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The Evolutionary Potential Of Quakerism

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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He is the author of *There Is a Spirit: The Nayler Sonnets*, and numerous articles and books on economics.

His most recent book, *Conflict and Defense*, is described as "a cold effort at mathematical and topological analysis of social conflict, and at the same time a warm humanistic effort on the part of a literate citizen who feels deeply the urgency of the problems of conflict to find solutions to them."

Eric B. Pollard
Secretary Australia Yearly Meeting

Originally entitled "The Quaker Mutation," Kenneth Boulding's lecture is here presented under the title of *The Evolutionary Potential of Quakerism* to avoid confusion with Pendle Hill's Pamphlet No. 7, *A Quaker Mutation*, by Gerald Heard.

The James Backhouse Lecture

This is the first in a new series of lectures instituted by Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends on the occasion of the establishment of that Yearly Meeting on January 1, 1964. The lecture was delivered in Melbourne, Australia, on January 5th during the sessions of the Yearly Meeting at which Kenneth Boulding was the representative of the Friends' World Committee for Consultation.

James Backhouse was an English Friend who visited Australia from 1832 till 1837. He and his companion, George Washington Walker, travelled widely, but spent most of their time in Tasmania, then known as Van Diemen's Land. It was through this visit that Quaker meetings were first established in Australia. James Backhouse was a botanist who published full scientific accounts of what he saw, besides encouraging Friends and following up his deep concern for the convicts and for the welfare of the aboriginal inhabitants of the country.

Australian Friends hope that this new series of lectures will bring fresh insights into truth, often with some particular reference to the needs and aspirations of Australian Quakerism.

David K. R. Hodgkin, Presiding Clerk

Australia Yearly Meeting

The Evolutionary Potential Of Quakerism

The scientific history of the universe can largely be written in terms of three great concepts — equilibrium, entropy and evolution. Without equilibrium nothing could exist at all and everything would dissolve into chaos. The history of anything from the meanest creature up to the universe itself must be written in terms of a succession of states or conditions, each of which has some stability. Equilibrium is all around us whether it is a book lying on the table, the solar system endlessly performing its gyrations, a man maintaining his body temperature and his internal environment by the process which physiologists call homeostasis, or whether it is a religious society giving attention to maintaining its doctrines and testimonies and transmitting these to the next generation.

All equilibrium states, however, are temporary. Otherwise there would be no history. The universe changes, the book is put back onto the shelf, a man ages and dies, and a society develops. Change in history however is governed by two apparently opposing concepts and processes. On one hand we have a “running down” process, which is associated in science with the concept of increasing entropy, and on the other hand we have a “building up” process which is associated with the phenomenon of evolution.

Entropy is a term which is precisely defined in thermodynamics and used rather loosely elsewhere. In its loose sense it may be equated with a measure of chaos, probability or disorganization of a system, or more precisely, with the amount of the system’s potential for change which has been used up. The famous second law of thermodynamics states that whenever work is performed entropy increases. This proposition may be generalized into a law of decreasing potential, which states very simply that whenever anything happens it is because the system had a potential for change but when something happens part of this potential is used up. Water at the top of the hill has potential for turning a turbine; once it has run down the hill and turned the turbine its potential for doing so is exhausted. Electric power can only be utilized if there is a difference in potential (voltage) between the input and output of a system. But the very utilization of this potential difference reduces it. A fertilized egg has enormous biological potential for organizing a living being. As the egg grows and develops however into a living being itself the organism gradually exhausts this potential and eventually the being matures, ages, and dies. Similarly a nation or a religious society has its origin in some creation of social potential. As its history unfurls this potential is used up and unless it can be renewed the organization likewise matures, ages, and dies.

In some processes potential is continually renewed. The rain continually lifts water from the bottom to the top of a hill, the power station continually reestablishes the potential differences which the electric lamps and machines destroy, in acts of procreation the living organism creates new fertile eggs and reestablishes biological potential, and social organizations are capable of elaborate forms of self-renewal. In each of these cases however the increase in potential must come in some sense from energy outside the system. Within a closed system the iron law of increasing entropy reigns supreme. The more complex the system, furthermore, the more likely it is to run down, simply because it represents in itself a more improbable structure and the more energy therefore must be imported from outside to maintain it.

The law of increasing entropy is a theorem more dismal than any which comes out of the dismal science of economics. It seems to say, with the author of Ecclesiastes, “vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” It sees the end of the universe in spite of our noblest efforts as a kind of thin soup in which everything is at a uniform density, temperature, and electrical potential, and in which therefore nothing more can happen for all eternity and all potential has been exhausted.

The Process Of Evolution

There is however another process at work in the universe which is creative rather than destructive, which builds up rather than tears down, which makes for diversity rather than uniformity and for the complexity of structure rather than for the simplicity of chaos. It has operated to build structures of higher degrees of organization, that is, of lower and lower probability. In our part of the universe this process reaches its furthest point in man — the most improbable of all structures! This of course is the process to which we give the name of evolution. It operates as far as we know through a very simple machinery. Any given system and any given state of the world will be subject to random shocks and random changes. Because any existing state is an equilibrium state most of these changes produce states that will not survive. Sometimes however these changes will be large enough to move the system to a new position of equilibrium, and if this happens it will never return to the old. It is the capacity possessed by higher levels of organization to form stable systems, which can be reached by a series of possible changes from some previous system, which give the universe its evolutionary potential, a potential which was present indeed in the primordial

explosion or act of creation. The process by which systems change is called mutation. The process by which some survive and some do not is called selection. It is the combination of mutation and selection which gives rise to the evolutionary process and which permits the realization of evolutionary potential.

The evolutionary process itself mutates. It has changed several times in the history of the universe, each time as it were, stepping into a higher gear and increasing the rate of evolutionary change. The evolution of the elements seems to have taken place rather quickly but after this there seems to have been at least two billion years of relative stagnation — one should always add, in our part of the universe! On earth however the development of favorable physical conditions led eventually to a rapid increase in the rate of evolution with the development of large complex molecules and the eventual beginning of life. Once life was established the rate of evolution increased enormously, for life itself in its genetic structure had an apparatus for recreating potential in each generation and for enormously increasing the rate of possible mutation. In the absence of any satisfactory measure of the rate of evolution it is hard to say whether the various stages which life passed through, for instance the emergence onto a land environment, the development of the vertebrates and so on, represent fundamental increases in the rate of evolution.

There is no doubt however that the advent of man, a mere half million years ago, represents a break and a change of gear in the evolutionary process at least equivalent to the invention of life itself. Before the advent of man the evolutionary process had no machinery outside the random rearrangement of the molecules of the genes. With the development of the human nervous system an apparatus was devised which could learn, that is carry on an evolutionary process within itself. Biological evolution then becomes relatively insignificant compared with social and cultural evolution, though now we seem about to reach a further stage, where cultural evolution gets to the point at which man can begin to intervene actively in the process of biological evolution. It seems highly probable that man will soon begin to create new forms of life.

Even in the history of man there have been at least three mutations in his own evolutionary process. For the first half million years he seems to have developed at a pace which makes a snail look like a rocket. Then, a mere ten thousand years ago, comes the neolithic revolution with the invention of agriculture. Five thousand years ago comes the urban revolution with the invention of cities and writing. We are now in the middle of the third great

transition, greater even than the other two, which is the scientific revolution. To what end it is carrying us no one can say. What is clear is that we are in the middle of enormous change. In many respects the human world has changed more since the date of my birth than it did in the half million years which preceded it. To dramatize this change I say that what is happening today is that civilization is passing away and a new state of man arising which I call "post-civilized," or, if this term is offensive, "developed."

The Quaker Mutation

What I have given in very rough outline is the scientific image of the history of the universe. I now want to step down from the sublime at least to the domestic and to ask what may seem to be an almost presumptuous question, what is the role of the Society of Friends, this tiny body of less than two hundred thousand people, in this great process stretching from creation to doomsday? Any grand theoretical principle however must be tested by application to particular cases. In the words of William Blake, "Truth lies in minute particulars." This Society of Friends is a "minute particular" indeed, but if it can be illuminated by a general scheme we not only have more confidence in the truth of our great generality, but we may also perceive more of the truth which lies in the minute particular itself.

Considered, therefore, as a case of social evolution, the Society of Friends can be seen as a mutation from the Christian phylum. I am indebted to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin for this expression used by him in The Phenomenon of Man, and indeed for many of the ideas of this paper. A "phylum" in biological evolution is a main line of development, such as, say, the mammals, which originates in some obscure mutation the origin of which is always lost to present knowledge but which turns out to have been a mutation of abnormal evolutionary potential. Some phyla exhaust their evolutionary potential eventually and reach an evolutionary equilibrium. The one-celled organisms and insects, for instance, seem to have changed very little for a very long period of time once they reached a certain stage. Often indeed it seems to be some obscure bud off the main line of evolution which eventually turns out to contain the greatest evolutionary potential and which carries the process on once the line from which it budded has exhausted its potential and become incapable of further evolution.

These concepts apply very satisfactorily to social evolution, whether this is the evolution of ideas or of forms of organization. Each of the great religions can be seen as a phylum stretching through time from its origins, growing or declining and branching with some branches possessing more evolutionary potential than others. Some branches come to an end, and some proliferate into the future. Christianity then is seen in a quite literal sense as a "vine" which proceeds out of the life of Christ.

It is hard to identify except by hindsight what is the nature of evolutionary potential. Who would have thought, indeed, at the time of Pontius Pilate, that an obscure itinerant preacher with a little band of ragged followers would be a "social egg" which would eventually lead to the building of mighty cathedrals and civilizations in lands then unknown. Who likewise, observing a fanatical desert Arab six hundred years later would have identified him as the founder of a spiritual empire which was to stretch from Spain to the Philippines and affect the destinies of countless millions of the yet unborn? Or who again would have thought that an intense young man in leather breeches, preaching up and down Cromwell's England would have been the source of a movement in the course of which this lecture would be given in present day Australia, three hundred years and half a world away!

Let us then take a closer look at the leather-clad George Fox and his circle to try to understand something of what constituted their evolutionary potential, for by so doing those of us who belong to the cultural and historical phylum which originated from this mutation will understand ourselves better as we comprehend the role, however small, which we play in the great processes of the universe.

All mutations mutate from something and have a long history of earlier mutations behind them. A lion never mutates into an eagle or even into a tiger. The Quaker mutation is purely a mutant from the Christian phylum, not from the phylum of Buddhism or Islam. It is a mutation furthermore from Western, indeed, English, Protestant, Puritan, Christianity. Some Friends who conceive of Quakerism as embodying a universal and absolutely valid truth may not find this statement attractive, but its historic truth can hardly be denied. We can hardly doubt that if George Fox had been a Turk, or a Hindu, or a Chinese even with the same unusual spiritual capacity in his person, then either Quakerism would never have been founded at all or it would have been something profoundly different. Thus even though George Fox himself felt that his message was a universal one, and we may recall indeed that envoys went both to the Pope and to the Sultan, the plain fact is that the message was received only within the Christian fold and

within the Protestant and the Puritan sector of that. It was Jesus Christ who spoke to George Fox's condition, but He clearly could not have done this if George Fox had not been born and brought up in a radically Christian environment, with its view of the world derived mainly from the Christian scriptures. It is true of course that mutations always in some degree transcend their origins, otherwise they would not be mutations. On the other hand each mutation usually represents a rather small change from the existing structure, for very large mutations are usually incapable of survival. If George Fox had decided that the truth required him to become a Moslem it is very doubtful whether he would have attracted many followers around him in the solidly Christianized English landscape.

Toward Perfection And Experience

Even though the Quakers were beyond doubt Puritans, Protestants and Christians, the Quaker mutation nevertheless included a surprisingly large change, comprising an unusually large number of elements. The gulf that divides the Quakers from those most like them, who were undoubtedly Baptists, is much larger than that which divides the Baptists, shall we say, from the Congregationalists or Independents. The magnitude of the Quaker mutation alone makes it of an unusual historical interest. It represented a change from existing beliefs and practices in a considerable number of important religious and cultural elements.

The first of these, and I think myself the most important, although historians differ on this point, is that the Quakers were perfectionists. They believed that life without sin could be lived on earth and they set about rather deliberately to organize a society to do this. It was this aspect of Quakerism which so shocked its more pessimistic contemporaries. On this point however the record seems to be clear. A predominant element both in the religious experience and in the preaching of George Fox was what theologians called "sanctification." He claimed that he was brought not only into the innocent state of Adam before the fall, but into the state of Christ Jesus which should never fall. He constantly upbraids the Baptists and other Puritans because they "plead for sin." The inward light for George Fox was no pale intellectual illumination, but a consuming holy fire which not only revealed sin but brought you out of it.

The peculiar Quaker culture is quite unintelligible unless it is interpreted by this strong perfectionist streak. The Quakers used a peculiar language; why?

Because they could not bear a use of language which smacked of imperfection or which tolerated social distinctions which they felt to be invalid. They refused to take off their hats in the presence of people who were accustomed to this act of deference. This apparently trivial custom got them into more trouble than almost any other single one of their peculiarities for it seemed to strike at the symbolic roots of social order. We cannot understand why what is to us a trivial matter could have been the source of so much anxiety and suffering unless we realize again that it was the almost obsessive passion for perfection which led to the denial of many apparently conventional and insignificant acts. The refusal to take oaths, which also was very costly, arose from the same source. The peace testimony likewise in its early days and the refusal to take arms or to participate in any kind of violence was merely an offshoot of this general perfectionism, inspired by the example of Christ.

A second very important strand in the Quaker mutation might be called "experimentalism." This is the insistence on firsthand experience as the only true source of religion and indeed of perfection. Perfection cannot be achieved by the mere following of an outward rule or by book learning. "Thou sayest, Christ said this and the apostles said that, but what canst thou say?" This is the constant appeal George Fox and indeed of all the early Quakers. Over against the religion of the "professors" who merely professed a set of words which they had not made their own, the Quakers insisted that the events recorded in the scriptures must be realized in the living experience of their own lives and times. Sometimes indeed they carried this position to pathological extremes as in the case of James Nayler, who rode into Bristol on an ass while his followers waved branches and shouted "Hosanna!"; and, even more alarming, there are several cases of Friends who claimed that they had risen from the dead. Every movement however has its pathological side, and this should not distract us from the importance of the vitality and freshness which flow into the stream of religious culture from this Quaker insistence on experimental religion. Subsequent movements such as Methodism fundamentally arise as variants which owe a great deal to this particular mutation.

It is a matter of some debate, perhaps largely semantic, as to whether experimentalism in religion implies mysticism. Rufus Jones laid great stress on the mystical elements in Quakerism in his famous histories. George Fox unquestionably records experiences which could properly be described as mystical on any definition. Isaac Penington, the sweetest and the gentlest of early Friends, likewise unquestionably stands in the mystical tradition. It is a far cry however from Meister Eckhardt or Jacob Bijhme to George Fox, and even further

to William Penn, who was far from being a mystic in the traditional sense. I incline to the view therefore that Rufus Jones was mistaken in trying to identify the stream of European mysticism as the source of the Quaker mutation, and that those who argue that Quakerism essentially came out of English Puritanism are much closer to the truth.

This does not deny that there are strong mystical elements in Quakerism, for any religion which lays stress on experience will find mysticism congenial. Traditional mysticism however, which emphasizes ecstatic states, the incommunicability and ineffability of the religious experience, and the complete union and interpenetration of the human and the divine is very different from the characteristic Quaker experiences even though it has some superficial similarities. The object of Quaker meditation is not so much to achieve union with the divine as to receive instruction from the divine, and very practical instruction at that. This was true I think even in what is commonly regarded as the most mystical of the periods of Quakerism, namely the period of so-called quietism in the eighteenth century.

Creating A Social Body

Out of these two mutations in motivation, towards perfectionism on one hand and experimentalism on the other, comes a series of great practical mutations: the Meeting for Worship, the related Meeting for Business, and the whole structure and practice of the Quaker meeting as a social organization. The meeting for worship on a basis of silent waiting in which each member present is open to receive and to express the word which comes to him is a direct consequence of the drive towards perfectionism which insisted on the priesthood of all believers and the absence of a professional clergy. It is a direct consequence also of the experimentalism which denies the efficacy of rites and ceremonies even to the extent of denying the great traditional sacraments of Baptism and Communion. Even though the Quaker meeting for worship seems to have originated with the “Seekers” of Westmorland rather than with George Fox himself, it is clear that he seized upon this as an ideal expression in practice of the religious motivations which he felt and sought to propagate. The Westmorland Seekers furthermore found in the doctrines of George Fox an ideal justification for the practices which they had found valuable. We might say, to use the biological analogy, that on coming down from Pendle Hill where he saw the vision of “a great people to be gathered” George Fox was the sperm which

fertilized the “social egg” of the Westmorland Seekers and hence created the extraordinary evolutionary potential which became the Society of Friends.

It seems to have been the genius of George Fox himself however that created the Meeting for Business and the organization of the new society into monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings. This gave it an apparatus, as it were, a “body,” capable of maintaining itself and of mobilizing the scattered resources of individuals into a common purpose. Without this the Society of Friends would probably have suffered the fate of the “Ranters” or other sects of enthusiasts who sprang into being about the same time, but which died out rapidly because they were unable to create an ongoing body. One pays a price however for the creation of a body — it is the old devil of entropy coming up again — for the very creation of a body exhausts some of the evolutionary potential which gave rise to it. The history of the Society of Friends is a clear witness to this principle. By 1700 the original expansion had largely come to an end and the society settled down into a self-reproducing religious subculture, producing at its best characters of extraordinary quality like John Woolman, but apparently incapable of much further expansion into the larger society that surrounded it.

In the history of the Society of Friends in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, especially in the United States, we see an example of a frequently observed principle of evolutionary systems of reverse mutations back towards the original equilibrium. When a species suffers a large mutation, even if the mutation is favorable and enables the new variety to survive and establish itself in the system of biological equilibrium, subsequent mutations frequently move towards the original type because from a rather extreme position these tend to have greater survival value. This is the old principle of equilibrium asserting itself again. The history of Quakerism is no exception to this rule. We saw that the Society of Friends originally was a mutation coming out of and moving away from the Puritan Protestantism of Great Britain and the early American colonies. Subsequent mutations in some parts of the Society of Friends have tended to move the pattern back towards its original sources, with a robed choir, congregational hymn singing, and a paid minister giving a regular sermon. There may perhaps be a few minutes of silent prayer in the middle of the service as a vestigial survival of the earlier Quaker Meeting for Worship, but to all intents and purposes the church is almost indistinguishable from the Methodist church across the road in its patterns of life and even of thought. We might say that here the Quaker mutation has suffered a further mutation and has reverted to the type out of which it came.

Even in meetings which retain the unprogrammed meeting for worship there have been many mutations from the original pattern, almost all in the direction of the "world" which surrounds the meeting. It is only a handful of conservative Quakers today who retain any distinctive clothing or any distinctive speech. Up until the middle of the nineteenth century the Quaker pattern of life everywhere was sharply differentiated from the pattern of life around it. Today this is no longer true. Nine tenths of the time it is impossible to tell a modern Quaker from the "world's people" among whom he moves for most of his day. His peculiarities assert themselves at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning, or at certain times of crisis, and reveal themselves in certain attitudes of mind, for instance on the subject of peace and world affairs. There is hardly any peculiar testimony of the Society of Friends however which is not practiced by more people outside it than inside it. There are many more pacifists outside the Society of Friends than inside it. Many of the traditional interests of the society in social reform — anti-slavery, prison reform, temperance, and so on have largely been taken over by others. Even very worldly corporations these days are supposed to reach their decisions in their boards of directors by taking the "sense of the meeting!" It is a serious question therefore whether the evolutionary potential of this particular mutation has not been exhausted and whether the Society of Friends, its contribution having been made to the world, should not quietly dissolve itself and pass into history.

I answer this question with a clear and unequivocal "no," otherwise I would not be doing what I am doing today. I believe the evolutionary potential of the Quaker mutation is very far from exhausted, and indeed, has hardly begun to show its full effects. I believe furthermore that the Society of Friends has a vital role to play in the future development of mankind, small perhaps in quantity but of enormous importance in quality, and that to refuse to take on this role or to run away from the burden which it may imply would be a betrayal of trust and a tragedy not only for the Society of Friends but for mankind as a whole. These are large claims and only the future will be able to judge whether they are true, but I believe a convincing case can be made for them.

Factors Of Survival

The assessment and evaluation of any mutation in regard to its evolutionary potential is rendered difficult by the fact that mutations hardly ever come singly and the effect of one is difficult to disentangle from the effect of others. A

mutation for instance can often survive and reproduce itself not because it is in itself particularly favorable but because it happens to be associated with other mutations which are favorable. Many of the phenomena both of biological and social evolution are incomprehensible without this principle. Accidental mutations involving customs, habits, clothing, language and so on become associated with other mutations which are fundamental to survival, and hence survive as it were by hanging on to the coat tail of really significant mutations. The reverse situation also happens. A mutation which is intrinsically favorable and which has a high evolutionary potential may have low survival value in its early stages either because it is associated with other mutations which are less favorable and which, as it were, drag it down, but also because an environment for which it is most suited is yet to come. There are many mutations which are quite unfavorable in the short run but favorable in the long run. If they are ever to survive in the long run they must be associated with other perhaps even quite unrelated mutations which are favorable in the short run.

Thus on the one side we do not explain the presence of Quakers in Australia or in Indiana or California, or even in Kenya by the survival value of the Quaker mutation alone. The Quaker mutation happened to be better adapted to an English speaking environment than to any other, at least in its early years. It so happens that the period of the Quaker mutation marks the beginning of an enormous expansion of the geographical extent and political influence of the English speaking world. This was due to many factors quite unrelated to the Quaker mutation, though the role of the Quaker mutation itself in this development is not negligible. Quakers for instance played a quite disproportional role in the rise of modern science and technology and in the so-called industrial revolution in England in the eighteenth century. I have argued elsewhere that this was not unrelated to the religious characteristics of the Society of Friends, and that indeed science and modern technology would be unlikely to develop in the first instance outside of a society in which the ideals of perfectionism and experimentalism were present. The Society of Friends therefore must accept a partial responsibility for the much larger mutation into science and technology which has dominated the world certainly from the beginning of the eighteenth century. We must acknowledge however that the Society of Friends was only a small part of the forces which brought about this transition even though we may claim that qualitatively it played a vital role and that without such Quaker names as the Darbys of Coalbrookdale, the Peases of Darlington and many others like them in the field of technological innovation and without also the names of the great Quaker scientists such as Dalton and Eddington the history of the last two hundred years would be radically different.

Still it remains true that it is not only because of Quakerism that there are Quakers in Australia, but because of many forces and institutions of which Quakers would not even approve, such as the British Navy, and even the British penal system. We all ride on somebody's coat tails and it is a constant source of spiritual difficulty to the sensitive Quaker perfectionist to realize that many of his opportunities and successes arise because he takes advantage of social situations which he not only did not create but of which he does not approve. The geographic spread even of a religion as gentle as Quakerism is not unconnected with the fact that it has been embedded in a highly aggressive and militaristic culture. It is a lion who has carried the seed of Quakerism in his fur!

In spite of these difficulties I am still prepared to defend the proposition that the evolutionary potential of Quakerism is not yet exhausted and indeed is still very high. I think this because I think Quakerism is an example of a mutation which was in a sense premature and before its time. The Quaker belongs to a kingdom that is not yet. This is an awkward loyalty to have. But it is an attitude and loyalty which points towards the future rather than towards the past. I regard both the religious experience, and also the ethical conclusions and the type of culture derived from the experience which are peculiarly characteristic of the Quaker mutation as having more relevance in the world to which we seem to be moving than in the world which we are leaving behind. It would take a whole volume to develop this hypothesis in detail and I shall merely outline some of the main questions which have to be answered.

Religion In The Post-Civilized World

The first question is whether the much larger mutation involved in science and technology has not swallowed up the whole Christian phylum out of which it unquestionably grew and so rendered any religious interpretation of the world unlikely to survive into the future post-civilization. The Communists indeed argue precisely this point of view. They regard religion as a survival from a prescientific era, in spite of the fact that they themselves made a quasi-religion out of some odds and ends of 19th century social science, and they look forward to a sanitary scientific world of the future in which religion will have gone the way of the Shamans, the witch doctors, and the fairies. In this of course they are simply following the traditions of the eighteenth century "enlightenment" which wanted to rub out the infamy of superstition and which had no need of the hypothesis of

God. At the beginning of this paper indeed I outlined a scientific view of the universe from which the deity was noticeably absent, except perhaps as an "alpha" or original source of all evolutionary potential or again in the language of Teilhard de Chardin, an "omega," the final degree of organization which will be reached at the end of the evolutionary process and which will presumably be capable of creating evolutionary potential for a whole universe again. There is a mind-stretching quality about the vision of a God who creates a universe the evolutionary processes of which will eventually recreate Him.

The most this can give us in the way of religion, however, is a chilly form of deism remote from living religious experiences. The justification for religion as a set of practices lies not in abstract philosophical speculation but in the experience itself. Religious experience can of course be of many qualities. At one end it sinks into magic and superstition, or even mescalin, and at the other it rises to the loftiest experience attainable by the human organism. In this latter sense, for instance, it is prayer as an activity that is the living reality immediately experienced in the human person, and "God" as a noun becomes a convenient way of talking about the object of prayer. This view may be attacked on the ground that religious experience itself is an illusion. I believe however that the rules of "reality testing" which apply to ordinary experience apply likewise to the religious experience of mankind and that a reality underlying this experience must be postulated, just as we postulate a reality underlying our carefully learned experience of the senses.

I argue furthermore that it is precisely in religious experience that one finds the evolutionary potential that looks forward to the ultimate future of man. That in man which denies the supremacy of pleasure, or even of the self itself, is not mere perversity but looks towards the true end of his development and potential. Man will shortly be able to run an electrode into the pleasure center of his brain and enable anyone who wishes to enjoy a lifetime of utterly meaningless ecstasies. If pleasurable sensation is the only end of man he will soon be at the end of his evolutionary road. It is the drive within him that looks beyond this that has real evolutionary potential. This is why I think religion will not pass away as we move from civilized to post-civilized society but will become immensely strengthened and enriched. Once we have gotten rid of war, poverty, and disease what is left for us to do? The only answer is to pursue what is good for its own sake. This is what religion at its highest has always meant by the search for God.

But even if religion has a great future in the new world will this religion necessarily be Christian? If it will not, how would this affect the evolutionary

potential of Quakerism? There are a few Friends who wish to disassociate Quakerism from its Christian origins as Christianity itself disassociated itself from its Jewish origins, and to make it a candidate therefore for a new world religion. I must confess that I think that this deprives Quakerism of too much of its content to make it viable. What seems to be left if Quakerism is disassociated from Christianity is sitting in solemn silence, listening to helpful little speeches, and doing a lot of imaginative good works. None of these things are to be despised, but they seem hardly adequate to meet the infinitely complex needs of man. It is not impossible certainly for a new religious mutation to arise out of Quakerism. If it did so however I doubt very much if this new wine could be contained in the old bottles. I suspect therefore that Quakerism will have to remain, perhaps somewhat uneasily, within the fold of Christianity, perhaps as a rather prickly burr on the great garment of the church, constantly holding up the standard of perfection before it and forcing it constantly to consider what are the bare essential characteristics of the Christian phylum which give it further evolutionary potential and what are the nonessential elements and cultural accidents. One likes to think of Friends also as specializing in dialogue with other religions or non-religions and as constantly tending to open windows which people intent upon coziness tend to shut.

Building Human Identity

In the second place the ethical positions which are peculiarly characteristic of the Society of Friends seem to me to be more appropriate in the post-civilized world to which we are hopefully moving than in the world of civilization from which we are emerging. The Society of Friends is deeply committed to love as a major ethical principle, and on building the human identity around universal love which knows no barriers of race, class, country or creed. Quakers therefore are deeply committed to what I elsewhere called the “integrative” system for the organization of society and management of human affairs. Civilized society however cannot be built on love. It is too poor, and the conflicts among various members and groups are too intense to permit a society to develop in which the main motive power is love alone. Early civilization was built mainly on threats and particularly upon the threat of violence. This is still an important element in the modern world, as the constant danger of war indicates.

Another great source of the development of society is exchange. By this means we develop specialization, we work for each other, but we work not for

love but for money or goods. Again civilized society could almost certainly not operate without this motivation and without the corresponding institutions. In civilized society therefore love exists as a major motivation either in small groups such as the family or among groups which have withdrawn from the world under the pressure of intense religious devotion such as the Franciscans or the Bruderhof. The short life expectancy of Utopian communities is a testimony to the extraordinary difficulty of organizing a society around the principle of love alone. Nevertheless the development of mankind leads almost inevitably to an increase in the proportion of social activity which is organized through the integrative system and a decrease in proportion of the social system governed by threats or even exchange. Even the growth of the national state, disintegrative as it is in many ways, represents a degree of concern of all for all and of an integrative system covering at least all its own citizens which would have been inconceivable in earlier ages. We can argue therefore that the ethic of love is the only one on which the world society which technology has made necessary can be built. If it is so then both the successes and the failures of the Society of Friends are of great importance for mankind in pointing the way towards the development of a world society bound together mainly because people care for each other, even if this may go along with continued operation of the exchange system or even of elements of threat and coercion.

The great search of man today is for a human identity which will permit him to live in peace with all his fellows. Today the national identity dominates all the others and it is strong even in the Society of Friends, as any Friend who travels to another country will soon find! Nevertheless in the world community of the Society of Friends we do have a foretaste of the “human identity” and that true world community for which we all long. In the establishment of this world community the Society of Friends has a great pioneering work still to do.

Finally I suggest that the Society of Friends has a great intellectual task ahead of it, in the translation of its religious and ethical experiences and insights into a conscious understanding of the way in which the kind of love which we treasure and covet can be produced, defended, and extended. A great part of this task no doubt lies outside of the Society of Friends, for instance in the development of the social sciences. Friends however have a unique opportunity before them in the decades to come. The principal, though not the only, growing point of the Society of Friends in the twentieth century lies in the intellectual community. It has been the university meetings which have been the main source of whatever expansion has taken place in unprogrammed Quakerism. This itself is a symptom of the evolutionary potential that still lies within the society because it

is precisely the university communities which now carry the seeds of the post-civilized future. I believe the next major task of the Society of Friends is to mobilize this intellectual potential and to catch a vision of the great intellectual task to which it is called. If it can respond to this vision its evolutionary potential may be great indeed.

Why, however, should a religious society have an intellectual task — surely this should be left to the universities! The answer is that the task in question is spiritual as well as intellectual, in the sense that it involves not merely abstract knowledge, but love and community. One of the great dangers of the developed society is that of a break in community between the intellectuals and the rest of the society. The besetting sin of the intellectual is pride, and this frequently leads him, and the organizations which he dominates, to disaster. It is only as knowledge is "sanctified" by love that it works without question for man's good. It is part of the genius of the Society of Friends that it has been able to unite in a single fellowship of mutual affection and concern both intellectuals and those who carry out the great common tasks of life. The Good Shepherd gathers us all into one flock, and only as we are so gathered, without either pride or envy, can knowledge be made perfect in love.

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