a certain point to say that the sense or judgment of the meeting is so and so. There are never any votes taken ; there is no defeated and discontented minority ; the entire Society gathered together in one place waits for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and nothing is decided until all are brought to the same judgment. In our Church assemblies the temper is something quite different. There are, indeed, prayers at the outset, and the assembly is dismissed with the Divine blessing ; but very shortly after the prayers are finished the atmosphere is liable to be exactly like that of any secular gathering. . . .

“ Of course, there will always be a place for voting in order to obtain a rapid settlement of those detailed questions which must be settled one

way or another, but have no real importance. In these decisions there is no spiritual significance, and it would be foolishly pedantic to spend time which is owed to God's service in waiting for spiritual guidance upon them. It is on all fundamental matters that the method that we have described should be applied. The Society of Friends has been keeping it alive for all Christendom. Many small groups have lately been learning from them. But if the whole Church is to practise it, all members of the Church must be entirely dominated by the passion to do the will of Christ; and this must be the passion to do what Christ shows us to be His will, and not the passion to do what we independently suppose that His will is likely to be."

From the *Challenge*, 14th December, 1917.

Gleanings from the Minutes of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, 1700 to 1711

THE following are copied from Minutes as printed in volume vi. of the *Publications of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, 1915-1917* :

CARE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTHS

"It is laid before this meeting that the Youth amongst friends, have too much liberty to wander on first day's in the evening. In order to prevent which for the future, It was proposed that there be appointed three, four or more evening meetings at several private houses on first-days."

"It is agreed by this meeting that four friends be appointed every month to look after the children that are disorderly, or kept out of the meetings on first days."

" . . . are desired to see that the Children, and such other persons that are out of the meeting, near the meeting house on first days may be persuaded to keep in the meeting, and be orderly."

"There being a Complaint made that the youth among friends do not behave themselves orderly in and during meeting time, for preventing thereof for the future . . . are desired to sit in the Gallery, with them in the forenoon, and in the afternoons friends are desired to make their children sit by them, & so continue their care therein until the next monthly meeting."

"The friends appointed to take care of Nathan Shenton's children and Estate, Report they have placed out the children they hope to good places, and they are all provided for, Except the young one which they have put out to Nurse, and hope there may be enough left to discharge the Expense of it."