



Lecture 1943

William Penn

*In the  
Nuture  
of the  
Lord*

*Edward R. Miller*

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# In The Nurture of the Lord

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by  
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The name of William Penn has been chosen because he was a Great Adventurer, who in fellowship with his friends started in his youth on the holy experiment of endeavoring “to live out the laws of Christ in every thought, and word, and deed,” that these might become the laws and habits of the State.

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## In The Nurture of the Lord

*And therefore, train up all your children in the nurture and fear of the Lord, that both you and they may all serve God in His spirit, in your creation and generation; for children are the heritage of the Lord, and ought to be trained up in His fear, and serve and worship Him in spirit and in truth; for it is the Lord that gave the increase of them all.<sup>1</sup>*

Each human organism and group has deeply seated within the life process the tendency to conserve the organism or group in and for posterity. Many of the physical laws of human heredity, for example, quite clearly indicate this by the color of eyes, or line of profile. Many unconscious habits of gesture, or speech mannerism, conserve from generation to generation the way of an ancestor. Groups try by constitutions, legal decisions, racial superiorities, class lines, sacred scriptures and so forth, to keep alive their systems of values from one generation to another.

The Society of Friends, in the year of our Lord, 1943, three hundred years after George Fox, the founder, started on his great spiritual quest, finds itself a group among many other groups faced with the problem of passing on to each succeeding generation those group mannerisms, those group characteristics, those inherited insights into God's truth, that seem vital and basic to any adequate comprehension of the Society and to a vital life therein. In common terms this may be called the *problem of religious education in the Society of Friends*. Or in even a more vernacular phrase—"How can I

get my children to believe what I believe; be religious as I've been religious, and enjoy a life of spiritual power worthy of membership in this historic Society?"

Unfortunately, there has not yet been phrased and understood any such law about group methods of passing on to the next generation the basic ideas and experiences of that group, comparable to the Mendelian law of heredity in relation to the inheritance of physical characteristics. Consequently there are many ideas and many methods in operation among the Society of Friends about the way in which children of the Society may become functioning and mature elements of the Society.

There can be no doubt about this being a concern and a problem among us. It has been a problem from the first years of the Society until now. George Fox was concerned that children be instructed in the ways of the Society. In 1657 he wrote a "Catechism for Children." In the same year he published "A Warning to All Teachers of Children Which Are Called School-Masters and Mistresses and to Parents." William Penn expressed this concern in his "Advices to His Children." Another expression of this problem was in Anthony Benezet's, "A Pattern of Christian Education," written in 1756. These examples can be multiplied by many other illustrations if one will dip into the books, Meeting minutes, Tracts, Quaker journals, and biographies that have accumulated over these three hundred years of Society History.

The methods used and proposed for the education of the children of the Society, leading them into the way and life of

the Society, have varied from strictly guarded education, whose counterpart is found in the convents of the Catholic Church, to the most ultra of ultra-progressive education. Educational theories used have ranged from the “*tabula rosa*” theory, to the newest concept of the “Gestalt psychology learning patterns” and the modern “maturation theories.” God has guided some directly, and others have claimed the need for emotional conversions before being ready for the life of the spirit. Some have felt that little formal schooling was more than enough, while others claim the need for formal schooling from the kindergarten years through to the most honored of degrees. Some have gone to public schools, some to Society sponsored schools, some to First-day schools, some to Fifth-day and First-day meetings for worship, and some have felt it enough to have been “born” into the Society.

To define the methods used by the Society of Friends to propagate their principles and ways in their children at any given time is like the old folk phrase used by a Greek teacher when we were faced with the choice of two equally valid English words for one Greek word. Said he, “You pay your money and take your choice.” At some period in the Society, and in some Meeting, almost any method, almost any philosophy of education, and almost any process of teaching can be found.

Participation in meetings having the care and responsibility for First-day schools; visits with parent groups discussing the religious education of their children; observations of the religious sterility of some young Quakers who have come through the Quaker Meetings, First-day schools and

elementary and secondary schools and colleges; a marked absence of young Friends from the meetings for worship and business — all these indicate to each of us that the Society has not found the way or ways of religious education that adequately fit the task of passing on in a stimulating, burning, crusading manner, from the older to the younger members, the “truths,” the “light within,” the values that have marked the religious and spiritual life of the Society.

It is a challenge then, to try to look for those basic foundations and understandings about religion, about education, about *Quaker Religious Education*, if you will, that must be ours if the Society is to move forward through the ever on-coming life of each new generation. This seems a possible undertaking, because there are many examples of rich Quaker family life, effective meetings for worship and valid school procedures that produced great spiritual power in their members. To understand more clearly the problems of Quaker religious education is our task at this time.

## ***I. The Nature of Religion***

One could easily get lost in the woods of a discussion about the nature of religion. My faint recollection of some of the long, intricate lectures in courses on the history and philosophy of religion bring memories of confusion rather than light. It is not our purpose here to give a philosophical description of religion. We do need to know, however, some of the characteristics of religion, if we are to adequately plan for and talk about “religious education.”

First of all, religion is not equivalent to the Bible. On the surface that sounds very unorthodox and disrespectful. But if you will read carefully and with sensitivity the books of the Bible, you will know what I mean. The Bible is a collection of records interpreting other persons' religious experiences. It is religious history, religious biography, religious music, religious law, but it is not religion.

A great many people, when they found the “direct revelation” of the Bible that had been taught them to be exaggerated, have felt they have lost their religion. We've held so many easy and naive ideas about the Bible, making it the end-all of religion. To own a Bible, to have it carefully displayed on the bookshelf, to lay hands on it when challenged to tell the truth, to quote from it for proof of a point, to require an uncritical belief in it for church membership—these and many other items are ways in which religion, is at times, reduced to a belief in the Bible.

Most of all, the crude way in which the Bible is studied in much religious educational material, including a good share of that used in First-day schools, has contributed to the attitude of religion being the Bible. The nearest teaching method comparable to this use of material is the laborious method of teaching the English classics—word for word perusal of Shakespeare, sentence by sentence analysis of the “Tale of Two Cities”—every bit of life and continuity is wrung out of them. The Bible wasn't written for that purpose. It is the life experience of a man on fire with God's word; the sweeping history of the rise and fall of a nation devoted to God's way; the sad and joyful songs from the heart of God's Chosen Ones; the sketchy records of the life



of Jesus of Nazareth, and the letters and manuscripts telling others of that Life and its impact on them.

The Bible is essential to a knowledge of the Christian message and for a life of the spirit based upon the life of Jesus and the will of God. It must be as familiar to every Christian as are the articles of furniture in the living room, or the letters of the English alphabet to each of us using the language. Parts of the Bible will be memorized, its stories will be told and retold, children will listen to oft repeated readings of it, but the Bible is only a source book of the Christian religion.

Second, religion is not equal to theology. Nine tenths of the information, reading, worship services, courses in religion that are taught are theological explanations about religion. They are handed on in such a way as to confuse theology with religion. Theology at best is only some other person's attempt to explain the history, the lives of leaders and the experiences of the religion in question. We've fallen into the habit of trying to explain everything connected with a religion. I sat one day in the Chapel of a great university while a learned professor proceeded to create out of every line, every brick, every stick of wood and every stone about the building, some mystical religious symbol. He was trying to make the building religious because of the way it was made, reading back into the mind of the architect things that were not there. Theology, with its second-hand interpretations, has confused for us the religious experiences of the great spiritual leaders.

One marvels sometimes at the injustice done to some passage of scripture telling of a religious experience or insight when theological explanations are made of it. There are courses of Systematic Theology, Pauline Theology, Doctrinal Theology, all of which may be important, but they aren't religion.

In the third place, religion is not science. Our urge to give theological explanations to everything, coupled with the modern passion for explaining all physical phenomenon in the laboratory has led us to try to reduce religion to scientific explanation and data. Dean Sperry of Harvard suggests that "liberal religion seems to aspire to be a kind of scouting troop for science, accepting all that science has proved and then going further than science can honestly go, to add its particular interpretations to the knowledge which science has achieved." To give a pious explanation to all scientific findings is not the purpose of religion. The two are related, but a "religious explanation" to every and any situation that children propose is not the whole of religion. We have become so in the habit of using the scientific method that we assume that religion exists solely for the purpose of explaining things not otherwise explainable. Religion is not comparable to a sort of Super-Encyclopedia Britannica edited by God through the aid of religious scientists.

Finally, religion is not some organization or membership therein. The elementary judgment in the present Selective Service law that leads many of the local draft boards to make it difficult for a person to be a religious conscientious objector to war unless he can literally show his name listed on the books of some religious organization illustrates the

attitude. It then follows for them that only those persons are considered as religious, or having a valid religion, according to their attendance at the meetings of the organization.

Religion, on the other hand, is the individual's total way of living, being, acting, thinking, and participating in this world, and his attitudes toward the human persons who surround his life. Religion is individual and social in its outreach. It is concerned with the quality of the divine-human relationships. Religion is the awareness of the known and unknowable aspects of the Universe in its "largeness." The Creator is seen in the growth process of the seed, in the glow of love as the parent guides the child to maturity, in the personalness of God. Religion is a sense of the Godliness of the Universe, and each person's sonship to Him. It is the ability to "be still and know that I am God." Religion is the prophetic cry of old, "What does the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God." It is the answer Jesus extracted from the Lawyer when questioned about the inheritance of eternal life,—"Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." D. Elton Trueblood, in his *Logic of Belief*, reaffirms for us the nature of religion. "The heart of religion, we must remember, is not an *information about God, but experience of God.*"

## ***II. The Nature of Education***

With such a functional idea of religion in mind, and a conception of some of the limitations of "religion," let us proceed to a description of education.

Were we to ask one another for definitions of education, for descriptive definitions of who are the “educated” and how do you know they are educated, nine out of ten of us would immediately start talking in terms of the number of years spent in schools and colleges; in terms of the courses taken, the grades made, the tuition paid; in terms of the perfection of the grammar used in writing and speaking; in terms of the kind of “white-collar” job held; in terms of table manners; and in terms of the honorary societies to which one has been elected. All of which may or may not have anything to do with education.

Let us assume from the beginning, then, that education is not limited to the amount, quality, kind, or place, in which one has received formal instruction. Let us, rather, think of education in its broadest sense—that education is the entire process of growing from birth to death; the entire process of becoming a person; the entire cycle from immaturity to maturity. Education will probably include given amounts of formal, institutional instruction, but it will also include those endless experiences that become the strands that weave life into an ever thickening and stronger personality. For example, take the ability to move about. The new born infant moves: that is, it wiggles, kicks, squirms. The muscles develop and the movement becomes more correlated. With that increased muscular control and correlation comes the ability to turn over, and to crawl backwards and forward. Then the child tugs itself onto its feet. The timid, exploratory steps and tumbles follow, and the period of mixing steps and crawling. After a while crawling is completely discarded for the more complex, but better method of walking. Then

running! What child, when sure of walking, doesn't ask some adult—"Want to see me run?" Then he begins climbing trees, chasing, pulling, pushing, skating, jumping. And all of it is the complex flowering of those first squirms, wiggles, and kicks.

Such is the real process of education—the endless mass of experiences, phenomena, movements, accomplishments, disappointments, rules, disciplines, and knowledge that each of us absorbs in the process of living and maturing.

The basic human responses, the natural and universal responses on the part of children that makes learning possible have been suggested by Dr. Luther A. Weigle.<sup>2</sup> They are:

1. Gregariousness.
2. Interest in the behavior of other persons as contrasted with the behavior of things.
3. Approval and disapproval. (Tendency to seek and to give approval.)
4. Tendency to master others and satisfaction in that tendency. (The reverse in the submission tendency.)
5. Rivalry, jealousy.
6. Envy, pugnacity.
7. Helpfulness, cooperation, altruistic behavior.
8. Kindliness, pity, welfare of others.
9. Sex attraction and behavior.
10. Parental attitude and behavior.
11. Filial attitudes.
12. Tendency to imitate, feel sympathy for, play, etc.

Thus the child's equipment to learn and be educated includes 1. Social instincts and responses to persons; 2. Responses to nature and things; and 3. An eagerness to understand, which is an intellectual curiosity, a reasoning power, and a desire to put the world together consistently.

But it is possible to learn the wrong thing, the evil as well as the good; the false along with the true. Most education, both formal and informal, is therefore directed toward a selected body of experiences that seem in accord with the ideas of the more mature persons of the given community, sect, state or nation. That is why some educational experiences have been so guarded. The earlier guarded education of the Quakers was a sincere attempt to give the formal schooling to the children of the Society of Friends that would be all good, entirely religious, completely the "truth" as Quakers saw it. The Puritan type of school that developed in New England tried for the same end. Both have broken down, partly because of changing social patterns within the country; partly because of too limited a definition implicit in such an educational philosophy; partly because they denied any basic eagerness to understand, denied any basic reasoning power and a desire to put the world together consistently; and partly because they denied the innate tendencies toward cooperation, kindness, and altruistic behavior on the part of the child.

Not finding satisfaction in such a "strict" method of education, and already having departed from a definition and experience of education that was inclusive enough to be sound, the Quakers, along with others, have tended increasingly to define education in terms of "social

functioning.” Social functioning, in turn, has meant, though described in many ways, an education for adjustment into society as it is at the moment. This so-called “progressive educational” method has projected into the learning experiences of children, all kinds of “projects,” in order to get them ready to live as modern science, modern history, modern industry, modern politics, and modern community life may demand. It is a pragmatic philosophy of education. In one widely circulated publication, issued by the Educational Policies Commission<sup>3</sup>; the purpose of this newer approach to education is stated:

*“The general end of education in America at the present time is the fullest possible development of the individual within the framework of our present industrialized democratic society. . . . The choice of this way of living (socially desirable) . . . is primarily determined by the prevailing scale of social and personal values.”*

Man, according to such views, is part of the changing weathervane of life, to which he adjusts himself as best he can by experimentation, trial and error.

This “progressive” approach to the learning processes is, like the guarded education, weak and narrow. It denies the child any basic desire to reason and put the world together consistently, mostly because it insists too much on the immediate. It fails to give a sense of direction, so the child is left completely at sea in the midst of conflicting wrongs and rights. It becomes an educational anarchy—whatever the individual thinks is socially desirable and right, that is the end for which to live. It is too narrow a definition of

education because it likewise excludes the impact of all that happens to the child in terms of the total self the child is developing, especially in view of the fact that the character, the personality in the process of realization is the base of the personality for all the rest of life. If various threads of many colors are put into the weaving of an all red rug, they show up, and they are there to stay.

Each of these philosophies of education, the strictly guarded and the newer “progressive” philosophy, which have been given to Quaker children has contributed something of value as well as weakness. In swinging from one educational precept to another, however, the weakness has tended to dominate. There are several statements, then, that are important for us to remember about education, and the way in which learning takes place.<sup>4</sup>

1. Learning takes place as a natural and inevitable part of intelligent action: *to learn is to act*. To teach is to arrange opportunities to act, and the most effective teaching is that which makes provision for creative, purposeful activity.
2. What is learned in and through activity is *all the activity and nothing but the activity in question*. Whatever is learned, in any educational situation, then, is what the *learner as a whole* is doing and only that.
3. The third proposition defines as the central content of the curriculum a *graded series of activities* which are continuous with the fundamental life processes of the community.



4. Each individual moves toward *higher and more permanent values* involving constant readjustments as new experiences arrive and new possibilities of experience open out. There is a rhythmical advance of the self from point to point, outgrowing the old, seeking the new, reorganizing habits and desires as new levels of experience emerge.
5. Human nature develops to its full capacity of happy self-direction only when it is surrounded by *an atmosphere of cooperation, goodwill, faith, and respect*, with every opportunity for participation in the control of its own affairs.
6. Self-development requires the *projection of an ideal self and an ideal society*, constantly moving on beyond the achievement of the actual self and the actual society, and providing at once the motive and standard of human behavior.
7. Nature as well as wisdom dictates that the chief value of the past for the living is with reference to the future. Education, then, becomes *an adventure into the future* rather than into the past, but an adventure equipped with all the pertinent wisdom the past can offer.
8. Individual differences in inherited and acquired tendencies require differentiated educational arrangements adapted to the *specific needs and capacities of individuals*.
9. Finally, as corollary of the eighth, unless education would choke off at its source the provision nature makes for the advancement mankind, it must set great store by the variations among individuals. *Each*

*generation, each race, and culture has much to give as well as much to gain, and must be encouraged to give its utmost.*

With these principles in mind, several items become very noticeable about education in this modern time.

*First:* the old virtue theory of character and good behavior has long been exploded though not discarded, especially by teachers in First-day school and at home. *Conduct is specific.* The notion that a child “possesses” honesty or charity or self-control in the sense that he possesses a knife or pocket-book is all wrong. Honesty is simply a name used to describe conduct as observed in specific situations. Most of us are both honest and dishonest. An honest person who is an ideal for children, insofar as he is honest, has learned honesty, and been guided into honesty, in each situation until it has grown thoroughly into the pattern of his being. This has a lot to say about the way moral education has been and is being passed on from generation to generation, in the home, at the meeting, and in the school.

*Second,* there are two kinds of goodness—good deeds and good intentions. We’ve long noticed the chasm between knowledge and conduct. *To possess moral knowledge is no guarantee that the conduct will agree,* for there is no specific relationship between knowledge and conduct, but only a general relation. And this general relationship depends upon the group code or standard and the group conduct. In other words, many a child has several vocabularies: one for First-day school, one for the dinner table, and one for the alley, and he never mixes them. Probably also he has many

different moral codes, depending on the number groups with which he is associated and upon general social situations surrounding him. This means that in moral education, the group is the important factor. For us it is especially important, for long ago, moral education among Quakers took place in groups—at home, in the meeting, in the school. We had forgotten that, and have been trying to teach abstract moral education from textbooks and by direct presentations.

We are forced again into the recognition that the important factors of educational, or learning experiences, are the persons involved. It is not what books were used, what room it was in, or what language was spoken, but who were the persons, the adults, the other children that were present? Education which forms character is education which includes the teacher as well as the taught, adults as well as children, society as well as the individual, in joint efforts to make life abundant for all. The kind of self that one has depends on the kind of fellowships one has, their character, their depth, their extent, their variety.

To summarize, education and learning are not things which can be reduced to an institution, to a course in a catalogue, or to a lecture. It is the entire process of experiencing, acting, thinking, being, fellowshiping. It will take place in classrooms, on playgrounds, at work, at home, in groups, with children, with adults. But the constant factor in the educational process is the presence of other human persons, determining the quality, the kind, the depth, the nature, and the character of the learner.

We have seen that religion is an experience: an experience of God, a practice of the “divine presence.” This begins to give us the key to *education that is religious*. Education which is religious is that “growing-up process,” that learning procedure that is constantly freighted with a consciousness of the larger aspect of the life intelligently aware of the Spiritual Power in the universe. The deepest roots of religion are in the life experiences of the child in his being loved and loving in return; in his being trusted and trusting in return; and in his sharing tasks and being shared with in return.

We are interested in religious education because we want children to develop the best possible life. We want the education to be religious so that they may develop a religion of their own. Thus we come to the problems of Quaker religious education.

### ***III. Religious Education among the Society of Friends***

In Walter Homan’s book, *Children and Quakerism*, there is a chapter on “The Education of Children Before 1737.” In this chapter he writes about the “synoptic view of life” held by the Friends. “All life was guided by one philosophy, and there was little distinction between times and places, leisure and labor, church and state, religion and morality, education and religious education. The early epistles and advices to the Meetings made no sharp lines of distinction between various types of education. The same epistle would advise parents to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord; to teach them the plain, modest and simple methods of dress and actions; and to train them in some useful work.”<sup>5</sup>

There was no separation which said that “today you go to First-day school to learn some religion,” or “second-day you go to school in the village to learn how to spell.” Even the grammar and spelling book in school were made up of the vocabulary and literature of the sacred scriptures of religion. When it came to education for a vocation, and the apprenticing of children for work in a trade, they developed the English apprentice system to meet their own needs. Early Friends adopted definite rules for it. It was not enough to be apprenticed to a good weaver. Insofar as possible, the child should be apprenticed with a family of Friends. Would the physical needs of the child be well cared for? Would the moral quality of the home influence be positive? Would the spiritual nature of the child be deepened? Quakers were interested in training for some useful and worthy trade that was in keeping with the professions of the Society, and at the same time they were interested in giving the children adequate instruction and ample opportunities for experience in religion.

But this education took place in a way that is much in contrast to our conceptions of education today. First of all, this spirit of unity, this synoptic view of life, held by the Friends made *all experiences educational and religious at the same time*. True, the sociological organization of the time may have made life a little less complex, but in spite of the degree of complexity which we may claim today as the cause for our educational deficiencies, there was a basic approach to the educational experiences of children related to the description of education and religion presented in the earlier

parts of this paper. Education and religion were functional, experimental, and involved in life.

Second, the experiences were all *colored by the religious principles of the Society*. Howard Brinton, in *Quaker Education in Theory and Practice*, suggests that the basic doctrines of the Society of Friends may be divided into three classes. The first leading into the second, the second into the third. But the first was the most important. It was that the doctrine of the Society of Friends declared that the presence of God is felt at the apex of the human soul and that man can therefore know and heed God directly. The prime place of the spiritual awareness of life and the personal experience of God were the motivating forces for education. The “Inner Light” revealed God and His will for men. This involved the children’s relationships to God and to their fellowmen. It helped develop a moral standard and it directed the type and nature of intellectual study. It helped guide the children in their moral and vocational interests and pursuits. George Fox wrote about it to this effect:<sup>6</sup>

*“Now this is the duty of all youth, let them be males or females, to remember their Creator, and let Him not go out of their memory, so that they may be fitted to stand in the evil days when they come.”*

Historically, Quaker education and religious education, were one and the same thing, each a part of the other, and both a part of the whole process of living a God-centered life. Arthur Rowntree is quoted on the cover of a recent *Friends Intelligencer* as saying:

*“We acknowledge the fundamental place of religion in life when we talk of Quaker education, and we may ask ourselves in lieu of a Quaker catechism: Are we leading and teaching the life of sincerity and simplicity heralded by the gospel of Jesus? are we seekers and followers of Truth wherever it lends? do we get glimpses of the Inner Light which lighteth every man? do we know God, the source of love, intellect and power, the Father of mankind? do we acknowledge the implication—brotherhood of man—and the insistent call to unselfish service of men at home and abroad?”*

Thus the religious education that has taken place among the families, Meeting, and schools of the Society of Friends has been marked by special consciousness of: *First*, the development of each child into a full flowered personality, a strong son or daughter of God. If each person is to be called upon to follow his own light, he must be assisted through training to correct his own understandings by the wisdom of the race, gathered over a period of time. A “congregation of priests” calls for the training of everyone, not just a class apart. *Second*, a spirit of positive tolerance. If all men are considered of equal importance in the sight of God, and if each person is regarded as having direct contact with God and God’s truths, then a respect for every man must ensue. *Third*, an equality of all. Into the male world of the Seventeenth Century such a teaching came as a breath of fresh air. Into a world of slavery and class lines, drawn as sharply as the razor edge, the message came. There was no higher, or lower, no betters to doff hats to, no business that

could charge one price to the rich or unsuspecting, and another to those who might find one out. *Fourth*, the unity of life. The division of sacred and secular disappeared before the mind of George Fox. God is the Creator of, all; man's life is entirely due to God. This attempt of the Quaker to break the hard lines of class caused him to adopt and teach extreme measures at times, for there was to be only one ethic governing the whole of life—public and private, sacred and secular, and it must, function alike as between high and low. *Fifth*, Quakers were seekers after Truth. Truth in the early days of the Society was nearly equal to the life and teachings of Jesus, and His interpretation of God's will. Singular devotion to God, consideration of life as a unit—these logically result in a singleness of Truth for the Quaker. He prepared for the "Kingdom of God" and not some "kingdom of earth."

We could spend much time discussing the values and limitations of "guarded education," the "apprentice system," or the "fifth-day meeting for worship." These, and other things, are inevitable "air-pockets" in the long history of the religious educational experiences of the Society. We could spend much time in consideration of the ways in which the Quakers of the past accomplished these special things in their education that was religious, but the important item for us today is the way in which they "nurtured and admonished their children in the way of the Lord." There lies behind all of this, however, a trilogy of agencies and methods that we ought to be aware of in this discussion. They are commonly known to us, and have already been mentioned in passing.



They are THE QUAKER FAMILY, THE QUAKER MEETING, and THE QUAKER SCHOOL.

The early Friends believed that the primary responsibility for the education of children rested upon the parents. The Friends believed that the education of children was a Christian duty and opportunity, and that the family should serve as the chief religious and educational agency. They not only believed it, but they practiced it! Many of the advices in the early epistles stated it clearly:<sup>7</sup>

*“We do entreat and desire that parents and governors of families, that ye diligently lay to heart your work and concern in your generation for the Lord, and the charge committed to you; not only in becoming good examples unto the younger sort, but also to use your power in your own families in educating your children and servants in modesty, sobriety, and in the fear of God, curbing the extravagant humour in the young ones — , then look to yourselves and discharge your trust for God, and for the good of their souls, exhorting in meekness and commanding in wisdom.”*

The parent is in a dual role. He is first of all the parent of the child. He is also a child of God. It is on this dual base that the parent is able to assist in the transference of the child's filial trust in him as a parent, to a filial trust in God. The parent is an incarnation of God's patience and wisdom. But at the same time the parent is a child of God, worshipping too, and he can associate the child with this parental worship. Or he can keep it from taking place in the child.

The second powerful agency in the religious education of the Quaker child was the Meeting. It was expected that children would attend with the same regularity as was advised for the adult. The Epistle of 1723 instructed as follows:

*“Then be concerned to keep them (children) to a constant, seasonable and orderly frequenting, as well as of week-day as of First-day meetings; instructing them to have their minds staid in the a divine gift; to wait upon the Lord therein, to receive a portion with you of His spiritual favours.”*

These meetings, occurring in addition to the deep spiritual life of the family, resulted in a direct choice in the “good life.” It was through imitation of the parent in so deep a religious exercise, and through the constant practice of the “leadings of the spirit” that the child too became religious, worshipping, listening in silence for the voice of God. Children heard there and saw there at the meeting, the great spirits of the Society, ministering, sharing, living as the “light” had led them. Children learned to worship in silence, waiting upon the Lord, and nurtured in His way.

The third agency in the religious education of the children of the Society was the school. The establishment of schools was the natural result of Friends’ interest in children, and their desire to bring them up in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord.” The epistles and advices, dealing with the education of children, could not have been realized without the organization of schools by the Society.

These early schools conserved and articulated in important ways the five items already referred to—development of full personality; a spirit of positive tolerance; equality of sexes, races and classes; the unity of life; and a constant search after truth. They became in many places and in many ways the outstanding forms of schools. In North Carolina, New Jersey, Indiana, and Pennsylvania the Friends' schools started and set the pattern for the statewide public education. The emphasis on practical training gave a whole new dignity to vocational education in the late Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries. The concern for the education of the poor developed schools for all. The emphasis on the unity of all life dignified the teaching of “whatsoever, things were civil and useful.”

The philosophy of education placed prime importance on the character, morals and qualities of the teacher, rating these things even above technical and professional skills. Further, the children coming to the school from Friends' homes and Meetings were grounded in a deep religious experience, and a desire to approach life in the spirit of “reverent awe,” and in direct fellowship with the will of God to be practiced by them in their trade and personal relations.

#### ***IV. Some Basic Concepts for Religious Education in the Society of Friends***

From our definition of total functional education from our description of religion as “first-hand experiences” and “insights into the will of God,” and the doing of His will; and from the basic virtues, strengths, and philosophy of early Friends education that was religious, what can we say for the

strengthening and redirecting of religious education among the Society of Friends today? What method of religious education can be used that may hold the thousands of young Friends lost to the Society upon their arrival at the later adolescent years?

*First:* Let us point out that it was not the mere fact that earlier Quaker families held family worship, attended the Monthly Meetings for business and worship, and sent their children to the schools maintained by the Society but the important item is that these were not three methods of education for religion. *They were one!* They were not only one, but they were set in a conscious community life that was expectant of that kind of action and thought.

As we've seen, the learning that takes place, whether it be the multiplication table or an experience of honesty, is a specific experience. The child will develop vocabularies, codes of morals, ways of action to fit each group he is with. The strength of the early Quaker educational experiences was that all experience was religious. They presented a united front. The home told the same story, emphasized the same caliber of conduct, the same belief in God that was experienced and talked of in the meeting for worship, and vice versa. The school was only an additional enlargement of that circle. The teacher had been selected because of his belief in and personal expression of the religious way of life desired by and practiced in the Meeting and the family. The subjects taught, the discipline of love in the school, the interpretations of the Truth were again further enlargements of the other experiences. And in addition, the Friends held their heads high in the community. There was no apology for

their “different” ways, their simplicity, their plainness, their veracity. In fact, the early Quaker history in England is a story of that very direct, continuous, and ever-present trustworthiness in all situations that won through the fire of persecution to the trusted places of bankers, manufacturers, educators, and government leaders. The history of Friends on the early frontiers of this country’s development quite often shows the sad opposite. Instead of bringing up the children in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord,” they were brought up in conformity as the community, other sects, social pressures, or popular opinion dictated.

As we face this problem of religious education of the children of Friends in 1943, this we must remember—the home, the Meeting, the school, must present a united front to the child if he is not to be immersed into the confusion of the secular community life that whirls about him. Sometimes it seems a miracle that any children of Quaker families grow up in the faith at all, for they are so torn and tossed about between home, Meeting, school, and community that their religious roots have no chance to be continuous and strong. In thinking of the future of the education of Quaker children for the life of the spirit, it is not enough to think in terms of school, or home, or Meeting, or community. The child is a unit, and must be confronted consistently.

*Second:* It is important for us to recognize again, that the *children who develop strong religious concerns have families who are likewise deeply rooted in the spiritual life.* In the book, *What You Owe Your Child*,<sup>8</sup> there is an entire chapter devoted to the unconscious influence of the parent. The author suggests that what most parents try to pass on to

the child in the way of religion (and which they almost universally fail to accomplish) usually turns out not to be religion, but some of the substitutes for religion about which we talked earlier. Parents pass on theology, or science, or membership, or antiquated concepts of God. “It is plain that we cannot discharge our duty to the next generation by trying to be merely pedagogic machines for passing on certain verbal statements about God.”

In that fascinating biography, *A Small-Town Boy*, Rufus Jones spends much time in the chapter on “A Boy in His Home” telling of the influence the various ancestors, living relatives, parents, and brothers and sister had upon him. With so many “Quaker saints” inhabiting that household, how could a child escape the fresh clear sense of religion in his life? It was a living religion that related itself to other people.

Further, the religion of the parent and the child was the same. Not merely were the religions of both alike, but additional continuity was found in the work, the play, the joys and the sorrows that were shared by the entire household. We’ve watered down our religion so much in trying to make everything of easy comprehension to the child at the moment that we’ve discounted the child’s ability to store away material for future use. He now gets little experience of the adult’s religious life.

Again, the parents had resting upon them an obligation that was direct—”to bring the child up in the fear and knowledge of the Lord.” If there should be an apparent conflict between the parent’s will and God’s will, the child was to follow God’s will. This religious obligation before God gave a

sense of direction to the life of the child. The strength of the early Friends was that they gave a sense of direction to life, and still didn't impair personal individuality. We need to observe in our educational efforts, then, the strength and value of the parent having a religion that is worth passing on to the child, and the necessity for the parent to be under the weight of directing the child to God.

*Third:* We've already hinted at the third item, namely, that *children were definitely biased toward a religion of the spirit*. The young Friend might make a choice of vocation, or wife, or town to live in, but to children brought up according to Friendly ways there was no choice about the world and its spiritual realities.

We have been so cautious about impinging our ideas on children in an attempt to be fair that we've often failed to impress anything on them. For a while, it was the rule in colleges and universities that the best teachers were those who never let the student know what was really thought about the problem. Knowing that children want to put their experiences together in such a way that the world has meaning, it would seem a crime against them to constantly and coldly insist on their arriving at the right decision without the warm hand of those they admire and those they trust.

*Fourth:* We cannot over-emphasize the importance of the fact that *learning takes place from associations with other persons*.

Modern communities, modern transportation, modern organizations mean that we live among a great number of other persons, but they also mean that we have few really first-hand experiences with those people that take place in good learning situations. We live among people, but we never really know them, and they us. Our associations with people are a little like the man at the fair who jumps through the circle of flame. He jumps so fast the fire doesn't touch him. Genuine education only takes place insofar as our lives are intertwined into the lives about us.

It is important that children discover their parents as persons of love and ability. Rufus Jones finished the chapter on his home, already referred to, with the way in which he *discovered* his mother. She was available to him as a person. They had experiences together, work together, play together, worship together, meals together. The child's life had been "entered into" by a more mature person. It is that "entering into" which is lacking today.

*Fifth:* Our modern education for religious living lacks the *marks of a first-hand religion*. We've kept in reverse the whole learning process. We have said that the child is a little, difficult individualist, and the process of educating him is to subdue, to fence in, to close the doors of the mind, until he has few enough scattered odds and ends of furnishings in the mind to make him fit the confines of modern civilization.

More accurately stated, the child is in the beginning completely dependent—dependent for life, for food, for clothing, for actions and words to imitate, upon the adults of his home and community. Real education for the life of the



spirit is the process of sharing with the child all that the adult has experienced, so that the child can push on and out beyond that into a “first-hand experience of God. In speaking of this need for a “religion of their own,” Dean Sperry of Harvard says:<sup>9</sup>

*“Therefore we may not be deceived as to the firsthand religion of our children. It is not something they experience for a few years, outgrow, and abandon in maturity. It is something they may achieve some day, if they have been started right. In any case, our whole effort in dealing with them looks to a religion which they can call their own, not some pale copy of our religion. It is our duty, in trying to waken them to religion, to vindicate their right to such a life.”*

There is the story of Kipling’s Tomlinson, who couldn’t get into either heaven or hell because both his virtues and his vices were second-hand. St. Peter refused him because he brought to the gate only a “borrowed word of neighbor, priest or kin,” and a “God that he got from a printed book.” The devil kicked him out, refusing to crowd his gentlemen “sleeping three on a grid,” because even Tomlinson’s vices were copied from French novels.

We hear lectures about God, we see pictures of the horror of war, we attend banquets for a “sharecropper week,” we read a book about migrants, we listen to Dr. Fosdick preach over the radio, we give to relief funds for China, or ride through the socially and economically eroded South in air-conditioned Pullman cars. We and our children experience in

a second-hand fashion most of what we know, especially if it concerns religion.

*Finally:* Different from the preceding five items, and yet related to them all, is the belief that children were considered the gift of God and *were to be reared in the nurture of the Lord*. Robert Barclay, in his *Catechism and Confession of Faith*, established the basic principles of the parent-child relationship. There were three principles underlying it: a. authority rested with the parents; b. parents and children had responsibilities to one another; and c. children were to obey their parents. The relation was a cooperative enterprise, and both parties were to give and receive.

The early Friends' ideas in regard to the care of children may be reduced to a set of rules for the discipline of children. They can be considered from two standpoints—that of the parent, and that of the child.<sup>10</sup>

*The responsibilities of parents were:*

1. The parents held authority.
2. Parents were to be worthy examples in wisdom, moderation, and plainness in language and habits.
3. Children should be brought into and held in subjection.
4. Children should be trained in the fear and wisdom of God.
5. Parents should deal with their children in kindness, justice and love.
6. The individuality and nature of each child should be considered.

7. Parents should not rule in tyranny or cruelty.
8. Parents should guide against sin.
9. Parents should encourage the good.
10. Parents should not be indulgent with their children.
11. God would help parents in the task of training their children and parents should turn to Him for guidance.

*The responsibilities of children were:*

1. Children should honour and obey their parents.
2. Obedience of God superseded obedience of parents.
3. Final responsibility for right living rested upon the children and not upon the parents.

Friends believed that God had given this parental assignment, but authority from God was tempered with the belief that God would assist them in the daily care for the child if they would but call upon Him. It was important that these parents “were under the direction of God, affecting both the parental conduct and the idea held by the child.” Such experiences must have led the child to believe that God was near and that He was interested in their welfare. Children came from God. It was He who gave them, and they were the result of His power. Children were taught, then, that God was their Father. They were to remember that He had created them, and that He continually preserved them. It is important that we recapture this basic spirit for modern religious education among Friends.

Basic concepts to Quaker religious education in all their importance must be woven into our thinking, and qualify our procedures. The six points that we’ve just considered can do

much to strengthen the “life of the spirit” among us and within each new generation We must unify our life in the Quaker home, Meeting, school, and strong in the “spirit of God” within each family; we must definitely bias the growth of children to the will of God; we must remember and practice a philosophy of education in which children learn from their adult associations; we must lead children into a “first-hand religious” experience; and we must recognize that children are the “gift of God,” to be reared in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Otherwise our religious life and that of our children becomes an earthly process, and religious education a form to be mechanically followed.

*“And therefore, train up all your children in the nurture and fear of the Lord, that both you and they may all serve God in His spirit, in your creation and generation; for children are the heritage of the Lord, and ought to be trained up in His fear, and serve and worship Him in spirit and in truth; for it is the Lord that gave the increase of them all.”<sup>1</sup>*

## Notes

1. Fox, George, *Works*, Volume 6, page 209.
2. Weigle, Dr. Luther A., Dean, Yale Divinity School.
3. Educational Policies Commission, *The Purpose of Education in American Democracy*.
4. Hartshorne, Hugh, *Character in Human Relations*.
5. Homan, Walter J., *Children and Quakerism*.
6. Fox, George, *Works*, Volume 6, page 201.
7. *Epistle* from the Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in London, 1688.
8. Sperry, Willard L.
9. *ibid.*
10. Homan, Walter J., *Children and Quakerism*.

## References

The following books are very helpful in understanding the educational and religious educational tasks before the Society of Friends. Each person concerned will find it possible to augment this list with many, many other books.

Homan, Walter J., *Children and Quakerism, A Study of the Place of Children in the Theory and Practice of the Society of Friends, Commonly Called Quakers.* 1939.

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Jones, Rufus M., *A Small Town Boy.* 1941.

Jones, Rufus M., "Education for Human Brotherhood." *World Unity Magazine*, Reprint No. 10. March, 1931.

Brinton, Howard H., *Quaker Education in Theory and Practice.* 1940.

Comly, John, *Journal of the Life and Religious Labours of John Comly.* 1853.

## About the Lectures

The William Penn Lectures started as a ministry of the Young Friends' Movement of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. In the beginning of the last century, "Young Friends" was the community of young adults from both the Hicksite and the Orthodox Philadelphia Yearly Meetings, which reunited in 1955. The Young Friends Movement began the lecture series "for the purpose of closer fellowship; for the strengthening by such association and the interchange of experience, of loyalty to the ideals of the Society of Friends; and for the preparation by such common ideals for more effective work through the Society of Friends for the growth of the Kingdom of God on Earth." The name of William Penn was chosen because the Young Friends Movement found Penn to be "a Great Adventurer, who in fellowship with his friends started in his youth on the holy experiment of endeavoring 'To live out the laws of Christ in every thought, and word, and deed; and that these might become the laws and habits of the State.'"

The first run of William Penn Lectures were given between 1916 and 1966, and are warmly remembered by Friends who attended them as occasions to look forward to for fellowship with our community, inspiration, and a challenge to live into our faith. The lectures were published by the Book Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has granted Pendle Hill and Quaker Heron Press permission to reproduce the lectures as free ebooks.

Although it was [announced](#) in 1960 that the series would be discontinued several lectures were published in the early '60s. It appears that the lectures given between 1923 and 1931 were never published. If we come upon manuscripts of these lectures, we hope to publish them in future.

In 2010, the Young Adult Friends of PYM revived the series, officially launching the second run of the William Penn Lectures in 2011. [The series was renamed](#) the *Seeking Faithfulness* series in 2016, as part of the Young Adult Friends of PYM's concern for dismantling racism within the yearly meeting and the wider society. It no longer felt rightly ordered to have a major event named after a slaveholder. The [Seeking Faithfulness](#) series is hosted by the Young Adult Friends for the benefit of the whole yearly meeting community, and invites a Friend to challenge us all to explore new ways to practice our Quaker faith. The Seeking Faithfulness series seeks to nourish our spiritual lives and call us to faithful witness in our communities and throughout the world.