

# **Baltimore Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice Revision Committee Proposed Advices, Queries and Voices**

## **Social Concerns: Advices**

Our testimonies are not the heart of our faith but are the fruits of our religious convictions. Our actions in the world arise from our love of that light in every person. We regard no person as our enemy. While we often oppose specific actions and abuses of power, we seek to address the goodness and truth in each individual.

Friends are aware that our tasks are founded on witness, not results; that our testimony to the world is the substance of our truth. We assert the transforming power of love and nonviolence as a challenge to injustice and violence and as an instrument for reconciliation.

While faith without works is dead, Friends are convinced that works without faith are futile. We understand that sheer activism is often spawned from an egocentric center. Friends are mindful of the spiritual ground of their outward works and are attentive to the spiritual dangers of benevolent works.

## **Social Concerns: Queries**

How have I expressed my faith in action? How are my actions grounded in my faith?

Is my sense of justice based in love?

Do I endeavor to face the pain of the world and match it with forgiveness?

Do I make an idol of that which I am forced to defend?

How do I avoid demonizing those who march against my concern?

## **Social Concerns: Voices**

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

James 2:14-17

It seems to me that the moving force behind the Quaker social witness has got to be some vision, however faint and tantalizing, of what the world would be like if we were really obedient to God.

Deborah Haines, *Friends Seek Wholeness*

True godliness don't turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavor to mend it: not hide their candle under a bushel, but set it upon a table in a candlestick.

William Penn, 1682

It must occur to everyone to ask why Jesus did not simply accept the power to overcome the sources of these human miseries so that there would be no more want, no more sickness or death, no more murderous or oppressive institutions. Surely the best way to address human ills is to eliminate their source rather than to attend to their symptoms.

Newton Garver, *Jesus, Jefferson and the Tasks of Friends*, 1983

As a Friend I know that my words are worthless if they are not manifested in my behavior, even though no words or behavior can manifest the Truth perfectly. I also need constantly to test my special sense of the Light, since confidence that my work has been illuminated from above can easily become dark pride, a common work of the devil.

Newton Garver, *Living As a Quaker In This World*, 2006

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Meister Eckhart says that we can only spend in good works what we earn in contemplation, and that is undoubtedly a valuable admonition to those of us serving Quaker institutions, but it is probably equally the case that what is earned in contemplation cannot be saved up indefinitely but must be spent regularly in service to others.

Paul A. Lacey, *Education and the Inward Teacher*, 1988

As Friends we are committed to an “ethical mysticism,” as Howard Brinton described it. The love of God that we have experienced demands that we express our answering love for God in the form of loving others. We begin to understand Jesus’ admonition: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” This is the basis for ethical behavior and the only motivation for reform that does not grow weary in well-doing, the only passion for social action that does not pall and wane.

John R. Yungblut, *Speaking As One Friend to Another*, 1983

The activist who seeks explanations based on outer facts declares that our restlessness is due to the terrible state of the world at present. If we could just get the outer world in order we could then feel inward peace. But perhaps he has not the whole truth, perhaps the more fundamental difficulty is with our inward world. As long as there is inward chaos, all outward actions will be contaminated by this chaos. In such a case all that we do will promote rather than allay confusion. We seek to bring peace in the world when there is no peace in our hearts and as a result we infect the outer world with our inner conflict.

Howard Brinton, *The Quaker Doctrine of Inner Peace*, 1948

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

1 Cor 13 (KJV)

Yet, in the last analysis, obedience to the Light is the only satisfying course [to pursue a social concern]. Approval is not the criterion. Results are not the criteria. We may never be able to say to our critics and detractors, “The results show that our work was important and rightly ordered.”

Dorothy H. Hutchinson, *Friends and Service*

Jesus’s ministry made clear that acts of reconciliation, of healing, and of service nurture the Seed and extend the Gospel. He demonstrated that the religious life is incomplete without the religious act, the practice of worship sterile without the practice of loving concern for distressed people. The truth He demonstrated has caused Friends to make labor in the areas of their social concerns an essential part of their religious life.

NEYM, *Faith into Practice in Social Concern*, 1985

There is nothing like an unsuitable good work for keeping us back from God. It enlists against Him all that is best and least selfish in our nature. Set an active soul to contemplate, and one of two results will follow, hypochondria or worldliness. Immerse a contemplative soul in business, and you will have either melancholy or delusion. Bend a person to much mental prayer, when they ought to be sewing at home, or helping the poor, and you will produce a self-righteous, inflated, stupefied simulation of interior holiness, which would ruffle the good humor of an angel.

Frederick Faber, *Self-Deceit*, 1949

How [do] you keep from going over the cliff into the heresy of sheer activism. Have Quakers in their long experience with inwardly directed concerns for service found any way to hold the inner and the outer together? Have they found, under the grilling pressures of situations requiring drastic social change, that they have been able to keep their own share in these things disinfected from the inevitable egotism of good works?

Douglas V. Steere, *The Hardest Journey*, 1969

It is said that one should never attempt the works of charity unless the motion springs from love in the heart. But God can lead us by more ways than one. Some he makes ready before he sends them out; others he sends out that they may be made ready.

Mildred Binns Young, *The Candle, The Lantern, The Daylight*, 1961

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The fact that God is always present means that the whole of a person's life is sacramental; Friends affirm the need to practice the presence of God in all activity. It follows, therefore, that Friends emphasize the importance of combining the inward and outward journeys. To take the inward without the outward will lead to selfishness. You go inward to wait upon and receive the word and support of God and then take this out to action in the world. To take the outward journey without the inward leads to "burn out" because the essential support is not there to be called upon.

Ted Hoare, *The Inward and Outward Journeys*

Seeking to live at all times in a divine order of life, Quakers have always counted social service part of Christianity. In fidelity to the genius of their inward experience, they have set themselves the task of developing their own spiritual sensitiveness to the light of truth; and have then resolutely confronted the unawakened conscience of the world with the demands of the new light, and have borne witness to it with undaunted patience. This has resulted in progressive enlightenment for themselves, and in the slow but sure triumph of many of the causes of which they have become champions.

William Charles Braithwaite, 1919, BritainYM 23.13

The great social movements of our time may well be part of our calling. The ideals of peace and justice and equality which are part of our religious tradition are often the focus of debate. But we cannot simply immerse ourselves in these activities. We need to develop our own unique social witness, in obedience to God. We need to listen to the gentle whispers which will tell us how we can bring our lives into greater harmony with heaven.

Deborah Haines, 1978

When we begin by demonizing the opposition, we have taken the first step to ensuring no possibility of resolution. However, there is another path: one which is far more likely to result in a positive resolution. Instead of beginning with what divides us, we should begin with our common ground.

Lawrence M. Hinman, 2005