

## Friends' Queries and General Advices

### A Survey of their Development in London Yearly Meeting, 1860-1928<sup>1</sup>

THE 1860 revision of the Queries was the most radical in the Society's history. As has already been shown,<sup>2</sup> many Friends were in the 1850's questioning practices of the Society which had become traditional. This can be illustrated particularly by the number of exceptions to the fourth query, regarding plainness of speech, behaviour and apparel, reported to Yearly Meeting, and the growing recognition of the loss which the Society was sustaining by the disownment of those who married "out" (which was in part the subject of the thirteenth query). An increasing number of Friends were advocating in Yearly Meeting alterations to these queries, and there were some who were prepared to urge a review of the queries as a whole. At the same time, many Friends called attention to the excessive amount of time spent at business meetings in reading and replying to the queries, which was particularly apparent at Yearly Meeting itself. After much discussion it was finally agreed in 1859, on the recommendation of a committee which had been considering the method of conducting Yearly Meeting business, to revise the whole of the Advices and Queries. The revision was referred to this committee, which presented its report in the following year. It recommended a reduction in the number of queries to ten, of which the first seven only were to be answered to Yearly Meeting.<sup>3</sup> After some amendment, the Queries were adopted in the following form:

1. Are your meetings for worship regularly held? Do Friends attend them duly, and at the time appointed?
2. (3) Are Friends frequent in reading the Holy Scriptures; and do those who have children, servants, and others under their care, encourage them in the practice of this religious duty?
3. (4) Are Friends careful to maintain a religious life and conversation, consistent with our Christian profession; and do those who have children or others under their care endeavour, by example and precept, to train them up in accordance therewith?

<sup>1</sup> Continued from page 235.

<sup>2</sup> Page 229.

<sup>3</sup> See *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1860, pp. 16-28; *The Friend*, vol. 18 (1860), pp. 104-6; *British Friend*, vol. 18 (1860), pp. 140-45.

4. (2) Are Friends preserved in love one towards another; and do they avoid and discourage talebearing and detraction?

5. Are Friends faithful in bearing our Christian testimony against all ecclesiastical demands?

6. Are Friends faithful in maintaining our Christian testimony against all War?

7. Are your meetings for transacting the affairs of the Church regularly held and duly attended? Is the discipline administered timely, impartially, and in a Christian spirit? And are Quarterly and Monthly Meetings careful to give to their subordinate meetings such assistance as may, from time to time, be required?

8. Are Friends clear of defrauding the public revenue? Are they just in their dealings, and punctual in fulfilling their engagements?

9. Are the necessities of the poor among you properly inspected and relieved; and is good care taken of the education of their offspring?

10. Is the advice to Friends on the subject of their outward affairs and the timely making of their wills annually given? Are the rules respecting removals, the revision of the lists of members, and the recording of births, marriages, and burials, observed? Are the titles of your meeting-houses, burial-grounds, &c, duly preserved and recorded; and is all other trust-property under your care rightly secured and applied?<sup>1</sup>

The committee responsible for revising the queries was conscious of the growing feeling in the Society that it was almost impossible to give satisfactory answers to them in a corporate sense. They were also conscious that the replies that had been given in recent years were often vague and meaningless. Some Friends on the committee may even have been prepared to take the final step of abolishing replies altogether, but the Society as yet was not unitedly ready for this, and the committee finally recommended that the queries to be answered should be reduced to a minimum.

The number of omissions was substantial. The previous 13th query on "marrying out" now disappeared, following the decision of Yearly Meeting in 1859 to amend the marriage regulations. It was replaced by a paragraph in the General Advices which continued to emphasize the advisability of Friends "marrying in" the Society, and touched on the deeper considerations that should be borne in mind:

In contemplating the engagement of marriage, look principally to that which will help you on your heavenward journey. Pay

<sup>1</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1860, pp. 28-29. Queries '2-4 were re-numbered in 1861, and the revised numeration is shown in brackets. Query 8 was re-worded: "Are Friends just in their dealings, punctual in fulfilling their engagements, and clear of defrauding the public revenue?"

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 the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

The previous 7th query "Do friends avoid all vain sports and places of diversion, gaming, all unnecessary frequenting of taverns and other public houses, excess in drinking and other intemperance" was also removed from the list of queries and a paragraph in similar terms with slightly altered wording was included in the General Advices. Perhaps the most important change of all was the omission from the 4th query of the requirement that Friends should train their children or others under their care "in plainness of speech, behaviour and apparel." This omission was approved in 1860 by Yearly Meeting only after much heartsearching. Many Friends, of whom Josiah Forster is a representative figure, who had opposed this alteration in 1859, were prepared to agree to it as part of a *general* revision.<sup>2</sup> In order to make it clear that the testimony for simplicity was still regarded as of great importance, the following paragraph was included in the General Advices:

Be careful to maintain in your own conduct, and to encourage in your families, that simplicity in deportment and attire, that avoidance of flattery and insincerity in language, and that non-conformity to the world, which become the disciples of the Lord Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

Substantial alterations were made to the form of the queries. In the new queries, an attempt was made to direct Friends to general principles, rather than to list prohibited activities. For example, Query 6 reads:

Are Friends faithful in maintaining our Christian testimony against all War?

instead of:

Are friends faithful in our testimony against bearing arms and being in any manner concerned in the militia, in privateers, or armed vessels, or dealing in prize goods?

Other alterations included the grouping in the 10th query of

<sup>1</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1860, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *The Friend*, vol. 18 (1860), p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1860, p. 32. Other omissions included the removal of both the 2nd and 12th queries of the 1833 revision, and the question on the appointment of overseers in the previous 14th query (including matters more easily supplied from the tabular statement recommended and adopted in 1861: *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1861, p. 21).

the administrative subjects which had formerly been spread over a number of queries, and the omission of the query specially addressed to Quarterly Meetings, the subject matter of which was transferred to the new 7th query.

In the following year, Yearly Meeting tried to emphasize the changing purpose of the queries, and expanded its minute of 1833 by the addition of the following paragraph:

Yet it is not to arrangements, however perfect, but to individual faithfulness to Christ, in daily dependence upon the help of the Holy Spirit, that we must look for growth in the truth, and vitality in the Church. As this faithfulness and dependence are maintained, we believe these queries will tend to promote the religious welfare of our members, and the upholding of our Christian discipline in a lively and healthy condition.<sup>1</sup>

Yearly Meeting also tried at the same time to deal with the criticisms that had been made of the vagueness of the replies to the queries and of the practice of some Friends in reporting exceptions which had not been properly investigated.

In framing the answers, vague and general terms should, as far as practicable, be avoided. Where deficiency is acknowledged, report is to be made in the answer whether due admonition and care have been extended. In no case whatever is a friend to consider himself at liberty to bring forward an exception on suspicion only, the actual existence of which has not been certainly ascertained.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the alterations made to the answered queries and the change of emphasis that was taking place in the Society as to their purpose, the committee responsible for revising the queries recommended in addition three queries to be read in the various meetings for discipline and then seriously and deliberately considered but not answered. They were approved by Yearly Meetings as follows:

(A) What is the religious state of your meeting; and is there among you evidence of a growth in the Truth?

(B) Are you individually giving evidence of true conversion of heart; of love to Christ, and self-denying devotedness to Him; and of a growing preparation for the life to come?

(C) Do you maintain a watchful care against conformity to the world; against the love of ease and self-indulgence, or being unduly absorbed by your outward concerns to the hindrance of your religious progress; bearing in mind that "here we have no continuing city"?<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Extracts from the minutes and epistles . . . relating to Christian doctrine practice and discipline*, 1861, 4to ed. p. 182. 8vo. ed. pp. 167-168.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 4to ed. p. 182; 8vo ed. p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1860 p. 30. These were numbered 1-3 in 1861.

In addition to these three queries, a fourth was added in 1861 by transfer of a paragraph from the General Advices:

4. Do you exercise a judicious religious care over your younger members; manifesting an earnest concern that, through the power of Divine grace, they may all become established in the faith and hope of the Gospel?<sup>1</sup>

These new queries, known as "the unanswered queries" (the logical mind of John Bright regarded the phrase as a contradiction in terms) were intended for serious self-examination, but it must be borne in mind that the requirement of Yearly Meeting was that they should be deeply considered in meetings for discipline—a reading of them without consideration was never contemplated.

Compared with the alterations to the queries in 1860, the revisions to the General Advices were comparatively small. Matter was transferred from some of the old queries but there were also a number of other paragraphs added, from which can be seen the evangelical atmosphere of the day, e.g.:

Prize the privilege of access by Him unto the Father; continue "instant in prayer", and "watch in the same with thanksgiving".

Be diligent in the private perusal of the Holy Scriptures; and let it be your earnest endeavour that the daily reading of them in your families be devoutly conducted.

There was a greater concern for those coming to meetings for worship who are not Friends:

Cherish a Christian interest on behalf of such attenders of your meetings as are not in membership; evincing a lively concern for their religious welfare and growth in the truth.<sup>2</sup>

The more parochial paragraphs in the previous General Advices relating to the "placing out" of children of Friends and the care of apprentices were omitted. As a result of these alterations, the trend that had started in 1833 of making the General Advices serve the purpose of self-examination was continued, and the "disciplinary" side of them virtually disappeared. A change which had been suggested by Durham Quarterly Meeting in 1853 now took place in their use; in

<sup>1</sup> *Extracts from the minutes and epistles*, 1861, 4to ed. p. 184; 8vo ed. p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *Extracts from the minutes and epistles*, 1861, 4to ed. p. 180; 8vo ed. p. 166. The wording was amended in 1861 from the 1860 "Exercise judicious religious care over your younger members, and towards such attenders of your meetings as are not in membership." *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1860, p. 31.

addition to being read in Quarterly and Monthly Meetings, they were directed to be read during the year after meeting for worship in each meeting instead of at Preparative Meeting.<sup>1</sup> The intention was to inform attenders as well as members of the Society of the principles for which Friends stood, and was a signal departure from the idea of the closed, exclusive Society of the previous hundred years.

The changes that were made during the years 1859-1861 were not made without strong opposition, and the clearest exposition of this was in Daniel Pickard's *Expostulation on behalf of the Truth*, published in 1864. To him, all the alterations that were made were a sign of the decay and decadence in the Society. Many of his criticisms we can sympathize with, particularly where he considers that the doctrinal views expressed in the new General Advices and Queries and the revised Book of Discipline were not in accord with the fundamental principles of the Society. He also pointed out, with much insight, the dangers which he foresaw would arise from the changes that had taken place. The reading of the General Advices at the end of meeting for worship was the "thin end of the wedge" and it would soon be found if this practice were continued that it was more convenient that they should be read in meeting for worship itself. The reading and consideration of queries not to be answered in Preparative Meetings would in his view in course of time become simply an empty formality. On the other hand, in his ultra-conservatism, Daniel Pickard showed no sense of proportion. He opposed all the changes that were made, so that even the alteration in the 1st query of the words "kept up" to "regularly held" seemed to him important. He was unable to see that, although the changes that were taking place held dangers, the old practice of requiring formal answers to a rigid set of queries had failed in its object and was just as incompatible with the essential spirit of Quakerism as the doctrinal changes criticized by him. Nevertheless, his *Expostulation* clearly sets out the old view of the queries and General Advices as an aid to the discipline of the Society and as a means of obtaining information as to its condition—a view which was now being discarded. It remained to be seen

<sup>1</sup> *Extracts from the minutes and epistles*, 1861, 4to ed. p. 179; 8vo ed. p. 165. The word "after" is printed in capitals. See also *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1860, p. 22.

whether the new practice would be any more valuable and successful.

The unanswered queries took a firm foothold in the Society and their use can only have accentuated the desire in the minds of many Friends that answers to the remaining queries should be abolished. At Yearly Meeting in 1871 it was agreed that instead of reading answers to the first seven queries from all the Quarterly Meetings, the answers to the first two only should be read in future and a summary of the remaining answers prepared and read. The demand for complete abolition of the practice of requiring answers recurred—from Westmorland Q.M. in 1872, Bristol & Somerset Q.M. in 1873 (which pointed out that the main purpose of the queries was in "individual self-examination", and that answers could not be given "except in very vague and general terms"), and Yorkshire Q.M. in 1874. The subject was referred in 1874 to a conference of Quarterly Meeting representatives, which in turn appointed a committee to revise the Queries and General Advices. The committee reported to the adjourned meeting of the conference, which presented their recommendations to Yearly Meeting in 1875.<sup>1</sup> As a result of the acceptance by Yearly Meeting of these recommendations, twelve new queries were settled and the practice of requiring answers was completely abolished except to the first part of the 2nd and 10th queries. This change was agreed by Yearly Meeting with surprisingly little opposition, partly due to the recognition by some of those who had previously opposed the change that very often those meetings where Quakerism was at its weakest were among the most zealous in replying to the queries.

The twelve new queries were in the following form:

1. What is the religious state of your Meeting? Are you individually giving evidence of true conversion of heart, and of loving devotedness to Christ?

2. *Are your Meetings for worship regularly held; and how are they attended?* Are they occasions of religious solemnity and edification in which, through Christ, our ever-living High Priest and Intercessor, the Father is worshipped in spirit and in truth?

3. Do you "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us?" Do you cherish a forgiving spirit? Are you careful of the reputation of others; and do you avoid and discourage tale-bearing and detraction?

<sup>1</sup> See *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1871, p. 24; 1872, p. 14; 1873, pp. 22-4; 1874, pp. 13-14; 1875, pp. 19-20.

4. Are you individually frequent in reading, and diligent in meditating upon, the Holy Scriptures? And are parents and heads of households in the practice of reading them in their families in a devotional spirit, encouraging any right utterance of prayer or praise?

5. Are you in the practice of private retirement and waiting upon the Lord: "in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, making your requests known unto Him?" And do you live in habitual dependence upon the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit?

6. Do you maintain a religious life and conversation as becometh the Gospel? Are you watchful against conformity to the world; against the love of ease and self-indulgence; or being unduly absorbed by your outward concerns to the hindrance of your religious progress and your service for Christ? And do those who have children or others under their care endeavour, by example and precept, to train them up as self-denying followers of the Lord Jesus?

7. Do you maintain a faithful allegiance to the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the one Head of the Church, and the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, from Whom alone must come the true call and qualification for the ministry of the word? And are you faithful in your testimony to the freeness and spirituality of the Gospel dispensation?

8. Are you faithful in maintaining our Christian testimony against all War, as inconsistent with the precepts and spirit of the Gospel?

9. Do you maintain strict integrity in all your transactions in trade, and in your other outward concerns? And are you careful not to defraud the public revenue?

10. *Are your meetings for Church affairs regularly held; and how are they attended?* Are these meetings vigilant in the discharge of their duties towards their subordinate meetings, and in watching over the flock in the love of Christ? When delinquencies occur, are they treated timely, impartially and in a Christian spirit? And do you individually take your right share in the attendance and service of these meetings?

11. Do you, as a Church, exercise a loving and watchful care over your younger members; promoting their instruction in fundamental Christian truth and in the Scriptural grounds of our religious principles; and manifesting an earnest desire that, through the power of Divine grace, they may all become established in the faith and hope of the Gospel?

12. Do you fulfil your part as a Church, and as individuals, in promoting the cause of truth and righteousness, and the spread of the Redeemer's Kingdom at home and abroad?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1875, pp. 20-22. These queries were now applicable to both Men's and Women's Meetings and the separate queries which had been used by Women's Meetings since 1755 were now abolished. These had been in much the same form as those in use in the Men's Meetings, although they were fewer in number, principally because there were various matters of discipline where the Men's Meetings had final authority.



The 5th query of 1860, "Are Friends faithful in bearing our Christian testimony against all ecclesiastical demands," had already been abandoned in 1873 after several years' agitation for this change, and replaced by a paragraph in the General Advices on ecclesiastical usurpations,<sup>1</sup> which was itself withdrawn in 1875. After the conversion of most tithes into a rent-charge on land, which was not directly payable to the clergy, Friends did not feel the same hesitation about paying it, and in the more tolerant atmosphere of the 19th century claims for tithes against nonconformists were not so rigorously enforced. The need for this query had therefore largely ceased, and Yearly Meeting's decision in 1873 was a recognition of this fact.

In addition to the omission of the 5th query of the 1860 revision, there were certain other omissions, which resulted from the queries no longer being addressed in corporate terms. The previous 9th query, relating to the care of the poor, disappeared altogether; it was probably felt that this could be safely left in the hands of Monthly Meetings and their overseers. The previous 10th query also disappeared but the Yearly Meeting considered that the subjects of it were too important to be overlooked. It accordingly specified seven "duties" which Monthly Meetings were to report upon to their Winter Quarterly Meetings,<sup>2</sup> of which five were formerly included in the 10th query, with the addition of "care of libraries", and the other two related to the reading and consideration of the queries and the revision of the list of overseers once in three years.

The alterations to the 1860 queries which remained were all made with the object of making them personal in nature rather than corporate. "Are you" and "Do you" took the place of the impersonal "Are friends" which had been the customary beginning in the old answered queries. We can see too the more personal approach in the enquiry at the end of the 10th query with regard to meetings for church affairs "And do you individually take your right share in the attendance and service of these meetings?"

There was no doubt that the virtual abolition of the

<sup>1</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1873, pp. 25, 31; see also 1869, p. 26, and 1870, pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1875, p. 22. These duties have been expanded to form the ten duties we know today.

answered queries made it possible to add queries of greater spiritual depth and to modify existing ones in order to call attention to deeper spiritual values. The 5th, 7th and 12th queries were all additions of this kind. It must be admitted also that the queries were now taking their place as vehicles of evangelical doctrine, of which a good example is the sentence added to the 11th query, enquiring whether Friends in caring for their younger members were "promoting their instruction in fundamental Christian Truth and in the scriptural grounds of our religious principles?" Strong evangelical influence can be seen in many of the alterations that had been made. It is worth remembering that one of the reasons for which conservative friends had opposed the discontinuance of answering the queries was that they realized that abolition would permit the queries to be used as a vehicle for principles they believed unsound.

The alterations made to the General Advices were not so substantial, and were approved in 1875 in the following form:

Take heed, dear Friends, we entreat you, to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, who leads, 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, purchased for us by the one offering of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Be earnestly concerned in religious meetings reverently to present yourselves before the Lord; and seek, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to worship God through Jesus Christ.

Prize the privilege of access by Him unto the Father. Continue "instant in prayer", and "watch in the same with thanksgiving."

Be in the frequent practice of waiting upon the Lord in private retirement; honestly examining yourselves as to your growth in grace, and your preparation for the life to come.

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 sympathising with each other in the trials and afflictions of life. Watch over one another for good, manifesting an earnest desire that each may possess a well-grounded hope in Christ.

Follow peace with all men, desiring the true happiness of all: be kind and liberal to the poor, and endeavour to promote the temporal, moral, and religious well-being of your fellow-men.

With a tender conscience, in accordance with the precepts of

the Gospel, take heed to the limitations of the Spirit of Truth in the pursuit of the things of this life.

Maintain strict integrity in your transactions in trade, and in all your outward concerns. Guard against the spirit of speculation, and the snare of accumulating wealth. Remember that we must account for the mode of acquiring, as well as for the manner of using, and finally disposing of our possessions.

Observe simplicity and moderation in your department and attire, in the furniture of your houses, and in your style and manner of living. Carefully maintain in your own conduct, and encourage in your families, truthfulness and sincerity; and 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, whether for yourselves or your children, as may in any wise interfere with a growth in grace.

Avoid such sports and places of diversion as are frivolous or demoralizing; all kinds of gaming; the needless frequenting of taverns and other public houses, and the unnecessary use of intoxicating liquors.

In contemplating the engagement of marriage, look principally to that which will help you on your heavenward 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; inure them to the habits of self-restraint and filial obedience; carefully instruct them in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures; and seek for ability to imbue their hearts with the love of their Heavenly Father, their Redeemer, and their Sanctifier.

Finally, dear Friends, let your whole conduct and conversation be such as become the Gospel. Exercise yourselves to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. Be steadfast and faithful in your allegiance and service to your Lord; continue in His love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.<sup>1</sup>

The main alterations were the exclusion of the sentences:

Watch over one another for good; when occasions of uneasiness first appear in any, let them be treated with in privacy and tenderness before the matter is communicated to another. Should differences arise, be willing early to avail yourselves of the advice and judgment of your brethren; and may friends be ready to undertake, and prudent in executing, the blessed office of peacemaker.

Cherish a Christian interest on behalf of such attenders of your meetings as are not in membership; evincing a lively concern for their religious welfare and growth in the truth.

<sup>1</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1875, pp. 23-24.

These sentences were found to be not really appropriate for reading at the end of meetings for worship to a gathering that might well include a number of attenders who were not members of the Society.

In 1883, the Book of Discipline was revised and had a strong evangelical character. No alterations were made to the queries settled in 1875, but some slight additions were made to the General Advices, of which the most important was the insertion of the following paragraph:

Let the poor of this world remember that it is our Heavenly Father's will that all his children should be rich in faith. Let your lights shine in lives of honest industry and patient love. Do your utmost to maintain yourselves and your families in an honourable independence, and, by prudent care in time of health, to provide for sickness and old age, holding fast by the promise, "I will never leave thee or forsake thee."<sup>1</sup>

This paragraph was introduced as the revising committee considered that the General Advices, as they stood, were chiefly directed to those in comfortable circumstances. Nevertheless the addition does seem of a rather patronizing nature, and has a note of prudent worldly wisdom characteristic of the nineteenth century.

We have already noted the evangelical character of the 1875 revision of the General Advices and Queries, but there were even at this date Friends who considered that the Society was not moving in the right direction. In an essay in the *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* in July 1875 on "The Present Crisis in the Society of Friends", William Pollard criticized the emphasis that Friends then tended to place on theology and sound doctrine.

The strength of our religious body, as it seems to us, is not in the inculcation of creeds, or elaborate theological systems, which are often the mere uninspired inferences of fallible men; but in the loving recognition and promotion of the work of Christ in the soul, by the power of His Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

He emphasized that the Society had a distinctive message to give, which differed on fundamental questions from the message of other Christian denominations. The criticism of the prevailing evangelical tendencies in the Society became stronger in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Friends

<sup>1</sup> *Book of Christian discipline*, 1883, p. 227. See also *The Friend*, n.s. vol. 23 (1883), p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, vol. 9 (1875), p. 324.

like John Wilhelm Rowntree stressed the need for a vital Christianity expressed in modern terms that people of the day would understand. They pointed out that the message of early Friends had not been founded on doctrine but on a real knowledge of the presence of the spirit of Christ.

Although many Friends were concerned with the need for a re-interpretation of Quakerism, others adhered to the evangelical viewpoint, and did not recognize the need for change. In 1907, Yearly Meeting decided to revise only part 2 of the Book of Discipline, dealing with "Christian Practice". It was appreciated that no agreed revision of part 1 — "Christian Doctrine" would be possible. No complete revision of the General Advices and Queries was attempted. Few changes had taken place in the form of the queries since 1875. In 1897 Yearly Meeting agreed that no answers need be given in future as to attendance at meetings for worship and church affairs, and only required answers as to whether such meetings were regularly held.<sup>1</sup> Even this requirement was dropped in 1905, and the subjects were added to the "duties" upon which monthly meetings were required to report to their quarterly meetings.<sup>2</sup> This marked the disappearance of the last relic of the system of requiring replies to the queries, which had outlived its usefulness, but it is worth remembering the warning of John Morland at the Yearly Meeting of 1905 of the danger of getting out of touch with the subordinate meetings.<sup>3</sup> The other alteration that had been made to the queries was in 1904 when the reference in the 11th query to "your younger members" was deleted and replaced by the phrase "the young people in your different congregations"<sup>4</sup> This alteration was due to the recognition that the Society had a responsibility towards the growing number of children who were not in membership but who attended meetings and children's classes.

An important alteration was also made to the General Advices in 1906 when the following two paragraphs were substituted for the previous paragraph on gambling and intemperance:

<sup>1</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1897, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1905, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> *The Friend*, n.s. vol. 45 (1905), p. 380.

<sup>4</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1904, p. 24 (minute 29); see also 1903, pp. 75-76, and 1904, p. 31.

Avoid and discourage every kind of Betting and Gambling, and such speculation in commercial life as partakes of a gambling character.

In view of the manifold evils arising from the use of Intoxicating Liquors, prayerfully consider whether your duty to God and your neighbour does not require you to abstain from using them yourselves or offering them to others, and from having any share in their manufacture or sale.<sup>1</sup>

The revision of "Christian Practice" was approved by Yearly Meeting in 1911, which also approved the recommendation of the revising committee that the following should be adopted as a new query:

Do you, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, take a living interest in the social condition of those around you? What place do you give to personal service for others? Do you seek to understand the causes of social evils and to take your right share in the endeavour to remove them?<sup>2</sup>

Yearly Meeting also agreed to the recommendation of the revising committee that the phrase in the General Advices "Be kind and liberal to the poor", should be deleted and the following clause substituted:

Live not for yourselves but for others, seeking to undo the heavy burdens and to let the oppressed go free.

Slight alterations were also agreed to the remainder of this paragraph. The sentence in the 1883 edition of the General Advices, "Let the poor of this world remember that it is our Heavenly Father's will that all his children should be rich in faith", was deleted, together with the phrase at the end of the paragraph, "holding fast by the promise, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."<sup>3</sup>

These changes were the consequence of the report to the Yearly Meeting of 1910 of the Committee on Social Questions which had been considering for several years the point of view that the Society should take on problems of the social order. This interest of the Society in such problems was in itself a result of the new questioning attitude among Friends.

Following the revision in 1921 and 1925 of parts 1 and 2 of

<sup>1</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1906, pp. 63-64; see also *The Friend*, n.s. vol. 45 (1905), p. 376, and vol. 46 (1906), pp. 381-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1911, p. 124. The query was numbered 10a, but was later renumbered 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1911, pp. 124-5; see also *The Friend*, n.s. vol. 51 (1911), p. 388.

the Book of Discipline, Yearly Meeting considered in 1925 whether the time had not come to revise the Advices and Queries, and instructed Meeting for Sufferings to set up a committee to investigate the position.<sup>1</sup> This committee in 1926 decided that the Advices and Queries should be completely replaced.<sup>2</sup> This conclusion was only reached after a long discussion and cannot have been an easy one to take. Many Friends were deeply attached to the existing Advices and Queries; for example, Derby, Lincoln and Notts Quarterly Meeting thought it unnecessary to appoint any representative to the Meeting for Sufferings committee, "as no great desire was expressed for alteration in the Advices and Queries";<sup>3</sup> Cumberland Quarterly Meeting considered "that the Advices could not be much improved, though some of the Queries might be"; and Sussex, Surrey and Hants Quarterly Meeting were "again impressed with the sound doctrine, value and beauty of the Advices and Queries". Other meetings, however, were willing to recommend drastic changes; a committee of Berks and Oxon Quarterly Meeting recommended the abolition of the General Advices and their replacement by a revised set of Queries, of which it produced a draft for consideration; Bedfordshire Quarterly Meeting had prepared a composite draft incorporating both Advices and Queries, with the Advices comprising a majority of it.<sup>4</sup> The movement of thought in the Society in the 1920s was clearly in favour of radical revision, and the committee's recommendations, revised and approved by Yearly Meeting in 1928, reflected this accurately.<sup>5</sup>

The General Advices were expanded and divided into three parts; the first concerned with Friends' attitude to worship, the second with family life, and the third with the social responsibilities of Friends. The first part replaced, in different form, the first seven paragraphs of the 1875 General

<sup>1</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1925, pp. 252-3; *The Friend*, n.s. vol. 65 (1925), pp. 507-9; Meeting for Sufferings minutes, vol. 59, pp. 257-8.

<sup>2</sup> Minute 3 of Advices & Queries Committee, 27.ix.1926; see also *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1928, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> An appointment was eventually made in xi.1926 (Meeting for Sufferings minutes, vol. 59, p. 312).

<sup>4</sup> Advices & Queries Committee: Suggestions from Quarterly and other meetings, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> The Committee's report is in *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1928, pp. 39-41, followed by the draft General Advices and Queries (pp. 41-45); the text as finally approved appears on pp. 319-24.

Advices, which were evangelical in language and doctrine, emphasizing that the person of Jesus Christ was central to the Quaker message. Friends' attitude to worship is expressed in modern terms, but the special emphasis on the person of Jesus Christ is no longer present. The reference even in the first paragraph to God's love being "a redemptive love shown forth in Jesus Christ, in all His life and above all on the Cross" was not inserted in the draft prepared by the Revision committee, but was included after Augustus Diamond and other Friends had protested in the Yearly Meeting at the absence of any reference to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross.<sup>1</sup> Among other important features of the first part of the General Advices is the greater prominence given to the importance of the individual as a member of the worshipping community, *e.g.* "Be earnestly concerned in your meetings for worship to enter reverently into communion with God *and with one another*"; "and receive the messages of others in a tender spirit"; "Know one another as fellow workers in the things that endure"; and the value of preparation of heart and mind for meeting for worship.

In the second part of the General Advices, a new paragraph was included which stressed the need for true education through a full use of God's gifts. The evangelicals had tended to believe in the value of a "guarded" education, protected from worldly influences, and not really encouraging the free use of the mind. The importance placed in the 1928 General Advices on a wide education shows clearly one of the concerns that Friends felt most deeply at this period, and their desire for a positive approach. Friends were advised "to encourage the reading of good books . . .", rather than "to guard watchfully against the introduction into your households of publications of a hurtful tendency". Similarly, Friends were no longer advised "against such companionships . . . as may in any wise interfere with a growth in grace", but instead: "Be mindful for yourselves and for your children of the beauty and power of friendship . . ."

In the third part of the General Advices, the first paragraphs dealt with the social responsibilities of Quakerism. The previous edition perhaps had tended to over-emphasize the need for worldly prudence—"Do your utmost to maintain

<sup>1</sup> For discussion see *The Friend*, n.s. vol. 68 (1928), pp. 519-20, 527-28; see also *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1928, p. 316 (minute 35).



yourselves and your families in an honourable independence"—and this was altered to: "While trying to make provision for yourselves and your families, be not anxious overmuch, but in quietness of spirit seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness." A further important change was made by the insertion for the first time of a paragraph on Friends' peace testimony.

The same trends that we have noted above can be seen in the alterations to the queries, which were increased to 17 in number. There was a new emphasis on the preparation of heart and mind for meeting for worship. This is perhaps most clearly shown by comparing the previous 2nd query:

Are your Meetings for Worship regularly held and how are they attended? Are they occasions of religious solemnity in which, through Christ, our ever-living High Priest and Intercessor, the Father is worshipped in spirit and in truth?

with the new 6th query:

Do you come faithfully to our meetings for worship with heart and mind prepared, entering into fellowship one with another, seeking reverently to know communion with God and refreshment of spirit? Are you obedient to the divine call, whether your service be through words or in silence?

The importance of the home and family life was stressed in the new 10th query:

Are you endeavouring to make your home a place of friendliness, refreshment and peace, where God becomes more real to all who dwell there and to those who visit it?

And the increased awareness of social responsibilities can be seen in the new 14th query:

Do you manifest the spirit of justice and understanding in your relations with your fellows in industry and trade and in all your daily life?

This was also evident in the final two sentences of the 16th query emphasizing the positive side of Friends' peace testimony:

Do you live in the life and power which takes away the occasion of all wars? Do you seek to take your part in the ministry of reconciliation between individuals, groups and nations and in the breaking down of class barriers?

While the alterations to the text of the General Advices and Queries in 1928 were substantial, the change in the purpose of these documents and the value to be placed on

them was just as important. The keynote was set at the second meeting of the revision committee, which appointed the drafting sub-committee. It suggested to the drafting sub-committee that it should especially consider the subjects dealt with in Part 2 of the Book of Discipline, and then stated: "We recognize the value of bringing these subjects before the members and attenders of our Meetings for Worship and we think it should be the work of our Committee to carry this out either in the form of Advices or of Queries."<sup>1</sup> In the light of these terms of reference, the sub-committee decided that the General Advices most suitably carried out the purpose suggested and proceeded with the preparation of a revised draft of these only. They were approved at meetings of the full committee held in 1927. A further sub-committee was appointed to consider the future of the Queries, and it would seem that the possibility of dispensing with them altogether was considered. This sub-committee decided however that the Queries should be retained, and stated that they were:

a valuable means of bringing home to the individual the personal application of some of the counsels contained in the General Advices. They ought therefore to deal in part at least with the same matters dealt with in the Advices. For that reason alone the present queries will require considerable revision which should take place after the form of the Advices had been settled. It was considered an advantage to have some other number than twelve if the queries are to be read monthly, in order that the same query may not always be read in the same month of the year.<sup>2</sup>

The sub-committee's recommendations were accepted by the main Committee, and the revised Queries were drafted in accordance with them.

It can therefore be seen that the 1925-28 Committee considered that the purpose of both the Advices and Queries was primarily for their individual use for self-examination by Friends and attenders. No distinction of purpose was drawn between the Queries and General Advices, although it was considered that the Queries had a special value in being more direct in approach, and any repetition of material in the General Advices was intentional. The emphasis on the personal use of both General Advices and Queries can be seen

<sup>1</sup> Advices & Queries Committee, 27.ix.1926, minute 3.

<sup>2</sup> Minute of Sub-committee on the queries, 1.vii. 1927. The first sentence is reproduced in the report to Yearly Meeting (see *Y.M. Proceedings*, 1928, p. 40).

in the recommendation, approved by Yearly Meeting in 1928, that pending the revision of Part 3 of the Book of Discipline, they should be printed separately in pamphlet form, and as far as possible made available to all members of the Society.<sup>1</sup> They had in fact been printed separately by the Friends' Tract Association since before 1900, but this practice now received official recognition from Yearly Meeting.<sup>2</sup>

It is also a reasonable assumption that in considering both the Advices and Queries the Committee had taken into account their value in meeting for worship. The Committee, which had also been entrusted with the task of considering and revising the Advices on Ministry, was conscious of the need for strengthening the ministry in meetings for worship, and in its report to Yearly Meeting it recommended that the permission already given to read the Queries at the end of a meeting should be extended so as to permit them to be read "on the occasion" of meetings for worship, without specifying that it should be done "at the close."<sup>3</sup> It would seem apparent from this recommendation that the Committee expected that many meetings would wish the Queries to be read in meetings for worship, and in revising them bore this consideration in mind. In relation to the General Advices, the Committee had recommended that "the new Advices be read from time to time and at least once a year, either as a whole or in portions at the discretion of meetings."<sup>4</sup> This recommendation would appear to have left it open to individual meetings to decide when the General Advices should be read, instead of specifying that they should be read at the end of meeting for worship. It seems clear that, as Daniel Pickard had feared, the practice of reading the General Advices in meeting for worship itself had become common.<sup>5</sup> It is difficult to escape the feeling that the Committee appreciated this, and in lengthening and extending the scope of the General Advices intended that they should often be read in meetings for worship rather than at their conclusion. Unless this were the case, it would seem very unlikely that the reading of the General Advices in meetings for worship would have been

<sup>1</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1928, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> The first dated F.T.A. edition in Friends House Library is 1894.

<sup>3</sup> *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1928, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> D. Pickard, *An expostulation*, 1864, pp. 73-74.

made obligatory on the revision of Part 3 of the Book of Discipline in 1931.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Committee considered the value of the General Advices and Queries both for personal self-examination and as aids to meeting for worship, there is no evidence that it ever thought whether the Queries had any importance for the purpose of corporate consideration in preparative and monthly meetings. When the requirement of replying to the Queries had been substantially dropped in 1875, and had been replaced by the duty of corporate consideration, it was intended that this should be carried out in a vital manner by the Society. This intention does not seem to have been satisfied, and Daniel Pickard may well have been right in his forecast with regard to the corporate consideration of the Queries, that "when they have run through their excitative and dubious course, the very flatness of formality will characterize their end."<sup>2</sup> The Committee's approach confirms this conclusion and the new Queries, the 6th, 10th, 12th and 14th, which did not replace similar Queries already in use, were all designed for personal rather than corporate consideration. The first two Queries adopted in 1928 are also essentially addressed to the individual Friend, while the first two which they replaced were clearly intended for corporate consideration. On the other hand, the first part of the 7th, 11th and 15th Queries together with the 17th Query adopted in 1928 all imply a corporate consideration in a Friends' business meeting, and are not so suitable for use either for self-examination or in meetings for worship. In these cases however, all these Queries, with their corporate implication, were in use in slightly different form before 1928, and were not therefore fresh suggestions arising from the Committee. It is understandable that the Committee may not have wished to make too many alterations to the Queries already in use, realizing the necessity for presenting recommendations that were likely to be acceptable to a Yearly Meeting with conservative elements in it, and the Queries proposed may have been a compromise list. The Committee does not seem to have fully understood the difficulty of adopting a list of

<sup>1</sup> *Church government*, 1931, p. 49. The three paragraphs on "Duty of reading Advices and Queries" at the end of ch. 6, show slight inconsistencies with the duties laid down in the opening preamble. The "Duty" does not appear in the draft submitted to the Adjourned Yearly Meeting.

<sup>2</sup> D. Pickard, *An expostulation*, 1864, p. 15.

Queries which were designed for different purposes, or of leaving unaltered the duty of corporate consideration of Queries which it had revised without bearing this purpose in mind.

#### CONCLUSION

During the history of the Society, the purpose of the Queries and General Advices and their relative importance had completely altered. The original three "Questions" adopted by Yearly Meeting in 1682 were intended to produce in reply certain factual information. In the eighteenth century the Queries were used increasingly to ensure consistency among Friends, to obtain information as to the state of the Society, and (particularly after 1760) as an aid to the discipline. In the nineteenth century the value of the Queries for self-examination became of greater importance, and their purpose as an aid to the discipline was increasingly questioned. Following the revisions of 1860 and 1875, the disciplinary purpose disappeared and they were used for corporate consideration in addition to self-examination. Finally, as a result of the changes made in 1928, the value of the Queries for self-examination emerged uppermost, and they were used increasingly as an aid in meetings for worship, while their importance for corporate consideration was largely overlooked.

When they were instituted in 1791, the General Advices were regarded as subsidiary to the Queries and had a very similar purpose to them as an aid to the discipline. Following the major revision of 1833 they were used mainly for individual exhortation, and at each successive revision in 1860, 1875 and 1928, they have grown steadily in length and importance, and, as we have seen, at the last revision the Committee considered the General Advices to be of greater significance than the Queries with the purpose both of arousing self-examination and for use in meetings for worship. In considering the revision of the Queries and General Advices at the present time, it is well to remember the alterations that have taken place over the years both in their purpose and content, and the need for the Society to use them to the best advantage. Properly used, they will not be regarded simply as a collection of pious sentiments leading

*[Concluded on page 279]*