

ROOTS AND FRUITS: MATERIALS RELATING TO THE QUAKER PEACE TESTIMONY IN THE COMMONWEAL COLLECTION

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ABSTRACT

This article includes a select review of books, pamphlets, journals and archives in the Commonweal Collection relating to the Quaker Peace Testimony. It provides an introduction to and background information about the Collection, an independent library which focuses on non-violence and movements for social change. The materials reviewed relate to the Peace Testimony's beginnings, development and interpretation; to Conscientious Objection in two world wars including the Friends Ambulance Unit; and to the witness of individual Friends. Many books and pamphlets reviewed illustrate the transition to a broader understanding of the peace testimony encompassing nonviolent action, mediation, and post-war peace campaigns.

KEYWORDS

Peace Testimony, Quaker, library, pacifism, non-violence

Introduction

The Commonweal Collection is an independent library focusing on non-violent action and movements for social change. The library grew out of a Gandhian community in Wales started by its founder David Hoggett at the initial suggestion of pacifist members of the Fellowship of Friends of Truth (FFT). The FFT was founded in India by Quakers and followers of Gandhi striving for the integration of the ideals of both, and Hoggett attended one of their conferences in Delhi in 1953.¹

The Community house was provided by a Quaker John Dennithorne, refurbished with the help of a Young Friends workcamp and three of its mem-

1. V. Worthington, 'David Hoggett—An Appreciation', in Barlow, *The Commonweal Collection*, Appendix C.

bers were Quakers or sympathizers. Although not a Quaker himself, this Gandhian Community was also inspired by Hoggett's admiration for the Quaker faith. The small FFT library was added to Hoggett's nucleus and the library which developed has always had a strong pacifist philosophy and class sections. Horace Alexander was a founding member of FFT and a fan of the collection.

That small community only lasted three years but Hoggett's biographer believes that these early influences had a strong effect on Commonweal, so that the ethos shifted even more towards non-violence and 'a concept of pacifism which reached out far beyond the traditional anti-militarism and personal war-resistance, to a very critical but creative concept of replacing the destructive culture of power and greed with a caring society'.²

At least three Quaker Committees or trusts have supported Commonweal. In 1958 a visit by Jayaprakash Narayan to David Hoggett was partly sponsored by the Friends Peace Committee. Quaker Peace Studies Trust has quite often contributed funds to support the Coordinator's post, and Quaker Peace and Services sponsored a project in the eighties to increase Commonweal's outreach and extra-mural activities.

Today the library has a home in the J.B. Priestley Library at the University of Bradford, and is well used by students and staff of the Department of Peace Studies there. It is however an independent library, a registered charity, with over 11,000 books, 200 current journals, videos and 400 discontinued journal titles. The library is free and open to everyone. We are constantly updating our materials, acquiring books at the rate of five to ten per week.

Pacifism in its various forms and practices is a core focus for Commonweal, and materials relating to Friends Peace Testimony form, as we shall see, a very significant section of the pacifist materials. The library has its own class system around the core areas of non-violent action in practice and theory, pacifism, peace movements, biographies and writings of radicals and pacifists and peace education. The classes then widen out to cover other areas now thought of as also relating to peace, such as the environment, racism, and north/south issues.

Books and Pamphlets

'The soul of the peace movement is the Quaker sentiment against all war'—wrote Cobden in 1853.³ Commonweal has ninety or so items which relate to

2. Letter from Harry Mister to Sylvia Barlow, 19.8.94, in Barlow, *The Commonweal Collection*, p. 8.

3. P. Brock, *Pacifism in Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 367.

the Peace Testimony in some way, and of these around sixty have a significant amount of material in them. They show clearly the strengthening, deepening and broadening of the Peace Testimony despite set-backs and disagreements, in both its self-clarification and its effectiveness.

Leaving aside those items whose focus is conscientious objection we have around eighteen books dealing with the Quaker Peace Testimony (QPT), five of these in a very major way.

Margaret Hirst's 1923 *The Quakers in Peace and War*⁴ is the first of the two major studies of the QPT we have. A thorough and detailed survey from the seventeenth century to the end of World War I, it aims to show the practice of Friends in maintaining their Peace Testimony. The book has long quotes from reports and individual Friends, and candidly shows the disagreements which often arose, for instance, when some Friends supported World War I and demanded a temporary or permanent abandonment of the 'traditional testimony against war'.

In *The Quaker Peace Testimony 1660 to 1914*⁵ Peter Brock devotes four chapters to the development of the Quaker Peace Testimony in England, viewing pacifism as central to Quakerism. His *Pacifism in Europe*⁶ also features Quaker pacifism prominently, and the prolific Brock also devotes a chapter to George Fox and John Woolman, and the Peace Testimony from Fox's and Woolman's era up to the eve of WW1 in two briefer surveys of pacifism from Christian beginnings to today.⁷ He sees a process of politicization and socialization of the Peace Testimony in the nineteenth century which led to Quakers collaborating with others in seeking to discover and remove the causes of war.

Martin Ceadel can explain much better than me⁸ the issues raised in his two works *Pacifism in Britain in 1914-1945*⁹ and *The Origins of War Prevention*¹⁰ as to how much the Peace Testimony has a tendency to be diluted or weakened by collaborating with non-absolutist pacifists and pragmatic peace activists.

The thirteen other books in Commonweal which deal directly with the

4. M. Hirst *The Quakers in Peace and War* (London: Swarthmore Press, 1923).

5. P. Brock, *The Quaker Peace Testimony 1660 to 1914* (York: Sessions Book Trust, 1990).

6. P. Brock, *Pacifism in Europe*.

7. P. Brock, *Varieties of Pacifism: A Survey from Antiquity to the Outset of the Twentieth Century* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), and P. Brock, *A Brief History of Pacifism from Jesus to Tolstoy* (Toronto: Syracuse University Press, 1992).

8. In the article by him in this issue of *Quaker Studies*.

9. M. Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain in 1914-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

10. M. Ceadel, *The Origins of War Prevention* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1996).

Quaker Peace Testimony in some part, include treatises on the gospel ground for the Peace Testimony, two sociological surveys which touch on it, one excellent workbook, a study of Quaker Socialists¹¹ and another on *Dissent or Conform: War Peace and the English Churches between 1900 and 1945*.¹²

Two collections of essays on the Peace Testimony are divided by sixty three years. In 1936 Horace Alexander, Gerald Heard and Carl Heath wrote beside other prominent and passionate inter-war peace advocates like Dick Sheperd and Aldous Huxley in *The New Pacifism*.¹³ In the very recent *Challenge to Mars* collection, Lynn Smith presents the history of the World War II Friends Ambulance Unit, with its perspective on war through the eyes of non-combatants, as a valuable and underestimated counterbalance to military accounts of World War II.¹⁴ In the same book, Martin Ceadel argues that British Pacifism's long historical roots in Quakerism had made the peace movement socially engaged, respectable and non-political; and that this along with other factors enabled it to attain a legitimacy by the start of World War II.¹⁵

In three books on the twentieth century peace movement and/or some of the people involved, apart from the case of conscientious objection, quaker peace witness is often invisible, although Quakers certainly contributed to one of the books *Peace is the Way*.¹⁶ By the 1960s, 70s and 80s Quakers had become part of wider sub-movements, e.g. CND, the World Disarmament Campaign (WDC), Greenham Common and the other peace camps in the 1980s. As one of Commonweal's key strengths is its holdings on peace campaigns there is also a wealth of material on any one of these campaigns and others in Commonweal, and we also have Committee of 100, WDC Archives. and Molesworth Peace Camp Archives.

In one of three Swarthmore lectures we hold, Wolf Mendl in his 1974

11. T. Adams, *The Socialist Quaker Society (1898-1924)* (MA Dissertation; Leicester: University of Leicester, 1985)

12. A. Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform: War Peace and the English Churches between 1900 and 1945* (London: SCM Press, 1986).

13. G. Heard, *The New Pacifism* (Allenson & Co. Ltd., 1936)

14. Lyn Smith, 'Quakers in Uniform: The Friends Ambulance Unit', in P. Brock and T. Socknat, *Challenge of Mars: Essays on Pacifism from 1918-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 243-55.

15. M. Ceadel, 'A Legitimate Peace Movement: The Case of Interwar Britain, 1918-1945', in P. Brock and T. Socknat, *Challenge of Mars*, pp. 134-48.

16. C. Moorhead, *Troublesome People: Enemies of War 1916-1986* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987); C. Wright and T. Augarde, *Peace is the Way: A Guide to Pacifist Views and Actions* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1990); J. Hinton, *Protests and Visions: Peace Politics in Twentieth Century Britain* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989).

*Prophets and Reconcilers*¹⁷ sees the Peace Testimony as going through six stages of development. He explains how key social changes such as the blurred distinction between peace and war have led to a shift in focus from one form of conflict to problems of conflict in general and at all social levels. While arguing that changes offer Friends new opportunities to express the peace witness, for instance, through support of UN peacekeeping, he does not shirk discussion of problems around disarmament and legitimate revolution and I sensed perhaps in this early 70s time a low point of belief in the inner light.

We have seen the outcome of this shift in focus in the publications on conflict resolution and mediation produced by Kingston Friends.¹⁸ These in conjunction with manuals from the Quaker Arts Drama group, the Leaveners, such as *Playing with Fire*,¹⁹ have been very influential in providing practical ways of tackling conflicts in communities, neighbourhoods, and schools—through youth work and the community and peer mediation programmes which have sprung up nationwide in the last ten years.

The growth of Quaker mediation in practice and theory at the international level over the last fifty years is documented by Yarrow in *Quaker Experiences in International Conciliation*²⁰ and in an account based on their personal endeavours given by Sue and Steve Williams, *Being in the Middle by Being on the Edge*.²¹

Sydney Bailey's Swarthmore Lecture *Peace is a Process* in 1993²² puts flesh on Horace Alexander's 1938 *The Growth of the Quaker Peace Testimony in the Society of Friends*.²³ Bailey answers the 'how' of the Peace Testimony with three illustrative sections on Quaker action: (1) Friends say no to outward weapons, (2) Quaker war relief and (3) Quaker peacemaking. Bailey's assertion that peace is a process is also a key insight of Adam Curle whose many publications

17. Wolf Mendl, *Prophets and Reconcilers* (London, Friends Home Service Committee, 1952).

18. E.g. *Ways and Means: an Approach to Problem-Solving* (Kingston: Kingston Friends Workshop, 3rd edn, 1987).

19. N. Fine and F. Macbeth, *Playing with Fire: Training for the Creative Use of Conflict* (Leicester, Youth Work Press, 1992).

20. C.H.M. Yarrow, *Quaker Experiences in International Conciliation* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press 1978.)

21. S. Williams and S. Williams, *Being in the Middle by Being on the Edge: Quaker Experience of Non-official, Political Mediation* (London: Quaker Peace and Service in association with Sessions Book Trust, 1994).

22. S. Bailey, *Peace is a Process: Swarthmore Lecture 1993* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1993).

23. H.G. Alexander, *The Growth of the Peace Testimony of the Society of Friends* (London: Friends Peace Committee, 1938).

illuminate our shelves from his own Swarthmore Lecture *True Justice*²⁴ to his latest book *To Tame the Hydra*.²⁵ In devising a model of peaceful and un-peaceful relationships from his early work in education and development planning, in converting his own experiences of mediation into a method applicable by others in *In the Middle*, in establishing the Bradford School of Peace Studies, and developing the theory and practice of positive peace-building through his constructive work in Croatia, Curle embodies the fruitfulness of the Quaker Peace Testimony in the twentieth century exemplified by so many other Friends.

Pamphlets

Aside from conscientious objection, nineteen of our pamphlets are concerned directly with the Peace Testimony and its interpretation and or practice. Some are very detailed examinations of the relationship of the Peace Testimony to national and international life. Others, such as one in 1943 on a Peace Retreat,²⁶ are very spiritual and explore, agonize even, over how to remain faithful, exhorting Friends to remain true even in times of darkest societal disapproval such as wartime. Still others outline practical steps such as forming a League of Nations at the end of World War I or establishing a Peace Office or Ministry prior to World War II or other constructive plans to end the current war.

The concerns of the six post-World War II pamphlets become wider still and increasingly call for the development of non-violent methods of conflict resolution and of resisting war, sometimes for supporting UN peacekeeping despite all its ambiguities. In the *Quaker Peace Testimony Today*, Alex South calls on Quakers to support UN peacekeeping despite its ambiguities,²⁷ Roland Dale calls for the development of non-violent methods giving instances from around the world,²⁸ and Fred Moorhouse cites Steve Biko's commitment to non-violence as a sign that there is an alternative to violence,²⁹ The pamphlets'

24. A. Curle, *True Justice* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1981).

25. A. Curle, *To Tame the Hydra—Undermining the Culture of Violence* (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 1999).

26. *Responsibility of Friends in the Present War Situation: Some thoughts on the Forthcoming Retreat* (London, Friends Peace Committee, 1943).

27. R. Dale, J. McCarthy, F. Moorhouse, A. South, *Quaker Peace Testimony Today: Some Present Day Interpretations* (Leeds: Northern Friends Peace Board, 1978), pp. 15-21.

28. R. Dale et al., *Quaker Peace Testimony Today*, pp. 6-9.

29. R. Dale et al., *Quaker Peace Testimony Today*, p. 27.

authors include Horace Alexander, Carl Heath, Ruth Fry, Donald Groom, Stephen Hobhouse, Corder Catchpool, Joseph Rowntree, and John Ferguson.

By the time of the 1979 Quaker Peace and Service Swanwick Conference on the *Quaker Peace Testimony in the World Today*,³⁰ the topics considered cover disarmament, alternatives to employment in defence work, violence in cities and racial problems, liberation movements, training for non-violence. The 1992 *Quaker Peace Testimony: A Workbook for Individuals and Groups*³¹ is an excellent resource with questions and exercises suitable for individuals or groups and a very clear seven page summary of the development of the Peace Testimony which emphasizes its new proactive character after World War II.

Conscientious Objection

Conscientious objection is a major theme in all the general books on the Peace Testimony which I have mentioned. We also have one major work on conscientious objection in World War I, *Objection Overruled* by David Boulton,³² and Chamberlain's passionate and committed *Fighting for Peace*³³ of 1928, which contains useful thumbnail sketches of members of the No Conscription Fellowship.

Of the two comprehensive studies of conscientious objection in World War II *Challenge of Conscience* by Dennis Hay³⁴ from just after the war is a spirited, obviously partisan, but also informative account written by a conscientious objector himself.

Rachel Barker's later book *Conscience, Government and War*³⁵ is less committed and uses more independent sources, but is drier. Barker documents a rather more positive experience of the working of the conscience clause and tribunals than in World War I. We also see, through the words of judges, officials, employers and citizens how unpopular pacifists were during the war.

A number of individual stories and letters from both wars include those of Corder Cathpool, Stephen Hobhouse and *Flowery*, the newsletter of

30. *Quaker Peace Testimony in the World Today* (London: Quaker Peace and Service Swanwick Conference, 1979).

31. *Quaker Peace Testimony: A Workbook for Individuals and Groups* (London: Communications and Fundraising Department of the Religious Society of Friends, 1993).

32. D. Boulton, *Objection Overruled* (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1967).

33. W.J. Chamberlain, *Fighting for Peace* (London: No more war movement, 1929).

34. D. Hayes, *Challenge of Conscience* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1949).

35. R. Barker, *Conscience, Government and War* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).

imprisoned conscientious objectors (COs) in World War II.

We also have four collections of individual accounts of COs experiences and feelings—one from World War I,³⁶ one about World War II³⁷ and two from both world wars.³⁸ One is based on taped interviews of the Imperial War Museum. All of these include Quakers.

The Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) has three books on conscientious objection, the most recent, *Pacifists in Action*, published in 1998.³⁹ The FAU's work is also analysed in some of the general books for its contribution to Quaker humanitarian work.

Constance Braithwaite's *Conscientious Objection to Compulsions under the Law*⁴⁰ looks at conscientious objection to all sorts of legal compulsions. It includes a very detailed and systematic treatment of compulsory military service before the twentieth century and in both world wars, and is a good source on Quaker resistance to the Militia Acts and Quaker humanitarian work. We learn how the Army, Navy, Militia and other reserve forces recruited, when they first became compulsory, and about the distraints on Quakers property levied instead of fines or rates. Braithwaite's treatment of her subject is very thorough and includes many quotes from Quakers.

Building on the right of conscientious objection established in Britain, two useful handbooks commissioned or written by Quakers at Geneva give information and advice on conscientious objection status in Europe including Britain.⁴¹ Then Cecil Evans brings us right up to date on conscientious objection to paying war taxes in his pamphlet *The Claims of Conscience*.⁴²

36. J. Bell, *We Did Not Fight* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1935).

37. C. Simmons, *The Objectors* (Anthony Gibbs & Phillips, 1965).

38. F. Goodall, *A Question of Conscience* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997); Imperial War Museum, *Oral History Recordings: The Antiwar Movement 1914–1945* (London: Imperial War Museum Department of Sound Records, 1985).

39. M. Tatham and J.E. Miles, *The Friends Ambulance Unit 1914–1919* (London: The Swarthmore Press Ltd., 1919), L. Smith, *Pacifists in Action* (York: Sessions Book Trust, 1998), T.A. Davies, *Friends Ambulance Unit* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1947).

40. C. Braithwaite, *Conscientious Objection to Compulsions under the Law* (York: William Sessions, 1995).

41. E. Miles, *A Conscientious Objectors' Guide to the UN Human Rights System* (Geneva: Quaker United Nations Office, 2002); Quaker Council for European Affairs, *Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Europe* (Brussels: Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, May 1984).

42. C. Evans, *The Claims of Conscience* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1996).

Individual Friends

We have sixteen pamphlets and six books on individual Quakers who have witnessed for peace, and six books. John Woolman accounts for six of these including his much loved journal. Other pamphlets relate to George Fox, Richard Hubbethorne, Thomas Lurting, Corder Catchpool again and his wife Gwenn. Later pamphlets such as Will Warren's 'scrap-book' of his time in Northern Ireland⁴³ or Donald Groom's letters from India and Pakistan⁴⁴ witness to the broadening from the early refusal to bear arms or pay the distraint levied, to active service on the national and international scene.

Corder's biography *Indomitable Friend*⁴⁵ is my favourite of the four remaining book-length biographies. Whitaker's *Fighter for Peace*⁴⁶ testifies to the worldwide impact of Quaker peace work with the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Philip Noel-Baker. The reminiscences of Sybil Whyte⁴⁷ witness not only to the tenacity of a Quaker COs wife but also the dedication of Quaker humanitarian work caring for interned 'enemy aliens' families.

Alex Bryan wrote *Healing the Wounds*⁴⁸ about Quaker humanitarian work during World War II and its aftermath to reveal the value of positive, creative pacifism. The pamphlet has evocative pictures of the conditions refugees in Europe were living in.

Dorothy Darke's moving book *The Leaves Have Lost their Trees*⁴⁹ about Jewish escapees, pays tribute to Quaker work for refugees in passing.

Journals and Archives

Our two treasures among the journals are the *Tribunal*, the magazine of the No Conscription Fellowship in World War I and II, and the *Herald of Peace*, the journal of the first Peace Society which became the London Peace Society. We have the first three copies of the *Herald of Peace* from 1819, and runs of issues up to 1853, although not a complete run. For the *Tribunal*, the first 101 issues

43. W. Warren, *A Quaker in Northern Ireland* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1983).

44. D. Groom, *The Peace Testimony Today* (Cowley, Oxford: C.A. Press, 1966).

45. W.R. Hughes, *Indomitable Friend* (London: Housmans, 1956).

46. D.J. Whittaker, *Fighter for Peace: Philip Noel-Baker 1889-1982* (York: William Sessions, 1989).

47. P.M. Wells, *Quick, thy Tablets, memory!* (Nottingham: Whitewells, 1989).

48. B. Alex, *Healing the Wounds: Quaker Relief Work in World War II and its Aftermath* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1986).

49. D.M. Darke, *The Leaves Have Lost their Trees* (York, William Sessions, 2000).

are complete starting in March 1916, then there are a number more up to November 1919, and also some for World War II.

We currently take *The Friend*, *Reconciliation International* and *Reconciliation Quarterly*, plus *Quaker News* and *Earth Quaker*.

Amongst our archives we have five boxes of materials relating to the Northern Friend's Peace board, two boxes on conscientious objection, and papers from Adam Curle and Robert McKinlay. Members of the public are welcome to make an appointment to view these archives or any other part of the library, even if they are not a member. We also have a website where the catalogue can be searched.⁵⁰

Conclusion

This overview of the materials in Commonweal on the Quaker Peace Testimony has picked up on the various strands going to make up that testimony since its beginning until today, and also illustrated new directions it has taken. The refusal to bear arms has continued through conscientious objection and increasing success in establishing the legal right of conscientious objection in national and international law. Quakers have also addressed the causes of war, and of conflicts from the local to international level. They have collaborated increasingly with others in the peace movement, and grappled with the danger of diluting their own absolute pacifism. Finally, Friends have explored non-violent action as an answer to war and as a practical training requirement, and have been initiators in devising positive new methodologies of peacemaking and peacebuilding such as community and international mediation.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Christina Arber was Outreach Worker at the Commonweal Collection from June 1999 to April 2002. Before that she was a trustee of Commonweal for 12 years and Chair for three. She has a PhD and MA in Peace Studies and has lectured at the Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, on a variety of peace-related subjects including peacemakers in the modern world, Gandhi, the theory and practice of non-violent resistance. She has also taught WEA and university extra-mural courses on peacemakers, peace studies and nuclear

50. www.brad.ac.uk/library/services/commonweal/home.htm. The university library catalogue can be searched by Commonweal Classmark; e.g. Da (Conscientious Objection), will display all the works we have in this class. You can also search by Keyword; this will display all the works in the University Library on this subject including those in Commonweal, which will be marked as 'Commonweal' on the individual record.

weapons systems. An article, 'Gandhi's Concept of God', was published in *The Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* in 1996, and some smaller items have appeared in *The Gandhi Way*. She was a Member of the Social Defence Project Steering Group 1987–91 for the book *People Power* (1991) by Michael Randle, and of the Non-violent Action Research Project which grew out of it.

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