

Notes for release of William Shewen's *Meditations & Experiences*

Charles Martin's Talk at San Francisco Friends Monthly Meeting's Meetinghouse
17 Fifth Month 2009

I want to thank all of you for coming out to hear me talk this afternoon. I will be talking about how I chose in the mature years of my life to take on a new profession, start a publishing business, and why I chose William Shewen's *Counsel to the Christian-Traveller: Also Meditations and Experiences* as my first Title. For the sake of full disclosure I will be talking about subjects and using language that some of you may be uncomfortable with. I may make statements that you will want me to explain or amplify, but I ask for your indulgence, so please hold off asking questions until I finish with my talk. I am willing to spend as much time as you like in a question and answer period after I finish with my remarks.

I am a member of the San Francisco Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, a Meeting that practices unprogrammed worship and could be labeled if not theologically, certainly socially "wildly liberal". I was born into a family whose Quaker roots go back to the mid-seventeenth century England and two families that migrated under the sponsorship of William Penn to Bucks County, Pennsylvania in 1682. Those parts of my heritage were members of the RSOF up through my paternal grandmother, who married outside of the Society in 1906. My father was not raised as a Friend, although in many ways he had Quaker qualities. Starting in the mid-1950's my grandmother would come and spend part of the year with my family and from that time until the time I left home in the late 1960's I would spend a great deal of time with her. One possession of my grandmother's was an old scrapbook made for her by her paternal grandfather, my great-great grandfather, late in his life. The scrapbook contains articles and illustrations clipped from periodicals and newspapers from the turn of the 20th century that he had accumulated, including many articles from the *Friends Intelligencer*, the precursor of the *Friends Journal*, as well as copies of his poetry. As a boy my grandmother and I would spend many hours looking through the book with grandma augmenting the illustrations and articles with her recollections of her family and their history. Grandma died in the early 1970's and I inherited the book, which I still have, but then quickly was stored away and seldom looked at until recent years.

When I was about nine years old my mother gave me two books, A King James Bible and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrims Progress*. Mother said I should read both of them. This was somewhat puzzling to me since my father was an atheist and hated anything to do with religion and my mother was as far as I could tell agnostic. We never talked about God as a family or the life of Jesus. I can only assume that it was at my grandmother's suggestion that I received those books. I read *The Pilgrims Progress* first and really liked it. I began reading the Bible and liked it but found it hard to understand. So I started attending a storefront church that was in walking distance of my home. I joined the Bible study and read a good deal of the Old Testament, at least *Judges* through *2Kings* as I remember. I also attended the services where there would be the occasional witness by an attender as to their conversion experience. One day a boy my age spoke and when he finished he said how happy he was to be saved and how sad he was that his father was going to hell because he didn't believe in God. I thought of my father who was a good man, an honest and loving man but who didn't believe in God. I couldn't imagine God sending him to hell so I stopped attending the church.

I was a product of the 1960's, radical, rebellious and distrustful of any and all authority, and after my storefront church experience, especially authority as represented by organized religion. Like most people I mellowed as I aged. In 1991 an event occurred that caused me to examine my life and I realized that I lacked a faith community and that I wanted that type of shared experience in my life. I was wondering how to go about finding such a community, and then I started thinking about my grandmother. I couldn't stop thinking about her so I thought I would do an Internet search and see if I could find genealogical information about her and her family. What I came across were the Quaker Testimonies, they spoke to me in a very meaningful and deep way and after a period of time I found myself coming to this place for Meeting for Worship. On the first occasion I felt I had come home.

The Friends I found at San Francisco Meeting were not like my grandmother. It was a bit confusing at first, but they were very nice people, politically engaged, socially aware, and doing all sorts of good works. Though there was very little talk of Jesus and some actual disapproval of "Christian language". I enjoyed Meeting for Worship but I

had a lot of questions about the way Meeting for Worship worked, Quaker Faith and Practice, and the meaning and use of the Scriptures among the Friends I encountered. I was very fortunate in that this Meeting has an adult religious discussion group that meets weekly with a potluck meal, and reads from various Quaker writings and then discussed what was being read. It was also a place to ask questions about the “whys and wherefores” of what went on in Meeting, and what to make of some of the vocal ministry that was spoken at Meeting. An added benefit for me was that we had a regular participant who radiated the same type of serenity that I had experienced with my grandmother. I’ve been regular part of that group for well over a decade.

Not long after I started participating in the group we read Jessamyn West’s *The Quaker Reader*, a collection of excerpts from various Quaker writings encompassing the entire period of Quaker history. Often a piece would move me deeply and it would be noted that it came from a work that was out-of-print. I was further told that Friends had regularly re-printed many if not most of the important writings of the Society up until the beginning of the 20th century. It occurred to me that there was a need to republish much of the older Quaker writings, (more recently I have come to appreciate the extent of unpublished manuscripts also in need of coming to print). As I thought about the need to republish out-of-print works I also started thinking about what I was going to do with my life when I left the everyday work-world. I thought maybe that publishing out-of-print books was something I could do. There was one problem however; I had absolutely no idea of how to go about publishing anything. I had little or no skill at copyediting, design or layout. My computer skills at word processing and desktop publishing were minimal. Publicity and marketing hadn’t crossed my mind. I wondered if this whole idea was just a pipe dream, then I did what Friends said you should do when you have such questions. I asked God.

Now unlike the characters I’ve read about in scriptures or in autobiographical spiritual writings I did not get a direct answer, yeah or nay, no voice or moment of revelatory insight, instead little things started falling into place. Through a friend of my wife’s I had learned about a course offered at University of California Extension in book indexing and learned it was but one course in a series of courses in a publishing certificate program intended to expand a persons marketable job skills. So I enrolled in the UC extension course and began taking the courses in the mid 1990s. In 1998 I was taking the final course in the series when the instructor assigned the task of having an informational interview with a Bay Area publisher. I looked through the catalogue of publishers and found that the one whose program was closest to what I wanted to do, that is publish in a limited edition to a niche market, preferably to a subscriber base, was located right around the corner from where I was working. After a series of postponements I finally interviewed with Andrew Hoyem at the Arion Press. Andrew was preparing to begin printing a large folio Bible by letterpress, probably the last Bible ever to be printed by letterpress, and when I handled a trial page of the Bible I knew that I had to be part of that project. I went home and talked with my wife and wrote a letter to Andrew asking to go to work for him. I was hired and in February 1999 began what is now a ten-year career with Arion Press.

Arion Press is one of the last fully integrated publishing houses, which means that everything is done in-house. From the selection of the text to be published through the design, editing, typesetting and casting, composition, letterpress printing, binding, marketing and sales. Although my responsibilities are primarily in business management and sales, over time I became exposed to the elements of design, typography, editing, etc. that goes into creating a book. Much of my knowledge about publishing has come about through osmosis, and as I began to work on Inner Light texts, trial and error.

Once again an event occurred that would determine how my publishing venture would evolve. One day my dear Friend Stephen Matchett called me. He was then clerk of SF Meeting and he said that he had received a request for hospitality from a traveling Friend named Barbara Mays. Stephen told me that I would like her, she’s very nice, and she’s involved in Quaker publishing. At that time Barbara was the head of publications of Friends United Meeting and co-clerk of Quakers Uniting in Publishing known as QUIP. Barbara encouraged me to join Quip, which I did in early 2001, and the next year I attended my first annual QUIP conference. For a nascent Quaker publisher it was the best networking association I could possibly get involved with. Over the years I have come to know and become friends with many if not most of the book publishers, booksellers, Journal editors and publishers, Yearly Meeting publications clerks and others involved in Quaker publishing. I’ve had an additional benefit of meeting Friends from across the geographical and theological spectrum of Quakerism and learned to appreciate the diversity among Friends, and the need for open dialogue among all the various factions.

In September of 2001 another event occurred that was to have as great an effect on my life as the event of 1991. A couple of days after 09/11 I attended the inaugural gathering of the Christian Friends Conference at the Berkeley Friends Church. Although I considered myself Christian, albeit with Universalist sympathies, I had a great deal of trouble with most people who called themselves Christian, especially those self-labeled, Evangelical, which I took to be synonymous with Fundamentalist. I knew that some of the participants of the CFC would be coming from the Evangelical Friends Churches and I was suspicious as how I would relate to them. After the preliminary introductions and orientations we went into the Church's sanctuary and settled into silent worship. Not long afterwards a man stood and gave vocal ministry denouncing the Islamist terrorist responsible for 9/11 and Muslims in general. I was so shocked at hearing this hateful speech being given as vocal ministry that I was debating whether or not to get up and walk out of the room. I asked God what was in the message that I needed to hear. As I sat wrestling with my anger and discomfort at the disturbing message that was given another person rose and read from the scriptures, it was the opening of *The Gospel According to John*, it was read in the original Greek, and while I was listening to this message something happened, unexpectedly a sense of peace and serenity came over me, and I went into a very deep and tender place, I knew that I was in the presence of the Lord, and I lost all concept of time. Others spoke during the worship, none of which I could remember hearing, when Meeting rose I was awestruck at what had occurred. I then understood that those fleeting moments of bliss that I had experienced at Meeting for Worship and on other occasions in my life were but a glimpse of what I could experience if I learned to worship the Lord in Spirit and Truth. That was the beginning of my becoming an out-of-the closet Christian Friend.

I have been a regular attender of the Christian Friends Conference since that time, in June of 2002 I was appointed to serve as the Western Region's coordinator, that is all the area west of the Rocky Mountains, and I held that position for several years. I have learned from my participation in that group what it means to meet in the name of Lord, and to practice waiting upon the Lord in Meeting for Worship, and in private worship, and I learned what the purpose of my work among Friends would be, that is to spread the Good News that Jesus Christ has come to teach His people Himself.

When I was thinking about starting Inner Light books I realized that because of the technological revolution taking place that whatever I produced to be printed would also have to be accessible digitally. So the first task after selecting the text to be republished is in having it transcribed into a format that I could work with and put online as well as put into print. So I established a website and started looking for a work to publish.

During this time that I was trying to decide what I would publish I met an incredible couple through Arion Press, Olga and Henry Carlisle. Olga's grandfather had been a revolutionary Russian writer named Leonid Andreyev. Olga convinced me to do an anti-capital punishment book by her grandfather titled *The Seven That Were Hanged*. A number of other connections were made that led me to do this book. I got as far as getting the text typeset into MS Word and to find other materials to include in the book. But I couldn't come to a sense of who I would market it to or what how it would be serving my publishing goals. So it is part of my to do, near publishable backlog.

In the fall of 2003 I took a business trip to Philadelphia. I had a business appointment cancel on me at the last minute and found myself with a free day. I knew that Drexel University has some materials concerning the Longshore Family, my paternal great-great grandmothers family, and I thought I would look at the papers to see if I could find anything written by her or to her. What I discovered were a number of hand written manuscripts written by Thomas Ellwood Longshore, one of her older brothers, concerning his life and the life of his wife Hannah Myers Longshore, the first practicing woman physician in Philadelphia. I understood immediately that this material would make a great book, original material about the real everyday lives of 19th century Quakers, and that this book could make me a "legitimate" publisher. I made arrangements to buy the rights from Drexel University and had the book typeset. I found other materials published by Longshore during his life particularly a series on religious subjects published in *The Journal*, which later merged with the *Friends Intelligencer*. However I realized that I would need to do a great deal of value-added work to make the book work in the way I wanted before going into print. I also wanted to have established my publishing business, including relationships with booksellers and reviewers before I launched Longshore's book, it too sits in my projects to do, near publishable backlog.

Around that same time a Friend named Henry Jason gave me a photocopy of William Shewen's *Counsel to the Christian-Traveller: Also Meditations & Experiences*. Henry said this was a book in need of being republished. I read the book and was knocked out by it and I knew that I needed to get it into print. Later I acquired a copy of Shewen's *The True Christians Faith and Experience* which I considered combining with the *Counsel to the Christian-Traveller: Also Meditations & Experiences* to publish *The Collected Works of William Shewen*. I was lacking a few pieces written by Shewen in the 17th century and after a good deal of thought and prayerful reflection decided that each work should be published separately. It is hard for me to explain exactly what it was about the *Meditations* that appealed to me so much but I can say that it spoke to my condition. I will go into more detail about this little book soon but I first need to complete the narrative of my publishing business.

As with the all other manuscripts that I had worked on there was one benefit in working on them was that because I would read through the text multiple times with extreme care I was increasing my knowledge of Friends thoughts, faith and practice and that this knowledge was percolating its way into my work among Friends.

I was also lucky in finding a professional typesetter that worked for reasonable rates and over the past few years I have had transcribed into MS Word eight complete texts, of the eight five are near ready to publish. In effect I have worked up a list that I can release over a three to four year period while developing new projects. Recently I was approached by Paul Buckley to publish his newly edited version of *The Journal of Elias Hicks*, so I am awash in raw material.

By May of 2007 with manuscripts collecting at a rapid rate, with my website up and running and the first texts posted to be read I felt it was time to put something into print. I was a little reticent because if I put something into print it meant that I had to sell the books and that I had to come up with the money to print them. But the time had come to get my act into gear and I basically had two different avenues to accomplish what I desired. The first was traditionally printed and bound, short order printing. The second was print-on-demand.

I had seen a number of print-on-demand books over the years and found them to be generally "ugly", poorly designed efforts. I assumed it was the technology, on the other hand I had seen a number of books that had been printed by a short-order printing firm named Thompson-Shore that were basic well done books. A friend whose advise I sought said that the quality of print on demand had greatly improved in recent years and I believed him but being business minded I thought I would cost out the two methods first. The print-on-demand printing turned out to be much more affordable and practical for me and in February of this year I released William Shewen's *Counsel to the Christian-Traveller: Also Meditations & Experiences*.

Earlier I mentioned that when I first read Shewen that it spoke to my condition, and what I mean by that is that Shewen touched me on an emotional, spiritual level that was deep and profound. It is because Shewen describes what is occurring within me when I experienced those prized moments in worship. Furthermore he explains what you need to do to get to that deep and profound place and stay there and how these experiences have been recorded in the scriptures and other holy writings for our edification.

As I thought about doing this presentation I was wondering how I could explain verbally something that was so visceral, experiential, and not necessarily for me intellectual. Then a couple of week ago another one of those occurrences happened where God gave me what I needed. After Meeting for Worship I went to the Asian Art Museum with my wife and a Friend to see the Art of Bhutan exhibit. The exhibit was of Buddhist religious art, with much explanatory signage, explaining the complex faith and practice of Vajrayāna Buddhism, also called Tantric Buddhism. In one room there was a sign about one type of practice called Deity Yoga. The sign explained that the practitioner by focusing on a particular deity would use meditation, visualization, chanting and/or other exercises to bring the essence of the deity into the being of the practitioner. In other words the purpose of Deity Yoga is to bring the practitioner to the realization that the deity and the practitioner are in essence the same. And this my Friends is essentially what William Shewen the 17th century pin maker is saying in this little book. On page 25 Shewen states, "So it is your enjoying the light of God's countenance, it is your being joined to the Lord, and being become one Spirit with him". Of course with Friends the deity is not one of a number of deities but the One, God in Christ and the essence of the Buddhist we would call the Spirit of Truth.

We see this in mediation, XXI. "It is a blessed thing, truly to *know how to wait for the appearance of Jesus*, and to know Him *when He does appear*; I say, this is very blessed; but it is more blessed, or a greater degree of blessedness, to be witnesses of His appearance, and to join with Him when He does appear; and so to experience the end of His appearance accomplished, abiding with Him till it be finished; truly understanding the end wherefore He does appear, and their state and condition at His appearance. This is the main thing chiefly to be understood, and minded throughout all dispensations.

And under them all, he is to be carefully minded and regarded, though it be in his first or lowest appearance, which is to convince of sin, self-righteousness and judgment; in order to destroy sin; finish transgression, and bring in everlasting righteousness. Unless people abide with him, and love his appearance in the ministration of condemnation, which brings tribulation and anguish upon the soul that has sinned, they can never come to enjoy and inherit the ministration of life and salvation, nor never come to enjoy the glory of his appearance the second time, without sin unto salvation.

This is the loss and misery of mankind, and was our loss and misery in the day of our ignorance, that we knew not how to wait for the appearance of Christ, or the coming of the just one; neither do they, nor did we, know him when he did appear; for he often appeared unto us, and stood at the door of our hearts, and knocked, and waited to show himself gracious unto us; but we not knowing it was he, did not regard him, nor open unto him; yet he was indeed the desire of our hearts, and he whom we longed to enjoy, and is the desire of all nations, the light and salvation of the *Gentiles*, the consolation and glory of *Israel*; but in this was our loss and misery, that we knew not how to wait for his appearance, neither did we know him when he did appear. So I say again, it is a blessed thing, for a people to know how to wait for the appearance of Jesus, the Savior, and to know him when he does appear.

But behold, this is a greater degree of blessedness, to be witnesses of his appearance, and to know the *coming of the just One*, or the *rising of the Sun of Righteousness*, with *healing under his wings*, and to be able to say, with the primitive *Christians*, *We know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, whereby we know him that is true, and are in him that is true, specifically in his Son Jesus Christ; this is the true God and eternal Life*. This is a high and heavenly knowledge, and a blessed state. This is the mark and prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, we have been called unto; and this is the state all are to wait for, inherit and possess, and not to sit down short of it. If this be not witnessed and enjoyed, all profession is vain, all knowledge is vain, all Religion and talk of *Christianity* is vain, and of no worth; for it is he that believes that Christ is come *in the flesh*, and that demonstrates the livingness of his Faith by the works thereof, that is *of God*, and *God dwells in him*, and *he in God*. This is more than a bare profession, or verbal confession, according to the testimony of *John*, the Divine, in his first Epistle, chapter IV.

1John, Chapter 4.

1: Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

2: Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

3: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

4: Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

5: They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

6: We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

7: Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8: He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9: In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10: Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11: Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

12: No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

13: Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14: And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.
15: Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.
16: And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.
17: Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.
18: There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.
19: We love him, because he first loved us.
20: If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?
21: And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Another major difference between the Buddhist and Friends is that with Friends this practice is both individual and corporate. As Shewen state in Meditation XXIV “ It is as truly witnessed now, as in days of old, that to be *spiritually-minded is life and peace*; to mind the Spirit, to have our minds, thoughts and wills exercised by the Spirit of truth, is *life and peace*; and to be carnally-minded is *death, sorrow and trouble*. These things are not only read, but truly known, and every individual may feel both within.”

And, in XXV, “It is as we meet, and wait together, *in the Spirit*, as we live and walk *in the Spirit*, the worship of God in Spirit and truth is performed; which all the bare professors upon the face of the earth are ignorant of. Such as wait and worship in the Spirit, know Jesus in the midst of them to be their Savior, teacher and leader; and as they follow and obey him, though but as one of a family, and two of a tribe, they will be as the light of the world, as the salt of the earth, and patterns and examples of righteousness to all that behold them.”

Now I am becoming mindful that this little talk has gotten quite long and what was meant as a simple introduction to this little book is getting very involved in some deep and for some, difficult concepts. I’m going to end my talk here. For those of you who stuck it out this far I would like to give this little four page print out of Shewen’s closing piece in the book, *A few Words Added to the Sensible Reader*. If you have an interest in reading Shewen I hope that you will get a copy of the book. Our Meeting will be reading the *Counsel to the Christian-Traveller: Also Meditations & Experiences* as the next book in our Thursday night group. Just when that will be depends on when we finish the current book, *John Woolman’s Journal*. In preparing for this talk I became overwhelmed by the understanding on just how much I could do to expand and explain what is in Shewen’s book. I will continue to work on this project including putting together a glossary of Christian terms. Perhaps in the future I may give a different talk solely on William Shewen’s writings and ideas but for now let us close with a little silence and then I will take any questions you may have.

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