

THE FIFTEENTH  
JAMES BACKHOUSE LECTURE  
1979

# **QUAKERS IN THE MODERN WORLD**

The Relevance of Quaker Beliefs to the Problems  
of the Modern World

J. DUNCAN WOOD

## **What This Lecture is About**

Between now and the end of the 20th century, the continuing growth of the human population will aggravate the already serious problems of providing food, housing, education, medical care, employment and energy for all members of the human family. These problems could be solved by intelligent co-operation based on the recognition of the unity of the human family. At present the concept of unity is challenged by divisive factors such as racism, nationalism and militarism, all, or anyone, of which may lead to suicidal conflict. The present trend towards conflict rather than collaboration is due to a moral and spiritual failure. It is the primary function of the Society of Friends to contribute to the spiritual renewal needed to save Man from his present predicament.

## **About the Author**

J. Duncan Wood, a British Friend, was born in 1910, son of Herbert G. and Dorothea Wood, who were Wardens of Woodbrooke during the First World War. Educated at Leighton Park School and Oxford University, he returned to teach at Leighton Park in 1934, interrupting his teaching career during the Second World War, when he served with the Friends Ambulance Unit in China. In 1945 he married Katharine M. Knight, lecturer in French at Westfield College, University of London, and in 1952 he and his wife became Quaker Representatives at the European Office of United Nations in Geneva, in which service they continued for 25 years until their retirement in 1977. They have one daughter. Duncan Wood's Swarthmore Lecture to London Yearly Meeting (1962), with the title *Building the Institutions of Peace*, derived, as does the James Backhouse Lecture, from his experience in Geneva.

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## THE JAMES BACKHOUSE LECTURES

This is the fifteenth in a series of lectures instituted by Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends on the occasion of the establishment of that Yearly Meeting on January 1, 1964.

This lecture was delivered at the Australian National University, Canberra on January 15, 1979 at the time of the holding of Yearly Meeting.

James Backhouse was an English Friend who visited Australia from 1832 to 1838. He and his companion, George Washington Walker, travelled widely but spent most of their time in Tasmania. It was through this visit that Quaker Meetings were first established in Australia. James Backhouse was a botanist who published full accounts of what he saw, besides encouraging Friends and following up his deep concern for the convicts and for the welfare of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the country.

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

This lecture was dedicated to the memory of Margaret F. Roberts, our Presiding Clerk, who died on 25 October 1978.

Richard Meredith  
Presiding Clerk  
Australia Yearly Meeting



# **QUAKERS IN THE MODERN WORLD**

## **The Relevance of Quaker Beliefs to the Problems of the Modern World**

### **Introduction**

Friends, I have accepted your kind invitation to deliver the James Backhouse Lecture because it gives me the opportunity to express the deep sense of gratitude which Katharine and I feel for the support and encouragement we have received from Friends all around the world during our 25 years as their representatives in Geneva. The great distance which has separated us in Geneva from Friends in Australia has not proved to be a barrier. On the contrary, you have been very close to us, particularly so in recent years when your generous contributions enabled us to say that the new Quaker House was indeed the home of a world-wide Quaker witness for international peace.

Of course, that witness is not expressed exclusively in Geneva and New York; it must also have its spokesmen in national communities. I pay tribute to the important work for peace which you are undertaking here in Australia.

I also pay tribute to the continuing contribution of the City of Geneva to the furtherance of peace and human brotherhood. Because it was the home of the League of Nations, an organisation which ultimately disappointed the hopes which had been placed on it, Geneva is sometimes referred to as the home of lost causes or is written off as an international "backwater. This is a mistake. Geneva today houses some of the most active and effective international organisations we possess. It is, for instance, the world centre for the co-ordination of relief in times of natural catastrophe flood, drought, earthquake or famine. News of such disasters, which have a habit of afflicting those parts of the world least well equipped to cope with them, comes quickly to the League of Red Cross Societies and the UN Disaster Relief Office, which, between them, are able to call for appropriate assistance from governments and the general public. Not all disasters are due to the forces of nature. What we call "man-made disasters" - wars and civil disturbance - are, in fact, of more frequent occurrence, for there has not been a single day since 1945 on which at least one armed conflict was not in progress in some part of the world, producing its quota of victims - the wounded, the prisoners, the homeless, the orphaned and the refugees. In Geneva we have the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Office of the UN High

Commissioner for Refugees, who constitute, so to speak, the High Command of the army of relief.

I draw to your attention three significant points about the institutions established for meeting acute human distress. First, each of the two kinds of victim has a governmental and a non-governmental organisation concerned for its welfare, so that each can be aided by both government funds and private charity. Secondly, private charity has at its disposal numerous voluntary agencies, some religious, some secular, which are closely associated with the relief work of the Red Cross and the official UN bodies. Thirdly, this extensive and quite elaborate machinery for administering relief in times of distress has greatly extended the frontiers of charity during the past three decades, so that we can now respond to the needs of people of every creed and colour. During recent years in Geneva I used to attend the monthly meetings of all organisations, official and private, concerned with assistance to the victims of disaster, whether natural or "man-made"; it was noteworthy that the situations we discussed were almost all outside Europe, many of them in countries which, a few years ago, we would have been hard put to it to locate on the world map. To this extent, world-wide human brotherhood is a reality today, a reality of which one is particularly aware in Geneva.

## **Human Needs in the Year 2000**

In Geneva, too, one is in a particularly good position to appreciate another aspect of today's world, the awesome fact that by the end of this century, barring some unparalleled disaster, human brotherhood must encompass 6000 million souls. This growth of the human family, so unprecedented that we call it the "population explosion", will affect principally the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America which are now experiencing what Europe passed through during the 19th century - a rapid fall in the death rate alongside a continuing high birth rate. When this occurred in Europe the excess rural population was absorbed into the new expanding centres of industry or found new opportunities overseas, here in Australia, among other places. Today's excess rural population will migrate to the towns where it is likely to form a vast pool of urban unemployed. Its chances of settlement overseas are poor. On the map this country appears to be the one remaining area of "wide open spaces"; but appearances can be deceptive and I understand that, quite apart from the reluctance of most Australians to accept large numbers of non-European immigrants, nature has set severe limits to further human expansion here. Emigration will, therefore, not be the safety-valve as it

was 100 years ago. The basic needs of the new members of the human family must be met in their native countries.

We can judge the gravity of the future problem by considering how far we are falling short of meeting the basic needs of our existing, smaller numbers. Basic needs include adequate food and housing, access to education and health services and to useful, gainful employment. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights declares that the meeting of these needs is a fundamental human right, but it is a right which millions do not enjoy. For example, at the present time 500 million people are chronically hungry, two-fifths of them children who risk permanent damage to their mental capacities through malnutrition in their early years. In addition, more than one third of our present world population does not have access to safe drinking water and are thus exposed to water-borne infection - dysentery, cholera, infantile gastritis - to which, it is estimated, 25,000 people fall victim every day. All over the world you hear complaints about the housing shortage; in affluent countries this means a shortage of homes with modern conveniences, such as indoor sanitation, but the estimated 80 million families in India alone who are stated to be inadequately housed do not have roofs which keep out the rain. Education is not available to three quarters of the children in the poorest countries where 60 per cent of the world's population lives; it is here that we find most of our 700 million adult illiterates. As to medical care, here in Australia you have one physician for every 785 inhabitants and an infant mortality rate of 16 per 1000. This does not put you at the top of the medical tree but it compares favourably with neighbouring Indonesia where each physician has to care for 19,000 people and the infant mortality rate is 125 per 1000. As to employment, vast numbers of urban poor will be deprived of any part in economic life unless 1000 million new work places are found for them between now and the end of the century.

From this very brief survey of the conditions of the poor of the earth today we may get some measure of the effort required of us if we are to satisfy the basic needs of a larger family in 22 years time. Just one more statistic to drive the point home: in 1971 it was stated at a meeting of the UN's Committee on Housing, Building and Planning that between then and the end of the century it would be necessary, if present trends continue, to build 2000 new cities, each the size of Brussels, to accommodate the new urban population in the developing countries. This is a staggering task. Two factors make our task more daunting still. First, even though the affluent countries are the principal consumers of energy, an increasing population will make additional demands on energy resources. Will our present sources of energy last into the 21st century? If not, where is our

energy to come from? Secondly, the provision of food and housing for 6000 million people will put an additional strain on our natural environment. Can we produce sufficient food without turning marginal areas into dust bowls? Can we prevent the new urban centres from becoming insanitary blots on a previously healthy and harmonious landscape?

I do not believe that it was possible to survey the human condition in these global terms before the advent of United Nations whose regular reports and large conferences on food and housing, population and the environment, have opened our eyes to the problems which confront us all. I say "all" advisedly, for this is now one world: no people anywhere can abstract themselves from the problems of all people everywhere; we are one family, one species. As a species, Man - homo sapiens - is distinguished from others by the development of mental faculties or intelligence. This has heightened Man's consciousness of his identity by providing knowledge of the needs of all members of his species; it has also enabled him to forecast how these needs may change for the next generation. I suspect that this is an accomplishment unique in evolutionary history. How is it then that so well endowed a creature should be paying relatively little concentrated attention to the problems which he knows he must face? Why is the meeting of basic needs not at the top of our agenda? Why does human solidarity function relatively well in meeting emergency needs yet remain relatively unmoved by needs which continue year after year?

### **Limits to Brotherhood: Denial of Human Rights**

One reason for our failure to respond to the plight of our fellow men is that the problem seems too vast. When the needy are numbered in hundreds of millions they cease to be fellow human beings and become statistics. One cannot become emotionally involved with statistics. An emotional response is evoked by the distress of refugees or victims of disasters, whose plight we can envisage and to whose immediate assistance we can make a meaningful contribution. We have not yet found a way to personalise the plight of needy millions.

There is another emotional barrier; for many, the unity of mankind is obscured by Man's diversity. We differ widely in language, religion and culture, and in the habits of life and attitudes of mind which derive from these factors; the differences are sometimes so pronounced that they conceal our underlying common humanity. Diversity, however, is not a denial of unity, for we must not confuse unity with uniformity. Other animals which behave as a single species, and which, superficially, seem uniform in appearance, in fact exhibit diversity in



certain characteristics, and there is reason to believe that this has survival value. The infinite variety to be found in the human race is not of itself a barrier to our acting together for the improvement of the human lot.

Nevertheless, this diversity has been used as the foundation on which the walls which still divide us have been erected. These walls were built in earlier times, before the birth of international institutions or the advent of modern means of communication. They persist as anachronisms into our own times. One of the most grievous, and possibly the most dangerous, is founded on the undeniable fact that the human species, like many other animals, is divisible into races. In its most extreme form, racism attempts to deny that the different races of Man belong to the same species, for a species is an inbreeding community and the prohibition of interbreeding is one of the cardinal points of South African legislation. It is not only on this point that Apartheid flies in the face of nature; it does so, too, in its insistence on the innate superiority of one race over the others. This notion, and the many restrictions it places on normal and natural human relationships, is at once an insult and a challenge to what is truly innate, the sense of human worth and dignity. In view of recent events, the white South Africans have been wise not to repeat the boast of their Rhodesian neighbour that they "have the happiest Africans in the world"; but there may be some justification for their claim that the blacks in South Africa are better off economically than those in the independent states to the north. As a defence of their policy, however, the claim is useless: let the black South Africans become genuinely affluent rather than have to eat the crumbs from the rich man's table - they will still not be happy so long as they are relegated to a position of carefully defined inferiority. Man does not live by bread alone.

There is, nevertheless, one point that can be made in favour of the unhappy situation in South Africa: it is clear and unequivocal. In many other countries, some of which are quick to join the chorus of condemnation of Apartheid, an official policy of racial equality is accompanied by social attitudes which perpetuate the notion of inequality. Legislation cannot of itself create brotherly relations between two people, one of whom refuses to accept the other as a neighbour. This is a spiritual and psychological failing which can only be overcome by admonition and education. We may have a long struggle ahead of us, but it must continue, for racism is profoundly divisive, it diverts attention from more pressing problems of human survival and it is the source of the most grievous infringements of human rights.

There are infringements of human rights, almost as grievous, arising from other causes. One is the extension to the whole world of that essentially European institution, the nation-state. In many parts of the world, notably in Africa and southern Asia, the conditions which gave rise to the nation-state do not obtain. The frontiers of many new states often drawn by colonial powers, are not the boundaries of a single homogeneous society but contain within them a number of disparate elements. The attempt to create a single nation out of these diverse elements has led to the domination of particular groups, such as the military or the most powerful tribal unit. The Right of Self-Determination precedes all the other rights defined in the two International Covenants; but in many countries which have exercised this right, the enjoyment of all the others is not yet guaranteed.

There are countries under the domination of individuals or small groups whose sole aim appears to be to remain in power. There are others where those in control are seeking to promote economic and social development on either capitalist or socialist principles. Both are concerned to reach their goals as fast as possible and both subject their citizens to considerable pressure and regimentation in pursuit of their objectives; both tend to assume that the enrichment of the nation is equivalent to - or a valid substitute for - the enrichment of the individuals which compose it. Though they disagree over the choice of method to achieve development, they agree that economic, social and cultural rights should take precedence over the civil and political rights which are the special concern of western nations. They claim that freedom of speech, or of the Press, is a luxury which they cannot afford while they are mobilising the nation to pull itself up by its own bootstraps. Let us recognise that economic development will continue to be a hard taskmaster, as it has been in the past; let us seek, by all means in our power, to mitigate its rigours by generous economic aid; but let us also continue to champion the rights which have been declared to have universal validity. At the very least, we can demand of all Governments, whatever their political colour or stage of development, that they refrain from the practice of discrimination on grounds of sex, race, religion, language or ethnic origin, and, above all, that they abjure the use of torture whose prevalence in the modern world is a shame upon our generation.

## **Limits to Brotherhood: Economic Inequality**

The question of the relative importance to be attached to different categories of human rights is not the only source of division between the developing countries and the affluent western industrialised countries, of which Australia ranks as one. Rich and poor are at loggerheads over their trading

relations which are another inheritance from colonial times, when the rising industrial countries of Europe were able to dictate the terms of trade to the colonies which they had created in the south. The granting of political independence to former colonial territories has not yet materially altered a trading system which operates to the benefit of the rich and tends to concentrate wealth in their hands instead of redistributing it. We can rejoice that serious negotiation has been undertaken, and is continuing, with a view to establishing a new international economic order in which the developing countries will enjoy a more equitable share of the profits of commerce. We can rejoice, too, at the increasing acceptance of the principle that wealth carries responsibilities as well as privileges, and that this applies not only in the national context but in international relations as well. Nevertheless, there is as yet no sign that the wealthy will take the action which their responsibilities demand: the gap between rich and poor is still widening and the bridging of it will require of the rich that they set limits to their accumulation of wealth and surrender some of the power which it has conferred upon them. Unless this gulf is bridged by a determined effort to raise the living standards of the poor, it will develop into a chasm so broad and deep that human unity will be shattered, possibly by world-wide armed conflict.

### **Limits to Brotherhood: Political Division**

The gulf between rich and poor is sometimes called the North-South conflict, though, in defiance of geography, Australia belongs in this context to the North. In the short term, the older and more familiar East-West conflict could prove more damaging. Once deemed to be a conflict over ideological principles, this struggle is more and more evidently one for supremacy between two states, each so powerful that they have been named the "Super-Powers". Their emergence could be described as the apotheosis of the nation-state, or equally well as its *reductio ad absurdum* since each has acquired power beyond any conceivable national requirement. This confrontation has many baleful consequences. It has turned United Nations, which should be an organ for international co-operation, into a political arena. It has prostituted the admirable notion of economic aid to political and military considerations. It has denied to developing countries the freedom to choose their own path by seeking their allegiance to one or other of the opposing alliances. It has engendered an arms race more intense and more widespread than any the world has yet known, a race which is turning the whole world into an armed camp. It encourages all states to believe that their first concern must be the acquisition of military power and that the meeting of the basic needs of their citizens must be subordinated to the needs

of the defence establishment. It promotes the use of violence by supplying weapons to unpopular regimes which survive only by the grace and favour of one of the super-powers, while their opponents seek similar assistance from the other. Such are some of the social and political consequences of the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The economic consequences are equally grave. The cost of the arms race is usually expressed in global terms, though it is unevenly spread: six states, including the two super powers, account between them for about three quarters of the total expenditure, so that the share of the majority of countries is small; but this share is steadily rising and includes contributions to the world military budget from states which can ill afford the luxury of sophisticated modern weapons. World military expenditure now reaches the staggering total of \$1000 million per day, or \$40 million every hour. In the time required to deliver the James Backhouse Lecture we might have built 100 new primary schools or rehoused 100,000 Indian families with the money squandered on weaponry. We seem to be resigned to this uneconomic use of our resources. When I was in Australia five years ago I was told that the installation of 10 square miles of solar cells in the middle of your desert would suffice to meet all your energy requirements; but my informant added that it would not be a viable economic proposition. I have often wondered since whether we subject our "investments" in battleships, or aircraft or missiles to the test of economic viability. Such expenditures, which come out of the pockets of the taxpayer, are almost universally accepted as the price that has to be paid for protection against hypothetical human enemies; should we not accept that similar expenditure may become necessary to protect us against other, perhaps not so hypothetical, enemies, such as cold and starvation? And if our resources are limited, do we not have to make a choice between expenditure on the weapons of death and expenditure on the preservation of life? At present we are choosing death rather than life; the developed, industrialised nations spend 20 times more on their military programmes than for economic assistance to the poorer countries.

The same imbalance is shown in the use we make of our intellectual resources. Today, half the world's trained scientific and technological manpower is employed in military research and development, producing ever more lethal and accurate weapons, with the help of a budget six times that devoted to energy research. The arms race has become a technological race which, in the view of most experts, is bound to end in the holocaust of which we were warned at Hiroshima 33 years ago. If Man continues on his present course he need not be

over anxious about the problems which will confront him in the year 2000 because he will not live to see it.

## **The Need for a Change of Heart**

Let us acknowledge with thankfulness that the dangerous divisions which afflict humanity today are a grave preoccupation for governments. Last year they assembled in New York in a serious endeavour to end the arms race and promote disarmament. However, these objectives cannot be achieved by governments alone; nor can the ending of racism, the elimination of torture and the right sharing of world resources. All require the active involvement of the public, and the public must be prepared for a long and arduous campaign in pursuit of them. Many non-governmental organisations have espoused these aims, and Friends, whether individually or collectively, will seek to work along-side them in their efforts to help Man to escape from his present predicament.

Our predicament is sometimes laid at the door of that element of aggressivity which is innate in all animals. Aggressivity is prevented from being self-defeating, or self-destructive, by carefully devised innate restraints. In our case, these restraints are provided by our sense of right and wrong, derived from the spiritual, rather than the intellectual, side of our nature. If the vision of human unity is shattered by suicidal conflict, this will be the result of a moral and spiritual failure. The experts who predict a holocaust add that it can be averted only by a change of heart.

The primary function of our Society is to contribute to this urgently necessary change. It is true that the Society has also the duty to encourage and uphold those of its members who are concerned to devote their skills to the promotion of human welfare, to undertake service among the poor and deprived, or to dedicate their lives in any other way to the cause of human betterment; it is also true that, if our spiritual message is to be relevant, we must acquire a detailed understanding of current world problems. But these tasks, important though they are, must not distract us from our central one which is to nurture our spiritual insights and share them with others.

Let us hold to these insights with conviction but let us not yield to the temptation of supposing that the whole truth has been vouchsafed to us alone. Let us remember that, numerically speaking, we represent a tiny fraction of the world's spiritual resources, for at 200,000 our numbers barely equal the daily increase of the world's population. But let us not be discouraged by our small

numbers, for the Lord is present when only two or three are gathered together in His name, and what we have to say has validity even if it is spoken only by a few. It is my experience - and I trust that it is also yours - that the Quaker message gets a sympathetic welcome in Councils of Churches which can number their faithful in tens or even hundreds of millions.

## **The Quaker Contribution to Change**

To the world at large we have a very special message for those who react to Man's predicament with either anger or despair. The angry are bent upon the destruction of the existing unjust order of things, seeking to bring a violent world to a violent end. Their emergence is an indictment of an age which has become inured to violence. The circumstances are not propitious, but let that not discourage us from continuing, with even greater zeal, to preach our Peace Testimony to our fellow-citizens and to Governments, for this is a task laid upon us by our Quaker forebears who were faithful to it. In their day, our forebears testified to the pirates on the high seas; we have to testify to the pirates of today, those non-governmental groups who seek to achieve political ends by open or clandestine warfare. We should not hesitate to condemn the use of violence, whatever the cause or the party which resorts to it. In condemning the use of violence we are not necessarily condemning the user or the cause, but let us remember that when Jesus said to the woman taken in adultery, "Neither do I condemn thee", he added "Go and sin no more".

We cannot, of course, be content with the simple condemnation of violence. We have a duty to understand the causes in whose name it is so readily, and so mistakenly and disastrously employed. Those who resort to it can claim - in some cases with justification - that their grievances would never have received the attention they deserve had they not used violent methods of advertising them. This is a very serious challenge to us. Does it mean that we are so blind to injustices that we need to be shaken out of our complacency by the murder of the innocent? Does it not mean that we should be much more alert to festering wrongs and seek to set them right before they erupt into violence? For these reasons we should see all our social concerns - for harmonious race relations, for the proper treatment of prisoners, for the right sharing of world resources - as an integral and totally necessary part of our peace testimony.

There is another form of violence which we have to combat, the violence of thought and speech. We are surrounded by conflict situations, some active, others quiescent but smouldering. They continue because the contestants refuse to resort

to any of the non-violent methods that are open to them for the settlement of disputes, because such methods would involve their accepting something less than total victory. The longer the struggle, the more likely it is that the extremists who adopt an intransigent stand will take command. This is a recipe for perpetual warfare.

Here again we face a very serious - and a double - challenge. First, as pacifists we are predisposed to support the moderates who are prepared at least to talk to, if not actually negotiate with, the enemy. When the extremists are in control the moderates are branded as traitors and risk assassination. Can we, in good conscience, encourage others to tread so perilous a path when we do not have to tread it ourselves? Secondly, we ourselves are extremists in respect of our Peace Testimony which we do not regard as negotiable. Does this mean that we should refrain from any form of compromise with the world, insisting that the solution to human problems is to be found not in negotiation or international institutions but only in a spiritual revolution? I do not think so. I believe- that there are diversities of gifts but the same spirit. I believe that our Society is large enough to contain its apostles who are called to preach the full and undiluted Quaker message, alongside those who follow the dictum of William Penn that "true godliness does not turn a man out of this world but rather incites his endeavours to mend it". United Nations was established with a view to mending a war-torn world; it bears some resemblance to the institution which Penn himself proposed for the preservation of the future peace of Europe. If Friends support United Nations in its endeavours to promote the peace of the world, this does not mean that they regard it as anything other than a human institution, and thus very far indeed from the City of God; but they are entitled to regard it as a small but significant step towards that City which is still afar off but of whose promise we remain assured.

We have a further contribution to make to the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in our method of conducting our business by seeking the sense of the meeting. We ourselves do not always rate this practice at its true value: it is time-consuming and requires much patience and forbearance, often for the settlement of issues so trivial that they may seem to bear no relation to the vast problems of our age. Attendance at our Monthly and other Meetings for Business may, however, be one of those very little things in which we are called to be faithful, since we do not know when these procedures, carefully nurtured and tended, may have a role to play on a much larger stage.

We must also have our message for those who despair of our world. If we treat them tenderly we may first point out that the picture is not wholly dark: the mere fact that we - peoples and governments alike recognise the problems which beset us is one among several grounds for optimism. But optimism is not the same thing as Christian Hope which has a habit of burning brightest when the skies are darkest. Hope derives from Faith which, as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". We derive from our membership of the Christian family our Faith in a God of Love, the Creator who looked upon his world and saw that it was good the Father who sent his Son to be our companion, not only in the green pastures but also in the valley of the shadow. We cannot believe that God has set his children before insoluble problems; it is inconceivable that he created them for the purpose of self-destruction. On the contrary, he has endowed us with intelligence to overcome the difficulties in our way, a precious trust to be used, not for our own gratification but in accord with another gift, the knowledge of good and evil, to lead us in the paths of righteousness.

To these divine gifts, Friends would add another, that element of divinity in everyone, which we call the "Inner Light". Let us beware of interpreting this as a belief in the goodness of human nature. Fox's discovery did not concern human nature but the divine nature: he found that God is not a distant, unapproachable being, remote from the lives of ordinary men and women, but makes himself accessible to each one of us, if we are attentive to the light within. As St. Paul says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, not of us". This power, we believe, directs the lives of those who, in accordance with the light that is given them, feed the hungry, tend the sick, visit the prisoners, comfort the afflicted and preach and practice the gospel of peace. When such concerned men and women lay down their tasks, we pay tribute not to their earthly achievements but to what God has accomplished through them. For we are persuaded that our world is redeemable and will be redeemed by the Grace of God made manifest in dedicated human lives.

This is the Faith which is our shield against despair, and this we offer to our generation. One thing more we offer: the healing and renewal that comes from silent worship. Ours is a noisy world; we are constantly bombarded by news of wars and rumours of wars, famines and pestilences and earthquakes in divers places. The practice of silence is becoming rare. Never was it more necessary. Never was there a generation more in need of heeding the words of the psalmist, "Be still and know that I am God", the God who "maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth", the God who spoke to the prophet Elijah at the entrance to a



cave on Mount Horeb. There the still small voice proved more compelling than all the clamour of the earthquake, wind and fire; and it spoke to a man in the depths of despair, bringing him not only the comfort of the divine presence but the strength to resume his appointed task. That experience took place far away and long ago, but because it partakes of the eternal it belongs also to the here and now. We do not need to travel to Mount Horeb to find the quietness of spirit which will enable us to hear again, above the clamour of the world, that still small voice which speaks to us when, together in worship, we seek the presence of the Lord.