



Lecture 1958

William Penn

*Peace  
and  
Tranquility*

*Ira De A. Reid*

William Penn Lecture 1958

**Peace and Tranquility**  
**The Quaker Witnesses**

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by  
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The name of William Penn has been chosen because he was a Great Adventurer, who in fellowship with his friends started in his youth on the holy experiment of endeavoring “to live out the laws of Christ in every thought, and word, and deed,” that these might become the laws and habits of the State.

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## ***William Penn***

Friends said he was a “man of great abilities; quick of thought and of ready utterance; full of the qualification of true discipleship, even love without dissimulation; as extensive in charity as comprehensive in knowledge, and to whom malice and ingratitude were utter strangers, ready to forgive enemies, and the ungrateful were not excepted.”

Caroline Jacob  
*Builders of the Quaker Road*  
Chicago, 1953. p. 59.

Friends, I am certain will understand me when I say that it was with fear and trembling that I approached the acceptance of this opportunity to commune with them through the William Penn lecture. I have experienced the Society’s addiction to the “form of sound words.” I was not so certain that I, at once a member of the Society and a social scientist, could adequately express the fullness of what I sensed and thought in the language to which they are accustomed in such a lecture. In fact, I believe that I have experienced what many have thought during the “hushness” of a meeting for worship – “How can I acceptably say what weighs heavily on my heart and mind?” I found a sort of negative sanction in an advice given by William Penn in which he cautioned that we not let this rightful concern become a “verbal orthodoxy.”

## ***Peace and Tranquility***

I have selected as my theme for this lecture two secrets of the Society of Friends – “Peace” and “Tranquility.” I do not regard them as the same in either faith or practice. Peace I regard as a sort of harmony or concord between and among individuals and states. Tranquility is a state of being inwardly quiet, undisturbed, and calm. The former obtains for man in his collective capacities and roles. The latter is that quality which obtains for man unto himself and himself alone. The former is attained when man works for concord among his fellow men; the latter is attained only when one seeks and finds the “that” which is of God in every man. The former is made evident in the ways of men and the goals they seek; the latter in the ways and faith of the individual. Both witnesses are parts of the secrets of the religion that is called Quakerism.

For about three-quarters of a century the study of religion and religious groups has enjoyed the fruit of work done with accuracy and enlightened by a critical appreciation of religious ideas and institutions. Aided by the progress of various sciences, it has achieved a more direct and adequate understanding of religions’ growth, cultural forms and social functions, as well as its bodies of belief, doctrine and ideals. The subject, as it can now be pursued, is an important contribution to any liberal study of man and society.

In the exciting volume *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James offered a case-book of individual religious experience, describing, to use his own

words, “experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they consider the divine.” That book, written from the viewpoint of individual psychology of the early 1900’s and approaching a clinical description of the religious life, is of the greatest value. But James is at pains to say that he omits from discussion that great portion of the subject which involves an analysis of the social scene in which religion takes place – that is the religious tradition, institutions and arts, and what groups of men and women do in expressing and cultivating what they together hold as sacred. This corporate feeling and action – this “togetherness” of religious behavior is the framework within which I should like to consider the two witnesses of Quaker religious life.

### ***Friends As Seen By Others***

Some twenty-five years ago two philosophers of no mean academic repute described the Society of Friends in the following language:

The Friends, or Quakers, represent the extreme left wing of Protestantism. Growing out of the turbulent seventeenth century with its religious wars and intolerances and its social unrests, Quakerism has survived and gains new power from every recurring period of distress and conflict. Two very different characters were primarily responsible for the growth of the Society of Friends: George Fox, a mystic and missionary, a preacher and prophet to the oppressed, and William Penn, a wealthy, influential business

man and politician, who came to respect and employ Quakers because of their sobriety, peaceableness, thrift and devotion to their democratic ideas.

Until 1660 the Friends were largely taken from the ranks of the disinherited and discontented, who hoped, by intensive missionary preaching and by apocalyptic prophesy, to establish the Kingdom of God in England; but severe persecution, fanatic demonstrations and opportunities for emigration induced them to adopt more passive tactics. Penn's "holy experiment" in Pennsylvania finally gave them a place to apply their principles unmolested. The most famous of the American Quakers was the itinerant missionary, John Woolman (1720-1772) whose journal is a classic exposition of Quaker principles and policies.

The Friends reject practically all of the traditional religious institutions – priesthood, professional ministry, sacraments, ritual, even the authority of the Bible. They believe in a radically democratic society and religion, in which each person is guided by the indwelling Spirit of God. Differences of opinion or conflicts of interest are to be settled by peaceable discussion or negotiation and mutual agreement. They oppose war, slavery, inequality of the sexes and all institutions which give one person absolute authority over another. Their worship consists in meeting silently for a period of prayer and meditation, followed by spontaneous addresses by

members of the Society.... There is no fixed creed.... Active philanthropy is one of the fundamental principles of the Friends, and they have carried on extensive works of education, charity and social reform.<sup>1</sup>

In another volume on religions, one which experienced 38 French editions before being published in English, one finds the following description of Friends and their witnesses:

Reformed England has never lacked reformers. One of these – George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends – was imprisoned under Charles II. He taught that the divine spirit acted directly upon individuals, occasionally inspiring them with a sort of convulsive shaking. People took advantage of this doctrine to call the Friends Quakers, although their worship is remarkably free from fuss or affection. The Quakers are honest folk, who know neither sacrament nor rites, whose lives are simple to austerity, who neither swear nor play, nor carry arms, nor dance, nor drink strong liquors. Their religious exaltation, inoffensive enough, declares itself at their “meetings,” when, amid a profound silence, one of the congregation may begin to hold forth in the name of the Holy Spirit. The most intelligent of the Quakers, William Penn, the son of an admiral, was a creditor of Charles II’s government, which paid its debt with a gift of land in America. Penn betook himself thither with a body of Friends in 1681. The flourishing state of

Pennsylvania preserves his name, and its capitol (sic) Philadelphia, reveres his memory. The Friends have always exercised a certain influence in England and in the United States, where they cooperated with effect in the movement for Negro emancipation. Quite recently, they have had the honour of being the first to rebuild houses in the devastated regions of France (1915) and they have played a merciful part in combating the famine in Russia (1922).<sup>2</sup>

These illustrations of the Quaker way are cited because they give us an opportunity to see ourselves as others see us. In the language of the social sciences they provide a view of the “looking-glass self.” This is the reflected self of the Society, a self which seems to have three principal elements: the imagination of our appearance to others, the imagination of their judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling that Quakers may have as a result of this image, such as pride or mortification. The “other persons” in whose mind we see ourselves, may make all the difference with our feelings.

### ***The “Looking-Glass Self”***

But the “looking-glass self” does not reveal the secrets of the Quaker religious life. These secrets include our acceptance of the principle of the “Inner Light,” our recognition of the power of the listening silence, sometimes called the “hushness”, our witnesses, our service, and our “concerns” – those costly inner leadings which may, in the course of their fulfillment, take over the very life of the one they engage.

The secret of the witnesses for peace and tranquility rests in our knowledge that for nearly three centuries they have been reasserted and revindicated by both revealed and secular truth. We know that at times the words have become but verbal orthodoxy. We know that these witnesses have been challenged in our contemporary lives by the dreadful potency of knowledge. We know that neither faith nor practice has fully supported the import of the mighty truths espoused by early Friends.

Today, Friends find it difficult to fully support a theory that is at once scientifically tenable and spiritually propitious. Though religiously the way seems open to us, Friends are called upon to recognize the contemporary nature of peace and tranquility, both of which are being affected by the stark facts that for many people in this huge world there is a richness of life and for others little or no life. For others there is an atmosphere of apprehension in which there is no full and free ventilation of controversial issues.

For many Friends and others, life itself has become all foreground with no horizons, reducing the opportunities in which man can at once come to terms with himself on the one hand, promote the ways of affection and love, and the ways of uninhibited exchange of thoughts and actions (safe from intrusion, control, and free from the invasion of authority) on the other. There exists within the problem of peace among men a need for combining revealed with experiential truth in order that the construction of a peaceful society may be dared without apprehension.

On the other hand there seems to be a need for a restatement of the Biblical expression “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” In these times the Great Emptiness in our individual lives, lives so devoid of inward peace, the statement may be minuted to read “Let your heart be troubled, but be you not afraid.” Faced with new challenges in a world at war with itself in deeds as well as values; sensing man’s loss of privacy in modern life, his inability to be at one with himself, Friends are called upon to follow another adventuring road that would permit them to speak truth to our times, asserting new duties that attend the new occasions for world peace, and witnessing to ways in which the ancient good of spiritual certitude (which stems from tranquility) can speak truth to Friends, to man and to government where e’er they may be.

### ***Quakerism ‘Set In a Larger Place’***

Eighty-odd years ago John Greenleaf Whittier in a series of letters to the Editor of the *Friend’s Review* in Philadelphia expressed his consummate faith in the Society while saying “I am not blind to the shortcomings of Friends.” He expressed his concern that they had lost so much by coldness and inactivity, by the overestimate of external observances, and the neglect of their own proper work while serving as the conscience-keepers of others. Whittier suggested that Friends were too much “at ease in Zion;” that Friends in the period of reconstruction in the United States had not been active enough “in those simple duties which we owe to our suffering fellow-creatures; that there had been a decline in practical righteousness.” But, said John Whittier, “if we look at the matter closely, we shall

see that the cause is not in the central truth of Quakerism, but in a failure to rightly comprehend it; in an attempt to fetter with forms and hedge about with dogmas that great law of Christian liberty ... If we did but realize it, we are 'set in a large place' (for) Quakerism, in the light of its great original truth is 'exceeding broad.' As interpreted by Penn and Barclay, it is the most liberal and catholic of faiths. If we are not free, generous, tolerant; if we are not up to or above the level of the age in good works, in culture and love of beauty, order and fitness; if we are not the ready recipients of the truths of science and philosophy – in a word, if we are not full-grown men and Christians, the fault is not in Quakerism, but in ourselves.”<sup>3</sup>

Being 'set in a large place' with a revealed truth which is 'exceeding broad,' Friends seemed called upon to rethink their revered and ancient testimony on non-violent forms of peacemaking between states and within men. The ever-changing lot of mortal man has in it the potency of endless change. Always within it there arise disturbers and disturbances of the peace. War is one of these disturbers and disturbances. When a nation resorts to war it uses a method of settling a dispute with another state. It may be a dispute over "honor", or trade, or any of many vast concerns.

Today, it is a misuse of language to call these disputes the causes of war. They are causes of war only if war is an accepted mode of settling them. War has no cause except the intention of governments, under whatever conditions, to resort to war. As has been said so often, war is an instrument of national policy and if men should decide to

abandon this instrument the alleged causes could forever exist without producing the alleged consequences. War has no cause except the intention of governments to resort to it. The mode of war has changed enormously in its character and in its consequences, and it is becoming increasingly clear that the majority of men are developing an increasing dread of it.

We all know that war has become intolerable under the conditions of our civilization. We also know that mankind has the continuing power to remake its social institutions according to its needs. We know that nothing resists the will to change these institutions except the unwillingness to change them. Friends, it would seem, are called upon to re-examine their peace testimony, to see to it that the values of their ancient witness are not imprisoned within the Society's traditions.

This concern becomes a heavy one when Prime Minister Nehru says to a public meeting in New Delhi (January 30, 1958) that "the peace of the world is hanging by a slender thread. It is not the big powers alone who are to decide whether to have war or not. That is bad enough. But now one man has been given responsibility which may engulf the world in war. Thousands of pilots are flying planes carrying atom bombs day and night. If any pilot lost his mind or got flurried or misunderstood orders and released the bombs, there would be a full-scale war." He added, in a plea for effective disarmament, that the path of the cold war "will not take the peoples of the world anywhere. If that is so then the world will have to follow another path. What is that path? It is clear that the path is one in which there is no

dependence on armaments. *So we reach the conclusion ultimately – that the path shown by Gandhiji and Buddha is the only path that can save the world from disaster.*” (Italics mine.)<sup>4</sup>

At the 300th anniversary World Conference at Oxford, 900 Quakers from 22 countries issued a message to persons everywhere which said, in part, we seek “to substitute the institutions of peace for the institutions of war.” Is it possible for our witness to the peace testimony to provide such institutions for men everywhere? Is it not possible to create a politics of peace as a living substitute for the politics of war? As national politics based on war continues to seep into every fabric of our everyday lives (at present offering to the men and women of college age and intent an opportunity to secure four years of college training at government expense, providing they agree to give twelve years to the armed services in return therefore) we must realize that our ancient truth demands newer and broader implementation. One wonders if a heart-felt concern expressed in speaking truth to power is a full and sufficient method for establishing and maintaining the truth of peace abroad and at home. The peace testimony ceaselessly calls for that “and something more” which is the essence of true religion.

### ***Inward Peace***

I would speak of tranquility or inward peace honestly, wistfully, and without fear. The Quaker doctrine of inward peace, as Howard Brinton has so effectively described it,

“is not a doctrine which is unique to the Society of Friends.” He states:

“In its general and essential character it can be found in all the so-called higher religions. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the inward and the outward were comparatively integrated. It was a time of social pioneering in such fields as equality of sexes, races and classes, simplicity of life, peace-making, prison reform, reform of mental hospitals, abolition of slavery, and education. Yet, it was also a time of intense inwardness, when the primary emphasis was placed on divine guidance and the search for inward peace. This inwardness increased men’s sensitivity to moral evils, and enabled situations to be faced freshly rather than through the obscuring haze of conventional patterns....

Modern Quakerism, affected by the prevailing trends of our time, has lost much of this inwardness. Activity continues to increase. Outward peace is sought as never before but men search less intently for the inward peace which is both source and goal of outward peace. ... In recent years scientific skill has been largely used for conflict, either to promote a militant nationalism or to produce a restless insatiable desire for possessions in order to increase the sale of goods. This is not the road to peace. It is clear evidence that the inner life is evaporating out of our culture, that the soul which held the culture together

is vanishing, leaving outer force as a means of providing security and unity.”<sup>5</sup>

It seems that modern day Friends are called upon to speak the truth of inward peace to the great emptiness and aloneness of modern man. The absence of any source of guidance and illumination, the absence of a spiritual or philosophical certitude, which are said again and again to typify Western man, reveal his necessity for being at one with himself. In his “Democratic Vistas” Walt Whitman wrote:

I should say that only in the perfect uncontamination and solitariness of individuality may the spirituality of religion come forth at all. Only here, and on such terms, the meditation, the devout ecstasy, the soaring flight. Only here, communion with the mysteries, the eternal problems... Bibles may convey, and priests expound, but it is exclusively for the noiseless operation of one’s isolated self to enter the pure ether of veneration, reach the divine levels, and commune with the unutterable.

The tranquilizer of medical science may deal with the somatic aspects of this aloneness and tension which contemporary man experiences but there are no substitutes for the loss of privacy; the ways of love and affection; the uninhibited exchange of thoughts safe from intrusion and control; for freedom from the invasion of authority. There is no doubt that the dreadful potency of knowledge, cast in an atmosphere of apprehension, has made many afraid to

express any kind of independent judgment (particularly on economic and political questions) lest they be suspected of being subversive.

The Quaker inward peace is at once scientifically tenable and spiritually propitious. It will permit its holders to have a religion of healthy-mindedness rather than one of weary, sin-sick souls. It will permit us to deal with the uneasiness of man in society, and harrow the ground whence comes solution for social problems. It will provide the religious enthusiasm that makes one contemptuous of danger and willing to live on chance. It will enable us to overcome the current popular fear of intelligence as one of the great dangers of our times. And since every powerful emotion and truth has its own myth-making tendency, it will enable us to bear witness to the necessity for making the attainment of peace a process that requires not only that we work on and with governments, but that we also cleanse our hearts and minds of the poisons that make military, economic, racial and religious conflicts seem reasonable: pride, fear, greed, prejudice, envy and contempt. As one of the Princeton University Seniors wrote in that challenging volume *The Unsilent Generation*, the development of these qualities will enable one to have the unimpeachable integrity, the keenness of mind, and the stability and balance needed in one's approach to any problem.

The development and maintenance of an inward peace is an inescapable preliminary to the great mission Friends have set for themselves in every community throughout the world. This personal peace requires that each of us within his or her own field of action – the home, the neighborhood,

the city, the region, the school, the meeting, the factory, the mine, the office, the union – must carry into his immediate day's work a changed attitude toward all his functions and obligations. The collective effort of Friends cannot rise to a higher level than his or her personal scale of values. It underlies our testimony that once this change is effected in the person, the group will record and respond to it.

### *Our Witness*

Today many of our best plans miscarry because they are in the hands of people who have undergone no inner growth. Many of these folk have shrunk from facing the world of crisis, having no notion of the manner in which they themselves have helped to bring it about. Into the situations of housing, human relations, pacifism, and disarmament, for example, they carry only a self-concern. Their hidden prejudices, their glib hopes, their archaic and self-centered desires all indicate that they are not sensitive to the compelling that gave us the heritage of Fox or Penn or Woolman. By closing their eyes, by being silent they seek to avoid the nightmares of human existence by resting in the bosom of their dreams. There is no peace-making in such behavior. Each man and woman must first assume his religious and social burden alone – and together.

Our witness tells us that we need not wait for nuclear warfare to strike us before we strip our lives of these superfluities; we need not wait for events to bend our wills to unison. Wherever we are, the worst has already happened and we must meet it. We must simplify our daily routine without waiting for legislation; we must take our political

and public responsibilities without having to take the negative action of being “against” nuclear testing, the death-use of science, the military-moulding of education. We must work for the unity and effective brotherhood of man without letting further wars, acts of congresses, decisions of courts, prove that the current pursuit of power, profit and all manners of material and social aggrandizement are treasonable to both Divinity and Democracy. The testimony of inward peace calls for a rebuilding of ourselves, which is no easy formula. For it is not enough for us to do all that is possible: we must do that which seems impossible, bringing to every activity and every plan a new criterion of judgment – a criterion obtained from within.

### ***Four Roads***

If the mission of Friends is as George Fox expounded it; if the qualities of Friends are as William Penn described them; if the responsibility of Friends is as John Woolman lived it, then the challenge to Friends is to develop and maintain a constancy between their religious beliefs and their social practices. John Woolman in a testimony before a Meeting of English Friends suggested that if they were to attain the right true ends of peace they must travel four roads – *The Damascus Road* with its drawings, concerns the awakenings; *The Jerusalem Road*, a journey requiring conscience and a complete commitment to a rightly fashioned life; *The Jericho Road* with its action and service in the cause of one’s belief; and *The Emmaus Road*, the way of true fellowship with one’s fellowman.

Damascus was the oldest continuously existing city in the world. It was the scene of Paul's conversion. It was also an oasis of living green between the Lebanon range and the desert. Mohammed refused to go there, saying when asked for a reason, "I shall have to go to heaven when I die; so why should I enter Damascus now." Jerusalem, then sacred to Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans alike, stood on two rocky hills. Enclosed by walls, and pierced by eight gates, it was difficult to reach. Jericho was always being sacked and rebuilt, requiring incessant activity to stay in the same place. The Emmaus Road – a not much traveled road on which the Apostles communed together, reasoned, and discovered their religious insights. It was here, Luke reports, that the Apostles discovered Jesus as one "who was a prophet mighty in deed before God and all the people."

Friends have traveled these adventuring roads with respect to many phases of human existence. They have spoken truth to *ecclesiastical power* and have been able to develop and maintain a religious amity that is at once peaceful and peace-promoting. They have been inventive in their ability to survive without creed and strangling theology. They have spoken truth to *political power* and have been able to maintain the dignity of a precious religion in having their views on oath-taking and military service accepted as individual and religious rights that should not be impaired. They have established, and in some instances kept open, channels of international peace when governments have failed to do so. They have spoken truth to *tribal power* which permitted the exploitation of racial and ethnic groups and have thereby promoted the causes of racial peace and

human dignity. They have spoken truth to *economic power*, and have taken stands on the exploitation of human labor, the manufacture of armaments, and the profits derived from each. And they have *spoken truth to their Meetings*, causing members to act within the spirit of the Society in matters of membership, marriage, education and other problems of the social order.

All of these have been great testimonies to the witnesses of peace and its abiding nature. These facts do illustrate that Friends can achieve peace once they are so minded. They further indicate that a peace witnessing once projected and sustained does not last for all time. There is ever the urgency that the cause of peace must remain under the watchful care of Friends concerns. Thus, today, the cause of peace may be observed in noting that there remains a need for demonstrating the peace testimony in the relations between church and state here in Philadelphia, in the United States, and throughout the world. The peace truth must again be demonstrated to political power as the increasing demands of the military order are superimposed on the normal activities of citizenship.

Does this warrant more precise political action in a Friendly manner? Truth must be spoken to the prejudicial and discriminatory aspects of tribal power wherein racial and ethnic groups continue to experience social indignities and denials that are creating new human disunities in Africa, Asia, and the United States. The demonstration of this truth must be based on the fact that the nearer we come to making men free of the disabilities we have heaped upon them, the more closely our actions will affect our own

private lives. The difficult witness lies ahead. Friends have been wary in speaking truth to economic power. Are there no problems? Or are these problems of economic peace too close for comfort? No matter what our answer we may find a leading in the historic experience of our Society.

### ***John Greenleaf Whittier***

Eighty-odd years ago Whittier wrote in the above-mentioned letters to the *Friends' Review* that:

The present age is one of sensation and excitement, of extreme measures and opinions, of impatience of all slow results. The world about us moves with accelerated impulse, and we move with it: the rest we have enjoyed, whether true or false, is broken; the title-deeds of our opinions, the reason of our practices are demanded.... It is charged that our Society lacks freedom and adaptation to the age in which we live, that there is a repression of individuality and manliness among us. I am not prepared to deny it in certain respects. But if we look at the matter closely, we shall see that the cause is not in the central truth of Quakerism, but in a failure to rightly comprehend it. . .<sup>6</sup>

I think we can say that the great secret or the central truth of Quakerism continues to survive and that its ability to speak truth to all times lies not so much in lamenting the “low condition” of life around us as in what Whittier called the world’s need for the Society of Friends as “a testimony and a standard” to which it might repair. Again, the history

of our Society indicates how the way may open on any issue of human and religious concern.

### ***John Woolman***

In an introduction to one of the editions of John Woolman, Whittier wrote about a Yearly Meeting held in Philadelphia in 1758, exactly 200 years ago. That assemblage, he said, “must ever be regarded as one of the most important religious convocations in the history of the Christian Church. Speaking of the concerns of Woolman, and his few but earnest associates in the cause for the elimination of “the mischief of slavery,” Whittier writes:

A deep and tender interest has been awakened; and this meeting was looked forward to with varied feelings of solicitude by all parties. All felt that the time had come for some definite action; conservative and reformer stood face to face in the Valley of Decision.... When the important subject came up for consideration, many faithful Friends spoke with weight and earnestness. No one openly justified slavery as a system, although some expressed a concern lest the meeting should go into measures calculated to cause uneasiness to many members of the Society. It was also urged that Friends should wait patiently until the Lord in His own time should open a way for the deliverance of the slave.

This was replied to by John Woolman. His solemn and weighty appeal was responded to by many in the assembly, in a spirit of sympathy and unity. Some of

the slave-holding members expressed their willingness that a strict rule of discipline should be adopted against *dealing* in slaves for the future. To this it was answered that the root of the evil would never be reached effectually until a searching inquiry was made into the circumstances and motives of such as *held* slaves.

At length the truth in a great measure triumphed over all opposition; and, without any public dissent, the meeting agreed that the injunction of our Lord and Saviour to do to others as we would that others should do to us should induce Friends who held slaves ‘to set them at liberty, making a Christian provision for them,’ and four Friends . . . were approved as suitable persons to visit and treat with such as kept slaves, within the limits of the meeting.

This painful and difficult duty was faithfully performed.... The number of slaves held by members of the Society was very large. Isaac Jackson, in his report of his labors among slave-holders in a single Quarterly Meeting, states that he visited the owners of more than *eleven hundred* slaves. From the same report may be gleaned some hints of the difficulties which presented themselves. One elderly man says he has well brought up his eleven slaves, and ‘now they must work to maintain him.’ Another owns it is all wrong, ‘but cannot release his slaves; his tender wife under great concern of mind’ on account of his refusal. A third has fifty slaves; knows it is wrong,

but can't see his way clear out of it. 'Perhaps,' the report says, 'interest dims his vision.' A fourth is full of 'excuses and reasonings.' 'Old Jos. Richison has forty, and is determined to keep them.' Another man has fifty, and 'means to keep them.' Robert Ward 'wants to release his slaves, but his wife and daughters hold back.' Another 'owns it is wrong, but says he will not part with his negroes – no, not while he lives.' The far greater number, however, confess the wrong of slavery, and agree to take measures for freeing their slaves.<sup>7</sup>

With this example of Friends preventing their values and concerns from becoming imprisoned within their own traditions may we dare suggest that Quakerism today can speak to our times? Are we sufficiently convinced to see in our witness the making of yet another "holy experiment"? The evidence is clear – our religion is meaningless unless it is responsive to our own experience.

### ***The Symbols of Religion***

There is no doubt either in my mind or my heart that Quakerism can speak to the condition of modern man. The witnesses of peace and tranquility are universal and unequivocal. They permit no compromise with evil or inequality or the power that destroys. They permit an outreach of the Society of Friends that is greater than any we have yet experienced. It is an outreach based on religion but which is in accord with the expansion of experience and knowledge.

Through this testimony we can speak in many tongues to many peoples. Because our witness is not dogmatic, it may speak in many tongues to many peoples. Because our society is free to grow it may invest with a new grandeur the tenets and turning points in the life of man – birth, death, marital union, and the seasons and the times of joy and sorrow. Because its source is divine, the testimony will search out wisdom and through all change bring man closer and closer to the eternal.

But religious associations are prone to communicate in what Penn called “verbal orthodoxy” and what behavioral scientists call the language of sensation. By the light of the symbols of religion Friends enter into the darkness of social problems. Their symbols are not always the knowledge of reason. They are those of belief. The symbols tell the unbelievers nothing, but they inspire and inspirit the elect. We believe in them at our own risks. We know this and we are not afraid.

But the social scientist must avoid the language of sensation if he is to correctly appraise the social scene in which the Society of Friends operates. He assumes, however, that the Society, as an on-going social institution, operates within the realm of the social and is knowledgeable in the language of fact and reason. He recognizes that Friends must operate their testimony on two levels of truth – that which is revealed and religious on the one hand, and that which is secular and demonstrable on the other. Neither context is sufficient unto itself for indicating the responsibility that the peaceful approach to life entails. To the social scientist who is also a religionist, the peace

testimony is a matter of revelation and belief on the one hand, and a matter of cultural characteristics on the other. Our witness for peace between governments, among men, and within man, demands that we look at the collective challenges which face us.

### ***World Religions***

For hundreds of millions of people throughout the world Christianity is not the sole answer to the problems for which they deem to need supernatural or supra-social answers. So long as the world remained in relative isolation this conflict of world religions was not so apparent. Today, however, it seems urgent that there be some sort of organized unity if they are to fulfill a social need. Are conflicts among world religions necessary? Is the rise of Communism as a secular religion a threat to organized religious belief? A threat to peace? Can the Society of Friends demonstrate its peace testimony outside the language of sensation?

### ***Equality***

Let us examine the problem of leadership within the context of leadership. This is a major force and factor in effecting adjustments in the modern world. Yet, it is curious how little has been done to clarify, and how much has been done to confuse the meaning, the bearing, and the application of this most common word in the vocabulary of the behavioral sciences.

In the religious context, equality is sanctioned and approved outside of the social context. In the political context,

equality is asserted as a right, a demand, as a fact. In other words, it is a demand that inequalities be removed. But what kinds of inequalities? and on what grounds? There are inequalities in every human society. And, to complicate the problem, there are endless differences. There are differences of interest, differences of dispositions, differences of taste, differences of outlook, none of which can be called inequalities. But at times it is difficult to draw the line between inequalities and differences.

What, for example, is meant by the assertion of equality as a right? It must mean one of three things – that equality of opportunity should be provided, that equality of treatment should be established, and that equality of equipment should be instituted. Equality of opportunity expresses a genuine ideal. Equality of treatment must somehow include different treatment. Does it mean equity or the provision for all of the social conditions under which they can enjoy as much well-being as possible, thereby fulfilling their own lives? Equality of equipment has been described as the most soulless and most dangerous of all the claims made in the name of equality. It bids men divide things equally. It offers no explanation why unequal men should possess equal things. What is its end? Of what benefit is it to society? It is grossly materialistic and utterly inapplicable to spiritual and intellectual good, but also to the most double-edged of all the possessions of men – power over other men? To whom should this equality be given? Are we assured of peace once it has been granted?

## *Peace*

Peace! The rise of sects and secular religions and beliefs, along with the growing competition, real and imagined, between church and state, represent one of the more deep-seated forces at work in world societies. How shall these be dealt with? By whom? In an era of wide knowledge and space-conquering technology may it be assumed that there is a decreasing need for religion in the lives of world peoples? May any significance be attached to the fact that humanistic and ethical religious groups have had a significant increase in adult memberships in the United States within recent years?

Peace! Popularly known as Neo-Malthusianism, the cosmic scare represents a resurging fear that the earth is becoming over-populated and that there will not be enough resources to go around within a few years – by the year 2000 A.D. say some experts. Such points of view have great meaning for peace and for our efforts to aid under-privileged sections of the world where there is a very high birth rate. The significance of the problem, however, lies in the way in which we have been able to prolong human life. We have never had a complete world census of the number of peoples being born. We know to a relatively accurate degree the numbers of peoples dying. Yet, the vital index of the world, that is the excesses of births over deaths, the increased life span, and the increased mobility of all peoples have given rise to one of the most significant problems of modern times – problems that have so far defied peaceful solutions.

Peace! The isolation of the modern world that gave rise to what we now call races of mankind, each living in his own tribal lair, has given place to a new world in which tribalism, whether it be nationalism, regionalism, or ethnocentrism, has become outmoded. The Bandung Conference of Asian and African people, the world's reaction to the problems of South Africa, the decisions of the United States Supreme Court on the segregation of persons of color all indicate the death of the tribe as a principle of social order. Meanwhile, there is arising in the world a new set of governments such as the countries of the Southeast Asian area, the growth of West African independent governments, and the rise of the West Indies Federation. When these are coupled with the rise of marginal peoples – those of mixed bloods and mixed nationalities, the problem takes on immense proportions.

Peace! The dilemma of political power in the modern world is that of proving its infallibility – the correctness of its power use. To what sorts of political beliefs should modern man ally himself? This is a crucial question for the one-half of the world that is in political turmoil. It is also evident in certain areas of the United States. Can religious and social leadership spell out ways in which modern man may resolve this important dilemma? The quantity and quality of our loyalties continue to vary and make necessary the development of authoritarian or psychological techniques for capturing men's minds and beliefs.

## ***Peace, Power, and Loyalty***

Power and its use presents one of the most challenging aspects of contemporary living. The conditions under which many people live are obscure, unjust, and stupid by modern standards. Loyalty to the existing order is no longer the one and only criterion for group existence. There seems to be a need for “lamps unto one’s feet.” But much of the world has had no experience in such planning or programming, and has not realized the necessity for dealing with such tasks.

As the social scientist looks at these aspects of the world order, he realizes that throughout the world there is a search for both sacred and secular peace. The dynamic nature of world societies requires that any group that attempts to deal with these ongoing changes needs a living opinion, which will be viable in its clash with other living opinions and which will undergo constant reinterpretation.

## ***The Dynamics of Peace***

The dynamics of peace is the perpetual challenge of the Society of Friends. It is to be ever alert to the problems man faces as he tries to achieve a sane and healthy balance between the world-he-believes-in and the world-he-lives-in. Failure to achieve this balance is ever a clear and present danger to humanity.

The witness of Friends has provided comfort where there was despair, and hope where there was uncertainty. To the present and the future, girded with the quest for world peace and an inward tranquility, Friends seemed called

upon to continue their witness and to encompass this witness with two safeguards. The one is courage which stems from their inward peace and which will give them that courage which Plato described as “Wisdom concerning dangers.” The second safeguard is contained in Timothy’s letter to the Christian church in Laodicea. The church was advised to be spiritually and socially keen and alert and to keep its “commission free from stain.” How better can one translate into effective social action that which is of God in every man?

## Notes:

1. Friess, Horace and Schneider, Herbert W. *Religion in Various Cultures*. New York. 1932, pp. 453-454.
2. Reinach, Salomon. *Orpheus: A History of Religions*. New York. 1930. (Translated from the French by Florence Simonds.) p. 358.
3. *The Writings of John Greenleaf Whittier*. (Riverside Edition) Boston. 1889. Vol. VII. "The Society of Friends." pp. 305-314.
4. "Atom Bomb in Asia Would Be Dangerous." *India News*. Vol. 3, No. 3. (Information Service of India, U.S. Embassy of India). February 15, 1958.
5. Brinton, Howard. "The Quaker Doctrine of Inward Peace." *Pendle Hill Reader*. Herrymon Maurer, Editor. New York. 1950. pp. 95-120.
6. Whittier, *loc. cit.* p. 308.
7. Whittier, *loc. cit.* p. 329, ff.

## About the Author

Ira De Augustine Reid (July 2, 1901 – August 15, 1968) was a prominent sociologist and author who wrote extensively on the lives of black immigrants and communities in the United States. He was also influential in the field of educational sociology. He held faculty appointments at Atlanta University, New York University, and Haverford College,[2] one of very few African American faculty members in the United States at white institutions during the era of "separate but equal."

Through the support of the American Friends Service Committee in 1947, Reid joined the faculty at Haverford College, where he was the college's first black professor.[3] He became the chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology in 1948, where he remained until retirement in 1966. During these years, he held visiting appointments at several universities, and served as a consultant and board member for sociological and educational initiatives and organizations, including the Pennsylvania Governor's Commission on Higher Education. From 1947 to 1950, Reid was the assistant editor of *American Sociological Review* and an officer of the Eastern Sociological Society and American Sociological Association.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ira\\_De\\_Augustine\\_Reid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ira_De_Augustine_Reid)

## About the Lectures

The William Penn Lectures started as a ministry of the Young Friends' Movement of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. In the beginning of the last century, "Young Friends" was the community of young adults from both the Hicksite and the Orthodox Philadelphia Yearly Meetings, which reunited in 1955. The Young Friends Movement began the lecture series "for the purpose of closer fellowship; for the strengthening by such association and the interchange of experience, of loyalty to the ideals of the Society of Friends; and for the preparation by such common ideals for more effective work through the Society of Friends for the growth of the Kingdom of God on Earth." The name of William Penn was chosen because the Young Friends Movement found Penn to be "a Great Adventurer, who in fellowship with his friends started in his youth on the holy experiment of endeavoring 'To live out the laws of Christ in every thought, and word, and deed; and that these might become the laws and habits of the State.'"

The first run of William Penn Lectures were given between 1916 and 1966, and are warmly remembered by Friends who attended them as occasions to look forward to for fellowship with our community, inspiration, and a challenge to live into our faith. The lectures were published by the Book Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has granted Pendle Hill and Quaker Heron Press permission to reproduce the lectures as free ebooks.

Although it was [announced](#) in 1960 that the series would be discontinued several lectures were published in the early '60s. It appears that the lectures given between 1923 and 1931 were never published. If we come upon manuscripts of these lectures, we hope to publish them in future.

In 2010, the Young Adult Friends of PYM revived the series, officially launching the second run of the William Penn Lectures in 2011. [The series was renamed](#) the *Seeking Faithfulness* series in 2016, as part of the Young Adult Friends of PYM's concern for dismantling racism within the yearly meeting and the wider society. It no longer felt rightly ordered to have a major event named after a slaveholder. The [Seeking Faithfulness](#) series is hosted by the Young Adult Friends for the benefit of the whole yearly meeting community, and invites a Friend to challenge us all to explore new ways to practice our Quaker faith. The Seeking Faithfulness series seeks to nourish our spiritual lives and call us to faithful witness in our communities and throughout the world.