

Guidance for Young Quakers in the use of Silence, 1657-1847

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SOME years ago when I was a member of a Meeting that had recently been started and in which the children outnumbered the adults, a lady who was not a Friend remarked, "I suppose you Friends always make a point of explaining to your children how best to make use of the time of silence?" She herself had had considerable experience in silent worship in retreats and elsewhere, and had what might be described as a technique of contemplation. Her question to me appeared to be a very reasonable one and I was not satisfied with my reply that Friends do little for their children in the way of direct teaching about the use of silence in Meeting.

In the last two years there have been letters in *The Friend* from New Zealand and South Africa on "The Talent of Silence". The South African correspondent writes (*Friend*, 21.ii.'36), "Quite early in life, I found that, in spite of being blessed with a Quaker upbringing, I completely lacked instruction in the art of silence and I have had to gain such knowledge as I have from sources other than that of the Society of Friends. It may be that I was unfortunate in not knowing the sources which existed in the Society and which would have supplied me with the same explicit and progressive education along these lines as would have been the case had I felt a vocation for, say, foreign mission work or the amelioration and rectification of social evils; but the fact remains that I was aware of no such instruction within the Society."

It is with this type of question in mind that I have tried to examine anew what has been written in the earlier days

of the Society on Silent Worship. It is a subject so large that I must omit many references to Fox, Barclay, and Pennington, since these would be in a large measure familiar, nor shall I refer to the numerous works published within the last forty years which do, I feel, answer many of the questions raised by these correspondents. I shall confine myself to works which if less well known, do show the importance that Friends placed on silence in worship, its nature and how best they could participate in it. [It is evident from notes that follow here, that an examination of the advice of early Friends on Silence, not only for children but for adults as well, was intended.]

From the first days of the Society, Friends were not backward in using the printed page for the religious instruction of their children.

In 1657 there was published *A Catechisme For Children that they may come to learn of Christ, the Light, the Truth, the Way that leads to know the Father, the God of all Truth*, by George Fox. It is a little book of 69 pages (which in the 1660 edition was expanded to 148 pages), consisting of Questions and Answers between Father and Child. The child is precocious and he undoubtedly asks, unlike so many children, the questions which his father thinks he is able and willing to answer. This catechism is chiefly noticeable for the emphasis placed on the Light. Again and again, in question and answer the words "the Light which doth enlighten every man that doth come into the world" are used.

Q. Father, is that the Light which thou tells me of, which I am enlightened withal, which sheweth me all that ever I have done, and all the ungodly ways that ever I have acted in, and all the ungodly deeds which I have committed, and hard speeches I have spoken, ungodly words I have uttered, and hard and wicked thoughts and imaginations which I have imagined and thought, is this the Light which doth shew this, and make this manifest ?

A. Yea Child, this is the Light which shews thee this, which doth enlighten every man that cometh into this world. Eph. v. 13.

- Q. Father, is this the Light which men hate because their deeds are evil and will not bring their deeds to the Light, because the Light will reprove them ?
- A. Yea Child. Job xvi. 8, 9.
- Q. Father, will this Light which doth enlighten every man that cometh into the world, reprove him that believeth in the Light, and whose deeds are wrought in God ?
- A. No Child. John iii. 2.
- Q. Father, what, will this Light show everyone's words, actions, and ways and deeds, and imaginations ?
- A. Yea Child, it doth make them manifest and it doth try them. John iii. 19, 20.
- Q. Father, how may I know a thought and an imagination from the Light ?
- A. Child, the Light discovers them and makes them manifest, which cometh from Him by whom the World was made, which Light was before the thoughts were, and if the Light be hearkened to, the thoughts and imaginations shall not lodge within thee. Heb. i, 2.
- Q. Father, how must I overcome them, and where must I know the first step of peace ?
- A. Child, in the Light which thou art enlightened withal (which loving thou wilt see thyself, and how thou hast spent thy time) in that Light stand still, and with that Light thou shalt come to see Christ, the Saviour of thy soul, from whence the Light comes, to save thee from thy sin, and that which the Light discovers contrary to it ; thy strength is to stand still and believe in the Light ; etc.

The answer to the question, " Father, what is the Kingdom of Heaven ? " is, " Why, it is the Light, child." Luke xvii. 21.

To the question, " Who is the Lord God, and how may I know him, and how may I see him ? " the father answers, " Child, the Lord God is he that sheweth thee thy thoughts, he that shews thee thy thoughts is the Lord who fills Heaven

and Earth, and in the Light he is seen and beholden, and his Glory ; I, the Lord know the heart, and shew unto man his thoughts, and so with the Light that checks thee for sin and unholinesse, and turns thee to holinesse ; with that God is seen who is Holy and without holinesse none can see him.”

Teaching such as this may seem to be entirely over the heads of the children addressed. Is it over their hearts and feelings ? I do not think so. I can picture George Fox seated by the fireside talking seriously to a serious-minded boy who feels in his presence awe and a great regard. The boy is taken seriously, and he is told to eat of the same meat as his elders. He learns that God is not outside the world and afar off, but within and very near. In this catechism George Fox, in the words in which he records his vision, “ did set the children upon my horse, that they should not tire because of the bull chasing them, I was so tender towards them ”.¹

A Primer and Catechism for Children by George Fox and Ellis Hookes was published in 1670. It is a very little book for very little children and contains instruction in spelling and punctuation, and a pronouncing vocabulary suited to the needs of the little Quaker. “ Christ is the Truth. Christ is the Light. Christ is my Way. Christ is my Life. Christ is the Seed,” he spells out. And then almost immediately he passes to “ Sarah was a good woman. Jezebel was a bad woman, who killed the just, and turned against the Lord’s Prophets, with her attired head and painted face peeping out of the Window. Christ I must feel within me, who is my Light, and the Truth ; and that is God that sheweth me my thoughts and imaginations of my heart ; and that is the Lord God that doth search my heart.” In the early pages of this curious little work the reader can learn the signification of the word Thessalonica, the four kind of Cubits mentioned in Scripture, the signification of the seven Arts and the marks of a true Christian. The Catechism which occupies the middle third of the book is between Scholar and Master. It begins with an enumeration of the many offices that Christ has in the church, and then passes on to the question,

What is that shalt lead into all Truth ?

¹ *Jnl. F.H.S.*, iv (1907), p. 124.

MASTER. It is the Spirit of Truth which must lead into all Truth.

SCHOLAR. Where is the Spirit ?

MASTER. Within.

The Spirit is within, and the Truth is within in the inwards parts, by which Spirit God is known, and by the Truth the God of Truth is known.

Altogether, a humble little book which was probably loved by the children who read it. Could they not look up the signification of the first names of Friends ?¹ Were they not taught a ready way to reckon what one's daily expenses cometh unto in the whole year ?

In 1681 S.C. (Stephen Crisp) and George Fox the younger collaborated in *A new book for children to Learn in with many wholesome Meditations etc.* The 1731 edition is a little book about five inches square. Following the alphabet and simple syllables comes a statement, simple in form if not in thought, of some of the fundamentals of Quaker belief. The long words are divided so that the child can spell them out.

Lit-tle chil-dren, let your ears be di-li-gent to hear the voice of the LIGHT, for that calls out of ever-y e-vil way. That is the Light which tel-leth thee in secret thou should-est not do E-vil and that is placed with-in thee, to be a Witness for God a-gainst all E-vil.

And here is George Fox the younger—

Little Children, God that made the World, and created all Things that therein is, he is not a Man sitting above the Stars in some one place, which place is called Heaven, as many of the World and the teachers there of imagine. But the true God, who was Creator of all things, he is an Eternal Spirit, and he is the Life and Virtue, and Power that upholdeth all his Creatures, and by him all things consist. [And again] So that which may be known of God is manifested in you, for God hath shewed it unto you. Therefore children, ye should not seek nor look out, nor *search* in your own thoughts to find out the Knowledge of God, for the World by their thoughts and Wisdom know

¹ Jeremiah—my height or fearing. Daniel—Judgement of God.

not God. But the Lord God is nigh unto every one of you, for to shew unto you your Thoughts . . . so children, take notice of that which sheweth you your thoughts, for that is the Lord. . . . For whatsoever doth make manifest, the same is Light.

This teaching is mystical but I believe that some children, especially those of Quaker parents, must have derived benefit from it, and it is certainly a courageous attempt to help them in worship. The book compares very favourably with *A Scripture Catechism for Children, Presented to Fathers of Families, and Masters of Schools* by Ambrose Rigge in 1702, in which the whole of the Old and New Testaments are passed in review. "How long did Seth live?" asks the scholar, to which the master replies "905 years." "Who was the first that should fight against the Israel of God after their Restauration?" "Gogg and Magogg." Ezekiel xxxviii. 16, 17.

John Freame's *Scripture Instruction*, 1713, written in order to promote Piety and Virtue, and discourage Vice and Immorality, though digested into several sections by way of Question and Answer, could not have been easy to assimilate. He does, however, in the "preface relating to education" touch on one interesting point, the spirit in which education is given.

And there is one thing that is of a pernicious Consequence, and ought carefully to be avoided; that is Father and Mother not agreeing in their Judgements, but often differing and disputing even before their children; not only about matters of little moment, but also concerning those things which relate to the management of their children.

William Penn's *Fruits of a Father's Love*, 1726, is perhaps the most helpful of these earliest books which deal with the religious instruction of children. In reading it we are conscious of the wise and loving earthly father who left these words of counsel to his children.

I will begin [he says in Chapter 2] here also, with the Beginning of Time, the Morning, so soon as you wake, retire your mind into a pure silence, from all thoughts and Ideas of Worldly things, and in that

frame, wait upon God, to feel his good Presence, to lift up your Hearts to him, and commit your whole self, into his blessed care and Protection. Then rise, if well, immediately ; being drest, read a Chapter or more in the Scriptures, and afterwards dispose yourselves for the Business of the Day. . . . And as you have intervals from your lawful occasions, delight to step Home, within yourselves I mean, and commune with your own Hearts, and be still. . . . The evening come . . . have your times of Retirement, before you close your eyes, as in the Morning ; that so the Lord may be the Alpha and Omega of every Day of your Lives.

There is something here beyond the mere advice to say your prayers regularly night and morning. Children who understood if only in small measure the meaning of this, would find little difficulty in the right use of the silence of the Meeting for Worship. It would be an extension of something already known..

Keep close [says Penn] to the Meetings of God's People, wait diligently at them, to feel the Heavenly Life in your Hearts. Look for that more than Words in Ministry, and you will profit most. Above all look to the Lord, but despise not Instruments, Man or Woman, Young or Old, Rich or Poor, Learned or Unlearned.

In 1733 the National Meeting held in Dublin approved a treatise by Samuel Fuller which was reprinted in 1786 under the title *Some Principles and Precepts of the Christian Religion by way of Question and Answer. Recommended to Parents and tutors for the use of Children.* It reflects the growing spirit of quietism.

Q. What is Prayer ?

A. It is the Speech or earnest breathing of the soul to the Almighty, whether expressed in words or not.

Q. Ought men to run hastily or rashly to God in Prayer ?

A. No ; " Be not rash with thy Mouth, and let not thine Heart be hasty to utter anything before God ; for God is in Heaven and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few." Ecc. v. 2.

Q. Do we know what to pray for and what helps us to pray acceptably ?

A. No ; no more than the Apostle Paul, who tells us notwithstanding our Lord's excellent prayer afore-said, that We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh Intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered. Rom. viii. 26.

It is interesting to note in passing that some of the questions are unexpectedly positive in their teaching. In the early nineteenth century the customary form of question was " Why do Friends object ? " Fuller has little use for the conscientious objector. He speaks of the Lord's Supper as " the soul partaking of the Bread which comes down from Heaven " and of a preparation that the soul must undergo before partaking of it. To the question " Is it necessary to partake of this Blessed Supper ? " he answers " Yes."

It is perhaps only to be expected that during the period of quietism there should be a marked falling off in the number of these children's manuals. Abiah Darby's *Useful Instruction for Children by way of Question and Answer*, 1763, covers much the same ground, in shorter compass, as Ambrose Rigge, and is without interest. She desires that the children will get the questions and answers by heart, but it is doubtful if their hearts could ever have been seriously engaged.

A much more likeable personality is F. Hatt of Ratcliff, London, whose informal manner of approaching children and patent sincerity, bridges the years that separate him from them, and them from us. His *Friendly advice to Children and all Mankind* was published in 1765. " It is desired by the author that this may be read by one person in every family, to others every Sabbath Day in the Morning, or by each Person that's capable to read, twice a week."

He advises children not to " be uneasy under their chastisements but to keep in mind the Advice given by their correctors, and take it as done for their good, not to spurn, be doged, and obstinate on Account thereof, rather calmly receive it ". They " will also find, by due Application of the mind something of a supernatural Power move in them in spiritual things ".

. . . you must be cautious of what company you keep, for the old saying is generally true " His person is known by the company ", and when there, take care you be not light and airy, and give too much liberty to the Tongue, that you may not have cause to repent of after, upon reflecting in your own minds.

The length of his sentences may have been something of a trial to the " Person that's capable to read ".

The place of Worship to which you go, keep steadily as you grow in Years, consider what sincere Worshipping of God is, in Spirit, and in Truth, not in the outward form or show of it, be very careful not to set down at ease therein, but seek diligently to feel the true and sincere Knowledge of the inward Teachings in your own Hearts and Souls ; which will if you bring your Minds into silence and stillness by subjecting all evil Thoughts and Carnal Vain Imaginations of the Heart, that attend all Flesh at divine Worship, be much manifest unto you, to teach and assist you to adore and worship the great Author of all Things, Animate and Inanimate, in true humility of Soul and Uprightness of Heart ; then you will come to experience the true Revelation of the Grace and good Spirit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as a still small Voice, saying unto you, this is the Way, walk in it, turn not to the right hand nor to the left ; this is the true inward and Spiritual Worship that the Father hath delight in, and not in the Multitude of the outward Forms and Shews which the carnal or fleshly understanding performeth in its own will and Time. I say, if you get down into this stillness, in which alone it is that the teachings of that holy voice can be either heard or received, it will influence and warm your hearts and Souls with a true and sincere Zeal to follow the dictates thereof, in all your actions both spiritual and temporal, becoming the pure principal of Truth in the Heart which guideth out of all error, it being the true Monitor . . . if through Inadvertancy you should slip or stray, return to that Teacher within you, it's that shewed you your Error, which will assist you and bring you again into that Life and Liberty, out of which you strayed,

where the enemy can have no Power over you, for that in you, giving the Life and Liberty, is stronger than all the powers of the wicked one. . . . Dear Children, as you take heed to make Improvement on the foregoing hints, you'll increase and grow up in the knowledge of this World's Affairs, and the Several Employments you are called to therein, in such sort that you will be able to discover the several errors and vices that the Enemy has concealed in them, and make war in Righteousness against them; Also you'll be brought to see the Beauty of outward dress, Deportment and Simplicity, with which the true Professor in All-ages were adorned and accomplished, and holy desires will be begotten in your souls to walk circumspectly in all things agreeable to the Will of your Creator who gave you your Being; and you will be overshadowed with that Gravity and Modesty which will recommend you to the solidest and best part of Mankind, which may remark and observe your actions; yea even the Profligate and Wicked will respect you and will be awful in your Presence, being convicted in themselves, that your walking is in the Uprightness of the leadings of that inward Monitor which was not wanting to manifest often unto them, what was their own duty, and so all people will become fond of you and you'll be liked in all your Commerce, in all your Callings and Employments, amongst them who behold your Integrity knowing it to be coupled with Fear.

Of the other three chapters in this little booklet the first is "An exhortation to the Professors of the Christian Religion of all Denominations, that they may come to know it really and experimentally".

Outward forms and services, that have not true Faith joined with them, are not acceptable offerings to the Lord: the offerings that are acceptable, must be made with the whole Heart, through, and by the Efficacy of an inward Revelation, shewing us what it is the Lord requires. . . . It's an internal Work . . . it's in this way of Stillness that Christ is to be known, and true sincere Worship to the Deity can be performed.

The second is "A few lines to those who are attentive to the Teaching of the Spirit and Grace of Christ in their Souls", and the last "A Warning and alarm to awaken and stir up the Careless and Lukewarm, both Old and Young, that have felt in some Degree the inworking and operation of the Grace and good Spirit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but through Unwatchfulness, and the neglect of duly attending thereon have not known the Works of true Religion wrought in them".

. . . its not being nominally a member of the Society of the People called Quakers, but witnessing a Being led by the spirit of Truth. . . . My heart's desire is, that we may none of us deceive ourselves by resting in a form, which tho' good in its place, as we are rightly led into it, will not otherwise do anything for us, but let us be diligent in the assembling ourselves together, and as much as in our Power steadily and constantly attending our own Meeting both Morning and Afternoon, and on week-days (not sleeping away the Time) but seek to know where to wait and what to wait for ; which as we attain unto, we shall find to be a real Blessing to us, being no less than the Bread of Life, whereby the Soul is nourished and kept alive to God.

" . . . seek to know where to wait and what to wait for . . ." is his Friendly advice to old and young ; and surely as acceptable and timely now as when he first gave it.

With the beginning of the nineteenth century came a renewed interest in the religious instruction of Quaker youth.

In the Friends Reference Library there is an undated leaflet of 22 queries designed for scholars in Boarding Schools.

" Why do Friends object to the use of forms of Prayer ? "

" Why do Friends object to preparing sermons to be preached ? "

" Why do Friends sit so much in silence in their meetings for Divine worship ? "

" The answers are to be written as neatly as possible on a quarter of a sheet of large post paper once doubled, with a little margin on the left hand side, in order that they may be all stitched together as a book ; the Query and its number

to be first copied ; then the answer ; in forming which, the Book of Discipline, Robert Barclay's Apology, J. J. Curney's Peculiarities, or any of the approved writings of the Society of Friends, but especially the Holy Scriptures, may be consulted."

John Bevans, Jun.'s *Brief view of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion as professed by the Society of Friends, in the form of Question and Answer, for the Instruction of Youth*, 1810, is evangelical in tone. In section iv on the Nature of Worship, the 81st query asks—

What is our duty when thus assembled together ?

Answer. To wait upon the Lord in silence, and endeavour to preserve the mind from dwelling on thoughts which arise from the activity of the imagination ; that the life and power of Christ may be felt to calm the soul, to bring every thought into subjection, to produce a real inward silence, and afford a true sense of its state ; when even a single sigh, arising from such a sense, will be acceptable to God because of his own begetting ; for it is only his own works that can praise him. [And again] Those who by a travail of spirit, are inwardly gathered to the one source of light and life for a renewal of their spiritual strength, become helpful to each other : the life flowing from Christ the head (who is spiritually present according to his promise) to his members, the circulation of it among them, as from vessel to vessel, produces the communion and fellowship of the saints, by which, one member feeling for and sympathising with another, all are edified.

In his *Remarks on the Religious Instruction of the Youth of the Society of Friends*, 1828, Richard Ball, speaking as a member of a school management committee whose task was to prepare a plan of religious instruction based on John Bevan's Scripture Proofs, heartily approves of the form of catechetical instruction. Speaking of the 107 Questions, Richard Ball says, "The children appear to be fond of learning the catechism, and I do not recollect a single instance of reluctance to apply to it, but on the contrary, they frequently learn the greater part of it during the time allotted them for recreation." He speaks of the early days

of the Society when its members had been well grounded in certain elements of the Christian faith, contrasting them with the present when it is frequently remarked that "the children of our society generally, grow up more uninformed on the doctrines of the Christian religion than the children of other Christian communities".

Richard Ball quotes a correspondent who is evidently uneasy about the methods adopted in schools. "I quite conclude", writes the correspondent, "that such dear friends as have in sincerity of intention, planned and are bringing into practice this process of religious instruction, are not aware that they are (to speak in a familiar phrase) as it were putting the cart before the horse; teaching children to profess a belief, that is, before they have come to that which can alone enable to say 'Lord I believe.'" The objector laments the danger of having "a set of young formalists rise about us . . . whose heads are likely to be filled with notions, rather than with that nothingness of self, which is as truly the introduction of all right knowledge as the other is a snare and a stumbling-block in the way to it", to which Richard Ball rejoins that "putting the cart before the horse" appears to us to be rather more applicable to those who hold the opinion that religious experience should precede, if not supercede, religious instruction, ". . . as if, because they could not confer grace it was useless to communicate information".

We are left, then, with the little Quakers in their boarding schools learning by heart in their hours of recreation the 107 Queries based on John Bevan's Scripture Proofs. Richard Ball thinks that he has done something to help them, but were they better able to use those long silent hours of worship on first and fourth day? On the other hand, his anonymous objector was content to do nothing for them, to offer no helping hand. They would, I feel, obtain little support from *The Silver Cord or the Youth's Instructor*, by John Ashby (1834) whose 346 pages seem to the modern reader wholly incapable of appeal to children.

Some may say, if I go to a meeting, and there is no speaking I cannot keep my thoughts upon such good as I wish, and I cannot keep myself awake. It may be so; but is it not the case, that thou art given to idolatry? that is, thy affections set on things of

the world, to serve thyself, the creature above the creator. [And again] If in our spirits we are ardent for his cause, and wait for him to open our understanding and keep us faithful to do his will, in love and zeal for the Lord . . . we shall have a desire to go to meeting and it will keep us awake, and our profiting will most likely be made clear to us.

Poor little sleepy idolators. They swing their legs as they sit on the hard form ; no one breaks the silence except the thrush on the branch of the tree outside, a visiting Friend to whom they must not listen.

In *Conversations as between Parents and Children, designed for the Instruction of Youth* (Philadelphia, 1834) the ways of Friends are explained and justified by reference to the Scriptures. Again the question and answer method is used.

EDWARD. . . . we should like to know why our meetings are sometimes held in silence.

FATHER. A state of inward retirement and waiting upon God, appeared to George Fox essential to the performance of true worship, as well as for the exercise of Gospel ministry, which requires a renewed qualification from Him, and fresh anointing of the Holy Ghost, to preach the word of life to the people. Worship being a communication between the soul of man and that divine Being who is a spirit, words are not essential for the performance of this important duty ; according to the doctrine of our blessed Redeemer " God is a Spirit ; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth " : of course their religious meetings were always held as ours are now, either wholly or partly in silence.

As one passes in review these books, pamphlets and catechisms the aim of which was to instruct the youth of the Society in religious principles and to a less extent to help them understand and profit by the Quaker way of worship, one receives the impression that for the most part they were written by those who showed little imaginative sympathy for the needs of youth and that the catechisms and queries were forms ill-adapted for their purpose. They began in questions between father and child, passed to

teacher and scholar, and, sometimes as the result of the work of committees, ended in the wholly impersonal queries, cold questions and cold answers.

For instance, Barclay's *Catechism and Confession of Faith*, 1837, though doubtless assisting towards a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, would hardly, one feels, satisfy a genuine thirst for information.

Q. Is there any promise that daughters as well as sons shall prophesy ?

A. Joel ii. 28.

Q. But may all women speak or are any commanded to keep silence in the Church ?

A. 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35 ; 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12 ; 1 Cor. xi. 4, 5.

Yet there are in the early nineteenth century at least two examples of a natural human approach to the problem of religious instruction which in an unassuming way succeed in understanding something of a child's difficulties.

Parental Instruction in Familiar Dialogues, by Charlotte Rees, was published in Bristol in 1811. It contains nine conversations between Mother, Fanny and William.

Conversation I.

FANNY. How shall I know what will please Him ?

MOTHER. He has through his great love towards us, placed something in our hearts that makes us feel comfortable when we do what is right, and causes us to be unhappy when we do wrong.

FANNY. Then if our heavenly father has put something within us which shows us what we ought to do, he himself teaches us to be happy.

MOTHER. Yes, dear child, that is quite true. So, though we do not see God, we know he is very great and very good . . . and though he does not talk with us as I do now with thee, yet he speaks in our hearts when he encourages us to do right, and reproveth us for what is wrong.

FANNY. What may I call this that God has placed within me ?

MOTHER. It is called the Light or Spirit of God, and when we are naughty we are said to grieve the

good spirit of God. But go now, my love, divert thyself with William ;—perhaps thou dost not understand all I have said ;—think of it sometimes, and another time thou mayst hear more.

Conversation III.

FANNY. Why do we go so often to Meeting, Mother ?

MOTHER. I should be sorry to stay away, for many reasons, my love, and I hope I am thankful that I am not obliged to do so. I once told thee all persons should endeavour to do their duty and it is a part of ours to go to Meeting. If we feel how much cause we have to love and thank our heavenly Father, we shall find such opportunities of thinking upon his mercies, very comfortable and useful.

FANNY. But could we not think of his goodness and love him for it while we are at home, reading, working, or doing other things ?

MOTHER. I desire never to *forget* this kind and best friend while I am engaged in what is useful at home, but that is no reason why I should not go to Meeting. Tell me, my dear, if thou wert to go from me to a distance, though thou might not *forget* me while learning thy lessons, or at play, wouldest thou not like sometimes to go alone where thou couldst think of me without interruption ? Then thou wouldest remember many things that I had done for thee, many things I had told thee, better than when thy thoughts and hands were busy with other things. Thus we ought often to put everything aside that nothing may take our attention from our gracious heavenly Father, and the remembrance of what he has done for us. It is right to fix a time when many Friends may meet in the same place, and it may cause us to love each other better when we come to wait upon God. Perhaps this is one of the things thou canst not understand yet ; but thou mayst believe it is so, and I hope thou wilt one day or other know the truth of it. . . .

FANNY. . . . I am afraid that when I go there I do not always think of what I ought.

MOTHER. Possibly thou dost not, my love ; but I hope thou wilt remember there is One that looks upon the heart, and if thou really wish to love and thank him for his goodness, he will often make thee feel he is very near, and willing to teach thee himself, and help thee to overcome an inclination to be thoughtless, peevish, disobedient, or otherwise naughty.

The second example of simple natural instruction in dialogue form is *Conversations with Mamma on the Peculiarities of Friends*, 1847. It has, among others, chapters on Music, On Vain Sports, On Plainness of Speech, On William Penn, On Silent Worship.

Little Emily has a kind aunt who is a member of the Church of England and cousins whose education and way of life she envies. She asks her mamma if she cannot accept her aunt's kind invitation to go with her to church next First-day, as she would sit still and would so like to hear the pretty music. "I should prefer thy remaining in the nursery with Ann, who will read to thee," says Mamma. She goes on to explain that

¹ thou art old enough to know, and have learnt that God is a spirit, can do all things and knows all things, even our thoughts. Since this is so, Friends believe that it is not needful to repeat written prayers or sing hymns, but they believe that if we silently sit, and endeavour to remember what are our greatest faults, and in our hearts feel sorry, and beg of our Almighty Father who is in heaven to forgive us, or if we pray or ask for what we desire, God in his goodness will listen to us, as readily or even more so, than if we were to read any prayer aloud. Dost thou, dear Emmy, now think thou understandest ?

EMILY. Yes, mamma, I think I do, and thank thee for trying to explain to me, because now, I think I can tell also what has often before puzzled me, that is, why when we dine with thee and papa, in the parlour, he does not repeat out loud, the same words that my uncle and some other persons do ; but now I hope I shall not forget when we sit in silence before meals,

¹ These quoted paragraphs have been abbreviated at several points.

that I ought to feel thankful, and that God will know and listen to my thoughts as well as my words.

[Later] I cannot think why we Friends do not have music at Meeting.

. . . it is spending time in the mere gratification of the senses which might be more profitably employed. [And again] all the reasons I gave you last night for disapproving of music, etc., are equally applicable to the amusements of which we are now speaking. [These were hunting, horse-racing and gambling !]

We have not much early written witness to the effect of silent worship on children ; though the evidences of their faithfulness are a proof that they had felt the power of their parents' way of worship. From Bristol in 1654 we hear that "sometimes children spake a few words in prayer ; and we were sometimes greatly bowed and broken before the Lord in humility and tenderness . . ." ¹ "By June 1682 the number of Friends in prison had reached about 150 ; but the Meeting continued to be kept up, chiefly by children. On June 18, 6 boys were taken from the Temple Street Meeting and put for an hour in the stocks, and some 30 children were imprisoned for a time. In July the meetings consisted of hardly any but children. On the 23rd the boys' hats were taken away and cast into a neighbour's yard, and 8 lads were put in the stocks for 2 hours, who behaved themselves soberly and cheerfully. Through the hottest days of persecution the children 'remained steadfast, and thus showed in spite of their enemies, that God would not suffer that the Quakers' meeting should be altogether suppressed, as it was intended.' " ² In 1664 Curtis wrote to Fox from Reading, "Our little children kept the meetings up when we were all in prison."

The following account of the experience of an Irish boy of twelve occurs in *Examples for Youth, in Remarkable Instances of Early Piety*, selected by William Rawes, Jun., 1797. "He said he had been several times in a place by himself, where he wished he had been for ever, he enjoyed so much of the comfortable presence of the Lord in silent

¹ W. C. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 165.

² W. C. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 102, 103.

waiting upon him, and meditating in his law, which drew his soul into rapture." Similar experiences are quoted in *Extracts and Original Anecdotes for the Improvement of Youth*, by Mary Leadbeater, 2nd edition, 1820.

About the seventh year of my age [writes George Bewley] it pleased the Lord to reach unto, and securely incline my mind to love to go to meetings, and at times I would be so tendered in meetings, and affected with divine goodness (though I scarce knew what it was) that desires were raised to feel more ; and I often found a fear of going to play and other childish folly, always finding that when I did so I came to a loss, as to the enjoyment of that inward sweetness and tenderness, which at times I was favoured with, not only when verbal testimonies were borne, but also in time of silence. One time sitting in a meeting in time of silence, I was much broken and tendered, so that many tears ran from my eyes, yet I was sweetly affected with inward comfort, and was made sensible, that I had too much given way to childish folly, insomuch that a dislike was begot in me to it, and I resolved to be more watchful for the future. Then such things, instead of being pleasant to me, became rather burdensome, and I chose to walk alone into the fields (from play) to pray to the Lord for preservation out of the evils of the world. . . . When I was about twelve years of age I was troubled, observing some in our religious meeting for worship, giving way to sleep and drowsiness ; though I was pretty well preserved therefrom ; yet I was often hard beset with a wandering mind [how glad one is to find that this good little boy shares the experience of all normal little Quakers !] and one time in a meeting, being desirous to be delivered of my thoughts (they being a trouble to me), suddenly I was, as it were enclosed with a glorious light, and immediately all vain thoughts vanished away, and I sat in great calmness and sweetness for some time. When this was withdrawn, I was sensible that it was a renewed, gracious visitation from the Lord unto me, by his blessed light, grace and good spirit, which confirmed my faith in the sufficiency thereof, and that all who loved, believed in and obeyed it, should not

only obtain victory over vain thoughts and a wandering mind, but also over evil words and actions.

Very similar was the experience of John Churchman, as told in his *Journal*.

Though I early felt reproof for bad words and actions, yet I knew not whence it came, until about the age of eight years, as I sat in a small meeting the Lord, by the reachings of his heavenly love and goodness, so overcame and tendered my heart, and by his glorious light discovered to me the knowledge of Himself, that I saw myself, and what I had been doing, and what it was that reprov'd me for evil ; and I was made in the secret of my heart to confess, that childhood and youth, and the foolish actions and words to which they are propense, are truly vanity. Yet blessed be the name of the Lord ! who in his infinite mercy and goodness, clearly informed me, that if I would mind the discoveries of His Truth and pure light for the future, what I had done in the time of my ignorance, he would forgive. And Oh ! the stream of love which filled my heart with solid joy at that time, and lasted for many days, is beyond all expression.

These testimonies and the records of children's steadfastness in times of persecution are proof enough (if proof were needed) that whether or not Friends have given them much help by the written word, children from the earliest days of the Society have known in themselves and in their elders reverence and awe in silent worship and have had their spiritual hunger satisfied there ; that they have known to some extent " where to wait and what to wait for ".