Modern Peacemakers:

Inhabiting Both the Earthly City and the City of God

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We live in a time of profound confusion. Disagreement and doubt are pervasive in almost all nations. Few societies or individuals enjoy a life of untroubled certitude and, judging from the disorder of the world, few societies or individuals are living in a way expressive of divine truth.

We do know one thing with some certainty. As members of the Religious Society of Friends seeking to uphold our traditional peace testimony, we know we face a world which has changed radically in the last ten years. Most of the conditions and suppositions which have guided our approach to our peace witness since World War II simply no longer obtain.

It has indeed been disappointing that the ending of the Cold War and of the polarized rivalry between two nuclear superpowers has not ushered in an era of peace. The situations in the former Yugoslavia, and in Somalia, Chechnya, Iraq, Tibet, Afghanistan, Rwanda, the Middle East, Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka remind us that lives continue to be lost in the most cruel and gruesome sorts of warfare. Moreover, in a way that is both very silent and very difficult to grasp, a global economy is taking shape which often puts masses of people at the mercy of a few, even though we do not call it slavery; these global economic arrangements may lead to malnutrition and death, even though we do not call it murder.

So, even though the threat of nuclear omnicide, a killing off of everyone and everything in one reckless moment, has receded, the challenges facing peace-concerned people today are as great as those of the Cold War when considered in terms of actual human suffering. Conditions often present enormous difficulties to those seeking a way to offer a concrete, healing service.

In the face of this grim reality, what we have experienced this weekend is a tribute to the continued commitment of Friends to our peace testimony, and to the spirit and the creativity with which Friends seek ways to give it expression.

In order to help draw this experience to a conclusion I propose that we try to accomplish four things this morning. The first two things I will try to do, the second two are for you to do.

First, I will try to review briefly what we have learned during this weekend of the scope and the focus of the Friends peace work represented here. I hope it will be a service if I group the various activities we learned about in the workshops into categories as a way of surveying what is occurring in an overall way, and perhaps also as a way of seeing where there remain gaps or needs which are still not being addressed.

Second, although the peace concerns as they appear on these charts might at first glance seem scattered, I believe they are tied together by an overall theme, by an overall task we face at this moment in history. So the second thing I would like to do is reflect on this unifying theme, or task, and consider how Christian and Quaker perspectives affect our approach to it. I will talk mostly about Christianity not out of a wish to disregard other faith perspectives. Indeed, I consider myself to be a universalist Friend. But I will be reflecting about Christian experience and perspectives because they are what, for better or for worse, tend to shape our attitudes toward this underlying theme or task.

These first two tasks will take about twenty minutes each. Then, third, I hope there will be a period of discussion from the floor lasting about thirty five minutes. We want you to have the last word. You can offer corrections to the scheme on the charts, and propose alternative themes and tasks. I do not expect that all of you will feel comfortable with the unifying theme I will propose, and so this is a time for you to present alternative perspectives. The idea is not to reach any definitive conclusions in this session, but to take a variety of issues, questions, insights and inspirations from each other home for worshipful contemplation in our monthly meetings.

Finally, I hope we can save about five minutes at the end, before Arch Street Friends arrive for worship, to fill out an evaluation questionnaire about the weekend so we can collect it before you leave.

Now, turning to the charts:

I.

First, there is the practice of **DIRECT ACTION**, such as is presently under the way through the Peace Teams Effort, the Peace Brigades International, the Alternatives to Violence Project, Christian Peacemaker Teams, and the various traveling ministries, intervisitations, and teaching/training efforts in conflict resolution, mediation, non-violence, and democratic practice which a great many Friends have been carrying on.

This direct action work is an essential element in a developed peace witness for Friends. It contributes to our knowledge of strategies and techniques which work in conflict situations. It contributes to our understanding of the conditions people face in areas where violence has broken out or which are threatened with violence. They communicate our faith that there is a way of life which takes away the occasion of war and our conviction that there do exist creative ways which people can find to resolve differences and to live together in peace. If thought about carefully, the experience gained by Friends in these projects can provide a link between the macrocosmic trends and events with which a fully developed peace witness must deal, and life as it is actually lived in villages, barrio's and urban communities.[1]

DIRECT ACTION

Deborah Wood: Alternatives to Violence Project
Rosa Packard: Friends Peace Teams
Hendrick van der Merwe: Friends Witness in the South African Liberation Struggle
Christian Peacemaker Teams
Intervisitation (Cuba, Balkans, etc.)
(Bethesda Meeting Epistle)

Quakerism, as we know, is a spirituality that is rooted in direct experience rather than in abstract theory or theology. We are rather deliberately non-ideological. Any peace witness must be rooted in our actual experience of conflicts and of conflict resolution, rather than in arm-chair philosophizing, however well intentioned. Without a rootedness in the kind of experiences gained by Friends working in real and difficult situations of actual conflict, we would be without the means to speak with an authentic voice on peace issues.

II.

I wonder if our time here this weekend has revealed enough emphasis on DISARMA-

[1] The charts which follow are facsimiles of handwritten "newsprint" posters used as visual aids during the final session of the 1997 Pendle Hill Quaker Peace Roundtable. It should be noted that, except where otherwise noted, entries in the charts are drawn from programs and groups represented among the 160 people participating in the Roundtable. The charts should not be interpreted as a comprehensive survey of all that Friends were doing at the time the Roundtable took place.

DISARMAMENT	GLOBAL ECONOMY
(Bethesda Meeting Epistle) (Conscientious objection to military service and war taxes) FCNL Work with Congress	

MENT? Would not an important focus of a developed Quaker peace witness be work toward the goal of domestic and international disarmament and the ending of arms trading and arms profiteering? Trafficking and profiteering in arms, an activity of both private businesses and of governments, clearly bodes only ill for the human family. The weapons trade grossly misallocates the resources of a hungry and poverty-stricken world, renders the sensible resolution of conflicts enormously more difficult, and makes the outbreaks of violence which occur ever more destructive. All so-called conventional weapons are evil, but land mines are especially pernicious. Severe injuries and the loss of life due to land mines can continue long after hostilities cease, and frequently afflict children and other completely innocent and uninvolved parties. Chemical and biological weapons are a growing threat. Iraq's war against Iran, the subsequent Gulf War, and the chemical attacks in Matsumoto and in the Tokyo subway remind us of the easy availability of chemical and biological weapons, and of a growing erosion of what was once an almost universal moral repugnance at their use. Materials sufficient to put vast populations at risk can be produced in a medium-sized room by a few people with only a modest command of technical knowledge. Chemical and biological agents have appropriately been called the "nuclear weapons" of poor nations. There is ample evidence that both nations and small terrorist groups are stockpiling agents capable of causing the most cruel of deaths to countless millions of people.

Should not work for disarmament be a high priority for a Friends peace witness? Are we giving this the attention it deserves? I did not hear very much discussion of this in the workshops and know of no activist focus on this among the Friends who are here. I understand that the matter came up in the FCNL workshop about priorities in the 105th Congress. The issue of arms and disarmament is also given considerable emphasis in the Epistle from Bethesda Meeting.[2] In fact you will see that the Bethesda Meeting Epistle pops up in a number of the charts. I hope

[2] An epistle from Bethesda (Maryland) Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends sharing a statement of concerns about the current state of violent conflict in the world, addressed to "Friends," and dated June, 1996.

everyone here has picked up a copy of Bethesda's epistle. It represents a truly extraordinary and inspiring attempt by a monthly meeting to formulate a careful and carefully balanced statement of Friends perspective about a range of complex international issues, expressing frankly where additional Light still needs to be sought as well as outlining those matters where Friends have found a way forward. It is fearless in facing some very difficult dilemmas which current international conditions present to Friends and to our peace testimony.

III.

A third focus for Quaker peace work in our changed and changing world would be the GLOBAL ECONOMY. How can we define and then establish principles of economic justice which protect all the world's people? How can we develop and then carry out economic practices which provide for the rescue of the environment?

IV.

A fourth focus of Quaker peace work in our time is, obviously, the matter of ETHNIC CONFLICT and strife. Work on mediation, conflict resolution and non-violent action projects obviously can be applied in areas of ethnic conflict. Experience with democratic practice, and with the teaching of democratic practice, might enable us to offer a compelling witness to support the establishment of free and fair multi-ethnic and multicultural societies. So this overlaps with

ETHNIC CONFLICT

Hendrick van der Merwe: Friends Witness and the South African Liberation Struggle
Rosa Packard: Friends Peace Teams;
Deborah Wood: Alternatives to Violence Project;
AFSC and Kathy Bergen: The Future of Jerusalem;
Not at Roundtable: George Lakey's work; David Hartsough's work

POLICIES OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

FCNL and Ned Stowe: Some Quaker Peace Priorities in the 105th Congress
Mark Walsh: The US Military and Peacekeeping Missions
Mary Lord: The Foreign Policy Context of Friends' Peace Work Today and Tomorrow
Chick Nelson: The Role of the United States Institute of Peace in Developing Approaches to Peace Making in the 21st Century;
Bill Galvin: Alternative Service for Your Tax Money

the first category, Direct Action.

V.

A fifth category focuses on the POLICIES OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT. We at this Roundtable are, for the most part, a gathering of American Friends who are concerned about the Quaker peace testimony. Obviously, we ought to give attention to those policies and practices of our fellow Americans and our government which bear on questions of militarism and violence, and which might diminish or enhance the possibility of peace.

VI.

Quaker peace activists, as part of their approach to their task, will reflect upon the present condition of the Religious Society of Friends, upon its history and experience with its peace

THE FAITH COMMUNITY AS A SOURCE

Ron Mock: Christian Distinctives and Their Impact on Peace Witness
Lloyd Lee Wilson and Susan Wilson: The New Testament Basis of Pacifism;
Jennifer Elam: Comparing Quaker Peace Witness to that of Mennonites, Brethren and Engaged Buddhists
Maya Wilson: Steady Work--An Overview of Quaker Peace Witness in the Twentieth Century
J. William Frost: Reconsidering and Active Peace Witness
Sallie King: Engaging with Buddhist Experience in Peaceful Living
Lon Fendall: the Peace Witness Among Evangelical Friends

THE ENVIRONMENT AS A PEACE ISSUE

Friends Committee on Unity with Nature

INT'L LAW AND INT'L INSTITUTIONS OF JUSTICE

Mark Walsh: The U.S. Military and Peacekeeping Missions
Not at Roundtable: Sam and Miriam Levering--Work on the Law of the Sea
U.S. Institute for Peace

testimony, and on the spiritual roots and sources of our peace witness in Christian faith. We will also take care to become engaged with people from other faith communities who have a concern for peace and who have experience in addressing the peace-building task on the basis of spiritual principles and religious commitment. I have had some difficulty devising a rubric for this category, but for the moment will call this area of concern **THE FAITH COMMUNITY AS A SOURCE.**

VII.

Although I was originally inclined to classify the workshop on "Sustainability, Simplicity and Peace Witness" as addressing issues of the global economy, after talking with Bob Wixom I thought it might deserve a category all of its own having to do with the environment as a peace issue.

VIII.

Lastly, an eighth focus for Friends peace witness in the late 1990's is the area of **INTERNATIONAL LAW** and **INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF JUSTICE.** We need to develop and extend the body of international law which exists, to cultivate international institutions of justice, to learn as an international community how to carry out peacekeeping projects sensibly and humanely, and to develop the capacity to enforce, with appropriate safeguards, appropriate regulations regarding human rights, arms trafficking, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, economic justice, and the ecology.

It is interesting, and I think significant, that the only entry in the last category from the group gathered here today is Mark Walsh, our friend from the United States Army War College. Also, a Friend reminded me that the United States Institute of Peace belongs here. I hope I am not doing them an injustice by adding the work of the late Sam and Miriam Levering on the Law of the Sea Convention to the list, even though they obviously could not here at our Roundtable, in order to add a Quaker flavor to this category!

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I would like to take a few minutes to think more about this issue of international law and international institutions. For this concern actually ties together five others on our list of eight. Addressing the issues of disarmament, economic justice, environmental rescue, and ethnic conflict would appear to depend in some way on the development of international law and international institutions of justice. They all point to an intimate connection between peace and government; that is, between peace, on the one hand, and a civil society with laws and with institutions of justice, on the other.

For the last several centuries, people who have given thought to the matter of international peace have understood that the condition of anarchy which prevails *among* nations offers a stark contrast to the characteristics of order and government *within* nations, and that the

outbreak of international conflict and bloody war is a consequence, at least in substantial part, of this condition of anarchy, of the lack of any way of processing disputes in the way an ordinary political community provides to its members. Three hundred years ago two Friends, John Bellers and William Penn,[3] independently argued for a European political confederation as a means of eliminating war, while in our own time many people besides Friends have understood the need for international institutions of justice and of conflict management, an insight which led first to the founding of the League of Nations and then of the United Nations.

The relationship between the occurrence of mass violence and the absence of civil society has been made even more glaring in the post Cold War world as the collapse of small nation states and of vast empires has resulted in an increase in strife and killing among ethnic and cultural groups.

Moreover, as the globe seems to shrink, as human populations multiply, and as the advance of scientific, technological and economic systems increases the volume and variety of the interactions which occur among the various peoples of the world, it becomes more and more clear that there needs to be some way to define the principles of justice which ought to adhere to these interactions. The operation of the global economy, the prevention of ethnic violence, the ending of arms trade and profiteering, the monitoring and enforcement of disarmament -- conventional, nuclear, biological and chemical disarmament -- and the protection of the environment will require the development of a body of international law governing these matters and a capacity on the part of the international community to enforce this body of law on behalf of the common good. As people concerned to work for a just peace, should we not face the fact that it is no more likely that we will achieve a reasonable state of peace in the world as a whole without international laws and institutions of justice than it would be reasonable to expect domestic tranquillity within villages, provinces or nations without the robust governmental institutions that operate in those spheres? Should we not, as peacemakers, recognize that the condition of international anarchy which thoughtful people like Penn and Bellers have always recognized to be dysfunctional has become extremely so under today's conditions, and that the historical task of the 21st Century will be to move beyond it?

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[3] In *An essay towards the present and future peace of Europe, by the establishment of a European diet, parliament or estates,* published in 1693, William Penn made the following proposal: "Now if the sovereign princes of Europe, who represent that society or independent state of men *(sic)* that was previous to the obligations of society, would for the same reason that engaged men first into society, viz, love of peace and order, agree to meet by their states deputies in a general diet, estates, or parliament, and there establish rules of justice for sovereign princes to observe one to another; and thus to meet yearly, or once in two or three years at the farthest, or as they shall see cause, and to be styled, the Sovereign or Imperial Diet, Parliament or State of Europe; before which sovereign assembly should be brought all differences depending between one sovereign and another that cannot be made up by private embassies before the sessions begin: and that if any of the sovereignties that constitute these imperial states shall refuse to submit their claim or pretensions to them, or to abide and perform the judgment thereof, and seek their remedy by arms, or delay their compliance beyond the time prefixed in their resolutions, all the sovereignties, united as one strength, shall compel the submission and performance of the sentence, with damages to the suffering party." Quoted in *Quaker Faith and Practice,* the book of Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain. (Paragraph 24:44)

If my supposition that under prevailing circumstances some evolution in the direction of a structured global order is inevitable, and that to talk of building peace without it is hardly reasonable, we then must turn to the question of how Friends ought to approach this issue. Are we prepared to take an active part in dialogue and advocacy regarding the fashioning of a more secure world order, or do we simply leave this to others? Do we think about the large philosophical issues which such a project inevitably entails, or do we content ourselves with our direct witness in small-scaled and somewhat scattered projects, leaving to others the task of designing the world order which is inevitable?

The question of establishing international institutions which would be capable of sustaining peace, of processing conflict, and of supporting justice raises anew the long and vexed history of the relationship between the religious sensibility and state power. On the one hand, there is a strong impulse within the church to see it as a responsibility of Christian people to participate actively in civic life and to advocate for and to help structure systems and institutions which bring the earthly city closer to the city of God. Much Quaker spirituality represents a full-flowering of this particular impulse. Friends have often insisted that we cannot draw a line between religious and secular affairs, and we have tended to see citizenship, community service and political activism to be natural expressions of the fundamentals of our faith. It would seem to follow from this stream of experience and thought that Friends should be proactively engaged in the extension of civil society into the international arena.

But there has also been an opposite tendency within the Christian church, a tendency which also finds expression in Friends' faith and practice. According to this line of thinking there are destined always to be deep and ineradicable flaws in human society, and a truly just or Christian social order is not really a feasible project. There is a long tradition of what might be called "other-worldly religiosity," in which it is assumed that an authentic Christian religious sensibility will take care not to be tainted by the things of the world, but will practice an etherialized spirituality which is somehow held apart from life as it is lived by most people. This kind of Christianity is usually thought to be diametrically opposed to the Quaker idea.

Yet there are definitely ways in which this notion has found expression in Quaker experience and practice, too. For example, George Fox and the first generation of Quaker pacifists drew a firm distinction between what Quakers themselves ought and ought not to do, on the one hand, and what the state was entitled to do, on the other. They thought it right that the state should resort to military action to keep order if need be. Isaac Penington, like other early Friends, recognized that governments were justified in "defending themselves against foreign invasions or making use of the sword to suppress the violent and evil-doers within their borders." Robert Barclay in his *Apology*, published in 1676, also recognized that what is true for a "separated society" (meaning the Religious Society of Friends) is not necessarily true for a government which represents a great mixture of people, problems and convictions.

While it is true that there may be insoluble conflicts between Quaker faith and certain public policies, there is a danger that by conceiving of ourselves as "a people apart" or as a "separated society" we and other Christian groups can collaborate in our own marginalization.

This is convenient in that we can leave awkward and embarrassing problems of politics and of society to others while we feel ourselves to be holier than they are. But it occurs at the cost of being irrelevant. We in effect let other people do the difficult work for us and then complain about the outcome.

The passion for liberty, the idea that the best government is the government that governs least, and the perennial seductiveness of libertarianism and philosophical anarchism, all are in some sense tacit acknowledgments of the difficult and even tragic dimensions of the task of structuring a political community.

Every government, every civil society, every state, every nation, is imperfect. But not all political systems are completely and equally illegitimate, and some are far superior to others. One of the tasks of a healthy social order is that it seeks to protect the poor and the weak from the powerful and the despotic. It may be a lofty form of nonviolence to be willing to suffer injustice oneself rather than harm another; but is it lofty nonviolence simply to abandon others to the violence and injustice of predators, rather than come to their aid? While war may never be justified, the organization of civil society is not war, although it does admittedly involve coercion. The organization of civil society posits that it is better for unjust aggressors to be coerced than for their victims to suffer their aggressions. The restrained use of state power by public authorities according to established procedures and under constitutional safeguards actually ensures both liberty and community. Without them there would only be the liberty of the strong, which is despotism. The vulnerability of vast populations to the strong and the despotic is in fact the prevailing condition in the international arena today. In a civil society, in contrast, coercion is minimized by being monopolized under constitutional safeguards, and is in fact an indispensable condition for community. So casual hostility to the state or to civil society would seem to be indefensible.

We must in the end conclude that the idea that we can be related to God and not the world, that we can practice a spirituality which is not political, is foreign to both Quakerism and Christianity. And as a new world order inevitably emerges, we must further conclude that if we leave the politics of this newly emerging world order to those who find it enjoyable, profitable, or in some way useful to themselves, it will loose its moral structure and purpose and be turned into an affair of sectarian interests and personal ambitions. As is the case at the village, provincial and national levels, so will it prove to be true on the global level: politics can be saved only by being practiced conscientiously by everybody.

Given the understanding that our religious convictions require us to exercise responsibility at a global level as well as in local and national politics, there follows the closely related question of just how this responsibility will be exercised. In particular there arises the question of how proactive we should be in visualizing in specific terms just what an international political order would look like. Are we willing to do the hard thinking necessary to develop a vision around which people can rally in the struggle to establish a peaceable world?

It might be useful in order to illuminate the problem we face today in visualizing a peace-

sustaining global order to reflect back on the revolutionary transitions of the seventeenth century, when Quakerism was founded and when English society itself was making the transition from feudalism to modernity. Just how did Quakers participate in the task of visualizing and promoting the new order which was to succeed feudalism?

Some of you may be familiar with the book written by Douglas Gwyn entitled *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and The Rise of Capitalism*, recently published by Pendle Hill. This is an enormously valuable piece of research and reflection, and I commend it to those of you who have not read it. I hope I do not do Doug's work too great an injustice by summarizing one aspect of it here for the purpose of making a point.

Doug's overarching thesis is that the life of individuals and societies ought to be ordered according to the will of God. Doug's view is that Friends, in the early days of their movement, sought to advance an individual and communal piety through which people would be led to live in a coherent and consistent way according to the Divine will for human life. However, according to Doug's thesis, Friends were defeated in their "Lamb's War," as people and governments opted to deal with social reality in a fragmented rather than coherently God oriented way, marginalizing spiritual concerns to Sunday morning and private spaces, while unleashing large spheres of human activity, most especially the economy, to function in an amoral way based on contracts of merely human contrivance and convenience. According to Doug this amoralism and fragmentation, a disordered way of living, has wrought the havoc which we see all about us today. Doug goes on to claim that Friends were somehow seduced away from their holistic, single standard of life, and brought into the fragmented and secularized view of reality, joining with the mainstream, and even becoming capitalists in the process, reserving their religion to a special, private, highly refined and cultured world of their own. Thus was our covenant with God crucified by people in general and Friends in particular.

But several thoughts emerge from reading Doug's riveting, dramatic and carefully wrought explication of the history of Quakerism in its early years, viewed in the context of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. One thing is that early Friends seemed to know quite well what they did not like -- tithes, insincere clergy people, oppression and exploitation by an aristocratic class -- but Doug's careful historical research does not reveal any very clear positive vision. How did Friends imagine that society could be organized? It is one thing to refuse to pay the king hat honor and to affirm the equality of all human beings. It is quite another thing to envision and then to establish a social order in which some legitimate authority can be identified and permitted to act for the common good.

For those outside the Religious Society of Friends, centuries of religious war and strife had begun to convince thoughtful people that it would be useful to de-emphasize spiritual things and to rely on reason and human good nature to iron out social arrangements. As religious warfare and strife ground on relentlessly, the ideas of Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke and Adam Smith appeared to have a compelling logic, a logic which coopted Quakers themselves before much time had passed. Social contract theory offered a philosophical legitimization of democratic forms in contrast to the monarchy, and the market theories of Adam Smith offered

both a compelling alternative to the feudal economic order and, through the dispersion of economic power which it seemed to promise, a reinforcement of democratic practice and theory. Oliver Cromwell's move toward a capitalist ethos, a move which tended to fuel an alienation between himself and George Fox, might have been wisely chosen as the best option available, or at least the best option that was reasonably visible at the time. It did, after all, usher in an unprecedented period of prosperity for the English nation and for North Atlantic civilization generally. The situation is perhaps an example of how, in the realm of politics, one cannot fight something with nothing.

In 1993 Quaker Peace and Service of Britain Yearly Meeting published a booklet entitled *The Quaker Peace Testimony: A Workbook for Individuals and Groups*. It is an enormously useful document for those considering the issues which have drawn us together this weekend. There are many things about the booklet worth noting, but one thing included in it is an article on what a Quaker testimony is. The article observes that the working out of the testimonies in social life often appears to be negative: a refusal to kill, a refusal to swear, a refusal to pay tithes, a refusal to take off our hats to any but God. While we ourselves have a sense that these negative actions arise from a positive experience of a creative, redeeming, healing life and power, this must, at least from the point of view of outside observers, require a lot of intuition to get a hold of specifically.

Again this reticence about etching out in concrete terms a positive vision, which in effect is a sort of abdication of the field to others who are willing to do so, is not unique to Friends within the community of Christian faith. The history of Christianity is a long series of equivocations about the project of visualizing a just society. Some church people have been genuine revolutionaries, but most have both acknowledged the fallen nature of the prevailing social order while also allowing themselves to be co-opted by it. Throughout Christian history the official Church has tended to be an apologist for whatever status quo prevailed, holding its conspicuous evils to be inevitable given the fallen state of human nature. It is only on relatively rare occasions that Christian societies have sought to merge the city of God with the earthly city, as the Puritans did in the Massachusetts Commonwealth. As we saw in the dramatic reading last evening, these experiments did not always produce attractive results.

Christian reticence about engaging in an exercise of visualizing a just social order is reinforced by the experience in modern times with political ideologies. A modern revolutionary ideology like Marxism tries not merely to alleviate particular social wrongs, but rather presumes to destroy the common root of all social evil. Its goal is comprehensive and lasting social harmony based on achieving a perfectedness of human nature itself. This obviously contrasts with the belief of many Christians about the fallen state of the human condition and the resulting ineradicable imperfections of human society. The revolutionary aspirations of Marxism seem like an extraordinary degree of hubris and idolatry to Christians. The fact that there is not a single example in our time of a determined effort to produce immediate and sweeping change that has not ended in tyranny, and in other conditions immeasurably worse than those perpetrated by the old social order, have caused many Christians to undertake a prophetic role very modestly, stressing patience, attentiveness and availability, emphasizing waiting for God's call in history,

rather than seeking to promote dynamic action. Christian prophecy, then, tends to be reduced to a piece-meal and scattered concern with individually identifiable evils, rather than advancing a total vision for the human community.

Modern day Friends are, for quite understandable reasons, straddling a fence on these issues. On the one hand, we are influenced by the long centuries of Christian thought which tend to doubt that the ideal of the just society is actually achievable. On the other hand, we are also influenced by streams of thought flowing from diverse modern sources -- secular liberalism, Marxism, democratic socialism -- all of which are rooted in the conviction that a just society *can* be created and *must* be created soon.

In contemporary times each of us must come to understand that just as we are a citizen of our town or village, of our state or province, and of our nation, we are also citizens of a worldwide human commonwealth. The building of peace in our world depends upon our willingness to participate in the creative, sustaining and ordering work of God in this worldwide human commonwealth just as much as it requires a conscientious attention to our civic duties on the local, regional and national levels. As members of the human family we are parts of an organic whole. We are interdependent, and our interdependence is an image or a sign of the mutuality inherent in the Creation itself.

One of the most significant things God requires of us is coming to terms with finitude, with limitations of all sorts: the limits of bodies that waste away and die; the limits of a planet the resources of which are exhaustible; our boundedness as a species which has appeared only lately in the unfolding drama of the Creation and which will eventually suffer extinction.

In the face of finitude we must make choices in complex circumstances and determine wise policies for collective action. At the same time we must acknowledge that in our simple humanity there are limits to our knowledge, limits to our foreknowledge, and limits to the capacity we have to control many of the consequences of our actions. Conflicting values and claims, each of which can be reasonably defended, cannot always be brought into harmony. Costs are involved in every complex choice; some properly valued ends cannot be achieved because others are deemed to be of greater merit. We will always find that tragedy is present in political and social life even as we seek to be responsive to the will of God. What is constraining for some persons will necessarily occur in the pursuit of what is an improvement for others. Indeed, if this were not so, virtue, justice and peace would be easy, for there would be no challenge to it.

Seen this way, the difficulties we face are not so much in a fallen human nature as in our circumstances. A condition of anarchy produces a natural tendency in people to reduce the risks to themselves through amassing power and wealth, even if this security must be wrested from others through violence and coercion and warfare. An ordered civil community, however, at least makes possible the fair working out of our interdependence, a sharing of burdens in some equitable fashion, procedures for resolving conflicts, and most important, an arena in which to enact key the spiritual virtues which bring the earthly city closer to the city of God -- the virtues of gratitude, mutual respect, a sense of obligation, repentance, readiness to forgive, patience,

tolerance, trust, trustworthiness, love, and the willing restriction of our individual interests and desires for the sake of others and of the whole.

To be peacemakers in the modern era, as in any time, requires patience, love and endurance. To be peacemakers is to be willing to think broadly and comprehensively, yet to avoid oversimplification and ideology. It is to be willing to undertake political action which is wise and compassionate. It means standing apart from the disorder of the world, but at the same time engaging actively with all those seeking a community which includes all nations and all peoples. It is to recognize that we cannot be absolute masters of our historical circumstances, yet it is to be willing to contemplate the life and suffering of distant peoples, as well as those in our own back yards, and to respond in the circumstances in which we find ourselves to the needs of a universal humanity.

It is to rely in our own weakness on the strength of God. It is to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit which allows us to see anew the situation we inhabit, the Holy Spirit which shows us what, in existing circumstances, must unfailingly be done. It is to realize that justice and peace are legitimately the goals both of the city of God and of the earthly political order, and that our life in religion and our life as citizens compliment rather than contradict each other. It is to do work which is neither desperate nor shrill, nor is it a dull and relentless drive toward some narrow ideologic end. Rather, we will become instruments of the Divine Creative Plan, constantly upbuilding that which folly threatens to dissolve, helping the world's people grow together as a community through the reconciling love of the One in whom all things are One.

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