

Foreword

This volume of articles has been culled from the FRIENDS JOURNAL issues over the last 50-plus years, although the tendency is toward the more recent.

The completion of this anthology required a good number of steps. First, various generations of interns dating back to 2002 assembled relevant articles on various themes, including this one. Then, in the summer of 2009, interns Allison Butler, Constance Grady, Lily Megaw, and Scott Yorko completed work on a set of preliminary articles and alternates for this anthology. In early 2010, I, Sharon Hoover, reassembled them into a coherent collection. That same year, interns Casey Jackson and Meghan Flynn and volunteer Patty Quinn thoroughly proofread the selected articles and bridge material. Another 2010 intern, Nicole Gravlin, formatted the articles into InDesign and participated in the final editing.

As I read and reread the material, it became clear to me that the search for peace among Friends began and continues as a spiritual search, not a political one. The statement by New Zealand Friends focused my thinking that a search for peace should begin as soon as possible in life and continue throughout our growing and developing years. “Bless the little children and forbid them not . . .,” Jesus said. Friends’ search for peace began with such texts as the Sermon on the Mount, not on political schemes, and we should keep that spiritual basis foremost in our minds.

Today, the Religious Society of Friends is made up of those from the newborn to the very elderly, from the “birthright” to the recently “convinced,” from “attenders” to members. This volume ought to speak to all of them and to their melding. Based on my own experience of seeing young Friends contributing enormous strength to the Religious Society of Friends and to the search for peace, I also decided that it ought to represent the efforts of Friends of all ages.

There were so many excellent articles that I had to select the final ones based on representation, sometimes on length in order to include a great number and variety of articles, and on focus. Articles worked best with one focus.

I was overcome with riches.

Some articles I tried to keep, and did until the last cut, such as a touching one about a World War I conscientious objector, one on genocide, and one on a disagreement with the direction of Friends' peace seeking. I hope that readers will turn to old JOURNALS for more reading in any area that interests them. And, that they will continue to write articles that will take the ideas of those presented here further into the search for the peaceable kingdom.

S.H.

Introduction

The History of the Peace Testimony

After Henry VIII broke with Rome, he had the Bible published in Early Modern English, the first authorized Bible in vernacular English. The book was quite large and unwieldy, over 14 inches tall. It was meant to be placed in every parish church. In the 15th century, several translations of the Bible, or parts of the Bible, appeared in English. However, in the growing controversies between the crown and its governing entities and the rising separatist sects, many men became martyrs for translating the Bible or for assisting in the effort to put a vernacular Bible into the hands of ordinary people. Finally, in the latter half of the 16th century, the Geneva Bible was written and printed in Geneva, Switzerland, in a size many ordinary people could buy and handle. It was the Bible that John Knox, John Calvin, and the Puritans used in study and writings. The Puritans and their Bible were not favored by Queen Elizabeth I or by King James I, so Elizabeth and James each authorized their own Bibles. The large Bishops' Bible produced under Elizabeth never became popular, but the edition of 1611 that we know as The King James Bible was soon popular throughout the English-speaking world, except among Puritans who continued to favor the Geneva Bible.

The invention of movable type in the 16th century, combined with legally being able to own and to read a Bible in English, unloosed the energy of the Reformation and the European Renaissance into England. Protestants were expected to learn to read in order to read the Bible. As it was the only book most people had, they read and reread it. It was long and complex; it could withstand much reading. People could read and learn from it themselves and know that Jesus did not take up arms against Rome and that he showed and taught people how to serve their neighbors who suffered from religious, social, and economic prejudice. He taught that everyone is a neighbor and that we should show kindness to each one, giving attention and substance to decrease the affliction or sorrow of others.

Fox and early Friends were affected not only by their reading of the

Bible and their search for spiritual Truth, but also by the chaotic political and social times in which they lived. The new and simpler printing presses meant that all sorts of tracts and speeches could be easily disseminated among the people. Thomas Carlyle, an acclaimed Scottish historian and essayist, said that “He who first shortened the labor of copyists by device of movable types was disbanding hired armies, and cashiering most kings and senates, and creating a whole new democratic world . . .” (Sartar Resartus Bk. I, Ch. 5).¹ During and just after the English Civil War, Fox had great hope for the Commonwealth as a new beginning for England’s religious and secular order, but he found instead that one kind of dictatorship had merely replaced another. War and killing had not led to the kingdom of God on Earth. At the same time, Friends were accused by people around Oliver Cromwell, then around Charles II, of being “plotters and fighters.” It seems an obvious step for Friends to make a stand against the use of arms: “A Declaration from the Harmless & Innocent People of God called Quakers” (1660). They could base their conviction on their experience of the recent war and its aftermath as well as on the teachings and behavior of Jesus, who said, “Love your enemies.”

Until the fourth century, when Constantine was emperor of the Roman Empire, Christianity had been pacifist. Also, over the hundreds of years after Constantine, numerous groups of Christian pacifists had developed in Europe.² Friends had also, unaware, stepped into a long line of non-Christian pacifists from the time of the Jains in India in the sixth century

¹Those interested in learning about the many different groups and developments that sprang up in 17th century England would do well to read a book by the historian Christopher Hill: *The World Turned Upside Down* (1972). The book is not overly long, and although it is a comprehensive history, it is quite readable. John Punshon’s *Portrait in Grey* (1984), an important book in Quaker history and theology, gives a short history of the time as it relates to his interpretation of Fox’s thought.

²Peter Brock has written the most definitive history of pacifists in Europe, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914* (1972). He also has a small, very readable overview of pacifism that many people will want to read: *Varieties of Pacifism: A Survey from Antiquity to the Outset of the Twentieth Century* (1999).

B.C.E.³ Today Friends work closely with members of the Church of the Brethren (began in Germany in 1708) and the Mennonites (founded by the Swiss in the early 16th century). In addition, many contemporary Friends study Buddhism and Zen, major Eastern religions dating back to the years before Jesus. Friends now cooperate with Christian, non-Christian, and secular national and international groups dedicated to a war-free world and to nonviolent ways to solve conflicts.

Friends as a group have adhered to the pacifist tradition since the time of Fox, although some young men, and some young women, have served in uniform. There were times when anyone who served as a combatant was “read out of meeting.” Some Friends’ meetings, especially more recently, have not rejected those who would use arms but have instead held them in loving concern. Today, there are even groups of Friends who have given outright approval to their young people who serve the nation with arms. The latter Friends are not represented in this anthology.

Friends’ experience with pacifism cannot be expressed in categorical terms. Many times the lines between being a pacifist and a non-pacifist have been murky or dangerous. Early seamen, many of whom were Quakers (there were numerous seamen in early England and America), were often bound to follow their captain who might be bound to the monarch or the government to fight back if attacked on the sea. Or if a Quaker owned his own boat, he might be bound to let the queen or king use it in war or to suffer its loss. That could be a difficult choice for a man brought up on the sea with no other obvious way to make a living, especially if he were blacklisted and had a family to support. Where and how one draws a line between cooperating in “war,” including undeclared war, has never been easy.

Another difficulty arose when someone called by the monarch or government to bear arms could pay someone else to serve in his stead. Or, he might be able to pay a penalty to the government. The question then arose: “Is providing for another to bear arms simply bearing arms oneself, once removed?” Some Friends chose to pay for a substitute; oth-

³ Karen Armstrong’s book *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of our Religious Traditions* (2007) is a fine presentation of the appearance of pacifist religious leaders just before and including Jesus. Reading it, one learns that several of today’s great world religions have much in common.

ers refused to do this and went to prison. In the 20th century some men refused conscientious objector status. One might decide that becoming a farmer or a practical nurse in an institution released another man to fight, and that was still cooperating in sending men to kill other men, and increasingly in modern times, to kill women and children. Prison time has also been meted out to many who were judged by officials as not truly conscientious objectors.

If earlier Friends refused to pay for a substitute to go to war or to pay levies for war, their property could be “entailed,” that is, fines imposed, often quite large ones. Government officials might take a person’s house, furniture, animals, and land. They probably also sent the owner to prison. There was no way to retrieve confiscated property. Money makes war possible. For some years, Friends gave the monarch money saying that it was a gift for the monarch’s use. The monarch was then responsible for how it was spent; the thought being that the spending of it was on his or her conscience.

America operated along more democratic lines, even in provincial times. Friends were permitted to participate in government, and in Pennsylvania, they dominated the Assembly for many years. However, when pressed by the people for the Assembly to vote for taxes to protect the settlers, most Friends (not all) resigned from the Assembly rather than to vote on taxes for war. When taxes began to include money for military actions “in the mix,” that made not paying for war even more difficult. Friends have never resisted paying taxes to support the operation of peaceful government concerns, but they have looked for ways to separate the taxes spent for war and those for peaceful purposes. During the Vietnam War, a telephone tax was levied expressly for the war, so many Friends refused to pay it. The issue of paying taxes for war has become more and more agonizing for Friends as the United States now maintains a continual, growing, and expensive war-making machine. And, to further confound contemporary Friends, they realize that saving or investing for the future or buying goods for the present supports corporations that have contracts, however small, with the Pentagon. By extension, then, Friends are cooperating in war-enmeshed production and financial systems. The same dilemma faces Friends who work in many industries. The issues of dealing with “war taxes” and providing money to maintain a war economy is an ongoing problem.

Related Prison Work

Early Friends were often sent to prison in England and America for preaching in public, visiting prisoners, refusing to take oaths, or because they acted contrary to one of the many acts that Parliament, the crown, or the provincial government designed to control and to punish them. During the 17th century, many Quakers died in prison and many, many others were crippled or suffered broken health after prison, possibly because they had also been whipped, dragged through the streets, or tortured in some other way before being thrown into prison. Not all Friends or other prisoners suffered such inhumane treatments, but many did, and all who went to prison quickly learned through personal experience that the prisons were rank and without food, water, or sanitation. They were also filled with prisoners whose sentences were long. Many died or went insane. Full of their faith, Friends held meetings in prisons, shared their food, nursed the ill, and after they left, continued to visit and to serve prisoners. They also worked to reduce punishments and to improve prison conditions.

Over the years, this work grew to concern for education for prisoners and especially, more recently, in developing ways for people to live nonviolently, whether in or out of prison. For example, prisoners at Greenhaven Correctional Facility in New York State, in 1975, asked Friends to help them to develop a program for learning to live more peaceably. Out of that request has grown an international program called the Alternatives to Violence Program. Based at first on ideas from the Children's Creative Response to Conflict program and the nonviolent training of the Civil Rights and Vietnam eras, it now is a well-developed program present in many prisons, communities, and schools across the United States and throughout the world, especially in places where personal and community trauma has been great.

“The Peace Testimony” Today

Like the first Friends, Friends today seek spiritual peace within, then in their actions toward others and the world itself. From a well-tended spiritual center, Friends seek to sow peace wherever they go. Many have found themselves called to witness for peace in specific ways in their families, their meetings, their communities, their nation, and their world. From the beginning of the Friends' attention to the conditions

of conflict, they have been concerned, not only with arms in war, but in the necessities and characteristics of policing. And like the first Friends, if they are called to civil disobedience, they cooperate with the authorities and continue to be peaceful with their neighbors. They go forward, willing to suffer for their commitment to peace, even as early Friends and Jesus taught and exemplified.

The following statement by New Zealand Friends sits squarely in the context presented above. As Fox and his Friends wrote a declaration for their time, place, and particular situation, so do Friends write declarations to speak to today's challenges.

—*Sharon Hoover*

May 1–15 1987

Rejecting the Clamor of Fear: A Statement from New Zealand Friends

The following is an extract from a statement issued in January 1987 by New Zealand Yearly Meeting:

We totally oppose all wars, all preparation for war, all use of weapons and coercion by force, and all military alliances: no end could ever justify such means. We equally and actively oppose all that leads to violence among people and nations, and violence to other species and to our planet.

We are not naïve or ignorant about the complexity of our modern world and the impact of sophisticated technologies, but we see no reason whatsoever to change or weaken our vision of the peace that everyone needs in order to survive and flourish on a healthy, abundant Earth. [It] is our conviction that there is that of God in everyone, which makes each person too precious to damage or destroy. While someone lives, there is always the hope of reaching that of God within: such hope motivates our search to find nonviolent resolution of conflict. Peacemakers are also empowered by that of God in them. Our individual human skills, courage, endurance, and wisdom are vastly augmented by the power of

the loving Spirit that connects all people.

Refusal to fight with weapons is not surrender. We are not passive when threatened by the greedy, the cruel, the tyrant, the unjust. We will struggle to remove the causes of impasse and confrontation by every means of nonviolent resistance available. There is no guarantee that our resistance will be any more successful or any less risky than military tactics. At least our means will be suited to our end. If we seem to fail finally, we would still rather suffer and die than inflict evil in order to save ourselves and what we hold dear. If we succeed, there [will be] no loser or winner, for the problem that led to conflict will have been resolved in a spirit of justice and tolerance. Such a resolution is the only guarantee that there will be no further outbreak of war when each side has regained strength.

The context in which we take this stand is the increasing level of violence around us: child abuse; rape; wife-battering; street assaults; riots; video and television sadism; silent economic and institutional violence; the prevalence of torture; the loss of freedom; sexism, racism, and colonialism; the terrorism of both guerrillas and government soldiers; and the diversion of vast resources of funds and labor from food and welfare to military purposes. But above and beyond all this is the insane stockpiling of nuclear weapons, which could in a matter of hours destroy everyone and everything that we value on our planet.

We must start with our own hearts and minds. Wars will stop only when each of us is convinced that war is never the way. The places to begin acquiring skills and maturity and generosity to avoid or to resolve conflicts are in our own homes, our personal relationships, our schools, our workplaces, and wherever decisions are made. We must relinquish the desire to own other people, to have power over them, and to force our views onto them. We must own up to our own negative side and not look for scapegoats to blame, punish, or exclude. We must resist the urge towards waste and the accumulation of possessions. Conflicts are inevitable and must not be repressed or ignored but worked through painfully and carefully. We must develop the skills of being sensitive to oppression and grievances, sharing power in decision-making, creating consensus, and making reparation. In speaking out, we acknowledge that we ourselves are as limited and as erring as anyone else. When put to the test, we each may fall short.

We do not have a blueprint for peace that spells out every step towards

the goal that we share. In any particular situation, a variety of personal decisions could be made with integrity. We may disagree with the views and actions of the politician or the soldier who opts for a military solution, but we still respect and cherish the person. What we advocate is not uniquely Quaker but human and, we believe, the will of God. Our stand does not belong to Friends alone—it is yours by birthright. Together, let us reject the clamor of fear and listen to the whisperings of hope.