

Education And The Inward Teacher

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This pamphlet develops more fully themes examined in *Quakers and the Use of Power*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 241, 1982, and *Leading and Being Led*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 264, 1985. The author believes the Inward Teacher is a powerful metaphor for understanding the experience of leading and being led and thus the order of power Quakers should use in shaping their institutional lives. In this essay he focuses the metaphor on critical issues in education.

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Care is a quality essential for psycho-social evolution, for we are the teaching species Only man ... can and must extend his solicitude over the long, parallel and overlapping childhoods of numerous offspring united in households and communities.¹

Erik Erikson

The teaching-learning process is a peculiarly human activity; we are not the only creatures to teach their young, but we humans depend almost entirely on learning from others how to make our way in the world. Very little comes to us solely through instinct, and even where we have innate capacities, such as the capacity for speech or learning to walk, we must be taught how to use them. Erik Erikson calls us the teaching species, rather than the learning one, but it is impossible to be one without being the other. Teaching and learning make up a single intricate process of interchange in relationship, interplay between people and with content — the transmission of information, skills, processes, but also of values, of what Erikson calls a world image and style of fellowship. We teach because we need to be needed, he says, and because things are kept alive by being taught, logic by being practiced, ideas by being professed.

Because we must learn virtually everything we know, the image of the teacher is a powerful one. We reserve the word for people whose actions have the greatest meaning for us: religious leaders, philosophers, scientists, writers, artists, great political leaders, social activists and liberators — when we want to speak of the depth of their impact on us, we stress their roles as conduits of knowledge and wisdom, as *teachers*. If the truth makes us free, our liberators are teachers.

It is not to be wondered that the image of the teacher becomes an image for the divine, a metaphor for God. And perhaps in no tradition is this metaphor — God is a Teacher — more central than in Quakerism, where the very core of the liberating message is, in George Fox's words, that "Christ has come to teach his people himself." What especially characterizes the Quaker perception, however, is that He is to be found waiting in every human soul. (In what follows, the pronoun *He* will be used in connection with the image of the Inward Teacher only when I am citing a writer who is specifically identifying the Inward Teacher with Jesus Christ. In every other case, I have avoided pronouns, used *It*, or, in one case, spoken of *He* or *She*, to emphasize that the Teacher is not to be confined to traditional patriarchal religious language.)

George Fox invariably describes his ministry as turning people toward the Teacher within them, the Light which has enlightened every person who has ever come into the world. This is the Inward Christ, imprisoned in us until we set Him free; it is "that of God," which shows us our sins and failings as well as the means to our salvation. The Inward Teacher enlightens and guides our conscience; it is "the witness" in the soul to which we can appeal in our adversaries, which will show them when they do wrong and will "throw them into confusion."

The metaphor of the Inward Teacher sets us to asking a number of questions. What can we know about the nature of the Teacher and the nature of the Teaching? What is the content of the Teaching? What is the method of instruction? How far can the metaphor be extended without becoming false or trivial? Are there things which the metaphor simply cannot address? Is the image of the Inward Teacher merely a fanciful way to avoid talking about where certain kinds of inspiration or learning come from? Or, if it is a metaphor for something important which people experience in their own lives, how can we take the reality it points to seriously, in the way we teach and learn?

More particularly, what relevance does the metaphor of the Inward Teacher have for the way we educate in Quaker schools and colleges today? Does it have anything to say about what is commonly thought of as education: practical education, or liberal education, the disciplines and basic skills which we find essential in order to live effectively in the world? Does the Inward Teacher have any part in our understanding and retaining concepts in Mathematics, foreign vocabulary or ideas in science? Outside of religion, are there kinds of learning where it has been useful or necessary to assert the reality of an Inward Teacher?

The Teacher And The Lesson

The troubled soul is not only to go to the Lord, but it must be taught by him how to go to him. The Lord is the Teacher, and this is a great lesson, which the soul cannot learn of itself, but as it is taught by him

Isaac Penington

The image of the Inward Teacher is common in the earliest Quaker writings. The teacher teaches only everlasting Truth, which is, in the first instance, about His own nature, as saviour, true shepherd, priest, bishop and prophet — the “offices” or works of the messiah. The Teacher, will also teach those who listen how to worship rightly and how to understand the scriptures and the parables. He will show them who their false teachers have been and will give ways by which they can have assurance that they are no longer misled. They will *know* Christ’s voice and thus be able to discern true from false teaching and teachers.

In receiving this knowledge, people become heirs of the kingdom of God because they have become part of the true church, because they have “come to know who their teacher was, Christ Jesus and the Lord God, as the prophets and the apostles and the true church did.”² Scripture, which

was closed and locked up in literalism, becomes comprehensible because it is now read in the same spirit which inspired it. The emphasis is always on knowing *from within*, because that is where Christ does His work. George Fox and other early Quaker writers did not speak often of Jesus, not because they had any doubt about the identity of Jesus with the Christ but because they wanted to emphasize that Christ's work is not limited to any historical figure or any time. The image of the Inward Teacher stresses the primary saving work of the spirit as *pedagogical* rather than *priestly*. The priest is one who knows how to perform the efficacious ritual, the sacrifice which restores us to favor with God. Friends would have accepted that such a sacrifice took place in the crucifixion, but, as James Naylor testified:

If I cannot witness Christ nearer than Jerusalem,
I shall have no benefit of him; but I own no other
Christ but that who witnessed a good confession
before Pontius Pilate; which Christ I witness in
me now³

The Teacher is Christ here and now, subsuming the priestly under the teaching work.

The Inward Teacher is the *only* Teacher; preaching, silence, scripture are all valuable, but each can only prepare and point the way to the true Teacher. Fox tells us of a gathering which was so fixed on Christ their Teacher that Francis Howgill, rising to speak, saw that they had no need for words. The Teacher and the teaching are known directly, experimentally or experientially, but *experience* is not the teacher. When a priest bursts out angrily that "he could speak his experience as well as I," Fox answers that "experience was one thing but to go with a message and a word from the Lord as the prophets and the apostles had done and did, and as I had done to them, this was another thing."⁴ To know experientially is to find the correspondence

between the law written on our hearts and put in our minds and what is happening in our daily lives. And our *experience* will be to know the spirit of God in ourselves and to know by that spirit the truth of the scriptures, to know God, and to have unity with one another.

In some ways both the teaching and its consequences are remarkably simple, at least to describe. When Fox describes true religion, he invariably cites the Epistle of James: “to visit the fatherless, the widows and the strangers, and keep themselves from the spots of the world.” And when he refuses the captaincy in Cromwell’s army, he says wars arise “from the lust according to James’ doctrine.” All the Quaker social testimonies, which are expressions of the ways that we can live in unity with one another, are found in germ in the Epistle of James. Perhaps the Epistle attracts Fox precisely because there is no mystery there about how to serve God. Though arriving at the power to act is painful and long-delayed, when one has reached the capacity to follow the Teacher, the teaching itself is simple.

So it is, too, with worship. Worship is waiting on the Lord, in silence, turning inward to hear the voice of Christ, coming into the Light, bringing others into the Light and letting the Light do its work. The advice for right worship is always remarkable for the absence of any arcane teaching. There are no techniques of meditation recommended for their efficacy, no doctrines to be mastered before one can be seasoned in worship. Be low and cool; “be still a while from thy thoughts, searching, seeking, desires and imaginations”⁵ The Light will show us our shortcomings and transgressions, Fox writes to Lady Elizabeth Claypoole, but rather than looking down on the sin, which will only swallow us up, we are to look to the Light, which will let us see over the sins and transgressions. “That will give you the victory; and you will find grace and strength; and there is the first step to peace.”

Minding And Answering

Though waiting seems essentially passive, two strenuous actions are associated with it: minding and answering. To *mind* the spirit is to yield up to it, to be corrected and guided by it, to test actions and impulses against its leading. It is often, in phrases commonly used by early Friends, to be broken, melted down, ploughed up in preparation for the Seed. To *answer* “that of God” or “the witness” in others is to behave in such a way that they are turned toward their Inward Teacher, shown their own trespass or confirmed in the rightness of what they are doing. When Fox speaks of the reformation of the professions, he says that the lawyers might be brought into the law of God,

which answers that of God (that is transgressed) in every one and brings to love one’s neighbor as himself. This lets man see if he wrongs his neighbor he wrongs himself; and this teaches him to do unto others as he would they should do unto him.⁶

The Inward Teacher is not the conscience. The conscience, Robert Barclay tells us, is the power of human judgment which tells us whether what we do contradicts what we believe, but the conscience can be corrupted, or it can be simply a narrow, tribal understanding, an internalization of what one’s society says is right or wrong. The conscience must be taught by the Inward Teacher, just as the judgment itself must be. Barclay says the conscience may be imagined as a candle holder, but the Light of Christ is the candle. Reaching the witness in others means, in the first instance, witnessing to the Inward Teacher in oneself. *Answering* that of God in another comes through *minding* it in oneself.

Minding and *answering* are reciprocal, dialogic actions. They reflect the social or communal nature of the Inward

Teacher's work. This was hard for the first generation of Friends to comprehend, as it remains a stumbling block for Friends today, but it is one way of distinguishing the Quaker from the Ranter. The Ranters seized onto the absolute freedom of the gospel and insisted that all things were permitted to whoever followed what he or she believed to be divine inspiration. For them there could be no authority outside of the individual's own conviction and neither the need nor the means to test the rightness of the individual's understanding or motive. The individual who had consulted the Light was infallible. But, as Friends learned painfully in the Naylor case, the best-intentioned people can misread a leading, "run out into imaginings," or let self-will become dominant. "That of God in everyone" was not simply a quality of personality or another name for individuality or idiosyncratic self-expression. Above all, it was not a personal possession.

For the true labourers in the vineyard do answer that of God; the true ministers bring people to that which is to instruct them, viz. the spirit of god. They answer the Spirit, and the Grace and Truth in all.⁷

For Friends, then, there was both the need and the means to test the leadings of the Light.

The Inward Teacher And The Community Of Faith

Because it is possible for us both to *mind* and to *answer* the witness, to find challenge or confirmation from others who turn toward the Inward Teacher, the community gathered together for the purpose of being led could and must practice *discernment* to test when an individual or the group was rightly led. The Light can be tested, by the Light itself; the witness can be reached, even over the babble of conflicting desires and impulses. In speaking of the workings of the Light, Howard Brinton emphasizes its social

and communal aspects; the Light flows to the group, he says, where, if way opens, it produces knowledge, power and unity.⁸ Those are essentially three aspects of communal power: the power of knowledge, confirmed by a common witness; the power of unity, mutual support and encouragement; and the capacity to act, with trust in one's own leading because the worshipping community affirms it. Knowledge, unity and power are mutually sustaining forms of God's power granted to the gathered fellowship. They produce behavior, Brinton says, characterized by community, harmony, equality and simplicity.⁹ These are characteristics of life together, in community, rather than life as isolated individuals, each pursuing his or her own leading. Robert Barclay says:

We concur with our persons, as well as our spirits, in believing that the maintenance of a joint and visible fellowship, the bearing of an outward testimony for God, and the sight of the faces of one another are necessary. When these are accompanied by inward love and unity of spirit, they tend greatly to encourage and refresh the faithful.¹⁰

Both the work of the group — the actions taken on behalf of the meeting by committees, the expression of the “joint and visible fellowship” in social action or other witness — and the leadings to actions which individuals feel, are brought into the worship, the sitting under our teacher. Decision-making is, first of all, a search for clearness, a full understanding of what the Teacher calls us to do. It rests on an acknowledgement that individuals wishing to be absolutely faithful to their leadings may still not understand or see clearly enough. They may be unaware of their shortcomings, or they may have confused what they would prefer to do with what needs to be done. They may be making a stock response to a situation they believe they

know all about, but where further information would point to new responses. They may be unable to transcend the limitation of their points of view.

In trying to find *the sense of the meeting*, a business meeting is not simply looking for the widest area of agreement or lowest common denominator — which is what is usually meant by *consensus*, as in *consensus politics*, today. The Quaker method of doing business has been described as the most efficient way to reach good decisions, as the most democratic method for reaching decisions, and as embodying some of the most powerful benefits of group therapy. All of that may be true, but neither efficiency, democracy nor therapy is the goal of the Quaker business method; they are at most fortunate by-products. The Quaker business method is looking for the gathered wisdom of the worshipping community, both the practical experience and good sense of the meeting, and the insights of those who are most seasoned in placing matters in the Light or before the Teacher. The group takes into the silence the description of an issue, the opinions and feelings of individuals, all the statements of principle which begin “Friends historically ...,” or “Friends always ...,” or “Friends never ...,” and it waits to be taught what to do.

In *The Quakers in Puritan England*, Hugh Barbour describes four tests for leadings which were applied particularly in the examination of individuals’ leadings but which are equally applicable to the leadings of a group or a meeting. These were the tests of moral purity, patience, the self-consistency of the spirit, and the fruits of the spirit or bringing people into unity.¹¹ Taken together, these tests probe the readiness of an individual or a group to set self-will aside; the accuracy of perception of what the spirit wills — “the spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it” — ; and the capacity of the proposed action to deepen the fruits of the spirit. “Love, joy,

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peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” are fruits of personal growth, but even more they are fruits of healthy human fellowship.

In the gathered meeting for worship or for business, we are more enabled to turn our own attention to the Teacher when we are among people who are already minding Him. The meeting itself can “melt and warm” the heart, “in the same way that a man who feels cold feels warmth when he approaches a stove,” says Barclay.¹²

The Teacher teaches us individually and collectively. We turn to the Christ within us, but what we find there, if it is true, will be found within others who also turn inward with a willingness to be taught. The teaching may differ, to some extent, from person to person, but that will be because people are in different stages of understanding, perhaps, or are called to respond differently to what is being taught. In the meeting for worship or for business, as in each individual’s daily life, there is a “measure” of Light which has been given, and each person is to be faithful to his or her own measure. The Teacher knows us in our deepest being and adapts the stages of learning to our capacity, our measure. The Teacher takes us where we are and leads us, step by step, from knowledge to greater knowledge. No one ever reaches the point where it is unnecessary to sit under the Teacher, but we can become quicker learners, more seasoned in the truth, more ready to pursue the implications of what we have been taught. By being faithful to our own measure, we may be enabled to contribute to the learning of others; by practicing discernment in testing our own and others’ leadings, by setting an example of patient waiting, by faithfully undertaking the ministry we are called to, by being channels through which the Teacher may reach others, by minding and answering the witness within, we participate in the pedagogical work of the Inward Christ.

Natural And Spiritual Learning

This Quaker language of teaching and learning states a priority of knowledge, but it does not imply a necessary conflict between *higher* and *lower* knowledge, or what we might call *sacred* and *secular* knowledge. If Fox called on parents to train their children in “the law of life, the law of the Spirit, the law of love and faith,” he also wanted to have schools set up to teach practical education, “all things civil and useful.” These were not contradictory but complementary goals for education. When God “opens” the creation to Fox, so that he knows the inward natures of things and how they were given their names, he reports he was for a time “at a stand in my mind whether I should practice physic for the good of mankind, seeing the natures and virtues of the creatures were so opened to me by the Lord.” But immediately afterwards, as he reports in the *Journal*, he is given a higher and broader revelation about learning as it was expressed in “those three great professions in the world, physic, divinity (so called), and law.” All three of these learned professions were “out of the wisdom” of God and thus could only pretend to care for the body, the soul and the property of people.¹³

Fox does not deny that each profession has a body of learning appropriate to it at the practical level; what he asserts is that each profession stands in need of reformation, turning to the wisdom, equity and perfect law of God. He objects that the foundations of each are false, so what can be built on them cannot be true. Fox is, after all, frequently indebted to the technical skill of lawyers, which he resorts to from time to time and encourages other Friends to use, if they are so led. He himself comes to be practiced in the law. One of the books he carried with him, apparently, was a guide to the common law. Clearly, he also had a lifelong interest in what we would call herbal

medicine. In his bequest of land to the city of Philadelphia, to build both a meeting house and a school, he also provided for a garden for the latter, "... to plant it with all sorts of physical [medicinal] plants for lads and lasses to learn simples there, and the uses to convert them to — distilled waters, oils, ointments, etc."

It would be too much to expect Fox to speak affirmatively of any course of study for training ministers, but the form his objections take is instructive. He reports going to reason with a man who wanted to set up a college in Durham, to train ministers, "and let him see that was not the way to make them Christ's ministers by Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and the Seven Arts, which all were but the teachings of the natural man."¹⁴ These "natural" languages, in themselves, do not lead us to knowledge of the divine. To those who spoke "natural" Greek, the cross was foolishness; to those who spoke "natural" Hebrew, Christ was a stumbling block; and Fox then singles out Pilate as the type of the "naturally" educated man, who "could set Hebrew, Greek, and Latin atop of Christ when he crucified him."¹⁵ But these are not arguments against learning "natural" languages; Fox is really only giving more detail to his "opening" that being bred at Oxford or Cambridge is not *enough* to make one a minister. Ministry is a gift from Christ, the result of turning to the true Teacher and the true teaching. Studying "natural" languages is a means to the end of ministry, but it does not *make* a minister.

This distinction between the *natural* and the *spiritual* tends to get expressed in a fear of the intellect, but we find that more often expressed by Isaac Penington, one of the university-educated Quakers of the first generation, than by Fox. Penington wants to distinguish what he calls the "knowledge and comprehension of things" from the feeling life, which he believes we can only come to by letting go of reasoning and disputing.¹⁶ To come into the feeling of the inward principle, for Penington, always requires coming *out*

of human knowledge, even the human knowledge of the scriptures. Perhaps Penington's distrust of the mind is explained by his experience of having received God's grace but being unable to trust it and turning instead to the exercise of the mind and making scripture into rules. By making the outward rule, the measure of the scripture, the test for the inward experience of God, he says, he limited "the Holy One of Israel and exceedingly hurt my soul."¹⁷

For Robert Barclay, another university-educated Friend, the priority of knowing is the same, but he does not seem to have the same fearful suspicion of the intellect. He says merely that all of the mind's own labors "and the roving of the imagination on things that are essentially good as well as things that are evil must be brought to a halt. Then, when the self has been silenced, God may speak, and the good seed may arise."

Despite this fear of "higher" education, Friends were very clear that founding schools and supporting training programs for apprentices were entirely in keeping with their faith. John Reader tells us:

By 1691 [London] Yearly Meeting recorded fifteen schools that had been set up, but it is known that there were many more than this actually in existence Most of them were day schools run by individual Friends, and Quakers were unusual in that many of their schools were for girls as well as boys.¹⁸

These schools were eminently practical in their educational purposes: some taught Latin because it was still an international language; some taught other foreign languages; English grammar and composition were taught, but not literature, except for the Bible; mathematics and science were taught only for practical application in medicine, farming, building, surveying and the like. Two maxims from John Beller's *Proposals for Raising a College*

of *Industry* of 1696 catch some of the spirit of Quaker education in its earliest days: "... Beyond Reading and Writing, a multitude of scholars is not so useful to the publick as some think" "Though learning is useful, yet a virtuous, industrious education tends more to happiness here and hereafter"¹⁹ Schools organized in accord with Friends' principles came to have some important common features. These were, as Helen G. Hole describes them, community based on the model of the family, shared practical work, simplicity and a spirit of reverence and sincerity, peaceable living, some degree of equality among students and faculty, the integrity and value of the individual stressed in a curriculum designed to meet individual needs, and an emphasis on the religious life and on education as a means to the end of growth in the religious life.²⁰ Bellers imagines that the poor children of his proposed college of industry would live in community "something like the example of primitive Christianity, that lived in common" Where students needed correction, he proposes that it be in the form of "abatements of food" rather than beatings, for, he says, though a rebellious temper must be corrected, punishment does not *make* ingenious scholars, for beatings weaken the presence of mind which is necessary for effective study

Perhaps the most important common feature of Friends schools was that children were regarded as having the potential to be nurtured. They were not assumed to be naturally good, any more than adults were, but they were not assumed to be deprived. The Inward Teacher lives in them as a birthright. The spirit of the school is shaped by that realization, with the consequence that students feel themselves in a setting where good learning can occur. They will be encouraged by those interpersonal qualities which encourage us to study and work successfully — gentleness, respect, reverence, high expectation. Quaker schools will have an *ethos* in which respect and cooperation

are valued; they will be communities in which formal learning will be embedded in a deep spiritual milieu. But though the recognition that the Inward Teacher lives in each of us led Quaker teachers to high expectation for their students' spiritual lives, nothing in their expectations, nor in the expectations of the Quaker bodies which founded schools, led them to expect what we would call *creativity* from their students. What Quakers have offered is more an *ethos* than a coherent philosophy and we have turned to thinkers outside that ethos, a Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Montessori, or Steiner, among others, when we want to assert the possibility of human creativity in the "natural" studies. In practice our schools might have exemplified the Christian humanism which was the inheritance of the seventeenth century, but they had no philosophical or theological foundation for connecting the "natural" light with the Inward Light, the "natural" sources of inspiration with the inspiration of the Inward Teacher.

This is a set of issues left for us to explore.

Witnesses To The Voice

Granting that the metaphor of the Inward Teacher asserts that we can be taught by the spirit of Christ, we have to ask, can we extend the metaphor's applications without trivializing it? Are there other, kinds of learning, other examples where it has been necessary to assert the work of an Inward Teacher to explain how the learning came about?

The poet Donald Hall, writing about the first moment of the creative impulse, says that in every human being there is what he calls the *vatic* voice. This voice, which gives inspiration, the excited flash of insight which comes in the shape of images or a rush of words, speaks the words of a god. For most people, Hall says, this voice speaks only in dreams and mostly unremembered dreams. But for some, it supplies not the finished poem but the material, the

excitement, the inspiration which will, if we work with it, eventually become a poem. Two characteristics distinguish the vatic voice from ordinary discourse, Hall says: it is always original and we always feel passive toward it. The vatic voice takes us by surprise; what it gives us is incomplete but original. In speaking to us, through us, it calls us to the work of completion, but that must be accomplished by working with it, obeying its direction even if we do not understand it. Even more important, the voice comes *to us*, on its own terms. We receive it, we do not originate it. It is within us, but we do not *own* it or determine it.

We must find ways to let this voice speak We want to do this not only to make poems, or to invent a new theory of linguistics, but because it feels good, because it is healthy and therapeutic, because it helps us to understand ourselves and to be able to love other people.²¹

Hall makes remarkable claims for this vatic voice: its speaking activates processes within the individual which have two results — concrete products and changed lives. The vatic voice provides the impetus for us to make poems, a concrete activity which eventuates in a finished *work*, the *product* of our activity. It also leads to health, feeling good, self-understanding and the capacity to love other people. It reaches us and, through us, other people. What moves the poet to write also moves the reader to respond: “it is the communication of one inside speaking to another inside.”

If we understand *ego* not in the popular sense of extreme self-centeredness but as the truest, wisest self, Hall’s argument is that becoming open and willing to follow, becoming dependent rather than assertive, is the only way to respond to the vatic voice. “To allow the vatic voice to speak through us is the *ultimate* goal to which men

must address themselves. It is what we live for, it is what we live by.”

“The true artist,” writes another contemporary poet, Denise Levertov, “maintains dialogue with his heart, meets things with his mind.” There is an inner voice, she says, a reader within one who must be spoken to, in order for a poem to be well done. This inner voice is the poet’s own, speaking the inner dialogue which goes on in us all the time, but it is also somehow different from the ordinary self. One discovers unknown things from listening to the inner voice; the reader within is that aspect of the self which can look with detachment at what one has produced. It is the link with the reader outside of one, the *other* who wishes to be reached. The artist is simultaneously needer and maker, and it is that complementarity which leads the maker to the openness and the discipline which result in the *made* object, the completed work of art. The dialogue with the heart involves learning how to speak to the need in oneself. There is also the reader *out there* as well as one *in here*, and the poet is enabled to meet the needs of that other person by facing her own deepest needs. That is why “the act of realizing inner experience in material substance is in itself an action *toward others*”²² To describe the origins of art, Denise Levertov speaks of inviting the muse, of waiting for what is given, of inspiration, meditation and contemplation. The poet in the process of writing a poem is a priest, “the poem is a temple; epiphanies and communion take place within it.” This communion is triple: between the maker and needer within the poet, between the maker and the needer outside of the poet, “and between the human and divine in both poet and reader.” The divine is called forth, “summoned by the exercise of needing and making.”

The poet enters into conversation with this god which has been summoned by the process of creating a poem. Levertov describes this as dialogue with the god in oneself.

Writing the poem reveals to others the possibility of dialogue with the god in themselves. "... Communion is the very basis of human living, of *living humanly*."

Hall and Levertov are not saying exactly the same thing, perhaps because they are describing somewhat different perceptions of how poems originate, perhaps because there is more than one place of origin for a work of art. Hall's *vatic* voice is certainly an inward teacher. It teaches a process of truth-telling, a work or product, a clarity about the self and an increased capacity to love.

For Levertov, some poems are simply given through inspiration, but since artists are constitutionally attracted to the *work* of creating, Levertov focuses on the labor to achieve communion between *needer* and *maker* as the means by which the divine is summoned.

Neither Hall nor Levertov use the available language of the Judeo-Christian tradition to define their experiences, perhaps for fear that the wonder of the creative process will be obscured by too-familiar language. So Hall invents a term derived from Latin, *vates*, a seer, prophet, one who speaks for a god, and Levertov speaks in classical Greek terms. The witness the two poets offer is that sometimes the intense labor evokes a gift of divine visitation, and sometimes the gift of divine visitation impels the intense labor. "By divine I mean something beyond both the making and needing elements, vast, irreducible, a spirit summoned by the exercise of needing and making." With both poets, something must occur akin to the *mindin*g and *answering* which Friends describe as the appropriate response to Christ the Inward Teacher, some keeping faith with what the voice has given or with the need in oneself that speaks.

It is not only modern poets who testify to the experience of an inner voice which teaches and leads. Socrates told his judges that, from early in his life, he was aware of a voice which spoke to him whenever he was doing something wrong. It did not give him instruction when he

was doing the right things; then Socrates was left to find his own way. His inner voice acted only as a preventative. But that lifetime of obedience to his inner voice gives direction and shape to Socrates' calling — which was to be, not a *teacher* but a *fellow-student*, a fellow seeker after knowledge. His life's work is to inquire what dependable knowledge and principles underlay the practice of the human arts — poetry and statecraft, medicine and instructing the young, whatever might be said to define the highest human activity. To pursue his study, Socrates develops a method: dialogue, the searching, rigorous conversation between seekers. Socrates says that philosophy, by which he means the dialogue in pursuit of wisdom, can only be pursued among friends, and it is therefore entirely in keeping with his life's calling that he should so frequently discuss the nature of friendship and love. These too are human arts, founded in ethical principles, the care for the spiritual well-being of others.

Socrates does not tell us that attending to his inner voice brings him self-understanding and love for other people, but we know of him that the great themes of his life are self-knowledge, knowledge of others and of the world, and a way of holding that knowledge, in love and good will. He is the champion of the examined life, the life of dialogue, and the life of love.

Many other philosophers, scientists and artists speak in similar ways about how the germinal insight or the finished work come into being, and this is to say virtually nothing of the great saints and religious thinkers of various traditions for whom the metaphor of God as an Inward Teacher is essential to describe their experience. Even the father of empiricism, Rene Descartes, tells us that his life's work came to him in a series of dreams: "the Spirit of Truth had opened to him the treasures of all the sciences," he wrote. And Albert Einstein said that he always felt in his work that he was following the thoughts of a cosmic mind.

These several witnesses do not always speak of a voice, though that is frequent; often we find writers, artists, scientists, psychologists reporting that either the germ of works or the finished works were given to them in dreams that had the feel of *visitations*. We have come, especially with the work of Carl Jung, to anticipate that messages, leadings, creations can come from the depths of our being, yet not simply from us but from the wells of knowledge which are the common human heritage. What comes is a gift which then exacts from us the most dedicated service to what we have received. If these testimonies are to be believed, the voice calls us to knowledge of both the world *out there* and the world *in here*, insight into the inner world of others, knowledge of need and of what will satisfy need. The voice calls us to connections between ourselves and the rest of the human community.

One Voice Or Many?

The preceding discussion has deliberately drawn on the testimony of people who are either not conventionally religious or are not drawing on Judeo-Christian language to describe their experience. It leads us on to three questions:

- What relation do these experiences of an inner voice or teacher bear to what Quakers speak of as the Seed, the Light, the Inward Christ, the Inward Teacher?
- What are the implications for pedagogy of these testimonies to an inner voice?
- How can we best prepare ourselves to hear and respond to the inner voice which these several testimonies suggest may be available to each of us?

Is every voice the same voice? Is it always the voice of the Inward Christ, the teacher to whom Friends say we are to take each person? It would be comforting to Quakers to argue that all testimonies to an inner voice are evidence for the same voice, but we owe it to the integrity of each

testimony not to jump too quickly to that conclusion. Setting aside all those cases where people report what, on the basis of their consequences, we must regard as pathological voices, but which they insist on as the voice of God, we still must recognize that, for all the similarity of language, the *content* of teaching which Fox, Barclay or Penington identify with the Inward Teacher gives us little warrant for imagining a poem, a scientific discovery or a philosophical insight as the product of such an encounter with Him. I would find it personally very comforting to be able to identify all these life-affirming encounters with an inner voice with the Inward Christ; as a Christian I am sustained by the assertion that all truth, by being true, is of Christ. But I am also aware that such an identification of the divine exclusively with the Christian revelation is both difficult and offensive for many people. It feels like the worst kind of cultural colonialism to preempt all testimonies to the divine involvement with humankind and subsume them under the Christian worldview.

But neither may I assert that it does not matter what name we use to address or refer to the divine, since they all mean the same thing. That too may be comforting to me; it lets me avoid the headaches of theological dispute, the irritations of conversing with smug people who believe *they* alone know the truth by name. But such an attitude, which appears to be so open to all points of view, is in fact yet another way for me to impose my definitions on the discussion. It bespeaks an unwillingness to hear and treat respectfully another's way of describing the concrete, personal encounter with the divine. If the Muslim says that the Holy Name is Allah, and the Jew says that it is Jahweh, it is not for me to say that both *really* mean God-in-Christ, nor that our differences in the naming are unimportant.

To take another example, my understanding of God has always been shaped by the dominant pattern of the prophetic traditions — Judaism, Christianity and Islam —

to speak of God with masculine pronouns. That is a substratum of my knowing God, for it is the way I have imagined God all my life. I can understand when someone else speaks of the Goddess and finds feminine pronouns best express the encounter with the divine; and I can practice opening myself to this language, can use feminine pronouns when I pray; but it is likely to remain a self-conscious choice for me to do so. I can *practice* conceiving of God as feminine, but perhaps this will always feel like translation for me. I know that other people speak and think in French, but the closest I have ever been able to come to this has been to take French seriously enough to labor at turning my native English into French. When another speaks of God as *She*, I must take that witness seriously; I may not *correct* my companion's experience by substituting my favorite pronouns for hers. Nor may she *correct* my pronouns. Neither may we evade the challenge of these contrasting ways by claiming that they do not matter. Martin Buber has taught us that the *I* is different when addressing the *Thou*. In that most intimate form of encounter, the name by which we have learned to address the *Thou* is intrinsic to our knowing. To take another's witness seriously, I may not avoid the scandal of particularity by imposing the blandness of universalism.

Kenneth Burke has said that every person is free to worship God in the metaphor of that person's choice. But metaphors, especially those for the divine, are less chosen than choosing; they seem to choose us, for they come as our discovery about ultimate reality, a revelation about how we relate to people and things about us, and how we understand our purposes in life. Metaphors have the force of truth but not the whole truth, for by giving emphasis they also omit. The dress of language at once reveals and veils truth. Any rich metaphor implies an intricate fabric of other images and metaphors, patterns which strive for coherence and consistency, myths which clarify and explicate the meanings of the core metaphor.

I may not say, therefore, that every true inner voice is the voice of Christ. I can only speak personally and say that I recognize in every authentic testimony to what Denise Levertov calls the triple communion and Donald Hall the vatic voice something which I have known as the Inward Christ. That is my native language, it is not the only language for the experience. We are always to judge the spirits by their fruits, and perhaps it is enough to recall that for Friends Christ the Inward Teacher is identified with the Light, the Spirit which has existed from the beginning of time and worked in all places, which enlightens every person who has come into the world. That Spirit, according to the Gospel of John, will be known as both the Spirit of Truth and the Comforter. Perhaps, then, we can remain content with saying that wherever people experience an inner voice which unites Truth and Love, Guidance and Comfort, which makes those who hear it know joy, peace, kindness, care for others and a sense of their own value, this Spirit is what Christians understand by Christ, though it is authentic under the many names people have used to enter into dialogue with it. As Martin Buber tells us, in every encounter we have with a *Thou*, the *Eternal Thou* is present, brooding over the relationship to bring it into greater significance.

Acknowledging, then, that these testimonies to the encounter with an inner voice point to significant distinctions among them, and that the integrity of each witness is inextricably bound up with the name by which the individual has learned to address it, we can nonetheless inquire further into what these testimonies have in common and what they might mean for our pedagogy in Quaker institutions.

- Each testifies to a powerful encounter which has the character of a conversation or a dialogue. One feels one has been addressed; what comes is a *gift*, a message peculiarly adapted to the individual's need or condition, and

there is something intimate or personal about the experience.

- Each confirms that humans are endowed with the capacity to hear and respond to the inner voice, to participate in a dialogue with what is frequently perceived to be the divine. We learn to listen, and we listen to learn. Some describe these encounters as coming from outside *into* the deepest self, while others experience them as originating *within* the deepest self. In neither case, however, is there any inclination to take personal credit for what the voice has given. Instead the receiver speaks of sacredness, of awe, of divinity, the vast and irreducible.

- This experience has similarities with other important experiences of our lives: the searching conversations we have with close friends, those dialogues which reach down deeply into us and effect a transformation of our relationships with one another. We discover that we have heard faint intimations of that inner voice in many everyday encounters. “Over the shoulder of the human listener, there is never absent the silent presence of the Eternal Listener, the Living God ...,” says Douglas Steere, calling this “... the third member of every conversation.”²³

- The encounter may eventuate in both a product or work — an artifact such as a poem, or a vocation or calling — and also a changed relationship with others. Each of us is potentially a maker of art. This does not mean we are great artists, producers of the objects of high culture, but we each can participate in the process of creation, as maker and as needer. We can be directly in conversation with the sources of value and meaning in the universe.

- We are also in need, hungry for nourishment from those sources of value and meaning. Our need links us in the human fellowship of those who also *make* and *need*, who engage in their conversation with those sources. When we are open to the Inward Teacher, we know joy, wholeness and a renewed capacity to love other people.

Leading In And Drawing Out

It is easy for Quaker schools and colleges to become captives of their reputations, for like the Quakers who founded them, they came to do good and have done very well indeed. Parents and students come to us expecting that the widest range of needs and wants, even the most contradictory, will be readily met through the good will of Quaker educators. Some want a highly experimental, free, *alternative* school, where the emphasis is on personal freedom, creativity and individualism, and where traditional methods of teaching or evaluating performance are eliminated. Probably most parents are looking primarily for excellent, rigorous academic preparation for getting into excellent colleges or graduate programs. And some would like the best of both worlds: “We have never forced our child to do anything he does not enjoy; we want him to be creative and happy. Getting into Harvard doesn’t matter to us. Yale will be fine.” In common with teachers in other good schools, we try to meet as many of the needs — and the wants — as possible. We hope our students can find personal fulfillment and satisfaction, can discover creative powers in themselves, can come to love learning for its own sake, and be prepared for doing well eventually in the world of work.

Approaches to educational goals and pedagogical methods tend to divide according to two emphases: one which focuses on the nature of a subject or discipline and how it should be taught; the other, which emphasizes the needs of the people who are to be taught. The first approach stresses the integrity of the discipline and the truth-content of the material. We can illustrate this most readily by pointing to how strict natural scientists are in holding themselves and their students to proper methods of research. If you get answers the *wrong* way, you are not doing science. Personal creativity, if it is expressed through disregard for scientific methods of research and rules of

evidence, or unwillingness to subject one's findings to rigorous scrutiny, will be meaningless to the scientist. Much of what we teach at any level of education must be concerned with finding and preserving the integrity of the subject and the methods of inquiry. Grammar, spelling, arithmetic, at the elementary levels of study; learning the established facts of history or science, accurately reading and reporting what a book says, at higher levels — from our earliest formal education we have learned the importance of such things. The capacity to make significant contributions to any field of study or activity rests on having learned its content and method thoroughly.

The second emphasis does not ignore matters of subject or discipline, but it holds before us the issues of accommodating a subject to the condition of the learner. It stresses the need to understand the stages of human development, the psycho-social changes we undergo which make it possible or impossible for us to learn particular contents or activities at a given moment. We crawl before we walk, walk before we run. We talk baby-talk before we speak correct sentences. We learn to speak before we learn to write.

Before asking what subjects are to be taught, this approach asks who is coming to learn. What are their ages, what are their previous experiences, how many of them are there, what are their lives like when they are not in my classroom? From Piaget we learn that concept-formation takes its own pattern, so we cannot rush or force a sequence just because we want to. If you are frustrated that a seven year old cannot get straight once-for-all that Philadelphia is in Pennsylvania, that they are not two different places, Piaget tells you that this kind of concept does not fall into place until we are ten or so. If you cannot stand to wait, teach eleven year olds.

From Erickson we learn how *powers* or *virtues* build upon one another, how basic trust creates the possibility of

hope, then of competence, identity and intimacy. From William Perry we learn how intellectual and ethical developments occur in connection with one another during the college years, so that much of what students *cannot* grasp may be closed off to them because they cannot yet move from the world of one right answer to the world where context and point of view help determine what is “right.” From Carol Gilligan we learn how women’s ethical development differs from men’s in this society, how women frame the ethical question in terms of who is responsible for whom, where men ask what the rules are and how well they have been followed. From Jung and Levinson we learn that humans develop all through their lives, reaching new stages of crisis and growth throughout the lifespan. And from a variety of researchers we learn that the teaching-learning process must take into account where each participant is in psycho-social development — where I, a middle-aged, white male teacher, am in my development and how that helps or hinders my capacity to teach eighteen-year-old college women and men studying how to write college papers.

Developmental education continually asks what the student is ready for now, how content and discipline can be best accommodated to her or his needs and abilities. If it has to choose between the purity of a discipline or method and the needs and capacities of a student, it would give priority to the latter, though developmentalists would deny that such a choice is necessary.

Our Quaker schools and colleges try to give proper attention to both emphases. We take pride in being student-centered, but we also take pride in how well we prepare our students for further education and success in life through our academic rigor. As teachers we try to be both student- and discipline-centered, and both our satisfactions and our frustrations grow from attempting to meet these two sets of complex demands simultaneously.

I want to suggest, however, that Quakerism's greatest contribution to the teaching-learning process is to put those two emphases together in a larger context. When it is faithful to its foundations, Quaker education is neither student-centered, nor discipline-centered; it is inward-centered. Quaker education operates from the conviction that there is always one other in the classroom — the Inward Teacher, who waits to be found in every human being. If we appear to be student-centered, it is because we know that the student has an inner guide to whom he or she can be led. If we appear to be content-centered, it is because we know that another name for the Inward Teacher is the Spirit of Truth.

The meaning for our pedagogy of the witnesses to the presence of an inner voice is implicit in its workings. In the film version of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Miss Brodie and the Headmistress discuss the etymology of the word *education*. Miss Brodie argues that it means *drawing out*, so the work of the teacher is drawing out of students the abilities and inherent wisdom they already possess. Miss Mackay looks in a dictionary and finds the etymology is *to lead in*. A pedagogy based exclusively on either of these etymologies is insufficient; education is always a process of both *leading in* and *drawing out*. The infant has an inherent capacity for language; it waits only to be drawn out. But each child can only learn to speak a specific language by having it led into its consciousness. The child will learn to speak German or English or Amharic through the confluence of *leading in* and *drawing out*, of working with what is inherently there and giving it nourishment.

Welcoming The Inward Teacher

The most significant questions for pedagogy in Quaker education have to do with how we can best prepare ourselves to hear the Inward Teacher. What can we do to open our

classrooms, our schools, ourselves, to the possibility of such an encounter? I can only suggest six steps in outline.

First, it helps if we hold out the expectation for one another and for our students that human beings can hear and follow the inner voice, that it is an expression of our deepest hopes, the response to our truest needs. Those who speak of such a voice are not pathological — though sick people talk of hearing voices — nor are they indulging in fanciful figures of speech. A Levertov, a Hall, a Socrates or a Fox, each speaks of a voice which teaches because that is the best way to describe the reality he or she experiences.

At the same time, we must help one another learn how to discern the true from the false voice. Self-centeredness, willfulness masquerading as originality, laziness hiding behind creativity must be challenged, especially when they claim the authority of the inner voice. Even young children can begin to learn that a test of the authenticity of the inward leading is that it brings us into more loving relations with others, so that we care about their well-being as much as our own. Children can experience the fruits of the spirit long before definitions of them become meaningful. As we get older, the greedy self becomes more sophisticated in how it makes its demands, so the practice of discernment must also become more sophisticated. The meeting for worship and meeting for business can become powerful supports to the testing of inner impulse; in a school or college where the sense of community is especially strong, older students might be encouraged to use committees of clearness when they are trying to understand what they are led to do. Obviously, these same supports are essential for the faculty and administration of an institution.

Second, we can invite the Inward Teacher by providing occasions which seem most propitious. Some of these ought to be established parts of the school schedule, such as a regular weekly community meeting for worship and daily

worship in smaller groups. In large schools, or schools which run from kindergarten through high school, it may be more effective for weekly worship also to be held in smaller groupings, though not necessarily in age or grade-level groupings. Older and younger children sometimes find they enjoy the friendships that can develop between them, free of sibling rivalry but building on the brotherly-sisterly impulses which lead us to like one another. Given the chance to develop such friendships, children separated by a few years can become important spiritual companions to one another.

Even if logistics require that weekly worship take place in smaller groups, it is important that, on some regular basis, the whole school community worship together. In our colleges, where required meeting is a thing of the past, the opportunities for community-wide worship are still essential. These can be offered on Sunday but also occasionally in a convocation during the week, even though it is unlikely that a majority of students and faculty will attend.

Those times will require planning and perhaps even the introduction of music, singing or reading as aids to centering down. Students should be given at least some modest suggestions about how to center down, ways to use the silence, themes or readings which might help them feel at ease in the quiet waiting. All this must be done with a light touch so as to help students, especially younger ones, feel at home in silence. The silence itself must not be made sacred or so solemn that people are afraid to break it or find that it is a medium for nothing but gloomy thoughts and feelings. We do not worship silence; we find that stillness and silence are ways to worship. They can be restful and pleasurable, but they must be offered as an invitation, not imposed as a punishment. Being still is a way we can better attend to what someone else has to say or to let our minds give us images and ideas worth attending to. True speech

comes out of silence, true silence comes out of speech, Dietrich Bonhoeffer tells us. So sometimes words — read, spoken, sung — may be used to lead us into silence; and out of that silence other words or music may emerge.

Third, we can surround ourselves with living examples of the encounter with the Inward Teacher. We can deliberately fill the curriculum with works and activities which reveal its presence in their fabric. The Inward Teacher is not found only through the arts and literature or in small discussion classes. We cannot find inwardness by gazing inward all the time. The Light is not given to us to stare at but so we may see everything else through its power. In *Discovering God Within*, John Yungblut says that a crucial aspect of religious education is teaching a child its inter-relatedness with all of nature. He prescribes the study of paleontology and ecology so the child can know its “enmeshment in the precious web of life.”²⁴ The child also needs to live close to the earth, to develop loyalty not only to friends, neighborhood and nation but to the species, as well. The sciences take us out of ourselves, so that when we go back we have a wider sense of connectedness with the *not-me*, a respect for the harmony and order of the physical universe. Chemistry, physics and astronomy teach wonder and humility before such complex, purposeful symmetry. They can show us connections between truth and beauty which we may not feel when a poet or philosopher asserts that the two are one. And to learn, in laboratory, field study and lecture, how a world-wide community of scientists works, how that community must trust in each member’s integrity, how it depends on the values of cooperation, openness in sharing results, rigorous self-examination, is to be richly prepared for discovering the ethical imperatives of one’s own life.

Similar things can be said about the study of the social sciences, the exploration of human behavior and human institutions. “I am human, and nothing human is alien to

me,” are the words of a Latin playwright, but it could be the motto of psychology, history, anthropology, political science or economics. Again we learn about wonder, about the ingenuity of human beings in solving their problems of life together, of their limitations, of the communities which define the human through cooperation, mutual respect and love, and those which get no farther than mutual hostility, aggression and fear. We learn what is open to choice and what is not, in particular lives and social orders. We get to ask Abraham Maslow’s questions: “How good a society does human nature permit?” and “How good a human nature does society permit?” We begin to learn how ethical questions must be anchored in the close examination of human circumstances and political and social orders.

Certainly we invite the Inward Teacher when we study the creative works of human beings, the music, art, literature, religious and philosophic reflections in which we struggle to speak about matters of supreme worth. We need to be surrounded by such artifacts of the inward search — paintings on the walls, concerts, readings, encounters with dead and living artists. Alfred North Whitehead rightly reminds us: “Moral education is impossible apart from the habitual vision of greatness.”

The curriculum of a good school or college provides the widest range of opportunities for students to achieve competence in skills of reasoning, communication, problem-solving, manipulation of information to reach conclusions, grasp of significant systems of thought, and the like. It also gives students the chance to discover what gives them personal satisfaction and pleasure in life, what holds their interest and allegiance in work, in philosophical and ethical commitments, and what they can become masters of, in their own lives. Such goals can be pursued in strictly utilitarian fashion, letting as little as possible of the intuitive or feeling aspects of human experience to intrude into them. But they can also be pursued simultaneously as

ends and as means to larger ends, as ways to gain personal competence and to serve God. In a Quaker school or college, it would never be enough to shape the curriculum to merely utilitarian ends. Without neglecting the content and methods of any discipline taught, the curriculum of the Quaker school must also allow the connections to be made — between disciplines, with ethical questions, and in relation to the spiritual dimensions of life.

Fourth, we can deliberately fill the faculty, staff and administration of our schools with people who live their lives in opening to the Inward Teacher and obedience to His or Her leadings. A curriculum remains words in a catalogue until someone starts teaching it. The vital connections get made because somebody makes them; they become persuasive because somebody lives them out, practices science as a religious calling, professes philosophy as a love of wisdom. We encourage our students to listen for the Inward Teacher by showing them living examples of people who do. This means not only that those responsible for Quaker educational institutions should be looking for such people but also that they need to be concerned to create the conditions where spiritually vital people can grow and deepen in the spiritual life. Too often we are content to hire people for these gifts, then exploit them until the resources are gone. In E.F. Schumaker's terms, we spend capital resources as though they were income. Certainly faculty and staff should be supported to find the practices and disciplines which enrich their inner lives, but equally certainly they should be supported in finding ways to practice what enriches them. This means not only trying to avoid overworking our teachers and administrators but also incorporating into their professional development opportunities retreats and workshops addressing such needs. In-service training which addresses the benefits of journal-keeping or practicing the arts is as appropriate as training in counseling students or new

pedagogies. The school must be a place where the Inward Teacher can be welcomed by staff, too, where the Seed is nourished and strengthened.

The tradition in Quakerism is that the Inward Teacher is sufficient for all essential knowledge of God, yet there is a role for the outward teacher, too, for it is teaching to lead another to the ultimate teacher. When Jesus is addressed as “good teacher,” he asks, “Why do you call me good? Only God is good.” Jesus points his hearers away from preoccupation with this man before them, directing them instead to the source of all goodness. He is a good teacher precisely because he seeks to make himself transparent, so that the teaching itself stands clear. The good teacher tries hard to be available to students’ needs without making them dependent; he or she does not want personal disciples. The good teacher knows where the source of any goodness is and how far short he or she falls in attaining goodness. The outward teacher is most effective when he or she is, in Kierkegaard’s words, “a witness, never a teacher.”

Fifth, we can search for the methods and disciplines which best open us to the inner voice. Some of these may be startling. Denise Levertov reminds us that waiting for the muse or *musings* means standing with your mouth open. Donald Hall says he is often most in touch with the vatic voice in times of laziness, when he daydreams and naps a lot. Hall is joined by many others when he speaks of needing to write every day.

This writing can be of many kinds: letters to spiritual companions, poems, essays, personal journals. Many people find that the best form of daily writing is a journal, where they might record dreams, make notes about reading, write drafts of meditations or reminiscences, reflect on each day’s activities. For some, a highly structured journal on the order of the *Intensive Journal* of Ira Progoff is valuable. Such journals are especially useful for keeping certain themes present in the consciousness. For others, a journal must be much more free-form to be inviting. They must have a

journal which does not demand to be written in every day, nor to pursue set themes. Journals can be so inviting at the start that one writes copiously for a few days or weeks, then feels the discipline is taking too much time and must be abandoned. Or it becomes one more nagging guilt, a visible sign of one's failure in spiritual discipline. For some people, a beautifully bound blank book is the perfect invitation to write; for others, nothing they have to say seems good enough to violate that first beautiful page. As with other helps to the spirit, it is important not to oversolemnize writing. It serves best when it is thought of as a mild exercise for keeping one tuned-up.

Reading can generate writing, but so can many other spiritually healthful activities. Learning to look at works of art may be an aid to writing. It can also be an aid to opening up intuition in drawing, painting, pottery and other non-verbal forms of expression. Music can have a similar effect. Before he set to work each day, the theologian Karl Barth would listen to a recording of Mozart's music. Barth's great contribution to Christian theology was to remind us that God was transcendent, wholly Other. His was an austere, rigorous theology, not comforting or comfortable, and it could easily lack human warmth; thus the importance of Mozart: the music humanized the theology so that Barth could feel he was speaking truthfully of God and compassionately to humans. In *Confessions of a Guilty Bystander* and in one of his poems, Thomas Merton talks about how necessary Mozart was to Barth. As a contemplative himself, Merton knew the importance of warming the intellect through the senses.

The methods and disciplines for opening ourselves are many and various — meditating, listening to music or looking at works of art — which Denis deRougemont calls “traps for meditation” — painting, composing, reading, writing, praying. For some, such work is best done by focusing intently but for a short time; for others, relinquishing the control which comes with focusing, or

letting something unfamiliar take the attention, is more productive. As with all education, the rhythm of leading in and drawing out appropriate to the individual needs to be found.

Sixth, we can look for ways which balance inwardness with productive outward activity. The inner world can be both an infinity and a cramped prison cell. Meister Eckhart says that we can only spend in good works what we earn in contemplation, and that is undoubtedly a valuable admonition to those of us serving Quaker institutions, but it is probably equally the case that what is earned in contemplation cannot be saved up indefinitely but must be spent regularly in service to others. It is like the manna in the desert, which had to be gathered every day and rotted if it were stored up for the future.

In reaction to the crippling effects of too much *outwardness*, the preoccupation with material things or the self-absorbed guilt and shame which fuel so much of our drive to succeed, we have embraced therapies which are equally self-absorbed. Spiritual and psychological health have come to mean nothing more than feeling good about ourselves, and the wonderfully cleansing effects of honesty have been reduced to the blandness of self-acceptance. Personal growth strategies have offered the same enticing but limited goals: we have learned to celebrate our sensitivity, our sexuality, our creativity and our fellowship with like-minded people. We have created what Robert Bellah calls lifestyle enclaves and called them community. We have gazed fixedly into a mirror and called it looking within. We have become the self-made man who worships his creator.

But Goethe reminds us that “every healthy effort is directed from the inward to the outward world.” It is profound wisdom which leads contemplative communities to share the daily work of gardening, cooking, maintenance, cleaning, equally among their members and to make *work and pray* their motto. Those of us who do not experience

that balance in our own lives probably sentimentalize Brother Lawrence's practicing the presence of God among his pots and pans. Perhaps Brother Lawrence could not have found God anywhere else but in the matter-of-fact care for the physical needs of the worshipping community. Those schools which require every member of the community to share in the food preparation, dishwashing and maintenance of the school are addressing something very important. But we also need to reach beyond our own fellowship to see those unlike us. Schools which have a service requirement which must be undertaken outside of school, in a project of some duration which addresses the needs of the poor and disadvantaged, are helping to strike the balance between inward and outward. Some schools have such a project as a graduation requirement, and that is admirable; even better would be the creation of a set of supports and expectations which led students to give time and energy to service in the larger community throughout their school years. Colleges which sponsor workcamps or service projects as part of foreign study or which have internships in community service are addressing this same need.

These kinds of projects have their risks, the greatest of which is that they may only encourage a do-gooding elitism rather than deep understanding. Work camps, intern programs in industry and community service, and similar projects, which were once so prominent a part of the work of the American Friends Service Committee, may have failed to address the deeper ills of our society, but they often opened up a process linking study and action, inner search and personal commitment, which we lack the instruments to accomplish today. Our schools and colleges have to re-invent some such teaching-learning opportunities.

Francis of Assisi says "a man possesses of learning only so much as comes out of him in action, and a monk is a good preacher only so far as his deeds proclaim him such,

for every tree is known by its fruit.”²⁵ Self-knowledge must bear fruit, and it is not enough to face honestly that one is selfish and cruel to others; one must resolve not to be so in the future. One must set about changing. We have a right to expect that self-knowledge will lead to care for others, self-forgetfulness in service to larger ends than feeling good about myself or celebration of the wonder of being me. If they can find ways to help students, faculty and administrators understand the connections between inwardness and outwardness, work and prayer, for being open to the Inward Teacher, our schools and colleges will have touched the deepest well-springs of education.

Returning To The Source

... When a religion has become an orthodoxy, its day of inwardness is over: the spring is dry; the faithful live at second hand exclusively and stone the prophets in their turn.²⁶

William James

“It is all so simple....” How I distrust lectures, sermons, speeches which begin that way. In school they told me that algebra was simple, and Latin and chemistry. How-to books on every topic, get-rich-quick schemes, diet and health programs, economic plans, political platforms, panaceas for all our ills are introduced with “it is really quite simple.” Our most important problems and profound convictions get simplified into bumper stickers. If we cannot endorse simple solutions, that too has a simple explanation: we lack faith, or we are acting in bad faith; we are hiding behind rationalizations; we are over-intellectual and have lost contact with our feelings; we have vested interests in avoiding the simple truth, so we complicate problems with piles of data and information, hoping that the discrepancies will let us do nothing. It is all so simple.

For every complex problem there is a simple solution, it has been said, usually wrong. It also runs counter to much

of our experience to be told that the most profound aspects of our lives can be illuminated by simple insights. We are used to having what we learn move from the elementary to the more complex, building in importance and implication as we move up the ladder of abstraction. Every subject begins in its most primitive elements, but the patterns which we build from those fundamental building blocks become more and more complex as we explore the subject. And we cannot reduce the complicated, subtler structures of meaning back into their building blocks and preserve their meaning, any more than we can simplify a sentence to its component letters and keep what it says. Our first speech is babble, then baby-talk; eventually we may be able to articulate our most profound doubts and convictions in correctly pronounced, grammatically accurate sentences. We crawl before we walk, walk before we run or dance. Learning goes from the simple to the complex, we find, and we are suspicious of anyone who would tell us that all we need to know is simple; as soon believe that baby-talk and crawling not only will suffice but are preferable to articulate speech and walking.

How then can we deal with the embarrassingly simple truths on which Quakerism rests? All we need to know about living the centered spiritual life we can learn by turning within ourselves, where Christ the Inward Teacher waits to instruct us; right worship is waiting in silence, to be taught what to do; true religion is to visit the fatherless, the widows and strangers, and to keep unspotted from the world; it brings unity and the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience. The teaching is all so simple, and we are on our guard against it on that account. Yet we see the testimony, not merely in the past but among those we work and live with every day, of lives which fulfill the promises of those simple claims. And we wonder how to make sense of it all.

Perhaps all we can do is to resort to a kind of myth. It is as if, by an act of grace, we have found ourselves able to

read a page in an unknown language, and what we have read is more beautiful, more convincing, than anything we have every known. The page overwhelms us with its radiance, and we are delighted by what it says and by our clairvoyance in understanding it. We feel transformed.

Then we discover that this bright page is one in a large book which we cannot read. Moreover, we recognize that, unless we learn to read the language of this book, we will lose our power to comprehend even the page whose meaning came to us as a gift. We must begin at the beginning, with an unfamiliar alphabet, the rudiments of a vocabulary and grammar for which we have no analogues. The language is hard to pronounce and harder to understand, and it gets more and more complicated as we penetrate further into it. We can only learn the language through hard work. We must read tedious books, must drill in pronunciation, slog and slog to learn the whole language in which that one bright page is written.

We must work hard to translate all the other pages in the book, and as we do so we learn the context for our single page, the elaborations of its meanings, the history of its composition, the pain of those who wrote it. Sometimes the bright page seems to be lost in our work, for there is so much which is hard, or dry, or tangential to what we were first given, but somehow we know that the work we are doing is what knowing that one bright page requires. It is how we keep faith with it. So we continue to do the hard, dreary work, sustained by memory and imagination, by the recollection of what those wonderful sentences said, by the hope of reading them again in their full power. That page came to us easily; it was simple. Perhaps what it said was simple: God is Love, the Light enlightens every person, there is One who can speak to our condition. But what we must do to keep it alive in us will frequently be complicated, not because our wills are weak or our minds treacherous but because the great simple truths require what T.S. Eliot

called “a condition of absolute simplicity costing not less than everything.”

How is the Inward Teacher known? In joy and health, but also in loneliness and alienation; in the deepest encounters with other people and in dialogue with great ideas and works; in love but also in emptiness; in hunger but also in plenitude; in solitude but also in community. Wherever we are is the starting-place for encountering the voice which can speak to our condition. We cannot compel the inner voice to speak, we can only try to practice openness and attention, and when we hear the voice we can only practice minding and answering. Fortunately, it is our nature as human beings, and it is God's nature, that we can reach what Levertov calls the triple communion, the communion within ourselves, with other people, and with that of God within each of us. Taking those promises seriously is the work of Quaker education. It is the bright page which leads us into all books.

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Notes

1. Erikson, p. 131.
2. Fox's *Journal*, pp. 152, 168, 272.
3. James Naylor's testimony, *Early Quakers Writings*, p. 261.
4. Fox's *Journal*, pp. 35, 65, 123, 194-5; *Letters*, Epistle 287.
5. Fox's *Journal*, p. 348; *Letters*, Epistles 4, 200.
6. Fox's *Journal*, pp. 28-29.
7. *Barclay's Apology*, p. 92.
8. Brinton, *Friends*, pp. 118-120.
9. Brinton, *Quaker Education*, pp. 15-20.
10. *Barclay's Apology*, p. 243.
11. Barbour, pp. 119-122.
12. *Barclay's Apology*, p. 253.
13. Fox's *Journal*, pp. 27-29.
14. Lampen, p. 57.
15. Fox's *Journal*, pp. 333-334.
16. Penington, pp. 3-4, 6, 8, 12.
17. Steere, *Quaker Spirituality*, pp. 142-157.
18. Reader, pp. 27, 51.
19. John Bellers in *Early Quaker Writings*, pp. 456-8.
20. Hole, pp. 14-35.
21. Hall, pp. 1-5.
22. Levertov, pp. 25-56.
23. Steere, *On Listening*, p. 25.
24. Yungblut, pp. 55-73.
25. Francis of Assisi in James, p. 256.
26. James, p. 269.