

consequence the Daughter of St Catherine feels completely at home in the world and fits in with her family, professional and social milieu. The vows she takes will consecrate her to God as a laywoman and not as a religious. Her visits to the convent, whether of long or short duration, are in no wise to withdraw her from her secular status, but to prepare her to live her life as a laywoman in a more fully Christian way. The D.S.C.S. have a considerable share in the government of the Group, the vicariates depend entirely on the Sisters who compose them—thus a D.S.C.S. is expected to use her initiative. The contact with the Congregation in no way detracts from the Group's secular nature but merely serves as a guarantee of its Christian and Dominican character.

The Group, which began its existence in 1947, has centres in France and in French Canada. It has received episcopal approbation with the rank of 'pious union' for the dioceses of Paris and Evreux in France and for the diocese of Saint Jean (Province of Quebec) in Canada. Anyone desirous of further information should write to:

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POINT OF VIEW

QUAKER SILENCE

'Not by strength of argument or by a particular disquisition of each doctrine and convincement of my understanding thereby cause I to receive and bear witness of the Truth, but by being secretly reached by the Life. For, when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart; and as I gave way unto it I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up, and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life, whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed; . . .'

Thus spoke Robert Barclay, the Quaker, in his *Apology* in the year 1676.

Perhaps the great contribution of the Quakers is their understanding and use of silence rather than their widespread social service. This silence, this 'waiting upon God' in the 'silent assemblies of God's people' is the mainspring of all Quaker action. Their firm faith in the 'indwelling of the Holy Spirit' in every man, or 'the Inner Light' and 'the Light of Christ', to use other names, has led them to seek him within themselves. For them silence is not an end in itself, something to be sought for its own sake, but only a means to an end, and as Robert Barclay testified in the quotation above, when he went to a Quaker Meeting for Worship: 'I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart'. How much do we value silence today? To so many of us it is only the absence of noise, something entirely negative, and so used are we to noise that we cannot bear silence or to be silent any more, so we turn on the radio while we are working, eating—yes, and even while we are talking! Is it any wonder that we become nervous, neurotic, and aspirin-addicts, when our souls atrophy for want of that healing power that comes with silence, and our bodies, quite unable to be still, must needs take sedatives to stave off nervous exhaustion?

But to the Quaker, and those Catholics who turn to the indwelling Holy Spirit, silence is not negative but a means of realising the power of the Holy Spirit, a means of communion with Christ. 'It is silence which prepares saints; it is silence which begins, continues and perfects the life of sanctity', wrote a Carmelite nun, Sister Aimée of Jesus; and St John of the Cross: 'That which we most need in order to make progress, is to be silent before the great God, with the desire and with the tongue, for the language which he best hears is the silent language of love'. One wonders whether most of us have not lost this 'silent language', even if we ever knew it? Sometimes it would almost seem that the Quakers of today, known and respected by so many people all over the world for their self-sacrificing actions, are yet called to that higher vocation of bearing witness to the power of the Holy Spirit through silence. People hungering for

God, lost and bewildered in the noise and hurry of city life, knowing nothing of any church, may find their way, as Robert Barclay did, into the silent assemblies of God's people, meeting for worship. The very silence alone, that precious gift, may heal.

It is very easy for Catholics to be content only with fulfilling their religious duties and to see nothing more in the outward forms of religion than a set of actions to be performed. Quite apart from the truths expressed to which we give notional assent, if we do not see them with that inner eye a whole world is lost to us.

The Quaker too can make of silence an empty and barren thing—a means of *self* assertion, and when that happens the very form the meeting takes, the sitting down in silence, the waiting for ten to twenty minutes, and then the expectation that So-and-So, a respected 'Elder', will speak first (he always does!) can become an end in itself: and the Spirit 'which bloweth where it listeth' does not blow in that direction.

In THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT there has been some interesting correspondence on the contemplative life in the world. That such a life in the world is *difficult* no one will deny, but it may be that some are called to be an oblation in this way for others, and the sacrifice of that silence which they long for can be a real crucifixion for the spirit. Outside the Church the Quaker comes nearest to those lay contemplatives, and his emphasis on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (at the expense of other doctrines we know) enables him often to preserve an inner silence and thus reach many that the Catholic as such is unable to do.

Quakerism, and the Quaker Silence that is integral to it, grew up in a world where only the outward forms of a denuded liturgy held sway: the Spirit was lacking. George Fox, in his search for Truth, found the Spirit within himself, and in corporate silence others found it too, and against bitter enmity, persecution, imprisonment, and even martyrdom, they witnessed to its power. Perhaps those lay contemplatives in the Catholic Church who have the full truth of the Christian revelation in their teaching may yet be thankful for the testimony of the early Quakers. E.B.