The Fighting Quakers: A New Vision for the Peace Testimony During World War I

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Abstract

The success of the American Quaker response to World War I through the creation of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) facilitated a shift in the Quaker peace testimony from a passive anti-war stance to an active, peace-building, reform-minded, religious duty. The institution of a draft when the United States entered WWI in 1917 had created an immediate crisis for the historically antiwar Society of Friends. In light of these circumstances, the Quakers were forced to reexamine their peace testimony.

Under the auspices of the AFSC, the Quakers worked to overcome the tensions remaining from a 19th century schism and sought to negotiate with the government in order to allow conscientious objectors (COs) an alternative to combatant service. The extraordinary access of certain Friends allowed the AFSC to communicate with high-level government officials in pleading their case for alternative service programs. The dangerous conditions of the military camps in which COs were held and intense public support for the war created a great deal of urgency for the AFSC. The American Quakers also had to navigate disunity within their own community in working to preserve their values. The ethos of the AFSC mission was largely formed by prominent Quakers like Rufus M. Jones. His writings on the Inner Light and the peace testimony called for Friends to remain actively engaged in peace-building work. The robust, active obligation to eliminate war was articulated on an institutional level in the postwar period.

World War I changed how many Friends defined what it meant to be a Quaker, a development which allowed for the creation of the AFSC and the use of the peace testimony as an active form of advocacy in imbuing its work with meaning relevant to the time.
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Introduction

The success of the American Quaker response to World War I through the creation of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) facilitated a shift in the Quaker peace testimony from a passive anti-war stance to an active, peace-building, reform-minded, religious duty. When the AFSC was formed in April of 1917, the intent was to create an organization that could help conscientious objectors (COs) and provide immediate relief to civilians impacted by war. The creation and operation of alternative service programs for COs and increased involvement in a variety of crises across the globe necessitated a new vision of the peace testimony. What Rufus Jones, prominent Quaker and professor at Haverford College, condemned as “mild and lukewarm peace meetings...to issue commonplace resolutions”¹ did not fulfill the Quaker obligation to peace. Cultivating a world without war required continuous work to eliminate its structural causes. The American Quaker response to World War I and the success of that mission caused a shift in the way many Friends understood what it meant to be Quaker. The Quaker peace testimony adapted to become a more public, engaged, active advocacy from an increasingly irrelevant, anti-war stance. Even though the American Quaker community was fractured, there was enough of a consensus among Friends to pursue this vision of the peace testimony through the AFSC.

The Quaker Peace Testimony

The Quaker peace testimony refers to the historical legacy of Quakers’ actions, or refusal to act, in times of war. The specific actions taken by Friends varied over the years, with some refusing to pay war taxes, take up arms, or choosing to remain ‘neutral’ during conflict. No official stance ever existed for all Quakers, although during WWI American Quaker institutions

issued statements affirming their opposition to war. These institutional positions did not mean that by joining the army, one was breaking a Quaker religious tenet. Quakerism and the peace testimony during WWI were interpreted individually, and the major institutions avoided proscriptive teaching. A testimony is a way of living that Quakers believe has been revealed to them by God through each individual’s Inner Light, also referred to as the Inward Light or the Light of God. The Inner Light is that of the living God within each person, which allows continuous revelation to individuals, and thus the revelation of the testimonies. This belief was very much a personal experience and a guiding principle. Testimonies are not themselves religious doctrine that defines the Quaker community. According to scholar Meredith B. Weddle, “[t]estimonies were not core beliefs, stated in creedal form with ruling force, but were, rather, principles derived from core beliefs.” This has allowed the peace testimony to have more flexibility and to be “developed through the daily decisions confronting particular Quakers or groups of Quakers undergoing specific challenges to their witness against fighting, the use of weapons, and war.” The circumstances of the moment and the realistic potential options in the face of war determine the tenor of the peace testimony.

The Friends utilized language from the Bible to support and explain the peace testimony for centuries, especially from the Prophets of the Hebrew Bible and the Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel of Matthew. In a 1660 declaration, George Fox, a foundational figure in Quakerism, and the earliest Friends wrote to Charles II of England asserting the Friends’ commitment to nonviolence. In doing so, they cited numerous verses from the Bible to

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emphasize that inward weapons (i.e. love), rather than outward weapons (i.e. swords), were the only weapons the Friends claimed would bring about a Kingdom of God, or a just and peaceful world. Fox wrote, “[b]ecause the Kingdom of Christ, God will exalt according to his promise, and cause it to grow and flourish in righteousness not by might, nor by Power of outward Sword, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord (Zechariah 4:6)”6 This verse, which was understood by the Quakers as a specific denouncement of the use of physical violence for the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth, placed the path of love as the only legitimate Quaker course of action. This was a call to rebuff violence not only individually, but also nationally. The wars of nations were typically justified by those who said they could bring about justice or peace through violent methods. But Fox rejected all war by utilizing a verse which he believed described what it would mean for a Kingdom of God to be realized on earth: “For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:3-4).7 The inward weapons won out in this prophetic vision of a world where the “word of the Lord” reigns and war has been extinguished. The image of transforming the tools of war, like swords, into tools of peace and development, such as plowshares, would become synonymous with pacifism.

6 A Declaration from the Harmless and Innocent People of God called Quakers, 1660.
7 Isaiah 2:3-4 KJV.
in the 20th century. Again, a shift away from the external weapons to the use of spiritual weapons was necessary to “seek peace and ensue it.” These verses were thus invoked to emphasize the Quakers as the inheritors of a biblical message of peace.

The peace testimony had also been derived from the Quaker interpretation of the teachings of Jesus that stressed complete nonviolence. For the Quakers in 17th century England, these teachings provided a response to the violent persecution and discrimination they faced. The Friends needed a way of coping with these challenges and found the answer in Christ’s “attitude towards enemies, an attitude that embodied the spirit of the gospel…exemplified in ‘But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you.’” When confronted, the ultimate spiritual weapon was love. The most directly relevant verse is from the Sermon on the Mount, specifically the Beatitudes, when Jesus states, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9). By abiding by these instructions the Friends believed they would be protected by God. In the face of violence, resisting the temptation to retaliate can be all the more difficult. This was why Jesus’ teachings were so pertinent to the Friends. The chapter continues on to further instruct on how to react to violence, “But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:39). The Friends considered this kind of non-reactionary and nonviolent behavior to be an obligation. Violence only begot more violence. Jesus rebuked violence taken on his behalf during his arrest, “Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the

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8 A Declaration from the Harmless and Innocent People of God called Quakers, 1660.
10 Matthew 5:9 KJV
11 Matthew 5:39 KJV
sword” (Matthew 26:52). The Quakers turned toward these messages in order to defend the principles and testimonies that guided their actions.

The legacy of the 1660 declaration came to be what most defined the peace testimony. But with the outbreak of World War I, the role of the testimony needed to be reevaluated in the modern world. The explicitly biblical language would take a back seat to the more progressive, liberal ideas of the Inner Light and Quaker service. In a December 1915 American Friend article, Rufus Jones wrote, “[t]he old methods of fighting have gone by. It is the age of the submarine, the zeppelin and of the liddite bomb. We must also adapt our warfare with sin to meet the needs of the time and we must keep our spiritual strategy up to the pace of this rapid age.” Unfortunately for American Quakers, they had neither reexamined their principles nor faced such a severe testing of their faith in the 50 years since the Civil War.

Ill-Prepared for War

American Quakers were caught off guard by World War I. The scope of the conflict and the astonishing violence were unprecedented. The institution of a national draft created an immediate crisis for Friends. This wasn’t just the case for Quakers, as other Christian groups who opposed war, like Mennonites and Brethren, were also in a difficult position. Each person had to weigh their spiritual values against their loyalty to their country and the potential consequences of not complying with the draft. While there are only partial statistics on the number of Friends who served in the war, in reality most Quaker men who were drafted served in combat positions during WWI. Of those who objected on religious grounds, only a small portion took the absolutist position and refused to participate in the war effort in any capacity. Figures from the War Department show that “3,989 out of 2,810,296 inducted men made any

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12 Matthew 26:52 KJV
claim in camp for exemption from any form of military service.”

According to the Adjutant General’s Office, the administrative office within the military in charge of determining the sincerity of each CO and recommending his placement through the Board of Inquiry, 1,500 men were recommended for farm or industrial furlough, 88 for the Friends’ Reconstruction Unit, 390 for noncombatant service, and 122 were marked insincere and assigned to general military service, with an additional 1,300 men accepting noncombatant service prior to examination by the Board and 400 remaining jailed in the military prison at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas.

There was no position on World War I service that was widely agreed upon by all American Quakers.

American Quakers were not only ill-prepared on how to respond to being drafted but also lacked religious unity. No single institution or creed defined American Quakers. As Rufus Jones wrote, “Friends in America were not spiritually prepared to give an adequate interpretation of the ground and basis of their faith, nor were they clearly united upon a plan of action suited to and correspondent with their ideals of life.”

During the 19th century, there were various schisms in Quakerism that resulted in a number of different branches and meetings in the United States. This fragmentation further contributed to the lack of a unifying position. Quakers, through contacts in positions of power, had been able to avoid a severe test of faith during the American Revolution and Civil War. These circumstances made the crisis of WWI all the more unprecedented. In 1929, Lester M. Jones, a non-Quaker with no relation to Rufus Jones and a professor at DePauw University, wrote that the American Quaker position at the beginning of

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WWI was one of idle, upper middle-class privilege. Jones set up a contrast between the behavior of the Friends prior to the war and during the war:

It had been fifty years since they had suffered anything for their peace principles. Belonging largely to the upper middle class with considerable sprinkling of the rich among their numbers especially in the East, they were affected only indirectly by the problems of our social order. Educated, cultured, moral, they were ‘at ease in Zion.’ They were proud of a peace tradition, the implications of which they had not thought through nor tested by experience. They were proud of their opposition to slavery without realizing that new forms of slavery were springing up about them. They were becoming narrow and self-centered; the Inner Light was in danger of being hidden under a bushel basket of institutionalism, or smothered by the dry rot of inaction.¹⁷

Jones’ tone was highly critical in describing the Friends as elite, upper-class, and stagnant. According to Jones, Quakers were highlighting past noble works but not engaging in the spirit of those works in the present. Jones employed two biblical images in his critique of the Friends. First, the Quakers were “at ease in Zion,” a reference to Amos 6:1 which warns those who are too self-satisfied: “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came” (Amos 6:1).¹⁸ In their comfort and privileged access to power, wealth, and education, the Quakers also appeared apathetic to the state of the world around them. Second, Jones referred to the obscuring of the Inner Light under a “bushel basket,” a reference to the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew:

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16)¹⁹

For the Friends, the Light is the truth learned through continuous revelation from God. By using this verse where Jesus was speaking to his disciples, Lester Jones placed the Quakers as

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¹⁷ Lester Jones, *Quakers in Action*, 163.
¹⁸ Amos 6:1 KJV
¹⁹ Matthew 5:14-16 KJV
inheritors of a biblical message of peace. It was thus their duty to share that message through the spirit of good works. The rise in Quakers’ social and financial status removed their ability to see the arising social ills and maintain their responsibility to the peace testimony. The light had become hidden. By reengaging with their Inner Light, the Friends could better fulfill their obligation.

Though Lester Jones’ critiques provide insight into why the peace testimony may have lost influence in the 19th century, it is also important to recognize that much of the language of peace principles was not relevant to Quaker life in the decades preceding WWI. The last serious challenge had been the Civil War, which ended 50 years before WWI. There was little motivation to probe the subject prior to the outbreak of a new war. In representing what many American Quakers believed, Rufus Jones wrote about how the community members had been focusing far too much on themselves and allowing the peace testimony to dwindle: “We wanted to show our faith in action and to show it in a way that would both bring healing to the awful wounds of war and at the same time take us out of self and selfish aims and carry us into the furnace where others were suffering.”

WWI provided the spark for the necessary revitalization of the peace testimony. The shift towards relief work was positive not only for those in need, but also for the Quakers’ own spiritual growth. With this crisis, a single, unifying organization was necessary to provide a vehicle for peace-building.

**The Formation of the American Friends Service Committee**

On April 30, 1917, twenty-four days after the United States entered World War I, fourteen American Quakers met in Philadelphia in response to rising concern for conscientious objectors and civilians injured by the ongoing war. That assembly of weighty Friends

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representing multiple Quaker meetings formed the American Friends Service Committee. Friends attended on behalf of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Orthodox), the Hicksite branch, and the Five Years Meeting, with Henry J. Cadbury and J. Barnard Walton attending unofficially. The gathering of men and women from these branches was noteworthy because the schism of the early 19th century had caused lingering tension among American Quakers. Those in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) who would become the Orthodox branch felt the other faction, later known as the Hicksites, was straying from essential Protestant doctrine, while the Hicksites viewed the Orthodox as abandoning the experiential aspects which made Quakerism unique. The differences, both historic and present in 1917, were diminished by their shared concerns. The fact that these groups chose to come together and work through a single body illustrated the gravity of their predicament. The appointment of leaders from multiple Quaker branches to the AFSC displayed a commitment to unifying American Quakerism. The first Executive Secretary was Vincent D. Nicholson, a young Quaker from Indiana who was representing the Five Years Meeting at the April 30th gathering. Rufus Jones, who played a key role in organizing the gathering where the AFSC was formed but was not present, accepted the position of Chairman. In order to create a body that could best represent American Quakers, the Board was set up to include voices from each branch.

An organizational document from the archives of the American Friends Service Committee reveals the original vision for the AFSC. The mandate of the new organization was

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21 The major schism within the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting was between the Hicksites and the Orthodox Quakers. There were also large differences between the East Coast Quakers and the Quakers of the Midwest. For more on the schism see Bruce Dorsey’s article in the *Journal of the Early Republic*, “Friends Becoming Enemies: Philadelphia Benevolence and the Neglected Era of American Quaker History.”

to bring relief to the people and landscapes destroyed by war in cooperation with the Red Cross and the British Friends:

Principal work developed thus far is Reconstruction and Relief work in the war devastated regions of Russia and France. Our work has been merged with that of English Friends who have been engaged in such work for three years. In France our work has been made a bureau of the American Red Cross…An extensive work in several hundred communities in sewing and knitting clothing to be distributed in civilian relief abroad, made from patterns for distinct foreign garments....

The scope of the mission was fairly narrow. The points of focus were to be the ongoing destruction of France by the fighting in World War I and the devastation caused by the War and the subsequent revolution in Russia. The reconstruction work allowed for the Friends to indirectly serve their country during war while avoiding bearing arms. Domestic projects like sewing, knitting, and canning food provided an opportunity for women and undrafted men to contribute through their local Quaker meetings.

This relief work approach followed the model of the English Quakers, who had founded the Friends Ambulance Unit and advocated on behalf of their own conscientious objectors prior to American involvement in WWI.

The AFSC joined the relief work being done by the American Red Cross. Since the Red Cross had been established in 1881 and was already sanctioned by the US government to provide

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aid in war-torn France, the AFSC was able to contribute urgently needed resources and men relatively quickly. Gregory Barnes described the Red Cross as providing a crucial partnership for the AFSC:

The Red Cross played a necessary buffer role. As a well-established organization familiar and indispensable to the military, its imprimatur would make it possible for the AFSC COs to move about the war zone. Its humanitarian purpose justified to the pacifists themselves the wearing of Red Cross insignia and membership in what was officially termed American Friends Reconstruction Unit 1.24

This partnership came with the instruction from the French government that the Quakers must not proselytize or denounce the war during their time in France, a factor which further focused the mission and shaped how the AFSC would come to define itself. The priority was to carry out good works, not evangelize. Grayson M.P. Murphy, who was the Chief of the American Red Cross in France, a member of the Red Cross War Council (as appointed by President Wilson), and a former Haverford College student, was a close friend of Rufus Jones.25 Murphy spoke highly of the Quakers and their efficiency: “I know the Friends of old and I can guarantee to you that if they promise to do a piece of work they will do it, and they will do it well.”26 The relationship between the two organizations was fruitful and a tremendous learning experience for the AFSC. The Red Cross provided the Quakers with a template for an international humanitarian aid organization driven by faith. Such an organizational structure aligned with Rufus Jones’ desire to facilitate active peace service as an obligation to the Quaker peace testimony.

26 Lester Jones, *Quakers in Action*, 22.
Rufus Jones’ Vision

With the establishment of the AFSC, Rufus Jones’ vision of a Quakerism obliged to peace-building began to take shape. As the organizer of the Haverford Unit, where students were trained for alternative service at the college, and a prolific writer and speaker, he was what one would call a ‘weighty’ Friend. As such, his work helped a larger audience become more aware of the Friends’ position. In his writings, Jones provided a lens with which to examine the efforts to negotiate with the government, the relief work he helped organize, and the founding of the American Friends Service Committee. His work became invaluable when, during WWI, the beliefs of the Quakers needed to be articulated and proven authentic to non-Quaker government officials. His views and words, however, were not necessarily representative of all Quakers. But as a founding member of the AFSC and a leader in the relief work, his beliefs undoubtedly shaped the mission. His writings provide insight into the Quaker beliefs that informed the work.

Critically, Jones altered the way the Inner Light was framed by many Quakers. This is perhaps what he is most famous for in the field of Quaker Studies. Previously, the Inner Light was the source of revelation from God. Jones acknowledged the importance of the experiential aspect of the Light, but sought to further define it while understanding the phrase had not been given a precise definition nor could it mean the same thing to all Quakers.27 The most succinct answer he found to his search for the Inner Light was that it was “the doctrine that there is something Divine, ‘something of God,’ in the human soul…This Divine Seed is in every person good or bad.”28 More simply put, there was something of God in every person. Jones believed that this was true for not just Quakers, but for all of humankind, even if one did not acknowledge it. Consequently, if one were to kill another person, they would be also perpetrating violence.

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27 Rufus M. Jones, Social Law in the Spiritual World, 160.
28 Rufus M. Jones, Social Law in the Spiritual World, 168.
against that of God within that person. This value placed on human life and the belief in the potential of every person to tap into the Inner Light were foundational to Jones’ understanding of the peace testimony.

Jones was one of few Quakers who articulated a new vision for the peace testimony prior to American involvement in World War I. One of his more salient pieces was a 1915 article in *The Survey*, a social reform journal, titled “The Quaker Peace Position.” In this article, Jones glossed over the schisms in Quakerism to speak about the peace testimony as if American Quakers were a singular body with significantly overlapping beliefs. Jones claimed that the peace testimony was fundamentally an absolutist anti-war principle in which war was never justified. For him, war was incompatible with the “way through Christ to the full meaning of life, to the real worth of man, to the inestimable ministry of love and brotherhood.”

War did not only cause unbearable suffering, but also prevented people from fulfilling their potential in helping society progress. Jones argued that the peace testimony was not merely about being opposed to war, but that there was further duty to be fulfilled in times of peace. Jones was explicit in his view on the role of the Quakers in ensuing peace, writing: “And whether in times of war or times of peace, the Quaker is under peculiar obligation to assist and to forward movements and forces which make for peace in the world and

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which bind men together in ties of unity and fellowship.”

Jones maintained that the Quakers must take a progressive stance and advocate for social reform as a path to peace and unity. His invocation of the terms “human rights,” “democracy,” and “human emancipation,” all part of a liberal and progressive vocabulary, further demonstrated his belief in a peace-building interpretation of the peace testimony. To Jones, Quakers had a responsibility to remain actively engaged with the world.

The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century brought about this change in Quaker thinking about peace. Jones recognized that this was a shift in how the peace testimony was being interpreted and encouraged such reexamination: “Religious ideals must be interpreted and reinterpreted in terms of present day thought.” Jones utterly rejected the historical, solely anti-war conception of the peace testimony. It was simply not effective, nor relevant to the present circumstances. He had come to an understanding of the causes of war and how to most effectively extinguish them, writing:

It is a mistake to call Quakers ‘non-resisters’ or ‘passivists.’ They are neither. They do not face any giant evil with a passive attitude. They seek always to organize and to level against it the most effective forces there are. They know as well as anybody does that instincts and passions are not changed by miracle and that peace cannot prevail where injustice and hate are rampant. They seek to do away with war by first doing away with the causes and occasions for it; that is, by removing the fundamental grounds from which war springs, by eliminating the roots and seeds of it in the social order, and by forming an atmosphere and climate that make war unthinkable.

The causes of war needed to be eradicated before they gave rise to war. Jones referred to this shift in approach as one from “the mere claim of a privilege to the sense of a weighty obligation.” He was also connecting the “great evil” of war to “injustice and hate,” which were

34 Rufus M. Jones, The Faith and Practice of the Quakers, 113.
seen as the underlying conditions that caused war, as were “economic injustice, imperialism, militarism, and racism.” Quakers began to work to create conditions in which peace was possible, which meant acting not just during times of war but during times of peace to ensure injustice and hate did not turn into war. Rufus Jones’ interpretation of the peace testimony was recognized by young Quakers in particular as critical to making Quakerism meaningful for their generation and for their time.

Impact of the Young Friends

A significant unifying force in American Quakerism was the Young Friends Movement, a group organized within Yearly Meetings to pursue an agenda that was relevant to young Quakers aged 18 to 35. During WWI, this was the group that had the most at stake, as they were the ones drafted into military service. Having been greatly influenced by the rise in the focus on social progress at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century, their work often championed “peace, social reconstruction, and unity among Quakers.” Many of the Quakers of the Young Friends Movement learned to think progressively from their professors at Quaker colleges like Haverford College and Swarthmore College. They were educated by men like Rufus Jones and Henry J. Cadbury, who were described as having “introduced Friends to the progressive currents of thought alive in the wider culture and urged them to create Quaker outlets for those impulses.” Another vital figure was Isaac Sharpless, a weighty Friend, Haverford professor and President of the College from 1887 until 1917. He was exceedingly influential, not only to his students but also to Rufus Jones, who dedicated his book on the Friends’ wartime service to

Sharpless after his death in 1920. In 1910 Sharpless described the type of Quakerism he taught as adaptable and receptive:

   It is more in touch with the world around, it is more open to new ideas, it is less inclined to accept as conclusive argument for itself that Friends in the past followed certain customs. It is probably no less loyal to fundamental Quakerism; and it is much more hopeful that this will become, not the possession of a slowly dying though very respectable remnant, but a growing and vigorous organism adapting itself to the problems of its environment, and winning strength and confidence by its real efficiency.\footnote{Benjamin, \textit{The Philadelphia Quakers in the Industrial Age, 1865-1920}, 176-7.}

The interpretation of Quakerism as living and evolving was compatible with the idea of the Quaker testimony as more flexible and defined through response to contemporary challenges. Sharpless and the other professors utilized their academic skills to show the compatibility of progressivism and Quakerism. Sharpless envisioned the future of American Quakerism to be active, moving away from the quietism that defined Quakerism for much of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. In order to keep the peace testimony alive, it would need to rely less on its legacy and more on how it could serve the Quakers in any crisis. This lesson was presented to the young Quakers in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century who would go on to be the Quaker leaders of the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century, thus ensuring Sharpless’ and Jones’ vision for Quakerism would live on well beyond their deaths. As Philip S. Benjamin described, these educators set up the next generation with a religious spirit and force of will:

   Much of the pressure to discard elements of the Quaker past which prevented active participation in the present came from a generation educated at the Friends’ colleges. The rigor of their intellectual demands produced graduates who refused to accept many traditional assumptions… [The professors] wrestled openly with basic religious questions and social problems as they related to Christianity. Because they were effective teachers many of their students carried this questioning spirit back to Philadelphia Meetings as adults…As it was they produced a generation which attempted to adapt the faith to the modern world.\footnote{Benjamin, \textit{The Philadelphia Quakers in the Industrial Age, 1865-1920}, 175.}
The Young Friends Movement, with its willingness to engage intellectually with differing opinions and interpretations of Quakerism, helped reconcile American Quakerism. Some Quaker scholars have argued that the relationships forged by the Young Friends led to the eventual reconciliation of the Hicksite and Orthodox branches into a single Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. It was at the urging of the Young Friends that Rufus Jones called a gathering of representatives on April 30, 1917 to form the American Friends Service Committee.

The tools learned by the Young Friends throughout their education were an important aspect of the movement’s strategy and in turn became vital in the AFSC’s work. Evangelical practices were overtaken by humanitarian ones: “The adult schools, home and foreign missions, temperance and similar reforms did not grip them as they had the Friends of the preceding half century. They were more interested in problems of the social order, international relations, post-war relief, and goodwill centers over the world.” The Industrial Revolution and the growing dominance of progressive interpretations of Quakerism accompanied these changes in priority. These young Quakers were far removed from the memory of the painful schism in the previous century, and thus far more willing to collaborate with other branches. They were also more willing to question the older Friends and why the American Quaker community remained fragmented. In 1895, the Young Friends’ Association began a lecture series, “not confined to religious topics, which fostered an open and questioning atmosphere.” The Young Friends fostered unity among the branches and created a space in which “all varieties of Quakerism could affirm a common heritage.” This brought together young Quakers with Quaker leaders

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whose connections to high level government officials would prove essential to the success of their shared mission.

Friends in High Places

Quakers were in an advantageous position to find a solution to their present crisis. A huge reason for their success was the cooperation of Quakers with meaningful connections to influential Americans. Vincent D. Nicholson exchanged letters with War Department advisor, attorney, and future Supreme Court Justice, Felix Frankfurter. Nicholson raised concerns about particular conscientious objectors in camps who were reporting mistreatment. Investigative reports conducted by the military on the condition of COs in military camps accompanied letters from the War Department. It appears as if the AFSC was able to push the War Department to, at the very least, investigate the Quakers’ claims and share government findings with the Friends. Throughout the war, Rufus Jones was in regular contact with senior members of the War Department, including the Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker. As a prominent religious scholar and professor, Jones was extremely well-respected and well-connected. This was advantageous because, when the United States entered World War I, men like Frankfurter and Assistant Secretary of War Frederick P. Keppel had been professors and administrators at universities. President Wilson had previously taught at Bryn Mawr College, giving him a firm connection to the members of the AFSC. The AFSC’s leadership included numerous professors, like Rufus Jones and Henry J. Cadbury, who had preexisting relationships with these men and knew how to most effectively approach them.

Frederick P. Keppel was viewed as an especially important partner for the Quakers within the War Department. Reporting on a trip to Washington, Jones wrote on April 30, 1918 that, “we were positively impressed by those in the Department…that it would be a grave mistake to
take up these matters with anybody else than Dr. Keppel. There appears to be a great deal of opposition in the Department...Dr. Keppel appears fully to understand our position and will at least handle it empathetically."\(^{44}\) Whether Dr. Keppel was predisposed to sympathy for the Quaker cause or was influenced by these interactions during WWI, he would later lead a life largely devoted to service. Immediately after the war, he became the Director of Foreign Operations for the American Red Cross and would go on to be the president of a major philanthropic organization, the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Having a contact within the War Department with these values and the willingness to thoughtfully engage with the Quakers was invaluable. Keppel helped bridge the two seemingly disparate philosophies of Quakerism and militarism.

Jones wrote a letter to President Woodrow Wilson on August 15\(^{th}\), 1917 explaining the AFSC’s partnership with the American Red Cross. He also requested approval for reconstruction work as alternative service and the granting of permits. The President of the United States, during wartime, responded directly to Jones in less than two weeks. The letter, dated August 28\(^{th}\), 1917, illustrated a friendly rapport between the two men by beginning “My dear Mr. Jones.”\(^{45}\) The President did not fulfill Jones’ requests but he did promise that once there was a full accounting of conscientious objectors, he would work towards a compromise with the AFSC: “I hope to be able to work out with the Secretary of War a plan which will give the nation the benefit of the service of these men without injustice to the great company of young men who are free to accept their country’s call to military duty.”\(^{46}\) The ability to communicate

\(^{46}\) Wilson, “Letter to Rufus Jones.”
with the President and be respected enough to get such a generous response shows the reputation these well-placed Quakers were able to cultivate.

The Quakers’ unique position is also shown in *The Conscientious Objector*, a book published in 1919 and written by Major Walter Guest Kellogg of the Judge Advocate General’s Office of the Army and Chairman of the Board of Inquiry. The Board was the mechanism that determined the ‘authenticity’ of petitions for conscientious objector status. Kellogg wrote that the Quakers were “intelligent,” a “patriotic class of citizens” who were “pleasant-appearing, clean-limbed young men,” “knew and understood the causes of the war…were well-versed in the current events, and…balked only at actual fighting.”47 This image contrasted greatly with Kellogg’s view of another large group of conscientious objectors, socialists. He relied upon stereotypical images of the groups of COs. Kellogg wrote that the socialists were “as different one from another as can be imagined. Many of them are simply ‘nuts,’ as they are called in the camps; some have had very little or no education; some have had too much.”48 The preexisting conventions about these groups of conscientious objectors influenced whether the Board of Inquiry approved them for alternative service or not. The Quakers were lucky enough for this to weigh in their favor.

Those lobbying for Quaker-driven alternative service were well-organized. They created documents with specific goals and talking points that they would take up with the War Department. The aim was, firstly, to clarify and expand what kind of work would qualify as alternative service. The AFSC pushed for “not only reconstruction work but [agricultural] work and work in enemy alien detention camps.”49 It was an effective strategy to approach the

49 “Memorandum of Matters to Be Taken Up with Secretary of War Baker,” n.d., General Administration 1917, American Friends Service Committee.
government with a plan in order for their proposal to appear practicable and have the best chance for approval because hundreds of jailed conscientious objectors depended on the outcome of these negotiations.

Advocacy for the Wartime Vulnerable

The Quaker leaders recognized the vulnerability of the jailed conscientious objectors. Friends like Rufus Jones, Vincent D. Nicholson, and Henry J. Cadbury utilized their voices on behalf of those who were unable to plead their own case and whose physical safety was uncertain, particularly in military camps. They advocated on behalf of the conscientious objectors who were being punished for ‘disobeying orders,’ for the COs writing them letters asking for help, and for the men grappling with the complex ethical dilemma of whether to appeal for conscientious objector status or ship off to the first mechanized, total war. Conscientious objectors were regularly put in front of military court-martials for refusing to serve and sentenced to terms of up to 10 to 20 years in military prisons. The Quakers were well aware that the conditions at these prisons were extremely dangerous. For example, two men at Camp Gordon in Georgia had their names published in *The Atlanta Constitution* when they were transferred to Fort Leavenworth in Kansas to serve ten-year sentences for “refusing to execute a lawful command given by a superior officer” and “refusing to sign [their] identification record card.”

The consequences were dire. The Quaker leadership responded to the urgency of this situation.

During WWI, the AFSC created, maintained, and updated a catalog of cards, one for each conscientious objector, with the CO’s assigned camp, religion, and whether they were a combatant, non-combatant, or absolutist. One card from an absolutist illustrated the treatment of

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50 “Refused to Fight, Twelve Gordonites Placed Behind Bars,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 20, 1918.
COs by the military: “Went on hunger strike in stockade because of criminals with them. Continued and transferred to insane ward with potentially violent men.”\(^{51}\) This was a punishment, a tactic to force COs to drop their claims, and a threat to all other potential objectors about the consequences of their actions.

Numerous cards report that COs were “knocked down” and subsequently hospitalized, suggesting that guards or other prisoners were targeting COs in detention. Instances of verbal and physical abuse were raised by the AFSC in letters with senior War Department officials. It appeared as if the Department took these claims seriously because of the inclusion of reports on military inquiries into the treatment of COs in these letters. One such report from Camp Funston in Kansas revealed that an investigation determined that three COs who refused to partake in their assigned sanitation department duties were assaulted by “noncommissioned officers” who “became incensed at answers made by the conscientious objectors to questions propounded to them.”\(^{52}\) The assault compelled the COs to work, their assailants were allegedly identified and punished, and “orders had been given…that [conscientious objectors] were not to be punished for refusing to work.”\(^{53}\) The response suggested that this was an isolated incident and such

\(^{52}\) “Report on COs at Camp Funston, Kansas,” October 27, 1917, General Administration 1917, American Friends Service Committee.  
\(^{53}\) “Report on CO at Camp Funston, Kansas.”
behavior was not condoned by the War Department. But the presence of multiple reports of violence from different military camps revealed the need for urgency in settling the role of COs with the government. Another report from Camp Taylor in Kentucky sought to explain the rough treatment of two COs: “Their training in the regular army rendered any piece of insubordination so abhorrent to them that they felt called upon to suppress it the instant it took place.”54 There was a willingness to excuse violent behavior by officers and blame the COs for provoking conflict. The assailants were only “admonished and cautioned as to their attitude toward conscientious objectors in the future.”55 These cautions did not provide much assurance that the War Department was greatly concerned with such violent conduct. While the sharing of confidential military reports with the AFSC showed the War Department’s willingness to cooperate with the Friends, the culture of the military was clearly not accepting of conscientious objectors.

COs also reached out to prominent members of the Quaker community to provide information on their camp and ask for help. In a letter dated September 25, 1918, a Quaker CO from Camp Taylor in Kentucky, Paul L. Whitely, wrote to Rufus Jones expressing his “helpless[ness].” Whitely spoke of his lack of confidence in the military process: “We feel that we have not received justice and frankly admit that we all feel

55 “Report on CO at Camp Taylor, Kentucky.”
that we will not receive justice from camp officials.”\footnote{Paul Whitely, “Letter to Rufus Jones,” September 25, 1918, Rufus M. Jones papers, 1860-1997, Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections.} While the well-connected leaders of the AFSC might have had enough trust in the government to work together, the COs in camps clearly had different experiences. Yet the AFSC still had the support of men like Whitely, who wrote of his continued support for the AFSC, its mission, and hope for the future: “We are not growing discouraged and are willing to bear sentences if they must come…However, I feel, personally, that I can help show the positiveness of our testimony by serving humanity during this crisis and I am not only willing but anxious to get into our work in France.”\footnote{Whitely, “Letter to Rufus Jones.”} He reassured Jones that there were still men committed to the peace testimony. Whitely seemed very aware of the pressure the AFSC and its leaders must have felt to quickly resolve the fate of COs. He showed a great deal of admiration for Jones and faith in the alternative service program. Rufus Jones and the other leaders of the AFSC were not only negotiating on behalf of the principle of the peace testimony, but they spoke on behalf of men who faced prison sentences for their beliefs and men like Paul L. Whitely who were invested in the new conception of the peace testimony that the AFSC was spearheading. After the war, Whitely would go abroad to France to participate in reconstruction work. Quaker support, such as that from Whitely, allowed for a united front against the negative public opinion regarding conscientious objectors.

**External and Internal Pressures**

Conscientiously objecting to war was not publicly perceived as patriotic or masculine. The Quakers were not following some larger trend of peace activism. In a 1918 article from *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, conscientious objectors who changed their minds about not serving were described as having “signified their intention of doing their full share for the cause of Uncle Sam
in the present War.” The paper implied that these men had an obligation to serve, and if they did not do so, they were not doing their “full share” as American men. The public sentiment about the appropriate, masculine duty was clear. Above this article, 18 portraits of local men serving in the war take up a third of the page. Each was in uniform with their names and units noted below each photograph. These men were being glorified.

Women faced similar pressure to support the war. When the United States House of Representatives voted to declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, the vote was 373 to 50 and one of the resolution’s opponents was Jeannette Rankin of Montana, the first woman to be elected to the House. Since a large part of the passionate support for the war resulted from the rampant anti-German hysteria that gripped the nation, Rankin’s loyalty to the United States was questioned and it was openly debated whether women were capable of holding positions of importance in government. The Helena Independent called Rep. Rankin “a dupe of the Kaiser, a member of the Hun army in the United States, and a crying schoolgirl.”

There were also extremely influential individuals who directly attacked the Quaker cause and conscientious objectors. Former President Theodore Roosevelt had a habit of referring to

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58 “Jail 12 Objectors at Camp Gordon,” The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, October 23, 1918.
pacifists as “sissies,” “slackers,” and “traitorous,” and accused COs of being “paid or unpaid agents of the German government.” He encouraged taking away their right to vote and advocated for universal military service. Roosevelt was furious at President Wilson for not allowing him to take a volunteer army to France to fight in the war, so Roosevelt went about pushing his own narrative of the war. In a speech in Minneapolis in 1917, Roosevelt lashed out at the men who refused to fight, branding them traitors and cowards:

A man has no right to the things that do not belong to him; and this country does not belong to the men who will not defend her. The man who will not defend the country has no business to vote in the country. Extreme Quakers take this position. They refuse to vote or pay taxes in addition to refusing to vote. Such men are unwise, but consistent. But nothing can be said for the pacifist who wishes to vote, but refuses to fight.

The language of the brave, patriotic male defending the female nation clearly conveyed the type of American masculinity which Roosevelt typified. For Roosevelt, military service was an obligation of citizenship. He showed deep animosity towards those who did not fight but still wished to call America their own. For him, those men were cowards. Roosevelt was less critical of the Quakers who refused to fight and completely removed themselves from political participation. Roosevelt’s view was similar to that of Major Walter Guest Kellogg, as both disagreed strenuously with the Quakers, but respected, to a degree, their earnest beliefs. This exception for Quakers was not the only mention of the Friends, as Roosevelt further stated:

There remains the pacifist, the conscientious objector, who really does object to war and who is sincere about it…The…attitude is that of great numbers of the Society of Friends, who in this war behave as so very many of the friends did in the Civil war; as that great English Quaker statesman, John Bright, lover of freedom and righteousness, behaved in the Civil war…John Bright said, in speaking of the pacifists who in the time of the Civil war wanted peace without victory: ‘I want no end of the war, and no compromise, and no re-union, ‘till the negro is made free beyond all chance of failure.’ He was for peace but

60 “La Follette Is Hissed; Roosevelt Applauded by Loyal Thousands,” *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, September 29, 1917
he was not for peace at the price of slavery. In the same way now, the best and most high-
mined friends, and lovers of peace in this country are for peace, but only as a result of
the complete overthrow of the barbarous Prussian militarism which now is Germany, and
the existence of which is a perpetual menace to our own country and to all of mankind.

The text of this speech was the same as in Roosevelt’s book released that very year, *The Foes of
Our Own Household*, in which he dedicated a whole chapter to the subject of conscientious
objectors. This speech exhibited a deep misunderstanding of the Quaker position. Roosevelt
assumed that there had always been a consistent Quaker peace position. In WWI and in the Civil
War, there were Quakers who fought and those who did not. The decision whether to
conscientiously object was deeply personal and Quaker institutions encouraged individuals to
make the right decision for themselves. Roosevelt’s reference to the Civil War also displayed a
lack of awareness about the legacy of Quaker involvement in the abolitionist movement and how
that may have resulted in increased Quaker support for the Union cause. All Friends would not
have seen slavery and Prussian militarism as equivalent evils. Slavery was a centuries-long,
global system of oppression with which the Quakers were deeply involved in fighting.

Roosevelt’s reference to John Bright was also very different from how Bright was understood by
the Quakers. Bright was a Quaker and British Member of Parliament in the mid-to-late 19th
century who was perhaps most famous for his invocation of the Quaker peace testimony in
articulating his absolute opposition to the Crimean War. He was viewed as a proponent of
pacifism. Bright’s supposed support for the Union during the Civil War did not mean it was the
only legitimate position, it was one of many. President Roosevelt’s speech typified the lack of
general knowledge of the Quakers by the American public and contempt for their pacifist
position.

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In addition to convincing government officials of their sincerity, the Friends had to turn the tide of public opinion. President Wilson explicitly advised doing so in a letter to the Friends’ National Peace Committee in May of 1917, telling the group to “[k]eep cool, think straight and try to influence public opinion so that the public will not become excited. With your background of spiritual training, you should be able to have great influence for calm and no other service is so much needed.”

After all, the president could not allow for exemptions of military service if the country violently opposed such a program. Thus, the Quakers mobilized a publicity campaign to educate the public on the plight of conscientious objectors and the pacifist Quaker position on war.

A pamphlet written by prominent Quaker and professor at Earlham College, Allen David Hole, and distributed by the Peace Association of Friends in America in 1917 communicated to the public why the right to object was important for the Quakers. At the same time, it emphasized the individual nature of choosing whether to conscientiously object, “as citizens of the United States and as members of the church at this time.” In a section titled “Allegiance to one’s country,” Hole rebuked charges of a lack of patriotism among the Friends:

It is an axiom that a nation can be strong only in proportion as it is a united nation, and Friends will all certainly desire so to act that they may be the last to place any obstacle in the way of the successful carrying out of the nation’s policy when that policy has been determined under the guidance of men who like President Wilson are sincerely endeavoring to find the right course for our nation, applying in doing so principles of liberty and democracy for which the United States has stood throughout its whole existence.

Hole assured the public that the Quakers were committed to a united nation and thus would not prevent others from serving or in any way inhibit the war effort. If they wanted special

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64 “Keep Cool and Think Straight President Says,” The Richmond Item, May 11, 1917.
66 Hole, Conscientious Objectors and Alternative Service, 3.
dispensation from military service, the Quakers could not be seen as trying to undermine the war effort.

The role of diplomacy in the Quaker mission was essential in effectively engaging with the public and the government. Hole sought to claim that the Friends, in their determination to fulfill their religious obligations by not fighting, were performing a service to those very principles upon which the United States was ostensibly founded. Such a service was done not only for Quakers, but also for the betterment of the country as a whole. The pamphlet invoked a purportedly American value, individual liberty, to defend the Friends from charges of insufficient patriotism:

The Friends and other conscientious objectors believe that there is one thing more important than saving the nations as they now exist, and that one thing they believe to be the preservation of those dearly-bought liberties which will permit those individuals who have a true vision of the future to be able so to employ their ideals in practical life as to lead the nations in which they live to the perception of the same higher ideals and to the embodiment of those higher ideals in the national life.67

This was a clear rebuttal of the nationalist language dominating America at the time. The general perception of the national draft was one of duty to country which ought to trump all other loyalties. The media, high level government officials, and the American public felt Germany was threatening the liberties dearly held by Americans and the only reasonable course of action for a patriot was to fight. However, this Quaker mission was conceived as part of a movement towards a better future beyond this immediate crisis which would benefit all Americans because their mission was called for by a higher power than country.

In the next section of the pamphlet, “Allegiance to God,” Hole appealed to government officials to avoid laws which would force men to weigh their loyalty to their country with their loyalty to their faith:

67 Hole, Conscientious Objectors and Alternative Service, 10.
It is, of course, hoped that the officials responsible for the conduct of the affairs of the United States at this time have such a knowledge of the part which Christian ideals have had to play in making possible our present civilization that affairs will be so administered that no injustice will be done in any way to those of our citizens who feel that they are being brought into a position where allegiance to God and allegiance to nation may more or less directly conflict. 68

Quakers used this pamphlet to connect themselves with a larger Christian community more familiar to the American public and political officials. Placing their beliefs in a more relatable context in order to garner more sympathy was a fairly effective strategy for these minority religious groups seeking exemption. This pamphlet tried to explain why some COs could not go to work in a military factory or within the army, writing “[i]f it be wrong for a Christian to use a sword or a gun to take the life of a fellow-man, then it is equally wrong for him to do service which will make it possible for someone else to perform the same wrong deed.” 69 For an absolutist, working in a military factory on ammunitions or military vehicles would have implicated the workers in the violence those materials would then be used for. A noncombatant may have accepted a position in a factory because it did not require them to take up arms and kill other men in the battlefield. Each individual came to the conclusion of what they would accept based on their own conscience and then hope the military would find them to be sincere. In presenting the options available to COs, the pamphlet invoked the history of the Friends by stating “many...at least, will choose the course which Friends as a rule have taken in the past, suffer imprisonment, punishment and all kinds of persecution and mistreatment in order that they may hold their consciences free in the sight of God to whom their highest allegiance must always be due.” 70 This legacy was especially salient because a significant portion of Quaker migration to America was due to religious persecution in England.

68 Hole, Conscientious Objectors and Alternative Service, 4.
69 Hole, Conscientious Objectors and Alternative Service, 4.
70 Hole, Conscientious Objectors and Alternative Service., 7.
Hole recognized the inevitability of resistance to the pioneering role of the Quakers in a social reform movement: “History seems to show that it is a part of the penalty which leaders in reform must pay for their views far into the future that they shall be misunderstood, misinterpreted and subject to severe discipline at the hands of those who have not seen the truth which the few assert has been made clear to them.”71 Hole claimed the Quakers were prepared to face mistreatment for their progressive ideals. This final appeal expressed how deeply held these beliefs were for Quakers and how unwilling they were to sacrifice what they saw as morally right for the more popular course of action.

The reluctance to compromise certain Quaker values was also challenged by internal divisions among the American Quaker community. Part of the work of the AFSC was to bring the multiple branches of Quakerism together to forge a common agenda. The appointment of Nicholson as the Executive Secretary and the creation of a Board with representation from multiple Quaker branches helped ease some of the tensions and counter the perception that Philadelphia Quakers dominated the smaller branches within the organization. But constant communication was still required for the inclusion of non-local meetings in the AFSC. Earlham College professor and General Secretary of the Five Years Meeting (FYM) in Richmond, Indiana, Walter C. Woodward, exchanged numerous letters with Nicholson concerning complaints about the lack of inclusion of voices from the FYM. In June of 1917, Woodward wrote to raise concerns about an advertisement placed in the Friends Intelligencer which publicized a fundraising agreement with the Red Cross:

Why, oh, why didn’t you telegraph us the information which I find in Friends Intelligencer over your name…We are doing all we can to cooperate effectively with the Philadelphia Committee and it’s hard for us to understand why we were ignored in such

71 Hole, Conscientious Objectors and Alternative Service, 10.
an important and vital matter as this. I am expressing not only our feeling but that of influential Friends here.\textsuperscript{72}

This letter illustrated the difficulty the branches had trusting one another after decades of friction. But Nicholson responded promptly, “Why, oh why, don’t you have more faith in me?...You can feel at all times that I will give you all the information that we have.”\textsuperscript{73} Woodward accepted Nicholson’s explanation and promise to always be forthright, and the two continued to work closely together. This kind of collaboration made the continuation and the expansion of the AFSC possible.

Another area of potential difference among the Quakers which required monitoring was the tone used to voice their opposition to taking up arms. They could not demonize or alienate the American public or the government. This concern came to the forefront with the events that led Henry J. Cadbury, a prominent Philadelphia Quaker, to leave his position as a professor at Haverford College in 1919. Cadbury wrote a letter, which was published in the \textit{Philadelphia Public Ledger}, decrying the anti-German hysteria surrounding the war in America as an “orgy of hate” and the American press and public as more “heathen and bloodthirsty” than the Kaiser himself.\textsuperscript{74} The piece was immediately controversial, especially for the Board of Managers at Haverford. William W. Comfort, the president of the College, even wrote to the \textit{New York Tribune} to distance himself and Haverford from Cadbury by publicizing the amount of war bonds Haverford held and the number of Haverford students serving in the army, navy, medical and ambulance units, and the Friends’ Reconstruction Unit.\textsuperscript{75} Cadbury was brought in by US

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{73} Vincent D. Nicholson, “Letter to Walter C. Woodward,” June 30, 1917, General Administration 1917, American Friends Service Committee.
\item \textsuperscript{74} David Harrington Watt and James Krippner, “Henry Cadbury, AFSC, and Haverford College,” \textit{Friends Journal} 63 (April 2017): 19–22.
\end{itemize}
Attorney Francis Fisher Kane for questioning before being “absolved…of all suspicion of disloyalty.” Cadbury submitted a letter of resignation, but divisions in the Board resulted in a leave of absence for Cadbury and a statement declaring Cadbury had “used intemperate and unjustified language…which Haverford College repudiates.” Rufus Jones wrote in a letter that Cadbury wasn’t opposed by everyone in the Haverford community, stating “[t]here is, of course, a very large group of loyal Haverfordians of the more enlightened sort, who are staunchly with him.” Despite this support, the Board of Managers accepted Cadbury’s second letter of resignation in March 1919.

The Cadbury dispute showed the varying degrees to which the Friends were willing to denounce the war. Some, like William W. Comfort, wanted to maintain a positive working relationship with the government and, specifically, the War Department. While Henry J. Cadbury took a public stance in his letter, institutions like Haverford College and the AFSC prioritized good relations with the government in order to effectively implement the new vision for the peace testimony through relief work.

**The Peace-Building Work**

Although the actual work carried out by the AFSC took many forms, much of it was endowed with a similar spirit. Jones maintained that the Quakers “shall either surrender the heritage which had come down to us, or…we shall so bury it in a napkin to preserve it that it will neither grow at our hands nor enrich the world.” Rather than view the testimony historically, Jones argued that it needed to be made useful for the present circumstances. Humanitarian relief represented a necessary evolution of the peace testimony. These projects were carried out not

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76 “Act on Cadbury Hate Note Today,” *Evening Public Ledger*, October 22, 1918.
77 “Give Prof. Cadbury Leave of Absence,” *Evening Public Ledger*, November 1, 1918.
only by Quakers, but also by Mennonites and Brethren. COs were also joined by volunteers who had not been drafted into the work. The workers were largely men, but women did contribute, within gender roles. They sewed, canned food, worked as secretaries at the AFSC, sat on a women’s subcommittee, or went abroad as nurses or teachers. An essential domestic project was fundraising. The treasurer of the AFSC reported that, between June 5th, 1917 and April 30th, 1918, they raised $464,207.39 and spent $345,377.90. For the small size of the American Quaker community, this was an extraordinary sum of money that displayed a deep commitment to the AFSC’s work. The programs abroad were humanitarian in nature, ranging from reconstruction to medical relief. Jones wrote that the Friends “wanted to show our faith in action and to show it in a way that would both bring healing to the awful wounds of war and at the same time take us out of self and selfish aims and carry us into the furnace where others were suffering.”

This form of work was a boon for both the aid worker and the recipient of aid.

Luckily for the American Friends, the English and Irish Friends had been organizing peace work since their countries had entered the war in 1914. They had established the War Victims Relief Committee to raise money and the Friends Ambulance Committee. The Americans

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joined the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) upon entry into the war and began sending men and resources. The FAU was a volunteer medical service which provided treatment to soldiers in France and Belgium. Such direct involvement with the military was considered controversial by some Quaker bodies, even resulting in the British Society of Friends threatening to disown the Unit.\textsuperscript{83} There was also a separate branch for civilian aid in the FAU, which succeeded in securing support for the Unit’s work from Quakers back home.\textsuperscript{84} The FAU was part of a larger medical relief service provided by the Friends. The AFSC recruited doctors and nurses, both Quaker and non-Quaker, to staff hospitals in France. Felix Morley, a graduate of Haverford College who would later become a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and President of Haverford College, wrote to Rufus Jones that he had been accepted to work in the FAU on a hospital train which transported patients from the front, “It is a great responsibility for this is the first time in the history of the British Army that a hospital train has been placed in the hands of other than the Army Medical Corps.”\textsuperscript{85} The Quakers were trusted with an enormous amount of responsibility.

The work carried out by the conscientious objectors and the AFSC volunteers was largely focused on reconstruction of physical buildings and farms in France that had been decimated during the war. The COs and volunteers were doing primarily hard labor and, according to Rufus Jones, “on the frontiers of civilian life. They were quartered not seldom in the midst of debris and in a silent, deserted world where havoc had worked its full measure of desolation.”\textsuperscript{86} They were witnesses to the destructive power of war. The agricultural work was of a similar nature. The goal was to “put the devastated land back into cultivation, to rescue the neglected

\textsuperscript{84} Palfreeman, “‘The Friends’ Ambulance Unit in the First World War.’”
\textsuperscript{86} Rufus M. Jones, \textit{A Service of Love in War Time}, 215.
areas from their small forest of weeds and to repair the havoc of trenches, shell holes and barbed wire entanglements.” By healing the land, the relief work allowed French civilians to regain a sense of normalcy after the war.

Other programs included the distribution of food, medical supplies, and general aid like clothing and furniture. Feeding programs which distributed items such as “canned milk, vegetables, meats, dried fruits, [and] chocolate” became a signature Quaker project of the first half of the 20th century. During the war, the AFSC only provided relief to US allies, like France. After the war, with the direction of Quaker Herbert Hoover, the AFSC undertook a large-scale feeding program in Germany. It was considered more controversial to provide aid to a so-called enemy, so the Quakers focused their efforts on women and children. In these feeding programs, the AFSC and American Quaker community found a form of aid well suited to Quakerism. The work allowed the Friends to provide necessary material aid, but also form close relationships with those they were serving.

Elizabeth Gray Vining, Philadelphia Quaker, Bryn Mawr College graduate, and, later, tutor to the future emperor of Japan, wrote in her biography of Rufus Jones in 1958, “Friends in taking food for the body had always sought to take food for the spirit as well…” This dual goal of

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87 Rufus M. Jones, A Service of Love in War Time, 157.
88 “Suggested Directions of Help of American Red Cross to Friends War Victims Relief Committee,” August 24, 1917, General Administration 1917, American Friends Service Committee.
feeding the body and spirit demonstrated how a religious spirit imbued the relief work. The spirit of the work showed how “love will work everywhere and always...even with enemies, vastly better than the way of hate works.”90 In carrying out the humanitarian aid, the Friends hoped to also share a message of peace, love, and brotherhood which would hopefully prevent violence in the future.

**Post-War Reorganization**

World War I prompted a collaborative exploration of the Quaker peace testimony that continued after the war ended on November 11, 1918. The end of the war did not bring an end to the need for reconstruction in France, or the hunger in Germany, or the ongoing need for aid in Poland, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Russia. Nor did it eradicate domestic poverty and racism. The AFSC was already invested, structurally, economically, and emotionally, and more confident after its successes in responding to WWI. The message adopted by the AFSC at the end of the war acknowledged the new phase of continued action: “With the close of hostilities in Europe the members of this Committee desire to state that in their opinion the real work of the American Friends Service Committee has just begun.”91 The AFSC officially recognized the continuous action required to maintain an enduring peace. They were also doing so with as united a voice as the American Quakers ever had, stating “for the first time in its history the Society of Friends are united in one work. It is a strength in all to know there is one organization that can give concrete expression to that part of their faith which they hold in common.”92

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90 Rufus M. Jones, *A Service of Love in War Time*, 265.
The need to reinterpret the peace testimony in a post-war world was recognized in August of 1920 at the Conference of All Friends in London. At this event, where the AFSC led the American delegation, “relief workers and weighty Friends considered the causes of war and the roles Quaker meetings and organizations might play in diminishing economic injustice, imperialism, militarism, and racism.” The high-profile nature of the gathering was confirmed by the presence of the influential diplomat, Quaker, and Under-Secretary General of the League of Nations, Inazō Nitobe. Two London papers, *The Observer* and *The Guardian*, estimated the attendance at over a thousand Friends from all over the world. A report on the conference published by the British Friends listed all of the delegates present, including representatives from America, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, England, Ireland, Austria, Denmark, India, Jamaica, Norway, Madagascar, Syria, Japan, and China. Such diversity displayed a commitment to unifying the global Quaker community for the sake of a message of peace.

Fig. 9 All Friends Conference, August 1920. (Photograph by Alston Waring, 1920. Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections.)

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The purpose of the conference was not to come to a consensus on what defined Quakerism, but to recognize the complexity of the topics at hand and that the peace testimony was no longer simply an anti-war stance. Papers were presented by renowned Quakers such as Rufus Jones, William I. Hull, Walter C. Woodward, and Henry J. Cadbury on various facets of the peace testimony including “The Character and Basis of Our Testimony For Peace,” “The Peace Testimony in Civic and International Life,” “The Testimony in Personal Life and Society,” “The Life of the Society in Relation to its Testimony,” and “Problems of Education in Relation to the Testimony.” In these papers, topics of race, war, liberty, and the League of Nations were probed by multiple weighty Friends. After each group of presentations, there was discussion of these complicated and profound topics.

The closing remarks by the Chairman of the Conference and British Friend John Henry Barlow can be interpreted as a call to action: “Progress is not inevitable. It depends upon men and women; upon what kind of men and women we are. No social reconstruction which is merely material can achieve what is needed; indeed, without corresponding spiritual change it must miserably fail. Through any difficulties, however great, let us be ready to go forward with quiet faith and courage.”95 Barlow was stating that the ideal world envisioned by the Quakers would not be possible without steadfastly committing to “living in the spirit which makes all war impossible.”96 He referred to this feeding of the spirit of others in fellowship and service as “Christ’s way.”97 Barlow sought to inspire the Friends to provide something beyond material aid. He argued for advocacy which offered a human connection and a promise of understanding,

friendship, and unity, “to make all humanity a society of friends.” Barlow’s speech fully aligned with Jones’ stated vision for the peace testimony to be interpreted as an active, peace-building duty.

Concurrently, COs articulated the new interpretation of the peace testimony for themselves. One such CO on the register of delegates for the Conference of All Friends in London was Arthur J. Vail of the Gwynedd Quaker Meeting. Vail was an absolutist conscientious objector held in a military camp until after the end of the war. On January 27, 1919, The Friend published a piece from Vail titled, “Our Need and Our Opportunity,” in which he argued that the war revealed that Christians were not sufficiently “convinced that permanent good comes to men only in proportion that they apply His teachings to their daily lives.” Although Vail invoked the teachings of Christ more explicitly than many of his contemporaries his emphasis on the need to reexamine religious ideals for the present moment was similar to the argument made by Rufus Jones. Detachment from faith had allowed for the causes of war to fester and erupt into total warfare. Vail argued that as Quakers, “[w]e would not be content to live among the evil conditions that we do, unless our greatest efforts were being exerted to let in the light of love.” Remaining connected to the Quaker faith was vital in preventing another obscuration of the Inner Light, the piece of God within each individual. Vail used overt religious language of faith and light of love to encapsulate what one was fundamentally called to do as a Quaker. This was the path the Friends needed to follow in order to make the world “the

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99 Vail was a CO during the war according to the records kept on index cards by the AFSC.
100 “Conscientious Objectors Discharged from Camp Up to Twelfth Month 21, 1918,” The Friend: A Religious and Literary Journal 92, no. 27 (January 2, 1919): 345.
kind of place God meant it to be,” the Kingdom of God. The belief and advocacy of these principles illustrated the ways in which WWI changed how many conceived what it meant to be a Quaker.

The future role of the AFSC was examined at a gathering in Philadelphia in 1924. The AFSC had been incorporated in September of 1918 because its leaders believed their “work has some degree of permanency,” which showed how a new vision of peace-building was overtaking the original, narrow, war-relief mission. The transformation was fully articulated in the fall of 1924, when the Board held a conference of about one hundred relief workers and Friends. Rufus Jones, as Chairman of the Board, gave the opening remarks and spoke first of the past: “God has enabled us to accomplish far more that our hearts dreamed of in those agonizing days when we began our work…The past is secure.”

Jones did not want the American Quakers to slip back into the idle state they had been in prior to WWI. He did not want Quakers to be satisfied with the work they did and return to their upper-class lives. Instead, Jones advocated for the AFSC to be utilized as a cooperative vehicle for Quaker peace service in the future:

It is extremely important that we should make no mistake about our future course. We should not go on unless we can speak and act for the corporate membership of the Society of Friends. I do not want to see us go out and hunt for tasks to keep our machinery going; but if there are tasks laying clearly at our door—God-given tasks which we can do better than anybody else can—let us then once more say, ‘Yes, send us to the work, and anoint us for it.’

Service was not to be done solely to keep busy. Jones claimed Quaker duties were revealed by God, just as continuous revelation had always informed Quakerism. The Friends were not only the best equipped to handle these tasks of service, they were chosen to do so by God. It was the
mission of the Quakers to carry out such work. At the 1924 gathering, the structural framework of the AFSC was expanded to better address the post-war world. The vision for future work focused on “building interracial harmony, coordinating activities with English Friends and other relief organizations, reconstruction programs abroad, peace education and social welfare work at home” through four divisions: Foreign, Interracial, Peace, and Home Service. Now a robust organization emerged, which had successfully navigated the first modern war, fully prepared to extend the Quaker message of peace through service and love.

**Conclusion**

Thinking about peace as an ongoing process that requires seeds to be sown in order to secure the future was a new concept to the Quakers during World War I. Standing on the sidelines and refusing to participate was no longer sufficient in building peace:

> An individual’s refusal to service in the military preserved his Christian witness but did little to hinder the war effort, prevent another conflagration, or pursue others to pacifism. Somehow the antiwar testimony had to be broadened to involve those who questioned the utility of sitting on the sidelines while others fought ‘to end wars’ and to ‘make the world safe for democracy.’

The peace testimony called for a heartier commitment. The Friends moved to act despite the extraordinary public support for the war, as Philip S. Benjamin wrote, “[d]issent from the militaristic consensus required conviction and courage.” The Quakers of the AFSC had enough of both to succeed. World War I forced American Quakers to confront the realities of war and how their faith compelled them to respond. What arose from this was a uniquely Quaker organization, which became “an institutional way of expressing pacifism.” This organization allowed for a future of increased cooperation among the branches of Quakerism and

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110 Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 263.
continued engagement from the Quaker community towards building the conditions which make enduring peace possible.

Quaker historian Meredith Weddle wrote, “Pacifism is complicated, because violence itself is complicated.”\textsuperscript{111} The Friends labored to ease the suffering of war and bring about peace beginning with World War I. They succeeded much more in the former because answering the question of how to eliminate war is far more complex. In 1938, Rufus Jones, along with two other Quaker leaders, visited the Gestapo in an attempt to change the hearts and minds of the Nazis prior to World War II. Such a miscalculation was due to the overriding belief in the Inner Light’s presence in everyone, including the Nazis, and Jones’ confidence in being able to tap into their Inner Light. Remaining steadfast in one’s pacifist beliefs led to problematic entanglements for the Quakers.

Yet the legacy of the enduring shift in Quaker response to atrocity conveys a worthwhile message. What arises from the spirit of the Quakers’ humanitarian relief is a sense of unity and fellowship. Jones best expressed this obligation to one another, especially in times of war:

Our noble word obligation means just that. Taken out of Latin and turned over into English it becomes ‘tied-in-ness.’ Anyone who is intending to claim his own right to walk the path of peace must take also his share of the heavy burden of trying to build a world in which the gentler forces of kindness, love, sympathy and co-operation are put into function.\textsuperscript{112}

The ways in which we feel indebted to one another, simply due to a shared sense of humanity, create a foundation for sowing the seeds of peace.

\textsuperscript{111} Weddle, \textit{Walking in the Way of Peace}, 4.
\textsuperscript{112} Rufus M. Jones, \textit{The Faith and Practice of the Quakers}, 113.
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