

FRIENDS CONSULTATION ON TESTIMONIES, QUERIES AND ADVICES

Quaker Hill Conference Center
Richmond, Indiana

December 8-11, 1988

Sponsored by
Earlham School of Religion
and
Quaker Hill Conference Center

PREFACE

This booklet is a report of the findings of the ninth Consultation of Friends held at Quaker Hill Conference Center December 8-11, 1988. This year 52 Friends came from 24 yearly meetings representing 25 states, Canada and Great Britain to consider the "Testimonies, Queries and Advices of Friends." These Consultations are jointly sponsored annually by Earlham School of Religion and Quaker Hill Conference Center.

The purpose of the Consultations is to bring together a broad spectrum of Friends in faith, practice and geography, and to consider a topic of importance to all Friends everywhere. The more than 350 Friends who have attended the past nine Consultations have found them very rewarding. They not only deal with an issue of current importance to Friends, but they help us to get to know one another at a deeper level than is ordinarily a part of our Quaker experience.

We want especially to thank the Chace Fund, the Shoemaker Fund and the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Bequest Fund for three grants of money in support of the travel pool which makes it possible to bring friends from yearly meetings throughout North America. Part of the success of the Consultations is due to the travel assistance received from these Quaker trust funds.

The Table of Contents lists the main presentations given, the summary findings of the small groups, the role plays presented by volunteers, the final report of the Participant Observers, and a list of participants and the daily schedule.

Although Friends talk a great deal about the Testimonies, they often overlook or know little about the way they have been embodied in the Queries and Advices of Friends. The task this year was to try to understand this larger context of the Testimonies, and to explore what new Queries and Advices should claim our attention for the time in which we live.

We believe that in a very unexpected way the Spirit of God has been at work in the Consultations held over the past nine years. We look forward to our Tenth Anniversary year in 1989 when all previous attenders will be invited back to explore together a topic of significance to all of us -- QUAKER WORSHIP IN NORTH AMERICA. Normally we do not have repeats at the Consultations, but next year is set aside for those who have been enriched by these Consultations and who wish to experience a "homecoming" of all those who have been a part of this experience in the past ten years. Next year's dates will be December 7-10, 1989. Between Earlham College and Quaker Hill Conference Center we hope to accommodate all who wish to come back for another Consultation experience.

Consultation booklets from the past are still available except for the first one on Quaker Service, which is out of print. Note below the cost and how to order them.

For the Consultation Committee,

Wilmer A. Cooper, Coordinator
of the Consultation

Eldon Harzman, Director of
Quaker Hill Conference Center

Please note: Additional copies of this booklet and previous Consultation booklets are available at \$6.00 each from the Quaker Hill Conference Center, 10 Quaker Hill Drive, Richmond, IN, 47374.

Friends Consultation --

1980, On Service	(Out of Print)
1981, On Ministry	\$6.00
1982, On Eldering	\$6.00
1983, On Membership	\$6.00
1984, On Spiritual Authority and Accountability	\$6.00
1985, On Discernment	\$6.00
1986, On Doing The Truth	\$6.00
1987, On Overcoming Sin and Evil	\$6.00
1988, On Testimonies, Queries and Advices	\$6.00

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PROSPECTUS

FRIENDS CONSULTATION ON TESTIMONIES, QUERIES AND ADVICES

It has been suggested that the Testimonies, Queries and Advices of Friends are the Quaker equivalent to the creeds and articles of faith of the other Christian churches. The Testimonies developed early in the Society of Friends and eventually became embodied in the Advices and Queries. This practice coincided with the development of the various Books of Discipline for Friends, often referred to today as Books of Faith and Practice.

The word "testimony" is a very appropriate word for Friends. A testimony grows out of an inner religious experience. It bears witness outwardly to an inward leading of the Spirit of God, often referred to as the Light of Christ Within. But a testimony is not fulfilled until it becomes an outward expression of daily living and witness. The Inward Light is one side of the coin, while the other side is the faithful translation of it into the fruits of the Spirit in daily living, both in personal behavior and in the corporate life of the group.

Today we tend to think of the social testimonies of Friends, such as peace, simplicity, equality, integrity and community. But we need to realize that these testimonies have a religious origin for Friends. They are the outward sacramental expression of an inward life of spiritual commitment. For Friends it is the life of the Spirit that must feed, sustain and nurture our social testimonies. Hence we need first to consider our religious testimonies, such as our experience of a direct and immediate relationship with God; our belief in the continuing revelation of God's truth; our belief that there must be a correspondence between the way we live outwardly and our inward discernment of God's will; our belief that we are members one of another in "the body of Christ"; and our belief that the Gospel is good news to be shared with a world that is dying for a message of hope.

At this Consultation we will look at the Testimonies, Queries and Advices in terms of their historical development. We will note how they have changed over the years as old ones have become obsolete and new ones have been added. We will search together for the living testimonies of Friends today that can help us become more accountable to God and to one another as Friends.

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Richmond, Indiana

December 8-11, 1988

Clerk: Lorton Heusel
Western Yearly Meeting

Thursday, December 8

5:00 p.m.	Arrive and get settled
6:00	Dinner
7:00	Introductions and background of Consultation
7:30	<u>FRIENDS TESTIMONIES, QUERIES AND ADVICES</u> <u>IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE</u> T. Canby Jones, Wilmington Yearly Meeting
8:30	Response and plenary discussion
9:15	Break
9:30	Worship Epilogue - Stephanie Crumley-Effinger Indiana Yearly Meeting

Friday, December 9

7:30 a.m.	Breakfast
8:30	Worship - unprogrammed
9:15	Small Groups meet to get acquainted
10:15	Break
10:30	<u>FRIENDS TESTIMONIES, QUERIES AND ADVICES</u> <u>IN REVISING QUAKER FAITH AND PRACTICE</u> Herbert Lape, New York Yearly Meeting
11:30	Response and plenary discussion
12:15	Break
12:30 p.m.	Lunch Free time
3:30	<u>FRIENDS TESTIMONIES, QUERIES AND ADVICES</u> <u>IN RECENT EXPERIENCE OF LONDON YEARLY MEETING</u> Helen Rowlands, London Yearly Meeting
4:30	Responses and plenary discussion
5:15	Break
6:00	Dinner
7:30	Small Groups meet with assigned tasks
9:00	Hymn Sing
9:30	Worship Epilogue - John Nicholson Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Saturday, December 10

7:30 a.m.	Breakfast
8:30	Worship - unprogrammed
9:15	Small Groups continue with assigned tasks
10:15	Break
10:30	<u>ROLE PLAYS ON TESTIMONIES, QUERIES AND ADVICES</u> Nancy Brewster, Indiana Yearly Meeting Plenary discussion to follow
12:30 p.m.	Lunch Free Time (Tour of Earlham and Richmond for those interested)
3:30	Small Groups continue with assigned tasks
5:00	Free Time
6:00	Dinner
7:30	Reports from Small Groups in Plenary Session
9:00	Hymn Sing
9:30	Worship Epilogue - Don Tickle North Carolina Yearly Meeting

Sunday, December 11

8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00	<u>SUMMARY REPORT BY PARTICIPANT/OBSERVERS</u> Barb Platt, Baltimore Yearly Meeting Phil King, Iowa Yearly Meeting
10:00	Consultation Evaluation and Guidance for Future Consultations
10:45	Break
11:00	Closing Worship
12:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00	Departure

FRIENDS CONSULTATION
ON TESTIMONIES, QUERIES AND ADVICES

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TESTIMONIES, QUERIES AND ADVICES
IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE
T. Canby Jones

I. Definitions and Comments

In preparing this paper I have struggled to understand what the terms, "Testimonies," "Queries" and "Advices" mean as they are used by Friends. Here are some attempts at definitions:

A Testimony is a standard of faith, ethical behavior or Gospel Order which a group of people covenants together to observe. (On the advice of my small group at the Consultation, "faith" was added to the definition.)

A Query is a sharply focused question designed to challenge persons or a group to live up to a corporately adopted standard of faith and behavior.

Again, what is the meaning of an Advice?

An Advice is friendly counsel from the group on what it means to live and abide by a commonly accepted Testimony.

Do you have further thoughts or suggestions to improve these definitions?

As I sought to discover the distinctive Quaker meaning of "Testimony," I considered other meanings of the term. Its roots in Latin are Testor, testatus: which means to make known, shown, prove or demonstrate. Or the Latin noun, testimonium, which means witness, evidence, attestation or testimony. A lawyer friend of mine says that "testimony" in the proceedings of a law court simply denotes "a telling." Such telling can either be true or false.

A number of us have been to Wednesday evening prayer or testimony meetings. Testimonies there normally consist of sharing with the gathered group accounts of inspiring encounters with the presence of God in our lives.

With a sense of wonder I remember attending a meeting of "no-Church Christians" in Spokane, Washington. Shared "Testimonies" there meant telling the group what Scripture passage had brought you the most comfort and strength during your personal Bible reading during the past week.

Each of these "other definitions" of Testimony are examples of individual persons telling of important events in their lives. By contrast Quaker Testimonies are corporate convictions, concerns which we are committed to put into action as a community of faith.

Years ago as a student at Yale Divinity School I made a study of the Creeds and Confessions of the Church. As a young Friend I had been brought up to oppose creedalism. As I studied those faith confessions of the early Church I realized the life-threatening crisis in the experience of early Christians out of which those faith statements were born. I freely testify that my heart sang in affirmation of virtually all of those creedal faith statements. Best of all was the definition of a creed which I learned at that time. That definition affirms that a creed is "a Testimony of what we commonly believe." When I heard that my Quaker "heart did leap for joy." As group witness born out of a crucible of faithfulness and long suffering, Quaker Testimonies are made of the same stuff.

Another characteristic of Friends Testimonies is their "faith-into-action" quality. We are a people committed to doing the Truth, carrying out our concerns, practicing what we preach, letting our lives speak. We take very seriously Jesus' words, "By their fruits shall ye know them." A life lived in unity in the Light of Christ with others will want to walk both in the way Jesus walked and also in the paths of Gospel Order, righteousness and moral conduct into which he leads the group. In the next section of this paper I will discuss some of the Testimonies and the influence George Fox had on their adoption by the Society of Friends. But first some reflections on those quaint but poignant and effective questions Quakers call Queries.

As a teenager in quarterly or monthly meetings hearing Queries read, and even worse, hearing answers to Queries read, seemed to me depressing, irrelevant or both. However, as I studied other Christian traditions, I learned that these pointed questions, challenging us to live up to the group standards of faith and practice which we profess, were unique to Friends. Instead of commandments, canon laws, regulations or imposed norms Queries allow the addressed individual or group to interpret or respond to their challenges in any way the Spirit may lead.

Just as I have come to love The Ten Commandments of Yahweh, our God, as personal counsels of his love covenant, I have come to love the Queries as a prayerful and penetrating method of bringing us back to holy obedience, Gospel Order and faithful loving-kindness in all our actions.

I am convinced that Friends and other Christians have set out on a path to the recovery of group discipline and of individual responsibility to the community of faith and its standards of righteousness. Queries on many and various issues are springing up all over. Later in this discussion I will mention the inspiration my local meeting has experienced by our

renewed use of the Queries and the four new ones on a specific concern that we have promulgated.

Concerning "The Advices" I feel a little awkward and hesitant. I have read, studied and experienced inward growth from the London Yearly Meeting Advices last revised in 1964. I find them much less disturbing and considerably more comforting than the Queries. As we shall see, Queries came first in Quaker practice. Advices were added later as positive suggestions on how to live out the Testimonies and how to respond with hope and confidence to those tough Queries. It would give me joy to witness the revival of the use of the Advices or their rebirth in a new form.

One Quaker practice which survives to this day from earlier times of public reading of and written answers to the Advices and Queries is our annual preparation of State of Society reports to be presented at quarterly and yearly meeting sessions. Having written a number of these for my own local meeting, I find these State of Society reports a very important evaluation of the faithfulness, spiritual condition and progress of the meeting. When a meeting has a great year, it is a blessing to write such a report. I hope we will include consideration of this practice in our Consultation this weekend.

II. How Much Did George Fox Influence the Adoption and Content of our Testimonies?

As some of you are aware I am finishing for publication by Friends United Press in April, 1989, a new complete edition of the pastoral letters of George Fox entitled, The Power of the Lord is Over All. About one third of those 410 letters are letters of ethical exhortation, admonition and advice. All but a handful of the total number were general epistles addressed to large bodies of Friends in various locations or regions and some were addressed to Friends everywhere. Friends would gather from miles around to hear read aloud the epistle from their earthly founder and prophet, George Fox. The comfort and inspiration garnered from most of the letters must have been tremendous. But hearing some of his letters dressing them down for their ethical sins and shortcomings must have been "like a hammer and fire breaking the rock in pieces."

Before sharing some passages from Fox's letters which may have influenced the adoption of Friends Testimonies, let me first connect them with their life-giving source, Christ the Light of the World. In a previously unpublished letter with that title written by Fox in 1654, Fox expressed the place of Christ in our obedience:

Christ is the Light of the World and lighteneth every man that cometh into the world... This Light is within you. If you stand still in it... Power will be given you from (Jesus) to forsake your evil ways...

This Light will open the Scriptures unto you...(and) will show you all Righteousness and unrighteousness... In that Light wait, which comes from the Second Adam, Christ Jesus, that with it you may see your Savior... This Light will clothe you, if you love it and obey it... It will lead you out of darkness, out of your evil deeds into the Light of Life, into the Way of Peace and into the Life and Power of Truth.

In the definition of Testimony used at the beginning of this paper we found the term "Gospel Order" included in the definition. What did that term mean to George Fox and what does it mean to us? I think it means the immediate and direct rule of Christ in the hearts and lives of his faithful community. The experience of Christ's bringing order and harmony into his gathered church is a root out of which grows our ability to love enemies and show faithful loving-kindness to all persons in need.

One of the breaches of Gospel Order within the community of faith which Fox treats most compassionately is that of correcting offenders. In Letter 264 (1669) Fox interprets and applies Jesus' counsel in Matthew 18:15-18 on how to reconcile the offending brother or sister. You will remember that Jesus advised us to seek the reconciliation privately. If that didn't work we should take one or two others with us to counsel with the offender. If that failed we should bring the person before the whole community. If the offender is still obdurate, Jesus says, "Let him be to you as a Gentile or tax collector." Here are some parts of Fox's compassionate interpretation of Matthew 18:15-18:

They shall not less than twice admonish their brother or sister before they tell the church...(and) let not final judgment go forth against him or her, till everyone of the Meeting have cleared his or her conscience...that if possible the party may be reached and saved.

Fox continues:

Go not in a rough, light or upbraiding spirit to reprove or admonish him or her, but in the Power of the Lord, Spirit of the Lamb, in the Wisdom and Love of Truth, which suffers thereby... So, may the soul of such a brother or sister be seasonably and effectively reached...

And be it known to all, we cast out none from among us. For if they go from the Light, Spirit and Power in which our Unity is, they cast out themselves.

Another important matter of Gospel Order for Fox was marriage. Early Friends fiercely opposed marriage of Friends outside of the meeting in the world by a hireling priest of an apostate church. Since marriages under the care and supervision of Quaker Meetings were against English law, much care had to be

exercised by Friends to be certain that such unions were truly guided by God. Fox in Letter 67 (1654) counsels:

(Those) whom God joins together are with the Light in the Unity, in the Covenant of Life and Peace. This marriage is honorable and this bed is not defiled (and) leads (away) from all works of darkness.

Fox continues in the same vein in Letter 264 (1669):

For it is not the bishop's nor priest's work to marry people... For we marry none, it is the Lord's work and we are but witnesses... This is the marriage which Christ owns, sets up and encourages.

It is impressive how closely traditional Friends marriage procedure follows Fox's suggestions in these and other of his letters.

But in Letter 190 (1659) Fox becomes fierce in his condemnation of Friends who marry outside of Friends. Such Friends, according to George, are guilty of being "unequally yoked with unbelievers." (2 Cor. 6:14) They have broken the Deuteronomic prohibition, "Thou shalt not give thy sons nor thy daughters in marriage with the heathen." (Deut. 7:3) Fox then refers to that strange incident in Genesis chapter six in which "sons of God" come down to earth and seeing that "the daughters of men were fair; they took to wife such of them as they chose." (v. 2). Fox believes not only that these marriages were illicit, but also that the overwhelming wickedness which grew up in the hearts of people was the result of these marriages. That wickedness, in turn, led to God's determination to destroy the earth by flood as punishment. In other words, bad marriages lead to overwhelming evil and punishment. Fox ends his condemnation of such marriages by saying, "Does not the world call (those) bastard and hypocrite Quakers...that go to the world for a wife?"

Think of the shock, shame and consternation those guilty of such marriages must have felt when they heard Fox's words. I had supposed that disownment of Friends for marrying out was not very common until 1760. But no, it had started with Fox's fierce admonition one hundred years earlier.

One of our most important Testimonies is the Peace Testimony of Friends. George Fox does not deal with this concern at length or in detail in his 410 published letters. Nevertheless, he clearly calls us in his letters to love enemies, to throw away our earthly weapons and to rely instead in our fight for Truth solely on weapons of the Spirit. In Letter 9 (1652) Fox calls us to be peacemakers and to:

calm the peacebreaker in the Power of God because the Lamb had and has the kings of the earth to war withal and to fight... (He) will overcome with the Sword of

the Spirit, the word of his mouth, for the Lamb shall have the Victory...

Elsewhere in Letter 177 (1659), Fox calls us "to stand in that which takes away the occasion of wars, in the Power which saves men's lives and destroys none." He encourages us to give earthly rulers "their tribute. But to bear and carry carnal weapons to fight with, men of Peace (they) cannot." In Letter 242 (1665) Fox again reminds us that "The saints' weapons are spiritual...that the blessing of the Lord may come upon all men."

Granted that the Friends Peace Testimony did not solidify into a universal witness of all Friends until 1660 there is no mistaking the fact that George Fox always held fast to it. Also I think none of us can doubt the great influence his faithfulness to it had on its universal adoption by Friends.

Until my research for this paper I had supposed that the Friends Testimony against paying mandatory tithes as taxes to support the established church and its priesthood became much less onerous after the Toleration Act of 1689. But in Britain Friends suffered distraint of money, goods and possessions well into the 1830's for refusal to pay those church taxes. Fox's Letter 29 (1653) makes this prohibition quite clear:

The ministers of the world...sue you at law and hale you before magistrates for tithes and maintenance, when they do you no work nor have you hired them... But praised be the Lord God...to such we cannot give tithes nor hire...for it is contrary to Scripture, Christ's doctrine and to that of God in our consciences.

Fox adds to this counsel in Letter 73 (1654): "And so, if the spoilers take your goods, let them go and let them take your cloak also...that over them all you may stand."

The Quaker Testimony of the fixed and fair price and strict honesty in trade and merchandizing is another about which Fox had much to share. He addressed Letter 200 (1661) to all merchants, shop-keepers, husbandmen, tradesmen and traffickers-by-sea and exhorted them to:

do rightly, justly, truly holily, (and act) equally to all people in all things... Then you are a terror and a dread to the unjust. Wrong no man, over-reach no man, if it never be so much to your advantage... Loathe deceit...hard-heartedness, wronging, cozening, cheating or unjust dealing. But live and reign in the righteous Life and Power of God...doing the Truth to all, without respect to persons, high or low whatsoever, young or old, rich or poor.

If you had been a Quaker shipowner or merchant, think how impressed you would have been by this letter of George Fox. It

was a call to group honesty and righteousness no matter what. Would that we had such a standard in the business world today!

Fox was also very strong in his call for temperance in the sale and consumption of beer, wine and strong liquor. In his Letter 381 (1682), which I have titled, "A Warning to all Vintners, Innkeepers and Proprietors of Strong-water Shops," Fox warns that serving liquor to people till they be drunk destroys them as God's creatures and also destroys their health and estates. Fox goes on to warn:

Though you think...the more they drink, the more gain...and profit you get; ah, poor sellers! Do not you think, that God with his all seeing eye does behold you and your actions? And cannot the Lord soon bring a blasting upon all your undertakings and such ungodly profits?

Fox's letter is a great temperance tract and must have carried great weight.

I am convinced that these examples from Fox's letters show that he had great influence on the shaping, adoption and faithfulness of Friends to these Testimonies. What do you think? Do you agree?

III. The Historical Development of Testimonies, Queries and Advices

As suggested above it is quite clear that George Fox himself and many other early Friends lived in the Life and Power which takes away the occasion of wars and supported the Peace Testimony from the beginning. But consistent faithfulness to that Testimony by the whole body of Friends was a fruit of the collapse of The Commonwealth in 1659, of new persecutions experienced by Friends under the newly restored king, Charles II, and of the Declaration of 1660 by George Fox and other Friends which declared on behalf of Friends that "We do utterly deny all outward wars and fightings, whether for the kingdoms of this world or for the kingdom of Christ, and this is our testimony to the whole world." In other words the Peace Testimony had now become a behavioral norm required of all Friends.

It is also apparent that George Fox and the early Friends had no clear witness against human slavery. The first protest against slavery by a Quaker group was made by Friends in Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1688. Seventy years of sensitizing Quaker consciences plus the powerful witness of Anthony Benezet, John Woolman, Benjamin Lundy and others were needed before Friends as a body condemned both slavery and the slave trade and required individual Friends and meetings to answer Queries to show that they were free of such practices.

Another Testimony which has survived with much altered significance into the twentieth century is that of plainness of speech and simplicity of life and dress. I feel sure that when persons like Thomas Elwood, Isaac and Mary Penington and others gave up their "gentlemanly" dress and courtesies and adopted "thou" and "thee" in speech when addressing a single person, their actions were revolutionary. By so doing they had donned the uniform, speech and social egalitarianism of warriors in the Lamb's War. They were out to convert and transform Christendom and the rest of the earth into a verisimilitude of the Kingdom of our God and of his Christ!

But with the Toleration Act of 1689 and Friends' loss of missionary zeal which set in thereafter, plain dress turned into a uniform and plain speech into a distinctive practice of a still socially effective but increasingly withdrawn and harmless sect. It survives among us today as the Testimony of Simplicity which is much less visible and much more difficult to define. Do you think we still practice simplicity? It is believed to be one of our major Testimonies. What can we do to make it effective?

Rufus Jones in his Later Periods of Quakerism (Vol. I p. 135) has a helpful comment on the development and change over the years which we have witnessed in our Testimonies, Queries and Advices. He says:

When a new moral issue arose and made its appeal to the minds of Friends, a few of the leaders would at first feel the "concern" to take the right action in reference to it. Then gradually the "concern" would spread and grow until a respectable nucleus of the membership was committed to it. The next stage of procedure was to formulate a Query dealing with the principle or practice in question. The result is that the growth of the Queries gives a pretty clear revelation of the development of the moral problems of the Society.

This brings us to the story of the development of Queries and Advices in Quaker use. This story begins in 1682 when London Yearly Meeting asked Friends to reply orally to these three questions:

What friends in the Ministry, in their respective countries, departed this life since last Yearly Meeting?

What friends imprisoned for their Testimony have died in prison since last Yearly Meeting?

How (has) the Truth prospered among them since the last Yearly Meeting and how friends are in peace and unity(?) (found in London Yearly Meeting, Church Government, 1968. Ch. 16 Section 701).

The purpose of these questions was to inform yearly meeting of the facts in all regions of Quakerdom on the three subjects mentioned. In 1694 the three questions grew to six. By 1706 written replies to the questions rather than oral were asked for. In 1723 the questions came to be called Queries and have been ever since.

But, as suggested in connection with the shift in meaning of plain speech and dress after the Toleration Act of 1689, a shift in the purpose and use of Queries occurred at the same time. Hugh Doncaster clearly explains this change in his book, Quaker Organization and Business Meetings, (London, Friends Home Service Committee, 1958, page 21). He says:

The Toleration Act of 1689...was a great step forward and prosperity and respectability became dangerous possibilities for Friends. At the same time the first vision of a universal mission was replaced by an attempt to perfect a "peculiar people" unspotted by the world and guarded from its corrupting ways... And so the Discipline, intended as the corporate aid to Christian discipleship given by the group to the individual, came to be a...legalistic set of prohibitions fostering outward uniformity but not always deepening spiritual conviction... Against this same background can be seen the major developments in the organizational life of Friends of this period: the appointment of elders and overseers, the creation of The Book of Discipline, the development of the Queries and the definition of membership.

Thus the Queries had now come to be used as tests of consistency of conduct and behavior and to elicit information on the State of Society.

By 1760 spiritual life had ebbed and numbers had declined. Samuel Fothergill and a group of other concerned men Friends became a meeting visitation committee "for the promotion and revival of wholesome discipline" among Friends. They felt that the life and power of the early Quaker movement could be recovered by strict observance of and faithfulness to Friends traditions and practices. This group therefore convinced London Yearly Meeting to insist on the widespread and systematic reading and answering of the Queries by all bodies of Friends as a principal instrument of that spiritual renewal. After 1760, therefore, the principal purpose of the Queries was disciplinary.

It was in 1791 that the first "General Advices" were issued and adopted by London Yearly Meeting for use in monthly and quarterly meetings. The Advices were short counsels and positive suggestions for the improvement of the life, conduct and witness of Friends. They were conceived of as supplementary and subsidiary to the Queries and as an additional help in promoting discipline.

By 1833 both in Great Britain and North America, Friends had come under the strong influence of the Evangelical Revival movement and as a consequence radically revised the Advices. These precepts now stressed not discipline so much as the adoption of evangelical faith and its principles.

However, beginning in 1787 the Queries had begun to be used increasingly for devotional and prayerful self-examination by individual Friends. This change in purpose and usage resulted in a complete revision of the Queries in 1860 and again in 1875. (See Church Government, op.cit. section 701).

By 1783 London Yearly Meeting's handwritten Book of Discipline called, Book of Extracts, was printed and made available to monthly meetings and individuals. First the Queries and later the Advices were included in The Book of Extracts and by 1834 its revised and enlarged edition was called, Rules of Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends. (Doncaster, op.cit. pp. 33-34).

After the Queries came to be used primarily for personal and group prayerful self-examination and evaluation, the requirement for preparing written answers to them was gradually dropped. During the nineteenth century additions were made to the Advices and they came to be read at the close of meeting for worship.

No revisions in London Yearly Meeting's Advices and Queries were then made until 1928. Less use of evangelical language and more stress on social concerns characterized this 1928 revision.

By this time much more stress was placed on the devotional use of the Queries. They were now regarded as "a collection of exhortations on the right management of one's affairs both inward and outward, and a collection of questions...in pondering which a whole Meeting can achieve a corporate examination of conscience." (Church Government, loc.cit.).

In response to London Yearly Meeting's decision in 1924 to drop the practice of recording Friends in Ministry a great concern arose to encourage all Friends to consider their own individual calls to ministry. To this end the traditional Advices on Ministry, adopted in 1702 and revised in 1775 were commended to the use of all Friends and were revised with additions in 1949.

The current twenty-three Queries and four groups of Advices were revised and adopted in 1964 and are now found in London Yearly Meeting's book, Church Government, published in 1968. The introductory statement about them concludes, in part, with these words:

Although the corporate use of the advices and queries is governed by more flexible regulations than in the past, it is believed they will continue to be a challenge and an inspiration to Friends in their

personal lives and in their life as a Christian community. (ibid.)

Let us meditate for a few moments on the first five Queries in London Yearly Meeting's Church Government. I find them succinct and very moving:

1. Do you cherish that of God within you, that his love and power may grow in you and rule in your life?
2. Do you seek to follow Jesus, who shows us the Father, and is himself the Way?
3. Is your religion rooted in personal experience of God? How does it find expression in your life?
4. Do you 'walk in love as Christ has loved us'? Do you cherish the spirit of understanding and forgiveness to which he calls us?
5. As disciples of Jesus, what do you do to awaken in men a realization of God's kingdom? Are you, in your daily lives, obedient to his call wherever it may lead you? Do you maintain a steadfast loyalty to him as the head of the church? (op.cit. Section 703).

Here also for our worshipful consideration is the first Advice in Part II of the same book:

In worship, we enter with reverence into communion with God, surrendering our whole being to him and to his purpose. Worship becomes sacramental as we receive the spirit of the living Christ in our midst, and offer ourselves to his service. Come with heart and mind prepared. Pray silently as you gather together that you may all be drawn into the spirit of adoration and communion in which fellowship with one another becomes real. Yield yourselves and all your outward concerns to God's guidance, that you may find the evil weakening in you and the good raised up (op.cit. Section 702 Part II).

Aren't Advices and Queries like these a wonderful and moving tradition? Why have we neglected them so?

IV. Thoughts on the Most Recent List of Testimonies from Friends United Meeting

We have noted that new crises in the life and faith of Friends call for new Queries and Testimonies, if we act in response to the leading of the Light and voice of the Lord amongst us.

In 1988 Friends United Meeting was faced with deciding whether to accept a homosexual applicant into its Quaker Volunteer Witness program. It felt no clearness to act since there was no precedent, previous decision or Testimony to guide the decision. I think the Friends United Meeting General Board Minute of October 24, 1988, in which they reached a decision serves as a striking example of reaffirming traditional Friends Testimonies and yet breaking new ground to extend acceptance and just treatment to homosexuals. The decision also may serve as a possible first step toward a badly needed Friends Testimony on sexual behavior and morality.

In the first part of its minute the Friends United Meeting General Board affirms the civil rights and full humanity of all persons without regard to sexual orientation in the secular world around us. It then goes on to say:

We affirm our traditional testimonies of peace, simplicity, truth speaking, gender equality, personal integrity, fidelity, chastity and community. We recognize that there is diversity among us on issues of sexuality. For the purpose of our corporate life together, we affirm our traditional testimony that sexual intercourse should be confined to the bonds of marriage, which we understand to be between one man and one woman. The lifestyle of volunteers under appointment to Quaker Volunteer Witness, regardless of their sexual orientation, should be in accordance with these testimonies.

My point in including this statement is not to discuss the rightness of the policy decision of F.U.M.'s General Board but to note the traditional and not so traditional Testimonies included in the list.

Would we not agree that the Testimonies on peace, simplicity, equality and community are major Quaker Testimonies and would appear on virtually every list? Equality has here acquired a new meaning because of the added qualifier, "gender." I'm glad to see that word added to the Testimony but it does give it a new cutting edge, does it not?

Truth speaking, personal integrity and fidelity; what about them? Are they main-stream Quaker Testimonies or subsidiary ones? I think personal integrity is right up there and probably should be included with peace, simplicity, community and equality. What do you think? As for truth speaking and fidelity, I think much of both but I also feel both have suffered erosion as Testimonies through benign or deliberate neglect in recent years. Do you agree? What would it take to make them major characteristics of Quaker behavior again?

But "chastity," do Friends have a Testimony on chastity? We're not monks or nuns vowed to chastity, now are we? But that does not exempt us from its claim, does it? No illicit sex.

Isn't that what chastity should mean for us? Put more positively, could we say that chastity means that sexual expression is blessed by God only within marriage? When my home meeting discussed this General Board Minute we struggled with a) what chastity is, and b) whether Friends have or should have a Testimony on chastity. I think it high time that we should. Do you agree? Traditionally I think chastity has been a behavioral norm for Friends but mostly as an unwritten taken-for-granted assumption that Friends would not be unchaste. What do you think?

What has our examination of this Friends United Meeting list of Testimonies to say to us about their use, importance or need for revision in the practice of our faith in our home meetings?

V. Thoughts about Revival of the Use of the Queries

I have already freely confessed my love for the Queries. How do you feel about them? Do you react negatively toward them as I used to as a teenager? Or do you see a new love-covenant-life being breathed into them?

I belong to a united monthly meeting which belongs both to Friends United Meeting and the Friends General Conference. We therefore have two sets of Queries to choose from. Our Wilmington Yearly Meeting book of Faith and Practice has eleven Queries with four additional Queries for Ministry and Counsel. Our other affiliation is with Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting. Its Book of Discipline lists twelve Queries. We have revived the use of Queries in our meeting by asking Ministry and Counsel to invite a member of meeting to read a Query during meeting for worship on one of the Sundays during the coming month. The appointed Friend chooses one or more Queries from one or both of the Books of Discipline. As led by God's Spirit, the appointed Friend then chooses the appropriate Sunday and seeks guidance for the right moment during our unprogrammed hour of worship to stand and share the Query or Queries with us. This practice works out remarkably well and avoids all the stiltedness or inappropriateness of reading Queries before meeting has settled or at the end when worship is over.

Campus Friends Meeting looks forward to the reading of the Queries as part of meeting for worship. They are always a pleasant surprise. Would some adaptation of this pattern bring a similar revival of use and positive response to Queries in your meeting?

Another way our meeting has used Queries is to compose and disseminate new Queries on a specific area of concern. One of our meeting families is particularly concerned about care of the earth and saving its ecosystems and environment. After educating us for a couple of years, that family attended the First North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology at Epworth Forest, North Webster, Indiana, in August 1987. The dozen

Quakers who attended got together and formulated four Queries on our responsibility toward our environment.

Our meeting then studied, worded over and edited those Queries and made them our own. After additional deliberation we sent them out with a covering letter of "advices" for their implementation and use to all the monthly meetings in both of our yearly meetings. It is our hope that these new Queries will eventually become the corporate Testimony of both yearly meetings and be included with the other Queries in their books of Faith and Practice. I have copies available of these environmental Queries in case your meeting might want to consider some similar action.

VI. But What about Advices?

In spite of the fact that our small meeting did something with Advices as well as with disseminating new Queries, I still feel that in contrast to our British cousins, Friends in North America have almost completely lost the tradition and use of Advices. Am I right? Perhaps we keep the tradition alive in other ways. If so, let's identify and strengthen them.

As I read over and meditate on Advices in London Yearly Meeting's volume on Church Government, I am moved by the beauty of the language and the rich devotional message of the words. It reminds me of my encounters with the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. As a Quaker I have been conditioned to eschew or look down on written or printed prayers. But have you ever read prayers from the Book of Common Prayer aloud? They are gorgeous! To a deprived Quaker like myself the beauty and power of those prayers I find almost overwhelming.

I have a similar response to the beauty of the Advices. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we found a way to revive their use? I think the spiritual harvest would be rich.

VII. What about State of Society Reports?

As suggested above, State of Society reports are the one surviving element of the Advices and Queries tradition that is still widely practiced and in a state of good health among us.

Some State of Society reports are not very inspired and turn out to be only a catalog of the meeting's accomplishments of the year past. On the other hand I look forward to quarterly meeting in May or June where I can hear them all read. I go eager to learn of the heights and depths and to feel the Life at work in those meetings. I go hungering for inspiration, surprise, examples of faithfulness and hope, and evidence of new spiritual life. I go eager to learn things that might challenge my meeting to new ways of growth in Holy Obedience.

Do you share my conviction that a revival and sensitive use of Queries and Advices amongst us would add new spiritual depth to our meetings and thus to our State of Society reports? As I have said above it is real joy to write a State of Society report when there is clear evidence that "The Lord is at work in this thick night of darkness, which may be felt"... And that "Truth does flourish as the rose (and) the lilies do grow among the thorns..." (G. Fox, Letter 227 (1663)).

VIII. Recapitulation and Further Thoughts about our Opening Definitions

Let us now prayerfully reconsider the definitions of Testimonies, Queries and Advices with which we began this exercise. We will close with a time of worship considering ways we can recommit ourselves to their truth and discover new and creative ways to apply their standards of righteousness in our lives and in our meetings. It may be, with God's guidance, we will be given new Queries, Advices and Testimonies which the Lord may now require of us.

Here, once more, are the definitions:

A Testimony is a standard of faith, ethical behavior or Gospel Order which a group covenants together to observe.

A Query is a sharply focussed question designed to challenge persons or a group to live up to a corporately adopted standard of faith and behavior.

An Advice is friendly counsel from the group on what it means to live and abide by a commonly accepted Testimony.

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FRIENDS TESTIMONIES, QUERIES AND ADVICES
IN REVISING QUAKER FAITH AND PRACTICE
Herb Lape

Much of what I have to say on the subject of testimonies, queries and advices and, therefore, present efforts to change testimonies as reflected in revision of yearly meeting Faith and Practices (or Books of Discipline) is a direct outgrowth of my own personal spiritual struggles to distinguish God's voice within from all the other more selfish voices that also speak within and seek to guide actions. Before addressing the title "Friends Testimonies, Queries and Advices in Revising Quaker Faith and Practice," I would like to share some of this story, because I think it will help make it clear why I think historic testimonies are so critical to our individual and corporate lives and thus why we must be very careful in our approach to making changes.

I grew up in a comfortable middle class home rooted in down home, solid midwestern values. Although my mother was a believing Catholic and my father a professed agnostic, even atheist -- a source of some tension in our home -- there was no disagreement between them about the basic values of right and wrong and how children should be raised. Nor was there much disagreement about these matters with my friends, their parents; in short the society as a whole. Everyone knew what was right and wrong even if they often failed to act consistently upon this knowledge.

I graduated from high school in 1967 and went off to college in the East, only to have my moral world turned upside down in the heady days of the sixties. The turmoil surrounding the Vietnam War threw into question government, family, church and religious authority -- the very sources that I had blindly trusted in high school. These traditions were now seen as the source of much that was wrong about America -- the war, the environmental crisis, sexual hang ups, etc. Ours was the generation that would produce, in the words of a popular best seller of the day, the "Greening of America," in which the old external controls would be eliminated and a new inward truth and freedom would be discovered in the heart of each one of us, setting the world right.

My spiritual life in college and that of much of my generation was best understood in the context of a hitch-hiking trip to California, the promised land of personal freedom, unbounded by history and tradition, where young people were discovering themselves. It was nothing short of a religious pilgrimage.

The peak experience of the summer was a week long solo back packing trip in the Sierra Mountains west of Lake Tahoe. The few items that I needed were in my backpack, most importantly my scripture of the time, a copy of Thoreau's Walden. Thoreau captured my journey in these memorable words,

Let us...work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and traditions and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion that covers the globe...til we come to a hard bottom...which we call reality...and set a lamp-post safely...that future ages might know how deep a freshet of shams and appearances had gathered from time to time. (Walden)

On the first day of this trip a dog appeared out of the woods and started to follow me. As we continued to hike together that week, I developed this elaborate fiction about the dog that fit nicely into my story. He was a tame, suburban dog, vacationing with his family when they stopped at a rest area so he could relieve himself. Catching the scent of an animal, he took off into the woods and the family gave up looking, and left him in the wilderness. As we hiked together, I was convinced that this dog was also living out a favorite book of my youth, Jack London's Call of the Wild. So there we were a thoroughly civilized young man and dog returning together to the wilderness seeking truth.

Once back in college for my senior year, I was now prepared to understand and assent to the powerful intellectual forces that dominated and still dominate many college campuses. I accepted the vaguely Marxist idea that Western Civilization was really nothing more than the invention of the rich and powerful to keep the weak oppressed in chains of slavery. The government, the church, the family, and other tradition-bearing institutions were instruments of this oppression. Feminism was teaching me that our cultural and religious traditions were created to serve the interest of white males of European descent to the detriment of women and people of color. The sexual revolution taught a similar message about the oppressive nature of our sexual taboos.

This was a very exciting time to be in college. Again, quoting the title of a very popular book of the period, we were leading the "Greening of America" in which the evils of the old order would be swept away.

My disillusionment with this faith began when I was confronted with the reality of my first job -- teaching history in a coed, upstate New York boarding school for kids whose parents could not deal with them or preferred not to deal with them. I approached this teaching job with the confidence of a vision of truth that I believed could liberate and heal my students, just as it had supposedly done for me. In the words of a very popular book on education, I saw teaching as "a subversive activity" whose purpose was to help free individuals from the cultural distortions of tradition, train them in reason and sensitivity to

feeling, and supply them with the skills of inquiry to decide for themselves the proper path or the beat of their particular drummer.

I wanted to believe that my students were naturally good, and that appeals to reason and sentiment could suffice without external authority, but the confusion of many of these kids' lives made more difficult by problems with drugs, alcohol and sex made it clear to me that these young people needed help if they were ever to get past immediate gratification of desire to something more solid.

A marriage that was clearly not working was also forcing me personally to recognize that there were dark forces at work in me that I seemed powerless to control or even heal.

I was first attracted to Quakerism while I was teaching in this boarding school. My wife had a friend who was a Quaker and visited us in order to attend a workshop at Powell House, the New York Yearly Meeting retreat center. She described Quakerism as a "do it yourself religion" in which each individual was free to follow his or her own "inner light" with the support and affirmation of a community fellowship. This seemed to go along with my Thoreauian faith, and it seemed to me that this idea of community support for inward leading was just the thing I needed in my present shaken state. I began attending meeting at Powell House and continued when we moved to Asheville, North Carolina.

Unfortunately, the chaos of my life did not improve in this warm, supportive environment of Friends. My marriage continued to crumble and my wife and I separated and later divorced. We were creatures of our culture -- two autonomous individuals with private dreams of what we thought we needed to be happy, chained to a partner who we felt would forever frustrate those needs. We had been powerfully bound together sexually and confused this with love. We never developed the kind of self-giving love that would be able to unite us together in a common life beyond personal desires.

Clearly my faith in my own inward leadings divorced from the testimony of history was badly shaken. Fortunately during this crisis some wonderful people in my meeting and elsewhere encouraged me to read books about Quakerism. Once again I began to see the story of my own life reflected in the experience of others, this time early Friends.

It seemed to me then and still does that early Friends were born in a time very similar to the late sixties; the events of the Puritan Revolution had brought all religious and political authority into question as the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement had done for many of us. We had hippies, yippies, the SDS, and the Weather Underground. The 17th century had Ranters, Levellers, Diggers and Fifth Monarchy men. We dressed, spoke, and acted in such a way as to communicate our contempt for the norms of "bourgeois" society. These radicals in the 17th century

communicated their contempt for aristocratic English society in similar concrete ways. They refused to doff their hats to "superiors," spoke in rude familiar language of thee and thou to their social betters, and occasionally went "naked for a sign."

I was immediately drawn to George Fox. He was a young man who had also matured in a tumultuous time. He also saw the religious institutions of his day as dry, lifeless things that had the form of religion but knew not the power. He, as Thoreau, also sought to work his way down through the mud and slush of human opinion to the bedrock of truth and there erect a lamp post. When he sunk his feet down and felt a firm foundation, he understood this rock to be Christ Jesus and his heart did leap for joy.

Inspired by this simple message of liberation, he traveled widely proclaiming the good news that "Christ is come to teach his people himself" inwardly without the aid of externals whether they be priests, ministers or even Scripture itself. Describing these efforts in the earlier years of the Quaker movement, he wrote "I turned people to their inward teacher, Christ Jesus, and left them there." He made no effort to establish churches with outward organization to instruct or discipline people in this new faith. As with the youth movement in my day, Fox demonstrated a tremendous faith that truth could be known inwardly once the distorting influences of deadening religious tradition were eradicated from one's life. Other powerful ministers joined with him to proclaim this truth and many were convinced. A tremendous energy was unleashed.

But as the events of the 1650's unfolded, Fox and other Quaker leaders began to temper their faith in the individual's ability to know this spirit of God inwardly without the aid of a disciplined faith community that upholds outward testimonies, advices and queries aimed at helping individuals discern this inward spirit of God from all the other more selfish human voices that also speak within. The two events that Quaker historians most often point to as profoundly changing the character of the Quaker movement are the Nayler incident and the fierce persecution of Friends after the restoration of the Monarchy in 1660.

As many of you know, James Nayler was one of the most valiant of the original Publishers of Truth. He evidently rivaled Fox himself in the power of his preaching and the esteem with which he was held as a leader. But in 1656 while working perhaps too hard as the chief publisher in London, he entered what he later called a period of spiritual darkness in which he felt the inward light withdraw. It was noted at the time that he withdrew from the company of stable Friends and allowed himself to be surrounded by "spiritual groupies." He indulged in much grief and fasting. This group wrote a letter to Nayler in which they called him "the only begotten son of God" and closed saying, "thy name will no longer be James Nayler, but Jesus." Spurred on, Nayler agreed to symbolically reinact the entry of Jesus into

Jerusalem as he was led into Bristol on a horse with his group singing "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of the Sabbath."

The gospel that Fox and others had preached had gathered in the tares with the wheat. Many heard in this gospel message a license for spiritual anarchy. It is interesting, therefore, to note that the first written testimony, the Epistle from the meeting of Elders at Balby dates from this time. Most historians that I have read see this document of 20 short clauses as the beginning of what we now, at least in New York, call Faith and Practice, which collects our testimonies, queries and advices. It is also at this time that a loosely structure church order begins to develop as well.

This loose structure did not fare well in the fierce persecution that followed the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 when Quakers continued to meet for worship openly in defiance of the law. Many left the faith and the movement in general seems to have been in disarray.

What these two events revealed to Fox and other Quaker leaders was that people must not only be turned to the Inward Teacher, but they must also be helped to settle on this foundation. It was no longer enough to simply turn people to their teacher and leave them there in the simple faith that they would be able to recognize the voice of their teacher from that of their own selfish desires. People needed help. The early Quaker movement in its enthusiasm had tolerated or perhaps even encouraged what it would later condemn as Ranterism, the hippie movement of its day. The Gospel Order and the development of testimonies, advices and queries all pointed to a church order that attempted to win over Quaker Ranters or push them out.

This discovery of a Quaker/Ranter tension within the early Quaker movement had a profound impact in helping me make sense of my own spiritual journey. Robert Barclay who helped lead the struggle against Ranter/Quakers wrote a tract called "The Anarchy of Ranters and Other Libertines" in which he described Ranters as

so great pretenders to inward motions and revelations of the Spirit, that there are no extravagancies so wild which they will not cloak with it, and so much are they for everyone's following their own mind, as can admit of no Christian fellowship and community, nor of that good order and discipline which the Church of Christ never was nor can be without. This gives an open door to all libertinism...

I saw clearly that my faith was a 20th century version of Ranterism, not Quakerism.

In many ways this insight came as a tremendous relief to me personally. My life was in shambles, and I was beginning to recognize destructive tendencies that I seemed powerless to control. I had at this time avidly taken to reading that

dangerous book called the Bible and was now able to see my Ranterism as a prideful system of idolatry that encouraged me to believe that I could be the God in my life. I began to see the painful events of my life as the real voice of God urging me to surrender and my inward leadings as mostly self-centered wounds and desires seeking divine cloaking. Much to my personal embarrassment and the horror and discomfort of my friends, I became a Christian realizing that no matter how many mistakes that I had made there was the ultimate forgiveness that God demonstrated on the Cross. I also began to experience the hope that I could begin over in a new life dedicated to God and feel the power of the resurrected spirit of Christ come to teach me himself with the help of others, past as well as present.

The great temptation for me at this point was to reject the possibility of inward leading completely and flee to a religion of Biblical legalism that would provide clear external guidance. But I continued to be inspired by the early Quaker vision that took seriously the weakness of humanity and yet still asserted that, with help, we could learn to discern that of God from that which is decidedly not God, individually and corporately.

Again it was this Quaker vision that helped me see that the Bible is a testimony itself to a middle path of liberty between two great systems of human idolatry and slavery. On the one hand is a right wing legalism or fundamentalism that is so distrustful of human nature that it denies the possibility of humans ever being able to hear and obey an inward word from the living God.

On the other hand, people who reject this form of idolatry are often tempted to embrace its opposite counterpart, a left wing individualism that early Quakers identified as Ranterism. This had certainly been the temptation that I had indulged in my youth. This system of belief, as with fundamentalism, attempts to simplify the great mystery of human nature and existence to make doing right a simple matter of turning inward and following the voice that speaks most clearly.

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians upholds the Gospel as a path of liberty that shuns both extremes. On the one hand, he attacks preachers who have followed his ministry and insisted that Gentile converts must satisfy all the dictates of the Jewish law. "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery." A few verses later, however, he makes it clear that this freedom is not a modern libertarian freedom to follow one's own desire as long as no one is physically harmed. "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh."

Robert Barclay's "The Anarchy of Ranters" rejoices in the fact that Quakers were attacked by the religious right (Papists and Protestants) as promoting disorder and confusion and left wing Ranter types for imposing tyranny through the establishment

of Gospel Order and testimonies. For Barclay this is evidence that Quakers are walking in the path of true liberty.

Before I shift my focus to the question of changing testimonies in light of revision of yearly meeting Faith and Practice, I would like to make clear how the narratives that I have described related to my understanding of the role of testimonies and advices in the Society of Friends. First is the matter of discernment. The experience and therefore testimony of early Friends, confirmed by Scripture and my own personal experience is that human beings are very fallible creatures who generally need help in discerning the spirit of God within from that which is decidedly not God that also dwells within. Just as the prophet Elijah found that the voice of God was not in the earthquake, wind and fire on Mt. Horeb but in a still small voice, we often need external help to still our internal earthquakes, winds and fires -- the heats of our desire -- if we are to hear that same still small voice of calm. Second, throughout history humans have been tempted to simplify this difficult matter of discernment by embracing either a rigid legalism or a rigid individualism that greatly simplifies that matter of discernment. Third, the Christian gospel which Quakers felt that they were recovering rejects both of these systems as idolatrous and affirms the ability of humans both individually and corporately to be led directly by the spirit of God but only with the help of a cloud of witnesses who have gone before and demonstrated through their lives that they lived in that life and power.

As the Elders of Balby made clear, testimonies, advices, and queries are not meant to be rigid laws. They are our best corporate judgment at any given point in time to what we believe to be God's will for us. At the same time testimonies and advices on peace, simplicity, moderation, etc. do not say to us that we are free to do our own thing as we are led.

While recognizing this importance of outward historic testimonies, we have also affirmed a central belief in continuing revelation -- namely that the spirit of God is still at work and that therefore historic testimonies can in fact be changed and new ones added. The decision to end plain speech and dress and abolish the holding of slaves are only a couple examples of many other instances where such change has occurred.

The problem that confronts us in changing testimonies is again the tricky matter of discernment. How can we be certain that the change that we propose is indeed a new word from the living God and not just an inward human desire or fear given divinity by a right wing fundamentalist appeal to the Bible or a left wing Ranter appeal to inward motions.

Let me again speak to these questions by retelling personal experience with two proposed revisions of yearly meeting Faith and Practices, those of SAYMA (Southern Appalachian Yearly

Meeting and Association) and more recently New York Yearly Meeting.

In 1975, I moved from the boarding school in upstate New York to Asheville, North Carolina, where there was, and still is, a vigorous meeting that was part of SAYMA. This was a relatively new yearly meeting which as its name indicates had some early struggles with those who did not like the authoritarian ring of the title Yearly Meeting and preferred the more egalitarian title of Association. Consistent with this tension there was no attempt to write a Faith and Practice and monthly meetings usually used Philadelphia's as a guide, especially to practice. However, it was finally decided that SAYMA would begin the process of writing one for itself.

The first issue that brought this concern to my attention in monthly meeting was a discussion of whether SAYMA's document should be a revision of an existing Faith and Practice such as Philadelphia's or whether it should be entirely our own creation. We decided for the latter option. It was felt that our Faith and Practice should reflect our unique experience and our own individual perception of the light and not an expression of Philadelphia's light or anyone else's.

A second issue that came to our meeting for discussion was whether it should contain advices along with queries. It was the sense of our meeting and that of others that advices should not be included. It was felt that advices were too authoritarian and denied the individual freedom and diversity that SAYMA Friends understood to be the hallmark of Quakerism. I remember at the time being vaguely uneasy about both of these decisions but was so mired down at the time in my own confused turmoil that I had nothing to say.

It was at this time in my life that I ran across a quote by Rufus Jones that crystalized many of the concerns that were beginning to nag at me related to this revision process. In a pamphlet entitled "An Interpretation of Quakerism" he wrote,

It (the Inner Light) is, of course not a substitute for history -- the slow verification of truth by historical process; nor is it a substitute for Scripture, the loftiest literary expression of religious experience. There is no 'substitute' for either of those ways of divine revelation. No one who neglects the unfolding of the will and purpose of God in history and in Scripture can ever make up for this neglect by stressing his claim to be the recipient of private revelation. No one can break the organic connection with the spiritual moments of the past, and confine himself to this thin channel of supplies, without suffering loss.

It seemed to me at the time that our ability to write a fresh document without the need to seriously wrestle with past

revelation was leading us to affirm those testimonies that we still accepted like peace and simplicity and water down or change traditional Christian language and testimony that no longer spoke to us, confidently proclaiming continuing revelation. As the above personal testimony should indicate, I was not so confident.

At this time in my life, I met in meeting a wonderful woman who was also divorced with two kids. In her pain and suffering she had also become a Christian and felt the forgiveness of God and grace to begin a new life. We were married and moved to New York where we both now teach at Friends Academy on Long Island.

As we moved, we heard from the Quaker grapevine that New York was in the process of revising its Faith and Practice. It was felt by those proposing change that the 1974 version was not truthful because it did not reflect the diversity of Friends. It was argued that in recent years many non-Christian Friends who sincerely lived their lives by an inward spirit of peace and truth not identified with Christ had been warmly accepted in membership. In many cases these Friends were some of the most dedicated and hard working members of yearly meeting and yet their testimony seemed excluded from Faith and Practice. As with SAYMA it was argued that our '74 edition did not describe what the spirit was revealing and was in fact proscriptive of the experience of many sincere Friends.

The resulting revision was a radical departure from historic testimony. Except in the historic statement, references to Jesus Christ were often transformed to "the spirit," "the spirit of God," "the light within," or other similar phrases that were seen as more universal and inclusive. The total impact of the changes was to clearly change our historic testimony to a faith rooted in Christian tradition -- a Christian universalism -- to an a-historic universalism rooted in no particular tradition in which individuals were free to seek guidance and nurture from any religious tradition, or none at all, according to their own inner light. It was this kind of faith that was the experience and therefore testimony of many Friends in yearly meeting. They justified this change in tradition under continuing revelation.

Again, the question of discernment confronted us as a yearly meeting. Was this radical change indeed a new revelation or merely the spirit of a very individualistic culture seeking divine sanction. There was one meeting in particular and many individuals who felt this new testimony did not answer that of God within them. Because of the large number of references to Jesus Christ contained in the old version, it was felt by those who opposed the revision that some changes in reference to Jesus could be changed without compromising the Christian character of the document as a whole. While there is still major tension in yearly meeting, characterized as a split between Christ-centered and universalist Friends, this issue was satisfactorily resolved at least in relation to the revision of Faith and Practice.

The next major struggle related to our testimony on the hot issues of marriage, family and sex. It has not been so easy. The '74 edition upheld a traditional Christian testimony to the ideal of sex within marriage in a section titled, "Marriage and Family Life." Obviously since '74, many Friends have attacked this testimony as rigidly narrow and thus denying the rich diversity of human experience at a great cost in personal suffering. Unmarried couples argued that richness of their relationships were being denied and they were being unfairly stigmatized just because they had not gone through a ceremony. They pointed out that many unmarried couples had better relationships than many married couples and that people should be judged only on the quality of relationship not its legal status.

Gays and lesbians pointed to the sad story of persecution suffered by people of same sex orientation -- the burnings at the stake in medieval times, the pink triangles worn in Nazi Germany, the gay bashing so prevalent today and argued as well that their relationships should be supported and affirmed on the same basis and also as a witness against this senseless violence. It was powerfully argued that the old Faith and Practice expressed a rigid, uncaring, even homophobic attitude all too typical of the excesses of our Western history. We needed to correct these past abuses and affirm love and support for those who had suffered for following the light as they experienced it.

The '86 revision attempted to do just this. The title of this section was changed from "Marriage and Family Life" to "Personal Relationships." In this version marriage was now just one of several family and sexual lifestyles from which individuals were free to choose with the support of Friends.

This was a very difficult matter for a person like me to approach. As a college youth, I had been thoroughly convinced by the testimony of the sexual revolution, but this testimony had not survived the testing of my life. I came to believe, as I do now, that sex is much too powerful a human force to be left up to individual discernment. I had come to see the failure of my marriage as at least in part a judgment from God that I had mistaken the powerful bonding force of sex as love and was never able to develop the kind of self-giving agape love necessary to sustain marriage. In my second marriage I had come to trust in the historic testimony of Friends -- Jesus came first and sex came after marriage. At the same time I knew too much history not to recognize the tremendous violence that has been done to people merely because of sexual orientation.

I had previously been confronted with this dilemma at a Friends General Conference Gathering at Berea College in 1981. As many of you know a gay and lesbian support group called FLCG (Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns) holds its summer gathering at FGC's gathering. As a result, gay and lesbian Friends are very visible in an environment which they feel is supportive. The surrounding Berea community, located in Eastern Kentucky, however, is generally not supportive of the hand holding and

other modest displays of affection that are typical at a gathering of gay Friends.

As the gathering progressed, I had discovered that nude massage was the particular thing to do that year in the men and women's centers. Later I heard rumors from several sources that college workers had witnessed massage that they had felt was sexual. At a previous gathering I had already become aware and concerned about the amount of sleeping around that was occurring among unmarried heterosexuals. Both of these instances had raised the question in my mind and others about our testimony on sexual expression. Were we helping each other live up to the highest ideals that God had for us as a people or were we too easily giving divinity to their desires?

On the other hand our gay community had attracted the attention of conservative townfolk and there were several incidents. There was a real fear that the situation might really get out of hand and break out into violence. When confronted with this threat, we rightfully, so I think, were asked to stand together with our gay and lesbian Friends and make it clear that we would not tolerate harassment, bigotry, and violence directed to children of God. I knew of several Friends who were torn like me between a desire to protect while at the same time not lose sight of the question of what was appropriate behavior for Friends, gay and straight, at a Quaker gathering? What was our testimony on sexual expression?

My meeting did try to pursue this concern in a letter to FGC but we never got very far and our desire to pursue the matter melted as it became clear that we were being seen as old fashioned.

This question of how we as a Society can reach out in loving support to people who have suffered because of their differences while at the same time uphold the highest ideals of a people called to bear testimony to God's kingdom restored, is, I think, the central dilemma that we continue to face in the revision of our testimony on marriage, family, and sex. I along with others believe that revisions of both '86 and '87 are not such a word. The phrase that divides us the most reads as follows:

We should try to widen the circle of love to include Friends with varied manners of living. Loving and nonexploitive relationship of mutual affection and respect can express the Light. The meeting family should welcome the diverse ages, interests, and living patterns of members, for it is God who has brought us all together in our diversity. Jesus showed how God's love, if we are open to it, embraces all of us and forms the community.

While this statement was strong on loving support it seemed to be so hopelessly vague as to make sex a personal matter and thus susceptible to the kind of Ranterism so prevalent in our culture.

It did not speak to my monthly meeting either and we wrote a minute of concern and sent copies to all monthly meetings within New York Yearly Meeting.

At yearly meeting deliberations on the proposed revision of the Marriage and Family Life section in the summer of 1987, I was concerned that the framework for discussion had shifted from the traditional Quaker concern of discerning the spirit of God to a new one that seemed solely based on tolerance and affirmation of alternative sexual lifestyles. It was argued that Friends who did not accept a new testimony to sex as a private matter between consenting adults were being unloving, intolerant, rigid, moralistic, narrow-minded, homophobic, etc. in their refusal to affirm premarital and homosexual sex and were thus, at least, indirectly responsible for the continued discrimination and violence done to these Friends by our culture. The irony felt keenly by those opposing the change was that they were often the ones being judged and dismissed in the name of love, tolerance, and acceptance.

If we were to make any progress that would both recognize the concerns to affirm and support single people and gay and lesbian Friends while at the same time recognize concerns about excessive individualism, clearly we needed to shift the framework for our deliberations. We needed to adopt a framework that would allow those believing in a new revelation to give their sincere testimony without being dismissed as hopeless sinners while at the same time encouraging those who were not convinced to give their testimony without being judged and dismissed as narrow-minded bigots.

Last summer we were finally able to organize a forum in which three individuals representing different attitudes were able to give their testimony freely without fear. As a result it appears that the framework for our deliberations has shifted to a more traditional Quaker position that accepts that both sides are sincerely giving testimony to the truth as they see it with our job as a yearly meeting being to test these different leadings in our community business sessions to see what "answers that of God within us."

If we are to make progress on the revision of Faith and Practice, it is helpful to remind ourselves of this Quaker process for testing new revelations in order to discern the spirit of God. First, new revelations seek to replace an old revelation that at one time spoke to our condition. In other words we have a historic testimony on marriage, family and sex that embraces a revelation of sex within heterosexual marriage. Minute books are full of cases of Quakers who were labored with for violating this testimony. New York Yearly Meeting's retreat center, Powell House, has unsuccessfully debated changing this testimony to allow unmarried couples to room together. The '74 edition of Faith and Practice upholds this testimony. However, as is right and proper, there are many Friends who believe that a new revelation has been given that would make sex a private

matter between consenting adults and thus allow for premarital and homosexual sex. It is our job to test this new revelation.

It is this framework that seeks to corporately discern a new word from God before a testimony is changed that is, in my opinion, reflected in Quaker history. When John Woolman and others traveled widely bearing witness to their belief that God was revealing a new word on the matter of slavery that no longer made it acceptable under any conditions, he would not have gotten very far if the framework for monthly, quarterly, and yearly meeting deliberations had been "love and tolerance" rather than discerning the "will of God." It is important to remember that while Woolman was indeed concerned about the effect of slavery on the slave, he was equally concerned about the effect on the slave holder and the reputation of the Society of Friends. Jack Marietta in an excellent book called The Reformation of American Quakerism points out that the arguments against adopting yearly meeting minutes condemning slavery were based on love and tolerance -- a desire not to judge and exclude slaveowners.

Whether the proposed change involves Christian language, sexuality, or Biblical inerrancy, I believe that it is critical that deliberations be done in the traditional framework of corporate seeking to know the will of God, recognizing that new testimonies can just as easily be the spirit of the world as they can be a new revelation.

Secondly, we should be patient in our deliberations. It is helpful to remember that it took nearly 100 years after the first minute opposing slavery was passed by Germantown Meeting before Philadelphia Yearly Meeting united making this a matter of yearly meeting testimony and discipline.

Third, it should be those who believe in a new revelation or testimony that should do as Woolman did and bring this witness to their monthly meeting and get a traveling minute to travel in the ministry to see if this new word answers the witness of God in other Friends.

In short we should uphold the integrity of Quaker process, because I believe if this process is followed that we can indeed begin to have confidence that the word we hear and affirm in our yearly meeting sessions is indeed a living word that avoids the seductive traps of both fundamentalism and Ranterism.

In conclusion, it should be obvious from what I have said thus far that I understand testimonies, queries and advices to be an essential outward guide in helping us individually and corporately discern the living word of God from the myriad other human voices that also speak within. As the elders at Balby put it so well in 1665, in referring to the twenty articles that amounted to our first written outward testimonies,

...these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all with the measure of light

which is pure and holy may be guided, and so in the light walking and abiding these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, -- not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth light.

TESTIMONIES, QUERIES AND ADVICES
IN THE RECENT EXPERIENCE OF LONDON YEARLY MEETING
Helen Rowlands

This is my second visit among Friends in the States, and on both occasions I've been struck by the frequency with which I see in meeting houses and in Friends' homes the painting, which I take it will be familiar to you, called "The Presence in the Midst." It's particularly striking to me because the clerk of my Preparative Meeting is a nephew of the artist, Doyle Penrose, and a large copy of it hangs on the wall of our meeting house. So when I see it here in America, it makes me feel that I'm on familiar territory and somehow secure. Yet at home, on the wall of our meeting, it irritates me, because it has come to represent to me a static traditionalism, the honouring of an image.

Earlier this year, while I was studying at Woodbrooke (the Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham, England) I helped to lead a "Woodbrooke-on-the-road" weekend with one of the Warwickshire meetings. It was targetted at attenders and new members, and the subject was Quaker worship. As a way into the subject, we used "The Presence in the Midst." We started by asking simply "What do you see in the picture?" and the answers flowed: a rather ethereal, other-worldly figure of Christ; people in "plain" dress; men and women separate; facing benches for Elders and Ministers; high windows which let in the light but shut out the world; a bored-looking child. After a lot more discussion we finally asked people "How would you portray the 'Presence in the Midst' for today?" A number of the drawings were strikingly similar -- a large lighted candle surrounded by smaller candles; a circle of people, hands joined, with a cross or a light at the centre. We concluded that our central experience of worship could be seen in the painting -- experience of presence, of communality, of ministering and being ministered to -- and the image spoke to us; but we also had to find our own idiom, our own means of expressing that central experience.

It seems to me that the process of revising our Discipline is doing in words what we were doing with visual images, looking again at how Friends have expressed their understandings of truth in past times and asking ourselves how we express our understandings today. London Yearly Meeting is not unique in this -- a number of people here have been or are involved in revisions, and may like to share their horror-stories or dreams-come-true later on. What I want to try to do now is give you a picture of why we have embarked on a revision at this time, where we have got to so far, where we hope to end up, and what key issues are emerging for us as we proceed with the work.

Let's start with the background. On average, a revision is undertaken once a generation. Our current Discipline was last revised in several stages; "Christian Faith and Practice," which contains extracts from the writings of Friends portraying their experience and the development of our faith, was approved by the Yearly Meeting in 1959; our "Advices and Queries" were adopted in 1964; and "Church Government," containing the administrative details and their background, was approved in 1967, and reprinted with amendments in 1980. So it is between 20 and 30 years since the bulk of the work of that revision was done. In 1984, our executive, Meeting for Sufferings, received minutes from at least two monthly meetings, and from Quaker Social Responsibility and Education, one of the three administrative departments at Friends House in London, requesting that a revision be considered. It was felt that these particular minutes were representative of a growing sense of unease in the wider Society, so the process of revision was embarked upon.

Two broad areas of concern were most obvious in "Advices and Queries," but the issues involved also clearly affected "Christian Faith and Practice." Firstly there was the question of the language in which they were written, which was felt by some to exclude or devalue their particular experience of life or of faith. The use of traditional religious vocabulary portraying ideas such as redemption, communion, or sacrament was for some a stumbling block. For others, it had to do with things such as the use of male pronouns to refer to God, or the word "men" to refer to "people," and all the unspoken assumptions which lie behind such usages. Others again experienced the Queries in particular as accusatory in style, finding it almost impossible to read them aloud in meeting for worship -- the question format beginning "do you...?" can make it sound as if the reader is excluding him/herself from the question, and can sound very smug and "holier than thou."

Secondly, came a number of factors resulting from our changing social situation. The document contains a number of implicit assumptions about the kind of people Friends are -- middle-class, relatively affluent, part of a life-long marriage, and so on. Yet in reality it can no longer be taken for granted that everyone who wants to will be able to find full-time, paid employment, let alone have choice in the matter in the way they had in the 50's and 60's. Our Advice on marriage took little account of modern strains on relationships, and left little room for the majority of Friends who are, for whatever reason, not part of a traditional "married couple and 2.4 kids." Insights into the religious dimension of environmentalism have been greatly deepened in recent years, and there was concern that this should be reflected in our Discipline. I am sure these examples will be familiar to Friends from other yearly meetings.

With all this in mind, it was concluded by the Memorandum Committee, which was established to consider the procedure to be used in setting about a revision, that it might be necessary to do more than just "play around with the wording" of Advices and

Queries. It was therefore recommended that the Revision Committee should be encouraged to take a look at the whole of our Book of Discipline, and rather than considering each of the three elements piecemeal, should take a global view of it, with the possibility of altering its format substantially if it saw fit. Fairly early on in the Committee's life we decided to tackle the Advices and Queries first; they had, after all, been the initial cause of concern, indeed there were meetings which told us they found it impossible to continue using them in public worship, and they offered a relatively manageable task with which to begin. In working on them, we would also begin the process of getting to know one another, we would come up against some of the big issues, and hopefully clear some of the ground, enabling us to move forward with greater trust and insight when it came to the more daunting work on Christian Faith and Practice and Church Government.

Right from the beginning, the revision has been seen as "an exercise in the life of the Society." This means it would be inappropriate for the appointed committee to shut itself away in some conference room and just get on with the work. The Book of Discipline represents the Society's corporate wisdom and witness; meetings and individuals across the country are taking their part of the task very seriously, and the Revision Committee needs to have its ear firmly to the ground in order to keep in touch with the Society's thinking. It is also important that, in exercising its legitimate function of showing the Society possible new ways of ordering the book, the committee should not get so far out on a limb as to make any new document inaccessible -- rather like the clerk in a meeting for business, there is a tension between the functions of servanthood and leadership. So from the start of our work we have encouraged communication, both in the form of letters and by visiting meetings.

Before any draft of a revised Advices and Queries was even available, we received many comments on the old document. A number of meetings and individuals made their own attempts to revise the old text, ranging from the alteration of perhaps ten words to detailed re-writing of particular sections. In committee we felt clearly led to do more than either thing, sensing that what was important was the spirit behind the text, not whether a particular sentence contained a particular word. The one thing all the correspondence showed was the importance of the Balby declaration:

Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all, with the measure of light which is pure and holy, may be guided; and so in the light walking and abiding, these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

So, after a process of individual writing, mulling it over in small groups, and returning again to the full committee, which lasted about a year in all, we eventually agreed on quite a

radical revision in the form of the document "Questions and Counsel," which we submitted to Meeting for Sufferings in December 1987. We requested that it should be circulated to all meetings, and that they should be asked not to send in their immediate reactions, but live with it for two or three years, using it both individually and as worshipping communities, and at the end of that time give us their reflections. The committee then plans to consider it again in the light of this experience and of our continuing work on the rest of the Book of Discipline.

The format of the new document is substantially different from the old one. For a long time we discussed the different functions of Advice and Query -- what was gained by having the two forms? To whom were they addressed, individual or meeting? Should either of these predominate over the other? We reminded ourselves that the original Queries were real questions demanding concrete answers, and were addressed to meetings. How did their style fit our current need for material which could be considered both by the gathered meeting and the individual in their private meditation? People had described carrying their copy of "Advices and Queries" in their pocket and reading it on the train to work -- a far cry from sending replies in to quarterly meeting. Yet the same material needed to suit the practice of reading portions aloud in meeting for worship, which most meetings do once a month or so. In the end we decided to combine the two elements of advice and questioning, which often contain duplicate references to the same topic; the long paragraphs of advice have been broken down into short, pithy sections which we hope will be more suited to reading aloud and be more encouraging of vocal ministry. Many of the well-worn, perhaps hackneyed, phrases have gone, to the relief of some and the chagrin of others -- everyone has their own particular favourites as well as the ones that make their hackles rise.

There are changes too in content. Sometimes, in trying to express ideas more simply or in more acceptable language, we have also made a change of meaning; the question then arises, is this the Society's current understanding? For example, the opening Advice

Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts, which are the leadings of God. Resist not his strivings within you. It is his light that shows us our darkness and leads to true repentance...

has become

Trust dear Friends, the promptings of love and truth in your hearts, which are the leadings of God. There is a light in each one of us that shows us our darkness and brings us to new life. (Q. & C. 1)

Does this new version make it sufficiently clear that we believe the light to be of God?

At other times we have tried to express general principles for living by, rather than going into detail of particular social concerns. Many of the letters we received asked us to include mention of one burning issue or another; we felt we could neither do justice to them all and still keep the document to manageable proportions, nor predict which of them would still be topical in 15-20 years time, so it would be better not to be too specific. Christian Faith and Practice would provide scope for greater exploration of detail. Hence the very broad terms in which Q. & C. 44 is phrased:

We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Seek to preserve its beauty and resources for the other species with which we share it and for generations to come. How can you simplify your needs, and recognize the boundary between need and greed in your life?

It may be that in applying this principle we have gone too far in the opposite direction and omitted some subjects which Friends are certain should be included. A number of people have already said that the example I have just read out does not go nearly far enough on the integrity of creation.

On the other hand, we have brought in some new themes. Whilst there may not be a single Quaker attitude to divorce, for example, it did seem that there might be something to say which would reflect a Quakerly approach to the problem as it affects people's lives, so we came up with this:

There are times when, despite the commitment, a relationship seems to be breaking. When this happens, seek help in trying to understand the other's point of view. If you undergo the great distress of separation or divorce, try to maintain some considerate communication so that arrangements can be made with the minimum of bitterness. Always remember the needs of the children. (Q. & C. 33)

Or again, we felt it right to include advice on an issue which is of particular topical concern to Friends, but did not find specific mention in "Advices and Queries," namely civil disobedience:

Obey the laws of the state. Consider acting otherwise only when impelled to do so by your religious conviction, and no other course is open to you. Test any such decision with your meeting, and ask for its prayerful support. (Q. & C. 41)

I hope these examples give you a flavour of the way we have tried to tackle some of the issues.

So now that meetings have had "Questions and Counsel" in their hands for nearly a year, how do we measure where we have

got to? We deliberately asked meetings to hold off making a too early response, but it is clear the document has already featured largely in Friends' spiritual lives. There has, as one might guess, been both positive and negative feedback. One Friend was heard to respond in a yearly meeting discussion group, "Questions and Counsel allows me to still be a Friend because it doesn't judge me, it includes us all." Another at the same meeting deemed it to be a failure because it represents the lowest common denominator of Quakerism, not its strongest points. It is probably true to say that the most vocal criticisms so far have come from those who sense with regret a weakening of the yearly meeting's expression of Christian commitment in the document. The committee will be faced with the task of balancing the weight of these responses against that of the unknown number who have not yet responded, simply because they are happy with the new draft; no judgments will be made until the two or three years we gave Friends have passed, but we are absolutely convinced of the vital importance of responses arrived at by groups of Friends meeting in worship and using our tested business procedure to consider what we have proposed. How else can we seek the light?

Since "Questions and Counsel" has been with the Society, the committee has turned its attention to the rest of the Book of Discipline. We have chosen to work on the material under the four main headings we used in "Questions and Counsel:" God and Ourselves; Reaching Towards God; Reaching Each Other; and Reaching Out. We felt these would give us sufficient structure to proceed, without limiting the final shape of the book in any way. Recently, we have chosen to organize these four sections within a framework which we hope will anchor them firmly in both the recent and historical experience of the Society. An opening chapter would attempt to portray its current life and thought in all its variety. Then, under the working title "Openings," would come a chapter of extracts from the 17th century. This would be followed by chapters representing our four working headings, but in a different order, namely worship, social testimonies and way of life, then the theological reflections which arise from our worship and way of life. These chapters would draw on material from several centuries for extracts. Finally would come a chapter of "Leadings," containing a range of contemporary voices which may be pointing the way forward -- only time will show which of these prove to be prophetic and which not, but we feel it is important to attempt an assessment; one of our current Advices contains the words "...try to discern the new growing points in social and economic life" and this could apply equally well to Quaker life.

What is the thinking behind this framework? Central is the conviction that to be relevant our Discipline must start where Friends are; hence the initial chapter on the current life of the Society in Britain. Then we recognize particular formative significance in the writings of the 17th century, which leads us to consider a special chapter for them. Yet the pendulum must swing back, for influential though it may be, our history alone does not have value unless we use it to inform present thought

and behaviour -- in the words of an extract I like from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice:

The teachings of our Quaker forefathers were intended to be landmarks, not campsites. (Jane Palen Rushmore)

Hence the desire to integrate the bulk of the historical quotes throughout the text.

In putting our experience of worship and of living before our "theologizing" we are in fact making a theological statement. We start with what challenges us, with our joys and our perplexities, and through them come to an understanding of the divine. In a document prepared to go out as an introduction to "Questions and Counsel" but never in fact published, Janet Scott wrote:

...we, like every generation, must find the Light and the Life again for ourselves and express them newly and honestly from our own experience and struggles. Only what we have truly made our own and have valued, not by assertion, but by lives of faithful commitment, can we hand on to the future. Even then, we must humbly acknowledge that our vision of the truth will, again and again, be amended.

In a sense, the very fact that we undertake revisions of our Disciplines from time to time is a testimony to our particular Quaker understanding of truth and how it is revealed to us. Revision is the practical out-working of a spiritual insight -- that "our vision of the truth" (not the truth itself) "will, again and again, be amended."

This, then, is our current position in the work. Working parties are beavering away at their particular sections, the process of gathering new extracts is underway, local meetings are also contributing a steady flow of thoughts and material, and we see this stage continuing for perhaps another two or three years. It is too soon to draw conclusions about where we may end up, what the "end product" will be, or what this revision will come to mean in the life of the yearly meeting, but I would like to share with you one insight that our work on "Advices and Queries" has increasingly brought home to me.

Perhaps the greatest differences of opinion in London Yearly Meeting at present centre around our understandings of the nature and person of Jesus, and what it means to call ourselves Christian; in this we are not entirely divorced from Friends worldwide (as I was reminded when looking again at the epistle from the 1985 World Gathering of Young Friends), nor from many other churches. The opening Advice, which I quoted earlier, continues with the words:

...The love of God draws us to him, a redemptive love shown forth by Jesus Christ in his life and on the

cross. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. As his disciples, we are called to live in the life and power of the Holy Spirit.

The equivalent section of "Questions and Counsel" (No. 4) reads:

The life and death of Jesus show us the reality and cost of obedience to God, and the mystery and truth of resurrection. How does Jesus speak to us today? Does his closeness to God challenge you to put what you have learnt from worship into daily practice? Be faithful in your inspiration.

For many people, the difference between seeing Jesus as "good example" alongside the good examples of other religious teachers, and seeing him as the Way, the Truth and the Life is absolutely central to their faith, whichever side they stand on. Potentially, it is an issue over which the yearly meeting could be torn apart. Yet I believe that once again the process of revision can be seen as a testimony to one of our fundamental Quaker insights, namely that there is a truth and a unity into which the people of God can be led. Two paragraphs from a paper sent in from one discussion group have spoken to me strongly on this:

Those who wish to identify themselves as Christians within the Society of Friends recognize the increasingly pluralistic nature of our Meetings for Worship. We believe that diversity of spiritual experience need not be an obstacle to our spiritual unity, but on the contrary, can be a source of strength. We must always be ready to engage in a dialogue with those of even apparently unreconcilable (sic) views in the expectation of illumination. We hope that those who do not wish to be called Christians within the Society of Friends will feel similarly inclined towards us. True tolerance is not the blurring of all distinctions, but rather the ability to embrace those of different conviction because of -- rather than in spite of -- that conviction.

...Be thankful for deep unity which we find in silence together, united far below thought by something which not all of us are willing to call God... To achieve at the level of thought and unity which we know in depth needs more than tolerance -- it needs a deep and compassionate readiness to try and understand each other; the courage to share our differences frankly, and to see them as offering us a great spiritual adventure in which we could not only find new strength together but could make a unique contribution to the spiritual turmoil of our time.

The phrase has been frequently used, but when taken seriously is staggering in its implications -- this revision is

truly a "test of our willingness to be led into unity." It is wonderfully encouraging to realize, through communications from meetings such as the one I have just read out, just how seriously Friends are taking that test.

A modern version of the Lord's Prayer in use in parts of the Church of England (Episcopalian) contains the phrase "Do not bring us to the time of trial." In one sense London Yearly Meeting's "time of trial" will come when we eventually, in three, four or five years' time, meet in special session to consider a final draft of the revised Book of Discipline. Yet in another, our "time of trial" is underway now, as we endeavour to interpret our calling to one another -- I am convinced that the process is as crucial as the product.

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"Questions and Counsel - a Provisional Document Offered by the Book of Discipline Revision Committee" -- First published January 1988.

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ROLEPLAY I
WHOM SHALL WE SEND AND WHO WILL GO FOR US?
Nancy Brewster

The Situation

Silverhill Friends Meeting is located in a semi-rural area of the eastern seaboard. In October 1988, a couple in the meeting, Jim and Alice, asked for a Clearness Committee because they both felt a strong concern to participate in the Witness for Peace group forming in Maryland and Delaware. The group plans to leave in January 1989 and go to Nicaragua for 2 weeks after a two-day orientation. The cost includes \$1300 for each person, one-half of which has to be turned in by January 1, 1989. Jim and Alice have two elementary-aged children. They have about one-half of the money from their own savings, but need the rest from another source. Alice is clerk of the Religious Education Committee in the meeting. Jim joined Friends five years ago because of the Peace Testimony. Alice has been a Friend all of her life.

The Task

The Clearness Committee needs to examine the steadfastness of Jim and Alice in their purpose and plans. They need to work out together what arrangements for the children and financing for the trip can be formulated.

Role Players

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Jim | An insurance salesman who loves his job and his family, but now for the first time has felt a genuine "call" to participate in Witness for Peace in Nicaragua. |
| Alice | Is trained as a social worker, but has not been employed in the last six years since their youngest child was born. She believes in the equality of women. She has heard about the Friends' Peace Testimony all her life but has never "done" anything about it. |
| Miriam | Clerk of the Clearness Committee has been active in many Friends' causes and is a regular member of the meeting. |
| Ralph | Clerk of the Finance Committee now, but once served as a conscientious objector in a World War II CPS camp. He is aware of the underpledged budget the meeting is attempting to raise. |

Louise Is a young mother with one child in elementary school. She is recording clerk of the monthly meeting and is a business stenographer in a full-time job.

Martin Doesn't understand what all the fuss is. He missed monthly meeting when it was originally presented and has many questions. He speaks Spanish well but has only used it in his work with agricultural cooperatives and Mexican farm laborers.

ROLEPLAY II
RENDER UNTO CAESAR
Nancy Brewster

The Situation

The No Nonsense Friends Church is looking for a new minister. Their former minister has retired after 12 years of service and gone to a retirement home in a nearby town. Lucas, with his wife, has come to the church, given an excellent trial sermon, and the congregation has been impressed. Lucas has been minister of another church for five years. His references are good. He has asked the church for the chance to withhold part of his salary (in a separate escrow account) as a protest against war taxes. Lucas is concerned about the homeless and truthfully told those talking to him that he hoped to spend part of his time working with a local group on starting a housing project for the homeless. Lucas' sincerity and vigor have impressed the congregation. The Ministry and Oversight is meeting to talk over the question of employing him. The parsonage is empty.

The Task

To reach consensus on whether or not Lucas will be called to come as minister to No Nonsense Friends Church.

Role Players

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Matthew | Clerk of Ministry and Oversight. He is a philosophy professor at the nearby state university. He became a Friend in middle age and is now near retirement. He considers Friends' business procedures slow, but knows they are the only way to remain faithful. |
| Anna | A former leader in the church is now in her eighties and becoming very hard of hearing. She recalls all the former ministers who have led the congregation. |
| Eugene | Is the church's janitor now that he has retired from his former shoe business. Previously an alcoholic, he was helped by the church community to regain his health and self-respect. |
| Ruth | A young mother and new member of the church who has worked in the local welfare office for several years. |

Marie A worker with the women of the church, who is always willing to help with whatever task comes along. She likes music and hopes Lucas will too.

Steve A banker and member of the Finance Committee of the church. He volunteers time at the feeding kitchen for aged people in the community. His teenage son is ready to leave the church from boredom.

SMALL GROUPS' TASK

This is being passed out to the conveners of the small groups. We want the groups to develop their own integrity and follow their own leadings, but based on past experience we think the groups function better if they have some suggestions to get started and to set boundaries to their discussion.

First, your initial meeting on Friday morning should give opportunity for members of your group to become acquainted. Everyone should share what they would like the group to know about them, the meeting they come from, and what their hopes are in coming to this Consultation. Second, the convener should moderate the group discussion, keep track of the time, try to keep the discussion on the topic, and be sure everyone has an opportunity to share in the group without one or two dominating the discussion. Sometimes it may be helpful for the group to wait in silence. Third, someone in the group should be designated as recorder of general conclusions reached (not the detailed discussion). It will be the responsibility of this person to make a ten-minute report to the Saturday evening plenary session, sharing the important ideas and concerns that came out of the group. Also, these summary remarks should be put in writing to leave at the conference center. They will go in the published findings of the Consultation, which will be mailed to you around the first of March.

The Groups' Task

Suppose your small group constitutes a committee on Ministry and Oversight charged with formulating a set of Testimonies, Queries and Advices for a new Friends meeting. Your task falls into three parts, which could coincide with your three small group sessions following your get-acquainted session on Friday morning.

1. What Quaker Testimonies do you want to emphasize in your new Friends meeting (or church)?
2. What Queries and Advices do you want to propose for your new meeting (or church)?
3. How do you propose to use these Queries and Advices in your meeting (or church)? How important is it for your members to comply with the Queries and Advices, and how would you achieve compliance?

SMALL GROUPS' SUMMARY REPORTS

GROUP 1

Our group began slowly, circling gingerly around a discussion of the Testimonies. Testimonies are part of a description, we suggested. Testimonies are the experience of people through time. We spoke of tradition and history. And then our energy began to flow more freely as we realized that Testimonies are a result of an experience with God. We meet God, encounter God, are found by God -- and our lives are changed. We cannot behave in the old ways.

Testimonies partake of the Sacramental -- an outward sign of an inward Grace. Thus the Peace Testimony becomes an experience we have inside ourselves. When we are dry, we get stuck with behaving in certain ways and losing the inner experience. Often, to bring a given Testimony back to life in a meeting, it takes an individual. The Testimony has to become incarnate.

We ask ourselves, Are there new Testimonies moving forward today? Wil Cooper has offered us Integrity. Our group speaks of Stewardship of the Environment, the practice of Sanctuary, Joy at the Good News of God's Love and Being a People of Hope.

In discussing the place of the Queries, the importance of history in discerning our Testimonies was questioned and also defended.

Out of that we moved to agreement on the importance of empowerment. Whatever we do has got to be real to us. As one member said, "Ownership is the key thing... If you don't feel you own it, it won't fly."

We found that none of us believed the Advices and Queries were being used effectively in the meetings known among us -- neither in meetings where the Queries were answered, nor in meetings where they were read aloud and received in worship. Both methods seem ineffective.

Why? It is tentatively suggested that over time our shortcomings become well-known to us, and thus, the exercise reveals nothing. But Friends do respond to newly formulated or spontaneously offered Queries. Can we keep our standing Queries and Advices -- they do ground us -- and, while upholding that tradition, create a mechanism or find ways to foster the formulation of fresh Queries every year?

A Query might be a new kind of way for an individual to bring a concern to the meeting. Instead of presenting a

position, offer it to the meeting in the form of a Query and see where it goes...

Finally, a successful experiment in a quarterly meeting was described. A Query was set. Then the meeting broke into small groups. In a worship-sharing format, each individual in the circle responded to the Query personally. Then, going around the circle again, each individual responded as though she or he had been the recording clerk for the group finding the sense of the circle. The final step -- although this particular meeting ran out of time -- would be for the convener of each circle to assimilate the collected reports of the "recording clerks." This is a creative use of Queries that we offer to you.

Our group closed, much to our surprise, with a spontaneously formulated Query: How do we integrate New Enlightenment?

GROUP 2

I. We can list Testimonies we feel are important. However, what is important is what we say about the spiritual basis for our Testimonies, or "where our Testimonies come from."

A. We think they come from the immediate experience of the Christ-spirit in all that we do.

B. They stem from the principle that our individual experiences of God can be tested by corporate worship, by Scripture and by the experiences of Friends who have come before us.

C. They grow out of our belief that God calls us to practice our faith constantly in every aspect of our lives.

II. The Testimonies, Queries and Advices are crucial in helping us keep our identity as Quakers. They are also helpful in giving newcomers a flavor of Quakerism in an easily digestible form.

We are concerned that Testimonies, Queries and Advices we have had for years not be revised too quickly. We want to emphasize the importance of good process in making revisions. We believe that new Testimonies, Queries and Advices should be tested by time and experience before being added to our Books of Discipline.

III. We would like to take the Peace Testimony and use it as a framework for expressing our ideas about Testimonies, Queries and Advices. It was the only Testimony we had a chance to discuss in any detail.

A. Testimony

From the 1660 Declaration of early Friends:

...We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever: this is our testimony to the whole world.

Friends throughout history have refused to participate in the wars of their countries, either by refusing to fight themselves, as in the case of conscientious objectors, or by refusing to pay and arm others to fight, as in the case of war tax resisters. For such actions, Friends have been sent to work camps, to prison and have had their property seized.

Recently Friends like Judy Brutz have devoted their lives to searching out the roots of violence in Quaker families. By identifying and dealing positively with instances in our own families in which we have been victims and have ourselves victimized others, we take another step towards becoming better peacemakers.

B. Queries

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God."

1. Are we learning to trust God and to therefore know inner peace and joy?
2. Are we developing constructive ways of handling disappointments, frustrations and anger in our most intimate relationships?
3. Do we really listen to those who disagree with us or who express their faith in unfamiliar language? Do we seek the spirit beyond language that can unite us in agape love?
4. As we reach out into our local communities and to those in the world community, do we seek to understand and minister, rather than to judge?
5. Do we work to change the economic, political and social structures which have institutionalized violence?

C. Advices

The Peace Testimony begins within us and spreads out to touch those closest to us, including our family members and friends. From there it grows to touch members of our local and worldwide community.

Peacemaking does not mean being passive, nor does it mean ignoring our anger and hurts. Though it may be painful, it means recognizing the seeds of violence within us and finding constructive, healthy ways of dealing with those seeds. Sometimes the counsel of a friend within meeting may be helpful. At other times, we may need the help of an experienced professional. Bear in mind that our family members and friends may not always be willing to seek help with us. A clearness committee can often be useful in helping us to decide what type of assistance we need.

Reconciliation, rather than a blurring-over of our differences, means listening, respecting other peoples' views and trying to find common ground with others.

IV. The Peace Testimony as roughly outlined above helps to illustrate some of the points raised in our small group discussion.

- A. Testimonies, Queries and Advices are closely inter-related. It makes sense to group them under general topics such as peace, equality and stewardship for example rather than separating them out into three different groups.
- B. Testimonies should be a description of what Friends are doing, and have done, rather than a prescription for behavior.
- C. Queries should serve as pointed questions which help us to live out the Testimonies. They should be worded "are we/do we" rather than "are you/do you?"
- D. Advices should serve as gentle reminders of how we respond adequately to Queries.
- E. Advices should give us a realistic idea of what may be involved in living out the Testimonies, outlining not only the joys but the difficulties we may encounter.
- F. We see new Testimonies, Queries and Advices as expanding on rather than replacing Testimonies,

Queries and Advices we have long found to be of value.

V. How do we incorporate Testimonies, Queries and Advices into the life of our meetings/churches? Listed below are some of our experiences:

- The reading of Queries and Advices in meetings for worship and business at regular intervals,
- The inclusion of Queries and Advices in the monthly newsletters,
- The routine handing-out of Testimonies, Queries and Advices to new attenders,
- The incorporation of Queries and their responses into State of the Society reports,
- The appointment of people in meeting whose job it is to answer Queries and Advices read in worship/business that do not generate a spontaneous response,
- The incorporation of a Query or Advice into the church service by listing it in the weekly bulletin, and planning a sermon around it,
- The formal answering of Queries and recording of responses in the monthly meeting minutes.

(The Friend whose meeting made it a practice to faithfully respond to and record their responses felt that when a difficult situation arose in her meeting, Friends appeared to have ignored the Queries! She emphasized that the inner rather than the outward response to Queries is what should be emphasized.)

Probably the most creative approach to Queries and Advices that we found is the following one. The Query/Advice Committee in the monthly meeting of one of our group members baked selected queries into fortune cookies and distributed them at the monthly meeting for business.

GROUP 3

We began by seeking for further clarity on Testimony. As an alternative to seeking unity on the sense of old or new Testimonies, we asked for particular examples from our particular

meetings, that is, "What Testimonies can we report from our home meetings?"

1. Truth speaking -- to speak as clearly as we can, to each other and to those beyond the meetings.
2. Equality -- for example, in preparing the meeting for same-sex marriages, though there is no actual couple in sight.

-- for example, providing a meeting place for a gay discussion group, risking receiving vandalism.

3. Community -- that part of community that is corporate support for, and affirmation of, particular concerns of individual meeting members; a kindness in hearing each other; a focus on prayer; caring for one another; accountability.
4. Peace -- the gathering of a number of past conscientious objectors and former military men.

-- a concern with peace within families within the meeting, as preparative for outreach peace witness.

5. Environment -- sending out Queries on environmental stewardship becomes a corporate project.
6. Worship -- nurturing the community life and structural life of a small meeting.
7. Simplicity -- a small meeting that does not take on more than it can handle.

-- acting a Testimony only when led to do so.

8. Joy
9. Unity

Queries and Advices

What is the source and power that may guide our meeting?

1. God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, variously discerned by each of us and all of us being aware, and being in tune with this power, and being willing to follow what God's will may be, and setting our own aside.
2. The source and power are manifested in persons, in the cloud of witnesses, past and present.

3. There is sometimes a tension between love and truth, powers that we want our lives to show. Our meeting helps us to find a healing way through paradoxes like this. We are all called to this process.
4. Language seems at once to help and restrict our ability to express our experience of the life and power. How, with what means, do we come in touch with this reality? The Word of God is not the same as our words of discourse, and this fundamental difference is addressed through discernment, and caution not to impose our words in place of God's Word. There are dangers in too closely describing in words, the sacred places of our lives that words can distort. Silence helps us to experience this reality; and discipline, and waiting in gathered meeting, humble, patient and in faith, for a gift of grace. Friends are likely to be at odds with the culture of their national society, for God's reality is a more fundamental one than any and all social constructions of reality. Biblical language is a manifestation of both discerned truth and language conventions.
5. Self-acceptance is the road to freedom; through sacrificing some of the things I would like to do, I am given the freedom to be fully obedient. Meeting nourishes this process.
6. Speaking truth, in love, is often well-put in the form of Queries. Posing a well-chosen Query allows the person's own inner teacher to transform that person's life, rather than being persuaded to react to outward compulsion.

We are not easy with a sense of enforcement in the use of Advices and Queries.

We agree to examine the Testimony for Peace, looking at Queries that speak to peace, from the personal community, friends and family, reaching outward to the world community.

In re-reading James Nayler's final statement of faith, we were struck by how it transformed and broadened the way we perceive the Peace Testimony, and so we include it here.

There is a spirit that I feel, that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end; its hope is to out-live all wrath, and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatsoever is of nature contrary to itself, so it conceives none in thoughts to any other, for its ground and spring is the mercies and forgiveness of God; its crown is meekness, its life is everlasting love unfeigned, and it takes its kingdom with entreaty, and not with contention, and

keeps it by lowliness of mind; in God alone it can rejoice, though none else regard it, or can own its life. It's conceived in sorrow, and brought forth without any to pity it, nor doth it murmur at grief and oppression; it never rejoiceth but through suffering, for with the world's joy it is murdered; I found it alone being forsaken, I have fellowship therein with them who lived in dens and desolate places in the earth, who through death obtained this resurrection, and eternal holy life.

When we are faced with disharmony, we should speak and act with love and integrity, leaving way open for redemptive grace, by offering guidance and inviting confession. This may be best done privately, or publically.

The Queries may not be used directly in these actions, but they inform our process.

We find that the writing and consideration of State of the Society reports, and sharing of these reports between meetings, serves as guidance for the individual meetings. But we also find marked differences from yearly meeting to yearly meeting. Several do not have these reports at all, or have only housekeeping content in them. We are concerned that Friends have ways to maintain accountability and sharing, to avoid tendencies to the spiritual isolation of meetings.

GROUP 4

What follows is a committee's work on formulating a set of Testimonies, Queries and Advices for a new Friends meeting.

Prior to beginning our work, we agreed that we should determine prior basic assumptions, on which to base our consideration of the matters at hand.

We included four major areas of agreement we felt necessary as underlying the directions of our work.

They are, that:

1. We are a religious society, the Religious Society of Friends, with the settled intention of practicing love.
2. There is the reality of the inner light, which is that of God within. John, Chapter 1, verse 9: "That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."
3. There is continuing revelation.

4. Perfectability of humans is possible.

With these assumptions, we turned to a listing of Testimonies, as:

1. Peacemaking
2. Simplicity
3. Equality
4. Community
5. Integrity, with a single standard of truth
6. Respect for creation

We thus moved on to correlate our Queries with our initial four basic assumptions.

1. Our first Query asks, then: Do we take the time to be open to God's presence, which empowers us to be loving? and

Are we loving in all our relationships?

2. Do we lay aside our own wills to permit God's light to guide our lives?

3. Are we open to new revelations from unexpected sources? and

Do we test new revelations against the light within and the collective light of the meeting?

4. Do we keep faith in the possibilities of perfection for ourselves and others through the power of the Holy Spirit?

5. Do we identify and hold to the light those elements of darkness within ourselves, so that perfection is possible?

We then proceeded to suggest Advices in keeping with our Testimonies; and seeing that peacemaking is a large task we suggest several Advices in this area.

They are:

To become a peacemaker, one must seek to achieve inner peace.

Friends are advised to love their enemies (Matthew, Chapter 5, verses 43-48), and to pray for those who spitefully use them.

Friends are encouraged to seek help in resolving situations which involve verbal or physical violence in the home or in the community. The

meeting should stand ready to help as needed and to be alert to the pain and suffering of its members.

Friends are urged to support alternatives to war as a method of solving international problems, as they are advised also to consider alternatives to military service and to the payment of taxes for preparation for war.

(Time ran out for working on the Queries and the committee agreed to move to our final task, the use of the Queries and Advices, and the importance of complying with them within the new Friends meeting.)

We propose that one of the Queries be read at meeting for worship at least once a month. We also suggest that individuals use the Queries in their private meditation.

We feel that membership committees should carefully review with the potential member the Testimonies, Queries, and Advices with the expectation that the person will grow in his/her understanding and acceptance of them.

And finally, in the event that a member fails to adhere to the spirit of the Testimonies, Queries, and Advices, it is the responsibility of the overseers or elders to counsel with the member.

GROUP 5

Our group accepted the task at hand and consequently a good deal of our discussion was colored by the fact that this was a "new" meeting...we accepted that as a challenge...perhaps even the chance to create the "perfect meeting."

Although it must be noted that we often wandered from the Testimonies, Advices, and Queries (who hasn't once or twice?) these wanderings were not irresponsible. They most often involved Quaker history lessons or opportunities for cross-pollination between varied Friends' practices and shared responses to common problems.

It must be admitted however, when we did try to stay focused on the assigned task, we found it elusive, slippery. I sensed even discomfort! But we forged ahead in spite of the pitfalls, beginning with the Testimonies.

There was general discussion trying to zero in on how the Testimonies might differ now that we had a chance to change them for our new meeting.

How long should they be? In a quick side trip for a history lesson, we learned that in College Park

California Meeting their whole Discipline consists of 5 short points. You can carry it around in your wallet.

How far should Testimonies get into basic beliefs?

How specific should they be?

Why do most of the various Books of Discipline not enumerate Testimonies?

But finally it was time to decide what Testimonies we wanted to pass along to our "new" meeting.

It was generally agreed that all the Testimonies would flow out of the basic belief that there is "that of God in every person."

We would try to rewrite and explain some of the old ones and include new ones.

The Peace Testimony might be expanded to include "creating harmony."

Let's add one on the importance of community.

Our Christian heritage should be more emphasized.

And the importance of a belief in the gathered meeting should be shared.

Next we moved to the Queries...generally agreeing that they would help to interpret the Testimonies by eliciting particular lines of thought.

Particular areas deemed important to include and update for our times were:

- Marriage, encouraging more commitment to meeting involvement in your marriage
- Seeking guidance for personal decisions under the care of the meeting
- Teaching our Quakerism to attenders
- Meetings for business being held in the spirit of worship
- Membership including a commitment to the wider Quaker fellowship.

One or two final notes about the Queries -- they serve quite well and often end up being used as an evangelical tool, providing a comfortable way to answer the inquiries of non-Friends.

- They need to be "readable," quotable, effective, exciting, re-freshing, and affirming rather than singularly judgmental.
- Some of them might be formed using illuminating Scripture to accompany them.

Finally the Advices. Are they a way of holding us accountable within the meeting community? Does not the meeting community have a right and obligation to articulate its expectations? How are we to pass on our spiritual heritage? And how are we to discern spiritual authenticity? Should the Advices be mutable? Should they contain a sense of humor? Should we maintain historical language if possible?

In general we agreed that all these things should be in the role of the Advices.

We specifically discussed community as an important topic for Advices, perhaps again using Scripture with an Advice to teach. I Corinthians 12:14-27 emphasizes the need for diverse gifts and ways of discerning these gifts within the meeting community.

After a long period of silence we closed with one specific Advice for our "new" meeting. When taking out ads in the local newspaper to announce your arrival to the community, consider placing your ad in the entertainment section rather than the religion section...you're much more apt to reach the unconvinced...Thee will get more bang for thy buck.

Flowing out of Friends' belief that there is that of God in every person comes a natural desire to be in harmony with ourselves and others as well as our mother earth. Friends seek to create harmony by eliminating the many ways in which violence dominates our lives...ever vigilant to the deceptive ways in which violence can taint our inner self love, as well as our relationships within families and with others, with our resources, with our environment, with other countries, with other cultures and with other religions... Friends seek to create harmony not just by eliminating violence but by nurturing in its place respect and a sincere yearning for all of God's creation to reach its full potential.

Honesty of integrity:

Friends have always striven to be honest in their dealings with all people. The desire to be honest about their faith, early led to their dismissal from the army for refusing to treat officers as superiors; led to difficulties in court for refusing to take off their hats before magistrates and to prison for holding their illegal religious meetings in public, for to do so in private would be a lie.

The desire to be honest led Friends to pioneer in the single pricing of goods for sale. Their behavior in many areas has made the word "Quaker" synonymous with honesty.

GROUP 6

How do you propose to use Testimonies, Queries and Advices in your meeting?

- Preparing for membership, but members must also be serious about them
- Don't answer them, but discuss what they mean and what constitutes the issues
- Make them living
 - Use in mid-week meeting as focus of worship
 - Monthly Sunday evening forum to see how they are expressed in individual and corporate life
 - Adult Sunday School class/discussion groups
 - Women's group
 - Meditation as outlined in pink paper in packet
 - both corporate and individual
 - Family make own Queries

Four major issues to consider as the Testimonies, Queries and Advices are used in our meetings:

1. Perhaps some of our Testimonies, Advices and Queries ought to be for our life together and some for individual life, i.e., family life - "do we (I) as a family member(s)...do we as a meeting encourage, teach and support families..."

We need to see Testimonies as the standard we want to put before ourselves and not an outline of a social action program. They are a way of spreading God's Kingdom among us and challenging us to live up to it. This is to avoid the strong dichotomy between the social action people and the inward-oriented people.

2. The language with which we present the Testimonies, Advices and Queries (i.e., abortion or any controversial subject) can lead to simplistic answers, YES or NO, and subsequent conflicts to convince the other side or justify our own answer. We need a language change to perhaps, "How do we support..." or other language which leads to discussion and mutual seeking.
3. How can we use the Testimonies, Advices and Queries to be more in balance within our meetings?
 - Not so much in addressing specifics as in leading us

to the overarching principles that guide us in coping with the difficult issues of our day.

4. "Preserve the Purity" by removing the one who has violated the Testimony, but we may realize that the group was (is) larger than we thought. The purity may be the compassion for one another and not necessarily the absence of immoral behavior.

Some questions regarding the current validity of Testimonies, Advices and Queries and how we might make them "real" and own them.

1. Linking them to memory, particularly the Biblical story, roots them and us together.
2. Make them part of our worship, study and living. Active inclusion in more than mere verbal discussion communicates a great deal to new persons attending our meeting, opening way for them to join us from their beginning point and not expecting them to begin at our point of view.
3. Mutual accountability -- without mutual accountability between members of society, the Testimonies, Advices and Queries will have very little purpose. We cautioned the use of the Testimonies, Advices and Queries "against" another unless we too are willing to be held accountable by another. Realistically, this is how many Testimonies, Advices and Queries are used. Ideally, we hold ourselves accountable and fear no discipline, because we know that the Almighty Parent disciplines the child that is loved.

We didn't feel we could write Testimonies, Advices and Queries for others, but we could do it for ourselves. We recognize the need to revise, reword, or add new Testimonies, Queries and Advices to make them alive and vital to us.

Worship -- we recognize the continued existence of God and the many opportunities for worship; we acknowledge the importance of structured corporate worship in Spirit and Truth, and the need to prepare well for it.

Stewardship -- to the meeting, to the community, and to God -- we realize that all we have, all that we are, belongs to God.

Ministry -- we must be respectful of the ministry of all persons, recognizing the diversity of gifts among us, cherishing and encouraging various ministries (hospitality, traveling, releasing, etc.); we are called to minister to each other with our time and energy as well as our material resources.

Christian Nurture and Family Life -- the meeting creates the conditions appropriate for growth and nurturance of all persons in the meeting; we educate and support families in their various forms (through First Day School, adult education, parenting classes, etc.); we support the children in the meeting and encourage them to attend meeting for worship.

Integrity and Truthfulness -- the meeting nurtures future as well as present members, recognizing the value of diversity; we try to live out all our Testimonies as examples to others of our faith.

Simplicity -- inwardly and outwardly; we try to exercise self-discipline, stewardship of our bodies, time and energy, and to cultivate directness and straightforwardness in all our actions.

Peace -- we recognize its origin in our hearts and endeavor to overcome the violence in our own nature.

Equality -- we work for the equality of all persons in our culture so that the "isms" are done away with (racism, classism, ageism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.).

Sacredness of All Creation -- seeing the spirit that moves through all things.

Vocation -- right livelihood; correct business dealings with others.

Meetings for Business -- proceed in the manner of Friends, in the spirit of worship.

Biblical Literacy -- we endeavor to become grounded in our historical roots by familiarizing ourselves with the Bible and the writings of and about early Quakers.

How to make them real and ours:

- Connect to Biblical story
- Make them part of our study and worship and living
- Mutual accountability

Where does the process start?

- Concerned individuals
- Use Friends' process
- Prophetic ministry
- Process itself provides the opportunity

Issues to keep in mind as we use the Testimonies, Queries, and Advices:

- Some are for corporate life, some are for family life, others for individuals.
- The way it is phrased can lead to simplistic answers -- not "Do you" but "How do..."
- Use them to bring balance to our lives and the life of the meeting. Don't focus on specifics to the detriment of the whole.
- Positive education toward broader vision, keep compassion, listening and laboring with one another in forefront. Keep overarching principles as the guidelines.

GROUP 7

We read the charge, surveyed the assigned task and spoke to the impossibility of accomplishment. The monumental character of the Testimonies inhibited our efforts until we considered Testimony and Query simultaneously. Personal exhortations were easier to address than corporate proclamations. We found some openings in the first session but not unity.

- Witness to a world of inequality, aggression, violence yet affluence
- Live separated from brashness
- Live as to found a society of care, etc.
- Live experimentally and free yet aware of part and collective discipline

* a new and gathered people in an old and fractured world *

And so, there was homework. The first session evolved a base; now we agreed to review the session, look to our meeting life and create... Mary Ellen Pike will share some examples of our thinking.

We felt some uneasiness as the final session began. The group task seemed clear enough on Friday, but a night's sleep led crystallized objectives. Compliance was too legalistic, too rigid. Accountability expressed our willingness to accept responsibility and to demonstrate our understanding of the spirit of Queries and Advices.

Two ways of presenting Queries seemed perfunctory or even irrelevant: routine notice in meeting bulletins or newsletters,

reading each month's Queries at meeting for worship or business meeting.

But there are better ways: a small group (3-5) within the larger meeting seek covenant together to examine and seek application of a Query. The people grow together in the shared experience of interpretations and thereby enrich the life of the meeting. And isn't the "State of the Society Report" a challenge to corporate accountability?

But are there other examples in Quaker practice that will make the Queries ring with truth?

- Perhaps a concern worded as in a Query and then presented to business meeting...
- Perhaps the monthly meeting will embrace accountability to itself by laying down a committee...
- Perhaps the acting clerk can modify a Query to make it pertinent...
- Perhaps a group may perceive a problem and bring a larger group into accountability.

Our group stopped in surprise. Had we been avoiding dialogue on differences?

Testimony

Members of _____ Meeting intend to create a community that reflects their encounter with the God whose spirit and will they have glimpsed through their individual experiences and in their gathered meeting. The community views itself as part of a long tradition stretching back at least to Jesus of Nazareth but authentically recaptured in 17th century England by bands of seekers effectively organized by a wandering and charismatic prophet, George Fox. The central event of which we of _____ community seek to testify -- a divine human cooperation that has captured our spirit and wills -- has made us determined witness to a world of inequality, oppression, and violence, yet one still of impressive material abundance. To live faithfully up to such possibilities, we affirm our commitment to lives separated from the harshness we are called to reject, yet lives that also embody our joint decision to found a society of care, concern, support and action. Wishing to find ways to be experimental and free while remaining aware of the fact and the necessity of collective discipline, we declare our fundamental testimony as one of a new and gathered people in an old and fractured world.

Foundational Testimony

Following on George Fox's assertion that "Jesus has come to teach his people himself," Friends hold one another accountable to heed the witness of the Light that enlightens every person. Friends hold that such individual and corporate listening opens the Society for new learning and obedient service.

Queries

Are you mindful of your heritage as Friends and do you endeavor to faithfully transmit it?

Do you wait patiently on the Lord and have you been enlightened with fresh outpouring of the Spirit?

Are you joyful in the faith that undergirds you, and how do you express your joy?

Are you gathered and centered in your worship and do you feel empowered by it in your service in the world?

How have you sought to integrate into your life of decision and actions the Light with which you have been entrusted?

Advices - Personal Spiritual Life

Make time in your daily life for spiritual refreshment, renewal and growth. Practice spiritual disciplines appropriate to your needs and circumstances. Read the Bible and other spiritual writings for instruction and devotions. Take time to be still in the Divine presence. Pray for guidance, strength, joy and deepening love. Hold those close to you, those with whom you are in conflict, and those in positions of responsibility in the Light, serving as a channel of Divine Love.

Find others with whom to frequently share your spiritual life. Be vulnerable, honest and humble in this spiritual sharing. Share your successes, failings, hopes, questions and doubts. Give your full attention to others as they share with you, listening non-judgmentally and empathetically. Encourage others in their spiritual journeys; offering insights from your own experience which may be helpful while respecting the need of the other person to discover his/her own path.

Advices

Do not be conformed to the world.

Stand fast against the forces of alientation which would set us against each other and seduce us into idolatry of parts of a fragmented universe.

Open yourselves to the sovereign and transforming grace of the Light within, who will show you the unity of all things in the Dominion of God.

Seek not to know God's purposes, for you are a tiny figure in the vast landscape of God's design.

Trust the inward teacher to guide you step by step in the path you are to follow in the fulfillment of that design, as that same teacher is guiding others along their paths.

Encourage others to trust in that guide and strengthen each other in fidelity to its leadings.

SMALL GROUP ASSIGNMENTS

GROUP 1

Margaret Yarrow, Convener
Carol Holmes
Jean Walton
Michel Avery
Dan O'Brien
Wilmer Cooper
Carter Pike

GROUP 2

Alice Lofland, Convener
Ruth Taber
Joan Lane
Paula Rogge
Stratton Jaquette
Don Tickle
Eldon Harzman

GROUP 3

Jan Hoffman, Convener
Helen Rowlands
Karen Reixach
Elaine Carte
Renee Crauder
Allan Kay Harvey
Richard Preston
Canby Jones

GROUP 4

Terry Warden, Convener
Marilyn Roper
Marian Roberts
Betty Austin
Doris Ferm
Jay Worrall
John Nicholson

GROUP 5

Gary Farlow, Convener
Katherine Smith
Nancy Brewster
Chip Neal
David Edinger
Geoffrey Kaiser

GROUP 6

Holly Inglis, Convener
Dorothy Kakimoto
Elizabeth Barnard
Virginia Redfield
Teodore Perkins
Herb Lape
Jeremy Greenwood

GROUP 7

Larry Ingle, Convener
Carol Zimmerman
Stephanie Crumley-Effinger
Esther Murer
Mary Ellen Pike
John Hubbard
Bill Samuel
Lorton Heusel

PARTICIPANT OBSERVERS

Are not assigned to any particular group, but may participate in all groups.

Barbara Platt
Phil King

PARTICIPANT/OBSERVERS SUMMARY REPORT
Barbara Platt and Phil King

The ninth annual Friends Consultation on Testimonies, Queries, and Advices has brought together 52 people from 24 yearly meetings, 25 states, Canada, and England. We are thankful this Consultation has been made possible because the road to this encounter has been paved by the experience of 8 prior Consultations. Our topic has been challenging, engaging, and fruitbearing in the lives of each who came. We expect this growth to continue as we return home.

Presentations

We are grateful to T. Canby Jones for offering some beginning definitions of Testimonies, Queries and Advices. (see p. 1) As our time together progressed, we agreed, over and over, that the demonstration of the Testimonies in our lives is central. We were reminded of the changes throughout our history in the use of the Queries and Advices, and want to affirm the value of their challenging, and devotional use, both personally and corporately. Friends welcome the meaningful linkages of our Testimonies, Queries and Advices to historic Quaker practice, and to Biblical faith. Canby introduced us to many Testimonies through the letters, experience, and language of George Fox. (Canby's was an exercise few of us would be prepared to attempt!)

Canby described the first 5 Queries in London Yearly Meeting's Church Government (1964) as, "succinct and very moving." How marvelous it has been to have with us London Yearly Meeting Friends Jeremy Greenwood and Helen Rowlands, both of whom are deeply involved in the current process of revising London Yearly Meeting's Book of Discipline. They have struggled, as have many American Friends in recent years, with the changing of language, often from traditional Christian expressions of faith to more inclusive, and many feel weaker, formulations of our faith. As a reflection of spiritual experience, these changes bring to the fore this felt conflict: "...the difference between seeing Jesus as 'good example' alongside the good examples of other religious teachers, and seeing him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life is absolutely central to individual faith, whichever side one stands on." The process of revising the Discipline is extremely important, as it gives Friends a chance to engage one another, and articulate anew that which is most central in our experience. "...this revision is truly a test of our willingness to be led into unity." We are amazed, and thankful, that 28 Friends come together on a regular basis and are able to accomplish the work that they are doing.

Herb Lape shared deeply of his personal journey, and testified that, "we must not only be turned to our Inward Teacher, but must also be helped to settle on this foundation." Often his own story has been reflected in the experience of others. Herb's personal testimony gave many of us the liberty to share our own stories throughout our time together. The tension between individual Light and corporate discernment is deep and unresolved. Does the Quaker/Ranter tension reflect our experience today?

Responses

Early on in our discussions confusions were expressed. Do Testimonies exist? What is an individual Testimony? A corporate Testimony? Testimonies are not a decision that we write down, but a product of our lives -- an expression of our faith. We seem to use the word "testimony" both to describe a practice/principle/way of living, and in the sense of testify, or bear witness to. What is the role of continuing revelation in bringing forth new Testimonies? What are our Testimonies? For instance, do we have a traditional Testimony on sexual expression, and if so, what is it? The efforts to define our Testimonies in the area of marriage and sexuality are causing great struggle in the Society of Friends. While both Canby Jones and Herb Lape presented some personal reflections, our group discussions did not focus in this area. Rather, we seemed continually to return to the varying approaches to Quaker faith. Are there other words besides "Christ-centered" or "universalist"? Are those persons in pain, or those who are unsure, the only persons defining the place of Christian faith in Quakerism? Perhaps membership applicants should consider this Query: Are you willing to look closely at the Christian heritage of our Quaker faith? Is it too easy in living for today to forget the importance of memory and/or tradition? Is it too easy to live only out of our personal experience thus forgetting or not observing or not even knowing about the cloud of witnesses? The paradoxical relationship between the individual and the community to which Friends have always witnessed came up over and over during this Consultation. How can we find ways of using the living Word through expressions and uses taken from this Consultation to avoid both fundamentalism and Ranterism? We need Queries which address the life of the whole person and the whole meeting. Are we creating museum pieces, or speaking prophecies? Do we not need language that connects us to our memory of life for today? How can we hold together heritage and vision?

See I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland. Isaiah 43:19

Small Groups

The stated task of our small groups, which met four times during the Consultation, was to formulate a set of Testimonies, Queries, and Advices for a new Friends meeting/church, and to consider if and how our Testimonies can be used corporately and personally as a tool for spiritual accountability in the life of individuals and the meeting.

Our small groups also provided an arena for worship, discussion, and personal sharing on our topic of Testimonies, Advices, and Queries, in whatever manner was helpful to the group. Thus one group might appear to have "ignored" the task, and yet experienced God's spacious presence in a manner which deepened each one and the group.

What is the source and power that may guide our meetings? What are the assumptions about who we are as faithful Friends which undergird our historic and living Testimonies?

Some of our assumptions include:

We are a religious society of friends, with the settled intention of practicing love.

The source and power which may guide is God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, variously discerned by each of us and all of us being aware, and being in tune with the power, and being willing to follow what God's will may be, and setting aside our own, our communities can reflect our encounter with the God whose Spirit and will we have glimpsed through our individual experiences and in the gathered meeting.

We meet Christ, encounter Christ, are found by Christ -- and our lives are changed. We cannot behave in the old ways.

There is that of God in every person, which we also know as the true light which lighteth every one who comes into the world.

There is also within us a natural desire to be in harmony with ourselves, others, and the earth.

Whatever we do, and whatever we believe, has to be real to us.

Jesus has come to teach his people himself.

Our "new meetings" grow from our personal experience and corporate heritage. We can consider Testimonies for ourselves more easily than for others. Some Testimonies we named include:

peacemaking, simplicity, equality, community, integrity and truthfulness, respect for creation, worship, ministry, Christian nurture and family life, joy at the good news of God's love, being a people of hope, sanctuary.

How do we live, practice, breathe our Testimonies? Many could agree with the statement of one group where no one thought the Queries and Advices were being used effectively, despite a variety of practices (reading during worship or prior to meetings for business, inclusion in newsletter or bulletin for personal reflection, etc.). Have our Queries and Advices perhaps become institutional relics, reminding us of beliefs of the Society of Friends, but seldom empowering individuals or meetings to reflective thought and action?

Many creative ideas of how to use Queries and Advices were shared: as a basis for small group discussion and reflection, as a focus for mid-week worship, as personal meditation/daily reflection. Can the Advices and Queries become the vehicles through which we work at accountability in our faith communities? How?

Worship and Group Life

We have reached each other in silence, through words and music, by careful listening and honest revealing. On Thursday night, Stephanie Crumley-Effinger, leading our worship epilogue, decried the keeping of secrets so prevalent in our culture. Our calling, to be truly who we are was at times unfulfilled. We recognize the experience of some Friends that this group was not one in which they could bring all of themselves, for fear of rejection, labeling, and being misunderstood. At the same time, we rejoice in the commonalities which we have discovered, and the deep unity we have felt. John Nicholson's sharing of joy at the beauty of creation spoke to our condition on Friday night. Our plenary discussion on Saturday evening became gathered as we spoke honestly, again, of some of our different experiences and feelings about this Consultation. Our worship continued as Don Tickle shared the concern about racism which has been laid upon him. We appreciate the depth of searching evident in our expectant waiting, in morning worship, and throughout this Consultation.

We have thoroughly enjoyed our time together. The role plays Saturday morning, led by Nancy Brewster (see p. 40) provided us with a lighter look at our topic. Several individuals were excused from practicing integrity/truth-speaking for the duration of the role-play. Between the laughs of recognition of our universal corporate dilemmas, we asked more questions. How do we determine the validity of a leading? Does the meeting or the pastor set the boundaries in the role of the minister? What is the role of the meeting in supporting individuals as they

practice our Testimonies? The timing of this exercise brought a much needed and refreshing uplift to our group.

Concluding Remarks

The Friends Consultation on Testimonies, Queries, and Advices has been a deeply enriching experience and one that we will be carrying back to our meetings. We will all look at our Testimonies, Advices and Queries in a new way. The process of encountering one another on matters concerning our deeper experiences of faith has served to bring life-producing growth. "Why are we silent and abashed about that which is most profound to us?" This Friend has found courage to take home with her. Another Friend was unsure of the need for this sort of Consultation, but now sees how much more creatively Queries and Advices can be used locally, and how critical it is that we grapple with our Testimonies.

As participant/observers who represent different branches of our Religious Society, we are convinced that continued "cross-fertilization" is essential if Friends are to truly engage one another concerning the core issues of our faith.

We all join in thanks to Eldon Harzman and Wilmer Cooper for their faithful efforts in planning the Consultation, to Lorton Heusel for clerking, to the presenters, to our small group leaders for their valuable service, to the hospitable and efficient staff of Quaker Hill Conference Center, and to each other for our presence.

As we floated from small group to small group, and around the Consultation activities, we were graciously received and openly responded to. We especially appreciate the support and encouragement you have given us throughout these days, which have enabled us to bring this report to you.

APPENDIX

The monographs which appear in this Appendix were made available to participants as resource materials for the Consultation.

QUAKER QUERIES AND THE AWARENESS EXERCISE **Renee Crauder**

What are the Quaker Queries? How do we use them?

"We read them once a month in meeting and are supposed to think about them."

"One Friend in our meeting answers them for the meeting and then they are sent to quarterly meeting."

"Aren't they a way for us to know how to live as Friends?"

Yes indeed, they are.

The Queries are the bridge between our beliefs and our actions -- the signposts leading us to action through our faith. They point the way to the concerns God has laid upon us; they give form and substance to the feelings and leadings we experience in meeting for worship and in our private prayer. The Queries answer our "What am I to do?" and often our "How do I do that?"

The Queries are a great underused resource that can help Friends today live authentic Quaker lives.

But what are the Queries and what has been their traditional function for Friends?

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice (1955/1972, in process of revision), notes:

The Queries are a profile of the Quaker way of life and a reminder of the ideals Friends seek to attain. Concerned with action, not with theological belief, they have long served as a unique form of self-discipline, although their pattern has not always been the same. In the late 1600's the Queries of London Yearly Meeting asked for specific facts and figures: What Friends imprisoned for their testimonies had died, what present prisoners there were, what sufferings?

Yet even then -- as now, in today's language -- there were also the questions: How does the Truth prosper among you, and how are Friends in peace and unity? In Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, as insights changed, so did the Queries.

How did we get the Queries? Hugh Barbour and Arthur Roberts (Early Quaker Writings, p. 31-32) note that:

Quakers wrote letters before they wrote epistles... notes between traveling Quaker preachers were built up into an organized system of mission reports...the same wide diffusion of the new apostles drove Fox and others into writing broadcast epistles to all Friends in a distant area...Queries and 'advices,' which called for a response from each local Meeting, were the logical next step

after statements from George Fox or London Yearly Meeting were sent around to Friends.

How were the Queries used? Howard H. Brinton (Friends For 300 Years P. 125) notes that:

the Queries were a kind of group confessional by which every individual and every meeting was able at regular intervals of a year or less to check actual conduct against an ideal standard of behavior. The Queries covered all that was expected of the consistent Friend. They were frequently revised as new moral insights prevailed or old testimonies become obsolete.

And Douglas Steere writes (Introduction to Quaker Spirituality p. 22-23):

Meetings were asked to read out the Queries and have their members examine their consciences in regard to such questions as the taking of oaths...the witness against paying tithes...the keeping of slaves...concern...in regard to the penal system... From the beginning these Queries also turned inward and asked whether Friends held their meetings properly and whether they ordered their lives in simplicity and found time for spiritual reading and for private waiting on God that made them able to come with the inward openness required for the public waiting upon God. They queried whether they held their lives free enough from the excessive cumber of acquisitive vocations in order to have time to give to others and for opening themselves to the Light; whether they encouraged their children in this same openness and gave them opportunity for the kind of education that might enhance this quality of life.

As example, here are two Queries from Baltimore Yearly Meeting's Book of Discipline (1950):

Query 2. Do you endeavor so to order your daily lives that opportunity is provided for meditation and close communion with the Divine Spirit for guidance and strength?

Query 4. Do you live in sincerity and simplicity? Are you careful to live within the bounds of your circumstances? Do you observe moderation in proper things and abstain from those that are harmful? Do you advise your children and those under your influence to observe the same care? Does your meeting take care of such of your members as need aid, and assist them when possible, to become self-supporting?

This last part of the Query is to be answered in writing once a year and sent to quarterly and yearly meeting. These Queries give us much to think about what it means to live as Friends.

The Queries changed as Friends' emphases and concerns changed over the centuries; and as more yearly meetings formed, different concerns became primary. A perusal of just a few yearly meeting Books of Discipline shows special 20th century concerns such as the environment, and drug and substance abuse. Yet the great themes of what it means to be a Friend remain the same: to live our private and communal lives in God's presence, answering that of God in everyone; to practice the Peace Testimony; to live simply; to be good stewards of what is entrusted to us. The Query in longest continuous use (1682) is "Are love and unity maintained amongst you?" A related Query asks, "Where differences arise are endeavors made speedily to end them?" How we continue to labor with these!

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting asks its meetings and members to consider these 15 Queries encompassing the life of the meeting, the lives of its members, and special concerns:

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Meeting for Worship | 9. Race Relations |
| 2. Ministry | 10. Environment |
| 3. Meeting for Business | 11. Peace and Nonviolence |
| 4. Care for One Another | 12. Interfaith Cooperation |
| 5. Religious Education | 13. The Home |
| 6. Education | 14. Simplicity |
| 7. Outreach | 15. Self-discipline. |
| 8. The Social Order | |

Friends are expected to incorporate each Query into their lives.

How do we really use the Queries today? How important are they in our lives as Friends? At Radnor Meeting, a Query is read on the first Sunday of the month during meeting for worship and

also at meeting for business. Read clearly and slowly, the Query is there for all Friends to reflect upon. Yet often even our worship does not reflect upon the substance of the Query, at least not in vocal ministry. How many of us take the Query home in our thoughts, reflect on it, consciously build our lives on it?

We can use the Queries today to grow as Friends, to enrich our meetings, to revitalize our Religious Society. Faith and Practice suggests they be used as a means of self-examination by the meeting and by individual Friends. We need to incorporate the Queries into our daily lives, for the aggregate life of the meeting reflects the lives of its members.

I propose that each one of us -- Friends and attenders -- begin a daily rhythm of reflections on each month's Query, to help us to live out of our deepest center in obedience to the Inner Light. In earlier days Quaker families read the Bible together (and perhaps discussed what they read and how this applied to their own lives); families lived closer together with the meeting their social, spiritual, and practical focus. Today, we come to meeting for worship from our own involved and busy lives, much of which are not Quaker-centered. There is not today the accountability to each other before God of the earlier generations of Friends. Reflecting daily on a Query may well hone our identities as Friends. Then our meetings may shine more brightly with God's Light in each of us, and others will see us and echo Henri Nouwen's beautiful words: "See how they love one another; look how they serve their neighbor; see how they pray to their Lord."

How do we begin? We have already begun: meeting for worship is indeed a self-examination in the presence of God. That is once a week. Now we need to take a little time daily to "set" the Query in our lives. Perhaps many Friends already incorporate each month's Query into their daily prayer. Many of us still need to find a way to do this.

A model for such a self-examination from a non-Quaker tradition that I have found consonant with Quaker values is the Ignatian Awareness Exercise. This is a short, daily prayer period during which I recall in some detail how I have lived as a Friend in God's presence today. In some detail, because that helps me to see the specifics of my actions and thoughts: I can reinforce the positive and work toward shedding the negative.

The Awareness Exercise (for many years called the Examination of Conscience) was set forth by St. Ignatius Loyola, a 16th Century Spanish Catholic mystic whose primary goal was to find God in all things and seek God's presence in all things (we Friends can hardly disagree with that!). He wrote to a young member of his religious order: "Let your whole heart and your whole outward person stand in the light of God's infinite wisdom." Ignatius found the Awareness Exercise a superb way of melding prayer with action. He realized that it is one thing to

decide during our prayer time to live the way God asks us to, and quite another to actually live this way the rest of the day! Since Ignatius' time, many persons, including those in religious orders, have made it a daily practice. Ignatius thought so highly of this prayer/exercise that when he had time for only one short prayer, he preferred this because it helped him to acquire a discerning heart -- to perceive how well he was living in the Light. This principle of joining prayer and life has much in common with our Quaker Queries. In Quaker Spirituality, (p. 22) Douglas Steere writes that the Queries are the public equivalent of the Roman Catholic Examination of Conscience (Awareness Exercise).

I have been doing the Awareness Exercise daily for almost ten years. A few months ago I added the Query of the month to this prayer time. The 15 minutes daily look something like this:

1. After rising I make a cup of coffee and take it to the living room where I sit cross-legged (my favorite posture for praying).
2. I put myself in God's presence by being there in a single-minded way (I know I am always in God's presence, but I am not always specifically aware of being in that presence) and by focusing on the Inner Light.
3. After a minute or so I ask for light to see myself more clearly and for wisdom to understand what I see. Usually I just say those words -- some days I just think them or say something else with the same meaning.
4. I think about my day since the last Awareness Exercise. It is not a matter of laboriously dredging up every instant of the day but rather a letting rise to the surface what will. Usually I hone in on one or two events that surface and try to see how I was obeying the Inner Light in my actions and interactions, with myself and with others. What might rise is, "Hmm, I think I cut off that person too soon in our conversation -- I'll have to be more mindful next time;" or, "That seemed like such a difficult time, but now I see the gift in it that I couldn't at the time it happened;" or, "I'm amazed how patient (not one of my virtues!) I was in that situation." In effect, I ask myself where I have clearly acted out of God's light, and where I can do better.
5. I read this month's Query. I first answer the Query questions with a "yes" or "no" or "sometimes," and then hone in with a "How do I..." or, "If not, how could I..." and other such questions, to get at the heart of my answer. A

plain "yes" or "no" is valuable, for it has enabled me to look at the situation, but I want to go deeper in order to become a more faithful Friend and more useful member of the meeting. Let's say it's Query 1: Do I attend meeting with heart and mind prepared for worship, expecting that my worship will be a source of strength and guidance? I answer as honestly as I can, and then ask myself a further question: How do I prepare for meeting? I do the same for the other question: Does the meeting for worship refresh and renew my daily life and increase my faithfulness? I ask myself, if yes, how does it renew and refresh my daily life and increase my faithfulness? If not, why not, and what can I do about that?

6. Then I "formally" close this prayer/exercise time with one of several prayers I particularly like, or I am just still until it seems right to get up.

The total time for the Awareness Exercise is about 15 minutes; some days I focus much more on one section than on another.

Let me share some of the questions that I asked myself before I began, and the answers as they have surfaced.

Question: If I do the Awareness Exercise each day, does that mean that I change Queries every month? Does that distract from a continuity? And what happens to the "discarded" Query?

Answer: Yes, I change to a new Query every month; this seems not to distract from continuity of prayer. The "discarded" Query sticks around anyway and when something particular to that Query occurs during my day, I may go back to it in addition to or instead of the current Query.

Question: Do I have to go through all parts of the Query every day?

Answer: It's probably a good idea to read over the whole Query each day and then to hone in on any experience of the day that speaks to you from that Query.

Question: Not every part of each Query is part of my life every day -- how do I connect with the Query?

Answer: I can expand the Query. For instance, Query 15 on Self-Discipline might be expanded for today to include a related condition: what is my reaction to the increased use of drugs by young people? What can I do?

The beauty of the Awareness Exercise is that it enables us to be honest with ourselves before God, and to grow from that self-knowledge. It's being "teachable," that old Quaker term meaning an openness to discerning what the Inner Light is asking of us and a willingness to change.

You might ask, "Well, all this seems very worthwhile but very complicated -- all those steps -- and takes a lot of time. What good does it really do?"

As with anything we practice faithfully, be it the piano or discerning how to answer that of God in each person, every beginning takes self-discipline and effort. Once we are into it, the forms that seemed to restrict us fall away and we are left with the substance and the freedom to become proficient.

What good does it really do? Of course it's hard to see specifics. I do sense a greater awareness of where and who I am in relation to the world around me, in relation to myself, and in relation to God (these are not necessarily separate). Because I "remember" a Query each day, I find myself reflecting on the particular Query at odd moments, quite without design. I feel that this process deepens my commitment and growth and faithfulness to Friends and to my meeting. And this deepening may well enable me to answer that of God in others more easily.

Isn't that what being a Friend is all about?

THE QUAKER TESTIMONY

Wilmer Cooper

The word testimony is dear to Friends because it is supposed to grow out of our experiences of the leading of the Spirit of God or the voice of conscience informed by the Light of Christ within. Quaker testimonies might be considered the equivalent of the creeds of the churches. The testimonies of peace, simplicity, equality, etc., are familiar to most Friends, with the peace testimony given priority. The testimony of integrity is often subsumed under one of the other testimonies, but perhaps is most central of all to the message of George Fox.

This thought came to me recently as I listened to a tape recording of an address given several years ago to my Quakerism class by Elfrida Vipont Foulds. She is now an elderly Friend, a distinguished member of London Yearly Meeting, who lives in northwest England in the Lake Country, where Friends had their beginnings in the 1650's. Her home is at Yealand-Conyers, not far from Pendle Hill, Firbank Fell, and Swarthmoor Hall. She is the author of a number of books, particularly children's books, and she is also a Quaker historian of some note.

The subject of her talk to my class was, "The Message of George Fox." Years earlier, she had struggled to bring Fox's experiences alive to her by visiting his birthplace at Fenny Drayton, a small, sparsely populated village in the English Midlands. As she walked around there she realized that probably only one building was still standing that had been there when Fox was a boy, and that was the village church. So she went over to the church, pushed open the large door, went in, took a seat on one of the front pews, and just sat there in meditation. She lapsed into absolute silence, no sound from within or without. Finally she looked up and saw along the wall one of those family tombs one sees in English churches. The faces and family names were carved across the top. The faces all looked alike, except for one half-face that was looking right at her.

At that moment she seemed to hear a voice which said, "Everything begins with a question about life." At the same time she saw in her mind's eye the boy George Fox sitting there with his family in the village church, Sunday after Sunday, worshipping. But the boy George looked puzzled; he seemed to be pondering why he and his family, and their neighbors, came week after week to the village church where they prayed; where they made solemn affirmations; and where they witnessed to Christ. But then these self-same people would go from the church the following week cheating their neighbors, cheating in the marketplace; they would get drunk in the ale houses; husbands would beat their wives, and children would get cuffed by their

parents. Next Sunday they would faithfully go back to the village church and go through the same religious exercises as the week before, only to repeat the same kind of behavior in the village the week following.

All of this inconsistency troubled the boy George Fox so that he continued to ask deep questions about the meaning of life, given this kind of behavior. At this point Elfrida Foulds says that the message of George Fox suddenly came to her, namely that Fox felt the need for integrity in daily life. He saw that there must be a correspondence between one's faith, between what one practiced on the Sabbath, and what one does during the daily work week. For Fox it called for the kind of integrity the Psalmist was talking about: "Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in mine integrity." (Ps. 26:1)

So "integrity" became Elfrida Foulds' subject for the message on George Fox which she was to deliver. She pointed out that Fox continually tested this in his own life. There is the example in his Journal when he was invited by some friends to a drinking bout, and he refused because he saw an inconsistency between such behavior and the faith he proclaimed. Fox also saw many inconsistencies when he observed the churches of his day. He believed that a minister of the gospel could not be prepared at Oxford or Cambridge, if such persons were not moved by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, the voice of God within. Moreover, Fox refused to call places of worship "churches" because a church is not a building; it is the people of God, a fellowship of believers. The church is the men and women who come together in worship; therefore, Friends called their places of worship "meetinghouses" rather than "churches."

Elfrida Foulds calls Fox's view of the relationship of faith and life the "sacramental view of life," in which there must be a correspondence between the inner life of the spirit and the outer life of involvement in the world. I will refer to this again in my closing remarks, but this will give you the background for my choice of "integrity" as the focus of my address to you, and how it came about that Elfrida Foulds concludes that integrity is the centerpiece of George Fox's message.

There is yet another reason why I came to this topic of integrity. Perhaps you have been asked, as I have, to explain Quakerism to someone unfamiliar with it. In the winter of 1980 when I was on sabbatical leave at Woodbrooke, the Quaker study center at Birmingham, England, we had there a young Indian woman who was studying at Birmingham University. Because she had never met any Quakers before coming to Woodbrooke, understandably she wanted to find out more about them. Someone suggested that since I was a visiting Friend giving some lectures, she ask me. So we sat together at the table one day and she began asking "What is a Quaker?" Because I didn't have a quick and ready answer, she became impatient with my hesitant response. Unfortunately, I began by suggesting two or three things she could read about Friends. At this point she showed a bit of anger. All she

wanted was a straightforward two-sentence answer to, "What is a Quaker?" or "What is Quakerism?"

As I struggled with this question then and on many other occasions, as probably most of you have, it occurred to me that perhaps the word "integrity" comes as close as any single-word answer to "What is Quakerism?" Now let me explain what I mean by this.

From the beginning Quakers have been known as "Friends of Truth" or "Publishers of Truth." The word "truth" and the word "integrity" have a close affinity and correspondence. In some respects the words are synonymous. Early Friends' use of "truth" had a biblical origin. Friends were fond of the Gospel of John, such as John 4:23 which says, "The true worshiper will worship the Father in spirit and in truth." And again in John 8:32, "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free." For some other thoughts about truth I am indebted to Kenneth Boulding's 1970 Swarthmoor lecture at London Yearly Meeting entitled, "The Prospering of Truth." Interestingly, he makes reference there to a practice that some Wilburite Conservative Friends used to have, namely, greeting one another by asking, "How is truth prospering in thy parts?" That is to say, "where thee lives." Obviously that is a searching way to greet another Friend.

"Truth" is a frequently used word in early Quaker literature. In some Quaker journals it appears on almost every page. It is usually Truth with a capital T. It is more than just common, ordinary truth that is understood here. For early Friends this Truth referred to the Gospel they found in the New Testament. It was Truth which had objective content, and it was truth in which one could participate. It was much more than propositional truth, which is probably our most common understanding of truth.

Let me now describe four ways in which integrity has been described and practiced by Friends.

The First Is Truth-telling, or Simply Not Telling Lies

For Friends this was grounded in the injunction of Jesus not to take an oath or swear that you would tell the truth. Friends were very conscientious about this, not only because it was refuted by the Bible, but it implied a double standard of truth. One should be known for telling the truth all the time, and not just when you are called before a judge and are sworn to tell the truth. Webster's Dictionary definition of an oath is "a ritual declaration, based on appeal to God...that one will speak the truth, keep a promise, remain faithful, etc." And swearing means to make a solemn declaration or affirmation (by invoking the presence of God) to tell the truth.

But Quakers believe that you should be known for telling the truth all the time. As a matter of fact, early Friends were thrown into jail more often for refusing to take the oath than for any other reason. Anybody who didn't like Quakers could bring them before a judge, charge them, and have them jailed because they would refuse to take the oath before the judge.

Apart from Friends' writings, one of the best places to find this kind of integrity described is in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's, The Cost of Discipleship. Bonhoeffer, you may remember, was the German pastor/professor who was jailed and hanged by the Nazis just before the end of World War II. Bonhoeffer has a chapter entitled "Truthfulness." He gives an interpretation of Matt. 5:33-37 which forbids taking oaths and swearing. It sounds like it might have been written by a Quaker. Bonhoeffer held that "the very existence of oaths is proof that there are such things as lies. Oaths are intended as a barrier against untruthfulness." And, parenthetically, he says that "perjury is a word for telling lies under oath." But Jesus destroys the lie by forbidding oaths altogether. "Let your 'yea' be 'yea' and your 'nay' 'nay.'" There is no need for oaths if you speak the truth all the time. Of course you can find the same thing said in Fox's Journal, and in other early Quaker writings. So the first point is, integrity means truth-telling.

Integrity Calls for Authenticity, for Genuineness,
and for Veracity in Our Personood

It calls us to be truly who we are and not be two-faced by trying to be something or somebody we are not. Thus integrity is the opposite of hypocrisy, which means phoniness, sham, and deception. Jesus has some scathing words for hypocrites in Matt. 23. He has seven woes against the religious authorities of his time, the Scribes and Pharisees, who were pretenders of virtue and piety.

When I worked for Friends Committee on National Legislation in Washington, D.C., in the 1950's, we had a friend and neighbor who was going back to her college for a class reunion. In preparation she went out and bought a new wardrobe of clothes to wear. In an attempt to justify buying these clothes, she said to us, "You know, when we get back to college and have that class reunion, it's going to be one big lying session!" In other words, they were going to put on false fronts and try to be people they weren't.

Integrity Calls for Obedience, or If You Prefer,
Faithfulness, to Conscience Illumined
by the Light Within

For Friends this is the seat of religious authority and the touchstone of our faith. Here Quaker truth and integrity have an existential quality. It is truth which lays hold of one in a

moment of time. It is truth which may very well have objective validity, as I believe it does, but if it is not truth which is internalized in each of us, and for which we take ownership, then it is not truth which is valid and binding for us. But once it lays hold of us, it is truth which will not let us go until we have acted upon it. This kind of truth is new and fresh and therefore vital. It is not grounded in dogma, creeds, abstract philosophical ideas, or theological affirmations. It is not to be found in religious textbooks or Quaker Books of Discipline, but it is grounded in a living faith and experience of the present moment. It is the basis for the Quaker testimonies -- testimonies which are a living witness to the inward leading of the Spirit of God in our lives.

We Need to Look at Integrity in Terms of its Root Meaning

We need to see it in its larger context. The word comes from the Latin *integritas* which refers to a state or quality of being complete, that is, a condition of wholeness. The word "integrity," as well as the mathematical term "integer," all have a common meaning. When we look at these common meanings of *integritas*, or "integrity," they all point to a unity when applied to persons, or what we call community. Integrity creates a sense of togetherness and belonging when applied to persons in community. It is in community that persons are able to have a sense of responsibility and accountability toward one another. This is the opposite of individualism, which is preoccupied with doing one's own thing, often with little concern for how it affects other people. This attitude dominates so much of our behavior in society and in our U.S. culture, and it affects the Religious Society of Friends as well. Thus we need to recover the testimony of integrity as applied to wholeness in communities of persons in which we have a sense of responsibility and accountability toward one another.

But integrity in its root meaning leads to an even deeper sense of community. This level of wholeness goes beyond the community of persons to a spiritual community with "the ground of our being," to use Paul Tillich's words. Here we need to associate integrity with the religious concept and experience of salvation. Now that may seem strange to you because the word "salvation" is not fashionable anymore, except among radio and television evangelists, and a few fundamentalist church folk. But according to Paul Tillich the root meaning of "salvation" is derived from the Latin *salus* (or *salvus*), which can mean "health" or "wholeness." Now, who among us does not want to have health and wholeness, both physical and spiritual? If the wholeness aspect of integrity leads to a sense of community of persons, likewise I am suggesting that it may also lead us to an experience of spiritual wholeness in relationship to God. This comes very close to what St. Augustine meant when he prayed: "Oh God, Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." In a similar vein

Olive Wyon writes, "integration" is not an end to itself; it is a means to an end, and the end is God."

Turning now to some practical aspects of our subject, I believe that the world is hungry for, if not dying for, integrity in daily life. As we look around us, we are overwhelmed by a society and culture which has few compunctions about lying, cheating, and stealing. People's lives are fraught with hypocrisy, deception, and fraud. It seems to be the norm. We shall enumerate here a few examples.

The widespread use of drugs and drug dealing falls into this category.

Another example is "white collar crime," such as the insider stock-trading scandals on Wall Street. Those who commit these crimes exhibit little sense of remorse in terms of their behavior in the marketplace. Or, turning to government and public policy-making, we find widespread use of lies, dirty tricks, cover-ups, in order to bypass legal and democratic processes in the interest of personal party gain. This is not to suggest that all government is corrupt and evil. Quakers have always believed that it is possible to work through government to help transform the world. But we are also aware of the frequent lack of integrity by many who represent us in government.

Still other examples of possible lack of integrity confront us whenever we walk into a supermarket, or any store, and wonder whether we're being cheated with respect to the quality of the goods, and whether the price is fair. Sometimes we are not only victims of cheating and deception, but we become perpetrators of it ourselves. We, too, are tempted to lie and cheat, partly because everyone else seems to be doing it. How many of us are truthful about our IRS returns? That's a toughy for us. This year I reported an income item which I am quite sure IRS would never have known had I not reported it. But in the interest of integrity I reported it, and of course I was haunted by the fact that I was going to be coming here to talk to you about integrity! This is an area where we are tempted to justify cheating because we so often disapprove of the way our tax dollars are spent by the government, particularly for military purposes.

We also need to ask ourselves about our sense of integrity and fidelity in family relationships, in our dealings with our spouses and children. How many of you know about the research that our Quaker friend, Judy Brutz, has done with respect to violence in the Quaker family? Her research shows supporting evidence that there's little, if any, difference between Quaker and non-Quaker families in the amount of violence used in the home. This is very upsetting to us as Friends, but Judy Brutz has considerable evidence for her conclusion. She is now in the process of forming with the help of some other Friends, what is called Friends Family Service, P.O. Box 16010, Des Moines, Iowa, if you are interested in finding out more.

We do not need to give any more examples to illustrate our point about the cry for integrity in daily life. Because of such widespread lack of integrity we are forced to ask the question: Is it not true that we are in about as much danger of being destroyed by our own moral sickness and culpability, as a society, as we are in danger of annihilation by nuclear bombs? I know we are all concerned about the possibility of an accidental nuclear holocaust, as we should be, so I don't want to detract from that concern. But I'm trying to suggest that there is something else eating away at our society which should claim our attention just as surely as the nuclear threat.

Friends in the past have had a very high standard for themselves. Early Friends were committed to what they called "Christian perfection," which is a term not very well understood today. Those of you who knew Cecil Hinshaw from Boulder (Colorado) Meeting may have read some of his early writings on the Quaker claim to Christian perfection in early Quakerism, and what relevance it has today. The Christian perfection of early Friends called them to live up to the measure of the Light of Truth given to them. It is a call to holy obedience to the Light of Christ within, as Thomas Kelly would say. Thus we have a lot to live up to in our Quaker heritage and in our testimony of integrity and truth-telling.

We might remind ourselves here of the well-known statement of the Harvard psychologist and philosopher, William James, who in his book, Varieties of Religious Experience, describes Quakerism as "a religion of veracity, rooted in spiritual inwardness." He went on to say that early Quakerism was "a return to something more like the original gospel truth...than had ever been known in England." That is a pretty bold statement. How well do we emulate this in our Quaker lives today?

I agree with Hugh Doncaster, the British Quaker who in 1967 at Friends World Conference at Guilford College challenged Friends by saying, "The world is dying for lack of Quakerism in action." I agree with that, but I do not believe we are worthy of such a claim unless we begin to take the Quaker testimony of integrity as seriously as we do the peace testimony. We need to learn how to teach our children these testimonies and to model them for others. We need to begin to live the way we want the world to become, rather than the way the world is now.

In conclusion, let me return for a moment to Elfrida Vipont Foulds. After she settled on "integrity" as the focus of George Fox's message, she went on to spell it out in terms of the Quaker sacramental view of life. She defined a sacrament in the classical way as "an outward sign of an inward grace," or as we might prefer, an outward sign of an inward spiritual experience and commitment. She observed that what Fox wanted to convey was that our outward, visible lives would give expression to our inward spiritual lives, and that there should be a correspondence between the two.

To give expression to this idea, Elfrida has popularized the Quaker phrase, "Let your lives speak." Presumably this is a quotation from George Fox, although she is not sure Fox ever uttered these exact words. But she is convinced that they reflect a basic religious principle for him. If you go to northwest England today you will find this message inscribed on a plaque on what is called "Fox's Pulpit," high on a rock overlooking Firbank Fell. It was here that Fox preached to over a thousand seekers gathered in June 1652 shortly after his vision on Pendle Hill of "a great people to be gathered." It was here that Fox not only called people to "let your lives speak," but he admonished them to live as if the kingdom of God could come in their lives then and there, rather than wait for the Kingdom to come at some future time.

Finally, I would like to end with a prayer, the source of which I do not know, but it is a prayer that speaks about Truth and has always meant a great deal to me.

Oh, God, who art the Truth, make us one with Thee in everlasting love, for in Thee alone art the sum of our desires. Let the whole creation be silent before Thee, and do Thou speak only unto our souls.