

The Advices

JOURNAL

OF THE

NORTH CAROLINA YEARLY MEETING
(CONSERVATIVE)

NUMBER 4 FALL 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction To The Advices..... 3
By Carole Edgerton Treadway

On The Advices.....10
By Lloyd Lee Wilson

***Sacramental Living: The Advices Speak
To The Daily Routines Of Life.....23***
By Deborah L. Shaw

Advices.....30

The publication of this journal was approved by
North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) in session
in Seventh Month 2000.

***Introduction to the Advices
Of North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative)***

By Carole Edgerton Treadway

The editorial board of North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) offers in this issue of the Journal a companion to the second issue that focused on the Queries in our Discipline (Faith and Practice). We now take up the topic of the Advices, which go hand in hand with the Queries. We hope to engage readers in a serious consideration of how the Advices serve us and how well they do that.

To advise: the verb has many shades of meaning, most commonly, as the dictionary states it, to give an opinion. The Latin root, however, means “to see.” The word “Advice”, then, can be taken to mean, “An opinion based on what has been seen.” Not what has been taught, but what has been seen, first hand, experientially.

The Advices are the collected wisdom and experience of Friends over time. Advices are directive but, as their name implies, not a set of rules as in many churches, or prescribed belief as a creed would be. The Advices are a container, holding the shape of the Religious Society of Friends. They show what a life lived within the context of a community seeking to live under divine guidance looks like. They indicate the broad outlines of shared faith and practice that give the life of those who commit themselves to living under its discipline, meaning and purpose. They provide a way that takes a follower over the course of a lifetime into unity with God and with neighbor—however defined.. The term traditionally used by Friends for this way of life in community is “gospel order.”

The Advices being considered here are part of The Faith and Practice: Book of Discipline of North Carolina Yearly Meeting

(Conservative) which first appeared in their present form in the edition published in 1876. The Discipline was revised in 1893, 1910, 1950, 1969, and 1983. The first printed discipline anywhere and the model for American yearly meetings until the mid-nineteenth century (and later in some yearly meetings) was published in London in 1783, although handwritten compilations of extracts from minutes and epistles had been sent out and circulated to yearly meetings long before that. The earliest “discipline” was an epistle issued by a gathering of elders at Balby in England in 1656. It covered most aspects of Quaker life, both private and public, and both in meeting and individual life.

The early disciplines were entirely “Advices.” They were topical and arranged alphabetically. A special and very brief subsection, “advice” appeared at the end of the Queries, under “Q.”

The 1869 edition of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting Discipline presented a complete reorganization of the topical “Advices” such that matters pertaining to meeting procedure, doctrine, Queries and general Advices, and explanations of our testimonies were grouped into categories rather than alphabetically. There was a more explicit explanation of the spiritual basis of our faith and our way of life. The subsection of “advice” remained as it had been in previous editions. However, in the 1876 edition there was an expanded stand-alone section of “Advices.” The language of these Advices comes from the third London Yearly Meeting edition published in 1834 under the title Rules of Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends, with Advices: Being Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles of Their Yearly Meeting, Held in London, from Its First Institution.

The Advices in the last revision of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting Discipline before the 1876 edition, published in 1869, comprised seven short paragraphs. They gave “advice” on the subjects of wills and legacies, the use of the First day, the use of tobacco, the recording of marriages, births, and deaths; the choice of marriage partner, and the last, ... “that Friends everywhere behave themselves

orderly, both in their converse and commerce, so as to answer the witness for truth [in all] with whom they are concerned.” Our current edition is much lengthier and incorporates elements of the earlier Disciplines that were not included in the 1869 edition. It still addresses the hows and whys of Quaker faith and practice.

A study of editions of Advices over the more than 200 years since they were first published shows how their writers responded to trends in the culture around them and changes in the concerns and outlook of Friends. The first major revision in 1869 was similar to revisions taken up in other yearly meetings of that era which show not only an expansion in the number and length of Advices but also more attention to doctrine. There are many reasons for this change. Undoubtedly the increasing complexity of the general culture, with its greater number and variety of influences that threatened the Quaker way of life and worship, was among them. It was felt necessary to be more explicit about both faith and practice in order to preserve the integrity of Quaker ways. It has been said that the 1876 Advices show the influence of the evangelical movement that was affecting Friends in the Mid West and in the South of the United States. They were not composed at that time however, but were, as mentioned above, taken largely from the third edition of the London Yearly Meeting Rules of Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends, with Advices: Being Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles of Their Yearly Meeting published in 1834. The language used reflects the evangelicalism of Friends in Britain at that time but a careful reading shows that the use of that language is distinctively Quaker.

The changes in revisions are often subtle, seldom as noticeable as the elimination of the directive against slave-holding when the end of the Civil War made it obsolete. Even when subtle, they can be significant. In the opening paragraph of the Advices pre-1969, there is reference to Jesus’s purchase of our hope in eternal life “by the one offering of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” The change made in the 1969 edition shows an important doctrinal shift when the wording was

changed to “. . . the hope of eternal life, brought to us in the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” The change indicates a different understanding of the atoning work of Jesus Christ but still acknowledges the atonement as central to the meaning of Jesus’s death on the cross and its relevance to our lives.

Of the revisions and additions, the Introduction to our current Advices states that they “show the evolution of moral consciousness as it becomes more sensitive to spiritual and social inharmonies.” Some might argue that what the changes show is not just an evolution of moral consciousness but also indicate responses to changing conditions in the culture. We are not bound by the morality of the past when it permits slavery, for instance (as it once did even among Friends), but we must acknowledge that we, in our own time, are also blind to certain immoralities and injustices. We hope to be open to God’s continuing revelation of truth and love and we should be cautious about making judgments of our spiritual ancestors. The intent of revision stated in the 1983 edition is to “re-examine . . . doctrines and procedures and set them down in a way that is both faithful to their religious heritage and applicable in the modern world.” Or, as Ohio Yearly Meeting states it in its 1992 edition, the hope is that with the new edition “will come a new vision of the original intent and spirit of such a guide book.”

Our Advices as we have received them from a generation ago have some gaps, some instances where words have shifted in meaning so as to mislead current readers of the intent, and areas which need more emphasis in view of growing concerns in the interim. An obvious gap is the admonition to avoid tobacco in all forms as well as growing and selling it without any reference to alcohol, drugs and other addictive and harmful substances. In view of current awareness of the nature of addiction and the social problems it creates, this seems an important area to address. Another is the absence of any reference to our natural environment. We now have not only an increasing awareness of our interdependent relationship with all of creation, but

also a much greater knowledge of how our carelessness, ignorance, and greed have damaged our world and threaten the quality of life in the developed countries and deprive those in developing countries of any quality of life. Our Queries remind of us our responsibility for stewardship and it seems obvious that the Advices should set the standard. An instance of a word being misleading because its meaning in the context is now archaic is the following: “. . . we are concerned to caution our members against the indulgence of passion, or the exercise of cruelty, even toward the brute creation.” Twenty-first century folks generally read the word “brute” to mean savage, cruel, or coarse while in this context it means simply any animal other than human. There have been many startled expressions on the faces of younger Friends when this part of the Advices is read.

There are those of us who love and value the Advices as they are. They inspire us. They are rich in meaning and link us with our spiritual forebears and our tradition. They are reliable indicators of our spiritual heritage while leaving room for growth in understanding and grace. There are also those of us who find them opaque and even offensive when traditional language calls up experiences where that language has been misused or corrupted. Is it possible to maintain the weight, truth, and beauty of the Advices that have served us since 1834 and in other forms since our earliest days as a religious society, while making them more accessible? The decision to review and revise poses the danger that revision will result in watered down and generalized statements of faith and less demanding applications of our faith and testimonies in our practice. It is an undertaking that can be done only mindfully, prayerfully, and with appreciation for what the Advices are. It is an undertaking that can be successful only if done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The contributors to this issue of the Journal of North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), Lloyd Lee Wilson and Deborah Shaw, share with us their love and appreciation of the Advices for what they tell us and for how they serve us. Lloyd Lee Wilson explores them and opens

them up to show how they reveal classic Quaker doctrine with its emphases on the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit and lifelong transformation of character into Christlikeness. He shows us that far from being rigid dogmatic statements of belief, they are actually gentle invitations to growth in faith. Deborah Shaw engages us in a very personal journey with her in her relationship with the Advices. For her, as they are meant to be for us, they lift up every experience as an opportunity for seeing the sacred in everyday life. They serve her as spiritual disciplines to aid her in opening to grace. It is our hope that readers of these essays will gain greater understanding and appreciation of the gift of the Advices. They are not a closed canon: they are subject to prayerful review and they are also a venue for revelation of divine truth and love for our time. Any change must be made with understanding and love for what they are and how they have served generations in the past.

Carole Edgerton Treadway is a member of Friendship Monthly Meeting in Greensboro, NC.

Sources Used

The Book of Discipline of Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Conservative). Barnesville, OH: Ohio Yearly Meeting, 1992

Faith and Practice: Book of Discipline of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) of the Religious Society of Friends. NCYM(C), 1983 and earlier editions

The Old Discipline: Nineteenth-century Friends' Disciplines in America. Glenside, Pa: Quaker Heritage Press, 1999.

Quaker Faith & Practice: The Book of Christian Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain (Great Britain). London: Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1955

Rules of Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends, with Advices: Being Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles of Their Yearly Meeting, Held in London, from Its First Institution. 3rd ed. London: Darton & Harvey, 1834.

On The Advices

By Lloyd Lee Wilson

Although it is rightly said of Friends that we have no dogma or creed, we do have clear unifying principles or doctrines. Friends have historically understood their relationship to God and to the world in a distinctive way. Although those distinctives are not today the subject of public debate in the manner of the 17th century, they are still very important to our understanding of ourselves as a community of faith, carrying an historic and honorable faith tradition into a new century and new millennium.

One of the important ways the distinctive Quaker understanding of our relationship to the Creator is embodied and communicated from generation to generation is in the Advices which occupy a prominent place in our yearly meeting Discipline. These Advices are partly good advice on living, accumulated over the centuries; but they are also, and more importantly, a densely packed statement of Quaker theology – our understanding of God and our relationship with God.

It is clear from the vocabulary of the Advices that Quakerism is steeped in and based upon Christianity. But a closer examination of the way words are used in the Advices also makes clear that Quakers use Christian vocabulary in ways that are often quite distinct from the ways these same words and terms are used by other Christians. Study of the Advices can be a good way to begin examining the differences between the Quaker understanding of Christianity and what might be called mainstream contemporary Christianity.

To illustrate these three points, let us examine the following two paragraphs from the Advices in detail, unpacking the doctrines and principles of faith embedded in each one.

Take heed, dear Friends, we entreat you, to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, who leads us, through unfeigned repentance and living faith in the Son of God, to reconciliation with our Heavenly Father and to the blessed hope of eternal life, brought to us in the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And

For although we recognize the children of our members as objects of our care, and partakers of the outward privileges of Christian fellowship, we would earnestly remind all that such recognition cannot constitute them members of the Lord's spiritual Israel. Nothing can effect this but the power of the Holy Spirit working repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, let the words of our Holy Redeemer have due place with us all, "Ye must be born again." May all of our members become such on the ground of true conversion, and be prepared in their several places to bring forth fruit unto God.

As one examines these paragraphs, it becomes clear that each phrase is packed with information about how Friends have understood their faith tradition – what modern Friends often call the “spiritual journey”. The “why” behind each phrase of Advice becomes as clear as the “what” being advised.

- *Take heed, dear Friends, we entreat you,*

The Advices, following a preamble, begin with entreaty. This is neither creed (all orthodox Quakers will do and believe the following) nor dogma (all orthodox Quakers will accept the following teachings of the church without question), but this is very important material. Spiritual growth comes by voluntary application of oneself to the

principles and practices of the spiritual journey, and is not mandated by predestination or enforced by the community. As a continuing faith community, we care very much about one another, across the generations and even centuries. Quaker spirituality is not every woman for herself; we are all mystically connected. So pay attention, Friends, we entreat you!

- *to the convictions of the Holy Spirit,*

But the plea of the Advices is that one pay attention to the Holy Spirit, not to the writers of the Advices! The Advices ask us to pay attention to the Holy Spirit, not to the moral guidance of elder Friends, the teachings of the institutional church, the instruction of Holy Scripture, or any human authority. Implicit in this request is an understanding, based on the personal experience of tens of thousands of Friends across the centuries, that the Holy Spirit of God is reaching out to each of us as individual persons. God exists, is aware of our circumstances, cares about our well-being, and actively intervenes in the world to help us.

The predominant form of that Divine intervention is personal guidance, and the first steps in that guidance are usually a means of pointing out to us where we have been going “off the path” in some aspect of our life so far. The journals of early Friends speak of “conviction” as the first step in the spiritual walk of Quakerism. They meant conviction as in a trial – they realized their entire life to that point had been judged and found wanting by the God of all creation, and that they must change. This conviction was a time of sorrow and joy – sorrow that one had been astray, and great joy at the new life now opening up to the “convicted” Friend. Our daily convictions may not be as dramatic as that first encounter, but they are often times of correction as well as joy in the comfort of God’s guidance.

Today many Friends are wary of the “damnation” that often accompanies a religious use of the term “judgment”, and rightly so. It may be helpful to remember that the judgment experienced by early Friends, and some contemporary Friends as well, is not a judgment to damnation but a judgment to salvation – not a condemnation to hell but the first necessary step to salvation.

- *who leads us,*

The Discipline speaks of the immediate and perceptible guidance of the Holy Spirit – this is that experience. The Holy Spirit of God is our guide, leading us without any mediator between us, whether priest, interpreter of Scripture, or the accumulated teachings of the institutional church. This guidance is perceptible – we can feel it with our own senses. We do not need to guess what God desires of us in this moment, because the Holy Spirit will lead us.

The verb here is “lead”: it could have been “nurture”, or “sustain”, or “heal”, but “lead” was chosen, intentionally. The Quaker experience of the Holy Spirit is an experience of being led away from where we have been (spiritually; not always physically) to a new life, a new way of being. Friends perhaps overuse the metaphor of a spiritual journey, but that does capture the sense of moving away from where we have been, toward the place God wants us to be. Again, the voluntary nature of this spiritual journey is expressed: the Holy Spirit leads, and we follow by our choice.

- *through unfeigned repentance and living faith in the Son of God,*

The path on which the Holy Spirit leads us is the path of unfeigned repentance – real, genuine contrition for our previous life, accompanied by a commitment to amend one’s life for the better. The Holy Spirit enables us to see our life up to this point with fresh eyes, understanding more fully than ever before how the life we’ve lived has

fallen short of the life we could have lived, and what pain and sorrow we've caused for ourselves, for other people, and for God as a result. One's natural response to this (in)sight is indeed repentance, and a desire to do better from now on.

The path to wholeness – spiritual and otherwise – requires that we see clearly and admit the shortcomings of our life up to this point. Shame and blame are not required, but an honest admission of where we have fallen short of being the person we know we should have been is necessary. The second step is to commit ourselves to being and becoming better persons in the future. God accepts us just as we are – in order to lead us through a process of growth and spiritual maturity that will change us significantly.

The path on which the Holy Spirit leads us is also the path of living faith, faith grounded in the normative Quaker vision of which Wilmer Cooper has written, and continuing to grow and develop through the unfolding revelation of God's will. The metaphor that comes to mind for me in relation to a living faith is one of the oak trees in my yard in Woodland. It grows in its own fashion, nurtured by the soil in which it is rooted and shaped in response to the wind and climate and circumstances. It doesn't look exactly like any other oak tree I've ever seen; it is quite different from any of the other half-dozen or so oak trees in the yard; and yet each one is readily identifiable as an oak, and each is nurtured by the same soil, watered by the same rain. Our "living faith in the Son of God" as individual Friends is much the same. Our faith is individual, shaped by the spiritual climate in which we've lived and the circumstances of our particular lives, as well, perhaps, as by the unique desires and aspirations of God for each of us. And yet we are all nurtured by the same spiritual soil of Christianity and the Quaker faith tradition, and each is readily identifiable as a Quaker.

Friends have always understood that words and titles are tricky things, to be used with great caution. This continues to be

especially true with religious words in the present day, when different groups (particularly different Christian groups) may use the same word(s) to mean greatly different things. When the Advices use the term “the Son of God” we may conclude from the usage of our own faith tradition that they are indeed referring to Jesus of Nazareth. It would be going beyond the meaning of those words in our faith tradition, however, to conclude that a claim is being made for masculine superiority (though it has been used as such, by some, throughout the centuries), that a specific claim is being made about the manner in which Jesus was the child of God, or when the Divine Spark entered him, etc. Jesus was like the rest of humanity in many ways, and unlike us in others – a mysterious combination of human and Divine natures who demonstrated by living, dying, and rising again the inseparable link between Creator and all of Creation. The Advices recognize the importance of Jesus without trying to define His nature or role in our spiritual journey.

- *to reconciliation with our Heavenly Father*

The Holy Spirit leads us, through Jesus Christ, to God. Neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit is the end point of our spiritual path, but God is. From the days of Robert Barclay’s Apology, Friends have held that one’s greatest happiness comes from a true knowledge of and communion with God. The Holy Spirit leads us to this greatest happiness today in the present century as surely as it led the earliest Friends some 350 years ago.

Note also where the Holy Spirit is not promising to lead us: not to health and wealth; and not to a life of ease or freedom from pain and exhaustion. This is not a “spaceship theology” that will allow us to escape from the burdens of life in this world, nor is it a “fire insurance theology” that promises to save us from the eternal flames of Hell.

There is an understanding in the Advices that we need reconciliation – that we have been estranged from God, and need to be re-connected. This has been a theme of Quaker theology since George

Fox. This is something different from Original Sin, which Friends have rejected throughout our history. It is a recognition that without the regular and perceptible guidance of the Holy Spirit we are each bound to wander from God and to make of our lives something different from what God knows we could be and yearns for us to become. Our reconciliation with God closes this gap.

The gender-identification of the Divine is, we now understand, an artifact of language. Friends have historically understood the feminine nature of God to be as important as the masculine, and are still ready to make that point whenever it is needed. God Creator is Heavenly Mother as well as Heavenly Father, and as much beyond gender as either one.

- *and to the blessed hope of eternal life,*

William Penn wrote that if there is no eternal life, Friends must be the most miserable of all people, to have suffered so much for their faith in this life. The nature of this eternal life is undefined. There is no tradition among Friends that says Heaven looks like the vision in Revelation, or where Heaven might be, or what we might look like in this eternal life. The tradition does say that there is a life after death, and that whatever that life is, its nature is that our reconciled relationship with the Divine continues. More detail than that is not in the Quaker tradition, no matter what other Christians may say or believe.

“The blessed hope of eternal life” is something different from reconciliation with God as is clear from its separate mention here. It may depend on that reconciliation, but the reconciliation comes first, and comes in this lifetime. It has been an important part of Quaker theology that we can be reconciled with God in this lifetime.

- *brought to us in the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

The sacrifice, or suffering and death of Jesus, is referred to as the Atonement. Christians believe that the atonement is very important to their faith, but Christians have never been in agreement about what happened spiritually in that event, or what the atonement accomplished. There is no completely satisfactory theory of the Atonement, and no single understanding has ever won general acceptance among Friends. However, Friends do understand that something mysterious happened because Jesus Christ lived and died and rose again, and that that series of events have somehow removed the obstacles that keep us from perfect communion with our Maker.

Again, it is important to recognize what the Advices do not say about this sacrifice (or Atonement). No particular understanding is endorsed or recommended. One does not have to believe that an angry God required a human sacrifice to atone for human sin; nor that an omniscient God sent His Son to earth knowing that child would be murdered. Jesus made a sacrifice, and in doing so changed the universe. It is a mystery.

As for myself, I believe that the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus made manifest the unbreakable depth and strength of God's love for creation and for each of us individually. If human beings can torture and execute the One who is God's messenger, and God still loves us, then nothing you or I can do is unforgivable, or puts us beyond the ability of God to love. Jesus revealed to human beings what was already true about God but we didn't know. Not all Friends have believed this way, but it is not outside the tradition to do so.

- *For although we recognize the children of our members as objects of our care,*

Nearly every religious community has to address the question of when its children become full members of the community, with the associated responsibilities and privileges. One of the debates going on 350 years ago, when Quakerism was coalescing into a coherent movement, was whether infants could be baptized into membership in the Christian community. Some groups said yes, and practiced infant christening and baptism; some said no, one must delay the commitment to Christianity until one is mature enough to understand the issues and the commitment. Quakers sided with the latter group. So, our children are not the same as our adult members, but a separate group.

Nonetheless, Quakers acknowledge an affirmative responsibility to care for and nurture our children. They are not miniature adults, as children were once viewed in English society. This care includes a careful religious education as well as an upbringing appropriate in other ways. In other generations, a “guarded education” and a “hedge” separating our children from the world were seen as more important by the majority of Friends than they are today. Today First Day School for children and Quaker summer camps are more in evidence than ever before among Quakers. The means for nurturing change over the generations, but the affirmative responsibility to give our children a solid spiritual foundation has been continuous.

- *and partakers of the outward privileges of Christian fellowship,*

Our children are in no way excluded from the fellowship of the faith community. There are no sacraments, ordinances, or other spiritual activities of the faith community from which they are excluded. They are free and welcome to full participation in all the activities of their meeting.

We are unaccustomed, perhaps to think of participation in meeting for business as a “privilege” of membership. But there are clearly “privileges”, or benefits, to Christian fellowship and Quaker fellowship. Our children are free to participate in and enjoy these benefits.

- *we would earnestly remind all that such recognition cannot constitute them members of the Lord’s spiritual Israel.*

There is a visible church and an invisible church. Both parents and children are here reminded that taking part in the visible church – even the visible Friends meeting – does not mean that they are reconciled with God (as discussed above) and part of the invisible gathering of God’s people. Being “birthright members”, or members by the action of their parents while they were children, does not put persons in a right relationship with God. Being an active attender of meeting activities, even from birth, does not establish one’s proper relationship with God. How one is raised as a child cannot make them a Friend as an adult. It may predispose them in that direction, but an adult experience and commitment of a certain type is necessary.

This is a caution that adults who are not parents should heed as well. Members, be warned that formal membership is not evidence of spiritual grace. Members and attenders both, be warned that active participation in all the activities of a meeting community, including full support of the meeting by one’s presence and presents, will not bring about the reconciliation with God to which our spiritual journey points. That requires something else.

- *Nothing can effect this but the power of the Holy Spirit working repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Only God can reconcile us to the Divine, and that by the inward work of the Holy Spirit, not by outward activities, symbolic

rituals, or verbal affirmations. Birthright membership, long-suffering committee work, the deep spirituality and dedication of our parents, or even a life of good works dedicated to relief of suffering and poverty will not avail to bring us into this invisible church, this “spiritual Israel” of the Lord.

The inward work is one of seeing our lives through God’s eyes and repenting of all we’ve done that falls short of God’s desire for us; then having faith (believing plus acting on that belief) that Christ can cure what needs curing. This work is accomplished by the grace of God, not by our good works or deep piety.

- *Therefore, let the words of our Holy Redeemer have due place with us all, “Ye must be born again.”*

This reconciliation, this shift in perspective to a God-centered life, is so dramatic a change that it may as well be a new life; hence the phrase, being born again.

This is not a reference to a specific time and place of spiritual re-birth, because Friends understand that we grow into a mature, holy relationship with God. It is a description of how profound a change that growth makes in us.

- *May all of our members become such on the ground of true conversion,*

“Birthright” membership is an accident of birth, expressive of our parental care for children and desire to give them a firm spiritual foundation as they grow; but real membership comes from the unfeigned conversion of one’s focus from self to God.

But this Advice refers to all our members, including those who come to Friends as adults. Becoming a member should be an outward consequence of a particular inward change in the individual, which re-

orders one's life so that God is at the center and our relationship with God is the defining and directing principle for all our activities. One does not wait for membership until coming into this perfect harmony with God, but one waits until God (our relationship with God) is the reference point for understanding our life.

- *and be prepared in their several places to bring forth fruit unto God.*

God's work in this world is unfinished, and those who have undergone this change of life, or re-birth, into a reconciliation with God and commitment to living in accordance with the perceptible guidance of the Holy Spirit must take on their share of God's work.

As individuals in "the Lord's spiritual Israel", we occupy several different places in the world, and our allotted work will be different for each person, reflecting God's need in each place.

God expects us to bear fruit, just as the fig tree in the Biblical parable is expected to bear fruit. It is not enough to have undergone the conversion spoken of in the Advices, if nothing else transpires. To be fully reconciled with God means to some extent taking on God's work in creation. That work can only be rightly done after the inward work mentioned above is well underway; but when that process takes hold of us inwardly, our work and the fruit we are to bear will become clear to us.

As contemporary Friends, how do we encounter these Advices with their long historical roots and embedded theology? Of course, they are not a creed, and there is no requirement that one agree with any part of the Advices until and unless one is led spiritually to accept the truth they express. That said, it is also true that the Advices do express the theology that has shaped our branch of Quakerism. As a wise Friend once observed to me, "Everything you like about Quakerism comes from its Christian roots." A very great deal of those Christian roots are embedded in these Advices.

The implication is that although we are not bound to agree with everything stated or implied in the Advices, we are bound to give them their due respect. That means understanding that this theology, this approach to God, has produced the faith communities that have become so precious to us today. It is incumbent on us as contemporary Friends, therefore, to strive to understand how the theology shaped the Advices and how the Advices have shaped the community. We must not ignore or discard anything until we understand the role it has played in our community history. We must engage and wrestle with those parts which seem to conflict with our own present understanding, to see what the tradition has to teach us. And even if we cannot bring ourselves to agree with the tradition, our proper role is that of “loyal opposition”: preserving and communicating the tradition at the same time we say that we disagree with it here, and here.

When we engage the Advices in this way, seeking to understand more fully and being willing to change when the tradition reaches us and convinces us, we come to understand the “whole cloth” nature of Quakerism. Our faith tradition is a spiritual cloth consisting of the warp and woof of both faith and tradition: individual threads that are woven together to make the cloth of Quakerism that has been so important to each of us.

Take some time, either individually or in a family or other group setting, to sit with and unpack some of the other sections of the Advices. If you are like me, you will find both challenge and comfort there. Let us all thank those faithful Friends who distilled and sustained this important tool over the decades and centuries, so that it is available to us for our spiritual growth today.

Lloyd Lee Wilson is a recorded minister and a member of Rich Square Monthly Meeting in Woodland, NC.

Sacramental Living: The Advices Speak to the Daily Routines of Life

By Deborah L. Shaw

This article is to address how the Advices speak to me - how I experience them, how I feel them affecting me in my daily life.

I am an archaic person in some ways. I like to read old books, I respond to the poetic beauty of the King James Version of the Bible (although I find my understanding of certain texts greatly enhanced by reading more contemporary translations, while I also recognize the power/gender bias of that particular translation), when I was clerk I found myself writing in that older Friends style without even thinking about it (so much so that the grammar feature on my computer was always telling me that I was using the 'passive' voice). All this to say that the language used in our Advices feels comfortable to me - and to acknowledge that not all Friends feel that way. For many, the older words and phrases may provide a difficulty in apprehending the truly radical way of living that the Advices invite us to.

...not to provide rules of conduct but to challenge and inspire Friends in their personal and social lives.

Over the twenty plus years that I have been a member of NCYM-C I have heard the Advices read aloud by many different and beloved voices. I don't read them all that often to myself, but I find the phrases coming into my mind throughout my days in a guiding, informing and, yes, challenging way. Overall the Advices call me to a heightened awareness of how my choices affect my life, most especially my life in the Spirit, then how my life affects those around me, and how the surrounding culture attempts to persuade me in both

these realms. The Advices invite me to be ever more intentional about including God in the discernment of all my choices. This is how the statement of purpose of the Advices interprets itself to me.

Be diligent in the private perusal of the Holy Scriptures

Nearly every morning my husband, Sid, gets up, makes the coffee and takes his cup to his chair in the living room and settles himself for his devotional time which includes writing in his journal, reading the Bible in Spanish, and sitting quietly with God. At times I have joined him regularly for the time of expectant waiting, but I have never been able to get into the habit of daily reading of scripture. In tender, non-judgmental tones, however, I hear the phrase being raised invitationally within me. It is the difference between "Do this!" and "Join me."

Be careful to make a profitable and religious use of those portions of time on the first day of the week which are not occupied by our meetings for worship.

When the weekend is coming and we are organizing how that time will be spent, trying to discern which of the seemingly countless tasks should move to the top of the list, the choices are made against the backdrop of the above phrase. Keeping the Sabbath is very challenging for me, as part of my First days are usually spent in work related, albeit worshipful, care of Guilford's College Meeting for Worship. At times there are activities undertaken on First day that would strain the definition of "profitable and religious use;" at those times I pray that a dedication of the task to the Glory of God and an intentionality on our part will imbed the task in that sacramental realm that we aspire to in the whole of our lives.

Carefully maintain in your speech and conduct, and encourage in your families, simplicity, truthfulness, and sincerity; and endeavor to avoid worldliness in all its forms.

When I first started working with the Quaker Leadership Scholars at Guilford College in 1993 I was immediately struck by their intense observation, conscious and unconscious, of my life. How I spoke to people, how I spent my time, what I wore, the choices I made, every intimate detail of my life was under the microscope. I remember rejoicing in this at the time, accepting it as an invitation to a deeper level of faithfulness - it was a reminder, not always a comfortable one, of how much more closely I am being watched by God. "Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord." For me this was and is not a fearful state - rather one of invitation. I heard someone say recently that we witness all the time with our lives. "What am I witnessing to with my life?" would be an alternate wording of this query. I find myself speaking as I have heard older Friends speak - when asked if I will be at a certain meeting or gathering, it has become my habit to reply that I am "intending" or "planning" to be there. This acknowledges that in my attempts to be obedient to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it may well be that I will be required to be some somewhere other than where I intended to be at a certain hour. As with the queries, so much of what is said in the Advices is about our individual lives and choices. Wrestling with the concept of 'worldliness' and what that means to me on an ongoing basis is a daily action. As in the case of the testimony of simplicity, I must resist the temptation to compare myself with others; at the same time I must try to be mindful of how my choices have an impact on others.

Be aware of the attitude with which you receive all the materials and cultural products of your society. Seek the beautiful and worthwhile in literary and recreational pursuits, being always sensitive to the encroachment of the banal, the degrading, or the violent.

I hear this portion of the advices ring in my ear (and heart) most often. The framework of our culture, the insidious and subtle inroads it makes on my choices and perceptions, the widespread multitude of points of entrance that it employs combine in a powerful assault against my attempts to live in the radical way that Christ calls me to. There are no pre-set exercises suggested, no map of strategies against this encroachment, rather what I take as invitation to live in an engaged and intentional way, viewing what I choose to do through the lenses of compassion and recognition of the interconnectedness of all life. I find in this portion an invitation to stay aware of my own vulnerability and tenderness in the face of this assault and to offer that as part of my witness. The avalanche of information that washes over us with sound bites and slices of lives and stories is so often banal - trivial, trite, facile, superficial, predictable - obscuring, through sheer volume, the ever present possibility to go deep with another human being and answer to 'that of God' within them - and in so doing have our own 'that of God' answered and affirmed.

This portion of the advices reflects on the paragraph immediately preceding it, which encourages the reader to *Guard watchfully against the introduction into your households of publications of a hurtful tendency, and against such companionships, indulgences, and recreations as may in anywise interfere with the growth in grace.*

Again, this is an invitation to a heightened sense of awareness, to a state of vivid wakefulness with regard to what is being offered to us in every moment.

Take care in your relationships with others that you respect and cherish each person, for people of all races and nationalities have that of God within their beings which unites them.

In this I am convicted, not in relationships with the farther off constituencies represented under 'people of all races and nationalities' but rather in those closer to me, with whom I have daily intercourse. For me, the phrase 'respect and cherish each person' speaks of the person right in front of me, of my own race, maybe even my own gender (my own family?), the colleague or meeting member (or government official) that I have relegated to the 'unlovable' category.

This convicts me of such categorization and leads me forward to deeper comprehension of the violence that I am capable of in my outgoing thoughts, referred to in the following: *Take care also, therefore, to maintain a consistent witness to peace, opposition to war, and to **all acts of violence** or coercion, that you may remain in accord with the timeless guidance of the Inner Light.* For as I believe that my prayers are light and love flowing outward, I have come to believe that what negative things I think about others, even if never expressed verbally, still have a force and power that accompany them. I do not imagine a state in which I will never have a negative reaction or thought about someone else, it is more to do with what happens after that thought or reaction occurs. Do I feed into that emotion - or do I seek after God's reconciling and compassionate presence to transform the situation/relationship into constructive, productive movement - fruit of the kingdom?

Watch with Christian tenderness over the opening minds of your children; give them examples of Christian freedom and discipline in your own lives; carefully instruct them in a knowledge of Holy Scriptures; seek for ability to imbue their hearts with the love of their Heavenly Father...

My work with the students at Guilford College gives me ample opportunity to watch over the opening minds of youth. As I mentioned before I do see the opportunity/challenge to witness to them through my life and my approach to Christianity. I see myself as an accompanier, walking with them into the Presence, and then leaving

them alone with that Presence, yet available to be present and listen as they interpret the experience. Most often I feel that I am being given the ability to imbue their hearts with the love of God - exposing them to some incremental notion of the unimaginably vast, incomprehensibly encompassing unconditional love of God for each one of us.

Finally, dear Friends, let your whole conduct and conversation be such as becometh the Gospel. Exercise yourselves to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward all persons. Be faithful and steadfast in your allegiance and service to your Lord; continue in His love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.

This final paragraph of the advices is also one in which I hear the voices of our yearly meeting elders. Several who have now made the transition would, in our business sessions, speak of 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace' as a condition toward which we were striving. As I recently attended the memorial services of two of our elders I heard witness to two lives that pointed toward and exemplified the Gospel. Clear testimony of two who had exercised themselves daily to have consciences void of offence to God and toward all persons. Blessed to be exposed to Friends in this condition, I have felt myself encouraged and invited to live in a similar exercise. With the psalmist I pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." In my Bible a note on this passage says, 'it is no light matter to be examined by God,' and I share that concern and yet still try to inhabit that place of receptivity. In this I give God thanks for the examples that I see around me.

I have not tried to speak to every line in the Advices. What I have shared about are the bits that live with me as I go about my day. They guide me, give me pause as I make choices, hold me accountable, and affirm me when I find myself struggling against the tide of

contemporary culture. Always the Advices invite me to listen more fully to that 'still small voice' within. I fully expect that as I live forward with our Advices that the bits not currently as present to me will rise up as I continue to engage in the spiritual discipline of self-examination.

Early on in the Advices we are invited to *'live in love...ready to be helpful one to another, sympathizing with each other in the trials and afflictions of life.'* Further, we are asked to *'watch over one another for good, manifesting an earnest desire that each may be well grounded in the Light of Christ.'* The advice here seems to encompass the whole, as Jesus' two commandments, "Love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself" encompasses the whole of what is written in the Law. In my monthly meeting and in my yearly meeting I am surrounded by examples of Friends living in this way, caring deeply for others and in no way limiting that care, or this way of being, to the confines of their meetings. There is a witness present, through experience and encouragement, of inviting one another to turn to the Inward Teacher, the Seed Christ, the Inner Light, as ground for our being.

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand. **Isaac Pennington 1667**

As I engage with the Advices they serve as both an historical context within which I and the Religious Society of Friends are fixed as well as a vital and challenging assist in how to be 'in - but not of - the world.'

Deborah L. Shaw is a recorded minister and a member of Friendship Monthly Meeting in Greensboro, NC.

Advices

The following Advices, revisions of those appearing in the 1876 and 1908 editions of the Discipline, are intended for the earnest and frequent consideration of all members of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Conservative). Their purpose is not to provide rules of conduct but to challenge and inspire Friends in their personal and social lives.

To our members, and all who meet with us in public worship:

Take heed, dear Friends, we entreat you, to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, who leads us, through unfeigned repentance and living faith in the Son of God, to reconciliation with our Heavenly Father and to the blessed hope of eternal life, brought to us in the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Be earnestly concerned in religious meetings to wait reverently upon the Lord, seeking to worship Him in Spirit and in Truth, and be in the frequent practice of waiting upon the Lord in private, honestly examining yourselves as to your growth in grace.

Be diligent in the private perusal of the Holy Scriptures, and let the daily reading of them in your families be devoutly conducted.

Be careful to make a profitable and religious use of those portions of time on the first day of the week which are not occupied by our meetings for worship.

Live in love, as Christian brethren, ready to be helpful one to another, and sympathizing with each other in the trials and afflictions of life. Watch over one another for good, manifesting an earnest desire that each may be well grounded in the Light of Christ.

Maintain strict integrity in your transactions in trade, and in all your outward concern. Guard against covetousness and an earthly mind. Remember that you must account as well for the mode of

acquiring, as for the manner of using your possessions, and may you everywhere behave yourselves orderly, both in converse and commerce, so as to answer the Witness for Truth in all with whom you have to do.

Be careful to make or revise your wills, and settle your outward affairs while in health.

Observe simplicity and moderation in your deportment and attire, in the furniture of your houses, and in your manner or style of living.

Carefully maintain in your speech and conduct, and encourage in your families, simplicity, truthfulness, and sincerity; and endeavor to avoid worldliness in all its forms.

Guard watchfully against the introduction into your households of publications of a hurtful tendency, and against such companionships, indulgences, and recreations as may in anywise interfere with the growth in grace. We earnestly advise all our members to refrain from the use of tobacco in every form, and to discourage its growth and the sale of its products, as well as the use of it by their children and all under their care.

Be aware of the attitude with which you receive all the material and cultural products of your society. Seek the beautiful and worthwhile in literary and recreational pursuits, being always sensitive to the encroachment of the banal, the degrading, or the violent.

Believing that meekness, moderation, and mercy are among the distinguishing traits of the Christian character, we are concerned to caution our members against the indulgence of passion, or the exercise of cruelty, even toward the brute creation.

Take care in your relationships with others that you respect and cherish each person, for people of all races and nationalities have that of God within their beings which unites them. Take care also, therefore, to maintain a consistent witness to peace, opposition to war, and to all acts of violence or coercion, that you may remain in accord with the timeless guidance of the Inner Light.

Let early care be taken to advise such as appear inclinable to marry without sufficient reflection; in contemplating the engagement let all look principally to that which will help you on your spiritual journey. Pay filial regard to the judgment of your parents. Bear in mind the vast importance in such a union of an accordance in religious principles and practice. Ask counsel of God, desiring above all temporal considerations that your union may be owned and blessed of Him.

Watch with Christian tenderness over the opening minds of your children; give them examples of Christian freedom and discipline in your own lives; carefully instruct them in a knowledge of Holy Scriptures; seek for ability to imbue their hearts with the love of their Heavenly Father, their Redeemer, and their Sanctifier.

For although we recognize the children of our members as objects of our care, and partakers of the outward privileges of Christian fellowship, we would earnestly remind all that such recognition cannot constitute them members of the Lord's Spiritual Israel. Nothing can effect this but the power of the Holy Spirit working repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, let the words of our Holy Redeemer have due place with us all, "Ye must be born again." May all of our members become such on the ground of true conversion, and be prepared in their several places to bring forth fruit unto God.

Finally, dear Friends, let your whole conduct and conversation be such as becometh the Gospel. Exercise yourselves to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward all persons. Be faithful and steadfast in your allegiance and service to your Lord; continue in His love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.