

Sources of the Quaker Peace Testimony

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Sources of the Quaker Peace Testimony

The founders of the Society of Friends, who began to preach throughout England about the middle of the seventeenth century, acknowledged divine revelation as the sole source for their doctrines. Like Paul they “conferred

not with flesh and blood” but followed “the heavenly vision.” The Bible was held to be a secondary source, for the Scriptures could only be interpreted correctly through the Divine Light of Truth shining in the soul, the same Light through which the Scriptures were originally written. “These things,” wrote George Fox in his journal regarding his early “openings” or revelations, “I did not see by the help of man nor by the letter, though they are written in the letter, but I saw them in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ and by his immediate Spirit and Power.”

Quakerism arose as a protest against Protestantism. The Society of Friends is not Protestant nor Catholic, but a third form of Christianity which is based essentially on inward experience. As the Catholic depended on the authority and sacraments of the church and the Protestant on the authority of the Bible and acceptance through faith of a plan of salvation believed to be described in it, so the Quakers found their source of guidance and power of salvation in the Light Within, the Spirit of the Eternal Christ revealing directly to the human heart the Way, the Truth, and the Life. This Quaker mysticism was modified by certain practical procedures. The Society of Friends was never anarchistic nor individualistic. The Quakers developed a type of public worship and church government through which the individual could check his own insight by means of the insight given to others. This procedure, which will be described later, was one of the sources of Quaker pacifism.

In spite of this insistence on the primacy of inward revelation, there is no doubt that the early Friends were powerfully influenced by the Bible, and by some among the

multitude of sects and opinions which found their first great opportunity for expression in the England of the Commonwealth. Soon after George Fox began to preach in 1647 he was joined by others who had independently come to the same conclusions that he had reached. From 1643 to 1649 England enjoyed a high degree of religious freedom, and the land swarmed with religions new and old.

Anabaptism, representing the left wing of the Protestant Reformation, had come from the continent nearly a century before. To its influence can be traced the opinions of many of the smaller Commonwealth groups. The Anabaptists, for the most part, rejected war, oaths, and capital punishment. A group known as the Familists or Family of Love, appeared in England about the middle of the sixteenth century. They held ideas similar to some of those which later became characteristic of Quakers. The General or Arminian Baptists were established in England about 1612. Their beliefs were so much like those held by the Quakers, that whole congregations were drawn, through Fox's powerful ministry, into the Quaker movement. John Smith (or Smyth) the first leader of these Baptist sectaries declared against all war and oaths. Others who also joined the Quakers in large numbers were the Seekers, who had left all established forms of religion as being inconsistent with primitive Christianity. They waited in silence for the return of the Spirit which had been poured out upon the early Church.

How much these pacifist or semi-pacifist sects and many others which could be mentioned such as the Ranters or religious anarchists and the Behmenists or followers of

Jacob Boehme influenced the Quakers at the outset, it is difficult to say. George Fox appeared in their midst as the organizing genius who gathered out of this chaos of beliefs and opinions a coordinated body of teachings. He then proceeded to develop and set up a form of worship and church government congenial to it.

The writings of the Church Fathers cannot be considered a primary source of Quaker pacifism, but they were sometimes used to defend it. Such scholars among the early Friends as Robert Barclay, William Penn and Isaac Pennington were well acquainted with these writings and often quoted them to uphold the Quaker position. They knew that during the first two or three centuries of its existence the Church officially opposed Christian participation in war. In his *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1679), the most important early exposition of Quaker belief, Robert Barclay asserts that “It is as easy to obscure the sun at mid-day as to deny that the Primitive Christians renounced all Revenge and War.” In support of this he offers many quotations such as the answer of Martin to Julian the apostate, “I am a soldier of Christ, therefore I cannot fight.”

The Quakers considered their movement to be “Primitive Christianity Revived,” a phrase which formed the title of one of William Penn’s tracts. The whole period between early Christianity and themselves they thought of as a dark night of apostasy. They did not realize that they were part of a stream of mystical, internal religion which had been flowing through the Christian Church since the beginning. Their direct spiritual ancestors are to be found, not in

Luther's Reformation, but in an almost unbroken succession of heretical sects which, century after century, sought to revive primitive Christianity, basing their uncompromising ethical standards largely on the Sermon on the Mount. Prominent among them were the Cathari, the Waldenses, the Franciscan Tertiaries, and the Lollards. All were to a greater or less degree pacifist. The Quakers, after their own peace principles had been developed and formulated, came into contact with the Mennonites, Dutch Collegiants, Labadists, Schwenkfelders, Huterian Brethren, and other Protestant pacifist radicals. Traveling on religious visits from England to the continent of Europe, they sojourned with these congenial religionists. Later Penn invited all such sects to his colony of Pennsylvania, and many of them accepted his invitation. Their votes helped to keep the Quakers in political power long after the Quakers themselves were in a numerical minority. A congregation of German Baptists which emigrated to Germantown, Philadelphia, in 1719, later expanded into the Church of the Brethren or Dunkers. Penn's colony was the main breeding ground of the three leading pacifist sects of America: the Mennonites, the Brethren and the Quakers.

There can be no doubt that the New Testament was the principal external influence in creating Quaker pacifism. Though it was through the inward Christ that the sayings of the historical Christ were to be interpreted, the Society of Friends believed that Christ's Spirit, as revealed in their hearts, would not be at variance with the same Spirit as revealed in the Scriptures. They were constantly assuring the Puritans, who were scandalized by this assignment of a

secondary role to the written word, that they did reverence the Scriptures and held them to be true. These Scriptures were in fact constantly used by the Quakers to defend their religious position. As they obeyed Jesus' command not to swear, so in controversies with opponents they took seriously such sayings as "Love your enemies," "Blessed are the peacemakers," "Resist not evil," "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also," "All they that take up the sword shall perish with the sword," "If my kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight."

Two sayings of Jesus: "I came not to bring peace but a sword," and "He that hath no sword let him sell his cloak and buy one," seemed to the Friends, if taken literally, so strikingly out of accord with the whole tenor of the gospel that they explained them as having a figurative meaning. In support of this interpretation Barclay quotes Ambrose and Origen. Friends were also influenced by such Apostolic injunctions as "We wrestle not against flesh and blood," "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal," "Render to no man evil for evil" and "Wars and fightings come of your lusts." The belligerent commands of the Warrior God of the Old Testament were rejected, for Jesus had obviously come to introduce a new religion and a new dispensation. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you" was unambiguous. Barclay makes the point that if the Old Testament can be used to justify war it can also be used to justify as a present requirement the whole Jewish ceremonial law. Jonathan Dymond, the Quaker moralist, comments, "He who insists upon a pure

morality applies to the New Testament; he who desires a little more indulgence defends himself by arguments from the Old.” (*Principles of Morality*, 1829).

Yet acknowledging the great influence of the New Testament upon them, we must take the Quakers seriously when they claim to have arrived at their fundamental doctrines as a direct result of the movings of the Divine Spirit of Truth in their own hearts. This Spirit within was called by many names, each suggestive of some aspect of its working. It is a Light, a Seed germinating in the Light, the Spirit of Christ making possible the Christ-like life. These phrases suggest an intimate organic divine-human relationship, which by its very nature develops an inter-human relationship. The Light was not divided among men so that part should exist in one and part in another. It is the same divine Light which shines into every human soul, creating a bond of unity, of mutual reverence, and of understanding.

Awareness of the full social implications of such religious doctrines and experiences is a matter of slow development. Although the Friends freed their slaves a hundred years before the Civil War, it had taken them a full century to reach and act upon the discovery that slave-holding was inconsistent with their religion. In like manner, although pacifism was one of the earliest of the Quaker social doctrines, not all Friends were pacifists at first. It took time to come to the view that fighting and violence were incompatible with the Spirit of Christ. Quaker soldiers in Cromwell’s army and Quaker seamen in the navy eventually made this discovery. Joseph Besse in his

Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers (1753), speaking of the sufferings of the Quaker soldiers in the Irish Army in 1656, says that they “came to be convinced of the Truth gradually . . . And some were turned out of the army . . . And divers of them as they became farther enlightened, refused to bear arms any longer and became able ministers of the Truth,” (Vol. II, p. 461.) Edward Burrough, one of the ablest of the early Quaker preachers, addresses a letter to the soldiers in Ireland in 1655 which shows the testimony against war in process of development:

*This Light reproveth you in secret of violence . . . And it will teach you not to strengthen the hands of evil doers, but to lay your swords in justice upon every one that doth evil. And it will teach you not to make war but to preserve peace in the earth . . . And this is your place and duty required of you from the Lord God
Commander in Chief – your sword will be a terror and dread to them that fear Him not.*

(Works, p. 94) .

Fox and his fellow preachers were not peace propagandists. They were wary about teaching what they called a “notional religion,” that is a religion based on ideas rather than on experience. They felt that a notional religion resided in that part of the mind which was, to use another Quaker phrase, “afloat on the surface.” Robert Barclay writes of this insight in his treatise called *Universal Love*:

Friends were not gathered together by unity of opinion or by a tedious and particular disquisition of notions

and opinions, requiring an assent to them, and binding themselves by Leagues and Covenants thereto; but the manner of the gathering was by a secret want, which many truly tender and serious souls in sundry sects found in themselves which put each sect in search of something beyond all opinion which might satisfy their weary souls, even the revelation of God's righteous judgment in their hearts.

William Penn writes similarly in *A Key Opening the Way*:

It is not Opinion or Speculation or Notions of what is true; or assent to or Subscription of Articles or Propositions, though never so soundly worded, that makes a man a true believer or a true Christian.

The fact that the early Quakers were not peace propagandists is important for a comprehension of the kind of teaching which Friends found effectual among themselves and with others in regard to pacifism as well as to their other principles. They directed seekers to the source of life and truth in the depths of the soul, not to the products of the thinking mind in terms of doctrines and theories. Fox declared that his object was to take his hearers to Christ their teacher and leave them there. It is reported that when William Penn asked him if he should wear his sword, Fox replied, "Wear it as long as thou can'st." It is remarkable how little space in the vast sum of seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century Quaker literature is devoted to the exposition of peace principles. Barclay places his brief analysis of the Christian's attitude toward war at the very end of his *Apology* in a

miscellaneous collection of items on outward behavior and relationships of persons. He devotes less space to the peace testimony than he does to oaths. This was perhaps natural, since the early Friends suffered far more for their refusal to swear than they did for their refusal to fight. Previous to the twentieth century Jonathan Dymond's *Enquiry into the Accordancy of War With the Principles of Christianity*, published in 1823, was the only book written by a Quaker entirely devoted to the peace testimony.

Fox's first recorded utterance on the subject of war was in 1650 when he refused to win release from prison by accepting a commission in the army. The incident is described in his journal. "I told them," he said, "that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars." The first declaration against war was put forth by the Quakers in 1660 to clear themselves of an accusation of plotting against the King. "We do testify to the world," they said, "that the Spirit of Christ which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the Kingdom of Christ nor for the kingdoms of this world."

Such pronouncements illustrate the fact that the Quaker objection to war was based primarily on feeling and intuition rather than on rational arguments or Scriptural authority. This intuition was dynamic; it was an enhancement of life rather than a part of doctrine. The Light Within gives more than knowledge of moral values. It gives also power to act on knowledge. "For all dwelling in the light that comes from Jesus," writes Fox in one of his Epistles (1657), "it leads out of wars, leads out of strife,

leads out of the occasion of wars, and leads out of the earth up to God, and out of earthly mindedness into heavenly mindedness.”

Such direct insight into the nature of goodness combined with a sense of obligation to behave in accordance with it, is usually called *conscience*, but for the Quakers the Light Within is not conscience but rather that which shines into conscience. Conscience is influenced by training and environment as well as by the Light. For this reason it may reveal one way of behaving to one person and another way to another person. The individual must therefore educate and enlighten his conscience by sensitizing himself to the Light of Truth in his soul. This process of sensitizing conscience takes place most thoroughly in a meeting for worship. Yet, though conscience is an imperfect instrument for transmitting the Light, its claims are absolute and must always be obeyed, for conscience gives us the highest knowledge of the Light that we have at any one time. Because clearer and clearer knowledge may be progressively attained as the virtue of obedience grows, Friends have never declared any doctrine to be a final and unalterable creed.

An important question which must be faced by every pacifist is this: Is it better to take an absolute, uncompromising stand, far beyond the reach of the average man or is it better to compromise, keeping ahead of the average man but not so far ahead as to get out of touch with him? Friends have usually aimed at the first position, believing it not so far beyond the “average man” as is generally supposed, though they have acknowledged that

those who take the second often accomplish much that is good. When Joseph Hoag in 1812 was pleading his peace principles a man in his audience said, “Well stranger, if all the world was of your mind, I would turn and follow after.” Joseph replied, “So then thou hast a mind to be the last man in the world to be good. I have a mind to be one of the first and set the rest an example.” (Hoag’s *Journal*, 1861, p. 201).

Thomas Story, in arguing with a Baptist preacher in Rhode Island in 1704, said:

The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ . . . but until this is finished by degrees as it is now begun and proceeds, the Kingdom of Christ on Earth is and shall be as at the first, a holy nation, a Royal Priesthood, a peculiar People, zealous not to fight and destroy but of good works . . . Until this be accomplished nation will lift up sword against nation but as to us we, through the Mercy and Goodness of God, are of those in whom this prophecy is begun to be fulfilled.

(*Journal*, p. 367).

In similar vein William Penn wrote in 1692 in *A Key Opening the Way*, “Let not this people be thought useless or inconsistent with governments for introducing that harmless, glorious way to this distracted world for somebody must begin it.” And likewise Isaac Penington in *A Weighty Question Concerning the Magistrate’s Protection of the Innocent* written in 1661 speaks of the peaceable kingdom foretold by prophecy:

Whensoever such a thing shall be brought forth in the world it must have a beginning before it can grow and be perfected. And where should it begin but in some particulars (individuals) in a nation, and so spread by degrees. Therefore whoever desires to see this lovely state brought forth in the general, must cherish it in the particular.

Such statements express the willingness of a minority to take an advanced position not only for the principle involved but also to point the way to others. These scouting parties ahead of the line of march stand in an exposed position, but they perform an important function. “The Peace maker”, wrote Fox in an epistle in 1652, “hath the kingdom and is in it and hath the dominion over the peace breaker to calm him in the power of God.”

The belief that the Light is within all men means that every person is capable of taking an advanced position and can be appealed to on these grounds. The same identical Light shines in every heart however obscured by selfishness and greed. Hence the non-violent method of good will and confidence will sometimes produce unexpected results because it reaches something in the other person which responds in similar fashion. That of God in one person arouses similar capacity in the other. Men tend to rise to what is expected of them. No human being is so depraved that nothing but force can appeal to him. There are many extraordinary instances in Quaker history in which an evil doer has been suddenly halted and transformed by the power of non-resistance combined with goodwill. These

methods sometimes fail, but so also does the method of violence.

The Quaker has often been asked whether, if he were attacked by another person, he would defend himself. There have generally been two types of reply. Either he has said that, rather than use violence, he would meekly suffer in the hope of persuading his assailant to desist or he might reply that he would use violence if it did not involve taking life. Some would use only such violence as would inflict no serious injury.

One reason for willingness to be killed rather than to kill is illustrated in the journal of Thomas Chalkley who argues in this way: "I being innocent," he said "if I were killed in my body, my soul might be happy; but if I killed him, he dying in his wickedness would consequently be unhappy; and if I were killed, he might live to repent; but if I killed him, he would have no time to repent." In 1707 while the Quaker-owned ship in which Chalkley traveled was being chased off Barbados by a French privateer, the seamen "cursed the Quakers wishing all their vessels might be taken by the enemy because they did not carry guns in them: At which I was grieved and began thus to expostulate with them: Do you know the worth of a man's life? 'Lives!' say they, 'we had rather lose our lives than go to France.' But, said I, that is not the matter, had you rather go to hell than go to France?" After that the sailors held their peace. (*Works*, p. 55).

But the absoluteness of the Quaker position in regard to war did not for the most part prevent Friends from paying

taxes to support the state, it being considered the state's responsibility to allocate the money. Only such taxes were unpaid as were wholly allocated to war.

When a delegation of Friends interviewed Peter the Great of Russia, while he was in London, he asked. "Of what use can you be in any kingdom or government seeing you will not fight?" Thomas Story replied:

He that commanded that we should love our enemies hath left us no right to fight and destroy but to convert them. And yet we are of use and helpful in any kingdom or government as an industrious quiet people who readily pay taxes after the New Testament example to Caesar, who, of rights hath the direction and application of them to the various ends of government, to peace or war, as it pleaseth him.

Story, *Journal*, p. 123

This way of meeting the problem has not always been either approved or adopted. In 1755 a considerable number of Friends refused to pay a tax levied in Pennsylvania largely for the purpose of waging the Indian wars. John Woolman recorded in his *Journal* (Chapter V) the meeting of a Committee about this time to consider the question of payment of such taxes. Its sessions were, he says:

The most weighty that I was ever at and the hearts of many were bowed in reverence before the Most High. Some Friends of the said committee who appeared easy to pay the tax, after several adjournments, withdrew; others of them continued till the last.

Apparently unity was not reached and the report of the committee was non-committal. Among the Friends who refused to pay their taxes was Joshua Evans who records in his *Journal* for the year 1756:

I found it best for me to refuse paying demands on my estate which went to pay the expenses of war; and although my part might appear at best a drop in the ocean, yet the ocean, I considered, was made up of many drops. (p. 19).

Woolman, speaking of the early Friends, says that “there was less danger of their being infected with the spirit of this world in paying such taxes than is the case with us now.” He explained that the situation was different because so many Friends held political positions. Payment of the tax by Friends would encourage Friends in politics to compromise even more than they had already done. In 1756, soon after he had expressed these scruples, most of the Friends in the Provincial Assembly, where they held twenty-eight of the thirty-six seats, withdrew, finding their position no longer tenable. There was actual war with the Indians, brought on by a policy which they had opposed. When the Quakers were later accused of stinginess for refusing to pay taxes to support this war they replied that they were willing to give much more than the amount of the war tax to secure peace with the Indians. This they did through their “Friendly Association for Gaining and Preserving Peace With the Indians by Pacific Measures,” an effort which actually succeeded in accomplishing its purpose in 1758 at a cost of five thousand pounds sterling.

The difficulties which Friends faced in the years following the Revolutionary War are recorded by Job Scott. There were many who refused to pay taxes and in consequence suffered loss of goods. He writes in Chapter V of his autobiography:

At our Yearly Meeting this year, 1779, the subject of Friends paying taxes for war, came under solid consideration. Friends were unanimous that the testimony of Truth and of our Society was clearly against our paying such taxes as were wholly for war and many solid Friends manifested a lively testimony against the payment of those in the mixture; which testimony appeared evidently to me to be on substantial ground, arising and spreading in the authority of truth.

A distant parallel to this condition existed in the First World War when many Friends refused to buy Liberty Bonds because the money derived from this source was entirely used for financing the war.

This question of paying taxes “in the mixture” is bound up with a still more difficult problem arising out of a desire to keep clear of preparations for war in a society so complex and interrelated that every part of it is affected by every other part. As war becomes totalitarian it becomes impossible to avoid indirect participation in it. Friends who lived in a less complicated age had a simpler problem and were able to reach a higher degree of consistency. It is inevitable that the form assumed by the Quaker testimony against war should change with the changing structure of society. In any age consistency is so difficult to attain that

many Friends have felt that their Divine Guide did not require of them more than seemed humanly possible.

The difficulties inherent in the situation are not met by such compliance but are somewhat mitigated by the opportunity which Friends have of taxing themselves to support enterprises which aid in overcoming the evil effects of war or in avoiding future wars. These self-imposed taxes have been used for the relief of sufferers by war and for the support of educational undertakings especially designed to prepare for the ways of peace. A new opportunity for self-taxation in the cause of peace has arisen through the so-called *Civilian Public Service* to which draftees who oppose war on religious grounds are assigned to perform tasks which do not further the war effort. These camps are supported by contributions from the pacifist churches and from individuals, thus permitting policies to be carried out in them which would be impossible if they were maintained by government funds.

That Quaker pacifism is positive as well as negative is demonstrated by the presence of members of the Society on nearly every battle front since the beginning of their history. Relief work was undertaken in the Irish War of 1690; during the American War of Independence in caring for sufferers in the neighborhood of Boston; in the Graeco-Turkish war of 1828 in helping Greek refugees; in the Crimean War by repairing devastation on the Coast of Finland; during and after the American Civil War in maintaining and educating colored freedmen and refugees; in the Franco-Prussian War when about forty workers were sent into devastated areas; in the Boer Wars by assisting

refugees and restoring Boer family Bibles; in the Balkan War of 1912 in sending supplies to Bulgarian refugees and in the first World War by relief work, sometimes on a large scale, in France, Serbia, Germany, Poland, Austria, and Russia. In the recent Spanish Civil war relief work was done on both sides and at the present time food and clothing are being distributed in France and China. The motives behind such undertakings were well expressed by Whittier at the time of the Civil War in a circular letter addressed *To Members of the Society of Friends* (1861):

Steadily and faithfully maintaining our testimony against war we owe it to the cause of truth to show that exalted heroism and generous self-sacrifice are not incompatible with our pacific principles. Our mission is at this time to mitigate the sufferings of our countrymen, to visit and aid the sick and wounded, to relieve the necessities of the widow and orphan and to practice economy for the sake of charity.

These efforts indicate that the Quakers are not to be classed with isolationists if by that term is meant the adherents of the creed which holds that the affairs of the rest of the world are “not our business.” If the isolationist believes in fighting but will do it only for selfish purposes, he is further away from the Quaker position than is that type of militarist who, in fighting, makes a genuine self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Such sacrifice to gain its ends must in the long run strike, not at persons who cause war, but at the causes of war in persons. War, unlike floods and earthquakes, is a result of wrong human attitudes such as hatred, greed and fear and these qualities can only be changed by their

opposites. If it is to be genuinely effective, Quaker relief work must accordingly administer not only to bodily needs but to spiritual needs as well.

In relation to government the Quakers have often been accused of disloyalty because of their unwillingness to fight for it, but they have frequently and publicly declared their desire to live as law-abiding citizens so long as the law did not conflict with the higher law in their consciences. They have felt that needed changes in government could take place by lawful methods rather than by violence if men were willing to employ enough time, teaching and patience to cause such methods to succeed. George Washington, during his presidency, inquired of a Quaker, "Mr. Mifflin, will you now please tell me on what principle you were opposed to the Revolution?" "Yes, Friend Washington," replied Mifflin, "upon the principle that I should be opposed to a change in the present government. All that was ever secured by revolution is not an adequate compensation for the poor mangled soldiers, and for the loss of life and limb." "I honor your sentiments," replied Washington, "for there is more in them than mankind has generally considered." (M. E. Hirst, *The Quakers in Peace and War*, p. 408).

From the first, members of the Society of Friends have acknowledged what they once called "the power of the magistrate's sword" if wielded lawfully and justly as a restraint against evil doers. The impartial exercise of police power was to their minds different from war, in which there is neither law nor justice. But they did not acknowledge the right of the magistrate to take human life for any cause

whatsoever. Nor did they think that the law has the right to punish for the sake of vengeance. Punishment was admitted only to protect society and to reform the offender. Throughout their history the Quakers have been well acquainted with prisons from the inside. For almost three centuries they have been active in prison reform, both in England and America, endeavoring to reduce to a minimum the element of violence.

As pacifists it was natural that they should have been pioneers in doing away with violent methods of dealing with the insane. The York Retreat in England, founded in 1796, and the Frankford Asylum in America, founded in 1813, both experimented successfully in nonviolent methods of treating mental disorders. Such practice has now become general. In education Friends' schools early did away with corporal punishment and with many other forms of violence and coercion.

In the field of politics Friends have sometimes attempted to introduce non-violent methods of settling international disputes. William Penn in his *Plan for the Peace of Europe* (1693) and John Bellers in an essay entitled *Some Reasons for a European State* (1710) proposed elaborate schemes for the arbitration of differences. In 1696, Penn proposed a plan for the union of the American Colonies. Later several provisions of that plan were written into the Constitution of the United States. Robert Barclay the Apologist endeavored to influence the plenipotentiaries at the peace of Nimeguen (1678). In collaboration with Benjamin Franklin some English Friends drew up suggestions for reconciliation between England and her colonies. In a later generation

Joseph Sturge and two other Friends visited the Czar of Russia in an attempt which might have succeeded in staving off the Crimean War had they been as successful in influencing the English leaders at home as they were in modifying the Czar's attitude. John Bright was partly instrumental in preventing English interference in the American Civil War.

References occasionally occur in Quaker literature to the sources of war in the greed for riches. John Woolman writes in his *Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich*:

When that spirit works which loves riches . . . it desires to defend the treasures thus gotten . . . Wealth is attended with power . . . and hence oppression carried on with worldly policy and order, clothes itself with the name of justice and becomes like a seed of discord in the soul. And as a spirit which wanders from the pure habitation prevails, so the seeds of war swell and sprout . . . May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses and our garments and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions.

Modern Quakers have more to say than had earlier Quaker writers about the seeds of war in the present social order, though the emphasis today is still, as formerly, on an inward change as a necessary prerequisite for a workable outward change. Some believe that the inward and outward changes should develop together, as for example, Horace G. Alexander who writes in *The New Pacifism*, Chapter V:

It is right for the pacifist today to insist on the need for a change of heart that will mean a change of the foundations of society, but he must not shirk the parallel task of turning the present world disorder into a world order . . . Pacifists are concerned that the community should check and prevent many of the evils that characterize the present acquisitive society. It is not state control, but world control that they envisage.

Few Quakers have undertaken to draw up schemes for a social order in harmony with their pacifist principles, though some suggestions are enumerated in Chapter Ten of the author's essay entitled *Divine Human Society*. This reluctance, like the reluctance to set up religious creeds, comes from the traditional tendency to distrust theories which precede rather than develop out of inward states. Unless compulsion be used, no theory is workable except by such as are inwardly prepared to work it. Nevertheless the Quaker meeting undertook, through the religious, social and economic relations which existed among its members, to adumbrate the character of the better social order to which its principles might lead.

Thomas Clarkson in his *Portraiture of Quakerism*, (1807) makes this comment upon the Friends, "Wherever they can be brought to argue upon political questions they reason upon principles and not upon consequences." In 1830 while advocating the abolition of slavery in the British colonies Joseph Sturge said:

When the Christian is convinced that the principle on which he acts is correct I believe that it does not

become him to examine too closely his probability of success, but rather to act in the assurance that, if he faithfully does his part, as much success will attend his efforts as is consistent with the will of that Divine Leader under whose banner he is enlisted.

From such examples it appears that Quaker argument is seldom pragmatic. Few writings condemn war because of its stupidity, its failure to achieve its own ends, or its destructiveness of property. If the end achieved were good, great loss of property or the sacrifice of one's own life would be a small price to pay for it. But we do find frequent emphasis on the relationship of means to end, in the sense that, if a spiritual end is desired, a material means will not achieve it.

The reply of Jesus to Pilate, "If my kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight," quoted so often by Friends, was interpreted as meaning that a spiritual end, such as the coming of Christ's kingdom in the souls of men, can not be furthered by material means. An evil will cannot be transformed into a good will by the sword. The chances are that the reverse will be achieved. The Christian way of life is such that to be genuine it must be adopted voluntarily, not under coercion. Violence depresses personality to the level of material things and renders its victim less capable of reformation. To assume that there is no other way than violence to create a better human society is to assume that reformation is impossible.

If the kingdom of God is to come on earth it will be brought in by those who are already living in it in the sense

that they are using its methods. “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal” is a phrase which appears more frequently than any other in early Quaker writings dealing with the problem of war. This expression meant two things. It meant that spiritual means must be used to achieve spiritual ends and it meant that the Quakers considered themselves to be real fighters but fighters for Christ’s kingdom, not for the world’s kingdoms. They were prepared to suffer, and did suffer as much in consequence of their warfare, as did soldiers battling on behalf of an earthly kingdom. George Fox writes: “All such as pretend Christ Jesus and confess him, and yet run into the use of carnal weapons, wrestling with flesh and blood, throw away the spiritual weapons.”

William Dewsbury, who spent most of his adult life in prison suffering for the Truth, had joined the Parliamentary forces to “fight for the gospel,” as he thought, but an inward experience in 1645, three years before George Fox began to preach, led him to leave the army. He writes:

The word of the Lord came to me and said: ‘Put up thy sword into thy scabbard, if my kingdom were of this world then would my children fight’ – which word enlightened my heart and discovered the mystery of iniquity, and that the Kingdom of Christ was within and the enemy was within and was spiritual and my weapons against them must be spiritual, the power of God.

There were many of Cromwell's soldiers who gave up the carnal warfare in order to enter this even more dangerous warfare of the spirit.

To the early Friends there was a sharp distinction between two ways of life, that referred to as "the way of the world" and the other which is "not of this world." The latter phrase was used, not in reference to some far-off heaven, but because the world had not yet adopted this way of life. Both ways could be lived on the earth. Wars were a part of "the way of this world", while peaceable methods belonged to the unworldly way. The main source of Quaker pacifism is an intuitive vision of the way which is not of this world, a way which is recognized as good in itself, regardless of its apparent consequences. A typical expression of this insight is found in Edward Burrough's *Fourth General Epistle to All the Saints* (1660):

And as for all the confusions and distractions and rumors of wars, what are they to us? Is not our kingdom of another world even that of peace and righteousness? And hath not the Lord called us, and chosen us into the possession of that substance, wherein strife and enmity dwelleth not? Yea he hath broken down that part in us that is related thereunto, and being dead in that nature of strife, bloodshed and wars how can we live in strife and contention with the world . . . But our kingdom is inward and our weapons are spiritual and our victory and peace is not of the world. And our war is against souls' enemies, and against the powers of darkness even by the Sword of the Spirit which God hath given us.

Burrough practiced what he preached for there was no more valiant fighter for the Kingdom than this “Son of Thunder and Consolation” as he was called, who laid down his life in prison for his cause.

The early Friends were willing to concede that those who chose “the way of the world” might have to fight if they were to be consistent with their own principles. Barclay says of such persons (Prop. XV, Sect. XV) that “because of the state in which they are, they have not come to the pure dispensation of the gospel. And therefore while they are in that condition we shall not say that war, undertaken upon a just occasion, is altogether unlawful to them.” He then goes on to compare their state to that the Jews were in before Christ came offering another way of life. It follows that the militarist like the pacifist should live up to the highest that he knows. In doing so he may eventually discover a higher way of life than that which he at first adopted.

Although, as has already been pointed out, the Quaker position in regard to war is not based primarily on pragmatic arguments which emphasize results, the history of the Society of Friends offers many instances of the effectiveness of non-violent methods, “not fighting but suffering” to use William Penn’s phrase. There is no better demonstration in history of the power of pacific resistance in effecting important social changes than the struggle for religious liberty carried on in England in the seventeenth century. The Parliamentary armies won their battle only to lose it later to the forces of reaction which the war had aroused. In the terrible years of persecution under the Conventicle Acts (1664-1673) which forbade all forms of

public worship except those of the Established Church, the Friends, almost alone among Non-conformists, held their meetings openly, in spite of every effort on the part of the authorities to prevent them by wholesale arrests and the destruction of meeting houses. Eventually through this passive resistance and other contributory circumstances the right to worship God publicly according to conscience was won. In the four or five American colonies which were for a time controlled by the Quakers this freedom was granted to all settlers.

The Quakers were a persecuted minority in all the colonies except Rhode Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and, for a time, North Carolina. The rest had state-supported churches. The refusal of Quakers to pay tithes and the example set in their colonies showed the advantage of freedom of worship. These were important factors in establishing religious liberty and the separation of church and state in the constitution of the United States.

During the century throughout which Rhode Island was ruled by the Quakers the colony attempted to avoid Indian wars, but it was too close to the other colonies to escape attacks. The Quakers remained in their homes during Indian raids and were unmolested while the remainder of the population sought the protection of stockades. In Pennsylvania during the seventy-four years of Quaker government (1682-1756) there was no war with the Indians nor with any one else. Even when Penn's policy of friendship with the Indians was largely given up, the Quakers remained unmolested. During the Revolution the fact that the Quakers were undisturbed by the Indians who

were allies of the British was taken as proof of British sympathies. Other instances of the protection afforded by a peaceable life and good will toward all men can be found in the experiences of Friends in the Irish Wars of 1688-1691 and the Irish Rebellion of 1798. Though surrounded by extreme violence and cruelty they not only escaped unharmed, but were able to feed the hungry on both sides. There are many instances in Quaker history of the power of non-violence when used in love, and certainly among the vital sources of Quaker pacifism must be listed the series of stories of marvelous escapes by land and sea through the protection which God so often affords to those who do His will.

From the beginning of Quaker history, Friends suffered fines and imprisonment for non-participation in military service. On numerous occasions they were attacked by mobs for refusing to illuminate their houses in celebration of military victories. At a time when pirates and privateers drove merchants generally to arm their ships Quaker ship owners generally refrained from arming their vessels and in consequence found it difficult to procure seamen. Groups of Friends on the Continent and in the West Indies suffered severely because of their resistance to conscription. Eventually most of them emigrated elsewhere. Perhaps the severest suffering endured by Friends in America occurred in the South during the Civil War. Some hardship was experienced in prisons and camps during the First World War. This was mainly due to ignorance of the law on the part of occasional draft boards or military officers. On the whole, pacifists were eventually granted alternative service

at home or they were furloughed to relief work in France under the Friends Service Council of England or the American Friends Service Committee. In the present war the position of the conscientious objector appears to be more clearly understood, with the result that provision has been made for special types of civilian service. In England a conscientious objector today may be granted exemption from any form of alternative service, a privilege won by those who went to prison for refusing to compromise in the First World War. These circumstances and others like them are among the elements which have built up a powerful tradition in the Society of Friends. This tradition should accordingly be accounted one of the sources of Quaker pacifism.

No official pronouncement of any regularly constituted body of Friends has ever sanctioned participation in any war. In every period of conflict some persons have seceded from the Society under the tension of partisan feeling. For example, several hundred Quakers who actively supported the Revolutionary War withdrew from the parent stock and founded the Society of Free Quakers of Philadelphia, an organization which still exists though in a much weakened and formalized condition. In every war a small minority has joined the army. In the Society of Friends acceptance or disownment of members is left to the judgment of the individual congregation or, to be more exact, the monthly meeting. Members deviating from the peace principles of the Society have been dealt with in a variety of ways, including disownment, admonition, the requirement of expressions of regret, or simply by ignoring the matter.

Every war has acted as a purge of nominal members, has awakened old members to new life and has brought in new members.

One further consideration remains to be stated both as a source and a result of Quaker pacifism. The meeting for worship and the meeting for business, when they follow the typical Quaker procedure, exemplify pacifist technique applied to the relations among individuals in a small group. Such meetings are training grounds in pacific methods. They are to the Society of Friends what the drill ground is to an army, though nothing could be further removed from a military procedure. The meeting for worship proceeds without human leader or prearranged program. These might exercise a kind of violence or constraint upon the free movings of the spirit. There is no ritual to control action, no creed to control belief, no hymn or liturgy to control religious expression. Such a meeting requires a large measure of love, toleration, mutual understanding and high expectation. If it is to succeed, it must exemplify all the typical Christian pacifist virtues. In the silence or during speaking which may arise spontaneously out of the life of the meeting, a deep ground of unity and harmony is unitedly sought. If the meeting is troubled by a speaker who must be patiently endured, this also serves as practice in forbearance.

Religious pacifism as a positive way of life rather than as a negative attitude toward fighting can be considered to be a direct derivative from worship. True worship which pierces through the surface of the mind where multiplicity lies, finds in the depths, beyond words and even thoughts, what

George Fox called “the hidden unity in the Eternal Being.” Here the worshipper feels as a present experience rather than as abstract theory his kinship with his fellow men in God. The early Friends seldom used the phrase “joined to the Lord” without adding its complementary expression “and to one another.” Out of this felt unity there comes a sensitizing of the soul, a feeling of oneness with all men which rules out conflict. A new and positive word for pacifism is community. This signifies the union of men from within enabling them to work together, rather than external coordination produced by authoritarian means or by the threat of violence.

A tiny illustration of the power of silence to reduce the desire for violence occurred at Westtown School during the superintendency of Philip and Rachel Price, 1818 to 1830. In those years there was a rule that no corporal punishment could be inflicted without the superintendent’s permission. This was an advanced position for that time. Benjamin Hallowell, one of the teachers, wrote to Eli Price about his father’s method of dealing with disciplinary situations as follows:

When the men teachers all united in judgment that the conduct of a boy had been such that corporal punishment must be inflicted they laid the case before the Superintendent. After hearing the statement of the teachers, he usually sat fifteen or twenty minutes with them in the most solemn silence . . . and I have known in repeated instances, the influence of his precious spirit so to operate upon the minds of the teachers that,

without his uttering a single word, they would unitedly propose a milder treatment.

In meetings for conducting the business of the Society, decision can be made only when those present reach a state of unity. No vote is taken. A vote might represent the coercion of a minority by a majority. It may take weeks or even years to attain such unity. If a group has achieved a truly non-violent frame of mind, unity is eventually possible because every member has access to the same Light of Truth. This Light is not divided, it is One. This peculiar method, while slower than the process of voting, is more creative for it gives time for new points of view to arise out of the synthesis of old ones, It is more durable for the very reason that it represents a greater degree of conviction on the part of the group as a whole. Decisions so arrived at are often different in nature from any course of action advocated at the outset. Parties supporting different measures may discover a procedure which satisfies each more fully than did any of the original proposals. This method of social dealing is typical of all truly pacifist programs. It seeks for the solution of conflict not by the ascendancy of one faction nor even by a compromise which is often a meagre selection of common elements. Rather one may say that the solution arises out of that unity, deep in the soul, which underlies all human differences and which is discovered through humble obedience to the one Divine Voice. George Fox's constant admonition was "stand still in the Light." If time is allowed for the slow process of growth, if men can but refrain from the hurried use of arbitrary or mechanical means, truth can

be found behind all the various and partial views of it. Mahatma Gandhi calls his non-violent method Satyagraha, "a grasping at truth." When violence, either intellectual or physical, is avoided, right action becomes action unified according to inner conviction. This extreme type of democracy in procedure presupposes equality of sex, race and class. The Quaker experience proved to be an incentive to the development of these and other such elements in American democracy as a whole.

In a pamphlet issued officially by Friends in England in 1917, these words occur: "We believe that Christianity requires the toleration of opinions not our own lest we should unwittingly hinder the working of the Spirit of God." This does not mean that the opinions of others are tolerated because one opinion can be as true as another. Friends have never hesitated to condemn error when they saw it. But it does mean that God's Spirit works best in an atmosphere of freedom, and humble openness to new revelations of truth. It is noteworthy that some Friends were imprisoned for refusing to submit to the censor the pamphlet containing the passage just quoted.

The peace testimony of the Society of Friends cannot be fully understood apart from their other social testimonies. These doctrines form a unit derived from a common source, but in a certain sense they also generate one another. For instance, the testimony for race, class and sex equality itself works against violence. In the same way the testimony for simplicity tends to remove the superfluities and privileges in which are found so many seeds of war. It is impossible to separate one aspect of this way of life from another.

Unlike modern Quakerism, the older Quakerism was undepartmentalized. Specialization has many advantages, but it runs into the serious danger of so emphasizing the part that its meaning in the light of the whole is lost. The peace secretary, the peace committee or the peace society, none of which existed in the Society of Friends until the nineteenth century, must constantly be reminded that the branch soon withers if it is severed from the vine.

To recapitulate, we find that the Quakers have used all types of argument to uphold their pacifist position. They have used authoritarian arguments in relation to their own long-established tradition and to the teachings of Jesus. They have occasionally made use of rational and pragmatic arguments in showing that war is futile, stupid, wasteful and incapable of attaining the ends which it proposes to attain. As such it is incompatible with the nature of God and the way in which His universe works. But more often, they have employed arguments based on the direct insight of the soul into the nature of Truth and Goodness, an insight interpreted as a revelation through Divine Light and Life. According to this view, a certain way of life is intuitively recognized as good and with this way war is seen to be incongruous. This argument is primary because the Divine Light is not only the source of knowledge but also the source of power. The Light shines deep within at the springs of the will. The will is not moved from the surface of the mind but from its depth. The will is not primarily influenced by arguments based on practical, logical or historical considerations nor by authoritative credal statements, Men are spurred to action requiring

genuine self sacrifice by a deep inner conviction arising in the soul, Only by drawing upon the inner sources of Truth and Life can a small minority hold fast to a position condemned by the great majority of mankind.

About the Author

Howard Brinton (1884-1973) taught at several Quaker institutions, including Woodbrooke – a model for Pendle Hill. He served as co-director of Pendle Hill from 1936-1950, with his wife, Anna Cox Brinton.

In 1936, the Brintons faced the contingencies of a pioneer school-community. Howard Brinton was often seen on his way to negotiate the latest crisis, pursued by his rabbit Tibbar and the family dog Nuto. Gerald Heard, a staff member, watched this peaceable kingdom on the march with delight and saw in it a practical illustration of the philosophy of survival by reconciliation.

After retiring in 1952, Howard and Anna worked in Japan and Europe for the American Friends Service Committee. After Anna's death in 1969, Howard married Yuki Takahashi, his Japanese secretary.

Howard Brinton wrote many Pendle Hill pamphlets and several books, including *Friends for Three Hundred Years*, a classic work of Quaker faith and history, republished as *Friends for Three Hundred and Fifty Years* with comments from the perspective of the Philadelphia Friends.

Pendle Hill

Located on 23 acres in Wallingford, Pennsylvania, Pendle Hill is a Quaker study, retreat, and conference center offering programs open to everyone. Pendle Hill's vision is to create peace with justice in the world by transforming lives. Since Pendle Hill opened in 1930, thousands of people have come from across the United States and throughout the world for Spirit-led learning, retreat, and community.

At the heart of Pendle Hill is a residential study program which encourages a step back from daily life for reflection and discernment in preparation for deeper engagement in the community and wider world. Because spiritual experience is essential to Quakerism, Pendle Hill's education is experiential, or experimental, at its core. Adult students of all ages come for a term or a year of education designed to strengthen the whole person – body, mind, and spirit. The Resident Program captures the earliest vision for Pendle Hill while responding to the call of the world in which we exist today. Program themes include:

- Quaker faith and practice
- Dismantling oppression
- Spiritual deepening
- Leadership skill development
- Ecological literacy
- Personal discernment
- Arts and crafts
- Gandhian constructive program
- Building capacity for nonviolent social change.

Programs are offered in a variety of formats – including term-long courses, weekend workshops, and evening presentations. Those unable to come for a term or a year are encouraged to take part in a workshop or retreat. Information on all Pendle Hill programs is available at www.pendlehill.org. Pendle Hill’s mission of spiritual education is also furthered through conference services – hosting events for a variety of religious and educational nonprofit organizations, including many Quaker groups.

The Pendle Hill pamphlets have been an integral part of Pendle Hill’s educational vision since 1934. Like early Christian and Quaker tracts, the pamphlets articulate perspectives which grow out of the personal experience, insights, and/or special knowledge of the authors, concerning spiritual life, faith, and witness.

A typical pamphlet has characteristics which make it a good vehicle for experimental thought. It is the right length to be read at a single sitting (about 9000 words). It is concerned with a topic of contemporary importance. Like words spoken in a Quaker meeting for worship, it embodies a concern, a sense of obligation to express caring or to act in response to a harmful situation.

To receive each Pendle Hill pamphlet as it is published, order an annual subscription. Please contact:

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