

NB following the ☞links is optional

LOVE AND COMPASSION ARE NECESSITIES □

Peace, Equality, Simplicity, Truth, Integrity ☞

and *Complacence?*

Quakerism cannot be taught, sold or adopted. Quakers spring fully formed from their upbringing and life experience long before they step into a Meeting House. Every Enquirer brings with them a fresh piece of the Quaker jigsaw. Quaker history and writing are just the straight edges and bits of sky.

The best way to predict your future is to create it - or at least to put in place systems and strategies that will support your ambitions.

Religion is the autobiography of society. In every era it has reflected the mores of the people – and has been used as the instrument of control by monarchies and governments.

'Man cannot escape history...☞' we are all products of our time; this is no less true for us than George Fox and John S Rowntree. To visualise the future of Quakerism we have to take into account not only the possible influences of the past, but also the influence of our own life experience.

A word is not a window, and, with the possible exception of Peace, over time - Equality, Simplicity, Truth and Integrity have changed their meaning. Simplicity is probably the most changed, so I propose to add humility to that heading. Remember 'The word killeth and the spirit giveth life'. □

Peace

The Thin Red line between genius and insanity[☞]

The horrors of the English Civil War[☐] shadowed the formative years of George Fox[☐] and his contemporaries, some of whom later joined him as the first Friends. The statement to King Charles II:- 'We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings ...' was the beginning of Friends' peace witness.

Quakers do not hold the monopoly of pacifism nor did Conscientious Objection just start with the First World War nor was it always automatically punished. From the mid 16th/17th Centuries Protestants in Europe were granted exemptions from military service.

Conscription was introduced in 1916 because *the intake of volunteers was not fast enough to keep up with the casualties*. The average age has not changed since then. Heartbreakingly the majority of casualties are under 20, drawn mostly from working class homes and minority racial groups; have the post-military service experiences have not changed, many ex soldiers becoming homeless, admitted to mental hospitals and/or convicted prisoners. ☐

☐ The Peace Pledge Union membership list reads like a roll call of the intelligentsia of the 1930's:- George Lansbury, Vera Brittain, Siegfried Sassoon, Donald Soper, Aldous Huxley, Laurence Housman, Bertrand Russell et al. People, however have doggedly continued to hack each other to pieces. When will governments learn that strategies that have repeatedly failed are unlikely to succeed with re-use?

Universal peace is highly desirable, but it seems culturally unfeasible; making a stand for peace is a personal, individual choice which we commit to *one by one*. The fact that we cannot influence the world at a stroke is no reason not to stand up to be counted.

Modern Quakers, even the professionals, have initiated radical strategies to promote peace far beyond protest and. Quakers founded and raised funds to support and promote Bradford University's Department of Peace Studies. The West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project is only one of the activities of modern Quakerism.

The cause of peace will continue to be writ large in the annals of Quakerism, it is however, fortunately, not just the province of Quakers. It seems trite to cite Ghandhi, Mandela etc. as their stories are well known; Tom Slick, (1916 – 1962), (who wrote 'Permanent Peace')[☞], Linus Pauling[☞], Bertrand Russell[☞], Frankie Vaughn[☞] - (a surprising addition) are amongst the ranks of peacemakers. There is no space here to list them all.

Equality – and Inclusion

Or a nest of Wasps?

Quakers have always been a motley group, – not that other religious groupings are necessarily any different; Quakers embrace people with all beliefs – and none.

The 1951 Swarthmore Lecture was titled 'Quakerism a Faith for Ordinary Men'[□] would this hold true for the Quakerism of the Third Millennium? We say we believe in inclusiveness. We believe we are not racist, sexist, ageist, elitist, homophobic or indifferent to disability. nor are we – consciously, but the composition of our meetings begs the question. The demographic and social makeup of any group is unwitting evidence of the balance of its

equality. *Of course* we are drawn to like-minded people – but we will lose out on enriching our fellowship if we fail to embrace the full depth and dimension of cosmopolitan Britain let alone the tired, poor, and huddled masses. ☹

There is a bunch of strategies that can be employed – quite painlessly, to address some of these issues. 'At meeting for worship relax and let your baby be with you' 2.50 QFP... ☐

Top and Tail:- The big scream and the minibus.

Some cinemas have special screenings for mothers and babies – the 'big scream' some churches have a glass wall across the back of their hall so that infants can be seen and not heard, and their parents can share the meeting. So many people lose the opportunity to attend meeting during their child rearing years, and later, when they become carers of their spouses and parents. Meetings should do their best to provide some form of child care/children's meeting, this is key to allowing parents and carers to take part in the life of the meeting, thus fostering a future generation of Quakers.

Buying a minibus and organising a rota of drivers is not beyond the means of many meetings. Where that is not possible, those who drive in could collaborate to collect those less able.

What about a walking bus? A joyful line of wheelchairs, scooters, buggies and toddlers could, quite possibly, generate a pied piper form of outreach.

Disability takes many forms. We seem to cope well with VIPs (visually impaired persons) a white stick usually needs no special assistance. Scooters, zimmer frames, and wheelchairs need a special effort, and fussing over new attenders with mobility problems

can send a message of reluctant acceptance. Fostering a relaxed air, however faded we are, (and that in itself is not wrong) will enable us to see the person behind the disability.

Mental illness sets a few alarm bells ringing, many of us have experienced it at some time, if you have and still hold back from befriending, you have failed to come to terms with your own problems. If you have not, then there but for the grace of God go you.

In my opinion spirituality is not an intellectual attribute, how many people with learning difficulties are members/attenders of your Meeting? Time was then being 'simple' or 'innocent' had connotations of piety. If you argue that anyone with learning difficulty would not benefit from attending meetings; is it possible that their parent or carer is losing the opportunity to attend?

There is a road from the eye to the heart that does not go through the intellect.

G. K. Chesterton [✍]

What thinkest thou?

Simplicity and Humility

Well. (I *will* have to be careful about all this verbosity)

In my point of view, Simplicity applies to tangible things, where Humility is a spiritual/social trait.

Humility

Humility in this context has nothing to do with Uria Heep, but is the non patronising expression of love, the giving and receiving of help and support. □ My personal image of this is doing good by stealth – as St Nicholas did for the three maidens, delivering their dowries down the chimney. . (although, it would now be difficult for him to maintain anonymity wearing red and white...).

Giving up a seat on the bus, accepting same with a bright smile, listening to the problems of a friend, striking up a conversation with a stranger – and not monopolising it. These, I should think we have all done. However going the extra mile means keeping ourselves informed of the needs of others – learning and using a simple greeting in another's language. Finding out what is most needed when asked to donate goods and food to a local Homeless/Asylum Seekers Charity. (often this comes in the form of personal toiletries).

Simplicity

The term 'simplicity' brings me out in a rash of ambivalence. Where does the balance lie between drinking deep and appreciatively of the joys of this world and gorging selfishly and heedlessly on everything we can lay our hands on?

Living simply now has a higher profile with increased awareness of global warming and diminishing resources. Recycling, and (ironically) *cycling* and walking to reduce the use of the car, using public transport, (bus pass holders don't bite, you know). Buying furnishings and clothes from charity shops. (the trick is to make a quick check of charity shops regularly for designer labels and unique furniture) Turning lights out, Mend and Make do, use up and wear out, waste not, want not, Joining freecycle[□] etct etc.. Keeping informed about the best ways to be eco friendly and sharing this information. Some ecologically friendly products can be bought in larger sizes for refilling, certain types of recycling are not readily available to members without transport - why not add to already established shared lunch and food collection days the opportunity for refills, swaps, and distribution of surplus garden produce.

Material Goods

Living simply means taking and enjoying what we need in terms of time, worldly goods and sustenance – an 'elegant' sufficiency' – but not wasting time and effort on perfecting the ideal. Simplicity in appearance, dress, and furnishing is a personal choice. The days of being eldred for lavish, showy, and extravagant tastes have long gone. You have, initially, no way of knowing whether someones acquisition of bright pink fridge is a sale bargain or the smart new coat a charity find, you have no right to question apparent frivolity and largess – and, frankly you never did have that right. Too bright make up, low cut dresses – odd socks, ghastly ties; these should be addressed privately by a good friend. John Woolman[□] probably was right to don an unbleached jacket and woollen buttons; although there is a balance to be made between thoughtful choices, and the time and effort they take to fulfil

Time

This is one resource which seems to be wasted unwittingly by most of us; and yet, we are also guilty of stinting on time for ourselves. Wasting someone else's time is unforgivable. Giving generously of our own time is a cornerstone of educated selfishness.

□ "Live Each Day As If It Were Your Last... Tomorrow is Not Promised."

Money

The majority of us could not call it wealth; like any other resource it should be on the whole used prudently, shared unstintingly when the need arises. This can be an obscure concept, the way I see it, impulsive spontaneous and unstinting giving is condoned in religious writings and another part of educated selfishness; this is covered in both the Bible 'Freely you have received, freely give'. .and the Quoran □ □ 'The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of Allah is that of a grain of corn: it grows seven ears and each ear has a hundred grains ...'

□ 'Our affluent society contains those of talent and insight who are driven to prefer poverty...' □ Michael Harrington.

Making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that's creativity. □ -- Charles Mingus[☞]

Truth and Integrity

The reputation of Quakers for integrity has served them well. I helped Quaker businesses flourish opened doors for Quaker mediators □. They are allowed to conduct and record

their own marriages, the records which are then passed to the official Registrar. Quakers are permitted to affirm instead of taking an oath in a court of law. The Quaker Oats company has no formal ties with Quakers, the name was used because Quaker businesspeople were known for their honesty.

Integrity is one of the virtues for which Quakers in the past have been praised. It is a quality worth having, but it is doubtful if it can be reached by self-conscious effort or by adherence to a principle. Quakers are guided by the spirit – not preachers or creeds, therefore a Quaker's integrity depends on paying heed to the promptings of the spirit not give in to the easy lie - falsehood, untruth, fib, (pick your own euphemism - Quakers also have the reputation of their community/history to answer to.

Again, there is no Quaker monopoly, the Humanist view:- “Humanists will recognise the importance of honesty and trust as features of our relations with one another, but will also want to ask whether that rules out the possibility of ever telling a lie for the sake of some greater good.” □

And finally :- at the risk of ridicule, mathematically John Nash, as portrayed in the Film 'A beautiful mind' was awarded The Sveriges Risbank Prize in 1994 for his Equilibrium Theory (The game theory) which proved that honesty and co-operation in negotiation produced the most effective outcomes in commerce:-

Fellow Quakers – *we are not alone!* □

"God is dead!" — Nietzsche.

"Nietzsche is dead!" — God.

Graffiti on a wall (Anonymous)

□ Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive. Dalai

Lama

- ✗ Introduction to section 19.33 in Quaker Faith & Practice
- ✗ Abe Lincoln
- Elders at Balby in 1656.
- ✗ Further reading:- Rudyard Kipling pre1914: □ Tommy (1890) □ Recessional (1897)
- Writing directly related to the First World War: □ Prose - □ Mary Postgate □ The Gardener,
Poetry - □ The Beginnings □ Epitaph □ 'My Boy Jack' □ Mesopotamia □
- The Quaker statement to King Charles II, 1660
- George Fox's (1624 - 1691),
- Guardian, Daily Mail, Yorkshire Post, et al ...
- Peace Pledge Union web page
- ✗ Tom Slick, (1916 – 1962) 'Permanent Peace'
- ✗ Linus Pauling, 1958 'War no More'
- ✗ Bertrand Russell, "Man's Peril" broadcast BBC
- ✗ Frankie Vaughan ✗ 1928 – 1999 played a concert in Glasgow and was so appalled by violence levels that he held meetings with gang leaders and appealed for people to surrender their weapons.
- Duncan Fairn George Allen & Unwin Ltd
- ✗ "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses..." on a bronze tablet that hangs inside the Statue of Liberty.
- QFP 2.50 Anne Hosking, 1986
- ✗ There is a road from the eye to the heart ... G. K. Chesterton 1874-1936
- Advices and Queries 18.
- www.uk.freecycle.org
- John Woolman (1720–1772), *American Quaker and reformer*
- "Live Each Day As If It Were Your Last... Tomorrow is Not Promised." Islamic forum
- (Mark 14:3) and (John 12:3)
- (Matthew 10:8.NIV) (Q2:261-3)
- Michael Harrington popular author and activist (1928-1989)-- Michael Harrington

- ✗ Charles Mingus, Jr. (April 22, 1922 – January 5, 1979)
- www.forachange.co.uk
- Humanism pamphlet written by members of the HPG in 2002
- The Sveriges Risbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 1994
- John F Nash Jr 1994 for Game Theory (Equilibrium Theory) Nobel Prize.Org Web Site