

THE SWORD AND THE LIGHT

**THE SWORD AND THE LIGHT:
THE EVOLUTION OF THE PEACE TESTIMONY OF THE BRITISH
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS, 1914 - 1918**

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis describes the evolution of the peace testimony of the British Society of Friends (Quakers) during W.W.I. From a disjointed and confused collection of inspirations, orientations, and critiques of society their peace witness developed into an integrated and comprehensive critique of human behaviour and fundamental social structures. In doing so, it tells a story that has been largely ignored by historians of British pacifism who have assumed that there was a coherent Quaker position during the Great War or have poorly understood as a whole the beliefs and practices of the Friends. The struggles of British Quakers, both with their individual consciences and amongst themselves, have been obscured by historians concentrating almost exclusively on the Society's involvement in the conscription controversy. By focusing on the Society of Friends over a broad range of issues, this thesis reveals that the Quaker response to war was not the easy reflex of traditional sectarian eccentricity. Rather, their response was one of an agonizing division of loyalties and a conscientious re-examination of fundamental beliefs. It is also the story of a closely knit community struggling to maintain a unity of belief in the face of a surprisingly wide range of opinion among its members. In the end, the unity of the Society was preserved but only at the cost of its

potential as a significant agent of social change.

Between August 1914 and May 1915, British Quakers struggled to re-affirm a long-standing commitment to pacifism. This commitment was threatened by the complex and devastating nature of the war and by their own compromises of the previous fifty years. At their yearly gathering in London, in May 1915, the Society's members confirmed that pacifism was essential to their unique faith and determined that this witness should be an outward testimony: an immediately relevant gospel for all mankind.

Between May 1915 and May 1916, this invigorated pacifism led the Society into a conflict with the state over compulsory military service. Conscription forced Quakers to recognize the conflict between their ideals and their capacity for militancy. The majority of Quakers refused to endorse militant political action despite the example provided by an absolutist minority. Individual Quakers would continue to play active roles in more aggressive organizations but the Society of Friends would avoid controversy in the interests of unity.

Between May 1916 and May 1918, the re-examination of the peace testimony prompted by the outbreak of war began to bear fruit in the form of a more thorough-going understanding of the roots of violence. Liberal and socialist Quakers developed the Society's first comprehensive analysis of human nature and society and the implications for pacifism of such

analyses. Combining the ideas of New Liberal thinkers such as T. H. Green, D. G. Ritche, and L. T. Hobhouse and the Guild socialism of S. G. Hobson and G. D. H. Cole, Quaker thinkers presented the Society with a remarkably radical program for social change. After some resistance from Quaker employers, the Society's Yearly Meeting of 1918 endorsed this approach as consistent with Quaker beliefs. Although the ideals expressed in the new testimony were never openly repudiated, the rejection of militancy in 1916 undercut the activism necessary to create the new society in Britain. Thus the decline in government-sponsored Reconstruction after 1918 was paralleled by and contributed to a decline in Quaker radicalism. The British Society of Friends never had such a complete understanding of its beliefs, but it was unable to face the challenges they presented.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my last undergraduate supervisor, the late Professor Brian Heeney of Trent University.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1914, the membership of the Society of Friends was no more than sixteen to seventeen thousand individuals. This number only amounted to a tiny fraction of the forty-one million people living in England and Wales.¹ Yet, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Quakers, as they were commonly called, had had a historical impact far beyond their numerical status. This disproportionate influence on British society was partially a result of their pivotal economic and social position. Quaker economic resources were concentrated in a few industries and in both London and provincial banking. Quakers dominated chocolate manufacturing and were influential in the china and shoe industries. As well, Quakers were deeply involved in at least two publishing houses and a Quaker, George Cadbury, was owner of the world's largest radical/liberal newspaper, the Daily News. Their high standards of conduct, progressive policies towards their work forces and steady record of economic success gave Quaker firms a distinguished position within the British business community.

The leading role of the Society of Friends in the network of interlocking pressure groups which dominated British social activism from 1820 to 1914, was of even

greater importance than their economic power and policies. Quakers were in the forefront of efforts to eradicate slavery, introduce temperance legislation and ameliorate factory conditions. The Society's contribution to the success of these efforts in a straight-forward and honest manner earned for them an unmatched respect and reputation for success among the British public as a whole, as well as among the nation's ruling elites. In a society dominated by a resolute middle class devotion for socially useful work, Quakers embodied the Victorian virtues of honest toil and good works.

This veneration of the Quaker image gave the Society considerable influence. The Friend, the Society's weekly periodical, had a wide readership and often contained articles by leading progressive thinkers who were not Quakers. Charles Booth, Beatrice Webb, C. F. G. Masterman, J. A. Hobson, and Clifford Allen were just a few of these distinguished, non-Quaker contributors. As well, the role of individual Quakers in public life contributed to the Society's influence. A tradition of small but influential parliamentary representation, initiated by John Bright in the mid-Victorian period was continued between 1914 and 1918 by such able M.P.'s as T. E. Harvey, Arnold S. Rowntree and Alfred Pease. The speeches of these men, well known for their constructive tone of reason and moderation, gave British social radicalism a sturdy respectability that repudiated

labels such as "firebrand" and "anarchist." The work of individual Quakers in the civil service compounded this image of constructive and earnest social reformers. Sir George Newman's tenure as the chief medical officer for the Board of Education and the Ministry of Health, and B. Seebohm Rowntree's efforts on behalf of nutrition and land reform are just two examples of the disproportionate contribution of the Society of Friends to the implementation of social welfare.²

The works and character of the Society of Friends created an image of Quakerism respected in Britain and throughout the world. Indeed, the deference of British society to the opinion of what G. M. Trevelyan described as the "spiritual aristocracy" gave the Society considerable social influence.³ Yet, while the contribution of Quakers to British Society is recognized, the Society itself is poorly understood. T. S. Eliot described Quakerism as a "distinguished, but isolated culture".⁴ This ignorance of Quaker beliefs is especially true of Quaker pacifism. Traditionally, the designation "Quaker" has been considered a synonym for pacifist. Yet throughout the greater part of its history the Society of Friends did not consider its pacifism the predominant aspect of its faith. In the nineteenth century, for instance, pacifism was just one in a wide spectrum of Quaker concerns which included advocacy of free

trade, prison reform, emancipation of slaves, and temperance reform. They were also known for their contribution to forms of philanthropy such as relief and schools for the poor. There was, and still is, more to the Quaker faith than simply non-violence. Nevertheless, it was pacifism which primarily determined the relationship between Quakers and the rest of twentieth century society.

The emergence of Quaker pacifism was not simply a case of British society finally recognizing this particular aspect of Quaker doctrine. Much more important was recognition by the Society of Friends of the nature and implications of their beliefs. Nineteenth century society and later historians gave Quakers credit for more philosophical sophistication than they deserved. During this period, Quaker understanding of their peace testimony was limited and contradictory, but the Society of Friends was not alone in its confusion and ignorance. The entire British pre-war peace movement was unclear about the exact ethical basis for non-violence. Most pacifists of the day expressed various inspirations and critiques simultaneously. Informed observers in late Victorian and Edwardian society failed to distinguish between those pacifists who rejected violence in all cases, and those who were willing to tolerate it under special conditions.

Martin Ceadel, in his authoritative book, Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1939, distinguishes precisely the various

subtle differences within the range of pacifist opinion. His most basic division is between the pacifist and the pacifist. For the pacifist, war is wrong and can never be accepted, whatever the consequences. A pacifist, however, while insisting that the avoidance or prevention of war should be the over-riding political priority, would recognize some limited circumstances where violence would be the only or most correct course.⁵ Such was the muddle among those who sought a peaceful world that most pacifists tended to consider themselves pacifists. This was the case for many Quakers in the first decade of the twentieth century. Virtually all Quakers during this period believed they were pacifists, whereas, in fact, many were merely pacifists*. This state of affairs existed despite the fact that the Society had espoused a peace testimony for over two centuries. During the First World War the Society's peace testimony evolved from a confused and generally shallow conception of pacifism to an integrated perception of the roots of human violence arising from social conditions and innate human weakness. The Society's response to war was not automatic and unanimous. Nor was the response a story of

* In this paper the term pacifist will be used in all cases largely because the distinction Ceadel makes is unimportant to the thesis presented here.

intransigent and fatal divisions as was the case for much of Nonconformity. Faced with an agonizing division of loyalties, this closely knit community undertook a conscientious re-examination of its fundamental beliefs, producing in the end a transformed peace testimony. Yet, in order to unite the Society behind this new testimony, the Society's potential as an agent of social change was severely undermined.

The bulk of the primary material for this thesis was taken from the Society's weekly periodical, The Friend. This periodical was a particularly valuable source because of the extraordinary comprehensive picture it provides of British Quaker opinion. Each weekly issue would begin with an editorial or an article by a prominent Quaker, commissioned by the editors, on a subject of current importance to the Society or within Britain. The Friend also occasionally reprinted articles from the Friends Quarterly Examiner, the Society's forum for scholarly essays, and from the Ploughshare, the periodical of the Society of Quaker Socialists. More importantly, the Friend published all the proceedings of the Quarterly and Yearly Meetings, the Society's regional and national collective assemblies; the Meeting for Sufferings, the Society's executive committee; as well as minutes and reports of all the Society's conferences and committees. The Friend also had a regular column of current events and announcements of the activities, births,

and deaths within the Society. Prominent Quakers were given detailed obituaries and testimonials by other Quakers. A regular column interpreted a selected scriptural quotation and another reviewed books of interest. Both of these columns were written by various Quakers and provided a broader picture of their interests and intellectual positions.

One section above all others, however, reflected the attitudes within the Society. This was the "Correspondence" section. The Friend had a very open editorial policy with regard to the letters it received. The editors attempted successfully to include a representative selection of the letters that came in each week. They considered this section of the publication to be an open forum for Quaker opinion and only very occasionally included their own opinions along with a particular letter. In the past the Friend had obstructed the efforts of radical Friends to obtain a hearing, but by the outbreak of W.W.I. such practices had been abandoned. The Friend was occasionally more strident than its correspondents, but just as often it was more cautious. This conjunction is revealed by a comparison between the views expressed in the editorials and those expressed at Yearly Meetings. The Friend, whatever its position relative to the rest of Quaker opinion, took an active, if cautious, role in shaping Quaker opinion. Other material has been taken from both the F.Q.E. and the Ploughshare as well as reports and

pamphlets produced by Quakers during the war, but these merely supplement the material provided by the Friend.

ENDNOTES: INTRODUCTION

¹Arthur Marwick, The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970), p. 17.

²Dictionary of National Biography, 1941-1950, s.u. "Newman, Sir George (1870 - 1948)", by J. A. Glove; and Dictionary of National Biography, 1951-1960, s.u. "Rowntree, Benjamin Seebohm (1871 - 1954)", by Hugh Heckstall-Smith.

³George Macauley Trevelyan, Life of John Bright, (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1925.), p. 3.

⁴Edward Milligan, unpublished biography of T.E. Harvey, Friends' House, London, p. 31.

⁵Martin Ceadel, Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 3.

CHAPTER ONE: QUAKER PACIFISM TO 1914

For all dwelling in the Light, that comes from Jesus, 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.

George Fox, 1657¹

The Society of Friends was by no means the first Christian community to develop a peace testimony. The early Christian church, before it became the established faith of the Roman Empire under Constantine, espoused a strong (but not unanimous) peace testimony. Once Christianity was established as the orthodox faith in late Roman civilization, pacifism was characteristic of small communities which saw themselves as separate, either from the Roman church or from society as a whole.² The Society of Friends was the first significant pacifist community to emerge in Britain; developing at a later stage of the Puritan movement which transformed British Christianity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³ The Puritan revolution sought to bring about the "Kingdom of the Saints"; to move English society and government towards a radical, religious

parliamentarianism. As the Puritan movement regressed into an overtly military regime, whose goals placed less emphasis on religious change than on political transformation, many Puritans lost faith in political and military action as a method of religious change. It was among these most severely disillusioned that the Quaker faith developed.⁴ Quaker pacifism was partly the rejection of conventional social and political activity. An aggressive "a-politicalism" led easily to an "a-militarism". However, a full-fledged peace testimony evolved slowly. The consensus among modern historians is that the Quaker peace testimony emerged throughout the 1650's and was not confirmed as an essential or inevitable part of Quaker belief until as late as 1660.⁵ By this time Quakers were committed to pacifism and saw their peace testimony as a direct consequence of their fundamental doctrine of the "Inner Light".

By the concept of the "Inner light" the Friends claimed there was essentially a direct illumination of the human soul by the Spirit of Christ. This belief was not the exclusive possession of Quakerism. Indeed, as Geoffrey Nuttall indicated in The Puritan Spirit, while a return to the theological prominence of the Bible was fundamental to the reforms of the Reformation, "the recovery of the Bible brought with it a recovery of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit".⁶ The religious conflict between Quakers and other Puritans focused on the relative importance of the "Word of God spoken inwardly by

His Spirit...".⁷ For Puritans, including Quakers, the Holy Spirit working through the soul of the individual enlivened and illuminated Scripture and experience. In so doing, the Spirit of Christ provided a means of spiritual improvement.⁸ Quakers differed from other Puritans on the extent of possible transformation. Less radical Puritans recognized a degree of progress but still insisted on the inescapable sinfulness of man. Quakers, by contrast, emphasized how the Spirit released the individual from the "dominion" of sin. Man remained sinful but the Inner Light allowed him to "see over the evil" and release him from its effects.⁹ The Quaker had a clear and direct sense both of his own sinfulness and of his forgiveness by God. Seeing both the good and the evil within himself, the Quaker was compelled to see those around him in a new way: ... he who despises, despises not men but God who had given us His Holy Spirit.¹⁰ Illuminated by the Inner Light, Quakers were "brought into that life which takes away the occasion for all wars."¹¹ Essentially Quaker beliefs went beyond being unable to despise another individual to a state where they could do no violence against him either. For the concept of the Inner Light decreed that some spark or aspect of God, through Christ, was present in every human. To wage war was thus to attack God.

In order for Quaker thought to progress from loving the individual to an espousal of non-violence, Friends assumed that a violent act and love were incompatible. Quakers

created a basis for this assumption by establishing Christ's life as a guide to human actions. As the Quaker was guided by the Inner Light, the Spirit made him over into the image of Christ. Christ's actions were the ultimate example to man. George Fox, the founder of the faith, could say, therefore, "We love, because he first loved us."¹² Hence, early Quaker pacifism was a particular tendency in mid-seventeenth century Puritanism taken to its logical conclusion. This development should not obscure the fact that Fox's pacifism was largely intuitive, as it was for many of his immediate followers. However, Quaker pacifism became more habitual than intuitive after the initial period of persecution.

After 1650 Quakers became the object of severe persecution under Cromwell and then the Stuarts, after the Restoration of 1660. The primary motivation for punitive actions was a fear that the loyalty of Quakers could not be trusted. The refusal of Quakers to swear oaths and to perform the customary acts of deference was taken to reflect a rebellious anarchism. The Society of Friends was not able to explain convincingly the apparent contradiction between their professions of loyalty and their refusal to swear oaths of allegiance. As a result, the Friends were not trusted and more frequently they were harshly treated. This persecution profoundly affected the character of the Society.¹³ Arthur Raistrick in Quakers in Science and Industry states that the

direct and indirect persecution of Quakers produced a community of individuals with very special characteristics and motivations.

The insistent defamation of their religious beliefs was a powerful spur to show in their lives the sterling character that was the flower of their despised religion...¹⁴

The persecution they suffered drove Quakers to seek identity and community in lives of exemplary integrity and simplicity. A failure in any of these areas could mean expulsion from the Society. Quakers distrusted all "worldly amusement"; art, music, theatre and all recreational activity was regarded as "anathema".¹⁵ The Quakers shared these attitudes with most Puritans, but the relatively severe persecution of the Society meant that only the most dedicated and courageous men and women would persist in their affiliation. Quakers tended to live up to the ideals set by their faith, and to their popular image of hard-working, serious and unshakeably honest eccentrics. Persecution also affected the Society's internal relationships. Quakers developed a custom of self-help and co-operation to assist fellow Quakers who were being prosecuted. Quakers usually married within the Society and indeed marriage to an outsider could result in expulsion. This custom, plus their self-imposed isolation from wider society, made the Society a tightly-knit, inward-looking community. Throughout the eighteenth century the Society was primarily concerned with preserving its own identity and traditions. It had no

outward testimony apart from the example Quakers provided by their way of life. It is not surprising, considering the restrictive and isolationist character of the Society, that its membership declined rapidly both in absolute terms and relative to Britain as a whole. At its peak, around 1660, the Society of Friends membership was as great as 70,000 individuals. By the middle of the eighteenth century this figure had fallen to just over 20,000. From 1850 to 1914, the Society's membership fell very slowly.¹⁶

In keeping with this social involution and concentration on respectability, the religious style of the Society during the eighteenth century became quietist. The primary source of spiritual knowledge was through immediate revelation by the Inner Light. Reason and the Bible were devalued as sources of knowledge. Quietist theology placed considerable emphasis on the doctrine of original sin, believing man's sinful nature to be complete and inescapable within this world. Salvation, made possible by Christ's death, was available to everyone, but was only attainable by obedience to the dictates of the Inner Light. To clear the path for complete revelation, quietists eschewed any intellectual understandings of Christianity which might interfere with this communication.¹⁷ Both their beliefs in the absolute sinfulness of man and their belief in direct revelation gave eighteenth century Quakers a fatalistic and passive approach to society in general. No action in this world could lead to

greater revelation amongst mankind; nor could such activity lead to salvation. Thus, social, political and economic changes in the Quaker community brought about both anti-intellectualism and a new emphasis on sin - so absent from the early days of Fox and his contemporaries. Quakers had failed to bring about the New Jerusalem and saw this failure as a product of their inescapable sinfulness.

The persistence of a mentality of persecution and the passivity of a quietist faith affected the adherence of the Society to its peace testimony during the eighteenth century. The peace testimony's importance to the Quaker identity encouraged the Society to maintain a strict interpretation of this testimony. If a Quaker was called upon to serve in a militia, usually the individual accepted distraint upon his property or imprisonment as an alternative to service. In addition, it was considered improper for Quaker merchants and industrialists to trade or manufacture goods associated in any direct way with military activities. Enforcement of these rules, however, was often very lax. Offenders often were not brought to task for decades.¹⁸ This policy of maintaining a strict interpretation of the peace testimony while enforcing it weakly and/or sporadically continued into the first two decades of the nineteenth century.

Between 1820 and 1830, Quakerism underwent a significant change in theology. The Society of Friends was

influenced by the evangelical movement which began transforming British Christianity in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Although the Society's exclusiveness and inwardness slowed the incursion of evangelical doctrines, by 1830, the transition was complete and evangelicalism dominated Quaker thinking for the following fifty years.¹⁹ The shift to evangelicalism did not involve a complete break with the quietism of the previous century. Evangelicals and quietists shared a belief in the importance of the doctrine of original sin and in the exclusive source of salvation brought about by the Atonement. Similarly, many evangelicals accepted the existence of, and placed some value on, the doctrine of the Inner Light. The basic difference between the two approaches lay in the importance given the Bible as a source of revelation. The evangelicals considered the Bible of central importance and a "miraculously flawless document."²⁰ The quietists, on the other hand, considered the Bible to be of "subordinate and relative importance."²¹ At the 1829 Yearly Meeting, an epistle was produced establishing "the paramount authority of scripture."²² This statement marked a shift by the Society to evangelicalism and the rapid decline of the Inner Light as a source of revelation and as a basis of Quaker doctrine.

The decline in the importance of the Inner Light did not produce a corresponding decline in Quaker pacifism. Instead, Quaker pacifism underwent a significant

rejuvenation. A new pacifist inspiration based on a strict (if selective) reading of scripture was developed by evangelicals. J. Bradley Rhys, an Anglican clergyman, was typical of evangelical pacifists both within the Society of Friends and without. His work The Lawfulness of Defensive War upon Christian Principles Impartially considered by a Clergyman of the Church of England (pub. 1798), was a rational examination of the justifications for war and how they compared to the requirements of the Christian life set down in the Bible. He believed that the distinction made between murder and war was "a distinction without a difference."²³ This belief led Rhys to renounce capital punishment and war, as the "usurped power over human life that no mortal can assume."²⁴ As evangelicalism permeated the Society, the basis of Quaker pacifism became a biblical literalism. Works by Quakers like John Joseph Gurney's Essay on War and its Lawfulness under the Christian Dispensation (pub. 1833) and Jonathan Dymond's Essays on the Principles of Morality (pub. 1829) passed over the implications of the Inner Light in favour of citations from the Bible.²⁵

The most profound effect of evangelicalism on Quaker pacifism was not in the area of doctrine. Evangelicalism gave the Society an entirely new awareness of, and a concern for, the state of society outside of their own community by banishing the passive fatalism of the quietists.²⁶ The world became a battlefield where the enemy was the ignorance of

sin. Quaker mission work and philanthropy represented a sharp break with the character of the Society in the eighteenth century. Nineteenth century Quaker activism was a direct result of the adoption of evangelicalism.

Evangelicalism also exposed the Society to wider intellectual influences which eventually led to the dilution of Quaker doctrines.²⁷ This was particularly true of Quaker pacifism. There had always been a certain legalism and rationalism in the evangelical critique of war. Peter Brock noted that the arguments of evangelical pacifists were largely pragmatic, rational and humanitarian, in a way that was very similar to the secular, utilitarian critiques of war that had paralleled Christian pacifism during the eighteenth century.²⁸ The rational, humanitarian basis for pacifism saw man as fundamentally peaceful. Only the perverted state of social and economic relations stood in the way of the expression of his peaceful nature. Through the nineteenth century the humanitarian pacifist tradition was maintained primarily by the utilitarians. Beyond the 1840's, however, all British pacifists presented a variety of justifications for pacifism. The Quaker John Bright's reaction to the Crimean war is typical of Quakers views in the mid 1850's. He criticized the war using mostly humanitarian arguments. Historians disagree on whether or not Bright had a personal belief in pacifism.²⁹ Regardless of this uncertainty, Bright's decision to criticize the war on non-religious

grounds, despite his Quaker association, reveals just how intermingled the humanist and Christian pacifist traditions had become.*

In the long run the mixing of humanist, evangelical and Quaker traditions led to the decay of Quaker pacifism altogether and not just to the eclipse of its original inspiration. Both the evangelical and the humanist inspirations encouraged pacifism rather than pacifism. D. W. Bebbington in The Nonconformist Conscience claimed that by 1880 the Nonconformist churches had abandoned all but the pretext of pacifism.

It is certainly clear that Nonconformists did not feel bound to stand by the principle of the Peace Society or even the views of John Bright. They still believed themselves to be champions of peace and non-intervention, yet in practice they were prepared to sanction war and annexation.³⁰

Although Bebbington tends to see the Quakers as the exception to this trend, he may be giving the Society too much credit. Elizabeth Isichei suggested that although individual Quakers tended to support organized pacifism financially, this did not necessarily indicate a strong

*The veneration of Bright's pacifism by Whig historians such as G. M. Trevelyan obscured the lack of clear thinking that was characteristic of mid-nineteenth century pacifists. Trevelyan discusses Bright's views on peace and war "as limpid and as resistant as a block of crystal." This was anything but the case. (G. M. Trevelyan, Life of John Bright, p. 1).

personal commitment to pacifism. Apart from financial support for the Peace Society, Quakers played a small part in other Victorian peace organizations.³¹ According to Isichei, the peace movement in general was in decline as early as 1860 and the Crimean war must be seen as the "Indian summer of Victorian Pacifism."³² Bebbington claimed that the decline in pacifist enthusiasm did not begin until the 1870's. Regardless of who is correct, it was clear that by 1880 there had been a sharp decline in the energy of Victorian pacifism. Certainly the level and character of Quaker pacifism activity after 1870 did not compare in conviction and energy expended on their efforts for other causes: the temperance movement, the anti-opium trade campaign and educational innovation all seemed to generate more enthusiasm within the Society. Although the Society of Friends was undergoing a new beginning in the 1880's, concern for pacifism among Quakers did not increase markedly until the Boer War.

Between 1880 and 1895 the Society of Friends underwent their most significant theological change since the evangelical movement swept through the Society in the 1820's. Young Quaker intellectuals were influenced by a new liberal Christian theology. Through their efforts the Society of Friends abandoned in less than a decade the evangelicalism that had dominated Quaker thinking for fifty years. Two publications marked the beginning of a concerted campaign by the Quaker liberals. These seminal documents were: A

Reasonable Faith written by Frances Firth, William Pollard, and William Edward Turner and published in 1884, and The Gospel of Divine Faith written by Edward Worsdell and published in 1886. The authors of A Reasonable Faith took over the editing of The British Friend in 1891, making it the voice of Quaker liberal theology. Edward Grubb who would continue to figure prominently in the Society's publications through the First World War, also contributed to this movement with articles and reviews in various Quaker publications. The most venerated contributor to what has been termed by historians as the Quaker Renaissance was John Wilhelm Rowntree. Rowntree did not emerge as the dominant figure in the movement until 1893 and he died abruptly in 1905.³³

The Society converted rapidly to a liberal theology. No single event marked the shift from evangelicalism but two events testify to the extent of change over a single decade. In 1887 a conference open to all Quakers in Richmond, Indiana, U.S.A., adopted a declaration that amounted to an evangelical creed. The declaration, put forward by J. Bevan Braithwaite, head of the British delegation and the most weighty Friend of the older generation was readily endorsed by the conference and it was expected that the London Yearly Meeting would do likewise. Most surprisingly, a minority of liberal Friends prevented the adoption of the declaration.³⁴

By the Manchester Conference of 1895, convened to discuss the relation of Quakerism to modern thought, the Society had become dominated by liberals.

As with other Christians converted to a liberal theology, liberal Quakers were influenced by Darwin's theory of evolutionary change and the popularization of the conclusions of Biblical criticisms. The primary effect of these influences was the rejection of the Bible as a perfect and ultimate source of religious knowledge. The Bible was perceived as divinely inspired, more so than any other Christian document. Nevertheless, it differed from other religious texts only in degree and not in kind. Quaker liberals were able to cope with the de-sanctification of the Bible, particularly of the Old Testament, because they found a source of theological knowledge in individual experience. Liberal Quakers had resurrected the old Quaker belief in immediate revelation. At the Manchester Conference Silvanus Thompson, the eminent Quaker chemist, attested to a direct illumination of the individual soul.

To every man there comes a consciousness, not to be analyzed in the test-tube of the chemist,... a consciousness of something quite other than those things which are to be apprehended by the physical senses. Not to the intellect but to the soul of man does the voice of God speak.³⁵

Liberal Quakers easily identified this source of knowledge with the traditional Quaker doctrine of the Inner Light. Liberal Quakers also developed a highly qualified approach to the doctrine of original sin. Quaker liberals did not

completely reject the sinfulness of man. Indeed, it would have been difficult to do so and still be considered Christian. However, because they believed in the possibility of man's ethical evolution in this world, they saw original sin as unimportant.

This qualification of the doctrine of original sin profoundly affected the Quaker social conscience. Although evangelicalism had rekindled Quaker activism and unleashed a remarkable energy, the persistence of a strict interpretation of original sin restricted the character of Quaker social work. The evangelical approach to social work was primarily concerned with relieving the pain of this world and educating the ignorant to the salvation available in the next world. Evangelicals' a priori belief in the inescapability of this world's suffering prevented them from considering intensive domestic reform. Quaker liberals, as a consequence of their belief in the social implications of post-Darwinian evolutionary biology, did not consider social reform futile. The most important influence of later liberal interpretations of Darwin's theory for such Quakers was the fostering of a belief in progress. Nature was no longer perceived as static, but rather as experiencing constant and progressive change in which natural selection no longer operated. Thus, Quaker liberals, following the lead of contemporary Liberal theorists, went beyond strict Darwinianism and claimed that the struggle for survival had evolved into co-operation.

They also believed that all of this was just as true of man's ethical nature. Man's perfection had been, and could still be, advanced in this world.

The resurrection of the Inner Light and the rejection of inescapable human sinfulness had significant implications for other Quaker doctrines. It prompted a return to an optimistic view of human nature. Although liberal Quakers did not reject the depravity of man, because they saw each individual as enlightened by God, they emphasized the hope that the Inner Light held out to all people. They had "confidence in the spiritual capacities" of the individual.³⁶ Quaker liberals, because of their faith in every man's capacity for divine guidance, set a high standard for human conduct. Like the founding fathers of Quakerism, liberal Friends established Christ's life on earth as the supreme standard of conduct and sacrifice. This approach to Christ's purpose on earth and the atonement differed radically from the evangelical tradition of substitution. Liberal Quakers saw Christ's life and sacrifice as part of God's revelation to mankind.³⁷ Christ's life, they believed, was an example to man of how to live. The appropriate course for man was to emulate this example.

Both these changes in Quaker orthodoxy profoundly effected the Quaker peace testimony. The return to the Inner Light once again gave Quakers an independent pacifist inspiration. The fresh liberal view of the significance of

Christ's life on earth provided a direct ethical ideal. All of these consequences, however, would wait at least two decades for fulfillment. The most immediate effect of the Quaker Renaissance was the stimulation of a parallel development in the Quaker social conscience. Liberal Quakers became deeply interested in the social distress of the day.

As mentioned previously, the transformation of Quaker theology was not an isolated incident. Ideas such as those adopted by the Quaker liberals were commonplace among advanced liberal political thinkers in the 1880's who had been influenced by a combination of Hegelian idealism and Social Darwinism. Michael Freedon, in The New Liberalism, indicated a change amongst liberal thinkers in their approach to social reform.

For the new liberals, social reform ceased to be solely a question of removing hindrances, of adjusting social evils, ... , of occasional intervention to restore nature's balance.³⁸

Rather, social reform became a method of advancing the ethical status of the society; of encouraging the full ethical potential of mankind. This belief in itself did not significantly alter the character of social reform, although it certainly encouraged it. Peter Clarke, in Liberals and Social Democrats, identified its essential companion as a belief that the moral ideas of a society were embodied in its laws, institutions and social expectations. The ethical progress of mankind would be measured by the state of social

institutions.³⁹ Real changes in the laws, institutions and social expectations could be justified if they encouraged the ethical advance of the society.

The influence of these ideas on Quaker thought was revealed in the writings of John W. Graham, Edward Grubb and John Wilhelm Rowntree, who were the primary contributors to Quaker liberal thought at the turn of the century. Graham's Evolution and Empire published in 1912 but based on a series of papers presented in 1890, was linked to the ideas of the "new liberalism". Graham himself stated that his ideas were influenced by Herbert Spencer, John Fiske and D.G. Ritche.⁴⁰ Of these writers, Ritche was Graham's link with the new liberals' belief in co-operation. Graham adopted the assumption of Social Darwinism that society had evolved. Indeed he made this belief the basis of his rejection of war.

... it is not hard to show that the world has in reality outgrown all fitness for war, that the gain from its practice ... has become a loss at length unbearable⁴¹

The changes that Graham identified were largely ethical. He believed man had experienced a process of ethical evolution, which made him rise above martial appeals to a condition when man did not need such motivations. In this belief Graham reveals his debt to L. H. Hobhouse's concept of orthogenic evolution. He rejected strict Spencerism because he felt that man had evolved beyond the simple mechanics of natural selection.

...with regard to the whole life of man a little reflection will show that civilization and co-operation have, even since the dawn of morality, been steadily eliminating or putting into an even remoter background the blind forces of natural selection by death.⁴²

Graham's rejection of laissez-faire industrialism followed directly from his rejection of simple natural selection. Laissez-faire industrialism was not the last word in social organization. It was merely a "motto of a necessary stage in industrial growth".⁴³ Graham believed that the aim of government in his day should be to intervene "to exploit or utilize the state for the benefit of the individual".⁴⁴

The adoption of New Liberal ideas was not unique to Quakerism. New Liberal thinking influenced the whole of British Christianity. Peter d'A. Jones, in The Christian Socialist Revival, 1877 - 1914, noted a resurgence in Christian social activism that developed in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

To the average Victorian priest or parson "the poor" - and even the mass of the working classes - were little less foreign than the Andaman Islanders. This was the ultimate moral failure of Victorian religion and the problem faced by the new generation of Christian reformers that arose in the 1880's and 1890's.⁴⁵

Jones was particularly interested in the revival of a Christian socialism, but what he said is true of a broader and more moderate liberal resurgence as well. The revival Jones identified was manifested in every denomination by a small, radical organization accompanied by another which was larger and more moderate.⁴⁶ Christian social unionism, as

the more moderate section of the movement was called, drew on New Liberalism. Christian socialism, the more radical section, had different intellectual roots. Nevertheless, both types of Christian social radicalism were motivated by the new concerns within Christianity for constructive social work. Both movements also drew the most talented members of their denominations. The leading Baptist of the period, Rev. John Clifford, was a moderate Christian socialist.⁴⁷ Jones, claimed that the "liveliest Quakers, such as J. Theodore Harris," were also Christian socialists⁴⁸. These talented and enthusiastic individuals, acting as "radical nuclei (or "ginger groups")", gradually swung their denominations around to an acceptance of a more radical social gospel than had previously existed.⁴⁹ Jones, in speaking of the Anglican Christian Social Union, perceived the change they effected as significant;

Largely because of the great prestige and social and intellectual understanding of its members, general church opinion began to change. The Social Gospel of 1908, however vague and mild, was a far cry from the complacent individualism of the 1870's.⁵⁰

As a movement, Christian socialism began within the Anglican church which had been home to an intermittent school of Christian socialism since the Anglo-Catholic Oxford Movement of the 1830's. In the late 1870's the Anglo-Catholics again provided the impetus for a Christian socialist revival. Steward Headlam's Anglo-Catholic Guild of St. Matthew (est. 1877) was a direct descendant of earlier

high Anglican radicalism. Headlam's organization was the lone representative of Anglican radicalism for many years during which it attracted considerable attention and support among a young generation of talented, socially conscious clergyman. However, Headlam eventually found his efforts co-opted by a more moderate organization, The Christian Social Union. This organization drew support away from Headlam's group while directly benefiting from Headlam's ideas and initiative. The C.S.U. became the most influential organization within Christian social radicalism. Sixteen of the fifty-three episcopal appointments made between 1880 and 1913 went to members of this organization and the founders of the C.S.U. were responsible for the new interpretation of Anglican theology; Lux Mundi (c1887). At its peak the C.S.U. claimed a membership of six thousand people.⁵¹

The evolution of Quaker social radicalism paralleled that of the larger Anglican movement in many ways. As was the case with Anglican social radicalism, the first Quaker group to emerge was the most radical one. The Socialist Quaker Society, established in 1898, set out to convert Quakers to socialism. Shortly afterwards, a more moderate organization, The Friends Social Union, organized in 1904, supplanted the original group, and gained the support of a larger segment of the Society. The F.S.U. associated itself with reform along the lines of the New Liberalism and attracted several powerful and influential Friends. Among

them were B. Seebohm Rowntree, who became F.S.U.'s president; George Cadbury, owner of the Daily News, the largest liberal paper in England, and J.W. Graham and Edward Grubb, both significant contributors to Quaker liberal Christian thought. The F.S.U. also had more support from the Society's central organization. The S.Q.S. was banned from using Devonshire House by the Society's "Premises Committee" and had great difficulty getting their articles published in the Friend, the principal Quaker periodical. In contrast, as late as 1910, the Society's "Committee on Social Questions" published a pamphlet entitled The Stewardship of Wealth which endorsed the moderate policies of the F.S.U.⁵²

The F.S.U., like its Anglican namesake, was influenced by new liberal political thought. Social unionism emphasized ameliorative reform to redress injustices and imbalances in the existing system. Underpinning their whole programme was an emphasis on participating within the system in accordance with Christian ethics. Discriminatory purchasing, patronizing only those shops or firms with acceptable labour practices, was one tactic of social unionism. Reform of government legislation regarding working conditions was another. On the whole, however, social unionism was content to sponsor lectures and publications to educate the public to a proper understanding of society.⁵³ This approach was consistent with the ideas of the new liberal thinkers. Freedman outlines how these thinkers viewed

the role of the reformer.

The evolution of mind was a catalyst of social progress... The reformer, by arousing individual minds to an awareness of their social nature, by providing a rational concept of society, was eliciting the ethical potential from the members of society.⁵⁴

By contrast, the Quaker socialists were less concerned with ethical advance than with the incompatibility of industrialism with Christianity. "Christian shopping" was not enough. The S.Q.S. criticized the existing modes of production for emphasizing profit above usefulness and individual gain above social service. The S.Q.S. wanted to convince Quakers of their responsibility to society and for the existing injustices. They believed that the original faith of the Society had been corrupted by the rise in the economic status of many Quaker families. This wealth caused the Society to loose touch with its roots among craftsmen and artisans.

The socialism of the S.Q.S. between 1898 and 1912 was described by Jones as an "ethical Fabianism".⁵⁵ Several Quakers were among the original members of the Fabian Society and like this group saw socialism as developing out of capitalism via political change. Other natural "collectivist pressures" assisted this process. They criticized capitalistic industrialism for its "individualistic 'business' mode of production" which emphasized profit.⁵⁶ Industry should be organized instead to emphasize service to society. They confidently believed that change would come

through a "long and hastening evolution".⁵⁷

The S.Q.S. urged other Quakers to recognize and encourage this process in order to fend off social revolution on one hand and social stagnation on the other. Between 1908 and 1912 the S.Q.S. recovered from the F.S.U. the momentum of Quaker social reform. During this period their ideals did not change significantly. After 1912, however, the S.Q.S. turned towards Guild socialism and away from the state socialism of the Fabians. The Ploughshare, the S.Q.S.'s newly established periodical, rejected collectivist solutions because there was "no evidence that socialized industries would treat workers any better than large corporations...".⁵⁸ Socialism needed to be more than "mere State employment".⁵⁹ It required

an industrial movement of the workers themselves, to resist the downward pressure of capitalism upon their class, so as to gain complete emancipation from employment as mere wage-earners either by private capitalist or the State.⁶⁰

It is not surprising that Quaker socialists eventually endorsed a programme rejecting state-sponsored change. Despite the compromises of the nineteenth century, the Society of Friends retained an element of its sectarian identity forged in the persecutions of the late seventeenth century. In fact, social unionism, with its association with change through moderate social legislation, was incompatible with Quaker traditions. The decline of social unionism can be partly attributed to the effects of this conflict. The

incompatibility between social unionism and Quakerism would be heightened during the First World War as the Liberal government threatened to infringe upon individual freedom of consciences. Despite the differences between the F.S.U. and the S.Q.S., both organizations were products of the same Quaker Renaissance. Both groups origins resulted from the impulse towards real social change that was the derivative of liberal Christian theology.

While the Quaker Renaissance immediately effected Quaker social work, its effect on Quaker pacifism was slight in the two decades before the First World War. By contrast, the experiences of the Society of Friends during the Boer War revitalized a waning interest in pacifism. Although the government came under criticism for the army's incompetence and brutality in the war, the legitimacy or morality of Britain's involvement in South Africa was not questioned by the majority of Britons. Those who criticized the government from this perspective were a small and harassed minority. Among these few, the Quakers have been described as "the most constant and intrepid."⁶¹ It is true that no other church was as active in supporting the Pro-Boer position. The Baptists, while they were united against the war, had only one active and influential Pro-Boer; Dr. John Clifford. Both the Methodist and the Congregationalist Churches were divided on the issue but the majority of their members supported the government. The Anglican church supported the government

vigorously, although there were a few exceptions. Considering the rapprochement that had developed between Nonconformity and imperialism during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, it is hardly surprising that so few religious organizations opposed the war.⁶²

The Society of Friends had made this same gradual compromise and its response to the Boer War was initially just as divided and hesitant. Some Quakers openly supported the war. Peter Brock believed that these Quakers were "mainly wealthy members who gave their political allegiance to the unionist cause" (Most Quakers supported the Liberal Party).⁶³ But, as Brock himself indicated, support for the war among Quakers did not appear to be linked to pacifism. John Bellows, the world famous book binder was an example of a pacifist Quaker who supported the war. Bellows felt that ideals such as support for the government and the institution of imperialism were more important than his peace testimony. Although the war was deplorable, it was fought in defense of a worthwhile institution. The war was considered the lesser of two evils.⁶⁴ The actions of Bellows sparked a major controversy within the Society, revealing how the Quaker peace testimony had been compromised by the adoption of a utilitarian-like moral calculus. Quakers like Bellows believed that wars and violence could be justified by the ends that they might bring. The presence of this attitude within the Society prevented it from responding decisively to

the beginning of the Boer War. They made no definite statement of their feelings and simply published an appeal for peace which had first appeared during the Crimean War. During this period the commitment to pacifism of the Society of Friends was questioned by outside observers and rightly so.⁶⁵ Not until the Yearly Meeting of 1901 did the Society officially declare the war un-Christian and urged a peaceful settlement.⁶⁶

The Boer War reminded Quakers that they had a traditional peace testimony and the leaders of the new trends in Quaker thinking began to consider the importance of their pacifism. Richard Rempel in "British Quakers and the South African War" stated that the war "accelerated a movement to a new social liberalism and, in some cases, a growing connection with the Labour movement."⁶⁷ Rempel was correct on the enlivening effect of the Boer War, but it is important to view this impulse as more broadly felt. The Boer War encouraged Quakers of all philosophical positions to pay closer attention to their peace testimony. Some Quakers felt compelled to leave the Society because they could not live up to this ethic.⁶⁸ Quakers who remained became heavily involved in pacifist activities.

The years between the end of the Boer War and the beginning of World War I saw an unprecedented Quaker peacetime involvement in pacifism. Individual Quakers pursued a variety of objectives, reflecting the diversity of

pacifist inspirations co-existing within the Society. Peter Brock's description of the Society's pacifism in early 1914 differs significantly from the apathy which existed in 1898.

On the eve of World War I, British Friends stood almost united behind their peace testimony, although there might be differing views concerning its practical implementation.⁶⁹

Brock described the situation precisely. Quakers accepted the importance of the peace testimony, but there was considerable variation in the inspirations and practices espoused.

The Boer War profoundly affected the pacifism of the Society of Friends, but it also brought about the rejuvenation of the British peace movement in general. Between 1906 and 1914, British pacifists were more active than they had been in any of the three previous decades. Quakers shared this new enthusiasm but also many of the illusions that went with it. The pre-war peace movement resisted the rising tide of militarism that seemed to be engulfing Edwardian England. The National Service League was demanding compulsory military service. A seemingly endless variety of "Boy's Brigades" were indoctrinating the youth of Britain with a martial spirit and its values.⁷⁰ Britain developed a wild interest in anything military and a hypersensitivity towards the country's defensive weakness. The peace movement attempted to combat these trends with a vigorous public campaign to balance the publications of

groups like the N.S.L. They were confident that eventually the public would see reason. Thomas Kennedy in The Hound of Conscience points out that while the efforts of pacifists may have been considerable, their audience was limited.⁷¹ Moreover, they tended to underestimate the appeal of their opponents. The optimistic view of human nature held by most pacifists made them see their own popularity in too favourable a light.

Howard Weinroth in "Norman Angell and the Great Illusion" goes even farther than Kennedy. He believed that British pacifists convinced themselves that war was unlikely.⁷² Strong international economic ties would prevent war from breaking out. Something of this optimistic complacency was evident in an editorial in The Friend in February 1914.

The march of science and its innumerable, applications; the world wide sharing of literature; the emancipation of women; the renaissance of knowledge and its spread from west to east and east to west; the germinating thought of evolution; the common link of the European Labour Movement; the means of international communication; the essential and ever-tightening bond of trade interest - all these factors make for peace and exert a steadying influence in the world. What we need to do is use these bonds, strength them, develop them, make them closer and more vital, for thus men will be bound together...⁷³

The same editorial pointed towards growing support for disarmament. This support represented the "...slow but sure growth of a national peace sentiment...."⁷⁴ As the summer of 1914 revealed, Quaker pacifism was overly optimistic and

complacent. There was some justification for these feelings. In the spring and early summer of 1914, relations between Germany and Britain appeared more relaxed than they had been in many years. Yet, pacifists, Quaker or otherwise, could not take any credit for the situation. As Zara Steiner pointed out, the anti-militarist opposition had had very little impact on the actions of the Foreign office.⁷⁵ Quaker pacifists had an exaggerated perception of their own influence and unity. No precise pacifist inspiration had established itself. No common programme of peace work had been agreed upon. Britain's descent into war in August 1914, revealed to the Quakers just how confused and precarious their pacifism really was.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER ONE

¹Peter Brock, Pacifism in Europe to 1914 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 261.

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³Ibid.

⁴Stephen Alan Kent, "Quaker Mobilization and the Tithe Question in Interregnum England: A Social-Psychological Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, McMaster University, 1983), pp. 144-6.

⁵Brock, pp. 260-262.

⁶Geoffrey Fillingham Nuttall, The Puritan Spirit (London: Epworth Press, 1967), p. 82.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 101.

⁹Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 99.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 181.

¹³Brock, pp. 255-257.

¹⁴Arthur Raistrick, Quakers in Science and Industry (New York: Augustus M. Kelly Pub., 1968), p. 44.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁶Alan D. Gilbert Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740-1914 (London: Longmann, 1976), p. 40.

¹⁷Elizabeth Isichei, Victorian Quakers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 8.

¹⁸Brock, pp. 315-318.

¹⁹Isichei, p. 8.

²⁰Ibid., p. 6.

²¹Ibid., p. 18.

²²Ibid., p. 6.

²³Brock, p. 371.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., p. 339.

²⁶Isichei, p. 13.

²⁷Ibid., p. 12.

²⁸Brock, pp. 339-341.

²⁹Brock, p. 351.

³⁰D. W. Bebbington, The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), p. 109.

³¹Isichei, p. 226.

³²Ibid., p. 224.

³³Ibid., pp. 32-41.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 9-10.

³⁵Ibid., p. 35.

³⁶Ibid., p. 26.

³⁷Ibid., p. 37.

³⁸Michael Freedon, The New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 92.

³⁹Peter Clarke, Liberals and Social Democrats (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 14.

⁴⁰John W. Graham, Evolution and Empire (London: Headley Bros., 1912), p. 5.

⁴¹Graham, p. 90.

⁴²Ibid., p. 11.

⁴³Ibid., p. 150.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Peter d'A. Jones, The Christian Socialist Revival, 1877-1914: Religion, Class and Social Conscience in late Victorian England (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 79.

⁴⁶Jones, p. 164.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 5-6.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 224.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 164-7.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 378-9.

⁵³Ibid., p. 181.

⁵⁴Freedden, p. 91.

⁵⁵Jones, p. 443.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 380.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 388.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Richard A. Rempel, "British Quakers in the South African War", Quaker History 64 (Aut' 75):75.

⁶²Stephen Koss, "Wesleyanism and Empire", Historical Journal, 18(75):105-118.

⁶³Brock, p. 354.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 359.

⁶⁵Rempel, pp. 77-87.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 87-91.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 78.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 93.

⁶⁹Brock, p. 361.

⁷⁰Thomas C. Kennedy, The Hound of Conscience: A History of the No-conscription Fellowship, 1914-1919 (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1981), pp. 1-22.

⁷¹Ibid. p. 19.

⁷²Howard Weinroth, "Norman Angell and the Great Illusion: An Episode in Pre-1914 Pacifism", Historical Journal 17(3): 574.

⁷³Friend, 20 February 1914, pp. 103-015.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Zara S. Steiner, Britain and the Origins of the First World War (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 153-4.

CHAPTER TWO: CRISIS OF IDENTITY, AUGUST 1914 - MAY 1915

... acting contrary to present outward interest, from a motive of Divine love and in regard to truth and righteousness, and thereby incurring the resentments of people, opens the way to a treasure better than silver, and a friendship exceeding the friendship of men.¹

John Woolman, c1753

The pacifism of the Society of Friends during the First World War has never been questioned. Although it has been recognized that not all Quakers were pacifists, historians have generally assumed that most Quakers were pacifists because their traditional beliefs endorsed this position. This assumption is essentially correct, but the story of Quaker pacifism is scarcely as simple as this might suggest. Virtually all British religious organizations had pacifist traditions. Nevertheless, the majority of churches endorsed the war in 1914.* With the exception of the Society of Friends, these churches which did not were small, modern sectarian churches such as the Jehovah's Witnesses' and the Christadelphians. Their rejection of the war was automatic

*The designation "church" is used in its broadest sense throughout this thesis to avoid the conflict between sociological and theological definitions of cult, sect, denomination and church. Virtually all religious organizations in Britain considered themselves "churches" which in itself justifies the usage employed here. See Bryan R. Wilson, Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment for a discussion of this issue.

in a way which most people have attributed to the Society of Friends. In fact, the Quakers had less in common with these groups than they did with the Nonconformist churches which supported the war. The similarities between Quakerism and the other Nonconformist churches begs the question: why were the Quakers opposed to the war in 1914? As this chapter reveals, Quakers did not unanimously oppose the war and the Society did not confirm its commitment to pacifism until the Yearly Meeting in May 1915, more than ten months into the war.

The difficulty of British pacifists in 1914 was that Britain's entry into the war seemed overwhelmingly just. German aggression and the allegations of atrocities in Belgium placed Britain in the role of protector of morality and civilization in the eyes of most other citizens. Nonconformity quickly responded to this perception. Stephen Koss in Nonconformity and British Politics, stated that overnight Nonconformist critics of government armament and foreign policies came to view British intervention on the Continent as both morally justifiable and strategically imperative.

As if to atone for their earlier pacifism and to compensate for centuries of outsideness, leading Free Churchmen made a comparable volte-face. Apostles of peace, they were transformed into holy warriors ...²

The shift was not as complete or unconditional as this quotation indicates. Nonconformity, in fact, split into a

large majority in each church who supported the war and a small minority who did not. The majority believed that Nonconformists should support the war because they were Christians. Sir William Robertson Nicoll, publisher of the major Nonconformist periodical, the British Weekly, upheld this view while speaking as chairman of the November 1914 conference of the National Council of Free Churches.

It is Christ who has taught us to fight for liberty, righteousness and Peace. It is He who has taught us to care for small nations and to protect the rights of the weak, over whom He has flung his shield. The devil would have counseled neutrality, but Christ has put His Sword into our hands.³

This decision was not surprising. D. W. Bebbington argued that Nonconformist attitudes on foreign affairs since 1880 made their support of the war in 1914 natural.

The great change in view was not an entire about turn, for Nonconformists as a whole had never been committed to the great radical rallying cry of nonintervention. ... In the midst of a heady crusade old convictions could be cast aside when they conflicted with an apparent moral imperative.⁴

Gladstonian moral politics had gradually eroded the Cobdenite principle of non-intervention venerated by Nonconformists in the 1860's. The Society of Friends had made the same compromises in the 1880's and 1890's as the rest of Nonconformity. During the Boer War, however, Quakers reversed this trend and developed a stronger commitment to pacifism. This was less true of other Nonconformists, but the difference was largely one of degree of commitment and not inspiration. The basic similarity between the attitudes of

many Quakers and those of other Nonconformists was still evident in 1914. The Quaker J. A. Pease, for example, although chairman of the Peace Society, did not find it necessary to leave his Cabinet post upon Britain's declaration of war in 1914, and in fact went on to work in the War Ministry.⁵ George Cadbury, the prominent Quaker publisher of the Daily News and a strong Pro-Boer who had actively supported the pre-war anti-armaments campaign, quickly resigned himself to the war.

Now that we have entered into war it is as impossible to stop it as to stop a raging torrent. The anger of the people naturally has been roused, and we must secure restitution to Belgium for the injuries inflicted.⁶

Similar views appeared in The Friend during the fall of 1914. F. W. Pim saw the war as a "world-wide contest between antagonistic and irreconcilable philosophies" between which there was no possible compromise.⁷ Pim believed that Friends had to decide between the supremacy of one philosophy or the other; in short, they had to determine whether to fight or not to fight. Clearly some Quakers were close to following the path of the rest of Nonconformity in the fall of 1914.

Christian social radicals also failed to support their Quaker colleagues. Peter Jones stated that the outbreak of war in 1914 was the final blow for both the C.S.U. and the C.S.L. Both organizations participated in the antimilitarist campaigns before the war, but, like most Britons, pacifist and nonpacifist alike, they were surprised by the events of

early August 1914. The C.S.U. almost immediately recognized the war as a necessary evil.⁸ This response was typical of non-Anglican moderate Christian radicals as well. John Clifford, the leading Baptist socialist, and by 1914 the real leader of Nonconformity generally, "regretted unspeakably" Britain's decision to go to war, but he conceded that the country was "forced into it."⁹ The membership of the C.S.L., the more radical Anglican organization, divided over support for the war.¹⁰ Although the C.S.L. did not simply fade away as did the C.S.U., the final effect of the division was the same. Some members of both these organizations became pacifists but a larger group supported the war. As active organizations, both the C.S.U. and the C.S.L. played minor roles during the war.

Individual Christian socialists did oppose the war. Some of those who were frustrated with the position of their churches and organizations such as the C.S.U. and the C.S.L. banded together to form the Fellowship of Reconciliation (F.O.R.). The F.O.R. encompassed Quakers, Congregationalists, Baptists, and, indeed, many Anglicans. Henry T. Hodgkin, the most influential Quaker of his day, was a founding member of the F.O.R. Although complete agreement amongst the membership was rare, the F.O.R. was the source of the first and most comprehensive Christian socialist critique of the war. Apart from co-operating with other opposition organizations the primary activity of the F.O.R. was the

development and dissemination of this critique. Of the various organizations which opposed the war, it was the only exclusive vehicle for Christian pacifism and gave Quakers like Hodgkin an outlet for their activism which the Society could not provide. Their involvement in the F.O.R., however, did have a reciprocal effect, and it has been argued that Friends in the F.O.R. provided the bridge which brought a radical Christian socialist critique of war into the Society of Friends by 1916.¹¹

The majority of the Society of Friends opposed the war in the fall of 1914 because of the persistence of two traditions within the Society itself: pacifism and Dissent. Of these two traditions the continuity of the peace testimony was the most important. Without an explicit doctrine of non-violence dating back to the seventeenth century origins of the Society, the Quakers would not have resisted the war. There was no time and even less inclination to develop such a testimony in the fall of 1914. As important as the mere existence of the Quaker peace testimony was the rejuvenation that this testimony had undergone during the Boer War. In the years before 1914 Quakers were more attached to their peace testimony than they had been in the previous three or four decades. The strength of the stand made by the Society at the turn of the century had been the first step in complete identification of Quakerism with pacifism both in the minds of Britons at large and more importantly within the

minds of Quakers themselves. Through the efforts of the Quaker liberals the Society of Friends developed a greater knowledge of their early history, and through this greater sense of a distinct Quaker identity. Part of that identity was the tradition of pacifism. In August and September of 1914, when the Society considered supporting the war, Quakers knew that this would mean abandoning a two hundred fifty year old tradition.

Another facet of the Quaker identity came from its roots as a Dissenting Church. As Alan D. Gilbert indicated in Religion and Society in Industrial England, the Society of Friends, more than any other church within Nonconformity, maintained the tradition of the radical puritanism of the late seventeenth century. He placed the Society in the category of "Old Dissent" along with the English Presbyterians/Unitarians and the Old Connection General Baptists. These churches did not undergo the change that the other historic Dissenting churches, such as the Congregationalists, the New Connection General Baptists and the Particular Baptists, experienced at the hands of evangelicalism.

... [Old Dissent] was a residual category for those elements of seventeenth and early eighteenth century dissenting traditions which were not caught up in the evangelical Revival. In its characteristic values and orientations to the wider society it was continuous with the older traditions....It tended to remain exclusive and elitest while the new dissenting movements became, like Methodism, inclusive and conventionalist.¹²

Quakers were definitely influenced by the evangelicalism, but in a different way from Methodists, Baptists and Congregationalists: the Society never completely abandoned its traditional testimonies nor was the character of its membership transformed in the way it was for the Congregationalist and Baptist churches. Moreover, the remnants of the seventeenth century present in the Society received new attention with the re-examination of early Quaker history by amateur Quaker historians. The continuance of an Old Dissenting identity had a pivotal effect on the crisis faced by the Society of Friends in 1914. The Old Dissent, because of an unbroken link with its origins in persecution and rebellion, possessed greater tendency towards sectarianism than the rest of Nonconformity. Methodism and New Dissent sought to mold but also to be identified with the British nation. This part of Nonconformity believed that it represented the true British personality, and was correspondingly less able to cope with social ostracism. In contrast, there was still present in Old Dissent a greater sense of being a separate religious community and a correspondingly greater ability to adopt a socially unpopular position. In August and September of 1914, the Society of Friends was better equipped to face the social isolation of pacifism because of the persistence of its Dissenting traditions.

The importance of a residual Dissenting mentality within

Quakerism should not be over-emphasized. During the first months of the war, the Society of Friends was torn between a desire to support the war, because they were British, and because of their close ties with the rest of Nonconformity, and a desire to guide their actions by their conviction that all war was morally wrong. The persistence of a mentality of Dissent simply tipped the scales in favour of pacifism at a time when the Society was under considerable stress.

The extent of the crisis of identity was revealed in the editorials, letters and articles published in the Friend between August and November of 1914. In the two months before the outbreak of war, peace issues were not frequently discussed in the Friend. After August 1st, the Friend was filled with little else. The first Quaker reaction to the outbreak of war was to give it a religious significance. The Society's public letter to the country used plainly apocalyptic symbolism when it cried "Christ is crucified afresh today."¹³ Edward Neave, writing to The Friend three weeks later, gave to the war much the same meaning.

This is a time of harvest: we are reaping the fruits of the earth according to the good seed sown by husbandman and blessed by our bountiful Heavenly Father. Elsewhere a harvest is being gathered of death, desolation, destruction, poverty, misery: the seed of that harvest was sown in the hearts of men by the devil, who puts evil for good and good for evil, who is marshalling his forces to try and deceive the very elect.¹⁴

That the war should be seen in this way in the columns of a religious periodical is hardly surprising. It is

important, however, that the tone of vindication revealed in Neave's letter carried over into the other Quaker critiques of the war. The war triggered amongst Quakers an unusual desire to be morally patronizing. The war simply proved everything they had ever said about contemporary society. In an August 7th editorial in The Friend, the war was portrayed as the inevitable product of the arms race between Britain and Germany;

Is it not rather that years of suspicion and jealousy have produced a state of nervous apprehension, such that the very slightest occasion will bring about a great war? Men have gone on repeating and believing in the foolish old heathen maxim "If you want peace, prepare for war." They have prepared for war, and war has come.¹⁵

The war was also depicted by the Friend as the product of the diplomatic system that entangled Britain in obligations without the consent of Parliament, much less the people. This system was clearly "out of relation to the needs of the people."¹⁶ It involved the country in a "responsibility of which we cannot not escape."¹⁷ Another cause of the war identified by the Friend was the presence of "vast military machines" and the "insolent and growing dominance of the military caste".¹⁸ R.J. Long, Chairman of the activist Northern Friends Peace Board was certain about the sources of this threat.

[Let] it be granted that Prussian militarism is a menace to the liberties of Europe, and that it has already enslaved the German people forcing them through the ruthless machine of the conscript army, working against the liberty of the press, breeding arrogance and the ascendancy of a certain caste.¹⁹

Yet another critique claimed the war was the product of the economics of imperialism. William E. Wilson, clearly influenced by the ideas of J.A. Hobson, viewed the war as retribution for the common sins of the European imperial system; a "greed for gain which leads to under-payment at home and abroad."²⁰

To obtain concessions in semi-civilized countries the financial magnates of the various European powers vie with one another. They back up their demands with the power of their State, and that power is represented in Dreadnoughts and armies... This system, by which financiers feather their own nests, has been the root cause of the inflated armaments of Europe, and these in turn have led to suspicion, jealousy, and hatred, which have made it possible that the whole of Europe should be engaged in war.²¹

Wilson wrote virtually the same words in Christ and War published in early 1914.²² It is clear from these few examples that, during the first three months, Quaker views on the causes of war were not greatly influenced by the course of the war itself. The war was perceived as confirmation of their pre-war critiques of society.

The first months of the war did not to solve the confusion surrounding Quaker pacifism. An early September editorial in the Friend presented four justifications for Quaker pacifism. The first was a Christian belief that war was a negation of Christ's teachings. The second asserted that war was ultimately inconclusive because the use of force breeds force and therefore could never hope to provide a complete remedy. The third justification claimed that the

sacrifices and energy devoted to war could be better used in other ways. Lastly, the editors rejected the current war because, they believed, the people of the nations involved opposed it.²³ There was a certain naivete and blindness to events evident in this last justification. As this editorial was written, the wave of volunteers in all the combatant countries repudiated this shallow hope.

Another feature of this article was the editors' failure to connect Quaker pacifism to the Society's belief in the Inner Light. The editorial identified this belief as the foundation of Quaker pacifism, but no attempt was made to demonstrate how this basic doctrine lead to a rejection of war. Nor was it revealed whether any of the justifications for pacifism presented could be linked to the belief in the Inner Light. Not only was this editorial unclear about the inspiration for Quaker pacifism, but the editors did not even appear to be committed fully to a pacifist stance. The publication listed the three tasks the war required of Quakers. First, the Quakers "must bear witness to the peaceful spirit." Secondly, the Society had to "render our full measure of national service." And finally, the Society was to "set about the business of Reconstruction."²⁴ These responsibilities were both vague and contradictory. There was an obvious conflict between bearing witness to peace and rendering a full measure of national service to a country at war. The Friend recognized this dilemma and in advising

Friends on how to deal with it made a surprising suggestion of priorities.

It is perfectly clear that our peace testimony cannot at the present time take its usual orthodox form of protesting against all war,²⁵. Though we are Quakers we are also Englishmen...

The Friend was expressing an opinion similar to that held by many pre-war pacifists in the fall of 1914. Peace activism in peacetime was one thing, but now that the war had arrived, Quakers were told to accept reality and modify their position.

The Friend was not alone in believing that some sort of compromise would have to be made. Lucy Fryer Morland, in a letter which appeared in the same issue of The Friend, urged Quakers not to fight or recruit.

It seems to me that only those who have taken the Quaker position as to war can rightly hold aloof from the present demands of the War Office. But I believe that we Friends must keep clear of any share in the work of recruiting if we are to be of assistance as we should in the work of peace making.²⁶

Morland implies that, while Quakers should not fight, others had no alternative. This was a common attitude among Friends in the fall of 1914. They recognized the validity of the war but not a Quaker obligation to fight. Quakers were to bear witness to peace by example and contribute to national service in other ways. In doing so they tacitly condoned the war. Henry M. Wallis, in a letter to the Friend in September, identified an inconsistency in the views expressed

by many Friends at that time. While they spoke of a desire for peace, Quakers also revealed a desire for military success. Surprisingly Wallis' own wish was for "Lord Kitchener's appeal to be well responded to."²⁷ Wallis's views are typical of a more extreme position that openly supported the war. These Friends believed that Germany constituted a threat to national security and without a military response she would have overrun France and Britain: "...where as a nation would we be if everyone held the same opinion as our Society with regard to the taking of arms in defence of our country [?]."²⁸ Indeed, one Quaker thought that a lack of military preparedness had contributed to the outbreak of war in the first place: "Will any one of us assert that if England had had a million, or even half a million armed and drilled men last July war would have broken out?"²⁹ The time for negotiation and petitions had passed. The only course left was to end the war as quickly as possible. The letter of J. Wilmer Green, a Friend of enlistment age, is typical of this position.

The all apparent justice of our cause and the fact that there is no other method of solution, make it imperative therefore that we see the successful termination of this war.

Under these exceptional circumstances the question must be asked, Do we young Friends help to attain this end by remaining non-combatants? I say decidedly that we do not or we should be assisting wrong to triumph over right. ... now that we are in it, let us help to bring it to a speedy conclusion in the only honourable way left us. "He that loveth his life shall lose it."³⁰

Opinions like Green's continued to be expressed by a few Friends until the Yearly meeting of 1915.³¹ The surprising characteristic of all of these letters was that their authors refused to consider support for the war, enlistment, or even participating in armed conflict, a compromise of their Quakerism. Most of these Friends, along with Juliet M. Godlee, saw war as a necessary evil.

Wrong and hideous as war is, there must be many members of the Society who do not hold that "Peace at any Price" is a more "vital" doctrine than that of the "Inward Light"; who think that once in a thousand years (perhaps oftener) the price may be too high and that such a case has arisen now.³²

The opinions of Friends who condoned compromise, both the moderates and the extremists, testify to the precariousness of Quaker pacifism in the first months of the war. However, there was an equally vocal body of Quaker opinion that rejected compromise and urged the Society to maintain its loyalty to a higher authority: namely the teachings and spirit of Jesus Christ. A letter criticizing those who would support the war appeared in the Friend in late August.

As individuals we have to answer to Him alone, our very lives are His, and it is not for us to say whether we shall take sides with this or that nation who are at war, which is absolutely wrong and contrary to His will. If other people have not been trained to look at the question from our point of view, [then]..., we must not be influenced by their lower voices, we must not bear arms.³³

Despite the importance given the war by the vast majority of Britons, the correspondent urged Friends to resist the desire

to conform. This was the courage of a residual sectarianism. This Quaker was more than willing to distinguish and isolate himself from the rest of society.

Another of the Friend's correspondents, Edith J. Wilson, was even more critical of the Society in her letter published on September sixteenth. Wilson repudiated the compromise of Quaker tradition and the Society's willingness to acquiesce to public opinion.

We have urged no faithfulness to the old Quaker testimony. We have attempted no examination of the logic of the Non-combatant's present position. We have not sympathized with the terrible stress that many are undergoing. We have assumed that Friends in general would not enlist, and have promised the nation that though we cannot go to the front, we will help with the cleaner work at home and exercise a good moral influence when the time comes to settle up.³⁴

The criticisms of these two correspondents and others in early September of 1914 affected the editors of the Friend. In the same issue in which Wilson's letter was published, the Friend reversed its earlier position.

The Society has its own religious duty to perform, and at this time and on this issue its testimony is the message of peace. All war, we say, is incompatible with Christ's gospel. That is the candle we must keep alight in England.³⁵

The Friend realized that to be true to the Quaker faith it was essential to be a pacifist. The Friend, like its critics, exploited the imagery of sectarianism. Quakers would be the few against the many, the possessors of truth in the midst of darkness. In attempting to resist those Friends who favoured compromise, and to encourage those Friends who

were uncertain, Quaker pacifists fell back upon the remnants of the Society's Dissenting origins. These origins were a powerful check to the nationalism exploited by those in favour of compromise. In the contest between two identities, Quaker or Briton, the sectarianism inherent in the Quaker identity gave the Quakers the ability to cope with the social isolation that a pacifist stance entailed.

At the same time, the Friend's editors realized that sectarianism could be taken too far. The Society had to resist the tendency towards compromise, but equally, it could not turn in upon itself and ignore the war. In the same September sixteenth issue, the editors argued for a constructive pacifism.

... we feel strongly that ... there is a need for such a testimony at the present time; but it must be more positive and more directly concerned than in time of peace with the immediate problems before us. To our usual peace testimony, as we have said, we must now add our contribution to national service and definite work for reconstruction.³⁶

The Friend was not over-reacting in its fear of a descent into sectarian isolation. In the 1870's the Society's pacifism had become almost inert, and there was still a section of the Society which would have been quite willing to be left alone and not to be involved.

In an effort to encourage a middle course between passive isolationism and compromise in October 1914, the Friend's editors commissioned two articles, one by Rufus M. Jones and the other by Edward Grubb. Rufus M. Jones was the

most respected Quaker intellectual of his day. Although an American, Jones perspective on the Quaker faith transcended the differences between the American and British Societies. His writings on the Society's origins and its mysticism are still considered a significant interpretation of the early history of the Society. More than any other Quaker, he inherited the brief, brilliant mantle of John Wilhelm Rowntree. In 1914, Jones was the accepted source of the historical perspective on Quaker traditions.

Jones began his article by dissociating the Quaker testimony from any pragmatic attitude towards war. The Quaker testimony was not concerned with whether war did or did not "pay". He insisted that Christianity and war were "utterly incompatible" because the practice of violence stood in the way of the complete fulfillment of the Christian soul. Man's purpose was essentially spiritual. To become a complete person he had to awake to a consciousness of the divine; to man's filial relationship with God. Ultimately man was to "enter into the actual inheritance of this divine human privilege, and to live it and practice it."³⁷ War obstructed this process.

Men cannot come to their spiritual stature, they cannot realize their potential nature, in a social atmosphere of hate and anger, when they are occupied with killing men like themselves. In that inward climate, the higher impulses and diviner contracts are weakened or missed altogether and the truer ideal of manhood is frustrated and defeated.³⁸

Jones implied that changes in the quality of the material

existence could be made to encourage the spiritual advance of mankind. However, Jones still emphasized the need for the individual to lead a moral life; a life that would "abolish the spirit that leads to war."³⁹ Part of his programme for change was for Quakers to lead by example.

He must exhibit, hard as is the call, a life that puts his Ideas of God and man, of divine and human interfellowship, of Love and selfgiving, full into play. He must weave his Idea into the visible stuff of daily life.⁴⁰

This example was not to be one of "cloistered piety." Quaker's should take a "thoroughly virile and robust part" in the task of improving the national spirit and encouraging a "healthier social atmosphere."⁴¹ These goals could be accomplished by cultivating the sympathy among classes, improving public education, raising the moral tone of the press and through participation in local government. Jones encouraged Quakers to take an active, if moderate, part in creating the "peacable kingdom".

The second article was written by a Quaker whose influence was greatest amongst a younger section of the Society. Edward Grubb, a liberal Quaker associated with the F.S.U., played an instrumental role in the transformation of the Society in the 1890's. He edited the British Friend until its demise in 1913, providing a forum for liberal and even socialist Quakers writing at a time when the Friend had been narrowly conservative. He had taught at several Quaker schools and through this exposure influenced a large portion

of the younger generation of Friends. During the war, he was primarily involved in the activities of the No-conscription Fellowship, an organization established to resist government legislation of compulsory military service. Despite these other activities, Grubb remained a regular contributor to the Friend throughout the war.

In his article, Grubb presented a similar argument to Jones. He began by returning to the issue that had emerged in September and asserted that a distinction must be made between the duty of the nation and that of the Society of Friends. Friends could not hope that the nation will at once swing around to a policy of non-resistance considering its history of imperial force and self-interested diplomacy. Such a change was especially unlikely while "the motives and dominating spirit of its people" remain unchanged.⁴² Grubb clearly considered this belligerent attitude as characteristic of English society at large. The Society of Friends had to resist this spirit.

Our duty as a Society is, I submit, not to surrender to the average politician, but to try to show that there is a higher way, and that it is not Utopian to strive to follow it.⁴³

Quakers had to provide an example for the rest of the nation. He was also concerned that the Society not lose faith in the methods of non-violent persuasion. The outbreak of the war in August did not mean that Quaker pacifism had been repudiated. On the contrary, it simply meant that Quakers

had failed to proclaim their peace testimony effectively. They had to learn that pacifism was a testimony that must be worked at.

Our faith as Friends is that there is in every human heart -- and therefore in every nation -- something of the Divine, something that will respond to love, to the manifestation of goodwill, to the trust that man reposes in man. This faith must carry with it the confidence that if we had practised it towards Germany we should not have needed to enter into a network of foreign alliances, to fear the growth of her fleet...⁴⁴

Jones and Grubb presented the option of an active pacifism as a compromise between those who felt compelled to do some constructive work and those who were afraid any action would compromise the peace testimony. Jones and Grubb managed to establish pacifism as the most correct course but they failed to deal with the position taken by Henry Bryan Binns, editor of the Present Day Papers. Binns asked the Society to let pacifism be a matter of individual conscience.

I do not think we ought to regard the injunction as a universal one. It applies to people who dedicate themselves to a specific function. As they enter into and realize it, they find themselves, at a certain stage, restrained from anything like military service; but they do not thereby acquire any right to hinder others from performing it.⁴⁵

Binns himself believed that a strict policy of non-resistance was the natural outcome of a belief in the primacy of the peace testimony. He recognized, however, that there might be other paths to follow in Quakerism. Binns did not consider the peace testimony the only or even an essential element of the Quaker faith. Belief in the liberty of the individual

conscience could supersede it. Deborah Scott Moncrieff, in a letter to the editor of the Friend on March 12, 1915, spoke for a section of the Society which objected to the call for a strict pacifist position on this basis.

We others know that we, too, have consciences; and, for us also, the society is our home. We do not think it is right that it should become the Peace Society. And especially just now. The Peace Ideal is growing on all hands and in most varied soils... All the less, to my mind, does it behove us, at the moment, to re-engrave the ultra form of it as an inexorable tenet of the Society.⁴⁶

Moncrieff believed that while the peace testimony was a common element of Quakerism, it was not a creed which was narrowly defined and obligatory. It was more important that each person have the right to choose his own course.

The fundamental problem with the solution suggested by Binns and Moncrieff was that it provided no guide to the Quaker conscience. By leaving the issue completely to the discretion of the individual, they were denying the existence of the Society itself. Without some commonly held beliefs, if only a very general set of ethics, the Society would degenerate into a widely diverse collection of religious opinions. Such a possible collapse was the concern of those Friends who argued that the peace testimony should be made a strict standard for Quakerism. Friends, like Caroline Armfield, believed that pacifism was the "litmus" test of Quakerism. Without this testimony there would be no Quakerism as such.⁴⁷ Moreover, Armfield felt that the

practice of pacifism distinguished the Society from other churches which merely espoused it. Joseph E. Southall shared this position;

Now one can understand that there are those who yet cling to the belief that wrongs can be put right by force of arms but the incomprehensible thing is that they should wish to be members of the one and only religious body that emphatically denies this teaching.⁴⁸

Southall remained one of the most vocal and uncompromising Quaker pacifists. Despite his integrity on this issue, Southall's emphasis of pacifism was not supported by reasoned argument and thus failed to provide an effective argument for a strict adherence to the peace testimony. Ernest E. Unwin provided this foundation by insisting that the peace testimony was an inescapable Quaker practice because it was so closely tied to the heart of Quaker doctrine; the Inner Light.

... war is the absolute denial of our belief in the Inner Light in every man (yes, in every German): of our belief in the absolute value of the individual in the sight of God; of our faith in the power of the Spirit as we see it revealed in the life and death of Christ.⁴⁹

Since the Manchester Conference of 1895, the Inner Light once again became the primary source of Quaker revelation and the life and death of Christ the supreme example for man's actions in his world. Unwin was the first Quaker during the war to clearly link the Society's pacifism to the fundamentals of Quaker liberal theology. By connecting Quaker pacifism to doctrines and traditions considered

essential to Quakerism, pacifist Friends were able to maintain the Society's commitment to its peace testimony.

By March of 1915, the question of the Society's commitment to an active pacifism was almost resolved. However, it was not until the Yearly Meeting that this position was completely confirmed. As mentioned previously, there were still a few objectors who found it difficult to concede defeat. A session of the May Yearly Meeting was assigned to this topic in an effort to establish firmly the Society's response to the war. The opening address was made by William Littleboy. Littleboy's influence within the Society was considerable, but it is difficult to show why this was the case. He supported, but appeared not to be prominent in, a variety of Quaker organizations. He was only an occasional speaker at Yearly Meetings and he was not a frequent correspondent of the Friend. The evidence of his power lies in the fact that on issues of importance his views were rarely contested. Littleboy would speak to an issue and that would settle the controversy. It seems that he was the quintessential "weighty" Friend - one whose views were of pre-eminent influence simply because of the tremendous respect in which he was held. Certainly his opening address on the peace testimony settled this particular issue. Those Friends who still objected would be tolerated but would have no influence.

Littleboy began by dealing with the relationship between the Society's belief in liberty of conscience and the peace testimony.

It was claimed that a man might act on his own individual impulse and that his action was beyond criticism if he pleaded that he was, as he believed, following an inward illumination. This is no new claim; it had been repeatedly claimed in Christian history, and its results were always disastrous... If we admitted our own liability to error, obviously we needed an objective standard by which we might "try the spirit whether it be of God". And that we found in the life and teaching of Christ and the experience of His Church.⁵⁰

It was the responsibility of each individual to measure his actions against Christ's example, and Christ was a pacifist. Littleboy also addressed the issue of the relationship of the peace testimony to the Inner Light. He believed that the testimony was a direct and inevitable outgrowth of the Inner Light. The session confirmed this position and declared that "within a generation of its foundation the Society had been forced by an inexorable logic into the testimony which it had ever since maintained".⁵¹ The minutes of the session also stated that it was the maintenance of these testimonies that distinguished Quakerism from other Christian churches. While other churches believed in, or recognized the validity of the Inner Light, the Society of Friends practised its implications.

On the issue of the activism of Quaker pacifists, Littleboy again based his position on the belief in Christ's life as the example for man's worldly actions. He indicated

that the weakness in the purely negative testimony was its failure to encourage the "life and power which takes away the occasion for all wars".⁵² He also insisted that the Society was not so much against war as for peace. Non-resistance merely suggested ignoble acquiescence;

But that was neither the teaching nor the method of Christ; to die for one's foes was not the act of a neutral. In the undertaking of "destroying the works of the devil" Christ laid stress on the active principle of love: "Do good to those who hate" " smother their hatred under the closely-clinging covering of an ever-hopeful, preserving Love." ..."the whole strength of the position of the Society of Friends lies in its conviction that it offers the one and only really effective resistance to aggression... by meeting it with love and gentleness."⁵³

In confirming the pacifism of the Society Littleboy based his argument on two doctrines resurrected by Quaker liberal Christianity: the Inner Light and the interpretation Christ's life and death as examples for man's worldly life. The transformation of the Quaker Renaissance was finally applied to Quaker pacifism. The Society considered it important that the practice of a peace testimony distinguished them from other churches. The Quaker liberal theology provided the firm foundation for the Society's pacifism. The long history of the peace testimony and the Society's residual sectarianism gave it the strength to believe they were right.

August 1914 to the Yearly Meeting of 1915 was a period of crisis for the Society of Friends. Unsure and confused about who they were and what they believed, the Society struggled to find the correct path. Henry T.

Hodgkins spoke of this struggle in his address to the 1915 Yearly Meeting.

There had come to us a challenge to think out what we meant by our peace testimony, to work it out in relation to the concerns of life....The truth needed to be expressed clearly and forcibly, but it also required a thorough application, ... Now was the time to state what this position of ours really meant...⁵⁴

Although many of the details had yet to be worked out, by May 1915 Quakers had established two aspects of their religious beliefs. Pacifism had become an essential ethic of Quaker life, and that pacifism, whatever its specific content, was an outward testimony. It was necessary to encourage the "life and power which takes away the occasion for all wars".⁵⁵ The Society of Friends was at last prepared for war.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER TWO

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- 55 Ibid., p. 401.

**CHAPTER THREE: THE LIMITS OF QUAKER ACTIVISM,
MAY 1915 TO MAY 1916**

The power and dominion of the conscience are the province of God, and he alone can properly instruct and govern it. No one whatsoever may lawfully force the conscience of others regardless of the authority or office he bears in the government of this world.

Robert Barclay, C. 1676.¹

Two closely related issues dominated the activities of the Society of Friends in the twelve months between May 1914 and May 1915. These were: first, the struggle to prevent the Liberal government from enacting legislation instituting compulsory military service and, second, the problems which arose once conscription had been introduced in January 1916, over the applications for exemption on the grounds of a conscientious objection. These two issues have been the focus of several studies of pacifism during the First World War, that have exposed the diversity, character and commitment of the younger generation of British pacifists. Yet at the same time, because they focused on just this one segment of the pacifist community and just one element of pacifist ideals, these studies obscure as well as reveal. They concentrate on conscientious objection to the virtual exclusion of pacifism generally. Although the Quaker peace

testimony was directly affected by the experiences and example of the conscientious objectors, this effect was mediated by the traditions and character of the Society. C.O's were a minority among Quakers and the Society was obliged to accommodate a wide range of opinion when determining its response to conscription and conscientious objection. This chapter examines the changes in the Quaker peace testimony during the period, May 1915 to May 1916, when conscription and conscientious objection were the predominant issues for Friends.

By 1914, Britons prided themselves on a unique tradition of voluntarism within their armed forces. In the first year of the war, the vast majority of Britons continued to believe that a voluntary system of recruitment produced the best soldiers and symbolized the virtues of the British political system.² From one perspective this belief was well-founded. The flood of volunteers in the first weeks of the war confirmed the adequacy of this method. Yet it was this very success that revealed the weaknesses of the system. Too many men offered their services at the same time, overloading the available facilities. Indiscriminate recruitment stripped key industries of large portions of their work force.³ As the war dragged on and developed into a massive contest of attrition, the necessity of imposing some order on the recruiting system became evident to both the army and the government. The decline in numbers of

volunteers, combined with the unprecedented number of casualties, gradually convinced more of Britain's leaders and the population in general of the necessity for conscription.

Within the Liberal government this realization did not come to everyone at the same time. Winston Churchill was convinced of the eventual necessity of conscription from the outset of the war, while Lloyd George was not convinced until August, 1915. There was also a faction within the party which never accepted the need for compulsion.⁴ The key figure balancing the differing opinions within the Liberal party, was Herbert Henry Asquith, the Prime Minister since 1908. Asquith had a strong attachment to the voluntary system but his overriding commitment was to the unity of the nation. He may have accepted the military necessity of conscriptions as early as 1915, but he also recognized its political impossibility without the voluntary system first being clearly discredited. The possibility of conscription was discussed in the Commons in mid-August, 1914 but it appeared at the time that the supply of volunteers would be sufficient.⁵ Indeed, between August 1914 and January 1915 Asquith and the Tory leader, Andrew Bonar Law, maintained an agreement not to discuss conscription in Parliament.⁶ However, there was considerable informal pressure on the government from both Liberals and Tories. On January 8th, 1915, two prominent Tory peers, Lords Selborne and Curzon,

asked the government to reconsider its commitment to a volunteer army. Asquith was able to push aside this request because of the support of anti-conscription Liberals and a clear opposition to the measure within the country. By August, the Conservatives and the newspapers had significantly increased the pressure upon the government and in October Asquith endorsed a final test of the voluntary system that became known as the Derby scheme, after its sponsor Lord Derby. The Derby scheme was an attempt to extract from the voluntary system either sufficient manpower or evident failure and has been described as "one of those shot-gun weddings between the fair maid of Liberal idealism and the ogre of Tory militarism ... for which Asquith's last ministry provided such efficient brokerage."⁷ Clearly idealism and militarism could not be so easily divided along party lines, but in some ways this description was appropriate. The scheme requested all males between the ages of eighteen and forty-one to state their willingness to serve. Each man was sent a written appeal from both Lord Derby and the King asking him to come forward. Both the King and Derby made it clear that this experiment was the last chance for the voluntary system. If successful, the Derby Scheme would be the saviour of liberal ideals. If it failed, the way would be open for conscription.

In the end the scheme produced the answer the pro-conscriptionists sought. Although well over a million men

came forward, Derby could point to another 600,000 who resisted the government's appeal. This figure was subsequently revised downwards to 360,000, but the government did not wait for this correction. On December 15th, Asquith appointed a committee to draft a bill introducing compulsory military service and on January 15th, 1916 the first Military Service Act was passed by Parliament.⁸ Derby had made it possible to justify conscription by the failure of voluntary system. In fact, numbers of men were not the real issue. The government adopted conscription to control the number and type of recruits. Indeed, the problem with voluntarism was that it was too successful, especially in draining away skilled workmen.

Resistance to conscription was generally slow in developing. Before the fall of 1915 there were only a few individuals who distrusted the intentions of the government and its ability to withstand pressure from the military. These few, in the winter of 1914-1915, sought community and activity within an organization called the No-conscription Fellowship (N.C.F.). The N.C.F. was a diverse collection of socialists, Christians and libertarians. Most of the N.C.F.'s members were pacifists, but this was not an essential belief. Thomas Kennedy, in his recent study The Hound of Conscience, stated that seventy-five to eighty percent of the N.C.F.'s members were socialists, and that those motivated strictly by religion or libertarianism were

a small minority.⁹ The stated goal of the organization was the prevention of the introduction of the compulsory military service. After their failure to prevent conscription, they became a source of support and advice to individuals claiming exemption under the conscience clause of the Military Service Acts.* The N.C.F. established chapters throughout the country and obtained a membership of several thousand individuals. Of the various religious organizations represented within the N.C.F.'s membership, the Society of Friends had the largest contingent and the greatest influence. Wealthy Quakers, influenced by Edward Grubb, the N.C.F.'s national secretary, made significant financial contributions.¹⁰ As well, other radical Quakers such as A. Barratt Brown and John P. Fletcher sat on the N.C.F.'s national executive.¹¹

It was through the Friends Service Committee (F.S.C.), created at the Yearly Meeting of 1915, that the Society was able to work closely with the N.C.F..¹² The F.S.C. was a very small group organized to co-ordinate the Society's special wartime activities. Consisting of the most radical

*The Military Service Act provided for exemptions from military service for reasons of health, the dependency of others on the individual's services, and "on the grounds of a conscientious objection to undertaking combatant service". Exemptions could be complete, limited to combatant duty, conditional or temporary, at the discretion of the tribunal. Inclusion of these provisions was at the insistence of Asquith himself, for immediate political reasons rather than any deep-seated attachment to liberal ideals. (John Rae, Conscience and Politics, pp. 27-31).

and active Quakers, this committee campaigned energetically against conscription and assisted conscientious objectors. The views of its members had considerable influence especially among Quaker C.O.'s. Despite the F.S.C. efforts, however, Quakers were as divided on the conscription issue as they had been on opposition to the war itself. The Society's division left it temporarily ineffectual but did promote discussion.

At the beginning of June 1915 an article in the Friend outlined the reasons for rejecting compulsory military service. Although the Friend's editors insisted that their objection to warfare formed the basis of their rejection of conscription, it was clear that other Quaker tenets had a great influence. The core beliefs which formed the Friend's critique of conscription were essentially libertarian. Conscription would be a violation of a traditional liberty of conscience and it would provide the basis for the institution of militarism;

First we claim that no man should be called compulsorily to fight if the dictates of his conscience convince him that it is morally wrong for him to do so. Secondly, we claim that to require every man to be a soldier is to hand over individual freedom to the military authority and to make the nation essentially military in power and dependent upon military and material force. In other words, it would be to introduce in England the beginnings of the very vice against which we profess to be at war, namely, Prussian militarism. Militarism cannot abolish Militarism.¹³

The Friend's editors were naively confident that conscription would not be instituted whatever the views of a vocal

minority, because there still existed "a large body of judgement in the country opposed to any form of compulsory military Service."¹⁴ The Friend also pointed to the vast numbers of enthusiastic recruits as a confirmation that voluntarism would be adequate for the defense of the country. This was an odd argument for the Friend's editors to use against conscription. First, the enthusiasm to which the Friend alluded had been a devastating blow to the optimists in the pre-war peace movement. Second and more importantly, the Friend was condoning military service. By doing so, in an attempt to repudiate conscription, the editors revealed just how distinct this issue was from their peace testimony.

A distinction between the conscription issue and opposition to war can be justified. The conscription controversy was not a conflict over the war itself but over how the war should be fought. For this reason, conscription was not primarily a peace issue. It had more direct parallels with objections to the Vaccination Bill of 1898, because in both cases the conflict was over liberty of conscience.¹⁵ Conscription would effect Quaker pacifism only indirectly. Conscription raised the issue of the Society's relationship with the state. If the Society could not find the courage to stand against the government on an issue as unanimously supported amongst themselves as liberty of conscience, would they be able to make a stand on the more controversial issue of resistance to war? Some Friends still

felt that Quakers should do their utmost within this limit to support the war effort. It was no surprise, therefore, that there were Friends who supported conscription. James Henry Doncaster is typical of those Quakers who supported the government's policy.

I assume that we all agree that no words are too strong to express condemnation of war. But I am also convinced that our nation did profoundly right in entering upon this war, and that the effort to carry it to a victorious conclusion should overshadow all other efforts now.¹⁶

The strongest statement made supporting conscription was by Bernard Ellis in a letter to the Friend published on November 19th, 1915. Ellis insisted that to maintain order any organized state required of its citizens certain services. Moreover, should these services not be fulfilled voluntarily, the community gave the ruling powers the right to compel. Ellis did not favour conscription but he clearly considered its enactment as within the rights of the government. He believed that if Friends did not want to be compelled, they should volunteer their services.

A last effort is being made to maintain the voluntary system: if it fails, then compulsion must be the result. It depends upon the answer given by those who have not come forward. Are the young men of the Society of Friends to be amongst those who force compulsion on the country?¹⁷

Ellis was placing one Quaker ideal above another. The Society's peace testimony should be sacrificed to save the nation from compulsion. Ellis believed that Friends should be fighting anyway. In the face of the dire need of the

country, Ellis believed that young Friends should do what they were best equipped to do.

I hope every young man in the Society of Friends will seriously consider his position and not be misled by arguments against compulsion: things much more important are at stake just now.¹⁸

Ellis was not the only Friend willing to place the demands of the state above the demands of his church. In the following issue of the Friend, H. Watson Smith argued for essentially the same policy.

Many Friends seem to be living in world of their own, with not the least conception in their minds that we are in the midst of an awful struggle with the powers of darkness. ... It is no time to be talking about individual liberties. ... This is no ordinary war in which we are free to take sides or to take no side at all. To defend the freedom, the civilization of the world, is our duty and worthy of any sacrifice that has to be made.¹⁹

This position was maintained by Smith, Ellis and a few other Friends well into 1916.

The correspondence columns of the Friend between November 1915 and the end of January 1916 reveal the views opposed to those of Ellis and Smith. On November 5, 1915, Oswald Clark had urged Quakers to make opposition to conscription "the question above all others."²⁰ The greatest reaction against views such as those of Ellis appeared in the Friend at the beginning of December 1915. In the first issue of that month, there were five letters objecting to Ellis' position on conscription. All of them admitted that Friends owed their country a service, but just as unanimously they

rejected Ellis' characterization of that service as well as his insistence that the government could compel it.

B. Ellis would have Friends accept the direction of the British State as overruling their vision of the greater Kingdom of Christ in which the law is to suffer rather than inflict injury ... The soldier has surrendered, in part at least, his liberty of conscience. ... Thus the foundation truth of Quaker life is flung to the winds.

William Henry F. Alexander

The State cannot, however, tell us what the nature of the service is to be; no one can tell us; it is a matter we must all decide for ourselves, under the guidance of God.

Ronald Theobald

...it appears to me, in the long run, we serve our country best by obedience to the ideal which it has not yet grasped, but some day will realize, if only enough citizens are faithful now. ... Bernard Ellis truly says 'things much more important than compulsion are at stake just now.' Loyalty to Christ, and those deeper and more enduring interests of England and humanity are in jeopardy,

Henry Hancock²¹

Clearly Ellis' letter startled Friends into an uncharacteristic excitement. No single letter of the war produced so great a response among Friends. Other members of the Society were anxious to make it clear that they disagreed with Ellis' viewpoint. The importance of the issue is testified to by the presence of letters in the Friend by two prominent influential Friends, William Littleboy and Henry T. Hodgkin. Neither was a very frequent correspondent to the Friend, restricting his letters to major issues. Both Littleboy and Hodgkin indicated that some of the opinions expressed in the Friend were those of individuals marginally associated with the Society:

Some of us feel that it is not necessary to take too seriously letters to The Friend from persons whose active interest in the Society seems to date from the time when the outbreak of the present war disclosed their wide divergence from the position of Friends as held through long years of trial, and as stated in our official documents.

Henry T. Hodgkin²²

Both Littleboy and Hodgkin expressed sympathy with the right of these people to express their views, but they hoped that these would not be confused with the true position of the Society.

Littleboy and Hodgkin also sought to clarify what they considered to be the proper position of the Society. They believed that the Quaker testimony called the individual to a higher loyalty than to the state. If necessary, the Society must be prepared to oppose national opinion and maintain its testimony;

...the truest patriotism consists not in drifting with the tide, but in setting forth by word and much more by example the highest that we know, in bearing unfaltering witness to the supremacy of Love.

William Littleboy²³

Although neither Littleboy nor Hodgkin made any direct reference to conscription, by supporting such an uncompromising stand on the peace testimony, they implied an implacable objection to conscription as well. Littleboy and Hodgkin made the issue more than a test of the Society's belief in liberty of conscience and made opposition to conscription a test of its loyalty to the peace testimony. In doing so, they made opposition to conscription no longer a

matter of individual conscience, but a question of the identity and unity of the Society. In May, 1915, the peace testimony had become of pre-eminent importance to the Society. The efficacy of an active peace testimony during wartime would depend on the Society's willingness to oppose the government. Littleboy and Hodgkin made it clear that the Society had to begin with a stand against conscription.

The influence of Hodgkin and Littleboy within the Society was such that their declarations effectively brought the debate to a halt and the Society's executive moved quickly to mobilize Quaker energy against conscription. The Meeting for Sufferings sent a letter to the members of Parliament in September 1915, outlining the Society's objection to conscription. Their primary objection was that such legislation would compel some individuals to act against the dictates of their conscience. The Meeting for Sufferings rejected political or military critiques of conscription or the idealization of any "abstract doctrine of the right of the individual to be free from state control"²⁴ The Society's objection to conscription rested on a traditional ideal of the freedom of conscience and not political or religious extremism. They recognized the duty of every citizen to serve his country, but at the same time, each individual had the right to follow his conscience. The Society of Friends had espoused some form of conscientious objection to the use of force for two and a half centuries. It was wrong,

therefore, to compel the enlistment of Quakers.

Although this letter made clear to Parliament the Society's position on conscription, nothing more was done by the Meeting for Sufferings to prevent such legislation until the end of November. At this time, the Meeting for Sufferings decided that the Society's main focus should be preventing the introduction of conscription. The meeting made several recommendations to strengthen the opposition to conscription. They agreed to co-operate with all individuals and organizations outside the Society who shared their objection to compulsory military service. Specific reference was made to the No-Conscription Fellowship and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, with the suggestion that meetings be arranged to co-ordinate their respective efforts. The Meeting also urged that an effort be made to strengthen the Parliamentary opposition to conscription, but public appeals or demonstrations were to be avoided.²⁵

This policy was undoubtedly a tactical mistake. Fear of public outcry was the principle check on the Liberal government. Asquith could only counter the demands of Liberal and Tory pro-conscriptionists by claiming that such a measure would severely divide the nation. However, the decision to avoid public appeals came from within the Society, and was not based on an assessment of the political situation. Quakers were still so divided amongst themselves that the executive Meeting for Sufferings did not believe

that it could commit the Society to a programme that would place Quakers in open opposition to the government. Without the consensus generated by a Yearly Meeting, the Society's executive would not expose the Society to public opprobrium.

To its credit, the Meetings for Sufferings took extraordinary action to obtain the necessary consensus and organized a special session of the Yearly Meeting for late January, 1916.²⁶ This session, called the Yearly Meeting (Adjourned), was a reconvening of the 1915 Yearly Meeting and could establish official Quaker policy. Unfortunately, by the time this Yearly Meeting had gathered, the first Military Service Act had been passed. The goal of the Meeting for Sufferings in November, to prevent the institution of conscription, was by then irrelevant. With this in mind, the clerk of the Yearly Meeting, John Henry Barlow, directed the discussion towards internal concerns. He clearly believed that the first order of business was for the Society to determine its own position.²⁷

The discussion that followed Barlow's address did not stray from his lead. J. W. Graham, A. Barratt Brown, and William E. Wilson, all liberal or socialist Quakers, confirmed that the problem with conscription was its infringement of an individual's liberty of conscience. They believed that each person was free from compulsion in certain areas of conscientious concern.²⁸ Conscription was already criticized for its contribution to militarism.²⁹ These two

points dominated the Quaker critique of conscription before and after January 1916. The special Yearly Meeting endorsed Barlow's explanation of the Quaker position on conscription and thereby isolated Ellis and his supporters in their idiosyncrasy. The general statement produced by this special Yearly Meeting made the Society's position quite clear.

We regard the central conception of the Act as imperilling the liberty of the individual conscience -- which is the main hope of human progress -- and as entrenching more deeply that militarism from which we all desire the world to be freed.³⁰

The Adjourned Yearly Meeting established the official Quaker position just in time, ironically, for the issue to become unimportant. Their delay made the effort pointless and pathetic. The Society was unable to prevent the imposition of conscription - a failure which revealed that the Society's direct political influence, was insignificant when it acted outside the rest of Nonconformity. The Society was slow to mobilize its efforts to influence the political process. Just as in the summer of 1914, the Quakers acted slowly on issues of elemental importance to their beliefs. However, by highlighting these weaknesses and failures, the Yearly Meeting (Adjourned) encouraged the Society to be prepared for the next major confrontation. Between the meeting in January and the next regular Yearly Meeting in May, the Society was preoccupied with the conscience clause of the M.S.A.

The Military Service Act passed on January 5th, 1916, and its successor of May 25, 1916, provided an absolute exemption from military and civilian service for the genuine conscientious objector. Local tribunals were to determine which requests for exemption were genuine and what form of exemption would be granted. The vast majority of the exemptions given were only partial. Out of a total of 16,500 individuals recognized as some form of conscientious objector, only 350 were given complete exemptions.³¹ It is impossible to determine how unaccommodating the tribunals actually were. Not all C.O.'s requested complete exemptions, and no estimate has been made of how many C.O.'s requested absolute exemptions but accepted partial ones. Whether or not it was their intent, the government, by including provisions for exemption from service on conscientious grounds in the Military Service Act, effectively undercut the major critique of conscription by giving the opposition what they asked for. In theory, no one would be forced to fight if he could convince the local tribunal that he had a genuine conscientious objection. The government had placed the issue squarely in the hands of the anti-conscriptionists. It was now up to the potential conscientious objector to justify his position. Although the Society of Friends and many others objected that the system was unfair and the tribunal members incompetent, there was very little wrong with the way the system was organized. The potential existed for a fair and

just accommodation of all conscientious objectors. Unsympathetic and inequitable judgments by the tribunals did cause many problems but, on the whole, the controversies lay elsewhere.³²

For the Society of Friends the problem was to decide what type of exemption best conformed to Quaker ideals. The traditions of the Society with regard to alternative service or substitution were ambiguous. Since the seventeenth century, Quakers had consistently refused to serve in militias or allow substitutes to go in their place. They had also refused to make a commutation payment in lieu of personal service.³³ Although these practices had not always been scrupulously adhered to, transgressions were the exception rather than the norm. When faced with compulsion, Quakers generally accepted some distraint upon their possessions, or if they were too poor for this, a short jail term. However, in the past, the Society had made a distinction between combatant and non-combatant service. In 1690, Quakers employed at the Chatham naval shipyard were willingly involved in the building of men-of-war. However, these same men refused when asked to muster for a local militia.³⁴ A similar incident took place in Antigua in 1708 in which the alternative service offered was non-military. Antigua Friends were granted exemption from combatant service if they would perform other tasks such as the "building of watchhouses, clearing common roads, making bridges, digging

ponds" and acting as messengers in case of invasion. The response of the Friends of Antigua was to refuse, not because the services asked were themselves unconscionable but because they were offered as an "alternative service".³⁵

We are willing to dig ponds, repair highways, and build bridges, or such convenient things where they are done for the general service of the island and other people at work therein with us, and not to balance those things which for conscience sake we cannot do.³⁶

This response was entirely consistent with the spirit of Quaker practice of refusing to compromise their beliefs through convenient deceptions. Surprisingly, the Meeting for Sufferings in London refused to support the position of the Antigua Friends and told them to accept the compromise offered. The London executive saw the services asked for as "innocent things" which should not be objected to. They urged the Antigua Friends not to give the impression of being "a self-willed and stubborn people."³⁷ Brock quite rightly noted that the policy adopted by London was a grave compromise of the peace testimony.

Such arguments indeed, if constantly used, would have undermined the kind of peace witness Friends presented when they refused to pay their militia fines; they even cast doubt, ..., on the validity of the Quaker variety of pacifism in general.³⁸

The Quaker policy on non-combatant services remained inconsistent throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Before the issue could be resolved, the passage of the Militia Ballot Act in 1860 dispensed with compulsory military services and removed the threat of forced war

work.³⁹

The other Christian churches that claimed exemption in 1916 did not provide the Society any useful examples to follow either. Most of the non-Quaker Christian pacifists belonged to small and rather eccentric churches. Typical of these were the Christadelphians, a small, insular Christian church which produced the largest single group of conscientious objectors. The Christadelphians refused to fight in an "earthly" conflict. Nevertheless, they anxiously awaited the great conflict which would occur at the time of the Second Coming. Christadelphians were willing to work in munitions factories as an alternative to combatant service. Their approach was "essentially passive, not pacifist; they did not wish to become involved."⁴⁰ Other small Christian sects such as the Plymouth Brethren, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, and the Pentecostal churches all had similar conscientious objections.⁴¹ Some like the Jehovah's Witnesses were clearly not even nominally pacifists.⁴² Political objectors were just as ambivalent about strict pacifism. As John Rae indicated in Conscience and Politics, political objectors included "both men who made no bones about their willingness to fight for a cause of which they approved and men who regarded fighting as immoral in all circumstances."⁴³

Despite what the confusion of positions among conscientious objectors might suggest a particular peace

testimony had a corresponding type of conscientious objection. The details of a specific peace testimony determined the most appropriate exemption. Given that the Society of Friends possessed a nominally unanimous interpretation of their peace testimony, there should have been no disagreement over alternative services. In practice, however, Friends had not yet worked out all the implications of their testimony. Between January and May 1916 this process was completed, but not all Quakers were happy with the result.

The Quaker conscientious objector in 1916 had two choices how to respond to the M.S.A. The fundamental decision was between accepting some form of war work in lieu of combatant service (alternativism) and rejecting such work because it contributed to and prolonged the war (absolutism). Most young Friends were alternativists and only objected to work which was overtly associated with the war effort. Many accepted ambulance or civilian work as consistent with Quaker principles. The alternativist position was also the more widely recognized response to conscientious objection by Quakers. This was partly due to the positions taken by two Quaker members of the House of Commons, Arnold S. Rowntree and T. Edmund Harvey. Both Rowntree and Harvey endorsed alternativism as the reasonable response. It was a course that testified to the evil of war while at the same time clearly illustrated the willingness of Quakers to make

sacrifices for their country. Quaker absolutists, as well as many others, were infuriated by Rowntree's and Harvey's actions. They felt that these two publicly prominent Quakers had compromised the reputation of the Society. Although the absolutists were only a minority within the Society, they were convinced, and were later able to prove to other Quakers, that their position was the most valid Quaker response to conscription.

The absolutists' position had been outlined even before the M.S.A. was passed. Joseph E. Southall, writing to the Friend in December of 1915, stated that Quakers must decide where their "highest duty" lay.⁴⁴

To my mind our young men who stand steadfast here in their places are the greatest heroes of all. Let the rest of us strive to be worthy of them, and banish from the Quaker vocabulary the expression "alternative service" with its fatal implication that killing our brother is one form of service.⁴⁵

Southall had expressed the main objection raised against alternative service: to accept alternative service was to accept the necessity of combatant service. Wilfred E. Littleboy speaking at the Yearly Meeting (Adjourned) raised a secondary objection to alternative service. Littleboy considered alternative service a child of the Military Service Act and any activity performed under its auspices condoned compulsory service and the M.S.A. which had as its stated purpose the more efficient prosecution of the war.

It was not a question of the methods of England or of Germany, but the methods of God against the

methods of the world. Any service to which we put our hands must have as its direct object the establishment of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and such would not be less truly national service. This was not a national service act but a Military Service Act,...⁴⁶

The alternativist position emerged clearly for the first time at the Yearly Meeting (Adjourned) in January 1916. The majority at that meeting were in favour of "doing something for the nation".⁴⁷ At the time, this meant some form of alternative service. Ambulance work was considered an obvious choice. In early 1914, the Society of Friends organized two special efforts to provide relief in France; the Friends Ambulance Unit (F.A.U.) which worked along side, but was largely independent of, the Royal Army Medical Corps (R.A.M.C.); and the War Victims Relief Committee (W.V.R.C.) which assisted in civilian reconstruction in areas destroyed by the war. The F.A.U. was eventually recognized as a legitimate form of alternative service.⁴⁸

The R.A.M.C. and the F.A.U. performed the same tasks on the battlefield. The F.A.U. was organized along military lines and its members even wore khaki uniforms. Nevertheless, conscientious objectors made a distinction between the two. The R.A.M.C. was part of the army. Service in that unit required the military oath and its members were subject to the direct authority of army. Many conscientious objectors, Quakers included, felt that taking the military oath infringed upon their liberty. They could not transfer the responsibility for their consciences to another. By

contrast, serving with the F.A.U. did not require a military oath. C.O.'s also favoured this kind of work because it provided the satisfaction of saving human life and because it presented the same dangers as combatant service. The consensus at the January meeting was that this was an excellent form of alternate service. If the objector found ambulance work objectionable, the meeting recommended agricultural work as a second choice.

A regular spokesman for alternative service throughout the war was J. W. Graham. In a mid-February issue of the Friend Graham stated clearly the basis of the alternativist position.

We have to find a way whilst rendering loyalty to two principles. We can take no personal part in war or the preparation for it, on one hand, and yet we owe devoted and costly service to the State, which is at war in spite of us. These two principles point very urgently to the necessity laid upon us eagerly to undertake some kind of national service.⁴⁹

Graham ignored the fact that these two principles were irreconcilable. While it was possible to be loyal to both, this possibility depended on a generous interpretation of national service. If Quakers followed the interpretation of the absolutists, virtually any activity of national importance contributed to the war. Graham, in contrast, believed that there would be no conflict as long as the alternative service did not personally involve the objector in the war effort.

... can any of us honestly say that we do not want to win the war? Personally I am not able to reach such a detachment from my fellow citizens as that, and I have never met a man who is so indifferent. This does not conflict with our hostility to all war.⁵⁰

While there is obviously some basic truth and honesty in what Graham said, his last statement is clearly incorrect. The crux of the Quaker dilemma was that their peace testimony did conflict with a natural patriotic desire to win the war. Graham attempted to solve this problem simply by ignoring this conflict and any responsibility for the repercussions of individual action: "I hold the view that we are not responsible for what the other man who we liberate may do."⁵¹ Unlike Graham, the absolutists could not ignore what they saw as their thoroughgoing complicity in the war effort.

Another basic difference between the absolutists and the alternativists was the extent and degree of their activism. Some alternativists tended to be more passive than pacifist. For example, Elizabeth M. Cadbury, a supporter of alternative service, was critical of the militant spirit of the absolutists.

One does not wish to misjudge the motives of any young men who refuse military service, but questions are provoked when some go further and decline to undertake "alternative service" ... Does not this refusal betray a share of the militant spirit that is working such havoc in Europe? It certainly contrasts unfavourably with those who have given up everything for the sake of their country, ...⁵²

Behind this passivity lay a fear of offending public opinion.

The vast majority of Quaker families were middle class and very conscious of maintaining an image for themselves, as well as for the Society, of propriety and respectability. These Quakers shared Cadbury's viewpoint and were concerned about the backlash militancy would produce. In an article, written for the Friend in May 1916, Graham recognized the responsibility of the individual to the dictates of his conscience even in the face of a contrary opinion of a democratic majority. However, Graham insisted that there were limits on how the objector could express his opposition.

The conscientious objector has no right to interfere with the operations of others by resistance outside the law. The democracy must have its way. We Friends have, indeed, as a tiny minority, no right to clog its wheels except by tireless political action.⁵³

Although Graham urged political action, he explicitly rejected militant civil disobedience. With specific reference to the Suffragettes, the Home Rule supporters, the Ulstermen and the passive resisters to the Education Act as examples, he insisted that such tactics would not lead to victory.

...we shall only win by the support of public opinion. To gain that we must avoid the accusation of unreasonable crankiness, ...⁵⁴

The position of both Graham and Cadbury was entirely consistent with the traditional policy of the Society. Yet they stood against the trend in Quaker thinking established at the Yearly Meeting of 1915. The commitment made at that gathering to an active pacifism led directly to the type of

strict adherence to conscience displayed by the absolutists.

The absolutists' integrity impressed upon other Quakers the implications of a strict pacifism. This change in attitude is revealed in the editorials of the Friend. In November 1915 the Friend's editors had endorsed a broad programme of alternative service. However, on March 10, 1916, the editors recommended a stricter position. They began by objecting to the military oath because all oaths necessitated the "enslavement and subjugation" of conscience. Secondly, the Friend believed that Quakers should object to military combatancy because the Society considered human life sacred and believed the true Christian could not "do murder". Lastly, the Friend could not endorse non-combatant military duty because this would be "aiding and abetting the slaughter of men".⁵⁵ They elaborated on this last objection by noting that the Quaker objection carried with it an "objection to any form of direct military service or to any form of service directly imposed by military authority." The Friend's editors recognized a further restriction against any service which might release another man for military duty, but considered this extremity as "pressing the matter to an impracticable counsel of perfection".⁵⁶ The Friend had rejected the fundamental absolutist ideal only on the basis of its impracticality. The Friend's editors recognized the "perfection" of the absolutist.⁵⁷

The absolutist position was given further credibility in a May issue of the Friend by Clifford Allen, chairman of the No-Conscription Fellowship. Allen was imprisoned in August 1916 after refusing a partial exemption.⁵⁸ In his article Allen criticized the establishment of the various forms of alternative service because they diminished the chances of C.O.'s obtaining absolute exemptions. Allen also rejected the argument made by many alternativists that their service was simply a response to the great sacrifice being made by those who went to war. The time for such conscientious sacrifice was before 1914 when agitation might have prevented the conflict.⁵⁹ Allen's principle argument was that absolute conscientious objectors could not make a distinction between their own personal objection and a desire to witness against the war and the militarism.

They believe war to be wrong. They are out to prevent war. They will never prevent war merely securing exemption for themselves and assisting in the harmonious administration of militarism for other people.⁶⁰

The absolutist's contribution to national service was his witness against the imposition of militarism and the immorality of war. W. Arthur Cooper, an imprisoned Quaker objector, who wrote to the Friend in response to Clifford's article, provided an example of this view.

Most of us, I think, are longing to take up "work of national importance" if we are given the opportunity, but we comfort ourselves by hoping that at this present time our most pressing work is the work which we are doing, that of remaining

quietly in prison, following our light, and
trusting that it will lead us
"on to the bound of the waste,
on to the city of God".⁶¹

By May 1916 most Quakers had recognized and, in many cases, admired the validity of the absolutists stand. Allen's article had made the issue clear and the response in the Friend confirms that his message was understood.

Unfortunately the conflict between the absolutists and the alternativists did not end with the realization that the Quaker peace testimony led inexorably to absolutism. While Quakers were willing to concede the moral victory to the absolutists, they could not condone their tactics. By refusing alternative service, or by refusing to co-operate with the tribunal system altogether, the absolutists could be accused of wilfully obstructing the system. Although civil disobedience was the course of action most consistent with Quaker beliefs, the majority of Quakers, because of their respectable social position and history of dignified liberal dissent, would not adopt militant tactics. These attitudes constituted the strength of the alternativists position. Alternativism was the only tolerable approach for many Quakers, even though it involved a compromise of the peace testimony. As the yearly meeting of 1916 approached the Society was faced with an impossible situation. The Yearly Meeting could not endorse the absolutists without dividing the Society. Moderate and conservative Quakers would not tolerate that kind of militancy. The choice of endorsing the

alternativists' position was equally impossible. Such a decision would involve an official qualification of the peace testimony so recently resuscitated. Such a precedent could not be set and an open clash between the two viewpoints appeared inevitable. In fact, the meeting was an anticlimax. The issue could not be completely avoided but there was no fatal collision. Both absolutist and the alternativist positions were defended. Robert O. Mennell, chairman of the F.S.C., which had been working closely with the N.C.F. in support of conscientious objectors, urged Friends to recognize the contribution of the absolutists and to reject the idea that these men were "prepared to do nothing". At the same time he felt that "each form of peace activity was essentially complementary to all the rest".⁶² The tone of Mennell's speech was conciliatory and in general the alternativist/absolutist controversy did not interfere with meeting.

The tone of Mennell's speech was surprising, considering the commitment of Mennell and the F.S.C. to the absolutist position. The F.S.C. fought bitterly with the N.C.F. over this very issue during the rest of 1916 and much of 1917 as well.⁶³ Just as surprising as Mennell's willingness to compromise was the absence of any reference to the absolutist/alternativist controversy in either the statement issued by the Yearly Meeting or in the minutes of the session on conscription. The submergence of Mennell's militancy, and

the controversy which had dominated the Society for the previous five months, can be explained by the actions of a few influential Friends who acted to preserve both the Society and its peace testimony. The dominant themes of the 1916 Yearly Meeting were unity and caution. Almost every session emphasized the need to both. By calling for unity and by avoiding direct reference to the difference of opinion certain Friends hoped to avoid an open clash at the Yearly Meeting. Just as they had intervened to defend the Society's critique of conscription, William Littleboy and Henry T. Hodgkin moved to prevent the division of the Society. In 1916, their efforts were assisted by Arnold S. Rowntree and John Henry Barlow, the clerk of the Yearly Meeting. These four men steered the Society away from any firm statement on either the absolutist/alternativist issue or the peace testimony.

The topic set for the opening session was the underlying unity of Christianity. However, it was clear from the outset that unity of the Society was the real issue. Anne Warner Marsh in the opening address urged Friends to remember that "there were others who were equally strong in what they held to be right" and the "great unity" of the Society "depended on its diversity".⁶⁴

Might it not be that this very crisis was to make us aware of the diversities which existed amongst us and other contributions, including the sufferings for conscience sake, which went to make up the essential unity?⁶⁵

This call to unity was evident during the discussion of the conscription issue as well. At that session Arnold S. Rowntree, a prominent, moderate Quaker and a member of Parliament, spoke of the need of the Society to "feel that they had been gathered into a unity which could not be divided".⁶⁶

At the session set aside to discuss preparation for permanent universal peace, Littleboy, Rowntree and Hodgkin all spoke of the necessity of waiting for further enlightenment before the Society made any decisions or statements. The urgings of these influential Friends was supported by all but a few of those who spoke. This policy of caution is clearly evident in the minutes of the session produced by the clerk.

"We have realized, as perhaps never before, that the duty before us now is to humble ourselves in the presence of God and wait that he may reveal himself. ... It is time for man to be silent and for God to speak. There is a need to be patient, to possess our souls, to wait for the divine call."⁶⁷

At the session on peace, held the day after, John Henry Barlow in his opening remarks to the session on peace insisted that it was "not necessary to do anything: it is necessary to discover what is required of us".⁶⁸ Barlow, Littleboy, Hodgkin and Rowntree had steered the Society towards the only solution that would preserve both of the peace testimony and the Society. The Society could not openly endorse the absolutists because of the militancy that

position demanded. Nor could it endorse the alternativists' view without compromising the peace testimony. So the Society did nothing. The statement issued by the Yearly Meeting was silent on the most important issue facing the Society at the time.

Littleboy, Hodgkin, Rowntree and Barlow were successful in their efforts to preserve both the unity of the Society and the integrity of the peace testimony, but heavy price was paid for this accomplishment. Since August 1914, the Society of Friends had been moving gradually towards a stricter pacifism and an increased militancy. After the Yearly Meeting of 1916 only a few Quaker militants would continue to fight an uncompromising battle with conscription and militarism. It was obvious that the Society of Friends as an organization could not follow that path without becoming fatally divided. The Society would not be a vehicle for militant pacifism.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER 3

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Friend, 2 June 1916, p. 395.

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CHAPTER FOUR: THE RESURGENCE OF QUAKER SOCIALISM

Is there any cure for the woes of the world until we are ready to believe that Jesus meant His Gospel to be taken seriously, and that He really waits to usher in a new era in which rejuvenated men shall dwell in a rejuvenated social order?

1917 Iowa Yearly Meeting
Epistle¹

At the Yearly Meeting of 1916 the Society rejected the strategy of deliberate confrontation because the majority of Friends refused to appear willfully disruptive. Although Quakers were already at odds with the government over its policy of conscriptions, the Society had not brought this conflict upon itself. The Society continued supporting both alternativists and absolutists through the F.S.C. and conscientious objections continued to be a major concern of Quakers throughout the war. There was, however, an increase in Quaker activity in other areas with the result that questions concerning conscientious objectives became less important. This chapter, thus, focuses on the changes to the peace testimony brought about by two new thrusts of Quaker activity which developed between 1916 and 1918.

After May 1919, Quakers increased their efforts to encourage a negotiated peace and a subsequent reform of international relations. Although the Society contributed directly to this effort, much of the work was done by

individuals providing time and money to organizations such as the Union of Democratic Control (U.D.C.), the primary group seeking democratic reform of international diplomacy. The U.D.C. had been founded as early as August 5th, 1914, by a small group of Liberal Radicals who criticized the foreign policy of their own party, and Sir Edward Grey in particular, for failing to avoid the war and for being incapable of ending it. As well as Liberal and Labour politicians such as C.P. Trevelyan and Ramsay MacDonald, the U.D.C. membership included popular figures and prominent intellectuals, such as Norman Angell and Bertrand Russell. The leaders of this eminent association were Trevelyan, E.D. Morel and Arthur Ponsonby. More than any others, these three men gave the U.D.C. its particular intellectual critique, based on a traditional liberal rational internationalism. Disillusioned by what they perceived as the betrayal of Parliament in 1914 by the Foreign Minister, Sir Edward Grey, they attempted to establish the U.D.C. as an effective left-wing opposition to the Liberal Government. In the short run the Liberal leadership succeeded in restricting the U.D.C.'s influence. However, by the war's end the U.D.C.'s ideas had gained support and became essentially the foreign policy aspirations of the new Labour Party fashioned in 1918.²

The U.D.C.'s campaigned for four major political reforms to be instituted after a negotiated peace: post-war boundaries between states should conform to national

groupings and not traditional empires; each nation must be given the ability to determine its own future; all the major combatants should grasp the opportunity presented by a peace settlement for total disarmament; and, most importantly, all diplomacy must be open to public scrutiny. Within Britain in particular foreign policy must be subject to parliamentary control.³ As these aims revealed, the U.D.C. was not primarily a "stop-the-war" movement. Whatever the truth to the U.D.C.'s claim that the war was a product of the machinations of a secretive and aristocratic diplomatic system, statements such as this were scarcely relevant after August 1914. Similarly, their suggested reforms were to be implemented after the war and contained no criticisms of the how the war was being conducted.

This feature of the U.D.C.'s critique of government policy, plus the respectability and status of its leaders, led to organization to adopt a political style that was strictly constitutional, however controversial they appeared to ardent patriots. The respectable tone and rationally argued literature of the U.D.C.'s campaign appealed to moderate Quakers. The U.D.C. was a vehicle for opposition to the war without the stigma of disloyalty or obstructionism. Quakers were also receptive to the U.D.C.'s ideas because they had supported the Liberal party, and in particular its Radical wing, since Gladstone created the party in the middle of the nineteenth century. The U.D.C.'s tactics of direct

but informal political influence matched the inclinations of many moderate Quakers in 1916, who wished to avoid notoriety.

Although Quakers devoted considerable energy to this new effort, it did not effect the Society's peace testimony in any direct way. It may, however, have contributed to the acceptance of the most significant restatement of the peace testimony since the eighteenth century. As Marvin Swartz stated in his authoritative study, The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics, participation in the activities of the U.D.C. "facilitated the transition of a significant number of liberals into the Labour Party."⁴ Liberal and Labour co-operation in the U.D.C. gave a respectability to Labour politics among left-wing Liberals. Within the Society of Friends this association created a more willing audience for radical Quakers and their ideas. The Quaker peace testimony was transformed by this previously ostracized minority.

The U.D.C. inherited the long-standing rationalist/humanitarian critique of war that believed arbitration to be a far better way to solve international disputes than warfare. Although very few Quakers objected to this conviction, by 1916 Quaker radicals had led many to the belief that the ultimate solutions to war lay elsewhere than in the reform of a secretive and aristocratic diplomatic system. This desire to find more complete solutions produced the second major thrust of Quaker activity between May 1916

and November 1918. Quaker pacifism, in search of a more comprehensive critique of violence and war, merged with Quaker socialism.

The Socialist orthodoxy applied to the problems of peace by Quaker pacifists in 1916 had been adopted by Quaker socialists between 1912 and 1913. In this change Quaker socialists paralleled a widespread shift taking place within British socialist thought generally. In the course of a few years part of the British socialist community rejected the centralism of state socialism in favour of a pluralistic social organization expounded by the Guild socialists. Oddly enough, Hilaire Belloc's reactionary critique of governmental authority, The Servile State published in 1912 gave considerable impetus to a trend among liberals and socialists away from faith in state sponsored socialism and in doing so temporarily revitalized Edwardian socialism. Peter Jones identifies the proponents and the key issue of this new socialist energy.

The great socialist revival that began in the 1880's seemed to have ground to a halt. A younger generation of socialists were determined to start afresh and incidentally recapture for British socialism an essential idea that had somehow been lost on the way between 1830 and the 1900's; direct worker control.⁵

The desire for direct worker control was not unique to Guild socialists. The Syndicalists had this goal in mind as well. Early proponents of the Guild socialist alternative believed that economic reform must create a system that benefited the

whole community. Workers had to share power within society with other institutions such as the state and the church. Syndicalism sought by revolution a "too exclusive claim for worker's self-government."⁶ Guild socialism was developed as an alternative both to state socialism and to syndicalism.⁸

Industrial Guild socialism was first elaborated comprehensively by S.G. Hobson, and was subsequently developed and expanded by G.D.H. Cole. Hobson's contribution and influence, especially amongst Christian socialists, has been undervalued in relation to the work of Cole. Hobson's particular formulation of the Guild idea had a greater appeal among Christian socialists because of specific differences in emphasis and objectives. Nevertheless, Cole was Guild socialism's most broadly influential and, ultimately, most sophisticated proponent. In developing Hobson's ideas, Cole gave Guild socialism a greater rigour and thoroughness, and a form of social organization that was ideally suited to political and religious dissent. Like all Guild socialists, Cole sought to place significant limits on the extent of the state's authority. The state, because it was an expression of the geographical aspect of man's personality and not the economic or religious aspects, could not claim to represent all the "associative will of man."⁷ Each individual functioned within several associations, each an independent product of man's nature. The state could not claim any superior power over these other associations. Membership

in the associations gave individuals the right to set "limits to the duties which they owe to their state."⁸ Cole recognized the obvious appeal that these concepts had for pacifists and conscientious objectors.⁹ Cole deliberately kept a discreet distance between himself and the war resisters, because he feared any identification of his ideas with the C.O.'s would produce a patriotic backlash and jeopardize support for his ideas among trade unionists.¹⁰

Despite all his efforts at discretion, Cole's ideas had a wide influence. J. M. Winter, in Socialism and the Challenge of War, credited Cole with influencing the ideas of Clifford Allen, chairman of the N.C.F.; Bertrand Russell, also active in the N.C.F.; and Ramsay MacDonald, leader of the Labour Party until he resigned with the advent of war.¹¹ Winter also states that the adoption of Guild socialist ideas by these men was "part of a wider movement of opinion during the war which brought many different men to the position which Cole and others had developed."¹² Winter believed that the appeal of Guild socialism was partly due to the new fearful vision of the state produced by the war.

After three years of war, the state was seen to be a very different and far more dangerous creature by even a moderate socialist like MacDonald.¹³

If Cole was the primary agent of Guild socialism for men like Allen, Russell and MacDonald, S.G. Hobson most directly influenced the Quakers. There are some obvious reasons for this preference. To begin with Hobson was a Quaker himself,

although his autobiography makes it clear that his adherence to Quaker practice was intermittent.¹⁴ He was a close friend of prominent Quaker socialist Alfred B. Thorne and his wife Mary, who were perhaps the most active Quaker socialists before the war.¹⁵ Apart from these personal connections, Hobson's form of Guild socialism received a readier audience among Quaker socialists because of his emphasis on the full development of the individual personality as the ultimate goal of society. Quakers would eventually modify Hobson's goals slightly to make spiritual development the goal of social reform.

Hobson's disenchantment with orthodox socialism was evident as early as 1905 where he abandoned the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.).¹⁶ By 1910 he had left the Fabian Society as well.¹⁷ S.T. Glass, in his book, The Responsible Society, noted that the primary distinction between Hobson and orthodox socialists was his belief that the workingman, simply because he was a man, "had a natural right to share in the management of the industry in which he was engaged."¹⁸ It was not enough to redistribute material wealth. Hobson believed that the fundamental social environment was the workplace and its condition had "important formative influences" on the personality of the worker.¹⁹ In the existing industrial system the conditions of labour were dominated by the wage relationship. Hobson considered this relationship unjust because it treated the worker as a

commodity and, more importantly, because it required him to sell his right to control the products of his labour. Capitalism, because it it depended upon an unjust organization of labour, prevented the full development of those involved in the system.

Economic subjugation brings in its train certain definite psychological results, which, in their turn, colour and dominate politics.... A community, four-fifths of which is rendered servile by the wage system, cannot possibly slough off the psychology of servility...²⁰

The wage system produced an active minority and a passive majority. Hobson was convinced that simply exchanging one set of owners for another, as the nationalization schemes of state socialism suggested, would not alter this basic relationship. Work environment reform had to be directed towards worker control to banish the psychological effects of wage slavery. It was the emphasis on the internal improvement of the individual rather than the purely political advance of industrial democracy that gave Hobson's Guild socialism its appeal among Christian socialists.

The conversion of the S.Q.S., the dominant Quaker socialist organization, to Guild socialism was revealed in the Ploughshare, the organization's monthly periodical, in November 1913. In this issue, the S.Q.S. openly rejected collectivism because there was "no evidence that socialized industries would treat workers any better than large corporations."²¹ State socialism was no more than state employment, whereas true socialism was as follows:

... an industrial movement of the workers themselves, to resist the downward pressure of Capitalism upon their class so as to gain complete emancipation from employment as mere wage-earners...²²

The S.Q.S. did not immediately apply Guild socialist ideas to the problem of war. In a pre-war critique of militarism, the S.Q.S. identified the enemies of peace as the.

... organized forces of the aristocratic hierarchy of Army and Navy, and of the financial interest of banks, bondholders, shareholders in the armaments ring, and profitmongers of all descriptions...²³

Although there was clearly an antagonism towards capitalism behind this critique, there was very little in it that was strictly socialist and even less that could be identified as Guild socialist. Before the war the S.Q.S. co-operated with the collectivist I.L.P. on peace issues.²⁴ This co-operation indicated that they did not feel that the ideological differences between themselves and the I.L.P. carried over into their anti-militarism.

The change in Quaker socialist orthodoxy took place just as support for socialism within the Society of Friends reached a plateau. Between 1912 and 1913, the S.Q.S. realized that its special conferences were only attended by the converted minority.²⁵ The rest of the Society appeared immune to its appeals. Indeed, the response to a letter circulated by the S.Q.S. in 1911 outlining its basic ideals revealed the depths of conservatism within the Society.²⁶ Between 1911 and 1914 the S.Q.S. acted more cautiously to

avoid alienating existing support. In minute form a S.Q.S. meeting in the summer of 1914 reflects this caution

...great care should be exercised not to antagonize Friends by introducing Socialist economics...The first point to be aimed at is to help Friends to feel a conviction of sin for the present system of industry.²⁷

Although Quaker socialism was clearly on the defensive in the last years of peace, the war did much to change this situation. Some Quakers saw the outbreak of war as the vindication of their critique of militarism but the majority had to admit that their efforts to prevent war had failed dramatically. This failure prompted many Friends to reconsider their understanding of the roots of war and violence. Such a desire is evident in the first official statement by the Society after the outbreak of hostilities.

In the distress and perplexity of this new situation, many are so stunned as scarcely to be able to discern the path of duty. In the sight of God we should seek to get back to first principles....²⁸

Quaker socialists took this opportunity to restate their belief that the roots of war lay in the existing organization of the industrial system. Permanent peace could only be brought about with the construction of a new Christian social order. The new order that the S.Q.S. advocated was a modified form of Guild socialism.

By 1916 Quaker socialism possessed a broader base of support within its parent organization and a greater vitality amongst its members than any other Christian socialist

organization. The war seriously weakened if not destroyed other Nonconformist Christian socialist organizations and the same was true of the C.S.U. and the C.S.L. within the Church of England.²⁹ In contrast, the S.Q.S., and to a lesser extent the F.S.U., drew new strength and purpose from the outbreak of war. The search for a better understanding of the causes of violence gave socialism a second chance among Quakers. The first evidence of this was a minute forwarded to the Yearly Meeting of 1915 by the Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting which asked that time be set aside for the "consideration of the Industrial and Social Order and its relation to the great war."³⁰ The minute linked international conflict with social strife.

We remember that many of the social and industrial conditions in this country have no foundation in justice and that the spirit of unchecked greed leads to industrial strife as well as international war.³¹

This Yearly Meeting was very significant for the future of Quaker pacifism. Opinions expressed were by far the most radical statements made at any Yearly Meeting since the speeches advocating a liberal theology shook the Society in the 1880's. The sitting began with the report of the Friends Social Union, which linked efforts for peace with a desire for the restructuring of social order. "Those of us working for peace amongst the nations must also be ready to work for peace in our industrial order."³² The report was as vague as the statement of the Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting, but the

speakers that followed were more explicit. John St. George Heath began the discussion, and quickly focused on one source of strife, the profit motive. Heath considered this drive the root of all social evil, the results of which were "reckless competition, low wages, social wreckage and ever increasing bitterness of capital and labour."³³ Heath sought a higher conception of industrial life, and he believed that different motivations were possible. Despite these criticisms, Heath stopped short of calling for a socialist restructuring of society. The new economic system would follow out of a determination to live in the image of Christ.

By contrast W. Loftus Hare, editor of the Ploughshare, went much further. He was adamant in his condemnation of a social system "based on the idea of industry not for use, but for profit;..." It was this "universal rush for profit" which had brought about the war."³⁴ Hare's views were supported by several of the speakers that followed. However, the radicals did not completely dominate the sitting. E. Vipont Brown, a member of the F.S.U., and long-time liberal Quaker, did not think that war need be tied directly to the competitive system. The first goal of the Society should be to introduce the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth. Once that was achieved, competition would be unthinkable. Another speaker, Alfred Brooks, in words that recalled mid-Victorian Quaker values, denied that the present war could be seen as a product of the present social order. He believed that if

there was a social illness it had more to do with the evil of drink than the organization of industry.³⁵ Between these two opposing positions stood a group of Friends who were unwilling to commit themselves. Typical of this positions were William Charles Braithwaite and Maurice Gregory, who called for a conference to study the relationship between the social order and war, and discuss what Quaker ideals had to say to the issue. The last act of the session was to create a committee to organize the suggested conference. This committee, called the War and Social Order Committee, was to play a leading role in uniting the Society's pacifism and socialism.³⁶

The formation of the War and Social Order Committee provided the first effective voice of Quaker socialism within the official structure of the Yearly Meeting. Over the next year the committee pursued its mandate vigorously. It organized two conferences: one at Oxford in August of 1915 and the second in London in October of 1916.³⁷ The committee's most significant effort was its report to the Yearly Meeting of 1916, Whence Come Wars?. The authors of the report were all members of either the S.Q.S. or the F.S.U., and the arguments reflect the input of both groups. Essentially the report borrowed a New Liberal understanding of human nature and the effects of the social environment and grafted this ideology on to a Guild socialist critique of industrialism.

The report begins with an article by William Loftus Hare on the role of human nature in the persistence of violence and war. Hare believed that every individual was endowed with a primary impulse, the most important of which was the "will-to-live." Man's impulses as a whole were a part of the natural order, and therefore were unchangeable. However, the "will-to-live" need not invariably lead to conflict, as was commonly suggested. Pacifism was in fact a logical rationalization of the "will-to-live" impulse. Hare believed the individual realized that carrying individual or national egotism to an extreme was a biological danger.³⁸ Once the individual perceived that his own welfare was dependent upon the welfare of others, his natural egotism would encourage co-operation. Co-operation or "mutual aid" was a pragmatic development from the fact of society. This development could not occur if social conditions obscured the logic of co-operation. Hare was convinced, however, that the natural instincts of man would be directed into a force "that may one day make war impossible," if both religions and the economy were properly ordered.³⁹ On this basis, Hare argued that pacifism was in fact consistent with human nature. Indeed Hare goes as far as to say that "human nature has progressed so far that war is now unnatural."⁴⁰ This led him to the obvious question; why does war still take place? His answer was quite explicit.

... we have not in the material, industrial and economic elements of our Social Order kept pace with our moral and psychological enlightenment.⁴¹

And with specific reference to the First World War;

... we do not think that the present war is to be explained as an outburst of radical antagonism or religious animosity, but to the perpetuation of an unsound economic system...⁴²

Hare obviously believed that wars could be prevented by reforming the economic system.

Hare's analysis of human nature was neither innovative nor uncommon. Bertrand Russell, in his work Principles of Social Reconstruction, published in 1916, outlined a similar understanding of human motivations. Russell, like Hare, believed that man's natural impulses did not invariably lead to war. It was true that war was a product of certain natural impulses but it was equally true that other impulses acted against war:

Impulses may be divided into those that make for life and those that make for death. The impulses embodied in the war are among those that make for death. Any one of the impulses that make for life, if it is strong enough, will lead man to stand out against war.⁴³

Like Hare, Russell asserted that the existing condition of society restricted those impulses which would make for life and discourage war. Injustice, and an economic system which compelled "almost all men to carry out the purposes of others rather than their own,...", destroyed the vigor of society and its ability to view life generously.⁴⁴ Pacifism was consistent with human nature, but the generous impulses that

lay behind it were not then dominant. If society could be reconstructed so that those impulses which encouraged pacifism became dominant, an end to war might be possible.*

Like Russell's book, the bulk of the committee's report was devoted to a critique of the existing society and recommendations for change. The committee, however, concentrated to greater extent than Russell on the problems of industrial organization. This emphasis reflected the input of the Quaker socialists. The committee identified two flaws in the economic system: the institution of private property and the wage system. In making these particular criticisms the committee appeared to present a complete repudiation of industrial society. In fact, their rejection of private property was not complete. They had no real objection to the possession of property in itself. What concerned them was the use of property beyond the needs of basic necessity. The analysis of private property was made by Maurice L. Rowntree. Rowntree drew upon L.T. Hobhouse's

* Russell's shift from the liberalism of his family to socialism is best exemplified by his attitude towards the wage system. By denouncing this fundamental element of industrialism Russell was abandoning any faith in the existing system. J. A. Hobson, a prominent New Liberal thinker, had made the same transition by 1916. See Russell's Roads to Freedom (1918) and Hobson's article in the Friend on October 1916.

distinction between property for use and property for power.* Property for use involved those possessions necessary to an ordered life. Property for power was the possession of property for the domination of others, in particular the control of products of other peoples' labour. Rowntree concedes the necessity and virtues of property for use and condemns the use of property for power.⁴⁵ The use of property for power led to social conflict by denying to large groups of individuals the full benefits of their labour.

... the modern organization of industry tends to make the workers into machines, devoid of initiative, enervated by monotony, compelled under the present system, without any say in the matter, to surrender part of the just proceeds of their labour in the form of interest and dividends to those who may never have done one stroke of honest work for the business.⁴⁶

Even if such power was used with the best intentions, this evil remained. The fundamental exploitation of others was not altered, no matter how much compensation was made. By thwarting the personal growth of the worker, industrialism created "widespread social evil and discontent, thus sowing the seeds of industrial revolution at home."⁴⁷ Rowntree also believed that the conflicts created by the use of property for power contributed to international rivalries.

* Rowntree openly follows L. T. Hobhouse's analysis of property, quoting and paraphrasing his work extensively. There is no direct indication which of Hobhouse's works he drew from, but Morals in Evolution (1915) is listed in the report's bibliography of suggested readings. (See Whence Come Wars", pp. 15-18).

... because of the fight to maintain and increase power through property, the severest strife is caused with foreign competitors, each side contending to embroil its government and thus provoke war between the nations.⁴⁸

This critique of the effects of industrial competition on the relations between states was not new. Rowntree's innovation for Quaker thought was to base this long-standing critique on the defects of a fundamental economic institution, private property.

The second characteristic of the existing economic system criticized by the committee was the wage system. The committee's critique of the wage system was more complete. "Wagery" was the root of all social evil and the fundamental division within industrial society was between employer and employee. Mary E. Thorne in her portion of the committee's report considered the conflict created by this division to be the real class war. The employer and employee would be inevitably opposed because the gains of each were at the expense of the other.

While this is the condition of industry imposed by capitalism, the struggle must continue; neither side will lay down arms. The opposition of interest betwixt employers and employed cannot be resolved any other way than by the abolition of wage-earners and wage-payers alike.⁴⁹

Thorne believed that this struggle between the employer and the employee was the root of all social conflict and that a solution to this fundamental conflict would reduce social conflict generally. If the industrial system could be

modified to give the workers a new status with control over production, industrial conflict, and therefore civil and international conflict as well, would be reduced.⁵⁰ Rowntree stated this succinctly in his previous article:

The more mankind transforms competition into co-operation, the more every human soul is accorded the chance of that full and complete life that Jesus meant him to have, the more quickly will wars, both industrial and military, disappear.⁵¹

Having identified what its members believed to be the two principal economic ills, the committee examined various solutions. Co-operatives and profit-sharing schemes were rejected because neither allowed for any real change in the employer/employee relationship.⁵² State socialism was rejected because it involved no more than the exchange of one owner/exploiter for another. Despite the worker's powers within a democratic state, his economic circumstances would not change significantly.⁵³ By contrast, Guild socialism sought to improve the worker's status within the industrial environment. Alfred B. Thorne, in his portion of the report describing the Guild socialist alternative, once again identified the fundamental problem for the worker as his lack of control over the products of his labour. Thorne favoured Guild socialism because it insisted that the right of workers to manage their own labour was as inalienable as their political rights.⁵⁴ The Guild system, with its democratic industrial organization, gave the worker full control over his primary occupation. It was this change which the

committee saw as essential to relieving the tensions within industry and the domestic and international strife which they produced. Restructuring society along the lines suggested would encourage the best impulses in man. By providing a fuller opportunity for personal responsibility for the individual and by encouraging co-operation and mutual aid, Guild socialism would foster those human qualities which made for peaceful co-existence. Guild socialism provided the key to a non-violent society and in their attempt to create a permanent peace, the Committee made it their model for social reconstruction.

Despite the failure of the report to state how the new Christian social order would be brought about, the document did amount to a vastly more sophisticated and comprehensive study of the roots of violence and war than had existed within the Society previously. The report also was quite specific about the changes that were necessary, and these amounted to nothing less than a denunciation of a the capitalist system.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER 4

¹Society of Friends, "London Yearly Meeting", Friend, 8 June 1917, p. 448.

²Marvin Swartz, The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), *passim*.

³Thomas C. Kennedy, The Hound of Conscience: A History of the No-Conscriptive Fellowship, 1914-1919 (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1981), pp. 41-42.

⁴Swartz, p. 1.

⁵Peter d'A Jones, The Christian Socialist Revival, 1877 to 1914 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp.280-281.

⁶S.T. Glass, The Responsible Society: The Ideas of the English Guild Socialists (London: Longmans, 1966), p.5.

⁷J. M. Winter, Socialism and the Challenge of War (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1974), p.128.

⁸*Ibid.*, p.129.

⁹*Ibid.*, p.128.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p.131.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p.129.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*, p.131.

¹⁴S.G. Hobson, Pilgrim to the Left: Memoirs of A Modern Revolutionist (New York: Longmans Green & Co., 1938), *passim*.

¹⁵Jones, p.378.

¹⁶Glass, p.29.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid. p.30.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p.388.

²²Ploughshare, 5 (Nov. 1913): 51-56, quoted in Peter d'A Jones, The Christian Socialist Revival, 1877-1914 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 1968), p.388.

²³Jones, p.385.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., p.379.

²⁶Ibid., p.380.

²⁷Ibid., p.381.

²⁸Society of Friends, "To Men and Woman of Goodwill in the British Empire", Friend, 14 August 1914, p.599.

²⁹Jones, pp. 273-275.

³⁰Society of Friends, "London Yearly Meeting", Friend, 28 May 1915, p.435.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., p.426.

³⁵Ibid., p.428-429.

³⁶Ibid., p.429.

³⁷Society of Friends, "Whence Come Wars?"; Being Papers Presented by Members of the Yearly Meeting Committee on War and the Social Order for their Second Conference, held at Jordans 7th-10th April, 1916; Together with notes at Discussions of Papers; Report to Yearly Meeting; Information and Suggestions for Inquiries (London: Hendley Bros., 1916), p.3.

³⁸Ibid., p.13.

³⁹Ibid., p.14.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Bertrand Russell, Principles of Social Reconstruction (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1916), p. 22.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 23-24.

⁴⁵Whence Come Wars?, p. 15.

⁴⁶Ibid., p.16.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., p.17.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp.28-29.

⁵⁰Ibid., p.50.

⁵¹Ibid., p.29.

⁵²Ibid., p.91.

⁵³Ibid., p.71-72.

⁵⁴Ibid., p.86.

CHAPTER FIVE: A SOCIALIST QUAKER ORTHODOXY

We are called to dedicate ourselves to the great endeavour of building our social life that it may set free the mass of the people instead of enslaving them,... that we may lead out the children into a full life instead of fitting them to take places in the industrial or military machine.

1918 Yearly Meeting Epistle¹

The radicalism of the War and Social Order Committee is less surprising when it is realized that in 1916 members of other Christian churches were producing documents similar to Whence Come Wars?. The most obvious parallel was the fifth report of the Church of England's National Mission of Repentance and Hope. The Mission undertaken by the church in the autumn of 1916 is described by Alan Wilkinson in The Church of England and the First World War, as an attempt by the church "to respond to the spiritual needs of the nation in wartime".² More pragmatically it was an attempt, as Wilkinson stated, to answer the criticisms leveled against the Church for not preventing the war and for failing to speak effectively to the lower classes. Wilkinson also believed that the church was concerned with a decline in attendance that developed after an initial increase in 1914.³ Whatever motivations prevailed, the Mission was not a tremendous evangelical success. John Oliver in The Church and Social Order claimed that the Mission failed because it

called the nation to repentance at a time when it was struggling to survive.⁴ Britons were not in the mood for the Church's medicine.

Regardless of its failure to bring Britons to a new appreciation of the Church, the Mission did produce five comprehensive reports on the condition of the country at war. The fifth entitled Christianity and Industrial Problems, was an extraordinary document for the Church of England to produce. It made five main points. Christian moral teaching should be applied to society, industry and economics just as they were to the individual. New Testament teachings about the dangers and legitimate use of wealth should be given greater emphasis. Christ taught the supreme importance of personality and therefore men should not be treated as mere instruments of production. Individualism must be complemented by duty to the community. Lastly, society must accept responsibility for the welfare of its members.⁵ These resolutions contained a great deal of encouragement and very little condemnation. As such it was a less radical and hard-hitting critique of society than the Quaker report. However, there are obvious similarities between the two. The importance given the application of Christian morality to all parts of society, and to the personality of the individual, are clear examples. Moreover, both reports state that there was a need for a new social order based on Christian ethics. The Anglican report also recognized that the necessary

changes were more than mere adjustments to the existing system. The problems in society were "expressions of certain deficiencies deeply rooted in the nature of the social order itself."⁶

Wilkinson stated that the authors of the Church's report tried to bridge differences of opinion on two issues: whether social issues were in fact the concern of the Church at all, and if so, how much worker control was appropriate. In skillfully incorporating both sides of these arguments in the report, the authors made possible its publication but severely hindered its application. After the war several attempts were made to put into practice the principles set down in the report, but for many reasons very little was accomplished.⁷ The major problem for the report was its lack of support from within the church itself. Similar problems faced the report of the War and Social Order Committee. Although it had an official status as a report to a Yearly Meeting, the Committee's report merely represented the opinions of a small radical minority. If the report was to be accepted as Quaker doctrine, many more Friends would have to be convinced.

The Quaker report was published in December 1915, but the first discussion of the Committee's ideas did not take place until the Yearly Meeting of 1916. This gathering was pre-occupied with defusing the absolutist/alternativist conflict and rejecting militancy in the process. For these

reasons the report was not embraced enthusiastically. The minutes of the session on war and the social order at the Yearly Meeting of 1916 reveal very little support for the specific suggestions made by the committee. Only committee members themselves made any statements which included suggestions for radical social reform. There was, however, widespread agreement on the need for some sort of change. J. T. Walton Newbold, a member of the committee, closed his statement with a call for a change in the organization of society.

Let Friends seek a transformation, that the things that were given by God in this fair world might be used for the good of all men.⁸

His point was taken up by almost every member at the sitting. The most significant supporter was Henry T. Hodgkin. Hodgkin pointed to the extraordinary accomplishments of the nation once its energies were directed to a common cause. In this he saw as a lesson for Friends:

... might we not also see some vision of a nation organized for peace and righteousness [?] Surely in such a case we should see great strides towards the day of peace, ... The lesson of war should be the organization of society or nation for peace.⁹

Hodgkin's comments brought the sitting to a close and the minute produced by the Clerk echoed his recommendation of work for social change.

We must show ourselves as a community who believe in the practicality of the Kingdom of God. We must believe in the possibility of reconstruction and seek actively for new light. ... we must make experiments and provide that out of this period of war and change a new and better order may arise.¹⁰

Just as he had been instrumental in defusing the conflict between the absolutists and alternativists, Hodgkin was able to direct the Society into this new activity. In the process of directing the Society away from militant political action he directed them towards work for social reconstruction.

Interest in the socialist critique increased immediately after the Yearly Meeting of 1916 and remained high over the next two years. Typical of letters to the Friend in the summer of 1916 was one by Wilfred E. Littleboy which linked an active peace effort to a new way of looking at society.

Did [Christ] not rather teach principles which if carried out as He had intended would have transformed this world here into the Kingdom of God on earth? And is not one reason for the failure to accomplish this result, that in studying the teachings of Jesus we have only looked for those aspects which affect men as individuals and have failed to grasp those aspects which affect men as members of a community?¹¹

Rufus Jones suggested the same revision of Quaker attitudes in the same issue of the Friend. Jones believed that the Society could "never again accept the easy individualism of the eighteenth century" and must recognize that the social group made an "immense formative contribution" to the life of the individual.¹²

The views of Littleboy and Jones, however, were relatively moderate. Some Friends proposed even more radical solutions than the Committee on War and Social Order. The Committee had condoned a limited ownership of private property. Douglas J.J. Owen, while generally in favour of

the Committee's recommendations, also spoke a word of warning.

Without a doubt, Friends will be labouring under a delusion if they think that these or any other plans will find any real measure of success in reconstructing society or alleviating the miseries of the poor, so long as society remains based on a fundamental injustice -- the private ownership of land.¹³

Owen made specific references to Herbert Spencer's early works and the writings of Henry George (proponent of the Single Tax). He saw the ideas of both of these men as developments of principles recognized by the eighteenth century American Quaker, John Woolman. For Owen, Woolman's work established the incompatibility of private ownership of land with the standards of the Gospel. Owen urged Friends to "inquire afresh into the sources of our incomes, and our acquiescence or otherwise in the continuance of a state of injustice."¹⁴ Owen's chiding was repeated by Robert T. Parker a month later. Parker insisted that the aim of the Society to Christianize the existing social system was an impossible task.

... any such effort can only result in the relief of symptoms without the eradication of the spirit from whence wars come. Can competition for gain be made Christian? Can Christianity justify the private "ownership" and control of land and other means of production?¹⁵

Parker believed that Quakers should reject half-measures such as restricting investments to certain virtuous industries or by creating experimental communities. Instead, they should

begin by "converting those industries which are so largely under Quaker control" in a way that would eliminate the indecent spirit and prove the sincerity of their pacifism.¹⁶ Parker believed that if a form of social radicalism was going to contribute to peace it was not the mild reformism of social unionism but the more thoroughgoing reconstruction recommended by Quaker socialists.

Socialist Quakers were critical more than of private property in the summer of 1916. J. Theodore Harris in an article written for the Friend in October 1916 lists three basic evils in the existing social order; the private ownership of land; the private control of capital and production for profit. Harris believed that for true reconstruction to take place these three evils had to be replaced by their opposites; collective ownership of land and capital and production for use.¹⁷ It is evident, therefore that through the summer and fall of 1916, a wider group of Friends were more willing to entertain suggestions for radical social change than ever before. Nevertheless, it is likely that Quakers with strong socialist views were still in a minority. Interest had increased but it was unclear how much real commitment had developed. At the conference organized by the War and the Social Order Committee in October, a clearer picture emerged of the extent of Quaker radicalism.

In accordance with the request of the 1916 Yearly Meeting, the War and Social Order Committee organized a conference open to all Friends. The conference was held in London in October, 1916, and attracted a large but select attendance. A commentator from the Friend described the conference as a "thoroughly representative gathering" but was almost certainly guilty of wishful thinking.¹⁸ Other Quakers in attendance objected to the narrow range of experience drawn upon at the conference. H. Sefton-Jones, who spoke regularly during the conference, wrote to the Friend afterwards to criticize the conference's attendance. "For a Yearly Meeting Conference the attendance was not large and several areas were unrepresented."¹⁹

...it is more difficult to account for the almost entire absence of leading local Friends engaged in business, and still more for the very thin attendance on the part of London Friends and attenders of the wage-earning classes on Saturday and Sunday especially.²⁰

Sefton-Jones' concern that more Quaker employers should have been present is a valid one. Such Friends should have had a considerable interest in the proceedings. His second concern, that so few working-class Friends were present, is unrealistic. Certainly since the early eighteenth century the Society of Friends had not drawn more than a tiny fraction of its membership from the working class. Sefton-Jones was concerned about the attendance of people who did not exist. This inexplicable expectation aside, Sefton-Jones' concerns about the unrepresentativeness of the

gathering were justified. His characterization of those that did attend should not be ignored either. He identified the most outspoken as the "Intellectual Proletariat" who made up only "..a minute fraction of the Society..." He saw in the conference a determined effort to "thrust our denomination into the position of an obedient seconder of the demands of the Labour Party."²¹ For Sefton-Jones this was a threat to the existence of the Society.

It is abundantly clear that unless the cautious deliberation and practical business experience of many more Friends can bring the T.N.T. enthusiasm of certain spokesmen and spokeswomen on the Committee within the definition of a safe explosive there will be more likelihood of shattering the Quaker gun than hitting the mark.²²

Sefton-Jones' remarks were the objections of a Friend disagreeing with the nature of social reform and not with reform itself. His programme of social change involved "... Law Reform, Land Reform, and Drink reform", all traditional areas of Quaker social criticism.²³ These changes involved modifying the existing system rather than reconstructing its basic structure and ideals. The division among those attending the conference was over how much and what kind of change was needed and not over the need for change itself. The commentator for the Friend also recognized this division within the conference. Although the Friend attempted to de-emphasize the disagreement, the basic and determined division between those who sought only reform and those who sought fundamental change was still evident. The Friend, like

Sefton-Jones, described one extreme as a group of hard-core radicals.

... they appeared to think that no reform was worth the expenditure of time and effort so long as we lived under the competitive system in industry -- not even making an exception in regard to education.²⁴

The more moderate view was expressed by J. W. Graham in the opening address of the conference. Graham, like the radicals, believed that the Society must look for the roots of war in the nature of society. The problems he identified, however, were the traditional ones.

First among unhealthy conditions which we should all agree must be removed or avoided was commercial protection... Only by unconditional Free Trade could we be relieved from the constant economic pressure for war.²⁵

The commercial rivalry associated with protectionism was compounded by an aristocratic lust for power.

For while capitalist enterprises... all had their finger in every pie of national rivalry which had led to war, they would operate in vain unless there were monarchs and war lords and governing persons, desiring power for its own sake, and conquest for the sake of power.²⁶

While these criticisms point to specific causes of war, Graham believed human failings were behind them all.

It was truer to say that war and the social order were both dependent upon human nature, rather than that war was dependent on the social order...²⁷

Graham's critique of war was basically the traditional Quaker combination of Cobdenite Radicalism and the Nonconformist

Conscience. His only real advance on this approach was his conviction that human nature progresses. He believed that "the progress we desired, towards co-operation, towards love, was on the line of the march of human nature."²⁸ Graham's faith in the progressive evolution of human nature made him a gradualist. Change would come slowly and inevitably. This faith made him reject the necessity of the structural change of society. Peace would come because society would change as human nature progressed. He saw nothing in capitalism itself which linked it inextricably to war and denied that economic competition led to political competition. Graham's speech was clearly far less radical than the Report of the committee.

The opposing opinion was best expressed by J. E. Hodgkin, clerk of the conference and chairman of the War and the Social Order Committee. Hodgkin began with a call for a real change in the order of society. He quoted the part of Epistle of the Yearly Meeting the previous May. "We are convinced that He is leading us to something different from that which has satisfied us so far."²⁹ Hodgkin asked the conference whether this was mere rhetoric. While he personally did not see how competition could be eliminated from the present system, at the same time he was sure that it was not consistent with brotherly love. Beyond a certain level, all advance in wealth by an individual was at the expense of others. If co-operation for the common good could

replace competition, destitution would disappear. Hodgkin asked the Society to recognize its complicity in the existing system as employers or shareholders, living wholly or in part upon the labour of others. Implicit in this statement is a criticism of capitalism as an exploiter of labour. Hodgkin also believed that the basic problems lay in the nature of industrial relationships and not in the character of the individual. Although Hodgkin spoke in mild and cautious terms, underlying his words was a much more severe critique of capitalism than Graham had presented.³⁰

The clerk of the meeting in drafting a minute based on these discussions was obliged to distill those ideas upon which there was a consensus but also indicate the range of ideas presented. The minute that was finally drafted reveals both the extent and the limits of Quaker socialism. It begins by stating that the ethics of competition were discussed but does not endorse either of the opinions expressed³¹. Obviously there was no consensus on this issue, and indeed strong opinions were expressed on both sides. More interesting is what the minute indicates was agreed upon. Those present agreed that education was an essential aspect of reform and that surplus capital may be acquired "at the cost of the lives and welfare of their fellow-men". The minute also stated that Friends should consider their responsibility for the bad conditions of slum life and for the restricted opportunities of the working class - "which

seem to prevent them from entering upon the fuller life, the more abundant life, which our Masters came that they might have."³² In short, there was agreement that the existing economic system was both exploitative and oppressive.

The statement that eventually emerged from the conference was definite on both the need for change and what shape that change must take. Like the committee's report, the statement endorsed a modified form of Guild socialism. Secular Guild socialism saw full individual liberty as an end in itself. In contrast, the conference clearly believed that full liberty should serve the ultimate goal of bringing into being the Kingdom of God on earth. They wanted to create a new Christian social order.

We base our position on our loyalty to Jesus, with His thought of service to the uttermost, and our belief in the Divine in every man with all its implications.³³

The most important implication of this fundamental ideal was "the sacred right of every man to develop his own true personality...".³⁴ The goal of all social change should be the creation of the greatest opportunity for the individual to reach his full spiritual potential. Only with the full spiritual development of every individual would society hope to eliminate war.

The conference also modified the means of social change adopted by the secular Guild socialists. As pacifists, they could not accept class conflict as an engine of social advance. Social change must come about by means which

conform to the ideals of the new order. Only through co-operation and understanding could harmony be created in human relationships. Existing social institutions, the conference declared, should be judged on how they encourage harmony.

No organization, however complex or firmly established, should be tolerated which thwarts or violates this ideal. In so far as society as we know it is based on ignorable or inferior aims, if war, or industry, or social convention treats the individual as a pawn, or as a means and not an end, it is in antagonism to Christ.³⁵

Having summarized its general beliefs the conference incorporated them in seven resolutions which they considered the foundation of a Christian social order.*

Unfortunately, the seven points did not include any step by step programme for creating the new order. The conference only managed to agree on principles. The seven points are also not as specific nor as direct in their criticisms as the original report of the War and the Social Order Committee because the conference included a much broader cross section of the Society. This moderation does not discount the fact that the "seven points" represented a significant advance for the Society of Friends. In 1914 the argument that peace must be brought about primarily through radical social change was a view held by a small minority.

*See Appendix 1 for a full text of the "Seven Points".

At that time a variety of approaches competed within the Society, none of which were as comprehensive as the one developed in 1916. Moreover, the October conference's statement reveals that the socialist critique had become the approach of a much larger section of the Society. Nevertheless, the conference was not totally representative in either its attendance or its status. Without the endorsement of a Yearly Meeting the seven points could not be considered tenets of the Society of Friends. More support for the committee's proposals would have to be created if such an endorsement was to occur.

In the months that followed the October conference support for the seven points appeared to be decreasing rather than increasing. The principle source of opposition came from Quaker employers. Looking back in 1924 upon Quaker opposition to socialism, the last clerk of the S.Q.S., Stephen James Thorne, saw the conflict within the Society as being

"...between a group of young radicals of modest means and the great, sturdy Quaker business families, deeply rooted, socially conservative, pious, and rich".³⁶

Thorne is probably exaggerating the distinction. There were a few Quaker employers who held radical views. Even those Quaker employers who rejected the committee's recommendations could not agree on how completely they should do so. Some refused to even consider the seven points whereas others were cautiously interested. These moderates would provide a

bridge between the socialists and the conservatives making possible an accommodation between the two by 1918.

The extreme opposing view was exemplified by the old pro-Boer, James N. Richardson. Richardson denied that the relations between capital and labour were inherently antagonistic and insisted that private ownership of land and capital, and production for profit, were all "God-ordained" and a stimulus to "good order and good conduct."³⁷

... that State is wise which sternly confirms its citizens in the possession of their private property and avoids wild-cat schemes for depriving such of the results of their own earnings or the earnings of their forefathers, in order to endow and re-endow those who never had the necessary self-denial to put by a penny for a rainy day.³⁸

Richardson's attitude was rarely expressed in the Friend or at Yearly Meetings. However, Richardson was not fundamentally different from the type of social critic who concentrated on individual morality. Richardson went one step farther and rejected any personal responsibility for social deprivation.

... but I really don't see why I should seek to enable my employees to educate their children at "Bootham" or "Leighton Park". It would not be good for most of them, and I should be on the rates myself.³⁹

Other Quaker employers, although more sympathetic, than Richardson were also critical of the idealism of those who spoke at the conference. They believed the conference suffered from the "great disadvantage of speaking on the subject of capital and labour from the theoretical rather

than the practical standpoint."⁴⁰ Their own experience tended to make them less optimistic about the capabilities or aspirations of the working man.

A few, but only a few, workmen have the desire to better their social conditions. These few would be the men of the class who attend Adult Schools, and from such the speakers seem to have drawn their views.⁴¹

These Quakers believed that to do any more for the worker would be a wasted effort. Typical of this viewpoint was Edward J. Gibbins who was unsure of the wisdom of increasing the basic wage of the worker.

I find that, generally speaking, those earning about thirty-five shillings weekly live the best lives. The high wage earners frequently adopt extravagant habits of spending.⁴²

Quaker employers did not recognize the condescension in their views. They saw themselves as rather enlightened, recognizing the need to improve relations between owners and workers and willing to make changes beyond material improvements. Gibbins, for instance, made a number of recommendations including complete recognition of trade unions and the formation of joint wage advisory boards composed of workers and owners.⁴³ Trade unions had been effectively legalized in 1871 and their right to strike and picket had been confirmed in 1906.⁴⁴ Clearly Gibbin was not breaking new ground in industrial relations. Equally dated were the co-partnership and profit-sharing suggestions of Kenneth C. Allen.

Profit-sharing and co-partnership, when run on well-thought-out lines, is, I believe, likely to prove of inestimable value in solving many problems. As has already been pointed out, a man will look after and value his own property in a way he would not think of doing if it belonged to another.⁴⁵

Allen at least had an optimistic faith in human nature. This was the fundamental difference between the radicals and the businessmen. The committee was attempting to change not just the structure of society but also the relationships within it. This transformation included the changes in the basic motivations of human activity. Most Quaker employers did not think such a transformation was possible.

The War and Social Order Committee had a second opportunity to place their ideas before the whole Society at the Yearly Meeting of 1917. This time the committee had the support of the statement by the conference in October. Nevertheless, the opposition of conservative Quaker employers such as Sefton-Jones, Allen, Gibbin and Richardson prevented the adoption of the seven points. Harrison Barrow, in the opening address to the sitting on war and the social order, identified the main obstacle to the work of the committee as "the deadening hand of custom" shown in an "unreasoning opposition by certain Friends to Socialism."⁴⁶ However, it was not just the opposition of the conservative Quaker employers that blocked the adoption of the seven points. The committee contributed to its own failure by asking the Yearly Meeting to state that the seven points were based on a "true

understanding of Quaker principles as shown in the Book of Discipline." In doing so they misjudged the sentiment of the Meeting. Initially, there was no objection to the seven points being endorsed in this manner. The clerk of the Yearly Meeting proposed a minute adopting the seven points and "commending them to the consideration of Friends." If the Yearly Meeting had accepted the minute as proposed, their act would have amounted a wholesale revision of Quaker doctrine. At the last moment, the sitting appeared to realize the magnitude of their actions and referred the seven points to the Quarterly Meetings for consideration. The Quarterly Meetings were to indicate whether they believed that the seven points were indeed based on a true understanding of the Quaker principles and report their conclusions to the Yearly Meeting of 1918. Adoption of the seven points had been postponed for a full year.⁴⁷

The decision to refer the seven points to the Quarterly Meetings was both reasonable and traditional.* The Society's governing system was organized to respect the minority opinion and the opposition of the Quaker employers could not be ignored. Decisions on issues where there were strong opposing opinions were usually postponed until a consensus could be developed. On other issues, the Society had put off decisions for years rather than defy a vocal minority.⁴⁸ Quakers were also unwilling to make changes in Quaker doctrine without consulting the Quarterly and Monthly

*** See Appendix Two**

Meetings. Theoretically, such recommendations should have been made by the local meetings, but many of these gatherings were less than active. The Yearly Meeting established committees and organized conferences to counter the chronic inertia of the Society. Nevertheless, accepting the recommendations of a committee or a conference without consulting the lower meetings was too great an abuse of the Society's traditional procedures. This concern for due process should not obscure the fact that the Society had employed an effective delaying tactic. The additional year gave the War and Social Order committee the time to overcome both the opposition of the conservatives and the hesitancy of the moderates.

The War and Social Order Committee's campaign to develop a consensus on the seven points had two major thrusts. Throughout the remainder of 1917, and in the first months of 1918, the committee sent representatives to each of the Quarterly Meetings to speak on the meaning and importance of the committee's recommendations. Some of the Quarterly Meetings endorsed the seven points whole heartedly; others gave very little support. In the end, ten of the eighteen Quarterly Meetings agreed that the seven points were consistent with a true understanding of Quaker principles.⁴⁹

The second part of the committee campaign was directed at the Quaker employers. The opposition of these Quakers had not been completely irrational or stubborn. Some Quaker

businessmen, such as Arnold S. Rowntree, held quite advanced social views. In an effort to encourage a progressive attitude, the committee, in co-operation with several Quaker employers, organized a series of meetings throughout 1917 between committee representatives and Quaker businessmen. These meetings culminated in a national conference of Quaker employers in April 1918. The existence of this conference by itself testifies to a willingness on the part of Quaker employers to consider the ideas of the War and Social Order Committee.

The organizers of the conference invited three speakers to present their views on the problems of labour: Henry Clay, late chairman of the Leeds Labour Party; Tom Hackett, Birmingham councilor; and Miss Scruton, an official of the Worker's Educational Association (W.E.A.). All three guest speakers attacked the basic nature of the capitalist system. The wage system gave the employer "too much control over the lives of the workers" and the ownership of private capital so distorted the intentions of even the best employers that they were "apt to think more of the main chance than even of industrial peace." These two basic elements of the system prevented any "real community of interest" from ever developing between employees and employers. Furthermore, the basic requirement of the capitalist system for a balance between employed and unemployed workers as a check on wages created a constant uncertainty in the life of the worker.

This "ever-present fear" prevented the worker from "developing himself or getting a right outlook on life."⁵⁰ All three speakers agreed that the faults in the capitalist system were fundamental and that the employers were just as much victims of these faults as the workers. They believed that if society was to improve, the organization of the industrial system would have to be changed radically.

In contrast, the suggestions made by the Quaker employers did not include any real change in the organization of industry. Most of their suggestions were essentially ameliorative. Hours of work should be shortened, especially for women. A basic wage should be established which would ensure a minimum standard of living. Relations with workers should be more intimate and based on fair dealings and trust.⁵¹ There was a willingness to discuss the more radical reforms of co-partnership and profit-sharing schemes but these were severely criticized by the labour representatives. The three speakers identified three basic faults. Such schemes were a threat to the Trade Union movement because they involved "individual bargaining between single firms and their operatives."⁵² In addition, both schemes made a worker's income dependent on uncertain profits - a risk that the worker could not tolerate to the same extent as an employer. The third objection of the labour representatives reveals the basic division between their hosts and themselves.

... profits did not depend simply on Labour but were due mainly to three factors, -- efficient labour, efficient management, and efficiency on the commercial side of a business. To make the workman's income dependent to any extent upon profits was to make it depend upon a factor over which he had practically no control.⁵³

Altering the status of the worker without giving him control over the full range of business activities was in fact a negative step. A few Quaker employers were willing to consider greater worker control, but these men were exceptions.⁵⁴ The views of the guest speakers were quietly listened to but not supported. The attitudes of Quaker employers at the conference did not appear significantly different from those expressed in late 1916.

At the Yearly Meeting, a month later, the speeches told a different story. Arnold S. Rowntree, in summarizing the conclusions of the conference, stated that the employers believed that it was necessary to give the worker more control.

Ours had been a system of industrial autocracy, but there was now a demand for democratic control in business, and the Employers' Conference felt that the worker must be given greater control of industry than in the past, establishing indeed the beginning of self-government in industry.⁵⁵

Rowntree stated that the employers also agreed to encourage this change in status by recognizing shop committees and shop stewards and the establishing Works Councils of labour and management. These changes would improve efficiency and create a work environment that encouraged the employee "to be and do his best."⁵⁶

This sudden reversal by Quakers employers is difficult to explain. Rowntree credits the conference with bringing about a change in attitudes of Quaker employers.

The value of the conference had been its common recognition of responsibility in these matters, its common desire to face these issues fearlessly, and the strength that came from mutual help. They recognized that amongst many of us, more important than changes in machinery was a change of spirit, in industrial as well as in international affairs.⁵⁷

However, the attitudes he identifies were prevalent before the conference. Most Quaker employers had recognized the need for change as early as 1916. The same majority had insisted that structural change was unnecessary, if the proper spirit motivated both employers and employees. It was the War and Social Order Committee that had sought a change in the "machinery". Therefore, Rowntree's claim that the conference convinced Quaker employers of the need for a change in spirit must have been exaggerated. In fact, the conference did not change attitudes, it merely isolated the extreme ones. The majority of Quaker employers continued to believe in the need for change short of the wholesale reconstruction of capitalism. By gathering the employers together this moderate view was confirmed as the position of the vast majority. Richardson, and the few others like him, were shown to be a tiny minority. As Rowntree stated, the value of the conference lay in its "common recognition of responsibility...", something Richardson had refused to do.

At a Yearly Meeting, the opinions of a vocal minority could not be ignored. At a conference, however, the large majority was able to isolate extremists like Richardson and present a much more moderate view on reconstruction in their report to the Yearly Meeting a month later.

When the seven points were presented to the Yearly Meeting of 1918 the War and the Social Order Committee made it clear what their adoption would imply. The seven points were an attempt to approach all of human relations; industrial, political and international, in a manner consistent with Quaker principles. Mary King Emmott's opening summary of the Committee conclusions stated that a discussion of the social order was inseparable from all other questions.

Whether we spoke of carrying the Quaker message to foreign lands or of extension work at home, the same reproach confronted us...Everywhere we were confronted by the inconsistency of a social order founded on a materialistic and not a spiritual basis.⁵⁸

The roots of war as well as the causes of any number of social problems lay in the malformation of society. The committee had been brought to this conclusion by their investigation into the causes of war.

Our investigation into the causes of war in 1915, when that Committee was appointed, showed that the principles which had led us as a Society to condemn war, were such as if carried out would lead us to condemn the whole social order; for wherever human relations were determined by force and not by reason the essential conditions of war were present.⁵⁹

The Committee presented the seven points as a set of ideals that would change the basis of social organization. They contained new motivations for human action and emphasized both the satisfaction of human need and service to fellow men. Above all else, social structures had to leave the individual free to order his own life as much as possible. In the end, the seven points were adopted with very little difficulty. The opening speech was followed by a brief discussion after which the seven points were recommended to the Yearly Meeting for adoption. Henry T. Hodgkin and Arnold S. Rowntree both encouraged the Yearly Meeting to adopt the seven points and suggested that the Quarterly Meetings be consulted on how the Society could best live up to these ideals. Several other Quakers supported acceptance and a minute was adopted to this effect without objection.⁶⁰

The adoption of the seven points was the culmination of the transformation of Quaker thought by liberal Christian theology. It also marked the completion of a thorough re-examination of their peace testimony by the Society. During the first half of the war, the Society was concerned with its commitment to pacifism and the implications this had for the Society's relationship with society and the State. The last half of the war was dominated by the development of a new programme for peace. By adopting the seven points, the Society declared its belief that the peacable kingdom had to

be brought about, not simply by appeals to the consciences of individuals, but primarily by creating a social environment which encouraged the development of peaceful people.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER 5

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⁴John Oliver, The Church and Social Order (A.R.Mowbray & Co., 1968), p.23.

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⁷Ibid., p.57.

⁸Society of Friends, "London Yearly Meeting", Friend, 2 June 1916, p.416.

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¹⁰Ibid., p.417.

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¹³"Correspondence", Friend, 23 June 1916, p.495.

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¹⁵"Correspondence", Friend, 21 July 1916, p.495.

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¹⁸"Notes on the War and Social Order Conference", Friend, 27 October 1916, p.834.

¹⁹"Correspondence", Friend, 27 October 1916, pp.856-57.

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- ³⁴Ibid.
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- ³⁶Jones, p.378.
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- ⁴¹Ibid.
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⁴⁴Sidney and Beatrice Webb, The History of Trade Unionism, rev. ed. (London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1920; Reprint ed., Clifton, New Jersey: Augustus M. Kelley, 1973), pp. 606-608.

⁴⁵¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶Society of Friends, "London Yearly Meeting", Friend, June 1917, p.449.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp.449-450.

⁴⁸Elizabeth Ishichei, Victorian Quakers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.82.

⁴⁹Society of Friends, "Whence Come Wars?" pp.146-155.

⁵⁰Society of Friends, "London Yearly Meeting", Friend, 7 June 1918, p.363.

⁵¹Ibid., pp.253, 265-266, passim.

⁵²Ibid., p.266.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Society of Friends, "London Yearly Meeting", Friend, 7 June 1918, p.363.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

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⁶⁰Ibid., p.351.

EPILOGUE: THE DECLINE OF QUAKER ACTIVISM

We live in days of disillusionment.¹
(1919 Yearly Meeting Epistle)

The cessation of hostilities in November 1918 was celebrated enthusiastically by the vast majority of British citizens. However, a few Britons greeted the armistice with mixed feelings. Conscientious objectors, in particular, could scarcely share in the happiness around them. The former chairman of the N.C.F., Clifford Allen, claimed, with a sense of isolation intensified by the after effects of illness in prison, that he "never longed so intensely as then to be one with the rest of the nation".² Ironically, it was the peace itself that prevented him from rejoicing. Allen could not see the "outbreak" of peace in 1918 as a victory for British pacifism. "I too, was glad that the war was likely to be over, but I had no share in the achievement over which everyone was exulting."³ Bertrand Russell, active war-resister and a former chairman of the N.C.F., shared Clifford Allen's sense of disillusionment. Bitterly, and in a far too self-critical depression, he reflected that "when the war was over, I saw that all I had done had been totally useless except to myself. I had not saved a single life or shortened the war by a minute."⁴ For those who had opposed the war, there was little satisfaction about the manner in which victory had been achieved. Conscription had been

successfully imposed upon the nation and the end of hostilities had been brought about by ruthless military means rather than by conciliatory negotiations. The war resisters had never developed beyond a small harassed minority, and they had failed to provide an effective opposition to the government. This outcome made it difficult for resisters like Allen and Russell to escape a feeling of futility. Russell, in particular, had lost faith in the likelihood of significant postwar reconstruction by November 1918.

The Society of Friends had taken an active role in the struggle against the war and, indeed, some of the most stalwart war resisters were the imprisoned Quaker absolutists. The F.S.C., in particular, had endorsed an uncompromising policy towards non-combatancy. The failure of these efforts should have been as great a disillusionment for Quakers as it was for other resisters. Quakers were disappointed with the war's outcome, but their disillusionment was different from that of Allen or Russell. By 1918, Friends were concentrating on rebuilding society after the war and were able to see the end of hostilities as a new beginning, regardless of how it came about. The end of the fighting merely marked the beginning of reconstruction. The Society, rather than lamenting the failure of pacificism, took the end of hostilities as a time to restate their goals and hopes for the future. An editorial in the November 15, 1918, issue of the Friend optimistically proclaimed that "We

are all pacifists nowadays."⁵ The only difference that the author saw amongst men was the method of bringing about peace. This article went on to restate the fundamental ideals of Quaker pacifism. Peace would be brought about by "changing evil-doers into children of light".⁶ By November 1918 Quakers were looking forward to a treaty and a reconstructed society which would encourage a lasting peace. It was the subsequent failure both of the Treaty of Versailles to create a just peace and of the aborted programmes for social reconstruction which would bring about the disillusionment of Quakers.

Quakers had held out high hopes for the reforms that a true treaty of reconciliation might accomplish. During the war Quakers campaigned for a negotiated settlement that would not leave one country or another in a position of humiliation or subjugation. Enthusiasm for reconstruction had encouraged Quakers and many others just after November 1918 to see the forthcoming treaty negotiations not just as a way to end the war but as an opportunity to institute significant reforms in the diplomatic system. Because of these exaggerated hopes the treaty was a severe disappointment for the Society. They saw its punitive measures and pronouncement of guilt as little more than a continuation of the war. Such measures, they were certain, would simply breed resentment and hatred, and in so doing, provide the foundation of future European conflicts. It was the failure of the Treaty of Versailles and

not the military victory that disillusioned the Society of Friends.

Part of the Society's response to the cessation of hostilities was to expand existing programmes of civilian relief work in Europe. Relief programmes were established or extended in Germany, France, Belgium, Austria, Serbia, Russia, Poland, Hungary, Italy and Turkey. The work of Dr. Hilda Clark in Vienna between 1919 and 1923 was typical of Quaker aid to the desperate populations of Europe. Food, housing, and medical facilities were in extremely short supply and the disruptions of the war and the peace left the Austrian government without the resources to cope. International assistance and Quaker efforts in particular, provided the only ball work to endemic sickness and starvation in the first years after the war.⁷ While obviously motivated by a desire to encourage reconciliation as well as a simple humanitarianism in 1918, relief work was not directly associated with the aspirations of the Quaker pacifism. The focus and hope of reconstruction measures were a new Christian social order in Britain. Hopes for this new beginning would be only slightly longer lived than those associated with the Treaty of Versailles.

The fate of British reconstruction has been recently examined by several historians. The majority opinion is that for various reasons the government programmes failed on a scale and with a swiftness that bordered on a betrayal of the

British people. The opposite minority opinion, best argued by Kenneth O. Morgan in several works on this period, can only claim that the failure was not as complete as others argue.⁸ The relatively severity of the failure of reconstruction is less important than the reasons why the failure took place. The decline of the Quaker will for reconstruction must be placed in the context of a decline in the general will.

Paul Banton Johnson in his examination of post-war reconstruction policy entitled Land Fit for Heroes claimed that governmental efforts at reconstruction had ended by July 1921.⁹ By that date the view that reform was integral to social improvement had been completely supplanted by a belief in the virtues of the existing system and the need for efficiency and order. Both in the Treaty of Versailles and in social reform policy, the nation swept the lessons of war aside and rejected their responsibility for the war and the responsibility of the social order. However, governmental social reform did not fail solely because of a war-weary nation's need to cope with its past. Phillip Abrams in "The Failure of Social Reform, 1918-1920" suggested that previous explanations of the failure of reconstruction are all variations of either the "hard faced men" theory, put forward by Lloyd George himself, or the explanation first suggested by J.M. Keynes, that the economic slowdown undercut the financial resources of the government needed for social

programmes.¹⁰ Each of these traditional explanations has some merit. It is true that the election of 1918, with its jingoistic atmosphere, produced a government whose members were more business-oriented and perhaps less enthusiastic about reform than the previous coalition.¹¹ However, capitalism and a concern for social reform could co-exist. Indeed, some businessmen had come to see government co-ordination of certain sectors of the economy as an admirable method of reducing wasteful competition. Johnson attempted to modify the "hard-faced men" theory by claiming that there was really only a conflict between different approaches to social reform.¹² The concern for efficiency and order amongst these new men included a belief that these adjustments would bring social improvement in their wake. They sought to make the existing system perform to its full potential.

If this new Parliament saw governmental involvement in wide ranging social planning as interfering with the natural functioning of the economic system, it was because this view was justified by recent experience. As Phillip Abrams points out, departmental rivalries and misunderstandings had as much to do with the lack of progress in social programmes as any negative attitude within the House of Commons.¹³ Abrams also claims that the Ministry of Reconstruction was created too late and without sufficient staff or authority to carry out its mandate. These problems were compounded by the lack of an effective sub-Cabinet committee with decision

making authority. This gap created a bottleneck at the Cabinet level, overloading its time and energy. Only the most immediate matters were dealt with, resulting in a lack of long term commitments. Demobilization, jobs, and food took precedence over housing and health. The decisions made were important and necessary, but without the complementary action of the broader and longer term reforms, the whole programme appeared piecemeal and token.¹⁴

Members of all the political parties were justifiably dissatisfied with the effectiveness of government programmes. In the face of a severe economic slowdown and a large deficit left over from the war, Tory back-bench members of Lloyd George's coalition began questioning the wisdom of reconstruction policies. The economic decline which developed in Britain after 1919 created a greater demand for unemployment support funds, while at the same time restricting revenues. As public money became limited, the costs of social programmes were scrutinized more closely. In most cases the effect of a specific programme was not easily measured in quantitative terms. Even housing policy was open to the criticism that private business could do the job cheaper and faster. Government economy measures gradually pared away the authority and funds necessary for the effective completion of reconstruction.

Regardless of how the economic downturn affected governmental social reform programmes, the most devastating

effect of this trend was among social reform efforts outside the government. The various embryonic industrial guilds suffered from increasingly restricted memberships and funds as their members became unemployed.¹⁵ Centrally controlled trade unions were less susceptible to this type of financial strain than the decentralized guild networks. In the industrial unrest which developed between 1919 and 1922 it was the big trade unions which challenged the government and not an industrial parliament. By 1922 the guilds had lost any of the momentum for industrial activism that they had ever possessed.

Social reconstruction, whether legislated by government or created by an industrial guild, had ground to a halt for reasons that were almost completely beyond the control of the Society of Friends. Although the Society had emphasized non-governmental social change, the fate of the government's programmes for social reform were of interest to those Friends who had been involved in the development of some governmental programmes. The obvious example was B. Seebohm Rowntree, whose work on land reform before the war earned him a position on Lloyd George's first Reconstruction committee in February 1917. Indeed it was Rowntree who established the target of 300,000 new homes to be built in the first two years for the government's housing programme. Rowntree also established as an axiom of reconstruction housing policy the necessity of direct state aid as the only method of achieving

this goal.¹⁶ Quakers did not object to attempts by the government to rebuild society, even if such attempts lacked the spiritual emphasis cherished by Quakers.

It is, therefore, rather surprising that the Society of Friends did not make a strong statement against the gradual failure of both governmental and independent schemes for social reform. The explanation for this failure is that the Society of Friends was experiencing a similar decline in its commitment to social reform. Between 1918 and 1919 there was a sharp decline in the enthusiasm of the Society to act or speak as a body on social issues. The ideals adopted at the Yearly Meeting of 1918 were never directly repudiated, but by 1921 they could no longer command the support of an effective majority within the Society.

Within months of the end of the war there was a sharp increase in the labour unrest after the relatively peaceful hiatus of the war years. The Society was quick to comment on the possible causes of this unrest and to assign to itself a special role in the ultimate solution. In an article in the Friend on February 21, 1919, the unrest was seen as the inevitable consequence of the end of four years of supreme effort and sacrifice. Emotional exhaustion and resentment of military control had crushed sympathy and understanding on both sides of the dispute. At the same time government bungling and lack of co-ordinated policies had compounded

real issues such as hours and conditions of work, lack of housing, profiteering, high prices and low wages. The Society of Friends believed it had a particular task and talent to apply to these circumstances.

We must understand, and understanding we must seek to recognize, the dominant and controlling factors of the social life and well-being of human society amid which our lot is cast. For though our numbers are exceedingly few, the tenets and mission of Quakerism are more intimately allied to individual and social responsibility than are perhaps any other religious views which find embodiment and expressions in organized Church machinery.¹⁷

This quotation reveals the beginning of a decline in Quaker confidence. The ideals were still evident and the Society still felt a responsibility to work for the improvement of the social environment. Yet, there is also a suggestion that Friends now saw themselves as the only group with the ability to lead society in the right direction. The optimism generated by being part of a larger movement was missing.

The epistles of the Yearly Meeting of 1919 and the Yearly Meeting of 1920 also reveal a decline in Quaker confidence. The epistle of 1919 still included the basic belief that real peace was impossible "on the present basis of society," but it also included the lament quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The epistle of 1920 was even more uncertain.

Are we going forward to the new world that lies before us today confident that truth and light will break forth to guide us, and devoted to the service of joining our lives to the lives of our fellows?

... How can we break loose from our fears and suspicions and from the grip of complacent materialism...?¹⁸

The faith in the ultimate emergence of a "new world" lacked the earlier spontaneity. For the first time the Society questioned its own commitment to change.

The post-war conference on Quaker pacifism that had been promised in November 1918 was finally held between August 13th and 20th, 1920. Referred to as the All-Friends conference, Quakers from around the world were in attendance but the two largest contingents were from Britain and America. The message produced by this gathering contrasted sharply with the confidence exhibited less than two years previously. Clear statements were made about the necessity of "drastic changes in industry" if this part of the social order was to conform to the "way of Jesus".¹⁹ The message also reiterated the ideal that the development of human personality was "the one thing that matters in all our social structure".²⁰ At the same time, however, much of the hope and confidence of 1918 had been eroded.

Progress is not inevitable. It depends upon men and women; upon what kind of men and women we are. ... And even if the outcome of the great unrest which is around us should not be the new world of our hopes, but rather that our present civilization itself should crumble and vanish in darkness and ruin, we must hold fast to the one way of life which can lead us ... into the world for which we long.²¹

The minutes of the conference confirm this overall pessimism. Edward W. Evans, an American Friend, saw some small value in

the events of the previous two years but there was a dispondency hidden in his words: "All the facts of recent experience are on our side. War has not ended war or relieved democracy."²² Henry T. Hodgkin, who had provided significant encouragement and support for Quaker reformism during the war, played a familiar but sadly necessary role at this conference. He spoke twice urging the Society to take action and dispense with words. The Society had to act as a body to "leaven the whole community."²³ His cry was apparently in vain. No constructive action was taken by the conference itself or recommended to the various Yearly Meetings represented.

Hodgkin's call for corporate action was repeated in March 1921 by a Quaker named Bertram Pickard. Pickard called for more constructive work by the Society on a day to day basis. "The apathy resulting from the war, so universally evident, has not left us untouched."²⁴ Two committees were established by the Society to "watch" the developments at both the League of Nations and in the wide spread industrial unrest. As "watching" committees, these groups amounted to a tiny commitment to significant action. In another effort to bring the Society to a more open participation in the events taking place around it, the Meeting for Sufferings established in April 1921 a committee charged with organizing a conference between Quakers and the Mine-Owners Association. The Society's executive believed that Quaker's had special

talents that could be of use in resolving the growing dispute between owners and miners. The committee sent a statement to both groups which urged them to seek not only a temporary settlement but to co-operate in restructuring the mining industry so that it could operate "for the service of humanity...".²⁵ The week the statement was sent out, the dispute reached a climax, ending on "Black Friday", April 19th, 1921, with the collapse of the labour alliance. The failure of the Quaker efforts to have any impact on the events of that week was hardly surprising. The spirit of co-operation necessary for negotiations along the line suggested by the committee had been exhausted long before.

The erosion of the Quaker commitment to social reform is most dramatically illustrated by a review of Austen Chamberlain's budget of April 1921, published in the Friend on April 24th. The review supported the budget but was critical of the governments previous handling of the national debt.

... since the war we have made no real reduction in our debts. The moral of the situation is the need for strict economy in all ranks of life. Government departments have set a bad example of extravagance, which capitalists, tradespeople, the salaried classes and wage-earners have been quick to follow. The present trade depression and widespread unemployment emphasize the summons to economy enforced by The Budget statement.²⁶

The author of this report must have been aware that the extravagancies to which he referred were the basis of the governments social reform programmes. The reviewer had

repudiated reform programmes with the same goals as their own. The mentality behind this article and the rather pathetic attempts by the Society to participate in industrial negotiation, reveals that the Society of Friends had lost the will to act corporately on the principles it had espoused at the Yearly Meeting of 1918.

This renunciation did not mean that Quaker social activism was entirely dead, or that the new understanding of pacifism that lay behind it had been abandoned. The responsibility for Quaker social reform was maintained by the group that had originated the Society's new approach. The War and Social Order Committee remained active sponsoring conferences and writing a series of articles for the Friend. Most of these articles took one of the seven points, explained its meaning and implications and suggested methods of change. Other articles in this series dealt with topics of particular immediate importance. One such an article published on March 19th, discussed the merits of a plan to nationalize the mining industry. The argument presented by the author was that the virtues of nationalization lay in the prevention of monopolistic profits falling into private hands. Moreover, he claimed that such a scheme was well suited to the technical needs of the industry. The author's major objection to nationalization was for its failure to provide for the aspirations of the miners. The article stimulated a lively debate in the corresponding columns of the Friend over

the next several months.²⁷ The critique of nationalization presented in the March, 1919, article was entirely consistent with the ideals of the War and Social Order Committee. At a conference sponsored by the committee held in July of 1919 the critique of nationalization was repeated and the direct link between basic Quaker doctrines, pacifism and radical social reform was reiterated.

Convinced of the eternal truth of the principles enunciated by Jesus Christ for the attainment of that harmony with the Divine which is the goal of human life, we see in the present social order, with its industrial and international wars, the inevitable result of the disregard of these principles.²⁸

At the All-Friends Conference, which produced such a pessimistic message to the Society, there was evidence of a minority who still still active and adamant. A report of the conference published in the Friend under the title "...From the View of Younger Friends" testified to the persistence not only of a commitment to pacifism but also to the specific critique endorsed at the last wartime Yearly Meeting. The report recognized some difference of opinion over how essential the peace testimony was to Quakerism. However, this hesitancy was undoubtedly produced by the presence of the American Friends who historically had displayed a less absolute approach to pacifism than the British contingent²⁹ Their approach at the conference did not deviate from this cautious tradition. Despite the comments of the Americans, the report by the younger Friends stated that "it was clearly

felt that to subtract our peace testimony from the Quaker faith would leave little or nothing of value to offer the world."³⁰ These younger Friends believed that the link between pacifism and social reform was upheld as well. The fundamental belief that joined the two streams of Quaker thought was recognized.

... social changes must necessarily follow a fearless application of the full peace principles. Thus early in the Conference it was becoming plain that Friends feel themselves to be on the brink of a new Quaker missionary movement.³¹

Despite the decline or radicalism amongst some members of the Society and the inability of Quakers to act collectively, it is clear that the confidence characteristic of the Society as a whole in 1918, was still present amongst a minority, and in a younger generation especially, in 1920.

The experiences of the Society of Friends during the First World War drove it to a greater appreciation and a deeper understanding of their peace testimony in a very short period of time. For some Friends the demands placed upon their lives by a strict adherence to the peace testimony were too great. For others, especially the younger generation, the new testimony fortified and encouraged a radical social activism. This division prevented the Society of Friends as a whole from playing a prominent role in British social and political movements in the 1920's and 1930's. However, individual Quakers, armed with the experience gained during the war, as well as a comprehensive and integrated Quaker

social theory, went on to make significant contributions to the interwar peace movement. A fuller examination of this contribution would reveal the persistence of Victorian and Edwardian radical Christian social criticism.

ENDNOTES: EPILOGUE

¹Society of Friends, "Epistle, 1919 Yearly Meeting", Friend, 6 June 1919, pp. 347-348.

²Thomas C. Kennedy, The Hound of Conscience: A History of the No-conscription Fellowship, 1914-1919 (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1981), p. 266.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 286.

⁵"Can We Still Be Quakers?", Friend, 15 November 1918, pp. 675-676.

⁶Ibid.

⁷John Ormerod Greenwood, Quaker Encounters: Volume 1, Friends and Relief (York, England: William Sessions Ltd., 1975), pp. 219-251.

⁸Kenneth O. Morgan, Consensus e and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government, 1918-1922 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), chap. 4 passim!

⁹Paul Barton Johnson, Land Fit For Heroes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 433.

¹⁰Phillip Abrams, "The Failure of Social Reform, 1918-1920" Past and Present 24(Apr '63):44.

¹¹Ibid., p. 47.

¹²Johnson, pp. 432-433.

¹³Abrams, p. 51.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 50-52.

¹⁵John Oliver, The Church and Social Order (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 1968), pp. 64-65.

¹⁶Johnson, pp. 59-61.

¹⁷"Some Thoughts on the Present Labour Unrest", Friend, 21 February 1919, pp. 101-103.

¹⁸Society of Friends, "Yearly Meeting Minutes", Friend, 4 June 1920, pp. 341-342.

¹⁹Society of Friends, "Message of the Conference of All-Friends", Friend, 27 August 1920, pp. 535-536.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Society of Friends, "Report of the All-Friends Conference", Friend, 20 August 1920, pp. 524-527.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Bertram Pickard, "A Plea for Definite Peace Works", Friend, 18 March 1921, p. 172.

²⁵Friend, 29 April 1921, p.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 255-256.

²⁷Joseph B. Fryer and Alfred J. Cudworth, "Nationalization of Mines", Friend, 19 March 1920, p. 172.

²⁸War and Social Order Committee, "War and Social Order Conference", Friend, 18 July 1918, p. 452.

²⁹"...from the View of Younger Friends", Friend, 10 August 1920, pp. 521-522.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

APPENDIX ONE

The final form of the "seven points", first published in the message of the War and the Social Order Conference in October 1915, was established by the Quarterly Meeting Ministry and Extension Committee a year later. The revised text was published in the Friend on October twenty-sixth, 1917. This was the text eventually endorsed by the Yearly Meeting of 1918.

1. A right social order will direct itself, beyond all material ends, to the growth of personality truly related to God and man.

2. Brotherhood as taught by Jesus Christ knows no distinction of race or sex, nor of social class.

3. It is a necessity for the development of man's full personality that he should not be hampered by oppressive conditions nor be crushed by economic pressure.

4. We shall seek for a way of living that will free us from the bondage of material things and of convention; that will raise no barrier against brotherly comradeship, and will put no oppressive burden of labour upon any by reason of our superfluous demands.

5. The spiritual forces of justice, kindness and trust call forth the response of willing service in all fields of life, and are mighty when applied to industrial and international relations.

6. Through co-operation and not through antagonism, the best social order will be established. Our disbelief in a system of outward domination applied not only to international affairs, but to the whole problem of industrial control, and to the resort to industrial strife.

7. Life should be organized on the basis of the privilege and duty of serving. Service cannot be confined to the causal encounters of life, but should be recognized and relied upon as the very motive and method of its chief activities, and opportunities to render such service should be open to all. Corporate as well as individual life needs to be permeated with the spirit of service.

* * * * *

APPENDIX TWO

The Organization and Process of Quaker Business Meetings:

The Society of Friends conducted their business meetings in a unique manner that was neither democratic nor dictatorial. In fact, there was scarcely any system at all. The smooth functioning of the Society's various meetings depended to a great extent on the personal qualities of the individuals involved. Although the Society often failed to reach decisions at critical moments because of the nature of their meetings, that the system worked at all is a tribute to the extraordinary dedication of active Quakers.

The organizational structure of the Society's business meetings was a simple pyramid. At the local level, Preparative meetings, embracing one or more congregations, would discuss issues to be brought up at the local Monthly meetings. These meetings, made up of the members of several Preparative meetings, conducted the bulk of the day to day business of the Society. The Monthly meetings in turn prepared minutes to be discussed at the Quarterly meetings. A Quarterly meeting drew its attendance from several Monthly meetings. The Quarterly meetings, however, did very little other than forward the minutes of the Monthly meetings to the London Yearly meeting, the Society's annual parliament. The London Yearly meeting was the ultimate authority within the

Society and, like all business meetings, it was open to all Quakers. Although the British Quakers were encouraged to attend, in practice, the yearly trip to London could only be undertaken by relatively affluent Friends and by delegates from each meeting, sent at the Meeting's expense. Since the middle-class predominated in the Society, the London meeting was generally well attended.

All Quaker meetings were run in the same manner. Issues were referred to the "higher" meeting by the one immediately "below" it, with the exception, of course, of the Preparative meetings which constituted the base of the pyramid. The order of business was determined by the Clerk who acted as a chairman or speaker. The Clerk was nominated by the meeting on a yearly basis. Although supposedly no more than a servant of the meeting, in fact, the Clerk commanded considerable power by virtue of his or her high personal standing in the Society and by the functions the Clerk performed. The Clerk chose the order of speaking and drafted the minutes of the meeting. These two duties gave the Clerk a direct hand in formulating the decisions of the meeting. The principle check on the power of the Clerk was the scrutiny of the other members of the meeting. Abuse of this position would result in the individual not being nominated the following year. Although the Clerk was always a power to be reckoned with, in a community renowned for its honesty and seriousness it was rare for a wholly ambitious or

unscrupulous individual to reach the position of Clerk. The refusal of the Society to use voting procedures in its meetings made the Clerk's task extremely difficult and delicate. Fearful of the tyranny of a majority over minority opinion, the Quakers demanded complete consensus before a resolution was accepted. In practice, all that was needed was the support of almost everyone present. In particular, however, the Friends of significant prestige had to agree. The opinion of the meeting was determined, not by a vote, but by the Clerk judging the "spirit" of the gathering and expressing it in a minute. The gathering would then discuss the merits of the minute and the Clerk would either amend it as he or she saw fit or let it stand. If no consensus was apparent, the Clerk could also postpone any decision on an issue. This delay was often the only recourse and it sometimes took years for contentious issues to be settled.

In drafting the minute the Clerk attempted to express the majority opinion but he was also obliged to include the full range of opinion of the speakers. The result of this approach was that minutes of the Quaker meetings rarely dealt with specifics, emphasizing rather the general feeling of a meeting towards an issue. In an attempt to escape the confines of Yearly meeting procedure, the Society would organize autumn conferences where the attendance of a Yearly meeting was virtually reproduced. The report of the conference was then scrutinized by a subsequent Yearly

meeting. The delay this system imposed was often enough to diffuse an issue. More importantly, the conference was a way of isolating the eccentric minorities that entangled Yearly meetings.

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