

Chapter 20

Living faithfully today

THE SOURCE OF OUR STRENGTH

- 20.01 I ask for daily bread, but not for wealth, lest I forget the poor.
I ask for strength, but not for power, lest I despise the meek.
I ask for wisdom, but not for learning, lest I scorn the simple.
I ask for a clean name, but not for fame, lest I contemn the lowly.
I ask for peace of mind, but not for idle hours, lest I fail to hearken
to the call of duty.

Inazo Nitobe, 1909

- 20.02 Job Scott (1751-1793) of Rhode Island travelled widely in the ministry. His Journal (see 21.51 & 22.36) is one of the treasures of the Quietist period.

Our strength or help is only in God; but then it is near us, it is in us – a force superior to all possible opposition – a force that never was, nor can be foiled. We are free to stand in this unconquerable ability, and defeat the powers of darkness; or to turn from it, and be foiled and overcome. When we stand, we know it is God alone upholds us; and when we fall, we feel that our fall or destruction is of ourselves.

Journal of Job Scott, 1751-1793

- 20.03 *The poetry of John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892), a Massachusetts journalist and antislavery campaigner, continues to find a place in modern hymn-books, far beyond the boundaries of the Religious Society of Friends. In The brewing of soma, of which the following are the final stanzas, the Quaker poet asks forgiveness for the Christian tendency to fall back on artificial stimulants to spiritual experience, which he likens to the drug-induced ecstasies of primitive religion in 'the childhood of the world' and contrasts with the true inspiration which we may experience in silent waiting upon God.*

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Dear Lord and Father of mankind
 Forgive our foolish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
 In purer lives thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
 Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word,
 Rise up and follow thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
 O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with thee
The silence of eternity
 Interpreted by love!

With that deep hush subduing all
 Our words and works that drown
The tender whisper of thy call,
As noiseless let thy blessing fall
 As fell thy manna down.

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
 Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
 The beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
 Thy coolness and thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
 O still, small voice of calm!

1872

20.04 When work does not turn out as was expected or intended, do not let it depress you. If you are working from a right motive, and doing

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your best under the guidance of a loving Father in heaven, your work cannot be and is not failure... Remember that the Lord never lays work upon His people that He does not give them strength or ability to perform, and if it please Him in the working out of His great purposes that life shall be sacrificed or cut short in the midst of the work, be assured that the work will not permanently suffer from such a cause.

Joseph John Armistead, 1913

- 20.05 The people whom I know who live a truly nonviolent life are in touch with the source of power, call it what you will; the Light, the seed, God, the holy spirit. Many others of us find this wellspring when we need it, and lose it again, find it and lose it, find it and lose it. Regrettably, I am one of the latter. When I have something very difficult to face that I know I can't cope with, then I turn desperately to the source. One of the things I find most infuriating about myself is that I often let the contact go when the emergency is over and flounder along without it for months on end when my everyday existence could be transformed by it. It is as if I opened the blinds in my house for only an occasional hour when – for example – I had an important visitor, or a cable arrived, or I had to sweep up some broken glass; and afterwards allowed the blinds to fall closed again. So that for ninety-per-cent of the time I bumble around, do my housework in semi-darkness, strain my eyes trying to read and can scarcely discern the features of those to whom I talk. More than anything I want to learn to live in the Light. So I think, anyway, but in fact I perhaps don't altogether want to take the demands involved, don't want to see all the dust in my life.

Jo Vellacott, 1982

- 20.06 Some among us have a clear sense of what is right and wrong – for themselves personally if not for everyone else. They have a reassuring certitude and steadiness which can serve as a reference point by which others may navigate. There are others who live in a state of uncertainty, constantly re-thinking their responses to changing circumstances, trying to hold onto what seems fundamental but impelled to reinterpret, often even unsure where lies the boundary between the fundamental and the interpretation...

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Please be patient, those of you who have found a rock to stand on, with those of us who haven't and with those of us *who are not even looking for one*. We live on the wave's edge, where sea, sand and sky are all mixed up together: we are tossed head over heels in the surf, catching only occasional glimpses of any fixed horizon. Some of us stay there from choice because it is exciting and it *feels like the right place to be*.

Philip Rack, 1979

- 20.07 Later on I was meditating, imagining Light and Love surrounding the world leaders as they gathered: 'Free them from fear', I asked ... but then I couldn't go on. I realised that all I could honestly ask was for myself to be freed from the fear which only an hour ago had threatened to ruin my day. All I could do was to come to terms with my own brokenness and make peace with myself and then with my immediate environment. And remembering the conflicts and problems in my life at that moment, even that seemed beyond me.

Susan Lawrence, 1984

- 20.08 Prayer is an exercise of the spirit, as thought is of the mind. To pray about anything is to use the powers of our spirit on it, just as to think clearly is to use our mental powers. For the best solution of every problem, the best carrying out of every action, both thought and prayer are necessary... To pray about any day's work does not mean to ask success in it. It means, first to realise my own inability to do even a familiar job, as it truly should be done, unless I am in touch with eternity, unless I do it 'unto God', unless I have the Father with me. It means to see 'my' work as part of a whole, to see 'myself' as not mattering much, but my faith, the energy, will and striving, which I put into the work, as mattering a great deal. My faith is the point in me at which God comes into my work; through faith the work is given dignity and value. And if, through some weakness of mine, or fault of others, or just 'unavoidable circumstances', the work seems a failure, yet prayer is not wasted when it is unanswered, any more than love is wasted when it is unreturned.

Mary F Smith, 1936

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20.09 Over the years many Friends have told me that they no longer need regular daily prayer. I don't want to suggest that I am a better man or that there is only one way but simply that this has not been my experience. I am not emotionally strong, and the expected, and even more the unexpected, needs of patients, students, colleagues, family, friends and strangers leave me empty and exhausted. I could not face the next day without a time in which life is renewed. I shall not describe this in detail. The essence is regularity and time – time to reach down to the level where I can begin to see myself and my work straight, where that strength we call love can break through my anxiety and teach me how to respond instead of react, where I am not ruled by conscience but by Jesus the true man within; the level where I can accept my whole nature and forgive myself and others... Prayer alone can reopen the road to the spirit, blocked repeatedly by busyness, self-importance, self-indulgence, self-pity, depression or despair.

Donald Court, 1970

20.10 The place of prayer is a precious habitation: ... I saw this habitation to be safe, to be inwardly quiet, when there was great stirrings and commotions in the world.

John Woolman, 1770

20.11 Love silence, even in the mind... Much speaking, as much thinking, spends; and in many thoughts, as well as words, there is sin. True silence is the rest of the mind; and is to the spirit, what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment.

William Penn, 1699

20.12 Like many people, I had given up the practice of prayer as I had learned it when young, for it seemed to me at best a convention, at worst a superstition. It was George Gorman, in *The amazing fact of Quaker worship*, who helped me to see that I do in fact pray. When I go up to kiss my sleeping children and linger with them, in quietness and love, that is prayer. There is a wordless unity of God, myself, my

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children, a sense of gratitude and reverence, awareness of my need for strength, shame for my failings, a promise to try again.

Exercise is good for us; prayer is the right kind for the spirit. As with physical exercise there are many kinds, to do by yourself or with other people, at different intervals, with different aids. It takes time and commitment to develop the right kind for each one of us.

Anne Hosking, 1984

- 20.13 There were three separate occasions when heart-felt disturbances called me back to prayer. One was entirely joyful: sitting up in bed early one summer morning nursing my week-old first child, looking out on the sunshine and being swept into a feeling of miraculous oneness with all creation and able to thank a real God with the whole of my being.

The second was in great contrast. The winter after my husband's death, when I was physically stretched to the limit caring single-handed for six young children and emotionally in a state of bleak torpor, I came across Simone Weil's *Waiting on God* and in a chapter called 'The love of God and affliction' recognised my own condition. I could not claim that I knew the worst that she, in her utterly clear and ruthless style, was describing, but it was near enough, and knowing that someone else recognised it brought a certain comfort. But most important, she showed a place for God in the shape of the crucified Christ, and part of my misery for some time had been the blank absence of any sense of the presence of God..

The third experience, some years later, concerned a friend who was extremely ill. She was one of the few really good people I had ever known, and I saw her in great distress. When I reached home from the hospital I went to my room and tried to lay myself alongside her suffering and bring us both before God. In the depth of affliction I had sometimes felt like Job; now I found myself wrestling like Jacob. This last episode began the process of break-up which led on by slow degrees to a time when I knew I had to try to pray again; not just in dire immediate need but as a basis for daily living.

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Joan Fitch, 1980

- 20.14 Those of us known as ‘activists’ have sometimes been hurt by the written or spoken implication that we must be spending too little time on our spiritual contemplative lives. I do know many atheists who are active to improve the lot of humankind; but, for those of us who are Friends, our attendance at meeting for worship and our silent prayerful times are what make our outer activity viable and effective – if it is effective.

I have similarly seen quieter Friends hurt by the implication that they do not care enough, because they are not seen to be ‘politically active’. Some worry unnecessarily that they may be doing things of a ‘less important’ nature, as if to be seen doing things by the eyes of the world is the same thing as to be seen doing things by the eyes of God... I suggest that we refrain from judging each other, or belittling what each is doing; and that we should not feel belittled. We cannot know the prayers that others make or do not make in their own times of silent aloneness. We cannot know the letters others may be writing to governments, similarly... We were all made differently, in order to perform different tasks. Let us rejoice in our differences.

Margaret Glover, 1989

- 20.15 In its history the Society of Friends has produced many people whose lives of conspicuous service have profoundly influenced their times. John Woolman, Elizabeth Fry, Joseph Sturge and many others would have made for themselves no claim to a special dedication to service, but they were none the less able, out of the depth of their love for their fellows, to take great opportunities that came to them. Their service sprang directly out of their religious faith, but this faith was itself stimulated and fostered by the religious atmosphere in which they lived. To this atmosphere the lives of many Friends, now nameless and unknown, contributed by their faithfulness in inconspicuous service, and so made it possible for the greater spirits to grow to their full stature.

Gerald Littleboy, 1945

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- 20.16 Our testimonies arise from our way of worship. Our way of worship evokes from deep within us at once an affirmation and a celebration, an affirmation of the reality of that Light which illumines the spiritual longing of humanity, and a celebration of the continual resurrection within us of the springs of hope and love; a sense that each of us is, if we will, a channel for a power that is both within us and beyond us.

Lorna M Marsden, 1986

- 20.17 Testimonies are not imposed on members of the Society of Friends, but they are re-affirmed corporately and re-expressed sufficiently often to be both a challenge and a way of living for most Friends. They are part of our distinctive witness. They do not make it any easier to live a life of faithfulness to God's leadings, for they give rise to many dilemmas and compromises as we live in a society which is often based on other presuppositions. We cannot help being immersed in it even whilst trying to change its norms. Finding ways of expressing the testimonies that are relevant to present times is a continuing challenge. Such expressions will not necessarily seem practical, tactful, sensible, expedient or in line with some current vogue of thinking, for they are based on what seems right in an absolute sense of inner conviction.

Chris Lawson, 1987

- 20.18 Ever since I first came among Friends, I was attracted to the testimonies as an ideal. I wanted to belong to a church which made the rejection of warfare a collective commitment and not just a personal option. I admired a simplicity, a devotion to equality, and a respect for others which reflected what I already knew of Christ. In a deceitful world I warmed to those who did not swear oaths and strove to tell the truth in all circumstances. But this was a beginning in the spiritual life. The seed that was sown in my mind and my politics struck root in my soul and my faith.

The choice of the word 'testimony' is instructive. The testimonies are ways of behaving but are not ethical rules. They are matters of practice but imply doctrines. They refer to human society but are

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about God. Though often talked about they lack an authoritative formulation...

A 'testimony' is a declaration of truth or fact... It is not an ejaculation, a way of letting off steam or baring one's soul. It has a purpose, and that is to get other people to change, to turn to God. Such an enterprise, be it in words or by conduct and example, is in essence prophetic and evangelical.

John Punshon, 1987

For the development of the testimonies in the seventeenth century see 19.33-19.48

- 20.19 It is not necessary that we should know all mysteries before we begin to follow Christ. To some of us much that is taught of His person and His work may not be clear, but so it was with the early disciples. They did not understand at first the mystic union with their Master to which they were called, but they followed Him, and as they followed, there was gradually unfolded to them the fullness of His love and life. If we begin where they began, and follow as they followed, we shall end where they ended, in adoring love.

London Yearly Meeting, 1909

- 20.20 For a Quaker, religion is not an external activity, concerning a special 'holy' part of the self. It is an openness to the world in the here and now with the whole of the self. If this is not simply a pious commonplace, it must take into account the whole of our humanity: our attitudes to other human beings in our most intimate as well as social and political relationships. It must also take account of our life in the world around us, the way we live, the way we treat animals and the environment. In short, to put it in traditional language, there is no part of ourselves and of our relationships where God is not present.

Harvey Gillman, 1988

- 20.21 It is in my heart to praise thee, O my God;

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let me never forget thee,
what thou hast been to me:

In the night, by thy presence in the
day of trial when I was beset in darkness,
when I was cast out as a wandering bird,
and when I was assaulted with strong temptations,
then thy presence in secret did preserve me,
and in a low estate I felt thee near me.

When the floods sought to sweep me away
Thou set a compass for them,
how far they should pass over;

When my way was through the sea,
and when I passed under the mountains
there was thou present with me;

When the weight of the hills was upon me
thou upheld me, else had I sunk
under the earth;

When I was as one altogether helpless,
when tribulation and anguish was upon me
day and night, and the earth
without foundation;

When I went on the way of wrath,
and passed by the gates of hell,
when all comforts stood afar off,
and he that is mine enemy had dominion;
when I was cast into the pit,
and was as one appointed to death;
when I was between the millstones,
and as one crushed with the weight
of his adversary,

As a father thou was with me
and the rock of thy presence.

James Nayler, 1659

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20.22 Luke Cock (1657-1740), a butcher by trade, and a noted singer, was a young man living in North-East Yorkshire when he was convinced. The following extract reports in his own idiom a sermon he gave at York in 1721:

Necessity, Friends, outstrips the law: necessity has made many people go by the Weeping Cross... I remember I was yonce travelling through Shrewsbury, and my Guide said to me: 'I'll show thee the Weeping Cross.' 'Nay', said I, 'thou need not; I have borne it a great while'. Now this place that he showed me was four lane ends.

I remember when I first met with my Guide. He led me into a very large and cross [place], where I was to speak the truth from my heart – and before I used to swear and lie too for gain. 'Nay, then,' said I to my Guide, 'I mun leave Thee here: if Thou leads me up that lane, I can never follow: Pse be ruined of this butchering trade, if I mun't lie for a gain.' Here I left my Guide, and was filled with sorrow, and went back to the Weeping Cross: and I said, if I could find my good Guide again, I'll follow Him, lead me whither He will. So here I found my Guide again, and began to follow Him up this lane and tell the truth from my heart. I had been nought but beggary and poverty before; and now I began to thrive at my trade, and got to the end of this lane, though with some difficulty.

But now my Guide began to lead me up another lane, harder than the first, which was to bear my testimony in using the plain language. This was very hard; yet I said to my Guide, 'Take my feeble pace, and I'll follow Thee as fast as I can. Don't outstretch me, I pray Thee.' So by degrees I got up here.

But now I was led up the third lane: it was harder still, to bear my testimony against tithes – my wife not being convinced. I said to my Guide, 'Nay, I doubt I never can follow up here: but don't leave me: take my pace, I pray Thee, for I mun rest me.' So I tarried here a great while, till my wife cried, 'We'se all be ruined: what is thee ganging stark mad to follow t'silly Quakers?' Here I struggled and cried, and begged of my Guide to stay and take my pace: and presently my wife was convinced. 'Well,' says she, 'now follow thy Guide, let come what will. The Lord hath done abundance for us: we will trust in Him.' Nay, now, I thought, I'll to my Guide again,

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now go on, I'll follow Thee truly; so I got to the end of this lane cheerfully...

My Guide led me up another lane, more difficult than any of the former, which was to bear testimony to that Hand that had done all this for me. This was a hard one: I thought I must never have seen the end of it. I was eleven years all but one month in it. Here I began to go on my knees and to creep under the hedges, a trade I never forgot since, nor I hope never shall. I would fain think it is impossible for me to fall now, but let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

I thought to have had a watering: but ye struggle so I cannot get you together. We mun have no watering tonight, I mun leave you every yan to his own Guide.

- 20.23 George Fox wrote to Friends in November 1663, during the time of much persecution:

Sing and rejoice, ye Children of the Day and of the Light; for the Lord is at work in this thick night of Darkness that may be felt: and Truth doth flourish as the rose, and the lilies do grow among the thorns, and the plants atop of the hills, and upon them the lambs doth skip and play. And never heed the tempests nor the storms, floods nor rains, for the Seed Christ is over all and doth reign. And so, be of good faith and valiant for the Truth.

- 20.24 How does Jesus speak to us today? Does his closeness to God challenge you to put what you have learnt from worship into daily practice?

Questions and counsel, 1988

- 20.25 Incomparably the most important thing is that each one of us should be sensitive to the call of God to ourselves and not spend time in passing judgment on the lives of others. To some the call will be to adopt the witness of great simplicity, perhaps to live in an Indian village or in a London slum. To others the most important thing will be to maintain our ancient testimony against 'fightings

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with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatever'. But perhaps most will be called to the humdrum tasks of serving an employer supremely well, or running a house, bringing up a family, keeping the peace with difficult neighbours, serving the community in little things – the tasks which, because they are simple, are in fact most difficult to do with dedication... Our duty is to be sensitive to what God is asking us to do, and not to dissipate our energies trying to be absolutists in several directions at once.

Industry and the Social Order Conference, 1958

- 20.26 To me, being a Christian is a particular way of life, not the unquestioning acceptance of a particular system of theology, not belief in the literal truth of the Virgin birth, or the Resurrection and Ascension, but being the kind of person that Jesus wanted his followers to be and doing the things he told them to do...

Nor, it seems to me, can you live a Christian life unless, like Jesus, you believe in the power of goodness, of justice, of mercy and of love; unless you believe in these so strongly that you are prepared to put them to the acid test of experiment; unless these constitute the real meaning of life for you, more important than life itself, as they were for Jesus.

Kathleen Lonsdale, 1967

SIMPLICITY AND EQUALITY

- 20.27 The heart of Quaker ethics is summed up in the word 'simplicity'. Simplicity is forgetfulness of self and remembrance of our humble status as waiting servants of God. Outwardly, simplicity is shunning superfluities of dress, speech, behaviour, and possessions, which tend to obscure our vision of reality. Inwardly, simplicity is spiritual detachment from the things of this world as part of the effort to fulfil the first commandment: to love God with all of the heart and mind and strength.

The testimony of outward simplicity began as a protest against the extravagance and snobbery which marked English society in the

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1600s. In whatever forms this protest is maintained today, it must still be seen as a testimony against involvement with things which tend to dilute our energies and scatter our thoughts, reducing us to lives of triviality and mediocrity.

Simplicity does not mean drabness or narrowness but is essentially positive, being the capacity for selectivity in one who holds attention on the goal. Thus simplicity is an appreciation of all that is helpful towards living as children of the Living God.

Faith and practice, North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), 1983

- 20.28 It is our tender and Christian advice that Friends take care to keep to truth and plainness, in language, habit, deportment and behaviour; that the simplicity of truth in these things may not wear out nor be lost in our days, nor in our posterity's; and to avoid pride and immodesty in apparel, and all vain and superfluous fashions of the world.

Yearly Meeting in London, 1691

- 20.29 Personal pride does not end with noble blood. It leads people to a fond value of their persons, especially if they have any pretence to shape or beauty. Some are so taken with themselves it would seem that nothing else deserved their attention. Their folly would diminish if they could spare but half the time to think of God, that they spend in washing, perfuming, painting and dressing their bodies. In these things they are precise and very artificial and spare no cost. But what aggravates the evil is that the pride of one might comfortably supply the needs of ten. Gross impiety it is that a nation's pride should be maintained in the face of its poor.

William Penn, 1669

See also 19.39-19.40 Equality & 23.32-23.46 Discrimination and disadvantage

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20.30 In 1698 Margaret Fox, then in her late eighties, felt that this testimony was fast degenerating into a preoccupation with the way Friends dressed, the colours they wore, and the furniture used in their houses.

It's a dangerous thing to lead young Friends much into the observation of outward things which may be easily done. For they can soon get into an outward garb, to be all alike outwardly. But this will not make them into true Christians: it's the spirit that gives life.

20.31 We are now coming into that which Christ cried woe against, minding altogether outward things, neglecting the inward work of Almighty God in our hearts, if we can but frame according to outward prescriptions and orders, and deny eating and drinking with our neighbours, in so much that poor Friends is mangled in their minds, that they know not what to do, for one Friend says one way, and another another, but Christ Jesus saith, that we must take no thought what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or what we shall put on, but bids us consider the lilies how they grow, in more royalty than Solomon. But contrary to this, we must look at no colours, nor make anything that is changeable colours as the hills are, nor sell them, nor wear them: but we must be all in one dress and one colour: this is a silly poor Gospel. It is more fit for us, to be covered with God's Eternal Spirit, and clothed with his Eternal Light, which leads us and guides us into righteousness. Now I have set before you life and death, and desire you to choose life, and God and his truth.

Margaret Fox, 1700

20.32 The Creator of the earth is the owner of it. He gave us being thereon, and our nature requires nourishment, which is the produce of it. As he is kind and merciful, we as his creatures, while we live answerable to the design of our creation, are so far entitled to a convenient subsistence that no man may justly deprive us of it. By the agreements and contracts of our fathers and predecessors, and by doings and proceedings of our own, some claim a much greater share of this world than others: and whilst those possessions are faithfully improved to the good of the whole, it consists with equity. But he who, with a view to self-exaltation, causeth some with their domestic animals to labour immoderately, and with the monies

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arising to him therefrom, employs others in the luxuries of life, acts contrary to the gracious design of him [the Creator] who is the true owner of the earth; nor can any possessions, either acquired or derived from ancestors, justify such conduct.

John Woolman, 1763

- 20.33 Were all superfluities and the desire of outward greatness laid aside, and the right use of things universally attended to, such a number of people might be employed in things useful, as that moderate labour with the blessing of Heaven would answer all good purposes relating to people and their animals, and a sufficient number have time to attend to proper affairs of civil society.

John Woolman, 1763

- 20.34 If John Woolman's approach is the right one for the Society of today it is not enough to go over our own behaviour in detail, cutting a bit here and pulling back a bit there; we must be concerned with our and society's attitude to life as a whole, to 'live answerable to the design of our creation'.

Michael Lee, 1976

- 20.35 Is our concern for simplicity relevant to our concern for the national economic situation? If we think of simplicity in terms of doing without certain things, of voluntarily reducing our standard of living, I believe this is almost irrelevant at the economic level in view of the scale of the world's need.

If we think of simplicity as a spiritual quality which incidentally simplifies our life styles then I believe it has relevance. This kind of simplicity goes straight to the heart of things and puts first things first, is needed to rectify our distorted values, to help us accept changes in our pattern of living. As this simplicity grows in our hearts and bears fruit in our lives, we may learn and help others to learn that the really abundant life is not to be found in the clutter of material complexity, but in simplicity.

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L Hugh Doncaster, 1976

- 20.36 I wish I might emphasise how a life becomes simplified when dominated by faithfulness to a few concerns. Too many of us have too many irons in the fire. We get distracted by the intellectual claim to our interest in a thousand and one good things, and before we know it we are pulled and hauled breathlessly along by an overburdened programme of good committees and good undertakings. I am persuaded that this fevered life of church workers is not wholesome. Undertakings get plastered on from the outside because we can't turn down a friend. Acceptance of service on a weighty committee should really depend upon an answering imperative within us, not merely upon a rational calculation of the factors involved. The concern-orientated life is ordered and organised from within. And we learn to say No as well as Yes by attending to the guidance of inner responsibility. Quaker simplicity needs to be expressed not merely in dress and architecture and height of tombstones but also in the structure of a relatively simplified and coordinated life-programme of social responsibilities.

Thomas R Kelly, 1941

See also 23.53-23.70 Work and economic affairs & 24.50-24.52 Right sharing of the world's resources

Moderation and abstinence

- 20.37 It being discoursed that the common excess of smoking tobacco is inconsistent with our holy profession, this meeting adviseth that such as have occasion to make use of it do take it privately, neither in their labour or employment, nor by the highways, nor in alehouses nor elsewhere too publicly.

Hardshaw Monthly Meeting, 1691

- 20.38 As temperance and moderation are virtues proceeding from true religion ... we beseech all to be careful of their conduct and behaviour, abstaining from every appearance of evil; and as an

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excess in drinking has been too prevalent among many of the inhabitants of these nations, we commend to all Friends a watchful care over themselves, attended with a religious and prudent zeal against a practice so dishonourable and pernicious.

Yearly Meeting in London, 1751

- 20.39 The world is a dark enough place still for too many. It can ill spare even the poorest rushlight candle of cheerfulness or the smallest fire of fellowship. We must not put out the glimmer of light which shines for so many still today through the tavern windows, unless we can put a better in its place. We need the light of a brighter cheerfulness, and the glow of a warmer fellowship.

T Edmund Harvey, 1931

- 20.40 Many yearly meetings hold very strong testimonies against any use of tobacco or alcohol. Within Britain Yearly Meeting some Friends advocate total abstinence from alcohol, others counsel moderation. Those who smoke tobacco, drink alcohol or abuse other substances risk damage to their own health, and may hurt or endanger other people. Such use can deaden a person's sensitivity and response to others and to God. Consider whether you should avoid these products altogether, discourage their use in others, especially young people, and refrain from any share in their manufacture or sale. Maintain your own integrity and do not let social pressures influence your decisions.

1994

- 20.41 For those trapped in substance abuse, such advice [as in 20.40] may seem hollow. Commonalities exist between addictive behaviours with these substances and other compulsive actions such as in the areas of eating disorders, gambling, overwork and physical abuse. The causes go deep and may not be fully understood, but the resulting pain, fear, desperation and denial, damaging the abuser and all around that person, need to be supportively recognised. A meeting community should be ready to listen non-judgmentally, offer information about sources of help, refuse to enable people to

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continue in harmful patterns, and continue to offer an environment free from addictive practices.

Faith and practice, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, 1988

- 20.42 Friends, whatever ye are addicted to, the tempter will come in that thing; and when he can trouble you, then he gets advantage over you, and then you are gone. Stand still in that which is pure, after ye see yourselves; and then mercy comes in. After thou seest thy thoughts, and the temptations, do not think, but submit; and then power comes. Stand still in that which shows and discovers; and then doth strength immediately come. And stand still in the Light, and submit to it, and the other will be hushed and gone; and then content comes.

George Fox, 1652

HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

- 20.43 Are you honest and truthful in word and deed? Do you maintain strict integrity in your business transactions and in your relations with individuals and organisations? Are you personally scrupulous and responsible in the use of money entrusted to you, and are you careful not to defraud the public revenue?

Queries, 1964

- 20.44 Integrity is one of the virtues for which Quakers in the past have been praised. It is a quality worth having, but it is doubtful if it can be reached by self-conscious effort or by adherence to a principle... Integrity is a condition in which a person's response to a total situation can be trusted: the opposite of a condition in which he would be moved by opportunist or self-seeking impulses breaking up his unity as a whole being. This condition of trust is different from the recognition that he will always be kind or always tell the truth. The integrity of some Dutch Friends I have met showed itself during the war in their willingness to tell lies to save their Jewish friends from the Gestapo or from starvation.

Honesty and integrity

Kenneth C Barnes, 1972

- 20.45 The Quaker testimony to truthfulness is central to the practice of its faith by members of the Religious Society of Friends. From the beginning Friends have believed that they could have direct and immediate communication with God which would enable them to discern right ethical choices. They soon experienced common leadings of the Spirit which became formalised into testimonies... Arising from the teaching of Jesus as related in the writings of John and James: 'Let your yes mean yes and your no mean no', Quakers perceived that with a conscience illuminated by the Light, life became an integrated whole with honesty as its basis.

From time to time ... adherence to factual truth can give rise to profound dilemmas for Quaker Peace & Service workers if they are in possession of information which could be used to endanger people's lives or give rise to the abuse of fundamental human rights... Some of us are clear that in certain difficult circumstances we may still uphold our testimony to truthfulness while at the same time declining to disclose confidences which we have properly accepted. Such withholding of the whole truth is not an option to be undertaken lightly as a convenient way out of a dilemma. We all accept that ultimately it is up to an individual's own conscience, held in the Light, to decide how to respond.

Quaker Peace & Service, 1992

- 20.46 A neighbour ... desired me to write his will: I took notes, and, amongst other things, he told me to which of his children he gave his young negro: I considered the pain and distress he was in, and knew not how it would end, so I wrote his will, save only that part concerning his slave, and carrying it to his bedside, read it to him, and then told him in a friendly way, that I could not write any instruments by which my fellow-creatures were made slaves, without bringing trouble on my own mind. I let him know that I charged nothing for what I had done, and desired to be excused from doing the other part in the way he proposed. Then we had a serious conference on the subject, and at length, he agreeing to set her free, I finished his will.

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John Woolman, 1756

- 20.47 To conform a little to a wrong way strengthens the hands of such who carry wrong customs to their utmost extent; and the more a person appears to be virtuous and heavenly-minded, the more powerfully does his conformity operate in favour of evil-doers... While we profess in all cases to live in constant opposition to that which is contrary to universal righteousness ... what language is sufficient to set forth the strength of those obligations we are under to beware lest by our example we lead others wrong?

John Woolman, 1763

See also 19.01 & 20.22

Oaths and affirmation

- 20.48 Throughout their history Friends have refused to take oaths; and they underwent much hardship before provision was made by statute allowing them to affirm.

1967

- 20.49 And they gave me the Book, and I took it and was turning to a place that was against swearing, and they took it from me again and bid me say after the clerk. So I told them, if they would prove that Christ and the apostles commanded to swear after they had forbidden it, give us scripture for this, and we would swear. It was Christ's command that we should not swear.

George Fox, 1664

See also 19.37 & 19.38

- 20.50 The deeper meaning of simplicity can be seen in the stand of Friends against the taking of oaths. Friends believe that their word should be accepted at any time among all persons and thus [uphold]

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the right to stand simply on their own word rather than swearing on the Bible or before God, a witness which has gained recognition in modern legal practice.

Faith and practice, North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), 1983

England & Wales

- 20.51 The opportunity to bear witness to our ancient testimony against oaths will come to most Friends only on the rare occasions when they have to give evidence, serve on a jury or act in some other legal capacity. It is none the less a testimony to be cherished. The occasion of making an affirmation can be spiritually enriching and stands in a long and honourable tradition.

Evidence given by a person who affirms is legally of equal value with 'sworn' evidence. So is any other action performed or duty undertaken following affirmation, including jury service. This principle that 'a solemn affirmation shall be of the same force and effect as an oath' (section 5 (4) of the Oaths Act 1978) applies in all circumstances; another example is the affidavit sworn when applying for a grant of probate, which may equally be replaced by affirmation.

It is of assistance to let the clerk of a court know in advance of an intention to affirm, though there is no obligation to do so. The right to affirm is now absolute, with no requirement to state a reason for preferring affirmation to the swearing of an oath.

The form of oral affirmation prescribed in all places and for all purposes where an oath is or shall be required by law is as follows: 'I, [name], do solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm': and then follows the substance of the affirmation. A witness may affirm, for example, that 'the evidence I shall give shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth' or 'that I shall tell the truth'; a juror in a criminal trial 'that I will faithfully try the defendant(s) and give (a) true verdict(s) according to the evidence', and in civil proceedings 'that I will well and truly try the issues joined between the parties and a true verdict give according to the evidence'.

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Written affirmations are also admissible, for example under section 6 of the Oaths Act 1978, or in other legal capacities as appropriate. Every affirmation in writing shall commence: 'I AB of X do solemnly and sincerely affirm', and the form in lieu of jurat shall be 'affirmed at X this ... day of ... 19../20.. before me [name]'.

1967; 1994

The following is a translation into Welsh of 20.51

- 20.52 Dim ond ar yr achlysuron prin pan fo raid iddynt roddi tystiolaeth, bod yn aelod o reithgor neu weithredu mewn unrhyw sefyllfa gyfreithiol arall, y daw cyfle i Gyfeillion arddel ein tystiolaeth hynafol yn erbyn cymryd llwon. Y mae, serch hynny, yn dystiolaeth i'w choleddu. Gall y profiad o gadarnhau fod yn brofiad sydd yn un ysbrydol gyfoethog ac mae iddo draddodiad hen a pharchus.

Mae unrhyw dystiolaeth a roddir gan berson sydd yn cadarnhau o'r un gwerth cyfreithiol â thystiolaeth dan 'lw'. Mae hynny hefyd yn wir am unrhyw weithredoedd neu ddyletswyddau yr ymgymerir â hwy o ganlyniad i gadarnhau, gan gynnwys gwasanaethu ar reithgor. Mae'r egwyddor yma fod 'i gadarnhad difrifol yr un grym a'r un effaith â llw' (adran 5(4) o Ddeddf Llwon 1978) yn gymwys ym mhob amgylchiad; enghraifft arall yw'r affidafid dan lw wrth wneud cais am grant profiant, pryd y gellir ei wneud trwy gadarnhad.

Mae o gymorth os gadewir i glerc y llys wybod ymlaen llaw am y bwriad i gadarnhau ond nid yw'n angenrheidiol gwneud hynny. Mae'r hawl i gadarnhau bellach yn un absoliwt heb unrhyw angen i fynegi'r rheswm dros ddewis gwneud hynny yn hytrach na chymryd llw.

Ffurf y cadarnhad llafar a bennir ymhob lle ac i bob pwrpas lle bo neu lle bydd llw yn ofynnol yn ôl y gyfraith yw'r canlynol: 'Yr wyf i [enw] yn datgan a chadarnhau yn ddifrifol, yn ddiffuant ac yn ddidwyll': ac yna fe ddilyn sylwedd y cadarnhad. Gall tyst _gadarnhau, er enghraifft, y bydd 'y dystiolaeth a roddaf y gwir, yr holl wir a'r gwir yn unig' neu 'y byddaf yn eirwir'; rheithor mewn

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prawf trosedd ‘y profaf yn ffyddlon y diffynnydd (diffynyddion) a rhoi rheithfarn gyflawn (rheithfarnau cyflawn) yn ôl y dystiolaeth, ac mewn gweithrediadau sifil ‘y profaf yn iawn ac yn deg y materion mewn dadl rhwng y pleidiau a rhoi rheithfarn gyfiawn yn ôl y dystiolaeth’.

Mae cadarnhau ysgrifenedig hefyd yn dderbyniol, er enghraifft yng nghyswllt adran 6 o Ddeddf Llwon 1978, neu, pan fo’n addas mewn amgylchiadau cyfreithiol eraill. Dylai pob cadarnhad ysgrifenedig ddechrau: ‘Yr wyf i AB o X yn cadarnhau yn ddifrifol ac yn ddiffuant’, a’r ffurf yn lle jiwrat fydd ‘cadarnhawyd yn X ar y dydd o 19—/20— ger fy mron [enw]’.

1967; 1994

Scotland

- 20.53 In Scotland there is a long tradition of affirmation, so there has not been the same need for a distinctive Quaker witness as in England & Wales. The information and advice given in 20.51 is equally valid in Scotland. The Oaths Act 1978 applies in Scotland as well as in England & Wales.

1994

Conducting business

- 20.54 From its earliest days our Society has laid great stress on honesty and the payment in full of debts justly incurred. Though social conditions have undergone great changes over the years of our Society’s history, so that much of the advice given in the past may seem out of date, it is well to remind ourselves that the principles underlying the advice have not changed. Since we believe that all people are the children of God, we cannot take advantage of others by any form of dishonesty, whether in buying or selling goods, in business or privately, or as employees by failing to give an honest return in labour for the pay we receive. When we have received goods or services, we shall be punctual in making payment of the

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price agreed on, and we shall not attempt to evade our proper obligations to the community by way of taxation.

1959; 1994

- 20.55 As Christians, all we possess are the gifts of God. Now in distributing it to others we act as his steward, and it becomes our station to act agreeable to that divine wisdom which he graciously gives to his servants. If the steward of a great family, from a selfish attachment to particulars, takes that with which he is entrusted, and bestows it lavishly on some to the injury of others, and to the damage of him who employs him, he disunites himself, and becomes unworthy of that office.

John Woolman, 1763

Sources and use of income

- 20.56 The guiding principle which Friends should keep in mind in making an income, whether by work or by investment, should be the good of others and of the community at large, and not simply of themselves or their own family. Friends should, even at the risk of loss, strive to be strictly honest and truthful in their dealings; should refuse to manufacture or deal in commodities that are hurtful, and should be vigilant against obtaining an undue profit at the cost of the community. If Friends are investing, thought should be given, not only to security and the rate of interest, but to the conditions under which the income is produced and the effect which the investment may have on the welfare of all, through social or environmental impact, at home or elsewhere. In spending income, Friends should consider how their actions affect society and whether such expenditure upon themselves and their family is to the advantage of the community as a whole. Friends should also consider whether there is a reasonable relation between the labour expended on producing the things they buy and the real satisfaction yielded by their use.

1925; 1959; 1994

Honesty and integrity

See also 4.19 Advice on outward affairs. For guidance on ethical investment see 14.24 & 15.07

- 20.57 We believe that, as Quakers, we should put our whole lives under the guidance of the Spirit. This should determine our choices as individuals and as a Society between saving and spending and the way in which savings are invested. We are led to choose investments that benefit the community at large and not just ourselves and our families or small groups; to be strictly honest and truthful; and to refuse to deal in products or services which are hurtful to individuals or to society as a whole. We should only invest in accordance with our principles.

Young Friends Central Committee, 1980

- 20.58 The love of money is apt to increase almost imperceptibly. That which was at first laboured after under pressure of necessary duty, may, without great watchfulness, steal upon the affections, and gradually withdraw the heart from God. The danger depends not upon how much a man has, but upon how much his heart is set upon what he has, and upon accumulating more.

Yearly Meeting in London, 1858

- 20.59 Friends should know their income and live within it, not hesitating to seek advice if difficulties threaten. In the interest of those they love and as an example of honest citizenship Friends are advised to avoid entangling themselves in heavy commitments by unwisely obtaining goods on credit. Anxiety for the future, however, should not lead Friends to withhold what should rightly be expended for the needs of the family or other dependents or devoted to the service of others.

1925; 1959; 1994

- 20.60 Encourage a spirit of Christian bountifulness. Let all ... cultivate from early years a true liberality according to their means; it should be a joy to the Christian to support wise efforts to promote the good of others.

1925; 1959

Gambling and speculation

20.61 Gambling disregards our belief that possessions are a trust. The persistent appeal to covetousness evident, for example, in football pool propaganda is fundamentally opposed to the unselfishness which was taught by Jesus Christ and by the New Testament as a whole. The attempt, which is inseparable from gambling, to make a profit out of the inevitable loss and possible suffering of others is the antithesis of that love of one's neighbour on which Jesus insisted.

1959; 1994

20.62 We are faced at every hand with enticements to risk money in anticipation of disproportionate gain through gambling. Some governments employ gambling as a means of raising revenue, even presenting it as a civic virtue. The Religious Society of Friends continues to bear testimony against betting, gambling, lotteries, speculation, or any other endeavour to receive material gain without equivalent exchange, believing that we owe an honest return for what we receive.

Faith and practice, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, 1988

20.63 So much has the public conscience been warped from the living Truth that a man who has acquired wealth by operations on the Stock Exchange is spoken of as having 'made' his money regardless of whether any useful purpose has been served. One who identifies the status quo with the divine law regards such an accession of wealth as something to be accepted with thankful heart like manna from heaven. True enlightenment would show that, if nothing has been given in return, the wealth so gained has been misappropriated and the whole transaction, though sanctioned by law and custom, is, in its essence, a violation of the eighth commandment.

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In our *Advises* [1931] we are warned against commercial speculations of gambling character, and we are told to ‘remember how widespread and diverse are the temptations to grow rich at the expense of others’. The faithful observance of this advice points the way to an issue greater than personal rectitude with regard to gambling. It should lead to an examination of the system which permits or encourages these abuses, and to a demand for drastic changes.

Shipley N Brayshaw, 1933

See also 23.53-23.70 Work and economic affairs

Care of money held for others

- 20.64 Friends who hold moneys on behalf of others should have regard to the importance of the proper safeguarding and wise administration of such moneys. It is important that, where possible, a separate bank account be used which is not in the name of a single individual. Particular care should be taken to keep proper accounts which should be examined, if necessary by a qualified auditor, once a year.

1959; 1994

See also 14.20-14.24

Wills

- 20.65 When death occurs, difficulties are encountered where an unsatisfactory will or no will at all has been made. It is therefore recommended that Friends should make wills in time of health and should obtain professional advice. Wills should be reviewed from time to time, as due to change of circumstances it may be wise for new wills to be made.

It should be remembered that in English law a will is automatically revoked on a marriage (unless the will is specifically made in contemplation of such marriage) and on divorce provisions in a will

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in favour of a spouse normally cease to have effect. Under Scots law a will may be revoked by the birth of a child, but neither marriage nor divorce has the effect of revoking a will. In all the above circumstances it is important that a new will should be made.

In choosing executors, care should be taken not to overburden those who are to act, particularly where continuing trusts may be involved. Friends who have responsibility for children should make provision for their care, appointing guardians and trustees as necessary. Where there is more than one parent the will should cover the possibility of their dying at the same time. Finally, the place where the will may be found should be made known to those likely to be directly responsible.

1967; 1994

- 20.66 Let Friends in making their wills have a strict regard to justice and equity, and not be actuated by caprice and prejudice, to the injury of those who may have a reasonable expectation from their kindred and near connections. Let none (although occasion may have been given or taken) carry any resentment to the grave, remembering that we all stand in need of mercy and forgiveness. Friends are advised not to make large bequests to relatives or others who do not need them; and to remember the pressing claims of religious and social concerns.

Friends are advised, on the one hand, to make their wills as simple as possible, avoiding complicated provisions; and, on the other hand, to consider carefully circumstances which may arise after their decease, so that due provision may be made for all who ought to benefit under the will, even should births, marriages or deaths occur, which the testator had not anticipated.

1782; 1911

See also 4.19 Advice on outward affairs

CONFLICT

- 20.67 And all Friends take heed of jars and strife, for that is it, which will eat out the Seed in you; therefore let not that harbour in your bosoms, lest it eat out the good in you, and ye come to suffer in your own particulars. Therefore dwell in love and life, and in the Power and Seed of God, which is the honourable, royal state.

George Fox, 1656

- 20.68 I have heard some Friends deny their anger in a silent 'peace' where there is no understanding of each other. Such Friends are angry but by their silence the progress of world peace has stood still. If we are angry we know how wars develop. It does not matter who's wrong. What matters is that we care enough to talk to each other.

How do we become reconciled to each other if we are asunder? All I can say is to go up to that person and say what is in your heart; that their ways are hurting but you still love them. But this takes time and not many people like to look in a person's face and find out who they are. So we miss the reconciliation and do not have the experience – that we *cared*. Given that, then we will know who we are and find relief in tears we all should share. This is where peace starts.

Sue Norris, 1982

- 20.69 If someone we love does have a bad temper, we try to avoid the circumstances that provoke it. If it is so easily provoked that we cannot avoid it, the soft answer may have to include, then or later, a quiet but firm reproof, for their own sake as well as ours. But very often our ability to co-operate peacefully with our family, our neighbours, and our fellow-workers does depend upon our knowing how, with courtesy, to refuse to be drawn into particular types of discussion or to take sides on questions which arouse needless passions. We may do this in particular when we know that they have violent prejudices which we do not share, but which we are not

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likely to be able to remove by argument. Or when the dispute is about a matter of fact that could easily be determined by experiment or by consulting a work of reference.

All these are the small change of everyday life, but they count for happiness in living together as persons, and they are a pointer to happiness in living together as nations.

Kathleen Lonsdale, 1957

- 20.70 Where any have received offence from any other, first to speak privately to the party concerned, and endeavour reconciliation between themselves; and not to whisper or aggravate matters against them behind their backs, to the making parties, and the breach wider.

Yearly Meeting in London, 1692

- 20.71 Conflict happens, and will continue to happen, even in the most peaceful of worlds. And that's good – a world where we all agreed with one another would be incredibly boring. Our differences help us to learn. Through conflict handled creatively we can change and grow; and I am not sure real change – either political or personal – can happen without it. We'll each handle conflict differently and find healing and reconciliation by different paths. I want nonetheless to offer three keys, three skills or qualities which I've found helpful from my own experience.

The first skill is *naming*: being clear and honest about the problem as I see it, stating what I see and how I feel about it. What is important about these statements is that I own them: 'I see', 'I feel' (not 'surely it is obvious that ...', 'any right thinking person should...'). This ability to name what seems to be going on, is crucial to getting the conflict out into the open, where we can begin to understand and try to deal with it.

Such a skill is dangerous. It can feel – indeed, it can be – confrontational. It feels like stirring up trouble where there wasn't any problem. It needs to be done carefully, caringly, with love, in

Conflict

language we hope others can hear. We need to seek tactfully the best time to do it. But it needs to be done.

The second skill is the skill of *listening*: listening not just to the words, but to the feelings and needs behind the words. It takes a great deal of time and energy to listen well. It's a kind of weaving: reflecting back, asking for clarification, asking for time in turn to be listened to, being truly open to what we're hearing (even if it hurts), being open to the possibility that we might ourselves be changed by what we hear.

The third skill is the skill of *letting go*: I don't mean that in the sense of giving up, lying down and inviting people to walk all over us, but acknowledging the possibility that there may be other solutions to this conflict than the ones we've thought of yet; letting the imagination in – making room for the Spirit. We need to let go of our own will – not so as to surrender to another's, but so as to look together for God's solution. It's a question of finding ways to let go of our commitment to opposition and separation, of letting ourselves be opened to our connectedness as human beings.

If we are to do any of these things well – naming, listening, letting go – we need to have learned to trust that of God in ourselves and that of God in those trapped on all sides of the conflict with us. And to do that well, I find I need to be centred, rooted, practised in waiting on God. That rootedness is both a gift and a discipline, something we can cultivate and build on by acknowledging it every day.

Mary Lou Leavitt, 1986

- 20.72 It is advised that, in all cases of controversy and difference, the persons concerned therein either speedily compose the difference between themselves or make choice of some faithful, unconcerned, impartial Friends to determine the same; and that all Friends take heed of being parties with one or another.

1833

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- 20.73 Let Friends everywhere be careful that all differences about outward things be speedily composed, either between themselves, or by arbitrators; and it would be well that Friends were at all times ready to submit their differences, even with persons not of our religious persuasion, to arbitration, rather than to contend at law.

1833

- 20.74 When legal action is required in separation or divorce, this should be the simplest process available consistent with the complexity of the problems involved in the unravelling of a marriage and the need for the best legal advice. Try to avoid rancour or undue parade of differences. Mediation and conciliation services can often help in the adjustment of such matters and this avoids disputatious procedures in court.

1994

See also 4.20-4.21 & 22.73

- 20.75 I come back again and again in my own mind to this word Truth. 'Promptings of love and truth' – these two sometimes seem to be in conflict, but in fact they are inseparable. If we are to know the truth, we must be able to see with unclouded eyes, and then we will love what is real and not what is duty or fancy. Once when I was in the middle of a difficult exercise of Quaker decision-making, I wailed to an older and wiser Friend, 'How can I speak the truth in love when I feel no love?' Her reply was, 'Unless you speak the truth there never will be love'.

Alison Sharman, 1986

See also 10.21-10.24 Conflict within the meeting & 4.21 Disputes among Friends